

Tēnā koutou

Thank you for the opportunity to submit Food and Fibre CoVE's thoughts and ideas regarding the redesign of the vocational education and training system.

Food and Fibre CoVE is an initiative of the Food and Fibre Centre of Vocational Excellence Society Incorporated. Members of the Society include industry peak bodies, employers and training providers from the food and fibre sector. We work closely with our constituent industries and associated employers, Workforce Development Councils, Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, Ministry of Primary Industries, Te Pūkenga and its subsidiaries, and other training providers. We invest in research and innovation to enable the transformation of vocational education and training (VET) to enable Aotearoa New Zealand's food and fibre sector to thrive through the increased capability and professionalisation.

The Government has set the aspirational goal of becoming an exporting powerhouse by doubling the value of our exports in ten years. The food and fibre sector will be pivotal to achieving this goal. If this goal is to be achieved the food and fibre sector needs easy access to an education system as a whole, and a VET model in particular, that delivers a work ready and ready for work talent pipeline that will enable it to succeed, meeting the needs of all learners and their employers.

In order for this rejuvenated VET model to develop and succeed for the food and fibre sector, it requires a research and innovation function that:

- Understands and is responsive to industry, employer, rural communities and akonga needs
- Can, in partnership with industry, facilitate a pan-sector approach to the design and implementation of education and training solutions tailored to those needs

Since opening the office in March of 2021, Food and Fibre CoVE has invested and/or committed to research and innovation projects and initiatives a total value of \$5,840,510 and growing. This includes a total of 45 completed pieces of work, 19 current and seven in development. We regret that the need for research and innovation in the VET sector is noticeably absent from the discussion document. This represents a missed opportunity, particularly during a time when the undeniable importance of such initiatives has been clearly demonstrated. We work nationally across the food and fibre sector to ensure that whenever an idea comes from a specific industry within the sector, it is fully researched and understood from a pan-sector perspective and can then be used by anyone. This approach is amplified when applied to some of our outputs, for example the excellence framework and associated rubrics, which are applicable to VET across the entire economy.

It would be remiss of Food and Fibre CoVE if we ignored this omission, with the following answers explaining why this is important if VET in New Zealand and especially for the nation's largest, by far, export sector is relegated to mediocrity or worse.

Proposal 1: Creating a healthy ITP network that responds to regional needs

1. *Do you agree with the consultation document's statements on the importance of ITPs?*

While we agree that ITPs are an important part of the wider VET ecosystem, we also believe that private training establishments (PTEs) and Wānanga are equally important and a source of innovation. Focussing on ITPs, in the manner that the discussion document does, is assuming that they are, other than traditionally so, an essential entity and a cannot be done without component of the national/regional VET model. Such an assumption needs robust research to support it. Food and Fibre CoVE would like to see the research that underpins the thinking that is driving the fixation on ITPs and its economic and social impact predicted for the sector as a whole as a result.

Why or why not?

2 *What do you consider to be the main benefits and risks of reconfiguring the ITP sector?*

Food and Fibre CoVE has conducted research into the performance of the VET sector through a wide range of projects. The report *21st Century Delivery and Assessment of training in the food and fibre sector in New Zealand states* “Future training systems will need to have flexible programme structures and utilise a variety of delivery methods and assessment approaches, instead of relying solely on historical teaching methods. This adaptability will be crucial in meeting the ever-evolving needs of learners, employers, and industries.” Furthermore, “The framework for delivery and assessment must be designed to be flexible and adaptable to effectively respond to the evolving training needs across the food and fibre sector. Current programmes should be enhanced by enabling the efficient development of new training material that supports new skills sets like the use of digital tools.”

History tells us that the ITPs and the way they are structured and operate, even prior to the RoVE programme of change, aren't easily able to deliver on the statements above. ITPs have grown to look and feel more University-like than the community-based, industry-led, and learner-focused VET entities that 21st century food and fibre industries (or for that matter, any 21st century industry) needs. The layers of bureaucracy and associated costs required to develop, approve, and begin delivering new programmes being but one example. Another is the reliance on, or default by, some ITPs for the delivery of diplomas and degrees rather than industry focused certificate level training. When non-formal and informal learning which is a major contributor to skills acquisition and growth in the food and fibre sector is factored in this point becomes even more pertinent.

What is also of significant concern is that ITPs do not or aren't equipped and funded to be able to recognise the different learning needs of the rural communities. The dispersed nature and often small cohort sizes of rural communities make delivery expensive and non-viable, under proposed funding arrangements, this will only be made worse. While the proposed federated model could, via on-line solutions be made more available, research clearly shows that remote delivery isn't suited to all learners and connectivity challenges continue to hamper remote solutions. Remembering also that many Māori learners in the food and fibre sector are living and working remotely which brings its own set of challenges, different from urban learners that ITPs are better suited to cater for.

3 *Do you support creating a federation model for some ITPs? Why or why not?*

There is no reason why the Federation ITP model couldn't be made to work, however it would require a paradigm shift by those managers and staff wedded to the way things 'have always worked in the past'. We believe this was one of the issues that impeded Te Pūkenga as a startup, and that organisation had the advantage of a top down or central command model. We don't understand why, apart from regional ego, the entire ITP network is not included on a permanent basis in the federation model? Ultimately this would lead to a shared services model while still allowing regional independence, which would be more economical.

If a federation model is to be pursued as well as the horizontal integration implied in Figure 2, we believe at the very least, it would also be sensible to have a discussion on vertical integration (in the same way Massey and Otago Universities are hosted by different campuses across NZ, ITPs could be based on a mix of specific regional needs plus industry groupings hosted on campuses where the region has critical mass for those groupings). Perhaps this might just be a variation of Option B. An example of this could be where NMIT, which has significant experience in aquaculture, would operate out of SIT's campus (or at least would be supported by SIT in that ITP's rohe) to provide aquaculture programmes in support of the emerging Southland blue economy.

4. *What are the minimum programmes and roles that need to be delivered by the new ITP sector for your region?*

ITPs need to be seen and need to see themselves as part of an eco-system. Rather than creating competition for competition's sake, efforts need to be made by officials, providers, community and industry to ensure that needs are met. We suggest that a version of the federation model might be a cooperative model at regional level within the national model. This would allow ITPs, PTEs and Wānanga, industry and research centres to cooperate, and leverage each other's strengths to deliver what is needed by local, regional and national economies. Similar in form to the example given in our answer to Question 3, where this is warranted, why not integrate PTE's, ITPs and Wānanga on the same delivery sites with shared resources including back office and teaching staff?

Food and Fibre CoVE believes cooperation is critical, but that competition is supportive of innovation. Therefore, we support co-competition (cooperative competition) enabled by a right sized, flexible funding system that will ensure nimble and responsive solutions and innovations that will serve all communities from Bluff to Kaitia while ensuring that all industries large or small have their needs met as well.

A current example of this is where NMIT operate in both Blenheim and Nelson. In the case of Blenheim, support of the wine industry, research, innovation, and training are all integrated on one site. This generates highly positive outcomes. Students are provided with opportunities to work with the National Wine Centre and Bragato Research, and Wine Marlborough is able to place students and graduates with their members across the region.

This model aligns with research Food and Fibre CoVE had carried out with the now abandoned Regional Skills Leadership Groups (RSLGs), but also in our own right. An example is the [report](#) that Food and Fibre CoVE commissioned on the Ngawha Innovation and Enterprise Park in Northland. In summary, the research found that “Businesses will seek a guarantee that their commercial needs will be maximised through the collaborative and co-operative network and activities they can access at the Park, such as sound talent management and recruitment strategies, training and development, business mentoring, and investment in research and development.”

5. *What are the critical factors needed (including functions and governance arrangements) to best support a federal model?*

As a national organisation, Food and Fibre CoVE believes that for any region, it must be the community and industry that decides what form their local ITP should take. The programmes on offer should reflect the needs of the economy of the region both today and into the future.

In partnership with Rural Leaders New Zealand, we have undertaken a significant piece of work that seeks to understand the leadership needs of the food and fibre sector at all levels, including executive and governance. The project to date has produced the report *A Path to Realising Leadership Potential in Aotearoa New Zealand's Food and Fibre Sector*. A quote from this report says, “The utility of leadership is to galvanise people into a team, so together they can achieve greater things than they could as a group of individuals. Yet the true value of leadership is to unlock the unrealised capability in others, so they might reach their potential, exceeding what they dared dream possible. This is a leader’s legacy. Truly leading well changes lives and futures.”

If this thought is applied to the makeup of Governance arrangements for the ITPs and the proposed federation then the Crown’s obligations to Te Tiriti cannot be ignored and Councils at regional and national level must be inclusive of all parties but where Māori are an equal partner, sufficient in number at the table and where Te Ao Māori, Tikanga and Mātauranga Māori are utilised to unlock the potential of the entities and the people within them and those they serve.

In 2021, Food and Fibre CoVE produced the Vocational Excellence Framework (the Framework), as part of our ‘Taking Stock’ Project. Based around a set of rubrics, the Framework provides a benchmark for the sector and providers to assess elements of their delivery of VET toward the achievement of excellence. The development of the Framework was based on the results of an international best practice literature review, and the rubrics validated with New Zealand industry and VET providers. We strongly suggest that, as changes are agreed and new models are adopted, this framework is applied to the new entities (whether federated or not). This should be done focusing on those rubrics most relevant to the operation of the entity. Based on the rubrics we used at the Ngawha Innovation and Enterprise Park, we suggest the prime rubrics would likely be:

- Work-based learning
- Employers and industry bodies
- Underserved learners
- Adult learners and career changes
- Ākonga Māori

There are other rubrics that could also be used, and more could be designed to better measure the innovations needed to ensure success of the revised VET eco-system.

Proposal 2: Establishing an industry-led system for standards-setting and industry training

6. Which option do you prefer overall? Why?

Compared to the extensive amount of work and consulting that went into the original RoVE process and the resource put into that exercise, we note the incredibly short consultation period for what is undeniably, a significantly important issue for Aotearoa New Zealand, both economically and socially. Taking this into account, **Option B** is the most desirable of the two ideas going off the information at hand and taking into account both options have a narrow vision with regards to new or future thinking and innovation.

Option A seems to be a return to the pre-RoVE model. This was a model that required national qualifications to be funded by an underfunded organisation that was required to meet all the 'set standards' statutory obligation but with funds siphoned off from enrolments under the 'manage training arrangements' statutory obligation, while still being required to meet all the requirements of that latter obligation. That this system lasted as long and performed as well as it did says far more about the commitment, innovative nature, and passion of those involved in making the model work, than the officials who oversaw it.

While we note that the revised funding system proposes discrete funding for standard-setting, we believe that this function needs to remain separate from managing training arrangements. This safeguards against the conflict of interest that previously occurred, intentionally or not, in the design of qualifications to better suit delivery by the same organisation setting the standards. Standard-setting (qualification development) and its associated activities such as quality assurance, moderation etc are far better carried out by specialist entities. This is further enhanced if the specialist entities are guided and governed by their constituent industries.

We also propose that under Option B, the workplace-based arrangements are not set up to stand alone, but are integrated into the operations of the ITPs, Wānanga and relevant, capable PTEs. This would ensure that another layer of competition, cost and/or confusion is not retained or reintroduced into the VET eco-system as was the case prior to the disestablishment of the ITOs due to RoVE. Further, one of the advantages the RoVE reforms brought was the promise of a seamless enrolment arrangement for all learners whether initially enrolling in workplace-based, distance or campus-based programmes. The potential for a learner to be able to continue studying without having to unenroll from one programme so they could enrol in another if their situation changed cannot be ignored as this was a significant advantage. Allowing for someone to find work in their industry of choice and swap to workplace-based or, alternatively, fall out of work and swap to campus-based learning without having that learning interrupted also carries significant benefits. Food and Fibre CoVE strongly believes this needs to be developed and properly implemented, and we cannot see how this is possible if the workplace-based function is set up separately, or there is a return via Option A to the past model.

7. What are the main features and functions that Industry Training Boards (Option A) need to be successful?

As detailed in answer (6) Food and Fibre CoVE does not support Option A. However, if this option was to be pursued then we recommend the statutory obligation of standard-setting with its associated quality assurance and moderation functions be part of the portfolio, and that it be separately funded.

The second function would then be managing training arrangements, though a better name for this might be, 'learner success'. This we can't emphasise enough must concentrate not just on signing people up and enrolling them in courses but must concentrate significant energy on pastoral care, employer support and trainee retention. There are plenty of good models to base improvement on, Tuakana Teina and Te Ako Tiketike to name but two. If a model as described were to be adopted, the purchase of the training places would be between the TEC and the provider, not the ITB and the provider as has been the case previously. The latter, due to underfunding, led to perversions of the system and the old ITOs operating models, that they were never intended to do.

Over the last two- or three-years, alternatives to the standard ITO or provider programmes and evidently successful models have been developed and tested. Associate Agriculture Minister, Andrew Hoggard, has asked Food and Fibre

CoVE to investigate these, comparing them to the standard models and to report on why they have worked and how they might be replicated.

A third function, and one the current WDCs are tasked with, is skills leadership. This goes hand in hand with standard-setting and training purchase and needs to be recognised as essential, industry centric, and in need of funding. This will ensure talent requirements are understood and properly planned for. We point out however, that skills leadership is not to be confused with VET research and innovation – which the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are designed to carry out – and needs to be funded to stand alone so the CoVEs can independently provide thought leadership, in turn influencing both standard-setting and provision by offering innovations and new models that are designed with learners and specific industry constituencies in mind.

8. *Under Option A, how important is it that Industry Training Boards' and non-Industry Training Boards be able to arrange industry training? Why?*

As explained above, we do not believe that ITBs should be required to arrange training. A quick look into other developed economies shows us that this function is separate to standard-setting in most jurisdictions looked at. An excellent example of this, and close to home, is in Australia where a Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) is a not-for-profit company that is industry-owned and industry-led. They are part of a national network of 10 JSCs that provide leadership to address skills and workforce challenges for their industry. They:

- Align efforts across industries to improve VET system responsiveness
- Build stakeholder confidence
- Drive high-quality outcomes for the VET sector, learners and business

JSCs identify skills and workforce needs for their sectors, map career pathways across education sectors, develop contemporary VET training products, support collaboration between industry and training providers to improve training and assessment practice, and act as a source of intelligence on issues affecting their industries. JSCs are not providers and maintain that separation and any conflict that would occur if they were.⁹ *What are the main features and functions that industry standards-setters (Option B) need to be successful?*

Industry standard-setting needs to be industry guided and governed. Food and Fibre CoVE also suggests the entire value chain of an industry be within the portfolio of the standard-setter. This will help ensure all parts of the industry, which day to day work together, are being listened to as qualifications are reviewed and revised. We see no reason why the red meat industry is spread across two WDCs currently, while the farmers are in many ways integrated with the processing. Wine on the other hand is integrated end to end under one WDC.

10. *Are there any key features of the Workforce Development Councils that need to be retained in the new system?*

Food and Fibre CoVE continues to benefit from effective collaborative relationships with Muka Tangata and Hanga Aro Rau WDCs, especially when it comes to research and innovative projects. Food and Fibre CoVE believes the WDC model is robust and needs careful consideration before being dismantled. Key to their work is setting standards and developing qualifications, and complimentary to this work are endorsement and quality assurance of programmes based on those standards and qualifications. To ensure qualifications are fit-for-purpose and meet demand, skills leadership must also remain a key function for WDCs to maintain a strategic view and be a functional interface between their constituent industries, TEC and providers. One of the greatest enabling factors for Food and Fibre CoVE to date has been our independence, we highly recommend that the future WDCs (whatever they may be called), be granted the same independence to ensure that they can accurately represent their constituencies.

11. *Are there any key features of how the previous Industry Training Organisations worked that should be re-introduced in the new system?*

Again, quoting from our recent Delivery and Assessment for the 21st Century report we note “There is an opportunity to improve the collaboration between industry and those developing and reviewing programmes. This will ensure that

industry needs are fully considered when designing programmes and delivery and assessment is planned. There were challenges noted on both sides, from industry who felt they were not adequately consulted and from those reviewing and developing programmes who struggled to gather sufficient feedback and engagement from relevant industry stakeholders. With limited funding and investment in training stretched, it was increasingly evident that every formal training programme needed to have a clear and current value proposition. Without this being apparent employers and industries will develop individual non-formal and in-formal training.”

Assuming Option B is adopted and proposed standard-setting bodies in terms of function resemble current WDCs, Food and Fibre CoVE recommends the Primary ITO model for Industry Partnership Groups (IPG) is considered seriously as a model to ensure industry constituencies are well represented. That is, membership of each IPG is determined by the members in that Industry, reviewed annually, and included a cross-section of business, industry body and individual sector stakeholders, including (where possible): employers, employees, Māori, industry associations and other specialists and/or government officials as required. Although we haven’t researched the model in depth yet, there is evidence that strongly suggests industry, for example wine, had via this innovation, its own representative standing group to assist in standards and setting and qualification development, understanding demand for talent and assisting in ensuring delivery models were fit for industry purpose. The IPGs also contributed to the appointment of the stakeholder committee that in turn, by acting as a form of electoral college, appointed the Board. While ITOs in their day had various models to ensure industry was engaged with, Food and Fibre CoVE recognises that the Primary ITO model appears to have ensured end to end engagement and at all levels. This model need not be exclusive to the standard-setting bodies but could also be adopted by the reconfigured ITPs as well, though a more regional flavour would be required when it came to the make-up of the IPGs etc.

12. What are the possible benefits and risks of having a short moratorium on new industry training providers while the new system is set up?

The more important point to consider here is that industry, employers, trainees and learners have had to endure considerable disruption and confusion for the past five years. The current reform of the reform process is only adding to those issues. We acknowledge the Government needs to review current settings but remind officials that industry doesn’t stop while Ministers conduct reviews and implement reforms. The longer this process goes on, and the less it delivers (and we have already noted the lack of vision and innovation in the choices being considered) the greater the chance that industry will either look overseas for training or move to an industry based non-formal model that meets its needs and excludes the ongoing complexity and short-term thinking associated with the formal model. The longer the delay, the harder it will be to recover lost opportunities, or restore what little momentum there has been in those few areas where change was being considered. The danger here is also the loss of innovative thinking and fresh ideas as the market is manipulated to set up something which we suggest is not required. This is even more concerning when it is considered against the background of research and innovation not appearing to be valued with the removal of funding for the existing and any future CoVEs.

Proposal 3: A funding system that supports stronger vocational education

Food and Fibre CoVE’s Delivery and Assessment for the 21st Century project reported “Limitations on how funding can be applied, and the need for more funding was a common theme across all stakeholder engagement. Like every other sector, food and fibre would appreciate additional funding, but in the current economic climate it is unlikely that more funding will be made available.”

The current funding model is in pockets, driving behaviours that are not supporting best practice in delivery and assessment, and therefore fails to meet all learner needs. One example is providers training practical skills without the workplace context, that would be best taught in the workplace.

Existing funding could be applied in a more targeted manner, ensuring that it is available in the areas that will have the most impact and be a mechanism to support best practice. A number of areas were highlighted that currently receive little or no funding including RPL, pastoral care and trainer support.

13. *To what extent do you support the proposed funding shifts for 2026?*

Food and Fibre CoVE doesn't support the proposed shifts and we are opposed to the removal of the strategic component. The need for increases to campus-based provision, where that is of value, is acknowledged. Of concern however is the trade-off that suggests money will be taken from workplace-based funding to fund standard-setting. This suggests two things; that workplace-based learners are seen as less important than their campus-based counterparts, and that standard-setting will again be subject to significant underfunding. In both cases we ask, how can New Zealand be so out of step with comparable economies globally?

The strategic component in the Unified Funding System (UFS) to encourage providers to address national and regional skill priorities was a unique and positive, if somewhat misunderstood, innovation. Unfortunately, this is being removed. Further to this, funding for a standalone industry-led VET research and innovation function, Centres of Vocational Excellence, has also been removed. This is of considerable concern and can only lead to mediocrity and further slippage in the development of the nation's talent pool. How easy would it have been to earmark a small portion of the strategic component to enable 4 or five CoVEs aligned to economically or socially important sectors to ensure thought leadership, research and innovation for those sectors was available and to protect the VET sector from mediocrity.

14. *What benefits and risks need to be taken into account in these changes?*

Food and Fibre CoVE invested in and continues to invest in understanding attraction and more particularly retention, as a result, pastoral care has been proven repeatedly to be an ever-increasing and essential aspect in today's societal and education system. Experience tells us that the funding rates available per learner, whether campus or workplace-based, are far too small for quality pastoral care to be provided. Even with the restoration of the campus-based funding to levels like those prior to the advent of the UFS, there is still going to be a shortfall of quality pastoral care available for learners. This situation is even more concerning when we note in the discussion document "This would require repurposing a significant proportion of learner component funding targeted to support learners with low prior achievement, disabled learners, and Māori and Pacific learners." This comment suggests pastoral care and targeted assistance is only going to be available if there is anything left over. The likelihood is there will not be anything left over. That then tells us that, apart from having a regional ITP for the sake of having a regional ITP, there are limited (if any) other benefits to be found.

15. *How should standards setting be funded to ensure a viable and high-quality system?*

In all other developed economies, standard-setting is funded discretely and well. For 30 years, Aotearoa New Zealand has not had the opportunity to benefit from that model. When the decision was taken to set up and adequately fund WDCs to act as standard-setters, the nation joined the other economies that have that model. Food and Fibre CoVE strongly supports the retention of standalone funding at an adequate level to ensure high quality standard-setting and all other associated activity related to that function.

16. *How should the funding system best recognise and incentivise the role that ITPs play in engaging with industry, supporting regional development, and/or attracting more international students to regions?*

The regional provider network, not just the ITPs, should be funded to offer only what the local economy and its related community requires to meet needs, both current and into the future. This would require the regional provider network to be a cohesive system that is highly engaged in its constituency, agreed on what each other's roles and responsibilities are, and taking advice from regional economic development agencies. That advice would in turn, be triangulated against advice from national standard-setting bodies relevant to those regional economies, and industry employers from within the local economies.

International students should not be required as a day-to-day business as usual model, but accommodated only once regional offerings are agreed and in place. Ideally, places should only be offered to international students, if there was a shortage of local talent for industry. This approach would then suggest the students coming in to fill those places

were in fact pseudo-domestic and could be funded as such. This could particularly be the case for workplace-based learners required by some of the food and fibre constituent industries.

Where places are offered over and above industry requirements, students would only be temporarily in Aotearoa New Zealand for the purposes of study. In this case, international education should be self-funding and always be the icing on the provider's income cake.

17. What role should non-volume-based funding play, and how should this be allocated?

Training of any description should not be funded via a volume-based model. We suggest that there should be no volume-based funding at all. Instead, the entire regional provider network, ideally operating as a cooperative model, should be funded to be open, but should offer only what the local economy and by extension community, requires to meet their needs, both current and into the future. This would require the regional provider network to be a cohesive system that is highly engaged in its constituency, agreed on what each other's roles and responsibilities are, and taking advice from regional economic development agencies. That advice would in turn, be triangulated against advice from national standard-setting bodies, exercising their skills leadership function relevant to those regional economies and local industry employers and peak bodies within the local economies.

Where there was proven need for a programme regionally that did not meet a commercial threshold, regional provision could reach out across the proposed federation to access technology and offer programmes through a nationwide or cross-regional virtual model.

No volume-based funding, coupled with the co-competition model as described above, would also allow ITPs and PTEs along with Wānanga to cooperate without fear of financial loss.

Concluding questions

18. Could there be benefits or drawbacks for different types of students (e.g. Māori, Pacific, rural, disabled, and students with additional learning support needs) under these proposals?

Taking a learner-focused, industry-led, and Government enabled approach, we believe this question would not even be up for consideration. As noted earlier, the discussion document makes the following statement. "Fully restoring vocational education funding rates to what they would have been under the previous student achievement component system. This would require repurposing a significant proportion of learner component funding targeted to support learners with low prior achievement, disabled learners, and Māori and Pacific learners." We would suggest the answer to this question is self-evident, and yes, there would be detrimental effects on all the parties listed in the question.

Our current and ongoing research to date clearly demonstrates that all the named cohorts require attention. Projects such as Attraction and Retention, 21st Century Delivery and Assessment of training in the food and fibre sector in New Zealand and Leadership in the food and fibre sector, for example, all show attention to each cohort requires appropriate energy and funding and, when done properly, that attention ensures people succeed, are ably employed, and rise to their potential. At a time when the Māori food and fibre economy especially is growing exponentially and recognising that historically Māori have been a major part of the food and fibre workforce and remain so currently, why would an economy not invest in learning and assessment models that suit, remembering these models are just as suitable for non-Māori.

Food and Fibre CoVE, in collaboration with Construction and Infrastructure CoVE (ConCoVE), is currently engaged in research that recognises neurodiversity as an asset rather than a deficit and acknowledges the diverse ways individuals experience and interact with the world. With an estimated 10% of Aotearoa New Zealand's population being neurodiverse, there is untapped potential to address the challenges they face in education and employment, particularly within key industries experiencing skill shortages. This research will provide evidence-based proposals for change, so we are deeply concerned to read that funding for innovative learning models to support learners identified in this research might be removed.

19. *Could there be benefits or drawbacks from these proposals for particular industries or types of businesses?*

The very myopic and unimaginative ideas evident in the proposals to date, ensure that there will be a negative impact on the food and fibre sector and rural communities in general. We believe officials will agree it is important that the methods and processes applied going forward are in line with the most effective and successful approaches in vocational education and training. Our research in the Delivery and Assessment for the 21st Century project was conducted to clarify and understand the existing best practices and confirm this with subject matter experts. This research guided the development of recommendations that aim to apply current best practices that remain relevant to how VET is delivered into the future.

In addition, the research investigated global models used in vocational education and identified approaches and techniques that could address some of the challenges in front of us. This additional research provided valuable support in formulating the project's recommendations.

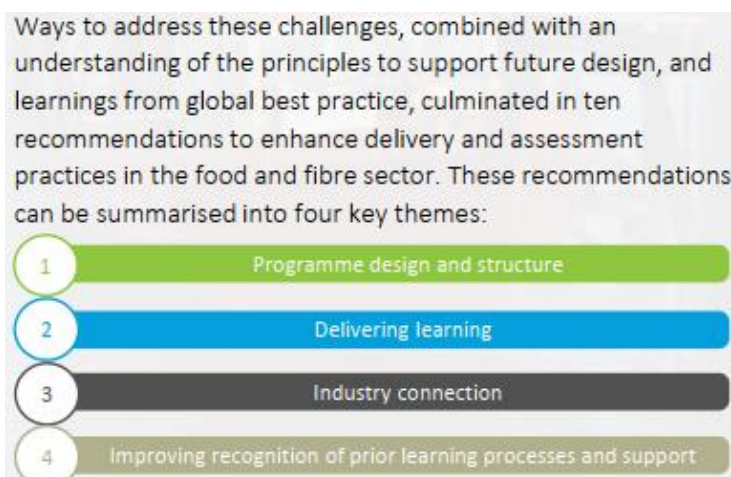
The key future design principles of flexibility, sustainability, and evolution directly relate to the way in which vocational education will meet the current and emerging training needs of the sector.

The Delivery and Assessment for the 21st Century project recommendations aim to elevate the sector to consistently operate at a best practice level. By fostering a continuous improvement mindset within the system, including processes and behaviours, and ensuring the totality of the resources and capabilities of the ecosystem are leveraged, it will be possible to effectively meet the evolving needs of future learners and the wider industry. This includes regularly realigning VET approaches to meet the new measures of best practice as developments occur in educational psychology, teaching pedagogies, technology, and the practices and needs of industry and learners. Without this adaptability, the sector risks revisiting the same challenges in the future.

Food and Fibre CoVE is not confident that what is proposed either in the future structure of ITPs, workplace-based training, or the funding system, can meet the current and future needs of the food and fibre sector, its constituent industries, and those who lead and work within it. Food and Fibre CoVE believes that the sector needs a tailored solution supported by research-based evidence that can deliver to talent requirements in a way that accommodates seasonal flexibility, dispersed workforces, changing technologies, and the need for resilience and adaptability in the face of the challenges of climate change.

20. *Are there other ideas, models, or decisions*

The following visuals, taken from the 21st Century Delivery and Assessment of training in the food and fibre sector in New Zealand report, illustrate what the food and fibre sector needs from vocational education and training. Whatever format the current review eventually arrives at, Food and Fibre CoVE firmly believes that in order for it to serve the food and fibre sector, the following needs to be recognised and allowed for in that format.



Five key themes emerged from the challenges faced by the sector:

- A The flexibility of the training system
- B Quality programmes delivered well
- C Industry connection, voice and role
- D Application of recognition of prior learning
- E The future of food and fibre in New Zealand

Future design principles to be applied in the food and fibre vocational education

1. **Purpose:** The purpose is focused on learners and the food and fibre sector industries, and enabled by work-integrated and/or work based learning opportunities to provide relevant experience and industry relevant skills.
2. **Flexibility:** Delivery and assessment modes apply flexible approaches to accommodate the diverse needs of learners and the food and fibre sector.
3. **Inclusivity:** Ensure the use of inclusive approaches that support vulnerable individuals and groups and enable the success of all parties.
4. **Technology:** Integrate relevant technology into food and fibre vocational education and adopt technological advances, including the integration of relevant digital tools and skills training.
5. **Collaboration:** Maintain collaboration between stakeholder groups and the food and fibre community to ensure delivery and assessment aligns with current and emerging needs including technologies and sector practices.
6. **Sustainability:** Create enduring and sustainable solutions, meeting emerging needs and ensuring the solutions are flexible and can be adjusted to meet future needs.
7. **Evolution:** Orientate towards lifelong learning, the integration of evolving practices and technology along with ongoing skills advancement across the sector.

Food and Fibre CoVE has commenced a project that is being designed to reimagine what the VET system would look like if it were designed to deliver to the sector's needs as described in the illustrations above, and not via the status quo processes that treats the training of hairdressers, electricians, and horticulturists as much the same.

The vision of this work is to raise the aspirations of stakeholders of Aotearoa's food and fibre VET system as to how New Zealand builds human capability to meet the needs to stakeholders across the value chain.

The work proposes a shift away from evaluating variations to the current VET system's structure and ecosystem. It instead focusses on creating an appetite for changes to the way New Zealand invests in VET and exploring alternative models to build human capability within food and fibre industries. Alternatives are focused on delivering the greatest value and achieving the best outcomes for five beneficiary groups:

1. Food and fibre industry (here defined as employers in food and fibre industries *collectively*)
2. Employers *individually*
3. Learners
4. Māori
5. New Zealand as a whole.

We want this work to create the imperative for change and to contribute to the discussions around the future shape of human capability-development for the food and fibre sector in New Zealand. What is proposed here is about

planting the seeds for a long-term vision that may take several years to achieve. There will be windows of time over the coming year to influence politicians, officials and industry leaders. The early learnings from the work could still be used to support more immediate conversations, while we continue to build insights over time.

This project builds off the back of other Food and Fibre CoVE research including Delivery and Assessment for 21st Century project, New Approach to Learner Pathways, Skills Framework, Secondary School Transitions and Pathways to VET and Employment, Excellence Framework, Futures Academies (and related research), as well as Food and Fibre Leadership Systems, Residential and Group Training, to name just a few. All of these collectively suggest neither the current nor the proposed structure for VET in Aotearoa New Zealand are fit for the purposes of the food and fibre sector in the 21st century.

Nā māua noa, nā



William Beetham

Chair Food and Fibre CoVE Board



Paul Hollings

Genal Manager Food and Fibre CoVE

Appendix One

Food and Fibre CoVE Projects Referenced in Consultation Feedback

21st Century Delivery and Assessment of training in the food and fibre sector in New Zealand

Case Study – Ngawha Innovation and Enterprise Park

Food and Fibre Leadership Systems Research

Vocational Excellence Framework

Appreciating and Supporting Neurodiversity in VET (collaboration with ConCoVE)

Food and Fibre CoVE Projects Related to Consultation Feedback

Work Integrated Learning

Training and Career Framework for the Food and Fibre Sector

Systems Approach to Micro-Credentials

Residential and Group Training

Non-Formal and Informal Learning in the Food and Fibre Sector

Hawkes Bay RSLG Actions

Forestry Trainers and Assessors Research Project

Case Study Farm4Life

Attraction and Retention

Apprenticeships in the Food and Fibre Sector

A New Approach to Learner Pathways

Food and Fibre Degree Level Apprenticeship Framework

Investing in Emerging Technologies

Food and Fibre Māori Leadership Development Framework

Funding System Review