



Continuous Improvement in VET – a set of resources

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Resources for staff development and change management
generated by national forums conducted in 2007.



Abbreviations

For brevity, the following abbreviations are used frequently in this report:

ACE	Adult and Community Education
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
CI	Continuous improvement
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEST	Department of Education Science and Training
ISC	Industry Skills Council
NQC	National Quality Council
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET/VTE	Vocational Education and Training

Key terminology

Continuous improvement is an integral part of AQTF 2007. An effective quality system includes processes that encourage and achieve continuous improvement. For RTOs this means developing a planned and ongoing process to systematically review and improve policies, procedures, products and services through analysis of relevant data from clients and interested parties, including staff. Data from the quality indicators provides a key tool for continuous improvement.

The value for RTOs of adopting a continuous improvement cycle is in its potential to create a stronger, more sustainable business that meets the needs of clients and stakeholders. Such a cycle also enables RTOs to adapt quickly to changing external environments such as economic factors and skill needs.

Types of continuous improvement processes and tools are not prescribed and RTOs have flexibility to consider their own business context and make improvements based on feedback from their clients and stakeholders. (AQTF 2007, Users' Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration, July 2007)

National Reform Agenda The National Reform Agenda is aimed at further raising living standards and improving services by lifting the nation's productivity and workforce participation over the next decade. (COAG Feb 2006)

Human capital The National Reform Agenda will enhance the capability and contribution of the Australian people – the nation's human capital. Skills development helps realise the potential of citizens, and of the nation. Continuous and lifelong learning gives more people the tools to participate in work and underpins more successful and rewarding careers when they do so. (COAG Feb 2006)

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recently described human capital as "the fundamental building block for growth strategies in the knowledge-based economy". (COAG Dec 2005)

National training system The national training system is a term often used to describe an Australian vocational education and training system characterised by the use of competency based training, Training Packages and the Australian Quality Training Framework. Other features of this system are that it is industry-led, demand-driven and client centred.



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1. Introduction to the forums and the publication

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to make easily accessible for the vocational education and training (VET) sector, a set of resources on the topic of *Continuous Improvement in VET*. The resources consist of a collection of papers and insights from practitioners that can inform the effective and innovative incorporation of continuous improvement in Australian registered training organisations (RTOs).

The resources were developed and used at a series of forums held around Australia in 2007 by Reframing the Future, the national staff development and change management program for skilling Australia's VET workforce to implement the national training system.

Reframing the Future provides a professional learning framework for educational change, staff learning and organisational capacity building in vocational education and training.

These printed materials are complemented by PowerPoint slides, templates and handouts available from www.reframingthefuture.net/CIVET_Aug07. The resources were used at the national forums conducted in 2007 and can be adapted for local use. They will also be available on the Reframing the Future Publications and Resources CD ROM which can be ordered from the website after April 2008. www.reframingthefuture.net

Background to the *Continuous Improvement in VET Forums*

The forums mentioned above were the central activity in 2007 for the Reframing the Future sub-program 'Engaging VET Practitioners'. The overall aim of this sub-program is for VET personnel and stakeholders to engage in constructive debate about how to continuously improve the national training system based on learning from both practice and theory.

The aims of the sub-program are to:

- initiate robust national dialogue around alternative teaching, learning and assessment practices in a Training Package environment
- strengthen a sense of professional identity and opportunities for networking amongst practitioners, and
- build RTO capability in Training Package implementation.

Our objective for the sub-program in 2007 was to establish an ongoing forum for knowledge sharing and generation among VET stakeholders and practitioners in making effective professional judgments about continuous improvement.

The 2007 forums are a timely response to the following critical developments for vocational education and training (VET):

- the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) aim of a responsive training system that supports the enhancement of Australia's human capital
- the National Quality Council's (NQC) initiation of changes such as the rationalisation of Training Packages, the promotion of recognition services, the introduction of skill sets and the assessing and reporting of employability skills
- the launch of the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007) in July with its emphasis on continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is one of the four features underpinning the new Framework and is an element within each of the three Essential Standards.

Each of the above developments requires training providers to undertake continuous improvement within their organisations and in their work with their clients.

For more information on these developments please visit the following websites:

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) national reform agenda:

<http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/100206/index.htm>

The Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007)

<http://www.training.com.au/aqtf2007/>

The National Quality Council (NQC)

www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/

Please note:

New national Quality Indicators for RTO's, which form part of the AQTF 2007 Essential Standards, are being developed during 2007. For current information please visit <http://www.training.com.au/aqtf2007> or email the AQTF Hotline on AQTF2007Hotline@dest.gov.au

Forum aims

The forums were based on the belief that an integrated approach to continuous improvement by training providers is preferable to a piece-meal approach. The forums provided an opportunity for RTOs to consider ways of implementing integrated responses to COAG's directions and the NQC's initiatives.

The specific aims of the forums were to:

- support the COAG goal of enhancing human capital, by focusing initially on the continuous improvement of the capabilities of the people within VET organisations – capabilities such as:
 - forming and sustaining relationships with clients
 - assisting disengaged groups to re-engage with work and learning
 - assisting industry and enterprises with workforce development
- support the NQC aim of implementing AQTF 2007, especially the principle of continuous improvement in RTOs, in the context of current national priorities such as the use of rationalised Training Packages, RPL, skill sets and employability skills
- promote effective skill development of VET practitioners and change management in RTOs to support the continuous improvement of:
 - products and services
 - organisational plans, strategies, cultures, structures and processes
 - external relationships and networks that underpin workforce development.

Forum participants

During August 2007, Reframing the Future facilitated a series of one-day forums around Australia.

A group of people representing a mix of VET providers and industry areas, and who could have an impact in their organisations, were selected to participate in the forums based on their expressions of interest. Participants' job roles ranged from RTO directors and quality managers to workplace trainers and assessors and human resource practitioners. Some participants also came from VET stakeholder groups such as industry associations, State Training Authorities and other organisations such as group training and job network agencies.

In all, 300 VET professionals participated in the Forums which were conducted in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Perth. Participants from regional areas, the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania were supported to attend the forum closest to their location. Additional shorter versions of the Forums were subsequently run in Canberra and Darwin. Owing to the demand, a further two forums were planned as part of Reframing the Future's national New Ways of Working in VET Forum 4 in Brisbane, in November 2007.

How we structured the forums

The forums were seen as the mid-point in a learning activity which began when participants filled in expressions of interest and examined pre-reading materials. The forums were structured around a background paper prepared by the co-facilitators Suzy McKenna and Dr John Mitchell, a case study presentation from Chisholm Institute of TAFE and a series of activities informed by an appreciative inquiry methodology. In addition, at least five participants, who recounted positive approaches to continuous improvement in their expression of interest, were interviewed in person about these experiences at each forum.

By adopting an appreciative inquiry methodology, participants focused on what was positive, what was possible and what works in continuous improvement. Rather than dwell on a negative attitude to change and all the reasons why continuous improvement is hard to do, the appreciative inquiry approach changed the dynamic and thinking of participants towards a 'can do' approach, rather than a 'can't do' feeling. It encouraged them to focus on the positives in current approaches and ways we can learn from each other and improve.

Participants were encouraged to extend their learning and maintain their interactions, after the forum, by becoming a catalyst for promoting continuous improvement approaches in their organisation.

Key concepts and definitions used in the forums

Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement is one of four concepts underpinning the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007) Essential Standards for Registration. The concepts are:

- A focus on outcomes
- A systematic approach
- Continuous improvement
- Access and equity.

It is described as follows in the *AQTF 2007 Users' Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration*:

Continuous improvement is an integral part of AQTF 2007. An effective quality system includes processes that encourage and achieve continuous improvement. For RTOs this means developing a planned and ongoing process to systematically review and improve policies, procedures, products and services through analysis of relevant data from clients and interested parties, including staff. Data from the quality indicators provides a key tool for continuous improvement.

The value for RTOs of adopting a continuous improvement cycle is in its potential to create a stronger, more sustainable business that meets the needs of clients and stakeholders. Such a cycle also enables RTOs to adapt quickly to changing external environments such as economic factors and skill needs.

Types of continuous improvement processes and tools are not prescribed and RTOs have flexibility to consider their own business context and make improvements based on feedback from their clients and stakeholders. (AQTF 2007, *Users' Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration*, July 2007)

Practice

These forums were fundamentally about influencing and improving VET practice and in particular the practice of continuous improvement. Practice is defined simply as the habits, customs, techniques, approaches and beliefs of VET practitioners (based on Wenger et al. 2002).

Appreciative inquiry

The spirit and intent of appreciative inquiry is conveyed in the following comment by one of the founders of this methodology:

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach...based on strengths rather than weaknesses, on a vision of what is possible rather than an analysis of what is not. (David Cooperrider)

Appreciative inquiry is discussed at greater length on page 7 and in section 4.

People as catalysts

An underpinning principle of the forums was that participants may be able to act as catalysts for change within their organisations, in supporting continuous improvement. A definition follows.

Catalysts are elements or chemicals that can cause or accelerate reactions that do not, themselves, get used up. They are, in this case, people who make things happen by their presence and by what they do. They don't necessarily do everything themselves but they bring out the best in the rest of us. They connect the rest of us, and facilitate our interactions so that we all can do great things. (Dr Gregg Vanderheiden, on presenting a Catalyst Award to Dr Henry Murphy)

Innovation

Implicitly, catalysts for change are involved in innovation. The following definition of innovation underlines the implementation of improved ideas and knowledge, and this can be related well to the concept of continuous improvement:

Williams (1999) defines innovation as the implementation of new and improved knowledge, ideas, methods, processes, tools, equipment and machinery, which leads to new and better products, services, and processes (p.17).

Williams also points out that the word innovation is derived from the Latin *innovatio* (renewal or renovation), based on *novus* (new) as in novelty. Note that innovation is about the implementation of not just new ideas and knowledge, but also of improved ideas and knowledge. (Mitchell et al. 2003, *Emerging Futures: Innovation in Teaching and Learning in VET*)

Ideas and concepts generated in the forums

The Forums were extremely well received by those who participated, based on data provided in the written feedback at the end of each Forum. The feedback on the immediate impact of the forum fell into four main categories, as follows:

1. Those participants who thought that their current practice was validated by what they learnt and now felt more supported and no longer professionally isolated.
2. Those participants who realised that continuous improvement is not as complicated or arcane as they previously thought.
3. Those participants who now believed that continuous improvement had a strong future as an essential component of the life of an RTO and is 'achievable' for RTOs, indeed essential.
4. Those participants who had changed their mind-set from a focus on compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework to one of continuous improvement as an organisation.

Participants' comments about what they learned at the forums included:

'Continuous improvement is not only about collecting data, but about what you do with it to improve and the subsequent monitoring of the improvements'

'There is no perfect model for any organisation; it must be adapted'

'Continuous improvement should be embedded in the business practices and culture of RTOs'

'Doing it, but need to document it better; do it better'

'Continuous improvement is a continuum – wide variety of approaches and actions'

'Involves everyone in an organisation, and thus good communication across the organisation.'

When asked what they would do differently as a result of participating in the forum, a representative selection of the participants' responses included:

'Analyse the effectiveness of our current processes'

'Need to document organisational strategies for continuous improvement so they are clear and user friendly for all stakeholders'

'Make continuous improvement a part of all processes'

'Involve all the staff'

- 'Take a different approach to student feedback'
- 'Better collection of data and analysis and use'
- 'Build continuous improvement into the start of a process not the end'
- 'Include continuous improvement as an agenda item at all staff meetings'
- 'See change through the eyes of others.'

Many respondents commented that more time was needed for discussion and problem solving at the forums while others thought the structure and presentations were 'just right'.

Based on the participants' feedback and comments at the forums, the following summary observations are made possible:

- **Scope for interpretation.** The definition of continuous improvement in AQTF 2007 documentation provides RTOs with ample scope to develop approaches that suit their context. However, many RTOs who are used to the previous AQTF and its more prescriptive approaches are unused to this freedom. Forums such as those conducted in 2007 can give practitioners the confidence to exercise their professional judgment with regard to interpreting and practicing continuous improvement.
- **Conscious expertise.** There is considerable expertise in RTOs with regard to continuous improvement but some people are not conscious that they have this expertise. A key role of professional development is to highlight and further develop this existing expertise, particularly through the structured use of the affirming methodology of appreciative inquiry.
- **Shared practice.** There is a need within the sector to share examples of good practice, to provide practitioners with immediate and accessible models. This set of resources is one response to that need.
- **Catalysts for change.** The forums included an examination of the role of a catalyst in fostering the adoption of new approaches to continuous improvement and embedding continuous improvement processes within VET organisations. In scientific terms catalysts speed up reactions by providing a surface on which the chemical reactions can proceed, or accelerate reactions by interacting with different compounds. By extending the concept to people acting as catalysts, participants were encouraged to take on the role of 'catalyst' in facilitating the adoption of continuous improvement as a foundation for quality on returning to their organisation.

Final comment

As a result of the forums, the broad aims of this set of resources are to support those catalysts; to demystify the concept of continuous improvement so it is willingly embraced; to inform the wider VET community of existing good practice and currently available resources for staff development and change management for individuals and RTOs; and, to encourage more awareness of current and potential capabilities with regard to continuous improvement in the VET sector.

How to use the resources, the set of strategies and the appreciative inquiry methodology

Using the resources

The resources on continuous improvement can be used by people in VET as follows:

- by individual practitioners seeking to improve their knowledge and skills about how to incorporate continuous improvement in their day-to-day processes as a leader, manager or administrator or in their teaching, learning and assessment practice
- by groups of VET practitioners examining a range of issues and solutions to embedding continuous improvement.

In using these resources, individuals can:

- read the background paper and think piece and review the PowerPoint slides
- follow up any references

- consider the questions and activities in the Appreciative Inquiry process
- read about the experiences of other VET practitioners in Section 9 on effective approaches to continuous improvement
- make changes to their practice and reflect on the outcomes to continuously improve practice.

Groups or organisations can do the same as individuals and in addition can:

- design their own forum or series of forums on the topic
- select issues and solutions raised in the background paper and think piece and focus on them
- add to the background paper and think pieces by inviting group members to research issues and solutions from the discussions
- invite internal or external speakers to talk about issues and solutions related to the topic.

Using a set of strategies

At the forums, participants were encouraged to examine a set of staff development and change management strategies and methodologies used by projects managed by Reframing the Future, as discussed in the background paper in section 3. The strategies and methodologies are outlined further in section 4.

One reason why strategies such as the use of networks or communities of practice were promoted at the forums is because it invariably takes time and stakeholder support to achieve new goals and practices with regard to continuous improvement. At the forums, groups were encouraged to imitate the developmental process used by Reframing the Future professional development and change management projects rather than concentrate discussions or training into one short session. This includes providing pre-reading, supporting and facilitating on-going dialogue and workbased learning activities after or between sessions, as well as enabling participant's to reflect on their changing knowledge, skills and practice.

The set of strategies may be utilised by RTOs to inform their planning for appropriate staff development and change management approaches to embed a culture of continuous improvement through the organisation and within specific workgroups.

Individuals and groups using these resources are also encouraged to review the materials from the 'Professional Judgment in VET' and 'RPL – Done Well' forums facilitated by Reframing the Future in 2005 and 2006. The challenges of improving professional judgment and RPL have some similarities with the challenge of improving approaches to continuous improvement. These materials are available on the website in the 'Engaging VET Practitioners' page and on the 2007 Publications and Resources CD ROM or relevant print publications that can be ordered free from the Reframing the Future website www.reframingthefuture.net

Using appreciative inquiry

Since 2000 Reframing the Future has provided leadership to the sector in its use of staff development methodologies such as networks, communities of practice and professional conversations. This leadership was acknowledged in the external evaluation of the program in late 2004, which compared the program to others around the world and declared it to be world class.

Continuing this leadership, in 2006 Reframing the Future modelled the use of appreciative inquiry for national staff development. While the methodology of appreciative inquiry has been used in occasional Australian VET staff development activities and research projects, Reframing the Future used it successfully as an innovative strategy for addressing a high priority issue in the sector in 2006: increasing the practice of recognition of prior learning (RPL).

A rigorous use of the appreciative inquiry methodology underpins Reframing the Future's series of forums on Continuous Improvement in VET in 2007.

Briefly, what is appreciative inquiry (AI)?

A doctoral student at Case Western Reserve University in the 1980s, David Cooperrider, and his faculty mentor Suresh Srivastva are acknowledged as pioneering the use of appreciative inquiry. In undertaking change projects, they found that in focusing on organisational problems and designing interventions to address the problems, the problems seemed to multiply. However, when they reframed their approach as an inquiry, in the sense of

seeking to learn and discover the positive forces within an organisation, they shifted their own and their subjects' attention away from the causes of failure and turned attention to the causes of success.

When initially developing the methodology of appreciative inquiry, Cooperrider and others decided to focus on stories of innovation, hope and positive change. They set out to find examples of success and experiences of high points. In this way, they constructed a methodology for influencing change that concentrated on the positives within an organisation, not the organisation's deficiencies.

The appreciative inquiry methodology focuses on the causes and examples of success, as explained by Ludema et al. (2003):

Appreciative inquiry is an approach to organisation change that has been used successfully in small- and large-change projects with hundreds of organisations worldwide. It is based on the simple idea that organisations move in the direction of what they ask questions about. For example, when groups study human problems and conflicts, they often find that both the number and severity of these problems grow. In the same way, when groups study high human ideals and achievements, such as peak experiences, best practices and noble accomplishments, these phenomena, too, tend to flourish. Appreciative inquiry distinguishes itself from other change methodologies by deliberately asking positive questions to ignite constructive dialogue and inspired action within organisations. (p.259)

It is important to stress that appreciative inquiry is not viewed by Reframing the Future as superior to the many other methodologies that seek to identify organisational problems and look for solutions: it is simply an alternative. It is appropriate to use appreciative inquiry when the goal is to find ways to move forward, rather than to continue to identify obstacles and problem solve.

Using appreciative inquiry for the Continuous Improvement in VET Forums

While Ludema et al. (2003) describe the use of appreciative inquiry for four-day summits, Reframing the Future adapted the methodology for a learning activity that commenced before a one-day forum, pivoted on a one-day intensive forum, and continued for some months after the forum was conducted.

The appreciative inquiry methodology offered Continuous Improvement in VET Forum participants a participative, collaborative and systematic method for discovering and building on the positive aspects of successful approaches to continuous improvement that are currently used in VET.

Appreciative inquiry used within forums focuses participants on the positive aspects of what is happening now in an organisation or sector, and what can be achieved in the future. This positive focus was appropriate for the 2007 continuous improvement forums, as the forums were targeted at existing and future good practice, not policies.

The benefits of an appreciative inquiry methodology for each forum included the following:

- The forum highlighted for participants the positive aspects of the current VET system in relation to continuous improvement, including current capabilities, effective practices and successful case studies
- The forum highlighted instances of successful practice in continuous improvement, examples from a variety of VET contexts and exemplars of innovation and change
- The forum provided easy and immediate access to valuable ideas and information
- The forum engaged participants in envisioning, designing and implementing improved approaches to continuous improvement
- The forum was designed to engender confidence and stimulate inventiveness and lead to improved practice and positive, sustainable change.

To optimise benefits for forum participants, the appreciative inquiry methodology was also used to frame both the pre-forum and post-forum activities:

- pre-forum activities included identification by participants, in their written expressions of interest, of success stories
- post-forum activities included the voluntary assumption of the role of a continuous improvement catalyst within an organisation.

References and further reading on appreciative inquiry

Cooperrider, D.L. & Srivastara, S. (1987), Appreciative inquiry in organisational life. In W.A. Passmore & R.W. Woodman (eds.), *Research in organisational change and development* (Vol.1), Jai Press, Greenwich CT.

Cooperrider, D.L. & Whitney, D. (1999), *Collaborating for change: Appreciative inquiry*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco.

Ludema, J.D., Whitney, D., Mohr, B.J. & Griffin, T. (2003), *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A practitioner's guide for leading large-group change*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc, San Francisco.

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>

'*Appreciative Inquiry Commons*' a worldwide portal devoted to the fullest sharing of academic resources and practical tools on Appreciative Inquiry and the rapidly growing discipline of positive change.

The Reframing the Future PowerPoint which guided the use of the appreciative inquiry during the forums is available from the website www.reframingthefuture.net The PowerPoint will also be available on the *Reframing the Future 2008 Publications and Resources* CD ROM which can be ordered free through the website after April 2008.



2. Background paper to the Continuous Improvement in VET Forums

A background paper on strategies for the continuous improvement of RTOs to enhance VET's human capital and to support AQTF 2007

Suzy McKenna and Dr John Mitchell

This short paper provides a context for the 2007 forums on continuous improvement conducted by Reframing the Future.

The paper positions continuous improvement within the rich context of the national reform agenda and changes to the national training system.

The view of continuous improvement taken in this paper and in the forums is that it represents a commitment to quality, achieved through a mix of appropriate principles, attitudes, strategies and processes.

Background

The 2007 forums are a timely response to the following critical developments for vocational education and training (VET):

- The Council of Australian Government's (COAG) aim of a responsive training system that supports the enhancement of Australia's human capital
- The National Quality Council's (NQC) initiation of changes such as the rationalisation of Training Packages, the promotion of recognition services, the introduction of skill sets and the assessing and reporting of employability skills
- The launch of the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007) in July with its emphasis on continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is one of the four features underpinning the change and is an element within each of the three Essential Standards.

Each of the above developments requires training providers to undertake continuous improvement within their organisations and in their work with their clients.

Forum aims

An integrated approach to continuous improvement by training providers is preferable to a piece meal approach. The forums provide an opportunity for registered training organisations (RTOs) to consider ways of implementing integrated responses to COAG's directions and the NQC's initiatives.

The specific aims of the forums are to:

- support the COAG goal of enhancing human capital, by focusing initially on the continuous improvement of the capabilities of the people within VET organisations – capabilities such as
 - forming and sustaining relationships with clients
 - assisting disengaged groups to re-engage with work and learning
 - assisting industry and enterprises with workforce development
- support the NQC aim of implementing AQTF 2007, especially the principle of continuous improvement in RTOs, in the context of current national priorities such as the use of rationalised Training Packages, RPL, skill sets and employability skills
- promote effective skill development of VET practitioners and change management in RTOs to support the continuous improvement of:
 - products and services
 - organisational plans, strategies, cultures, structures and processes
 - external relationships and networks that underpin workforce development.

Intended participants

Participants will be key influencers on continuous improvement in their organisation, including:

- RTO middle to senior level managers, both educational and corporate
- RTO professional and organisational development managers
- RTO managers of teaching, learning and assessment
- Officers responsible for systemic quality and change.

Benefits of attending

The forums are designed to:

- provide participants and their organisations with access to a set of proven methodologies that can support continuous improvement
- persuade participants that continuous improvement in RTOs will support the achievement of the aims of COAG and NQC and will benefit all clients.

Strategies matched to contexts

There is no one way – no simple formula or silver bullet approach – to achieve continuous improvement: a RTO commonly will draw from a range of strategies and methodologies, to match their context and needs. In addition, any approach to continuous improvement requires rigour, commitment, and stamina.

Continuous improvement involves the continuous management of change. But just because we use the term continuous improvement, the change which is managed is not necessarily continuous. A steady even tempo is not the only mode of continuous improvement: it can involve bursts, peaks, breakthroughs, disruptions and varied pacing. As an example, Burnes (*Managing Change*, 2000, p.304) refers to Senior's three categories of change:

- *smooth incremental change*: covering slow, systemic, evolutionary change
- *bumpy incremental change*: where the smooth flow of change accelerates
- *discontinuous change*: when equilibrium is punctuated.

Burnes (2000, p.304) also provides this checklist of varieties of change, for individuals, groups and systems, and appropriate strategies to achieve each type of change.

Table 1: Types of change and strategies to achieve each type of change

	Incremental change	Punctuated change	Continuous change
Individuals	Learning	Promotion	Career development
Groups	Kaizen (*)	Team building	Changes in composition and tasks
Systems	Fine tuning	Business process re-engineering	Culture

(*) Kaizen is defined by Burnes (p.145) as a Japanese approach to continuous improvement which includes creating a vision of the future and moving towards it in incremental steps, at all levels of the organisation.

In addition to change management strategies, RTOs need frameworks and tools for evaluation, to gauge the impact and progress of any continuous improvement. A range of approaches to evaluation will be promoted at the forums and are cited below.

Overview of Reframing the Future's Set of Strategies

At the forum Reframing the Future will introduce participants to a Set of Strategies for *Continuous Improvement*. The set will consist of:

- Strategies and methodologies to assist continuous improvement
- Monitoring and evaluation strategies to assist continuous improvement

Strategies and methodologies to assist continuous improvement

Strategies and methodologies to be examined at the forums, and advocated as aids to continuous improvement for the VET workplace, include the following:

1. **For the individual VET practitioner:**
 - a. the active and conscious exercise of your professional judgment, with an emphasis on you building your confidence based on previous experience;
 - b. workbased learning methodology, with an emphasis on you undertaking reflection targeted at continuous improvement.
2. **For RTO work teams:** community of practice methodology, with an emphasis on you benefiting from social learning systems.
3. **For VET RTOs internally:**
 - a. change agency methodology, with an emphasis on you using your capacities for resilience, adaptability and energy;
 - b. change management methodology with an emphasis on you identifying the type(s) of change required, for example, incremental, disruptive or contingent, and developing continuous improvement strategies in response to this analysis.
 - c. knowledge management methodology with an emphasis on you (1) generating new knowledge; and (2) converting knowledge into different forms.
4. **For RTOs externally:** industry training networking, with an emphasis on you balancing members' goals, intended outcomes and ongoing network dynamics.

All these strategies and methodologies are used, proven, refreshed and refined by Reframing the Future. At the forums these strategies and methodologies will be presented as a *Set of Strategies for Continuous Improvement* that you can access as needed.

Monitoring and evaluation strategies

The impacts of any strategies designed to result in continuous improvement need to be monitored and evaluated. Hence, a feature of the forums will be the provision of frameworks and models for such monitoring and evaluation, including:

- clear definitions of key evaluation terminology such as objectives, outputs, outcomes and performance indicators. See also 'Users' Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration' p.4 for a focus on outcomes and a systematic approach.
- an examination of the meanings of continuous improvement. See for example AQTF 07 Users' Guide:
An effective quality system includes processes that encourage and achieve continuous improvement. For RTOs this means developing a planned ongoing process to systematically review and improve policies, procedures, products and services through analysis of information and collection of data from clients and other interested parties, including RTO staff. Data from the quality indicators provides a key tool for continuous improvement.
The value for RTOs of adopting a continuous improvement cycle is its potential to create a stronger, more sustainable business that meets the needs of clients and stakeholders. Such a cycle also enables RTOs to adapt quickly to changing external environments such as economic factors and skills needs.
- a four-level model for monitoring impacts: individual, group, organisation and system levels
- a six-step model for monitoring projects and activities designed to support continuous improvement.

Methodologies and activities at the forum

The range of methodologies and activities used at the forums will be suitable for participants to use with your own colleagues within RTOs, when introducing them to the *Set of Strategies*.

Appreciative Inquiry is the primary methodology underpinning the learning design of the Continuous Improvement in VET Forums.

It is a methodology for influencing change that concentrates on the positives within an organisation. It is based on asking questions at four stages: discovery stage, dream stage, design stage and destiny stage.



3. A set of strategies and methodologies to assist continuous improvement

The strategies and methodologies outlined below are designed to support staff development and change management activities that foster the development of organisational structures and cultures that embed continuous improvement across business units and whole organisations.

These strategies and methodologies are used extensively by project teams managed by Reframing the Future. They are also clearly described and explained in numerous Reframing the Future publications listed below.

The Core Ideas series provide a quick overview of why and how each methodology can support the development of staff to implement the national training system.

In general, the other publications go into more depth and include case studies and examples of how learning methodologies utilised by Reframing the Future project teams develop staff capability.

Generic Reframing the Future publications

Reframing the Future has publications available via its website on a range of issues that are relevant to continuous improvement in RTOs. These include:

- *Human Capital Enhanced by VET.* (2007)
- *How VET enhances Human Capital.* (2007)
- *RPL – Done Well: a set of resources.* (2006)
- *New Capabilities in VET.* (2006)
- *Professional Judgment in VET: a set of resources.* (2006)
- *New Ways of Working in VET.* (2005)
- ***Core Ideas: Innovation and the national training system.*** (2005)
- *Emerging Futures.* (2003)

These publications provide the broad rationale for continuous improvement, including the directions promoted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The publications also demonstrate how VET practitioners are developing new capabilities and new ways of working in order to achieve continuous improvement to their practice and their organisations.

Change management and change agency publications

Reframing the Future has publications available via its website – for the sub-program on *Strategic and Change Management for Improvement* – about the ways to initiate and manage change, leading to continuous improvement of RTOs. These publications include:

- Publications on change management
 - ***Core Ideas: Strategic and Change Management and the national training system.***
 - *Strategy Making in Turbulent Times.* (2003)
- Publications on change agency
 - ***Core Ideas: Change Agents and the national training system.***
 - *The Skilling of VET Change Agents.* (2004)

Networking and communities of practice publications

Reframing the Future has publications available via its website – for the sub-program on *Effective Networking* – about the ways to use networks and communities of practice to enhance practice and improve organisations. These publications include:

- Publications on networking and communities of practice:
 - ***Core Ideas: Networking and the national training system.***
 - ***Core Ideas: Communities of Practice and the national training system.***
 - *Building Industry Training Networks.* (2004)
 - *Effectively Structuring Communities of Practice.* (2003)

Workbased learning, action learning and action research publications

Reframing the Future has publications available via its website – for the sub-program on *Skills Development for VET Practitioners* – about the ways to enhance practice and improve organisations through workbased learning. These publications include:

- *Facilitating Workbased Learning Groups*. (2005)
- *Participating in Workbased Learning Groups*. (2005)
- *Learning @ Work*. (2001)

Knowledge management publications

Reframing the Future has publications available via its website – for the sub-program on *Applying Information and Research* – about the ways to enhance practice and improve organisations through effectively using available information and research. These publications include:

- *Core Ideas: Knowledge Management and the national training system*.
- *Applying Information and Research – Good Practices from 2005*. (2006)

Monitoring and evaluation strategies to assist continuous improvement

Reframing the Future has tools available via its website about ways to enhance practice and improve organisations. These tools include:

- Readiness for change in VET organisations questionnaire.
- Measuring Impacts Model – a model for measuring the impact of projects or initiatives on four levels.
- Self-evaluation Model – for teams/organisations to achieve continuous improvements with initiatives and projects.
- Evaluating projects.

All these publications can be downloaded as a PDF from the website. Print copies are available for most of the publications and can be ordered free through the website.

All Reframing the Future publications are on the most recent Reframing the Future Publications and Resources CD ROM which can be ordered through the website www.reframingthefuture.net



4. Program for conducting forums

This section sets out the detailed program for the Continuous Improvement in VET forums. People wishing to conduct their own forum on this topic are advised to modify the program below to suit their local participants and their context.

1. Pre-forum: activities for participants

- completion of expression of interest, citing commitment to implementing continuous improvement
- pre-reading – the Background Paper to the Continuous Improvement in VET Forums (See section 2) and the AQTF 2007 Users' Guide to the Essential Standards for Registration
- interviews of a selection of participants on their experience of continuous improvement

2. Forum: key activities

At the forums participants were seated at round tables in groups of 8–10.

Introduction to appreciative inquiry (AI)

AI principles: e.g. we move in directions of what we ask questions about; so by deliberately asking positive questions we create constructive dialogue and inspired action

Introduce the AI 4D Cycle:

- **Discover** – identify the positive core of capabilities in continuous improvement
- **Dream** – imagine what more could be achieved by your organisation/partnership with continuous improvement
- **Design** – clarify improvements you could make to your organisation/partnership to implement your continuous improvement dreams
- **Destiny** – encourage catalysts and innovators to achieve continuous improvement dreams and design goals

Exercise: introducing participants to each other using AI principles

Sample activity used in the Continuous Improvement in VET Forums

1. Please interview one person next to you, making notes for later reference, seeking stories, and using these questions:
 - What do you like about continuous improvement?
 - What is an example of a successful continuous improvement process or activity you been involved in?
 - Why was it successful?
 - What would you like to do next with continuous improvement?
2. Then use their continuous improvement story to introduce the person you met to the group at the table.
3. Report on AI interviews with a sample of participants on their continuous improvement experiences to the whole group.

DISCOVERY activity

Clarification of Discovery phase: The purpose of this phase is **to identify the positive core** – assets, capacities, capabilities, resources and strengths – in the forum participants, in relation to continuous improvement.

Rationale: change is more possible if it builds on existing strengths. The discovery phase creates a positive sense of possibilities and builds the momentum to dream.

Exercise: *mapping the positive core*

Sample small group activity

1. Re-visit the introductory stories and a report on expressions of interest to identify the positive core, i.e. the **forces** and **factors** that enable you and your organisations to undertake continuous improvement well.
2. Encourage narratives/stories and ask: what were the **qualities** of you, your staff and your organisation and other stakeholders that contributed to success with continuous improvement.
3. List these narratives/stories on one half of the piece of butcher's paper and cite the positive forces and factors on the other half.
4. Report back to the whole group (using your display of the positive core on butcher's paper) following facilitator's directions.

Whole group activity

Analysis of small group reports, to highlight current strengths in the room.

Introduce or interview guest speakers or selected participants on a specialist aspect of continuous improvement, pointing to incentives of undertaking continuous improvement to improve quality and successful strategies for using a continuous improvement process.

DREAM stage

The purpose of this phase is to **envision a bold future** – to imagine what could be achieved with continuous improvement if it was aligned with your own and your organisation's skills, strengths and goals.

Rationale: when we are clear about where we want to reach, we become inventive about achieving our dreams. Positive images lead to positive action. We can build on the 'positive core' clarified in the first session hence grounding the vision.

Exercise: *creating a shared dream*

Sample small group activity

1. Re-visit what you would like to do next with continuous improvement (from the introduction activity).
2. Then imagine a time in the future (2010?) in our organisations where our approaches are based on our positive core. What would we be doing differently or better with continuous improvement?
3. Write a shared dream based on step 2.
4. Prepare a 2–3 minute summary presentation of the shared dream for the whole group.

Presentations

Each small group presents their shared dream to the whole group.

Sample small group activity

5. Drawing on all the presentations, discuss images of the future for continuous improvement.

Using butcher's paper and textas create a map that captures opportunities for the next 4–5 years for continuous improvement.

As a whole group, and drawing on the summary presentations, briefly discuss shared images of the future for continuous improvement in VET.

Second guest speaker on strategic approaches to continuous improvement in the context of AQTF 2007, pointing to incentives of doing it well. For instance, a presentation such as the Think piece: Student Survey, a design for sustaining continuous improvement. See section 6.

Local success stories – from participants

DESIGN stage

The purpose of this phase is **to design improvements to our work teams or collaborative partnerships** to assist the implementation of our dreams/hopes for continuous improvement.

Rationale: structures such as organisational teams, arrangements or business partnerships have a deep influence on our practice of continuous improvement, and these structures can be redesigned to fit with our values and dreams. Ideally our teams/arrangements and partnerships will be values-based and foster creativity and be open to continual redesign. The design phase encourages participants to clarify their dreams and to develop a set of compelling propositions so that redesigned teams, arrangements or partnerships can create an improved future with continuous improvement.

Exercise: *writing provocative propositions*

Sample activity

At your table:

1. **talk about** the structural elements of current work teams, relationships or partnerships that – if ideally designed – could influence the process of continuous improvement: e.g. job role descriptions; status and power; communication systems; decision-making processes; reward systems.
2. **develop a series of provocative propositions** – a set of principles – about the ideal design for teams, relationships or partnerships in future, to achieve your group's shared dreams for continuous improvement. The propositions need to be provocative and bold, but grounded in the stories from your table of successes with continuous improvement.
3. write your group's top three propositions on butcher's paper to share with whole group.

The confidence engendered by this exercise feeds into the Destiny phase to follow.

DESTINY activities

1. **The way forward for individuals**

The purposes of this phase are **to encourage catalysts and to plan innovations** to achieve our dreams and design goals with continuous improvement.

Rationale: innovation is likely to succeed if it is fuelled by and based on discovery (existing skills and attributes), dreams (visions of a bold future) and design (improved structures of teams and partnerships) and is supported by a program of professional development.

As catalysts and as members of innovation teams, we are more likely to achieve innovation in continuous improvement.

Exercise – *the preparations of a catalyst*

Sample small group activity

Each participant individually identifies how he/she will be a catalyst in taking the ideas from the forum and using them to positively influence continuous improvement in their own organisation.

- On a piece of paper, identify **three** things you will do in the next month, and another **three** things you will do in the next four months to positively influence continuous improvement.
- Activity: use the 'Self-evaluation Model' (hand out) to map out an evaluation framework for your initiatives in the next four months.
- Share your evaluation plan with the person you interviewed at the beginning of the day.

DESTINY activities *continued*

2. The way forward for work groups or organisations:

The purposes of this phase are to determine **staff development and change management approaches** to achieve our dreams and to determine **appropriate strategies and methodologies to embed continuous improvement processes** across our work group or organisation.

Rationale: innovation is likely to succeed if it is fuelled by and based on discovery (existing skills and attributes), dreams (visions of a bold future) and design (improved structures of teams and partnerships) and is supported by a program of professional development.

Exercise – *planning capability development to embed continuous improvement*

Sample small group activity

- On a piece of paper identify, from the *Set of Strategies* (Section 3), the most appropriate strategies for your work group or organisation to use over time
- Use the 'Self-evaluation Model' and 'Measuring Impacts Model' (hand outs) to map out a framework for your staff development and change management initiatives in the next year and to inform your strategy making.

Sample whole group activity

- Share small group work
- Together, create a framework for capability development for continuous improvement across the work group or organisation.

Available from the Reframing the Future website are adaptable word versions of the following documents mentioned above:

- Expression of Interest proforma
- Program for Conducting Forums

The following handouts are available in PDF

- Readiness for Change questionnaire,
- Self-evaluation Model
- Measuring Impacts Model

5. PowerPoint presentation for Continuous Improvement in VET Forums

The PowerPoint presentation used by Reframing the Future at the Continuous Improvement in VET Forums to guide the activities is available on www.reframingthefuture.net The PowerPoints largely follow the sequence set out in section 4 Program for Conducting Forums. It will also be available on the Reframing the Future 2008 Publications and Resources CD ROM after April 2008.





6. Think piece: Student Survey, a design for sustaining continuous improvement

Helen McNamara, Manager Strategic Planning and
John Ward, Planning Officer, Chisholm Institute of TAFE

Overview

The challenge that is now embedded in AQTF 2007 is to use data and information for continuous improvement. But then there is nothing new in this. All training providers use student feedback, market assessments, improvement in their teaching practices, and so on, to ensure that they remain a viable business that delivers a quality product. How do we know that the information that we collect is actually about stakeholder satisfaction? And how can we collect reliable information in order to improve what we do?

Chisholm TAFE has been using student, staff, graduate and employer satisfaction surveys for many years. The Institute always used this stakeholder information in its strategic planning program, but Chisholm hasn't always been systematic about it.

In early 2006, Chisholm decided to start with a blank sheet of paper and redesign its surveys so that the Institute could be confident that it had reliable and valid measures of satisfaction. Chisholm began with a student survey and the intention of linking the drivers of satisfaction to Institute strategy and resource allocation. Each of these activities on its own delivers information and benefit to Chisholm, but purposefully using them together can create continuous improvement and greater benefit.

The Strategic Planning Program.

The first step on this journey happened in 2003 when Chisholm designed its Strategic Planning program. The institute Council wanted a simple and sustainable program that could engage staff at every level of the organisation. The design follows a reasonably standard format:



Added to the program is a simple presentation of the Chisholm Strategy. It is a brightly coloured, one-page document that can be seen pinned to notice boards all over the Institute, conveying direction, measures and activities. Please see the Chisholm Strategy 2006–2008 overview 2007 at the end of this section.

Did we succeed in meeting Council's expectations and in engaging Chisholm staff? The staff survey tells us that staff knowledge of the Institute's Strategic Directions has improved from 34% to 79% over the past four years. But there is more to go!

The Student Survey

The aim in designing a new student survey was to identify and measure issues pertinent to student satisfaction with the educational experience in VET. The research integrated quantitative and qualitative methodologies and derived the dimensions associated with the concept of satisfaction amongst Chisholm students.

Without going into the substantive statistical analysis that underpins this study, Chisholm found that there were eight dimensions of student satisfaction.

1. **Enrolment:** encompassing the procedures of completing enrolment forms, payment of fees and charges, the taking of photos and obtaining a student card.
2. **Organisational:** encompassing such organisational issues as timetables, subject/module outlines, booklists, and orientation day activities.
3. **Learning facilities:** encompassing such items as the size of the classroom, all classroom facilities (audio visual, overhead projectors, etc), atmosphere in classrooms (heating and cooling, lighting), and other learning facilities (computers, lathes, ovens, machinery, etc)
4. **Campus facilities:** encompassing such facilities as the canteen, student lounges and recreational areas, sporting facilities, parking, and personal safety and security.
5. **Library:** encompassing such items as books, computers, DVD, as well as opening hours.
6. **Teaching & Learning:** encompassing provision of assessment requirements, feedback on progress, relevance of skills, the extent to which classes are interesting and enjoyable as well as **staff/student interaction:** encompassing issues concerning staff treatment of students, the availability of staff, and the skill levels of staff.
7. **Social activities:** encompassing participation in social clubs or sporting events, and the level of sociability and support given by fellow students.
8. **Student support:** encompassing study support outside the classroom, including: literacy and numeracy, career counselling, and personal counselling.

The inter-relationship between the dimensions of satisfaction was examined using a statistical technique called "Structural Equation Modelling". This process allows a conceptual map of student satisfaction to be constructed. It shows how the dimensions of satisfaction inter-relate to produce an overall perception of satisfaction.



At the Reframing the Future Forum, Chisholm will demonstrate how to use the model, and how to link it to organisational strategy. But for the moment, the model shows that only three dimensions have a direct impact upon overall student satisfaction: teaching and learning, the social environment, and course organisation. The impact of the other dimensions upon overall satisfaction is of a secondary nature, asserting their influence through their effect upon one of the three primary dimensions.

Given that our aim is to increase overall student satisfaction with VET services, the structural equation model provides us with a blueprint to the way in which improvements in certain areas of satisfaction impact upon overall satisfaction. When

combined with current satisfaction data, we can use this model to prioritise and direct scarce resources to those areas that will have the greatest influence upon overall satisfaction.

While structural equation modelling is gaining popularity in the financial and hitechnology industries as a means of analysing customer satisfaction, an international literature review has discovered that there is very little published on the application of structural equation modelling to student satisfaction in education and training. Such a study has never been conducted in the context of the Australian VET system. Nevertheless, there is enough congruence between Chisholm's research and others to suggest that the student perception of satisfaction as represented in the dimensions above may be universal in nature. This means that it is likely that most VET students would relate to the dimensions of Chisholm's model. We might all now have a platform from which we can think creatively and within our own context about continual improvement.

Conclusion

Chisholm Institute has designed a means through which it can improve its students' perception of the quality of the educational process. The three steps are:

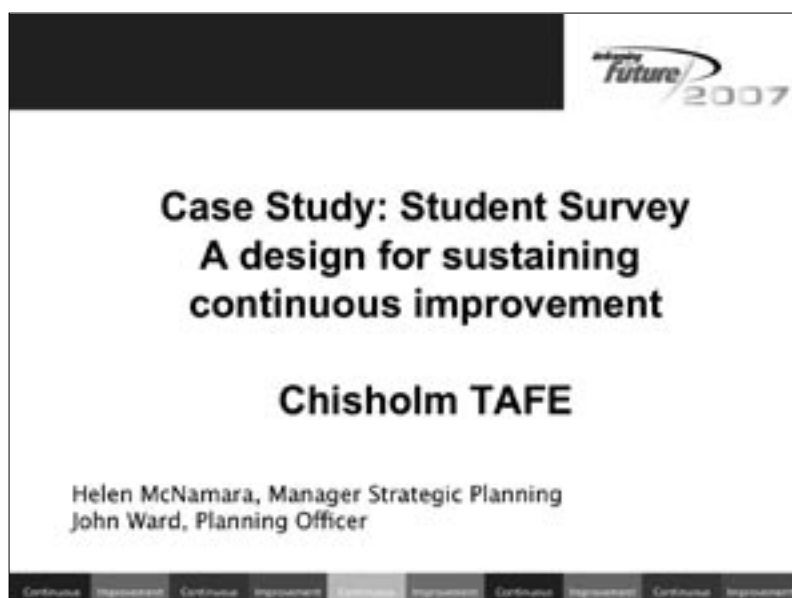
- the design of an effective strategic planning program
- the design of a powerful model of student satisfaction
- using these and other sources of data and information to inform resource allocation.

Chisholm needed a valid means of looking at and working with the factors that drive student satisfaction. The Institute now has a working system that provides it with a sophisticated means of allocating scarce resources, thereby making the process sustainable, leading inevitably to continuous improvement.

This think piece was used to lead into the design phase of the appreciative inquiry cycle at the Reframing the Future Continuous Improvement in VET Forums.

7. PowerPoint presentation for Student Survey, a design for sustaining continuous improvement

The PowerPoint presentation used for the *Student Survey, a design for sustaining continuous improvement* is available on www.reframingthefuture.net The PowerPoints largely follow the sequence set out in the think piece in section 6. It will also be available on the Reframing the Future 2008 Publications and Resources CD ROM after April 2008.



CHISHOLM STRATEGY 2006 – 2008 OVERVIEW 2007

OUR PURPOSE
To contribute to the social and economic prosperity of the individual, industry and the region through the achievement of quality education and training outcomes

Strategic Direction	Stakeholder	Value	Outcome / KPI, 2006 - 2008	Activity / Measures, 2007	TRENNIAL ENABLING STRATEGIES
Chisholm Learning Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent teaching Quality educational environment Opportunity for individual success 	STUDENTS	Excellence	1. Successful learning outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> module based completion rate student satisfaction 	1.1 Learning and assessment plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of plans registered on shared drives 1.2 Technology in teaching and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of students in accredited training using network 1.3 Student destination surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 course areas 1.4 Information services to students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 major continual improvement initiative for local / international students verified for each school/division 	Chisholm Charter of Professional Practice in Teaching and Learning
Capable Chisholm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professionalism Skills currency Staff qualifications 	STAFF	Commitment	2. Capable and professional staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> qualifications of staff 	2.1 Professional practice program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100 teachers participating 2.2 Seasonal teaching staff support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% of seasonal staff completing mandatory program 	Teaching & Learning
Adaptive Chisholm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry alliances Packaging and customisation Work relevant learning 	INDUSTRIES	Relevance	3. Flexibility and performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> employer satisfaction 	3.1 Industry strategic alliances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new strategic alliances for each school/division 3.2 Enterprise partnerships for work placement and/or industry release <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 published case study per school/division 	Enterprise Development Finance & Infrastructure
Collaborative Chisholm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partnerships Valuing diversity Pride in Chisholm 	REGIONAL COMMUNITIES	Mutual Benefit	4. Community strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alliances and partnerships 	4.1 Friends of Chisholm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementation in each school/division 4.2 Educational alliances/partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> case studies published (School, TAFE, Higher Ed, ACE) 	External Engagement Workforce Development
Prosperous Chisholm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial strength Differentiation Managed levels of risk 	GOVERNMENT	Integrity	5. Financial strength <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAFE system averages fee for service revenue 	5.1 Industry integrated learning centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 major commercial initiative documented for each centre 5.2 Learning environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> budgeted allocation per campus 5.3 Asset management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5% increase in space utilisation 5.4 Fee for service income <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fee for service business plans 15% increase in income per school/division 	Chisholm Charter for Student Success

Endorsed by Chisholm Council, 25 October 2006

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8. Article: Continuous improvement a foundation for quality

From John Mitchell's Inside VET column in *Campus Review*, 25 Sept 2007. Reproduced with permission of John Mitchell & Associates and *Campus Review*.

Why is continuous improvement a new focus across the VET sector?

"Continuous improvement is a term that we all think we understand" says Suzy McKenna, the national project director of Reframing the Future, but she wonders "whether we are all on the same page about it. Maybe we are – maybe we aren't."

"Given the wide range of providers in VET, it would be a challenge to find a consensus about what is continuous improvement, and what it looks like in terms of the AQTF 2007 (Australian Quality Training Framework)." McKenna adds that it is a challenge to find ways to use continuous improvement "as a foundation concept to drive good to better quality outcomes in VET".

Continuous improvement was the focus of a series of national forums conducted recently around Australia by Reframing the Future. McKenna selected this focus in order to address the multiple definitions of the term and to support the implementation AQTF07 which was launched on 1 July.

"AQTF07 is the biggest shift in the system at the moment," says McKenna. Importantly, AQTF 2007 cites continuous improvement as one of its four underpinning features and the term is threaded through the three essential standards of the new framework.

McKenna notes that there are other policy initiatives in VET besides AQTF07, such as employability skills, rationalised training packages, and the increased provision of recognition services: "The policy context in VET has become quite crowded recently with the introduction of several initiatives that have the potential to make providers' everyday work seem more complex than ever." McKenna believes continuous improvement potentially can guide the sector about how to respond in an integrated way to these various initiatives.

Forums on continuous improvement were conducted in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, and an abridged version in Canberra, with an emphasis on encouraging providers to think afresh about their practice. "Implementing continuous improvement across a whole organisation is not simple – it involves making responses to feedback that may challenge firmly held positions or 'our way of doing things here'. On the other hand it can also invite staff to actively question and critically examine their practice and to develop creative or innovative solutions together."

At the forums, McKenna stressed that continuous improvement provides a way of looking at integrating and improving both educational and business practice in training providers. "A continuous improvement approach to quality has the potential to bring together providers' educational and business processes, to meet client and community needs."

Participants at the forums "talked at length about how silos within organisations impede improvement". For instance, "teaching teams may develop an innovative response to student or industry needs, but this is hampered by business practices that either delay implementation or actively work against the idea because there is no form for it, or it might cost too much".

"Participants shared strategies for breaking down the silos by developing pragmatic communication pathways, and workshadowing or job-sharing, to get an idea about how and why other jobs are done."

The learning methodology used at the forums, appreciative inquiry, enabled participants "to clarify their existing capabilities with continuous improvement, then to develop a dream for where they want to be". This was followed by activities to design new ways of working to achieve the dream.

In their reviews of the forums, participants recognised that integrating continuous improvement into everyday processes and all systems was critical, but this requires planned professional development and change management. "It's a new mindset for many, and quite different to the compliance way of thinking and could challenge and change internal cultures."

Student satisfaction

A highlight of the national forums was the presentation of a model for measuring student satisfaction, developed by Chisholm Institute of TAFE in Victoria. McKenna used the Chisholm model “to stimulate thinking about contemporary ways to design, analyse and respond strategically to data in a sector that is under increasing pressure to be high quality, efficient, effective and agile”.

The Chisholm case study “demonstrated the dynamic processes a good quality RTO can put in place to improve their services by using reliable data to manage strategic improvements and organisational change”. McKenna was impressed that the Chisholm presenters, Helen McNamara and John Ward, were able to table concrete examples of how good data about student satisfaction can inform strategic decision making.

McKenna highlighted three aspects of the model. First, strategic intent drove the design, collection and analysis of the data. The data was not collected simply to meet compliance requirements. Second, the model focused on the students’ view of their whole experience at Chisholm: it was more that “your usual teacher designed ‘happy sheet’ at the end of a course”. Third, while the survey was designed for and by Chisholm, it is based on principles and features that are transferable to all types of RTOs.

The Chisholm model is available from McNamara for other providers to examine. Additionally, McKenna indicated that “student outcome surveys that can be used by all RTOs are currently under development and will be rolled out in 2008”.

Overall, the forums showed that many RTOs are adopting what McKenna describes as a ‘can do’ attitude to AQTF 2007. “There is a discernible readiness, even enthusiasm, to move on from the constraints of the compliance focus of the previous AQTF.”

“For many VET people, the new AQTF provides a foundation to involve all staff, management, training and administration and support staff in moving forward.”

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The AQTF 07 Users’ Guide includes the following statement:

An effective quality system includes processes that encourage and achieve continuous improvement. For RTOs this means developing a planned ongoing process to systematically review and improve policies, procedures, products and services through analysis of information and collection of data from clients and other interested parties, including RTO staff. Data from the quality indicators provides a key tool for continuous improvement.

The value for RTOs of adopting a continuous improvement cycle is its potential to create a stronger, more sustainable business that meets the needs of clients and stakeholders. Such a cycle also enables RTOs to adapt quickly to changing external environments such as economic factors and skills needs.



9. Effective approaches to continuous improvement by nineteen VET practitioners

Background

Purpose – increased capability in continuous improvement

The purpose of this document is to support improved approaches to continuous improvement, by showcasing the ideas, motivations, challenges and successful strategies of a range of practitioners in relation to continuous improvement.

Background to the nineteen interviews

As part of the appreciative inquiry methodology used for the Continuous Improvement in VET forums in August 2007, prior to the forums expressions of interest were obtained from all participants about their successful experiences with continuous improvement.

A selection of respondents was conducted by co-facilitator Suzy McKenna, on the basis of the written expressions of interest from potential participants, and these respondents were interviewed at the forums, by forum co-facilitator Dr John Mitchell. The interviews were designed to enable participants at each forum to hear a range of examples of success with continuous improvement.

After the forum, the interviewees were invited to make enhancements to their initial expressions of interest, for reproducing in this publication.

Links to appreciative inquiry

The appreciative inquiry methodology provided *Continuous Improvement in VET* forum participants a participative, collaborative and systematic method for discovering and building on the positive aspects of successful approaches to continuous improvement that are used in VET.

Appreciative inquiry used within these forums focused participants on the positive aspects of what is happening now in an organisation or sector, and what can be achieved in the future. This positive focus was appropriate for these forums, as the forums were targeted at existing and future good practice, not policies.

Key findings

The written interviews in this document provide evidence of the following:

- Continuous improvement is conducted confidently and effectively in a vast range of different types of registered training organisations within VET – large and small, metropolitan and regional or rural, and from those focused on areas from the traditional trade to those focused on business, hospitality and community services.
- There is extensive existing expertise in the VET sector in ensuring continuous improvement, and this expertise sometimes resides within whole teams of practitioners.
- Continuous improvement can be enhanced by structured professional development.
- The practice of continuous improvement is assisted by the development of customised resources and processes within each organisation.
- To undertake continuous improvement, the VET practitioner needs a deep knowledge of the field involved and of their own organisation, and an ability to make a professional judgment about issues as they arise.
- VET practitioners can learn much more about continuous improvement by networking with their peers in other organisations.

How to use this section

This section is designed to be used by a variety of individuals and groups, in different settings, for a variety of purposes related to increasing capability in continuous improvement in Australian VET.

As a professional development resource, the section is based on the simple belief that the sharing of success stories about continuous improvement can have a profound impact on the confidence and practice of VET practitioners. Success breeds success.

Questions

The section could be read by an individual or groups seeking information on the following questions:

1. What previous experiences of fellow VET practitioners have assisted them in their practice of continuous improvement?
2. What can we learn from the memorable experiences of these practitioners?
3. What factors led to these positive experiences?
4. What skills and attributes helped with these positive experiences?
5. What are some future opportunities for using continuous improvement?

Readers could read the section from start to finish; or about practitioners from their own state/territory or field.

Readers could look at just one set of answers: for example, all the answers in the interviews to the question 'What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?'

Professional conversation topics

Groups of practitioners could organise professional conversations around these interviews focusing on issues such as the following:

- Professional conversation No.1: What skills are needed for continuous improvement?
- Professional conversation No.2: What factors contribute to success in continuous improvement?
- Professional conversation No.3: What skills and attributes do I already have for ensuring continuous improvement?
- Professional conversation No.4: What new ways can we use to approach continuous improvement?

Professional conversation structure

- The professional conversations could be preceded by members of the group reading relevant sections of this section and preparing some discussion points in advance of the structured session.
- The facilitator could open the session by highlighting three ideas raised by the topic.
- The session could focus on each participant relating a personal experience or observation stimulated by one of the success stories in this section.
- The session might close with each participant being invited to share one thing they will do differently in future, in relation to continuous improvement.

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Lieutenant Colonel Paul Simadas	Deputy Commandant Land Warfare Centre (NSW)	Australian Army, Steel Barracks	NSW	38
Lesley Harris	National Quality Manager	Workstar, Rhodes	NSW	39
Elaine McGrath	Manager Quality Assurance	Swan TAFE	WA	40
Matthew Mellsop	Quality and Accreditation Co-ordinator	Australian College of Applied Psychology	NSW	42
Mike Wallace	General Manager	First Impressions Resources	QLD	44
Sue Hartree	Executive Manager	Real Estate Institute of WA Learning (REIWA)	WA	46
Sheralee Taylor	Training Systems Worker	Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi (Waltja)	NT	47
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Vivian Biggs	National Training Manager	Strive Training Australia	QLD	50
Rose Vallen	Manager Higher Education/ Curriculum Services	Australian Institute of Management	SA	52
Sherridan Maxwell	Senior Educator	RMIT University	VIC	53
Janene Piip	Manager, Business Development	TAFE SA	SA	55

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

I have recently returned to a position in TAFE SA North as Manager Innovation Teaching and Learning and Professional Development after two years in a program leadership role. In the latter role I was able to develop a high level of awareness of major national VET strategies facing RTO's and in particular TAFE SA. In my new role I anticipate this forum will support me directly by giving me ideas and strategies to assist in implementing ways to increase the capacity and capability of our VET staff. This increase will reflect the skills required to operate in a more flexible, responsive and demand driven VET context. Personally it will act as a catalyst to further develop my thinking and knowledge in change management and continuous improvement.

It will be an opportunity for me to increase my networks with other VET practitioners in similar positions and share innovative ways to address these challenges. This may provide opportunities for alliances with new partners.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

In TAFE SA North my key role is to ensure that my team is instrumental in supporting and developing its VET practitioners to have the teaching skills required to perform in the current and future VET environment.

Part of this role requires that I communicate across TAFE SA and try to influence and support directions that will lead toward consistent good practice. Other parts of this role are:

- To consider how continuous improvement concepts can be used to review our vocational education and training programs and services in line with the Australian Quality Training Framework, COAG agendas and state directions.
- To develop an annual professional development plan in consultation with TAFE SA Adelaide North staff and through the professional development committee which I chair.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

As my role is a leadership one that has a relatively small budget and staff contingent it is imperative that I consider innovative, efficient and effective ways to impact on a large organisation. In the past I have used initiatives such Reframing the Future, Learnscope and other projects that drive change and improvement. In using such approaches I will always consider in the early stages of the project how it will be sustainable and what can be transferable to other programs.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

I am currently involved in two Reframing the Future projects. The focus in each is on strategic and change management. These will establish sustainable procedures beyond the project. One aims to support managers to think from an organisational perspective rather than a work team one so collaborative planning can occur. I have used the rationalisation of the Tourism, Events and Hospitality training packages as a catalyst.

I plan to host a professional conversation between auditors and educational teams on the implementation of the AQTF, with a focus on strategies for embedding continuous improvement.

In my role of planning and coordinating professional development I collect and analyse the annual activity data which informs future planning. The data is both statistical and anecdotal. In 2008 I will be attempting to forge stronger links between work team needs for professional development that reflect national and state agendas.

I am actively developing professional conversations on key VET topics. Currently a group is developing an institute response to embedding employability skills in delivery and assessment. The work of this group will be shared with all staff to reduce the amount of duplication that could occur, and to provide educational leadership.

KEN JORGENSEN

Director Education and Learning Systems, Department of Defence

Defence Learning Services Network, Dept of Defence, Canberra, ACT

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

Participation in the Forum would:

- Complement and enhance my knowledge of the AQTF (2007) and its implementation.
- Support my policy work addressing Defence use of the National Skills Framework in Defence-provided vocational and technical education.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

In my current appointment in Defence, I:

- Manage one of the four Defence RTO, the Defence Learning Services Network (DLSN).
 - The DLSN was a QETO before until 2001 and a participant in the DEST trial of the excellence criteria in 2006.
- Write Defence policy addressing Defence use of the National Skills Framework in its VTE provision. The four Defence RTO in 2005 issued 16, 763 AQF qualifications (9,892 Certificate IV level or higher) and 14,828 Statements of Attainment.
- Provide professional VTE advice to all four Defence RTO.
- Represent the Defence RTO on the Enterprise RTO Association
- Represent large RTO on the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council.
- Represent Defence on the Public Safety Industry Advisory Committee of the GSA ISC.
- Oversee the Defence Sector Project which develops and validates units of competency and qualifications required by Defence for inclusion in national Training Packages. (271 units of competency and 42 qualifications have received national endorsement to date. 23 sub-projects are currently in progress – each addresses an area of Defence employment not covered elsewhere within a national Training Package).

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

At my instigation in 2001 Defence, in conjunction with the ACT Accreditation and Registration Council, implemented a three year rolling program of external audit focused not just on compliance but also on quality assurance and continuous improvement using the AQTF 2001 as the start point. This:

- Addressed potential weaknesses in the AQTF 2001 in operation in Defence RTO (50% staff turn-over each year, undue focus on administrative processes, compliance only).
- Complimented extant whole-of-Defence focus on quality assurance and continuous improvement.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Defence has taken a number of steps this year and last to reinforce its focus on continuous improvement in VTE, including:

1. Introducing a common Defence systems approach to training (The Defence Training Model, ADFP 7.0.2), which has as its core the concept of continuous improvement, and which specifically addresses continuous improvement within the context of the AQTF.
2. Regular meetings between the four Defence RTO to share experience in implementing the AQTF.
3. Establishing programs to qualify staff against the BSB quality auditing units of competency.
4. Using internal auditors from other Defence RTO.

METTE SLATER

Quality Assurance & Compliance Coordinator

Nautilus Training & Curriculum Pty Ltd, Rye, VIC

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

Nautilus Training & Curriculum is very focused on continuous improvement. It is a part of everyone's daily work routines to constantly review and improve our daily practices and procedures. With continuous improvements being so important in my workplace, it would be of great value to me to learn about new strategies/goals and to hear how other organisations in similar environments ensure continuous improvement occurs and to be able to share our experiences.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

I have worked within the quality assurance area for more than a decade. I was employed in Denmark with a private dairy organisation, where I was responsible for the ISO9002 for approximately 120 employees. I was the prime mover in securing the local community's approval for the company's environmental protection and sustainability program.

One of my current key responsibilities is to develop and implement written procedures relating to and acting on opportunities for improvements, as identified by our monitoring and reviewing strategies, with a view to continuously improving our systems, processes and practices. I am responsible for version control and our corrective action register as well as being involved in daily student record keeping and have a hands-on approach to our RTO reporting requirements.

Nautilus Training prides itself on its willingness to seize the moment and act on opportunities to continuously improve our procedures and offer our trainees (and their employers) the best possible training and support available.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I try to be approachable for all the users, on all levels of our systems, to ensure the system is compliant, but still usable for the relevant staff members. In addition to continuously acting on opportunities to improve our practice, we have monthly meetings where the entire staff is able to discuss their work area and it is my responsibility to ensure those discussions/suggestions are explored in detail and if necessary actioned.

Our procedures are monitored and constantly reviewed to fit in with the reality in the industry. It is my belief that Nautilus Training's quality system needs to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate the diversity of trainees we see through the qualifications we deliver within the workplace. We work hard to provide a flexible, tailored approach to our customers and hopefully this is reflected all the way through our systems. We see ourselves as a training organisation in equal partnership with all stakeholders, learners and their employers, Australian Apprenticeships Centres, relevant industry bodies, OTTE and the AQTF.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

A key strategy in our CI approach is to have regular Management Review Meetings (MRM). These are conducted very democratically, and are attended by all staff members, within our organisation. We hold those meetings routinely on the first Friday of every calendar month, so that it is properly prepared for and readily scheduled.

In the MRM any aspect of our business may be discussed, reported and followed up. The main aim of the MRM is to inform, involve and empower all staff members about current, future and past issues and developments which may affect the quality of our performance. The MRM agenda is wide-ranging and it also can be contributed to at any point. Given the fact that many improvements are made or suggested during our day to day operations, the MRM provides an opportunity to confirm and document the detail about those improvements which are made. Our deliberations cover all roles performed by staff within the organisation and all functions performed in the operation of the RTO, internal and external.

Involvement of all staff members at all levels of the organisation is very important to us. When we develop and redevelop our procedures, we always involve the users, to ensure they fully understand the procedure and for them to have an input into the process and the final outcome and to participate in the ongoing monitoring and review of our continuously improving practices.

PATRICIA GROSSE Regional Education Development Officer for ACE in North East Victoria

Hume Regional Council of Adult, Community and Further Education, Benalla, VIC

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

In my role, I provide support for 17 ACE RTO's in North East Victoria to ensure their continued compliance against the AQTF standards. The forum will add to my understanding and expertise in continuous improvement in VET to assist me in my support role and in relation to our Reframing the Future AQTF project

Focus in this region for 2007 includes RPL (ACE and TAFE partnering as a skills store for the Goulburn Valley) and skills sets (Reframing the Future project). Participation would add value to my professional contribution to these initiatives.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

My role as the Regional Education Development Officer for ACE in North East Victoria supports 17 ACE RTO's. I support ACE RTO's to maintain compliance with AQTF standards, manifested in identifying and delivering professional development opportunities, one-to-one support, attendance and providing feedback from Statewide and national events, and informing ACE RTO's of developments in Government policy. I work from the premises of continuous improvement, risk management and in maintaining integrity in training and assessment.

My position enables me to identify priorities and partnership opportunities to meet Government goals, particularly those in relation to COAG and State priorities. I act as broker on behalf of ACE, project partner, convenor or facilitator.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I am committed to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in VET in the Region, across providers of non accredited (potential for RPL pathways) and RTO's.

My commitment can be demonstrated by:

- Support for non accredited learning into formal training
- Region wide professional development opportunities
- Accessing external funding (including Reframing the Future) to support ACE professionals to improve their practice. (Reframing the Future projects have included: men into learning, professional judgement, communities of practice, meeting the Essential Standards and Skills Sets)
- Attending State and National professional development events, feeding back to RTO's, identifying opportunities for improvement and opportunities for ACE in relation to Government priorities
- Using a collegiate approach to professional development, encouraging RTO's to work together to share, develop and inform their own practice

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Through the Reframing the Future funded skills development project, ACE RTO's in North East Victoria are openly sharing and refining materials and practices to improve their individual operations. They are bringing common concerns to the table and sharing advice. The group is also working together to review commercially developed applications and their applications to large and small community organisations.

The RTO's vary in size from a very large ACE organisation with multiple staff and a large scope to medium sized RTO's with limited scopes. The variation in size of ACE RTO's is positive, with larger organisations offering and providing support to the others.

The group has identified mixed perceptions of ACE and issues of marketing as challenges they currently face. By working together, their expectations are to increase their skills and knowledge, improve practices, and make best use of their strengths. Consistency/improvement in quality and flexibility to respond quickly, should improve perceptions.

There is a commitment for consistency across the RTO's in North East Victoria, which will lead to a guarantee of quality. This consistency will also extend to the recognition of prior learning and partnership arrangements.

The Regional Council and the ACE RTO's will review the impact of the project on the individual organisations. The group has committed to meeting regularly beyond the life of the project.

We anticipate that increased organisational confidence will encourage more partnership arrangements with non ACE RTO's, particularly in locations where there is no RTO presence. The next step for the ACE RTO's will be to offer consistent models to non RTO's to deliver quality programs where the needs arise. Meetings in 2008 will provide the opportunity to reflect and moderate practice.

The Regional Council will also work with non RTO's to improve their understanding of the VET system and to encourage partnership arrangements with the RTO's.

The single most driver for continuous improvement has proven to be the opportunity for RTO's to get together and share.

ABBIE RIDING

A/Quality and Assessment Officer

WA Police Academy, Joondalup, WA

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

As the Quality and Assessment Officer for the WA Police I am responsible for our RTO complying with the AQTF standards. As we are aware, continuous improvement is a main component of the AQTF 2007 standards. I am therefore hoping that attendance at the forum will assist me in implementing the AQTF 2007 standards to the WA Police, especially the notion of continuous improvement of our training and assessment, client services and our management systems.

You advise in your literature that key influencers on continuous improvement in their organisation should participate in this forum particularly those officers responsible for systemic quality and change. One of my key roles is to research contemporary training and assessment systems and methodologies to improve and progress training, assessment and evaluation for WA Police. Attendance at the forum would therefore assist me with one of my accountabilities.

The Forums are also a great opportunity to talk to others in VET and see what they are doing, share ideas and network.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

This position has a dual role. One role is to maintain the RTO's compliance to national and state training standards by continually improving the Academy Training Management System and measuring the effectiveness of its application. This includes managing the AQTF internal auditing process for training and monitoring the RTO's compliance to national and state training standards and reporting to Management on trends and issues.

The other role of this position is to work in close liaison with the Assessment Coordinator to ensure the Western Australia Police Academy training and assessment services comply with the Australian Quality Training Framework and nationally endorsed training packages.

This involves the development and implementation of assessment tools and activities in accordance with Assessment Guidelines in the nationally endorsed Training Packages and the assessment requirements specified in the accredited courses. It also includes involvement in the validation of assessment for ongoing compliance with standards and continuous improvement.

Internally, the position is required to establish and maintain an effective working relationship with a wide spectrum of WAPOL Units and Sections delivering training and conducting assessment and evaluation to ensure compliance with the National Training Framework. Externally, working partnerships with RTO's and other police jurisdictions will be conducted as required to ensure that the WAPOL participates in an exchange of information and ideas.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

The WA Police Academy conducts all foundation training and subsequent in-service and critical skills/duty of care training courses to meet day to day operational requirements. The police culture is often ingrained in the training and assessment staff at the academy and it can be difficult to change something that has been in place for so long. The training approach at the academy has become quite stale and not conducive to the adult learning environment that we are trying to develop. With the high volume of cadets, recruits and DEAT's (direct entry and accelerated training) going through the academy and the introduction of the new AQTF standards, it is a prime opportunity to change our training/assessment strategies and instill the notion of continuous improvement. I am therefore interested in what other RTO's have done in this regard and to have access to proven methodologies that support continuous improvement so that they can perhaps be introduced at the academy.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Currently WAPOL is recruiting interstate and overseas for police officers. This has meant that the Academy has gone from around 180 recruits per year to approximately 720. Unfortunately the academy resources have not increased to allow us to deal with these significant numbers. We are therefore continuously looking for ways to produce a more effective frontline Probationary Constable for deployment to immediate post-Academy environment, increase the operational capacity of the Police Academy, develop a more effective Foundation Training framework incorporating the principles of adult learning and contemporary information technology and have a more satisfying learning experience for recruits.

A project is currently underway to review our curriculum and the qualifications that we issue. The aim of the project is to produce a Probationary Constable who has the core skills and knowledge to commence immediate frontline duties in the post-Academy environment. This entails development of a new Foundation training framework and comprehensive revision of the current Foundation Training framework and curriculum including the content and methods of delivery and assessment.

WA Police Academy is also looking "outside the square" and breaking away from our traditional methods of delivering training in the classroom. We are now introducing more on-the-job training, scenarios (simulations), and e-learning (Blackboard). The use of the Blackboard technology will be an integral part of the Academy. It will allow Recruits to undertake study away from the Academy which will free up some of our resources. This will be especially useful for those recruits who are being sourced from overseas/interstate as they can begin their study before they get to WA which will significantly reduce the amount of time they need to attend the Academy.

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

As the forum directly relates to continuous improvement and my role at Transport Training Centre (TTC) is to oversee the quality system in general, I believe the professional output of knowledge to be gained is significant. (Especially in light of the new AQTF Standards being implemented and continuous improvement being a high focus point)

From a personal professional development perspective, working and networking with other varied practitioners would be beneficial to me and I believe my own training / industry experience may be of benefit to individuals and / or the forum as a whole.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

My main tasks within TTC, in line with my official position description, are as follows:

- Scheduling internal quality audits
- Arranging for audits to be carried out by personnel trained in the audit procedure
- Review and update as necessary, all documents which relate to the quality system
- Coordinate the entry of any document or data into the TTC system that relates to the quality system
- Maintain and distribute the Quality Manual to ensure that documents remain legible and readily identifiable
- Assign and maintain currency of each document relating to the quality system including the form register
- Report to management on the performance of the quality management system and any need for improvement
- Set the agenda for the Operations meetings distributing the agenda and previous minutes to each team member at least 3 days prior to the scheduled meeting
- Prepare summary reports on – Results of audits, process performance and product conformity, status of preventive and corrective actions, follow-up actions from previous QA reviews, changes that could affect the quality management system, recommendations for improvement
- Ensure that corrective action is taken in response to any deficiencies found or improvements suggested as a result of an audit.

The more I extend from my role as the main person responsible for compliance within the organisation to engaging others employed at TTC, the greater their knowledge and understanding becomes, which in turn makes initiating, relaying and instigating new initiatives far easier. With the implementation of the new TAA Qualifications, this is excellent from my perspective as the trainers who were previously considered 'old school' are now being brought up to speed with the latest requirements to work within this industry. I am supported significantly by management above me and this support is generated by people who themselves believe in my personal / skill-based attributes as well as the system being a beneficial, continuous 'work in progress'.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

It is my belief that innovative strategies and continuous improvement complement each other, provided that new and / or innovative strategies are actioned, implemented, utilised and reviewed for their suitability and applicable usage to the job at hand. Our RTO conducts training that is covered under the AQTF and also licensing. To this end, it is imperative that our strategies and processes for continuous improvement be varied and flexible to ensure all standards are being met under the AQTF and licensing regulatory bodies.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

At present there appears to be a great variety of tools available for use within our fields of expertise and operational requirements. TTC has made a dedicated effort to purchase some of these tools to both ensure compliance and improvements. TTC is accredited under the Australian Standards ISO 9001:2000 and is audited separately to any AQTF requirements. This audit process itself is viewed by TTC as an improvement process as any suggested improvements are at the very least considered and most likely implemented. TTC's staff has increased significantly in the past two months. These people are from within the industry and bring with them current knowledge that keeps all our trainers abreast of current industry changes. Consultation within our working environment is also proving to be beneficial as most people will bring to the forum a newly identified person, project or operational technique that may be utilised within our training arena.

Our industry is suffering from a skills shortage so we need to be alert with ways in which we can not only entice new people into the industry but how to keep them there. It is through some of the new Government initiatives that we are able to entice new people to the industry and these initiatives also provide fields of areas for our own organisational improvements to undertake to ensure we remain as a body focused within the transport and Logistics stadium. TTC's philosophy is that communication is the key word when talking continuous improvement. We are more than willing to share our resources with others to benefit the client as the end result. This is not always the case for many RTO's.

Jennifer was unable to attend the forum but her well considered responses were seen as worthy of reproducing in this publication.

NARELLE MARRIOTT

Quality Assurance Coordinator

Disability Services Commission, East Victoria Park, WA

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

As the Quality Assurance Coordinator, continuous improvement and capacity building is a key role of the position. Professionally I would benefit from the latest innovative ideas in the strategic approaches to continuous improvement to develop our RTO.

Recent expansion of our RTO, staff changes and the new AQTF 2007 standards has prompted great opportunities for change.. The forum will provide me with new ways to approach and implement these changes in the area of skill development for our trainers and assessors and developing a culture that embraces continuous improvement.

We want to be an RTO that actively welcomes feedback and make changes to improve our practices. The RTO wants all team members to see change as a positive thing and to take responsibility for initiating change for the better.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

We are an enterprise RTO delivering Certificate III and IV Disability to existing employees only. The RTO is a small branch (8 people) of a much larger government department.

I was appointed as Quality Assurance Coordinator in a part time capacity in Nov 2006 to prepare our RTO for the transition to AQTF 2007 and together with the manager, oversee continuous improvement activities for the RTO and to research and network with other RTO's and industry to support continuous improvement in training and assessment. My role is to research and develop innovative continuous improvement strategies and incorporate them into our processes and educate and support the staff of the RTO.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

Being an enterprise RTO we are committed to using innovative strategies in the areas of RPL, skill sets and employability skills. We are committed to ensuring continuous improvement is integrated into our culture, structure and processes so it is not seen as something "separate" to what we do but rather embedded into our operations. For this shift to occur innovative strategies are required. Being committed to driving this focus in our RTO I look forward to learning more at the forum.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Continuous Improvement is now the focus of our team's quarterly planning meetings and Staff Development Workshops. We are a small team of eight people and have always been open to change and improvement however discussion about continuous improvement has generated more enthusiasm and excitement for possibilities for the future. A recent restructure of the team has resulted in increased motivation and a real continuous improvement culture is emerging.

We have done a lot of work with evaluation surveys – participants, industry, presenters and internal trainers and assessors. The process started earlier this year and after attending the CI forum some of the interesting ideas presented have been incorporated into our review, particularly by asking participants and other stakeholders what it is that they really want and not our perception of what they want. We will also be trialing an online evaluation survey for participants later this year.

One of the ways that our organisation is progressing with CI is to involve all stakeholders to really embrace the whole notion of CI. We are an enterprise RTO and have a lot of opportunity to engage industry so we will be looking at ways to include them more in improving the service we provide. Although we have asked for feedback in the past, the feedback we have received was limited in its ability to really influence our processes. More face to face contact is needed and focus groups have been organised to commence in 2008. The culture of continuous improvement has been embraced by all team members and when they are in contact with industry and other stakeholders they are asking for feedback and embracing it.

We produce a bi-monthly newsletter and this will now have a section focused on continuous improvement activities.

Together with the Manager, the team will continue to be provided with up to date and relevant information that affects the RTO and to involve them in decision making. This has generated creative solutions to act on feedback received or identified issues. All team members are taking more responsibility to make the RTO provide the best service possible.

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

Australian Army soldiers are at war, and we train the men and women that will undertake that endeavour. As a deputy commandant of the Land Warfare Centre (New South Wales), I supervise a busy and dynamic registered training provider that is part of the Army Registered Training Organisation. I am involved as an operator in the formulation of our continuous improvement planning, and in complying with our obligations to VET within the Quality Training Framework. We operate in a very dynamic environment, where our training content must adapt quickly to stay relevant to our trainee and Army needs. Thus, continuous improvement is what makes the AQTF 07 so important to me. It helps us to stay relevant and adaptive to our environment.

Firstly, I need to stay alert to current developments, and to meet with other practitioners. The Army is a larger RTO in Australia, and we apply a disciplined and holistic approach to training. We train to fight.

Secondly, I feel my presence will contribute to discussion, and encourage innovative thought in me.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

I am a Deputy commandant of an Army Registered Training Provider. I supervise a team that organises and supports a wide variety of professional development and trade courses delivered by the Army in Sydney.

We deliver several VET courses, which are accredited with civilian qualifications. I also instruct on several courses.

Previously, I served in the Headquarters Training Command-Army, the RTO within the Australian army. We were always adapting, or continuously improving, and the AQTF sets the disciplines within which we can guarantee the quality of the training we do.

Currently I am a member of the *Unit Training Systems Review Team*. Senior staff and trainers review our practices and activities. We then adapt.

I contribute to the *Annual Training Systems Review* and the *Unit Continuous Improvement Plan*. This is a formal process that is adapted to the unique Army environment.

I wrote the unit's strategic plan. This permits my supervisor, the Commandant, to align all our activities to a common end.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

Good organisations learn and are adaptive. The new AQTF 07 is highly useful. Our people will see it as more relevant to other organisational objectives within the unit. We have set up an executive review committee to look quarterly at our training, safety, welfare and financial management practices. Continuous improvement occurs as part of this review process.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Conduct new Cert IV instructor and assessor training for our staff.
Deliver induction training that explains the relevance and practicality of AQTF 07 to our staff.
Send staff on further industry workshops to improve understanding of the RTO and to network.
Quarterly executive reviews continue.

LESLEY HARRIS

National Quality Manager

Workstar, Rhodes, NSW

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

The forum would provide me opportunities to gain knowledge and skills that will assist in developing continuous improvements to ensure compliance against the new AQTF 2007. Workstar is the registered trading name of three registered training organisations and it is my priority to ensure we provide quality services that are continually monitored, reviewed and updated. The forum will also give me the opportunity to pass on the knowledge and skills I have to other RTOs from working for over five years in the VET sector.

I would be able to develop and implement continuous improvement strategies that are benchmarked against other RTOs. Participating in the forum would provide the opportunity to network and identify how other RTOs approach continuous improvement.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

In my role as National Quality Manager I am responsible for ensuring Workstar complies with the AQTF National Standards. I am required to work closely with all stakeholders to develop, monitor, review and update continuous improvement strategies. My role requires me to undertake internal audits nationally and conduct self-assessment against the National Standards. I am in the process of developing a committee that will actively be part of the continuous improvement process.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

My commitment is evident in my work ethics. I have a commitment to supporting and working with all stakeholders of Workstar to raise the standards and quality of the services provided through continuous improvement. Continuous improvement is not only a mechanism for ensuring quality but allows the organisation to remain a leading competitor within the VET sector. I will ensure stakeholders are aware of the benefits of continuous improvement and change through adopting the innovative strategies.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Coming away from the Continuous Improvement forum had me seriously thinking what I have learnt from the day and what I could take back to my organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement. I considered the following:

- Everyone within the organisation needs to embrace continuous improvement
- Continuous improvement needs to be a way of life at Workstar
- Continuous improvement needs to be part of the organisational culture
- How can you change organisational culture?
- What would be the best approach to implement continuous improvement to ensure it would be embraced, practiced and embedded within the organisation?

As National Quality Manager, my main focus at present is the implementation of the new AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for RTOs – which are all about continuous improvement.

I am currently developing across the organisation Communities of Practice. Membership will consist of trainers and assessors, managers, a facilitator and an industry representative specific to a training package, for example the Retail Training Package. Invitations for membership will be extended to all staff nationally who deliver training leading to a qualification within the Retail Training Package. Meetings will initially be held one a month by teleconference. The goals and objectives of the Communities of Practice are still to be accepted by members but will be based on:

- Continuous improvement opportunities within the new AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for RTOs
- Staff professional development
- Relationship building across the organisation
- Knowledge and social capital management
- Skill development through sharing of knowledge, skills and experience
- Review and make recommendations on training materials
- Assessment validation
- Teaching methods and best practice.

It is my personal goal to have at least three Communities of Practice specific to different training packages established and functioning within the next six months.

To gain support and resources from management and commitment from staff it was important to ensure that the groups would benefit the organisation and the individuals.

Support so far has been excellent and everyone is very excited, the challenge however will be to ensure that what could be a huge project, is successful.

ELAINE MCGRATH

Manager Quality Assurance

Swan TAFE, Perth, WA

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

The New AQTF requires RTOs to systematically review and improve their policies, procedures, products and services. As the Quality Assurance Manager, it is essential for me to be current in the materials and strategies developed for the college. I am keen to see the approach other RTOs are considering to document and demonstrate their continuous improvement as well as share what Swan TAFE has developed.

As the Chair of the Quality Consultative Committee within Western Australia, I am keen to develop broader networks at a national level to discuss issues such as this.

- 2 Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

As the Manager, Quality Assurance, I guide staff through the AQTF and continuous improvement requirements. I have a broad understanding of the different and most effective and sustainable way to improve processes and procedures in the VET sector while still maintaining AQTF compliance.

In this role I want to be able to present a range of strategies to staff which will allow them to integrate continuous improvement into their activities in the most study area friendly way. I hope by participating in a forum such as this, I will gain a better understanding of how continuous improvement can create a stronger more sustainable business that effectively meets client and stakeholder needs.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

The use of Reframing the Future funding has assisted in the past for staff to come together to discuss their strategies and expectations of working in the VET environment. I see the forum as providing strategies for me to use with Swan staff during Swan's 2007 Reframing the Future project. This project will further develop their understanding of the new AQTF standards and the responsibility they have in adhering to them.

I feel there is a need to look at the new standards with fresh eyes and I hope the forum will provide me with new ideas to set up implementation strategies for not only continuous improvement of the 3 major elements, but the Conditions of Registration requirements as well.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

My College has been successful in gaining funding for a Reframing the Future project in relation to Skills Development for VET Practitioners in 2007.

I am one of three staff members from the Teaching and Learning section who are facilitating the project. The project is focused on reviewing the current policies, procedures and templates used in the College in the light of the implementation of the AQTF 2007 Standards. The intention is to improve the documentation to a good practice model and to share the outcomes with other RTO's.

A cross section of academic staff from across the College has been invited to attend and we have a mixture of casual lecturers, lecturers and Principal Lecturers.

The first session was facilitated by a Training Accreditation Council external auditor who repeated the TAC workshop that has been mirrored across the country in relation to explaining the AQTF 2007.

The following three sessions which will take place in September and October will involve staff having input into improving processes that Swan TAFE can implement to incorporate good practice documents in relation to the new standards. This collaborative approach, will lead to a sense of 'ownership' of the Continuous Improvement process.

The final session for this project will involve a debrief by the same auditor who will provide feedback on our suggested approaches and documents prepared in the previous three sessions.

This is the first year that the College has implemented an Internal Bulk Audit system. Internal auditors were provided with training that has allowed them to gain part of the Diploma of Business (Quality). The Internal Auditors' commitment to the College will see them continually auditing which will allow for greater consistency in reporting outcomes for the College.

Internal Audit Moderation meetings with all internal auditors and Principal Lecturers, after the bulk internal audits this year, have allowed for continual improvements to the process to be reviewed and reported on and will provide valuable information to assist in the College move forward in terms of how we support the academic sections.

A report outlining various improvements including the College's audit checklists and policies has been provided to our Corporate Executive to show improvements that will be made relating to the new AQTF standards.

This process will complement the Reframing the Future Project and will feed into a series of College road shows at the beginning of 2008.

MATTHEW MELLSOP

Quality and Accreditation Co-ordinator

Australian College of Applied Psychology, Sydney, NSW

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

I believe that I will benefit professionally from the *Reframing the Future* forum for several reasons. In my role as the Quality and Accreditation Co-ordinator I am responsible in part for the development of the College's courses both in VET and Higher Education. My responsibilities within this task center on ensuring that the College's courses comply with the relevant industry guidelines and standards for course accreditation. Participating in a forum that focuses on recent changes in industry standards and regulations such as the new AQTF 2007 Guidelines will help me to better understand these changes and the effect they will have on the College's course development for VET courses.

In my role I am also responsible in part for the continuing improvement of the quality of ACAP and its product. The fact that this forum focuses on the continuous improvement of an RTO's product, its organisational processes and its external relationships will be of benefit to me in that, I will be able to apply the ideas and new strategies gained through the forum to this area of my responsibilities.

The final reason why I believe this forum will benefit me professionally is that it will help me to further my understanding of the Australian VET sector. My knowledge of Vocational Training has been developed through my role as an International Qualifications Evaluator at the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The opportunity to gain further insight into the Australian VET context and its future direction is one that I would love to take-up if given the opportunity.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

My role at ACAP is primarily concerned with ensuring that the College's courses, policies and procedures are inline with the standards and guidelines of the Australian VET and Higher Education sector.

In performing my role I need to liaise with all areas of the college from Academic Delivery to Administration and Curriculum development, ensuring that all staff members are aware of and comply with the relevant industry regulations. In ensuring that the College's courses continue to meet the changing industry regulations and procedures I need to be pro-active in supporting continuous improvement across all of ACAP.

Another aspect of my role that requires me to take a pro-active role in supporting continuous improvement at ACAP is in ensuring that the college's quality assurance procedures and policies are reflective of industry best practice and incorporate any new strategies that may be of benefit to the College.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I am very committed to the use of innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement at ACAP. ACAP as an organisation is committed to the use of innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement, a fact that is embedded within the organisational mission statement. In my role it is important that I am aware of innovative new strategies for improvement within the VET sector and pro-active in applying them to my areas of responsibility, namely accreditation of ACAP's VET courses and quality assurance of the ACAP product.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

My attendance at the Reframing the Future Continuous Improvement in VET forum helped me a great deal in reinforcing my understanding of continuous improvement in both the VET and Higher Education sector.

Since the forum the Australian College of Applied Psychology has undertaken several activities or initiatives that have benefited the College's approach to continuous improvement. The most notable of these activities has been in undertaking a whole of organisation audit by the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA).

In preparation for the AUQA audit the College was required to submit a Performance Portfolio. The Performance Portfolio was informed by an organisational self review which involves every staff member of the College. The Performance Portfolio essentially provided a snapshot of the College focusing on its achievements against its own objectives in four main areas. These four main areas were Institutional and Educational Objectives and Institutional Governance; Teaching and Learning; Organisational Structure and Decision Making; and Review and Evaluation. The areas were broken down into over 30 sub-categories.

The College structured its Performance Portfolio as well as its organisational self review on the OADRI model, a variation on Deming's "Plan-Do-Check-Act" quality management cycle. As such for each of the sub-categories covered the College was able to map out its Objectives, its current Approach and Deployment in achieving these objectives, its Results against its objectives and identify opportunities for improvement.

Even though the AUQA audit process for the College has not completely run its course, it has already proven beneficial to its approach to continuous improvement. For a start, following the organisational self-review the College was able to identify several opportunities to improve its current practice. This was compiled into a Gaps Analysis report which will help to inform the future strategic planning of the College. It is also expected that more areas in which the College has an opportunity to improve will be identified following the site visit of the AUQA Agency. In addition to this the AUQA audit process also assisted the College in raising the awareness of all staff to continuous improvement and quality assurance issues. Undertaking an organisation wide self-review encouraged staff members of the College to examine the way in which things are done and to think about how they could be improved upon. While I was not responsible for initiating or overseeing the AUQA process, I have been actively involved and contributed to significant aspects of it.

With specific regard to the VET Sector, the College will undertake its annual self-assessment against the AQTF 2007 Guidelines in November of this year. This is the first time that the College has performed a self-assessment against the new AQTF Guidelines and it is expected that much like the AUQA Audit process will help to inform the continuous improvement process. As I will be involved in the oversight of this process I hope to be able to further contribute the knowledge that I have gained through my attendance at the Continuous Improvement in VET forum.

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

FIR has been established for 19 years and has developed from a small SE Queensland RTO into a business with over 2,000 trainees across Australia. I joined the company as General Manager in August 2006 with only a couple of years experience in the Australian VET system and no experience of Traineeships, which is the mainstay of FIR's business. Fortunately for me, there is huge experience within the organisation in these areas that I am able to call upon (and I do frequently).

In developing the business however, I would benefit greatly from the shared knowledge and experience of others in the VET sector as, whilst I have my own ideas for continuous improvement from a broader management education and background, a well informed VET/RTO perspective is invaluable. Two examples follow:

- i. FIR specialises in training for the Retail industry and this presents issues around currency of vocational competencies as well as technical competencies. Skills shortages and availability of trainers with relevant and recent retail experience, particularly in regional and country areas is a real challenge for us. I would like to develop more ideas around solutions to the PD requirements of new and existing staff in vocational and technical areas and would benefit personally from the interaction with other VET professionals in this respect.
- ii. With many remote trainers I have a real challenge in conducting and monitoring PD. We have recently invested in a LMS which I feel can be a great tool in this respect as well as in the induction of new staff to our organisation. I would benefit from other experiences in this regard and how PD might be structured and materials developed for online delivery.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

As General Manager for First Impressions, I am responsible for arranging and coordinating the professional development of all staff. We operate nationally and many of our trainers live and work remotely. PD features as a part of our HR strategies and performance management process.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

We are absolutely committed to the professional development of our staff. For example, we are participating in two Reframing projects (skills development for VET practitioners and industry training networks) this year and also a Learnscope project.

Earlier this year we volunteered to host John Mitchell to run a pilot Employability Skills PD workshop and brought in a number of remotely based and interstate trainers to attend.

We have a very close relationship with industry and were highlighted in the recent John Mitchell/Nigel Paine publication "New Leadership for Innovative Organisations" – I also participated in the associated workshop in Brisbane.

We are running a national staff conference at the end of July for all of our staff. This is a 3-day event comprising a range of PD sessions, workshops, guest speakers from industry and other opportunities for networking and development.

We are also very happy to share our experiences and approaches with other organisations and to participate in the broader development of our sector. This has included various RPL and other innovative programs.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

Our continued growth and success is fundamentally built on the relationships that we have with our industry clients and the standard of the services that we provide them. Our focus on CI is therefore on the people that we employ and the systems and processes that underpin their services.

Our HR strategy is to recruit trainers who have extensive and current experience in the retail industry, at the level of store manager or above and this often now involves recruiting directly from industry. For new recruits, this presents a number of challenges, particularly in developing technical skills in training and assessment and in meeting AQTF requirements for technical qualifications. Coaching, mentoring and other techniques are used in this respect, as well as close supervision. We are also developing our induction program to align with certain units of the TAA40104, supported by online resources.

For our existing trainers, or recruits from the training sector, the challenge is in maintaining current vocational skills and knowledge. Most of our training is conducted in the workplace, which keeps our trainers in touch with many aspects of our clients' business. We also run an "industry buddy" system, whereby each trainer has a buddy in retail, at store manager level or above, with whom they meet monthly and discuss the issues of the day.

Our staff are also participating in other professional development projects, such as Reframing the Future and Learnscope, which are targeted at specific areas of interest and change, such as Employability Skills and e-Learning. These projects will develop into communities of practice and will also produce individuals who will act as centres of knowledge and agents of change. These will be supported by our new learning management system in communicating and sharing knowledge and experience through discussion boards and wikis.

We have implemented a new student management system which is now being rolled out to trainers for remote access – most of our trainers work remotely around Australia and therefore have no office base. This system enables trainers to better manage their caseloads, to input details of visits and phone calls and also results directly into the system. This means that we all have access to the same, real-time data and that we and our clients have improved access to information relating to the participation and progress of trainees.

A new performance management system is being initiated, with clear and measurable targets for all staff. We have also re-designed our feedback process so that all trainees are requested for feedback from their course on completion or cancellation and feedback is also sought from their employer. These will combine to provide the platform for staff performance appraisals and as a result a focus for future investment in professional development of our staff and in improvements to our processes and systems.

To me, the above seems a logical, business-like approach to maintaining client satisfaction and in growing our business. I am also delighted to see how closely this approach aligns to the Standards of AQTF2007! I can only deduce that positive outcomes for our clients and trainees are linked to positive outcomes for our business – isn't that how I started?

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

Apart from VET, COAG, NQC and AQTF I am interested in continuous improvement so that we have a successful business which people return to and refer to us as preferred providers. The better our continuous improvement the better business we have and students have better outcomes. We are in competition with other providers and we are also the "voice of real estate in WA" and so our reputation is extremely important to us. To maintain our reputation our learning resources must be state of the art, relevant, meaningful, and practical with lots of opportunities for practice with case studies, role plays and exercises. In a highly regulated industry like real estate the laws are changing frequently as is practice and keeping resources up to date means constant amendments and consultation with industry. Continuous improvement is our life blood and without it we wouldn't have a viable business. We have process in place to ensure that we are fully informed of any and every change and our materials are in a constant state of review, amendment or complete rewrite. Obviously our trainers must also be part of this process and as they are also working in the industry and training for us on a sessional basis many of the changes are instigated by them.

Doing it is one thing, demonstrating it is another. I am interested in different ways of recording improvements that have been made. Should we record every small thing or just those that have the most impact? I want to be able to fit continuous improvement into our business plan so that it is part of what we do all the time to benefit our business and not an extra burden that we rush around doing because we have an audit. In an effort not to create extra burdens we have rewritten all our job descriptions so that they are congruent with our business plan, which in its turn is compatible with the wider organisational goals. This relates directly to our business but also fits neatly with the new Standards. Version control of resources, policies and procedures, and other documentation like job descriptions and evaluation forms is one way that we record CI. We have fortnightly staff meetings that have an agenda and a written record and many improvements are recorded in this way.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

I am the executive manager in charge of the REIWA training department. It is my role to ensure the smooth running of our business, to meet our budget, to provide the optimal learning experience for our students and to contribute to the wider organisational business strategy and plan. AQTF compliance and continuous improvement is the responsibility of all staff members and it is my role to encourage, implement and evaluate strategies that achieve those goals. When putting together our business plan for 07/08 and doing a SWOT analysis it was clear that our competitive advantage and point of difference is our constant pursuit of excellence in our staff, trainers, resources and customer service.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I manage the professional development (PD) of REIWA Learning staff and all our sessional trainers. The PD of all staff and trainers contributes to continuous improvement as everyone brings their experience and ideas to the team. I discourage ownership of systems so that when someone has an idea for improvement it is accepted on its merit and not rejected because we have 'always done it that way'. Discussion in team meetings and trainers meetings is a hotbed of ideas and ways to improve systems and services. Smooth incremental change is fine but it can grind to a halt without the right drivers or triggers. I want to know how to keep the process going so that it is inherent in all we do not something that is put on the agenda at odd times. Meeting our budget is a great incentive to keep improving as we would not get courses off the ground if our resources and customer service were not undergoing constant improvements.

Feedback from our students is constant but the quality is not always meaningful. I would like to improve the way we collect information in a more focused way that we can respond to without going broke. Electronic surveys are one way to collect data quickly and easily. We now carry out TNAs electronically and the program collates the data as well. Our members are frequently surveyed in this way about the various services they receive and response rate is often 25% to 30%. We are part of the pilot program for the testing of the quality indicators for learner and employer satisfaction and this is being collected electronically. For smaller RTOs the time and expense of this type of data collection is minimal particularly as the data is collated as well.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

The only way that we can remain relevant to students is to continually improve our products and services so we have state of the art courses. We take seriously and act on any negative feedback that we get. Sometimes it is too easy to say that a student is unrealistic in their expectations or plain unreasonable and we have found that when we unpack negative feedback there is always a way for us to improve our service. Negative feedback about staff and/or trainers is the most challenging to deal with. Feedback usually comes in written form on feedback sheets although our members are very vocal as well! Negative feedback is always used in a positive way for professional development and this has proved to be successful. There is always an exception of course and one person resigned because we took the feedback seriously. We have a stringent staff and trainer selection process through which we have to keep our nerve in this time of labour shortages. We have very high expectations of the standards of training delivery, conduct and demeanour of staff and trainers and these are made very clear to everyone.

We train best practice in the classroom and so we strive to be the best we can in everything that we do within our organisation.

SHERALEE TAYLOR

Training Systems Worker

Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi (Waltja), Alice Springs, NT

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

1. I am new in this position and feel that any information that I am able to learn or any PD I receive can only better myself and in turn my organisation, and importantly our client group.
2. Being able to develop new networks in this area will be of great benefit to myself and the work that I do. Also it gives me the opportunity to develop networks outside of Alice Springs and learn other ways VET business can be done.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

I am responsible for leading, managing and supporting continuous improvement with Waltja as a RTO. I am responsible for audits, including self auditing, and complying with ATQF 2007.

Our organisation is only small, and we rely on other staff to assist and support the way we do business. We (Waltja) are continuing to learn and develop in many ways. Information at this workshop will therefore be passed on to others within Waltja, and my networks.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

Waltja as an RTO is always looking at ways to continually improve our service. An example of this, is our current plan to extend our scope of registration, as many of the Communities we work with in remote Central Australia have asked for other training. We have looked at this and I have commenced the process to extend our scope and assist them.

Waltja is always looking at ways to improve, and has recently employed myself to be responsible for Waltja as an RTO and a HR/Training Worker to assist in staff development.

There are obviously many ways that this forum can assist (teach) me and therefore I will be able to come back and implement them in Waltja.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

One of the ways Waltja is looking at CI, is to invite other RTO's delivering remotely and in town, with the same scope, to a workshop run by Waltja to compare, and receive feedback on our assessment methods. This has not been conducted but is in the planning stage.

I am seeking recommendations on a regular basis from this Committee and staff on the training that Waltja can and should provide. Particular with the NT's "national crisis" training is going to play a big part of what is required.

STEVE HENDERSON

Training Manager

Tenix Systems, Technology Park, Mawson Lakes, SA

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

Whilst being involved in VET for approximately 20 years, this has been in the defence industry; therefore I am relatively new to the RTO scheme.

I see this forum as a further chance to interact with experienced RTO providers, in turn helping me gain a better understanding of the requirements of the AQTF 2007.

I expect this interaction will also assist me to objectively look more closely at how I have been conducting business (in particular training services) and what and where I can improve to keep pace with industry.

Post Forum

The forum provided a good level of interaction with a variety of training providers who were willing to share their experiences, which were many and varied. I did notice however, that all were customer focused and process driven, albeit at different levels.

While I can not claim to be an expert in the requirements of AQTF 2007, I believe I now have a clearer understanding of what it is and how it effects myself, my company and ultimately my customers.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

I currently manage a small group of Training Development and Training specialists. We have typically designed and developed and delivered training packages for our own products that are generally developed specifically to the customer's requirements. That customer has traditionally been defence related.

As an ISO 9001:2000 Quality endorsed company we have many quality procedures in place to ensure that our product is subject to continuous improvements.

What I am seeking to understand is how these processes compliment the requirements of RTO status and what, if anything I need to alter to fall into line with our RTO commitments. Equally I believe that I can offer some insights to continuous improvement based on my past experience in the VET sector and assisting in maintaining our companies ISO Quality endorsement.

Post Forum

If I understand the requirements of the AQTF 2007 correctly, the requirements placed on me as part of the ISO Quality endorsement is more stringent. While both the AQTF and ISO endorsements are seeking to achieve a similar outcome, there are different requirement levels for each. There are two issues here, the first being; we have to comply with the higher ISO standard in order to maintain our accreditation, therefore we are required to apply this same level to the AQTF. The second issue, as I see it, could be construed as a negative by aiming to meet only the requirements of the AQTF, it may be seen as though we are not complying with the requirements of the ISO standards and therefore not providing the best quality service to our customers.

During the forum it was remarked upon by a number of people that we are process driven and this is acknowledged as we accept this as part of the ISO endorsement and a normal part of our business. However, while not to the same level, I would argue that the AQTF is also process driven. I can also understand the need for a small organisation to reduce any additional burdens that may be driven by the higher level of processes that the ISO requires.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

Tenix as a company is committed to providing Quality products, whatever they may be and to do this there must be a continuous improvement cycle.

I am expecting to gain a clear understanding of the continuous improvement process required for an RTO with the expectation of merging the two processes to ensure that we are providing the best possible product to our customers.

We are currently analysing what training we provide and what methods are currently used to deliver this training. The outcomes are suggesting that technology has progressed at a relatively fast pace and costs are being reduced making technological solutions far more cost effective than they were in the past, however, we still remain mindful that we are committed to providing quality products and competent persons as the final outcome of our training programs.

Post Forum

As part of the Systems Approach to Training, we take the functions of Evaluation and Validation as an integral component of the training design and development cycle. It is also one of the tasks that our customers expect of us as part of the service we provide when developing and conducting training for them. This approach ensures that there is a continuous improvement process.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

As stated above, this process is already in place and documented to meet the requirements of the ISO standard.

We believe that there is a clear difference amongst ourselves and the majority of training providers that were in attendance. We generally provide one-off training for specific products with our customer taking ownership of the training on delivery of the product and the initial training, whereas the majority of other training providers appear to conduct repetitive training based on pre-developed training packages. In saying this, the need for continuous improvement is acknowledged; just the level of process being applied will vary.

VIVIAN BIGGS

National Training Manager

Strive Training Australia, Bulimba, QLD

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

As National Training Manager with Strive Training Australia I am responsible for looking at new and innovative ways to keep improving the quality and outcomes of our training. The improvement could be very small and detailed or large and holistic but if it positively affects any of the key stakeholders then it is seen as a step forward. There is a tremendous amount of focus on the actual training being delivered and the move away from just 'assessing' trainees. We are building in 'more training time' and taking a fresh new approach to our materials. As well as this aspect there are the underpinning administrative processes and systems that support the training and provide the necessary evidence (the dreaded paperwork). In my role I work actively with trainers across our business to ensure that this key aspect of our training is met with the same commitment and passion to 'getting it right first time' as that which is displayed in the training sessions.

This type of forum provides an incredibly valuable opportunity to network with other VET providers, to look at benchmarks, to listen to other success stories and ideas, and of course share some of ours. As my role is a relatively new one to the business, we are keen to take off the blinkers that might be holding us back from moving forward and start to look externally to get a better understanding of our greater VET Family! Although we might be competitors we are all committed to the same outcome – vocational training for Australia, and as such we would like to learn a great deal more from those around us and start to share more of our experiences and successes. Some of the greatest learning I have had personally and professionally is from listening to other people's stories and how they have approached challenges and what they have learned. (this is after all one of the best tools we have in our training belt – the metaphor or story we tell). I also believe in the six degrees of separation, and it is often through a common goal (such as continuous improvement) that the greatest synergies and alliances can be created to propel businesses forward!

All of which are a crucial part of continuous improvement!

Another reason personally (and professionally) I would like to attend this forum is because I believe that acquiring new skills and knowledge is the key to growing and as a result will improve what we do and how we do it!

Leading by Example!

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

I provide Trainer Support out in the field by assessing trainers and helping them reach not just the minimum standards, but the higher benchmarks set within Strive. These are simply a result of listening to the clients and what they want – and delivering it! I help trainers develop new skills, or sometimes just shift their focus or attitude which can make all the difference in terms of the creativity they bring to their training.

A key approach we are using is to ‘celebrate and be thankful’ for ALL Feedback (and complaints are considered just that – feedback). By creating an environment that looks at all feedback as an opportunity to improve what we are doing – it creates the leverage for change, and reduces the time ‘wasted’ on breaking through personal defensiveness or justification.

My newer role of National Training Manager also means that I am responsible for looking at the standards involved with all VET delivery and working with Leaders within the business on a strategic level to explore how we can improve the way we deliver them – this applies equally to the processes and systems that support the training as well as the training itself.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I am passionate and live my entire life based on the belief that change is good and that we should always be looking for ways to improve what we do! If we are not growing – we are dying, or going backwards.

Not only will innovative strategies keep the business operating into the future in what has become and incredibly competitive and demanding industry but will also bring the valuable skills needed for people to perform at their best and make a difference!

Our commitment extends to taking all the information we gain at such forums to every team member in a personal and effective way that will generate enthusiasm and action toward being the best we can be in the VET industry.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

We have taken a number of concrete steps toward continuous improvement which include:

1. Quarterly meetings with trainers that cover a number of crucial areas such as review of assessment procedures and evidence, review of documentation used in the training and assessment process, collating feedback and suggestions for improvement.
2. Introduction of redefined KPIs and professional development plans for every team member (VET practitioners and supporting administration team) that focuses on attitude and personal growth as much as professional qualifications. When new KPIs are set we are also adding in consequences for failed performance which to date had not been documented and actioned. To date all managers and leaders new KPIs have been implemented as well as professional development plans for all team members. Trainers KPIs are currently being reviewed and written.
3. Automated systems that allow the overall monitoring of training, and assessing to be standardised that ensures minimum KPIs are reached.
4. A commitment toward a shared vision that has been communicated to all team members and now features in all meetings and planning processes moving forward to prevent it from being ‘a nice thing to talk about once a year’, but rather the cornerstone of every goal we set and action we take!
5. Working closely with industry partners (clients, other RTOs and Departments) to ensure our supporting documentation is not just compliant but state of the art to minimise lost time on these administrative functions, and the updating and revision of training materials and methodologies to meet the changing demands of the generational diversity and cultures that exist.

6. Proactive participation in events such as those run by Reframing the Future and building a wider network to learn from, share with, and create benchmarks for best practice.

ROSE VALLEN

Manager Higher Education/Curriculum Services

Australian Institute of Management, SA

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

I would benefit professionally from the forum in several ways:

- As a facilitator for Certificate IV and Diploma of Training and Assessment I would gain a more in-depth knowledge about continuous improvement practices in VET that I would be able to share this knowledge with new Training and Assessment practitioners.
- I am responsible for extensions of scope, self audits and compliance in general for the Australian Institute of Management. The knowledge that I would gain from this forum would be invaluable to my professional development and in ensuring AIM meets its registration obligations under the 2007 AQTF. It would also assist us on our way to meeting the non-compulsory Excellence Criteria.
- I am also responsible for providing professional development to AIM's training consultants (sessionally paid trainers and assessors) and other training staff and so this forum would be passed on to many other trainers through me - and as many of our Trainers work for other organisations – through them to other RTO's.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

My roles in leading, managing and supporting continuous improvements in the VET sector involve:

Compliance, scope and self audits for AIM and also the review and evaluation of continuous improvement in the organisation.

I am also providing ongoing professional development to AIM staff and consultants on the 2007 AQTF and continuous improvement at AIM - so this learning would be transferred to them.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I have had a long history of innovation and continuous improvement within the VET sector working with Private RTO's. I have been actively involved in the implementation of the TAA and Business Services Training Packages and in recent years, finding innovative ways to ensure AIM's consultants and staff are up to date with issues in the VET sector.

I have been training Workplace Assessors and Trainers and providing advice to various RTO's for many years and actively promote the need and strategies to continuously improve operations, delivery and accessibility to VET.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

AIM took advantage of Reframing the Future funds to conduct work-based training sessions on the 2007 AQTF. As part of this endeavour staff members and sessionally paid trainers were exposed to a variety of Continuous Improvement frameworks and strategies. It was decided to leverage off the work done in these sessions and Review and update AIM's Continuous Improvement Framework. This process is just beginning and involves:

- setting up a new cross functional quality team
- working with these people to review and evaluate our Continuous Improvement strategy and framework
- formulating a new deployment strategy
- formulating a new evaluation strategy
- formulating a new internal auditing system.

SHERRIDAN MAXWELL

Senior Educator

RMIT University, VIC

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

I would greatly benefit from being able to hear how other RTO's are dealing with the issue of continuous improvement as required by AQTF 2007.

I would also like to hear how other RTO's engage staff in their organisations in quality and continuous improvement issues, and how they encourage their staff to embed quality principles into their training programs. That is; the understanding of, and the embedding of continuous improvement principles into programs as a natural process rather than being perceived as a separate process from normal every day practice or as an "add on" to support auditing or reporting requirements.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

My role at RMIT is that of Senior Educator, Curriculum and Project Design, in the Portfolio of Science, Engineering and Technology where I support VET staff across the portfolio with teaching and learning strategies, program renewal and quality requirements.

I also contribute to a number of University working groups to ensure that TAFE quality issues are considered and addressed when implementing new University processes and policies, my aim being that of encouraging the enhancement and the effectiveness of the University's core activities of learning and teaching, research and innovation, student experience and Industry engagement and where I focus on the continuing development of efficient management, planning and resource processes.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I was successful in receiving Reframing funding in 2006 to develop an on line tool for individual teachers and program teams to be able to “self audit” against AQTF standards and use this tool to support continuous improvement in program teaching and learning. I used a “Community of Practice” methodology to underpin the project and worked with staff from across diverse program disciplines and with all TAFE schools within the University.

My commitment to continuous improvement is that I continue to develop the tool which is now expected to be finished by the end of this year (2007), and I have been able to support the project by receiving University Strategic Initiative funds. I also continue to use the Community of Practice methodology used in the initial Reframing project; and I am committed to ensuring that program staff I work with understand how to make effective judgments about continuous improvements in their programs that will support AQTF, student and Industry requirements.

The tool itself is now being seen as a by-product, not the focus of the project; it is in fact the methodology of bringing a group of people together who would not usually have the opportunity to meet each other (the COP), and the conversations around supporting the principles of continuous improvement that are of benefit to the University.

The innovation of the project is that it has now moved away from a focus of “self audit” to one of “dialogue”, which firstly encourages individual teachers in planning their forthcoming year, that is, their work-planning, their professional development needs, and their ideas and strategies that they may use in teaching and learning, student satisfaction and Industry engagement.

Then secondly, for the program team or leader to continue the dialogue for overseeing the continuous improvement needs of the whole program, including the staff needs and ideas, the student and training package requirements and Industry, and University Program Annual Reviews.

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

I work in a dual sector University, and we had complex ways in which we implemented our new qualifications and training packages, we used a model that was suited to Higher Education taking our implementation paper work through numerous committees and having many people sign off on them before the qualifications were placed on our data base.

In 2005 to 2006 we started a process of implementation simplification (supported by a Reframing the Future project), first by streamlining our over cumbersome and unnecessary documentation requirements, aligning our implementation process to be able to report on AQTF needs, and further to be timelier in our responses to Industry.

Now as we move into supporting the principles of continuous improvement as outlined in the AQTF 2007 we are moving away from an “audit only” model to a model where we start to bench mark and document best practice.

A demonstration of how we have taken “concrete steps” to improve approaches to continuous improvement thus far; has been to moderate our current implementation processes from across the three discipline portfolios in the University along with the Quality Unit to critique and share best practice, with the focus now on teaching and learning strategies to support program teams.

This includes how we engage with industry, how we support students, strategies for student satisfaction outcomes, assessment strategies to support competency based training and workbased delivery, and have management systems that are responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

1. Please provide two reasons why you would benefit professionally from being involved in the forum.

In 2007, I have been chosen as a National Training Change Agent for the Reframing the Future program. I would like to attend this forum to hear about the views of other practitioners I may not have access to during my project. I would like to collect a wide range of views for my project.

I wanted to attend the forum to understand what the term 'continuous improvement' meant. This is a way of checking in to see if you are on track and a way of learning new tips.

As a VET practitioner, it is extremely crucial to gain a wide cross section of views to shape your work, its currency and your own professional judgement. I like to be able to compare and listen to a wide range of views and the richness of views is always astounding.

I am privileged in my role that I am able to move around rather than remain in one location and have access to many workgroups, campuses and Institutes. However, the networking opportunities presented by attending forums such as Continuous Improvement casts a wider net of new knowledge from an extremely diverse range of providers – public, private, large and small.

Working in the VET sector, is as much about learning for the practitioner as it is about delivering learning.

2. Please describe your role and responsibilities in leading, managing or supporting continuous improvement in your RTO and/or the VET sector

My project this year is on Accelerated Skills Formation in the Change Agent category. A component of this project is also the RPL aspect and I am involved in the RPL project led by Margaret Thornton from TAFE SA.

I would like to hear about continuous improvement in relation to the 2 projects I am involved with.

My core work is about driving the development of new partnerships with clients and new ways of doing business. For this reason, Continuous Improvement is a core issue.

Successes are often interspersed with inevitable failures so the continuous improvement process forces you to look at how you can do things better or in a different way next time. It also helps you streamline and glide over steps that may impede your success.

It forces:

- new partnerships
- new attitudes
- new ways of doing things

As a result, I am often at the forefront of change in the organisation and have developed the confidence over the years to understand who to influence and how to make changes without causing too many waves. From this your reputation develops which allows for more changes or continuous improvement and makes it easier to influence others.

3. Please outline your commitment to using innovative strategies to influence continuous improvement approaches in your RTO and/or in the VET sector.

I am committed to using innovative strategies to improve an outcome focused VET for clients. My experience is that VET has many opportunities to improve services to make VET easier to navigate. This has been especially apparent as I undertake my Change Agent project this year.

I am extremely committed to using innovative strategies to improve VET and see no reason to use methodologies for doing things if there is a better more efficient way.

I have managed the Skills vouchers project this year where the early adopters of innovative methodologies have streamlined much more efficient ways of improving the take up of the opportunity, the RPL process, the delivery and the outcomes for clients. Unfortunately, this has been in pockets so my aim is to try to replicate this message across other workgroups, campuses and whole Institutes!

4. What are some concrete steps or activities or initiatives you are taking within your organisation to improve approaches to continuous improvement?

I have found that because TAFE SA is spread across 55 campuses and the culture and way of communicating to staff in each location is so diverse, using identified communication tools can assist this process. I have been able to streamline this process to communicate and market internally to staff.

The TAFE SA intranet has a large deal of power in the continuous improvement process. I have developed an intranet page which is linked to the 3 TAFE SA intranet sites. When the information on that page is updated it is updated on all 3 sites instantaneously.

I have used, with much success, ways of spreading messages through this means. I have also identified that using a key contact point into each Institute to spread messages is another good tool. That person is responsible for communicating in their own organisation through the networks and using associated protocols. They can then communicate back to me with a large amount of feedback

The initial stages of this process required some training and change of mind sets but is working efficiently now. The Skills vouchers information is distributed through this methodology.

When new administrative processes mandated by DEST are required, the information is published immediately on the intranet. Our team now only uses this methodology. Staff have been trained to look on the intranet site for updated information.

Last week, DEST conducted a monitoring visit at 2 sites providing the Skills Vouchers Programme. Nearly 100 files were investigated and most had the correct information in place. Staff would only know about the correct information and procedures if they had followed the information on the TAFE SA intranet site.

Results of the monitoring visit will be published on the intranet site in the next week to update staff.