

TAFE Queensland

NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative Report

This National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Training and Skills Support Strategy project is proudly supported and funded by the Queensland Government.



MAKE
GREAT
HAPPEN



Acknowledgements

TAFE Queensland acknowledges the traditional owners on the lands on which stakeholders have met to deliver this initiative, recognising the continuing connection to land, waters, culture and kin that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples uphold, paying respects to Elders past and present.

The generosity of individuals who have contributed their time, expertise and collaborative approach is also acknowledged below:

Steering Committee members: Benjamin Keast, Bev Charnley, Bronwyn Rose, Danielle Mason, Debbie Nawaitabu, Graham Burridge, Ian Montague, Jennifer Cullen, Karin Swift, Kay Kaur, Mandy Strathearn, Maree Butler, Margaret Rodgers, Melanie Emmerick, Michael Burbank, Raoul Wilson, Sam Smith, Shelley Haynes, Steve Eltis, Tracy Galaud

Focus Group participants: Annette Du-Shane, Craig Bishop, Garry Rapp, Graham Burridge, Jenny Freeman, Julie Devling, Margaret Haynes, Melanie Clarke, Sarah Dart, Steve Eltis, Steven Paull, Sue Lavelle, Vera Cockrenn

Interviewees: Annette Du-Shane, Bronwyn Rose, Jess Wright, Jesse Brandt, Jody Ware, Karen McIndoe, Kelly Andrews, Lisa Dawson, Nam Suksamram, Naomi Collier, Robert Chittick, Steve Paull, Troy Nicholls

Videographers: Carlos Vaquero, Patricia Casajus

Graphic designer: Elisha Gilles

Copy editor: Tayla Arthur

TAFE Queensland Project Team: Bev Charnley, Judy Williams, Tracey Vella

WorkAbility Qld.: Mandy Strathearn, Fay Whittaker

Department of Education Small Business and Training

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Background.....	3
Key deliverables of this initiative	3
Introduction.....	4
1. Key deliverable: Formation of state-wide NDIS Vocational Placement Network (VPN).....	6
1.1 Formation of NDIS Vocational Placement State-wide Steering Committee	6
1.2 Modes of meetings.....	7
1.3 Face-to-face workshop.....	8
1.4 Final meeting of NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative Steering Committee	8
2. Key deliverable: Research and articulate the benefits of quality vocational placements – highlights and challenges.....	9
2.1 Literature review	9
2.2 Impact of research on current project work	9
3. Key deliverable: Engagement with NDIS service providers to develop vocational placement models and solutions	11
3.1 Development and distribution of survey instruments	11
3.2 Follow-up activities – focus groups	11
4. Key deliverable: Tailored suite of vocational placement resources and promotional elements	13
4.1 Stakeholder interviews – design and implementation.....	13
4.2 Locating interviewees.....	14
4.3 Interview and video process	14
4.4 Development of the fact sheets.....	15
4.5 Findings.....	16
5. Key deliverable: Development of incentives and strategies to support quality vocational placements.....	17
5.1 Strategies to ensure quality vocational placements	17
5.1.1 Develop collaborative relationships.....	17
5.1.2 Consistent and comprehensive processes	17
5.2 Incentives	18
6. Key deliverable: Collaborate, link and work closely with Community Resource Unit (CRU)	20
7. Next steps.....	21
8. Resources developed in the initiative	22
9. References.....	23
10. Appendices.....	23

Background

This initiative was led by TAFE Queensland, conducted in close collaboration with WorkAbility Qld as part of the *Growing the NDIS Workforce Strategy*, and funded by the Department of Small Business and Training (DESBT). Vocational education and training has an important role in the preparation of staff in the disability sector and vocational placement is a critical component.

Effectively aligning quality vocational placement practices to opportunities supporting efficient workforce recruitment requires attention by all stakeholders. This report documents the processes, activities and deliverables of the initiative using action learning methodology.

Key deliverables of this initiative

1. Formation of state-wide NDIS Vocational Placement Network (VPN)
2. Research and articulation of the benefits of quality vocational placements, highlights and barriers, systemic and individualised RTO issues and improvements to active collaborations through the VPN
3. Engagement with NDIS service providers to develop vocational placement models and solutions for Certificate III in Individual Support (CHC33015) and Certificate IV in Disability (CHC43115), and support overall understanding and learning concerning collaboration and problem solving between employer/industry sector/RTO
4. Develop a tailored suite of vocational placement resources and promotional elements including fact sheets, videos and active collaboration with all NDIS stakeholders
5. Development of incentives and strategies to support quality vocational placements, provide accurate information and improve the quality of the overall training and employability of graduates, while enhancing the capacity of VET to meet demand of skilled workers in NDIS roles
6. Collaborate, link and work closely with Community Resource Unit (CRU) to share expertise and knowledge to ensure resources developed by CRU complement the supplier's action research project

Introduction

The human (or community) services qualifications in vocational education are a large component of the contemporary national education and training and sector, and warrant close attention in the context of this initiative and broader, for several reasons. These include widely documented national workforce shortages across a range of occupations and sectors, including but not limited to disability, aged care and early childhood education and care.

A parallel paradox is that education and training providers (registered training organisations) report difficulty in accessing human services organisations for student vocational placement and therefore, the workplace learning that occurs throughout. Since 2021, there are the additional consequences of COVID-19 on student access to workplaces for undertaking vocational placement. This is evident in both the pre- and post-vaccination stages of the pandemic. Prior to vaccination availability, student engagement with workplaces was, in many cases, extremely limited or non-existent. Post the availability, mandates or conditions around compulsory vaccinations for students to undertake vocational placements in the human services are evident. A recent example is the 2021 requirement for students to be fully vaccinated in order to undertake vocational placement in aged care facilities; another is the requirement by a number of early childhood education and care providers.

There appear to be several additional factors contributing to difficulties in obtaining quality vocational placements. This is a problematic issue as it is graduate students who are most able to effectively and immediately support the workforce in challenging times.

One consideration in relation to the paradox (workforce shortage vs student placement shortage) is whether vocational education and training organisations and workplaces have historically placed appropriate value on student vocational placement as an overt, intentional component of student learning (supported adequately from a pedagogical stance) that has a resultant flow-on to employment levels. It is evident from outcomes of the data analysed in this initiative that education and training providers and human services organisations need to work more collaboratively for their mutual benefit.

The NDIS is referenced as a driver for the large increase required in the workforce across disability and mental health services, so this initiative and the deliverables are occurring at a timely juncture nationally and state-wide. This report has investigated the following key themes, with engagement and data collection occurring via steering committee participants, training and service organisations, and people with a disability:

- A. Scope of practice in relation to vocational placement — scope of practice includes student preparation, student understanding of their agency and active learning for outcomes, student engagement with RTOs and workplaces
- B. VET practitioners and practices around vocational placement to support student meta-cognition and strategies to enhance their learning and also relationships with workplace supervisors

- C. Operational processes of workplaces hosting student vocational placement to develop insights into how workplaces provide experiences for students, including pathways to employment
- D. Identification of challenges that inhibit effective practices and suggested strategies for improvement and change where required
- E. Identification of resources currently available to support quality vocational placement the development and dissemination of new resources supported by this initiative.

The key deliverables of this initiative are discussed in detail in the following pages.

1. Key deliverable: Formation of state-wide NDIS Vocational Placement Network (VPN)

A key focus of this initiative was to (a) identify existing highlights and challenges surrounding vocational placement and (b) identify strategies and solutions to support quality placements. It was essential that this work was guided by key stakeholders (service providers, registered training organisations and people with a lived experience of disability — all of whom could provide insights and guidance). It was also important to reflect on work that has previously been undertaken around the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and vocational education and training.

The first stages involved the formation of an NDIS Vocational Placement State-wide Steering Committee and as the initiative evolved, synergies and intersections with the existing NDIS VET Practitioner's Community of Practice became evident. The Community of Practice was formed during the implementation of the NDIS VET Practitioner's Leadership Programs, which provided professional development on the NDIS and key aligned topics to vocational education and training educators.

Therefore it was considered important to create synergies with the activities of this Community of Practice. With over 200 VET practitioners from public and private training providers, several key sector representatives and four scheduled meetings per annum, this is an excellent group to raise important themes identified through this Vocational Placement Initiative. The Vocational Placement Initiative and resources developed are included on the agenda of the NDIS VET and Sector Practitioner's Community of Practice meeting, scheduled for March 2022. From 2022 onwards, it is recommended that this Community of Practice is known as the *NDIS VET and Sector Practitioner's Community of Practice and Vocational Placement Network (VPN)*. Adequate scoping and expansion of the terms of reference will occur to ensure:

- (a) relevant vocational placement officers from training providers and workplace supervisors from human services organisations are aware and invited to participate
- (b) large, medium and small sector organisations are invited to participate
- (c) VET practitioners who did not complete the NDIS VET Practitioner's Leadership Program are aware of the network and are invited to participate
- (d) agenda items will reflect the themes identified through this initiative, as well as showcasing good practice work currently being undertaken
- (e) the resources are accessible and freely available for use by all stakeholders.

TAFE Queensland, who convene the Community of Practice, will continue to convene the NDIS VET and Sector Practitioner Community of Practice and Vocational Placement Network (VPN). Input and facilitation is welcomed from all participants.

1.1 Formation of NDIS Vocational Placement State-wide Steering Committee

A range of stakeholders were considered to represent the interests of a range of services, registered training providers, diversity and people with a disability. The final composition of the NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative Steering Committee membership is noted below in Table 1.

Table 1 - Membership NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative Steering Committee (2021 - 2022)

Name	Role	Organisation	Expertise
Benjamin Keast	CEO	ARC Disability Cairns	NDIS service provider
Bronwyn Rose	CEO	Horizon 2 t/as Care College	RTO
Bev Charnley	Community Services Product Lead	TAFE Queensland	Community services, VET
Danielle Mason	Consultant	Community Resource Unit (CRU)	NDIS disability service and training
Debbie Nawaitabu	VET practitioner	TAFE Queensland	Disability, leisure and health; mental health trainer
Graeme Burridge	Vocational Placement Coordinator	Mi Haven	RTO
Ian Montague	State Manager	National Disability Service (NDS)	Disability
Jennifer Cullen	CEO	Synapse	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and disability service (specialist, acquired brain injury)
Karin Swift	Human services	NDIS participant	Lived experience practitioner
Kay Kaur	VET practitioner	TAFE Queensland	Disability
Mandy Strathearn	Project Manager	Workability Qld	Community services
Maree Butler	Portfolio Manager	TAFE Queensland	RTO management - community services
Margaret Rodgers	CEO	Community Resource Unit (CRU)	NDIS disability service provider and training
Mark Stewart	General Manager	Mi Haven	RTO
Melanie Emmerick	Business Development and Training Officer	Capable Services Cairns	NDIS service provider
Michael Burbank	VET practitioner	TAFE Queensland NGO practitioner	Mental health peer work practitioner and trainer
Sam Smith	VET practitioner	TAFE Queensland	Former disability practitioner and trainer
Shelley Haynes	VET practitioner	TAFE Queensland	Former disability practitioner and trainer
Steve Eltis	HR Manager	Wesley Mission Queensland	NDIS service provider
Tracy Galaud	VET practitioner	TAFE Queensland	Mental health, mental health peer work trainer

1.2 Modes of meetings

Due to COVID-19 restrictions and the widespread locations of the steering committee members, meetings were initially held online. The meetings were carefully planned to ensure efficient use of participants' time, given their professional roles. Agendas tabled for the six meetings are included in Appendix 1 and illustrate the input sought from stakeholders and the value that the project lead attributed to this expert involvement. Recorded minutes of these meetings attest to the valuable contribution the committee provided at each stage of the initiative (Appendix 2). The TAFE Queensland Project Team attended each of the steering committee meetings. At a point when COVID-19 restrictions relaxed, face-to-face

engagement with the steering committee membership was sought to share progress and gather more focused feedback on the use of the resources that were being developed. A half day workshop was scheduled at TAFE Queensland's Southbank campus in August 2021 to support these objectives.

1.3 Face-to-face workshop

This workshop was highly successful as it:

- allowed the opportunity for steering committee members to meet face-to-face and discover common areas of interest and intersect
- supported cross-sector collaboration
- provided detailed input into the project deliverables and their use by stakeholders
- invited stakeholders to suggest further participation from sector contacts relevant to fact sheet preparation.

It also provided an opportunity for the Human Skills Service Organisation (HSSO) to present information on their development of a Best Practice Guide for Vocational Placements, a Federal Government funded project. This supported collaboration, synergy and a higher level of awareness of both activities.

Table work activities were undertaken by attendees during the face to face steering committee meeting workshop. Responses and input from the Steering Committee enabled the initiative to identify not only additional information to be incorporated into the fact sheet deliverables, but also cross fertilised thinking around participants who might feature in the fact sheets. A summary of the findings from these discussions and the table work activities are included as Appendix 3.

1.4 Final meeting of NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative Steering Committee

The final scheduled steering committee meeting was held in February and provided a summary of the deliverables in relation to the timeframes. At this meeting, several members articulated a desire to continue their collaboration. There was keen interest to further discuss the launch of the resources developed, distribution points and the potential future synergies with the Community Resources Unit (CRU) initiative, focusing on vocational placements with self-managed NDIS participants.

To this end, a further meeting is scheduled for April/ May 2022 (beyond the scope of the NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative timeline). The inclination of steering committee members to continue their collaboration is indicative of the strength of relationships and also the identified need to enhance vocational placement opportunities as a source of the workforce pipeline in the disability sector.

N.B. It is interesting to note that a number of large organisations have recently incorporated dedicated roles to support vocational placement opportunities in the disability sector. These include the development of formal workplace supervisor training sessions in partnership with training providers, appointment of identified coaches and leaders, and updating policies and procedures concerning vocational placement.

2. Key deliverable: Research and articulate the benefits of quality vocational placements – highlights and challenges

2.1 Literature review

A key question is, 'What constitutes quality vocational placement?'. In order to answer this question, a brief review of existing research into the training of workers for entry into the disability sector, including vocational placement, was conducted.

With the NDIS in place, there is an urgent and renewed focus to develop the size and quality of the workforce to deliver contemporary services to people with a disability.

In 2019, Skills IQ conducted research for the Disability Support Industry Reference Committee on VET disability education delivery. This research focused on:

- the different models of training delivery for disability workers in Australia
- how effectively the current models prepare students for the workplace
- current challenges to developing and implementing best practice in training delivery in Australia.

Their report involved synthesising information from peer reviewed and gray literature sources, a survey of disability training providers, and stakeholder interviews. The summary report SkillsIQ (2020) provided some key findings relating to quality vocational placements.

The report noted an industry perception that students are generally not adequately prepared for work in industry. The survey of RTOs indicated difficulty in finding suitable placements and the interviews with service providers indicated concerns about the quality of training provided.

A necessity to integrate work and study components of training through a well-supported vocational placement program that could only be achieved through close partnerships between service providers and RTOs was stressed. Best practice examples highlighted processes relevant to both parties. Quality RTOs employed staff who were current in industry, responsive to service providers, and allowed industry simulations and hands-on training in well-equipped practical facilities. Quality service providers engaged meaningfully with RTOs and supported a culture of learning within their service.

2.2 Impact of research on current project work

Although the insights in this report influenced the approach in several ways, it was considered necessary to:

- research further into best practice guides for vocational placement. Desktop research identified (NDS, 2014), '*Tasmanian Disability Sector Best Practice Vocational Placement Guidelines*', which is comprehensive and directive.
- explore models of vocational placement, workplace supervision and the documentation (paperwork) associated with placement contracts and workplace observations. The SkillsIQ report, referred to above, indicated concerns from some

RTOs in relation to the quality of workplace supervision. Previous surveys of service providers had also indicated that vocational placement documentation and administration was a disincentive for many service providers.

- survey key stakeholder groups (especially service providers) to gain a first-hand snapshot of practices and issues in Queensland. This resulted in the development and circulation of surveys to participating RTOs and service providers. Additionally, focus groups were held with both sets of stakeholders. The focus groups comprised individuals who had indicated a willingness to explore issues raised in the surveys. Focus group processes and outcomes are discussed later in the report.
- locate stakeholders (VET practitioners, students, service providers, and people with a disability) who were willing to be interviewed on video about their experiences of vocational placement. The purpose was to highlight the benefits, challenges and examples of good practice.
- identify successful strategies and understand the process and commitment around these to make recommendations.

3. Key deliverable: Engagement with NDIS service providers to develop vocational placement models and solutions

3.1 Development and distribution of survey instruments

To collect current information about practices and processes, two surveys were developed — one each to be administered with participating RTOs and service providers. Drafted surveys were tabled and analysed with the steering committee to gain feedback. This was invaluable and resulted in the surveys being simplified to provide quantifiable and accurate responses in minimal time, thus not appearing or creating an onerous task for respondents.

These surveys are included in this report as Appendices 4 and 5. Surveys were distributed with the valuable assistance of many stakeholders, including:

- Department of Employment Small Business and Training (DESBT)
- Convenor, NDIS VET Practitioners' Community of Practice
- Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA)
- Far North Qld Disability Network
- Nth Qld Mental Health Network
- Service provider members of the steering committee

There was a delay in the distribution to some sectors, particularly the RTOs, due to conflicting sector events. Nonetheless, a sufficient number of responses were received to conduct an analysis and determine themes. The final numerical responses were:

- RTO stakeholders: 52
- Service provider stakeholders: 45
- Total respondents: 97

An analysis of the survey findings was presented to the second meeting of the steering committee. Key themes that emerged include the following:

- Vocational placement is considered an extremely cost effective recruitment strategy for service providers
- Developing and maintaining close relationships between RTOs and service providers is a key strategy for securing and supporting *ongoing*, suitable placement for students
- Some RTOs identified barriers that prevented them building these collaborative partnerships
- There were considerable differences in the expectations and responsibilities of each stakeholder group about (a) the preparation and (b) the support of students on placement. The detailed summary of these findings are attached as Appendices 6 and 7.

3.2 Follow-up activities – focus groups

Survey respondents were subsequently asked if they would participate in a 60 minute focus group to explore in more depth some of the topics raised in the survey. A total of 17

respondents agreed to participate in two focus groups — one for RTOs and one for service providers. However, not all of these respondents were able to attend the actual meetings when they occurred in August.

The final list of participants who engaged in the two focus groups are listed in the table below. The list indicates service providers and RTO participants.

Focus Group 1	Name	Organisation
Registered training organisations	Graham Burrige	Mi Haven
	Annette Du-Shane	Steps Group
	Vera Cockrenn	AMC Training and Consulting
	Melanie Clarke	TAFE Queensland
	Margaret Haynes	Morrissey Training
	Gary Rapp	TAFE Queensland

Focus Group 2	Name	Organisation
Service providers	Sarah Dart	ARC Disability Services
	Craig Bishop	Uniting Care Community
	Sue Lavelle	Ramsay Health
	Jenny Freeman	Centacare
	Steve Eltis	Wesley Mission Queensland
	Julie Devling	Community Lifestyles Agency
	Steven Paull	Big Dog Support Services

The focus group participants were posed a series of questions (Appendix 8). Resultant discussions revealed excellent practice examples of collaborative partnerships between RTOs and service providers with very positive outcomes for students. The discussions similarly highlighted several challenges encountered and offered a range of strategies to address these. The summary of these discussions is detailed in Appendix 9. Two focus group participants subsequently agreed to be interviewed on video to support the fact sheets being developed as a deliverable in this initiative.

4. Key deliverable: Tailored suite of vocational placement resources and promotional elements

The project plan developed for this initiative detailed the suite of fact sheets and resources to be developed and the focus of each. Initially this was to consist of three fact sheets and the associated videos noted immediately below:

- Fact Sheet 1: The focus was to highlight the benefit of quality vocational placements to key stakeholders (service providers and service users, RTOs and students)
- Fact Sheet 2: The focus was to provide guidelines for service providers to support quality vocational placements
- Fact Sheet 3: The focus was to provide guidelines for RTO to support quality vocational placements

This was later increased to six fact sheets based on feedback from the steering committee, discussions within the project team, and the large amount of information.

The suite of six fact sheets are listed below along with their final names:

- Fact Sheet 1: Benefits of quality vocational placements to service providers
- Fact Sheet 2: Benefits of quality vocational placements to students
- Fact Sheet 3: Benefits of quality vocational placements to registered training organisations
- Fact Sheet 4: Benefits of quality vocational placements to people with a disability
- Fact Sheet 5: Guidelines for service providers to ensure quality vocational placements
- Fact Sheet 6: Guidelines for RTO to ensure quality vocational placements

While the surveys and focus groups provided qualitative data and very clear insights into the key features of quality vocational placements, there was potential to explore these issues in more depth through videoed interviews with key stakeholders.

4.1 Stakeholder interviews – design and implementation

A series of questions were drafted as discussion points for the video interviews, discussed at steering committee meetings and further refined after consideration of some of the issues raised in the focus groups.

The questions for each stakeholder formed the basis for the recorded interviews and the responses informed the fact sheets being developed concurrently. The video interview questions are attached in Appendix 10 (RTO staff, service provider supervisors/managers, graduated students).

4.2 Locating interviewees

Requests for locating interviewees were made through the steering committee, which comprised NDIS providers and RTOs. One RTO (Horizon 2 t/as Care College) and a service provider (Centacare) offered to participate in the first video interviews, focusing on relationships formed around vocational placement processes. Bronwyn Rose, CEO, Horizon 2 t/as Care College engaged with a past student, employed at Centacare, and arranged for her to be part of the video interview. This was a successful outcome and provided valuable insights into quality practices in education and training and vocational placement. This interview highlighted aspects of best practice, which complemented each of the fact sheets being developed.

Interviewee	Organisation	Role
Bronwyn Rose	Horizon 2 t/as Care College (RTO)	Manager and VET practitioner
Kelly Andrews	Centacare	Placement coordinator and former student
Jody Ware	Centacare	Service Delivery Manager
Annette DuShane	STEPS Education and Training	VET practitioner
Naomi Collier	TAFE Queensland	VET practitioner
Steve Paull	Big Dog Services	Managing Director
Lisa Dawson	STEPS Education and Training	Past student and current disability support worker
Karen McIndoe	Social Studio	Studio Coordinator
Jess Wright	Big Dog Services	Past student and current employee
Robert Chittick	STEPS Education and Training	Past student and self-employed in leisure and recreation
Nam Suksamram	Social Studio	Past student and current employee; lived experience
Troy Nicholls	Endeavour Foundation	NDIS participant
Jesse Brandt	Endeavour Foundation	NDIS participant

4.3 Interview and video process

Three series of interviews were conducted face-to-face using a professional videographer. The expert advice from the videographer in relation to location of interview rooms, features of interview space, eg. background, lighting, noise levels, as well as optimum presentation of interviewees was extremely beneficial to the initiative. The videographer's quality control was an important element to the generally high standard of the filmed product. Due to the geographical location of some participants, a small number of interviews were completed remotely via computer. It is noted that whilst providing greater accessibility and range of

participants, the quality of these interviews was not of the same standard as the face-to-face interviews.

Learnings — interviews.

Even though the questions remained consistent, the interview discussions often moved in different directions, providing perspectives and processes not previously considered. These influenced and enriched subsequent interview discussions. As an example, one interviewee outlined in detail how their RTO assisted in matching students to specific placement roles. This subsequently shaped future questions with other VET practitioners about their practices and rationales for same in the pre-placement planning processes.

On occasion, some responses within interviews raised broader considerations also discussed with the steering committee. For example, one of the students interviewed had commenced his studies with the purpose of gaining credentials to commence his own business, which provides sport and recreational services to NDIS participants. Another past student also spoke of his decision to work as an independent provider along with his part-time employment at a disability service.

4.4 Development of the fact sheets

The videoed interviews also helped inform the content of the fact sheets. It quickly became evident that the original 'fact sheet 1 — Benefits for stakeholders' needed to be divided into individual (stakeholder) fact sheets, as the benefits were substantial and varied significantly between stakeholders. As a preliminary step, the original fact sheet was divided into three fact sheets and included the '*Benefits for service users*' with the '*Benefits for service providers*' fact sheet. After a suggestion concerning the development of a fact sheet focusing on the potential benefits for people with a disability participating in vocational placement, it was determined to create another, separate fact sheet with this focus.

Use of the video interviews

In considering how to use these interviews effectively, the eventual presentation of the fact sheets was influenced by resources developed by a group who wished to improve their processes for vocational placement across a range of disciplines. The use of brief video segments highlighting students and practitioners' perspectives and illustrating key points contributed to this quality online tool.

After exploring this approach, each video was dissected into brief segments of varying durations focusing on a particular topic. Each segment was titled according to the focus of the content, for example 'Motivation to study disability work' and 'How I located a placement'. As further video interviews were completed, it was evident that multiple segments could be clustered together under a single title. Thus, the merging of several video snippets under specific themes illustrated and highlighted the key points to be addressed in the fact sheets.

To this end, there was further refinement in the titles of the video clusters and a graphic designer provided guidance on integrating the video clusters whilst presenting the fact sheets in an optimal format. As the fact sheets were to be in hard copy as well as electronic, a QR

code was displayed on each fact sheet to provide access to the relevant video cluster for readers of the hard copy versions.

The videographer provided the clusters for consideration and the ongoing editing process, which resulted in the removal of some snips, substitution with others, and re-ordering to ensure relevant flow and impact of the cluster. Captioning was included as a matter of course.

Potential further use of initiative's collateral

Several of the video clusters were not readily applicable to the six fact sheets created for this initiative. Nonetheless, they are considered to be of useful value in the overall discussion of vocational placement for students and this has led to a process of exploring how best to use this material as a guide for students, if funding were available. Potential further uses include developing an online video of 'Frequently asked questions' as a guide for students contemplating study in the disability or related areas. Such a resource could be added to RTOs websites, for students seeking course information. It would also be possible to create a student guide to all stages of the vocational placement experience, which could be used in student course orientations as well as more focused preparation for vocational placement by VET practitioners.

N.B. It is important to note that these suggestions in the paragraph above are not within the remit of this initiative.

4.5 Findings

This project, through steering committee and other sector interactions, once again confirms the necessity of a highly skilled and responsive workforce to meet the needs of people with a disability. Quality vocational placements form an essential role in the development of this workforce and this initiative reinforces the value of vocational placement as an essential and increasingly recognised element of an organisation's recruitment process.

Crucial components of quality vocational placements have been identified and demonstrated in the suite of videos and fact sheets. These include:

- the necessity for strong, supportive relationships to be actively promoted at all levels and developed between disability services and training providers
- thorough pre-placement planning and orientation of students to a service, its philosophy and style of operation
- a need for clarity around the assessment tasks to be undertaken on vocational placement, and the responsibilities of each stakeholder (RTO, student, organisation) for these tasks
- a need for clarity about (and logical presentation of) documentation
- a need for support and guidance to workplace supervisors and buddies/other roles is critical to ensure students develop the required skills and knowledge to capably enter the workforce
- a need for mutual support between training providers and service organisations through the duration of vocational placement

5. Key deliverable: Development of incentives and strategies to support quality vocational placements

5.1 Strategies to ensure quality vocational placements

Quality vocational placements hold multiple benefits for RTOs and service providers, as detailed in Fact Sheet 1 and Fact Sheet 2. Whilst some excellent examples of best practice collaborations were identified through this initiative, it is evident that RTOs and service providers need to commit time, energy and resources as outlined in the points below.

5.1.1 Develop collaborative relationships

- RTO commitment to consistently attend and actively participate in service provider networks to explain the vocational placement processes and increase the spread and reach of placement opportunity for their students
- RTO commitment to planned engagement with local service providers through workplace visits or other contact as appropriate (scheduled sessions via online meeting platforms with the workplace supervisor and/or student as an example) to confirm placement requirements, support required and student performance
- Service providers and people with a lived experience of disability supporting experienced staff to address students in guest lecturer roles as a regular component of training delivery, indicating the value of these stakeholders to the course delivery (the RTO may also potentially identify future training staff through scheduling such sessions)
- RTO and service providers using validation or course advisory processes to review learning and assessment materials to provide comment on whether training and assessment tools meet current needs. This may also provide insights into how the RTO's vocational placement documentation may be streamlined.

5.1.2 Consistent and comprehensive processes

To support all stakeholders throughout the placement experience, RTOs and service providers develop processes such as:

- RTOs must consistently provide staff time and energy to support vocational placements and workplace supervisors through all stages of the placement experience. This includes:
 - preparation of students for the placement experience
 - providing support to students in their initial meeting with prospective placement organisation to clarify work role duties, supervision and assessment and documentation requirements
 - explaining expectations and responsibilities to service provider staff, specifically the workplace supervisor, including identifying the required verifying signatures
 - regular engagement (phone, online meeting platform and where possible visits) with workplace supervisor and student during placement to confirm student participation and performance

- culminating meetings with students and workplace supervisor (phone, online meeting platform or face-to-face) to finalise placement and gather feedback on students' performance.
- Service providers can be an invaluable part of a student's development. They can achieve this by:
 - providing clear induction and orientation processes for students at the commencement of their placement
 - allocating a workplace supervisor (and where appropriate, workplace buddy) to support the student to gain confidence and develop competence in their role. This includes providing regular supervision and guidance.
 - providing staff time for engagement with the RTO to discuss student progress and to resolve any issues concerning the placement
 - ensuring the workplace supervisor completes required documentation for the student to successfully complete the placement
 - providing training, support and supervision to staff who take on the role as workplace supervisors, noting this can be conducted in collaboration with the RTO taking an active role
 - providing staff (workplace supervisor) time to undertake a final debrief with the student and RTO at the conclusion of placement to formally complete the placement and confirm all documentation is in order.

5.2 Incentives

Multiple incentives exist for RTOs and service providers to engage in processes that assure quality vocational placements, highlighted in Fact Sheet 1 and Fact Sheet 2 in the suite of resources developed (Deliverable 4).

Incentives for RTOs include:

- improved completion rates for students
- greater student satisfaction and enhanced reputation of training organisation
- ease of locating and managing student placements through collaborative partnerships formed with industry
- enhanced currency of training staff through industry engagement.

Incentives for service providers include:

- cost effective recruitment processes
- opportunities to influence the training and development of the future sector workforce via engagement with RTOs to deliver specific aspects of training (as an example, the aforementioned suggested roles of guest lecturer and role consultations) as well as guiding students' on-the-job performance

- development of workplace supervisor/buddy knowledge and skills in mentoring and leadership to support successful vocational placement completion and potential transition to the workforce
- a continuing pipeline of competent work-ready graduates.

N.B. Discussion has arisen during the initiative in relation to financial incentives for workplace supervisors. This is not within the remit of this initiative.

The tangible resources (fact sheets with embedded video-recordings) that have been developed by this initiative will support quality vocational placements by providing accurate information to stakeholders to improve the quality of the overall training and employability of graduates. Flow-on consequences of the use of the resources will enhance the capacity of VET to meet demand of skilled workers in NDIS roles via efficient vocational placement processes. The suite of six fact sheets are listed below. Additionally, the synergies created with previous NDIS-related work in vocational education and training through WorkAbility Qld and TAFE Queensland initiatives, the linking and alignment to existing structures outlined in ‘*Section 7— Next Steps*’ and the practical and achievable strategies discussed in 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.2 will also contribute.

- Fact Sheet 1: Benefits of quality vocational placements for service providers
- Fact Sheet 2: Benefits of quality vocational placements for students
- Fact Sheet 3: Benefits of quality vocational placements for registered training organisations
- Fact Sheet 4: Benefits of quality vocational placements to people with a disability
- Fact Sheet 5: Guidelines for service providers to ensure quality vocational placements
- Fact Sheet 6: Guidelines for RTOs to ensure quality vocational placements

6. Key deliverable: Collaborate, link and work closely with Community Resource Unit (CRU)

At the commencement of this initiative, WorkAbility Qld advised TAFE Queensland that Community Resource Unit (CRU) was funded by DESBT to undertake an initiative focusing on the potential of engaging and supporting people with a disability into the placement process, as workplace supervisors.

Following on, a number of face-to-face and online meetings occurred so the stakeholders could discuss and be informed on:

- the objectives of each initiative
- the parameters (scope) of each initiative, including differences and any common elements
- deliverables
- stakeholders relevant to each of the initiatives
- planned approaches to each initiative
- timelines and progress.

A collaborative relationship subsequently developed and has progressed through this initiative, supported by the above consultations and the inclusion of CRU Chief Executive Officer and consultant on this initiative's steering committee.

7. Next steps

The initiative's suite of resources and final report have been completed as per the schedule. There is a critical workforce need identified that requires all stakeholders to authentically commit to ensuring vocational placements are well designed, efficiently supported and lead to employment.

Immediate actions include but are not limited to the following:

- The suite of resources developed as part of this initiative will be widely distributed to encourage discussion and use, leading to enhanced, consistent and collaborative processes by RTOs and service providers. Fact sheets will be hosted on the WorkAbility website in addition to those RTOs and NDIS services who wish to do so
- Circulating the suite of fact sheets to the TAFE Queensland Vocational Placement Officers Network for use in planning vocational placement for Certificate III in Individual Support, Certificate IV in Disability and other community services qualifications as is useful
- Following the request of the members of the steering committee who have requested a further meeting in March/April 2022 to consider the impact, spread and reach of the resources developed. This group has the potential to become a valuable reference point to provide insights and future directions for training and workforce development and as such will be added to the NDIS Principles and VET Practitioners' Community of Practice circulation list.
- Circulating the suite of fact sheets to members of the steering committee for their distribution to member networks they are involved in
- Acting on synergies with the existing NDIS VET Practitioners' Community of Practice as a distribution point and forum to raise key themes raised through the development of this initiative. This initiative and the resources produced are on the agenda of the NDIS VET Practitioner's Community of Practice meeting scheduled in March 2022
- Restructure the above Community of Practice by broadening terms of reference to formally include vocational placement and a recommendation that the name be amended to the NDIS VET and Sector Practitioners' Community of Practice and VP Network, as per the detail in Key Deliverable 1 of this report
- Inform the TAFE Queensland ageing, community and disability state-wide professional learning community (PLC) of the resources and importantly the analysis of the data from RTOs and service providers
- The relationship with the Community Resources Unit (CRU) and their work with self-managing NDIS participants offers further opportunities for stakeholders to explore and support alternative models of vocational placement. It is envisaged that engagement will be maintained with CRU on any further developmental activities they may undertake in this space

8. Resources developed in the initiative

The below fact sheets 1-6 plus the '*Introduction to all fact sheets*' document have been developed throughout the initiative. Links to video vignette interviews conducted will be embedded into the fact sheets, along with a QR code allowing access on mobile devices from the resources in hard copy format.

WorkAbility Qld will host the fact sheets on their website as the primary host and the live fact sheets will be made available once hosting set up is complete by WorkAbility Qld. Other organisational websites will also be able to host the resources once this is completed.

For the purposes of presentation in this report we include the fact sheets in PDF format, on which the QR code (for mobile devices) has a placeholder reflecting where the live links will be incorporated.

We also include a link below page that demonstrates every video vignette that has been included in fact sheets 1 – 6 and that are to be embedded as mentioned above.

- Fact Sheet NDIS Vocational Placement Initiative: Introduction to all fact sheets
- Fact Sheet 1: Benefits of quality vocational placements to service providers
- Fact Sheet 2: Benefits of quality vocational placements for students
- Fact Sheet 3: Benefits of quality vocational placements for registered training organisations
- Fact Sheet 4: Benefits of quality vocational placements for people with a disability
- Fact Sheet 5: Guidelines for service providers to ensure quality vocational placements
- Fact Sheet 6: Guidelines for RTOs to ensure quality vocational placements

Link: [NDIS Vocational Placement videos](#)

9. References

SkillsIQ 2020, *'An evidence-based discussion paper on VET disability education delivery'*, SkillsIQ, Sydney.

Available at:

https://www.skillsiq.com.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Research/VET_Disability_Education_Discussion_Paper_Sept2020.pdf

National Disability Services (NDS) 2014, *'Tasmanian Disability Sector Best Practice Vocational Placement Guidelines'*, NDS, Tasmania.

Available at: https://www.nds.org.au/images/Policy/Tas_BestPractice_Guidelines.pdf

10. Appendices

1. Steering Committee Meeting Agendas
2. Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
3. Summary of Steering Committee Group Workshop Activity
4. NDIS Service Provider Survey Questions
5. RTO Survey Questions
6. NDIS Service Provider Survey Results
7. RTO Survey Results
8. Focus Group Questions – Service Providers and RTOs
9. Summary of Focus Group Discussions
10. Video Vignette Interview Questions – RTOs, Service Providers, Graduates
11. Fact Sheet Resources

