



Fast-Track Apprenticeships Grant Funding Case Study

Name of Registered Training Organisation
T.A.F.E. Western Sydney Institute
Title of Project
Fast track for Apprentices/Employers in Sheet Metal Work – Heavy
Apprenticeship
MEM 30305 Certificate 111 in Engineering - Fabrication Trade
Project Summary <i>Please summarise how the project contributed to the more timely completion of apprenticeships in the long term, including evidence of how the project:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">reduced the timeframe for the competency-based completion of the apprenticeship while ensuring quality of service provision; and increased the status of apprenticeships. <p>The overall objective of the program is to increase the number of qualified trades people in the Metal Fabrication Trades, particularly in Heavy Fabrication, by providing flexible competency based training and assessments. The manufacturing area of western Sydney is still a major contributor to the economy, however, has been reduced due to globalization of manufacturing over the last 10 years or so. During this project, there were a number of contextual factors which impacted including the recession which affected most employers in this area, introduction of competency based pay progression and the impact of new technologies on the production processes.</p>
Main features of the program
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Development of training and assessment strategies customised for each individual apprentice.Communication between the employer, apprentice and the trainer are critical for the success of the program.Design of Training and assessment is to provide the employer with the skills required in their workplaces, the apprentice with the skills and knowledge to effectively work in their current job and the trade as they progress in their careers.Development of new programs of delivery where the training and assessment is more closely aligned to the workplace requirements, the apprentice's needs and the availability of training at the college.Reduction of time-frames for early completion of apprenticeships have been and will continue to be reduced in the long term.Ensuring quality and provision of training and assessment services.
Findings
Employers and apprentices were targeted for the program based on the performance of the apprentices. High performing apprentices were targeted and their employers then invited to commit to the trial project.
Apprentices from all years were targeted, however, most were in their second year. Eleven students started the fast track program with 2 finishing in 2009. Mature age apprentices were provided with on the job training and assessment and others attended in the evenings.

One of the major risks in the metals area is safety and the potential for apprentices to miss out on underpinning knowledge and basic skills in a fast track program. Evaluation by the employers found that safety and underpinning knowledge required in the workplace was ensured through the process for fast-track apprentices.

Progression against the pay scales

The general feedback regarding progression against the pay scales was positive, however, there were mixed reports during the project from employers. Some employers were affected by the economic crash of 2008 and in fact some employers closed shop during the project. Others had reduced their staffing levels. Apprentices that were fast tracked progressed in their jobs as well as being paid as skilled workers. Their status has increased in their workplace as well as being given extra employment opportunities

The status of apprentices that were trained and assessed gave the apprentice a solid foundation and a high level of understanding of different skills required within their trade. This has increased the awareness of the project and as specific practical competencies were selected this encouraged the employer to delegate responsibility and ownership of a project to the apprentice.

Some employers were willing to do this as students were in the second half of the 3rd stages of their apprenticeship increasing the status of their apprentice.

This could only occur by obtaining a good understanding of other stakeholders' viewpoints and development of closer links with employer and their apprentices.

Apprenticeship Outcomes

Please provide the:

actual number of apprentices that started in your project (where applicable);

actual number of apprentices that finished in your project (where applicable);

nominal duration of the apprenticeship (months); and

reduction in the duration of the apprenticeship (months).

- Actual Number started: 11
- Completions: 4 in 2009, 6 will complete during 2010 and 1 apprentice left the industry
- Nominal Duration: 48 months
- Reduction in the duration: 6-12 months

Please provide the numbers of apprentices involved in the project who:
were Indigenous / non-Indigenous Australians;
completed project activities;
were existing workers;
were previously outside the workforce before participating in the project;
were people with disabilities; and
were female.

- Indigenous / non-Indigenous Australians; Nil
- Completed project activities; 4 have completed others are completing.
- Existing workers; 11
- Previously outside the workforce before participating in the project; Nil
- People with disabilities; and Nil
- Female Nil

DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS

Please discuss the development of the project's fast-track apprenticeship model and how it could be sustained over time.

Do you propose to continue to use this model within your industry? If so, are you proposing to change the model based on your experience from this project? Will you be trialing or implementing the model for use in other industries? If so, which industries?

Is there potential for this fast-tracked apprenticeship model to be accelerated further? If so, how?

1.Fast-Track Management Model

A framework was developed in consultation with industry groups, government representatives, TAFE teachers and management.

A reference group was established to discuss the development of the framework, strategies, learning and assessment outcomes and continued future of the project.

A total of six meetings of the reference group were held during the year.

Members of the reference group included the following people and organisations:

- Maria Trevaskis WSI TAFE NSW, Manager Educational Development
- Allan Ryan, WSI TAFE NSW, Head Teacher, Vehicle Trades
- Phil Nixon, AI Group
- Milton Owen, AI Group
- Grant Medaris, State Training Services, ITA
- Bob Palmer, Australian Business Limited, Consultant
- Kim Foster-Manager Educational Programs TAFE
- Eric Milne, Rick Duynhoven
- Kim Foster-Manager, Education Programmes, TAFE
- Chris Keogh-Head Teacher Fabrication and Welding-TAFE
- Rodney Wallace –Teacher, Metal, Fabrication and Welding, TAFE
- Tom Holmes-Teacher, Panelbeating, TAFE
- Terry Teremoana-Teacher, Vehicle Painting, TAFE
- Eddie Dobo- WSROC, (Metals)
- David Laing-Teacher, Construction
- Michelle Baillie-ABL Vehicles Trades
- Robb Werner-Timber Building Materials Association
- David Jones- Timber Building Materials Association
- Glen Johnston-President Windows and Doors Industry Council

The focus of the discussion in regards to the model revolved around the current and continuing requirements and needs of both employers and apprentices.

An important aspect of the model and the continuing success of the fast tracking process was its sustainability and continuing flexibility to meet future employment needs.

The model has the following essential components that will maintain the integrity of the project and meet funding requirements and objectives:

- Strategies for teaching and assessing
- Communication with stakeholders
- Specific systems for record keeping
- Tools and resources
- Promotion
- Employer training
- Management of project
- Ongoing improvement

The model will ensure that the viability of the program will be sustained in the future through:

- Continued effective management
- On-going consultation with stakeholders
- Ongoing development of tools and materials for use by employers, apprentices and teachers

- Employer and apprentice liaison
- Advice and support from reference group

Model has been successful in fast tracking and completing competencies in Engineering-Fabrication and as such will be used in the future.

Reference group will be discussing and implementing new strategies where applicable for:

- Teaching methodologies
- Assessments
- Employer liaison

Any new strategies, tools and methodologies will be trialed with specific employers and apprentices before being introduced to the whole industry.

The model will be introduced to the engineering trades, including light fabrication.

There is potential for this fast-tracked apprenticeship funding to be extended to include other Engineering trades, where more skilled workers are required. It is envisaged that the programme will extend to include other qualifications in the future.

This will be done through consultation with the reference group and current employer recommendations.

2. Fast-Track Apprenticeship Models

- a) Management and teachers developed a Fast-Track apprenticeship model that focused on delivery of quality outcomes.

This is achieved by concentrating on key areas that include:

- Recruitment
- Employer involvement and training
- Continuous RTO improvement in delivery and assessing
- Customised training
- Monitoring Systems

In each key area the model incorporates strategies, systems and resources that are required to meet the overall aims of the programme.

(see attachment)

ISSUES

Please describe any issues encountered regarding the introduction of your project and how these were managed.

There were a number of issues encountered in introducing the fast track, to teachers and employers.

The issues are being managed through the formation of the reference group which includes industry representatives, teachers and management.

Issues include:

Successfully Engaging Employers and Apprentices in the Fast-Track Project.

It was important to “profile” potential employers as different issues would arise depending on the size of the organisation.

Large companies such as “Crane Industries” have more resources and supervision capabilities for the training and assessment of apprentices. A larger number of competencies can also be attained in the larger organisations.

In comparison to this, small to medium sized businesses often find it more difficult to engage apprentices in a wide range of competencies in the workplace. This is mainly due to the nature of the work carried on in the size of organisation.

Micro businesses find it even more difficult, as they were highly specialised work was carried out. These types of business rely on the TAFE to support them in the training and assessment of the apprentice of competencies not gained in the workplace.

Initial identification of potential employers and qualifying apprentices, assisted in the project being accepted by a number of employers in the industry. With this initial success and the input from members of the reference group, the fast-track project was able to be implemented successfully.

Mapping Competencies and Customized Training Plans

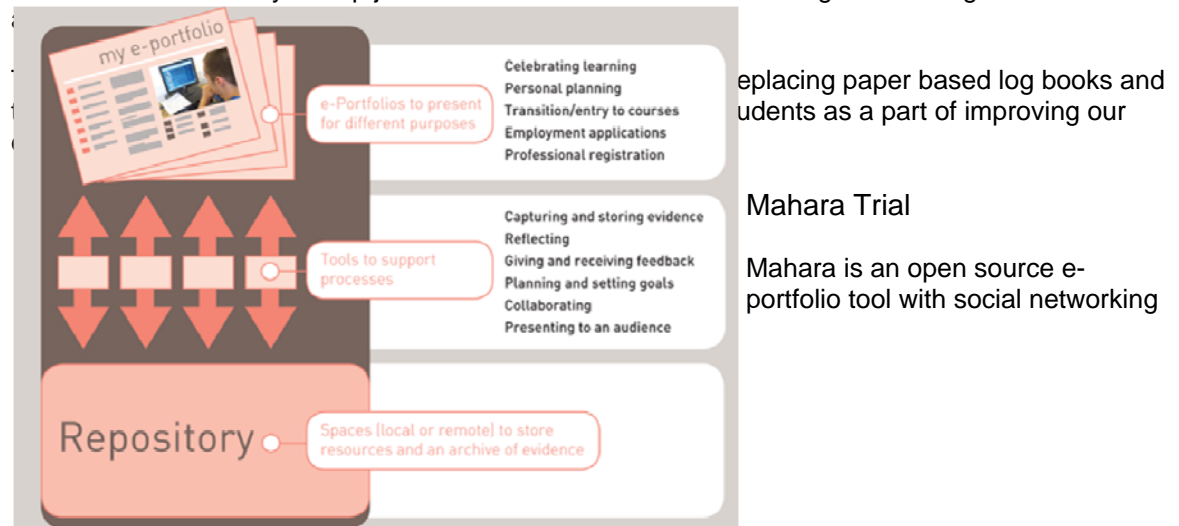
- In a number of workplaces the apprentice works across a narrow range of competencies and therefore, the apprentice needs to attend a TAFE College to complete their training.
- Non existence of some of the competencies in the workplace was an issue for some apprentices.
- Mapping of competencies was an important element in customising Training Plans.
- Units needed to reflect the nature of work carried out in the workplace. Liaison with employers and supervisors in each workplace assisted in profiling jobs and mapping the competencies required. Once this was achieved customised plans were developed in consultation with both employers and apprentices. This process ensured that their competencies met the learning needs of the apprentices.

Development and Trial on New Learning and Assessment Strategies

Teachers and assessors in the project were encouraged to develop new learning and assessment strategies where required. This is a continuing aspect of the project, its objectives and reporting. Guidelines have been established. In this manner there is continued communication and updates given to the reference group.

- **E-Learning Portfolio**

The Australian Industry Group joined with WSI to conduct a trial using E- Learning Portfolio for



functions that was developed in New Zealand and is a plug-in for Moodle. Mahara was made available in a DET sand pit environment which was used for the trial. Mahara represented the largest part of the trial. Two (2) of the teachers involved in fast track project were trained to use Mahara.

The trial tested four quite different e-portfolio systems:

- Mahara, available in the DET sandpit
- Skillsbook, managed by Worklab, Tasmania
- Pebble Pad, managed by Pebble Pad UK
- Careers Connect, available through the WSI Careers Connect development site

Training and ongoing technical support was offered to participants in each e-portfolio system. The trial was evaluated by collecting feedback from participants through anonymous online surveys, face to face interviews, email feedback and comments posted in forums on the site (when available).

WSI's e-portfolio trial resulted in a disappointing level of e-portfolio usage despite access to e-portfolio tools, training and ongoing support.

The assumption was that apprentices were using "facebook" and other technologies. However, it was found in the trial that they use mobile technologies rather than web based technologies. It was therefore decided that students would not use the technology.

However, evaluation of staff that were trained and used the e-portfolios with students is ongoing and recommendations as to the next steps that could be taken in ascertaining a role for e-portfolios in the fast track project in the coming year.

Professional Development

Teachers also attended training in:

- Group presentations (required when addressing the reference group)
- Community practice (working and liaising with employers in work environments)
- Best practice used in RPL
- E-Learning Systems and Practice
- E-Learning Facilitator Training

Increased pay levels

Some employers were apprehensive of shorter apprenticeships and increased pay levels because of the shorter apprenticeships.

There are a number of issues in regard to the pay progression which are not limited to small or larger organisations. This project found that while most employers were committed to competency based pay progression a lot of the employers did not understand the new arrangements and had not attended information sessions.

Workplace Assessments

There were three main issues;

1. Historically, employers have not completed workplace evidence log books accurately or with sufficient validity to satisfy assessment requirements.
2. Employers complain about the amount of paperwork required to record activities against each competency.
3. It is the role of the assessor to ensure that evidence meets the rules of assessment. Evidence and recording of evidence has been an essential part of the teacher role in the training and assessment of fast track students.

The project was successful in reducing the amount of paper work by customising record books from Skills Pro, and using Moblogs for the verification of workplace evidence and encouraging collaboration between employers, apprentices and the teachers.

The progress of each candidate is tracked using a simple style of recording that records the competencies to be assessed in the workplace and those at the TAFE College.

Samples attached.

Methodologies

Please provide:

details of training and assessment materials produced or used in the project; and
details of practices, strategies and/or training delivery models produced by your project.

SkillsPro was used to provide electronic evidence to support training & assessment.

- The software assists teachers in developing individual learning plans for students.
- Learning plans can be created using the Learning Plan Generator.
- The requirements of units of competency are mapped against training standards. All learning plans created are matched to and checked against the training package requirements and conditions.
- Planning is flexible, efficient and effective, enabling training provision to be responsive to changing industry needs.
- SkillsPro allows the user to create recognition of prior learning documents, view and print a range of reports, identifying the various requirements necessary to achieve a task.

Documents produced include:

- customised learning plans that are compliant to training package rules
- delivery report and timetables based on units of competency selected in learning plans
- RPL (recognition for prior learning) and student self-evaluation documents on selected units of competency
- agreement between trainee and employer
- record books, log books and roll books

Practical strategies to ensure consistency were developed including:

- defined communication process for classroom training schedules, workshop rosters, formal meetings, reviews, OH&S policies and issues
- defining an holistic approach to assessment and ensuring resource either on job and/or simulations
- Holistic project approach to unit clustering
- RPL/RCC on commencement
- Workplace assessment and structured workplace visits by teachers
- Management of flexible delivery options via Moodle online student management system – complementing face to face delivery

Evidence of Engagement with Industry / Employers

Please provide information about:

the extent to which industry / employers were involved in the fast-tracking of the apprenticeship; any adaptations made to training plans (if applicable); and
the extent to which the training met the requirements of the participating industry / employers.

All contact with employers was on an individual basis. Employers were initially approached by teachers to discuss the scope of the whole project.

There was a minimum of three visits to employers that focused on apprenticeship assessments and discussing their progress with employers/supervisors. Once to set up and plan the fast track

program, and two visits for assessment and evaluation. Phone calls were regular between the employer and the teachers.

Industry groups and government agencies were invited to form the reference group which was established and has met monthly to discuss issues and offer advice.

Meetings were held in February, March, April, May, June and October.

Meetings concentrated on:

- Discussions and evaluation of the project as a whole
- Presentations and updates from teachers
- Discussion and debate on the continuous improvement of the project
- Discussion of workplace issues
- Evaluation of training and assessment methodology
- Reflection on best practice

Training plans have been adapted to the individual needs of both employers and apprentices. These are completed with the cooperation of all parties.

Evaluations carried out both on the phone and face to face with employers, supervisors and apprentices. This information can be found in the attached evaluations

Evidence of the success of the fast tracking programme has occurred through personal visits in November and December. Both employers and apprentices were involved.

In both cases training needs are being met. In a number of cases pays have increased as has the status of the apprentice involved.

Small employer's requirements have been met where work experience for the apprentice is limited.

Larger organisations requirements have also been met as employers have gained more competent staff in a shorter period. This has helped productivity through the addition of a more skilled worker in the workplace.

Employer/Apprentice Package

An employer/Apprentice "Information Package" was developed to assist both parties in:

- Understanding the fast-track Project
- Assistance in finding information
- On the job training & assessment skills
- Incentives

The package brings together information and assistance into one "easy to use" and stand alone package. It can be saved on a memory stick and also can be found on the web.

Employers are able to easily access information found on Government sites.

Topics are included that not only offer links to more comprehensive information, but also give valuable practical examples in:

- Recruitment, Selection and Induction
- Bullying in the Workplace
- Assessment Practice
- Skills Training in the workplace

The package has been given to a number of employers and supervisors with positive feedback. It

can be produced electronically and place on websites.

There is value in promoting this package on a face to face basis as part of the preparation for employers taking on fast track apprentices.

Contact Details for Further Information

Maria Trevaskis
Manager Professional Development
117 Henry St
Penrith. NSW 2750
Ph: 47248282
Fax: 47248259
Mobile: 0424140356