Workforce Development Council public meeting

**Auckland
26 September 2019**
~ 60 attendees

Overview

On 26 September 2019, the Tertiary Education Commission and Ministry of Education held the third of a series of public meetings on Workforce Development Councils (WDCs). These meetings form part of a wider engagement process for the Reform of Vocational Education work programme, focused on the potential coverage and governance of WDCs.

This meeting was well attended, with a range of representatives from employers (including small businesses), industry associations, industry training organisations, education providers and central and local Government present.

The following pages are a brief summary of some key themes identified at the meeting.

Please note that this output document does not claim to represent the individual views of all attendees present at the meeting on 26 September 2019. Rather, it provides a general overview of some key matters discussed.

Coverage

Potential Groupings

The main two proposed groupings discussed at this workshop focused around the larger groupings (six or seven WDCs) and a potential grouping of four WDCs.

The discussion around the smaller number of WDCs involved the greater size and scale of these, but it was noted that a larger number of groupings could potentially help facilitate greater representation for smaller industries.

As with the previous meeting, there was discussion around where sports and recreation may fit in, and discussion about expanding the community and social services to include public services.

There were concerns raised about how multidisciplinary industries would be segmented in the WDCs.

Shared Functions?

There was lots of discussion around the value of shared competencies and functions, particularly around areas like soft skills, technological capability, pastoral care standards, and data and systems. Some groups felt these could be operated through an entirely separate organisation or WDC, others indicated these could be shared competencies or frameworks.

It was agreed that shared functions could potentially mean greater consistency, and a more holistic approach to learning and development that was more learner centric than current systems.

What's really important?

The niche nature of individual industries needed to be accounted for, regardless of the position within (or size of) a WDC grouping.

Participants were interested in how the different components of the system fit together – including government – and how the new WDCs could be incentivised to respond to industry in a way ITOs aren't incentivised to do now.

There was general acknowledgement of the complexity of industry and the diversity of interests within these, and a desire that WDCs were not dominated by the biggest or loudest industries – ensuring everyone has a voice.

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Governance

How can the interests of employers and industry be represented?

Collaboration was a key theme of this discussion – with an acknowledgement that WDCs would only work if industry and the WDCs were closely aligned.

Like the conversation on coverage, a strong desire to identify and acknowledge the niche nature of individual industries was important. Employers needed to know there was someone at a WDC that could understand their operations, so there would be no disconnect between qualification design and what was needed by employers.

Employers also emphasized the importance of holding WDCs to account, to ensure they are responding to their industry needs.

Advisory groups and similar mechanisms were presented as a potential means of ensuring feedback loops are embedded into the WDCs.

What governance structures could work well?

Participants discussed the need for a core central governance capability, with a strong focus on learning outcomes. There was discussion about how different layers of the WDC could have different skills needs, and the acknowledgement of a need for governance experts at the core of the WDC system. This was potentially more around mind-set than skillset, but it was crucial that relevant people from industry sectors were at the governance table, too.

The need for key strategic leaders that could see beyond their own individual industry was raised, and the competency profile this might require.

Some tables indicated that they saw value in a common framework or governance structures across the WDCs, noting that this may differ slightly in each organisation dependent on the industries it represented.

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Thank you very much for your time

If you have any questions about this document, or the WDC work programme, please feel free to contact us at **WDCs@tec.govt.nz**.