

Redesign of vocational education:

Guide to making a submission

What's proposed

The Government has proposed disestablishing Te Pūkenga and re-creating a reduced number of polytechnics (those that are financially capable of standing alone), with the remainder placed in a loose federation anchored by the Open Polytechnic (**Proposal 1**).

Workforce Development Councils (which provide skills leadership, set programme standards, develop qualifications, provide quality assurance, and tender advice to the Tertiary Education Commission) would be replaced by **either**:

- **(Proposal 2A)** sector-specific Industry Training Boards, which would incorporate most of the current functions of WDCs *and* those of arrangers of workplace-based learning (former ITOs that are business units of Te Pūkenga); **or**
- **(Proposal 2B)** unnamed sector-specific successor bodies that would carry out most of the current functions of WDC, but at a lower cost to the government and in a way that is more industry-led.

Under option 2B, the arranging of training would again be carried out by former ITOs, either standing alone or merged into a new organisation, and by individual polytechnics/the proposed federation. A temporary moratorium on competition from the private sector for those functions would be considered.

The funding system (**Proposal 3**) would revert to pre-2020 settings, which would advantage polytechnics and classroom-based learning at the expense of workplace-based learning. The standard-setting function would be funded from the allocation for workplace-based learning.

Key points to consider

The food and fibre sector is the **mainstay of the Aotearoa New Zealand economy** and our largest export earner. It employs more than 300,000 people and trains more than 30,000 at any one time.

The Government has set an ambitious goal of doubling exports by value over ten years. This will require significant investment in technology and skills, and a **vocational education and training (VET) system that delivers a reliable skills 'pipeline'** for the food and fibre sector.



Despite repeated reforms, the VET system is not meeting the needs of the food and fibre sector. The lack of skilled workers in places where the sector farms, grows, processes, packages and exports is **undermining productivity and profitability**.

The current VET system is **inflexible and insufficiently connected to industry needs**. Funding favours classroom-based learning and makes low-volume but strategically important programmes difficult to establish and deliver. Micro-credentials are under-utilised. Workplace-based learning, which the food and fibre sector and many learners prefer, is disadvantaged. Opportunities for multi-provider and hybrid programmes (with both classroom and workplace-based elements) are hard to realise.

Māori are heavily engaged in the food and fibre sector as agribusiness owners, landholders, workers and learners. **Māori aspire to a VET system that meets their needs, provides flexibility and choice, and incorporates te ao Māori.**

Given the size, characteristics and importance of the food and fibre sector, **bespoke arrangements for the sector are warranted**. Any replacement system should be industry-led and should explicitly work to meet the skill needs of the food and fibre sector.

As well as standard-setting, a new industry-led organisation should have a role in **commissioning and brokering programmes** from a range of providers and in multiple delivery formats to ensure that key skill gaps are filled, and that the system acts with a **strategic purpose**.

The Government has indicated that the industry's views will carry extra weight in the re-design. Industry submitters should seek a **continued role** in the design and implementation of the new VET system.

Submissions close on 12 September 2024.

More information is available at [2024 Vocational education and training reforms - Education in New Zealand](#)

