

Benchmarking for continuous improvement

This guide looks at benchmarking learner and employer survey results for continuous improvement.

Benchmarking – your decision

You decide if benchmarking is right for your RTO.

Benchmarking is a partnership. You agree to share, compare and discuss your learner and employer survey results with other RTOs.

Benchmarking results spreads ideas about delivering quality training and assessment. It can help keep your RTO at the leading edge.

Choosing partners

If you are concerned about benchmarking with competitors, remember: you select your benchmarking partners. If your market is in western Sydney, you could benchmark "with", a southern Sydney RTO. If your market is in Warrnambool, choose partners in Mount Gambier or Broome.

It can help if benchmarking partners are similar in some ways. You might select several partners to get useful comparisons. You could ask questions like these to help select the right partners.

Your RTO	Benchmarking partners
350 enrolments and RPL assessments each year	Will it help if my partners have similar enrolments?
Mostly on the job training and assessment, and RPL assessment	Will it help if my partners mostly train and assess on the job?
Disability services	Could I benchmark with RTOs operating in other personal services areas such as aged care?
Mostly existing workers	Will it help to have partners who train mostly existing workers? Would I learn something from RTOs that train school leavers as well?
Government and some private employers	Will it help to have partners who train employees in businesses of all sizes?
Certificate III and Certificate IV qualifications	Is it best to have partners who mostly deliver at these qualification levels? I'm planning to add some higher level qualifications to my scope. Would it help to benchmark with partners already offering Diplomas?

Sharing information

Benchmarking relies on the willingness of partners to share evidence on the quality of their education and training.

You decide which results to share. Initially, you might agree to share only scale results for the learner survey and the employer survey rather than results for each survey item. You might decide to share only employer survey results for the Training Relevance Scale and the Competency Development Scale, and not results for Trainer Quality, Overall Satisfaction and Effective Assessment. As confidence grows, you might agree to share more.

It's especially helpful to compare results over time. That's why benchmarking partnerships are usually long-term arrangements rather than one-offs.

A benchmarking agreement can cover confidentiality of your shared results and your discussions.

Comparing and analysing survey results

Every RTO is different. The most important part of benchmarking is when partners discuss learner and employer survey results. Together you work out what produces different results. Is the lower result on the Competency Development Scale to do with bedding down the new qualification you have introduced? Did a change in on-the-job assessment boost your Effective Assessment Scale results? Was this the year your two best trainers retired, which helps explain the dip in your Trainer Quality Scale results?

You might prefer face-to-face discussions with benchmarking partners. Or you could benchmark by email or teleconference. Benchmarking discussions might take two hours a year, or ten. You decide. You could report outcomes of these discussions to your learners and your employer network (if your benchmarking agreement covers this.)

Benchmarking can offer ideas for adjusting your practice based on the practical experience of your partners. Partners often develop better approaches through discussion. Benchmarking is a clear indication to learners, your employer network, registration authorities and other RTOs that you take quality improvement seriously.

Things to do

1. Decide whether benchmarking will benefit your business
2. Decide which RTOs you will benchmark with
3. Decide what learner and employer survey results you will share
4. Draw up an agreement with your benchmarking partners
5. Decide how you will compare and analyse learner and employer results with your partners
6. Include benchmarking in your annual cycle for collecting, analysing, reporting and acting on your learner and employer results

About this guide

This Continuous Improvement Guide forms part of the AQTF 2007 Quality Indicators Resources Package. This package contains information and materials for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to use to collect, analyse and act on data about their training and assessment.

The Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007) Quality Indicators are part of the AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration for training organisations that wish to deliver nationally recognised vocational qualifications and competencies. Three Quality Indicators have been endorsed by the National Quality Council (NQC): Learner Engagement, Employer Satisfaction and Competency Completion. These are designed to help RTOs conduct evidence-based and outcomes-focused continuous quality improvement, and assist Registering Bodies assess the risk of an RTO's operations.

Visit www.training.com.au for further information on AQTF 2007 or the Quality Indicators Resources Package.