Enhancing survey response rates

This guide offers tips on how you can engage people in providing feedback to your learner and employer surveys.

AQTF 2007
Building Training Excellence

Engaging feedback and response

Surveys compete for time in people's busy lives, and it is vital to use various techniques to engage them in providing a response.

Securing an appropriate number and range of responses to a survey is an important part of assuring the authority and validity of the results.

The quality of survey results counts, because survey results provide valuable information on education and training.

Key principles

It's helpful to think about surveys as part of your overall continuous improvement process. Surveys do not just involve distributing questionnaires and collecting data. They are part of the ongoing conversations and feedback that you have with your key stakeholders about enhancing quality.

Research has shown that people are more likely to participate in a survey if they feel that:

- the outcomes are of personal, organisational or societal benefit
- their voice matters and will be heard
- the surveys and questionnaires look appealing and are well designed
- the process is conducted in a consistent, valid and transparent way.

A general approach

In general, it can be helpful to think through key phases in which you can capture people's interest and engage them in providing a response.

Making plans early

Engaging people's response should start well before data collection while you're making general continuous improvement plans.

At this stage you might like to think of:

- investing time, energy and enthusiasm into an organisation-wide campaign
- holding a planning meeting which brings together and engages representatives of all key stakeholders in the feedback process, including 'end-users' who will make the most use of the data
- minimising large-scale data collections in the period before fieldwork
- ensuring that the target population is correctly specified
- coordinating organisation-wide research and fieldwork activities via a single person or group
- considering offering a response incentive (NB: there is no concrete evidence that these work)
- ensuring that appropriate resources have been allocated to manage the process
- developing an approach to monitoring, reviewing and improving survey processes.

Promote feedback opportunities

Just before the survey is to begin, you might like to:

- alert learners, staff and employers that the survey is coming up, capture their interest in the process, and endorse it as a significant opportunity to provide feedback on education and training
- ask various people to help distribute information to students
- provide summary reports of earlier results to the people you intend to survey (they are intuitively interested in this information)
- provide basic information about the survey
- report specific ways in which the organisation has and is responding to earlier feedback.

Capture attention and response

To capture the attention of the person being surveyed and encourage them to respond, you might like to:

- ensure paper survey forms are sent to the most appropriate address and promptly resolve any problems
- communicate with potential respondents using approaches that are most likely to be effective – often a combination of face-to-face, email, telephone or mail
- make a quick phone call to check if the potential respondent has received the form
- individually address emails to potential respondents – the personal touch matters
- have teaching, administrative and senior staff endorse the process by drafting letters and emails to learners or employers
- develop an FAQ sheet so that queries can be assessed, managed and responded to in timely and appropriate ways.

Taking stock

As these ideas suggest, there is no 'one right way' to conduct a survey or to enhance response rates.

It is important to think carefully about what approach is most meaningful to your organisation.

Improving survey operations may take time and experience. There may also be value in seeking expert advice, or feedback from another similar organisation.

Things to do

1. Make early plans about how to engage key stakeholders in the feedback process.
2. Develop a multifaceted approach to promote feedback opportunities.
3. Be strategic about how you manage data collection and reporting.

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.