



What You Asked For

1: Assistance to create better relationships and communication with RTOs, and a better understanding of the training sector. Part of this was about having a better awareness of the rights and responsibilities of people engaging with RTOs and training, and the questions to ask before contracts are signed.

What is Happening:

- A template 'Working With Houses' MOU has been developed for Houses to use when engaging in training with RTOs. It is available for Houses to adapt to suit their own needs, and we will continue to improve it.
- The 'Working With Houses' checklist has been developed as a guide of things to consider and questions to ask before signing any contract. It is available for Houses to adapt to suit their own needs.
- A 'preferred training provider' list will be developed by TACH. The 'Working With Houses' checklist will be used as a screening mechanism by TACH when entering discussions with a potential training provider to the network. Those providers who demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the work of Houses, and are prepared to deliver training to suit Houses will be put on a preferred provider list. Houses will be able to refer to this list when making RTO choices to see which RTOs have had initial conversations with TACH and have indicated their understanding of the needs of Houses. The list will be open for Houses to include their preferred providers based on their previous experience. Of course it is totally up to Houses whether they use RTOs on that list or not.
- An umbrella MoU will be developed by TACH, to be signed between TACH and the 'preferred training provider' (as identified through the above process) as evidence that discussions have been had and an understanding reached about expectations when engaging with Houses. RTOs not prepared to sign an MoU will not be put on the list. This MoU is aimed at helping to put Houses on the front foot when engaging with RTOs by 'breaking the ice.'
- Improved relationships and clear communication with RTOs will assist in getting consistent guidelines for RPL (recognition for prior learning) across the network. Part of TACH discussions with RTOs will be about RPL.

2: Community development training is wanted across all staff and volunteer roles so that everyone working within a House understands the community development model within which Houses operate. Training does not need to be full course orientated or accredited, but does need to be purposeful and relevant.



What is Happening:

- Drawing on the TACH Sector Survey, Tasmania Medicare Local approached TACH with the offer to deliver some short, innovative training to Houses, targeting one of the key skill areas identified. The Connecting Ideas & Process (CIP) training, being run over 3 months in 2014, involved a one day workshop, with a \$4,000 grant to resource the identified project. Training was delivered on-site at each of the twenty three Houses that took up the opportunity.

3: Funding bodies and training organisations to have a better understanding of the work of Houses, and an appreciation of the issues and barriers faced by individuals when engaging with training.

What is Happening:

- The findings of this Project have confirmed what the network has anecdotally known for a long time, and provides evidence that can be shared with Skills Tasmania, other Peak bodies, RTOs and other organisations to help create a better understanding of Houses and training issues.
- Using the findings of this Project TACH is liaising with the RTO Avidity (with who TACH is piloting the umbrella MoU) to apply for funding for training that incorporates the costs of addressing the issues and barriers for people to engage in training. The aim is for the required support to be included as part of the training delivery and not just as an add-on.



What Now?

The information in the documents from the Project is available for Houses to use, for example to support their discussions with RTOs on why the provision of training needs to be a certain way, or as evidence when applying for training funding or opportunities.

Full report information is available on the TACH website or copies are available on request from the TACH office.

For information on registered training organisations and the courses they are registered to deliver visit the website: www.training.gov.au

For information on courses available visit the website: www.myskills.gov.au



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TACH
Tasmanian Association
of Community Houses Inc

Workforce Development Project

2013 - 2014

Snapshot of Findings



Background to the Project

The Workforce Development Project was initiated by TACH to develop a map of the training needs of the paid staff, volunteers and community participants in Houses, and to identify ways to source and deliver training to best address these needs.

Another key driver for initiating the Project was the opportunity to gather evidence regarding previous training experiences across the network. Many negative experiences had been reported to TACH in the past including: a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) changing training delivery arrangements without negotiation with the learner; assessment requirements being inconsistent for different learners for the same unit; and the trainer not understanding the House context so they were unable to deliver relevant training or assessment.

The evidence gathered supported what has long been anecdotally known – that there is a deep dissatisfaction within Houses of previous poor training delivery experiences and that Houses have received the short end of the training stick time and time again.

A survey of TACH member Houses was conducted to identify training and skills requirements, gauge potential future training needs, and document the experience and issues around the participation in training options. The information gathered also identified best practice issues around the engagement between Houses and RTOs.

The survey was conducted primarily by means of face to face conversations through visits to Houses or at the TACH State Conference. Some phone conversations were conducted, and some responses returned by email. Conversations were held with coordinators, paid staff and volunteers. Representatives from twenty-nine Houses responded to the survey. Information previously gathered from regional meetings and feedback to TACH from training such as PPP was also drawn on.



What We Learnt

- The Neighbourhood House network is a complex, eclectic and ever changing environment, and as such, there is no one approach to addressing its workforce issues and training needs.
- The training needs of the network are broad and varied, and directly affected by the relatively high turnover of staff, particularly the turnover of volunteers on the management committees.
- The complexity of training needs of the House network is due in part to the fact that it is not just about workers and their roles as defined by duty statements (which vary across Houses) but also includes the breadth of volunteer skills, interest and knowledge.

Coordinators and staff:

The existing qualifications and skills that coordinators bring to a House are broad and varied, and this is valued by the network. An argument for not having a minimum entry qualification is that it allows for this diversity of incoming staff, as well as potentially creating pathways into paid positions for volunteers.

Training needs of staff and volunteers are driven largely by the needs of each House and the requirements in delivering programs, projects and services relevant to that community.

Volunteers:

Training needs of volunteers are also driven by the desire of Houses to provide pathways for individuals to learn new skills and expand potential choices for further training or employment. Houses provide a safe entry point for volunteers to become skilled up in the community sector, and through this volunteer involvement create potential pathways into broader employment opportunities. A volunteer's role could lead to other things but it should not be assumed that it will or that *more* is best.

Local communities:

Training needs of local communities are broad, complex and driven by industry issues, including workforce demand. Houses are potential avenues to provide, for example pathways, foundation employment skills, Jobseeker training and support skills such as literacy and numeracy, but not in a position, as a general rule, to address the training needs of a community.



What You Told Us



Snapshot of Identified Skill Gap Areas

The table below is a summary of the skill areas identified in the Sector Survey as priority areas for training. The topic areas listed are those that recurred most frequently across all surveys.

It was recognised that there are many ways training can be accessed from fully accredited qualifications, such as a Certificate 2 Community Services, to skills sets and specific subjects, such as Financial Management and First Aid, to non-accredited training, such as Mental Health First Aid, NILs and governance training.

All training is a valid means of acquiring skills and knowledge, and individuals should be encouraged to engage with training at the level appropriate to them, for their own benefit, as well as to enhance their role within the House.

Topic Area	Identified Key Skill Gap Areas	Coordinators	Staff	Volunteers	Committee
Community Development	Community development				
	Community consultation				
	Community needs analysis				
Governance	Governance				
	Management skills				
	Minute taking				
	Facilitating meeting				
	Roles & responsibilities of volunteers				
	Strategic planning				
	Succession Planning				
	Working with a Committee				
	Risk management				
Workplace management	Negotiation/conflict resolution				
	Volunteer management				
	Staff management				
	Working with challenging behaviours				
	Team effectiveness				
	Mentoring				
Leadership	Leadership				
	Coordination skills				
	Time management				
	Networking				
	Advocacy				
	Project management/evaluation				
	Research & evaluation				
	Meeting facilitation				
The Basics	Mental health first aid				
	IT				
	Financial management				
	First Aid				
	OH&S				
	Safe food handling				
	Budgeting				
	Grant writing				
	Report writing				
	Lobbying				
	Presentation skills				
	Promotion and marketing				
	Literacy (own and others)				
	Financial counselling				
	Communication skills				
MYOB					
Social media					
Healthy food preparation					

Snapshot of Key Recurring Issues for Training Participation

The table below is a summary of the identified factors affecting the training experience for past participants, and issues that act as barriers for those looking to engage with training. Houses are well placed to address many of the issues and needs raised such as location, safe environment, and supportive relationships as they provide inclusive, supportive environments.

Factor	Issues
Time	Travel time Duration of training Time away from workplace required Time required to complete assessments – is it in work or own time? Time of day training delivered Extra time requirements over normal work/volunteer hours
Travel & Transport	Cost of travel Availability of transport options (public or private) to the training site
Trainer	Unreliable, changing appointments at short notice Not 'knowing their stuff' about Houses or community development Little to no communication or support, leading to poor relationship Little to no feedback on work submitted for assessment Different styles and expectations of assessment content between trainers Trainers change resulting in lack of continuity and consistency of assessment No communication or negotiation from RTO or trainer regarding changes to arrangements
Training Delivery	Fixed, centralised location and inflexible times of delivery Lack of clear course content and expected outcomes Content not relevant to workplace or role Unclear, delayed enrolment process Unclear or no induction process Cost
Training Assessment	Inconsistency of assessment requirements across same course/unit Inconsistent application of RPL process Lack of relevant, work related assessment Requirements inflexible to different learning styles and needs
Location of Training	Travel time and costs Transport availability and costs Available, affordable childcare Unfamiliar, intimidating surrounds
Other	Previous education experiences impacting on motivation Lack of confidence Literacy level skills Awareness of potential training options

What Else You Told Us

In short, to improve the training experience and reduce the issues that act as barriers to participation, turn the negatives into positives and invert the barriers into enablers and we will essentially have what we want! This means:

- **Training** needs to be local, preferably in-House and on the job, (especially when over an extended period of time), flexible, relevant, appropriate to individual needs and learning styles, supported (eg childcare and literacy), time efficient, affordable, and have a clear induction process.
- **Assessment** needs to be consistent in its requirements across the same course, regardless of the trainer that delivers it; relevant; appropriate to individual needs and learning styles; discussed and negotiated with the trainer, and have clear and consistent guidelines for the RPL process.
- **The trainer** is a fundamental key to successful training, with relationships between the trainer and participants an essential element of that success. They need to be reliable, approachable, supportive, and give clear direction as to what is required, from induction to course content to assessment requirements. It is imperative that a trainer understands the House context, and they uphold their part of any negotiated arrangement as to where, when and how training and assessment will be conducted.
- **Good communication** between all parties involved with the training is vital.

