



VET 2050

Blog post

Employer and Sector Body Perspectives: Exploring the Role of Labour Market Actors in a High-Quality VET System

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As the VET2050 project continues the vision-building phase, the next workshop turns to a highly debated and consequential dimension of vocational education and training in England – the role of employers and sector bodies. VET2050's broad goal is to articulate a long-term, durable vision for a high-quality VET system which enables England to lead the OECD in youth participation in education and employment. This goal depends on a skills system that works for learners, providers and employers alike. This workshop will build directly on themes flagged in the VET2050 scoping paper which highlighted fragmented pathways, uneven employer engagement and misaligned incentives as key challenges that inhibit the systems ability to support young people transition into the labour market.

Why employer voice matters

The scoping paper identified a longstanding tension in England's skills system: although policy narratives regularly emphasise an 'employer-led' approach, actual employer involvement in shaping and training remains uneven. Many SMEs face administrative barriers to offering apprenticeships while larger employers are navigating rapidly changing regulatory and funding landscapes. At the same time, an employer-centred system can inadvertently become an employer-burdened one, especially when responsibility for coordinating and sustaining training partnerships fall on individual firms. In addition, there are wider system-level challenges such as:

- Fragmented pathways and complex qualifications that make it hard for employers and young people to understand progression routes.
- Policy churn and weak coordination across departments and agencies which contributes to volatility creating uncertainty for employers.
- Regional disparities and uneven capacity which shape the availability of work-based learning and employers access to training and skilled workers

For these reasons, and more, the workshop focus on employer and sector body perspectives not as a discrete theme but a cross-cutting foundation which must be established for a future VET system that is responsive and sustainable.

Questions guiding this workshop

To support forward-looking thinking, this workshop will explore a series of open-ended questions aimed at clarifying the role of employers, identifying the appropriate system supports and considering how employer perspectives interest with other VET2050 themes.

1. What is the right role for employers within the skills system? How can England balance responsiveness to employer demand without over-burdening firms, particularly SMEs, with responsibility for sustaining VET?
2. What role can sectoral or place-based intermediaries play? How might intermediaries support the translation of LMI into stable occupational pathways and set clear quality markers?
3. How do employer perspectives on high quality VET align or differ from other perspectives such as those of learners, training providers, or place-based perspectives?

Connecting Evidence, Practice and Policy

By convening a mix of stakeholders, this workshop and the VET2050 project aims to build a shared understand of what quality looks like in terms of employer engagement, and how this can be supported by coherent governance, funding and coordination. Participants will be encouraged to reflect not only on current barriers but promising local and international practices that may inspire new approaches in England's VET system.

Insights from the session and broader feedback from the public will play a direct role in shaping the VET2050 vision and the creation of its implementation workshop.

Invitation to Engage

While participation in the workshop is limited to ensure meaningful opportunities for participation among those in the room, we welcome input from anyone through the project website. To learn more about the project, read the full scoping paper, or see more about this and other workshops, please visit the project website.

Be sure to take the opportunity to share your input, by letting the project team know what you think is more significant as we work to craft a vision for a high-quality VET system for England.

 [Share your input](#)

To stay up to date about project activities and have an opportunity to participate in future workshops, please join the mailing list.

 [Join the VET2050 mailing list](#)

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