

VET 2050

Blog post

Provider Perspectives: Exploring the Role of Providers in a High-Quality VET System

May 2026

Yushan Xie and James Robson

Oxford Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance
(SKOPE)

As the VET2050 project continues the vision-building phase, the second vision workshop turns to another dimension of vocational education and training in England – the role of providers. 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 workshop will build directly on themes flagged in the VET2050 scoping paper, which highlighted limited funding, policy churn, lack of coordination, and pressure on the VET workforce and other factors that constrain providers' ability to deliver high-quality provision and support learners' learning and transition into work.

Why provider voice matters

The VET2050 scoping paper identified a fundamental challenge in England's skills system: while providers are the essential foundation of the delivery and quality of the system, the conditions under which they operate are often fragmented, unstable and shaped by diverse needs of policy priorities (e.g., the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy), employers, and learners. Yet, providers often don't have the *right* conditions, and they are faced with the wider system-level challenges, including:

- Funding crisis, which limits long-term planning and investment in provision, workforce and infrastructure
- Policy churn and shifting accountability frameworks, creating uncertainty and administrative burden
- Fragmented system and lack of coordination across national and regional/local levels
- Variable employer engagement, making it challenging to sustain consistent and good-quality partnerships
- Pressures on the VET workforce, including recruitment, retention and professional development
- Fragmented learner pathways, which affect progression and outcomes

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 providers, identifying the appropriate system supports and considering how provider perspectives align with other VET2050 themes.

1. Where does the current VET system work well, and where does it create barriers for providers?
2. What is the 'right role' for providers within a high-quality VET system?
3. How do provider perspectives on high-quality VET align or differ from other perspectives?
4. How should coordination and collaboration work with different stakeholders, in order to deliver high-quality VET provision?

Connecting evidence, policy and practice

The session will bring together a diverse group of providers, researchers and policy actors. This will enable a shared understanding of what high-quality VET provision looks

like and how this can be supported by coherent governance, funding, coordination and collaboration. 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](#)

Funding

VET2050 is funded by the Youth Futures Foundation



Project Team

[Terence Hogarth, Emily Erickson and Stefanie Poole at the Institute for Employment Research \(IER\), University of Warwick](#)

[James Robson and Yushan Xie at SKOPE, University of Oxford](#)

Website

[Project homepage:](#)

<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/researchthemesoverview/researchprojects/vet2050/>

Disclaimer

Opinions expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily represent the views of YFF, IER or SKOPE.