



Australian Government  
Department of Employment  
and Workplace Relations

## NATIONAL SURVEY FINDINGS

# Registered Training Providers Experiences with VET Data Reporting

March 2023



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledges First Nations peoples as Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country and the continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples, their Cultures, and Elders past, present and emerging.

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# Acknowledgement

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations thanks the people who supported and participated in this research.

## Vocational Education and Training (VET) activity and data management research



### BACKGROUND

The VET Data Streamlining program was established to modernise the way VET student and training activity data is collected, managed, and utilised by the whole sector. The program's focus is to improve outcomes for the sector and includes three main pillars of work:

1. The introduction of a new VET Information Standard, to replace the existing Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) VET Provider 8.0 collection, specifying national and state specific VET data elements to be collected from training providers.
2. The introduction of new technology to enable data submission, validation, and reporting of VET student and training activity data.
3. Changes to the legislative framework to support the program.

The Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), in partnership with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), state and territory governments and sector regulators are working together to deliver the VET Data Streamlining program.

The program is committed to engaging with the VET sector early and often and has established several forums to facilitate this, including an external user reference group and a range of subgroups. These groups, combined with targeted research, are critical to the successful delivery of the program.

In 2021, the Department engaged Whereto Research to conduct qualitative and quantitative research on the VET sector. This research has been critical in terms of understanding the complex and diverse nature of the sector, so the Department and its partners can effectively deliver this program of work.

The qualitative research, which was gathered through interviews and workshops, was completed in late 2021 and is published on the DEWR website.

This document is a summary of the following quantitative research.



### PURPOSE

DEWR engaged Whereto to investigate and understand the different approaches training organisations currently use to manage student and training activity data collection, validation, and submission. The survey focused on what and how systems are used, staffing arrangements, and student management system functionality.

DEWR is using the outcomes of this research to:

- » better map the diversity and landscape of the VET sector's reporting processes
- » understand current challenges of VET data reporting for training organisations
- » identify potential early challenges to adoption and implementation of the new VET Information Standard and the program's enabling technology
- » understand the roles and relationships between training organisations and student management system vendors, and
- » build a detailed understanding of the unique and varied business processes used by training organisations.



# Data Collection Process

A quantitative survey of registered training organisations was conducted between 11 August and 2 September 2022.

DEWR used its existing administrative records to determine training providers in scope of the survey. Invitations were sent via email to 4,089 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The survey was open for three weeks.

DEWR received 980 responses, and 702 of those were able to be used in this analysis. This represented a final response rate of 17 percent.

### READING THESE TABLES

The Population is the percentage of the in-scope RTOs that category represents. For example, 9.9% of all RTOs in DEWR’s records have 19 students or fewer. The Responding sample (%) is the percentage of the survey respondents in that category. For example, 4.9% of the respondents have 19 or fewer students. The Difference is the gap in percentage points between the number of respondents in a category compared with their representation in the sector (according to DEWR records). For example, the gap between the number of respondents and representation in the sector is five percentage points. This indicates that this cohort is five percentage points under-represented in the data.

Table 1: RTO size

RTO size	Number of students	Population (%)	Responding sample (%)	Difference (% pts)
<b>Small</b> less than 100 students	19 and below	9.9	4.9	-5.0
	20 to 49	9.6	5.4	-4.2
	50 to 99	10.8	9.1	-1.7
	100 to 149	8.0	6.5	-1.5
<b>Medium</b> between 100 and 999 students	150 to 249	10.6	11.3	0.7
	250 to 499	15.2	16.5	1.3
	500 to 749	8.1	6.8	-1.3
	750 to 999	4.9	5.6	0.7
<b>Large</b> 1000+ students	1,000 to 2,499	12.9	17.8	4.9
	2,500 and over	10.0	16.1	6.1

Table 2: Organisation type

Organisation type	Population (%)	Responding sample (%)	Difference (% pts)
Community based adult education provider	10.2	8.3	-1.9
Enterprise - Government	1.7	1.5	-0.2
Enterprise - Non-government	1.6	1.5	-0.1
Equipment and/or product manufacturer or supplier	0.2	0.2	0
Industry association	3.3	5.3	2.0
Other - not elsewhere classified	0.3	0	-0.3
Privately operated registered training organisation	71.3	75.7	4.4
Professional association	0.4	0.2	-0.2
School - Catholic	1.9	1.7	-0.2
School - Government	6.3	2.6	-3.7
School - Independent	1.6	0.8	-0.8
Technical and further education institute or similar public institutions (TAFE)	0.6	1.4	0.8
University - Government	0.3	0.6	0.3
University - Non-Government Catholic	0.1	0.2	0.1
University - Non-Government Independent	0.1	0	-0.1

Table 3: Reporting

Table 3 is based on reporting pathways, some RTOs may have reporting pathways to multiple jurisdictions.

Jurisdictions	Population (%)	Responding sample (%)	Difference (% pts)
Cross-Jurisdictional Provider	11.1	17.8	6.7
NSW	27.7	33.4	5.7
VIC	26.9	22.3	-4.6
QLD	32.3	34.6	2.3
SA	10.1	12.7	2.6
WA	12.7	14.7	2
TAS	3.7	6.8	3.1
NT	2.9	5.6	2.7
ACT	3.5	5.6	2.1
Direct to NCVER	65.6	66.8	1.2

# Summary of Findings

The survey data has been combined with administrative data provided by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

- » The key variables of interest are RTO size (which is derived from student numbers), funding source and jurisdictions of operation. The data presented in this report has been analysed by each of these variables and notable findings are included.
- » The survey sample is broadly representative of the sample frame and no weighting has been applied to the data. These findings are statistically significant enough to be applied across the VET sector noting that larger RTOs are slightly over-represented.
- » VET sector RTOs are diverse in size, funding and business type and this is reflected in the results.

## DEFINITIONS

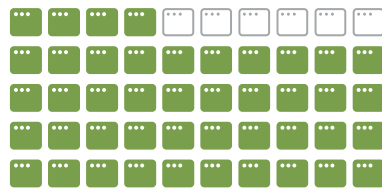
- » The statistical 'mean' refers to the average of a set of values.
- » The statistical 'median' is the middle number in a sequence of numbers.

The survey was completed by

**702**

RTOs nationwide

RTOs using commercial SMS



**88%**

RTOs using in-house SMS



**9%** slightly more common in WA (13%)



**49%** of RTOs have a customised SMS

RTOs operating in Tasmania (34%) is the only group where it is significantly under 50%

Known usage of APIs in data collection and submission



Usage is limited (22%)



lowest in schools (9%)



and poorly understood (36% unsure)



lower for all small RTOs (17%)

**61%** use multiple data systems

with the average number of systems increasing with RTO size



**443**

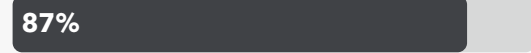
RTOs agreed to participate in further research and consultation. **These RTOs will be contacted about how they can be involved**



SMS assistance with validation of activity data

It is common across all providers, although slightly less so in schools

Other providers



Schools



Over

**80%**

of large RTOs enter data into their SMS daily, in comparison to small RTOs with less than 20% entering data daily

Highest frequency of data entry into the SMS

		Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
Daily	57%	15%	19%	54%	60%	82%	85%
At least once a week	19%	23%	35%	22%	24%	6%	9%
		● Fee for service only		● Government funded			



Only **6%** described their internal data processes as inefficient

**28%** of RTOs submit data annually

Most common amongst

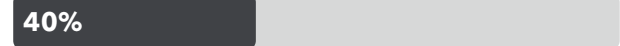
Small RTOs



Privately operated RTOs



RTOs submitting directly to NCVER



These three cohorts overlap significantly



# Student Management Systems (SMS)



## KEY FINDINGS

Of the RTOs surveyed approximately:

**79%**  
use a commercial SMS

**49%**  
of commercial SMS users had a system customised to their RTO's specific needs

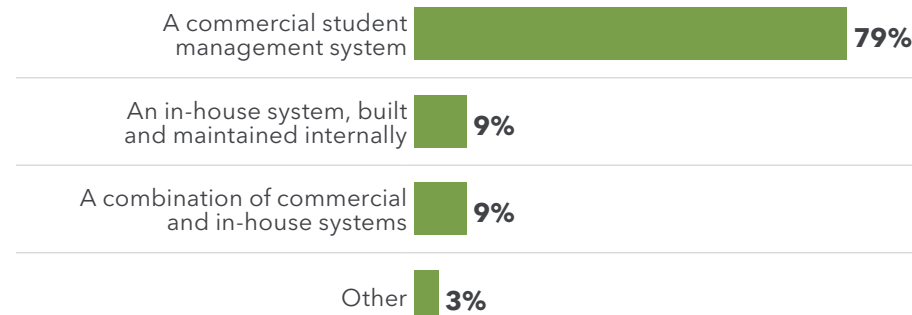
**15%**  
of fee for service RTOs do not use a commercial SMS compared to **6%** for government funded

**73%**  
believe their SMS is updated one or more times a year

**24%** are unsure how often their SMS is updated. There is no notable correlation between degree of customisation and frequency of updates

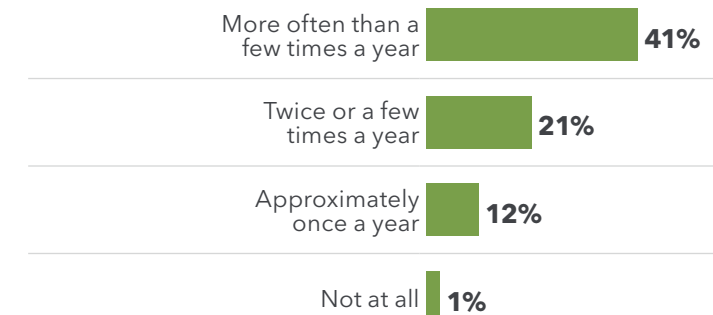
**49%**  
receive full assistance from their SMS with data validation prior to submission  
**14%** do not receive any assistance from their SMS.

### SMS type



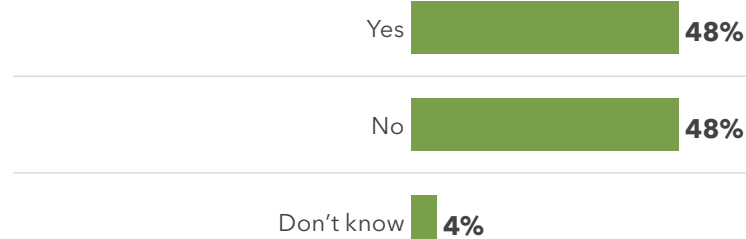
C1.1. Which best describes your organisation's student management system?

### Frequency of updates



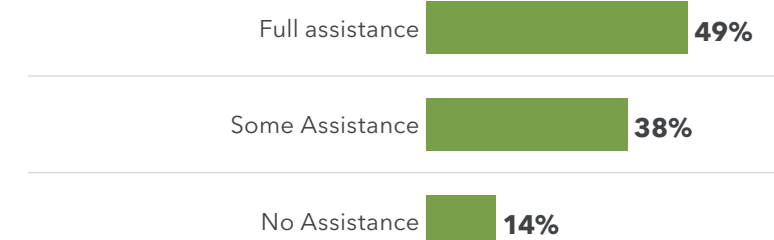
C5.1. How frequently is your student management system updated or upgraded by your provider?

### Commercial SMS significantly customised to training provider's needs



C1.1i. Is your organisation's commercial student management system significantly customised to your organisation's needs?

### Level of assistance with AVETMISS or state-funded data validation

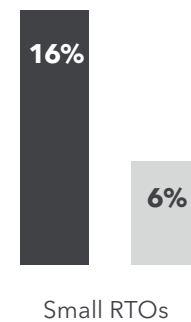


C5. Does your student management system assist with AVETMISS or state-funded data validation or apply business rules prior to your organisation submitting student activity data?

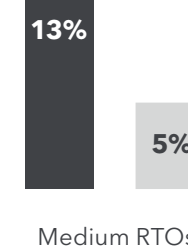
### Percentage of training providers without a commercial SMS by organisation size and funding source

- Fee for service only
- Government funded

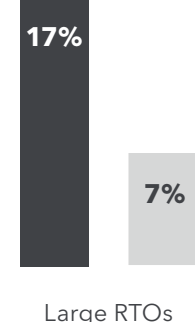
C1.1. Which best describes your organisation's student management system?



Small RTOs



Medium RTOs



Large RTOs

# Data Entry and Other Systems



## KEY FINDINGS

**57%**  
of all RTOs enter data into their SMS daily. The smaller the RTO is, the more variance in the time to putting data into their SMS

A correlation can be seen between RTO size and funding source and how frequently they enter data into their SMS

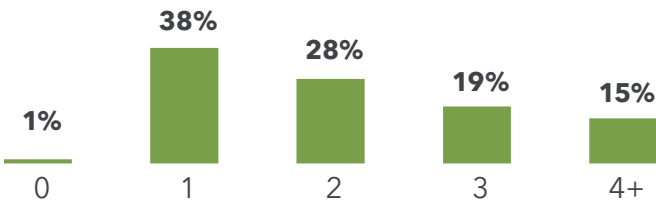
**67%**  
of RTOs use two systems or less to collection and submit student activity data. 34% of RTOs use three or more systems. In most cases this would include their SMS

**Amongst government funded providers**  
the number of systems used increases with the size of RTOs. This is generally not the case amongst fee for service only providers

**22%**  
of RTOs knowingly use APIs, with 35% unsure if APIs are used in their systems. API usage is lowest amongst small, government funded RTOs but consistent across all other RTO types.

### Number of systems

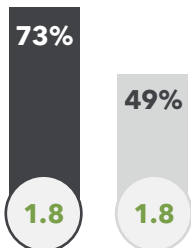
Number of systems used to collect and submit student activity data



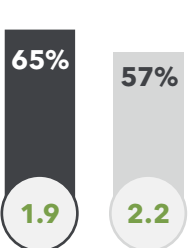
C3. How many different systems does your organisation's student activity data transition through between collection and final submission?

### Percentage of RTOs who use multiple data systems

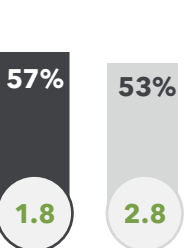
Small RTOs



Medium RTOs



Large RTOs



#Average no. of data systems used # Fee for service only ● Government funded ●

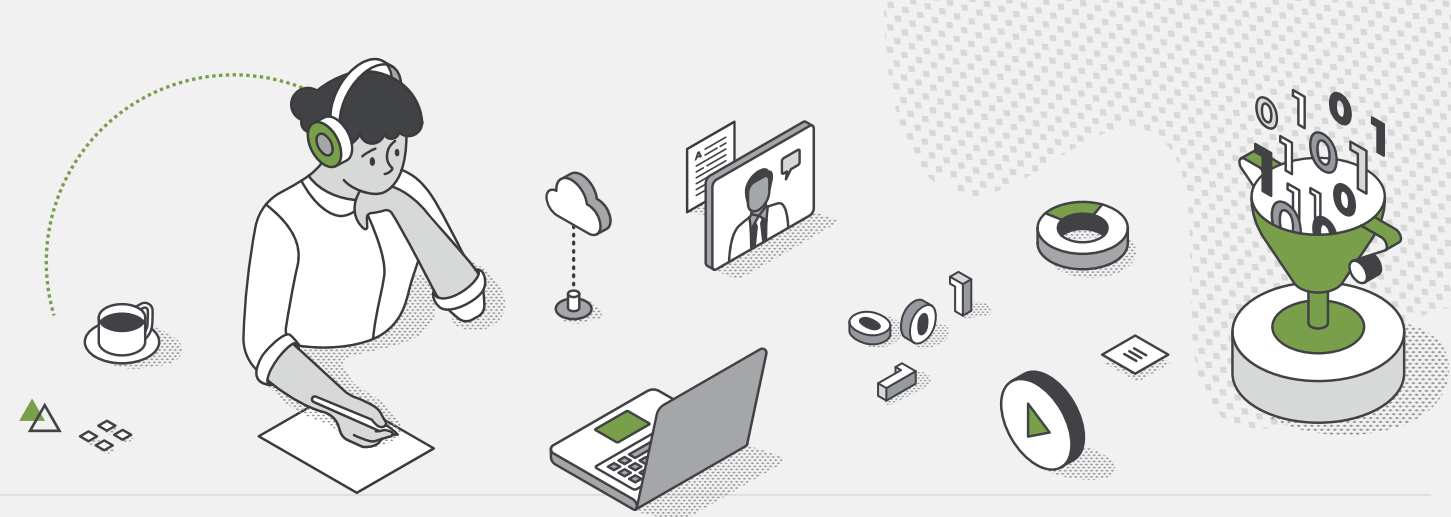
### Highest frequency of data entry into the SMS

		Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
		Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded
Daily	57%	5%	19%	54%	60%	82%	85%
At least once a week	19%	23%	35%	22%	24%	6%	9%
At least once a fortnight	5%	11%	19%	4%	4%	1%	1%
At least once a month	9%	25%	19%	7%	8%	3%	2%
At least once a quarter	5%	11%	6%	8%	2%	4%	3%
At least every six months	2%	5%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
At least once a year	3%	11%	0%	2%	1%	4%	0%
Less frequently than once a year	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

D1.1. When does your organisation first check VET activity data quality prior to submitting it for validation? C6. How frequently does your organisation put VET data into the student management system? D1.2. What is your current most frequent VET activity data submission frequency (to NCVER, state/territory authorities)?



# Data Checking, Validation and Submission



## KEY FINDINGS

RTO size and funding source plays a large role in determining frequency of data submission

### Weekly submission

is practiced mainly by medium and large government funded RTOs

### Fortnightly and monthly submission

is practiced by government funded RTOs of all sizes

### Quarterly and annual submission

by fee for service only providers of all sizes

Of the RTOs surveyed:

**35%**

are performing some form of data quality check during collection. Of those who do not, 31% check their data at least once a month

### Regardless of size

government funded RTOs check data at least once a month, whereas some fee for service only RTOs check less frequently

**31%**

submit activity data once a year or less

49% submit data at least once a month.

### RTOs first check VET activity data quality prior to submission for validation

	Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded
As it is collected from the student/source	35%	45%	39%	35%	19%	38%
Daily	2%	3%	3%	10%	6%	12%
At least once a week	3%	19%	6%	20%	12%	21%
At least once a fortnight	7%	10%	2%	8%	6%	8%
At least once a month	16%	23%	14%	20%	19%	14%
At least once a quarter	14%	0%	21%	6%	23%	3%
At least every six months	7%	0%	7%	1%	3%	2%
At least once a year	15%	0%	7%	0%	10%	1%
Less frequently than once a year	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

D1.1. When does your organisation first check VET activity data quality prior to submitting it for validation?

### Frequency of submission to NCVER, state/territory authorities

	Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded
Daily	1%	0%	2%	4%	7%	10%
At least once a week	1%	3%	2%	20%	3%	26%
At least once a fortnight	2%	29%	1%	18%	0%	17%
At least once a month	6%	48%	10%	41%	8%	31%
At least once a quarter	24%	6%	19%	8%	40%	8%
At least every six months	5%	0%	7%	2%	5%	2%
At least once a year	57%	13%	58%	7%	37%	6%
Less frequently than once a year	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%

D1.2. What is your current most frequent VET activity data submission frequency (to NCVER, state/territory authorities)?



# Staffing and Resources



## KEY FINDINGS

RTO staffing varies significantly depending on the size of the RTO

Up to **3**

staff are employed by most RTOs to work on data entry, validation or submission of VET activity data

**Large government funded RTOs**

employed significantly more data staff than any other cohort

**72%**

do not hire or relocate staff to assist with data entry, validation or submission

**1 or 2**

people are responsible for preparation and validation of data prior to submission. This is true for both annual and quarterly submissions

**The number of hours involved**

in preparation and validation varies dramatically. Approximately two-thirds of RTOs devote between five and 100 hours. The median effort required is slightly longer for annual submissions (25 hours) than for quarterly submissions (20 hours).

### Staff hiring or reallocation

	Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded
Yes, my organisation hired one or more additional staff to assist	6%	16%	13%	8%	8%	24%
Yes, my organisation reallocated staff to assist	15%	3%	9%	20%	14%	16%
Yes, my organisation both hired more staff and reallocated staff to assist	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	6%
No, my organisation did not hire or reallocate staff to assist	72%	81%	78%	70%	77%	54%

B4.1. In 2021, did your organisation periodically bring on additional staff, or reallocate staff, to assist with data entry, validation or submission?

### Estimated number of staff working on data entry, validation and submission

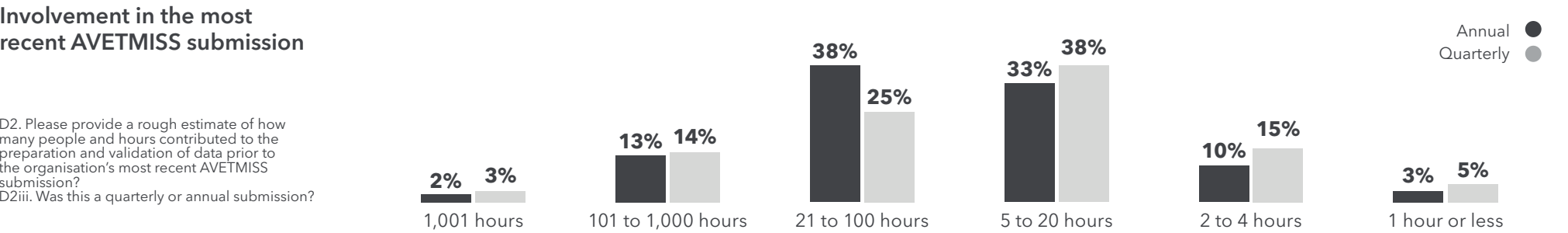
	Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
	Average	Median	Average	Median	Average	Median
Full time training delivery staff	1.1	1.0	2.0	1.0	22.1	2.0
Part time training delivery staff	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	1.4	0.0
Casual training delivery staff	0.2	0.0	0.3	0.0	1.7	0.0
Volunteer training delivery staff	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Total staff	2.0	2.0	3.1	2.0	25.3	4.0

The table above shows the approximate number of staff that work on data entry, validation and submission compared to RTO student numbers for VET activity in 2021. The table shows us that:

- Small and medium RTOs employ similar numbers of staff to work on VET activity data
- Large RTOs generally have more data staff and this reflects the significantly larger number of students they have
- Some casual staff are utilised by large RTOs, however most small and medium RTOs do not use casual staff
- The significant difference between average and the median number of staff for large RTOs reflects the scale of some of the larger providers

B1 - Approximately how many staff worked directly on training delivery for your organisation in 2021? by RTO Size

### Involvement in the most recent AVETMISS submission



# Barriers to Submission



## KEY FINDINGS

The most common barriers to quality data submission are:

- human error in data collection or entry
- specific validation issues, including lack of clarity and support
- issues engaging with government systems
- inadequate resources

Of the RTOs surveyed:

51%

report that their internal data validation and submission processes or systems are efficient, with 6% reporting that they are inefficient

### Internal efficiency is consistent

across all provider types and funding sources - except schools who are less likely than others (36%) to report - label their internal processes as efficient.

## Largest barriers to submission

		Small RTOs		Medium RTOs		Large RTOs	
		Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded	Fee for service only	Government funded
Incomplete data / students not answering all questions or answering them wrong	17%	16%	4%	23%	13%	25%	16%
Is too time consuming / requires too much effort	14%	15%	13%	15%	16%	10%	12%
In house error / human error / input error	13%	15%	4%	14%	15%	11%	14%
Error system not specific enough with what issue is	8%	14%	22%	7%	8%	2%	8%
Lack of clarity with validation rules / constant changes with requirements / lack of support to help compliance	8%	5%	9%	6%	12%	6%	5%
Using different systems across states/ federal / inconsistency of requirements between systems	8%	1%	9%	2%	10%	5%	17%
USI errors / Student ID not congruent with legal names	7%	5%	4%	7%	3%	8%	11%
Staffing issues / complex staff training for reporting / staff turnover	7%	9%	4%	6%	7%	2%	10%
Post code verification not exact / address validation	6%	8%	4%	6%	2%	16%	8%
Inconsistency of errors detected between SMS and VET validation / lack of communication between SMS vendors and gov on changes	6%	0%	9%	6%	9%	6%	6%
Current SMS tools are not adequate / too expensive	4%	3%	9%	1%	3%	5%	5%
Complexity/amount of data required	4%	1%	0%	3%	2%	3%	10%
Other	21%	18%	9%	20%	21%	21%	28%

D10. What is the largest barrier to submitting quality data (and why)?

Data collection issues Issues with government systems or processes Validation issues Inadequate resources

## Efficiency of the organisation's internal data validation and submission processes by provider type

Privately operated RTO	53%	42%	5%
Community based adult education provider	48%	39%	13%
Industry association	46%	49%	5%
School	36%	58%	6%
Other	53%	36%	11%


B3. How efficient are your organisation's internal data validation and submission processes or systems?


Efficient Somewhat efficient Inefficient

# Getting Help




## KEY FINDINGS

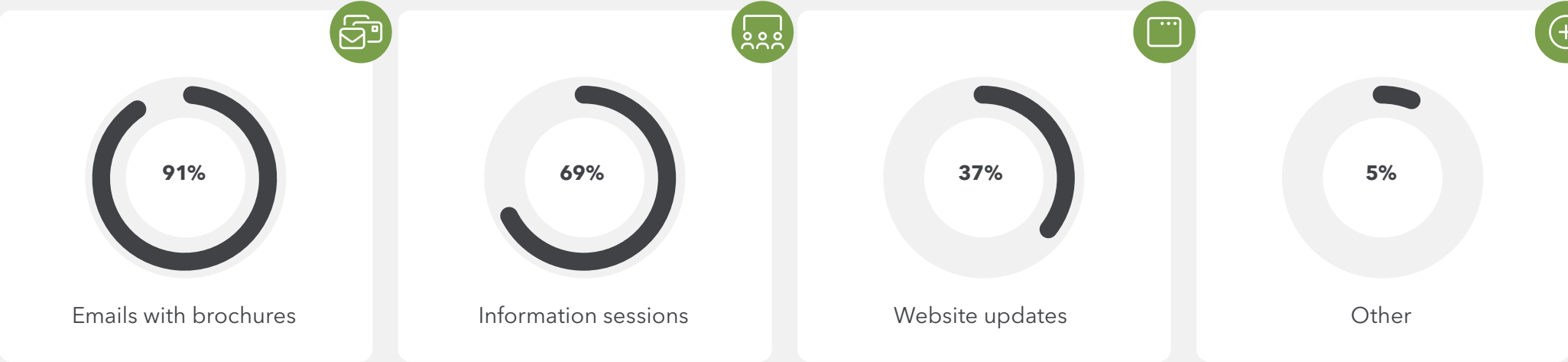
 RTOs regularly contact SMS vendors (63%), NCVER (60%) and STAs (54%) for help. When doing so, most RTOs find it easy to get help

 **75%**  
of RTOs receive information regarding AVETMISS updates from all organisations but most commonly through NCVER

 **63%**  
of RTOs would like to be contacted for future research and consultation for VDS

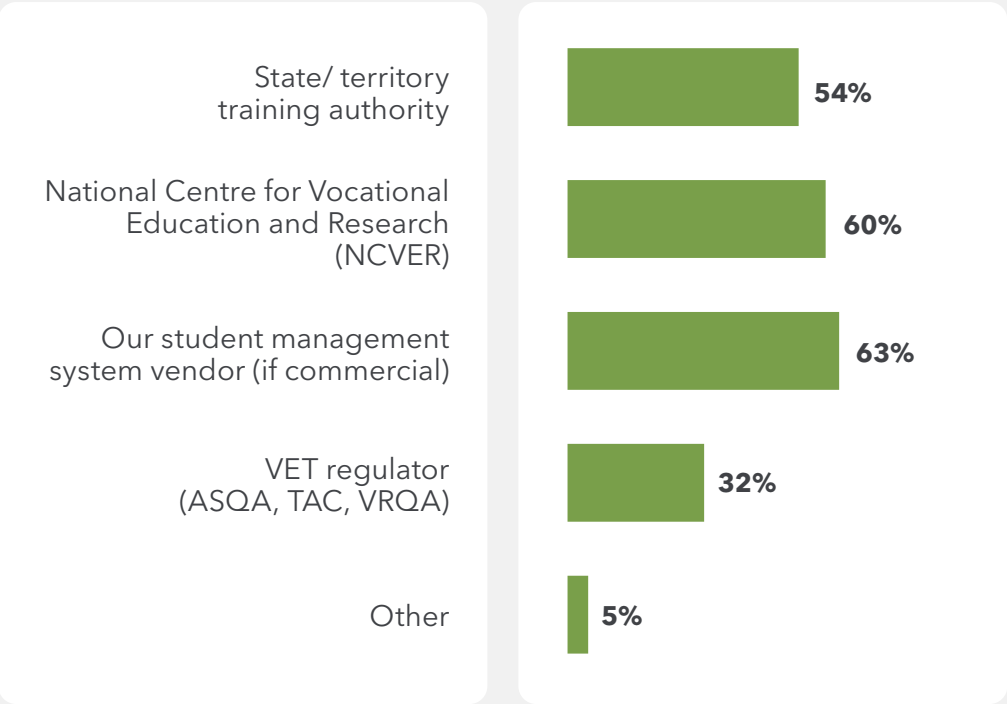
 **69%**  
of RTOs want to participate in information sessions and most prefer email as the primary contact channel for updates.

### Preferred contact channels

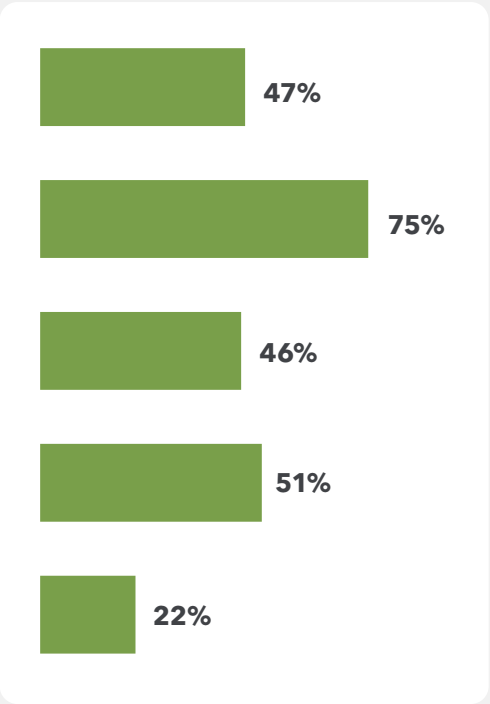


E4. Would you like to be contacted for future research and consultation for VET Data Streamlining?  
E1. What is the best way for the government to inform your organisation about any change to VET data submissions?

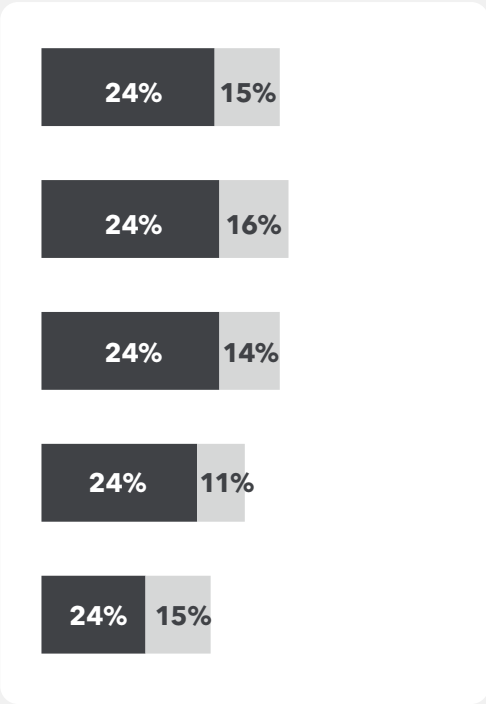
### External organisations to contact for assistance



### Current information channels



### Ease of getting help



D4. Which external organisations does your organisation contact for assistance with VET activity data validation or submission issues? D6. How does your organisation currently receive information regarding updates and changes to the AVETMISS? Is it through... D5. Currently, how easy or difficult is it to get good external advice on data validation and submission?

Somewhat easy  Very easy 



# Conclusion

## THE BENEFIT OF THIS RESEARCH FOR THE VET SECTOR

DEWR is working closely with our program delivery partners, including the state and territory governments and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, to use these findings in ways that support jurisdiction-specific needs associated with the rollout of the program. DEWR believes that by providing this research to the sector, it will find additional value and purpose for those who contributed to it and for the broader sector.

## ENGAGEMENT WITH THE SECTOR

The VET Data Streamlining program is committed to engaging early and often with the sector and have established forums with representatives from across the sector and each jurisdiction. These include the External User Reference Group and several sub-groups which focus on user design, technology and systems, training and support, change management and stakeholder needs and analysis.

EURG meets regularly and is attended by representatives from large and small training providers including TAFEs, state and territory training authorities, SMS providers, VET peak bodies and regulators. The Extended Consultation Group (ECG) is a forum for ad-hoc, informal engagement which provides occasional input on implementation issues.



## STAY UP TO DATE

As the program progresses, information and support materials will be published on the Department and our delivery partner's websites.

-  [dewr.gov.au/vds](https://dewr.gov.au/vds)
-  [ncver.edu.au](https://ncver.edu.au)
-  [act.gov.au/skills](https://act.gov.au/skills)
-  [education.nsw.gov.au/](https://education.nsw.gov.au/)
-  [skillingterritorians.nt.gov.au](https://skillingterritorians.nt.gov.au)
-  [education.vic.gov.au/](https://education.vic.gov.au/)
-  [dtwd.wa.gov.au/](https://dtwd.wa.gov.au/)
-  [education.sa.gov.au/](https://education.sa.gov.au/)
-  [desbt.qld.gov.au/](https://desbt.qld.gov.au/)
-  [skills.tas.gov.au/home](https://skills.tas.gov.au/home)

Enquiries about the program can be sent to

 [VETDataStreamlining@dewr.gov.au](mailto:VETDataStreamlining@dewr.gov.au)