Apprentice Productivity Project

Dissemination Plan

Objectives

Prepare a *Dissemination Plan* detailing how NECA can spread and promote the knowledge developed through the *Apprentice Productivity Project* more broadly. This will include the tools, guides and manuals that can assist businesses to improve the productivity of their apprentices under the current regulatory environment. The *Dissemination Plan* will outline how this could occur via a range of channels that can be executed by NECA.

Context

The *Dissemination Plan* can be used by NECA to promote the potential gains that can be achieved by electrical contractors through a better understanding of the performance of their apprentices, including ways to improve the cost effectiveness of their apprentices. This will include information on strategies and tools to assist business in maximising the contributions of apprentices in the electrotechnology sector and identify how their abilities can be deployed, harnessed and developed in the workplace to optimise business performance and productivity.

The *Dissemination Plan* outlines the communication strategies to describe the impetus for the *Project* being undertaken — what was the *Project* aiming to clarify or change – i.e.

- The combination of *internal factors* – attitudes, values, perceptions and behaviours of apprentices – and *external factors* – aspects of work, training and the workplace, and the way that apprentices experience them and respond to them, that have the most significant impact on an apprentice's productivity and commitment to completion.
- The range of strategies and approaches to improve the workplace performance of apprentices by addressing the impact of following key areas on their productivity -
    - o Recruitment and Retention – difficulties, costs of apprentices, recruitment, selection and induction processes, quality of applicants, termination frequency, apprentice expectations etc.
    - o Apprentice Training – relevance of training, improvements that should be made, etc.
    - o Supervision – importance of effective supervision, finding good supervisors, capability of supervisors etc.

Dissemination goals

Disseminate the outcomes of the *Apprentice Productivity Project* to a target audience and articulate in clear and easy to understand language what the *Project* was about and what it offers its particular audience. This will include;

- Taking forward the strategies underpinning the *Apprentice Productivity Project* and ensure these arrangements become part of NECA services tailored to the unique needs of electrical contractors across the industrial, commercial, and residential industry sectors.
- Identifying approaches that can be supported through a number of avenues that make up NECA's operations including the delivery of strategies and tools directly to business through a variety of platforms.
- Articulating how the outcomes of the *Apprentice Productivity Project* will assist businesses to improve the productivity of their apprentices under the current regulatory environment.

- Promoting the benefits of the strategies underpinning the *Apprentice Productivity Project* including strategies to:
  - Improve apprentice completion rates.
  - Modernise apprenticeships through a flexible system that recognise individual needs.
  - Ensure national consistency that addresses the future demand for electricians and produces a more productive workforce.
  - Increasing the pool of qualified tradespersons.
  - Greater links between structured off-the-job training and the practical work-based experience gained by apprentices.
  - More appropriate on-the-job training with associated productivity benefits for the business.
  - More appropriate release from the workplace to receive industry relevant theoretical off-the-job training.
  - Greater understanding of the apprenticeship training period and the business economic cycle, the nature of contracting work and the issue of increasing specialisation of work.
  - Adoption of more flexible forms of training partnerships and greater cooperation between the employer and the training organisation.

Target Audiences

The following groups will be targeted in the *Dissemination* activities:
- Electrical Contractors across the industrial, commercial and residential sectors
- NECA Staff
- NECA Training Function Arms (RTOs and GTOs)
- Broader Industry Groups

The type of communication activity will be tailored to the needs of each Target Group and will fall into one of the following three categories:
- *Dissemination for Awareness* - at the very least, audiences within this target group will need to be aware of the work of the *Project*. These activities will be tailored for those target audiences that do not require a detailed knowledge of the work but will be helpful for them to be aware of the *Project's* activities and outcomes.
- *Dissemination for Understanding* - This will include a number of groups/audiences that will need to be targeted directly with the *dissemination* activities. This is because they can benefit from what the *Project* has to offer. It will be important, therefore, that these groups/audiences have a deeper understanding of the *Project's* outcomes.
- *Dissemination for Action* - promoting a change of practice resulting from the adoption of products, materials or approaches offered by the *Project*. These groups/audiences will be those people that are in a position to "influence" and "bring about change" within their organisations. These are the groups/audiences that will need to be equipped with the right skills, knowledge and understanding of the *Project's* work in order to achieve real change.

Key Messages

Effective messages will be used to explain what the *Project* outcomes mean, why they are important, and what action should be taken as a result.

The *Dissemination Plan* will allow NECA to examine the outputs/outcomes of the *Project* and think about how these can be presented as benefits and solutions to the users i.e. how the *'toolkits'* developed in the *Apprentice Productivity Project* can be applied in workplace settings to improve business performance by managing apprentices productively. Effective messaging will be prepared for the use of the range of tools, guides and manuals to equip business with the skills and knowledge to improve the workplace productivity of their apprentices in three key areas:

- Recruitment, Selection and Retention;
- Apprentice Training and Profiling; and
- Mentoring, Training and Supervision.

Recruitment and Selection

> **The tools, guides and manuals have been prepared to address a range of industry Issues:**
> - Quality of applicants - entrants to training did not have prerequisite skills, knowledge and aptitude, especially knowledge of careers in electrotechnology.
> - Employer use of recruitment and induction procedures to attract and retain good quality apprentices.
> - Ensuring a good *'fit'* between the apprentice, their employer and the industry.
> - Accessing correct training and career information.
> - Selecting applicants who have awareness and aptitude for the industry.
> - Work and recruitment practices are an important contributor to productivity and completion which reduce recruitment costs for employers.

Key Messages for Electrical Contractors. Good recruitment strategies are needed to increase the likelihood of an apprentice completing their apprenticeship. The *recruitment tool* has been tailored to meet the specific needs of the industry and to improve the matching up of potential apprentices to employers. The tool is of particular benefit to small and medium employers that do not have the capacity to undertake extensive benchmarking of their own apprenticeship candidates.

The '*toolkit'* will allow potential apprentices go through a *Customised On-Line Screening Processes* that is tailored to industry requirements to identify the most appropriate candidates for apprenticeships by assessing the skills, aptitude and attitude that is suitable to the types of businesses that they would be going into**.** It will ensure the matching process is directly linked to employer groups that understand the types of attributes that successful apprentices possess. The *On-line Screening Process* will give the apprentice a clear understanding of what an apprenticeship will entail to help manage their expectations, and ensure potential candidates have the ability to perform the tasks, both on the job and in training and will be focused on an attitudinal fit between the job role and the potential apprentice.

Apprentice Training and Profiling

> **The tools, guides and manuals have been prepared to address a range of Industry Issues:**
> - More flexible training pathways to meet employer needs.
> - The apprenticeship training period lasting longer than the business economic cycle.
> - The nature of contracting work.
> - The linking structured off-the-job training to the practical work-based experience gained by apprentices.
> - Employers are generally not familiar with the Industry Training Package.
> - Apprentice training that best suit business needs and the needs of apprentices.
> - Consideration of the specialisation of work which places pressure on a broad based whole of Industry skills learning pathway.

Key Messages for Electrical Contractors – the *'toolkit'* has been tailored specifically for electrical business (industrial, commercial, and residential) to help them build and manage apprentice capability. It can be used to identify the training that best suit business needs and the needs of apprentices. Its application will allow employers to:
- analyse work requirements;
- link work activities to competency standards units;
- develop work specification;
- create competency profiles; and
- analyse training needs.

The *'toolkit'* provides an easy to use, intuitive interface that makes the process of modelling any work environment easy and allows a business to:
- confirm apprenticeships and job structure;
- develop a profile of the skills needed and the competencies needed by successful candidates;
- established a clear understanding of the expectations, relevant tasks and the timing of placements;
- map the work tasks against skill-sets and competencies to determine "*fits*" within the apprenticeship pathway and the workplace.

Mentoring, Training and Supervision

> **The tools, guides and manuals have been prepared to address a range of industry Issues:**
> - Managers and supervisors need improved skill levels in undertaking their supervisory role to improve the way they manage their apprentices and provide an opportunity for an improved management culture that improves productivity.
> - Supervisor skills are not just limited to the technical skill set but need to be adequately trained for all required skill sets.
> - Supervisors need support in their role of monitoring an apprentice's on-the-job progression and how to link this to an apprentice's performance i.e. tracking work-based activities of apprentices both on and off-the-job to measure an apprentice's progression.
> - Lack of support structures for supervisors, time given to supervision and inadequate understanding of what it means to coach and mentor an apprentice.

Key Messages for Electrical Contractors – The *'toolkit'* will support strategies to improve the skills levels of workplace supervisors. This will include targeted programs for apprentice supervisors to:

- Ensure that the workplace is an appropriate environment for the apprentice including what level of supervision should be applied at various stages of the apprenticeship;
- Ensure that the apprentice is given opportunities to learn and practice skills in structured training and on-the-job; and
- Ensure a more 'hands on' role, teaching, training, mentoring and monitoring progress on a daily basis.

The S*trategies/tools* will provide guidance:

- *In the identification of good potential supervisors* **-** which can be used by employers to identify any additional skills/knowledge needed by supervisors to motivate apprentices, teach them about the work, develop their skills, provide them with feedback and recognise their achievements;
- *For Supervisors and Monitoring Supervision* **-** to help them to balance their supervisory and other work responsibilities and to monitor them in their efforts to supervise and direct apprentices;
- *In Supervisor Training* **-** to enhance the coaching and mentoring role of supervisors, including knowing how and when to coach (and when to use other tools like mentoring) and providing the skills and knowledge to effectively communicate and deliver training instruction to apprentices or groups of apprentices in the workplace. This includes providing an understanding of training instruction and facilitating individual and work-based learning.
- *In Confirming and Managing Apprentice Progression* - to get a better understanding of the evidence requirements that support the application of competency based training and the importance of integrated workplace and off–the-job validation of skills and competencies.

Dissemination Activities and Channels

The *Dissemination Plan* will outline the engagement activities (such as briefings or presentations) that will be undertaken to reach each target audience, and the communication tools (such as printed materials or web sites) that will support these activities. The *Dissemination* activities will go beyond traditional vehicles and will also identify the activities that will promote a two-way dialogue, not a one-way flow of information i.e. face-to-face meetings or briefings are a very effective way to reach decision makers.

The *Plan* aims to help NECA identify which methods are the most effective and appropriate to meet the needs of the target audience. Dissemination will occur in a variety of ways to suit the needs of the target audiences i.e. effective dissemination will engage recipients in a process whether it is one of increased awareness, understanding or commitment and action as outlined below:

Utilising NECAs' diffusion and engagement strategies with members and non-members to increase awareness:

▪ *NECA website - NECA* can use its national website to provide access to members and non-members to read and download the *apprentice productivity* reform material from the *Project.*

▪ *Social Media - NECA* can use Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to have two-way communications with members, non-members (e.g., apprentices, electricians and other non-member employers) and the broader community.

▪ *Member Communications - NECA* is a national organisation with State and Territory Chapters through which communications with members takes place. NECA has four hard copy magazines covering all Chapters which are mailed on a regular basis to members and others. NECA also uses 'e-News' communication to update and educate members. These can be used to promote the outcomes of the *Apprentice Productivity Project.*

Utilising NECA's Industry networking and information sharing mechanisms to increase understanding:

▪ *Broader Industry Dissemination - NECA* has directors on E-Oz Energy Skills Australia and various State Electrotechnology ITABs. These contacts can be used to publicise and disseminate findings from the *project* through regular timed discussions. These audiences will be interested in understanding how particular pieces of work fit into the broader industry context and the extent to which adopting new approaches/methods/materials might have other implications, for example, on future policy.

▪ The use of *road shows, branch meetings, regional member briefings* and other member and non-member engagement opportunities - *NECA* has various and different arrangements in place from state to state. In NSW and Victoria there are regional groups or branches. *NECA* representatives will be able to share the information from the *Project* and provide advice as how to make best use of the tools and findings. A planned program consisting of a number of meetings per state or territory with members and any other interested companies in their local area will target smaller groups of participants and involve a much higher and more active level of engagement. For example, a workshop might be organised as a "*hands-on"* session allowing participants to try out particular materials and approaches

Utilising NECAs training functions to ensure a commitment to 'Action':

▪ Using the training function services – *NECA* provides a broad range of training options for members including technical training sessions, business skills training and business development and marketing training to help contractors keep business flowing. Each state offers a slightly different range of packages based on local market demand and this arrangement can be used to establish and provide training programs that will focus on applying the 'toolkits' in a workplace setting.

▪ *NECA* runs Group Training Organisations in WA, Victoria, SA, Tasmania, NSW, ACT and Queensland employing about 2000 apprentices. *NECA* also runs RTOs in WA, Victoria, SA and NSW. These organisations employ field officers, trainers and apprentice advisors who can be trained to utilise the *Project's* tools to ensure access to industry experts with the ability to provide technical advice and support. *NECA* can enhance the internal staff capacity within these organisations to develop and deliver an ongoing support. This can include identifying personnel

who are able to comprehend the strategies and able to speak authoritatively in respect of them, identify persons from within who can be prepared to provide advice on specific areas of the strategies and provide access to training support and/or seminars relevant to the needs of business.