HOW TO WRITE AN INDUSTRY COLLABORATION AWARD

Read this in conjunction with the [official Victorian Training Award resources](#).

It takes time to prepare an award application and gather the materials you need.

When there are a few people and more than one organisation involved, there's even more hoops to jump through! Keep in mind that you may be chasing busy people for information or feedback, and waiting to get approvals signed off.

But the effort will be worth it...

Collaborate to Write

This award is all about collaboration. So make the process a team effort.

Connect with colleagues in your industry organisation. Confirm that they have head honcho approval to proceed, and that they can commit to seeing it through.

You could set up a project team and allocate tasks to share the load. Maybe you just need everyone together to get the ball rolling. Whichever way you go, be upfront about what you need and when you'll want those contributions.

Understand the Steps

To get a clear sense of what you'll need and when, take a look at the official Victorian Training Award information plus our **'how to win an award checklist'** and the generic **'how to write an award guide'**. The information in these resources will help you to plan and follow all the right steps.

This guide right here will help you to focus more on the detail. It's been prepared so you can respond directly to the 2020 industry collaboration selection criteria.

Importance of Industry

Industry engagement is what makes TAFE unique. It is part and parcel of what we do. Industry participation is expected of us.

So for your collaboration to stand out as excellent you'll have to demonstrate that your project goes beyond business as usual.

Make it clear to the judges that the relationships you've built and the results you've collectively delivered are something worth celebrating and showcasing.

THE APPLICATION

There are three parts to this application:

- Overview
- Responses to the Selection Criteria
- Supporting Evidence

SECTION A: OVERVIEW

Think of this as your 'who, what, where, why and how' story. It's a 500 word summary for promotional material, something that will be shared with the media and public when you hit the spotlight. It's the good news story.

To write this, imagine that you're having a conversation with someone who only knows a little bit about TAFE.

You'd want to tell them about the history or context of your collaboration. Share some practical nuts and bolts of how it all happens. Also, describe your project's importance and maybe explain how it solves a problem or creates something new.

You can write the overview in cohesive form, or answer in bullet point with brief descriptions for each organisation, the products or services you offer, and the milestones you've achieved together.

SECTION B: SELECTION CRITERIA

The serious business. Your answers here will be carefully assessed by the judges. Remember, they're looking for evidence of outstanding excellence.

You have an 800-word limit for each response. There are four to answer in the industry collaboration award – so that's 3200 words in total for Part B.

Maybe break up each 800 word section into an introduction plus four or five paragraphs, each addressing a key point. Blend general and specific information.

Then add a concluding sentence or two that hammers home your answer to the criterion question. It can be helpful to mirror back or paraphrase the words in criteria to show that you have delivered what was required.

The information that follows relates directly to what you are asked to submit for this 2020 award. We've provided general tips and made-up example answers. These should give you a few ideas to get cracking and write about your own collaboration.

CRITERION 1   *Outstanding practice of the collaboration (800 words)*

Describe the extent to which the collaboration goes above and beyond standard practice in training and skills development.

START BOLD, ADD GOLD

Start writing for each criterion with a bold general statement that shouts 'we're outstanding', speaks directly to the question and signals what you're about.

Don't be afraid to blow your own trumpet. The judges want to choose someone confident enough to represent the state. So knock their socks off from the start.

But as you proceed, remember that you have to deliver the little details that back up and justify your boldness. Deliver the gold (not just the glitz). An intro statement would cover what you'll go on to explain next, for example:

> *This collaboration between 'TAFE' and 'organisation' is changing the way people in region123 receive 'ABC' services. Our innovative e-learning initiatives have enhanced skills, training and job satisfaction for employee/students. As a result, the organisation has boosted productivity and staff retention, and that's translating to a better experience for their employees and local customers. The collaboration is a model of industry and TAFE working together to resolve an efficiency and engagement problem. It has the potential to bolster industry-wide practices because it has halved the time to train people in XYZ while boosting the quality and scope of their technical competency. We're already having conversations with the peak body to see how we can share our value-add achievements.*

Below are the types of things you could talk about in more depth for the rest of the word count. You can see how the opening example introduces these points in some way, while presenting an overarching story.

The intro also claims to offer something new and high impact (i.e. goes above and beyond standard). It is a training practice that solves something at a local level and has big possibilities to extend collaboration beyond this project.

- how it is an example of training excellence
- what unique, exemplary or innovative aspects you implemented
- any e-learning initiatives in your program
- transformation in the lives of participants
- the contribution the training makes to the advancement of the industry and community in which it operates.

CRITERION 2   *Achievements of the collaboration for training (800 words):*

SHOW, DON'T TELL

A good tale weaves in aspects of a journey - like where you came from and got to, the challenges you overcame, the problems solved and what you collectively learned and achieved along the way. All of this leads into the grand finale of what the collaboration contributes - for all of the characters in your stakeholder story.

For an award submission you can't simply say, our program is 'innovative' or 'excellent' and leave it at that. The judges want proof in the pudding.

You can use raw data and quotes; a combination of qualitative and quantitative. You might already have information in your administrative systems. You can also gather additional material, perhaps through a survey or testimonials.

Whatever you include, don't assume the results speak for themselves. Chunks of data without context won't cut it. Grab snapshot highlights to prove your claims (full results can be included the evidence section). For example:

> *The company has experienced a 17% increase in project productivity since this training began. The CEO reports "significant improvement in collaborative culture and engagement", which they attribute to the mentoring scheme aligned with training delivery. The TAFE sent out a follow-up survey to the first cohort of students three months after the completion of training. Almost 68% responded, and of those respondents, 89% agreed or strongly agreed that this program gave them a clearer pathway within the company; and 93% reported improved confidence in contributing to the workplace...*(maybe add a short quote (sentence or two) from a student that paints a picture of the data).

Don't limit the submission by getting stuck on one achievement. Show a range:

- the training outcomes achieved (including qualifications and skill sets awarded)
- improvements in the quality of learning and assessment
- the links in place for the creation of new or improved career pathways and opportunities
- a contribution to social equity, especially increasing the participation of people from groups under-represented in the industry or workplaces generally
- if the outcomes of the collaboration can be replicated or modelled for other industries.

CRITERION 3   *Training impacts of the collaboration (800 words)*

CREATE A RIPPLE EFFECT

You want to show the judges that your collaboration has a range of benefits, and explain how these can or might flow beyond your cohort and organisations.

Try to include immediate, short and long term effects, for a range of stakeholders. Some of this will be quite obvious and easy to measure because you've already done it.

The broader impacts can also include potential, such as those industry-wide implications that might not have happened yet. Describe the possibilities. It can help here think about the difference between outputs and outcomes.

Outputs are the tangible things (e.g. improvement by % in student satisfaction rates or a speaking about the project at a regional employer group meeting).

The outcomes are the bigger flow on effects of what the outputs do (e.g. student satisfaction that leads to better workplace culture and productivity; or regional awareness leads to three organisations wanting to join in). For example:

> *This collaboration has already made a difference to the individuals in the course, who were initially struggling to engage with technical material. Their positive results mean they are moving forward in their career with skills and confidence. Two of the thirteen students have already been promoted since they qualified. The project has made a $$XX impact to the bottom line and culture of the organisation, which is now making a stronger contribution to the region by sharing its learnings with peers and boosting its own capacity as a reputable employer. They've observed 24% increase in job applicants since last year, and have received three expressions of interest from other companies wanting to know how to implement the practices we piloted.*

Consider the proven and potential benefits to the:

- employer or industry body and its employees
- organisations delivering nationally recognised training
- individuals involved in the collaboration
- community and/or region
- industry and/or industry sector
- relevant Training Authority and the broader TAFE and training sector
- improvements in the processes or procedures of all collaborating organisations.

CRITERION 4   *Sustainability and future of the collaboration (800 words)*

THINK BIG

Sustainability here has two meanings, and you're asked to consider both.

First (and most of all for the purposes of answering) is the ongoing viability of this collaboration.

The second is about the environmental benefits, which could include everything from energy efficiencies on site, more workers trained in a process that produces less waste; or less travel resources needed for training.

Show the judges that you are thinking big and long term. While your collaboration might have started to resolve a small and local problem, perhaps the model can be shared or scaled up. Explain how that could happen and what would be needed. At the very least explain why and how the collaboration is set to continue and improve, and what you've put in place to enable it.

> *Our collaboration was a huge success, even though we had teething problems along the way. This experience of learning as we went means we can support other organisations to implement better practices that will build their workforce capabilities in ABC. The project team evaluated Year 1 survey feedback from students, managers and teacher trainers. From the data we identified ABC for immediate improvement, and we have a co-design session scheduled in XX so stakeholders can contribute to future delivery. The success of the pilot means that the manager at the organisation now has this project as a KPI deliverable. So instead of just being an enthusiastic champion of change, the position is mandated and resourced to formally support this collaboration into the future.*

Consider:

- the potential for the collaboration to be sustained in the future
- the systems of quality improvement being utilised by the collaboration
- any performance evaluations of the collaboration that are in place and planned
- what ways the collaboration is contributing to environmental sustainability
- the capacity for the collaboration to be replicated
- any plans for expansion or adoption in other settings.

SECTION C: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

There are mandatory inclusions and up to ten pages of optional extras for you to include. These take time to gather so get onto this early.

You <u>must</u> include five relevant photographs, logos and a signed business endorsement from the authorised leader of the organisation/s.

The ten pages can include whatever you think adds value and gives the judges additional insight into the collaboration. The evidence should back-up or expand your story.

Items could include course materials you've made reference to in your criteria, a copy of a local news story or a testimonial from a participant or person of influence. You could provide full survey data that you were only able to highlight in your answer.

When requesting testimonials ask people to be specific. Don't be afraid to offer suggestions on what they could include. The most effective feedback identifies the outstanding impact and shows real familiarity with the collaboration and its value. So it needs to be a bit more than someone just saying they are aware of the project and that they think it was a good thing to do.

If you need more information to respond to the criteria, have a chat to colleagues who've done this before. If you are successful and get to the shortlisting stage, we've developed specific resources to help you prepare for the panel interview.