NACCHO Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Community of Practice (CoP): Final Evaluation Report

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

12 June 2026

nous



Nous Group acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders past and present, who maintain their culture, Country and spiritual connection to the land, sea and community.

This artwork was developed by Marcus Lee Design to reflect Nous Group's Reconciliation Action Plan and our aspirations for respectful and productive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

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Glossary

Acronym	Description
ACCRTO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Registered Training Organisation
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
ACCH	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health
RTO CoP	Registered Training Organisation Community of Practice
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
FNORTO	First Nations Owned Registered Training Organisation
The ICoVE	The Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence
IDS	Indigenous Data Sovereignty
KEQ	Key Evaluation Question
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
PL	Program Logic
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
ToC	Theory of Change
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Acknowledgement

The following RTOs generously participated in stakeholder consultation as part of the NACCHO RTO CoP evaluation:[1]

RTO participants		
Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA)	Gallang Place	Tauondi Aboriginal Community College
Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA)	Institute of Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)	Tiwi Islands Training & Employment
Bamara	Ironbark Training	TPA Australia
Barang Regional Alliance	Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service (KAMS)	Victoria Aboriginal Community Services Association (VACSA)
Birrang Enterprise	Nungalinya College	Westbourne College
Carey Group Holdings	Saltbush Social Enterprises	Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation (WMHSAC)
Centre for Appropriate Technology (CFAT)	Sunrise	Yalagan Registered Training
Equinox College	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	

[1] A further ten individuals contributed to the survey anonymously.

1 Executive summary

The Registered Training Organisation Community of Practice (RTO CoP), led by the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), is a national initiative that brings together Aboriginal Community Controlled and First Nations Owned Registered Training Organisations (ACC and FNO RTOs) to strengthen collaboration, build capability, and support improved training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In a sector characterised by geographic dispersion, variable organisational maturity and limited formal mechanisms for collaboration, the RTO CoP provides a structured, culturally safe forum for connection, peer learning and collective problem-solving.

This evaluation finds that the RTO CoP is delivering meaningful early value and is addressing a clear and previously unmet need for coordinated engagement across the ACC and FNO RTO sector. NACCHO has successfully established and expanded the CoP beyond its original Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) focus to include a broader cohort of ACC and FNO RTOs operating across multiple sectors. Through this expansion past the ACCH sector, the RTO CoP has begun to function as a national platform for shared learning and collaboration, supporting early outcomes including strengthened relationships, increased practitioner confidence, enhanced access to shared knowledge and emerging partnership opportunities.

Delivery of the RTO CoP is effective and on track. Planned activities have been implemented with a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness to stakeholder needs, and participants consistently report that the CoP is culturally safe, respectful and valuable. The current blended delivery model, combining in-person and virtual engagement, is supporting both accessibility and deeper relationship-building, while financial support for participation remains a critical enabler of engagement, particularly for smaller or remote organisations.

The evaluation also identifies several areas where the impact and value of the RTO CoP could be strengthened. As a program designed to trial and test a range of engagement approaches and delivery models before transition to ICoVE, the RTO CoP plays a critical role in informing future design and implementation. While the RTO CoP is appropriate and highly valued, participants experience its relevance differently depending on organisational maturity, capability and context. This reflects the diversity of the sector and indicates that targeted refinements to the delivery model could enhance value by better aligning engagement approaches with participant needs and informing ICoVE's future operating model.

At present, the RTO CoP is primarily delivering early-stage, relational and capability-building outcomes. While these are important foundations, there is an opportunity to further mature the model by supporting the translation of collaboration into tangible outputs. This includes the co-development of shared resources, formation of more formalised partnerships, and joint initiatives that address common sector challenges such as workforce shortages and compliance burden. While there is evidence that these activities are occurring, participants indicated a desire to see greater progress and more consistent focus in these areas. Over time, these outputs will be critical in demonstrating the CoP's ongoing value and ensuring that early engagement translates into measurable improvements.

Looking ahead, the transition of the RTO CoP to the Indigenous Centre for Vocational Education (the ICoVE) represents a critical juncture. The RTO CoP is well positioned for transition, with strong foundations of trust, engagement and shared purpose established under NACCHO's leadership. However, a successful transition will depend on clearly defining the ICoVE's role now it has been announced, as well as establishing strong mandate and governance arrangements to ensure continuity and maintain participant confidence. Ensuring a clear and credible transition pathway will be essential to maintaining momentum and avoiding disruption to participation.

Sustaining and scaling the impact of the RTO CoP will require continued investment in coordination, facilitation and engagement, as well as a more deliberate focus on outcomes and performance measurement. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation arrangements will support a more robust assessment of value for money over time and enable resources to be directed toward the most impactful activities. Program costs are largely driven by coordination, staffing and relationship management, alongside participant travel and accommodation and the delivery of national engagement activities. Cost variability is influenced by fluctuating participation levels, geographic factors, and external conditions such as natural disasters, as well as in-kind contributions from participating RTOs.

In the longer term, the effectiveness of the RTO CoP will depend on its ability to embed itself as a core mechanism for sector coordination within the vocational education system. As the ICoVE matures, there is an opportunity to position the RTO CoP as a key platform for sector-led leadership, continuous improvement and shared advocacy, ensuring that the collective voice and capability of ACC and FNO RTOs are strengthened and sustained.

Overall, the RTO CoP is a promising and worthwhile initiative that is already delivering benefits across a diverse and growing sector. With continued investment, clearer structuring and a successful transition to the ICoVE, it is well positioned to deliver deeper and more sustained impact over time, contributing to stronger training pathways, workforce participation and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Table 1 | Summary of recommendations

Recommendations	Responsibility
RECOMMENDATION 1: NACCHO should continue using structured and purposeful breakout group discussions within the RTO CoP, across both joint ACC and FNO sessions as well as ACC-specific sessions.	NACCHO to continue and strengthen existing efforts ahead of the transition to the ICoVE
RECOMMENDATION 2: The ICoVE should implement a differentiated RTO CoP model, including tailored streams or sessions based on organisational maturity, capability and sector focus, to improve relevance and value for participants.	The ICoVE, building on the foundations established by NACCHO
RECOMMENDATION 3: The ICoVE should formalise participation support arrangements (including reimbursement settings and mechanisms to manage cost variability over time) and maintain a balanced blended delivery model to ensure equitable and sustained participation across the sector. Without formalisation of these settings, there is a risk that increasing cost pressures and variability in participation could undermine equity and consistency of access across the sector.	The ICoVE, reliant on continued funding from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
RECOMMENDATION 4: The ICoVE should develop a structured monitoring and evaluation framework with clear indicators across short-, medium- and long-term outcomes to track impact and assess value for money over time.	The ICoVE
RECOMMENDATION 5: NACCHO should introduce, and the ICoVE should maintain, light-touch post-activity surveys (and occasional non-participant pulse checks) to better understand engagement, ensuring the approach remains optional and minimally burdensome.	NACCHO to introduce and the ICoVE to maintain
RECOMMENDATION 6: The ICoVE should clearly articulate its role, mandate and governance arrangements for the RTO CoP, including responsibilities for facilitation, sector leadership and potential advocacy, to support a smooth and credible transition.	The ICoVE
RECOMMENDATION 7: The Department should consider the continuation of funding for the RTO CoP beyond the current agreement period and review the structure of funding arrangements as the RTO CoP transitions to ICoVE to ensure it can continue to support participation of ACC and FNO RTOs.	The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
RECOMMENDATION 8: The ICoVE should establish structured mechanisms (e.g. working groups, action tracking, co-design processes) to support the continued progression from discussion to concrete outputs such as shared resources, partnerships and joint initiatives.	The ICoVE

2 Evaluation context and approach

Context and overview

Aboriginal Community Controlled and First Nations Owned RTOs play a vital role in developing a skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples bring unique knowledge, cultural expertise, and community connections that are vital to the economy. By investing in and supporting this workforce, employers - particularly Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and First Nations owned organisations - can strengthen place-based employment opportunities and deliver culturally responsive services that benefit communities and the broader economy.

Central to investing in and supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce are ACC and FNO RTOs, which deliver both accredited and non-accredited training to students and the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

All ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs share a core purpose: to build a skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that not only supports their communities but also drives broader economic development.

- An FNO RTO refers to a registered training organisation that is majority owned and governed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, grounded in their cultural values, and operated to benefit their communities.
- An ACC RTO refers to a not-for-profit organisation, controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, which delivers community-connected services to strengthen and empower their communities.

These organisations play a critical role in creating training and career pathways, responding to community and employer needs, and fostering opportunities that strengthen both social and economic outcomes. By equipping individuals with skills and qualifications, they contribute to sustainable employment, workforce participation, and the growth of local economies.

The NACCHO RTO CoP brings ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs together to share knowledge, form partnerships, and address obstacles impacting student outcomes.

The RTO CoP Program (the Program), led by NACCHO, is a strategic workforce and organisational development initiative. The Program provides a platform for ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs to share best practices, develop partnerships, and collectively address barriers to student success. The Program is aligned with broader sector strategies, including NACCHO's Core Services and Outcomes Framework and supports the objectives of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the National Skills Agreement, which prioritise building the community-controlled sector, expanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET workforce, and boosting cultural capability across the training system.

The present RTO CoP continues the work initiated by the first ACCH RTO CoP.

The RTO CoP builds on NACCHO's eight years of experience establishing successful Communities of Practice across Australia, fostering collaboration, capacity building, and cultural safety. The inaugural national Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Registered Training Organisation (ACCH RTO) CoP was convened in November 2022, and since 2023, the group has expanded to include ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs from a range of sectors, including early childhood education, community services, legal advocacy, governance, languages, hospitality, sports, and performing arts. The RTO CoP has broadened its membership to include 'Associate Members' who are organisations who may not meet the ACC RTO or FNO RTO criteria but have significant influence. The RTO CoP provides a dynamic and constructive forum for best practice sharing, partnership development, and advocacy, welcoming new members as they are identified or established.

Funded by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), NACCHO now oversees an expanded RTO CoP, with the aim of enhancing collaboration, capacity building, and cultural safety across the ACC and FNO RTO sector over an 18-month period (March 2025–September 2026), before transitioning to the ICoVE.

NACCHO and their funder DEWR engaged Nous to complete a process and early outcomes evaluation.

Because NACCHO's role includes establishing the RTO CoP and supporting its transition toward the ICoVE, the evaluation primarily emphasised process and formative components. The primary objective is to provide NACCHO and DEWR with insights into how the program is being delivered, whether it is progressing as planned, and the factors that are enabling or constraining its delivery. The evaluation has sought to identify early outcomes, such as increased confidence and knowledge of participants, while documenting lessons learned to inform future program delivery and sustainability.

The evaluation was conducted collaboratively in a culturally safe manner, using mixed methods that are adapted to the available data.

The evaluation was Aboriginal-led and guided by culturally safe principles, ensuring that all activities respect cultural protocols and community governance. A mixed-methods approach was used, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data from program documentation, existing delivery data, and targeted primary research (such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys). Program logic and Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) underpinned the evaluation design, enabling a structured assessment of program appropriateness, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led governance approach

Our approach to this evaluation, including stakeholder engagement, was guided by Nous' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Principles (see Table 2).

Table 2 | Application of Nous' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Principles

Principle	How this shaped our stakeholder engagement approach
Ensuring a culturally safe and trauma-informed approach	• We have actively considered the mix of gender balance and experience when conducting consultations. Our team included both male and female evaluators who have experience in leading trauma-informed conversations. • We sought to communicate warmly and openly, listen deeply, and ensured we summarised and validated conversations so that participants feel heard and respected. • We acknowledged potential unconscious bias and encourage team reflection throughout the project.
Using a strengthens-based approach and language	• We have recognised that Nous' knowledge systems and structures are built off Western ways of knowing and doing, which can disadvantage certain groups. We have considered how we can challenge this and elevate Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander perspectives and methods throughout this evaluation. • We have been wary of language and statistics that perpetuate a deficit view. We report on poor outcomes where necessary with the context that contributed to them (e.g. structural barriers etc.). • We have considered how to leverage the strengths of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and approaches as part of our findings and recommendations.
Supporting self-determination through our engagement, data analysis and reporting	• We have ensured that engagement approaches are informed by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people (both internal team members and external participants) to empower participants to share their views. • We have sought to be flexible in our data collection to measure what matters for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and use appropriate approaches and language. • We have supported Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS), including by ensuring Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people can access project findings and have a say in what, how and why data are collected, accessed, owned and used.
Supporting genuine	• We allowed for flexibility in project timelines to align with stakeholder needs. • We designed our proposed consultation approach to avoid adding to potential over-consultation for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

Principle	How this shaped our stakeholder engagement approach
partnerships and shared benefits	• We will make sure Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people directly benefit from our work, such as through capacity building and sharing findings.
Considering whether and how to include Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait leadership, Nousers, partners and governance	• The evaluation has been Aboriginal-led and supported with a gender-balanced team to ensure that Aboriginal voices guide the evaluation, oversee all evaluation activities, lead engagements, and conduct all data collection. • We have worked collaboratively with NACCHO (and other key stakeholders as appropriate) throughout the course of the evaluations. This included to design the Evaluation Methodology Plans and Toolkits, to confirm data collection tools, and to test and confirm insights and recommendations. This will ensure that evaluation findings reflect the wisdom and experience of NACCHO representatives and recommendations are appropriately framed to improve outcomes for ACCHOs and the communities that they serve.

Methodology

Key evaluation and research questions

KEQs and research questions have guided this evaluation to ensure a clear and focused assessment of the Program's performance, outcomes, and areas for improvement. The KEQs were developed in consultation with NACCHO and confirmed to reflect their priorities and key areas of learning, ensuring the evaluation is aligned with NACCHO's information needs and decision-making context. A full list of KEQs and research questions is provided below in Table 3.

Table 3 | KEQs and research questions

KEQ	Research questions
1. Appropriateness *To what extent does the program address identified needs?*	• What support do ACC and FNO RTOs need to share best practice, develop partnerships, across the ACC and FNO RTOs? • Does the RTO CoP support ACC and FNO RTOs to improve training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students? • Has the ACC and FNO RTO CoP supported the identification of common needs across the participating ACC/FNO RTOs? • What alternative support could be considered? • Is the RTO CoP appropriate for all ACC and FNO RTOs and the intended participants of the program?
2. Efficiency *To what extent are activities being delivered as planned?*	• Is the RTO CoP being delivered on time and to budget? • What factors support or hinder efficient delivery of RTO CoP? • What else could be done to support efficient delivery of the RTO CoP engagement? • To what extent is the RTO CoP delivering appropriate value for money, given the resources used and what has been delivered and achieved to date?[2]
3. Effectiveness *To what extent is the program achieving its intended outputs?*	• Have the intended program outputs been achieved so far (e.g. number of online meetings; number of face-to-face meetings)? • Has the expanded RTO CoP resulted in an increase in the number of RTOs participating? If not, why not? • What, if anything, has helped or hindered the roll out of RTO CoP?
4. Impact	• Is there any early evidence that the RTO CoP is leading to short-term outcomes (collaboration and knowledge sharing among ACC and FNO RTOs on best practice)?

[2] This research question was added at DEWR's request, following feedback from them on the RTO CoP Evaluation Plan.

KEQ	Research questions
To what extent is the program achieving its intended outcomes?	
5. Sustainability *How likely is it that the program will continue into the future?*	• How can RTO CoP structures and activities be effectively and sustainability transitioned to the Indigenous Centre for Vocational Education (the ICoVE)? • What additional support may be needed (for RTOs, for NACCHO, or for the ICoVE) to support future sustainability and maintain capability?

A theory of change and program logic guided the evaluation.

The theory of change sets out the overarching goals and explains how the RTO CoP activities are intended to strengthen collaboration, promote the exchange of best practice, and build capability across the sector. A program logic describes the logical connection between:

- **Context**: The background for the Program and the environment in which it is being delivered, including why the program is considered relevant and appropriate.
- **Inputs:** The resources that are used to deliver the Program.
- **Activities:** The activities that are undertaken as part of the Program, building on the inputs.
- **Outputs:** The results of activities (both quantitative and qualitative).
- **Outcomes:** The changes that are expected as a result of activities and outputs.

A theory of change (Figure 1) and program logic for the Program (Figure 2) was developed as part of the initial stages of the evaluation with the support of NACCHO. The program logic provided an important basis for the development of the KEQs and our line of questioning.

Figure 1 | NACCHO RTO CoP theory of change

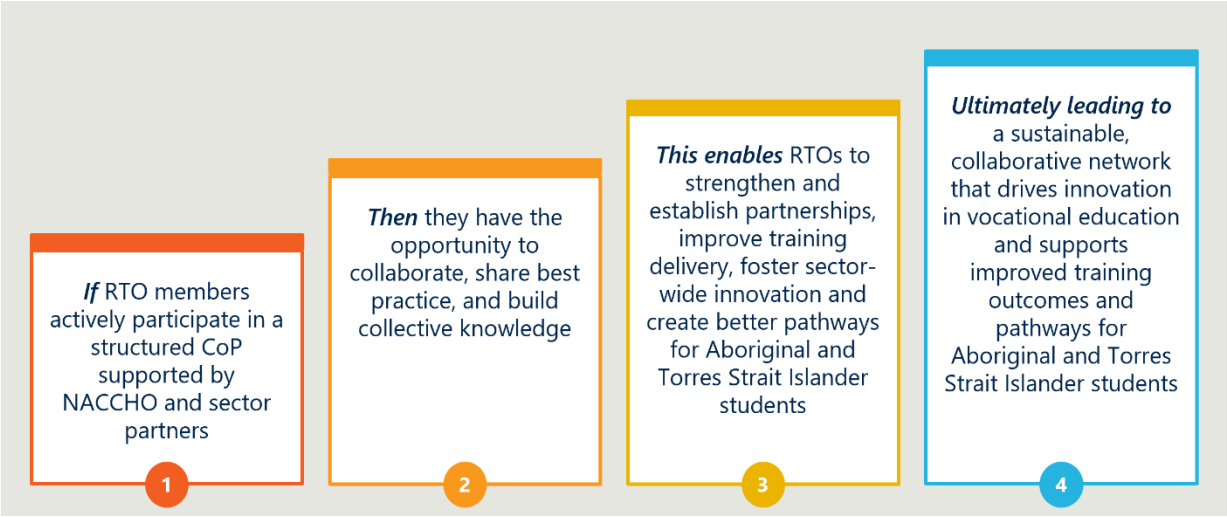
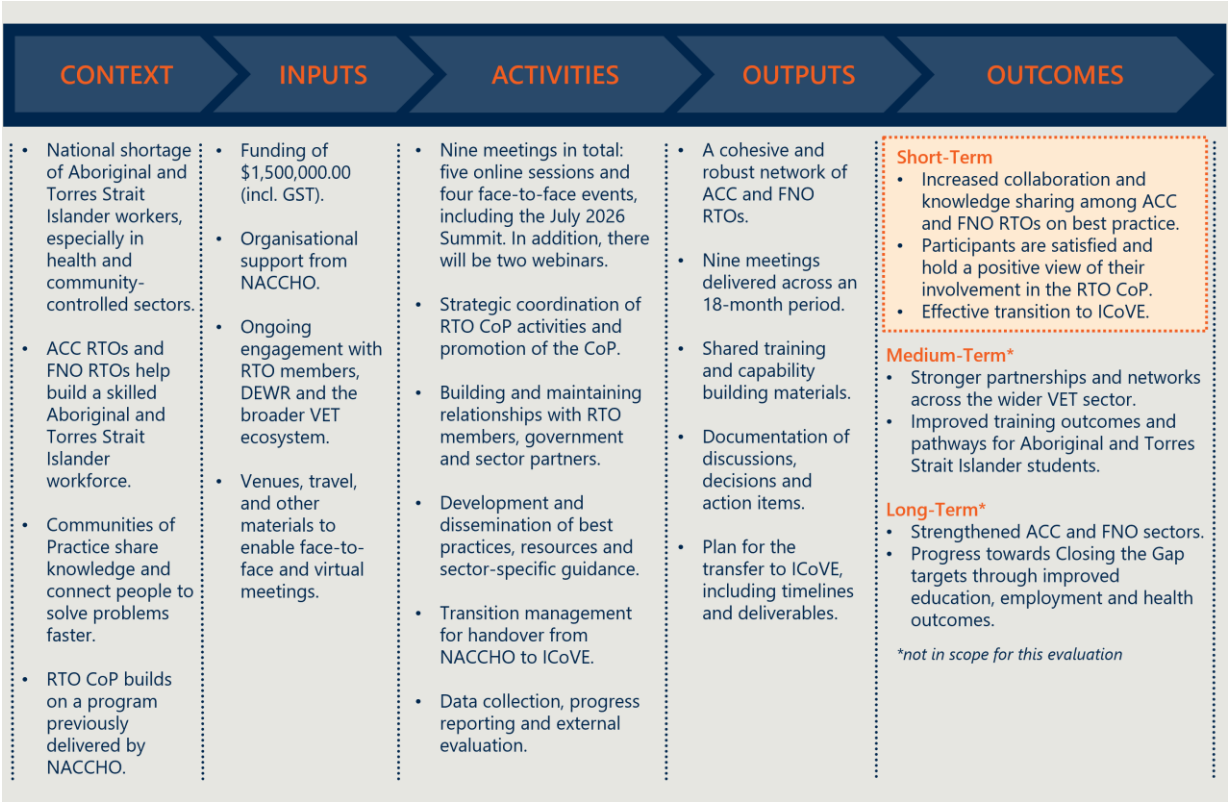


Figure 2 | NACCHO RTO CoP program logic



3 Findings

Appropriateness: To what extent does the program address identified needs?

The expansion of the RTO CoP beyond the ACCHO sector was an appropriate, interim approach to addressing a gap in national First Nations RTO coordination, though longer-term stewardship is more appropriately aligned to a dedicated sector body.

The expansion of the RTO CoP from an ACCHO-focused forum to a broader, cross-sector network of ACC and FNO RTOs reflects a pragmatic response to the absence of an established national coordination mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander RTOs. At the time of expansion, there was no dedicated body responsible for convening the sector, supporting collaboration, or facilitating the sharing of best practice across diverse training organisations. In this context, NACCHO was well positioned to initiate and broker this engagement, leveraging its role as a national Aboriginal-led organisation with established networks, convening power, and experience in delivering Communities of Practice.

While NACCHO's primary remit sits within the health sector, the extension of the RTO CoP to include RTOs operating across multiple sectors represents a logical progression of its workforce and capacity-building agenda, particularly given the importance of vocational education and training in supporting broader social, economic, and workforce outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Stakeholders did not raise strong concerns about the appropriateness of NACCHO convening this broader group; rather, the RTO CoP was generally seen as filling a critical coordination gap that would not have otherwise been addressed.

However, the evaluation also suggests that NACCHO's role in convening a cross-sector RTO CoP is most appropriately understood as transitional. As the ICoVE is established, led by sector organisations including Tranby Aboriginal Co-operative and Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service (KAMS), there is a clear pathway for the RTO CoP to transition to a model more directly embedded within the vocational education and training system. This transition supports stronger alignment between the RTO CoP and the broader RTO sector, while allowing NACCHO to step back from a function that sits outside its core mandate.

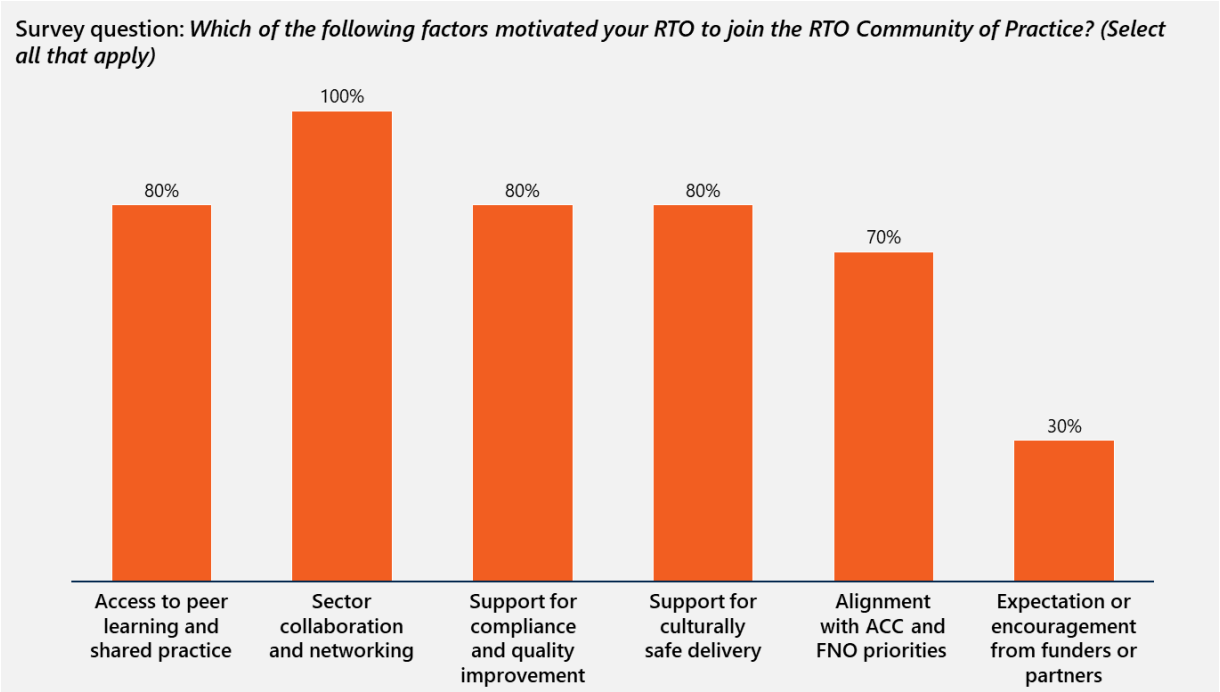
Overall, the expansion of the RTO CoP beyond the ACCHO sector is appropriate in the current context, reflecting both a clear sector need and NACCHO's capacity to fill that gap in the absence of an alternative. Over time, however, sustained appropriateness will depend on successful transition to the ICoVE, ensuring that leadership, accountability and ongoing development of the RTO CoP are grounded within the vocational education sector itself.

ACC and FNO RTOs require an ongoing dedicated, structured avenue to connect, enabling the sharing of best practice and the development of partnerships.

Many RTOs, across both ACC and FNO cohorts, reported limited opportunities to meaningfully connect with one another. This was particularly evident among FNO RTOs, whose more commercially oriented models may not naturally lend themselves to collaborative engagement. While some RTOs indicated they had derived greater value from the RTO CoP than others, and some felt there are further benefits yet to be realised, there was near-universal recognition of the RTO CoP as one of the few structured forums available to share best practice and build partnerships across organisations.

Importantly, this did not reflect a lack of perceived value in collaboration. Rather, RTOs consistently expressed a desire for stronger connections and more opportunities to partner. Many stakeholders indicated a willingness to move towards greater cross-organisational engagement, recognising the potential benefits of shared learning and coordinated approaches. At an organisational level, all survey respondents identified sector collaboration and networking as a key motivating factor for their RTO's participation. This was followed by access to peer learning and shared practice (80 per cent of respondents), support for compliance and quality improvement (80 per cent of respondents), and support for culturally safe delivery (80 per cent of respondents) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 | Survey response on motivating factors for joining the RTO CoP



Given competing operational demands and sector-wide capacity constraints, these opportunities for connection are unlikely to emerge organically. Instead, they require intentional design and facilitation, as many RTOs are not currently investing significant time or resources into independently driving information sharing or collaboration.

ACC and FNO RTOs require financial support and an accommodative engagement model to enable participation in collaboration activities, recognising existing resource constraints and workforce pressures.

ACC and FNO RTOs consistently operate in financially constrained environments, with limited capacity for discretionary expenditure. NACCHO funding is critical in enabling participation in the CoP, primarily by offsetting travel and accommodation costs. However, participants also highlighted the indirect cost of staff time away from service delivery, which can further limit participation where workforce capacity is constrained. Without this support, most indicated they would be unable to attend or would face a significant financial burden, particularly for in-person activities given geographic dispersion and associated backfill requirements.

In-person engagement is highly valued for building relationships, trust and peer learning. However, the CoP is already delivered through a blended model, with biannual in-person meetings complemented by ongoing virtual engagement. As such, the key consideration is not the introduction of a blended approach, but whether the current balance represents an appropriate use of resources.

While in-person activities deliver deeper engagement benefits, they are more resource-intensive. Virtual sessions offer a more accessible and cost-effective means of maintaining continuity and broad participation. Overall, the evidence suggests the current model is appropriate, with any expansion of in-person engagement requiring careful consideration to ensure benefits justify additional costs. Maintaining the existing balance, prioritising accessible virtual delivery with targeted in-person interaction, is likely to achieve the strongest balance of cost, reach and impact.

The RTO CoP has supported the identification of some common needs across ACC and FNO RTOs such as workforce and trainer shortages however, common needs are more strongly shared within ACC and FNO cohorts respectively, reflecting differences in operating contexts.

ACC and FNO RTOs operate in distinct contexts shaped by their governance, purpose, and accountability structures. ACC RTOs are governed by, and accountable to, a defined community, resulting in a service model that is place-based, not-for-profit, and oriented towards community self-determination. This often involves delivering

training in remote or very remote settings, embedding cultural content and language, involving Elders in design and delivery, and adopting flexible approaches to attendance and assessment.

In contrast, FNO RTOs operate as businesses owned by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander individuals, with a stronger commercial orientation. They are primarily accountable to the regulator and operate in a way that is more responsive to market opportunities and funding environments. As a result, they may operate more like mainstream RTOs, tendering for contracts, delivering across broader geographies, and employing diverse workforces, while bringing Indigenous leadership and cultural perspectives to their work.

RTOs, including both ACC and FNO providers, operate within a common national framework, delivering vocational education across Australia, issuing nationally recognised qualifications, and complying with regulatory requirements. Despite differences in structure and context, they face a shared set of systemic pressures. Workforce and trainer shortages were consistently identified, affecting recruitment, retention, and access to suitably qualified trainers. Across the sector, there is also a strong and recurring need for greater collaboration and connection between RTOs. Stakeholders emphasised the value of networking and relationship-building, alongside more practical opportunities to work together, such as co-delivering training or collaboratively filling course enrolments. There is a clear appetite for tangible shared resources, particularly compliance templates, validation documentation, and tools or practices, which could help standardise approaches, reduce duplication, and ease administrative burden. This is particularly important given the high compliance and reporting requirements associated with RTO delivery, which are experienced most acutely by smaller providers with limited staff capacity. Collectively, these insights point to collaboration and resource-sharing as pragmatic mechanisms to improve both efficiency and quality across the sector.

The RTO CoP is largely appropriate for ACC and FNO RTOs; however, participants reported differing levels of relevance and benefit, with some RTOs gaining more than others.



The RTO CoP is seen as appropriate and beneficial for both ACC and FNO RTOs, reflecting its alignment with shared sector needs around compliance, capability, and workforce development. However, a small number of participants noted that the historical positioning of the RTO CoP within the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) sector, and its continued association with NACCHO, can shape the focus of discussions, with some perceiving a stronger emphasis on ACCHO-specific contexts.

Views on the value of the RTO CoP varied depending on organisational maturity and internal capability. RTOs with more established systems and dedicated compliance expertise reported that some discussions, for example those focused on compliance requirements, reiterated areas where they already had strong capability and therefore offered less additional value. In contrast, RTOs that were newer, less active, or undergoing workforce transitions described significant benefit from these same discussions, highlighting their importance in building foundational knowledge and confidence.

These differing experiences reflect the considerable diversity across the RTO CoP membership, including variation in organisational maturity, experience operating as an RTO, and internal resourcing. While perspectives on relevance varied, there were no strong concerns that the RTO CoP was inappropriate or not beneficial overall. Rather, findings suggest that maximising value for participants requires deliberate facilitation approaches that acknowledge this diversity, for example, by tailoring discussions or creating opportunities for more targeted engagement across different cohorts.

RECOMMENDATION 1

NACCHO should continue using structured and purposeful breakout group discussions within the RTO CoP, across both joint ACC and FNO sessions as well as ACC-specific sessions.

To better reflect the diversity of the membership and enhance relevance for participants, breakout groups could be regularly rotated based on key characteristics such as:

- Geographic location
- Level of organisational maturity (self-identified)
- Types of certificates or accreditations delivered, and sector focus.

A more structured and differentiated RTO CoP model is required to reflect the diversity of participants and maximise value across different cohorts.

The RTO CoP brings together a diverse membership across ACC and FNO RTOs, encompassing a wide range of sector focuses, operating contexts and organisational priorities. This diversity is a key strength, enabling broad knowledge exchange and exposure to different approaches across the sector. However, it also creates challenges in ensuring that activities consistently meet the needs of all participants.

Consultation evidence suggests that a uniform delivery model does not fully optimise engagement across the membership. While some participants value opportunities for shared discussion and cross-sector learning, others noted that session content does not always align closely with their current priorities or stage of development. To better harness the benefits of this diversity, there is an opportunity to adopt a more intentionally structured delivery approach. This could include introducing targeted sessions or parallel streams aligned to specific themes, priorities or levels of engagement. Such approaches would allow participants to engage more deeply in areas of greatest relevance, while still maintaining opportunities for broader cross-sector exchange. NACCHO has advised that RTO CoP members are already identifying targeted topic areas, which are beginning to shape the themes for CoPs, webinars and consultations. Smaller, jurisdiction-specific RTO CoPs are also emerging as part of this process.

Over time, a more differentiated model would support stronger engagement and enable the CoP to deliver more advanced outcomes. By facilitating discussions among participants with shared contexts or goals, it can create a stronger foundation for practical collaboration, including the co-development of resources and partnerships. In this way, differentiation would enhance both participant experience and the overall effectiveness of the RTO CoP as it continues to evolve.

RECOMMENDATION 2

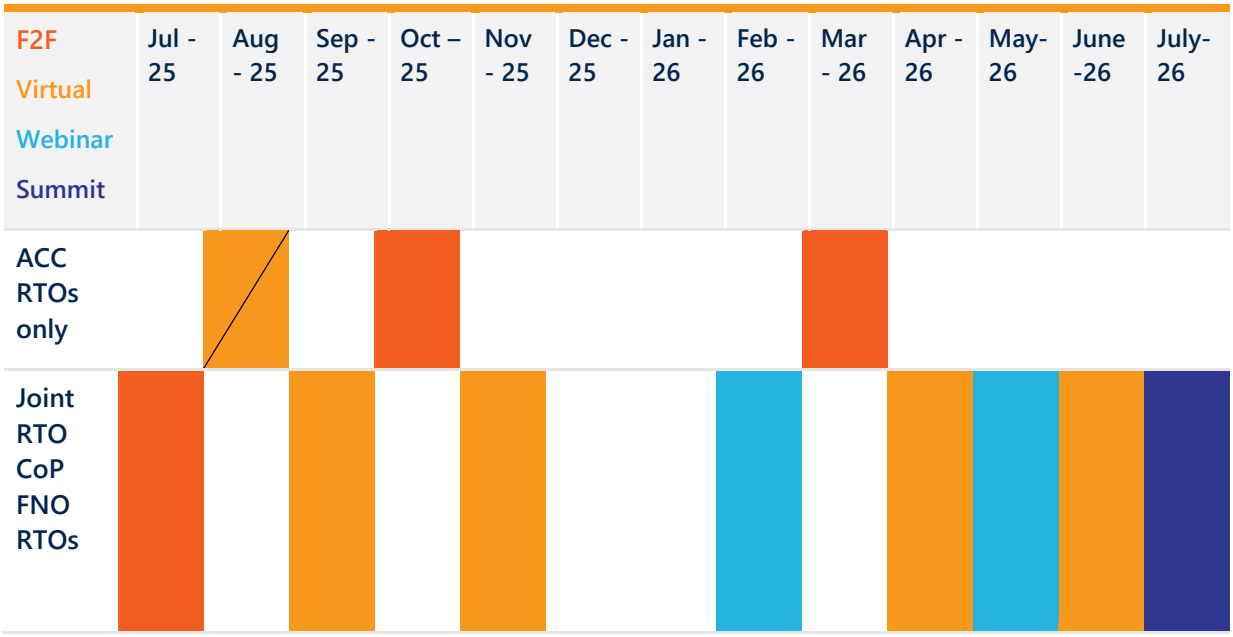
The ICoVE should implement a differentiated RTO CoP model, including tailored streams or sessions based on organisational maturity, capability and sector focus, to improve relevance and value for participants.

Efficiency: To what extent are activities being delivered as planned?

NACCHO reports that delivery of the NACCHO RTO CoP Program is on time and to budget.

NACCHO reports that the RTO CoP is being delivered by NACCHO on time and within budget, with planned online and face-to-face activities occurring largely as intended as of May 2026 (see Table 4). Reconciled expenditure data and final budget acquittal documentation are not yet available, as the program remains ongoing, but all information available to support the monitoring and evaluation has been provided. As such, findings regarding value for money remain indicative rather than definitive.

Table 4 | RTO CoP schedule July 2025 to July 2026



There is evidence of effective implementation and adaptive management, with no major barriers to delivery identified.



All RTO CoPs were delivered as scheduled, except for the virtual ACC-only session planned for August 2025. This session was deferred due to concurrent consultation being undertaken with RTOs across multiple NACCHO programs at the time. In agreement with stakeholders, it was considered appropriate to avoid overburdening RTOs. This approach reflects a deliberate level of flexibility in delivery and a strong understanding of stakeholder capacity and engagement considerations.

Given the geographic spread of ACC and FNO RTOs across Australia, including rural and remote areas, additional budget flexibility could support delivery where external or environmental factors create unanticipated challenges.

Stakeholders consistently highlighted that rising cost of living and cost of doing business pressures are being felt across the sector, with flow-on impacts for participation in the RTO CoP. Travel costs, particularly fuel and flights from remote locations, have increased, making attendance at face-to-face sessions more expensive for RTOs and, consequently, for NACCHO, which reimburses these costs. Travel reimbursement rates, start from approximately $1,495 for urban and regional participants to $2,095 for rural and remote participants, dependent on the number of days they are required to travel. This reflects the significantly higher costs faced by geographically isolated RTOs and are a key mechanism for maintaining equitable access to the RTO CoP.

While NACCHO has sought to support participation through these reimbursement arrangements, they noted that funding levels have remained static despite rising costs, limiting their ability to fully cover expenses incurred by participants. Although stakeholders did not identify a current 'gap' between reimbursements and actual costs, there was a shared acknowledgment that this balance may become increasingly difficult to sustain. For smaller or more remote RTOs in particular, the ability to attend remains heavily dependent on this financial support, and increasing costs may pose a risk to ongoing equitable participation if not carefully managed.

RECOMMENDATION 3

NACCHO and the ICoVE should formalise participation support arrangements (including reimbursement settings and mechanisms to manage cost variability over time) and maintain a balanced blended delivery model to ensure equitable and sustained participation across the sector. Without formalisation of these settings, there is a risk that increasing cost pressures and variability in participation could undermine equity and consistency of access across the sector.

Available evidence indicates that the RTO CoP is generating early outcomes consistent with the level of investment to date.

Available evidence indicates that the RTO CoP is generating early outcomes consistent with its level of investment to date. While NACCHO has provided high-level program budget assumptions, the evaluation has not had access to reconciled expenditure data or the full funding agreement. As such, findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive.

Available budget information suggests that program costs are primarily driven by:

- staffing, including coordination, facilitation and relationship management,
- participant travel and accommodation, and
- delivery of face-to-face events and the annual summit.

Monitoring and evaluation activities also represent a defined cost across the program lifecycle.

These costs are inherently variable due to factors affecting both program scale and delivery. This includes changes in the number of participating RTOs, differences in attendance across activities, RTOs sending multiple representatives, and staffing changes over time. Costs are also influenced by external and contextual factors, such as natural disasters affecting travel, and in-kind contributions from RTOs, including hosting events or providing venues.

This cost structure reflects the national scale of the RTO CoP and the geographic dispersion of participating RTOs. In this context, travel reimbursement represents a significant and necessary enabling cost to ensure equitable participation across jurisdictions, particularly for rural and remote organisations, and should be understood as a core enabler of access rather than a discretionary delivery cost.

On this basis, total program funding of approximately $1.5 million suggests indicative average costs per activity in the order of $130,000–$150,000, noting that higher-cost face-to-face events and the national summit are likely to account for a disproportionate share of expenditure. While simple per-participant or per-activity cost metrics provide a useful reference point, they are influenced by participation levels and should not be treated as a direct proxy for value for money. Qualitative evidence indicates that participating RTOs are deriving benefits including strengthened relationships, increased knowledge sharing and improved organisational capability.

Overall, and within the limits of available data, the RTO CoP appears to be delivering outcomes consistent with its level of investment and stage of maturity. This reflects a cost structure largely driven by coordination and staffing, participant travel and accommodation, and delivery of national engagement activities, aligned with the relationship-based and geographically dispersed nature of the model. In this context, the CoP is establishing a structured, culturally safe forum for collaboration in a fragmented and resource-constrained sector, while supporting early, foundational outcomes that enable longer-term impact.

Opportunities exist to strengthen value for money over time by improving targeting, differentiation and alignment between engagement activities and participant needs.

While the RTO CoP is delivering value overall, the evaluation highlights opportunities to further optimise its value for money. In particular, variation in participant experience suggests that not all RTOs derive the same level of benefit from current activities, reflecting differences in organisational maturity, capability and priorities. This indicates that a more tailored approach to engagement, such as differentiated content, targeted sessions or cohort-specific discussions, could enhance relevance and increase the return on investment for participants.

In addition, while in-person engagement is highly valued for its role in supporting relationship-building and trust, it is also the most resource-intensive component of delivery. The current blended model appears appropriate; however, ensuring that in-person activities are strategically designed to maximise impact, for example by focusing on intensive collaboration, co-design or partnership development, will be important to justify their higher cost relative to virtual engagement.

As the RTO CoP matures, there is also an opportunity to more clearly articulate and measure intended outcomes, including tracking indicators such as participation, collaboration between RTOs, and application of shared practices. Strengthening this performance framework would support more rigorous assessment of value for money over time and enable ongoing refinement of delivery to ensure resources are directed toward the most impactful activities.

RECOMMENDATION 4

the ICoVE should develop a structured monitoring and evaluation framework with clear indicators across short-, medium- and long-term outcomes to track impact and assess value for money over time.

Effectiveness: To what extent is the program achieving its intended outputs?

NACCHO is delivering on the requirements set out in its grant agreement with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

NACCHO deliverables, or key program pillars, are outlined in the grant agreement with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations that funds the Program. Table 5 outlines each deliverable and the corresponding progress as of 25 May 2026.

Table 5 | NACCHO deliverables and progress to date

NACCHO's deliverables under the RTO CoP grant	NACCHO's progress to date against each deliverable
Coordinate nine meetings over 18 months including: • Five virtual meetings with up to three including FNO RTOs. • Four face-to-face meetings held over two days, with one including FNO RTOs. • A national VET workforce two-day summit to further enable engagement opportunities between the ACC and FNO RTO sectors and other parties (including Coalition of Peaks members, government officials and mainstream RTOs). NACCHO will also run a face-to-face CoP meeting the day prior to the Summit commencing.	All RTO CoPs were delivered as scheduled, except for the virtual ACC-only session planned for August 2025.
Expand on the existing ACCHRTO CoP to expand the reach to include all ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs.	The RTO CoP has grown from an initial cohort of 11 ACCHO RTOs to 58 member organisations, comprising 35 ACC RTOs and 23 FNO RTOs.
Apply technical and cultural expertise and service delivery knowledge to contribute to guidance on project activities.	NACCHO has demonstrated application of technical, cultural and service delivery expertise through the design and facilitation of CoP activities, including shaping discussion topics, guiding sessions and embedding culturally safe approaches. This has been reinforced through a co-design model that draws on participant expertise to inform priorities, governance and delivery. While this expertise is clearly reflected in how activities are structured and delivered, it has been applied primarily in a facilitative and responsive manner, with limited evidence of translation into formalised guidance products or frameworks.
Foster best practice sharing and exchange of expertise between ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs.	NACCHO has fostered best-practice exchange through a national CoP model that normalised cross-RTO sharing and peer support and is now growing relationship-based exchange between ACC and FNO RTO cohorts as trust and engagement increases.
Share relevant and useful information with RTO CoP members to foster collaboration. This includes monitoring and communicating potential risks and issues.	NACCHO described a systematic post-session information-sharing mechanism: after each session, participants receive a feedback document summarising "activities, presentations, and key takeaways," and "all presentations and resources are shared with members" (including those unable to attend).

NACCHO's deliverables under the RTO CoP grant	NACCHO's progress to date against each deliverable
Improve networking, collaboration and information sharing between ACC RTOs and FNO RTOs.	NACCHO has strengthened national networking and collaboration by moving RTOs from isolated problem-solving to a trusted, regular forum with growing attendance and cross-cohort relationships, supporting increasingly unified engagement across jurisdictions and sectors.
Create innovative, collective resources to support training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, enhancing workforce participation and economic empowerment.	Stakeholders reported that the sharing of resources for broader sector use has been limited to date, with a stronger focus on coordination and engagement activities rather than sustained resource development. However, NACCHO has made meaningful progress toward the deliverable by creating, co-designing, and developing resources to support professional development and information sharing within individual RTOs. This includes tailored and intensive supports that demonstrate strong internal capability and innovation across the sector. NACCHO has also established the foundations for broader sector impact through the development of a shared knowledge sharing platform, designed to enable resource exchange and collaboration across RTOs, and intended for launch as part of the transition to ICoVE. While resource development has to date been more internally focused, this reflects a deliberate investment in building quality, culturally appropriate materials and workforce capability. The transition to ICoVE presents a significant opportunity to formalise, scale, and extend access to both professional development and nationally accredited resources, including expanding shared national accredited materials through models such as the ACCHRTO Licencing Agreement, thereby strengthening workforce participation and economic empowerment outcomes.
Maintain cultural integrity, safety, care, respect and practice.	Feedback from NACCHO and RTO CoP members indicates that NACCHO has effectively upheld the cultural integrity, safety, care, respect and practices underpinning the RTO CoP, while also creating space for members to lead and drive progress.

Participation in the RTO CoP has decreased over time across both ACC and FNO groups, with the steepest decline observed in webinar formats and consistently higher engagement among ACC RTOs.

Table 6 provides a summary of attendance and participation in the RTO CoP, based on records provided by NACCHO. It should be noted, however, that there appear to be some inconsistencies in these records, as several stakeholders reported participating in CoP activities during consultations but are recorded as non-attendees in NACCHO's data. Due to the confidentiality of stakeholder engagement processes, these discrepancies could not be reconciled as part of this evaluation.

It is also noted that RTOs remain members regardless of their level of engagement, provided they continue to meet the relevant eligibility criteria or until they formally request removal.

Table 6 | Member RTO CoP attendance

RTO CoP date	Format	ACC/FNO	FNO participation	ACC participation
29 July – 30 July 2025	**F2F**	**ACC & FNO**	31%	69%

RTO CoP date	Format	ACC/FNO	FNO participation	ACC participation
30 September 2025	Virtual	ACC & FNO	31%	49%
23 October 2025	F2F	ACC	N/A	63%
17 November 2025	Virtual	ACC & FNO	27%	60%
11 February 2026	Webinar	ACC & FNO	22%	40%
11 March 2026	F2F	ACC	N/A	58%
13 April 2026	Virtual	ACC & FNO	18%	55%
19 May 2026	Webinar	ACC & FNO	9%	35%

Participation of ACC vs. FNO

The participation data indicate a clear downward trend in attendance over time across both ACC and FNO groups, although engagement remains consistently higher among ACC RTOs. Among sessions open to both cohorts, ACC participation declined from 69 per cent at the initial face-to-face meeting in July 2025 to 35 per cent by May 2026, while FNO participation fell more sharply from 31 per cent to 9 per cent over the same period. Across the full period, ACC-only sessions also show some decline, from 63 per cent attendance in October 2025 to 58 per cent in March 2026, although this decrease is more modest than for the mixed-cohort sessions.

The attendance data indicates that a small number of RTO CoPs have never participated in the above listed RTO CoP activity to date, noting that some RTOs have participated in other RTO CoP organised activities such as consultation. This includes one ACC RTO and 12 FNO RTOs. This suggests there is an opportunity for more targeted engagement with these organisations to better understand barriers to participation and strengthen future attendance.

ACC only CoP

ACC participation was generally strong in ACC-only sessions (58–63 per cent), and was higher than attendance in most joint sessions, although the initial joint face-to-face session recorded the highest ACC attendance overall (69 per cent).

Participation by format

By format, face-to-face sessions appear to attract the strongest attendance, particularly among ACC participants, while virtual sessions produce more variable results and webinars are associated with the lowest participation for both cohorts. Overall, this suggests that participation is softening over time regardless of group, but that format likely influences the extent of engagement, with more interactive or in-person formats appearing to support stronger attendance than webinar-based delivery.

Webinars are also recorded and provided to all RTO CoP members, which may contribute to lower attendance.

Priorities, governance structures, decision-making protocols and operational strategies were decided on with input from RTO CoP members.

Priorities, governance structures, decision-making protocols and operational strategies for the RTO CoP were developed through structured consultation and co-design with CoP members. Foundational elements were established at the initial face-to-face CoP meeting in July 2025, where ACC and FNO RTO representatives collectively identified sector priorities, defined the scope and objectives of the RTO CoP, and co-developed key artefacts with NACCHO, including the Terms of Reference. These arrangements reflect a considered and effective approach, drawing on the expertise, local knowledge and cultural authority of members. Importantly, this process appeared to foster a sense of collective ownership among members, with governance and operational settings grounded in the needs and aspirations of the ACC and FNO RTO sector.

While NACCHO has deliberately adopted a 'soft' facilitation approach to enable member-led direction of the RTO CoP, some participants expected or would have preferred more active involvement from NACCHO.

A small number of participants expressed uncertainty about the role NACCHO was intended to play within the RTO CoP, particularly in relation to advocacy and addressing sector-wide challenges. Some participants suggested that NACCHO could take a more active role in advocating to governments for increased funding or for regulatory and compliance settings that better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning environments. NACCHO reported they have been actively and consistently advocating for increased funding over the past four years, initially for ACC RTOs and subsequently extending to FNO RTOs. This includes significant national and jurisdictional advocacy through the National Skills Agreement, as well as ongoing engagement with regulatory bodies to improve culturally safe support and engagement for ACC and FNO RTOs.

For some, this uncertainty may reflect limited involvement in earlier discussions where priorities, governance structures, decision-making protocols and operational strategies were established. However, for others, this perception appears to point to a broader gap in the RTO sector that they consider NACCHO could potentially help to address. With the transition to the ICoVE, there will be an opportunity to reconsider where and how the ICoVE is positioned to represent the interests of RTOs when RTO CoP members. Noting that NACCHO has not been contracted or formally agreed to undertake a representative role for the RTO sector, and is not a peak body for RTOs, this distinction may help to clarify expectations moving forward. RTO CoP members will have an opportunity to consider and identify their priorities for the ICoVE at the ACC and FNO RTO CoP 29 July 2026.

NACCHO has provided ACC and FNO RTOs with opportunities to provide feedback; however, there is an opportunity to formalise these processes and include options for anonymous input.

NACCHO has made semi-regular efforts to engage RTOs that are not yet fully or consistently participating, with most challenges observed among FNO RTOs. While some RTOs respond positively to phone outreach and engage in constructive conversations, this engagement has not consistently translated into sustained participation.

The primary barriers identified to date relate to limited organisational capacity, as well as, in some cases, the absence of established, trusted relationships. Despite NACCHO fostering an open and honest environment and maintaining consistent outreach, there may be value in introducing more formalised avenues for feedback. This could include structured engagement opportunities or anonymous surveys, enabling RTOs to share their perspectives without attribution. Such approaches may support a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to low or inconsistent engagement on the part of some RTOs, while also providing an opportunity for highly engaged RTOs to offer feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.

RECOMMENDATION 5

NACCHO and the future the ICoVE should consider introducing a short, targeted feedback survey following each CoP activity to capture participant satisfaction and experiences. This would support a more nuanced understanding of engagement trends over time and help identify opportunities to strengthen the relevance and delivery of activities.

To complement this, NACCHO and the ICoVE could also explore light-touch approaches to gathering feedback from members who do not participate in activities (e.g. an occasional, optional pulse survey), to better understand barriers to engagement.

Given that participation in the CoP is voluntary, any feedback approach should be proportionate and minimally burdensome, ensuring it does not negatively impact member experience or willingness to engage.

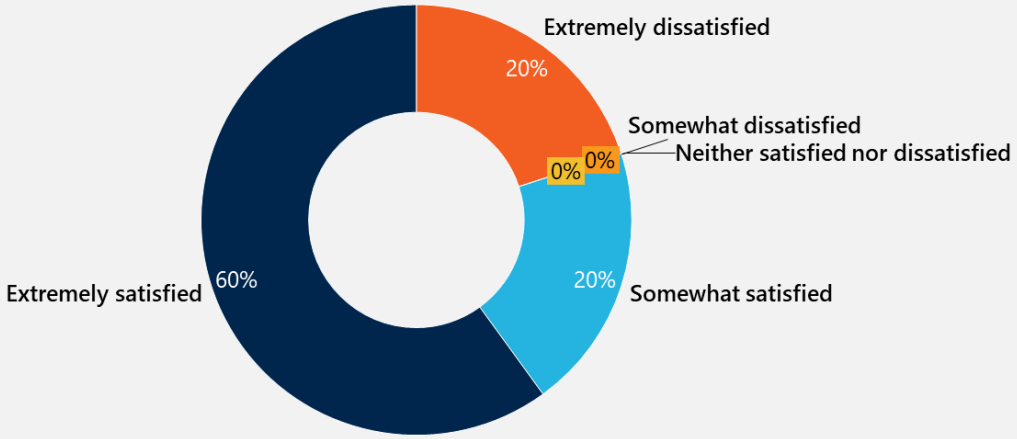
Impact: To what extent is the program achieving its intended outcomes?

Overall, the NACCHO RTO Community of Practice is beneficial, and most RTOs spoke positively about their experience.

Of survey respondents (n=10), most reported being extremely satisfied with the RTO CoP, with a lesser number being somewhat satisfied and being extremely dissatisfied (see Figure 4).

Figure 4 | Survey response on satisfaction with the RTO CoP

Survey question: ***Overall, how satisfied are you with the RTO Community of Practice?***



The pattern of responses suggests that, for most RTOs, the RTO CoP is impactful and delivering on its intended purpose and meeting participant expectations. High levels of reported satisfaction indicate that the RTO CoP is providing value, whether through relevant content, opportunities for peer learning, or practical support aligned to their operational needs. This aligns with the RTO CoP's aim to foster shared learning and collaboration and suggests that its core design and delivery approach is working effectively for a large proportion of participants.

However, the presence of respondents who are only somewhat satisfied, and a small number who are extremely dissatisfied, suggests that the RTO CoP is not uniformly meeting the needs of all groups. While respondents did not explicitly outline the reasons for extreme dissatisfaction, broader survey responses indicate this may reflect unmet expectations regarding outcomes, such as limited improvements in organisational capability, adoption of new ideas or approaches, and only moderate gains in confidence and collaboration. Notably, satisfaction with NACCHO's facilitation remained relatively high, indicating that these concerns are more closely related to perceived outcomes than delivery. This may also reflect variations in organisational context, priorities, or levels of maturity across RTOs. It suggests that for some cohorts, potentially those previously identified as having less alignment with the RTO CoP's focus or format, the content or delivery approach may feel less relevant, accessible, or actionable.

Taken together, these findings point to a generally strong performance of the RTO CoP, alongside opportunities to better tailor or differentiate elements of the model to ensure it is inclusive, responsive and impactful to the diversity of participating RTOs. Importantly, the variation in satisfaction is not unexpected, given that the RTO CoP is working to service organisations with diverse contexts, priorities, and levels of capability. As such, a single model may not fully always meet the needs of all participants, reinforcing the importance of ongoing adaptation and flexibility in design and delivery.

At a foundational level, the RTO CoP supports ACC and FNO RTOs to strengthen organisational capability and practitioner confidence, which indirectly contributes to improved training quality and student employment outcomes.

At a foundational level, the RTO CoP is supporting ACC and FNO RTOs to strengthen organisational capability and practitioner confidence, which in turn contributes indirectly to improved training quality and student employment outcomes. Evidence from consultations indicates that the RTO CoP is enhancing participants' knowledge of regulatory requirements, increasing awareness of alternative delivery approaches, and providing practical insights that can be applied within their organisations.

The CoP is also fostering peer-to-peer learning and encouraging the exchange of best practice, which is particularly valuable in a sector characterised by geographic dispersion and variable organisational capability. Early impacts are most evident in increased confidence, strengthened professional networks, and improved access to shared resources and advice.

While these benefits are largely intangible at this stage, they represent important enablers of longer-term improvements in training delivery, student retention and employment pathways. However, the RTO CoP remains at an early stage of maturity, and there is limited evidence of direct or measurable impacts on training quality or student outcomes to date. These outcomes will likely depend on sustained engagement and further development of more structured, outcome-focused activities over time.

Sustainability: How likely is it that the program will continue into the future?

The evaluation initially intended to consult with the ICoVE to more deeply understand their perceptions and needs in relation to a successful transition; however, given the ICoVE has only recently been announced and key positions (including the CEO) have not yet been filled, it was determined that their participation in monitoring and evaluation activities, including interviews, would not be appropriate at this stage, with the timing of the announcement, and the delay in establishing the entity, identified as the primary reason for this approach.

The RTO CoP is well positioned for transition to the ICoVE, with strong foundations in relationships, trust and shared purpose established under NACCHO's leadership.

The RTO CoP has established a credible and valuable foundation for transition through the development of a trusted, culturally safe forum that has begun to connect a previously fragmented sector. NACCHO's convening role has enabled initial engagement across ACC and FNO RTOs that would not otherwise have occurred, creating a space for organisations to share experiences, build relationships and identify areas of common interest and challenge.

These early achievements reflect more than successful delivery of activities; they represent the development of trust, legitimacy and shared purpose among participants. This has contributed to a growing sense of ownership of the RTO CoP among members, which is likely to support continuity beyond NACCHO's direct involvement.

The establishment of an engaged and growing membership base further strengthens the transition pathway. The RTO CoP now operates as an active network that can be transferred, reducing transition risk for the ICoVE and enabling it to build on an existing platform rather than establishing one anew.

Successful transition to the ICoVE will depend on clear articulation of roles, governance and value proposition to ensure continuity and alignment with sector expectations.

While the RTO CoP is well established, the transition to the ICoVE introduces risks if roles, responsibilities and expectations are not clearly defined and communicated. The evaluation indicates that there is currently some ambiguity regarding NACCHO's role within the RTO CoP, particularly in relation to facilitation, advocacy and sector representation. This ambiguity is likely to become more pronounced during transition if a clear future-state model is not established.

A sustainable transition will require the ICoVE to clearly articulate its mandate and value proposition, including how it will support delivery of the RTO CoP, engage with members and contribute to broader sector development. Clarifying whether the ICoVE will act primarily as a facilitator, a capability-building body, a representative voice, or a combination of these functions will be important to align participant expectations.

Formalising governance arrangements and ways of working will also be critical. Transparent decision-making processes, clear communication channels and mechanisms for member input will help maintain trust and continuity, while aligning the RTO CoP more closely with the broader vocational education and training system.

> **RECOMMENDATION 6**
>
> The ICoVE should clearly articulate its role, mandate and governance arrangements for the RTO CoP, including responsibilities for facilitation, sector leadership and potential advocacy, to support a smooth and credible transition.

Sustained impact will require targeted investment in coordination, facilitation and engagement to maintain participation and translate early collaboration into tangible outcomes.

The RTO CoP is currently delivering early-stage benefits, particularly in strengthening connection, enabling knowledge sharing and building participant capability. These outcomes are underpinned by consistent coordination, active facilitation and deliberate efforts to support engagement across a geographically dispersed and resource-constrained sector.

Maintaining participation will be critical to ongoing sustainability. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of financial support, flexible engagement models and culturally safe facilitation in enabling their involvement in the RTO CoP. The current blended delivery model appears to balance accessibility and depth of engagement effectively, and continued support for this model will be essential to ensure inclusive participation.

Without sustained investment, there is a risk that engagement in the RTO CoP will decline, particularly among smaller or more resource-constrained organisations. This would limit opportunities for collaboration and reduce the overall impact of the initiative. Continued investment in coordination and facilitation will therefore be essential to support the progression of the RTO CoP toward more substantive and outcome-focused collaboration. Given the program's reliance on travel, coordination and facilitation, sustainability will depend on continued access to flexible funding capable of responding to cost pressures and participation variability.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Department should consider the continuation of funding for the RTO CoP beyond the current agreement period and review the structure of funding arrangements as the RTO CoP transitions to ICoVE to ensure it can continue to support participation of ACC and FNO RTOs.

Further support is needed to move from relationship-building to more mature outputs, including collective resources, partnerships and system-level improvements.

The RTO CoP has been effective in establishing relationships and enabling early collaboration; however, the development of more tangible outputs remains at an early stage. Much of the value generated to date has been relational and knowledge-based, including increased trust, shared understanding and informal exchange of practices.

There is now an opportunity to build on these foundations by supporting a more deliberate shift toward collective outputs. This may include co-developing shared tools and templates, formalising cross-organisation partnerships, and facilitating joint initiatives that address common challenges such as workforce shortages and compliance burden.

Enabling this shift will require additional facilitation, structure and resourcing. Participants may need support to move from discussion to action, particularly given existing workload pressures. Strengthening mechanisms to identify and prioritise collective outputs, and to progress work between RTO CoP sessions, will be critical to ensuring that early collaboration translates into sustained, sector-wide impact.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The ICoVE should establish structured mechanisms (e.g. working groups, action tracking, co-design processes) to support the progression from discussion to further concrete outputs such as shared resources, partnerships and joint initiatives.