

Discussion Paper: Search and Rescue Tertiary Funding

Contents

Introduction	2
Purpose	2
Introduction.....	2
Feedback.....	2
Due date for feedback	3
Timeline and Approach.....	3
Proposed timetable.....	3
Principles.....	3
Key Issues.....	4
Appendix 1: Tertiary funded education and training in the search and rescue sector .	6
Appendix 2: Performance information on search and rescue training	8
Appendix 3: Consideration of options	9
Appendix 4: Search and rescue sector	12

Introduction

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to:
 - outline the issues on which feedback is sought;
 - invite feedback from the search and rescue sector on the list of issues identified as requiring action;
 - invite feedback on the options presented in this paper with respect to funding of education and training for the search and rescue sector; and
 - outline the process for the sector to work with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

Introduction

2. Government invests \$4.2 billion in tertiary education each year. For this investment, the Government is seeking higher levels of performance including course and qualification completion and progression to further study.
3. Recent policy changes in the tertiary education system such as the removal of funding for short awards (including health and safety and regulatory compliance¹) and the introduction of performance-linked funding, will affect the sustainability and funding of search and rescue provision for tertiary providers and the sustainability of tertiary funded training and education being offered, particularly for volunteers in the search and rescue sector.
4. As a consequence of these changes, in late 2010, stakeholders in the search and rescue sector² raised a number of concerns in relation to the provision and funding of training for volunteers in their sector.
5. The two main challenges that this review has initially identified for volunteers in the search and rescue sector relate firstly to the inability for search and rescue volunteers to be recognised for skill sets (through the New Zealand Qualification Framework (NZQF)) that are generally fewer than 20 credits; and secondly ensuring that there is a sustainable training model for the search and rescue sector.
6. The TEC has committed to undertake a review on the funding of search and rescue training for volunteers in the tertiary sector, in light of these concerns.
7. This review focuses on the training being accessed and funded through tertiary education organisations (TEOs) and aligned to the NZQF only, but acknowledges that other funding sources are also used for search and rescue training and education purposes.

Feedback

8. This document presents the following issues for feedback:
 - whether search and rescue training that meets the needs of the sector is sustainable in the context of the developing tertiary education system; and
 - if it is not, what the options are to ensure that the training needs of the search and rescue sector are met sustainably.

¹This policy provides a differential between the obligation of employers to ensure that their employees are able to work safely, from government funding for education and training which supports higher level transferable skills. Paragraph 4 of Appendix 1 provides further detail on this policy direction.

² The search and rescue sector as defined for the purposes of this review is described in Appendix 4 of this paper.

9. Additionally, the TEC invites comments on any other matters relating to tertiary funding of search and rescue education and training that the sector believes need attention.

Due date for feedback

10. The TEC seeks one submission from each organisation, and recommends that the organisation representing a wider sector or group of volunteer sectors, collates all individual submissions and provides a summary of these submissions.
11. All feedback should be emailed to searchandrescuefeedback@tec.govt.nz
12. Feedback would be appreciated as soon as possible, but no later than 5pm, Friday 18 November 2011. All feedback should include the subject line "Search and Rescue Funding Review – feedback".

Timeline and Approach

Proposed timetable

13. An indicative timeline has been developed and is summarised in Table One. Feedback is welcomed on the merits and feasibility of the indicative timeline, including any suggested amendments.

Table One: Proposed Review Timetable

Date	Action
19 October 2011	Discussion Paper released
19 October 2011– 18 November 2011	Conduct meetings with TEOs and other stakeholders
4 November 2011	Consultation on Discussion Paper closes
November 2011	Recommendations made to TEC Board and Minister for Tertiary Education

14. If the TEC Board makes recommendations to Government about the future arrangements of search and rescue training for volunteers, proposals will be made following the November Board decisions.
15. As part of the review, the TEC proposes the following level of communication with the sector:
- the provision of this discussion paper with a period of four weeks available for feedback;
 - meetings with relevant TEOs and stakeholders to facilitate effective feedback and ensure that all appropriate opportunities for input are taken .

Principles

16. The process will be based on the following principles:
- drawing on relevant experience and expertise across the search and rescue sector;
 - meeting the needs of the search and rescue sector for New Zealand;
 - exposing proposed changes to rigorous sector and expert scrutiny;
 - the need to balance public and private good in relation to who should pay for the training needs;
 - achieving as much sector agreement as possible about the best resolution for issues raised, and
 - continuing to ensure the overall ongoing focus of tertiary education investment remains on the value for government investment in tertiary education.

Key Issues

17. This review seeks to explore the following:

1. Whether search and rescue training that meets the needs of the sector is sustainable in the context of the developing tertiary education system; and
2. If it is not, what the options are to ensure that the training needs of the search and rescue sector are met sustainably

Search and rescue training in the context of the tertiary education system

18. The wider search and rescue sector receives approximately \$13.8 million³ dollars from Government funding. The TEC contributes an additional \$4.8 million (approximately) for the purposes of education and training that is aligned to the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).
19. Recent policy changes such as the removal of funding for short awards (including stand-alone health and safety and regulatory compliance) and the introduction of performance-linked funding, will affect the sustainability and funding of this provision for tertiary providers. Appendix 1 of this paper discusses these issues in more detail.
20. This impact is likely to affect the search and rescue training specifically because it tends to be undertaken part time in small components. The majority of learners accessing this training are volunteers. These volunteers in many cases have skills that are rarely utilised in emergency situations, but who require them to be refreshed so they can be effective when the need arises. The learning they currently access to achieve this tends to be in the form of a unit standard, or limited set of standards, on a “just-in-time” training basis⁴.
21. Course completion rates for 2010 provision that include search and rescue provision in Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) and Private Training Establishments (PTEs) were below 10 percent. This is consistent with learners only undertaking a small proportion of the course in which they are enrolled, and therefore not completing courses or qualifications. Completion rates for training being arranged by the Fire and Rescue Industry Training Organisation (EMQUAL) in the search and rescue sector are 39 percent for limited credits programmes and 75 percent for national certificates. EMQUAL has noted however, in a briefing paper for its sector, that it considers only 20 percent of volunteers complete a national qualification. The difference in the completion rates is likely to be due to the fact that EMQUAL also arranges training for fire rescue services, not simply land, search and rescue. Appendix 2 of this paper provides further detail on the course and qualification completions within the sector.
22. The Government is seeking a better return on its investment in tertiary education, including increasing the number of successful qualification completions, progression within the tertiary system and improved employment outcomes. However, it may be that the training required for the search and rescue sector has different requirements to that of general tertiary education provision.
23. While the search and rescue sector (including volunteer learners) are able to extract the relevant skill sets required from the available qualifications to meet their training needs, in tertiary terms this approach is not likely to align with the outcomes sought from the tertiary sector, which focus on the completion of nationally recognised qualifications, progression within the tertiary sector, and employment outcomes. Initial analysis therefore suggests that search and rescue training of volunteers through tertiary providers (and possibly ITOs) is a poor fit with the tertiary education system.

³ Specifically operational funding to run search and rescue operations plus overheads for salaries

⁴ This evidence has been supplied to the TEC by Fire and Rescue Industry Training Organisation (EMQUAL). Patterns in enrolment also support this statement.

24. We will need to explore this further and confirm that this is what is happening. We also need to take care to ensure that training that has wider national implications is not adversely affected, and we therefore will confirm with the sector that the refresher-style training that appears to be happening is the approach the sector requires.
 25. In the interests of public good it is important that there is sufficient training for search and rescue volunteers to be safe, and if they desire, the opportunity to uptake further education and training in the industry.
 26. We need to explore the issues with the sector and confirm (or not) the issues as we have described them are correct.
 27. Under these circumstances, there may be several initial options that the TEC Board may need to consider for volunteers in the search and rescue sector, including:
 1. no action (status quo)
 2. grant an exception to the TEC funding rules to continue the funding of courses and programmes in the search and rescue sector for volunteers;
 3. fund search and rescue training for volunteers through a reconfigured Adult and Community Education Fund setting; or
 4. recommending to Government that search and rescue training for volunteers not be the responsibility of the tertiary education system and explore alternative funding streams for this provision.
 28. There may be other options that the sector may wish the TEC to consider. This review invites the sectors recommendations on any other options.
 29. Appendix 3 of this paper provides an initial analysis of the options identified.
-

Appendix 1: Tertiary funded education and training in the search and rescue sector

1. The funding sources for the training of volunteers in these sector bodies are varied. The majority of training for volunteers is delivered and funded in house by the various sector bodies identified above. The majority of this funding comes from lottery grants and other community trust grants. Some of this training involves qualifications registered on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF).
2. In some cases, Private Training Establishments (PTEs), Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) or Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) may be used to access funding from the TEC.
3. Training being accessed and funded through tertiary education organisations must align with the outcomes that Government is seeking for its investment; higher levels of performance including course and qualification completion and progression for further study. In implementing this approach, the TEC has undertaken a review across all sectors of investment including short awards⁵, stand-alone health and safety and regulatory compliance learning. Budget 2009 announced a number of changes to the funding of regulatory compliance and health and safety qualifications from Vote Tertiary Education. Government considered that industry should meet the costs of stand-alone regulatory compliance and health and safety certificates.
4. This policy provides a differential between the obligation of employers to ensure that their employees are able to work safely, from government funding for education and training which supports higher level transferable skills. The implementation of this policy, in the case of volunteer training in the search and rescue sector, would mean that the organisations who train them and provide them as a resource to the New Zealand Police and the Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre, are responsible for their safety, and thus would be considered as the employer and would have the responsibility to organise the relevant training required and to meet the associated costs..
5. In the interests of public good, it is important that there is sufficient training for volunteers to be safe, and if they desire the opportunity to uptake further education and training. It is also important that the search and rescue training system ensures that there are sufficient volunteers to meet the search and rescue needs for New Zealand.
6. Given the element of public good, the obligation of employers to cover the associated costs in enduring volunteers are safe and appropriately trained is significantly different from the funding of other education and training, and the TEC needs to consider, as part of this review whether it is the appropriate Government agency to be funding this type of training.

Volunteer learners in search and rescue sectors

7. There is evidence to suggest that volunteers in the search and rescue sector tend to enrol in smaller pieces of learning (less than 20 credits) and seek to undertake learning that is specific to a skills set or industry requirement (ref refers). This learning tends to be in the form of a unit standard, or limited set of standards, on a “just-in-time” training basis.
8. Within the search and rescue sector, current and funded qualifications require significant time investment from members of the sector – similar to the training hours required for a full time vocational qualification (typically between 200 - 400 learning hours). Many emergency response personnel are volunteers and are unable or unwilling to spend time training in skills that they do not see as essential.

⁵ Short Awards are courses that are typically less than

9. There is also evidence that the insistence on signing for a full qualification, requiring training beyond the core requirements for search and rescue volunteer work, is impacting on the ability of sector organisations to recruit and retain emergency response volunteers. EMQUAL, the Industry Training Organisation (ITO) with coverage for the fire and rescue sectors notes that only 25% of its trainees are volunteers and, of those only 20% complete a national qualification.
 10. In a briefing paper for the sector, EMQUAL has noted that volunteers need to have their skills refreshed but very rarely are able to employ their skills. There is therefore a view from the sector that frequent refresher training is required for volunteers to maintain specialist skills, and qualifications, in the form of short courses, that recognise that the qualified person has a specialist skill, and that their competence has been recently assessed.
 11. An example of this is the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) qualifications. Some USAR team members are tertiary qualified with high levels of technical skill however, even they, along with basic responders, must hold a "Responder Card" as a minimum credential to be permitted access to the incident ground.
 12. To qualify for this, candidates must complete a minimum of four unit standards amounting to eleven credits⁶. While this is well below the credit level of a New Zealand Qualification it nevertheless provides confidence that these people can be deployed and will perform safely and competently.
 13. The nature of these issues raise a number of tensions firstly for the funding of training for volunteers in the search and rescue sector, in relation to the TEC's funding rules and the intent of the Government's investment in tertiary education. These issues are discussed in more detail below.
-

⁶ This is less than the 20 credit minimum required for a qualification to be funded by the TEC.

Appendix 2: Course and qualification completion for search and rescue training

14. In order to quantify the level of training that the TEC funds in the search and rescue sector, and to understand the value that the TEC is getting from its investment, analysis was undertaken on all courses and programmes funded by the TEC, with the words “search” and/or “rescue”. This analysis has found that there are 20 ITPs, 18 PTEs and 5 ITOs who provide or arrange training in the search and rescue sector.

Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics and Te Wananga Aotearoa

15. In the 2010 calendar year, ITPs and Wananga provided 396.5 EFTs of search and rescue training, at a cost of approximately \$2.4 million. The average course completion rates for the entire sector were below 10 percent, with the exception of two outliers, with very small training volumes. There were three ITPs who received more than \$200,000 for the provision of this type of training. These ITPs were Tai Poutini, Western Institute of Technology Taranaki and Telford. For 2010 the ITP sector median for course completion rates was 76 percent.

Private Training Establishments

16. PTEs provided 44 EFTs for the 2010 calendar year, at a total cost of \$212,000. The average course completion rates ranged from 0.2 percent to 6.9 percent. Only one PTE received more than \$50,000 funding from the TEC; in the 2010 calendar year. For 2010, the PTE sector median for course completion rates was 81 percent.

Industry Training Organisations

17. In the 2010 calendar year ITOs arranged training for 674 STMs in the search and rescue sector, and received \$2.15 million to do so. The average completion rates ranged from 21.4 percent to 75.2 percent. The majority of training was currently undertaken by EMQUAL (FRSITO).

Summary of course and qualification achievement

18. There is significant variability in the completion rates for learners in the search and rescue sector. The relatively low completion rates are likely to be a consequence of volunteers “cherry picking” specific unit standards that they consider important to the voluntary roles they have committed to. This arguably meets the definition of regulatory compliance, specifically where most enrolments in a qualification or programme lead only to the completion of the health and safety or regulatory compliance components, rather than the whole qualification. It also suggests that the balance of courses and programmes being offered are not meeting the majority of the learners or industry ‘needs, as the completion of a qualification is not valued.
19. Through the investing in a plan process, the TEC funds organisations based on performance expectations, including qualification completions and credits achieved. The TEC has set minimum expectations for course completion rates for them to be eligible for funding. There is an expectation that what is expected as a minimum completion rate will increase further increase in the 2012 calendar year.
20. In light of the low completion rates for courses and programmes in the search and rescue sector, it is unlikely that the TEC will continue to fund such programmes, or alternatively providers will stop offering them over time.

Appendix 3: Consideration of options

21. The two main challenges that this review has identified for volunteers in the search and rescue sector relate firstly to the inability for search and rescue volunteers to be recognised for skill sets (through the NZQF) that are generally less than 20 credits; and secondly ensuring that there is a sustainable training model for the search and rescue sector.

Skills sets less than 20 credits

22. With regard to the matter of recognising packages of skills that are too small to be qualifications, the changes made through the Education Amendment Act 2011 will allow for the registration of qualifications that are less than 40 credits on the NZQF. These qualifications are known as "Training Schemes" and will provide the search and rescue sector with an opportunity to register qualifications that will meet the needs of their volunteer learners, and also the needs of their industry.
23. While the search and rescue sector (including volunteer learners) are able to extract the relevant skill sets required from the available qualifications to meet their training needs, in tertiary terms this approach is not considered to align with the outcomes sought from the tertiary sector, which focus on the completion of nationally recognised qualifications, progression within the tertiary sector, and employment outcomes.

Sustainable Training Model

24. There is a judgement required on whether Government should adjust TEC funding rules to ensure that this training can continue to be supported, or whether alternative means should be found for resourcing this type of training.
25. We need to explore the issues with the sector and confirm (or not) the issues as we have described them are correct. However, initial analysis suggests that search and rescue training of volunteers through tertiary providers (and possibly ITOs) is a poor fit with the tertiary education system.
30. Under these circumstances, there may be several initial options that the TEC Board may need to consider for volunteers in the search and rescue sector, including:
1. no action (status quo);
 2. grant an exception to the TEC funding rules to continue the funding of courses and programmes in the search and rescue sector for volunteers;
 3. fund search and rescue training for volunteers through a re - configured Adult and Community Education (ACE) Fund setting; or
 4. recommending to Government that search and rescue training for volunteers not be the responsibility of the tertiary education system and explore alternative funding streams for this provision.
31. There may be other options that the sector may wish the TEC to consider. This review invites the sector's recommendations on any other options.

Analysis of the options for the Funding of Search and Rescue for Volunteers

No Action

26. Taking no action is likely to compromise the training available for the search and rescue sector, and will result in changes overtime, including tertiary education organisations withdrawing from providing this training because of the impacts on their overall performance and funding. This option is likely to result in a downstream loss of capability and sustainability of the volunteer sector within the search and rescue sector. Taking no action therefore does not appear well in line with the review's principles.
27. That said the New Zealand Qualification Authority's Targeted Review of Qualifications may, in time result in qualification structures that volunteers in the search and rescue sector are more likely to want to complete in the longer term.

Granting an exception

28. This option does not align with the outcomes sought from the Tertiary Education Strategy nor does it seek to improve the value for money from the government's investment in tertiary education. It is also likely to lead to requests for other exceptions to the funding rules, where employers desire short, atomised packages of training, with ongoing uncertainty about "who should pay".
29. Furthermore, if the TEC were to consider an exception to its funding rules to allow the funding of short awards and limited credit programmes that, are not competed in their entirety, and do not result in successful progressions to qualifications of more than 40 credits, then there would also be a need to exclude parts of a provider's provision from performance based funding.

Fund search and rescue training for volunteers through a reconfigured Adult and Community Education Fund setting

30. This option considers the funding of search and rescue provision for volunteers through a re-configured Adult and Community Education (ACE) setting. The TEC's funding rules for this fund may be re-configured to allow the funding of provision that is considered community good or public good.
31. However, ACE provision does not tend to be aligned to the NZQF, and is not required to be formally assessed. This means that the ability to standardise learning and credentialise volunteers in the search and rescue sector may not be attained through this option, although funding would be maintained.

Recommending to Government that search and rescue training for volunteers not be the responsibility of the tertiary education system and explore alternative funding streams for this provision

32. This scenario would explore the benefits for the search and rescue sector in transferring the responsibility for the training of volunteers in the search and rescue sector to those agencies that utilise their services, and who have primary responsibility for ensuring their safety. This would allow those government agencies who utilise the services of volunteers directly, and who understand the needs of their volunteer workforce to fund the training that they consider necessary and appropriate. This would ensure that this important, public good is subsidised, and that the training purchased is fit for purpose.
33. This scenario provides the search and rescue sector with the flexibility to purchase training in a fit for purpose manner, that does not need to necessarily align with the outcomes sought by the tertiary education strategy, including qualification completions and employment outcomes.

Other Options

34. This review acknowledges that there may be other options that the sector may recommend that the TEC explore further in order to ensure that a sustainable training model exist for volunteers in the search and rescue sector.
35. This review invites feedback on such options.

Appendix 4: Search and rescue sector

36. For the purposes of this review, the TEC has defined the search and rescue sector as consisting of a number of sectors and stakeholders including:
- Marine:** People who are active in marine based search and rescue. Most of these people are volunteers from Surf Life Saving New Zealand and Coastguard NZ and maritime operations.
- Land:** People who are active in land based search and rescue. Most of these people are volunteers from Landsar NZ and the amateur radio emergency communications
- Training/Prevention:** People involved in providing training and prevention services. Most search and rescue training is carried out in-house by each of the search and rescue organisations. The NZ Mountain Safety Council and Coastguard Boating Education Services are the main organisations that provide preventative education services to the New Zealand public.
- Aviation⁷:** People involved in the aviation segment of the search and rescue sector. This segment provides a great deal of support to a large number of search and rescue operations across all three modes – land, marine and air, including all Helicopter Rescue Trusts.
- Coordination:** People involved in the coordination of SAR operations, and in providing strategic direction and policy advice for the sector, these people are drawn from the NZ police, maritime NZ's Rescue Coordination Centre, and the NZSAR secretariat.
37. There are approximately 13,183 people involved in the search and rescue sector -spread across different activities and modes of operation. Approximately 10, 204 of these people are volunteers. These numbers do not include services provided by the Fire Service and other emergency management personal such as civil defence.
38. There are two agencies involved in coordinating search and rescue operations in New Zealand. These are the New Zealand Police and the Rescue Co-ordination Centre New Zealand.
39. Government's expenditure in search and rescue is approximately \$13.55 million in the 2009/10 year. In the 2010 calendar year, the TEC funded an additional \$4.78 million for training in the search and rescue sector.
40. In addition to the specific description of the search and rescue volunteer sector, there is also another group of volunteers in the rural firefighting sector who are likely to face similar challenges.
41. Below is a diagram that details the search and rescue sector, as defined by the New Zealand Search and Rescue Secretariat.

⁷ None of the aviation segment of the search and rescue sector receives funding under the search and rescue cap.

