



# RAISING STANDARDS IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

**Full course name:** Certificate IV in Business

**Project lead:** Victorian TAFE Association

## SCHOOL LINCHPINS – THE CONTEXT

The 2015 Bracks Review of school funding stressed the critical role school business managers play in achieving quality education outcomes. It also noted a variation in competence across the workforce of about 1200 school business managers in Victoria. The reasons included under-investment in the professional development of school business managers – many of whom had no formal training for the role.

Subsequently, the IBAC investigations into corruption at The Department of Education and Training identified the professionalism and standards of school business managers as an issue to be addressed.

## A SPECIALIST QUALIFICATION – THE SOLUTION

The Department prioritised upskilling school business managers as part of its integrity reforms. It commissioned RMIT to tailor the content of the Certificate IV in Business course for delivery to school business managers. RMIT conducted a training needs analysis of the workforce before developing this iteration of the course.

The course covers topics such as finance and procurement, risk management, project work, staff recruitment, stakeholder engagement, and ethics.

It follows an innovative ‘flipped classroom’ delivery method. Participants review materials online before attending a workshop where they discuss what they’ve learnt and analyse various scenarios.

There are five one-day workshops in total, spread over the 30 weeks the course typically takes to complete.



## HUNDREDS OF ENROLMENTS – THE OUTCOMES

- The course was developed by RMIT in 2017 and pilot programs were run at three Victorian TAFEs.
- As a result of feedback from the pilot programs, some modules were reviewed, and the course was rolled out to 13 TAFEs. Almost 400 students enrolled in the program during 2018.
- The project is backed by the Regional and Specialist Training Fund through grant funding and a higher subsidy that will cover 800 participants in total.
- An evaluation of the course has been conducted and was submitted in August 2019. Its recommendations will be used to further refine and strengthen the project.

## “IT’S BEEN A REALLY TERRIFIC EXPERIENCE”

### Student case study: Sue Northover



In her 30 years of working as a business manager and finance liaison officer in schools, Sue Northover had often thought that formal training for her job would be beneficial.

So she didn't hesitate to volunteer for the pilot program for the Certificate IV course.

Ms Northover, business manager at Pakenham Springs Primary School, says the course was challenging and rewarding – and that one of the highlights was the chance to meet her peers and talk about their experiences.

*“I've developed a network of business managers and we've supported each other through the course,” she says.*

Ms Northover says the knowledge she gained in areas such as project management was valuable and she thinks the flipped learning model was a strength of the course.

*“The workshop has been a great way to reinforce the learning and also to work in groups, gaining input from other business managers,” she says.*

*“The course has been a really terrific experience and I thoroughly recommend it.”*

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE – PRINCIPALS' TESTIMONIALS

An evaluation of the project sought feedback from principals and included some glowing testimonials, such as:

- *“We got tangible benefits from project work on a food forest and garden area and (our school business manager's) added confidence to contribute in that way. Our school business manager has taken over coordination of the school's council agendas and delivered information to the school council on projects, and has taken on some of our financial activity and reporting.”*
- *“The course has stimulated conversations between myself and my admin support team. We are all working better together as a result.”*
- *“We are both more aware of OHS, risk management, procurement and practical budgeting – all of this helps us make better decisions. Knowledge is power and as we work together, the knowledge from the course has a flow-on to me. It's made me think that there really should be some sort of professional development that principals and business managers could do together.”*

The Regional and Specialist Training Fund is a targeted *Skills First* funding stream that supports training for specific skills in regional and specialist areas that are not being met by the current training market. Training providers who hold a current *Skills First* VET funding contract are eligible to apply for higher subsidies and one-off grant payments for selected courses in specific regions to meet local industry demand or specialised occupations. Funding will be considered where there is a strong connection between industry, training and job outcomes.

To find out more visit: [www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/rst.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/training/providers/funding/Pages/rst.aspx)  
or email the RSTF team at: [rstf@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:rstf@edumail.vic.gov.au)