

# **Paraprofessionals in Local Government: an RTO's perspective on the barriers and opportunities**

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# Paraprofessional

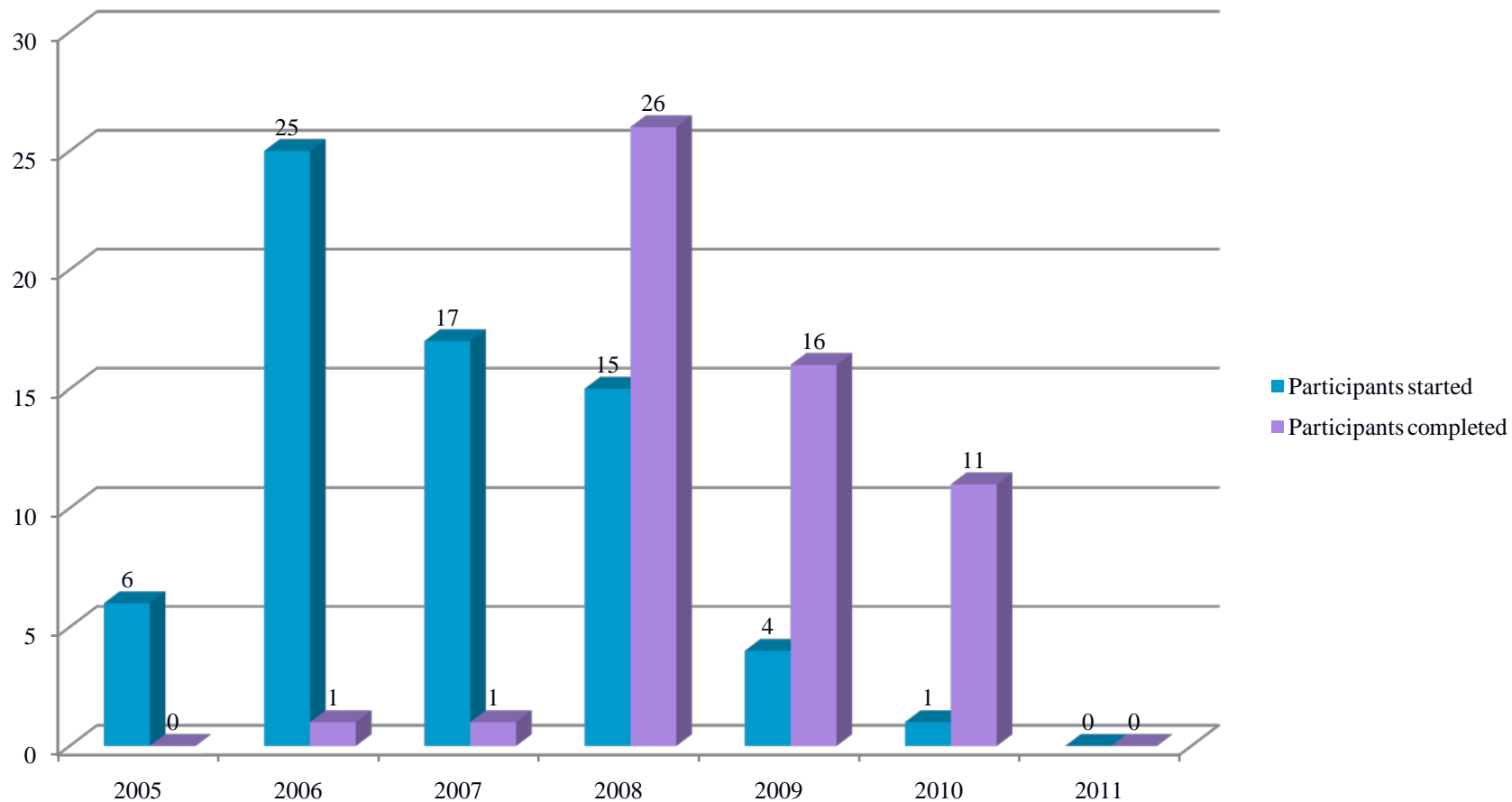
**“typically performs some of the duties of a professional or a technician in a support role, which usually requires less formal training and/or experience normally required for a professional or technical status. Usually requires an associate degree, or business/vocational training”**

[www.state.wv.us/ADMIN/PERSONNEL/clascomp/Docs/define.htm](http://www.state.wv.us/ADMIN/PERSONNEL/clascomp/Docs/define.htm)

## Some (well-documented) examples of skills shortages

Skills shortage of Professionals	Paraprofessional qualifications from Local Government Training Package* (others available)
Town Planners	Cert IV or Dip in Local Government (Planning)
Building Surveyors	Dip Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment)*
Environmental Health Officers	Dip Local Government (Health & Environment)
Rates Officers	Cert IV in Local Government – tailored to rating professionals
Civil Engineers	Cert IV or Dip of Local Government (Operational Works)

# Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning)



# Some key barriers from the local government industry....

- Lack of a cohesive industry plan for implementing paraprofessional positions
- Fragmented approach to job-sizing and pay classifications for paraprofessionals
- Still some resistance from professionals fearing their pay and status will be eroded
- Almost complete reliance on availability of government funding for training paraprofessionals

## Some barriers from the training industry....

- Perception that local government is a 'thin' market
- Technical writers, trainers and assessors very scarce
- Model of government funding in NSW volatile and not conducive to RTOs investing in resources with confidence
- Council decision making processes can at times be 'unfathomable' and slow in relation to funding deadlines

# Some barriers from State and Federal government...

- Increasingly complex models of funding for training
- The quantum of money available annually for local government is unspecified
- Data on local government industry training needs is not reliable
- 'One size fits all' approach to funding deadlines regardless of budget cycles of the industry

# Some suggested enabling strategies...

- Model job descriptions, classifications and pay ranges be developed for key paraprofessional roles e.g. Town Planning Assistant, trainee Building Surveyors, etc.
- Support of unions and key industry bodies e.g. PIA, AIBS, EHA etc., is sought and the benefits of having entry-level pathways via VET qualifications made explicit to members
- Councils to invest in training and assessment skills sets for managers and technical staff transitioning to semi-retirement → new pool of experienced trainers



# Some suggested enabling strategies cont'd...

- Lobby State government to pilot a brokerage model for funding local government training. This would:
- Provide the industry as a whole with an opportunity to apply for funding for specific qualifications
- Provide state and federal governments with quantitative data on actual training requirements
- Quantify approximate financial allocations required by local government for training
- Provide a competitive yet stable commercial environment for RTOs

**Thank you for  
your attention**