

Re-visioning VET

A capabilities approach to bottom-up,
top-down reform

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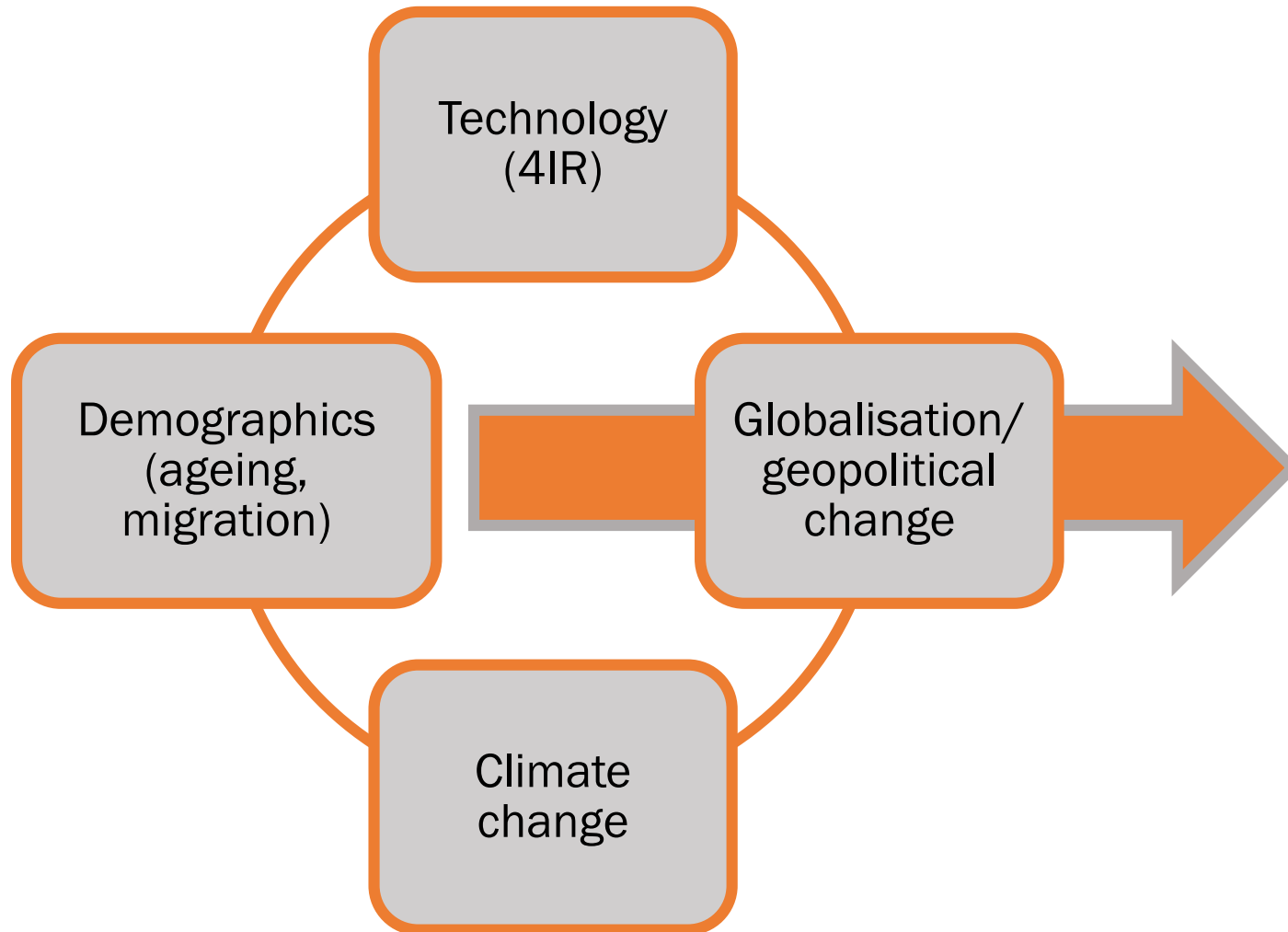
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A woman with long brown hair and blue eyes is looking upwards with a questioning expression. The background is dark grey with numerous white question marks scattered across it. An orange horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the text "What's the problem?".

What's the problem?

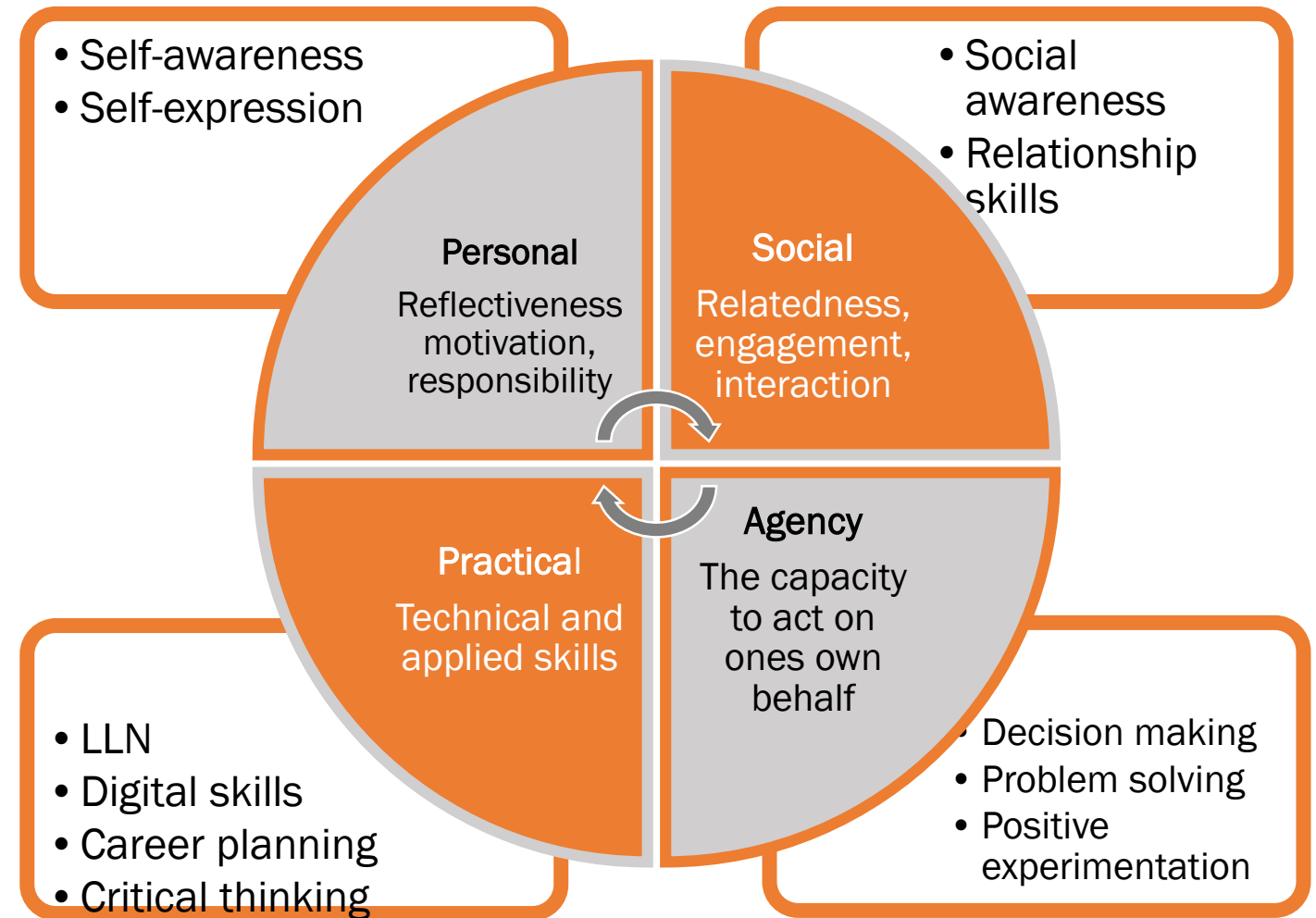
The future of work – a changed labour market for young people



- The future of jobs (loss of existing jobs, creation of new ones, raising of the skills bar);
- Their quality (increasing casualization, insecurity, gig economy);
- Wage and income inequality (the working poor);
- Social protection; and
- Industrial relations

The future of work – what capabilities will young people need?

Plethora of literature on the skills, attributes and aptitudes needed, but broad consensus is...



A vision for VET – fit-for-purpose

Meeting the challenges/opportunities of the future of work requires a fit-for-purpose VET system, one which:

- Enables access, participation, attainment.
- Maximises choice and opportunity – particularly for those most curtailed.
- Is grounded in the needs of learners AND industry – beyond short-term demand.

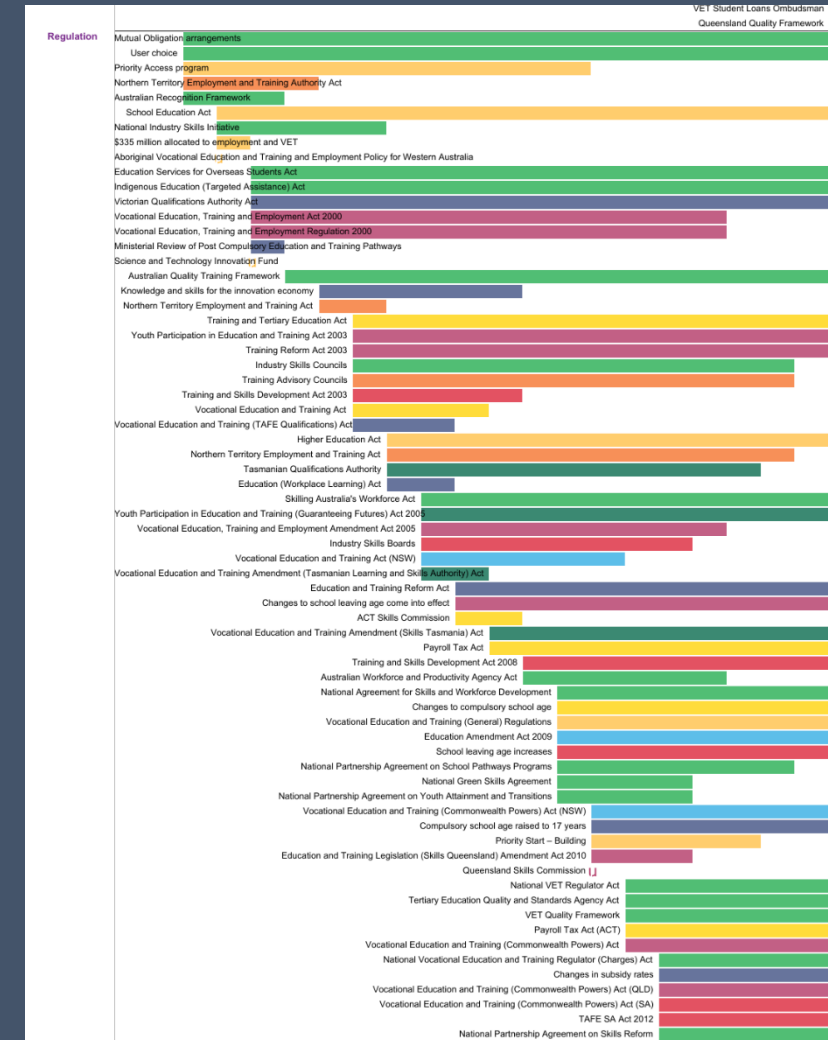


What's stopping us? A lack of vision for VET

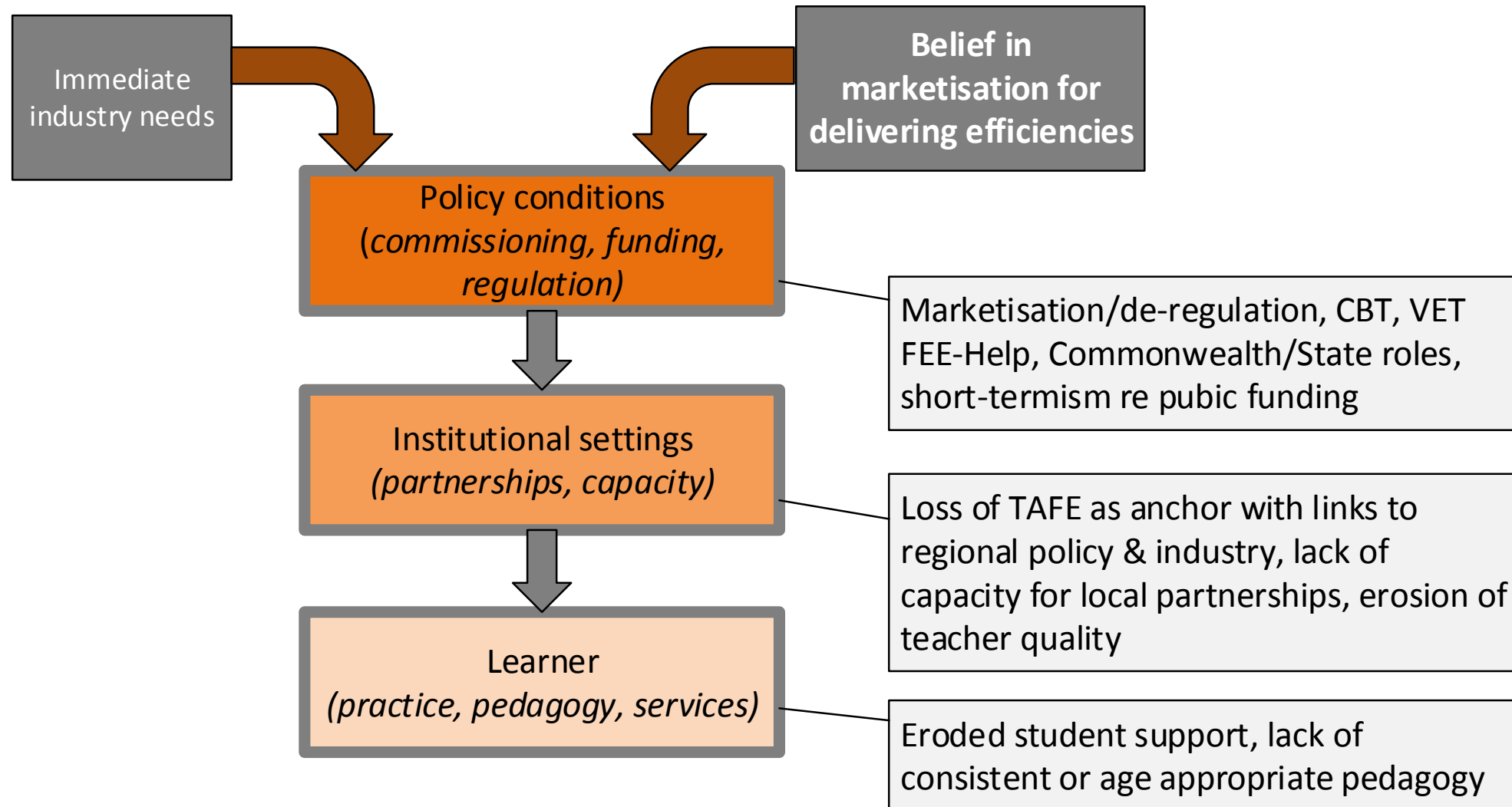
Near constant state of flux in VET (national and State) due to marketization – Victoria led the way.

Now we have:

- Declining quality of some courses, declining employer confidence in the quality of qualifications
- Mismatch between labour market needs and skills produced
- Complex system which is difficult for learners to navigate – 48 TAFEs and almost 4,000 RTO's
- Increased enrolments but poor completion rates
- Equity, access and support issues



What's stopping us? A top-down approach



Outcomes of the current approach

Previous (and current) reform attempts have been top-down, and ill suited for:

- Envisioning future job markets
- Adequately skilling the workforce to industry's standards
- Meeting young learner's needs
- Matching skills and demand
- System cooperation

Outcomes:

- Low completion rates
- High rates of debt
- Poor labour market outcomes

A hand is shown in the foreground, holding a piece of white chalk and drawing a lightbulb on a dark chalkboard. The lightbulb is simple, with a rounded top and a base. In the background, the word "SOLUTION" is written in large, white, chalky letters. The letter 'O' in "SOLUTION" is replaced by the lightbulb being drawn. An orange horizontal bar is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the text "What's the solution?".

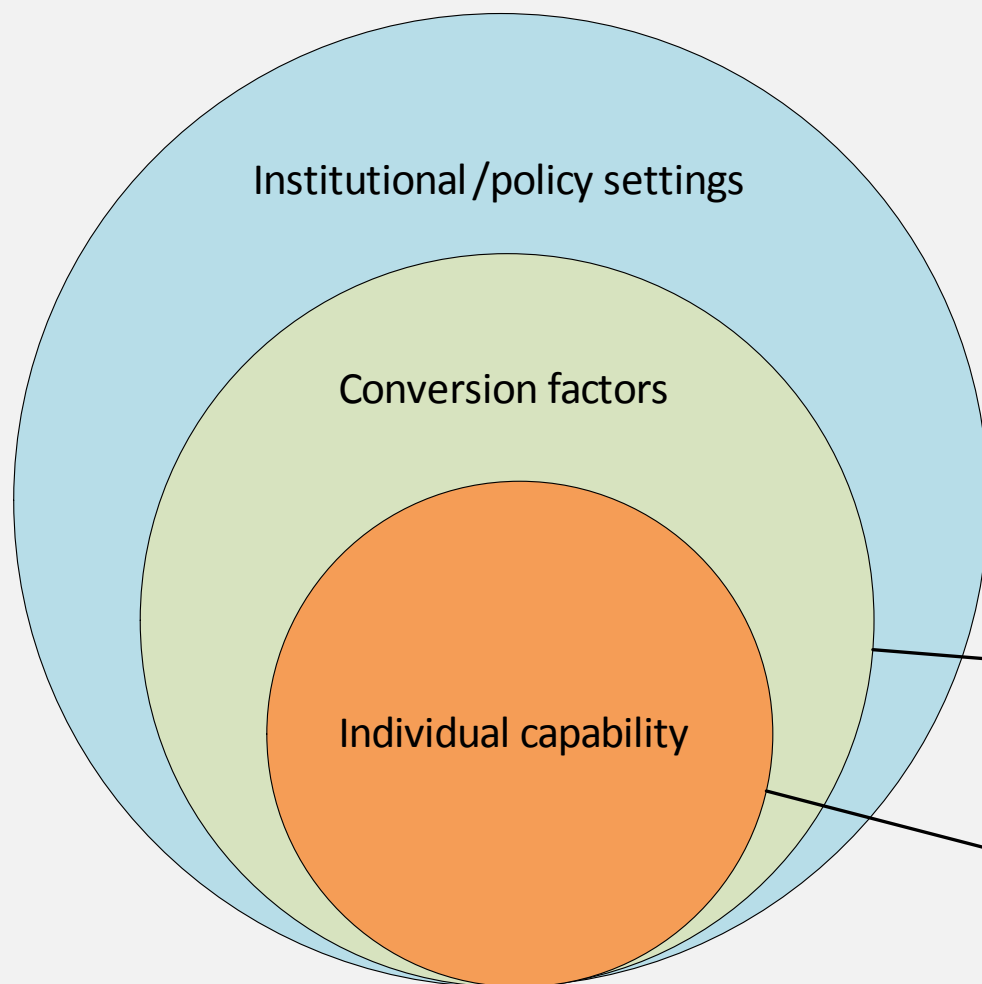
What's the solution?

A Capabilities Approach

- Capabilities refers to the **resources, capacities** and **abilities** that individuals can draw upon to make choices about how they will live.
- Concerned with notions of **freedom, choice** and **social rights**.
- Capabilities holds great utility for the development and evaluation of social policy – points to the **enabling conditions** required to achieve **integrated and sustainable solutions** to complex problems.



Embedded in place



*Embedded in broader social ,
economic, environment, geographic,
cultural context – enable or constrain
capabilities*

The partnerships and policy levers
required to enable the development
of capabilities and agency

The things required for people to
exercise their capabilities (housing,
transport , health & wellbeing,
vocational guidance , opportunities ,
networks)

The capabilities required to live a life
you have reason to value

A focus on choice and agency

Capabilities approach is about maximising people's **choices**.

Agency is core to the capabilities approach – not simply from a human rights and social justice perspective, but because agency is intrinsically motivating.



Recognition of context and place

Capabilities cannot be divorced from context – geographic, social, economic, cultural. The ability to develop capabilities and exercise agency in how they are deployed requires access to:

- conversion factors
- structural enablers



CONTEXT
MATTERS

Ground up – starting with the learner

So where to start?



With an understanding of
the learner as a *young
person*...



Young people in VET – who are they?



Over 230,000 young (15-24) early school leavers (ESL) in VET



Nationally, 47.8% of 15-19 yo ESL, and 52.1% of 20-24 ESL in VET



Over-representation of those from low SES background



Secondary school, SBATs, campus-based VET, full-time apprenticeships



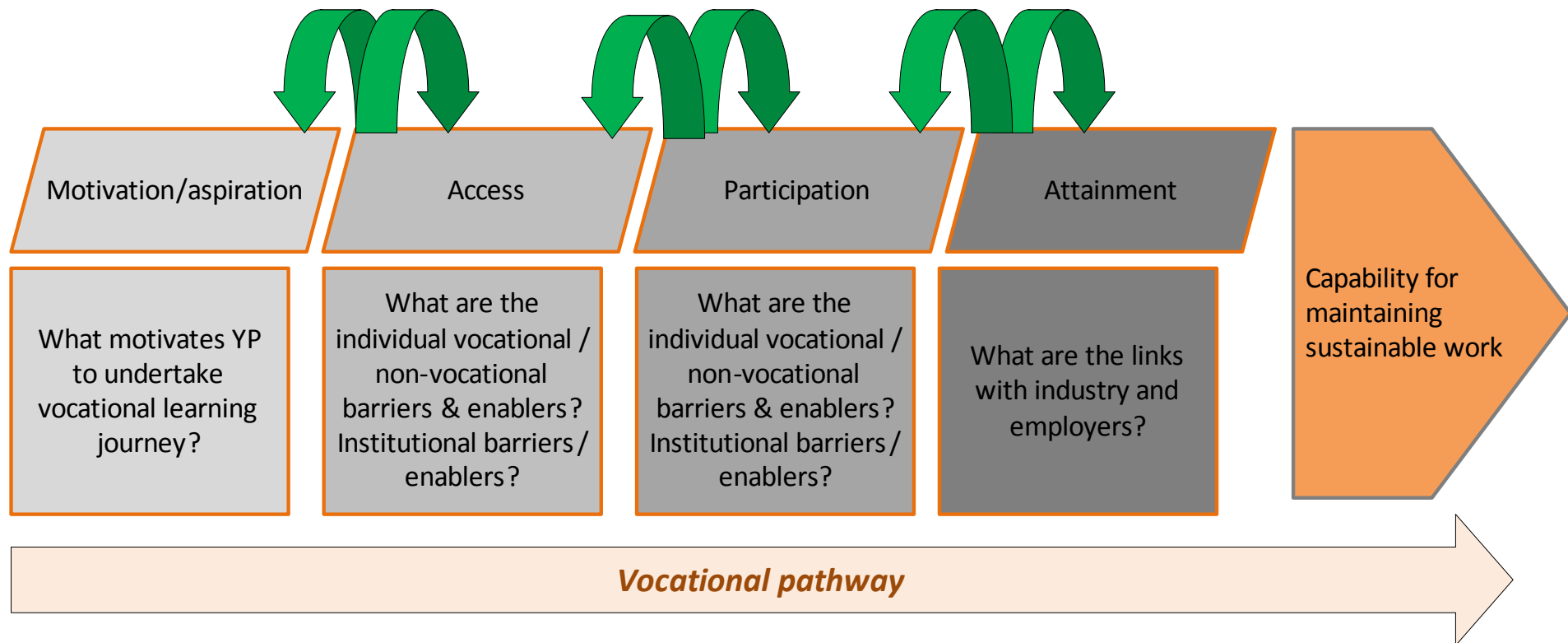
58.3% completion rate for under 25s (without prior post-school qual)

Young people in VET – what do they need?

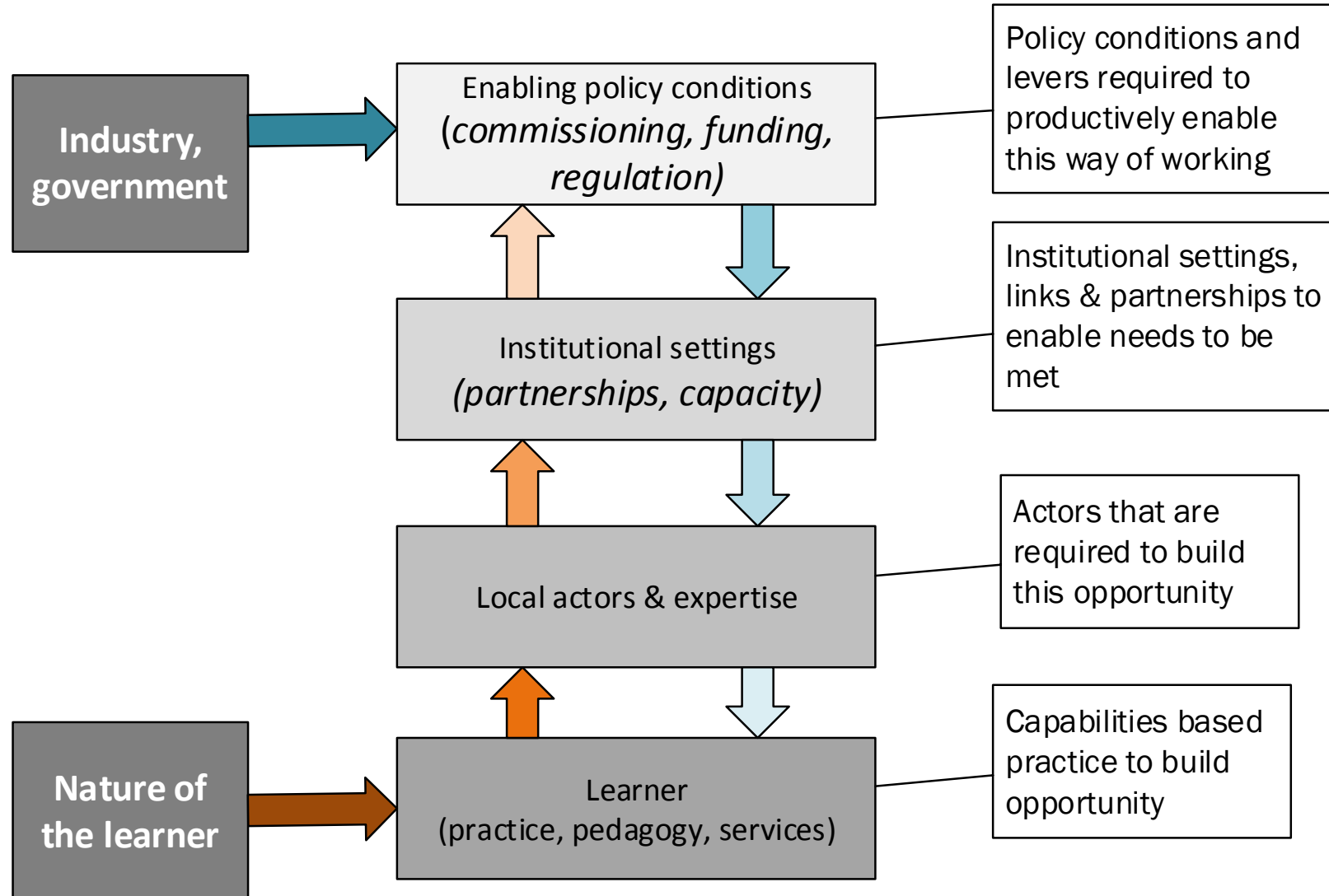
- Freedom of choice (without being penalised)
- Vocational guidance/career development
- LLN and learning support
- Specific pedagogy
- Links to specialised support services
- Work experience
- Access to transport
- Network building
- Confidence to pursue passions, develop skills and interests
- Better social connectedness and stronger links to community
- Capacity to find meaningful employment
- Capacity to transition to higher education
- Capacity to re-adjust from old to new employment landscapes

Young people's vocational journey

A **FLEXIBLE** vocational learning journey



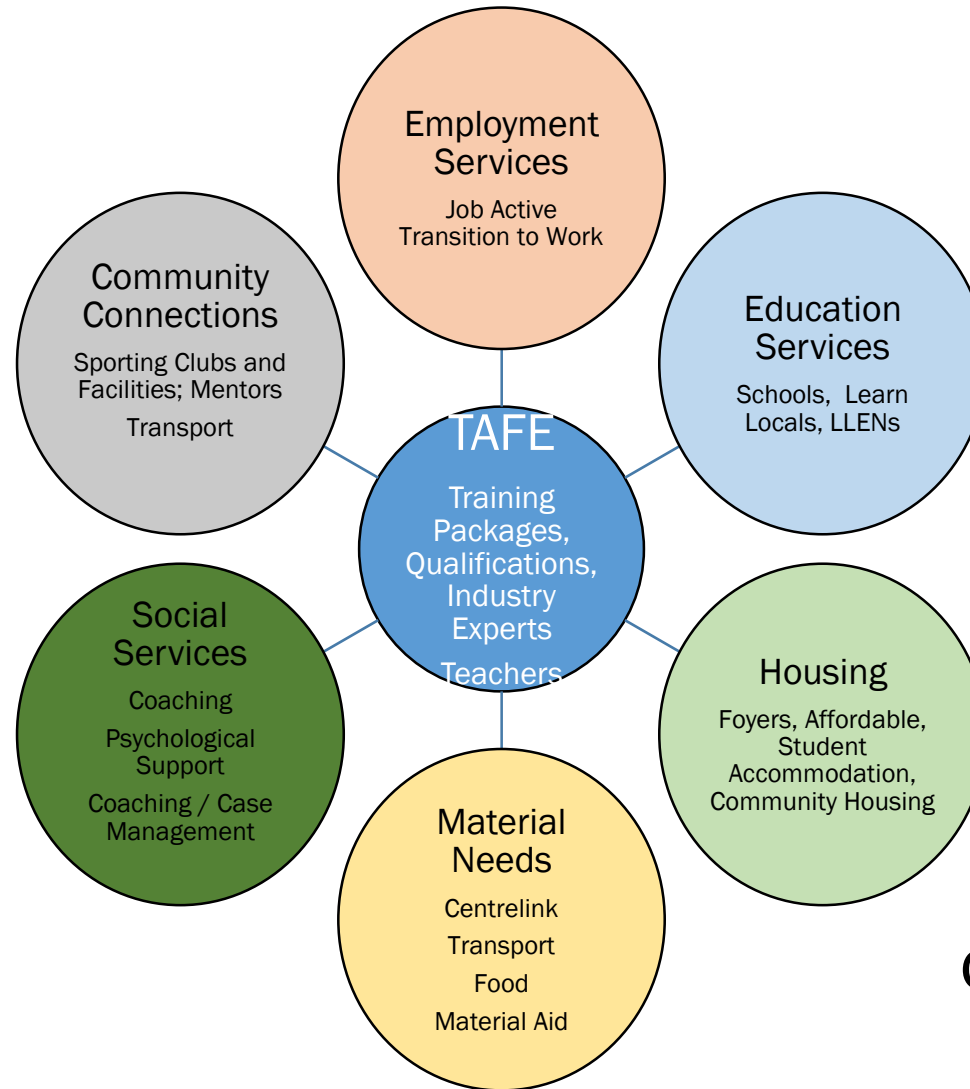
Bottom-up, top-down approach



TAFE as anchor – Institutional links

Employers &
industry

Local
government



Higher
Education

Regional
development
bodies

Thanks, questions?

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Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty