



Ensuring Access to Foundation Skills

More Australian adults will have the opportunity to develop literacy and numeracy skills

What is the Ensuring Access to Foundation Skills initiative?

Through the National Skills Agreement, the Australian Government will partner with states and territories to support Australians who are facing foundation skills challenges to access the quality training they need to participate in further education and training, employment, and the broader community.

This initiative complements the reforms to Commonwealth foundation skills programs announced in the 2023-24 Budget.

What are the benefits of the initiative?

Foundation skills (language, literacy, digital literacy, numeracy, and employability skills¹) are the competencies that underpin workforce participation, productivity, and social inclusion.

These are core 'learning to learn' skills, necessary to provide people with access to an education system from which follows opportunities to develop careers, participate in lifelong learning and support social engagement.

Foundation skills training must better serve the one in five Australian adults – around 3 million – who have literacy and/or numeracy gaps. This initiative provides Australians with unmet foundation skills needs who have left school, with opportunities to enhance their skills.

What does it mean for the VET system?

The initiative takes an approach that delivers a 'no wrong door' experience for learners.

To ensure access to foundation skills training for learners with an assessed need, the Australian Government will support states and territories to provide no or low-fee access to training through their VET and/or Adult and Community Education (ACE) or equivalent providers.

¹ Employability skills are a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work.

Funding for the ACE sector recognises its key role in supporting the most disadvantaged Australians, who may find it difficult to engage with mainstream education and prefer to learn in a more informal local community environment.

The initiative will also develop a 10-year national foundation skills strategy to strengthen the quality and sustainability of the sector.

How much funding has been allocated?

The Australian Government is investing up to \$142 million over five years to improve foundation skills training quality and access. This includes up to \$77 million for foundation skills training through the Adult and Community Education sector, or equivalent.

What are the next steps?

The Australian Government will work with states and territories to agree on implementation arrangements to deliver these initiatives. This plan will be developed in close consultation and collaboration with foundation skills stakeholders and experts.

By the end of 2024, Federal, State and Territory Skills Ministers will agree a 10-year foundation skills strategy, to identify critical actions to strengthen the foundation skills sector, which may include support for the foundation skills workforce, investment in foundation skills training resources, cooperative work on foundation skills assessment tools, and a national suite of activities to better reach groups with diverse and complex needs.