



Skilling Queenslanders for Work

# Community Foundation Skills

## Guidelines for funding 2025–26

The *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative continues to achieve on social, economic and fiscal fronts, with an ongoing annual investment of \$80 million to support up to 15,000 Queenslanders into work each year.

The initiative represents a commitment to increasing workforce participation, driving job growth and strengthening the performance of the Queensland economy by improving skills development and work opportunities for disadvantaged Queenslanders.

Ever evolving, *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* is flexible in design and delivery and has been revitalised to accommodate the changing labour market conditions as a result of COVID-19.

The initiative comprises the following suite of programs:

- Community Work Skills
- Work Skills Traineeships
- Get Set for Work
- Ready for Work
- Youth Skills
- Community Foundation Skills
- Skill Up
- First Start

## Overview and objectives

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of support for those in the community most vulnerable to reduced employment opportunities.

*Skilling Queenslanders for Work* is the proactive means for increasing Queensland's workforce participation and the overall performance of the Queensland economy by directly and positively engaging those outside of or disadvantaged in the labour market.

*Skilling Queenslanders for Work* represents the Queensland Government's commitment to support strategies that encourage equitable participation by a broad range of marginalised groups that generally

face barriers or challenges to their participation in skills development and the labour market.

In 2025-26, disadvantaged Queenslanders will benefit from targeted training pathways that help to ensure they gain the skills they need to find new jobs. The Queensland Government is working to identify current and future sustainable employment and skills needs, aligned to economic and social development and creating relevant training opportunities to meet those needs.

Training that improves an individual's skill level, employment prospects and social inclusion is a priority for the Queensland Government.

## Community Foundation Skills

Community Foundation Skills is one of eight programs that make up the *Skilling Queenslanders for Work* initiative. The program will prepare disadvantaged Queenslanders with low level language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills, with the knowledge and confidence to participate successfully in a modern knowledge economy.

Providing access to affordable and high quality foundation skills training is critical to breaking the cycles of poverty, joblessness and intergenerational disadvantage.

In 2025-26, up to \$5 million will be available to support up to 1,400 disadvantaged Queenslanders and under-utilised workers develop the foundation skills required to pursue their career aspirations and support transitions to further training, employment or improved job roles.

Community Foundation Skills is administered by the Department of Trade, Employment and Training (DTET).

## What are foundation skills?

Foundation skills are fundamental skills that support participation in the workplace, community and adult education and training. They are a broad set of enabling skills on a continuum from basic to highly proficient that includes LLND and employability skills.



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DTET supports the use of the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and the Core Skills for Work developmental framework (CSfW) to benchmark a participant's current foundation skills capabilities and the use of the Foundation Skills Training Package to develop skills.

The ACSF describes levels of performance in the five core skills of: learning; reading; writing; oral communication; and numeracy. The CSfW describes a set of employability skills that underpin successful participation in work. Implemented together, the ACSF and the CSfW can provide the essential foundation skills necessary to participate in the community and economy.

The Foundation Skills Training Package provides a suite of qualifications and units of competency that can be used by registered training providers (RTOs) to support the development of a learner's foundation skills.

DTET acknowledges that non-accredited training, mentoring and support can also be highly effective in developing enabling level foundation skills; particularly for those marginalised from the more formal education system.

## Why do foundation skills matter?

*An individual's ability to adapt and thrive in a fast-evolving world rests on their having acquired strong foundation skills, the willingness to learn and a habit of learning (lifelong learning). These skills and attitudes are vital for individuals to absorb and expand the knowledge and skills required to navigate new labour market needs and life circumstances.<sup>1</sup>*

By addressing barriers to participation by supporting people to access foundation skills training appropriate to their needs, increases their ability to participate in society and the economy.

## Where will the program be delivered?

Community Foundation Skills will be available throughout Queensland however, priority will be given to identified areas of high need or where access to services may be limited due to market failure.

## Who can apply for funding?

Non-profit community-based organisations, including Adult Community Education (ACE) providers, are eligible for funding. Applicant organisations must be registered for GST.

Applicant organisations must be able to demonstrate a commitment to access and equity principles, as well as an ability to provide appropriate support services.

Applicant organisations must have experience in delivering foundation skills support to the specific cohort in the location for which they are applying.

## Who will the funds support?

Community Foundation Skills primarily targets Queensland residents who are ineligible for Australian Government employment services or assistance.

Individuals accessing Australian Government services are eligible if they are disadvantaged and require complementary services, regardless of the length of time they have been unemployed or in receipt of assistance.

To be eligible, participants must:

- be aged 15 years or older and no longer at school
- be an Australian citizen, Australian permanent resident (includes humanitarian entrant), temporary resident with the necessary visa and work permits on the pathway to permanent residency, or a New Zealand citizen
- have ACSF level 1 or 2 foundation skills and be seeking to expand their career aspirations by entering vocational education and training (VET) or the workforce.

## Priority groups

Priority groups to be targeted include:

- long-term unemployed job seekers
- mature-age job seekers (aged 45 years or older)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- migrants and refugees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people with disability
- recently released prisoners and individuals with criminal records
- under-utilised workers, including workers who are marginally attached to the labour force or under-employed.

The selection of participants for assistance is at the discretion of the funded organisation, subject to the above eligibility criteria and in consultation with DTET.

Permission to recruit participants outside of the above criteria needs to be sought from DTET.

Community Foundation Skills is to be delivered at no cost to participants.

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<sup>1</sup> OECD – Skills Outlook 2021 – Learning for Life

## National Foundation Skills Strategy

The [National Foundation Skills Strategy \(NFSS\)](#) sets a shared direction for Commonwealth, state and territory governments for adult foundation skills nationally over the decade 2025-2035.

Community Foundation Skills complements the NFSS.

### What assistance can be funded?

Community Foundation Skills has a project-based delivery model and funds organisations to deliver customised foundation skills training to people with low level LLND skills.

Community Foundation Skills focuses on the delivery of foundation skills courses and qualifications.

Foundation skills training must be tailored to the individual foundation skills development needs of the participant based on their current capabilities. Practical learning activities that support the delivery of training are also encouraged.

Participants under Community Foundation Skills can be enrolled in nationally recognised foundation skills qualifications, or appropriate non-accredited foundation skills preparatory courses that provide an essential pathway to further education and work.

Community Foundation Skills will fund the tailored support that must accompany the delivery of training within a community-based setting, as well as the student co-contribution fees.

Training and assessment services under Community Foundation Skills are funded under the [Certificate 3 Guarantee](#).

### Non-accredited training

Stand-alone non-accredited foundation skills training or preparatory courses can be offered on projects and is funded on a fee-for-service basis under this program. This can include basic adult education programs, aimed at adults with limited formal education or language skills, drop-in sessions at libraries and neighbourhood centres and volunteer tutor programs.

### Digital skills training

Digital skills training can be funded under Community Foundation Skills. Digital literacy covers the physical operations of digital devices and the software operations in those devices.

It incorporates the ability to search and navigate, create, communicate and collaborate, think critically, analyse information, and address safety and wellbeing using a variety of digital technologies.

The inclusion of digital skills alongside the foundation skills of language, literacy and numeracy recognises that digital literacy has become increasingly critical for an individual's participation in the workforce.

## Training and support plans

A foundation skills training plan is to be developed with each participant before the commencement of any training. The plan must be developed based on an upfront foundation skills assessment to identify their current foundation skills capability.

Program delivery must respond to participant needs with strategies to overcome any barriers identified in the training and support plans. This includes links and referrals to appropriate specialist or support services addressing personal, health and social issues, and assistance with career development, pathways planning and job preparation skills.

Projects targeting digital skills will need to clearly identify the skills and knowledge required by the target participants to achieve outcomes that lead to further education and work.

### Scope of registration

Registered training organisations (RTOs) must be Skills Assure suppliers ([SAS](#)) approved by DTET to deliver training.

Applicant organisations will need to partner with a RTO that has SAS status for the accompanying delivery of training and assessment services.

Qualifications and units of competency to be delivered must be nationally recognised and included in the RTO's scope of registration at the time of submitting the application for funding.

### What outcomes are expected?

Funded organisations will be required to identify what employment, further education and/or training targets will be achieved throughout the project.

Success will also be measured by pre and post foundation skills for participants benchmarked against the ACSF and CSfW or a reported change in proficiency levels.

It is expected that Community Foundation Skills providers will design services to provide a continuum of support to participants across all learning and work pathways so they can achieve their learning goals and transition to work or further education.

### Foundation skills network

DTET intends to build a network of foundation skills providers with the knowledge and expertise to assess and develop participants' LLND skills. Community Foundation Skills will encourage connected and collaborative partnerships between community organisations and specialist training providers that support improved learner outcomes.

### What is the application process?

Generally, there are two funding rounds each year under a transparent contestable application process.



Applicant organisations are encouraged to contact their local DTET regional office to discuss their project proposals.

One lead organisation is to apply for and manage the funding for each project. Applications are capped at ten per organisation, per funding round, across all programs.

Projects that address emergent needs or government priorities may be funded by DTET outside of the published funding rounds.

The application and selection process, and assessment criteria, may be varied or discontinued by DTET as required at any time and for any reason, in its sole discretion.

Without limitation, DTET may, in its sole discretion:

- apply such criteria and weightings as DTET sees fit
- for applications considered ambiguous, erroneous or incomplete, refuse to consider the application or request further information from the applicant, as DTET sees fit
- not accept any application.

DTET may also decide to accept, suspend or not proceed with, or carry out itself, all or any part of the project proposals included in an application. Funding rounds will be announced on the [Community Foundation Skills webpage](#). Interested organisations are advised to check this page regularly.

Organisations should apply online via the [Community Foundation Skills webpage](#) by the closing deadline. Incomplete applications and applications received after published closing dates will be ineligible.

## How will applications be assessed?

Applications will be assessed in two stages.

### Stage one

The stage one assessment will involve the assessment of applications by DTET against the 'capacity to manage' criteria. An applicant must demonstrate a 'capacity to manage' for the application to be determined by DTET as eligible to proceed to stage two assessment.

### Stage two

The stage two assessment involves assessing eligible applications against the assessment criteria by DTET and locally-based SQW Advisory Committees comprising of representatives from the community, industry, government and unions.

The role of these committees will be to discuss, prioritise and recommend applications for funding to DTET. Applicants should note that:

- the order of the list of assessment criteria is not to be taken as an order of precedence or an indication of weighting which will be given to any particular criteria; and
- the list of assessment criteria is not necessarily exhaustive and DTET may also consider other criteria in its sole discretion.

Following the completion of both stages of assessment for a funding round, DTET will notify each applicant of its decision in relation to the application.

Assessment criteria	How will this be assessed – including but not limited to:
Capacity to manage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>financial viability of the lead organisation</li> <li>lead organisation's structure, governance, risk management and reporting framework</li> <li>relevant experience, and current and past performance, in managing government funds and delivering similar services</li> <li>staff with specialist foundation skills experience and qualifications for supporting disadvantaged job seekers and learners</li> <li>recruitment strategies</li> <li>commitment to an inclusive learning framework</li> <li>training delivery outside an institutional setting and in a community-based environment</li> </ul>
Servicing community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear articulation of how the project will address gaps in or complement existing local services</li> <li>level of community benefit</li> <li>no duplication with other programs or services</li> <li>evidence to support the organisation's strong community presence within the local area</li> <li>evidence of links with other relevant service providers in the community</li> </ul>
Strategies to assist participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support mechanisms that specifically address the individual's learning needs and goals and build foundation skills</li> <li>support mechanisms to encourage completion of foundation skills qualifications and skill sets or non-accredited foundation skills courses</li> <li>specialist assistance or links with other agencies to help disadvantaged job seekers overcome barriers to learning and employment</li> <li>flexible training and assessment strategies that support the needs of disadvantaged learners</li> <li>ability to provide effective training and realistic learning pathways in terms of method, location and timing of delivery</li> <li>volume of learning sufficient to ensure disadvantaged learners gain all relevant skills and knowledge</li> <li>ability to develop career aspirations and pathways through career development advice</li> <li>level of job search activities and skills to maximise local job opportunities</li> <li>level of post-placement support methods</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>level of qualification/course completions, further education or training and employment outcomes forecasted, and demonstrated evidence of ability to achieve quality outcomes</li> <li>past outcomes achieved</li> </ul>
Cost/value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cost effectiveness – cost of proposal and overall cost per participant and outcome</li> <li>ability to deliver proposed outcomes over the period being applied for, and any identified innovative ways to reduce the costs of service delivery</li> <li>level of complementary funding and assistance accessed from other sources and in-kind resources.</li> </ul>

## What level of funding is available?

The funding available under Community Foundation Skills is for a maximum 12 month term.

The level of funding is dependent on the type of project and nature of the training and assistance to be provided, as well as the number of participants targeted by the project.

## What can project funds be used for?

Project funds can only be expended on costs directly associated with the delivery of the project including:

- wages and on-costs for project coordinator and other delivery staff
- co-contribution fees which may also cover training costs for approved qualifications and skill sets not funded on the Priority Skills List or non-accredited training
- administration costs such as rent, accommodation, venue hire, office supplies, advertising, travel costs, vehicle hire/lease
- support costs such as learner driver training, subsidised travel, personal grooming or counselling services
- materials and equipment excluding capital equipment or assets
- overheads or operating costs (with the management fee not to exceed five per cent of total funds up to a maximum \$15,000).

## Ineligible costs

Project funds cannot be used:

- to purchase assets/capital equipment e.g. IT equipment, buildings or vehicles
- for interstate travel, training or conferences for project staff
- for any recurrent or normal business costs such as established positions within the organisation or core functions of the organisation.

Funding from other sources must also be disclosed to DTET.

To avoid duplication of services, funding is not available for the same services being delivered through other initiatives or programs.

Any third party contributions must be specified in the project application to enable clear consideration of all funding, resources and in-kind support provided. Any addition of resources or subcontracting of learner support measures post project approval must be approved in writing by DTET.

## What are the funding conditions?

Successful applicants must enter into a formal Services Agreement with DTET, which will include standard key performance indicators.

A first payment will be made once the Services Agreement has been executed, and no sooner than 30 days prior to the start of the project. Subsequent payments are made upon satisfactory compliance with all reporting requirements and the acquittal of expenditure of the previous payment. Monthly reports will be required throughout the life of the project.

All projects must be fully acquitted after completion and any unexpended or surplus funds returned to DTET.

A copy of the Services Agreement, which is performance based and outlines the standard terms and conditions of funding, is available on the [Community Foundation Skills webpage](#).

## Appeals process

Organisations may request a review of a decision made by DTET in relation to the provision of funding under Community Foundation Skills.

The appeals process has been established to help identify any problems in the application process, ensuring these processes continue to improve, and to assist with future applications.

Appeals must be lodged in writing to:

Appeals Officer  
Investment Division  
Department of Trade, Employment and Training  
PO Box 15483  
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Organisations will be notified in writing of the appeal outcome within 21 business days from receipt of the appeal.

## More information

For more information about Community Foundation Skills:

Phone: 1300 369 935  
Email: [training@desbt.qld.gov.au](mailto:training@desbt.qld.gov.au)  
Visit: [desbt.qld.gov.au/training/community-orgs/funded/sqw/community-foundation-skills](https://desbt.qld.gov.au/training/community-orgs/funded/sqw/community-foundation-skills)

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