Appendix A: Bilateral Implementation Plan – National Skills Agreement Policy Initiatives

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and South Australia under the 2024–2028 National Skills Agreement (the NSA) and should be read in conjunction with the NSA and the NSA Bilateral Implementation Plan Guidance.

2. Once executed, this implementation plan and any updates agreed with the Commonwealth, will be appended to the NSA and will be published on the Commonwealth's Federal Financial Relations website (https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au).

3. This implementation plan is expected to expire on 31 December 2028 (in line with the NSA), or on completion of the initiative, including final performance reporting and processing of final payments against milestones.

4. In all public materials relating to the policy initiatives, South Australia will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: *Ensuring Access to Foundation Skills* is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and the South Australian Government.

REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

Reporting

1. Performance reporting will be due by 31 March and 30 September each year until the cessation of this Agreement, or the final payment is processed.

2. South Australia will provide to the Commonwealth a traffic light status and activity summary on all policy initiatives.

3. The Commonwealth will provide templates for the purposes of reporting.

Payments

1. The Commonwealth will make payment subject to performance reporting demonstrating the relevant milestone has been met.

2. As part of the performance reporting, South Australia will provide evidence of what has been delivered in the reporting period. Payments will be processed once performance reports have been assessed and accepted.

3. Where a payment is due at a reporting period (31 March and/or 30 September), South Australia will complete the relevant section of the reporting template and provide the evidence required as agreed in the Milestones and Payments associated with this Implementation Plan.

4. Under A92 of the NSA, if a State is unable to expend any Commonwealth funding provided for policy initiative milestone payments, the Commonwealth may reduce a future payment by an amount equivalent to the unspent funds.

ENSURING ACCESS TO FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING (Clause A104 to A111 of the NSA)

In accordance with clause A110 of the NSA, the Parties commit to working cooperatively with other jurisdictions to develop a 10-year national foundation skills strategy to be completed by the end of 2024.

The Parties will review this implementation plan after the 10-year national foundation skills strategy is settled, and update it if required, to effectively deliver on the strategy (clause A111 refers). This includes funding for any actions agreed by SWMC in accordance with clause A105b of the NSA.

(a) Foundation skills assessment and referral that delivers a 'no-wrong door' experience for foundation skills learners (clause A107 refers).

'No wrong door' aims to ensure that Australians seeking foundation skills training are supported to access the training that meets their needs. This means, where someone seeks help with foundation skills, they can get that help and are not turned away or made to face onerous eligibility assessments. The Commonwealth has committed to achieving this ambition through an expanded redesigned Skills for Education and Employment program which includes a dedicated First Nations stream. Successful implementation requires Commonwealth and state/territory foundation skills offerings to work together in a co-ordinated way focused on meeting the needs of learners.

Entry points

1. All learners seeking access to subsidised training in South Australia are required to participate in an upfront assessment of need (UAN) process with their training provider.
2. The UAN process includes an assessment of reading, writing and numeracy capabilities based on the requirements of the course of choice, mapped to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF). The UAN facilitates assessment with a 'light touch' through to more in-depth assessment where specific need and best support responses can be determined.
3. The UAN also connects learners into additional services that support identified needs that can be non-vocational in nature (e.g. mental health and general well-being) but impact on a student's foundation skills development and success in vocational education and training (VET) course content. These supports in South Australia are provided systematically through Success and Wellbeing Services.
4. Learners whose foundation skills are below the minimum needed for their vocational course have their results interpreted by a literacy and numeracy specialist to identify what the gaps in their capabilities are and to determine what foundation skills accredited training supports are needed to address these gaps.
5. Students accessing subsidised adult community education (ACE) places in South Australia have their foundation skills needs assessed through a version of the UAN adapted for ACE providers to use. The Basic Skills Indicator (BSI) was specifically designed for ACE delivery and helps providers understand student reading and numeracy skill levels. The BSI is undertaken at commencement and completion of ACE training, so student progress is understood and demonstrable.
6. Expanded access to ACE in South Australia is a priority action in this implementation plan, including an uplift in participation. This uplift will be **in addition** to volume supported by South Australia through existing ACE delivery (approximately 1,800 ACE training places in 2024-25). To action expanded access to ACE, **particularly in regional South Australia,** targeted approaches for building provider presence will be implemented, and existing approaches for supporting provider capability building across the sector will be leveraged. As a complementary measure, capability building of the ACE educator workforce will be an element of the state's approach to VET workforce development.

7. Further, South Australia intends to develop additional entry points to ACE (and foundation skills it supports) **for existing workers in workforce development contexts**. It is recognised that there is significant demand for foundation skills amongst existing workers and a community-based option with 'safer' accessibility for meeting this need has merit and is worth pursuing (for example, Skills SA understands there are digital literacy gaps amongst smelter workers in Port Pirie, where a local community-based education option has attracted employee and employer interest).

Connecting to right services

8. Learners assessed as requiring support and wanting to connect to publicly subsidised fee-free foundation skills training providers are supported with information through the Skills SA info line, website chat function and course search tool to find a provider to meet their needs.
9. The UAN process outlines that RTOs are responsible to ensure learners undertake UAN assessments, and to ensure that learners complete foundation skills training if required.
10. Learners identified as needing foundation skills as part of the UAN process are supported by their training provider to access these services either in house or with another Skills SA training provider.
11. If determined as necessary as part of the UAN assessment, foundation skills training can be accessed by a learner at any point during their training.
12. ACE providers are community-based organisations (largely, community centres) with extensive reach to multiple human services, including training and employment. **People can connect to ACE through these providers even though their initial contact was for support in different areas of their life (and supported by other government services).** This inherently supports a 'no wrong door' approach where ACE is particularly useful.
13. Several ACE providers deliver non-accredited ACE content alongside accredited VET delivery in partnership with registered training organisations. This blended delivery in community (non-institutional) settings supports a layered approach for students to build their language, literacy, digital literacy, numeracy, and employability skills. A pathway outcome for ACE is the 'warm referral' for students to services (including non-vocational) and next steps to training and employment opportunities. Most ACE providers will leverage existing community networks to reach people who may benefit from commencing an ACE learning pathway. This will include disadvantaged cohorts. *There are also opportunities to increase outreach and access to South Australians seeking help through dedicated, appropriately contextualised web content that provides a one stop site that consolidates all the information required to connect people to ACE access in their region. Participant eligibility for ACE is detailed in* ***Attachment 1****.*

(b) Provide no- or low-fee access to foundation skills training in the state's VET and Adult and Community Education (ACE) (or equivalent) systems, for learners who have been assessed as at or below Australian Core Skills Framework and/or Digital Literacy Skills Framework Level 3 (clause A108 refers).

Upfront Assessment of Need

1. South Australia currently delivers on this requirement through the UAN process, a well-established existing approach to the assessment of reading, writing and numeracy needs which provides access to fee free foundation skills training where gaps in capabilities are identified.
2. Learners with identified gaps in their capabilities are provided with access to up to five fee free accredited foundation skills units of competency alongside every subsidised vocational course. The foundation skills units of competency can be completed before they start the

vocational course or embedded into the delivery of the vocational course or undertaken alongside the vocational course.

3. Learners requiring more than five foundation skill units of competency must complete requisite training through a foundation skills course before commencing their vocational course.
4. Learners may also seek direct access to subsidised foundation skills courses with training providers who deliver these courses via the UAN process at any time if they are not seeking access to a vocational course.
5. South Australia is currently working towards the introduction of a digital literacy assessment tool, mapped against the Digital Literacy Skills Framework. When it is available, the current UAN process will be updated to reflect the inclusion and how supports can be accessed.

Adult Community Education

1. SA commits through this Bilateral Implementation Plan to continue to provide no- or low-fee access to foundation skills training in its VET and ACE sector or equivalent for learners with an assessed need during the term of the National Skills Agreement.
2. Publicly subsidised ACE is fee free in South Australia. Expanded access to ACE is a priority action in this implementation plan (see 'entry points'), as is strengthening the connections between ACE and VET in support of unbroken pathways for students ('warm referral'). The scope of foundation skills supported in South Australia through ACE and how it is delivered in South Australia is detailed in Attachment 3. **Note that ACE content is provided to students on a fee free basis, including accredited content (foundation skills or vocationally related).**
3. While 'warm referral' and 'no wrong door' can be supported within existing ACE delivery approaches, South Australia has determined an opportunity to strengthen this practice and test some innovation in delivery approaches through 'ACE+'. ACE+ also seeks to develop the connection of institutional training organisations into ACE, in partnership with community organisations, to provide (a) strong supported pathways into VET (beyond the current ACE offering); (b) a source of students (and potential skilled workers); and (c) increased professionalisation of ACE educators through shared practice and blended delivery.

(c) Activities that support the Adult Community Education sector or equivalent (clause A109a refers).

1. The South Australian Government continues to support ACE ($3 million per annum) for the delivery of community-based pre-entry pathways for people to build their language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills to successfully transition to VET courses, higher education, and employment.
2. South Australia currently undertakes ACE Level 2 projects, which are foundation skills activity based around vocational pathways providing accredited training delivered by a RTO, and that demonstrate connection with industry or an employer.
3. The new ACE+ model aims to support an integration of best practice through the delivery of accredited vocational training in community settings, supported by ACE providers. It is an opportunity to test deeper learner-centred, integrated, and contextualised approaches based on contemporary best practice in adult education. The intent is to test stronger and more integrated delivery of ACE and VET to create a stronger, seamless transition into formal vocational learning with improved completions.

4. South Australia views ACE+ as an additional type of delivery supporting both 'no wrong door' and 'warm referral'. South Australia expects ACE+ could be funded on an ongoing basis through future triennial arrangements from 2025-26.
5. Subject to evaluation, the ACE+ approach could evolve over time to replace current 'Level 2' ACE projects (i.e. those delivering some accredited VET) as a preferred approach.
6. ACE is also a credible option for the workforce development of existing workers (or those that have been displaced). Where improved foundation skills are a barrier to further opportunities and /or workplace productivity, some workers may feel more comfortable building these skills in a community-based setting or with more access flexibility (e.g. night classes or on weekends).
7. Annually ACE is offered to students across 25-30 ACE projects providing around 200 courses and up to 1,500-1,800 training places for non-accredited and accredited foundation skills training. Around 98 per cent of learners achieved an ACE pathway outcome (measured through the BSI, to determine an increase in foundation skills capability) including 27 per cent transitioning to employment or additional further training.
8. ACE is delivered by 30-40 community-based providers each year, with most projects triennially contracted to support continuity with less administration burden for these organisations. This represents about a quarter to a third of the community sector in South Australia.

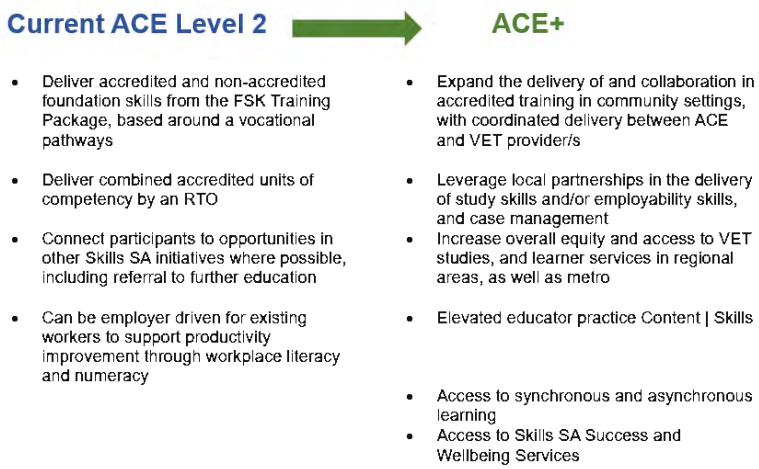
Action: A	**Increased access to ACE in regional South Australia and uplift for First Nations students** To expand access to ACE in regional SA, additional providers will be required to deliver increased activity. Regional delivery is typically around 15-20% of all funded places. To expand ACE training places across SA, with prioritisation of projects offering places to First Nations students.
Objective	To increase number of: 1. ACE providers willing to offer courses in regional locations 2. ACE providers offering courses to regional students through digital delivery 3. ACE training places for regional students. 4. Overall volume of ACE places in South Australia with emphasis on greater access for First Nations people.
Delivery Method	1. *ACE Set-Up Grants* will fund projects supporting establishment and delivery of ACE in regional locations and for delivery to regional students. These grants will be offered from Q3 2025 and from 2025-26 alongside existing contracted delivery (supported by the state), including the next round of new triennial grants in 2025-26. Grants will look to support smaller volumes of ACE training places, increasing to scale on a sustainable long-term basis, particularly for new providers without history of ACE delivery. ACE Set-Up Grants will be offered to market through open funding rounds which will invite providers to offer and deliver ACE training places in regional South Australia on a fixed term, project basis. They will be provider-driven (i.e. applicants will propose projects to Skills SA) and grants will allow for

	additional supports to stand up delivery (e.g. project delivery costs reflecting regional delivery requirements, excluding capital investment — this will be supported through separate initiatives that are state funded, such as Equipment and Capital Grants). Activity supported through Set-Up Grants could transition to Strategic Set-Up Grants (see 2, below) where outcomes can support additional delivery in regions on a longer term, more permanent basis. These transitions would be very actively managed by Skills SA through a commissioning process centred on co-design with additional partners to reflect place-focused productivity and or participation objectives. 2. *ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants* will fund strategic co-designed projects implemented by Skills SA to target partners who can support expanded ACE access and delivery (i.e. additional ACE training places will be delivered as part of these grants) at a larger scale than (1) through strong regional partnerships and reach. Strategic Set-Up Grants will look to target multiple priority regions and engage peak partners (established community-based RTOs; sector peaks; regional development bodies), following an approach of supporting the establishment of a 'backbone' partner in a region. Activity developed through these grants will be entirely through a co-design approach managed by Skills SA and engaging other partners to maximise connection to other supports and opportunities. Grants will focus on vocationally connected foundation skills (largely ACE projects connecting to or delivering Level 2 activity) and will be continuously available until funding for a delivery year is exhausted; noting Skills SA will develop a targeted approach over each delivery year of the implementation plan to mitigate any associated funding supply risks. A particular focus area of Strategic Set-Up Grants will be long term delivery of ACE in regions, to support establishment, build continuity and reliability for communities (and ACE providers willing to deliver regionally), and opportunities to expand access to ACE for Aboriginal people particularly in place-based /on-land settings (also a focus area for (1)). South Australia also acknowledges the opportunity for Strategic Set-Up Grants to be supportive of the proposed ACE+ pilots, particularly where students can transition from a project delivering Level 2 courses to an ACE+ experience. (See Action B, ACE+ trials.) It is envisaged that access to ACE established through Strategic Set-Up Grants would be supported by state-based ACE funding beyond the life of the implementation plan. Strategic Set-Up Grants will exclude capital investment — this will be supported through separate initiatives that are state funded, such as Equipment and Capital Grants. 3. See 'Reporting' and 'Evaluation' sections for further detail around arrangements to determine outcomes of this Action. In scope providers (for all elements of Action A) will include: 1. All currently contracted ACE providers in South Australia 2. Community-based organisations interested in ACE delivery ('community based' will be aligned to current Skills SA purchasing parameters and will be as inclusive as possible).

	Students in scope for Action A activities will remain consistent with current ACE eligibility. This is relatively broad and prioritises learners facing barriers including community participation, levels of foundation skills and /or education post-school, and workforce participation.
Expected reach and additionality	1. South Australia aims to increase additional regional access to ACE by at least 3 locations per year over the implementation period. Initial prioritisation will be in the Yorke and Mid-North region and Upper Spencer Gulf (initially centred on Whyalla). 2. South Australia aims to increase state-wide ACE delivery under NSA support by up to 2,003 training places over 3 years to new and existing providers (around 668 places per year), noting this includes an expected regional uplift of 20-25%. 3. Cohorts would remain aligned to current ACE delivery scope, though a targeting of young people and First Nations students is an area of priority for South Australia.

Action: B	**ACE+ trials** Supporting closer alignment between ACE and VET to provide 'no wrong door', 'warm referrals' and stronger vocational pathways for students into VET and employment. The ACE**+** model will test expanded delivery of accredited vocational training in community settings, aligning with contemporary best practice in adult education creating a stronger, seamless transition into formal vocational learning programs. The value-added role of ACE**+** intends to bring distinctive qualities to VET through a flexible, community-based, learner-centered approach.
Objective	ACE**+** aims to identify effective language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (LLND) responses and enhance community education's role in skills and workforce development. The ACE**+** pilot will support broader workforce development foundation skills, for VET and ACE. ACE**+** will provide appropriate professional development opportunities that support enhanced LLND delivery, in community settings, as well as consideration of the accompanying infrastructure needed to lift ACE capacity to provide LLND services, synchronously and /or asynchronously for VET enrolled students. An overview of professional development for Literacy, Numeracy and Digital skills practitioners delivering ACE**+** is provided in **Attachment 2**. The intent is to test stronger and more integrated delivery of ACE and VET to creating a stronger, seamless transition into formal vocational learning with improved qualification completions. <u>What makes ACE**+** different from current ACE delivery?</u>

	1. ACE+ empowers learners to develop their skills alongside their peers, developing their strategies to learn and allowing them to upskill and either enter the workforce, keep their roles or undertake new roles (for existing workers, this seeks to support uplift in productivity). 2. ACE+ learner services are accessible by students already enrolled and commencing a VET course. Students will have undertaken a pre-enrolment Upfront Assessment of Need that identified any learning support needs as well as any foundational skills; that is, literacy, numeracy, and digital technology (LND) skills and/or study and employability skills to enhance the likelihood of learner success in their chosen vocational pathway. 3. An ACE+ provider will undertake an authentic contextualized pre-assessment of a learner's foundation skills, mapped to the ACSF and nearing student completion will undertake an authentic post intervention assessment to measure the learners improved core skills to ensure they are work ready to a workplace standard. 4. The ACE+ student experience is learner centric, and the following services are delivered holistically within the individual's vocational program: • Contextualized foundation skills embedded in the vocational program • ACE+ trainer may co-deliver alongside the VET trainer • Learner access to synchronous and asynchronous LND resources • Study skills, and appropriate employability skills are embedded in the program • Preparation for industry experience is included in the program, with input from local employers; this may include resume writing, interview preparation, and at a minimum industry exposure, site visits through to work experience • Mentoring is available through out any work placement program. 5. ACE+ intends to be a local response to a community training need, reflecting a place-focus informed by established working partnerships between the training organisation, community organisations and employer(s). 6. Skills SA also offers Success and Wellbeing Services, however ACE+ providers will support arrangements with local community organisations and provide facilitation /warm referral for case management services that assist the individual in their personal life. These will often also connect to other support services for students relating to other non-vocational support initiatives. 7. Contextualised LND skill development is embedded within the vocational program. This proactive approach aims to enhance learning outcomes and increase student confidence in their learning, and therefore their progression and retention in the program. 8. Co-design, and collaboration between the VET educator and the ACE+ tutor with LND expertise allows for the development of teaching and learning resources specific to the students' needs when they need it, in real time. This may be through co-delivery within the classroom or through accessing asynchronous resources at a time of the students' choosing.

	9. In the longer term asynchronous LND support on core skills which students may access during their learning program may include writing feedback on formative tasks such as workplace reporting, grammar usage, or written structures. Noting the latter will require capability building support from Skills SA. 10. Mutual benefits are anticipated between ACE+ tutors with LND expertise and vocational trainers with subject matter expertise; being able to identify most challenging components of skills development and assessment competencies and how to ensure the training and assessment resources are relevant, effective and scaffold learning. 11. ACE+ leverages local expertise of partnering organizations, however ACE+ is underscored, in the first instance of LND, with study and/or employability skills. 12. While some learners in a cohort enrolled in a VET program may have learning gaps, the suite of ACE+ learner experiences are available to all in the cohort who wish to access it. The program focus is learner centric, community based to deliver learner success. 13. The diagram below highlights the differences between current ACE level 2 course delivery and ACE+. 
Delivery Method	1. ACE+ pilot projects will be co-designed to test the model in different contexts: regional, metropolitan, blended (face-to-face and online) delivery, with several ACE and RTO partners. The first tranche of pilots will commence from 2025-26, with further tranches of pilots over 2026-27 and 2027-28 to further expand testing and scaling. Pilots will be contracted through existing and new ACE purchasing, including where ACE+ can onboard new providers (Action A: **Increased access to ACE in regional South Australia**) and contribute to overall ACE uplift (Action A: **ACE uplift for First Nations students**). Any capital investment for ACE+ pilots will be on an exception basis and supported only by separate initiatives that are state funded, such as Equipment and Capital Grants. 2. Subject to evaluation, the ACE+ approach could over time replace and /or complement current 'Level 2' ACE projects (i.e. those delivering some accredited VET) as a preferred approach. South Australia sees ACE+ as an

	additional type of delivery supporting both 'no wrong door' and 'warm referral'. South Australia expects ACE+ could be funded on an ongoing basis through future triennial arrangements from 2025-26. 3. See **Attachment 3** for the indicative working approach to ACE+. 4. See 'Reporting' and 'Evaluation' sections for further detail around arrangements to determine outcomes of this Action.
Expected reach and additionality	1. ACE+ pilots will seek to test the approach state-wide (with a prioritisation on regional pilots). 2. ACE+ pilots will support overall ACE uplift detailed in this implementation plan.

Budget summaries and breakdowns

Summaries

NSA Foundation Skills 2024-25 to 2027-28 (life of NSA)

Funding by FY

Summary

	SA	Commonwealth	Total
2025-26	$253,333	$2,100,000	2,353,333
2026-27	$53,333	$1,800,000	$1,853,333
2027-28	$353,333	$1,105,000	$1,458,333
TOTAL	**$659,999**	**$5,005,000**	**$5,664,999**

NSA Foundation Skills 2024-25 to 2027-28 (life of NSA)

Funding by action

Summary

	SA	Commonwealth	Total
Action A	$659,999	$3,705,000	$4,364,999
Action B	-	$1,300,000	1,300,000
TOTAL	**$659,999**	**$5,005,000**	**$5,664,999**

NSA Foundation Skills 2024-25 to 2027-28 (life of NSA)

Breakdown by FY

Financial year	IP action	State investment ($)	Commonwealth investment ($)	Total investment
2025-26	ACE Set-Up	75,625	300,000	375,625
2026-27	ACE Set-Up	-	500,000	500,000
2027-28	ACE Set-Up	152,708	300,000	452,708
2025-26	ACE Strategic Set-Up	177,708	800,000	977,708
2026-27	ACE Strategic Set-Up	53,333	1,000,000	1,053,333
2027-28	ACE Strategic Set-Up	200,625	805,000	1,005,625
2025-26	ACE+	-	1,000,000	1,000,000
2026-27	ACE+	-	300,000	300,000
2027-28	ACE+	-	-	-
Total		**659,999**	**5,005,000**	**5,664,999**

Ensuring access to foundation skills training – reporting

The Commonwealth will develop a reporting template in consultation with states for completion by the end of September each year, in line with the payment cycle.

The Commonwealth will also work with states to develop a template for a short six-monthly status report for completion by the end of March and September each year. This report will outline for each policy initiative the progress made over the preceding six months, including key achievements, whether implementation is on track and highlighting any emerging issues or risks.

Measures /indicators aligned to implementation plan actions

For South Australia's approach to a *no-wrong door* experience for foundation skills learners and *access to fee-free /low-cost foundation skills and ACE*, a range of indicators will be used to support reporting:

- Total VET student throughput at a system level for UAN access and recommendations in relation to foundation skills as part of the UAN process. Specifically, this will include:
    - Number of CSPA assessments undertaken, > number of students not at exit level 2 or above, > number of these students that can be matched to an interpretation report, > number of their recommended foundation skills undertaken. (Noting students have choice on whether they undertake foundation skills training recommended.)
- Number and proportion of students accessing free foundation skills bridging units and alignment of this to broader publicly subsidised VET. (Reporting on training delivery claims.)
- Quantitative and qualitative data inputs from Success and Wellbeing Services where relevant to supporting no-wrong door access in South Australia.
- ACE measures for actions in this implementation plan (below).

Increased access to ACE and uplift for First Nations students (ACTION A)

- Number of additional providers and delivery partners engaged to supply ACE training places. Proportionality of community-based providers and organisations, and RTOs. (Comparison with baseline ACE participation in 2023-24.)
- Number of identified and additional non-metropolitan regions with ACE access where availability to publicly supported ACE did not exist at implementation plan baseline (2024).
- Number and proportion of additional individuals (students) engaging with and completing ACE courses, including First Nations people and people living in regional areas. (Comparison with baseline ACE participation in 2023-24.)
- Number and proportion of ACE students demonstrating a measurable increase in their foundation skills (using the BSI /ACE UAN).
- Number and proportion of ACE students moving into next steps (accredited) training and /or workforce participation, including First Nations people and people living in regional areas.
- Student satisfaction with ACE experience and support from their provider.
- Case studies that highlight benefits of increased access to ACE and successful 'no-wrong entry' and 'warm referrals' to next vocational steps. Case studies will also seek to highlight impact of overall investment for ACE providers, communities, and students and function to take a see what you can be approach for vulnerable learners.

ACE+ trials (ACTION B)

ACE+ trials will be codesigned in Year 1, with a continuous improvement focus for the following two years of the initiative. The outcomes and outputs of the trial period will be measured through agreed data collection methods to inform the future roll of ACE+.

Measurable Learner Outcomes: The ACE+ trials will measure learner outcomes and the improvement in language, literacy, numeracy, and digital skills (LLND) among learners in adult education settings.

The data collection methodology will be codesigned with proponents to ensure they are relevant to the locally based program and its cohort. These may include but are not limited to:

- learner skills development and progression (pre and post assessment),
- feedback and self-assessment,
- observations and
- community and employer feedback.

Combining these approaches allows for a comprehensive assessment of LLND improvement, offering both quantitative data and qualitative insights into learners' development in adult education programs.

Measurable ACE+ Outputs - Measuring the outputs of the ACE**+** programs will involve assessing the tangible outcomes for the adult community education sector and impacts on learners. These may include but are not limited to the following measures:

- Number of ACE providers and VET RTOs onboarded to participate in trials.
- Number of students participating in trials.
- Number of students completing their VET course.
- Number of ACE and VET educators delivering through the ACE**+** approach.
- Student satisfaction with ACE**+** experience and support from their provider.
- Educator satisfaction with ACE**+** approach and qualitative reflections to inform evaluation.
- Number of ACE**+** pilots that are successful and can be continued and /or scaled.
- Number of ACE and VET educators upskilling to facilitate LLND programs, including digital skills delivery.
- Number and variety of community partners involved in ACE**+** programs, including employers.
- Cost effectiveness of programs
- Flexible training products and approaches that respond to local and emerging skill needs.
- Suitability for integration into mainstream (state-funded) ACE purchasing (based on overall evaluation approach for trials).

The above qualitative and quantitative data collection and methodology can effectively measure ACE**+** outputs and demonstrate the impact on learners, employers, and communities. This comprehensive approach ensures accountability, informs program improvements, and facilitates evidence-based decision-making.

Ensuring access to foundation skills training – contribution to the goals of the NSA

1. Early identification and access to foundation skills training ensures learners can commence their vocational course of choice, succeed in training and be an effective graduate on the job. ACE and foundation skills training also support the 'scaffolding' of student capability and capacity to transition (on a 'warm referral' basis) to institutional training.
2. Fee free access to foundation skills addresses the risk of financial barriers/burden being an excluding factor for the learner.
3. Options for the ways in which foundation skills training provides learners and training providers with flexibility to structure delivery to meet individual need.
4. South Australia has set minimum standards for literacy and numeracy trainers and assessors to deliver subsidised foundation skills courses and for vocational trainers to embed subsidised foundation skill units of competency into vocational course delivery.
5. Foundation skill requirements for each subsidised courses are developed in partnership between Skills SA and literacy and numeracy trainers and assessors, employed by approved training providers who deliver foundation skills training.

6. Professional development and supported pathways to practitioner professionalisation and skills deepening can contribute to high quality training and expert trainers. Arguably, this development can also contribute to effective pathways and transitions.

Ensuring access to foundation skills training - evaluation arrangements

Skills SA systematically evaluates programs and services, using the outcomes of evaluations to continually improve programmatic strategies, practices and outcomes.

The Foundation Skills evaluation arrangements will be aligned with project key indicators (reporting outcomes) and identified funding milestones established with the Commonwealth.

Evaluation Methodology and timing:
SA's evaluation methodology will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the initiative's impact.

The evaluation process will be ongoing, with key milestones identified for assessment. Annual review, evaluation and operational calibration will be supported through the following approach:

Evaluation approach
Skills SA will determine and allocate appropriate resources and funding to establish effective evaluation mechanisms to be integrated alongside the implementation plan. This will enable ongoing monitoring and evaluation throughout the duration of the agreement, provide insights on the impact of Actions, identify opportunities for continuous improvement and remain responsive to unmet need.

The evaluation approach for **Action A** will be supported through existing ACE reporting. This includes:

1. Outcome metrics recorded for ACE (sourced from state systems) and that reflect success are:
    a. Number of students completing the ACE course and achieving an ACE pathway outcome of
        - demonstrated improvement in participant foundation skills
        - transition from a Level 1 to a Level 2 project
        - enrolment in a VET course
        - a VET course completion
        - employment or self-employment
        - transition to higher education
        - transition to other project initiatives.
    b. Number of students achieving an ACE pathway outcome (even if they have not completed the course).
2. Qualitative outcomes required from ACE providers in final reporting:
    a. Description of project progression and learnings (noting quantitative measures are sourced from Skills SA systems):
        - Outline of how the ACE project fulfilled its purpose
        - Description of delivery successes and challenges:
            - What will you keep doing because of the success?
            - What will be done differently in future projects and why?
        - What services and strategies were used to support students and what were their impacts?
        - Summarisation of any specific tutoring and mentoring approaches provided to participants

- Description of project connections with industry and employers; describing what this activity was and value to students
- Were foundation skills units suitable to achieve learner outcomes and purpose of project (noting in SA non-accredited delivery is mapped to FSK training package units)?
  - Would you like support from Skills SA when selecting FSK units in future?
- What areas of professional development would benefit the ACE Tutor, Project Manager, and others organisational staff to deliver ACE successfully?
- Please provide any case studies and /or good news stories that demonstrate the success of the project. Skills SA is very interested in highlighting good practice and the benefits of ACE to students and other members of the community.

Evaluation approach for **Action B** will be supported through:
ACE+ will begin with codesigned pilot delivery of various elements of an ACE+ approach, dependent on community-based needs. The evaluation methodology can allow for a longitudinal assessment of key features required for success which can inform ACE+ delivery in Year two and three, the latter being the final model incorporated into the suite of ACE delivery in South Australia.

***Year 1*:** ACE+ program implementation evaluation, including adherence to program objectives, curriculum delivery, participant engagement levels and progress to accredited courses, VET completion where possible.

Gather feedback from all stakeholders, participants, educators, and community stakeholders to understand their perceptions of the program's effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Year 2: Any necessary adaptations or adjustments based on Year 1 findings and emerging needs, are incorporated into ACE+ programs. Test opportunities to increase the scalability, resource utilisation and sharing of ACE+ outputs.

Year 3: Final evaluation to compare outcomes and outputs from year 1 baseline data to the end of the three period. Qualitative and quantitative data to consider the impact of the initiative on local economic participation and workforce development. Compile lessons learned throughout the evaluation period including successful strategies, challenges faced and recommendations for future community based LLND initiatives to inform programmatic decisions and contribute to evidence-based practices in adult education and workforce development.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

This section sets out considerations for implementation arrangements across all relevant Policy Initiatives under Part 6 of the NSA. States are to outline how the following apply across all relevant Policy Initiatives:

Linkages

- Closing the Gap (supporting uplift in ACE access and participation for First Nations students).
- Completions.
- TAFE.
- VET Workforce (supporting ACE educators: growing the workforce and lifting capability).

Dependencies

Successful delivery of the Foundation Skills Policy Initiative is dependent on meeting required uplift of providers and places in ACE training.

Student Experience

Reflections from current student experience through existing program reporting (e.g. final reporting from existing ACE and training providers and educators) has been considered in the design of proposed actions. Educator development initiatives, recent reforms to the UAN, and development of foundation skills capability and capacity in South Australia have also provided qualitative views including student experiences to inform this implementation plan. Student perspectives (quantitative and qualitative) will also be a key component of evaluation across actions.

Engagement arrangements

Engagement supporting the proposed directions in the implementation plan include: • Sector peaks (Adult Learning Australia and Community Centres South Australia). • Regional Development Australia (to support regional access to ACE). • South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network to support targeted opportunities for First Nations students. • Targeted RTO partners with capability and capacity to deliver ACE regionally through potential community-based partnerships. • Targeted RTOs to scope co-design for ACE+ pilots. • Industry partners for industry-specific vocational streams connecting ACE to VET. First focus areas are: clean energy and green minerals, defence, care, and heavy industries. Engagement will intensify once implementation approach is finalised.

Approach to Funding

Foundation Skills – estimated phasing of funding arrangements

Details of funding	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Commonwealth contribution	$2,100,000	$1,800,000	$1,105,000	-	$5,005,000

MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – ENSURING ACCESS TO FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1 Initial payment on agreement of Bilateral Implementation Plan.	Bilateral Implementation Plan agreed with the Commonwealth	$500,000	N/A
Milestone 2 Commonwealth acceptance that South Australia has operated measures to support increased access to foundation skills through ACE, including: **August 2025** • ACE Guidelines updated and released to reflect availability of ACE Set Up Grants. • eDM invites applications for Set Up Grants and invites engagement for Strategic Set Up Grants. • All ACE Set Up Grants available for 2025-26 on rolling basis over FY. **September 2025** • ACE Guidelines updated to invite engagement and co-design of ACE+ pilot projects. **August 2025 to March 2026** • ACE Set Up Grants commission ACE Projects supporting increased access	Progress Report signed by relevant South Australian senior official and agreed by the Commonwealth providing the status of all foundation skills training actions, including the implementation of ACE Set-Up Grants, ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants and ACE+ pilot projects. Report will include quantitative and qualitative indicators and measures outlined in the reporting section and evaluation arrangements section of this plan will be reported on, including: • Increased access to ACE and uplift for First Nations students (ACTION A) • Supporting ACE sector capability and capacity for increased access and uplift (ACTION A) • Progress of ACE+ trials including Measurable Learner Outcomes: (ACTION B) and Measurable ACE+ Outputs (ACTION B)	$1,600,000	31 March 2026

to ACE training places in at least two (2) non-metropolitan regions of SA. • ACE Strategic Set Up Grants commission targeted ACE Projects in Yorke and Mid-North and Upper Spencer Gulf in 2025-26 to support greater access. • At least two (2) ACE+ pilot projects are established.	• Emerging evaluation observations from first year of implementation, particularly in relation to the ACE+ trials. • Case studies that highlight and promote implementation impacts.		
Milestone 3 Commonwealth acceptance that South Australia has operated measures to support increased access to foundation skills through ACE to 31 March 2027, including: **April to July 2026** • ACE Guidelines updated and released to reflect availability of ACE Set Up Grants for 2026-27. • eDM invites applications for Set Up Grants and invites engagement for Strategic Set Up Grants. • All ACE Set Up Grants available for 2026-27 on rolling basis over FY. **August 2026** • ACE Guidelines updated to invite engagement and co-design of additional ACE+ pilot projects. **August 2026 to March 2027**	Progress Report signed by relevant South Australian senior official and agreed by the Commonwealth providing the status of all foundation skills training actions, including the implementation of ACE Set-Up Grants, ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants and ACE+ pilot projects. Report will include quantitative and qualitative indicators and measures outlined in the reporting section and evaluation arrangements section of this plan will be reported on, including: • Increased access to ACE and uplift for First Nations students (ACTION A) • Supporting ACE sector capability and capacity for increased access and uplift (ACTION A) • Progress of ACE+ trials including Measurable Learner Outcomes: (ACTION	$1,800,000	31 March 2027

• ACE Set Up Grants commission ACE Projects supporting increased access to ACE training places in at least two (2) non-metropolitan regions of SA. • ACE Strategic Set Up Grants commission targeted ACE Projects in Eyre and Western; Far North; and South-East /Limestone Coast in 2026-27 to support greater access. • At least two (2) ACE+ pilot projects are established.	B) and Measurable ACE+ Outputs (ACTION B) • Ongoing evaluation observations from implementation, particularly in relation to the ACE+ trials. • Case studies that highlight and promote implementation impacts.		
Milestone 4 Commonwealth acceptance that South Australia has operated measures to support increased access to foundation skills through ACE to 31 March 2028, including: **April to July 2027** • ACE Guidelines updated and released to reflect availability of ACE Set Up Grants for 2027-28. • eDM invites applications for Set Up Grants and invites engagement for Strategic Set Up Grants. • All ACE Set Up Grants available for 2027-28 on rolling basis over FY. **August 2027** • ACE Guidelines updated to invite engagement and co-design of additional ACE+ pilot projects. Note: final year of pilot projects may be	Progress Report signed by relevant South Australian senior official and agreed by the Commonwealth providing the status of all foundation skills training actions, including the implementation of ACE Set-Up Grants, ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants and ACE+ pilot projects. Report will include quantitative and qualitative indicators and measures outlined in the reporting section and evaluation arrangements section of this plan will be reported on, including: • Increased access to ACE and uplift for First Nations students (ACTION A) • Supporting ACE sector capability and capacity for increased access and uplift (ACTION A)	$1,105,000	31 March 2028

commissioned directly by Skills SA to target any areas of interest to test, and an invitation to providers not made. **August 2027 to March 2028** • ACE Set Up Grants commission ACE Projects supporting increased access to ACE training places in at least two (2) non-metropolitan regions of SA. • ACE Strategic Set Up Grants commission targeted ACE Projects in Murraylands and any other areas of SA not yet serviced or where there are remaining access gaps. If Murraylands can be serviced before 2027-28, other target regions will be nominated. • At least two (2) ACE**+** pilot projects are established (to conclude by September 2029).	• Progress of ACE+ trials including Measurable Learner Outcomes: (ACTION B) and Measurable ACE+ Outputs (ACTION B) • Ongoing evaluation observations from implementation, particularly in relation to the ACE**+** trials. • Case studies that highlight and promote implementation impacts.		
Milestone 5 Commonwealth acceptance of South Australia's final report on implemented measures supporting increased access to foundation skills through ACE, including: • ACE Set Up Grants • ACE Strategic Set Up Grants • ACE**+** trial.	1. Final Report signed by relevant South Australian senior official and agreed by the Commonwealth providing the final status of all implemented foundation skills training actions, including the implementation of ACE Set Up Grants, ACE Strategic Set Up Grants and ACE**+** pilot projects. Quantitative and qualitative indicators and measures outlined in the reporting section and evaluation arrangements section of this plan will be reported on, including:	$0	30 September 2028

	○ Increased access to ACE and uplift for First Nations students (ACTION A) ○ Supporting ACE sector capability and capacity for increased access and uplift (ACTION A) ○ Final report on progress of ACE+ trials including Measurable Learner Outcomes: (ACTION B) and Measurable ACE+ Outputs (ACTION B) ○ Case studies that highlight and promote implementation impacts. 2. ACE+ pilot evaluation (final), with reflections on suitability for integration into mainstream (state-funded) ACE purchasing (based on overall evaluation approach for trials).		
	Total	**$5,005,000**	

ATTACHMENT 1

How is publicly funded Adult Community Education delivered in South Australia?

Adult Community Education (ACE) is delivered in South Australia by community or faith- based organisations, local government community centers or specialised community service providers. Other organisations (especially in regional South Australia) with a training delivery relationship with a community-based organisation (including registered training organisations (RTO)) are eligible to delivery ACE in South Australia.

ACE delivery in South Australia must assist people that are:

- aged 17 years or over and **not** enrolled in school, OR
- early school leavers with or without non-school qualifications[1], OR
- an Australian resident, or if not an Australian resident, have an eligible visa (please visit https://www.skills.sa.gov.au/courses-careers/eligibility-explained), OR
- transitioning from other skills initiatives funded by the Government of South Australia, OR
- existing non-government employees needing to upskill their foundation skills, OR
- identifying as Aboriginal, young people under 25 years, mature age (45 years and over), from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, people with disability, women returning to work or women seeking to enter non-traditional occupations.

Providers deliver foundation skills training based on the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Foundation skills (FSK) training package utilizing a range (38 units available for funding) of Numeracy, Reading, Learning, Oral Communication, Writing and Digital Literacy units of competency from the package to incorporate into their course delivery in a contextualized fashion.

For instance – if a Provider is running a cooking course, they may select foundation skills units that are able to be contextualized for cooking activities such as:

- FSKRDG004 - Read and respond to short and simple workplace information (read and understand a recipe)
- FSKWTG003 - Write short and simple workplace information (prepare a shopping list for ingredients)
- FSKNUM004 - Use basic and familiar metric measurements for work (measure and mix ingredients)

Courses may be delivered in both accredited and non-accredited formats, noting that non-accredited is still based on accredited content and based on minimum delivery hours required for accredited delivery.

Course duration ranges from 6 to 10 weeks depending on content with providers slotting courses into terms over the course of the year.

Providers may deliver either or both level 1 or level 2 courses.

[1] Early school leavers are those who leave secondary school without finishing year 12. Non-school qualifications are any qualifications outside of high school up to and including Certificate III level qualifications.

Level 1 Course

Level 1 courses deliver **non-accredited training only**. Participants receive a statement of attendance.

Level 2 Course

Level 2 courses offer **both accredited and non-accredited content** with a focus on vocational pathways such as childcare or aged care.

For instance, foundations skills units may be accompanied by a first aid course or short skill set relevant to the course content.

Accredited training is delivered by a partner RTO with the relevant course/skill set on scope.

Participants receive a statement of attainment for the accredited component.

Non-accredited Micro-Credentials (NAMC) (proposed)

NAMCs are a blend of non-accredited FSK units of competency and elements and performance criteria extracted from relevant units of competency from non FSK qualifications, bundled into a micro-credential.

The elements and performance criteria activities are selected by mapping the demonstrable activity content from the course against elements/performance criteria (PC) listed in units of competency from the TGA using AI algorithms to data scrape the TGA database.

Again, using the cooking example, an ACE cookery MC may have the above listed FSK units combined with performance criteria from units of competency listed in the Certificate 3 in Commercial Cookery such as:

SITXFSA005 – Use hygienic practices for food safety – and incorporate performance criteria such as embedded in elements such as:

- Follow hygiene procedures and identify food hazards
- Report any personal health issues
- Prevent food contamination
- Prevent cross-contamination by washing hands

By incorporating the Elements and PC into the MC, students can gain a deeper skills knowledge of the content (in a more vocational context) while maintaining robust training content as it is drawn from the AQF framework.

MCs are not intended to replace FSK non-accredited courses but offer flexibility in a more comprehensive training product for participants who wish to continue their skills development through VET on completion. It also allows for learning at a higher AQF level should the cohort suit, given the FSK units sit at certificates 1 and 2 level within the FSK Training Package.

ATTACHMENT 2

Professional development (PD) for Literacy, Numeracy and Digital skills practitioners delivering in ACE+

Language, literacy and numeracy educators have different strengths and abilities both in ACE and in VET. Expertise varies from early career to advanced practitioners with various credentials.

The ACE+ model requires educators to be able to integrate foundation skills (LND and employability skills) with in a vocational education training program. Educators working in ACE+ must hold or be actively working towards a TAE40122 - Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Essential knowledge is the ability to unpack training package product requirements and identify the inherent foundation skills required to demonstrate competency.

Early career educators will benefit from on job mentoring alongside PD activities that enhance their ability to develop learner's foundational skills in the context of the vocational qualification being undertaken by the learner. Professional development on how to adapt materials for diverse learners and grow their capability to develop practical classroom resources and strategies focused on real world applications of literacy and numeracy in vocational contexts, integrating technology in the classroom, and using assessments effectively that align with industry standards.

Examples include:

- TAELLN423 - Integrate employability skills support into training and assessment
- TAEDEL414 - Mentor in the workplace
- TAELLN421 - Integrate core skills support into training and assessment
- TAELLN422 - Use foundation skills resources, strategies and advice
- CHCEDS037 - Support the development of numeracy skills
- CHCLLN001 - Respond to client language, literacy and numeracy needs
- TAEXDB511 - Develop and implement training and assessment strategies for learners with disability
- TAEDES513 - Design and develop e-learning resources.

Some of the above units can be found in the following relevant skill sets:

- CHCSS00101 - Language, Literacy and Numeracy Tutor Skill Set
- TAESS00026 - Foundation Skills Integration Skill Set
- TAESS00025 - Learning Support Skill Set.

Experienced LND specialists undertake advanced practices and support the vocational education practitioner. Working as an ACE educator requires identifying the Australian Core Skills Framework levels of a training product, developing diagnostic pre-and post-assessment resources contextualised to the vocational sector, amending training and assessment resources, embedding foundation skills (LND and employability skills) and enhancing the vocational trainers' awareness of foundation skills and learning strategies to improve student outcomes.

Examples of relevant training include:

- TAELLN511 - Lead the development of adult literacy skills
- TAELLN512 - Lead the development of adult numeracy skills
- TAE80113 - Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice (or units within)
- TAE80213 - Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Leadership (or units within).

Other non-accredited PD can also support ACE**+** educators, such as those provided by sector peaks (e.g. ALA, Community Centres SA), Australian Council for Adult Literacy, or various Maths Associations and education departments. These would be in-scope for PD offered (with any necessary adaptation) for educators delivering in ACE+ pilots.

The PD approach for ACE+ will also complement work supporting ACE educators through South Australia's implementation plan for the VET Workforce Policy Initiative (Action B *Support excellence and development of the Adult Community Education workforce*). This has a sector-wide focus, though PD specifically developed to support ACE+ delivery will have applicability for ACE educators more generally.

South Australia will work with ACE+ proponents to determine the credentials and experience the trainers have, and through co-design develop relevant professional development responses, with a focus on:

1. Interest in specific professional development to improve current practice
2. How and to what extent the professional development will improve professional practice and student outcomes
3. Commitment to completing the professional development, with a clear planned approach to implement learning
4. How knowledge and skills will be shared with peers and colleagues, within and across organisations.

Particularly to support (4), the aim is that highly credentialled (AQF5+) and experienced foundation skills educators will be able to provide support via a 'consultancy model' to new ACE+ providers and develop and/or enhance their foundation skills courses and resources. This may include mentoring early career foundation skills trainers. This could also be extended to other ACE educators not engaged in ACE+ but who would benefit from this PD. For example, using this approach:

1. To develop a consultancy methodology:

   Some existing ACE providers already possess good credentials and experience and have met all four criteria above in their scoping of potential ACE+ delivery; ACE+ funding could contribute for them to commence the *TAE80113 Graduate Diploma of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy Practice* for their delivery under the trial, and to work with other educators delivering ACE+ (or general ACE, especially as a developmental PD opportunity).

2. To develop foundation skills capability:

PD provided as part of ACE+ would support an experienced trainer (but with entry level foundation skills) to undertake the CHCSS00101 Language, Literacy and Numeracy Tutor Skill Set.

While PD supported through ACE+ will focus on delivery of the trial, the intent is that the broadest application through sector-wide sharing and practice will be prioritised and benefit ACE providers in general, especially through a consultancy and/or mentoring approach that has long-term application.

ATTACHMENT 3

ACE+ indicative pilot approach (subject to finalisation)



The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this implementation plan as follows:

Signed *for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by*



The Honourable Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Skills and Training

11 / 7 / 2025

Signed *for and on behalf of the State of South Australia by*



The Honourable Blair Boyer MP
Minister for Education, Training and Skills

07 / 07 / 2025