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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and Tasmania 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, Tasmania 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 Tasmanian 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. Tasmania 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, Tasmania 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), Tasmania 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)

As noted in the *National Foundation Skills Strategy 2025-35*, Tasmania's work towards increasing foundation skills for adults at a community level is progressing through *26Ten Tasmania* and the *Lifting Literacy Community Framework*. These are key government policy initiatives intended to lift literacy across the state.

Given the high level of investment in 26Ten and Lifting Literacy, and the upcoming review of the 26Ten Strategy in 2025, in its first iteration, Tasmania's implementation plan draws from this work rather than developing new programs. If any gaps in the 'no wrong door' approach or low-fee access requirement are identified in this initial period, these can be reconsidered in future iterations of this plan.

Tasmania is also committed to working with the Australian Government and states and territories to deliver on the nationally agreed priorities under the National Foundation Skills Strategy (clause A109 (c) refers, along with supporting actions from the VET Workforce Blueprint and the Qualifications Reform Design Group that are relevant to foundation skills.

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

Context

Within the VET sector, TasTAFE, as Tasmania's only public provider of VET delivers a significant amount of foundation skills development for adult learners across all levels. TasTAFE's new approach to Foundation Skills Services, which takes an organisation-wide approach to promoting foundation skills, is proven, nationally recognised and award winning.

More broadly, the Tasmanian Government established a Literacy Advisory Panel in 2021 to create a community-wide framework to achieve a literate Tasmania. The panel delivered its final report, *Lifting Literacy*, in May 2023. The implementation plan is a three-year plan for implementing the recommendations (2024-2026).

Outside of TasTAFE, significant work in relation to adult learners is also being done through Libraries Tasmania, in particular the Adult Literacy Service, and 26Ten, *Tasmania's Strategy for Adult Literacy and Numeracy 2016-2025*. Adult literacy tutors are supported by TasTAFE, which is the only Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in Australia delivering the Adult Language Literacy & Numeracy (LLN) Tutor Skill Set.

Tasmania's approach to literacy and numeracy delivers in-principle a 'no wrong door' approach through which commonly accessed service providers are able to support and refer potential foundation skills learners.

Touch points where any adult may seek, or be identified as needing, support and assistance to improve their foundation skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, include:

- Community service providers
- Educational facilities such as schools and child and family learning centres.
- Employment service providers
- Government service providers
- Libraries
- Medical services and health practitioners
- Regional jobs hubs
- Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
- Skills for Education and Employment (including SEE providers)
- TasTAFE

However, this can be difficult to document as it relies on word of mouth, and as it is delivered through known networks and connections, there are likely to be gaps.

Activity

To start to address this, following work to map existing campaigns and touch points, a *Lifting Literacy* campaign will be developed and delivered in 2025 and 2026. This will focus on using existing brand recognition and building on services that are already proven, rather than developing new programs, ensuring that resources are delivered to where they can have the greatest benefit and are not spread too thinly. It will include further awareness raising of Tasmania's network of libraries as pivotal community centres for supporting literacy development for Tasmanians of all ages, including adult learners.

Key elements of the *Lifting Literacy* plan focus on strengthening the adult literacy service provided by Libraries Tasmania. Work will be undertaken to extend the reach of this service to additional cohorts, including delivering online tutoring to learners in remote areas. There will be continued engagement with Tasmanian Aboriginal communities to enable culturally responsive literacy programming within libraries.

The 26Ten Strategy's collective impact approach is intended to be the main vehicle through which Tasmanian communities, individuals, service providers and businesses can continue to work together to ensure that more people are aware of adult literacy and know how and where to refer others to, promoting the 'no wrong door' experience for learners. Work is currently underway to renew the strategy in order to further embed the collective impact approach that has been so successful in the past ten years. This review will consider how existing work may be best built upon in developing a new adult literacy strategy, including exploring opportunities to provide additional potential touch points.

Tasmania will support work under the National Foundation Skills Strategy to develop nationally agreed high-level principles to guide foundation skills assessment and consider how these principles could most effectively be promoted across Tasmanian training providers throughout the life of the strategy. We will monitor work occurring across other jurisdictions to ensure new ways to enhance 'no wrong door' experiences are captured within our system.

2) **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).**

Context

The National Foundation Skills Strategy (the strategy) recognises that the delivery of foundation skills training is diverse, which reflects the varying needs of individuals. Accredited and non-accredited courses delivered through a range of providers offer a range of options to suit these needs.

Foundation skills within the VET system

As noted in the strategy, depending on the needs of learners, accredited foundation skills training could be purely focussed on building foundation skills, or foundation skills could be provided as a component of a broader course.

Tasmania allocates a portion of its funding to TasTAFE for it to "provide foundation skills training that may lead to obtaining a qualification enabling participation in the workforce or in further education and training".

In Tasmania, foundation skills training is primarily delivered through TasTAFE, which had 1,477 enrolments across foundation skills products in 2023. TasTAFE offers the suite of Certificates in General Education for Adults as accredited courses targeting foundation skills at all ACSF levels. The Certificate II in General Education for Adults is currently delivered online and/or face to face

to the Tasmanian community. TasTAFE also delivers skills sets from the suite at all ACSF levels face to face within the Department of Justice (Tasmania Prison Service). In addition, TasTAFE delivers the Certificate II in Career Preparation, which includes skills for learning, literacy, numeracy, digital and employment. All of these courses, along with courses such as Intro to Computing, Skills for Adult Learning, Certificate I in Work Education, and Certificate I in Transition Education for students with an intellectual disability, are delivered as no-fee opportunities by TasTAFE.

In Tasmania, qualitative evidence indicates that qualifications more closely linked to employment, where foundation skills learning is incorporated into the learner's program, are more attractive to many potential learners than full qualifications from the foundation skills training (FSK) package. While FSK units of competency are common in other programs, the full qualifications are not typically delivered by Tasmanian RTOs other than through the Australian Government's Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program and through school-based RTOs. For example, in 2023[1] there were only 110 program enrolments in Tasmania in FSK qualifications.

Private RTOs may also apply for subsidies to deliver foundation skills courses through the Department of State Growth's (Skills Tasmania) contestable grant funding programs. These grant programs (including the Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund and Building a Skilled Workforce) fund delivery of nationally recognised training and other supports to address the current workforce development and training priorities of the Tasmanian Government. Foundation courses currently subsidised for jobseekers include Certificate I in Workplace Skills and Certificate II in Workplace Skills. These courses are offered at no-fee for learners holding a government concession card.

The ACE sector

Tasmania does not have a network of community RTOs, so there is little nationally recognised foundation skills training formally delivered through the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector as it is understood in other jurisdictions.

TasTAFE delivers free accredited foundation skills programs in the community. These programs focus on building digital skills, reading, writing, numeracy and employability skills. TasTAFE's community-based delivery occurs in state libraries, neighbourhood houses and Tasmania's Child and Family Learning Centres.

The strategy observes that non-accredited foundation skills training may include "basic adult education programs, aimed at adults with limited formal education or language skills, drop-in sessions at libraries and volunteer tutor programs".

Alongside community, local government and private organisations that deliver basic adult education (primarily interest-based) learning, Tasmania's ACE sector equivalent consists of government-funded programs within community settings and workplaces. With respect to non-accredited foundation skills training, significant government invested is directed towards:

- Libraries Tasmania's lifelong learning programs, including free introductory programs for digital technology and English language learners, and support for adult literacy and numeracy through the Adult Literacy Service.
- 26Ten (*Tasmania's strategy for adult literacy and numeracy 2016-2025*) is a network of organisations and individuals working to increase the literacy and numeracy skills of Tasmanian adults. 26Ten offers free support for learners through:
    - 26Ten Communities.
    - 26Ten workplace grants, which support projects to improve literacy and numeracy within workplaces.

[1] Source: NCVER 2024, *Total VET students and courses 2023: program enrolments DataBuilder*, Total, Provider type, State/territory of delivery location, Program name, Highest funding source by Year. Numbers are rounded to the nearest 5.

- Promoting Plain English in workplaces and other organisations.

Activity

One of the themes of the Tasmanian Skills Plan 2024-2028 is "supporting learners to succeed". This theme includes actions to invest in foundation skills to support learners in building the language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills they need to complete their training. Initially the focus is on maintaining existing programs and wrap-around services, but as the plan matures, additional activities may be identified. This National Skills Agreement foundation skills implementation plan will be updated to reflect this, where necessary.

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

Expansion of the 26Ten Workplace Grants Program

Consistent with the National Foundation Skills Strategy's recognition of the diversity of ways in which foundation skills may be delivered, Tasmania's activity for ensuring access to foundation skills under the National Skills Agreement focuses on 26Ten, as a proven community driver of improved adult foundation skills in Tasmania. Tasmania proposes to use the Australian Government funding provided for the foundation skills initiative to extend the funding available to the 26Ten Workplace Grants Program and enable more workplaces to deliver tailored literacy and numeracy training at no cost to their workers.

Program overview

Under the expanded program, organisations may apply for grants of up to $65,000 for projects to help their workers improve their reading, writing, maths, speaking, listening, and digital skills.

There are no eligibility restrictions for workers, and there is no cost to the individual worker to participate in the training.

Improving these skills helps workers do their jobs better, which provides mutual benefit to the organisation and individual. This includes improved workplace safety and compliance with procedures, reduced costs, and increased morale and engagement in the workplace. This training may also support employees who are already participating in accredited training or want to build their skills so they can undertake further training in the future.

The workplace grants program has a community focus in that training is delivered within a workplace in work time rather than in a classroom setting. This has distinct advantages for the learners and reduces the barriers that prevent learners from attending, such as transport issues, lack of time, or discomfort within a formal learning environment. Learners are motivated because training is tailored to them and is often delivered one-on-one. These features help reduce the stigma that is prevalent among people with lower literacy skills and is motivating because the learning is relevant to the individual's circumstances and needs.

Rationale for expanding the program

1. An increase to the maximum grant (from $50,000 to $65,000) in 2024 to reflect the increased cost of delivering training has reduced the maximum number of projects that can be funded each year. Under this implementation plan, up to six additional organisations per year will be able to access the program. The number of employees supported through the program varies considerably across workplaces and according to the nature of the projects. Based on 2022-23 data, it would be reasonable to anticipate up to 120 additional employees could be supported.
2. 26Ten is a trusted Tasmanian organisation that is supported by key people in a range of industries, which enables us to promote workplace grants that match businesses with training organisations and skilled trainers in Tasmania's VET sector. These links with

industry are supported through the Tasmanian Government's Industry Skills Compacts and the focus of the Tasmanian Skills Plan on subsidising training in skills and knowledge areas that are valuable across multiple industries or provide a pathway to meaningful jobs, including foundation and critical thinking skills.

3. Grants are available in regional and remote areas of Tasmania where access to structured learning may be unavailable or less accessible.
4. The 26Ten Workplace Grant program supports high-quality, responsive, accessible education and training that boosts productivity for organisations. It also supports Tasmanians to obtain the skills they need to participate and prosper in the modern economy by delivering targeted practical training that benefits both them and their employer. This in turn builds resilience and adaptability that is of long-term benefit for all.
5. Building foundation skills for work has ripple effects for individuals, who develop confidence and become better able to participate in their families and communities, including being able go on to further learning or to engage with their children's learning. Their visible success in learning also encourages others to seek help.
6. 'Get Ready' grants of up to $5,000 are also available for workplaces that are not yet in a position to develop a workplace project. These grants enable workplaces to engage an Adult Literacy Trainer to assess their business needs, identify skill gaps among employees, and develop an application to submit to the full grant program.

Training provided under the program

The primary focus of the program is on literacy and numeracy training, which must make up at least 50 per cent of a project. However, projects may include other elements such as developing training resources for use in the project, training for staff to support low literacy workers or clients, and training in learning skills (ACSF core skill 1 – 'learning how to learn').

Grant recipients must engage an Adult Literacy Trainer to deliver the training. These trainers are either teachers from an RTO or an individual practitioner from the 26Ten Adult Literacy Trainer Register, who design the training and assessment program informed by evidence and research. The Adult Literacy Trainer is also responsible for measuring skill improvements using the ACSF. They must use existing resources or create suitable measurement practices and tools that are appropriate for the organisation.

The training provided is generally non-accredited and tailored to the needs of the workplace and its employees. It is typically delivered in the workplace, which enables it to be undertaken within work hours and at a location easily accessible to learners.

Responsibility for program management, including monitoring arrangements

The program is currently managed in accordance with the Tasmanian Government's grant management protocols. Grant recipients must provide:

- a mid-project report
- a final report and evaluation
- a financial acquittal
- a minimum of three stories to be used to promote the program.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$1,970,000	N/A – as per Clause A106	July 2025	July 2029

Performance Indicators

Tasmania will report on progress of foundations skills initiatives in accordance with the Milestones and Payments section including existing Department of State Growth (Skills Tasmania) reporting resources. Reporting will include quantitative and qualitative measures where appropriate and relevant, as available at reporting dates.

Indicators will broadly include:

- Number of applicants
- Number of first-time applicants
- Number of previous recipients of 'Get Ready' grants successfully applying for a grant
- Number of grants awarded
    - currently 10-11 per year over the period 2020-2024
- Number of participants
    - currently approximately 20 per workplace over the period 2020-204; however, this information can only be obtained on the receipt of a project's final report, which may have a 12-month or more delay
- Employer satisfaction (qualitative)
- Employee benefits (qualitative)
- Changes in participants' literacy and numeracy levels *(Further work to be done to determine what data can be provided with respect to this indicator)*

Evaluation arrangements

The Department of State Growth (Skills Tasmania) will adhere to best practice evaluation requirements as established by the Tasmanian Government's Department of Treasury and Finance.

Key legislation includes:

- The *Financial Management Act 2016*
- The *Training and Workforce Development Act 2013*
- The *TasTAFE (Skills and Training Business) Act 2021*
- Other requirements under the Tasmanian Treasurer's Instructions

The Department of State Growth (Skills Tasmania) operates under a grant management framework that covers the full end to end process of offering and administering grants. The grant management framework aims to facilitate compliant, efficient, consistent, timely and valuable grant programs that benefit recipients and the broader Tasmanian community and economy.

Foundation skills initiatives will be evaluated two years after commencement of the program. The review will examine the extent to which activities are addressing the policy intent. This may result in an adjustment of the program to improve the potential for successful student outcomes or in response to new evidence or emerging priorities.

Approach to Funding: Foundation Skills - estimated phasing of funding arrangements.

Details of funding	**2025-26**	**2026-27**	**2027-28**	**2028-29**	**Total**
Cwth contribution	590,000	443,000	443,000	494,000	1,970,000

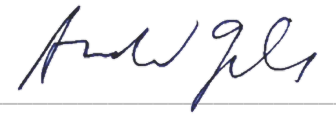
MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – ENSURING ACCESS TO FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING

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 Commonwealth.	$147,000	N/A
Milestone 2: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania has initiated activities and developed plans to expand the 26Ten Workplace Grants program in 2025-26, to be demonstrated by: • a Project Plan for delivering the expanded workplace grants program • reviewed program guidelines and key performance indicators.	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress and attaches: • the Project Plan for delivering the expanded workplace grants program including key responsibilities, recruitment activity (if required), promotional activities and timeframes for the grant rounds • the proposed grant program guidelines that include eligibility criteria, assessment criteria, and application process.	$443,000	30 September 2025
Milestone 3: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania has delivered the first 12 months of the expanded 26Ten workplace grants program (2025-26).	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress and attaches: • details of the operation of the grants program including recipients, information about the projects and summaries of any mid-project or project completion reports provided • a summary of changes (if any) proposed for the next round of the program following any post-grant round review.	$443,000	30 September 2026

Milestone 4: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania has delivered the second 12 months of the expanded 26Ten workplace grants program (2026-27).	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress and attaches: • details of the operation of the grants program including recipients, information about the projects and summaries of any mid-project or project completion reports provided • a summary of changes (if any) proposed for the next round of the program following any post-grant round review • a progress report on the proposed mid-program evaluation.	$443,000	30 September 2027
Milestone 5: Commonwealth acceptance that Tasmania has delivered the third 12 months of the expanded 26Ten workplace grants program (2027-28) and will deliver any final planned activities for the remainder of 2028-29.	Report signed by the relevant Tasmanian Senior Skills Official that provides an update on progress and attaches: • details of the operation of the grants program including recipients, information about the projects and summaries of any mid-project or project completion reports provided • forward plan for the program for the remainder of 2028-29 • an evaluation of the first three rounds of the extended program.	$494,000	30 September 2028
	Total	**$1,970,000**	

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

21 / 7 / 2025

Signed *for and on behalf of the State of Tasmania by*



The Honourable Felix Ellis MP
Minister for Skills and Training

5 / 6 / 2025