Skills SA

Department of
State Development

Adult Community Education

Guidelines

January 2026

Introduction

The South Australian Government invests in community and vocational education to skill the workforce for today and the future.

Adult Community Education (ACE) helps adults to develop their literacy, numeracy, language and digital skills in a community setting, build their confidence, and support a safe and successful entry into vocational education, training or employment. In 2024-25, 31 ACE projects in communities around South Australia delivered over 2,800 training places in non-accredited and accredited foundation skills.
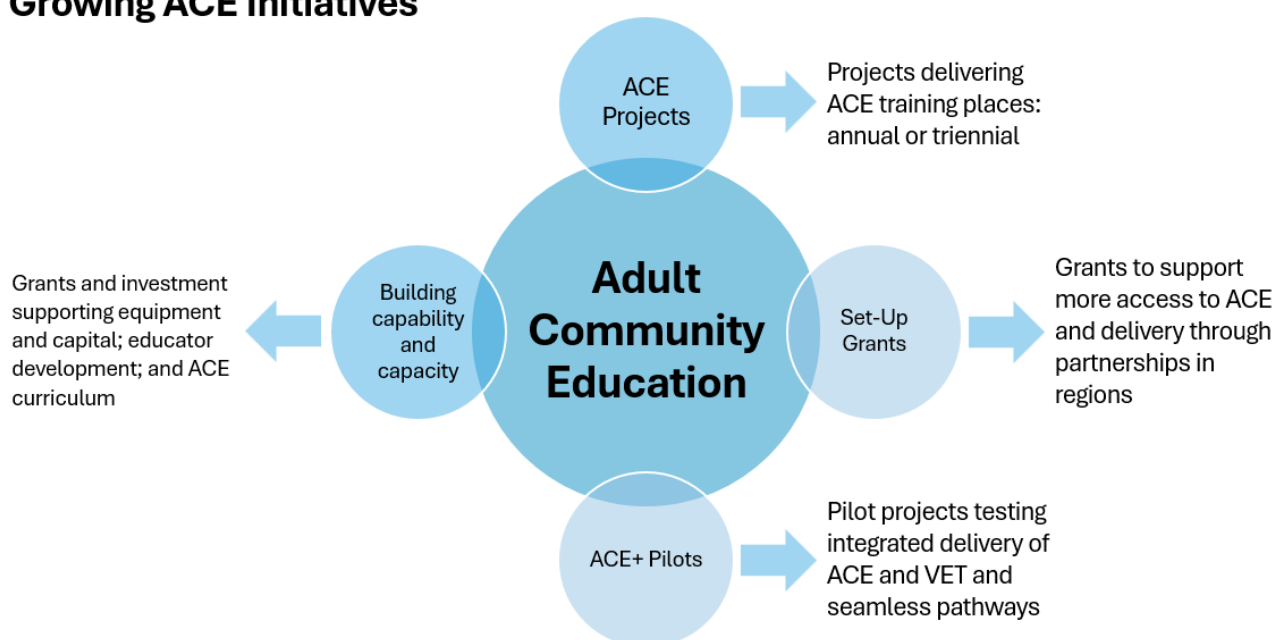
In the National Skills Agreement, there is a priority to support more South Australians with low levels of foundation skills to connect with accessible training and skills pathways. In South Australia, ACE builds these pathways through strong community-based delivery and supports to enhance social cohesion, promote health and wellbeing and build community capacity and resilience.

In 2025-26, Skills SA is seeking to build on this strong foundation to:

- Increase community-based education and foundation skills delivery in South Australia.
- Expand access to ACE in regional areas and with Aboriginal communities, through new and existing partnerships.
- Strengthen connections to vocational learning, including pilots for integrated ACE and vocational training.

Community-based organisations and other eligible providers are invited to consider grant opportunities for 2025-26 ACE delivery across several initiatives that aim to grow ACE:

Growing ACE Initiatives

ACE Projects → Projects delivering ACE training places: annual or triennial

Set-Up Grants → Grants to support more access to ACE and delivery through partnerships in regions

ACE+ Pilots → Pilot projects testing integrated delivery of ACE and VET and seamless pathways

Building capability and capacity ← Grants and investment supporting equipment and capital; educator development; and ACE curriculum

Adult Community Education

2025-26 grant opportunities

ACE Projects

ACE Projects provide foundation skills training to eligible adults in community settings. During 2025-26, eligible organisations are invited to apply for:

- Level 1 ACE Projects: Non-accredited training to improve foundational skills, aiming to transition participants to Level 2 ACE Projects, accredited training or employment.

- Level 2 ACE Projects: Combined accredited vocational training and non-accredited foundation skills training, delivered in partnership with (RTOs) and employers and/or industry sector organisations.

ACE Projects are delivered through annual and triennial arrangements.

ACE Set-Up Grants

ACE Set-Up Grants support the establishment and delivery of ACE in regional areas with new providers. Eligible organisations are invited to apply for small, time-limited grants for support to start delivering Level 1 ACE. ACE Set-Up Grants are available until budget is allocated in each year to 2027-28 inclusive.

ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants

ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants support expansion and reach of ACE in regional areas and with Aboriginal communities, through key 'backbone' partners and extensive partnerships. Delivery will focus on Level 1 ACE, Level 2 ACE and vocational pathways.

ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants will be commissioned directly by Skills SA and may be offered through a targeted grant application process on occasion.

ACE+ Pilots

ACE+ Pilots use blended delivery approaches by ACE providers and RTOs working together to improve individuals' foundation skills while completing a VET qualification in a flexible, community-based, learner-centred approach.

ACE+ Pilots will be commissioned directly by Skills SA and may be offered through a targeted grant application process on occasion. ACE+ Pilots will have a strong regional focus. Participation in pilots will be through targeted grant applications and/or when organisations are contacted directly by Skills SA to explore opportunities to deliver ACE+.

See ACE Projects for more information on accessing these 2025-26 grant opportunities.

Other initiatives

Skills SA will support building capability and capacity to deliver ACE in South Australia: Equipment and Capital Grants, for example, will continue to be available to organisations delivering ACE in partnership with Skills SA. In addition, there will be specific supports upcoming for ACE educators, both in developing their expertise and capability, and in developing and testing new ACE curriculum and resources for delivery to students.

1. What are ACE Projects?

ACE Projects provide foundation skills training in community settings to eligible adults and include:

- Level 1 ACE Projects: Non-accredited training to improve foundational skills, aiming to transition participants to Level 2 ACE Projects, accredited training or employment.
- Level 2 ACE Projects: Combined accredited vocational training and non-accredited foundation skills training, delivered in partnership with eligible[1] registered training organisations (RTOs) and employers and/or industry sector organisations.

ACE Projects that are funded by Skills SA:

1. are designed to demonstrably improve learner foundation skills through one or more of the 38 approved units of competency from the FSK Foundation Skills Training Package (see Appendix 1).
2. are contextualised to a vocational pathway and include industry engagement activities such as employer visits and student work placements (mandatory for Level 2 ACE projects).
3. include an Upfront Assessment of Need (see Appendix 2) for all learners, undertaken at the beginning and the end of the training.
4. include fit-for-purpose retention and completion strategies for their target group, such as mentoring and other support services.
5. have customised transition plans for learners which help to proactively connect learners to other relevant ACE Projects, VET and further learning and employment.

2. What are ACE Set-Up Grants?

ACE Set-Up Grants support the establishment and delivery of ACE in regional locations, particularly by new providers. Eligible organisations are invited to apply for small, time-limited grants to start delivering Level 1 or Level 2 ACE. These grants support small volumes of ACE training places, increasing to scale on a sustainable long-term basis.

Set-Up Grants will be provider-driven (i.e. applicants can propose projects to Skills SA), and grants may allow for additional costs to support delivery such as higher project delivery costs reflecting regional delivery requirements.

Activity supported through Set-Up Grants could transition to ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants where outcomes can support greater delivery in regions. These transitions would be managed by Skills SA through a commissioning process centred on co-design with additional partners.

3. What are ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants?

ACE Strategic Set-Up grants will fund strategic co-designed projects led by Skills SA to target partners who can expand ACE access and delivery (i.e. additional ACE training places). ACE Strategic Set-Up grants will be at a larger scale than ACE Set-Up grants,

---

[1] RTOs are required to have relevant courses and/or units on their Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) scope of registration AND hold a current Funded Activities Agreement (FAA) with Skills SA.

include stronger regional partnerships and reach than other ACE projects and include contextualised non-accredited and accredited foundation skills training.

ACE Strategic Set-Up grants will follow an approach of supporting a 'backbone' partner in a region and engage peak partners such as established community-based RTOs, peak sector organisations, and regional development bodies. These partnerships are to maximise connection to other supports and opportunities beyond the original organisations.

ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants will foster long term delivery of ACE in regions to build continuity and reliability for communities and providers willing to deliver regionally, and opportunities to expand access to ACE for Aboriginal people particularly in place-based and/or on-land settings.

ACE Strategic Set-Up grants:

1. are co-designed projects with partners who can support expanded ACE access and delivery in regional areas for regional students.
2. are based on strong regional partnerships in priority regions and engage peak 'backbone' partners in the region.
3. deliver combined accredited and non-accredited training activity.
4. deliver foundation skills activity based on a vocational pathway (i.e., the outcome is a VET enrolment or employment) similar to ACE Level 2 projects.
5. deliver accredited units of competency by an RTO that are relevant to the project.
6. assist participants to transition to vocational education and training or employment.
7. connect participants to opportunities in other Skills SA initiatives where possible.
8. include industry engagement activities such as employer visits, industry visits, or student work placement where appropriate.
9. can be employer-partnered for supporting existing workers to increase productivity improvements through workplace literacy and numeracy.
10. will focus on long term delivery of ACE in regions, and opportunities to expand access to ACE for Aboriginal people, particularly in place-based settings.

ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants may also be supportive of the proposed ACE+ pilots, particularly where students can transition from a project delivering Level 2 courses to an ACE+ experience.

4. Key features of projects

4.1. Who can participate?

ACE is for adults seeking to develop their foundation skills and where possible assist them to enrol in vocational education, higher education or gain employment.

ACE activity must be delivered to South Australians who are:

- aged 17 years or over and **not** enrolled in school, OR

- early school leavers with or without non-school qualifications,[2] 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.

Government of South Australia employees are not eligible to participate in ACE.

Access to accredited training is determined by Subsidised Training List (STL) eligibility and entitlement rules[3].

Skills SA reserves the right to make exemptions to these eligibility criteria in special circumstances.

4.2. Who can apply?

Skills SA invites applications from providers who are:

- a community-based organisation with training as the primary focus of their business, OR
- an organisation with a training delivery relationship with a community-based organisation, OR
- a non-government Registered Training Organisation (RTO) with a current Skills SA FAA, where they have partnered with a community-based organisation and will deliver the training at the community-based organisation's premises.

Applicants must demonstrate strong partnerships within their communities to support targeted recruitment of learners, provision appropriate supports during training to aid retention and completion, and warm[4] referrals to support successful transitions.

Applicants can partner with TAFE SA to deliver accredited training through TAFE SA's existing funding arrangements. The partnership and scope of project delivery must be endorsed by the authorised TAFE SA delegate prior to application for an ACE Project.

ACE Set-Up Grants and ACE Strategic Set-Up Grants must have strong partnerships with other community-based organisations or education providers where they can support broader access to ACE in regional South Australia.

---

[2] 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.

[3] See https://www.skills.sa.gov.au/courses-careers/eligibility-explained

[4] A warm referral is facilitated. It involves the referring organisation directly connecting the learner with the service or employer they are being referred to, to introduce them and explain the referral, increasing the chances of engagement.

4.3. What can be funded?

Organisations applying for an ACE Project or an ACE Set-Up Grant can deliver **one Level 1 and one Level 2 project per annum**. This supports Skills SA's ability to consider state-wide support for ACE and priority sector-level activities for ACE. Skills SA may elect to support additional projects by a provider where they are aligned to supporting expanded access and delivery of ACE.

Organisations that have not delivered ACE in South Australia in the past three years can apply for a single year project.

Funding is provided for non-accredited and accredited training, and project management activities.

Non-accredited training

Funding for the delivery of non-accredited training is based on the number of students participating and the units of competency delivered.

Where a learner is undertaking a cluster of units or non-accredited training the cost should not be more than a full accredited course (qualification) or take as long to complete.

Accredited training

Funding for the delivery of accredited training is paid directly to the RTO and is paid at the unit of competency level in line with South Australian Vocational Education and Training Fee Framework published by Skills SA.

The Skills SA subsidy calculator allows you to estimate the funding for accredited training units of competency and is accessible via the course search function at Subsidised Training List.

Delivery of accredited training is not supported by ACE funding and **is subject to availability on the Subsidised Training List** and/or Fee Free arrangements (e.g. Fee Free TAFE; Fee Free First Nations; Fee Free Construction).

Project management

Project management funding can support:

- coordinating and delivering project elements (excluding the delivery of training)
- implementing the UAN
- developing learner-centred transition plans
- coordinating activities to attract, select, retain, and support learners
- liaising with learners, employers, industry, and other project partners
- coordinating and supporting industry visits and information sessions, and preparing learners for work opportunities and selecting vocational pathways
- working with employers to engage and upskill existing workers
- additional goods such as personal protective equipment for learners
- workplace mentoring to support retention and transition of learners
- provision of learner support services

- travel related expenses to access face to face services out of the workplace or across sites.

4.4. What can't be funded?

Funding will not be provided for:

- activity undertaken before a contract is executed
- student course fee contributions
- activities that duplicate existing Government of South Australia or Australian Government services or supports and/or are already funded through another initiative
- purchase of assets and capital equipment, e.g., organisation-wide ICT infrastructure, systems or applications, buildings, or vehicles
- wage subsidies for learners.

Skills SA may elect to support activity from 'what can't be funded' on an exceptional basis where it aligns to strategic skills objectives and priorities, or complementary skills initiatives to amplify scope and/or impact.

5. How to apply

Eligible applicants are invited to contact Skills SA to discuss potential projects. If eligible, organisations will be invited to apply online through SmartyGrants where you will either need to set up an account in SmartyGrants or log in to an existing account. You will also need to complete a budget template and training schedule and attach this to your application, which can be accessed through the application form.

Grants supporting ACE delivery will be available subject to budget availability in any given funding year. Proposed activity by applicants may be put on hold (if feasible) until funding is available. Skills SA will discuss this with you if it is necessary. Tips for applying:

- Before commencing an application, you should read and understand these guidelines. If you have any questions, email these to Education.ACEProgram@sa.gov.au.
- Regularly check the ACE Projects FAQs while applications are open. Skills SA will update this with responses to questions received about the guidelines.
- Keep your responses in the application clear and concise and ensure critical information is provided. Assume the reader is not familiar with your context or organisation, as your application will be de-identified during assessment.
- Before submitting your application, make sure it is complete and accurate, and your budget and training schedule is attached. Incomplete applications are likely to be disadvantaged in the assessment process.

5.1. How are applications assessed?

ACE Projects are **competitive and merit based**. This means that applications are compared against one another, particularly similar projects, using defined assessment criteria. For assessment, applications are **de-identified**, meaning that all references to the applicant's name are removed.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Project design
- Value for money
- Past performance.

5.1.1. Criteria 1: Project design

Assessment will consider the following:

- The aim of the project is clear and appropriate, and target learners are identified
- Training is clearly described and is suitable to meet the aims of the project
- The project incorporates appropriate and targeted support strategies to support retention, completion and successful transitions[5]
- The project demonstrably supports learners to achieve an appropriate outcome/s[6]
- The project includes a range of partnerships to deliver the project, assist participant referral processes and maintain support services throughout the project
- The training and support strategies form a framework for activities that improve language, literacy, numeracy, or digital literacy capabilities.

Evidence of the applicant's capacity and capability to deliver contemporary and flexible community-based learning and training to targeted learners will also be considered.

5.1.2. Criteria 2: Value for money

Assessment will consider the following:

- The project is robust, has realistic solutions and is time sensitive
- The project meets the needs of students, communities, industry, regions and the training and skills system
- Cost comparisons with similar funded projects
- Co-contributions, including in-kind supports.

Proposals that increase access and delivery of foundation skills in locations where there is no current delivery of ACE **AND/OR** are Level 2 ACE projects will be very highly regarded.

Based on value for money assessment, the value and training place numbers requested may be reduced in the offer from Skills SA.

5.1.3. Criteria 3: Past performance

Past performance will be considered where an applicant has received funding from Skills SA over the past three financial years. It encompasses project delivery, meeting reporting requirements, contract compliance, and achievement of contracted outcomes.

---

[5] This may include mentoring for participants, specialised delivery approaches, project partnerships with key organisations, and connecting with employers and/or industry for work placement, work experience or site visits.

[6] Outcomes include demonstrated improvement in learner foundation skills; transition from a Level 1 to a Level 2 project; enrolment in a VET course; completing a VET course; employment or self-employment; enrolment in higher education; or transition to another initiative.

5.2. How will successful applicants be contracted?

Successful applicants will be offered a Funded Activities Agreement (FAA) project annexure, which will include the funding value, payment structure and reporting milestones.

Payment for project activities and non-accredited training will be made against agreed milestones and based on enrolments and completions information entered in Skills SA's STELA System, accompanied by a claim request to Skills SA.

Accredited training is paid to the nominated RTO at the unit of competency level in line with South Australian Vocational Education and Training Fee Framework.

Reporting is a key contractual requirement of all projects. It is important that reporting is completed by the due dates in the FAA. This is a key consideration in past performance for future applications.

Where project activities do not meet milestones and funding is not paid, Skills SA reserves the right to redistribute these project funds to maximise ACE investment opportunities.

6. Who to contact

For further assistance:

- Contact the Skills SA Infoline on 1800 673 097

- Email Education.ACEProgram@sa.gov.au

- Visit Adult Community Education and Adult Community Education Toolkit

Appendix 1

Eligible foundation skills units

All ACE projects will be based on and must include at least one Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) Pre-Level 1 or Level 1 or Level 2 unit of competency from the FSK Foundation Skills Training Package.

The [Australian Core Skills Framework](#) provides guidance to educators in effective assessment and delivery for learners operating at ACSF levels 1-5. For those beginning their learning below ACSF Level 1, the ACSF Pre-Level 1 supplement provides a summary set of information describing each skill.

The FSK Foundation Skills Training Package includes units of competency that can support learners to develop their learning, including reading, writing, oral communication, and numeracy skills, and the expected level of performance. Achievement of an FSK unit does not indicate achievement of an entire ACSF level.

Approved units are:

Australian Core Skills Framework Pre-Level 1	
FSK Foundation Skills Training Package 2019	
FSKLRG001	Prepare to participate in a learning environment
FSKNUM001	Use beginning whole number skills up to 100 for work
FSKNUM002	Use beginning skills related to time and 2D shapes for work
FSKOCM001	Participate in highly familiar spoken exchanges
FSKRDG001	Recognise extremely short and simple workplace signs and symbols
FSKWTG001	Complete personal details on extremely simple and short workplace forms

Australian Core Skills Framework Level 1	
FSK Foundation Skills Training Package 2020	
FSKDIG001	Use digital technology for short and basic workplace tasks
FSKLRG002	Identify strategies to respond to short and simple workplace problems
FSKLRG003	Use short and simple strategies for career planning
FSKLRG004	Use short and simple strategies for work-related learning
FSKNUM003	Use whole numbers and halves for work
FSKNUM004	Use basic and familiar metric measurements for work
FSKNUM005	Use familiar 2D shapes for work

FSKNUM006	Use simple and highly familiar spatial information for work
FSKNUM007	Use simple data for work
FSKOCM002	Engage in short and simple spoken exchanges at work
FSKRDG002	Read and respond to short and simple workplace signs and symbols
FSKRDG004	Read and respond to short and simple workplace information
FSKWTG002	Write short and simple workplace formatted texts
FSKWTG003	Write short and simple workplace information
FSKOCM002	Engage in short and simple spoken exchanges at work

Australian Core Skills Framework Level 2	
FSK Foundation Skills Training Package 2020	
FSKRDG005	Read and respond to simple and familiar workplace procedures
FSKRDG006	Read and respond to simple informal workplace texts
FSKRDG007	Read and respond to simple workplace information
FSKDIG002	Use digital technology for routine and simple workplace tasks
FSKLRG005	Use strategies to plan simple workplace tasks
FSKLRG006	Participate in work placement
FSKLRG007	Use strategies to identify job opportunities
FSKLRG008	Use simple strategies for work-related learning
FSKNUM008	Use whole numbers and simple fractions, decimals, and percentages for work
FSKNUM009	Use familiar and simple metric measurements for work
FSKNUM010	Use common shapes for work
FSKNUM011	Use familiar and simple spatial information for work
FSKNUM012	Use familiar and simple data for work
FSKNUM013	Construct simple tables and graphs for work
FSKOCM003	Participate in familiar spoken interactions at work
FSKWTG006	Write simple workplace information
FSKWTG005	Write simple workplace formatted texts
Total: 38 units	

Appendix 2

Upfront Assessment of Need

ACE Project participants are required to undertake the ACE Upfront Assessment of Need (the UAN) to demonstrate their suitability for the course, meet the requirements of any pre-requisites, and identify additional supports to ensure successful learning outcomes[7].

The UAN must be undertaken using the Basic Skills Indicator (BSI) that has been specifically designed for the ACE sector. This is an online tool with questions to understand a student's reading and numeracy level. This is unique to the ACE sector and must be undertaken at commencement and completion of training to demonstrate a student's progress. The UAN, while similar to that used by VET providers, is not the same.

Where a student undertakes the UAN at the completion of one course and commences a second course within 30 days, the student is not required to undertake the UAN again. This recognises that a student's foundation skills are unlikely to have changed during this short time between courses.

All ACE providers are required to contact an experienced UAN mentor to access the online BSI platform. The mentors were involved in the development of the UAN and can assist with understanding of and training in use of the BSI platform.

The ACE UAN mentors are:

- **Zoe Gow:** phone 0432 487 611; email pfccfoundationskills@gmail.com
- **Paul Malloy:** phone 0425 533 174; email paul.malloy@wiseemployment.com.au

Further information about the ACE UAN is available in the Adult Community Education toolkit.

Community-based organisations and participating RTOs cannot subcontract their enrolment obligations to a third party, including for the UAN. Community-based organisations and RTOs must be compliant with this contractual obligation to be eligible to apply for a project.

[DOCUMENT ENDS]

---

[7] ACE Project participants are not eligible for the Skills SA Success and Wellbeing Services.