

Forest Industry Foundation Skills Plan

Introduction

This Forest Industry Foundation Skills Plan is an important step in providing a framework to guide an industry wide strategic approach to building the capacity of the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry to address this key issue for industry.

ForestWorks is a not for profit organisation, working with industry to provide a series of services valued by the industry and government. ForestWorks supports the development of the forest, wood, paper and timber products industries and the people who work in them. We work with industry, government, and the vocational education and training sector to improve skills standards and support workforce development. At ForestWorks, we know that innovation skills will increase industry's productivity and underpin its future value. The foundation or core skills of the workforce are key to achieving this outcome.

The Forest Industry Foundation Skills Plan is consistent with the aims of the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults, in that it seeks to strengthen foundation skills in the workplace through establishing strong and lasting partnerships with stakeholders and supports foundation skills training that is responsive to the particular needs of industry and the skill needs of the current workforce.

Foundation skill acquisition is a lifelong process, as we consistently require foundation skills upgrades each time we take on new roles and responsibilities or move into a new situation, or the environment changes. Therefore, any focus on improving foundation skills should not be confined to those with limited skills, but extend to everyone trying to understand new forms of communication and information as they take on different roles in work and life.

The Forest Industry Foundation Skills Plan sets out a plan for the industry that will help address the issues and challenges to improve the foundation skills of the industry.

The underlying principle in the plan is that foundation skills are an essential component of all workplaces and they affect the ability of workplaces to achieve best practice. Therefore, managers and employees in enterprises, industry associations, training providers and ForestWorks have a role in working to achieve improvements in foundation skills.

Plan development

This plan has been developed as part of a three-year project from 2012-2015 where ForestWorks undertook research and analysis across the forest, wood, paper and timber products industries to deal with the development of foundation skills within a workplace context and to support improvement in skills.

The work undertaken by ForestWorks through the funded project is summarised below:

Year 1 2012/13

ForestWorks undertook research to identify where and how industry were addressing LLN issues identified in the statistics. This involved consultation with industry associations, the VET sector and individual enterprises, across Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, Queensland, SA and WA.

The goal of the consultations was to investigate how employers and employees were currently dealing with LLN issues either formally or informally and to document feedback to the following questions:

Do low literacy and numeracy levels affect your business?

1. How? (poor completion of work documents, time wasting through work needing to be repeated, ineffective team work, wastage, training not effective, financial miscalculations, workplace injuries, unsafe work practices, difficulties in recruitment)
2. Are particular job roles affected more than others? (labourers, process workers, operational staff and front line supervisors)
3. Do you have capacity to develop literacy and numeracy skills in your business?
4. What would help? (support with workplace from co-workers, redesign of documents to make them easier to access, LLN training offsite, LLN training in-house induction, industry specific LLN training, LLN training integrated with work)

The work undertaken in year 1 identified a consistent need in all workplaces regardless of the industry sector, for the following three key areas to be addressed:

- Workplace change and increasing complexity;
- Supervisor/Team Leader development;
- Ensuring WHS procedures are adhered to and supported by all

Year 2 2013/14

The focus in year 2 was to develop a plan and engage with enterprises who demonstrated existing LLN best practise within the three priority themes learnt from the research; dealing with change and increasing complexity, professional development of supervisors and team leaders and ensuring WHS procedures are adhered to and supported by all.

Early in year 2 after advice from industry, it became apparent that there was a fourth priority theme, use of technology. This was notable where employees move from manual operating systems to an automated computer operated systems and where employees were taking on positions of greater responsibility. This required the ability for workers and enterprises to incorporate the use of computer based technology into their day-to-day activities, such as with new operating and reporting systems. Although digital literacy ran through the three existing priority themes, industry supported it being added as a fourth area for this WELL strategic plan to focus on.

Year 3 2014/15

2014/15 saw the project assimilate the previous two years of work into the Workplace Learning Tools:

- the Industry Plan,
- the online resources and
- promotional materials.

These Tools were then reviewed and presented to industry as part of our industry development processes. Industry feedback was utilised to fine tune and develop understanding of the Tools by industry.

The way forward

There are a series of parties involved in influencing the outcomes of this plan: workers, supervisors, enterprises, associations and Forestworks. ForestWorks has systems and processes in place through its industry engagement roles to discuss foundation skills across industry and throughout industry. Engagement occurs via regular meetings with associations, the VET sector and directly with enterprises through stakeholder visits.

Who?	What?	How?
Workers	<p>When change is introduced, identify gaps in foundation skills which impact on being able to do your job role.</p> <p>Identify on job description what foundation skills are required for you to undertake your job role.</p> <p>Use Tools provided by ForestWorks to assist in this process.</p>	<p>Utilise initiatives in the workplace to build skills.</p> <p>Speak up at Toolbox meetings with your fellow workers to identify where you or others need training to do your job roles.</p>
Supervisors	<p>Ensure job description identifies foundation skill requirements in job roles and that workers are trained to successfully undertake their roles.</p> <p>Seek training both formal and informal in foundation skills to assist workers and supervisors achieve job outcomes.</p> <p>Foster a learning culture in your workplace team/s.</p>	<p>Alert your workers to workplace initiatives that will assist them build their skills.</p> <p>Alert managers to areas where training maybe required.</p> <p>Welcome input from workers to improve foundation skills.</p>
Enterprise processes and management	<p>Identify where foundation skill capacity building will assist your enterprise to achieve better outcomes by utilising your workforce effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>Ensure job descriptions are reviewed and maintained to reflect foundation skill requirements.</p> <p>Identify common foundation skills requirements across the organisation and develop formal and informal programs to build capacity to provide workplace flexibility.</p> <p>Work with workers, supervisors and the VET sector to ensure foundation skills are embedded in learning activities, both formal and informal.</p> <p>Ensure foundation skill development underpins all workforce development planning.</p> <p>Embed foundation skill learning when reviewing and/or considering and/or implementing new practices, technology and processes.</p>	<p>Identify foundation skills as a priority area and assign responsibility for it within your organisation.</p> <p>Act on feedback from supervisors and workers.</p>

Trainers in the VET Sector	<p>Embed foundation skill training in all training delivery. This may mean the delivery of specific foundation skills as part of technical skills training</p> <p>Work with the forest industry to ensure foundation skills are recognised as an integral part of workforce development.</p>	<p>Include foundation skills in all learning across the sector.</p>
Associations	<p>Work with enterprises to promote ForestWorks Workplace Learning Tools – this plan, online resources and promotional items.</p> <p>Work with industry to ensure foundation skills are an acknowledged component of industry development.</p>	<p>Use communication tools to promote and reinforce the importance of Workplace Learning to the industry.</p>
ForestWorks	<p>Work across all sectors and stakeholders to promote this plan.</p> <p>Strengthening relationships with VET sector relating to foundation skills through engagement processes.</p> <p>Through industry engagement, ensure the Workplace Learning Tools are maintained to and updated to reflect industry requirements.</p> <p>Embed Workplace Learning in all aspects of our work with particular reference to skill standards development, workforce development planning, industry-based products such as FOLS and Better Business and ForestWorks communication tools such as our webpage and Newsletters.</p>	<p>Provide ongoing methods for engaging with industry on Workplace Learning e.g. Skills Training Advisory Committee (STAC), Skills Employment Council (SEC), Newsletters, website, site visits.</p> <p>Maintain and continually develop the Workplace Learning Tools</p> <p>Keep Workplace Learning on the agenda internally and externally</p>