



Case Study: Forestry Corporation NSW Adoption of FOLS Skills Verification Program

Summary

Forestry Corporation of NSW (Forestry Corporation) supported 18 of its harvest and haulage contractors to move over to the FOLS Skills Verification Program between May and June 2017. It was part of a pilot trial to see how the FOLS program could assist Forestry Corporation to manage the skills and training of its workforce and to identify training gaps. The pilot included all of their contractors in the northern hardwood forests around Coffs Harbour, Wauchope and Grafton.

Forestry Corporation were pleased with how smooth the process was. Forestry Corporation's Harvest and Haulage Contractor and Procurement Manager, Mark Hitchins said FOLS proved to be "a really effective and transparent system for managing the skills and competencies of our workforce".

Situation

Forestry Corporation were looking for an effective and transparent mechanism to manage the skills and competencies of their workforce and to ensure operators who work in State Forests meet the following requirements:

- The NSW *Code of Practice for Safety in Forest Harvesting Operations* approved under section 43 of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*; and
- Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) issued by the NSW Government.

Forestry Corporation identified FOLS as a tool to bring to light any skills gaps and to help them work with contractors to develop workforce training plans. Initially, Forestry Corporation adopted FOLS for its contractors operating in native forests in north-east NSW, to pilot how it would work for these 18 harvest and haulage companies and their 200 operators.

Process

Forestry Corporation initially met with contractors to discuss the pilot program and then ForestWorks worked with each forest contractor to guide them through the process.

The process for each contractor included:

- Completing and signing a FOLS application form, identifying competencies/skilled activities for inclusion on their FOLS record.
- Supplying evidence of training for those competencies/skilled activities – this could include a Statement of Attainment or a transcript of results of nationally recognised training from a registered training organisation.
- Providing a signed 'Verification of Currency' statement from either their employer or a representative of Forestry Corporation to verify that the operator is currently using their skills in the workplace.

The cost of signing up to FOLS for an operator is \$150 for three years. A 20 percent discount applies for operators working for a member of the Australian Forest Contractors Association. Forestry Corporation agreed to reimburse each operator \$50 for their initial subscription based on receipt of a FOLS.

Many of the forest contracting companies signed up to FOLS as a *Forestry Contractor*, to receive access and view the FOLS records of the operators they employ. They also have the ability to generate reports.

Forestry Corporation signed up to FOLS as a *Forest Manager*, to have the ability to access and view the FOLS records of the operators they employ. They also have the ability to generate reports.

Outcomes

1. Employees' skills were verified with FOLS. They could access a summary of their records online and received a physical FOLS Card, listing their current skills.
2. Contractors received a skills gap-analysis for their employees and could access employees' details online. They also now have a better understanding of Forestry Corporation requirements and the vocational training system.
3. Forestry Corporation staff are now able to view and manage online training records of each operator working for their contractors on the pilot program.
4. Forestry Corporation, the forest contractors, ForestWorks and TAFE NSW are now working together to close the skills gaps and to ensure the regional workforce has the appropriate training.



Employees from *Cover It Pty Ltd*, left to right: George Connor, Boyd Young, Jamie Young, and Kelvin Young



Attending a FOLS briefing session in Grafton: Lisa Hoffman and Shane Hoffman from *Hoffman Haulage* and Peter Dove from *Greensills Brothers*