

THE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY GROUP

# FOUNDATION SKILLS PILOT PROGRAMS SUCCESS

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**THE AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY GROUP  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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# WORKPLACE FOUNDATION SKILLS

## SUCCESS IN PILOT PROGRAM

***The results from the Australian Industry Group's pilot of skill sets in Foundation Skills indicate a significant return for employees and participating companies.***

The Australian Industry Group developed a unique national pilot program of three Foundation Skills Units of Competency as a Skill Set and delivered it into three different manufacturing workplaces in 2016.

The objective was to pilot the delivery of a program based on the selection of three units of competency from the Foundation Skills Training Package to assist employers to engage with employees on foundation skills and improve the productivity within their business.

Ai Group's recent report on the benefits of providing training in Foundation Skills has indicated a return on investment and higher levels of productivity in businesses who engage in the implementation of Foundation Skills based programs.

The manufacturing industry has been identified through research as having among the lowest levels of workforce literacy and numeracy.

Suitably qualified practitioners delivered the foundation skills content in the workplace. This approach has not been used before and the pilot enables consideration of whether this approach has more general application.

*The unique features of this pilot included:*

- The use of a Skills Set with variable content;
- Customisation of the program to the requirements of the workplace; and
- Delivery in the workplace to suit employer needs.

A co-contribution model was used and employers contributed half of the delivery costs of the program.



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## THE THREE SELECTED COMPANIES WERE:



### **HAIGH'S CHOCOLATE**

**ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

Haigh's Chocolates is the oldest family owned chocolate maker in Australia. The company employs over 500 people throughout the factory, administration and 15 retail stores located across Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney. The training program occurred at the Parkside site in Adelaide.



### **CSF PROTEINS**

**MELBOURNE, VICTORIA**

CSF Proteins Melbourne (formerly BPL Melbourne) was acquired by the Ridley Corporation in 2012 and is the largest renderer in Victoria, processing both poultry and red meat offal through separate manufacturing lines. Products include meat and bone meals, tallows, poultry meal, poultry oils, feather meal, blood meal and custom blended products.



### **TEYS AUSTRALIA**

**WAGGA WAGGA, NEW SOUTH WALES**

The Teys family has been involved in the Australian beef industry since 1946, wholesaling and retailing meat in South East Queensland. The business has grown to become the second largest meat processor and exporter in Australia.

# OUTLINE OF THE PILOT

The pilot focused on the delivery of three Foundation Skills Training Package units of 15 hours duration each. With assistance from the specialist trainer, the companies selected the units based on their specific needs. Companies selected 7-10 employees they believed would most benefit from the training and provide the greatest investment return for the company.

All companies had different needs and targeted specific cohorts of employees. At Haigh's Chocolates, confectionery production workers participated in the training with organisational goals to improve communication and measurement skills, as quantities and accuracy are an important part of the manufacturing process.

Approximately half of the workers are from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) language backgrounds whilst others have low levels of self-esteem in relation to their learning. Being a quality company, continuous improvement is always the focus. Training aims were to increase employee confidence, particularly to raise issues with supervisory staff. This is all part of achieving high standards of accuracy in the completion of forms and reporting procedures.

The CSF Proteins site at Laverton has a workforce of about 70 people. The majority of the production shift employees are of Vietnamese background. Of the 29 employees initially interviewed, 24 were of Vietnamese origin and 18 had limited English language capability. With improved English language skills and better training in the use of Standard Operating Procedures, more consistent application of these in the production process will be achieved. Also, general plant operations reporting and communication between the production employees, maintenance workers, management and technical groups would be improved.

Teys Australia, Wagga Wagga plant, had a focus on training emerging leaders. The purpose of the training was to develop reading, writing and oral communication skills to improve leaders' ability to undertake day-to-day communication activities and prepare them for further learning at AQF 4 and above.

Their job roles included supervisors, line trainers and Quality Control officers. The participants were generally selected by their managers, however some also volunteered.

Accordingly, the companies selected different units of competency for the training from the Foundation Skills Training Package.

## HAIGHS CONFECTIONARY PRODUCTION WORKERS

FSKOCM07: Interact effectively with others at work  
FSKDRG10: Read and respond to routine work information  
FSKNUM14: Calculate with whole numbers and familiar fractions, decimals and percentages

## CFS PROTEIN FOOD PROCESSING PRODUCTION WORKERS

FSKRDG07: Read and respond to simple workplace information  
FSKWTG06: Write simple workplace information  
FSKOCM03: Participate in simple spoken interactions at work

## TEYS SUPERVISORS, QUALITY CONTROLLERS, LINE TRAINERS

FSKOCM11: Use communication skills to facilitate workplace teams  
FSKWTG10: Write complex workplace texts  
FSKRDG11: Read and respond to complex workplace information

# TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

## INITIAL ASSESSMENTS

All of the trainers undertook initial assessments of the participants at the companies.

### HAIGH'S CONFECTIONARY PRE-ASSESSMENT DISTRIBUTION

	CORE SKILL AREAS	LEARNING	READING	WRITING	NUMERACY	ORAL
ACSF	LEVEL 3	3	3	1	2	2
AUSTRALIAN	LEVEL 2	5	1	4	2	5
CORE SKILLS	LEVEL 1		4	2	4	1
FRAMEWORK	PRE-LEVEL			1		
TOTAL		8	8	8	8	8

At Haigh's Chocolates eight volunteers participated after consideration of shift requirements and production needs. Participants completed the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Core Skills Profile Assessment online, producing an assessment across five levels and five core skill areas.

This assessment demonstrated that several of the participants were below Level 3 across the core skill areas. Level 3 is considered to be the minimum level at which someone can operate effectively in a workplace.

### CSF PROTEINS PRE-ASSESSMENT DISTRIBUTION

	CORE SKILL AREAS	READING	WRITING	SPEAKING	LISTENING
ACSF	LEVEL 3	0	0	1	2
AUSTRALIAN	LEVEL 2	7	2	7	8
CORE SKILLS	LEVEL 1	8	13	9	7
FRAMEWORK	PRE-LEVEL	2	2	0	0
TOTAL		17	17	17	17

The situation was different at CSF Proteins as there were 18 participants spread across three groups. While only one of these groups was involved in the pilot program, the assessments and results for all participants have been included. One participant was not assessed. The company was interested in focusing on three of the core skill areas: reading, writing and oral communication. The latter core skill area was also separated into speaking and listening.

This assessment indicated that there were no participants at Level 3 for reading or writing and only a couple for oral communication. Most of the participants were assessed as Level 1 or Level 2 and there were a couple below Level 1.

## TEYS PRE-ASSESSMENT DISTRIBUTION

At Tey Australia the focus was also on the three core skills of reading, writing and oral communication. The pre-assessments indicated a higher level with most participants at Level 3 for reading and writing and Levels 3 and 4 for oral communication. There were some Level 2 assessments for reading and writing.

LEARNS	READING	WRITING	ORAL COMMUNICATION
A	3.03 - 5 POINTS	2.05 - 8 POINTS	3.07 POINTS
	2.04 - 7 POINTS	3.06 - 7 POINTS	3.08 POINTS
B	2.03 - 10 POINTS	2.05 - 8 POINTS	4.07 - 5 POINTS
	2.04 - 7 POINTS	2.06 - 8 POINTS	4.08 - 10 POINTS
C	3.03 - 11 POINTS	3.05 - 10 POINTS	4.07 - 12 POINTS
	3.04 - 9 POINTS	3.06 - 9 POINTS	4.08 - 8 POINTS
D	3.03 - 11 POINTS	2.05 - 6 POINTS	4.07 - 11 POINTS
	3.04 - 6 POINTS	3.06 - 10 POINTS	4.08 - 10 POINTS
E	3.03 - 9 POINTS	3.05 - 8 POINTS	4.07 POINTS
	2.04 - 6 POINTS	2.06 - 8 POINTS	4.08 POINTS
F	3.03 - 6 POINTS	3.05 - 6 POINTS	4.07 - 8 POINTS
	3.04 - 5 POINTS	3.06 - 12 POINTS	4.08 - 12 POINTS
G	2.03 POINTS	2.05 POINTS	4.07 POINTS
	2.04 POINTS		4.08 POINTS
H	3.03 - 5 POINTS	2.05 - 5 POINTS	3.07 POINTS
	2.04 - 6 POINTS	2.06 - 8 POINTS	3.08 POINTS

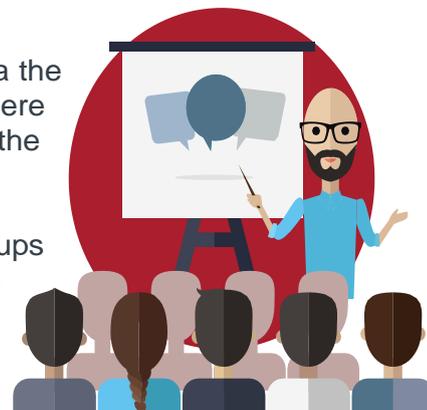
# TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

The training at Haigh's Chocolates occurred once per week for the full group from 7 April and concluded on 30 July 2016. In addition, some individuals sought discussions with the trainer out of scheduled training time. There were also regular meetings with the Training Manager and production staff who helped shape the direction of specific training to ensure relevance.

To meet the shift requirements at CSF Proteins the 18 participants were organised into three rotating groups. Each group participated in two out of three weeks. Each group received 30 sessions of 1.5 hours each over 23 weeks commencing in April 2016. The group included three supervisors and 15 production operators.

Given the relatively remote location of the Teys plant at Wagga Wagga the training was delivered in five separate events over a five-month period. There were 13 participants in all but only eight in the pilot group who undertook the assessments.

Due to production requirements, the participants were split into two groups with training occurring on consecutive days once a month. Each training event was five to six hours in duration with the exception of one eight-hour event. Participants were required to complete a range of tasks between events to ensure that the training hours were completed.



The trainer was available on call by phone to provide support.

# TRAINING CONTENT

All three companies had differing training needs within the Foundation Skills umbrella and selected different units of competency from the Training Package. At Haigh's Chocolates the training included how Standard Operating Procedures, Incident and Batch forms could be modified to improve readability or ease of completion using feedback from the production users. The focus was on further developing effective problem solving interactions between production employees and supervisory/team leaders. As part of the numeracy training, the need to check and recheck the accuracy of measurements was highlighted.

At CSF Proteins, the company wanted to provide workers with underpinning foundation skills and knowledge to better understand, apply and participate in company requirements associated with safety, quality, continuous improvement and to provide workers with further training opportunities. The focus of skill development was on oral communication, reading and writing skills related to safety and production systems and processes. There was skills practice in speaking and listening to English on radio communication, reading Safety Alerts and Toolbox Talk documentation and writing for production monitoring and Hazard/Near Miss reporting. The trainer used on-line resources for listening and pronunciation practice, card games to support safety vocabulary and interactive activities to promote active learning.



The training content at Teys was to develop the reading, writing and oral communication skills to improve the ability of leaders to undertake communication activities and prepare them for further learning at AQF 4 and above. There was a focus on reading complex workplace documents and to target information relevant to their workers. Based on this training the group wrote draft work instructions. This included rules of plain English and formatting to make documents easier to understand.

Oral communication skills were developed around communicating these work instructions to other employees. The breaks between training events were utilised to apply the skills learnt in training.

# RESULTS

## BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS

### HAIGH'S CONFECTIONARY POST-ASSESSMENT DISTRIBUTION

	CORE SKILL AREAS	LEARNING	READING	WRITING	NUMERACY	ORAL
ACSF	LEVEL 3	7	5	5	5	7
AUSTRALIAN	LEVEL 2	1	3	2	3	1
CORE SKILLS	LEVEL 1			1		
FRAMEWORK	PRE-LEVEL					
TOTAL		8	8	8	8	8

A major result for participants can be seen in relation to the assessments below Level 3, considered to be the minimum requirement. Prior to the training there were 28 assessments below Level 3. After the training this was reduced to 17 assessments. Haigh's extended the training program to see if results could be influenced by an additional six weeks with more 1:1 time. Now there are only 11 assessments below Level 3 compared to the original 17.

### CSF PROTEINS POST-ASSESSMENT DISTRIBUTION

	CORE SKILL AREAS	READING	WRITING	SPEAKING	LISTENING
ACSF	LEVEL 3	2	1	3	5
AUSTRALIAN	LEVEL 2	13	9	12	12
CORE SKILLS	LEVEL 1	3	8	3	1
FRAMEWORK	PRE-LEVEL				
TOTAL		18	18	18	18

In terms of achievement in Level 3 there were only three assessments prior to training. After the completion of the training this number had increased to 11. While there are still significant numbers below Level 3 there has generally been improvement in each core skill area. The major improvements were: in reading the number of assessments at Level 2 increased from seven to 13; in writing the number of assessments at Level 2 increased from two to 12; in speaking the number of Level 2 assessments increased from seven to 12; and in listening Level 2 assessments increased from eight to 12. All four Pre-Level assessments improved and the number of assessments at Level 1 decreased from 37 to 15.

## TEYS POST-ASSESSMENT DISTRIBUTION

LEARNS	READING	WRITING	ORAL COMMUNICATION
A	3.03 - 12 POINTS	3.05 - 9 POINTS	4.07 - 8 POINTS
	3.04 - 7 POINTS	3.06 - 11 POINTS	4.08 - 9 POINTS
B	3.03 - 12 POINTS	3.05 - 6 POINTS	4.07 - 13 POINTS
	3.04 - 10 POINTS	3.06 - 6 POINTS	4.08 - 13 POINTS
C	3.03 - 14 POINTS	3.05 - 11 POINTS	4.07 - 13 POINTS
	4.04 - 8 POINTS	3.06 - 15 POINTS	4.08 - 14 POINTS
	3.04 - 12 POINTS		
	4.05 - 5 POINTS		
D	3.03 - 13 POINTS	3.05 - 9 POINTS	4.07 - 14 POINTS
	3.04 - 11 POINTS	3.06 - 12 POINTS	4.08 - 14 POINTS
	4.03 - 7 POINTS		
E	3.03 - 13 POINTS	3.05 - 9 POINTS	4.07 POINTS
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H	3.03 - 13 POINTS	3.05 - 7 POINTS	4.07 - 10 POINTS
	3.04 - 6 POINTS	3.06 - 8 POINTS	4.08 - 10 POINTS

At Tey's the group of participants started at higher levels of assessment. Each individual improved generally between two and four levels across the six different assessments. Most also improved their points count. There were improvements recorded in each of the core skill areas. In reading all seven assessments at Level 2 improved to Level 3 and three at Level 3 moved to Level 4. In writing all nine Level 2 assessments improved to Level 3 and in oral communication the four Level 3 assessments advanced to Level 4. At the end of the training all eight participants were at either Level 3 or Level 4 across the three core skill areas assessed.

## BENEFITS FOR COMPANIES

In addition to the participants, the companies were also able to identify outcomes and benefits.

At Haigh's Chocolates, the training provided an opportunity for Team Leaders and Supervisors to listen to participant suggestions about how Standard Operating Procedures and Incident and Batch forms could be simplified and changed. The supervisory and management staff indicated that the training had contributed to continuous improvement.

"In our workplace, we worked with supervisors to simplify and clarify processes. The participants were able to identify areas for improvement which increased their confidence." Training Manager

At CSF Proteins, the company noted a greater willingness and improved ability in participants to approach managerial and English-speaking staff to ask questions or raise concerns. There is a better understanding of managerial roles and more collaboration with the HSE Manager and Quality Manager. Improved confidence and understanding to give feedback and to interact regarding production and safety documentation was also noted. Supervisors commented on the improved ability to complete production paperwork and an improved understanding about the safety system and processes such as HSE meetings, WHSE representation and Hazard/Near Miss reporting and tracking.

Teys Australia believes that the training has made significant improvements in the communication skills of its team leaders. It is engaging the team leaders and trainers to review work instructions and JSAs for the first time and believes the training has made significant differences. A decision has been made to include the *Communication for supervisors training program* as an introduction to leadership training programs for all new supervisors, trainers and Quality Control Officers across the Wagga Wagga plant in future. Work is continuing with the development of a staged approach to leadership training during 2017 with this program as stage one.



## PROJECT ISSUES



Notwithstanding the success of the pilot program there were issues that needed to be dealt with and could improve the further implementation of the program.

Haigh's Chocolates noted the cost of release time for staff to attend training. It is important that this contribution is noted in addition to the co-contribution funding arrangements.

At CSF Proteins, there were issues about the grouping of participants for the training. There was a wide range of mixed abilities within the groups which added to the difficulty of training. Inconsistent attendance due to the changing demands of shift work was a further challenge.

The timing of training after a period of shift meant that sometimes participants found it difficult to concentrate as they were tired. Some company documentation such as Standard Operating Procedures required a reading level of ACSF level 4 or 5 which made it difficult for the participant group.

# CERTIFICATION

The pilot program used different Registered Training Organisations: Ai Group extended its scope to include the Foundation Skills Training Package and was the provider for CSF Proteins; in South Australia TAFESA was the RTO for Haigh's Chocolates; and in New South Wales Response Training Australia was the RTO for Teys.

At Teys Australia all 13 participants were awarded the three units of competency used in the program. The company intends to map these units into the Business Services Training Package to contribute to the BSB42015 Certificate in Leadership and Management.

The same result occurred at Haigh's Chocolates where all participants were successfully awarded the three units of competency used in the pilot program. A different approach was adopted in the case of CSF Proteins given that participants were operating at a lower level of competency. All participants were assessed at Level 1 or 2. Despite the undoubted progress as a result of the training the participants were not able to gain the units of competency.



NATIONALLY RECOGNISED  
TRAINING

Accordingly, the trainer on behalf of Ai Group issued Certificates of Attendance that referenced study in the three units at ACSF level 2.

# CONCLUSIONS

The pilot program effectively demonstrated the use of the Foundation Skills Training Package in workplaces utilising a skill set format.

The use of a Training Package skill set approach proved to be very flexible. It is interesting to note that all three of the participating companies used different units of competency to meet their specific needs, which strengthens the value of a 'moveable' skill set. Employers appreciated the opportunity to select the units of competency, in consultation with experienced LLN trainers.

The pilot also had the benefit of utilising nationally accredited training which assists to better connect companies with the national training system. The use of a skill set rather than a full qualification matches the needs of employers in this area who are after immediate and targeted gains in workforce productivity.

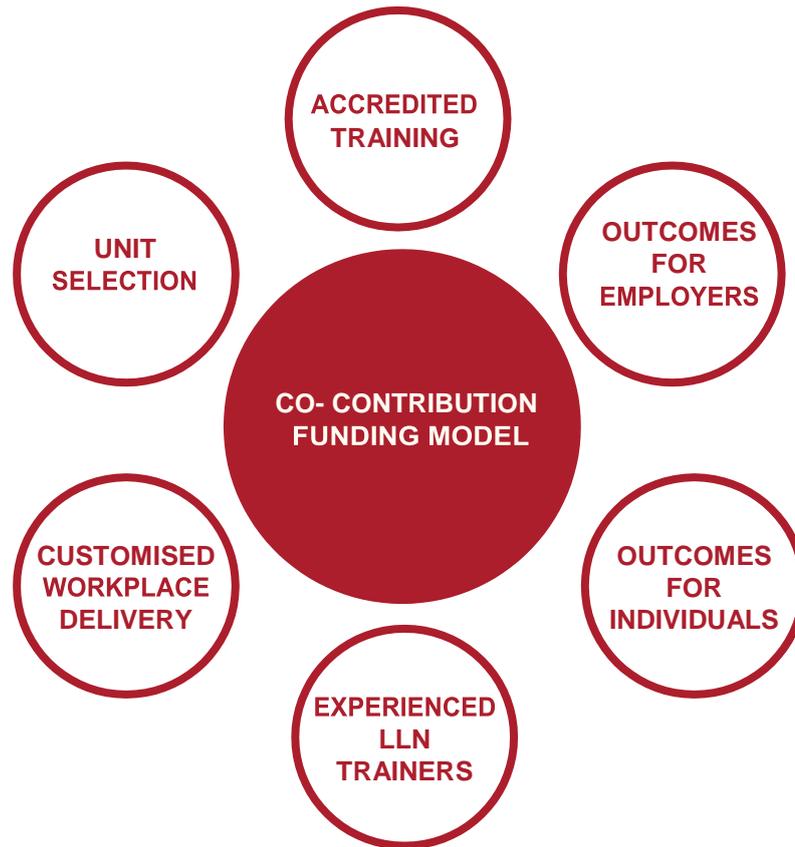
The customisation of the program was also a significant benefit. The companies appreciated the negotiations about the training arrangements to fit in with their production schedules. The trainers used materials and forms specific to the company to enable more effective and immediate improvements to workforce performance. The use of experienced LLN trainers was a further important element of the program. This assisted with the unit selection, the pre- and post-assessment activity and the customisation of materials and delivery.

The program demonstrates benefits for both the companies and the individual participants. For individuals, the increase in the achievement of core skills as measured by the Australian Core Skills Framework is evident. There are also the intangible but important benefits of increased confidence and self-esteem, communication skills and participation in workplace activity.

For the employers, there was also a range of beneficial outcomes. These included continuous improvement through better communications between production and supervisory staff, improvements to workplace documentation such as Standard Operating Procedures, a better understanding of workplace roles, improvements in understanding and reporting of workplace safety and increased leadership and communication skills of supervisors.

In terms of program cost it is important that a co-contribution model is implemented. Employers funded half the cost of the program, demonstrating employer willingness to pay for training when they receive results. The co-contribution model is a manageable financial approach for employers.

# KEY FEATURES OF THE MODEL



## RECOMMENDATION

Given the success of the implementation of the Foundation Skills Pilot Project, the Australian Government, in collaboration with industry and other stakeholders, investigate the development and implementation of national workforce foundation skills program to specifically meet the literacy and numeracy needs of the Australian workforce. The development of such a program should consider but not be limited to the following features:

- The use of the nationally accredited Foundation Skills Training Package as the basis for the construction of skill sets
- The involvement of employers in the selection of appropriate units of competency within the skills set
- The use of experienced and accredited LLN trainers to undertake program delivery and the measurement of outcomes for participants including through the Australian Core Skills Framework
- The customisation and delivery of the program in the workplace in consultation with the employer
- The measurement of outcomes for employers focusing on improvements in productivity and return on investment
- The use of a co-contribution funding model where program cost is shared between the Australian Government and individual companies

It is further recommended that the program be introduced on a pilot basis and that there be a comprehensive evaluation after an agreed interval.



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