

# Agency Frequently Asked Questions

Skilling SA Public Sector

## What is Skilling South Australia?

[Skilling South Australia](#) is a state government policy aiming to increase the uptake of apprenticeships and traineeships.

With matched funding from the Commonwealth Government's Skilling Australians Fund, the aim is to create more than 20,000 new training places over four years across the state.

## What is the Skilling SA Public Sector Project?

Under the broader Skilling South Australia initiative, the Skilling SA Public Sector Project will see 2685 trainees, graduates and existing employees work and train within the South Australian Public Sector.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE) has allocated Senior Management Council (SMC) agencies a nominal allocation over the project's four years. OCPSE is responsible for implementing the project in the South Australian Public Sector in collaboration with the Department for Innovation and Skills (DIS) and participating agencies.

## How can my agency meet allocation targets?

There are three options available for agencies to meet allocation targets as part of the Skilling South Australia project:

- Pathway 1 – Directly employing a new trainee/graduate on a contract of training
- Pathway 2 – Hosting a trainee through a GTO
- Pathway 3 – Upskilling an existing employee

OCPSE is working with agencies to discuss how allocations can be met in line with agency workforce planning.

## Can we exceed our allocated targets for training?

All requests for support from agencies above allocated targets will be considered by OCPSE in conjunction with DIS on a case-by-case basis, subject to funding and eligibility.

The whole of government target of 2685 commencements has been nominally allocated to agencies based on their Full Time Equivalent count.

If an agency is struggling to meet their allocated target, OCPSE should be contacted as a priority to discuss.

## Can an existing public sector employee be placed on a Contract of Training (COT)?

Yes, an existing employee can agree to enter into a COT which will comprise of on-job and off-job training as prescribed in the *Training and Skills Development Act 2008 (SA)*.

Agencies should consider the employee's classification and role to decide what level of training is reasonable for this on-the-job development.

Where a staff member enters into a COT their remuneration level does not change; it continues in accordance with their existing employment contract.

## Do existing public sector employees have to undertake an Upfront Assessment of Need?

Yes. Completing an Upfront Assessment of Need (UAN)—including the Core Skills Profile for Adults (CSPA) test—is a requirement for all who receive subsidised training through Skilling South Australia project funding.

While we respect that many public sector employees have already studied at a tertiary level, the UAN is designed to maximise

success and ensure each student receives any support required.

For more information see the [Upfront Assessment of Need webpage](#) and look for the following documents:

- Upfront Assessment of Need Fact Sheet for Employers.
- Upfront Assessment of Need Fact Sheet for Prospective Students

### **What qualifications are eligible under a COT?**

The full list of available qualifications can be found on the Traineeship and Apprenticeship Pathways (TAP) Schedule found [here](#). This list includes qualifications available under a COT, nominal duration of the contract and length of the probation period. Eligible qualifications include Certificate III, Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

### **What happens if we want to make a change to the COT? (termination, completion, suspension, transfer, extension)**

If both the employer and trainee agree to alter the COT, an application can be made to Traineeship and Apprenticeship Services to vary the contract. If approved, both parties will be notified that the change has occurred.

To vary a COT, contact DIS Traineeship and Apprenticeship and Traineeship Services. Email: [skills@sa.gov.au](mailto:skills@sa.gov.au) | Infoline: 1800 673 097

### **Can a COT be undertaken part time?**

Yes, COT hours can be averaged over 4 weeks with a minimum of 15 hours per week. If a COT is part time, the nominal duration of the contract will be longer.

A COT cannot be undertaken on a casual basis.

### **Does the employee need a Training Plan as well as a COT?**

Yes, a Training Plan is a requirement of the COT and must be approved by the trainee/graduate/employee, employer and Training Provider (and a parent or legal guardian if the trainee is under 18).

The Training Plan outlines the qualification being undertaken, method of training (on/off job) and the units of competency. The Training Plan is submitted to Traineeship and Apprenticeship Services by the Training Provider.

### **What provisions for study time are available under a COT?**

Where a COT is agreed for trainees/graduates/employees, it contains an obligation of the employer to provide paid time for completing the agreed study components of the qualification, identified in the training plan.

### **How do I know the probation period and nominal term for a trainee and/or apprentice under a COT?**

The [TAP Schedule](#) outlines the required probation period and the nominal term of the contract. A COT can be completed earlier if all parties agree that the trainee/graduate/employee has achieved competency in the workplace and has successfully completed their formal training requirements.

A COT up to and including a 24-month term has a 60-day probation period. A COT which is more than 24 months has a 90-day probation period.

### **What is the role of a Group Training Organisation?**

Group Training Organisations (GTOs) employ trainees directly, and then arrange their training and a suitable host employer.

As part of this project, several GTOs will be procured to assist your agency (if you so choose) in managing recruitment, training and wages.

## Where can I find more information on the GTO Panel?

Information relating to the use of the Group Training Organisation (GTO) Panel is available on the [SA Government Extra Site](#) and the [OCPSE website](#).

## What are the eligibility requirements of a trainee?

Public sector trainees must be aged 17 – 30 years, and up to 35 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people with a declared disability, currently or previously under Guardianship of the Minister, or deemed long term unemployed (greater than 12 months).

See [December 2017 Gazette](#) for more detail.

For upskilling existing employees and trainees hosted in the public sector via a GTO, there is no age limit.

Participants are not eligible to undertake a qualification equivalent to one they've already completed. However, they may enter a COT to obtain a higher-level qualification, or qualification in an additional field of study.

## Are we able to request an employee from the Aboriginal Employment or Disability Employment registers?

Yes, employees can be sourced from these registers where requested to support inclusion and diversity throughout the public sector.

## What qualifications are subsidised?

The Skilling South Australia Subsidised Traineeship and Apprenticeship List (STAL), found [here](#), lists the qualifications that may be subsidised in South Australia under a COT arrangement. Most Apprenticeship and Traineeship pathways on the TAP Schedule are eligible for subsidised training.

---

<sup>1</sup> Training costs are for gap fee - up to \$3000 per qualification (i.e. qualification cost minus subsidised training amount).

## What if a qualification is not listed on the TAP Schedule or STAL that our agency wants to use?

If a course has been identified as not being available on the TAP Schedule and/or the STAL please contact the OCPSE Skilling SA team on [OCPSEskillingSA@sa.gov.au](mailto:OCPSEskillingSA@sa.gov.au)

## What support do agencies receive under the Skilling SA Public Sector Project?

Support depends on which pathway an agency is utilising, and may be provided by OCPSE or a Group Training Organisation.

Support services for agencies under the project may include:

- Training costs<sup>1</sup>
- Recruitment
- Mentoring
- Supervisor training
- Case management / pastoral care
- Public sector induction
- Job seeker training and support

## What costs will the agency be responsible for?

Each public sector agency will be responsible for costs associated with engaging a trainee, including wages or salaries, supervision and on costs.

Contact the OCPSE Skilling SA team on [OCPSEskillingSA@sa.gov.au](mailto:OCPSEskillingSA@sa.gov.au) if you wish to discuss your agency's support.

### *Example – existing worker*

An existing worker undertakes a Certificate IV in Project Management as part of an agency's skilling and capability building. The agency receives support for qualification training costs (subsidised training and support for the training gap fee).

### Example – new trainee

An agency employs a new trainee to undertake a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management. The agency is supported with service costs including recruitment, supervisor training and training costs (subsidised training and support for the training gap fee).

### Can an agency seek reimbursement for costs under the Skilling SA project if an employee withdraws or terminates their contract of training?

Funding through the Skilling Australians Fund National Partnership Agreement is based on achieving agreed milestones. Accordingly, the Department for Innovation and Skills payment model for Skilling South Australia Projects directly links payments to achieving Training Contract Outcomes. Training Contract Outcomes are defined as a training contract commencement, following completion of the probationary period. In essence, Contracts of Training that are withdrawn from or terminated before the probationary period is complete, are not counted towards an agency's target nor are they entitled to any reimbursement of costs associated with the training.

### Do the South Australian Modern Public Sector Enterprise Agreement: Salaried 2017 provisions apply to public sector trainees?

Yes. Whilst trainees are not covered directly by the [Enterprise Agreement](#), the *Commitment to Ongoing Employment* provision under Clause 10 will continue to apply in relation to agencies employing new trainees (or graduates on a COT as part of Skilling SA allocations).

Clause 10.2 of the Agreement provides:

“When an employee has been engaged as a trainee in accordance with the *Training and Skills Development Act 2008* and has successfully completed their Contract of Training, has satisfactory performance

appraisals throughout their employment and upholds the public sector values, the employee will become an ongoing employee pursuant to section 45(2)(a) of the *Public Sector Act 2009* from the date of completion of the Contract of Training at the ASO2 classification level or equivalent”.

### Does the employer need to be registered with the Department for Innovation and Skills (DIS) to employ a trainee or apprentice?

Yes, it is a requirement under the *Training and Skills Development Act 2008 (SA)* that an employer is registered to employ trainees and apprentices in South Australia. In this case, the employer is the public sector agency.

Employer registration also includes the scope of relevant qualifications the agency can employ trainees under.

To register or make changes to your registration, you can contact the DIS Traineeship and Apprenticeship Service team. Email: [skills@sa.gov.au](mailto:skills@sa.gov.au) | Infoline: 1800 673 097

### Do trainees employed under the Public Sector Aboriginal Traineeship Program count towards allocation?

Yes, the target for 100 additional Aboriginal traineeships by June 2020 does count towards an agency's allocation.

### Will there be any opportunities in regional areas?

Yes, employers can apply for Travel and Accommodation Allowance for trainees who are required to travel long distances to their training provider. More information about this allowance can be found [here](#).

## **Is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) supported through the project for new and existing workers?**

Yes, RPL is allowed. All training providers are obligated to ask about and offer RPL to all students. However, part of the intent of the Skilling SA Public Sector Project is upskilling staff to learn new skills and greater support them in their traineeship/apprenticeship role. With this in mind, if a staff member is able to achieve competency of the qualification through a majority of RPL then either an alternative or higher-level qualification must be considered.

*Last reviewed July 2020*