



FUTURE SKILLS  
ORGANISATION  
Finance Technology Business

# Executive Summary

Workforce Plan 2024

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## Letter From the CEO

I am delighted to present the second edition of the Future Skills Organisation's Workforce Plan for the Finance, Technology and Business Support sectors.

As a Jobs and Skills Council (JSC), our role is to make vocational education and training (VET) a preferred choice for learning finance, technology and business skills by partnering with industry and the vocational training sector to fast-track innovative training solutions that meet the demand for the most important skills.

To do this, we actively engage with industry, unions and government to amplify their voices and facilitate engagement with the education and training system.

**Workforce planning is one of our core responsibilities as a JSC, setting the context for everything else we do.**

It provides the evidence base to understand current and future workforce challenges and opportunities. It is used to drive the program of projects designed to strengthen the skills needed by the finance, technology and business sectors.

Our **Initial Workforce Plan**<sup>1</sup> highlighted an opportunity for our VET system to play a greater role in developing innovative solutions to meet future skill demands.

We identified five key challenges. These are training suitability, the digital capability gap, the impact of new technologies, the need to increase understanding of pathways into careers and occupations, and the need to support teacher and trainer currency.

As we build on these findings through Workforce Plan 2024, we aim to further understand the key workforce challenges and skills gaps in finance, technology and business. We dive deeper into key concepts such as the potential impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on occupations and skills across the sectors; diversity, equity and inclusion; the impact of regulatory reforms; and the effectiveness of career and learning pathways.

Our work will only be successful when we have authentic partnerships within our community. Your active participation helps us to amplify your voice and co-design solutions to drive positive change across finance, technology and business.

**We welcome your insights and feedback.**

**Patrick Kidd OBE OAM**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Future Skills Organisation



## About the FSO

The Future Skills Organisation (FSO) is a Jobs and Skills Council funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The FSO aims to address the current labour and skills shortages while future-proofing the country's Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector.

The FSO seeks to ensure there are opportunities for everyone to access finance, technology and business skills needed across the economy, irrespective of background.

**We focus on advancing current and future skills for successful businesses of any size and industry, that need finance, technology and business (FTB) skills.**



## Introduction and Recap

The Future Skills Organisation (FSO) was appointed as the Jobs and Skills Council (JSC) for the finance, technology and business (FTB) sectors from July 2023. Our role is to identify skills and workforce needs, map career pathways, develop contemporary vocational education and training (VET) products, support collaboration between industry and training providers and act as a source of intelligence on issues affecting our industries.

In support of these outcomes, the FSO published its [Initial Workforce Plan<sup>2</sup>](#) (IWP) in January 2024. Findings include that FTB occupations and skills are a significant part of Australia's economy, with around 1 in 5 workers across Australia working in finance, technology or business occupations.

Identified in the report was the horizontality of these occupations meaning FTB occupations are found in every industry. In fact, the report found that the majority of finance and technology occupations were *outside* their respective sectors. It was also found that business occupations were distributed across every industry sector.

Despite increasing demand for these occupations and skills, the IWP found that supply from the skills system, for both VET and Higher Education (university), was declining. The reasons for this are complex, but identified in the report were five key interrelated challenges:

- 1. Industry is experiencing fast-changing skills needs in many occupations, largely due to the impacts of emerging technologies such as Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) and the increasing digital transformation of many businesses.**
- 2. Digital skills are increasingly in demand in non-tech jobs.**
- 3. Training does not consistently meet industry needs, particularly the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Training Package, and the training system is not able to keep pace with fast-changing skills demands.**
- 4. There is limited understanding and awareness of pathways into and within FTB occupations, both at a learner and industry level.**
- 5. VET teachers and trainers would benefit from additional support to keep pace with industry's fast-changing skills needs.**

Findings in the IWP have already informed a suite of activities (i.e. projects or initiatives) being progressed by the FSO. At the time of writing these include a needs and gap analysis of the ICT Training Package and an update of telecommunications qualifications. Additional activity proposals based on findings in the IWP are under consideration by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR).

## From Occupation-Focused to Industry-Centred: A New Approach in this year's Workforce Plan

This year's plan builds on the [Initial Workforce Plan \(IWP\)](#)<sup>3</sup> and moves from an occupation-based approach to industry-centred reporting. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of workforce needs within the Finance, Technology, and Business Support (FTB) sectors. While the IWP focused on FTB occupations across the entire economy in every industry, this year's plan reports on industries which count occupations within the direct FTB sectors, whether those are FTB occupations or not.

Further definition of these sectors is provided at page 6 of each individual plan. The new plan contains detailed sector profiles, including sub-sector analyses and comprehensive profiles of the 18 largest FTB occupations.

This amendment results in significantly different workforce data. The IWP found that the number of people employed in Finance occupations were: 842,000, in Technology occupations: 749,300 and in Business Support occupations: 1,400,000. The IWP correctly identified that the majority of FTB occupations sit outside the direct Finance, Technology and Business Support sectors.

Accordingly, this year's Plan reports far fewer working in the direct Finance, Technology and Business industries (Finance: 596,789, Technology: 338,277 and Business Support: 526,549) as it does not count those in FTB occupations outside these industries. However, this data remains consistent with industry reported data, such as the Tech Council of Australia report on Getting to 1.2 million tech jobs which counts digital workers within and outside the direct tech sector.<sup>4</sup>

Further, it should be noted that this year's Plan uses the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) 2021 Census data as the basis for reporting, and therefore does not reflect increases to each of the sector workforces since that time. Next year's Workforce Plan will be updated using more recent ABS Labour Force data as relevant.

3. Initial Workforce Plan — Future Skills Organisation; <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/initial-workforce-plan>

4. Getting to 1.2 million jobs – Our roadmap to create a thriving Australian tech workforce, Tech Council of Australia, 2022: <https://techcouncil.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022-Getting-to-1.2-million-report.pdf>

## Structure of the Workforce Plan 2024

The development of the Workforce Plan 2024 (the Plan) has focused on validating findings in the IWP, addressing identified gaps, confirming and updating key challenges, and deepening our engagement and understanding of the issues facing the FTB workforces.

[The Plan](#) reflects an industry-centred approach to the workforce rather than a focus on occupations (as for the IWP) and contains three separate sector profiles:

- [Finance Workforce Plan 2024](#).<sup>5</sup>
- [Technology Workforce Plan 2024](#).<sup>6</sup>
- [Business Workforce Plan 2024](#).<sup>7</sup>

Each sector workforce plan includes profiles of the sub-sectors within those sectors and detailed profiles of the 18 largest FTB occupations. The next iteration of the workforce plan in 2025 will include the complete suite of FTB occupation profiles.

During consultations for the workforce plan, stakeholders identified additional workforce challenges and skills gaps in finance, technology, and business. We invite you to have your say and share your insights on how these issues impact you and your organisation.

- [Gender equality in FTB](#).<sup>8</sup>
- [Rural and remote workforce challenges – a case study of the Northern Territory \(NT\)](#).<sup>9</sup>
- [Sustainable finance](#).<sup>10</sup>
- [First Nations people's participation in FTB](#).<sup>11</sup>
- [Digital Divide](#).<sup>12</sup>
- [The impact of Artificial Intelligence on the VET sector](#).<sup>13</sup>

Separate reports are also available detailing the results and outputs from the [FSO Stakeholder Survey](#)<sup>14</sup> and the [FSO National Forum](#).<sup>15</sup>

The Plan should also be read in conjunction with the IWP due to its focus on FTB occupations irrespective of the industry in which these occur.

5. <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/finance>

6. <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/technology>

7. <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/business>

8 <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/reports-papers/2024-consultation-papers>

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/building-an-ai-enabled-workforce-priority-framework>

14. <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey-report>

15. <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/fso-national-forum-report>

# Methodology

The evidence informing Workforce Plan 2024 comprises a mix of qualitative and quantitative data as outlined in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Qualitative and Quantitative Data Sources for the Report

Qualitative Data	Quantitative Data
Consultations with 26 Finance organisations	FSO Stakeholder Survey data (n=183 respondents) <sup>16</sup>
Consultations with 33 Technology organisations	Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) and other relevant data including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Census 2021</li> <li>• Census 2016</li> <li>• Labour Force Survey</li> <li>• Internet Vacancy Index</li> <li>• VET Student Outcomes</li> <li>• VET Student Outcomes top 100 courses</li> </ul>
Consultations with 25 Business organisations	
Consultations with 16 Community groups representing diverse groups	
Consultations with 24 training providers	
Consultations with 8 JSCs	
Consultations with 17 government agencies (Commonwealth, State or Territory)	
Consultations with 5 unions	
Feedback from 142 attendees at the FSO National Forum	
A review of ~170 pieces of relevant grey literature	
Regular meetings with the FSO Workforce Plan Taskforce	

16. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

The stakeholder consultation process was conducted from

NOVEMBER 2023 → APRIL 2024

We received feedback from more than double the number of stakeholders than for the IWP (n=154 compared to n=56), exceeding our target of 130.



Feedback

154

Workforce Plan 2024

56

IWP



The consultation process also included three in-person workshops in the Northern Territory and Tasmania, culminating in the FSO National Forum in Melbourne on 14-15 March 2024 with 142 stakeholders attending (excluding FSO team members).

A full report from the National Forum is available [here](#).<sup>17</sup>

In addition, the FSO Stakeholder Survey (the Survey) was open from 18 February to 18 March 2024 and more than double the number of responses was received compared for the IWP (n=183 compared to n=84). A full report of the Survey, including survey design, is available [here](#).<sup>18</sup>



17. Future Skills Organisation (2024) National Forum report. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/fso-national-forum-report>

18. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

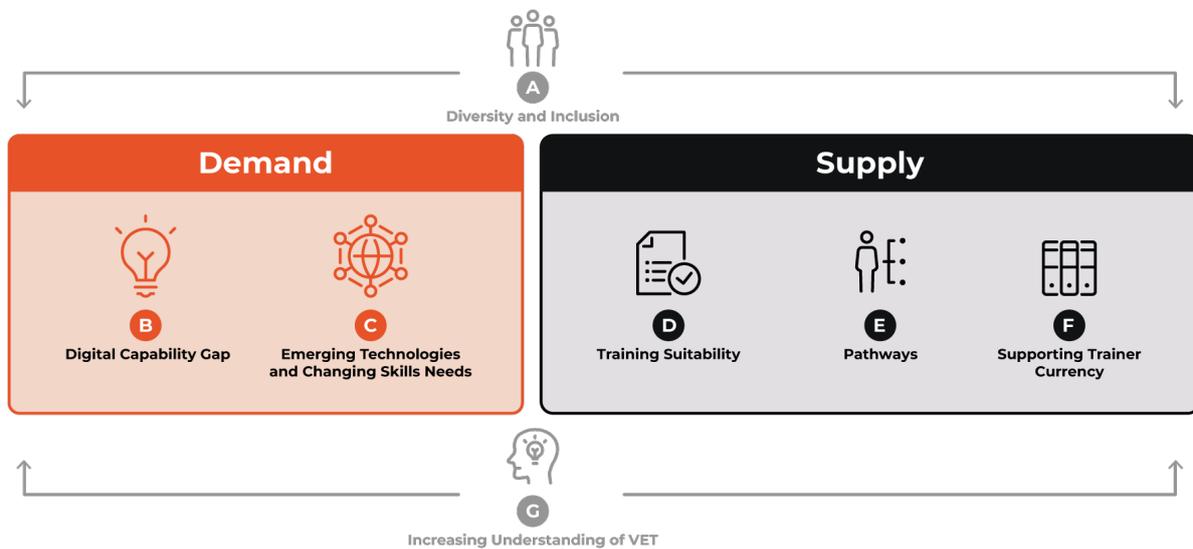
# WORKFORCE PLAN 2024: Key Findings and Opportunities

Stakeholders generally validated the hypotheses in the IWP.

A key challenge identified in the [Initial Workforce Plan](#)<sup>19</sup> (IWP) is declining supply and increasing demand for skills by the finance, technology and business workforces. This situation has not changed since publication of the IWP earlier in 2024. The five key themes have been validated by stakeholders as key issues for Workforce Plan 2024.

In addition, numerous stakeholders highlighted the need to increase diversity and inclusion in FTB and increase industry and community understanding of VET, both of which were key challenges raised by attendees at the FSO National Forum. Further detail on this feedback is set out below in Graphic 1 and, accordingly, the Workforce Plan 2024 key themes have been updated.

**Graphic 1:** Workforce Plan 2024 – Key Themes



**Data limitations:** Workforce intelligence needs improvement to help inform decision making. Current data gaps limit the ability to identify and track emerging skills and responses to skilling and workforce challenges. This includes the appropriateness of ANZSCO classifications as industry shifts toward defining workers by skill sets rather than increasingly outdated occupation classifications.

19. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Initial Workforce Plan. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/initial-workforce-plan>

## A. Diversity and Inclusion

### Many stakeholders report the lack of diversity and inclusion within FTB requires specific recognition as a key theme.

Responses to the Survey and participants at the FSO National Forum confirmed that stakeholders recognise the need for greater diversity and inclusion across FTB.<sup>20</sup>

Each of the three sectors is experiencing similarly low rates of diversity. First Nations people and people with disability are underrepresented in FTB, each making up less than 1% of the workforce in the finance and technology sectors and a little over 1% of the business support workforce.

Of note, the Australian Government has committed to a target, by 2031, to increase the proportion of First Nations people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

[Share your insights on First Nations Representation in FTB<sup>22</sup>](#)



20. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey20>. Reserve Bank of Australia (2006) The Structure of the Australian Financial System, Reserve Bank of Australia, Australian Government.

21. Australian Government. Closing the Gap targets and outcomes

22. Future Skills Organisation (2024) First Nations report. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/first-nations-ftb>



This lack of diversity poses risks to each industry, as diverse teams have been shown to be better equipped for decision-making, innovation and service across a diverse customer base.<sup>23</sup> Further, Australia needs to broaden and deepen the talent pool through diversity and inclusivity to address existing skills and occupation shortages.

In addition, gender inequality was highlighted throughout consultations for the Plan, reinforced by data indicating each of the three sectors has pay equity issues.<sup>24</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) research reports that occupations with high gender imbalance were more likely to be in shortage.<sup>25</sup>

**Share your insights on Gender Equality and Inclusion in FTB<sup>26</sup>**

23. Reserve Bank of Australia (2006) The Structure of the Australian Financial System

24. Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2024) ABS Gender Pay Gap Data, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Australian Government. and Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2024) Data Explorer, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Australian Government.

25. Jobs and Skills Australia. (2023). Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap.

26. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Gender Inclusivity report. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/gender>

Respondents to the FSO Stakeholder Survey and attendees at the FSO National Forum identified that effective strategies to increasing diversity and inclusion in FTB include:

- Adjustments to language used in recruitment.
- Increasing acceptance by industry of alternative pathways into occupations.
- Mentoring programs.
- Work experience opportunities.
- Culturally appropriate training.
- Resources to support First Nations people in the workplace.
- Strategic partnerships between peak bodies, employers and community organisations to promote pathways for First Nations people into occupations.

## Demand Challenges and Opportunities

### Low supply of suitably skilled entrants to the workforce, especially in rural and remote areas

During consultation for the Plan, stakeholders continued to report low supply of suitably skilled entrants to the workforce. While recruitment difficulty was notably easing in some occupations, stakeholders indicated ongoing pockets of recruitment difficulty, especially in sourcing and retaining experienced employees and in sourcing and retaining suitably qualified staff in rural and regional areas, particularly in the Northern Territory and Tasmania. The easing of recruitment difficulty in some occupations was reinforced by declining vacancy rates across the economy and in major FTB occupations.

#### Vacancies for Software and Applications

fell 30.9% over the 12 months from



**6,128** in April 2023 to  
**4,237** in March 2024<sup>27</sup>

compared to a 12.4% economy-wide vacancy decline over the same period (35,300 job advertisements)<sup>28</sup> (Note: Industry vacancy data is not available).

#### Vacancies for Accountants

fell 11% over the 12 months from



**4,873** in April 2023 to  
**4,337** in March 2024<sup>29</sup>

compared to a 12.4% economy-wide vacancy decline over the same period (or 35,300 job advertisements).<sup>30</sup>

27. Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, March 2024.

28. Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, March 2024, seasonally adjusted data.

29. Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, March 2024.

30. Jobs and Skills Australia, Internet Vacancy Index, March 2024, seasonally adjusted data.

Vacancies for Software and Applications Programmers fell 30.9% over the 12 months from 6,128 in April 2023 to 4,237 in March 2024<sup>26</sup>, compared to a 12.4% economy-wide vacancy decline over the same period (35,300 job advertisements)<sup>27</sup> (Note: Industry vacancy data is not available).

Vacancies for Accountants fell 11.0% over the 12 months from 4,873 in April 2023 to 4,337 in March 2024<sup>28</sup>, compared to a 12.4% economy-wide vacancy decline over the same period (or 35,300 job advertisements).<sup>29</sup>

Declining vacancy rates are likely attributable to tightening economic conditions across the economy. Irrespective, retention of FTB staff in regional and rural areas was also reported as a major challenge, with competition for staff frequently reported between the public and private sectors and challenges raised by the loss of migrants from regional to metropolitan areas.

Stakeholders in the finance and technology sectors generally reported challenges in sourcing suitably skilled and experienced tech employees, while in the business support sector, stakeholders were more concerned with non-tech workers needing increased digital skills, with almost 90% of business respondents to the FSO Survey considering digital skills to be very important.<sup>31</sup>

## B. Digital Capability Gap

### Digital skills demands are growing and gaps persist.

84% of FSO Survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed there is a digital capability gap in the workforce.<sup>32</sup> This theme was reinforced throughout consultations, including with other JSCs, and is recognised by the Australian Government as part of its reform agenda, as evidenced by its inclusion in the Working Future – Government White Paper<sup>33</sup> and the new National Skills Agreement.<sup>34</sup>

All workers require some level of digital skills to enable full economic participation. The working population can be categorised into those who are digitally informed (50% of the working population require digital literacy but negligible need for specific digital skills), digitally enabled (43% rely on digital skills to augment their functional skills) or digital experts (7% require specific digital skills as central functional skills).<sup>35</sup> The potential benefit to the economy of a digitally skilled population is well recognised, with improved productivity gains for companies and higher salaries for employees.<sup>36</sup>

31. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

32. *ibid*

33. Australian Treasury (2023) Working Future

34. National Skills Agreement | Federal Financial Relations

35. Future Skills Organisation (2023) About DSO, Future Skills Organisation, Australian Government.

36. Juha Saarinen (2023) Digital skills deliver “tremendous economic benefits” for Australia, Computer Reseller News (CRN).

This trend towards greater digitalisation in the economy is particularly evident in the finance industry. The Australian Computer Society reported the share of finance and insurance jobs requiring high levels of digital skills increased from 25% in 2006 to 45% by 2018.<sup>37</sup> This results in increasing demand for digital expert employees and digitally enabled workers with the ability to leverage technology to drive innovation, improve customer experiences and enhance operational efficiency.<sup>38</sup>

Skills gaps appear prevalent across proficiency levels, from digitally informed, to digitally enabled, and digitally expert. In the finance sector, 3 in 5 organisations believe their workforces have outdated digital skills.<sup>39</sup>

Part of this is attributable to the digital divide that exists in the community.

[Share your insights on digital inclusion in Australia<sup>40</sup>](#)

Responses to the FSO Survey indicate activities designed to improve digital capability should be prioritised by the FSO given the evolving needs of organisations navigating digital transformation and embracing innovative technologies.<sup>41</sup>

## C. Emerging technologies and Changing Skills Needs

### Technologies are changing skills demands.

Of the FSO Survey respondents, 94% agreed or strongly agreed that emerging technologies are changing skill needs. The impact and adoption of GAI again garnered extensive feedback throughout interviews and workshops, albeit with a lack of clarity about the actual, or potential, impact of AI in the workplace, including on workers. Some stakeholders reported concerns around loss of jobs due to the impact of AI.

37. Australian Computer Society (2020) Australia's Digital Pulse 2020, Australian Computer Society.

38. PwC Australia. (2021). The Future of Financial Services. <https://www.pwc.com.au/financial-services/the-future-of-financial-services.html>

39. Australian Computer Society (2022) Australia's Digital Pulse 2022, Australian Computer Society.

40. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Digital Divide. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/digital-divide>

41. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

## [Read our report on the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the VET sector<sup>42</sup>](#)

With the rise of automation and technological advancements, stakeholders highlighted the increasing importance of non-routine, cognitive skills and the value of a workforce with skills able to adapt to change. Across FTB, industry reported significant demand for behavioural skills in the workplace.

### **The transition to modern work standards**

Numerous stakeholders felt that work in much of FTB was moving towards a set of modern standards focused on risk and advice. There was a general view that many occupations required a strong understanding of foundations and principles and the ability to use a set of highly reliable tools in the workplace to undertake many of the routine processing and technical tasks. Accordingly, the future of many FTB occupations was considered to be as business advisor or consultant-type roles and that communication skills would be key for future success.

The ability to interpret and apply foundational knowledge was considered critical across FTB including data analysis, problem solving and other behavioural skills.

The focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) reporting will become more prevalent for many FTB occupations pending the enactment of legislation for sustainable finance reporting, anticipated to be from 1 January 2025.

## [Share your insights on Sustainable Finance<sup>43</sup>](#)

The significance of the Closing Loopholes Act 2023 and Closing Loopholes No. 2 Act 2024 was not lost on stakeholders. Many noted the impact this legislation has on finance and business occupations. These significant reforms will require updates to the Financial Services (FNS) and Business Services (BSB) training packages.

Despite a greater focus on behavioural skills, a range of technical skills and occupations were identified as remaining in strong demand across finance, technology, and to a lesser extent, business support, including, for example, in cloud computing and cyber security.

Stakeholders considered changing demand dynamics presented significant opportunities for the VET sector and that the sector was well-placed to respond to rising demands for digital skills, the need for lifelong learning, and the importance of industry-training partnerships.

42. Future Skills Organisation (2024) AI Impact on VET. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/building-an-ai-enabled-workforce-priority-framework>

43. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Sustainable Finance report. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/sustainable-finance>

## Supply side issues

Identified through the IWP were significant declines in enrolments and completions in each of the FTB training packages, particularly at lower qualification levels.<sup>44</sup> During consultations to inform development of the Plan, multiple contributing factors were identified for these declines, including:

- Overall labour market context.
- Training suitability.
- Complexity and lack of understanding of VET.
- Lack of flexibility in VET.
- Timeframes to complete training.
- Changes to VET in Schools funding for FTB qualifications.

In the Northern Territory (NT), employers pointed out that declines should be considered in the overall context of the labour market and the significant decline in the national unemployment rate, from 5.1% in March 2019 to 3.8% in March 2024.<sup>45</sup> In a tight labour market, employers in the NT highlighted that young people were more likely to take up employment rather than further post-secondary school training, despite research that demonstrates the positive benefits of further education.<sup>46</sup>

Of the contributing factors, most stakeholders felt the key factor was the suitability of training, especially for the technology sector.

[Share your insights on rural and remote workforce challenges<sup>47</sup>](#)



44. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Initial Workforce Plan. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/initial-workforce-plan>

45. ABS. Labour Force, Australia methodology, March 2024. Seasonally Adjusted. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/labour-force-australia/feb-2024#unemployment>

46. OECD (2018) Education at a Glance; Norton A, Cherastidham I & Mackey W (2018) Mapping Australian higher education 2018, Grattan Institute.

47. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Rural and Remote Workforce. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/rural-remote>

## D. Training Suitability

### Training is not consistently meeting industry needs.

Stakeholders report a major contributing factor to declining enrolments and completions of FTB training products is the suitability of the training available. Only 34% of FSO Survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that FTB training products were meeting industry needs. The ICT training package received the lowest rating of the three training packages managed by the FSO – only 19% of those who use it agreed or strongly agreed that the ICT training package was meeting industry needs.<sup>48</sup> This rating was further validated throughout our workshops and interviews, with mixed feedback on all three training packages with a particular focus on gaps and issues in ICT training.

Stakeholders reported preferences for skills-based approaches, consistently emphasising the importance of skills over occupations and, accordingly, reinforced demands for more responsive, short-form training. Although many stakeholders noted the structure of the VET sector can meet these demands, it was felt the policy and funding focus was generally on full qualifications, which detracts from the flexibility and structure within the system.

Full qualifications appear to be less in demand by employers, with only a small number of businesses consulted indicating a preference for full qualifications for new entrants or existing workers. Vendor certifications in technology were frequently identified as almost as important as accredited qualifications, with a desire to see greater alignment between the two. Of the respondents to the FSO Survey 68% reported vendor-certified training should be better aligned with nationally recognised training.<sup>49</sup>

## E. Pathways

### Pathways into and within FTB are poorly understood.

Of the respondents to the FSO Survey 73% agreed or strongly agreed there are limited opportunities, lack of interest or insufficient understanding of training and skilling pathways into FTB occupations and careers.

48. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

49. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

Many stakeholders expressed concern around the pipeline of young people interested in FTB occupations, particularly in high schools, and particularly the lack of women interested in technology careers. The common view was that school students are either unaware of, or not interested in, opportunities in FTB and that misperceptions exist about what FTB occupations entail.

Stakeholder feedback indicated many employers are unaware of the opportunities of traineeships or other Earn While You Learn (EWYL) models in FTB and that the FSO should focus on brokering an increase in trainee commencements.

Many industry stakeholders considered EWYL is overly complex and has high entry barriers. During this frequently discussed topic, industry reported the following barriers to increasing uptake:

- Businesses don't understand the potential impact, nor what is expected of them.
- Businesses have concerns around their ability to provide sufficient supervision by highly specialist staff.
- Small and medium-sized enterprises struggle to “hide trainees in the team.” Big business can often more effectively build these resources into larger project teams.
- There is a lack of tools or frameworks to support supervisors or mentors.
- Restrictions around trainee:supervisor ratios limit the ability of larger businesses to take on more trainees.
- There is a lack of flexibility in training delivery for trainees.
  - Trainees at one technology consulting business had to attend the same session at the same time at an offsite training provider, meaning the business was simultaneously losing a significant number of trainees rather than being able to stagger absences.

Accordingly, the FSO will commence efforts to increase EWYL uptake in FTB by reviewing and identifying entry-level qualifications suitable for completion as an apprenticeship or traineeship.

## **F. Supporting Teachers and Trainers**

### **VET trainers and secondary school teachers would benefit from additional industry support.**

FSO National Forum attendees identified occupational shortages in teaching and training as key issues. Stakeholders reported shortages of teachers of digital in secondary schools and the difficulty VET training providers face in recruiting and retaining trainers with current tech expertise.

Of those performing this critical role, only 30% of respondents to the FSO Survey agreed or strongly agreed VET trainers and teachers are able to maintain industry currency. Many stakeholders requested FSO develop additional support materials and tools for teachers and trainers.

There were also calls for the FSO to support teachers and trainers by facilitating hosting opportunities in industry workplaces, providing opportunities for educators to build their skills.

## G. Increasing Understanding of VET

### Industry and the community do not appear to fully understand the VET system.

The structure of VET ought to be able to meet demands for short-form, just-in-time training, with units of competency and skillsets both existing as “microcredentials” that could be delivered in isolation to quickly meet an existing skill need. However, around 50% of respondents to the FSO Survey indicated they were unsure whether current training products were meeting occupational needs.<sup>50</sup> This suggests a need for greater promotion and understanding of VET.

Multiple stakeholders suggested VET could play a greater role in addressing skills and occupation shortages, but industry and student perceptions were impacting the ability of VET to do so. Suggestions included simplifying language and removing jargon, shortening qualifications and streamlining Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes, including for vendor certifications. Stakeholders also demanded clearer definitions of skill sets and microcredentials to avoid misinterpretation.

Consultations with training providers and industry reinforced that current and prospective employers require clear, accurate, reliable information on the VET sector to inform decision-making, whether as an entry pathway or for reskilling or upskilling existing workers.



50. Future Skills Organisation (2024) Stakeholder Survey. Available at: <https://www.futureskillsorganisation.com.au/workforce-plan-2/stakeholder-survey>

# Strategic Priorities

## Closing the skills gap by optimising alternate tertiary learning pathways



**The FSO is dedicated to narrowing the gap between education and industry, to ensure effective transitions between learning and work.** With a focus on enhancing the skills pipeline, we’re dedicated to meeting the rising demand for skilled individuals in the finance, tech and Business Support sectors to meet the projected demand. Our approach involves harnessing the potential of the education and training system, leveraging its strengths, and aligning it with the dynamic needs of industry.

Our strategic approach encompasses four key pillars:

**1. Ensuring a Learner-Centric Approach by:**

- Centrally positioning the learner in our initiatives, ensuring their needs, aspirations, and career goals are the guiding principles.
- Supporting the learner via a range of initiatives that may include career information, mentorship programs, and learning pathways, to empower them to succeed.
- Cultivating an inclusive and supportive learning environment by championing diversity, equity, and accessibility, and ensuring equal opportunities for all learners.

## 2. Enhancing the VET System by:

- Conducting thorough industry consultations to pinpoint specific skill gaps and emerging trends.
- Collaborating with education and training providers and industry experts to ensure tertiary learning aligns with industry needs.
- Promoting and facilitating work-integrated learning opportunities, such as internships and traineeships, to provide practical experience and industry exposure.
- Advocating for investments in state-of-the-art training facilities and resources to guarantee students receive hands-on training with the latest technologies and industry-relevant equipment.

## 3. Fostering Industry Engagement and Commitment by:

- Promoting awareness and outreach programs to underscore the value and benefits of the VET system to employers and industry leaders.
- Facilitating and promoting partnerships between educational institutions and industry to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and mutual understanding.
- Recognising industry best practice and celebrating initiatives which highlight industry engagement in VET in areas such as offering traineeships or innovative recruitment practices that recognise the skills of VET graduates.
- Showcasing success stories and case studies of VET graduates who have excelled in their respective fields, highlighting the potential and value of alternative pathways.

## 4. Supporting the Government's Qualifications Reform Agenda by:

- Collaborating closely with relevant government and stakeholders to synchronize our efforts with the qualifications reform agenda.
- Contributing to the development of a relevant and usable qualifications system that meets the needs of industry, learners, and the broader economy.
- Advocating for policies and initiatives that promote the recognition and acceptance of VET training products across various sectors and industries.
- Facilitating the integration of Higher Education (HE) and VET qualifications into broader educational pathways, enabling seamless transitions and lifelong learning opportunities.

By prioritising the learner-centric approach, enhancing the VET system, fostering industry engagement and commitment, and supporting the government's qualifications reform agenda, the FSO aims to cultivate a skilled workforce that meets the demands of the economy and contributes to the overall growth and productivity of the nation.

 **Potential actions**

During development of the Plan, potential actions have been identified to address key challenges. Pending approval, these would be further developed in consultation with industry, unions, training providers and governments.

**Table 2:** Potential Actions to Address Challenges and Drivers

Labour Force Dynamics	Relevant Sector/s	Potential Action	Stakeholders
<b>A. Diversity and Inclusion</b>	Finance	<b>Challenge:</b> The Technology workforce has low diversity and declining enrolments in ICT training by women.  <b>Potential Action:</b> Increase understanding and promote gender equality in enrolments in ICT, FNS and BSB Training Packages.	TAFEs
	Technology		Private RTOs
	Business		Community RTOs Schools Universities Unions Industry associations Priority cohorts Community Groups
<b>B. Digital Capability</b>  <b>G. Training Suitability</b>	Finance	<b>Challenge:</b> There is no common language employers, training providers and learners can use to describe necessary digital skills.  <b>Potential Action:</b> Evaluate existing frameworks as the basis for a common language for uplifting digital capability.	RTOs including:
	Technology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAFEs</li> <li>• Private RTOs</li> <li>• Community RTOs</li> </ul>
	Business		State and Territory Governments including secondary schools Universities Unions Industry associations Priority cohorts

Labour Force Dynamics	Relevant Sector/s	Potential Action	Stakeholders
<p><b>C. Emerging Technologies and Changing Skills Needs</b></p> <p><b>G. Increasing understanding of VET</b></p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Business</p>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <p>States and Territories are developing multiple approaches to addressing workforce shortages, especially in tech.</p> <p><b>Potential Action:</b></p> <p>Share knowledge and promote best practice at state and federal level. Ensure collaboration on projects in areas where Federal, State and Territory objectives align.</p>	<p>State and Territory Governments</p> <p>Unions</p> <p>Industry associations</p> <p>Priority cohorts</p>
<p><b>D. Training Suitability</b></p> <p><b>C. Emerging Technologies and Changing Skills Needs</b></p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Business</p>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <p>Declining enrolments are evident in FTB training packages.</p> <p><b>Potential Action:</b></p> <p>Undertake a comprehensive needs and gap analysis to review the qualifications, units of competency (UoCs) and skill sets.</p>	<p>RTOs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAFEs</li> <li>• Private RTOs</li> <li>• Community RTOs</li> </ul> <p>Schools</p> <p>Universities</p> <p>Unions</p> <p>Industry associations</p> <p>Priority cohorts</p>
<p><b>D. Training Suitability</b></p> <p><b>C. Emerging Technologies and Changing Skills Needs</b></p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Business</p>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <p>Telecommunications qualifications are out of date and contain incorrect information.</p> <p><b>Potential Action:</b></p> <p>Update telecommunications qualifications in line with industry and regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>RTOs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TAFEs</li> <li>• Private RTOs</li> <li>• Community RTOs</li> </ul> <p>Unions</p> <p>Industry associations</p> <p>Priority cohorts</p>

Labour Force Dynamics	Relevant Sector/s	Potential Action	Stakeholders
<p><b>E. Pathways</b></p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Business</p>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <p>Uptake of traineeships in FTB is low.</p> <p>Employers want more job relevant skills.</p> <p><b>Potential Action:</b></p> <p>Explore opportunities for entry-level FTB qualifications which can be completed as a traineeship.</p>	<p>Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and other relevant Unions</p> <p>Tech Council of Australia</p> <p>DEWR</p> <p>Industry</p> <p>Training Providers</p>
<p><b>E. Pathways</b></p> <p><b>A. Increasing Understanding of VET</b></p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Business</p>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <p>Poor industry and student perceptions of VET.</p> <p><b>Potential Action:</b></p> <p>Improve clear information about VET as a pathway for skills development and employment in FTB.</p>	<p>Industry Associations</p> <p>FSO Large Employer Taskforce</p> <p>Unions</p> <p>State and Territory Governments including secondary schools</p> <p>National Career Institute</p>
<p><b>C. Emerging Technologies and Changing Skills Needs</b></p> <p><b>D. Training Suitability</b></p> <p><b>E. Pathways</b></p>	<p>Finance</p> <p>Technology</p> <p>Business</p>	<p><b>Challenge:</b></p> <p>Cyber Security is everyone's responsibility but there is no common language employers, training providers and learners can use to uplift capability.</p> <p><b>Potential Action:</b></p> <p>Explore potential frameworks as the basis for a common language for uplifting cyber security capability.</p>	<p>FSO Cyber Security Technical Committee</p> <p>Industry</p> <p>State and Territory Governments</p>

Labour Force Dynamics	Relevant Sector/s	Potential Action	Stakeholders
<b>A. Diversity and Inclusion</b>  <b>C. Emerging Technologies and Changing Skills Needs</b>	Finance  Technology	<b>Challenge:</b> The increasing utilisation of GAI within the workplace to automate, augment or adapt job roles presents opportunities for the VET sector.  <b>Potential Action:</b> Examine upskilling of workers in GAI.	DEWR  Unions  Industry associations  Priority cohorts  Employers

## Future Research

Our proposed program of research aims to better understand why challenges are occurring and how to address them to meet the needs of the FTB workforce.

These specific research topics have either been recommended by external stakeholders or identified as gaps in research during development of the Plan or the IWP.

**Table 3:** Proposed Research Areas

### A. Diversity and Inclusion

Research to further examine diversity in FTB workforces, with a particular focus on rural and remote workers, balanced gender representation and First Nations people’s participation.

This research will identify gaps and barriers in training and employment for diverse groups and provide insights to education providers and industry to support increased diversity within their workforces.

### C. Emerging Technologies and Changing Skills Needs

Research to better identify and understand growing skills demands and trends nationally and internationally using forward-looking data and employment projections.

Separately, we will deliver research to better understand AI adoption rates within FTB sectors.

**D. Training Suitability**

Research to understand from learners and potential learners the relevance and appropriateness of VET for employment outcomes in FTB, including consulting with current learners not employed in FTB occupations.

For learners or graduates already employed in FTB occupations, this will help us better understand how well training aligns with the requirements of the workplace.

Findings from this research will inform updates to training packages.

**E. Pathways**

Consultation with employers to identify perceptions, barriers and/or challenges to traineeship and apprenticeship pathways, specifically in the BSB training package. This will result in transferable findings to inform FSO work on the design of 'Earn While You Learn' pathways for the technology industry.

We will also conduct research to support outcomes in the Universities Accord Interim Report identifying opportunities to more closely align VET with Higher Education.

**F. Supporting Trainer Currency**

Research to better understand training support required for educators in FTB. Insights will assist training providers in enhancing support mechanisms.

**G. Increasing Understanding of VET**

Work with the National Careers Institute to deliver research to support promotion of VET as a pathway for skills development and employment, in finance, technology and business. Outputs from this research will be used to increase awareness of VET pathways into FTB occupations within industry/employers and secondary school students.

## Data Gaps in Workforce Plan 2024

The key gaps in available data identified during development of the Plan are:

- Lack of data on emerging skills:
  - Emerging skills demand will be an area of focus in Workforce Plan 2025.
  - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) classifications remain a challenge as industry shift towards defining workers by skill sets rather than occupation classifications or by tasks.

- Lack of granular data on student outcomes and pathways from VET and higher education:
  - There is insufficient detail on specific occupations graduates enter.
  - There is a lack of data on flow of students between VET and university.
  - These will be areas of focus in the FSO research program outlined in this document.
- Reasons for non-completions:
  - There is a lack of detail on reasons why students are not completing VET courses.
  - Particularly, there is no data on reasons for apprentice/trainee non-completions.
  - These will be areas of focus in the FSO research program outlined in this document.
- Types of skills shortages for all occupations:
  - Although feedback on the reasons for skills and occupation shortages was collected during consultation for the Plan, Jobs and Skills Australia has developed a classification system for skills shortages which identifies four classes of shortage: longer training gap; shorter training gap; suitability gap; retention gap.<sup>51</sup>
  - However, only the Top 20 largest occupations have, to date, been classified in the JSA report.
  - The Workforce Plan 2025 will incorporate this classification system into consultations to increase understanding of skills and occupation shortages in FTB.
- Lack of job vacancy data by industry:
  - Internet Vacancy Index data is not available by industry, only by occupation.

Available data that has not been reported in Workforce Plan 2024 includes higher education and migration data, particularly student satisfaction rates from higher education FTB courses. These gaps will be addressed in Workforce Plan 2025.



51. Jobs and Skills Australia (2023), Towards a National Jobs and Skills Roadmap

# Approach to Workforce Plan 2025

**Table 4:** FSO Workforce Plan Development Process 2025

Process Step	Data Analysis (1) and review of Workforce Plan 2024	Initial Draft Complete	Consultation	Data Analysis (2)	Finalising Report	Approvals and Publication
Anticipated timing	May – July 2024	July – Aug 2024	Aug – Dec 2024	Dec 2024 – Jan 2025	Dece 2024 – Feb 2025	Jan – Mar 2025
Who will be consulted?	WFP Technical Working Group JSA DEWR		Commonwealth / State / Territory Governments  Unions  Industry Peaks and Associations  FSO Taskforces  Other JSCs  RTOs/Educators  Community Groups  Priority Cohort Groups	JSA DEWR FSO Taskforces	WFP Technical Working Group JSA DEWR FSO Strategic Advisory Committee FSO Board	JSA DEWR FSO Strategic Advisory Committee FSO Board
What will occur?	Interrogate relevant data sources including JSA, ABS, LinkedIn, NCVER, QILT, VNDA and State and Territory Government data.  Research additional grey literature.  Review process and outputs from Workforce Plan 2024.	Draft a high-level report based on Data Analysis (1) and additional desktop research.	Obtain feedback on initial draft.  Determine gaps and future focus areas.  Update any changes to relevant regulation and legislation.	Update information to incorporate stakeholder feedback.  Update other sections of report as required.  Additional data analysis (if required).	Draft an Executive Summary.  Finalise Draft of Finance Industry Report.  Finalise Draft of Technology Industry Report.  Finalise Draft of Business Industry Report.  Finalise case studies.  Incorporate research findings.	Approvals and updates.  Proofreading, editing and final design.

Process Step	Data Analysis (1) and review of Workforce Plan 2024	Initial Draft Complete	Consultation	Data Analysis (2)	Finalising Report	Approvals and Publication
How will we do this?	<p>Updating data tables.</p> <p>Adding additional data points as required.</p> <p>Commencing research projects.</p>	<p>Amending and adding to Workforce Plan 2024 as relevant.</p>	<p>Stakeholder Survey.</p> <p>Stakeholder Interviews.</p> <p>Stakeholder Workshops.</p> <p>Proposed Activity Consultations.</p> <p>FSO Taskforces.</p>	<p>Consolidate and analyse feedback and grey literature.</p> <p>Analyse data from stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>Draft, review and edit.</p> <p>Share drafts with JSA and DEWR.</p>	<p>Document finalised and designed.</p>
Outputs		<p>Workforce Plan – quarterly update.</p>		<p>Workforce Plan – quarterly update.</p>		<p>Workforce Plan 2025</p>



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