

# First Nations learners and foundation skills courses: motivations and experiences

Foundation skills courses equip learners with essential language, literacy, numeracy, digital and employability skills, enabling them to participate more fully in the workforce, further education, and the broader community.

These programs have consistently low completion rates. While not all students aim to complete a full program, it raises questions about what supports could help more students continue and complete their training.

This research insight draws on focus groups and interviews with First Nations learners who had commenced but not completed a foundation skills course.

## Why do First Nations learners enrol in foundation skills courses?



## What were learners' experiences?

### What learners valued:

- Learning skills that can be applied at work and in daily activities
- Building social relationships
- Very experienced trainers
- Strong preference for face-to-face delivery.

### Challenges:

- Trainers did not always have an understanding of the local First Nations community
- Learners had mixed views on when training should be scheduled, with some preferring mornings only and others full days.

## What stopped learners from continuing or completing?



## What supports do First Nations learners suggest?

### Training provider supports:

- Transportation to and from the training location
- Onsite creche or capacity to have children present in the classroom
- Availability of food during the training
- Financial support or incentive to attend training.

### External supports:

- Seeking support from employers for time off work
- Learning with friends to provide additional motivation to attend
- Getting help from family with looking after children.

## What changes do First Nations learners suggest?



Community-specific cultural induction for trainers to learn unique cultural norms, common local terms and community issues



Yarning circles to understand individual learners' needs



Culturally appropriate facilities to aid learning on Country



Distance learning to facilitate more frequent scheduling of training



Two-way learning to assist the sharing of ideas and voices between non-indigenous and First Nations peoples



First Nations trainers, translators and/or community support persons to encourage attendance and help accelerate understanding



Affordable public bus service or transport provided by local training providers to better enable attendance.

This research insight is produced from content available in the research summary *First Nations and migrant learners' experiences with foundation skills courses* (Wibrow, Ackehurst & Trimboli 2025).

### Acknowledgement of Country

NCVER acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continued spiritual connection to land and water. We pay respect to Elders past and present.