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| Higher Education and Skills Group**Participation Branch Memo****Department of Education and Training** |

***NUMBER:*** *2017 / March / 7*

**TO:**

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| Learn Local organisations * *ALL*
 | ACFE Board | ACFE Regional Councils |
| Adult Education Institutions | Learn Local Stakeholders | Participation Branch Staff |

**FROM:** Eduard De Hue, Acting Director, Participation Branch

**DATE:** 7 March 2017

**SUBJECT:** *Skills First Reconnect Program – Application process now open for 2017*

**ACTIONS / CRITICAL DATES:**

* *Learn Local Registered Training Organisations and TAFEs with a 2017 Skills First contract are invited to apply for funding under the Department of Education and Training Skills First Reconnect program.*
* *Applications close at 4pm on Friday, 31 March 2017.*

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Applications are now open for the *Skills First Reconnect* program to eligible providers consisting of Learn Local Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and TAFEs with a 2017 Skills First contract.

Announced as part of the Skills First reforms in August 2016, the *Skills First Reconnect* program will provide $20 million over two years to selected Learn Local RTOs and TAFEs. The program is an extension to the $14 million *Back to Work Reconnect grant program* that was funded in 2016.

*Skills First Reconnect* grants will fund the provision of a range of supports for disengaged high needs learners to sustain their engagement with learning and build the resilience and capacity necessary to successfully transition into formal learning and training that leads to jobs.

*Skills First Reconnect* grants will enable selected Learn Local RTOs and TAFEs to:

* undertake outreach and engagement activities to locate, engage and attract disengaged high needs learners back into a learning environment
* assess the learning and non-learning needs and career goals for participants, and develop an agreed learning plan
* coordinate and provide access to support services that will support participants start and stay in training
* assist participants in transitioning to further training, employment or both.

Partnerships between RTOs and Learn Local organisations and other community service providers are integral to the program’s aim of engaging high needs learners and providing them with the supports they need, including pre-accredited training programs.

Learn Local organisations may be contacted by these RTOs in the near future or may decide to contact those operating in their area to discuss potential collaboration under the Skills First Reconnect program.

Applications for *Skills First Reconnect* will close 4pm Friday, 31 March 2017.

If you have any questions about the Skills First Reconnect program and application process please contact Nick Quinn, Strategic Projects and Research Unit, Participation Branch on quinn.nicholas.j@edumail.vic.gov.au.