

Strategic Plan 2026-2029



The voice of adult and community education

Acknowledgement of Country

ACEVic acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands and waters across Victoria on which our members live, work and learn. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise the enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the world's oldest living cultures. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

Learn Locals work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners across Victoria. We are committed to supporting their educational aspirations and recognise the vital role that community-controlled organisations play in delivering culturally safe learning environments.

Adult and Community Education (Victoria) Incorporated
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Abbreviations and Terms

ACE	Adult and Community Education, the broader sector in which Learn Locals operate
ACEVic	Adult and Community Education (Victoria) Incorporated, the peak body for Victoria's Learn Locals
ACFE Board	Adult, Community and Further Education Board, the Victorian Government body that funds and supports Learn Locals
Foundation skills	The literacy, numeracy and digital capability adults need to participate in education, employment and community life
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
Learn Local	A community-based organisation registered with the ACFE Board to deliver pre-accredited programs, building foundational skills and confidence in adults who face barriers to mainstream education
Pre-accredited programs	Programs that develop foundation skills and confidence rather than leading directly to a formal qualification
RTO	Registered Training Organisation

This plan covers four calendar years from January 2026 to December 2029

ABOUT US

Adult and Community Education (Victoria) Incorporated (ACEVic) is the peak body for Victoria's Learn Locals.

Learn Locals are community-based organisations that help adults build literacy, numeracy and digital capability across Victoria. Their pre-accredited programs develop foundational skills and confidence rather than leading directly to a formal qualification. For many learners, a Learn Local is the first place that education has ever felt possible.

ACEVic's members include Learn Locals that are also Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), community learning centres and neighbourhood houses. These organisations share a commitment to supporting learners who face barriers to mainstream education, and for many of them, a local, flexible and supportive learning environment makes all the difference.

ACEVic works closely with government, peak bodies and organisations across the education and community sectors to advocate for Learn Locals and ensure the sector's voice is heard in policy decisions that affect members and their learners. The outcomes Learn Locals achieve extend across health, employment, social connection and community resilience. ACEVic's role is to make sure government understands that.

Our History

Established in 1988, ACEVic has served as the state peak body representing Learn Locals for nearly 40 years.

ACEVic maintains its position as the recognised voice of the sector through periods of significant change. When community-based RTOs faced market disruption, sector leaders worked to revive and strengthen the peak body. When the Ministerial Statement on Adult Community Education was developed in 2019, ACEVic was at the table. Whenever the sector has needed a voice in government policy, ACEVic has represented its interests.

ACEVic's focus has remained constant: ensuring Learn Locals can continue their essential work in Victorian communities.

Our Vision

Learn Locals are recognised as essential to Victoria's social and economic prosperity.

This vision reflects ACEVic's ambition for the Learn Local sector to be valued not just for delivering education programs, but for what that education achieves: stronger communities, pathways out of disadvantage, workforce participation and social connection. Learn Locals attract, engage and retain learners that no other education sector can reach.

Our Purpose

To be the voice and champion of Victoria's Learn Local providers, supporting them to strengthen individuals and communities.

ACEVic exists to serve Learn Locals and, through them, the learners and communities they support. Advocacy and member support are fundamentally interlinked: strong advocacy requires genuine understanding of member realities, and members benefit most when their peak body influences the decisions that shape their operating environment.



Our Values

ACEVic's values guide how we work. They are not just words but lived behaviours that shape our decisions and relationships.



Leadership

We take responsibility as the voice of Victoria's Learn Local sector. We step up to represent members in policy conversations, earning trust by being informed, evidence-based and constructive.



Collaboration

We work in partnership with Learn Locals, government, other peak bodies and the broader community. We build coalitions and share knowledge because the sector is stronger when we work together.



Accountability

We are transparent with members about what we do and achieve on their behalf. We measure our impact, ground our positions in evidence and report honestly on progress. We listen to what members need and respond.



Equity

We give voice to all Learn Locals: large and small, metropolitan and regional, RTO and non-RTO. We recognise the diversity of our membership and ensure our advocacy reflects the breadth of the sector.



HOW WE CREATE CHANGE

If ACEVic builds strong relationships with government and effectively advocates for the Learn Local sector's value and needs,

And ACEVic provides clear value to members through advocacy, professional development and connection,

And ACEVic maintains a sustainable organisation with adequate resources and capability,

Then Learn Locals will be better funded, better supported and better recognised,

Which means more Victorians, particularly those who face barriers to mainstream education, will have access to pre-accredited learning opportunities that help them build skills, confidence and connection

Contributing to Victoria's social and economic prosperity through stronger communities, more pathways to employment, better health outcomes and reduced demand on justice, health and community services.

THE LEARN LOCAL SECTOR

Victoria's Learn Local sector comprises more than 200 providers operating across the state, serving around 28,000 adult learners each year through government-subsidised pre-accredited training.¹⁻³

These are independent, not-for-profit, community-based organisations. Some are RTOs delivering both pre-accredited and accredited training. Others focus exclusively on pre-accredited programs that build foundation skills learners need before they can succeed in formal qualifications.

Who Learn Locals serve

Learn Locals reach people that other education providers often cannot. Their learners include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugees and new arrivals
- Adults with limited prior education or low literacy and numeracy
- Older Victorians needing digital skills and social connection
- Young people who need alternatives to mainstream education
- People living with disability
- Women re-entering the workforce
- Residents of communities experiencing disadvantage

Many of these learners are among the one in four Victorian adults with low foundation skills in literacy, numeracy or digital capability. They often face multiple intersecting barriers: limited confidence, negative past experiences with education, caring responsibilities, mental health challenges, financial constraints and transport limitations. A flexible, supportive and community-based approach makes all the difference.



What Learn Locals achieve

Learn Local education changes lives in ways that don't show up in enrolment numbers. Learners build confidence, develop social connections and gain skills that change trajectories. In Victoria in 2022, over 60% of adult and community education learners reported improved confidence, life skills or learning outcomes after completing their program. Across three years of surveys, 83% of learners achieved their main reason for training and 91% said they would recommend their provider.⁴ Around 57% of Learn Local program participants indicate they intend to pursue further education or training after their pre-accredited course, and of those who transition to accredited training, around 78% complete and attain their qualification.⁵

The value runs deeper than pathways to further study. Learners who train specifically to improve their employment prospects consistently report improved employment outcomes after completing their program. Learn Locals also contribute to health and wellbeing through social connection, social cohesion through community belonging, justice system diversion through engagement and digital inclusion. Their work helps divert people from crisis services and builds the community connections that reduce isolation.

Australian research involving thousands of adult learners found that improving literacy skills produced measurable public health benefits, including changes in diet, physical activity and health service engagement, retained six months after completing the program.⁶ One in three Australians experience loneliness, at an estimated cost of \$2.7 billion annually, and community-based learning is one of the few interventions that directly addresses social isolation in disadvantaged communities.⁷

This broader impact matters. Learn Locals deliver outcomes across multiple government portfolios, including education, health, justice, community services and employment, often with funding that covers only the educational component of what they do. Social return on investment analysis of Victorian neighbourhood houses, many of which are also Learn Locals, found that every dollar invested returned between \$2.78 and \$4.48 in economic and social value.^{8, 9} International research suggests that a 1% increase in adult literacy levels is associated with around a 3% increase in GDP per capita, placing the economic value of foundation skills education well beyond any single portfolio.¹⁰

Our challenge

Demand for the work Learn Locals do is increasing as workforce shortages, an ageing population, changing migration patterns and rapid digital transformation intensify the need for foundation skills development.

In Victoria, around one in four adults has low foundation skills, including literacy, numeracy and digital capability, limiting their ability to access further education, training and employment pathways.¹¹ In 2024, an Australian Industry Group report found that 88% of businesses are affected by low levels of workforce literacy and numeracy, with impacts including reduced productivity, poor documentation and staff lacking confidence.¹²

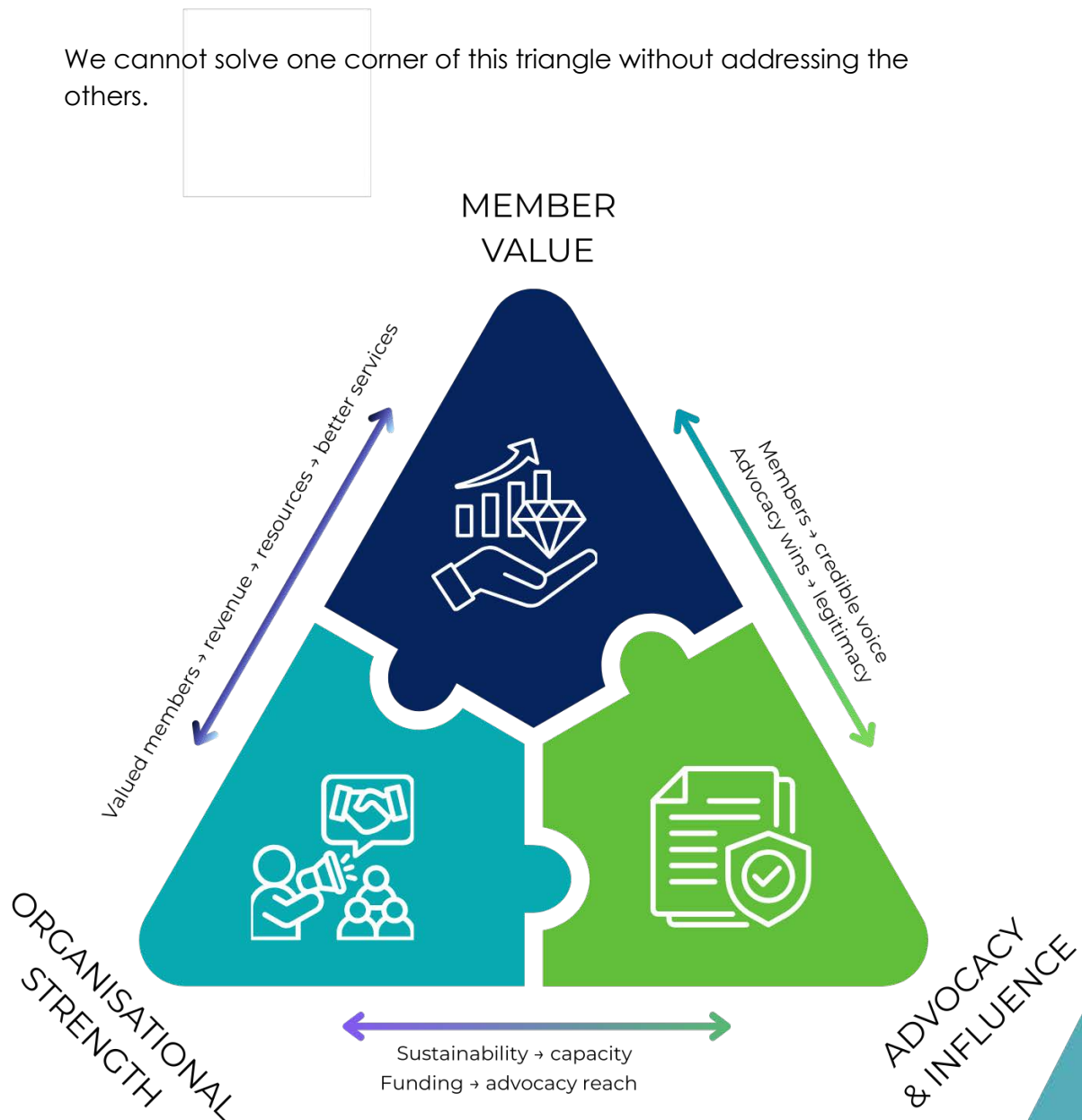
Strengthening these core capabilities is critical to building a resilient and adaptable workforce. As the peak body for Learn Locals, ACEVic plays a central role in advocating for policy reform, equitable access and sustained investment in foundation skills. Learn Locals are ideally placed to meet this challenge, provided the sector receives sustained recognition and strategic investment.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

This strategy rests on three interconnected focus areas that form a strategic triangle where each element affects the others:

1. Our value to Learn Locals affects our membership, which affects our sustainability
2. Our advocacy stance affects our government relationships, which affects funding for the sector
3. Our sustainability affects what we can offer Learn Locals, which affects whether they value us

We cannot solve one corner of this triangle without addressing the others.



Member Value

Greater value to Learn Locals will strengthen membership and organisational sustainability



ACEVic serves its members through advocacy, professional development, networking, information sharing and support. Advocacy and member support go hand in hand: when we influence policy or secure funding for the sector, members benefit directly.

Membership must feel valuable to justify the cost when Learn Locals face financial pressures. We demonstrate value consistently, ensuring members know what is done and achieved.

Member support focuses on sector-wide issues rather than individual questions. We connect Learn Locals with each other and resources, escalate concerns to the ACFE Board and department, and enable peer learning and collaboration.

How we'll do it

1.1 **Provide professional development that responds to member needs**

We will deliver quality professional development and specialised training that members value, with programming that responds to emerging needs including any changes to ACFE guidelines, digital capability, workforce development and governance strengthening.

1.2 **Ground advocacy in member experiences**

We will maintain regular engagement through site visits, consultations, surveys and informal connection, ensuring member stories and experiences inform our submissions and communications.

1.3 **Connect Learn Locals with each other and with opportunities**

We will build connections across the sector, facilitating peer learning, sharing good practice and helping Learn Locals find collaboration opportunities and funding pathways.

1.4 **Demonstrate clear value through tangible outcomes**

We will communicate what ACEVic achieves on behalf of members, translating advocacy wins into stories that demonstrate value, and being transparent about our work and accountable for results.

Measures of success

- Membership is stable or growing, with retention rates above 90%
- Member satisfaction with ACEVic services exceeds 80%
- Professional development offerings are well-attended and highly rated
- Members can articulate specific ways ACEVic adds value to their organisation

Picture of success: December 2029

Members see ACEVic membership as essential rather than optional. When Learn Locals are asked what ACEVic does for them, they give specific, concrete answers. Professional development is valued and well-attended. Members feel connected to each other and to the broader sector. The conference is a highlight of the sector calendar. New Learn Local managers are welcomed into the sector through ACEVic networks.

Picture of success: December 2035

The vast majority of Learn Locals are ACEVic members because they cannot imagine operating without that connection. Membership is seen as being part of a movement, not a transaction. The sector shares knowledge generously, learns from each other's challenges and successes, and presents a united voice. The conference is a flagship sector event that regularly sells out. Learn Locals that started small have grown into confident organisations, supported by the networks ACEVic facilitated.

FOCUS AREA 2

Advocacy and Influence

Our relationships will position ACEVic to influence policy and funding decisions that affect Learn Locals



ACEVic leads the Learn Local sector's engagement with government, the ACFE Board and decision-makers. We advocate for recognition of the sector's value, adequate and indexed funding, and policy settings that enable Learn Locals to serve their communities.

We emphasise impact over output. Rather than focusing on what Learn Locals do, we tell the story of what they achieve: people staying connected to communities, building confidence, avoiding crisis services, staying out of the justice system and finding pathways to employment.

How we'll do it

2.1 Evidence of impact

We will quantify what Learn Locals achieve, documenting learner pathways and outcomes, capturing social and economic value, and building an evidence base for increased investment.

2.2 Position Learn Locals as essential to Victoria's prosperity

We will tell a bigger story about the sector's contribution across portfolios, demonstrating how Learn Locals keep people connected to communities, build pathways to employment, support health and wellbeing, and strengthen social cohesion.

2.3 Build the case for sustainable funding

We will document the gap between funding and delivery costs, articulating the sector's funding needs persistently through submissions, position papers and direct government engagement.

2.4 Strengthen government relationships

We will maintain and deepen relationships with the ACFE Board, officials and ministerial advisers, engaging in policy development and positioning ACEVic as a trusted sector voice.

Measures of success

- ACEVic is consistently consulted on policy and funding decisions affecting Learn Locals
- Sector impact evidence is developed and cited in major submissions
- Learn Locals are referenced in government policy documents beyond the education portfolio
- The funding case is documented, communicated and on the record
- ACEVic meets regularly with ministerial advisers and relevant portfolio holders

Picture of success: December 2029

All levels of government understand that Learn Locals deliver value across multiple portfolios. Health, justice and community services ministers recognise Learn Locals as part of their solution, not only an education sector responsibility. The case for indexed funding has been made. ACEVic has credible research quantifying the sector's social and economic contribution, and this evidence shapes policy conversations. When decision-makers talk about foundation skills, workforce development or community resilience, Learn Locals are part of the conversation.

Picture of success: December 2035

Learn Locals are recognised as essential community infrastructure, not a marginal part of the education system. Funding reflects the true cost of delivery and is indexed to maintain value over time. ACEVic has a seat at every table where decisions affecting adult and community education are made. The sector's contribution to Victoria's prosperity is understood and valued across government.

Organisational Strength

ACEVic will have the foundations to deliver on its strategic ambitions



Effective advocacy and member service require a sustainable organisation with adequate resources, skilled people and sound governance. Delivering on this strategic plan requires strengthening our financial position, building capability and ensuring governance supports strategic decision-making.

How we'll do it

3.1 **Grow and retain membership**

We will retain existing members by demonstrating value, grow membership by reaching Learn Locals who would benefit from what we offer, and review our membership structure to ensure it is accessible and reflects capacity to pay.

3.2 **Diversify revenue through projects and partnerships**

We will pursue project-based funding and contracts that align with our purpose, including professional development delivery, sector data coordination and policy development work, bringing sector expertise to work that might otherwise be outsourced to consultants.

3.3 **Invest in team capability and governance**

We will ensure our team has the skills, resources and support to deliver on strategic priorities, while the board continues to bring deep sector expertise alongside strong governance and strategic oversight.

3.4 **Focus effort where ACEVic can have greatest impact**

We will prioritise work where ACEVic is uniquely positioned to make a difference, saying no to activities that dilute our effort or distract from strategic priorities, and documenting policies, procedures and relationships to reduce dependence on individual knowledge.

Measures of success

- Membership retention exceeds 90% annually
- Revenue from non-membership sources increases by 25% over four years
- Annual operational plans with clear KPIs are in place and reported against

Picture of success: December 2029

ACEVic has a clear operational plan with measurable KPIs that the board reviews regularly. Revenue has grown through a mix of membership fees, project-based funding and professional development delivery, reducing reliance on any single income source. The team has the capacity and capability to deliver on strategic priorities without stretching beyond what is sustainable. Key organisational knowledge is documented, and critical relationships and processes do not depend on any one person. The board brings a strong mix of sector expertise and governance skill, and succession planning is underway for key roles.

Picture of success: December 2035

ACEVic is a financially resilient organisation with diversified revenue and reserves that allow it to weather shifts in government and funding environments. Governance is mature, with regular board renewal bringing fresh perspectives alongside deep sector knowledge. The organisation has grown its team and operational systems to match its ambitions and is well positioned to take on project work and partnerships that align with its purpose. ACEVic's internal strength means it can respond to emerging opportunities and sector challenges without compromising its core work.

community education

WHAT MAKES OUR WORK POSSIBLE

Membership provides our financial foundation and our mandate to speak for the sector. Without members who see value in what we do, we cannot sustain our operations or claim legitimacy.

Governance ensures we are accountable, strategic and well-directed. Our board brings sector expertise and commitment. We are transparent about our work and honest about our results.

Relationships give us access and influence. Built over decades, these connections to government, the ACFE Board, other peak bodies and sector leaders enable us to shape policy rather than simply respond to it.

Evidence makes our advocacy credible. Without data showing what Learn Locals achieve, our voice carries less weight. We continue to build the evidence base that supports the sector's case.



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