



GunnedahShire
Open New Horizons

Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan 2020-24



Project Date and Version

03/06/20 Version 1.0 EXHIBITION COPY

Responsible Officer:

Manager Economic Development

1. Introduction

The Gunnedah Shire Workforce plan is a key element in understanding the nature of the skilled labour shortage in the Gunnedah Shire and will be used to inform the development of actions that Council can take to address this shortage.

The Gunnedah Economic Development Strategy identified a Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan as an important measure in overcoming the barriers to growth that are associated with skills shortages. In order to alleviate the growth barriers caused by skills shortages, a measured approach to economic diversification is required.

2. Purpose

The Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan sets objectives to ensure that Gunnedah Shire has high quality local skills that are accessible and responsive to the needs of employers and employees (both future and current). Gunnedah Shire Council aims to support Gunnedah Shire by ensuring a skilled workforce and local educational opportunities by supporting; students/learners, job seekers, industry and training providers for a strong local economy now and into the future.



3. Definitions

Labour Force – the number of persons over the age of 15 contributing to, or actively looking and immediately available for, the supply of labour at that time.

Skills - the abilities acquired through education and other experiences, however, this can include 'soft skills' such as capabilities, behaviours, and attitudes people have rather than 'skills' in the more traditional sense.

Unemployment rate - The rate is unemployed people expressed as a proportion of the labour force (in the same age group).

Youth Disengagement – People who are in the 15-24 year age group who are neither in employment or education.



4. Key Stakeholders and Potential Partners

Gunnedah Shire Council	Elected Members
Gunnedah Shire Council	Economic Development Team
Gunnedah Shire Council	Social and Community Planning
Gunnedah Shire Council	Planning Department
Gunnedah Shire Council	Youth Officer
Gunnedah Shire Council	People and Culture Team
Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Partner
Gunnedah Shire Council - Economic Development Working Group	Partner
Gunnedah TAFE	Partner
Gunnedah Community College	Partner
Gunnedah Schools	Partner
Namoi Unlimited	Potential Partner
Regional Development Australia – Northern Inland (RDANI)	Potential Partner
Regional NSW Regions, Industry, Agriculture and Resources (formerly NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet)	Potential Partner

5. Strategic Linkages

Gunnedah Shire Council - Community Strategic Plan (2017-2027)

- ***Engaging and supporting the community***
- 1.2.2 Position Council as an employer of choice, promoting a safe, healthy, inclusive and innovative working environment

- **2 Building our shire's economy**
- 2.5 Skilled workforce and quality local educational opportunities
- 2.5.1 Encourage new residents with skills to the area to supplement our skilled workforce
- 2.5.2 Advocate for quality local educational services and seek opportunities in the tertiary sectors for facilities and courses that meet our regional training needs
- **3 Retaining our quality of life**
- 3.5 Our younger people are attracted, retained and developed
- 3.5.2 Attract and retain young people and families to our area to maintain population balance
- 3.5.3 Council and local business provide traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities for young people across a variety of industry sectors

Gunnedah Shire Council - Economic Development Strategy (2014-2019)

- **Build a strong and skilled local workforce.**
 - Identify the number of workers, qualifications and skills (hard and soft) needed now and in the future, by industry sector.
 - Explore options for attracting workers to Gunnedah.
 - Assist local businesses to attract and retain staff.
 - Endeavour to retain young people in the community by providing training and employment opportunities.
 - Establish the Trade Training Centre in Gunnedah.
 - Expand the range of courses available at Gunnedah TAFE.
 - Training Centres.
 - On-line Training programs.
 - Introduce a program of short courses and briefing sessions for business owners.

Future 2040: Gunnedah Shire – Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)

1. Develop a community workforce plan

- a) Identify skills/services that are needed in the local labour force to address current and likely future industry requirements.
- b) Develop and implement a marketing strategy aimed at attracting new residents in order to grow future workforce.
- c) Develop a specific business development strategy that provides clear guidance and incentives for the establishment, expansion or relocation of businesses.
- d) Build on opportunities for employment in new, emerging and growth industries. e) Facilitate transition to new employment and skills /training opportunities in response to changing technologies within existing industries.

2. Develop a partnership approach for an education and training led model of business growth.

This may include the following:

- a) Advocate strongly for the establishment of the proposed trade training and education precinct and/or the expansion of the range of courses offered at Gunnedah TAFE, with courses targeted to address skills shortages
- b) Advocate with the State government to identify and secure employment lands

3. Investigate public private partnerships and links with tertiary education providers.

- a) Advocate for the benefits and attraction of relocating to regional NSW, including campaigns and targeted initiatives for skilled workers
- b) Liaise with Department of Home Affairs regarding skilled regional migration schemes with the aim of supplementing skills shortages and improving the skills of the labour force to meet changes in the use of technology

4. Simplify procedures to allow creative uses of the public domain to accommodate art in public spaces and to allow the temporary use of streets and public spaces for creative practices

NSW Government - New England North West Regional Plan 2016-2036

- ***Creating jobs and growing the regional economy***
 - Supporting skills development to improve pathways to employment for adults and young people
 - Increase the number of school-based traineeships and apprenticeships by targeting new placements in state and local government.
 - Help 15 to 19 year olds who have disengaged from learning with mentoring, good career advice and connecting them to jobs and training through the Regional VET Pathways program.
 - Match young people to jobs in the region through the Smart, Skilled and Hired Youth Employment Program.
 - Increase the skill levels of workers in the grains and cotton industries in the region through AgSkilled, an initiative under Smart and Skilled.

6. Background

The Gunnedah Shire economy is driven by two main industries, agriculture and mining. Gunnedah Shire is the gateway to one of the most productive and prime agricultural regions in Australia – the Liverpool Plains. Coal mining is also an integral part of the Gunnedah Shire economy, with the Gunnedah basin containing around 10% of the estimated coal reserves in NSW.

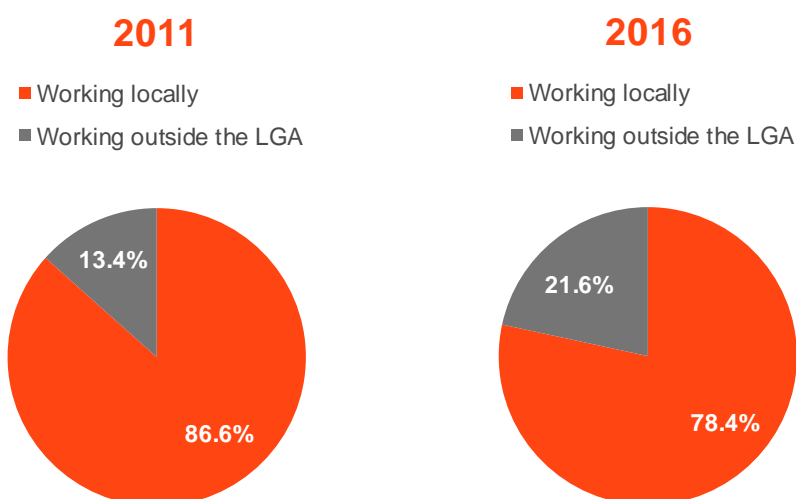
The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Gunnedah Shire generated \$704m as of the 30th June 2019 supported an estimated 5,490 jobs. This represents 0.4% of Regional NSW's economy in terms of GRP (0.5% in terms of local jobs). The GRP has been contracting over the two years up until 2018/19, with an annual average GRP growth rate of -1%. On the contrary, the growth in the number of local jobs per annum was static during the same period. The contraction in the economy has largely been driven by prolonged period of drought. It is important to note that the economic analysis referred to throughout this document was undertaken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. First forecasts are showing that Gunnedah could be as much as 9.7% down in GRP and experience a potential 6.1% in local jobs as a result of COVID-19 (NIEIR, 2020).

The Shire has an estimated residential population of 12,661 (2019) with a low (average annual) growth rate of 0.7%, slightly behind the rest of regional NSW at 0.9%. The unemployment rate was 6.4% as at March 2019, relatively higher than Regional NSW (5.1%). In the December quarter 2019, the unemployment rate was seen to drop to 4.4%, which is comparatively lower than Regional NSW at 4.6%.

In the period 2018/19, there were 6,258 employed residents in the Gunnedah Shire. Data shows that there are fewer jobs in the Gunnedah Shire than employed residents, with the share of residents working outside the LGA increasing between 2011 and 2016, as shown in the graphic below.

Employment self containment - Gunnedah Shire

Share of residents working locally



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2011 and 2016

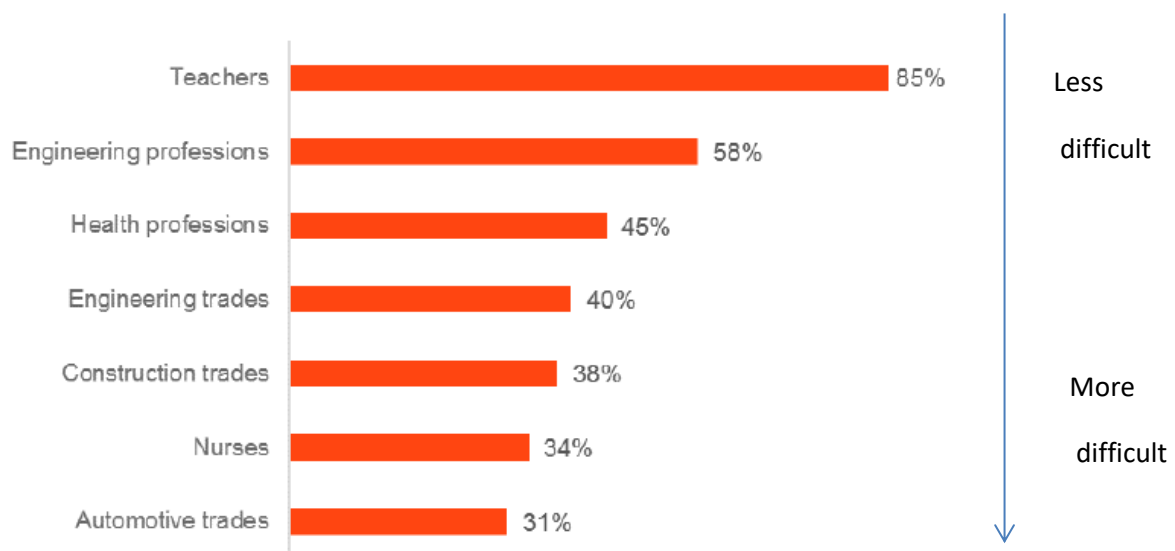
This suggests more residents are looking elsewhere for opportunities possibly because local jobs are not matching their needs.

Local businesses across a range of industries are finding it difficult to find and retain skilled and experienced employees, putting a strain on growth and productivity. The social and economic impact of a skills shortage is having a profound impact. The difficulty in finding appropriately skilled labour is not unique to Gunnedah and is a phenomenon that is felt across Regional NSW. Gunnedah is unique, however, as the economy is growing and labour is not meeting the demand for job vacancies.

The Gunnedah economy has a high dependence on the agricultural sector and exhibits a lower education and skill profile compared to Regional NSW. This may pose a constraint to growth to those businesses that are increasingly reliant on technology and knowledge. Strategies to address the development of effective career pathways relevant to Gunnedah’s economy that better connect and transition young people into the local market are required.

Generally, regional areas find it more difficult finding qualified workers. Regional NSW has the second highest skill shortage with 62% of vacancies filled compared to 66% in regional Australia as a whole. Overall, employers in NSW found difficulty recruiting for automotive trade, nurses, construction trades and engineering trades, with less than 40% of vacancies filled across these groups in 2018.

The table below shows skills shortages by occupation group in New South Wales, teachers being the least difficult at 85% of vacancies filled (%) in 2018/19 and automotive trades at more difficult at 31%.

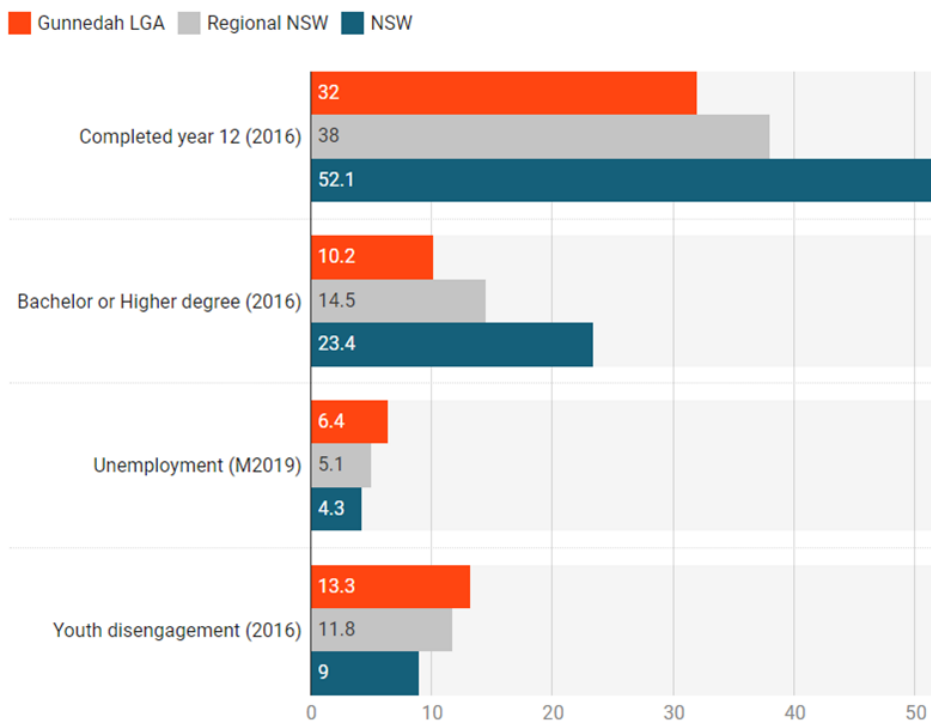


1 Skills Shortages by Occupation Group, NSW 2018/19

The level of education in Gunnedah Shire has been identified as a constraint for growth; the year 12 completion rate is lower (32%) than the Regional NSW average at 38% in 2016, where the level has increased by 3% since 2011. Around 10% of the residents had a university qualification compared to 14% for the residents of Regional NSW. It should be noted that the year 12 completion rate of the

Gunnedah Shire has increased since 2011 by 3%. The table below depicts the education level, unemployment rate and the youth disengagement rate compared to NSW and Regional NSW. An area of concern is the high rate of youth disengagement in Gunnedah Shire at 13.3% compared to the NSW average of only 9%.

Skill profile



Gunnedah is losing a large percentage of its young people to pursue further studies and employment opportunities elsewhere. In 2016, 178 people aged 18-24 years moved out of the Gunnedah Shire, this loss of young people is inhibiting the economy by reducing the number of young people in the workforce. The good news is that data suggests that there are large amounts of people who are moving to Gunnedah Shire to pursue employment opportunities, in 2016, 212 people aged 25-34 moved to Gunnedah Shire.

The key challenges impacting the growth trajectory of the Gunnedah Shire are linked to the lower education profile and related skills shortages, slow population growth and outflow of younger residents. Despite these factors, there are a number of opportunities that have the potential to diversify the economy and speed up growth. For example, the investment pipeline includes large projects such as the extension of Vickery South mine, redevelopment of Gunnedah hospital, construction of a Koala Park and Hospital, a beef processing facility and redevelopment of the Saleyards.

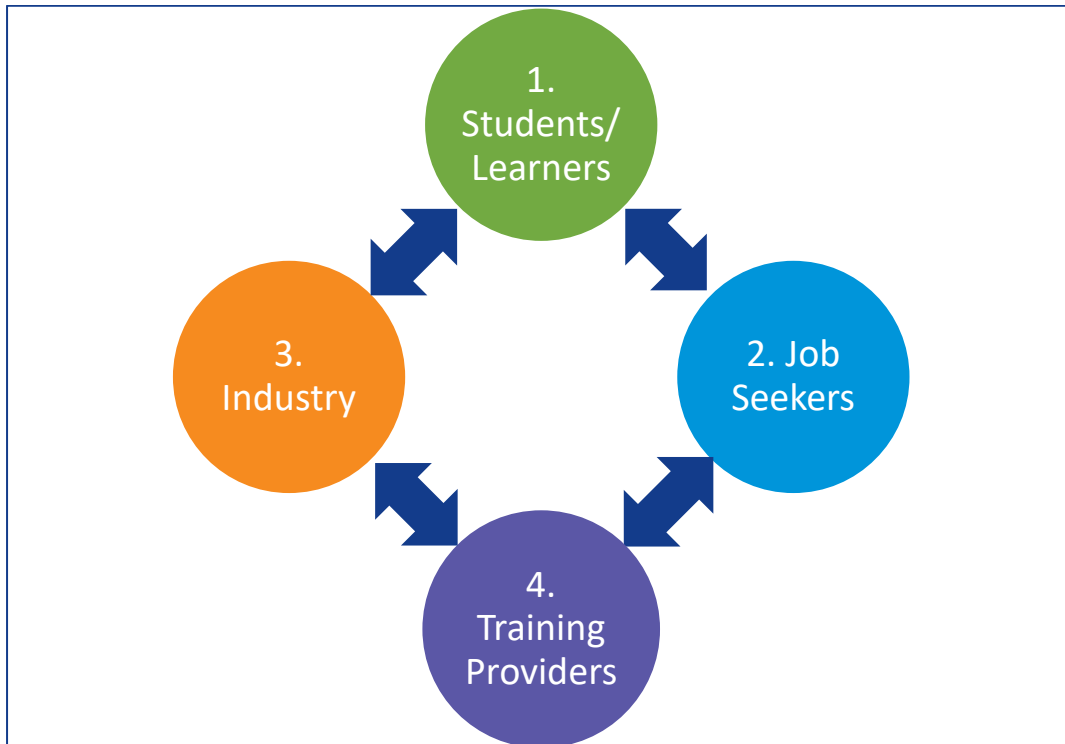
The Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan seeks to identify key actions required in overcoming the skills shortage and associated barriers to growth.

* Further detail on the workforce and economic conditions are outlined in **Appendix A**.



7. Objectives

Four key stakeholders were identified when setting the objectives for the Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan. Gunnedah Shire Council aims to support learners, job seekers, industry and training providers to build a skilled workforce. To carry out the plan Council plays a supportive, advocating, facilitative role to connect all four stakeholders.



The **Objectives** of the Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan are that:

Council supports the Gunnedah Shire economy by ensuring a skilled workforce and quality local educational opportunities by supporting:

1. Learners have the opportunity to gain the type and level of skills they need to access local opportunities and progress in the labour market.	2. Job Seekers are able to readily access opportunities in the Gunnedah Shire	3. Industry supports training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally	4. Training Providers work collaboratively to develop a local skills offering that is responsive to the needs of the local economy
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8. How did we create the plan?

In order to understand the state of the workforce and further detail surrounding the skills shortages a Community Work Force Plan was a recommendation of the Economic Development Strategy.

To prepare the Gunnedah Shire Workforce Plan a detailed Economic Health Check was undertaken by Id Consulting. The findings of the Economic Health Check are outlined in this report and form the basis for the proposed Action Plan. [Appendix 1]

Consultation Summary

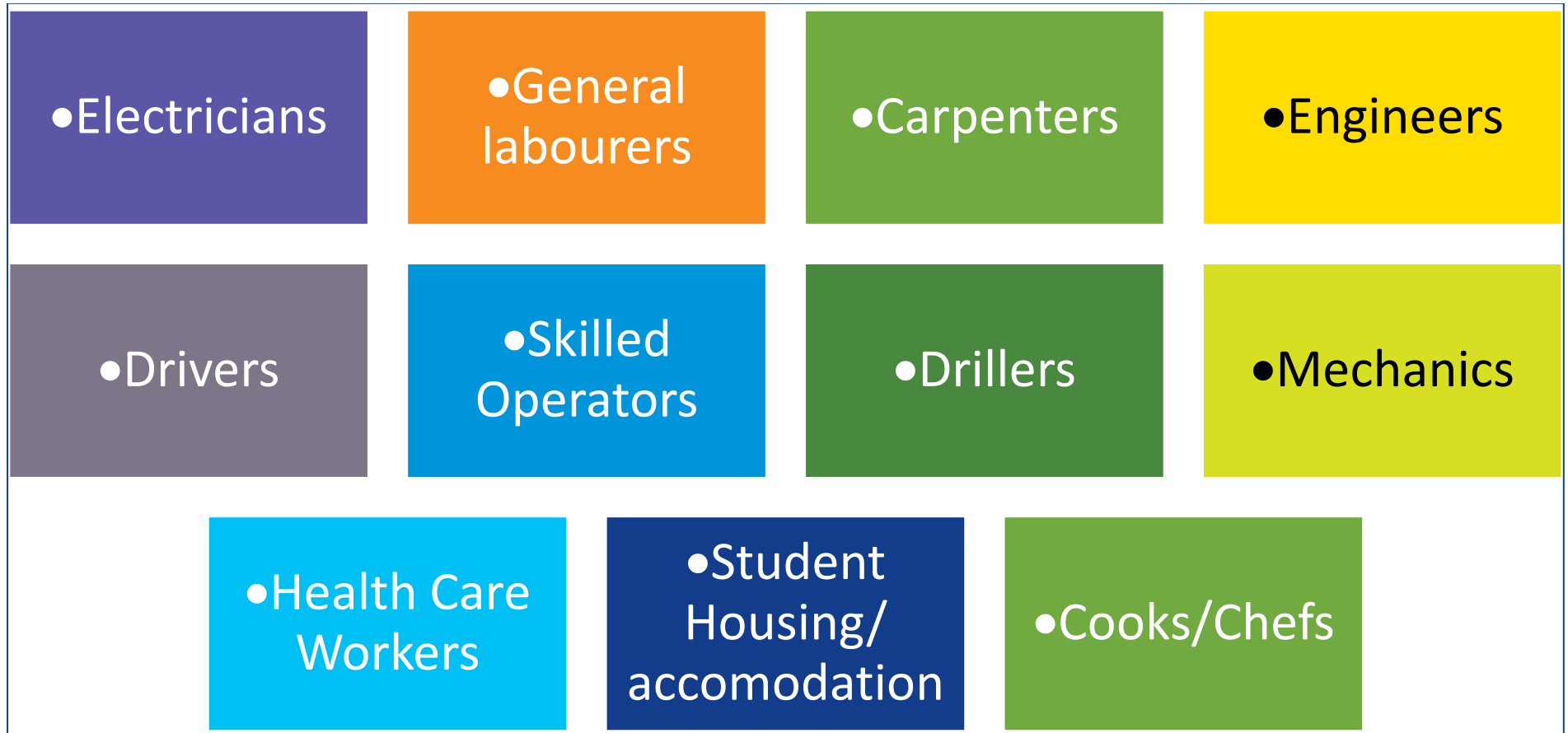
- 1) Monthly meetings with the Gunnedah and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Chamber)
- 2) Two community round tables with Chamber representatives and key business owners
- 3) Monthly meetings with representatives of Council, Chamber and TAFE
- 4) Workshop with Economic Development Working Group
- 5) Manager Economic Development and a Chamber committee member attended “Skills Subcommittee” meetings
- 6) Councillor workshop held 20 November 2019
- 7) Feedback and review by key partners and stakeholders (01/05/20 – 30/05/20)



9. What the community told us

Shortages Identified

Whilst skills shortages were listed in various categories and skill levels, below is a summary of the feedback we received from business owners during the consultation phase.



Opportunities Identified

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training courses in drone technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessing different government funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training pathways to healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upskilling/retraining programs (marketing, management, sales)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industry Field Days including AgQuip and EIMEX	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pathway programs in high school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business mentoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farm and business visits for students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Utilising on site training at existing businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage students through Gunnedah Youth Council (GYC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recreation and youth activities linked to school attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skilled migration

Challenges Identified

• Changing education and welfare culture	• Childcare shortage	• Poor high school completion rate	• Curriculum changes – ability to influence is low
• Loss of knowledge & lack of succession planning	• Lack of public transport – young people unable to access training and employment	• Employer culture to find trained/qualified personnel rather than investing in training/upskilling existing workforce	• Minimum class numbers at TAFE
• Large employers are not utilising local training providers	• Drought impacts on local economy	• Lack of awareness of training available	• Cost requirements on employers to fund training

10. Action Plan

Council supports the Gunnedah Shire economy by ensuring a skilled workforce and quality local educational opportunities by supporting:

1. Learners - have the opportunity to gain the type and level of skills they need to access local opportunities and progress in the labour market

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
1.1 Improve access to training and information for learners	1.1.1 Advocate to ensure future library developments support digital learning	Elected Members Community Services Team
	1.1.2 Provide access to online training webinars that are readily available and accessible	Economic Development Team
	1.1.3 Lobby government for upgrades to networks including mobile and internet	Elected Members Economic Development Team
	1.1.4 Review public transport in the Gunnedah Shire to ensure that it is meeting the needs of tertiary and vocational students	Economic Development Team Strategic Planning Infrastructure Services
1.2 Work closely with schools and training providers to increase diversity of skill development	1.2.1 Work with key stakeholders to bridge the gap between education and employment by placing young people at the heart of the solution	Economic Development Team Youth Officer Elected Members Chamber

1. Learners - have the opportunity to gain the type and level of skills they need to access local opportunities and progress in the labour market

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
	1.2.2 Support community youth workers and agencies and Gunnedah Youth Council.	Youth Officer TAFE
	1.2.3 Continue to host the Youth Expo to provide learners with a focus on the opportunities in Gunnedah to help plan for their future	Youth Officer
	1.2.4 Advocate for more job ready young people by advocating for better youth engagement and pathways between high school and tertiary education available locally	Youth Officer
	1.2.5 Build communication between school aged people with links to community organisations and training providers to help them plan for their future.	Youth Officer
	1.2.6 Advocate for gateway programs by working alongside high schools in the Shire to implement programs that promote career opportunities and facilitate employment in the mining and agricultural industries	Youth Officer
	1.2.7 Continue to support the Community Scholarship fund to help young people to pursue tertiary education opportunities.	Youth Officer Elected Members

1. Learners - have the opportunity to gain the type and level of skills they need to access local opportunities and progress in the labour market

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
1.3 Support the development of workplace skills through quality work placements.	1.3.1 Continue to support apprenticeships and traineeships at Gunnedah Shire Council	People & Culture Team
	1.3.2 Facilitate connections between learners and employers to encourage work placements such as apprenticeships and traineeships.	Economic Development Team Elected Members Chamber
1.4 Support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners by identifying and addressing barriers to learning, improving access to supported learning programmes and other opportunities to gain workplace skills.	1.4.1 Implement relevant actions within the Disability Access and Inclusion Strategy (DIAP)	Social and Community Planning People & Culture Team
	1.4.2 Advocate for the education needs of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities	Social and Community Planning Youth Officer Elected Members
	1.4.3 Advocate for the needs of financially disadvantaged learners to enhance access opportunities	Social and Community Planning Youth Officer Elected Members
	1.4.4 Investigate the need for cost effective housing for accommodation for students.	Social and Community Planning Planning
1.5 Work with employers and training providers to increase the range of opportunities to develop their skills.	1.5.1 Work with universities such as UNE to grow their university presence in Gunnedah	Elected Members Economic Development Team

2. Job Seekers - are able to readily access opportunities in the Gunnedah Shire

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
2.1 Improve communication of job opportunities in the Gunnedah Shire	2.1.1 Develop strategies to encourage new workers and families to relocate to Gunnedah Shire	Economic Development Team Chamber
	2.1.2 Deliver a marketing campaign focusing on attraction and retention of skilled workers	Economic Development Team Chamber
	2.1.3 Implement digital options for job seekers including an online job board for Gunnedah Shire (utilise the Localised platform)	Economic Development Team
2.2 Review alternate measures to supplement the local workforce	2.2.1 Explore migrant visa opportunities through existing networks such as the Economic Development Working Group.	Economic Development Team
	2.2.2 Deliver marketing campaign focussed on attracting skilled workers	Economic Development Team
2.3 Develop a Housing Strategy for Gunnedah Shire	2.3.1 Investigate options for student and worker accommodation that meet the needs of the Shire	Social and Community Planning Planning Team

3. Industry supports training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
3.1 Facilitate communication and collaboration between key stakeholders to ensure that the training needs of industry are met locally	3.1.1 Continue to facilitate and attend monthly meetings with Gunnedah TAFE and the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Chamber
	3.1.2 Continue to disseminate information between training providers and business community	Economic Development Team
	3.1.3 Continue to work with employment agencies to better understand gaps in the labour market	Economic Development Team
	3.1.4 Open dialogue with the major employers to encourage their support to local training programs.	Economic Development Team Chamber Elected Members
3.2 Encourage local businesses to participate in school-based apprentice and traineeship programs	3.2.1 Assist with communications between training providers to encourage local businesses to participate in school-based apprentice and traineeship programs	Economic Development Team
	3.2.2 Encourage businesses to pool candidates to share training opportunities where possible	Chamber Economic Development Team
	3.2.3 Build a community culture highlighting the importance of skill building,	Economic Development Team

3. Industry supports training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
	championed by leaders in the community	Chamber
3.3 Support local businesses to remove barriers to employment and access funding if required	3.3.1 Continue to advocate for people with complex needs to be considered by employers as per Council's Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)	Social and Community Planning
	3.3.2 Build awareness of grant opportunities around innovation and transitioning to new industries	Economic Development Team Social and Community Planning
	3.3.3 Continue to support business growth, diversification and innovation through the Business Partner Program	Economic Development Team
	3.3.4 Advocate for upskilling opportunities and transfer of knowledge within workplaces	Elected Members
	3.3.5 Advocate for an Innovation Hub in Gunnedah Shire – creating new employment opportunities	Economic Development Team Elected Members
	3.3.6 Review public transport in the Gunnedah Shire to ensure that it is meeting the needs of employees	Economic Development Team

3. Industry supports training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
	3.3.7 Develop and implement strategies to encourage mature-aged workers back into the workforce	Economic Development Team
	3.3.8 Advocate for RDANI to support employers in removing barriers for employers wishing to access skilled migrants.	Economic Development Team Elected members Chamber
3.4 Help ensure the local workforce is equipped with skills to response to changes in employer demand	3.4.1 Facilitate business training to improve the recruitment process/strategies used by local employers	Economic Development Team
	3.4.2 Advocate for all employers to conduct their training in Gunnedah where possible	Elected Members Economic Development Team
	3.4.3 Encourage retraining or upskilling for transitioning into new roles	Chamber Economic Development Team
	3.4.4 Support a culture that encourages business mentoring and networking within the Gunnedah Shire	Economic Development Team Chamber Elected Members
	3.4.5 Encourage employers to recruit locally where possible	Economic Development Team Chamber Elected Members

3. Industry supports training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
	3.4.6 Encourage employers to implement workforce diversity programs	Chamber, Economic Development Team
	3.4.7 Support industry in working with government agencies to utilise skilled migration where skills cannot be sourced locally.	Chamber, Economic Development Team
3.5 Facilitate training for businesses where gaps are identified in the offering of the training providers	3.5.1 Continue to host business training and networking opportunities to build business capacity	Economic Development Team Chamber

4. Training providers work collaboratively to develop a local skills offering that is responsive to the needs of the local economy

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
4.1 Facilitate communication and collaboration between industry and training providers to enhance the local skills offer	4.1.1 Continue to facilitate and attend monthly meetings with Gunnedah TAFE and the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Economic Development Team
4.2 Continue to build on the apprenticeship offering and promote vocational learning to schools and employers	4.2.1 Continue to work with TAFE to advocate for adequate training opportunities including emerging industries training providers	Economic Development Team Elected Members
	4.2.2 Advocate for TAFE to confirm the Pre- apprenticeship or “job ready” style training is a permanent course at the Gunnedah campus	Economic Development Team Elected Members
	4.2.3 Build a community culture highlighting the importance of skill building, championed by leaders in the community	Economic Development Chamber
4.3 Continue to work with training providers to ensure the workforce needs of the Gunnedah community are considered in future planning	4.3.1 Advocate for dormitory style accommodation to support TAFE students and short-term contract workers	Economic Development Elected Members
	4.3.2 Advocate for increased agriculture courses including AgTech and Agribusiness	Economic Development Elected Members
	4.3.3 Advocate for courses offering to be tailored to support future development (e.g. meat processing courses to support the development of an abattoir)	Economic Development Elected Members Chamber

4. Training providers work collaboratively to develop a local skills offering that is responsive to the needs of the local economy

Theme	Action	Potential Partner
	4.3.4 Advocate for requirements of the future economy, such as technological advancements, to be considered when planning training courses including agricultural processing, automation in manufacturing and autonomous mining.	Economic Development Team Elected Members
	4.3.5 Build collaborative partnerships with government and community organisations to enhance the capacity of its contractors to provide jobs and the capacity of locals to develop skills and secure jobs	Economic Development Team Chamber

Approval Management

The tables below provide details of the document approvals.

Council Endorsement

Version 1.0 of this document was approved by resolution of Council on:

11. Sources

Regional Development Australia – Northern Inland NSW “Skills for the Future - A study into the skill needs of businesses in the Northern Inland Region of New South Wales” -

<http://www.rdani.org.au/files/pages/projects/skills-for-the-future/Skills-for-the-Future-Web-Quality.pdf>

Local Government NSW – Local Government Skills Strategy - https://www.lgnsw.org.au/files/imce-uploads/79/5_Local_Government_Skills_Strategy_P_Evans.pdf

.idEconomics (2019), <https://economy.id.com.au/gunnedah>

12. Appendices

- A. Gunnedah Shire Economic Health Check, idEconomics (2019)
- B. Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce – Bridging the Gap 2017



Gunnedah Shire

Open New Horizons



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