

# Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning & Employment Network Strategic Plan 2026

*Everything we do begins with the young person.*

The Wimmera Southern Mallee Local Learning & Employment Network (WSMLLEN) places the young person at the centre of all decision-making. The 2026 Strategic Plan articulates our commitment to strengthening pathways and leading collaborative approaches that build family and community-inclusive practices across the region. Through these partnerships, we aim to improve educational, wellbeing and transition outcomes for every young person.

## Our Mission

To broker meaningful partnerships between industry, education, and community that develop positive futures for Wimmera and Southern Mallee young people.

## Our Vision

A region where every young person is connected, capable, and confident to pursue their future.

## Our Values

Everything we do is anchored in our values: working together, championing equity, acting with integrity, staying committed to our community, thinking creatively, and grounding all our decisions in evidence-informed practice.

## Our Young People

### Goal:

Young people across the Wimmera Southern Mallee have equitable access to quality education, pathways, strong support networks, and meaningful opportunities that build confidence and capability.

### Strategic Objectives: Achieve

1. Strengthen pathway clarity and transition outcomes for all young people, including those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage including rurality challenges.
2. Improve engagement and participation in education, training, and employment through early intervention, re-engagement pathways, and community-connected learning.
3. Support student wellbeing, belonging, and identity as critical foundations for educational success.
4. Ensure Koorie young people have culturally safe and aspirational pathways, in partnership with community and local Aboriginal organisations.

### Strategic Priorities: Focus

- Champion high-quality VET/VDSS pathways through supporting effective cluster governance, industry alignment, enrolment management, and advocating for equitable access across the region and state.
- Expand school-to-work transitions through placements, immersive experiences, structured work-based learning, work experience, apprenticeships, and traineeships that strengthen confidence, capability, and employability.
- Strengthen re-engagement and flexible pathway options with schools, RTOs, community agencies, and alternative education providers, ensuring Wimmera and Southern Mallee young people have genuine second-chance and flexible work-based learning opportunities.
- Expand wellbeing-focused, preventative initiatives (mentoring, identity, connection, mental health literacy) as a wraparound to work-based learning initiatives so young people have the protective factors needed to thrive in education and life.
- Partner with Koorie communities to support culturally strong, self-determined aspirations and transitions for Aboriginal young people across the region.
- Prioritise support for cohorts facing vulnerability or systemic barriers, including young people experiencing disadvantage, disability, rural isolation, financial

hardship, disengagement, out-of-home care, culturally diverse backgrounds, or complex health or wellbeing needs.

- Co-design targeted opportunities for priority groups, ensuring WSMLEN's programs, pathways, and initiatives are inclusive, strengths-based, and accessible.
- Scale up early intervention projects—including literacy, readiness, and transition confidence—as long-term protective factors for success.
- Strengthen parent, carer, and family engagement in pathway planning by providing clear, accessible information, building confidence to navigate the education system, and promoting shared understanding of future options.

## Our Partners

### Goal:

Strong, credible partnerships that align education, industry, and community to improve opportunities, workforce outcomes, and regional vitality.

### Strategic Objectives: Achieve

1. Build a connected regional ecosystem where schools, industry, community agencies, and government work collectively to improve youth pathways.
2. Strengthen community and industry capability to engage meaningfully with young people and support local workforce needs.
3. Promote the Wimmera Southern Mallee as a region of opportunity for young people, families, and employers.

### Strategic Priorities: Focus

- Lead and participate in effective collaborative networks and cross-sector working groups to address local needs.
- Grow targeted industry engagement that supports work placements, work readiness, immersion experiences, and future-focused workforce pipelines.
- Strengthen partnerships with local councils, economic development, regional agencies, and employers to co-design workforce attraction and youth retention strategies.
- Support delivery of State priorities (e.g. VET Reform, VCE-VM pathways, Koorie Education, School-to-Work frameworks).
- Elevate the MATES Mentoring Program as a flagship community and career-building initiative that improves confidence, connection, and achievement.
- Promote regional strengths, opportunities, and stories that build community pride and long-term population sustainability.

## Our Wimmera Southern Mallee LLEN

### Goal:

A resilient, future-focused, and evidence-driven organisation recognised as a trusted regional leader in youth pathways and partnership brokering.

### Strategic Objectives: Achieve

1. Ensure strong governance, compliance, and fiduciary oversight that protects WSMLEN's independence, integrity, and sustainability.
2. Operate as an agile, data-informed organisation that anticipates emerging needs and designs responses proactively.
3. Strengthen financial sustainability through diverse revenue streams and strategic partnerships.
4. Maintain a safe, inclusive, high-performing workplace that reflects Child Safe Standards and models community leadership.

### Strategic Priorities: Focus

- Modernise governance structures, policies, and processes—including youth voice representation, risk management, and succession planning.
- Deliver high-quality data analysis and impact reporting to inform regional decision making and demonstrate value to government and partners.
- Advocate strongly for rural equity, access funding, and sustainable investment into WSMLEN services and youth transitions across the Wimmera Southern Mallee.
- Diversify funding through grants, partnerships, philanthropic opportunities, and delivery of value-aligned projects.
- Strengthen organisational capability in evaluation, stakeholder engagement, digital systems, communication, and project delivery.
- Foster an organisational culture that is reflective, collaborative, inclusive, and child-safe — where staff are supported to innovate, learn, and lead.

*This Strategic Plan has been intentionally developed as a single-year framework in response to the Department of Education's one-year School to Work contract and the broader suite of education reforms currently underway. The shorter planning horizon enables WSMLEN to remain agile and to align our future direction with the State's emerging priorities. This has not at all lessened our focus or ambition for 2026.*

**2026 Strategic Plan was accepted and approved by the Committee of Management on 20 November 2025.**