

Appendix A: Bilateral Implementation Plan – National Skills Agreement Policy Initiatives

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan (Plan) is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) under the 2024–2028 National Skills Agreement (the NSA) and should be read in conjunction with the NSA.
2. Once executed, this implementation plan and any updates agreed with the Commonwealth, will be appended to the NSA and will be published on the Commonwealth's Federal Financial Relations website (<https://federalfinancialrelations.gov.au>).
3. This implementation plan is expected to expire on 31 December 2028 (in line with the NSA), or on completion of the initiative, including final performance reporting and processing of final payments against milestones.
4. In all public materials relating to the policy initiatives, the ACT will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: The Enhanced Vocational Education and Training (VET) Data and Evidence policy initiative is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and the ACT Government.

REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

Reporting

1. Performance reporting will be due by 31 March and 30 September each year until the cessation of this implementation plan, or the final payment is processed.
2. The ACT will provide to the Commonwealth a traffic light status and activity summary on all policy initiatives.
3. The Commonwealth will provide templates for the purposes of reporting.

Payments

1. The Commonwealth will make payment subject to performance reporting demonstrating the relevant milestone has been met.
2. As part of the performance reporting, the ACT will provide evidence of what has been delivered in the reporting period. Payments will be processed once performance reports have been assessed and accepted.
3. Where a payment is due at a reporting period (31 March and/or 30 September), the ACT will complete the relevant section of the reporting template and provide the evidence required as agreed in the Milestones and Payments associated with this Implementation Plan.
4. Under Ag2 of the NSA, if a State is unable to expend any Commonwealth funding provided for policy initiative milestone payments, the Commonwealth may reduce a future payment by an amount equivalent to the unspent funds.

ENHANCED VET DATA AND EVIDENCE (Clause A130 to A140 of the NSA)

The Enhanced VET Data and Evidence policy initiative includes three key measures:

- *VET Data Streamlining (VDS)* – Transition the VET sector to the new VET Information Standard and National VET Data System.
- *Enhancements to improve the cyber security posture of VET Data* – Develop a sector wide VET Data Security policy and strategy and initiatives to improve the security posture of the sector.
- *Development of the VET Data Reform Blueprint and Investment Roadmap* – Develop a 5-to-10-year collaborative roadmap and blueprint for multi-jurisdictional investment.

The enhancements to cyber security and the development of the VET Data Reform Blueprint and Investment Roadmap will be progressed through the State Skills Officials Network (SSON) and Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council.

This section of the bilateral agreement covers the VDS program only.

VET Data Streamlining: Australian Capital Territory (ACT) opts-in to the VDS program and commits to:

- completing transition to the National VET Data System by 31 December 2028;
- transitioning State Training Authority and support TAFE transition to the VET Information Standard by 31 December 2028, and
- Supporting TAFE with their transition to the National VET Data System and the VET Information Standard if and as needed

Note: A state that opts out will be ineligible for future payments under the initiative but will retain previous payments made up to the point of opting out. States will be responsible for any costs incurred by their jurisdiction in transitioning out of the program (Clause A139 refers).

(a) Specify activities that support the VDS program.

The ACT will support the VDS Program:

- Through the provision of subject matter experts and expertise to provide continuous input and feedback in the analysis, design review and development support in all development lifecycles of the National VET Data System to go live.
- By implementing ACT technology infrastructure that:
 - aligns with VDS Program goals.
 - complies with information security policies.
 - facilitates the VET Information Standard; and
 - integrates with the National VET Data System.
- In collaborating with the VDS Program teams to jointly develop and implement ACT specific business processes and rules, reference data, metadata requirements, and business processes to support the VDS Program implementation.
- Providing ACT business and technical expertise and resources to support testing of the National VET Data System, including user acceptance testing.

- Supporting ACT Training Organisations (TOs) and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) to transition to the National VET Data System and the VET information Standard by participating in VDS Program and ACT specific change management programs.
- By providing subject matter experts to actively participate in VDS Program governance groups in all phases of the development lifecycle of the National VET Data System to go live.

The ACT proposes to fully transition to the VET Information Standard and National VET Data System by 31 December 2028, following staged implementation phases. Transition is anticipated to commence with integration to the National VET Data System in June 2027 to go live. Transitioning funded training organisations by June 2028.

- The following timeline supports this transition approach and is indicative and non-binding.
 - ACT detailed planning complete: August 2026
 - ACT detailed design complete: February 2027
 - ACT build commencement: March 2027
 - ACT build complete: September 2027
 - ACT integration and User Acceptance Testing complete December 2027
 - ACT integration to the VDS as a direct state – go live: January 2028
 - ACT funded RTOs transition commences: January 2028
 - ACT funded training organisations transition complete: September 2028
- Support the transition of Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) to the National VET Data System by 31 December 2028.

(b) Specify activities that support the VET Information Standard.

The ACT will support the National Centre for the Vocational Education Research (NCVER) develop and implement the VET Information Standard:

- Through the provision of subject matter experts and expertise to contribute to the business and technical aspects of VDS Program VET Information Standard working groups to provide analysis, input, and design review on the VET Information Standard and associated artifacts throughout the Standard's development lifecycle.
- Collaboratively designing ACT specific data elements and associated business rules for inclusion in the VET Information Standard with VDS Program teams and the NCVER.
- By actively participating in VDS Program governance forums and decision making.
- Supporting TOs and the CIT implement the VET Information Standard by the 31 December 2028 through active participation in VDS Program and ACT specific change management practices.

(c) Specify the state's reporting pathway for the purpose of collecting VET Activity Data (clause A138b refers).

The ACT Proposes to collect VET Activity Data by the direct reporting pathway, whereby funded TOs submit VET Activity Data in VET Information Standard compliant format, anytime directly to the National VET Data System via Student Management System or the National VET Data System user interface.

The ACT anticipates releasing validation responses for funded VET Activity Data from an ACT IT infrastructure network to the National VET Data System for National reporting purposes as often as possible, but not less frequently than quarterly or the period set in the Data Provision Requirements. Non-funded VET Activity Data will be distributed to the NCVET by the National VET Data System.

(d) Specify the state's collection and submission processes.

States will support the collection of metadata related to VET Activity Data submitted by RTOs to the National VET Data System to enable states to monitor compliance with state specific contracts and regulators to monitor compliance with the Data Provisioning Requirements (DPRs).

The ACT will support the collection of metadata related to VET Activity Data submitted to the National VET Data System to enable compliance with ACT contracts and regulators to monitor compliance with DPRs by:

- Supporting TOs to submit VET Information Standard compliant data without restrictions to allow for any time submission (submit as you go) for all VET Activity Data.
- Requiring funded ACT VET Activity Data submissions to the National VET Data System, no less frequently than quarterly or as agreed in the DPRs and in accordance with ACT contract obligations.
- Validating and releasing funded VET Activity Data submissions received by the ACT as often as possible, but no less frequently than quarterly or as agreed under the DPRs and in accordance with ACT specific contract obligations.
- Continuing to report VET in schools' data annually through current processes or as defined in the DPRs. The ACT may require funded training organisations to report VET in Schools data more (but not less) frequently than annually to meet ACT specific obligations.

(e) Specify activities to support inclusive and robust governance.

The ACT agrees to implement the outcomes of the VDS Program Governance Reset and commits to providing details of the ACT specific program governance model and arrangements as part of the Project Management Plan in Milestone 2.

(f) Project management: Specify approach to project management and reporting

The ACT commits to providing a detailed Project Management Plan as part of milestone 2, which will include details of how the ACT will manage its ACT-specific VDS transition project using its preferred contemporary, fit-for-purpose program and project governance, and delivery methodology.

The ACT commits to:

- participating in the Commonwealth VDS program delivery program and project management forums and working groups.
- collaborating on VET Data Streamlining program wide risk management activities with all partners including risk identification, mitigation, and treatments.
- providing regular industry standard status reporting to the Commonwealth VDS Program Management Office in line with the agreed format and frequency as agreed as part of the VDS Governance reset.

Gate Reviews

Gate-reviews are a key governance tool in contemporary program management methodologies that provide stakeholders with a formalised process to review and assess the current and ongoing value and risk of the program.

The VDS program will have gate reviews at key stages of the program. States have the option to opt out of the VDS program as part of the gateway review process. (A138 refers).

Gate reviews provide a formalised process to review and assess the ongoing viability of the VDS Program, as such the ACT commits to actively participating in the VDS Program Gate Reviews endorsed by the SSON on 24 April 2024 as part of the governance reset. These are:

- Gate 1 – Governance review.
- Gate 2 – Go Live review.
- Gate 3 – Mid-Point review.
- Gate 4 – Delivery and Operational Transfer.
- Gate 5 – Program Closure.

Enhanced VET Data and Evidence - evaluation arrangements

The ACT supports the development of a VET Data Streamlining Evaluation framework, for consideration by SSON which will provide a consistent methodology for all jurisdictions to use to evaluate the success of the VDS program. The Evaluation arrangements will be robust and appropriate to the design and scale of the VET Data Streamlining program.

As part of Milestone 2 Project Planning, the ACT commits to using the evaluation framework to outline how the success of the VDS program as it pertains to their jurisdiction will be measured, how effectiveness will be evaluated, and how findings will be disseminated and actioned.

Enhanced VET Data and Evidence funding arrangements.

Details of funding	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Commonwealth contribution	\$1,000,000	\$2,500,000	\$1,000,000	\$500,000	\$5,000,000

MILESTONES FOR ENHANCED - VET DATA AND EVIDENCE

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1: Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan	1: Bilateral implementation plan agreed with the Commonwealth	\$500,000 (Paid)	Payment will be made on execution of the implementation plan.
Milestone 2: Completion and acceptance of detailed State-specific program management planning artefacts	2: Commonwealth acceptance of State-specific program management planning artefacts, including: • VET Data and Streamlining roadmap • project management plan • detailed project Schedule • resource / procurement plan • risk management plan and key risks • payment schedule • agreed delivery payment milestones • State specific reconciliation report template	\$500,000	30 June 2026
Milestone 3: Digital Canberra (DCBR) Project Plan finalised	3: Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills confirming that: • DCBR ACT VDS Project Proposal agreed to • Delivery advice has been provided by DCBR outlining - Proposed solution approach - Key delivery stages and dependencies • DCBR Project Plan completed, agreed and signed. Includes: - defined scope of the ACT ICT solution	\$500,000	30 September 2026

	- timelines and milestones for delivery - resourcing and cost estimates • The Project Plan has been reviewed, agreed and signed by: - ACT Project Board - Project Sponsor		
Milestone 4. DCBR ACT VDS Design and Discovery commenced	4: Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills confirming that: • DCBR has commenced the ACT VDS IT solution design and discovery phase • Budget and delivery timelines have been developed to support: - development of the proposed ICT solution architecture - identification of integration requirements with Student and Training Activity Reporting System (STARS) and ACT systems • Design and discovery activities have been formally initiated in accordance with the approved DCBR Project Plan	\$500,000	30 September 2026
Milestone 5. DCBR ACT VDS Design and Discovery completed	5: Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills confirming that: • DCBR have completed the ACT VDS ICT solution design and discovery phase • The ACT VDS ICT solution design has been finalised, accepted, and includes: - the proposed ICT solution architecture - confirmed integration requirements with STARS and ACT systems	\$500,000	31 March 2027

	the ACT Project Board and Sponsor have accepted the solution design, budget and timelines.		
Milestone 6: DCBR Design Solution and build commenced	6: Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills confirming that: - DCBR commenced build of ACT VDS IT solution, with initial build progress has been demonstrated, confirming that: - solution components are being developed in line with the agreed design - dependencies and sequencing are being actively managed - Build activities have commenced in accordance with the approved solution design and DCBR Project Plan - Implementation activities are underway, including: - development and configuration of the ACT VDS ICT solution - establishment of environments to support build and testing	\$1,000,000	31 March 2027
Milestone 7: Design Solution build completed and ready for testing and transition	7: Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills confirming that: - DCBR has completed the build of the ACT VDS IT solution - the ACT VDS ICT solution has been implemented in accordance with the approved solution design - system and integration testing has been completed, confirming that:	\$500,000	30 September 2027

	- data ingestion, validation and storage processes are functioning as intended - integration with STARS and ACT systems is operating as designed • the ACT VDS ICT solution has been tested by Skills Canberra and is ready to support Registered Training Organisation (RTO) transition activities • the completed solution has been reviewed and accepted by: - ACT Project Board - Project Sponsor		
Milestone 8: State Training Authority (STA) 'Go Live'	8: Commonwealth acceptance of a report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that, • Initial cohort of RTOs has been successfully onboarded and is submitting activity data via STARS • STARS and ACT systems are functioning as intended • The ACT VDS ICT solution is supporting data flows required for ACT business functions, including payments, contract management and reporting	\$500,000	31 March 2028
Milestone 9: STA/RTO transition complete	9: Commonwealth acceptance of a Project closure report signed by the ACT Senior Official with responsibility for skills, confirming that: • all agreed project deliverables have been completed or transitioned • ACT funded training organisations transition complete by 30 Sep 2028	\$500,000	31 December 2028

	• Support the transition of CIT to the National VET Data System by 31 Dec 2028 • the project has been formally closed • the project closure report has been endorsed through ACT project governance		
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The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this implementation plan as follows:

Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of
Australia by



The Honourable Andrew Giles MP
Minister for Skills and Training

31 / 7 /2026

Signed for and on behalf of the
Australian Capital Territory by



Michael Pettersson MLA
Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations

20 / 7 /2026