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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and New South Wales 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, New South Wales will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: Improved Completions is a joint initiative between the Commonwealth and New South Wales 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. New South Wales 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, New South Wales 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), New South Wales 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 A92 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.

IMPROVED COMPLETIONS – ESPECIALLY FOR PRIORITY GROUPS (Clause A141 to A150 of the NSA)

1) Outline actions to improve completions and which element of clause A145 will be addressed.

This implementation plan is grounded in support for priority cohorts to improve completions. Improved completions will be achieved through enhanced training pathways, greater access to supports, and establishing a robust evidence base to direct pilot initiatives and redefine successful training outcomes.

This implementation plan enables a range of new and expanded initiatives structured by four **priority outcomes** below.

Priority Outcome 1: Working learners – enabling uplift in apprenticeship and traineeship (A&T) completions to unlock the critical skills needed for the future.

- The NSW Apprenticeship and Traineeship (A&T) Roadmap 2024-2026 is the basis of this stream of work.
- Informed by the NSW A&T Roadmap, the department will explore new A&T models for priority cohorts, grow pre-vocational programs, and expand incentives and wraparound supports to improve completions for apprentices and trainees.
- The expanded incentives and wraparound supports will augment the services NSW currently provides, noting the department has a legislative responsibility under the *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001* to regulate the delivery of A&Ts in NSW.
- The following activities will be expanded, with final funding to be reported under Milestone 2 and subsequent milestones:

Program	Service offering	Reach and scope
Expand Bert Evans Apprentice Scholarships	Payments to apprentices experiencing hardship who applied for but were not awarded a Bert Evans Scholarship. Under the guidelines, equity criteria applies and applicants who are in one or more priority equity groups may receive priority consideration.	Expanding the scholarship incentive provides an alternate pathway to increase access to training for learners experiencing financial hardship. Additional funding would increase scholarship recipients by up to 50 learners for 25/26 FY.
Grow pre-vocational programs	Pre-apprenticeship, pre-traineeship, and try-a-trade programs will provide fee-free exposure to an introductory unit in an approved course in a trade or industry, with a targeted focus on priority vocations and priority cohorts.	Expansion will increase participation by 50% in the 2025/26 and strengthen outcomes by ensuring 'right fit' workers aligned to the 6 Critical Skills Areas under the NSW Skills Plan. DoE will work with GTOs and the ACE sector to target and provide wrap around support for priority cohorts such as: women returning to the workforce; people with a disability; rural and remote learners; and learners with LLN needs.
Strengthen Vocational Training Allowance Scheme (VTAS)	Expand supports and drive process uplift to improve access to training and learner outcomes for apprentices who travel considerable distances to attend training, with a focus on equity groups.	The uplift will aim to automate the application process increasing accessibility through updated payment methods. This could include a potential payment portal through Services NSW, or voucher system. Automation will be coupled with a modest increase in the number of apprentices supported and in allowances in line with CPI to help address increased cost of living, supporting more learners to complete.

Expand Continuing Apprentices and Trainees Placement Service (CAPS)	Uplift supports for apprentices and trainees in skills shortage occupations who have lost their jobs to find a new employer and complete their qualification.	Expansion will provide greater assistance to learners needing relocation, with a focus on increasing the financial supports available for learners from equity groups as well as lifting overall participants to 2,000 learners over 3 years from 2025.
New A&T models for priority cohorts	Alternative, agile models that ensure an accessible approach to A&T, which could include: 'access' traineeships for learners from priority groups; higher apprenticeship models for high performers; and 'stackable' micro-credentials permitted under the *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Act 2001*.	Implementing flexible and accessible apprenticeship and traineeship models permitted under NSW legislation will support improved learner outcomes and participation, retention and completion of learners from equity groups by up to 5% over 3 years. Leveraging the ACE strategy, the models will include embedded wrap around supports.
Skills Boost for Success	Skillsets for apprentices in their fourth year designed to embed small business literacy, and address critical skills needs that set learners up for post-apprenticeship success.	Supporting up to 150 final year apprentices over 3 years to overcome barriers to completion and transition to further employment.

- The expanded incentives and wraparound supports are intended to complement existing NSW and Commonwealth measures without adding to system complexity.
- NSA clause/s addressed: A145(a) and (c)
- Indicative funding allocation: $14.7M

Reach and additionality

- Initiatives for working learners will increase the participation of equity cohorts undertaking A&Ts and increase the numbers of people qualified to work in critical industries through an A&T pathway.
- Many NSW DoE initiatives prioritise, rather than exclusively target, specific equity groups.
    - For example, the Bert Evans Apprentice Scholarships support apprentices facing hardship, with priority given to women in male-dominated trades, First Nations Australians, rural and remote learners, and students with disabilities.
    - Similarly, the Continuing Apprentices and Trainees Placement Service (CAPS) program assists displaced learners to reconnect with employers to complete their qualifications. While available to all displaced learners, equity groups are increasingly prioritised as improved data enhances visibility of priority cohorts.
- While equity groups are already a focus within existing initiatives, Commonwealth investment provides the opportunity to expand and strengthen supports, which will boost participation, retention, and completion rates for all learners.

Priority Outcome 2: Priority cohorts – implementing targeted initiatives designed for priority cohorts to drive improvement in training outcomes.

- The Commonwealth's investment into Get Back In the Game (GBIG) will fund the following:
    - Up to 2,160 young people within NSW between 1 July 2025 and 31 Dec 2028 to receive wrap-around supports offered under the GBIG program to connect with and engage in training.
    - The trial, refinement (if needed) and subsequent implementation of the Youth Engagement Assessment (YEA) tool to enable early identification of risks and mitigations for young people enrolling into training.

    - Implementation of an incentive for GBIG service providers related to training engagements.
    - Identification of high-completion RTOs and establishment of a baseline for their use by GBIG service providers and their clients.
    - A geographic expansion of the GBIG program may be possible through NSW Government funding (still TBD). Should this occur, some of the up to 2,160 young people funded by the Commonwealth will be within those expansion areas.
- A GBIG service provider is an organisation contracted by NSW DoE for GBIG program delivery and appointed through open tender. There are currently 9 GBIG service providers, which are mainly small, local, not for profit youth support organisations.
- The expanded GBIG program responds to some of the complex issues associated with improving completion rates by providing supports to two system participants: learners and service providers. Provider incentives are a complementary element that will sit alongside the youth engagement assessment tool. The tool aims to provide more holistic support to guide young people into the right courses at the right time, as well as reduce instances of dropout through more targeted, ongoing support for mental and physical wellbeing.
- The IP will also expand supports for First Nations learners, skilled workers, and women in trades. These initiatives include:
    - expanding financial and non-financial wraparound supports for First Nations learners, including culturally appropriate mentoring, employment grants to lift participation and boost retention, and career and pathway support to young people.
    - new wraparound supports for Women in Trades, involving employer 'gender literacy' training, targeted campaigns informed by behavioural insights research, and essential wraparound supports.
    - scaling up the Trade Skills Recognition (TSR) and Trade Pathways Existing Workers Program (TPEW) to streamline and expand processes in line with increasing demand for skilled workers in priority occupations.
- The expanded supports will augment the services NSW currently provides and are intended to complement existing NSW and Commonwealth measures without duplicating them. For example, the programs below support NSW to deliver on Priority Reform 5 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap:
    - The Barranggirra Initiative offers culturally safe mentoring support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander A&Ts, with all providers deeply embedded in the communities they serve. This local knowledge and established relationships allow Barranggirra to offer tailored wraparound services that align with the unique needs of each learner. By specialising in the specific needs and barriers faced by learners within their communities, Barranggirra ensures a targeted and effective approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners.
    - The Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment (OCHRE) Opportunity Hub Initiative aims to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking and completing VET. The initiative supports learners' immediate goals for training and creates long-term impact by building pathways to meaningful careers and further educational attainment.
    - The Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Grant is a multi-faceted program that aims to increase participation and retention of Aboriginal people in training and employment, including through Local Aboriginal Land Councils. The grants focus on training outcomes and VET completions through payments to school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, payments post-school to support ongoing employment, and Aboriginal Adult Apprenticeships and Traineeships (AAAT).
- NSA clause/s addressed: A145(a) and (c)
- Indicative funding allocation: $33.95M

Reach and additionality

- GBIG has a proven success record working with young people across a range of equity cohorts, including First Nations learners, women, learners with a disability, and learners in regional areas. Currently, 60 per cent of GBIG participants undertake the VET stream of the program.
- 2023-2024 enrolment data indicates the majority of program participants are based in regional areas (63 per cent). Expansion of the training stream enables delivery in un-serviced rural areas of Murray and Riverina, as well as large parts of metropolitan and outer Sydney, and will fund up to 2,160 learners to enrol in the program from July 2025 to December 2028. Specifically, expansion into four additional regions will support efforts to address high youth unemployment rates[1] in these areas:
    - Murray youth unemployment rate: 11.1 per cent
    - Riverina youth unemployment rate: 6.0 per cent
    - Outer South West Sydney youth unemployment rate: 10.5 per cent
    - Outer West and Blue Mountains youth unemployment: 9.3 per cent
- Introducing two new elements to GBIG, i.e. the youth engagement assessment tool and incentives for service providers on VET completions, is forecasted to increase the number of young people enrolled in GBIG that engage in VET by an average of 10 per cent annually.
- The National VET Completions Report states that "all stages and transition phases of the learner journey influence completions and the achievement of successful learner outcomes" (p. 14). GBIG directly aligns with the report's key findings that the importance of informed choices, pathways advice, and identification of, and support for, at-risk learners will support improved completion rates.
- Commonwealth investment will augment NSW current service offering for priority groups. For example, targeted supports for Aboriginal learners are expected to expand:
    - Demand for the Barranggirra program currently exceeds the funded places available through six providers. NSA funding would support the growth of program by enabling additional mentors to be employed in ACCOs, particularly to support A&Ts.
    - Currently, five OCHRE Opportunity Hubs service a small proportion of NSW. Support through the NSA would enable additional Hubs to be opened in at-risk areas of NSW with high levels of Aboriginal student populations.

Priority Outcome 3: Critical industries – developing a sustainable, highly skilled workforce for critical industries.

Renewable energy

- Research for NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) estimates the NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap's five Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) will require 110,000 construction job years (one job is equal to one FTE for 12 months), and 5,600 ongoing operations and maintenance job years as at October 2024. Most jobs are in occupations experiencing skills shortages, including electricians, construction managers and electrical engineers.
- In line with this research and the Critical Skill Areas identified in the NSW Skills Plan, the department will tailor a range of completions initiatives to improve outcomes and increase completions in renewable energy qualifications, including a specialised Regional Industry Education Partnerships (RIEP) program, dedicated stream of the Trade Pathways for Existing

[1] Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs and Skills Atlas, https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/jobs-and-skills-atlas, accessed 7 February 2025

Workers (TPEW) program, Group Training Organisations (GTOs) service, and more targeted foundation skills support:

- The renewable energy stream of the RIEP program will target and directly support secondary school students in the REZs to gain early exposure to VET pathways by participating in industry events as well as taster and pre-employment courses, noting that the National VET Completions Report identified the impact of informed student decision making and exposure to workplaces prior to enrolling on improving long term student outcomes including completion (p. 17).
- The renewable energy TPEW stream will upskill local, unqualified tradespeople and reskill transitioning workers in coal fired power stations and coal mining, and support existing workers to have their skills and experience recognised and undertake any gap training towards a trade qualification related to renewable energy. The importance of this initiative is reflected in the National VET Completions report, which highlights the benefits and challenges with skills recognition under Recommendations 4 and 7.
- GTOs will be key to encouraging employers, particularly smaller employers in REZs, to engage apprentices and ensuring apprentices complete their qualification, noting that renewable energy projects have a typically shorter duration than an apprenticeship. This incentive program (parameters to be developed) will build on the Commonwealth's GTO Reimbursement Program. The National VET Completions Report highlights the role of GTOs in supporting both learners and employers over the course of an apprenticeship, including through the group training model, mentoring, and support for employers to improve their supervision (p. 20).
- A tailored approach to delivering higher level language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills (parameters to be developed) will better prepare school leavers and first-year apprentices for VET pathways and support improved learner outcomes.

Reach and additionality

- NSW is investing heavily in the energy transition and partnering with the Commonwealth through this implementation plan will help both NSW and the Commonwealth meet their clean energy targets.
- Demand for a renewable energy workforce is growing rapidly across regional NSW. Construction of three of the five REZs will be underway in 2025, increasing demand for an already limited workforce.
- Commonwealth investment through this implementation plan is expected to create a step-change in NSW's energy transition delivery by rapidly expanding access to high quality training which will grow the clean energy workforce and teaching pipeline, unlock over 200,000 new jobs, and tap into up to $32 billion in private investment for renewable energy projects.
- The intention behind the package of four renewable energy initiatives is to emulate the success of the NSW Infrastructure Skills Legacy Program (ISLP), which has exceeded its employment targets. In emulating the ISLP, NSW could expect around 20 per cent of the total REZ construction workforce to be learning workers including apprentices and trainees.
- The combined impact of the TPEW, GTOs, and LLND initiatives outlined above is expected to support the pipeline of future workers by serving to strengthen and add between 100-300 workers to the renewable energy workforce by December 2028. This presents a significant uplift in the context of creating momentum for this emerging industry with employers and training providers to drive improved training and local employment outcomes in regional locations. It is critical to embed the right supports to ensure NSW has the best chance of converting demand for skilled workers into apprenticeships.

- Further to this, the RIEP would target 60 secondary schools across the REZs, including 1,393 students already undertaking related VET in schools subjects.

Care and support economy

- The care and support economy is a Critical Skills Area in the NSW Skills Plan. The NSA provides the opportunity for NSW to trial new initiatives, including piloting new qualifications, to support VET completions and the future pipeline of skilled workers in the care and aged care sectors.
- With Commonwealth support, the department will explore skillset offerings and pilots for a pre-traineeship pathway for males from priority cohorts and existing worker traineeships.

Reach and additionality

- These initiatives are designed to grow the care and aged care workforces. The existing worker traineeship pathway will support an increase in diploma-trained and upskilled workers across the aged care sector, while the pre-traineeship pathway will have a specific focus to support an increase in the proportion of males from priority groups in the care sector.

- NSA clause/s addressed: A145(c)
- Indicative funding allocation: $15.05M

Priority Outcome 4: Data and research – leading research to drive the policy and operational approach to improving completions in NSW, contribute to the national evidence base, and with input from students, inform innovative pilots over the life of the NSA.

- The NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) will lead data and research projects that will provide a deeper understanding of completions in the NSW context, including: refining completion rate methodology; studies into finishing training successfully across different cohorts, drivers for non-completion, and tertiary support factors; in-training progress monitoring and SMS support; and, departmental monitoring dashboard.
- Rationale and further details on refining completion rate methodology:
    - The department and NCVER have discussed shared concerns about the calculation of completion rates, particularly in relation to A&Ts where changes in circumstances beyond the control of the learner or the training provider contribute to elevated non-completion rates.
    - NCVER have agreed to analyse the data from the nationally available set in parallel to NSW using the local data, which contains greater detail, to see if an administrative solution can be found that meets the satisfaction of NCVER and NSW.
    - The focus is primarily on A&Ts but there is some interest in government funded VET and assessing if scenarios where learners move to other study where the fields of study align (effectively continuing their episode of training under a different program), whether this is represents a genuine non-completion or is reflective of greater commitment to that field of study.
    - Finally, NSW is interested in assessing if all non-completions represent a failure of the system, as such analysis in the outcome from partial completion of training is an area for analysis and potentially refinement of the definition of non-completion or creation of secondary metric that represents non-completion with a positive vocational outcome, the intended purpose of a robust training sector.
- The data and research will complement national work, such as the work of the National VET Completions Taskforce in the NSW context. Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) have voiced interest in the progress of the work as it contributes to the suite of intervention strategies employed nationally. The work will be socialised with other jurisdiction and key learnings will be shared. The expansion on the work undertaken previously is the richness of the data held

in the NSW longitudinal data asset combining school education, all episodes of training (government funded and fee for service), local NSW data elements not held in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA) and vocational data from ATO records. This longitudinal approach (all learners 11-67 year of age with an education record in NSW from 2016 onwards) allows understanding the shifting pathways learners take across with education and work careers.

- The data and research will inform future completions initiatives funded through a Completions Innovative Initiatives Fund (CIIF), enabled through a coordination function to support delivery, evaluation and reporting across the initiatives. A portion of NSA funding under this IP will be allocated to the CIIF.
- Future pilots funded by the CIIF will complement and/or augment existing NSW and Commonwealth measures avoiding duplication of effort or adding to system complexity. The intention is that Commonwealth investment through the CIIF will enable NSW to implement innovative new or expanded initiatives targeted to priority cohorts and industry needs as determined by the findings of CESE's data and research projects.
- Examples of possible future pilots based on the findings of the above studies are:
    - differentiated incentives and/or rewards for learners from different priority groups to pursue their main reason for training.
    - new and/or expanded program/s to identify at-risk learners and provide financial (e.g. scholarships, stipends, allowances) and non-financial supports (e.g. case management, mentoring, careers advice) to address barriers to completion.
    - incentivising and rewarding high performing RTOs to implement best practice in wraparound supports through contract management and a grants program.
    - direct outreach program to A&Ts in priority groups and/or critical industries
    - supports for A&Ts and other learners from priority groups after cancelling a training contract or dropping out to link up with other services or training pathways
    - attraction and retention initiatives tailored to industries where enrolments are in decline, such as building and construction
    - pilot new targeted regulatory approaches to address practices of high-risk employers, to reduce barriers to apprentice and trainee completion.
- Future pilots will be informed by consultation with the department's expanded student voice body, the Skills and Pathways Advocacy and Representative Committee (SPARC) (see below for more detail). Project plans will include evidence of consultation with SPARC.
- A set of criteria will be developed for determining eligibility of future pilots under the Completions Innovative Initiatives Fund (CIIF), and the department will share pilot project plans with the Commonwealth and agree these via progress milestones.
- Any unused funds across the initiatives at the end of a financial year will be re-allocated to the CIIF funding pool for the following financial year.
- NSA clause/s addressed: A145(a), A146 (a), A146 (b)
- Indicative funding allocation: $9.56M
- CESE will also be involved in evaluation of the initiatives (see Evaluation arrangements below).

Reach and additionality

- Analysis of drivers for non-completion will enable a new policy definition of what successful completion looks like. A new definition will not affect completions reporting but contribute to a greater understanding of the drivers for non-completion. There is the potential that by using the longitudinal data asset managed by NSW DoE that a secondary measure of partial completion with a positive vocational outcome be scoped up reflecting the contribution of the completed units of competency to positive vocational progress by the learner. This work

will be socialised with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth to support all stakeholders' understanding of non or partial completions.

- Defining a new methodology that more captures the learner journey more accurately will address gaps in the current approach by enabling NSW to follow learners who change courses but continue in training.
- Tracking learner outcomes longitudinally will enable a greater understanding of the effectiveness of training in obtaining a job in the industry, particularly in the recently identified Critical Skills Areas in the NSW Skills Plan.
- The reach and additionality of future pilots funded by the Completions Innovative Initiatives Fund will be determined as part of the project plans.

2) Outline how this proposal addresses clause A146, including links to recommendations of the National VET Completions Taskforce.

Meeting the needs and interests of priority groups, including the voice of students

This implementation plan prioritises the participation of equity cohorts in VET by enabling targeted supports to improve student outcomes, including for learners to complete their qualification or otherwise achieve their main reason for study.

In addition to the findings in the National VET Completions Taskforce Report (the Report), NSW own evidence suggests there is value in tailoring completions to the needs of priority groups. For example, cohort analysis shows that full qualification completion rates for NSW Smart and Skilled fee-free initiatives are lowest for Aboriginal learners (35 per cent), students with a disability (46 per cent), initiatives that target young people (42 per cent) and out of home care scholarships (43 per cent).2

Lifting participation and completions for priority cohorts is a key focus of this implementation plan, as well as the NSW Skills Plan under Strategic Priority 2: Improve equitable outcomes, pathways and access for students.

The implementation plan also allows for a mechanism to enhance the voice of students in VET policy and delivery. The department is currently reviewing SPARC and the implementation plan presents an opportunity to act on key recommendations stemming from the review. Additionally, the department will leverage the expanded SPARC through a consultation process to be developed by March 2027. The process will ensure learners' voices are heard on the design and implementation of future pilots identified by CESE's research studies.

Contribution to the national evidence base

CESE's data and research will reflect and make recommendations relevant to the NSW context. However, this implementation plan presents the opportunity to publicly release de-identified and/or abridged versions of internal publications for the benefit of the national evidence base and information-sharing between jurisdictions. The department will explore options for online publication and information-sharing as part of the project plans.

National VET Completions Taskforce Report (the Report)

[2] Smart and Skilled Fee-Free Training Completion Rates paper.

Several recommendations from the Report shaped the development of this implementation plan. In line with the learner journey identified in the Report, the package of initiatives provides targeted interventions at critical points where extra support will make a difference to completions. Some initiatives span multiple phases of the learner journey and some complement a learner's transition between phases.

Many of the initiatives have a learner-focused approach, noting the Report's key theme around addressing the broad range of learner characteristics that increase the risk of non-completing, such as First Nations learners, learners in regional or remote areas, and learners who face foundation skills barriers (National VET Completions Report, p. 37).

Commonwealth Investment ($M)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$73.26M	NSW will meet its matched funding obligations through committed expenditure, consistent with clause A91 of the NSA. See details below.	1 July 2025	31 December 2028

Improved completions - approach to matched funding arrangements (clause A144 refers) – to be reconciled over the life of the NSA.

The programs proposed to meet matched funding are from NSW funding under the NSW Skills Budget, rather than Commonwealth flexible funding. The programs in the table below are subject to future government decision-making and funding levels are indicative only and reflect 2024-25 funding commitments. Where changes to programs are made, NSW will replace any matched funding contribution with alternative eligible expenditure in agreement with the Commonwealth.

Details of matched funding	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Commonwealth contribution	$26,165,000	$18,838,000	$18,838,000	$9,419,000	$73,260,000
NSW Government contribution:					
Educational Pathways Program	$8,000,000	$8,000,000	$8,000,000	$8,000,000	$32,000,000
RIEP	$7,500,000	$7,500,000	$7,500,000	$7,500,000	$30,000,000
A&T Assistance Programs	$2,900,000	$2,900,000	$2,900,000	$2,900,000	$11,600,000
Total	$18,400,000	$18,400,000	$18,400,000	$18,400,000	$73,600,000

The New South Wales Government will provide details of their matched funding contributions at the end of each financial year, commencing 1 July 2024 until 31 December 2028. Final payments under this implementation plan may be reduced where the total contribution by the New South Wales Government over the life of the project does not align with the Commonwealth contribution.

The NSW Government will provide matched funding through committed expenditure that relates to the specific policy initiative, consistent with clause A91 of the NSA.

Performance Indicators

Priority Outcome 1) Working learners – enabling uplift in apprenticeship and traineeship (A&T) completions to unlock the critical skills needed for the future.

- Commencement and completion rates
- NCVER National Student Outcomes Survey
- Delivery of programs under this priority outcome

Priority Outcome 2) Priority cohorts – implementing targeted initiatives designed for priority cohorts to drive improvement in training outcomes.

- Commencement and completion rates
- NSW Post-School Destinations and Experiences survey
- NCVER National Student Outcomes Survey
- Case studies
- Delivery of programs under this priority outcome

Priority Outcome 3) Critical industries – developing a sustainable, highly skilled workforce for critical industries.

- Commencements and completions in Critical Skills Areas
- Employer satisfaction with accredited training
- VET-related occupations in shortage in NSW
- Case studies
- Interviews with industry and/or local employers
- Delivery of programs under this priority outcome

Priority Outcome 4) Data and research – leading research to drive the policy and operational approach in NSW, contribute to the national evidence base, and with input from students, inform innovative pilots over the life of the NSA.

- Completion of data and research projects under this priority outcome

Evaluation arrangements

Evaluation framework

The department will develop an overarching evaluation framework for implementation plan. The evaluation framework will support continuous improvement over the life of the implementation plan and inform future efforts in NSW to support students at all stages of their learning journey to complete.

The evaluation framework may take the form of a matrix, set of quantitative and qualitative metrics, or evaluation questions. Evaluation reports will be analytical and the department will share findings with the Commonwealth.

The evaluation framework is likely to:

- Comment on the effectiveness, efficiency and appropriateness of the initiatives in achieving the priority outcomes.
- Assess overall progress towards achieving the priority outcomes using traffic light status.

- Track progress of qualitative and quantitative performance indicators.
- Discuss lessons learned (successes and challenges), adjustments made, and other observations about key initiatives for each priority outcome.
- Outline emerging risks and mitigations where relevant.

The department will share an evaluation framework template with the Commonwealth at the March 2026 milestone payment.

Progress report card

Beginning March 2026, the department will prepare a six-monthly progress report card. The progress report card will provide a high-level statistical overview of the uptake, benefits and other key findings of the initiatives under the four priority outcomes.

The progress report card will be a separate, additional reporting mechanism not linked to milestone payments to ensure the Commonwealth is kept informed of NSW progress. However, the first progress report card is linked to the September 2026 milestone payment.

Given the time needed to fully assess the impact of the implementation plan on completions, the progress report card will identify progress made at other critical points over the four-year qualification cycle, for example at the end of the first year of training.

MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – IMPROVED COMPLETIONS

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1: Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan	1: Bilateral implementation plan agreed with Commonwealth	$7,326,000 To be provided in the 2025-26 financial year.	1 July 2025

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 2: Commonwealth acceptance of implementation update outlining initial progress to set up initiatives.	2: Implementation update signed by NSW Department of Education senior official. This will include details of progress made toward stakeholder consultation, program guidelines, procurement guidelines, and any completed procurement activity where appropriate to the period ending 30 September 2025. • Report card: Statistical status update on implementation progress in infographic format, including testimonials from program participants where available. • The update will show where progress has been made towards implementation of initiatives to deliver: Under Priority Outcome 1, progress towards: • Increasing recipients of scholarship incentive • Increasing participation of priority groups, with breakdown by cohort • Increasing the number of qualified and/or upskilled graduates in priority industries Under Priority Outcome 2, progress towards: • Meeting demand in un-serviced regions • Increasing participation in VET Under Priority Outcome 3, progress towards: • Meeting indicators to be developed on commencements and completions, learner and employer satisfaction, and occupations in shortage. Under Priority Outcome 4, progress towards: • Completion of data and research projects Implementation stage of Completions Innovative Initiatives Fund (CIIF).	$9,420,000	30 September 2025

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 3: Commonwealth acceptance of an overarching evaluation framework template as per the evaluation arrangements	3a: Evaluation framework signed by NSW Department of Education senior official. • Building on the department's experience as program managers, the framework may use elements of existing evaluation measures where they are already in effect, particularly for programs that will be built on and expanded. 3b: Report card providing a statistical status update on implementation progress in infographic format, including testimonials from program participants where available. The update will show where progress has been made towards implementation of Outcomes 1 - 4 to 31 March 2026 as per deliverables in Milestone 2.	$9,419,000	31 March 2026
Milestone 4: Commonwealth acceptance of report card providing implementation update including uptake, benefits, and early findings. Commonwealth acceptance of project plan/s for pilots under the Completions Innovative Initiative Fund (CIIF)	4a: Report card providing a statistical status update on implementation progress in infographic format, including testimonials from program participants where available. The update will show where progress has been made towards implementation of Outcomes 1 - 4 to 30 September 2026 as per deliverables in Milestone 2. 4b: Project plan/s will contain rationale, scope, intended outcomes, and evaluation mechanism/s.	$9,419,000	30 September 2026
Milestone 5: Commonwealth acceptance of mid-point evaluation report analysing implementation across Priority Outcomes 1-4.	5: Mid-point progress report on outcomes delivered to date signed by NSW Department of Education senior official. The report will utilise the mechanisms identified in the '**Performance Indicators'** set out on pp. 13-14 of this IP to show progress towards achieving the Priority Outcomes 1-4.	$9,419,000	31 March 2027

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 6: Commonwealth acceptance report card on uptake, benefits, and early findings.	6: Report card providing a statistical status update on implementation progress in infographic format, including testimonials from program participants where available. The update will show where progress has been made towards implementation of Outcomes 1 - 4 to 30 September 2027 as per deliverables in Milestone 2.	$9,419,000	30 September 2027
Milestone 7: Commonwealth acceptance report card on uptake, benefits, and early findings.	7: Report card providing a statistical status update on implementation progress in infographic format, including testimonials from program participants where available. The update will show where progress has been made towards implementation of Outcomes 1 - 4 to 31 March 2028 as per deliverables in Milestone 2.	$9,419,000	31 March 2028
Milestone 8: Commonwealth acceptance of: • CESE research report summary and pilot project outcomes funded by the Completions Innovative Initiative Fund (CIIF). • End-point evaluation report analysing implementation across Priority Outcomes 1-4.	Signed by NSW Department of Education senior official: 8a: Final summary of findings from completed data and research projects to be made available to other, jurisdictions, noting a focus of this SPI is to contribute to the national evidence base (Clause A146.B) 8b: Final outcomes from pilot initiatives delivered under the Completions Innovative Initiative Fund (CIIF) 8c: Final evaluation report including analysis of progress towards meeting the four priority outcomes, lessons learned, and any findings to inform future programs that support improved completions	$9,419,000	30 September 2028
	TOTAL:	$73,260,000	

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 / 2025

Signed *for and on behalf of the State of New South Wales by*

The Honourable Steve Whan MP
Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education

27 / 6 / 2025