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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and the Northern Territory Government under the 2024–2028 National Skills Agreement (the NSA) and should be read in conjunction with the NSA and the NSA Bilateral Implementation Plan Guidance.

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 Northern Territory will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: The Enhanced VET Data and Evidence policy initiative is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government.

REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

Reporting

1. Performance reporting will be due by 31 March and 30 September each year until the cessation of this Agreement, or the final payment is processed.

2. The Northern Territory 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, Northern Territory 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 Northern Territory 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.

ENHANCED VET DATA AND EVIDENCE (CLAUSE A130 TO A140 OF THE NSA)

The Enhanced VET Data and Evidence policy initiative includes a number of measures. The following relates to the VDS program only.

VET Data Streamlining: The Northern Territory opts-in to the VDS program and commits to:

- completing transition to the National VET Data System by 31 December 2028; and
- transitioning State Training Authority and TAFE data systems to the VET Information Standard by 31 December 2028.

1) Specify activities that support the VDS program.

The Northern Territory will support the VDS program by:

- Providing subject matter expertise on the development of the National VET Data system
- Providing input about considerations unique to the Northern Territory
- Participate in VDS program Governance
- In partnership with the Commonwealth and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) support funded registered training organisations headquartered in the Northern Territory to transition to the National VET Data System by 31 December 2028
- Enhance the Northern Territory's vocation education and training data system, or develop and implement a new solution, to be able to interact with the National VET Data System (following the direct model) and complete integration by 31 December 2028.
- Integrating the NT's new vocational education and training data system with existing contract management and reporting systems

The Northern Territory's indicative timeline for its VDS transition is outlined below:

- Project planning artefacts (milestone 2) completed - March 2026
- Finalise procurement of ICT services – May 2026
- Solution design completed – September 2026
- System development completed– March 2027
- System integration testing – May 2027
- User acceptance testing – August 2027
- PEN testing – September 2027
- Implement system –December 2027
- Support and engage NT-funded training organisations to transition (NT sector change engagement dates to be finalised).

*The above indicative dates are dependent on broader VDS program deliverables being completed on-time.

2) Specify activities that support the VET Information Standard.

The Northern Territory will:

- Actively participate in the design and refinement of the VET Information Standard to ensure it meets national requirements while accommodating NT-specific policy and contractual obligations.
- Update NT State Training Authority data systems and interfaces to ensure compatibility with the VET Information Standard and the National VET Data System.
- Provide support to NT-funded RTOs to facilitate adoption of the VET Information Standard and ensure consistent data capture and reporting.

- Undertake testing and validation of data against the VET Information Standard prior to transition to live operations.
- Monitor ongoing compliance of NT data submissions with the VET Information Standard, including implementing quality assurance processes and feedback loops with providers.

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

The Northern Territory operates as a direct reporting pathway jurisdiction. Under this model, all NT-funded RTOs submit VET Activity Data directly to the National VET Data System.

4) Specify the State's collection and submission processes.

The Northern Territory 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).

As a direct reporting pathway jurisdiction, the Northern Territory will not collect VET Activity Data directly from RTOs for submission to the National VET Data System.

The NT:

- Require, through funding contracts, that NT-funded RTOs comply with all VET Information Standard requirements, including submission timelines and validation rules.
- Receives reporting from the VET Data System on submission status, completeness, and quality for NT-funded RTOs.
- Monitors provider compliance i.e. following up with RTOs to address late submissions, validation errors, or data quality concerns, where needed.
- Validate NT-specific business rules (where this cannot be done in the National VET Data System and provide validation results back to the NT-Funded RTO and/or the National VET Data system.

5) Specify activities to support inclusive and robust governance.

The Northern Territory commits to participating in the VDS program delivery governance processes endorsed by SSON as part of the VDS program reset on 24 April 2024. The Northern Territory agrees to implement any changes to governance as agreed by SSON over the life of the program. The Northern Territory commit to providing details of the State specific program governance model and arrangements (for example, project board, governance requirements, and how decisions are made) as part of the project management plan (milestone 2).

6) Specify approach to project management and reporting

The Northern Territory commits to providing a detailed project management plan as part of milestone 2, which will include details of how the Northern Territory will manage its State-specific VDS transition project using contemporary, fit-for-purpose program and project governance, and delivery methodology.

The Northern Territory further 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 by the VDS Steering Group.

Gate Reviews

The Northern Territory commits to actively participating in the VDS program Gate Review process endorsed by SSON on 24 April 2024 as part of the VDS 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 Northern Territory will support 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 Northern Territory 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 $**
Commonwealth contribution	$1,000,000	TBA	TBA	TBA

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 Commonwealth	$500,000	N/A
Milestone 2: Completion and acceptance of detailed State-specific program management planning artifacts	2: State-specific program management planning artifacts accepted by the Commonwealth • 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	31 March 2026
Future milestones to be agreed prior to 30 June 2026 (as per clause A136 of the National Skills Agreement) following delivery of the project management plan at Milestone 2.			

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this implementation plan as follows:

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Signed *for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by*

The Honourable Andrew Giles MP

Minister for Skills and Training

23/12/2025

Signed *for and on behalf of the Northern Territory by*

The Honourable Jo Hersey MP

Minister for Education and Training

09/11/2025