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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and 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: "Ensuring Access to Foundation Skills Training" 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, The 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.

ENSURING ACCESS TO FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING (Clause A104 to A111 of the NSA)

The Northern Territory commits to working cooperatively to develop the 10-year foundation skills strategy (clause A109 (c) refers).

Context of Foundation Skills Delivery in the Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory (NT) foundation skills—language, literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy (LLND)—are provided through a wide mix of independently run programs and training organisations, together forming a dispersed Adult and Community Education (ACE)-equivalent ecosystem. There is no formal ACE sector.

Although this network operates independently and is not formally integrated, it offers a strong base to build on. The NT intends to improve access, create smoother learner pathways, and ensure training reflects the needs of priority cohorts, consistent with the objectives of the NSA.

This includes:

- Registered Training Organisation (RTO)-delivered training: Public and private RTOs offer both accredited and non-accredited foundation skills training. This ranges from standalone FSK Foundation Skills Training (FSK) programs to LLND units embedded in vocational qualifications. Training is aligned to industry needs and supports diverse learners, including early school leavers, jobseekers, and residents of remote or disadvantaged communities.
- Community-based provision: Aboriginal-led organisations, local councils, libraries, and other community providers deliver flexible, place-based LLND programs—often informal or non-accredited—tailored to local and cultural contexts. These providers frequently act as trusted community entry points, identifying needs early and connecting people with further training or support.
- Institution-based learner support: Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) offer targeted assistance for Vocational Education and Training (VET) students, including embedded foundation skills units, academic literacy support, and specialised programs for First Nations learners. While both institutions operate in higher education, their contributions to this Plan are strictly through VET delivery.
- Commonwealth-funded programs: The Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program (General SEE Delivery and SEE First Nations), delivered by BIITE and STEPS Group Australia, provide culturally responsive, job-focused LLND training in regional and remote communities. Other Commonwealth programs deliver LLND support through employment, youth, housing, and health initiatives, expanding access to non-traditional training settings.

Together, these initiatives create a diverse and evolving foundation skills ecosystem. Through this Implementation Plan, the NT aims to coordinate the identification of LLND needs and strengthen support across the VET sector, anchored by a 'No Wrong Door' model within the RTO network. Where possible, new Commonwealth-funded programs and referral mechanisms will align with existing initiatives—such as SEE—to minimise duplication, improve learner experiences, and maximise outcomes.

The activities detailed under the "Ensuring Access to Foundation Skills Training" align with the NT Government's **Rebuilding the Economy Strategy,** which sets the Territory's economic direction. Two priorities from this framework underpin the approach:

- **Build a Bigger, Better Workforce** - strengthen vocational pathways, increase Aboriginal participation and align training with industry demand.
- **Unlock Regional Growth** - empower communities, improve access to training and support infrastructure that enables local employment.

This Implementation Plan also aligns with the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults (2025–2035), which outlines a national commitment to strengthening adult literacy, numeracy, digital and employability skills. The NT's approach reflects all five Strategy priorities: empowering learners, building educator capability, improving access, enhancing system capability, and fostering strong governance and partnerships.

1) Foundation skills assessment and referral that delivers a 'no-wrong door' experience for foundation skills learners (clause A107 refers).

Vision for 'No Wrong Door'

In the NT, a 'No Wrong Door' approach means that anyone enrolling in NT-funded training is assessed for LLND needs and connected with the most appropriate, culturally informed foundation skills support. It is a coordinated, learner-centred model that embeds structured assessment and referral processes across RTOs, ensuring equitable access—particularly for regional, remote, and First Nations learners.

In practice, the NT's 'No Wrong Door' model strengthens access and navigation within the VET system while making use of, and aligning with, existing Commonwealth-funded programs such as SEE where appropriate. The key steps includes:

- Identification and assessment
- Referral and pathway navigation
- Supported and inclusive delivery
- Workforce capability and sector coordination

This targeted focus reflects the NT's delivery context and seeks to maximise impact by improving learner identification, formalising referral pathways, and ensuring consistent access to suitable support services within the RTO network

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ONE: LITERACY AND NUMERACY - IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT

Identifying LLND needs accurately is the first step toward providing effective support. A Territory-wide LLND assessment tool—aligned to Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) and Digital Literacy Skills Framework (DLSF)—will be introduced to ensure all providers and regions apply consistent, equitable identification processes. The tool will be built into existing enrolment and referral systems, so learner needs are recognised early and addressed promptly.

In addition to formal testing, providers will be supported to use locally appropriate methods—such as community information sessions or workplace conversations—to pick up on needs that standard assessments might miss. This is especially important in regional and remote communities, where trust and relationships strongly influence participation.

Assessment results will guide referral decisions under the No Wrong Door model, ensuring each learner is connected to the most suitable training or support. The Territory-wide LLND assessment tool will consistently monitor referrals, learner participation, and training outcomes, feeding into the NT's Performance Monitoring and Continuous Improvement Framework. This integration ensures that evidence from practice informs program refinement and future priorities, linking assessment with broader systems such as Tracking Outcomes.

Embedding consistent, culturally aware practices across the NT will support early identification and assessment, provide clearer pathways into training, and enable the foundation skills system to respond more effectively to individual and local needs.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TWO: NAVIGATION AND REFERRAL PROCESS

Once LLND needs are identified, the next step is ensuring learners are connected to the most appropriate support. Under the No Wrong Door model, this will be done through a structured referral process that links RTOs, SEE providers, community organisations, and other foundation skills services. This means that anyone enrolling in NT-funded training is assessed for LLND needs and connected with the most appropriate, culturally informed foundation skills support. It is a coordinated, learner-centred model that embeds structured assessment and referral processes across RTOs, ensuring equitable access—particularly for regional, remote, and First Nations learners. This coordinated approach helps close referral gaps, reduce duplication, and guarantee every learner has a clear pathway forward. This targeted focus reflects the NT's delivery context and seeks to maximise impact by improving learner identification, formalising referral pathways, and ensuring consistent access to suitable support services within the RTO network.

Pathways may include LLND support embedded in VET programs, NT-funded foundation skills training with contextualised FSK units, or entry to Commonwealth-funded programs such as the SEE Program (General SEE Delivery and SEE First Nations)—both designed for culturally safe delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. Community-based delivery will remain a cornerstone, offering On-Country and workplace-based learning shaped to local needs.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE THREE: SUPPORTED AND INCLUSIVE DELIVERY. PRIORITY COHORT LLND FUND

Once referred learners need training that reflects their circumstances. Delivery will range from LLND units embedded in vocational qualifications, workplace-based foundation skills training. RTOs and community organisation will also offer contextualised, practical learning, as well as promoting applied and On-Country Learning formats in areas such as

financial literacy, digital safety and health literacy-helping learners apply LLND skills in daily life and job readiness.

Where possible, training will be led by culturally competent practitioners and shaped through meaningful community engagement, making learning both relevant and inclusive.

Eligibility will be limited to RTOs participating in the initial rollout of the Territory -wide LLND assessment tool, ensuring that funding aligned with consistent identification of learners needs and integrated into the broader referral and support framework.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOUR: WORKFORCE CAPABILITY AND SECTOR COORDINATION:

Meeting the Northern Territory's diverse delivery needs requires strategic investment in workforce skills and sector coordination. NSA Commonwealth funding will support targeted actions such as accredited FSK training for LLND educators, scholarships for RTO staff to specialise in LLND delivery, and professional development focused on trauma-informed, contextualised, and culturally responsive pedagogy. Capacity-building grants will empower First Nations-led organisations to expand their role within the foundation skills ecosystem. Collectively, these measures aim to build a qualified, culturally competent workforce capable of delivering high-quality foundation skills training across the NT's varied regional and remote contexts.

To further expand the availability and quality of foundation skills educators, the NT will offer scholarships for trainers to complete accredited Adult Education qualifications and deliver professional learning programs aligned with inclusive pedagogical approaches. Regional RTOs will receive support to strengthen internal delivery capacity, with the goal of upskilling at least 50 trainers and assessors over the NSA period. These initiatives are designed to enhance delivery practices and improve learner outcomes, as confirmed through ongoing evaluation.

These efforts will be reinforced by the rollout of a Territory-wide LLND assessment tool and structured referral pathways, supported by consistent data collection and reporting to monitor progress.

Establish a Performance Monitoring, Continuous Improvement and Outcomes Framework:
Ensure delivery approaches evolve based on evidence, performance data, and feedback from learners and providers. The NT will embed a Performance Monitoring and Continuous Improvement Framework to ensure that delivery approaches evolve in response to evidence, data, and stakeholder feedback. All LLND assessments, referrals, and training outcomes will be tracked using the Territory-wide assessment tool, creating a consistent and reliable evidence base. This data will be reviewed by the Foundation Skills Advisory Group, which will identify gaps, share best practice, and recommend targeted improvements. Biannual reports will be provided to the Commonwealth in line with NSA clauses A107–A109, ensuring transparency and accountability. These processes will enable continuous refinement of delivery, with local insights on cultural relevance and learner readiness directly informing adjustments to delivery models, referral protocols, and professional learning activities.

Collectively, these actions will strengthen the NT's capability and capacity to deliver high-quality, coordinated LLND training—particularly in remote and high-need regions—and ensure the foundation skills delivery ecosystem is well-positioned to achieve long-term strategic outcomes under the National Skills Agreement.

The Foundation Skills Advisory Group—made up of RTO, SEE provider, and Department of Education and Training (the department) representatives—will oversee referral protocol development and promote consistency across the sector. Referral data will be captured through the Territory-wide LLND assessment tool, connecting this action to Identification and Assessment, Tracking Outcomes, and Performance Monitoring and Continuous Improvement. In this way, services will be easier to navigate, transitions between programs smoother, and learner retention from first assessment to course completion stronger.

2) Provide no-or low-fee access to foundation skills training in the State's VET and Adult and Community Education (ACE) (or equivalent) systems, for learners who have been assessed as at or below Australian Core Skills Framework and/or Digital Literacy Skills Framework Level 3 (clause A108 refers).

Policy Commitment

NT commits through this Bilateral Implementation Plan to continue to provide no- or low-fee access to foundation skills training in its VET and ACE sector or equivalent for learners with an assessed need during the term of the NSA. This commitment aims to lower financial barriers—particularly for First Nations learners, those in regional and remote areas, and other priority cohorts—so that cost does not prevent participation.

Current Foundation Skills Access and Affordability

Access to affordable foundation skills training in the NT is provided through a mix of fee-free and low-fee VET courses, many of which include accredited or contextualised LLND components. LLND support is also embedded in vocational pathways, particularly in high-demand areas such as care and construction. Culturally informed delivery—delivered On-Country and through workplace-based learning—ensures programs remain relevant and accessible across diverse settings.

Commonwealth-funded programs such as SEE and SEE First Nations, delivered by NT providers, BIITE and STEPS Group Australia, play a key role in meeting learner needs. LLND services are also embedded in broader social programs—such as youth, housing, and health initiatives—bringing training opportunities into community to support participation.

3) Activities that support the Adult Community Education sector or equivalent (clause A109a refers).

The NT's Foundation Skills Implementation Plan will deliver a coordinated suite of initiatives, fully funded through the Commonwealth's funding contribution under the NSA. Together, these initiatives will build a more accessible, consistent, and learner-centred approach to foundation skills delivery across the NT. The focus is to address key delivery gaps—particularly in identification, referral and a more inclusive delivery, to support workforce capability and continuous improvement. The rollout of a Territory-wide LLND

assessment tool sits at the core of the Plan—funded through the NSA—which will support consistent referral and eligibility processes across the VET sector. This will be complemented by the embedding of a 'No Wrong Door' model within the VET system to ensure learners identified with LLND needs are referred to the most appropriate training. Where possible, referral processes will be linked with existing SEE programs to reduce duplication, improve learner experience, and extend program reach.

Implement a Territory-Wide LLND Assessment and Referral Process
See Strategic Initiative One above

Strengthen Delivery in Regional, Remote and Underserved Areas Priority Cohort Targeted LLND Fund
See Strategic Initiative Three above.

Through these targeted actions, the NT aims to reach at least 200 learners annually in remote and high-need regions, while opening new access points for priority cohorts currently outside formal VET pathway.

Build Workforce Capability in Foundation Skills Delivery
See Strategic Initiative Four above.

Strategic Rationale and Coordination
The NT's approach to foundation skills delivery is shaped by its unique geographic, demographic, and cultural context. Large distances between communities, a highly dispersed population, and the significant proportion of First Nations learners require delivery models that are flexible, locally relevant, and culturally grounded. Many learners face complex barriers to participation, including limited access to training providers, low prior educational attainment, and competing personal or community responsibilities.

To address these challenges, the NT's Implementation Plan aligns with the objectives of the NSA while responding directly to local needs. The coordinated suite of initiatives—spanning assessment, referral, targeted funding, workforce capability, and continuous improvement—has been designed to complement and support the existing ecosystem. By embedding the 'No Wrong Door' model across the VET sector and strengthening links with community-based delivery and Commonwealth-funded programs, the NT will create clear, supported pathways into LLND training for all learners.

Implementation will be guided by a Foundation Skills Advisory Group that will oversee delivery, monitor progress, and respond to emerging needs or opportunities for alignment with other initiatives. Drawing on the collective expertise of providers, community organisations, and other key stakeholders, the group will support consistent application of referral processes and ensure that activities remain responsive to learner needs and NT priorities. This collaborative approach will help target investment for the greatest impact, minimise duplication, and foster continuous improvement informed by evidence and feedback.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$3,995,000	N/A	2025	31 December 2028

Ensuring Access to Foundation Skills Training funding arrangements.

Details of funding	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
Commonwealth contribution	$1,699,000	$1,300,000	$850,000	$146,000	$3,995,000

Co-contribution is not required under the NSA Foundations Skills initiative. The NT Government will continue to fund the local foundation skills programs through VET subsidies, e.g. FSK units and Learner Support, which will complement the NSA funded initiatives.

Performance Indicators

To assess the reach and impact of foundation skills delivery in the NT, a set of outcomes-focused performance indicators will be applied. These indicators align with Clauses A107–A109 of the NSA and reflect the NT's geographic, cultural, and service delivery context. They will guide jurisdictional reporting, inform continuous improvement, and support decision-making across the foundation skills system. Data will be disaggregated by region, provider type, and priority cohorts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, remote residents, and early working-age adults (15–34 years). During the first operational year, baseline measures will be established to understand program uptake and impact, with indicative targets revised accordingly.

Learner access and participation will be monitored through the proportion of eligible learners (assessed at or below ACSF/DLSF Level 3) who are referred and offered access to no- or low-fee foundation skills training across NT-led and Commonwealth-supported programs. The initial target is that at least 60% of assessed learners are referred and offered appropriate support within two years, subject to regional capacity and program availability.

Referral pathway effectiveness will be measured by the proportion of learners referred into Foundation Skills support who enrol and commence within six months. The aim is for at least half of referred learners to engage in Foundation Skills training within that timeframe, noting that availability and learner readiness may influence results.

Skills progression and completion will track the proportion of learners who either complete a Foundation Skills course or demonstrate measurable progress in ACSF/DLSF levels in post-assessment. An initial aspirational target of 60% is set, to be reviewed annually based on baseline data and delivery context.

Monitoring and continuous improvement will be demonstrated through the timely submission of biannual progress reports containing participation and engagement data, referral success rates, uptake, completion and a summary of improvements to referral systems, workforce development, or delivery models. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used to provide a full picture of performance.

Initial benchmarks will be set using 2023–24 data and refined over time in consultation with delivery partners. These indicators will also contribute to national evaluation activities under the Foundation Skills Strategic Policy Initiative, with targets adjusted as evidence builds and the program matures.

Evaluation arrangements

Evaluation and continuous improvement are built into the NT's foundation skills delivery through the Performance Monitoring and Continuous Improvement action item. This approach aligns with Clauses A107–A109 of the NSA and is directly linked to the evidence requirements for Milestone 5: Final Evaluation and Outcomes Assessment. It reflects the NT's commitment to delivering outcomes that are relevant to learners, accountable to stakeholders, and informed by evidence.

The evaluation framework looks at access and participation—especially for First Nations and remote learners—as well as training quality, learner progression, the effectiveness of referral processes, and the strength of pathways into further training or employment. Insights are drawn from learner tracking and referral data, ACSF- and DLSF-aligned assessments, and regular engagement with learners, providers, and community partners.

Findings are used in biannual reports to the Commonwealth, in internal program reviews, and within governance processes involving First Nations stakeholders and community organisations. They guide targeted changes to referral systems, delivery models, workforce capability strategies, and access pathways. This ensures the NT's investment remains responsive, learner-centred, and aligned with local needs and NSA priorities, while continually strengthening quality and equity across the foundation skills ecosystem.

MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – ENSURING ACCESS TO FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING

Milestone	Evidence	Payment Value Up To (Commonwealth funded)	Commonwealth reporting period
Milestone 1: Initial payment on agreement of bilateral implementation plan	Bilateral implementation plan agreed with Commonwealth	$399,000	N/A
Milestone 2: Commonwealth acceptance that the NT has operated measures to support increased access to foundation skills to 31 March 2026 by: • Provider and Process Readiness	Report signed by NT senior skills official confirming: • Operational referral processes (RTOs, SEE providers, community orgs) • Commence identification and selection of foundation skills assessment tool •Commence development of the procurement process to acquire a foundation skills assessment tool. • Sector engagement with Foundation Skills Advisory Group (Workforce Capability and Sector Coordination)	$1,300,000	31 March 2026
Milestone 3: Commonwealth acceptance that the NT has operated measures to support increased access to foundation skills to 31 March 2027 by: • Access and Community Delivery Implementation	Report signed by NT senior skills official confirming: • Procurement of the foundation skills assessment tool completed. • Implementation of the foundation skills assessment tool. • Commence first-stage deployment of foundation skills assessment tool to RTOs: • Initial (LLND tool) provider familiarisation training delivered • initial stage learner assessment and referral data captured •Establishment of priority cohort targeted LLND fund • Participation of regional and priority cohorts (under the Strengthening Delivery in Regional, Remote and Underserved Areas activity stream) • Summary of the assessment tool program features	$1,300,000	31 March 2027
Milestone 4: Commonwealth acceptance that the NT has operated measures to support	Report signed by NT senior skills official confirming: • the number of trainers undertaking/ completing professional development • Measurable learner progression (ACSF/DLSF)	$850,000	30 September 2027

increased access to foundation skills to 30 September 2027 by: • Workforce and Learner Progress Outcomes	• Transitions into Foundation Skills training following referral • the number of capacity-building grants to regional and First Nations-led organisations • Employer/community feedback on delivery quality		
Milestone 5: Commonwealth acceptance of the NT's final report on implemented measures supporting increased access to foundation skills by: • Final Evaluation and Outcomes Assessment	Final report signed by NT senior skills official providing: • Aggregated training outcomes demonstrating participation, completion, progression • Impact on First Nations, remote and priority cohorts • Lessons learned and recommendations for future delivery • Summary of changes made through continuous improvement	$146,000	30 September 2028
	Total	**$3,995,000**	

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
16 /12/ 2025

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

The Honourable Jo Hersey MP
Minister for Education and Training
23/ 10/ 2025