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 of Australia 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 Northern Territory will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement:

"Measures to strengthen the VET Workforce" is a joint initiative between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government.

REPORTING AND PAYMENTS

Reporting

5. 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.

6. The Northern Territory will provide to the Commonwealth a traffic light status and activity summary on all policy initiatives.

7. The Commonwealth will provide templates for the purposes of reporting.

Payments

8. The Commonwealth will make payment subject to performance reporting demonstrating the relevant milestone has been met.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. 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.

MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE VET WORKFORCE (Clause A124 to A129 of the NSA)

1) Outline activities that will support, grow and retain a quality VET workforce (including relationship to the VET Workforce Blueprint):

To strengthen the VET Workforce, the Northern Territory Government will implement a series of activities guided by 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.

Together, these priorities ensure that Measures to Strengthen the VET Workforce contribute to broader economic and social goals.

Funding Allocations

The Northern Territory Government has committed funding to four strategic initiatives under this Implementation Plan, totalling $2,450,000. These allocations are indicative amounts, and the NT reserves the right to amend funding per initiative depending on interest, uptake, and emerging workforce priorities. The NT also reserves the option to introduce additional strategic initiatives should new opportunities or needs be identified through sector engagement.

Current indicative allocations:

1. Strategic Initiative 1: Supporting Early Career VET Educators – $500,000
2. Strategic Initiative 2: Advancing Capability and Professional Learning in the VET Workforce – $500,000
3. Strategic Initiative 3: Strengthening Quality and Governance Across the VET Workforce, Sector wide capacity building – $1,250,000
4. Strategic Initiative 4: Building the First Nations VET Workforce – $200,000

These investments are intended to support targeted, responsive activities aligned with the VET Workforce Blueprint, with delivery and expenditure monitored through agreed milestones and evaluation indicators.

Stakeholder Consultation and Sector Engagement

The Northern Territory Government has developed this Implementation Plan in collaboration with key VET sector stakeholders through a series of consultative forums and strategic engagement processes.

A key platform underpinning this collaboration is the Northern Territory VET Community of Practice (VET CoP). Established with support from the Northern Territory Government, the CoP functions as a strategic governance and engagement mechanism for VET workforce development across the Territory. It enables structured consultation with the VET sector, supports coordinated input into policy and reform priorities, and facilitates the delivery of professional development and system capability initiatives.

First Nations-led RTOs are formally represented within the CoP governance structure, coordinated through the NT First Nations RTO Advisory Group and supported by targeted engagement activities, ensuring the perspectives and priorities of Aboriginal Community-Controlled and remote training providers are embedded in system planning and implementation.

- Two dedicated RTO Roundtable Forums were held in Darwin (28 February 2025) and Alice Springs (28 March 2025), providing a platform for providers, trainers, and First Nations

representatives to identify workforce priorities and propose practical strategies for capability development.

Feedback from these forums directly shaped the design of initiatives in this Plan, including:

- The expansion of the NT VET CoP
- Dedicated support and scholarships for early career and advanced VET educators
- Structured mentoring, peer learning, and team-teaching models
- Targeted scholarships and initiatives enhancing workforce capability through industry collaboration
- The development of a culturally grounded First Nations educator pathway

The Northern Territory Government remains committed to sustained engagement with the VET sector and will continue to adapt program delivery in response to practitioner and community feedback. Implementation of workforce development initiatives under the Community of Practice model is supported by the VET CoP Executive Committee, which provides strategic oversight, governance, and quality assurance.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE ONE: SUPPORTING EARLY CAREER VET EDUCATORS

In alignment with Opportunity 5 – Action 12 of the VET Workforce Blueprint—monitor and evaluate the impact of the TAE Training Package and promote the undertaking of higher-level qualifications to support practitioner development and expand structured professional learning opportunities for early career teachers, trainers and assessors.

This initiative will be delivered through a dedicated Early Career Educator Stream, established under the broader VET CoP framework. It will provide induction, capability development, and retention support for new and transitioning practitioners, including those undertaking or progressing from the updated TAE Training Package.

Training design reflects extensive sector consultation, including the 2025 RTO Roundtable Forums, and responds to the identified need for more consistent, coordinated early career development. A modular, agile delivery model will support a flexible and responsive approach—tailored to the needs of educators operating in diverse and often remote contexts.

Core components include:

- Structured induction programs covering key elements of VET pedagogy, compliance, and learner engagement
- Mentoring and coaching, particularly in the first 12–24 months of practice
- Collaborative delivery models, including team teaching and shadowing opportunities
- Professional networking and Communities of Practice to reduce isolation and build sector cohesion

Annual Development Programs will provide repeatable entry points for induction and upskilling, and the initiative is expected to support at least 40 early career educators in its first year, with a target of up to 80 participants annually as delivery matures and sector engagement increases subject to sector capacity.

In addition, the NT Government will fund an initial 10 targeted scholarships to support early career educators to undertake development in high-priority areas. Scholarships will be awarded based on demonstrated organisational support and alignment with workforce priorities.

Tailored support will also be available for individuals transitioning from industry, including access to mentoring and micro-credentials in adult learning and assessment design. This approach ensures culturally and geographically contextualised delivery, responsive to the needs of the Territory's regional and remote workforce.

Oversight is provided through the VET CoP Executive Committee, which ensures alignment, consistency, and quality across all professional learning initiatives under this Implementation Plan.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE TWO: ADVANCING CAPABILITY AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN THE VET WORKFORCE

Aligned with Opportunity 4 – Action 11 of the VET Workforce Blueprint—to implement targeted professional learning that addresses industry and pedagogical priorities, including inclusivity, respect and gender equity—the Northern Territory Government is establishing a new professional learning stream to support advanced VET educators.

The Advanced Educator Stream, delivered under the VET CoP, will offer tailored development pathways for experienced VET practitioners, including trainers, assessors, and education leaders from all provider types. This cohort typically includes educators with 3+ years of delivery experience, with responsibilities in mentoring, program leadership, curriculum design, or delivery in complex learning environments.

The initiative is expected to support a minimum of 40 advanced educators annually, with an aspirational target of up to 70 participants as sector uptake increases.

Development activities will focus on building:

- Educational leadership and mentoring capability
- Inclusive and culturally responsive training practice
- Regional and remote delivery expertise, including First Nations contexts

To maintain vocational relevance and encourage innovation, the stream will also support structured engagement with contemporary industry practices through professional shadowing, curriculum co-design, and applied learning models.

A pool of up to 10 scholarships will be available in the first year to support access to higher-level qualifications or specialist training in areas such as adult learning, inclusive education, and culturally responsive delivery. Final numbers will depend on course selection and participant demand.

The initiative builds on earlier pilot activities and sector consultation, with strategic oversight provided by the VET CoP Executive Committee. It contributes to the Territory's broader strategy to retain expertise, support system-wide capability uplift, and ensure high-quality VET delivery across the Northern Territory.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE THREE: STRENGTHENING QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE ACROSS THE VET WORKFORCE - SECTOR WIDE CAPACITY BUILDING

In recognition of the essential roles played by VET administrators, compliance officers, learner support staff, and operational leaders, the Northern Territory Government is expanding the VET CoP to include a dedicated VET Quality Stream.

This initiative represents a substantive expansion of earlier quality and compliance engagement forums—moving from periodic networking events to a structured, year-round professional development and knowledge-sharing platform. It directly supports the goals of the VET Workforce Blueprint and National Skills Agreement by strengthening quality assurance, enhancing system governance, and building capability across the broader VET workforce.

The VET Quality CoP Stream will provide structured learning and peer collaboration opportunities focused on:

- Regulatory compliance and self-assurance practices
- Learner-centred support systems
- Organisational risk management
- Remote and culturally responsive quality delivery

Priority areas being addressed include maintaining regulatory readiness, embedding continuous improvement, and building leadership capability in smaller RTOs—particularly in regional, remote, and First Nations contexts where workforce size and isolation present persistent challenges.

The initiative is expected to support 50–80 participants per year, with reach expanding through multi-format delivery (including online engagement and regional forums). Shared resources and tools developed through the stream will be centrally disseminated via the NT VET CoP platform, with opportunities to align and collaborate with Commonwealth initiatives (such as the Quality Reforms) identified through ongoing engagement with national regulators and intergovernmental networks.

By strengthening capability and professional recognition in this critical workforce segment, the initiative supports a whole-of-system approach to quality—reinforcing the foundations of effective VET delivery from the classroom through to governance and compliance.

Together with the Early Career and Advanced Educator streams, this initiative contributes to a scalable, inclusive and sector-owned platform for continuous improvement and workforce development across the Northern Territory.

The stream is coordinated under the VET CoP Executive Committee, which ensures alignment and consistency across all professional learning initiatives within this Implementation Plan

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE FOUR: BUILDING THE FIRST NATIONS VET WORKFORCE

In alignment with Opportunity 2 – Action 6 of the VET Workforce Blueprint — develop localised and bespoke First Nations strategies to build the First Nations VET workforce from the ground up in partnership with First Nations peoples — the Northern Territory Government is progressing a place-based, culturally responsive approach to workforce development.

The First Nations Trainer and Assessor Development Project is the primary initiative under this action and is being delivered in partnership with the First Nations Teacher Education Hub at Charles Darwin University. This project is central to the NT Government's commitment to building a culturally grounded and community led First Nations VET workforce and aligned closely with the NSA Closing the Gap sector strengthening initiative.

Under this Implementation Plan, activity is focused specifically on the co-design and development of culturally appropriate learning and assessment resources to support First Nations learners undertaking the TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, from the Training and Education (TAE) Training Package. These resources are being developed in collaboration with First Nations communities, embedding cultural safety, place-based pedagogy, and community leadership at the heart of design. This marks a critical shift from previous approaches, moving

beyond mentoring and support programs to embed cultural integrity in the tools and materials used in qualification delivery.

Responsibility for trialling and scaling up the delivery of these resources, including participant support and implementation across remote and regional settings, will be progressed under the NSA Closing the Gap policy initiative. This ensures clear delineation of investment streams and aligns with the Closing the Gap commitment to Priority Reform 3 — transforming mainstream institutions — and Priority Reform 2 — strengthening the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector.

The initial phase will produce a suite of culturally responsive training and assessment resources, publicly available for broader sector use. These will support a sustainable pipeline of First Nations trainers and assessors and strengthen national qualification delivery through enhanced cultural responsiveness.

This initiative, as scoped within the VET Workforce policy initiative, demonstrates the NT Government's commitment to genuine co-design, quality resource development, and the foundational steps toward a more inclusive and representative VET workforce.

The NT Government has allocated $200,000 under this initiative to support the development of culturally responsive learning and assessment resources for First Nations trainer candidates. In addition, $200,000 has been allocated to support scholarships and targeted development for early career and advanced VET educators, while $316,144 will support sector-wide capability building across all three workforce development streams. These allocations form part of the Territory's $1.225 million investment in the Measures to Strengthen the VET Workforce and will be tracked through relevant milestones and evaluation indicators.

2) Engagement arrangements, including relevant partnerships with First Nations peoples:

The Northern Territory Government is committed to working in genuine partnership with First Nations peoples in the design, delivery, and evaluation of VET workforce development initiatives. Engagement is underpinned by principles of co-design, community leadership, and cultural safety, with a strong focus on increasing First Nations participation, representation, and leadership across the VET workforce.

To support this commitment, the First Nations RTO Advisory Group provides strategic advice and cultural oversight across programs impacting First Nations trainers, assessors, and learners. The group comprises representatives from the Northern Territory's First Nations-owned Registered Training Organisations, bringing direct community and sector expertise into policy and program development. While the group operates independently, it is formally recognised as a component of the VET CoP ensuring that First Nations voices are embedded within broader workforce governance and planning structures. Once fully established, the Advisory Group will also provide broader advice to the Northern Territory Government, including on Closing the Gap measures and other cross-sector workforce reforms.

In parallel, the Northern Territory Government is investing in First Nations Trainer Capacity Building, with a strong focus on culturally responsive and community-informed pathways into the VET teaching profession. This work is being delivered through a combination of targeted initiatives under both the *VET Workforce* and *Closing the Gap* policy streams of the National Skills Agreement.

Under the *VET Workforce* initiative, investment is focused on:

- Co-designing culturally grounded TAE learning and assessment resources, in partnership with the First Nations Teacher Education Hub and Indigenous-led providers, tailored specifically to the needs of First Nations learners and regional/remote delivery contexts.

Under the NSA *Closing the Gap* policy initiative, the Northern Territory Government will support:

- Trialling and scaling the delivery of the TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment using these co-designed resources, in partnership with First Nations RTOs and communities
- Supporting the identification and development of mentor-trainers and dual professionals, particularly in community-based roles
- Embedding First Nations engagement across the broader VET workforce system, including through governance, mentoring, and capability-building frameworks.

This work is coordinated across both the *VET Workforce* and the NSA *Closing the Gap* initiatives to ensure alignment of design, delivery, and long-term sustainability.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$1,225,000	$1,225,000	1 July 2024	31 December 2028

Measures to strengthen the VET workforce - approach to matched funding arrangements (clause A126 refers) – to be reconciled over the life of the NSA.

Details of matched funding	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
State contribution	$716,144	$158,856	$140,000	$140,000	$70,000	$1,225,000
Commonwealth contribution		$798,000	$297,000	$100,000	$30,000	$1,225,000
Total	$716,144	$956,856	$437,000	$240,000	$100,000	$2,450,000

The Northern Territory Government confirms that it will meet its matched funding obligations for this Implementation Plan through direct financial contributions only.

The Northern Territory does not intend to include in-kind contributions toward this policy initiative.

The NT 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 NT Government over the life of the project does not align with the Commonwealth contribution.

Performance Indicators

The performance indicators below provide a balanced combination of quantitative and qualitative measures aligned with the VET Workforce Blueprint and tailored to the Northern Territory's workforce and delivery context. These indicators are designed to track progress across workforce participation, sector engagement, program delivery, and governance outcomes over the life of the Implementation Plan.

Indicators are linked to activity streams described in this Plan and will inform reporting against agreed milestones. Where available, participation estimates and indicative delivery frequencies are included, and data will be sourced through delivery partner reports, stakeholder feedback, and program-level monitoring. Oversight and review will be coordinated by the VET CoP Executive Committee, with refinements made as needed in response to sector input and evaluation findings.

Given the Northern Territory's small and highly dispersed population, participation targets have been set to balance ambition with deliverability. While modest in absolute numbers, these targets represent a proportionally significant investment in VET workforce development and are designed to ensure depth of engagement, particularly in regional and remote communities.

Across the life of the Plan (2025–2028), participation targets are expected to reach:

- Up to 240 early career educators through structured induction and mentoring programs (approximately 60 per year)
- Up to 150 advanced practitioners through the Advanced Educator and Quality CoP streams
- 20–30 First Nations participants supported through the co-design and scaling of culturally grounded TAE resources
- Up to 20 scholarships awarded across early career and advanced educator streams, subject to course availability and demand

1. Attraction and Engagement of First Nations VET Workforce (Blueprint Action 6)
    - Establishment and continued operation of the TAE First Nations Advisory Group, providing strategic input and cultural oversight on workforce initiatives.
    - Increased participation of First Nations stakeholders in VET workforce planning and program development, as reflected in engagement data and advisory outcomes.

2. Governance and Sector Coordination
    - The VET CoP Executive Committee meets quarterly to oversee implementation and ensure alignment across professional learning streams.
    - Annual reporting on the performance and sector impact of Community of Practice (CoP) initiatives is shared with key stakeholders to inform policy and planning.

3. Workforce Retention and Career Development (Blueprint Action 12)

    - Ongoing delivery of the Early Career Educator Stream through the NT VET CoP, supporting structured induction, mentoring and professional learning.
    - Improved confidence, capability and retention among early career VET practitioners, particularly in regional, remote, and priority sector contexts.

4. Advanced Professional Learning and Industry Relevance (Blueprint Action 11)
    - Targeted professional development delivered through the Advanced Educator Stream and VET Quality CoP, supporting advanced pedagogy, leadership and organisational quality.
    - Strengthened sector capability and vocational alignment through applied learning, peer engagement, and context-responsive professional practice.

5. Structured Engagement with Contemporary Industry Practice
    - Opportunities for structured engagement with current industry practice embedded within professional learning streams, including curriculum co-design, applied learning models, and practitioner shadowing.

- Strengthened vocational relevance of training delivery, contributing to improved industry responsiveness and practitioner confidence.

Evaluation arrangements

Evaluation will assess the relevance, effectiveness and impact of initiatives delivered under this Bilateral Implementation Plan. The approach will align with the objectives of the National Skills Agreement and the VET Workforce Blueprint and will support continuous improvement and evidence-informed workforce planning.

Evaluation will be proportionate to the scale and scope of funded activities and integrated with existing NT governance arrangements. Oversight will be provided through the VET CoP Executive Committee with periodic review of performance data and stakeholder input to guide delivery adjustments as required.

Core evaluation activities will include:

- Annual performance reporting by delivery partners, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data
- A mid-term review to assess implementation progress and inform program refinement
- A final review to evaluate outcomes, relevance and sustainability

Evaluation will consider:

- Effectiveness – achievement of outcomes in workforce attraction, retention and capability
- Appropriateness – alignment with NT workforce priorities and needs of priority cohorts
- Efficiency – delivery progress and use of resources against planned objectives

Where appropriate, stakeholder perspectives will be gathered through existing advisory structures, targeted consultations, and case study insights. Findings will inform NT Government reporting under the National Skills Agreement and contribute to broader workforce policy development and practice improvement.

A final report will consolidate findings from performance indicator monitoring, mid-term and end-point evaluations, and sector engagement processes. It will include:

- Analysis of performance against projected participation targets and qualitative outcomes
- Key insights from the VET CoP, delivery partners, and advisory groups
- Integration of relevant Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) labour market data, particularly in relation to workforce shortages, sector demand, and First Nations workforce participation trends
- Recommendations for the long-term sustainability and scalability of initiatives beyond 2028

The NT Government will engage an independent consultant evaluator to support this process, ensuring objectivity and alignment with national performance reporting expectations.

MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE VET WORKFORCE

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	$122,000	N/A

Milestone 2.
Commonwealth acceptance that the Northern Territory has operated measures to strengthen the VET workforce through governance and VET Community of Practice (CoP) being established
	Report signed by NT senior skills official confirming:
	• Establishment and meeting of the VET CoP Executive Committee, and
	• Operationalisation of VET CoP including:
	  • Early Career, Advanced Educator and Quality sub-streams, and
	  • activities planned and delivery timeframes.
		$326,000	30 September 2025

Milestone 3.
Commonwealth acceptance that the Northern Territory has operated measures to strengthen the VET workforce through commencing implementation of First Nations and Priority Cohort Workforce Strategies
	Report signed by NT senior skills official confirming:
	• Initiation of the First Nations Trainer and Assessor Development Project (resource development phase) in partnership with Indigenous-led organisations, including details of:
	  • co-design activities, participating partners, and
	  • planned delivery timeframes for the creation of culturally responsive training materials
	• Scholarship framework operational for early career and advanced educators and a copy of the framework.
		$350,000	31 March 2026

Milestone 4. Commonwealth acceptance that the Northern Territory has operated measures to strengthen the VET workforce through completion of Mid-Term Review and Capability Outcomes	Report signed by NT senior skills official attaching mid-term review completed and endorsed by VET CoP Executive Committee, confirming: • Progress report on participation, retention and capability development across VET CoP streams • Learner and educator feedback summary • Adjustments to delivery models, if applicable, and • Any interim evaluations	$297,000	31 March 2027

Milestone 5. Commonwealth acceptance that the Northern Territory has operated measures to strengthen the VET workforce through completion of Final Evaluation and Strategic Impact	Final evaluation report signed by NT senior skills official providing: • Aggregated delivery outcomes across workforce streams • Impact analysis for First Nations and regional educators • Case studies and key lessons learned, and • Recommendations for scalable models and future investment.	$100,000	31 March 2028
Milestone 6. Commonwealth acceptance that the Northern Territory has operated measures to strengthen the VET workforce through completion of the Final Report	Final report signed by NT senior skills official, incorporating: • analysis of performance indicators, • findings from mid-term and final evaluations, and • recommendations for sustainability (includes funding for an external consultant evaluator)	$30,000	30 September 2028
	Total	$1,225,000	

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
17/12/ 2025

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

The Honourable Jo-Anne Hersey MLA
Minister for Education and Training
23/10/ 2025