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

PRELIMINARIES

1. This implementation plan is made between the Commonwealth of Australia (Commonwealth) and Western Australia (WA) 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, WA will acknowledge the Commonwealth's contribution with the following statement: Closing the Gap is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and Western Australian 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. WA 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, WA 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), WA 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.

INTRODUCTION

As party to the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CTG)*, the WA Government has committed to improving outcomes for First Nations people[1] across key reform priorities. VET is a contributor to educational attainment and economic participation and can help to close skills and employment gaps for First Nations people.

WA is home to more than 120,000 First Nations peoples, representing 4.3% of the State's population, of which 50% are under 25 years. Over 60% of First Nations peoples in WA live in regional areas, with around one in eight living in one of the 200 or more communities or homelands[2]. In 2024, eight per cent of all publicly funded enrolments across WA were undertaken by First Nations people. As at 1 November 2024, there had been 137 positive Native Title determinations in WA[3], covering approximately 90% of the State.

WA's unique geographical context and diverse First Nations communities will add time and complexity to establish formal partnerships at the community level, shared decision making and the implementation of the NSA. In particular, time will be required to ensure an inclusive approach that respects the diverse views of all First Nations stakeholders.

On 2 October 2023, the WA Government released its second *Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-2025*, which outlines new initiatives and key strategies to drive progress towards the priority reforms and socioeconomic outcomes.

The *WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* aligns to the NSA's priority reform areas but also extends beyond them, acknowledging the intergenerational trauma experienced by First Nations people and their communities and the need for culture, healing and self-determination to be at the heart of future policy and practice.

The strategic elements of the *WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* are:

- Culture at the heart
- Building Aboriginal empowerment into how we work
- Investing in foundations and futures
- Walking together.

Ensuring partnerships are accountable and representative is a key principle under Priority Reform One of the *WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan* (Partnership and shared decision making).

The *WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* will provide the guiding framework for undertaking the consultations required to identify the unique needs, challenges and gaps for First Nations communities and organisations in relation to skills and workforce development, and ensure they are adequately represented in this process as equal partners.

In WA, the First Nations training sector includes Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA), Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA), Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO), First Nations Owned Registered Training Organisations (FNO RTO), Group Training Organisations (GTO) and First Nations owned companies providing training and employment services.

[1] While the term First Nations has been used in this document, it should be noted that in Western Australia, the preferred term when referring to Aboriginal people is "Aboriginal people".
[2] In Western Australia, "homeland" refers primarily to small communities that are often long distances from major regional centres and metropolitan areas, and where Aboriginal people live on their traditional lands, maintaining cultural and kinship ties.
[3] Native Title Newsletter 2024, Issue 2. Available at: NativeTitleNewsletter_2024-2.pdf.

CLOSING THE GAP (Clause A93 to A103 of the NSA)

1) Approach to partnering with First Nations communities and organisations (clause A101 refers). This refers to Closing the Gap Priority Reform 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision making.

Objective

WA will develop a Partnership Framework and engagement mechanisms in collaboration with First Nations people to provide the foundations upon which a project plan, consistent with NSA clauses 101 & 102 and the WA *Closing the Gap Implementation Plan*, can be fully developed.

Delivery method

- Engage an Aboriginal consultant to work in partnership with WA's two peak bodies – AHCWA and CASWA to scope the stakeholders and design the consultation agenda and processes.
- Establish funding arrangements with AHCWA and CASWA to:
  - work with the Aboriginal consultant
  - support and participate in consultation processes
  - contribute to the design of the Partnership Framework and engagement mechanisms
  - undertake actions arising from the consultations.
- The Partnership Framework will outline the scope and mechanisms to formalise arrangements and shared decision making with the First Nations training sector.
- The objective of the Partnership Framework will be to ensure a balanced representation of regions, communities, training sector providers and peak bodies, who are able to contribute to the ongoing development of training services and skills development of First Nations people.
- The Partnership Framework will include a robust reporting and evaluation framework to ensure accountability as well as track the progress and effectiveness of the Framework.
- Further detail regarding evidence and evaluation will be provided to the Commonwealth in the *project plan*, including performance indicators for existing measures, timelines and sequencing of future initiatives, as well as evaluation arrangements over the remainder of the NSA. The project plan will be developed in partnership with CASWA and ACHWA and the Department of Training and Workforce Development.

Expected reach and additionality

- The stakeholder engagement process and the subsequent Partnership Framework are a new initiative for WA and will lay the foundations for how the ACCO training sector works with the Department of Training and Workforce Development in a true partnership.
- This foundation will accelerate partnership arrangements and strengthen understanding between the First Nations training sector and the State Training Authority (the Department of Training and Workforce Development).
- It is intended that this process, and subsequent Framework, will empower both the First Nations training sector and the State Training Authority, to collaborate in the development of place-based solutions that improve training access and outcomes in an expanded range of industries.
- The Partnership Framework and mechanisms will give effect to actions identified in the *WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-2025* and will be based on the principles of the *WA Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy*.
- They will also be informed by the WA whole-of-Government ACCO strategy to

achieve greater involvement of ACCOs in the planning, designing and delivery of more culturally appropriate and responsive services.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$997,000	$997,000	1 October 2025	31 December 2028

2) Activities for expanding investment in the capability, sustainability, and growth of the Aboriginal Community Controlled (ACCO) and First Nations owned (FNO) training sector (clause A102a refers), delivered in partnership with First Nations Peoples. This refers to Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2: Building the Community-Controlled sector.

Objective

In partnership with the First Nations training sector and informed by the findings of the Coalition of Peaks Sector Capability Analysis, identify activities for immediate investment to build the capability, sustainability and growth of WA's First Nations training sector.

Delivery method

- Scope current activity, capacity and opportunities to expand training delivery, build capacity and improve training completions. This will include identifying:
  - ways to support the First Nations training sector to deliver training and provide training related services such as wrap-around supports, career development and job brokerage
  - a sustainable model for expanding and deepening the capability and capacity of the First Nations training sector to provide culturally appropriate and place-based training services to facilitate better training and employment outcomes across a range of industries.
- Funding mechanisms will be aligned with First Nations training provider and community needs, subject an agreed process and to maximise the objectives and commitments under the NSA and related CTG agreements and strategies.

Expected reach and additionality

It is intended that these activities will:

- Enable the WA Government to accelerate immediate action to support WA funded First Nations training providers to improve sustainability and training delivery.
- Facilitate the participation of WA funded First Nations training providers in the design and evaluation development processes.
- Develop principles for expanding the investment and establishing engagement mechanisms to distribute funding for training delivery, wrap-around support services and to build a skilled First Nations VET training workforce.
- Identify opportunities to expand training delivery beyond current providers and industry areas.
- Develop mechanisms to address common issues identified by First Nations training providers.
- Identify ways First Nations training providers can better support employers and apprentices.
- Expand and strengthen wrap-around support services for students.
- Establish funding agreements that outline service deliverables, activities, outcomes, reporting and evaluation requirements.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$19,000,000	$19,000,000	1 October 2025	31 December 2028

3) Approach for contributing to activities to grow the First Nations VET workforce and boost cultural competency of mainstream RTOs (refer clause A102b). This refers to Closing the Gap Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations.

Objective

To grow the First Nations VET workforce and increase the cultural capability of the broader TAFE workforce.

Delivery method, expected reach and impact

The approach for contributing to activities to grow the First Nations VET workforce and boost the cultural competency of the broader TAFE workforce will be guided by the Partnership Framework and the insights gleaned through the evaluation of the strategies developed with the VET First Nations training sector. Key considerations will include, but not limited to:

- two-way learning programs with First Nations training providers
- cultural competency professional development program
- contracting frameworks to ensure cultural competency strategies and mechanisms are in place
- culturally appropriate and safe learning spaces.
- appropriate wrap-around supports for members of the First Nations VET workforce developed in collaboration with and delivered by First Nations Training providers.
- TAFE-ACCO partnership agreements embedding student centred arrangements for collaboration on training, teaching and learning resource sharing, and activities aimed at two-way capability building between sectors.

Commonwealth Investment ($)	State Investment ($)	Planned Start Date	Planned End Date
$1,950,000	$1,950,000	1 October 2025	31 December 2028

Closing the Gap - approach to matched funding arrangements (clauses A97 and A102 refers) – to be reconciled over the life of the NSA.

Details of matched funding	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	Total
WA Contribution	$4,997,000	$7,000,000	$7,000,000	$2,950,000	$21,947,000
Commonwealth contribution	$4,997,000	$7,000,000	$7,000,000	$2,950,000	$21,947,000
Total contribution	$9,994,000	$14,000,000	$14,000,000	$5,900,000	$43,894,000

The Western Australian Government will provide details of its matched funding contributions at the end of each financial year, commencing 1 October 2025 until 31 December 2028. Final payments under this implementation plan may be reduced where the total contribution by the Western Australian Government over the life of the project does not align with the Commonwealth contribution.

Performance Indicators

Qualitative and quantitative indicators will be used to help monitor the influence and effectiveness of the Partnership Framework, engagement mechanisms, and the strategies designed to improve the capability, sustainability and growth of First Nations Training Providers, to grow the First Nations TAFE workforce, and increase the cultural capability of the broader VET workforce. Key performance measures will be determined in collaboration with community stakeholders and will include, but not limited to the:

- Development of the Partnership Framework, including its alignment with NSA clauses 101 & 102 and the WA *Closing the Gap Implementation Plan*.
- Establishment and implementation of partnerships with ACCOs.

- TAFE-ACCO partnership arrangements in place with case studies of major activities and initiatives
- Development of specific measures of success relating to training capability, with a view to understanding the sustainability of the strategies.
- Participation by TAFE staff in cultural competency training.
- Extent to which students report feeling culturally safe in their TAFE learning environments.

Evaluation arrangements

CASWA and ACHWA will engage with representatives from the First Nations Training Sector to develop establishment of a developmental evaluation framework, evaluation strategy, key evaluation questions and measures of success. This approach will support the continuous refinement and improvement of the activities and strategies being delivered under this initiative to ensure the best outcomes possible for communities, students and the training workforce. A formative evaluation report that considers the implementation components of this initiative will be provided to the Commonwealth in 2026-27, while the summative evaluation report will be provided to the Commonwealth in late 2028. Consideration will be given to issues such as privacy, confidentiality, data sovereignty, and anonymity in reporting against all measures of success. The analysis and reporting of data will include a collaboration between the First Nations training sector and the Department.

MILESTONES AND PAYMENTS – CLOSING THE GAP

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.	$2,194,700	N/A
Milestone 2 Commonwealth acceptance that WA has developed a Partnership Framework with an activity/project plan for NSA Closing the Gap measures in partnership with First Nations communities and organisations that specifies the deliverables to be achieved and associated timeframes.	Report signed by WA senior official with responsibility for skills that provides details and updates on progress implementing NSA Closing the Gap measures for the period of 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026, and includes attachments and details of: • how the formalised partnership arrangements with AHCWA and CASWA were developed • governance arrangements supporting the operation of the partnership • engagement of an Aboriginal consultant • a stakeholder scoping document • evidence of Partnership consultation documentation including schedule and process • the Partnership Framework developed in collaboration with the First Nations Training sector • NSA Closing the Gap measures activity plan, for Commonwealth approval. • evidence of First Nations communities and organisations engagement in developing and support for the activity plan • agreed performance indicators • timelines and sequencing of future strategies • commitment to publication of the activity plan, once approved by the Commonwealth, and • evaluation arrangements over the remainder of the NSA.	$2,802,300	31 March 2026
Milestone 3 Commonwealth acceptance that WA is implementing TAFE-ACCO Partnership arrangements activities in accordance with approved	Progress report signed by relevant WA senior official with responsibility for skills, that attaches evidence providing status of implementation of all initiatives for the period of 1 April 2026 to 30 September 2026 and includes:	$1,950,000	30 September 2026

activity plan (agreed under Milestone 3)	• TAFE-ACCO partnership agreements outlining student centred arrangements for collaboration on training, teaching and learning resource sharing, and • update on activities in accordance with approved plan aimed at two-way capability building between sectors.		
Milestone 4 Commonwealth acceptance that WA is implementing TAFE-ACCO Partnership arrangements activities in accordance with approved activity plan (agreed under Milestone 3)	Progress report signed by relevant WA senior official with responsibility for skills, attaches evidence providing status of implementation of all initiatives for the period of 1 October 2026 to 31 March 2027 and includes: • performance indicators for agreed measures within activity plan • data reporting in alignment with data sovereignty principles agreed with partners. • indicators of success and/or case studies, • any implementation issues, and • a formative evaluation report considering the implementation components of this initiative.	$5,050,000	31 March 2027
Milestone 5 Commonwealth acceptance that WA is implementing TAFE-ACCO Partnership arrangements activities in accordance with approved activity plan (agreed under Milestone 3)	Progress report signed by relevant WA senior official with responsibility for skills, that attaches evidence providing status of implementation of all initiatives for the period of 1 April 2027 to 30 September 2027 and includes: • update on TAFE-ACCO partnership activities • data reporting in alignment with data sovereignty principles agreed with partners • indicators of success and/or case studies, and • any implementation issues.	$3,500,000	30 September 2027
Milestone 6 Commonwealth acceptance that WA is implementing TAFE-ACCO Partnership arrangements activities in accordance with approved activity plan (agreed under Milestone 3)	Progress report signed by relevant WA senior official with responsibility for skills, that attaches evidence providing status of implementation of all initiatives for the period of 1 October 2027 to 31 March 2028 and includes: • data reporting in alignment with data sovereignty principles agreed with partners • indicators of success and/or case studies, and • implementation issues, if any.	$3,500,000	31 March 2028

Milestone 7 Commonwealth acceptance of Final Report showing WA has implemented NSA Closing the Gap measures to 31 December 2028 in accordance with the approved activity plan	Final report and acquittal signed by relevant WA senior official with responsibility for skills, that provides a finalised summary of implementing NSA Closing the Gap measures and attaches evidence including: • financial expenditure information to allow final reconciliation of matched funding • data reporting in alignment with data sovereignty principles agreed with partners. • Final report will include evaluation outcomes.	$2,950,000	31 December 2028
	Total	**$21,947,000**	

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 / 11 / 2025

Signed *for and on behalf of the State of Western Australia by*

The Honourable Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA
Minister for Skills and TAFE

/ / 2025

28 OCT 2025