Australian Government
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

Stewardship in the National Skills Agreement

Governments working collaboratively and purposefully to address Australia's skills needs

What is the stewardship model?

The National Skills Agreement (NSA) embeds a model of shared stewardship, led by the Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council, that fundamentally changes the way governments work together to deliver on Australia's major economic and social priorities, while allowing all governments the flexibility to act to meet their local skills needs and demand.

The key principles of skills sector stewardship are:

- **Joint Responsibility** - leadership by all governments to achieve long term reform of the skills sector
- **Collaboration and Engagement** – working together, including tripartite engagement and collaboration with key stakeholders from across the community, to set shared outcomes for skills and workforce development and agree on reforms
- **Evidence Informed** - leading results-based decision making and continuous review and improvement
- **Transparency** – Communication of agreed actions, targets, and progress of reform.

Shared stewardship replaces a more transactional, and too often adversarial, approach to funding and delivery that has existed in the skills sector. It ensures the funding available under the National Skills Agreement is used to achieve the best possible outcomes based on collaboration, agreed targets and priorities and an evidence-based approach to drive continuous improvement.

How does the Stewardship Model operate?

The stewardship model is underpinned by an annual review cycle that supports routine collaboration, learning and results-based decision-making. This builds on existing arrangements for the skills sector with a central role for the Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council.

National Skills Plan and Jurisdiction Skills Plans

Key deliverables of the stewardship model are publicly available national and jurisdictional skills plans that set out how governments will meet the outcomes sought for the skills sector and deliver on agreed national priorities and targets, including both new reforms and existing programs.

The plans have been developed through engagement with the VET sector, tripartite leadership bodies such as Jobs and Skills Councils, and in partnership with First Nations organisations and communities.

The National Skills Plan and annual updates are available on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website. Links to individual jurisdictional action plans are also publicly available along with the Australian Government Jurisdictional Action Plan and annual updates. Plans are reviewed annually to consider new evidence and emerging priorities or address shortcomings in existing approaches.

What are the agreed national priorities?

The national priorities are areas governments have agreed require focused effort to ensure all Australians have access to the education, training and support needed to obtain well-paid jobs, to address critical skill and workforce shortages in the Australian economy, and reform the VET system.

National priorities are areas that will have the greatest impact on outcomes, including nationally significant skills, workforces, cohorts and reform actions to address gaps. The agreed national priorities are:

- Gender equality
- Closing the Gap
- Supporting the Net Zero transformation
- Sustaining essential care services
- Developing Australia's sovereign capability and food security
- Ensuring Australia's digital and technology capability
- Delivering housing supply, and
- Delivering reforms to improve the regulation of VET qualifications and quality.

What are the benefits of skills sector stewardship?

Stewardship encompasses responsible planning and management of resources to ensure the long-term interests of the Australian community.

The shared stewardship model facilitates improved collaboration and tripartite engagement and strengthened public transparency. The approach recognises the complexity of delivering on the desired outcomes and assumes that by working together we can achieve something greater than the sum of the individual parts.

Shared stewardship provides a mechanism for agreement on what we want for individuals, society and the economy through the skills system – reflected in agreed population and system outcomes

and targets – with individual governments identifying how they will contribute to these in their local context.