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NORTHERN TERRITORY

RDA NT Business Plan Summary 2026-27

August 2026

Local people developing local solutions rdant.com.au

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Acknowledgement of Country

Regional Development Australia Northern Territory acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Australia. We respect and celebrate the inherent strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their commitment to the land, waters and their communities. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

A Message from Our Chair And CEO

RDA NT is the trusted voice for regional development in the Northern Territory. Our role is to connect people, knowledge and opportunity, turning shared priorities into actions that strengthens regional economies and builds better futures for all Territorians. We launched our Strategic Plan 2026–2029 in February 2026, positioning 2026–27 as the first full year of delivery against this strategy. This Business Plan articulates how we will translate strategy into a practical annual action by supporting quality regional projects, enabling communities and organisations access funding, developing a stronger evidence base for decision-makers, and advancing our operational effectiveness.

This Business Plan also constitutes a formal statement of our commitments. It details our Implementation Plan and sets out our obligations against the four outcomes specified in our Commonwealth Funding Agreement 2025–2030. The “How We Work” section covers the governance, systems and reporting that underpins this work.

This does not occur in isolation. RDA NT operates most effectively when we maintain strong connections with communities, industries, organisations and government partners contributing to the Territory's future. We actively welcome engagement with you whether regarding a project we should be aware of, barriers requiring advocacy, or feedback on the priorities outlined in this document. We look forward to collaborating with you throughout 2026-27.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, sweeping 'U' shape followed by a series of vertical strokes and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kon Vatskalis, Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katrina' followed by a stylized surname, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Katrina Kawaljenko, CEO

About RDA NT

Funded by the Australian Government, RDA NT is an independent, not-for-profit organisation and part of a national network of 50 Regional Development Australia committees across Australia's capital cities and regions. We are led by a volunteer Committee of 12 members, drawn from across the Northern Territory and supported by a small staff team of three based in Darwin with specialist contractors as required. As our members live and work in the regions they represent, the priorities we take to government come from the ground up, across the whole of the Territory, rather than from Darwin alone.

Under the Regional Development Australia Charter, our role is to drive economic growth, innovation and entrepreneurship by facilitating investment in community, industry and the environment. Working within the Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework, we connect with all levels of government to support economic growth, liveability and sustainability, helping attract public and private investment, supporting stakeholders to access grants, providing regional intelligence and practical support, and building the evidence for regional development. We do this as an independent, evidence-led body and as a trusted connector, working alongside the Northern RDA Alliance and the Capital City RDA network on issues affecting our regions.

Our Strategic Direction

The Northern Territory's regions present substantial opportunities in First Nations enterprise, resources, tourism and liveability. These opportunities are accompanied by genuine challenges including geographical distance, limited markets, workforce gaps and uneven access to funding. The Territory's scale, diversity and complexity call for a coordinated, place-based approach that responds to local conditions. RDA NT's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 establishes a deliberate, five-goal strategic direction to address these opportunities and challenges. This Business Plan operationalises that strategy through a practical annual work program.

Four principles guide our work across all activities: evidence-based and place-based practice; partnership with First Nations peoples; adaptation, resilience and net-zero alignment; and inclusive, transparent communication.

01**Coordinated advocacy and regional intelligence**

Decision-makers act on solid, up-to-date evidence rather than guesswork.

Delivered through Outcomes 3 and 4

02**Development of the NT Liveability Framework**

A shared, Territory-wide way to define and measure liveability.

Delivered through — Outcome 3

03**Increased regional investment and capability**

More good regional ideas become funded, delivered projects.

Delivered through Outcomes 1 and 2

04**Coordination for workforce and skills development**

Workforce gaps are better understood and addressed collaboratively.

Delivered mainly through — Outcome 3

05**Stronger governance, capability and visibility**

RDA NT itself is trusted, well-run and easy to understand.

Delivered through How We Work

Strategic Plan 2026–2029

2026–27 is the first full year of delivery.

Our Priorities For 2026–27

Our Strategic Plan sets our direction to 2029. Each year our committee also endorses five key business activities. These are our top five priorities, which we are required to nominate and report against under our Commonwealth Funding Agreement. For 2026–27, these are priorities are:

1. Implement our Funding Enablement Framework (internal document) to progress priority regional projects, strengthen investment readiness and support First Nations-led economic development across the Territory.
2. Lead the development of the Northern Territory Liveability Framework through cross-sector collaboration, a dedicated working group and evidence gathering.
3. Deliver grant readiness training, project support and investment capability initiatives to help regional stakeholders secure funding.
4. Gather regional intelligence and coordinate advocacy and workforce initiatives to inform government, influence policy and support sustainable regional economic development.
5. Strengthen our governance, organisational capability, systems, communications and performance reporting to support effective delivery and accountability.

In practice, this year's work includes:

- Supporting priority regional projects.
- Building grant readiness through workshops, tools, direct advice and letters of support.
- Publishing quarterly Regional Insights Reports, alongside other briefings and insight products.
- Setting our advocacy priorities each quarter.
- Progressing the Northern Territory Liveability Framework through a dedicated working group, scoping work, indicators and pilot planning.
- Clarifying our role in workforce coordination through mapping, stakeholder insights and potential pilots.
- Contributing to partner-led regional and economic development strategies wherever we can add data, intelligence or project knowledge.

What We Will Deliver In 2026–27

Outcome 1 Facilitating regional economic development Delivers Goal 3	Outcome 2 Supporting stakeholders to access grants and funding Delivers Goal 3	Outcome 3 Contributing to local economic development planning and strategy Delivers Goals 1, 2 and 4	Outcome 4 Contributing data and local intelligence Delivers Goal 1
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Outcome 1 — Facilitating regional economic development

Delivers Strategic Goal 3: increase regional investment and capability.

We help good regional ideas become investment-ready projects that deliver real outcomes for the Territory.

- **Tiered project support.** Support regional projects at different stages of readiness, including projects backed by the Regional Investment Readiness and Impact Fund (RIRIF) and other projects aligned with our Strategic Plan. We track this support and publish project case studies where appropriate.
- **Connections and partnerships.** We make introductions and referrals between project proponents, First Nations organisations, councils, industry, funders, researchers and government, and maintain a quick-reference directory of support services and contacts.
- **Understanding the region's project pipeline.** We gather intelligence on emerging projects, barriers, funding pathways and regional priorities, including opportunities and challenges relating to First Nations economic development, infrastructure, connectivity, decarbonisation, liveability and workforce.

- **Aligning with government priorities.** We help project proponents understand funding pathways, policy priorities, evidence requirements and delivery risk, and we engage directly with government agencies on their behalf. These insights feed into our briefings, advocacy and Regional Insights Reports.
- **Supporting social impact and First Nations-led development.** We engage with not-for-profits, social enterprises and First Nations-led organisations to understand their needs, help identify social impact measurement approaches, and connect them with partners, funders, technical advisers and capability support.

Outcome 2 — Supporting stakeholders to access grants and funding

Delivers Strategic Goal 3: increase regional investment and capability.

We help communities, organisations and businesses across the Territory secure the funding they need to deliver their projects.

- **Grant readiness support and tools.** We help applicants build stronger submissions through practical tools on our website, direct advice on funding pathways and eligibility, and at least one grant readiness workshop during the year. We will seek partner and program funding to extend the workshop program and use participant feedback to shape what we offer next.
- **Direct grant application support.** We provide advice, application reviews and letters of support for projects that align with our priorities, applying appropriate safeguards where we also play an assessment role.
- **Promoting grant and funding opportunities.** We maintain a grants database on our website and promote opportunities through social media, newsletters, stakeholder updates and direct outreach.
- **The Regional Investment Readiness and Impact Fund (RIRIF).** We deliver RIRIF in line with approved guidelines, manage the assessment and grant administration process, monitor project progress and investment-readiness outcomes, and prepare evaluation findings to improve the program over time.

Outcome 3 — Contributing to local economic development planning and strategy

Delivers Strategic Goals 1, 2 and 4: regional intelligence and advocacy, the NT Liveability Framework, and workforce coordination.

We help shape regional strategy and strengthen RDA NT's role as the Territory-wide regional development voice

- **A disciplined approach to advocacy.** We are documenting how we identify, test and prioritise advocacy themes and regional priorities, so our submissions,

briefings and reporting are consistent, and we can show what we raised, with whom, and what happened.

- **Turning intelligence into advocacy priorities.** Each quarter, we analyse the priorities, issues, barriers and opportunities raised by stakeholders and turn into advocacy priorities.
- **The NT Liveability Framework.** We will establish a cross-sector Working Group to scope the Framework's purpose, principles, indicators, data sources and governance needs. We will also identify potential pilot locations and develop funding, partnership and long-term governance pathways.
- **Workforce partnerships and coordination.** We are mapping workforce and skills issues, engaging stakeholders to identify programs, gaps, overlaps and opportunities, and aiming to identify one or two practical coordination opportunities or pilots.
- **Supporting partner-led strategies.** We identify and monitor regional, local government, First Nations, industry and other partner-led economic development strategies, and provide input through data, intelligence, submissions, meetings or written feedback wherever we can add value.
- **Learning from the national RDA network.** We participate in Capital City RDA, Northern RDA Alliance and other network forums, share NT priorities, identify useful models from other regions, and explore collaboration and study tour opportunities where feasible.

Outcome 4 — Contributing data and local intelligence

Delivers Strategic Goal 1: coordinated advocacy and regional intelligence.

Good decisions need good evidence. As an evidence-led organisation, we help build the data and insight base for the Territory

- **Regional Insights Reports and other insight products.** We publish quarterly Regional Insights Reports, drawing on our stakeholder engagement records, direct intelligence, Committee input, data analysis and emerging policy issues. Reports cover regional priorities, advocacy themes, and project pipeline and investment-readiness intelligence, alongside other products such as issue briefs, snapshots, submissions or website content.
- **Regional data mapping and capability.** We compile and map regional data sources, including population and economic data platforms such as .id, the Australian Bureau of Statistics, NT Government and Commonwealth sources identify data gaps and key intelligence holders, and deliver State of the Regions events to share what the data is telling us, and provide .id training and access to economic modelling tools for stakeholders who need them.

- **A central regional intelligence system.** We maintain a dedicated stakeholder and regional intelligence system of stakeholder insights, project intelligence, survey findings and emerging policy issues, refining our processes over time and using the register to inform our insights reports, advocacy, submissions, briefings and Committee reporting. We will also run a stakeholder survey during the year to test what we are hearing and give stakeholders a direct, structured way to tell us what matters in their region
- **Evidence-based briefings and submissions.** We prepare briefings, submissions and local intelligence summaries as required, record engagement with Ministers, Members of Parliament, agencies and stakeholders, and track outcomes and follow-up actions where known.

How We Work

Delivers Strategic Goal 5: strengthen governance, capability and visibility.

Behind these outcomes, we are strengthening the foundations that let us deliver well and be accountable to our stakeholders.

- **Governance and accountability.** We hold regular Committee meetings, actively manage conflicts of interest, and review our governance policies, including progressing a review of our constitution, so our decision-making stays transparent and sound.
- **Systems and reporting.** We are continuing to build our internal stakeholder and regional intelligence system, maintain accurate records, and develop clear reporting templates and an insights methodology, so we can reliably track and demonstrate our impact to our Committee, funding partners and the public.
- **Communications and visibility.** We maintain our website, issue newsletters and stakeholder updates, produce case studies, and promote grant opportunities, insights and stakeholder outcomes.
- **Team and capability.** We support staff training and development, maintain strong stakeholder coverage across all regions of the Territory, review roles and workloads to match our priorities, and hold regular internal planning meetings to stay coordinated.
- **Financial management.** We monitor our budget and report regularly to our Committee, complete an independent audit of our accounts each year, track project expenditure and acquittals, and maintain financial controls appropriate to the responsible management of public funds.
- **Risk management.** We maintain an organisational risk register covering strategic, operational, financial, compliance and reputational risk, and escalate high-priority risks as they emerge.

How We'll Measure And Report Progress

Being accountable means being specific about what we are aiming for. This Business Plan sets targets for our main areas of work in 2026–27, so our stakeholders and funding partners can judge us on what we said we would do.

What we are aiming to deliver this year

OUTCOME 1 20–30 regional projects supported across all readiness tiers	OUTCOME 1 5 flagship projects backed by RIRIF
OUTCOME 2 10–15 proponents given direct grant application advice	OUTCOME 2 1+ grant readiness workshops delivered
OUTCOME 3 3–4 potential liveability pilot locations identified	OUTCOME 3 1–2 workforce coordination opportunities or pilots
OUTCOME 4 4 Regional Insights Reports published (quarterly)	OUTCOME 4 4+ briefings or submissions to government

RDA NT is a small team of three staff delivering a Territory-wide remit. Consequently some targets are expressed as ranges rather than fixed commitments, and the pace of project delivery depends on partner engagement, funding decisions and factors beyond our direct control. We remain committed to transparent reporting of outcomes and will clearly articulate the reasons where performance falls short of targets.

How We Report

The CEO submits a formal quarterly report to the RDA NT Committee against Business Plan actions and strategic priorities; our flagship initiatives and frameworks; stakeholder engagement, project support, grants activity and regional intelligence;

progress against the four Commonwealth Outcomes; emerging risks and dependencies; and notable achievements, case studies and advocacy outcomes.

We provide an annual report to the Australian Government against the outcomes and performance indicators in our Funding Agreement, including written case studies of our work. Our financial accounts are independently audited annually. We publish quarterly Regional Insights Reports that share relevant regional findings publicly, and our advocacy priorities are tested with and endorsed by our Committee before implementation.

What This Looks Like In Action

RDA NT works with communities, not-for-profit organisations, business and all levels of government to strengthen regional projects and economic opportunities. We connect organisations with funding, information, partners and decision-makers, and provide practical support to help projects become investment ready across stronger regional economies, First Nations-led economic development, infrastructure and connectivity, community resilience, liveability and industry growth. Here's what that looks like in practice in 2026–27.

Project development and readiness

We shape early project concepts, clarify scope and outcomes, support business cases and investment pitches, and broker collaboration.

In 2026–27: Tiered support through our Funding Enablement Framework and RIRIF recipients.

Funding and grant support

We help organisations find and pursue funding that fits regional priorities and strengthen applications before they are lodged.

In 2026–27: Grant readiness workshops, tools and templates, direct advice, reviews and letters of support.

Regional intelligence

We gather information from stakeholders across the Territory to understand regional opportunities, challenges and priorities.

In 2026–27: Quarterly Regional Insights Reports and a dedicated regional intelligence system.

Connections and partnerships

We act as a trusted connector and honest broker, helping organisations find the right people and navigate government, industry and community networks.

In 2026–27: Exploring closer strategic partnerships, including with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Advocacy and regional priorities

We bring regional priorities to the attention of government, funders and decision-makers through briefings and submissions.

In 2026–27: Advocacy priorities identified quarterly and endorsed by our Committee before we act.

Free online tools

Our website offers a Grant Search Tool and access to .id regional economic and community data for planning, applications and business cases.

In 2026–27: Help to access economic modelling, plus training on how to use these tools.

Connect With Us

RDA NT works best when we're well connected to the people, businesses and organisations shaping the Territory's future. If you have a project, a funding question, or regional intelligence to share, we would like to hear from you and we welcome feedback on this Business Plan.

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2026-27 Business Plan Summary. Published: August 2026

Business Plan approved by RDA NT Committee 27 Jul 2026

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