



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Strategic Plan

2026/2029

February 2026

Local people developing local solutions rdant.com.au

Table of Contents

Minister's Foreword	04
Message from the Chair and CEO	05
1. Executive Summary	06
2. About RDA and our Context	10
Northern Territory Profile	11
3. How This Plan Was Developed	14
4. Strategic Direction	22
5. Strategic Goals	24
Goal 1: Drive Coordinated Advocacy and Regional Intelligence	25
Goal 2: Lead the Design of a NT Liveability Framework	26
Goal 3: Increase Regional Investment and Capability	27
Goal 4: Strengthen Coordination for Workforce and Skills Development	28
Goal 5: Strengthen Governance, Capability and Visibility	29
06. Delivery	30
07. Monitoring and Evaluation	32
08. Conclusion	33

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 the Federal Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories.

Minister's Foreword



The Australian Government welcomes the Regional Development Australia Northern Territory (RDA NT) Strategic Plan 2026–2029 as a strong and timely contribution to regional development in one of the most complex and opportunity-rich parts of the nation.

The RDA program is a national network of 50 committees that bring together local leaders, all levels of government, business and community organisations to drive economic growth, strengthen regional communities and ensure local priorities inform national decision-making.

Within this network, RDA NT has a distinctive set of challenges and opportunities. It operates across an entire jurisdiction characterised by vast distances, a small and dispersed population, a high proportion of First Nations communities, and a project pipeline that spans resources, energy, defence, agribusiness, tourism and the net-zero transition. These characteristics create significant challenges in infrastructure, service delivery, workforce attraction and liveability, but they also position the Northern Territory as critical to Australia's long-term economic resilience, national security and clean energy ambitions.

The Australian Government has set four clear outcomes for all RDA committees: to facilitate regional economic development; support stakeholders to access grants; contribute to, and where appropriate lead local economic planning and strategy setting; and provide regional data and intelligence to inform policy and program design and implementation.

RDA NT's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 provides a clear line of sight to these outcomes, with a strong emphasis on coordinated advocacy, a Territory-wide view of regional priorities, investment readiness support, and a commitment to robust monitoring and evaluation of impact.

The Northern Territory's regional challenges cannot be addressed by any one organisation or level of government alone. They require clear priorities, coordinated effort and a facilitator capable of connecting local insight to national policy and investment.

The Australian Government looks forward to continuing to work closely with RDA NT and its committee over the life of this Strategy, and to seeing the practical outcomes that will flow for communities and businesses across the Territory's regions.

The Hon. Kristy McBain MP
Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories

Kon Vatskalis
Chair



Katrina Kawaljenko
CEO



Message from the Chair and CEO

This Strategic Plan outlines Regional Development Australia Northern Territory's (RDA NT) priorities and direction for the period 2026–2029. It provides a clear, evidence led framework for strengthening regional development outcomes across the Northern Territory through coordinated advocacy, regional intelligence, investment enablement, workforce development and strong organisational governance.

RDA NT operates across one of Australia's most geographically vast, culturally diverse and economically complex jurisdictions. Stakeholder engagement undertaken to inform this Strategy confirms strong support for RDA NT's role as a trusted, independent convener that connects government, industry, First Nations organisations and communities to turn regional priorities into action, with stakeholders consistently valuing our practical support, credible data and economic analysis, and ability to open doors across the three tiers of government.

This Strategy builds on those strengths and responds to a changing policy and regional development environment. It positions RDA NT as the Territory wide regional development voice, providing clarity of role, focus and value add in a crowded policy and delivery landscape and it directly reflects stakeholder feedback calling for stronger advocacy

coordination, clearer articulation of RDA NT's niche role, deeper investment readiness support and improved visibility of impact and outcomes.

The Plan has been developed during a period of organisational and system transition, including a change in Northern Territory Government and the conclusion of previous Northern Territory regional economic growth plans and the appointment of a new Chair in April 2025 and a new CEO in May 2025. In this context, RDA NT's commitment to collaboration—working with First Nations organisations, local government, industry, the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government—will be central to delivering the five strategic goals, strengthening the regional investment pipeline, and supporting a skilled and inclusive workforce across the Territory.

The Strategic Plan will be supported by a separate Implementation Plan and Monitoring Framework, ensuring RDA NT's work over the next three years is actionable, measurable and aligned with both local priorities and national regional development objectives. Through disciplined delivery and genuine partnership and collaboration with regional stakeholders, the committee and staff are committed to turning this Strategy into visible, practical outcomes for communities and economies across the Northern Territory.

1— Executive Summary

RDA NT plays a role in driving regional development outcomes across the Northern Territory. As an independent, evidence-led body, RDA NT operates at the intersection of policy, investment, community and place, to turn regional priorities into practical action.



The Northern Territory presents both significant opportunity and complexity. Its regions span vast distances and include remote and regional communities, a high proportion of Aboriginal land ownership, emerging and established industries, and persistent workforce, infrastructure and liveability challenges. Stakeholder feedback confirms that addressing these challenges requires coordinated action across governments, industry and communities, and that RDA NT is well placed to act as a trusted connector and facilitator in this space.

This Strategic Plan sets out RDA NT's direction and priorities for 2026–2029. It aligns with and delivers on the Regional Development Australia Charter and the Australian Government's Regional Investment Framework, as required under RDA NT's funding agreement with the Commonwealth Drawing on Territory-wide stakeholder engagement, Committee workshops and strategic discussions, comparative desktop analysis of other RDAs nationally, and RDA NT's practical experience in regional development outcomes.

The Plan reflects a period of transition for RDA NT, including the suspension of the Regional Economic Growth Plans following the Northern Territory Government's change in 2024, and a refreshed leadership with a new Chair and CEO.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to provide a clear, shared direction for RDA NT from 2026 to 2029. It aims to:

- Clarify RDA NT's role, value proposition and strategic focus;
- Guide decision-making, prioritisation and resource allocation;
- Strengthen alignment between RDA NT's activities and stakeholder needs;
- Provide a transparent framework for measuring impact and performance; and
- Support effective collaboration across government, industry, First Nations organisations and communities.

This Plan also articulates RDA NT's niche within the broader regional development ecosystem, ensuring that its work complements rather than duplicates other organisations, and focuses finite resources on activities where RDA NT can add the greatest value.

This Plan maps RDA NT's delivery against the four mandatory Outcomes in the funding agreement:

1. Facilitate regional economic development outcomes through investment in skills and local leadership, opportunities for First Nations people, infrastructure, connectivity, decarbonisation and industry growth.
2. Support regional stakeholders, including local government and the not-for-profit sector, to seek grant opportunities that advance strategic regional priorities.
3. Contribute to, and where appropriate, drive local economic development planning and strategy development.
4. Contribute relevant data and local intelligence to support the evidence base to inform regional development strategies, program design and policy responses.

The five strategic goals (detailed in section 5) deliver these outcomes. RDA NT's annual business plans and reports use outcomes and performance required under the RDA Program for monitoring and accountability.

1.2 Background and Strategic Context

RDA NT operates across an exceptionally large and diverse geographic footprint, encompassing urban centres, regional towns, remote communities and homelands. The Territory’s regions face shared structural challenges, plus workforce shortages, infrastructure gaps, high delivery costs and complex governance arrangements, alongside significant opportunities in energy, resources, agriculture, tourism, defence, First Nations enterprise and the net-zero transition.

The previous strategic direction was strongly anchored in the RDA Charter, the Australian Government’s Regional Investment Framework and the Northern Territory Government’s Regional Economic Growth Plans. With the 2024 Northern Territory Government change, those Growth Plans and regional committee structures were paused creating a transitional policy environment. RDA NT responded by refocusing on its Charter mandate, the funding agreement’s four mandatory Outcomes, and alignment with the NT Government’s core priorities (Rebuild the Economy, Reduce Crime, and Restore the Territory Lifestyle), while maintaining continuity for regional stakeholders.

Stakeholder consultation in 2025 highlighted strong support for RDA NT’s enabling role, particularly in grant and project development support, to economic and demographic data, regional intelligence and coordinated advocacy. Stakeholders identified risks including duplication with other organisations, advocacy cut-through challenges and capacity constraints, reinforcing the need for a sharper focus, stronger coordination and improved visibility of outcomes.

1.3 How we will deliver

RDA NT will deliver this Strategic Plan through a focused, collaborative and evidence-based approach that reflects both regional priorities and organisational capacity. The Committee provides strategic leadership and governance oversight, ensuring RDA NT operates with integrity and full funding agreement compliance.

The organisation’s team will concentrate on high-impact activities aligned to five strategic goals for 2026–2029, and will report annually against the four mandatory Outcomes and their performance indicators using the Commonwealth framework.

Delivery will be underpinned by:

Strong partnerships with First Nations organisations, local government, industry, the Australian Government and the Northern Territory Government, ensuring activities are co-designed and place-based.

Targeted use of data, regional intelligence and enabling support (e.g early-stage project and investment readiness assistance) to unlock funding, de-risk projects and attract capital into the Territory’s regions.

Transparent performance monitoring against the four mandatory Outcomes, with quantitative and qualitative evidence of impact, to inform continuous improvement and support regular reporting to the Commonwealth, the Committee and stakeholders.



OUR VISION

To be a trusted voice for regional development in the Northern Territory, driving collaboration, intelligence and action.



OUR MISSION

To work with regions, communities, industry and across all levels of government on shared priorities, building stronger economies and better futures for all Territorians.



OUR PRINCIPLES

- Evidence-and place-based practice
- First Nations partnerships
- Resilience heading towards net zero
- Inclusive communication



OUR VALUES

- Integrity
- Leadership
- Collaboration
- Respect
- Impact
- Innovation

Strategic Plan Overview: RDA NT Goals and Key Actions

1

Drive coordinated advocacy and regional intelligence

- Deliver an Advocacy and Regional Priority Framework
- Coordinate a Territory-wide set of shared Regional Priorities
- Publish Regional Insights Reports
- Track advocacy outcomes
- Build stakeholder visibility and collaboration

2

Lead the design of a Northern Territory Liveability Framework

- Secure partnerships and investment to co-design the framework
- Pilot and refine the framework through place-based projects
- Establish long-term governance and maintenance arrangements
- Promote liveability as a driver of regional growth

3

Increase regional investment and capability

- Develop and implement a Funding Enablement Framework
- Build capability through workshops, tools and support
- Coordinate a Territory-wide funding and project pipeline
- Share investment intelligence to promote investor confidence, and collaboration

4

Strengthen coordination to improve job creation and skills development

- Identify gaps, overlaps and opportunities in workforces
- Link employers, training providers and First Nations organisations
- Identify and support scalable pilot projects
- Support workforce attraction and retention

5

Strengthen RDA NT’s governance, capability, and visibility

- Clarify and communicate RDA NT’s role
- Modernise governance
- Strengthen capabilities
- Enhance visibility through consistent stakeholder communication plans and engagement
- Be accountable, show impact

2— About RDA NT and our Context

2.1 RDA NT and our context

RDA NT is the Northern Territory's Regional Development Australia committee and the recognised voice of regional development across the Territory, driving collaboration, intelligence and action in support of stronger regional economies and communities. RDA NT is part of the national, federally funded Regional Development Australia program, a network of 50 committees across Australia that work with all levels of government, business and community stakeholders to drive economic growth, strengthen regional communities and support long-term development priorities.

Today, RDA NT's work encompasses four integrated pillars. Together these pillars position RDA NT as a practical regional development partner for the Northern Territory.



Collaboration and connection across stakeholders and government



Promotion of funding opportunities, policies and regional opportunities



Support for grant applications and project readiness



Projects

In 2025, RDA NT experienced an important period of renewal, with a new Chair appointed in April 2025 and a new CEO commencing in May 2025 as well as new committee members in October 2025, strengthening governance, clarity of purpose and external engagement.

The Strategic Plan 2026–2029 reflects this transition by consolidating RDA NT's role as a Territory-wide connector and advocate while positioning the organisation to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges in the years ahead.

Northern Territory Profile

Population and People

The population estimate for the Northern Territory as of the 30th June 2024 is 255,069, growing 0.79% since the previous year. Population growth in the Greater Darwin area was 0.90%. Compared to Australia as a whole, the Territory population has a bigger proportion of people with Australian Aboriginal ancestry (24.5% versus 2.9%).

255,069
People in the NT



24.5%
Australian Aboriginal Ancestry



The Economy

Northern Territory's Gross Regional Product was \$35.44 billion in the year ending June 2024 growing 7.2% since the previous year. Jobs held by the local workers in the RDA Northern Territory in 2023/24 shows the three largest industries were:

- Public Administration and Safety
21,847 people or 16.2%
- Health Care and Social Assistance
22,215 people or 16.5%
- Education and Training
13,018 people or 9.6%

\$35.44B GRP
NT Economy



16,243
Local Businesses



134,947
Local Jobs



The biggest growth from the previous year in local workers by industry was in healthcare (+1,934), construction (+815), public administration and safety (+455) and mining (+266).

The major differences between the jobs held by local workers of the RDA NT and Australia were:

- A larger percentage of local workers employed in the field of Public Administration and Safety (16.2% compared to 6.7%)
- A smaller percentage of local workers employed in the field of Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (5.7% compared to 8.9%)

2.2 Our role, mandate and operating environment

RDA NT is funded through a 2025–2030 regional development funding agreement with the Australian Government and operates in alignment with the Regional Development Australia Charter to promote sustainable economic growth, employment and investment outcomes across all regions of the Northern Territory. Under this mandate, the committee provides independent, evidence-based regional intelligence and advocacy, supports funding and project readiness, and strengthens collaboration between communities, industry, First Nations organisations and all levels of government.

The committee operates as an impartial convener and “honest broker”, complementing rather than duplicating Commonwealth, Northern Territory and local government roles and those of industry peak bodies. RDA NT focuses its effort where it can make the greatest difference: coordinating and communicating regional priorities, generating credible data and insight, enabling funding and investment, and supporting place-based initiatives.

The Northern Territory context is characterised by a small and dispersed population, extensive remoteness, a high proportion of First Nations communities and exposure to major project cycles, which together create both structural challenges and significant development opportunities.

Key opportunity areas include energy and resources, defence and national security, agribusiness, tourism, digital connectivity and enabling infrastructure, alongside the need to address persistent challenges in cost of living, housing, workforce attraction and retention, service access and climate risk, particularly in remote and very remote communities.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES



Energy and resources



Defence and national security



Agribusiness



Tourism



Digital connectivity



Enabling infrastructure



2.3 Alignment with Government Priorities

RDA NT’s work is closely aligned with Australian Government regional development objectives outlined in the Regional Investment Framework (RIF) and the outcomes set out in its 2025–2030 funding agreement, including strengthening regional intelligence, investment readiness, collaboration and data-driven decision-making.

As part of the national Regional Development Australia network, the committee works with all levels of government—Commonwealth, Northern Territory and local—to connect local and regional insights to wider policy agendas in areas such as economic diversification, net-zero transition, productivity, workforce development and inclusive regional growth.

At the Territory level, RDA NT aligns its activities with current Northern Territory Government economic and lifestyle strategies, including priorities to rebuild the Territory economy, unlock regional opportunities, support business and workforce growth, and enhance lifestyle and liveability.

With previous NT regional economic growth plans no longer in place, RDA NT provides continuity by maintaining a structured, Territory-wide view of regional priorities, opportunities and constraints, ensuring that regional voices continue to inform policy, reform and investment decisions across the Australian Government, the Northern Territory Government and local government across the regions.

3— How This Plan Was Developed

RDA NT's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 has been developed through an integrated program of desktop research, stakeholder surveys, regional engagement and committee workshops, aligned with Australian Government and Northern Territory Government economic and lifestyle priorities. The process reflects a period of transition for RDA NT, including the conclusion of previous Territory planning frameworks, and the appointment of new leadership in 2025.



3.1 Desktop Research

Desktop research provided the analytical foundation for this Strategic Plan, drawing together insights from previous RDA NT work, comparable RDA regions, and contemporary government priorities. This work was undertaken to ensure that RDA NT's strategic focus remains sharply targeted, complementary to other actors, and responsive to stakeholder needs across the Territory. The desktop research comprised:

- Review of previous strategic direction and workshops, including analysis of outcomes from the November 2023 RDA NT workshop, which highlighted opportunities in land release, liveability, Indigenous-led solutions, regional centres and workforce development, as well as challenges in infrastructure, short-term investment and local capability.
- Comparative analysis of nine similar RDAs (including Kimberley, Pilbara, Far North SA, Central and Western Queensland, Goldfields–Esperance, Far West NSW, Townsville and North West Queensland, Indian Ocean Territories and Tasmania), examining population, geography, funding models and service offerings (funding support, networks, workforce, infrastructure, business showcase and programs) to clarify RDA NT's niche.
- Stakeholder mapping across Australian Government, Northern Territory Government, local government, Aboriginal organisations, industry, research institutions and community sectors to identify who is doing what in regional development, where gaps exist, and where RDA NT can add distinct value without duplication.

The desktop review explicitly considered Australian Government regional priorities, including the Regional Investment Framework and RDA Charter focus on strong, inclusive, sustainable regional economies, First Nations participation, connectivity and local leadership.

It also drew on current Northern Territory Government strategies, particularly the Northern Territory Economic Strategy 2025 (Rebuilding the Economy) and Restoring the Territory Lifestyle Strategy 2025, which emphasise being the best place to do business, building a bigger and better workforce, unlocking regional growth, connecting the Territory, and restoring liveability.

RDA NT's previous strategic direction was strongly anchored in the RDA Charter, the Australian Government Regional Investment Framework, the funding agreement with the Commonwealth, and the Northern Territory Government's Regional Economic Growth Plans. Following the change of Northern Territory Government, these Growth Plans and associated Regional Economic Growth Committees were paused.

This Strategic Plan responds to that changed context by reconfirming RDA NT's role as a trusted connector, evidence-based advocate and facilitator of regionally led development, aligned with emerging Territory-wide economic and lifestyle strategies rather than region-specific Growth Plans.

3.2 Stakeholder Survey & Outcomes

To ensure that the Strategic Plan 2026–2029 reflects the expectations and experience of those RDA NT has supported or engaged with, a Territory-wide stakeholder survey was undertaken in September 2025, following the earlier desktop analysis and mapping.

The survey was designed and delivered with Remote Strategy Plus, using a mixed-methods approach to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights across government, industry, Aboriginal organisations, community organisations and the RDA NT committee.

The survey achieved 46 responses, with a strong spread across sectors and regions, and around one-third of respondents working across the whole NT. Respondents reported a mix of relationships with RDA NT, with approximately half having received direct support (for example grant advice, economic analysis, project development), and around one-third indicating limited prior engagement but a desire to build a relationship. Stakeholders consistently identified RDA NT's strengths as its ability to turn intent into outcomes through:

- Practical grant and project support, including advice, letters of support, economic modelling and improved evidence for funding applications.
- High-quality regional data and intelligence, particularly through the .id tools and commissioned economic analysis, strengthening business cases and policy submissions.
- Strong networks across the three tiers of government, giving stakeholders access to decision-makers and helping navigate complex systems and programs.
- Trusted convening and facilitation, including the Roadshow, regional forums, and collaborative planning processes.
- Inclusive engagement with Indigenous and remote communities, including tailored support for Indigenous entrepreneurs and community-led projects.

Five core opportunity areas for the NT emerged strongly from the survey, closely reflecting the 2023 workshop and the desktop research:

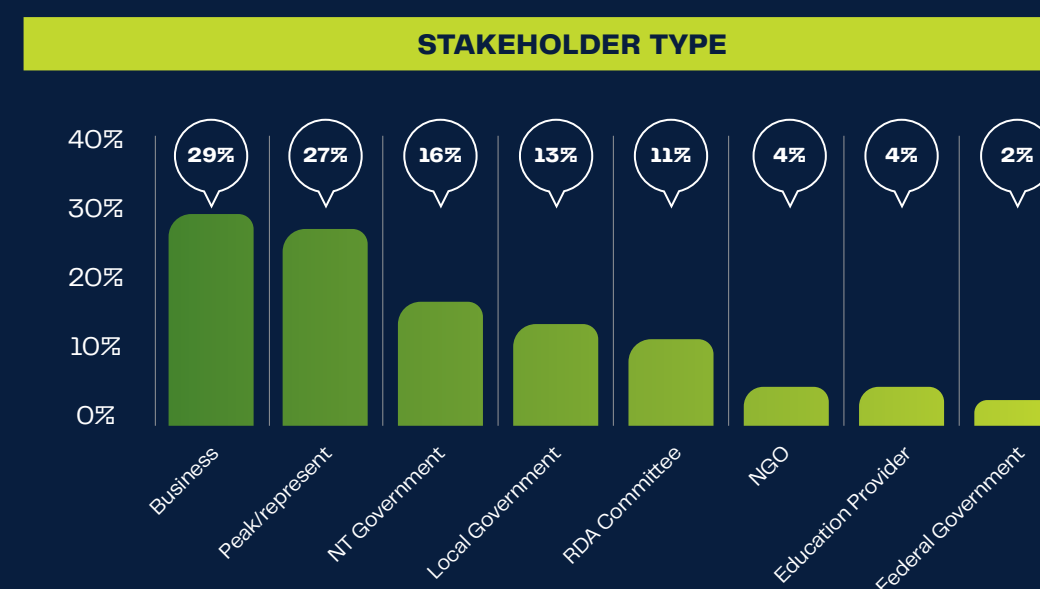
- Enabling critical infrastructure and transport, including logistics hubs, corridors and enabling infrastructure.
- Improving digital and physical connectivity, particularly reliable all-weather roads and stronger telecommunications for remote communities and industry.
- Supporting workforce and skills development, moving from short-term programs to sustained local jobs and stronger Indigenous workforce participation.
- Developing strong and resilient regional centres, supporting regional hubs (such as Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy) to transition and diversify.
- Enhancing liveability across communities, recognising that services, social infrastructure and lifestyle are critical to retention, growth and crime reduction.

Two cross-cutting themes were emphasised as critical to genuine regional development:

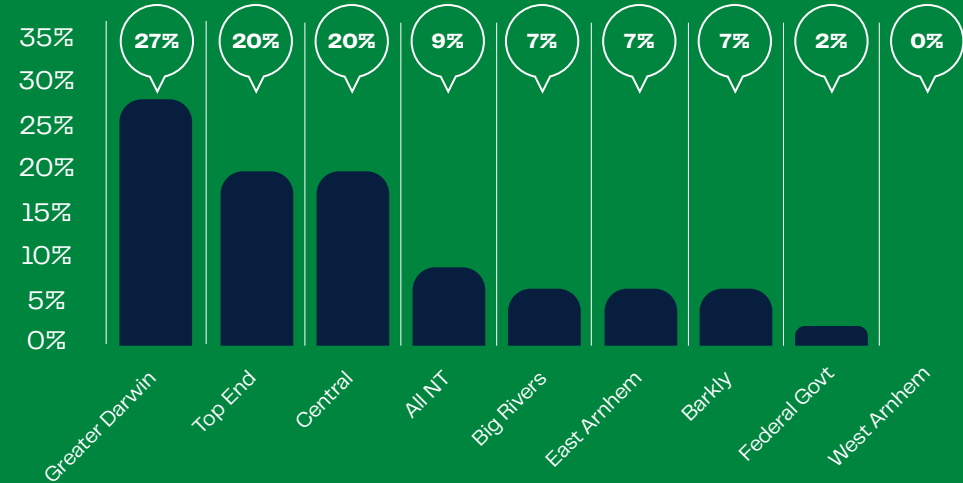
- **Indigenous-led economic development and inclusion:** Stakeholders stressed that meaningful regional development requires partnership with First Nations peoples, with priorities including Indigenous-led enterprise development, land tenure certainty, land and sea management, art centres, cultural enterprises and community-controlled governance structures.
- **Emerging industries and economic diversification:** Growth opportunities were identified in clean energy, circular economy and waste recovery, agriculture, resources, nature-based tourism and carbon markets, all contingent on enabling infrastructure, workforce capability and investment readiness.

Stakeholders also highlighted key risks and challenges for RDA NT and the Territory, including vast distances and high delivery costs, local capacity gaps, risk of duplication with other agencies, barriers to early-stage investment, and the challenge of maintaining genuine on-ground presence across remote regions with finite resources.

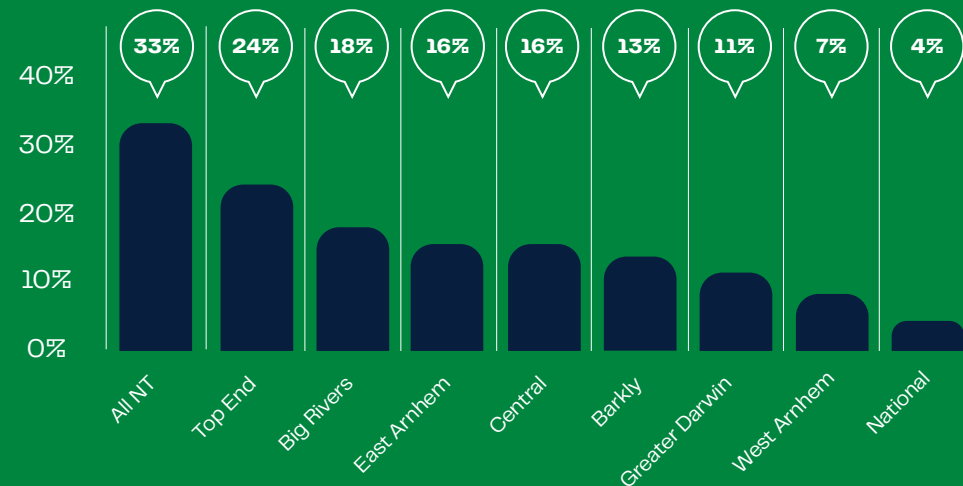
These insights have significant implications for RDA NT's strategic focus in 2026–2029. The regional context confirms that RDA NT's greatest value lies in coordination, evidence-led advocacy, investment readiness support and inclusive, place-based approaches, rather than direct service delivery or duplication of government roles. The survey findings also confirm the need to sharpen communication of RDA NT's niche role, strengthen visibility of advocacy, and broaden support to include both community and commercial regional initiatives.



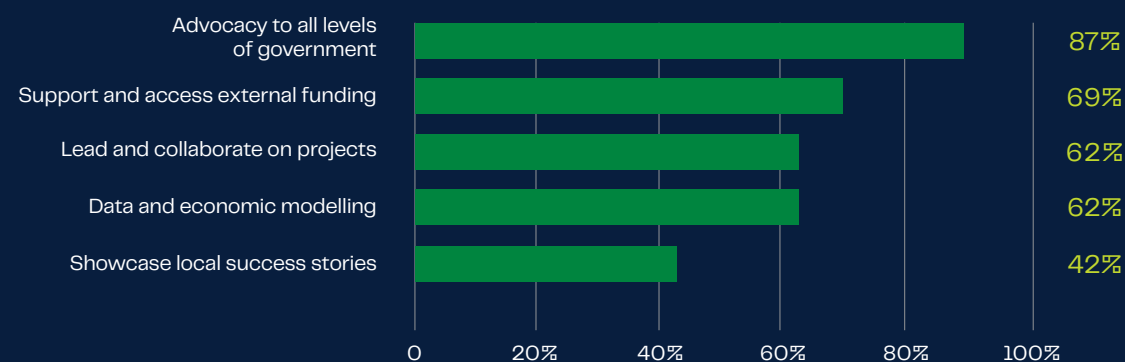
WHERE RESPONDENTS LIVE



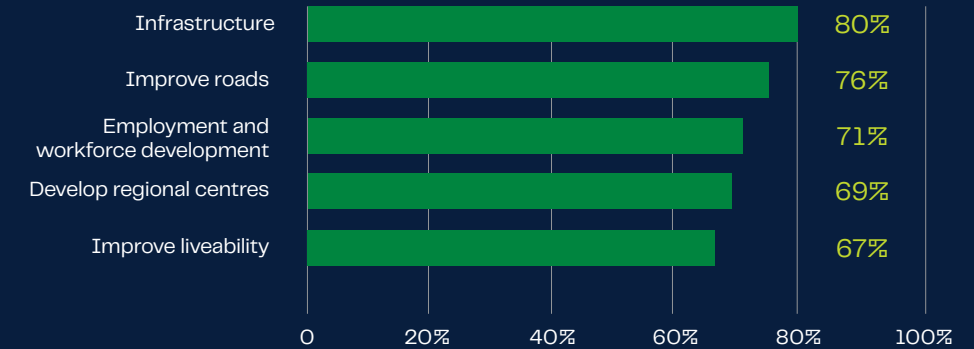
WHERE RESPONDENTS WORK



RDA FOCUS IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS



CORE OPPORTUNITY AREAS



Five core opportunity areas for the Territory emerged strongly from the survey, closely reflecting the 2023 workshop and the desktop research:

Infrastructure

Enabling critical infrastructure and transport, including logistics hubs, corridors and enabling infrastructure.

“Infrastructure; to assist with moving of commodities (eg logistics hub) would greatly increase productivity as it will be easier to move products.”

Improve roads

Improving digital and physical connectivity, particularly reliable all-weather roads and stronger telecommunications for remote communities and industry.

“The NT suffers from the tyranny of distance and the lack of scale, better roads, better connectivity and better representation will assist.”

Employment and workforce development

Supporting workforce and skills development, moving from short-term programs to sustained local jobs and stronger Indigenous workforce participation.

“There is a drastic need to support regional workforce development... RDA can navigate between the Feds and NTG and get to the ground.”

Develop regional centres

Developing strong and resilient regional centres, supporting regional hubs (such as Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy) to transition and diversify.

“Improved liveability and develop regional centres — will support with the recruitment and retention of staff to work and live in the region.”

Improve liveability

Enhancing liveability across communities, recognising that services, social infrastructure and lifestyle are critical to retention, growth and crime reduction.

“All of the items listed above are important... Livability is THE key.”

3.3 Regional visits, roadshows and committee workshops

Regional engagement and Committee deliberation were integral to the development of the RDA NT Strategic Plan 2026–2029, ensuring the Strategy reflects both Territory-wide priorities and the diverse realities of communities, towns and regions across the Northern Territory.

This work was informed by a series of strategic workshops and engagement activities over several years. A Committee-led workshop held in November 2023, informed by a pre-workshop survey and attended by regional representatives, identified consistent Territory-wide priorities and challenges.

Key themes included the importance of liveability, Indigenous-led economic development, resilient regional centres, workforce development, improved land release and tenure processes, and the need for stronger coordination and collaboration across regions and governments. These insights provided an early foundation for subsequent engagement and strategic thinking.

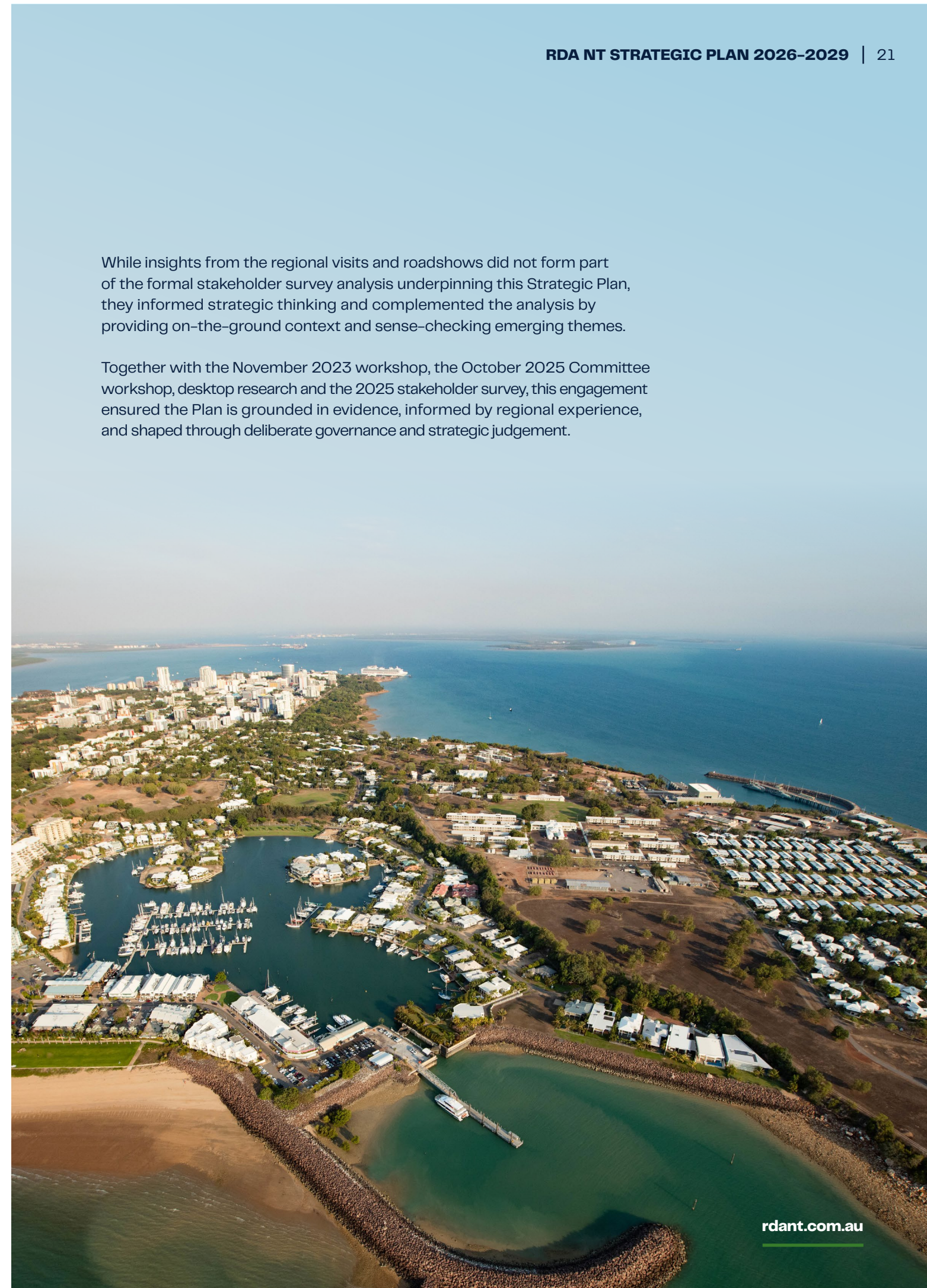
In October 2025, RDA NT convened a two-day Committee strategic planning workshop to consider emerging evidence and refine the organisation's future direction. Building on the 2023 workshop, desktop research and the 2025 stakeholder survey, the session enabled the Committee to test assumptions, clarify RDA NT's role and value proposition, and confirm the vision, mission, values, cross-cutting principles and five strategic goals for 2026–2029. While the Committee workshops did not form part of the formal stakeholder survey analysis, they played a central role in shaping strategic judgement and decision-making.

This strategic deliberation was complemented by extensive regional engagement undertaken throughout 2025. Between July and September 2025, RDA NT conducted regional roadshows across the Barkly, Big Rivers, East Arnhem and West Arnhem regions, alongside earlier engagement in Central Australia. These visits involved the CEO, staff and Committee members where available and engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including local and regional councils, Aboriginal organisations, industry proponents, service providers and Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government agencies.

Common themes raised across regions included workforce shortages, housing and service access, road and enabling infrastructure, crime and community safety, land tenure and leasing delays, and the need for stronger coordination across governments and regional stakeholders. The engagement also highlighted region-specific challenges and transition issues, alongside opportunities linked to major projects, regional partnerships and emerging funding programs. Through the roadshows, RDA NT also provided clarity about its role and services, promoted grant and project development support, shared regional data and intelligence, strengthened relationships with First Nations organisations, and identified practical follow-up actions.

While insights from the regional visits and roadshows did not form part of the formal stakeholder survey analysis underpinning this Strategic Plan, they informed strategic thinking and complemented the analysis by providing on-the-ground context and sense-checking emerging themes.

Together with the November 2023 workshop, the October 2025 Committee workshop, desktop research and the 2025 stakeholder survey, this engagement ensured the Plan is grounded in evidence, informed by regional experience, and shaped through deliberate governance and strategic judgement.



4 Strategic Direction

The Northern Territory's scale, diversity and complexity require a coordinated, place-based approach to regional development that responds to local conditions.

RDA NT's strategic direction for 2026–2029 builds on its Charter mandate, Commonwealth funding agreement and alignment with current NT Government priorities, following the conclusion of previous regional growth planning arrangements. With refreshed leadership from 2025, RDA NT is positioned to sharpen its focus and operate more proactively as the Territory-wide regional development voice.

4.1 Vision

RDA NT is the trusted voice for regional development in the Northern Territory — driving collaboration, intelligence and action across our regions.

4.2 Mission

To connect people, knowledge and opportunity — turning shared priorities into action that strengthens regional economies and builds better futures for all Territorians.

4.3 Values

RDA NT's values underpin how the organisation works, partners and delivers outcomes:

INTEGRITY

Acting independently, transparently and in the best interests of NT regions.



LEADERSHIP

Championing regional priorities and influencing decision-making with credibility.



COLLABORATION

Working across sectors and regions to achieve shared outcomes.



RESPECT

Valuing people, culture and place, with strong partnerships with First Nations peoples.



IMPACT

Focusing effort where measurable difference can be achieved.



INNOVATION

Embracing new approaches that respond to a changing regional landscape.



4.4 Cross Cutting Principles

Evidence-based and Placed-Based Practice:

RDA NT combines credible data, economic analysis and regional intelligence with on-the-ground knowledge to inform advocacy and investment decisions. Each region's unique strengths, challenges and opportunities shape priorities and responses.

Partnerships with First Nations Peoples:

RDA NT recognises the central role of First Nations peoples in shaping the Territory's future. The organisation works in partnership with Aboriginal organisations, leaders and communities to ensure development reflects cultural knowledge, aspirations and shared decision-making.

Adaption, Resilience and Net-Zero Alignment:

Climate resilience and sustainability are embedded across RDA NT's work, including support for clean energy, circular economy initiatives, climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable land management.

Inclusive & Transparent Communication:

RDA NT is committed to open, respectful and consistent communication, building trust and shared ownership of outcomes across government, industry and communities.

Together, RDA NT's vision, mission, values and cross-cutting principles define how the organisation will operate over 2026–2029 and where effort will be focused. Building on this foundation, the following strategic goals set out the practical areas where RDA NT will concentrate its influence, partnerships and resources to strengthen regional economies, improve liveability and support sustainable development across the Northern Territory.

5— Strategic Goals

The following five goals will guide RDA NT's work from 2026 to 2029.

Goal 1:

Drive Coordinated Advocacy and Regional Intelligence

Drive coordinated advocacy and regional intelligence to influence policy and investment decisions across all levels of government.

→ **Purpose:** Strengthen RDA NT's role as the Territory-wide regional development voice and evidence provider — ensuring that credible regional intelligence and unified advocacy shape government policy, funding and investment decisions.

→ **What we will achieve:**

- Develop and implement an Advocacy and Regional Priority Framework with clear partners, timelines and outcomes.
- Coordinate a Territory-wide set of shared RDA NT Regional Priorities, updated annually.
- Publish regular Regional Insights Reports combining data and local intelligence to inform investment and policy.
- Track and demonstrate advocacy outcomes through transparent reporting and case studies.
- Build visibility and collaboration with communities, industry and all levels of government to amplify regional priorities and influence decisions.

Goal 2:

Lead the Design of a Northern Territory Liveability Framework

Lead the design and coordination of an NT Liveability Framework enabling all levels of government, industry and communities to define, measure and promote liveability — from remote areas to the capital city — to attract and retain people, grow the workforce and guide future investment.

Purpose: To secure investment and partnership to develop a practical and evidence-based Liveability Framework. RDA NT will advocate to be the lead organisation responsible for coordinating and co-designing the framework, testing it through pilot projects, and developing user-friendly tools that help all levels of government, industry and communities measure and improve liveability.

This work will build a shared understanding of what liveability means in different NT contexts and how it can be strengthened to support population, workforce and economic growth.

→ What We Will Achieve:

- Secure investment and partnerships with Commonwealth and NT Governments for RDA NT to lead the collaborative design of the NT Liveability Framework, ensuring it reflects the diversity and priorities of the Territory's regions. Develop flexible indicators and user-friendly tools to measure liveability at every scale — from remote homelands and communities to major centres and Darwin.
- Pilot and refine the framework through place-based projects in selected locations, using outcomes to guide Territory-wide application.
- Establish long-term governance and maintenance arrangements, that considers RDA NT's role as the ongoing coordinator and custodian of the framework.
- Promote liveability as a driver of regional growth by embedding it in workforce, housing and population strategies.

Goal 3:

Increase Regional Investment and Capability

Increase regional investment by improving capability, project readiness, data quality and investor confidence.

→ **Purpose:** Support councils, First Nations organisations and regional entities to deliver investment-ready projects.

→ What we will achieve:

- Develop and implement a Funding Enablement Framework that defines RDA NT's role, scope and tiered levels of support while maintaining independence where RDA NT has a role in grant funding assessment processes.
- Build capability across the NT through targeted workshops and practical tools that help regional proponents prepare competitive proposals, with tailored support for smaller councils and Indigenous organisations.
- Coordinate and maintain a Territory-wide funding and project pipeline, tracking projects from concept to delivery to identify gaps, barriers and opportunities for investment.
- Produce regional investment intelligence reports that use data and local insights to demonstrate NT readiness and attract government and private investment.
- Promote investor confidence and collaboration by aligning with all levels of government and industry to strengthen visibility of regional NT projects.
- Track and report outcomes – including funds leveraged, projects supported and capability improvements – through transparent annual reporting and shared case studies.



Goal 4:

Strengthen Coordination for Workforce and Skills Development

Strengthen coordination and collaboration with all levels of government, industry, training providers and First Nation Organisations to enable job creation and skills development across regional industries and emerging opportunities.

Purpose: To support a skilled and inclusive workforce that meets the needs of the Northern Territory’s regions and emerging industries, RDA NT will identify where it can add value by addressing workforce gaps and coordination challenges, enabling stronger collaboration across existing programs.

Working with all levels of government, industry, training providers and First Nations organisations, RDA NT will connect intelligence, partnerships and place-based initiatives to strengthen workforce participation and job creation across the NT.

→ **What We Will Achieve:**

- Map and analyse the workforce landscape to identify gaps, overlaps and opportunities where RDA NT can add value and enable improved coordination and outcomes.
- Facilitate collaboration and alignment between workforce initiatives led by governments, industry and training bodies to reduce duplication and improve regional outcomes.
- Partner with employers, training providers and First Nations organisations to support co-design practical, place-based pathways that link skills development with local and emerging opportunities.
- Identify and support pilot projects that demonstrate scalable approaches to connecting training, employment and industry demand in regional and remote contexts.
- Promote workforce attraction and retention by aligning skills initiatives with liveability outcomes and showcasing regional NT as a place of opportunity, combining data and local insight to inform investment and policy decisions.



Goal 5:

Strengthen Governance, Capability and Visibility

Strengthen RDA NT’s governance, capability, and visibility across all levels of government, industry and communities.

Purpose: To build a strong, professional and well-governed organisation that is trusted, connected and clearly understood, RDA NT will strengthen its internal systems, policies and performance monitoring while enhancing visibility and communication across all levels of government, industry and communities. This will ensure RDA NT continues to operate with integrity, demonstrate impact and lead with confidence as the Territory’s trusted regional development partner.

→ **What We Will Achieve:**

- Define and communicate RDA NT’s operating model and role statement, clearly articulating how it differs from government and industry bodies.
- Modernise governance systems and processes, including policy updates, a risk and performance framework, and annual impact reporting.
- Strengthen organisational capability through regular professional development, succession planning and regional knowledge sharing across the Committee and staff.
- Implement a consistent communications and engagement plan to build understanding of RDA NT’s brand, role, outcomes and value.
- Enhance visibility and relationships across all levels of government, industry and regional stakeholders to increase influence and credibility.
- Demonstrate accountability and impact through transparent reporting, clear performance metrics and ongoing stakeholder feedback.

6 — Delivery

6.1 Implementation Approach

The delivery of this Strategic Plan will be supported by a detailed Implementation Plan that translates strategic intent into clear, actionable and time-bound activities over the 2026–2029 period. The Implementation Plan will be embedded within RDA NT's annual Business Plan, as required under the Australian Government funding agreement, to ensure alignment with funding, reporting and performance obligations.

Together, these documents will provide a practical and accountable framework for delivery, ensuring RDA NT's priorities are progressed in a coordinated and transparent way and clearly linked to the Strategic Goals.

→ The Implementation Plan will:

- Break down each Strategic Goal into defined actions, milestones and deliverables, with clear links to regional priorities and outcomes.
- Identify lead responsibility within RDA NT, including Committee oversight, CEO and staff roles, and key delivery partners.
- Set indicative timeframes across 2026–27, 2027–28 and 2028–29, with flexibility to adjust as regional conditions, funding opportunities and government priorities evolve.
- Establish clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to outcomes and impact, drawing on the Outcomes and Performance Indicator framework used for business planning and reporting.
- Identify key risks, dependencies and mitigation strategies, integrated with RDA NT's organisational risk and performance framework.
- Support prioritisation and sequencing of work to ensure focus, capacity and resources are maintained and directed to where RDA NT can add the greatest value.

The Implementation Plan will be treated as a live document, reviewed and refined annually to reflect changing regional conditions, emerging opportunities, funding environments and stakeholder needs, including shifts in NT Government regional economic planning settings. A midterm review during the life of the Strategy will assess whether priorities, actions and delivery settings remain fit for purpose.

6.2 Key partnerships and roles

Delivering this Strategic Plan will rely on RDA NT working in partnership across all levels of government, industry, First Nations organisations, local government and regional stakeholders, consistent with RDA NT's role as the trusted regional development voice for the Northern Territory. Clear roles and expectations will support coordinated action, reduce duplication and maximise the impact of limited resources.

Within RDA NT, the Committee will provide strategic oversight, set organisational direction and monitor performance against the Implementation Plan, including review of KPIs, key risks and major milestones. The CEO and staff will be responsible for day to day delivery, stakeholder engagement and reporting, ensuring that annual Business Plans, communications and projects are aligned with this Strategy and the Commonwealth Funding Agreement 2025–2030.

→ RDA NT will continue to work closely with:

- Australian Government departments, particularly the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, to align activities with the Regional Investment Framework and inform national regional policy.
- NT Government agencies to align with the Territory's 2024 economic, lifestyle and community priorities.
- Local governments, Aboriginal organisations, industry bodies and regional development stakeholders to codesign and deliver place based initiatives, share data and intelligence, and progress regional priorities identified through roadshows and engagement.

These partnerships and roles will be revisited as part of the annual review of the Implementation Plan, ensuring that RDA NT remains responsive, collaborative and clearly positioned within the evolving regional development ecosystem.



7— Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1 Framework and KPI's

RDA NT will apply a streamlined monitoring framework aligned to the five strategic goals and the four mandatory Commonwealth Outcomes. The framework will combine quantitative and qualitative measures to provide a balanced view of performance, impact and influence.

→ Key elements include:

- Outcome-aligned KPIs: A small, clearly defined set of indicators for each strategic goal, aligned to the Outcomes and Performance Indicator framework used in RDA NT's annual Business Plan and Annual Report.
- Activity and output tracking: Core activities such as regional engagement, grant and project support, regional intelligence products and partnership initiatives will be tracked through internal registers and engagement logs.
- Impact evidence: High-level impact measures will focus on investment leveraged, capability improvements, workforce outcomes and evidence of influence on policy, planning and investment decisions.
- Place-based and First Nations outcomes: Capturing how activities support regional and remote communities, Aboriginal-led organisations and place-based initiatives, consistent with RDA NT's cross-cutting principles.
- Fit-for-purpose internal systems will support delivery, monitoring and reporting.

7.2 Reporting and review

Monitoring information will underpin both accountability and learning. RDA NT will:

- Report annually through the Annual Report and Business Plan, meeting all Australian Government funding agreement requirements.
- Provide regular performance updates to the Committee, including progress against KPIs, emerging risks and recommended adjustments.
- Publish selected Regional Insights and summary products to support transparency and stakeholder engagement.

→ **A formal mid-term review** will be undertaken in 2027–28 to assess progress, relevance and emerging priorities. Findings will inform refinements to delivery approaches, partnerships and resourcing, ensuring the Strategy remains fit for purpose in a changing policy and regional environment.

Monitoring and evaluation will provide a structured, transparent way for RDA NT to track progress, demonstrate impact and continuously refine this Strategic Plan over 2026–2029.



8— Conclusion

This Strategic Plan positions RDA NT to lead, connect and influence regional development outcomes across the Northern Territory with clarity, credibility and measurable impact over the period 2026–2029. By focusing on coordinated advocacy, evidence led decision-making, investment readiness, workforce alignment and strong organisational governance, RDA NT will continue to play a vital role in enabling regional development that is inclusive, place based and responsive to the Territory's diverse regions.

The Strategy provides a strong foundation for collaboration across government, industry, First Nations organisations and communities, at a time of significant transition in the NT's regional development landscape. It reinforces RDA NT's role as a trusted Territory wide connector and honest broker—helping turn shared priorities into action, strengthening liveability, supporting sustainable investment and building resilient regional economies across the Northern Territory from 2026 to 2029.



RDA NT Strategic Plan 2026–2029. Published: February 2026
Document endorsed by RDA NT Committee 9 February 2026.

Regional Development Australia NT
Suite 8B/Level 1, 25 Parap Road
Parap Northern Territory 0820
GPO Box 4725, Darwin NT 0801
Phone: (08) 8941 7550
→ rdant.com.au



An Australian Government Initiative



Regional
Development
Australia