
Australian Flexible Learning
Framework for the National Vocational
Education & Training System
2005-2007

Foreword

E-learning is a critical means for transforming the central VET business of teaching, learning and assessment. By integrating information and communications technologies into the way VET is done, we are making it more flexible, more responsive to client needs, improving quality and access and fostering innovation.

There is no alternative

The benefits of national collaboration for e-learning over the past five years are now being seen throughout the VET system. These include economies of scale through national pooling of resources; faster systems development; higher quality e-learning products and services; and a well-distributed pool of VET professionals able to design, implement and manage quality e-learning.

For Australia's VET system, there is no alternative to continuing national collaboration for e-learning. No single jurisdiction has sufficient intellectual or financial resources to go it alone in the design, development and application of e-learning and succeed in a highly competitive global market.

A strategy for a federal system

In this second Framework, lessons learned from implementing Framework 2000-2004 and an international scan have yielded six essential features of an e-learning strategy for Australia.

- There must be a clear vision and clear priorities for the new framework and its relationship to the mainstream; a strong planning and accountability framework, resource allocation and incentive systems; communication and knowledge in communities of practice
- National leadership is essential but sustainability depends on recognition of State/Territory roles as system owners, regulators and resource managers
- Complementary action is needed at enterprise, industry, State/Territory and national levels
- Efforts to promote and support innovation at the delivery agency level are vital
- There must be a national framework for knowledge management, evaluation and diffusion

Policy settings are critical for transformation in a relatively small, remote economy.¹

So what will be different?

What will be different at the end of 2007 when this second Framework has finished its work? The following pages identify a range of specific outputs, actions and indicators. In sum, the differences will be a more flexible and accessible VET system characterised by:

- Robust benchmarks for e-learning, widely used to inform decision-making at all levels
- An informed and demanding client base which puts pressure on the VET system to be more responsive to its needs
- Partnerships between providers, industry and communities which accelerate and broaden the uptake of e-learning in workplace, community and institutional settings
- High levels of uptake of e-learning by Indigenous people and better learning outcomes for them
- A VET workforce highly skilled in the design, development, application and management of e-learning
- Providers innovating in the key areas of e-learning, e-business, online student support and self-service
- Agreed interoperability standards across jurisdictions enabling national sharing and exchange
- A national pool of quality e-learning resources accessible to all
- A national knowledge management and diffusion system
- Cross-sectoral collaboration for sharing content, expertise, research and advocacy
- Policy settings which support e-learning.

On behalf of FLAG and the ANTA Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) I invite your support for Framework 2005-2007 and for the shared endeavour of using information and communications technologies to transform the way we do VET in Australia.

Jim Davidson
Chair, Flexible Learning Advisory Group

¹ Acknowledgement: John Rimmer, former CEO, National Office for the Information Economy, presentation to FLAG, 10 March 2004.

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The Evolution of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework

Since 1993, the Australian Government and the States and Territories have worked together, in partnership with users of the vocational education and training (VET) system, to support more flexible learning. In 1999 they took a major step forward by developing and investing in a five-year national strategy - known as the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000-2004 (Framework).

THE FIRST FRAMEWORK 2000-2004

The first Framework supported national collaborative action across five goals:

Goal 1: Creative Capable People

Goal 2: Supportive Technological Infrastructure

Goal 3: World-Class Online Content Development, Applications and Services

Goal 4: Enabling Policies

Goal 5: Problem-Solving Regulation

A rigorous program of monitoring and evaluation has underpinned continuous improvement and accountability over the life of the first Framework. In addition to project and program evaluations, two major Framework Evaluations have been conducted: the first covering 2000-2001 and the second covering 2002-2003. The most recent evaluation² found that the Framework:

- legitimised investment in flexible learning

- created powerful problem solving networks

- leveraged the use of resources across its own programs and with other initiatives of State and Territory agencies and registered training providers

- enabled a consistent and efficient approach to be taken to the adoption of technologies in VET and support of Australia's transition to an information economy

- delivered significant returns on the investment made by the Australian Government, States and Territories.

The Evaluation also found that, from a very low base in 2000 there have been substantial increases in:

- the number of students using technology in their learning programs

- the number of students using technology to communicate with their peers and their teachers, share information and submit work for assessment

- the number of technology-enabled learning resources available to teachers to use and the volume of their use

- the number of training organisations providing enrolment, administrative and support services online

- the number of VET practitioners accessing information on flexible learning and resources.

THE SECOND FRAMEWORK 2005-2007

In May 2004, ANTA CEOs acknowledged the need for continuing effort in flexible learning when they agreed that a second national flexible learning framework should be developed for their consideration.

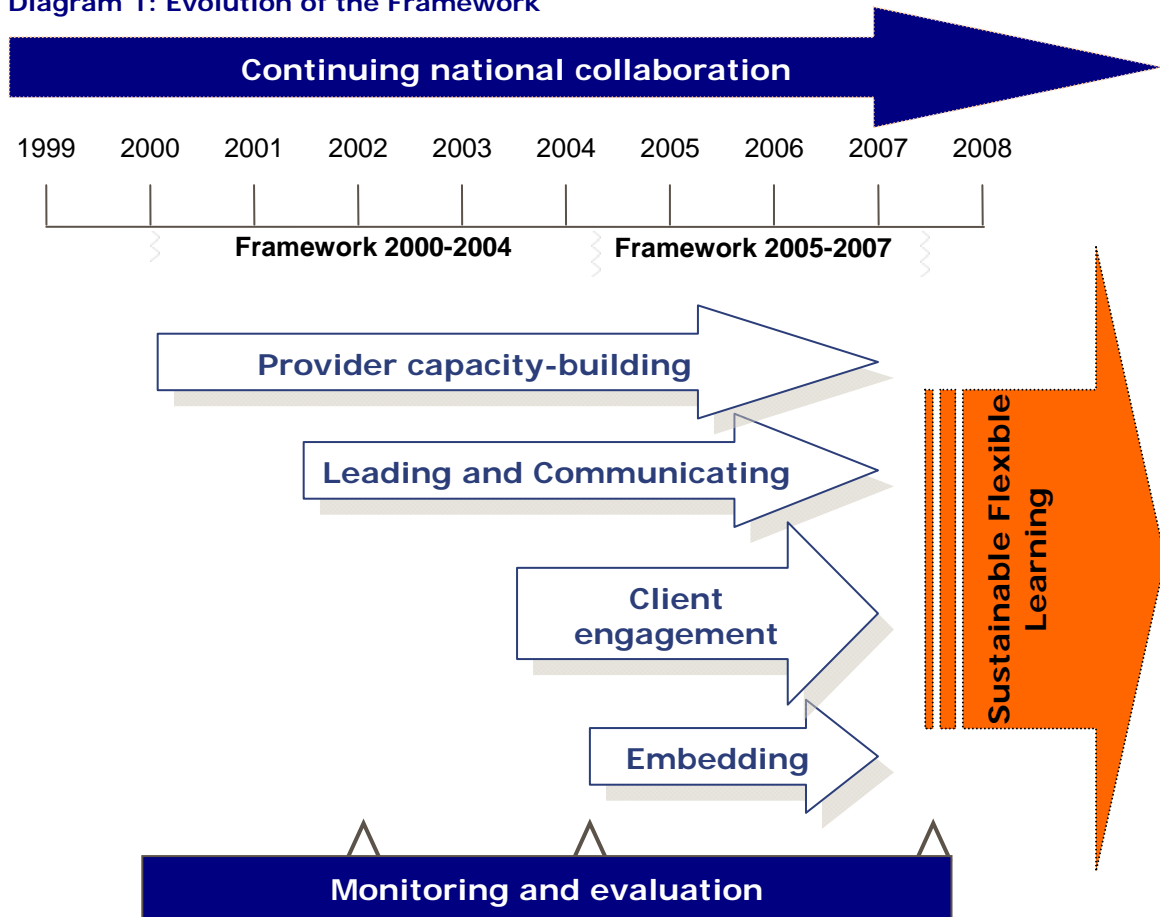
The Framework for 2005-2007 set out in this document capitalises on the accumulated national experience of researching, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating flexible learning in

² Evaluation of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2000-2004: Phase 2 Evaluation, Final Report, May 2004, I & J Management Services.

VET and takes account of the changing social, economic and policy environment in which it now operates.

Diagram 1 below shows the themes which have characterised the Framework's efforts to date and the new themes which will be added over the next three years.

Diagram 1: Evolution of the Framework



e-learning: a national priority

Most developed nations place a high priority on national strategies to integrate information and communications technologies (ICT) enabled content and teaching methods into their education and training systems, and Australia has been an early global leader in this area.

JOINT STATEMENT ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE INFORMATION ECONOMY AND ACTION PLAN FOR 2004-2006

The first national action plan for education and training in the information economy was endorsed in 2000 and the second is now being finalised.³ In their *Joint Statement on Education and Training in the Information Economy and Action Plan for 2004-2006*, Ministers acknowledge the potential of ICT to address many of the major issues facing the education and training sector and, at the same time, to address some of Australia's contemporary issues. They agree that cooperative, often cross-sectoral, national approaches and continued collaboration are essential in achieving their vision of:

³ As at 6 July 2004, the *Joint Statement on Education and Training in the Information Economy and Action Plan for 2004-2006* had been signed off by all Ministers except NSW, who is anticipated will sign it off by the end of July 2004.

creating an innovative society
ensuring that all learners achieve their potential
improving quality and raising standards
achieving efficiencies through sharing
capitalising on the internationalisation of education.

SHAPING OUR FUTURE: NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2004-2010

The National VET Strategy 2004-2010 has four objectives:

Industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy

Employers and individuals will be at the centre of vocational education and training

Communities and regions will be strengthened economically and socially through learning and employment

Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and their learning culture will be shared.

Achievement of these four objectives will require action across many fronts. Collaborative action to improve the capacity of VET to offer more flexible and client-focused approaches to teaching and learning will be essential if the national VET strategy is to achieve its objectives.

The proposed Framework for 2005-2007 has been designed to support achievement of these broader objectives through e-learning.

THE POTENTIAL OF E-LEARNING

E-learning uses all available electronic media to improve the learning experience and deliver vocational education and training flexibly.

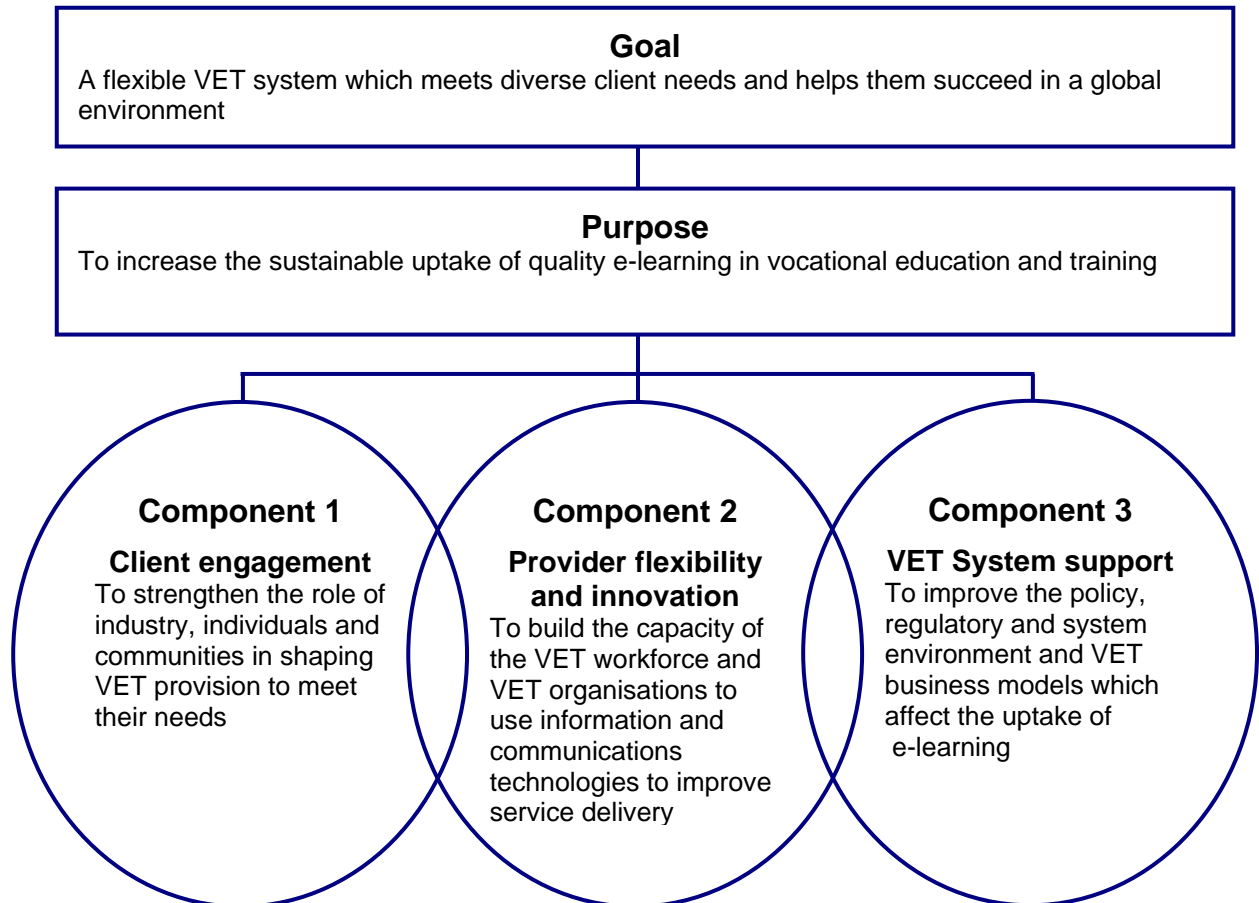
As a learning method in its own right or blended with other methods of learning, it can improve the quality and reach of learning, widen participation in it, broaden choices and foster the continuous innovation needed for the 21st century.

It can also reduce time spent on training administration; provide better feedback about progress to learners themselves and to their employers; and make possible more personalised approaches to meeting learners' needs.

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2005-2007

Experience of the first Framework 2000-2004 has led to a streamlined design for the next three years. This is organised around one goal, one purpose and three components, shown in Diagram 2 below.

Diagram 2: Framework Design



The *goal* of the Framework is to help the VET system become more flexible and therefore more responsive to client needs. But the national Framework 2005-2007 cannot achieve the goal by itself. Rather, it works with and through the many other initiatives at State/Territory and national levels which are also supporting a more flexible and responsive VET system.

The *purpose* is what the Framework itself will achieve.

Each of the Framework's three *components* contributes to achieving the purpose. While each component has its own objective, component activities will be linked across the Framework.

This new design maintains continuity with the most successful activities of the past four years, consistent with the findings of the Phase II Evaluation, but also strikes out in some new directions.

The demand side – client needs and engagement – has a higher priority than in the past, thereby broadening the Framework's change strategy⁴

⁴ "Clients of vocational education and training are the users of the services. They encompass businesses, small and large, full-time and part-time students, apprentices, trainees and people who work, are preparing for work and looking for work", Shaping Our Future, Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training 2004-2010

Building organisational and individual capability on the supply side will continue, but with tighter targeting and a strong emphasis on developing the design, management and administrative skills peculiar to e-learning

E-learning remains a clear focus for 2005-2007, but the integration of e-learning with e-business will be strengthened

Sustainability (the degree to which benefits produced by Framework activities are maintained after Framework support ceases) is a key criterion for selecting and supporting Framework activities

The Framework explicitly supports the National Strategy for VET and Ministerial priorities for mainstreaming ICT into all facets of education and training, including VET

A strong outcomes-focus, based on a rigorous approach to benchmarking, evaluation and accountability.

COMPONENT 1: CLIENT ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY, INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES IN SHAPING VET PROVISION TO MEET THEIR NEEDS

<i>Output</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Output Indicators</i>
<p>Output 1.1 Industry associations, unions and enterprises actively promoting and using e-learning in nationally recognised workplace learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Support RTO - enterprise alliances which increase nationally recognised e-learning programs in workplaces <input type="checkbox"/> Establish partnerships with Industry Skills Councils to develop champions and leaders in the industry, and to identify, communicate and promote best practice in e-learning in workplaces, especially small businesses <input type="checkbox"/> Provide extension services to targeted industry sectors and the small business sector to help them identify needs and establish e-learning systems and programs <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and promote just-in-time e-learning taster programs specifically designed for different industry sectors <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with professional associations for sharing of knowledge, expertise, and networks, leveraging off mutual achievements and increasing industry knowledge of the VET sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> E-learning as a % of all structured training provided by employers <input type="radio"/> % of VET workplace delivery using e-learning <input type="radio"/> Industry participation in, knowledge of and satisfaction with Framework activities <input type="radio"/> Industry satisfaction with e-learning as a learning medium

	Output	Action	Output Indicators
Output 1.2	Indigenous people actively participating in planning, designing, implementing and evaluating e-learning at national, state and local levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> In partnership with Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council, review the current state and potential of e-learning for Indigenous people and identify actions needed at national, State/Territory levels to achieve the output⁵ <input type="checkbox"/> Identify existing successful Indigenous e-learning initiatives at the local level, and in partnership with Indigenous organisations and providers, extend them through demonstration projects <input type="checkbox"/> Promote Indigenous e-learning champions in communities and enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Measurable improvements on 2004 benchmarks for Indigenous learning in VET⁶
Output 1.3	E-learning embedded in existing community-based and regional development initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Capitalise on existing community and regional development initiatives to integrate e-learning in all aspects of their operations <input type="checkbox"/> Foster partnerships between RTOs, community based organisations and business and government for community planning then implementation of e-learning <input type="checkbox"/> Consult with under-represented client groups on ways to increase the number and range of sustainable e-learning programs available to them, and take joint action in agreed areas <input type="checkbox"/> Undertake communication campaign on the benefits of e-learning targeting specific client groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased participation of community providers in VET e-learning alliances and networks ○ Uptake and use of e-learning in community and regional development initiatives at State/Territory and national levels ○ Increased client knowledge of and demand for e-learning

⁵ The national Blueprint for implementing the National Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in VET 2000-2005 has, as Objective 3, "Achieving increased, culturally appropriate and flexibly delivered training, including the use of IT, for Indigenous people"

⁶ As identified through research conducted by NCVET under the 'Indigenous Australians in vocational education and training: National research strategy for 2003 - 2006'

COMPONENT 2: PROVIDER FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION

OBJECTIVE TO BUILD THE CAPACITY OF THE VET WORKFORCE AND VET ORGANISATIONS TO USE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY

	Output	Action	Output Indicators
Output 2.1	The VET workforce has the knowledge and skills necessary to implement and sustain quality e-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage participation of teachers / trainers and support staff in accredited foundation-level and advanced-level online professional development programs on e-learning <input type="checkbox"/> Provide targeted action learning opportunities to increase the use of e-learning, particularly in workplaces <input type="checkbox"/> Support action research and other innovative professional development models which encourage good practice in teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> % of VET teachers and trainers able to customise e-learning content <input type="radio"/> % of VET teachers and trainers using and satisfied with e-learning <input type="radio"/> Increased take-up, use, sharing and personalisation of e-learning resources by providers
Output 2.2	Increased provider capability to provide training delivery and support service innovation for improved flexibility, quality, productivity and client satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Create new opportunities to help VET leaders and managers plan for, manage and fund e-learning in institutional, workplace or community settings <input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate and advise providers on sustainable innovation in training delivery and service models, with a focus on e-learning, e-business, online student support and self-service <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and develop leading edge e-learning applications by convening an R&D forum which brings together providers, researchers, industry and suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Attitude of VET leaders and managers to e-learning <input type="radio"/> % of VET providers offering e-learning options <input type="radio"/> % clients satisfied with e-business experiences in VET <input type="radio"/> % of VET providers with access to e-learning and e-business service infrastructure

Output	Action	Output Indicators
<p>Output 2.3</p> <p>Quality customisable e-learning resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and maintain a national pool of customisable e-learning content to support nationally recognised training <input type="checkbox"/> Stimulate innovative projects that use nationally-funded learning objects to customise learning for particular client groups, and evaluate their educational effectiveness <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with the schools and Higher Education sectors to leverage off their work in developing e-learning content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> A national set of shareable e-learning tools and resources <input type="radio"/> Quality and range of VET e-learning resources produced nationally <input type="radio"/> Provider access to and usage of nationally developed e-learning content <input type="radio"/> % of Training Package qualifications supported by customisable e-learning resources
<p>Output 2.4</p> <p>Educationally effective teaching & learning practices which meet the diverse needs of learners in e-learning environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop and promote models of educationally effective learning activities and teaching strategies for different learner segments <input type="checkbox"/> Increase take up of e-learning within VET in Schools by working collaboratively with the schools sector <input type="checkbox"/> Exchange research on learner preferences in relation to e-learning with the schools and Higher Education sectors and apply as relevant to the VET sector <input type="checkbox"/> Showcase Australia's capability for quality e-learning in international markets in association with Australian Education International <input type="checkbox"/> Increase the quality and accessibility of e-learning available to people with disabilities in partnership with Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) and its business partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Increased use of e-learning by targeted learner segments including people with disabilities <input type="radio"/> % of learners satisfied with e-learning as an educational medium

COMPONENT 3: VET SYSTEM SUPPORT

OBJECTIVE TO IMPROVE THE POLICY, REGULATORY AND SYSTEM ENVIRONMENT AND VET BUSINESS MODELS WHICH AFFECT THE UPTAKE OF E-LEARNING

	<i>Output</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Output Indicators</i>
Output 3.1	Research and advocacy which supports the uptake and maximises the impact of e-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Commission a Benchmark Survey of the state of e-learning in Australian VET to be administered early in 2005 and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ administer it again in 2006-2007 to assess Framework achievements against it ~ promote its use by State Training Authorities and providers to enable them to assess progress in the uptake of e-learning <input type="checkbox"/> Review, formulate, advocate and advise on national policies that affect e-learning in VET⁷ <input type="checkbox"/> Further develop the e-learning research base in collaboration with national and international research organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Benchmark Survey administered and analysed in 2005 and 2006-2007 <input type="radio"/> Extent of application of national e-learning benchmarks across VET <input type="radio"/> Stakeholder assessment of the value of framework research and policy advice <input type="radio"/> Range and impact of collaborative research projects
Output 3.2	Integrated system for sharing and managing e-learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Integrate and strengthen the national network of VET learning object repositories <input type="checkbox"/> Establish protocols for governance and access rights for providers to e-learning content, including agreements between jurisdictions for exchange of Crown Copyright resources <input type="checkbox"/> Foster national collaboration and common standards to achieve technical and business process interoperability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Sustainable model for managing the national pool of e-learning content <input type="radio"/> Level of general usage and resource sharing achieved through the national network <input type="radio"/> User satisfaction with resource access and useability

⁷ Priority areas include electronic authentication, interoperability, copyright, intellectual property and access rights

	Output	Action	Output Indicators
Output 3.3	Integrated system for sharing national information and knowledge about e-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a best-practice Knowledge Sharing Service which includes the national repository of flexible learning documents and lessons learned <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with schools, higher education and the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector to maintain and improve EdNA Online services to VET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Knowledge Sharing Service established and widely used by VET staff <input type="radio"/> Increased stakeholder use of integrated systems and tools
Output 3.4	Support and advocate access to core broadband to achieve innovative teaching and learning and business processes at a sustainable cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Support State and Territory efforts to increase VET access to core broadband <input type="checkbox"/> Research and promote the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to achieve VET business efficiencies <input type="checkbox"/> Promote and support options for increasing community access to broadband <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate with the Australian Research and Education Network (AREN) and the Australian Academic Research Network (AARNET) on broadband access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> % of VET providers and community-based providers who access broadband

Evaluating the Framework 2005-2007

The ultimate test of the success of Framework 2005-2007 will be whether it achieves its purpose: *To increase the sustainable uptake of quality e-learning in vocational education and training and contributes to its goal: A flexible VET system which meets diverse client needs and helps them succeed in a global environment.*

Framework 2000-2004 and other recent initiatives have attempted to develop measures of flexible learning and the use of ICT in educational or related settings. Although there are now literally hundreds of indicators of e-learning, there are significant methodological questions to be resolved.

The challenge for the Framework over the next three years is to identify, collect, analyse and report on a manageable suite of quantitative and qualitative indicators which, when taken together, will inform judgement as to whether the Framework has achieved what it was funded to achieve.

THE FRAMEWORK EVALUATION MODEL

Two hierarchical data sets are necessary to evaluate the success of the Framework.⁸

Level 1: Uptake & use: The uptake of e-learning, and the volume and sophistication of use by clients (individual learners and industries/ enterprises), by providers and by the VET system.

Level 2: Impact: The degree to which the application of ICT to vocational learning has changed behaviours and outcomes for clients and transformed the practices of providers and the VET system.

Specific indicators within each data set will need to be determined, having regard to data sources, data integrity, data availability, the costs of data collection and respondent burden.

It is also proposed that the primary data source for assessing *Uptake and Use* and *Impact* be a **Benchmark Survey of e-learning in VET**. A national survey would be administered early in 2005, based on work undertaken in the second half of 2004. A second national survey would be conducted in 2006-2007 to assess progress of the Framework.

Survey data would be supplemented by existing data drawn from VET data sources including AVETMISS and more widely including the ABS.

In addition to this evaluation model, **Output indicators** will be used to judge the efficiency and effectiveness of individual framework outputs. Where appropriate, these will be used to supplement the survey data and data from other sources.

On the next page are **Proposed Framework Indicators**. Further work will be done in the second half of 2004 to refine these indicators so that they guide the design of the Benchmark Study.

⁸ The choice of these two data sets is influenced by the benchmarking framework in Booz Allen Hamilton (2002) "*The World's Most Effective Policies For The e-Economy: International e-Economy Benchmarking*", Report to the British Office of the E- Envoy & the UK Department of Trade & Industry, London

Proposed indicators of the success of the Framework 2005-2007

IMPACT INDICATORS	
ON CLIENTS	Client satisfaction with experiences in VET x demographic status and x learner group
ON PROVIDERS	% of VET teachers whose teaching practices have been positively influenced by Framework activities
	% of VET providers whose strategic and business plans have been positively influenced by Framework activities
ON VET SYSTEM	Number and range of e-learning resources shared nationally
	Business improvements achieved through e-learning
	ANTA CEOs' assessment of the impact of framework activities on VET provision

UPTAKE & USE INDICATORS	
BY CLIENTS	E-learning as a % of all structured training provided by employers
	% of workplaces offering e-learning opportunities to employees
	% of VET learners enrolled in units that use e-learning x demographic status and x learner group x learning outcome
	Use of e-learning by Indigenous people especially in remote communities
BY PROVIDERS	% of VET teachers/trainers using national e-learning resources
	% of VET teachers/trainers using online technologies for teaching purposes
	% of VET providers offering online enrolment, information and student support services and assessment
	Access to VET e-learning resources by public, private and community providers
	Number of teachers/trainers, support staff and managers trained
BY VET SYSTEM	Progress in electronic authentication, copyright and digital rights management
	Use of common technological standards within VET
	Scope and use of national VET learning object repositories
	% of training providers who access broadband
	Increased international demand for VET e-learning products and services

Funding and managing the Framework

The Framework is funded through a unique collaboration between the Australian Government, ANTA, and the States and Territories involving the pooling of infrastructure funds. Pooled investment over the five-year life of the first Framework has complemented investment by individual States and Territories. This successful concept of nationally pooled funds will continue in 2005-2007.

The Framework is managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) which is a group of senior personnel from across Australia who advise ANTA CEOs on national issues for flexible learning in VET. It is chaired by an ANTA CEO. FLAG also works with and advises the Australian Information and Communication Technologies in Education Committee (AICTEC) on a range of issues in relation to the use of technologies in VET and has a mandate to respond to specific references from ANTA CEOs.

The FLAG National Support Services supports FLAG's work in relation to the implementation of the Framework and more broadly.

Framework activities are organised and implemented through Programs. Program Groups are chaired by a FLAG member and comprise stakeholder representatives.

In 2005-2007, a range of models will be used to manage Framework activities. In some areas, such as copyright and broadband, implementation at national level is essential. But in other areas, the process of devolution of responsibility for implementation to States and Territories (within nationally agreed parameters) will continue, with a view to ensuring sustainability beyond the life of this Framework.

An Annual Business Plan will be developed for each of the three years of the Framework. Each Business Plan will identify what is to be achieved in the year, how it will be achieved, the funds allocated to various activities, how achievement will be measured, and who will take the lead accountability.

Glossary

Blended learning	Learning methods that combine e-learning with other forms of flexible learning and more traditional forms of learning.
Broadband	High-speed transmission. (The specific speed used to define broadband is subjective; the word often implies any speed above what is commonly used at the current time.)
Community of practice	A loosely-coupled group of practitioners who work and learn together around a certain broad topic over an extended period of time. CoPs operate on the basis of joint interest, spontaneous interaction, and mutual development. ⁹
Digital divide	The gap between those who can access technology and those who cannot.
E-business	Utilising information and communication technologies to improve and transform key business processes.
E-learning	E-learning as a component of flexible learning uses all available electronic media to improve the learning experience and deliver vocational education and training flexibly. It includes computer-based learning, web-based learning, virtual classrooms and digital collaboration.
Electronic authentication	Authentication is the process of establishing whether someone or something is who or what its identifier states it is. The key benefit of electronic authentication is that it enables electronic transactions to take place in an environment of trust and confidence. ¹⁰
Flexible learning	Flexible learning expands choice on what, when, where and how people learn. It supports different styles of learning, including e-learning. ¹¹
Interoperability	Interoperability describes the ability of electronic systems and services to operate effectively together, exchanging data and/or information with maximum efficiency. Interoperability depends upon use of accepted technical standards and protocols. Common information formats and business processes also facilitate interoperability.

⁹ *Working and Learning in Vocational Education and Training in the Knowledge Era*, Final report of the Professional Development for the Future Project, Attachment D: New approaches to professional development, Dr Rob Poell, Tilburg University, Netherlands

¹⁰ *Legal Issues in Electronic Authentication*, Available at:
<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/experts/reports/electronicauthenticationfinal052003.pdf>

¹¹ Webpage: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/aboutus/jargonbuster.htm>

Knowledge management	A multi-disciplined approach to organisational objectives by making the best use of knowledge. It involves the design, review and implementation of both social and technological processes to improve the application of knowledge, in the collective interest of stakeholders. ¹²
Learning object	A digital entity designed to support a particular learning experience that can be used either by itself or as part of a larger aggregation (such as an online unit or course). The national trend is to adopt international specifications and standards (IMS Content Packaging and IEEE Learning Object Metadata) that aid discovery through learning object repositories.
Virtual Private Network	A virtual private network (VPN) is a way to use a public telecommunication infrastructure, such as the Internet, to provide remote offices or individual users with secure access to their organisation's network. A VPN can be contrasted with an expensive system of owned or leased lines that can only be used by one organisation. The goal of a VPN is to provide the organisation with the same capabilities, but at a much lower cost. ¹³

¹² *Performance = knowledge + learning + use* (Clark 2003): the application of knowledge management theory to add practical value to a VET organization, Available at: <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/knowledgetree/edition05/download/Sullivan.pdf>

¹³ Webpage: http://searchnetworking.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid7_gci213324,00.html