

Education Leadership Strategy 2021–24



Acknowledgement

The Department of Education respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which young Territorians are educated. In the spirit of reconciliation we acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of the Northern Territory and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We respect and support the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young Territorians.

While this strategy uses the term 'Aboriginal', we respectfully acknowledge that Torres Strait Islander peoples are First Nations people living in the Northern Territory. Therefore, 'Aboriginal' should be read to include both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Interpreter services

If you need an interpreter to read this report, phone one of these services, who will arrange one for you:

- Interpreting and Translating Service NT on 08 8999 8506
- the Aboriginal Interpreter Service on 1800 334 994.

For more information about interpreter services, visit www.nt.gov.au/page/interpreter-services

Back cover image: bennymarty – stock.adobe.com

WARNING: This report may contain images and stories of deceased persons.

Published by the Department of Education

© Northern Territory Government, 2021

Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this document may be reproduced without prior written permission from the Northern Territory Government through the Department of Education.

Contents

<u>From the Chief Executive</u>	2
<u>Leadership Strategy vision</u>	4
<u>Strategic Actions</u>	6
<u>Timeline for implementing the Strategic Actions</u>	14



From the Chief Executive



The Northern Territory Department of Education Leadership Strategy is for all current and future leaders across the department – educators, school and Early Childhood Education and Care staff, and all our staff across the system who support them.

An expert education workforce is critical to the success of the Education NT Strategy 2021–2025, our strategy for continuous school and system improvement, and to strengthening instruction for all young Territorians.

This Leadership Strategy is a significant, long-term investment in building that expert education workforce. It represents a new approach to identifying, developing and supporting our people – in early childhood services, schools and across the system – at each stage of their careers. The Leadership Strategy sets out how we will develop the specific knowledge, skills and practices our leaders need to embed inquiry as a way of working across the system and accelerate improvement in education.

The research is clear that education leadership has a strong, positive influence on child and student learning, especially when it's coupled with systematic curriculum delivery and effective pedagogical practices. System leadership in the department, including in regions and in our central office can help leaders strengthen instruction in schools and early childhood services.

We worked closely with our education leaders on this plan to build our expert education workforce over the next 4 years. This Leadership Strategy is an important tool to build an expert education workforce, a key strategic priority under the Education NT Strategy.

This strategy has been informed by extensive consultation with school and system leaders across the Territory. It includes 4 strategic actions:

- 1. Create a common understanding of improvement** to embed inquiry as a way of working across the system and create role clarity for early childhood, school and system leaders.
- 2. Establish a clear leadership pipeline** to provide a career pathway for current and future leaders. Leaders will have opportunities to join masterclasses and flagship leadership development programs linked to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and Principals and the Northern Territory Public Sector Capability and Leadership Framework.

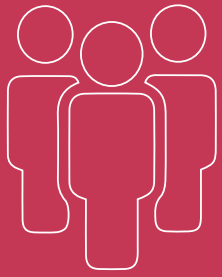
- 3. Improve the impact of leadership development programs** to ensure the investment in these programs, both by current and aspiring leaders and by the system, results in professional growth and stronger instruction for all young Territorians.
- 4. Engage Aboriginal leaders and remote staff** to both participate in and shape the leadership pipeline and improve cultural responsiveness and connectedness across the department.

Thanks to this Leadership Strategy, in 5 years the Northern Territory will have Australia's best pipeline of school and system leaders and its most effective leadership development programs. Inquiry will be embedded as a way of working across the department, and every person in our expert education workforce will have had the opportunity to benefit from targeted leadership development opportunities.

Above all, this Leadership Strategy will strengthen instruction for all young Territorians – the children and students at the centre of all of our work every day.



Karen Weston
Chief Executive



Leadership Strategy vision



This Leadership Strategy is a new approach to identifying, developing and supporting our expert education workforce at each stage of their careers.

1. Who is the Leadership Strategy for?

All current and aspiring education leaders across the Department of Education, including everybody in schools and early childhood services, and in central and regional offices.

2. Why do we need the Leadership Strategy?

This Leadership Strategy was created to support and lead continuous school and early childhood service improvement. During consultations in 2020 and 2021, education leaders identified opportunities to:

- develop a common understanding of education improvement and better define role clarity, in early childhood services and schools and across the department, to lead improvements in teaching and learning
- embed inquiry as a way of working to drive continuous improvement across the department
- implement a leadership pipeline that sets out leadership progression pathways
- provide more high-quality training and development opportunities that are connected to job needs
- identify and bridge capability gaps across the workforce in the areas of leadership focused on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and in leading parent and community engagement
- engage Aboriginal leaders and remote education leaders to both participate in and shape the leadership pipeline, and improve cultural responsiveness across the department.

The Leadership Strategy builds on our strong foundation of school and early childhood service improvement work to date, including the development of the NT inquiry cycle, by clearly articulating what a system-wide focus on educational improvement means in terms of practical changes to the way leaders work. Importantly, it also demonstrates how we will support leaders to make these changes and how we will measure our progress.

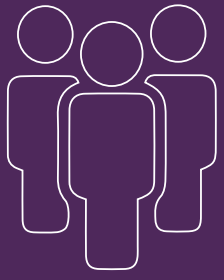
In addition to the perspectives and experiences of leaders across the system, this Leadership Strategy is also informed by the evidence on effective education leadership.

Evidence shows that, after quality teaching, leadership has the biggest in-school and early childhood service impact on child and student learning, especially when focused on strengthening instruction. System leadership in regional and central offices, in turn, increases the capacity of schools and early childhood services to focus on strengthening instruction, and helps to ensure everyone is working towards our common goals for school and early childhood service improvement.

Effective system leaders tailor support to the differing needs of schools and early childhood services in the system and work collaboratively with leaders. They create and enable the right conditions for children and students to achieve their best.

3. Related strategies and frameworks

- Education NT Strategy 2021–2025
- School Leader Wellbeing Action Plan
- NT Public Sector Workforce Strategy 2021–26
- Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy.



Strategic Actions





1. Create a common understanding of improvement

We will identify the critical leadership practices that will drive school, Early Childhood Services and system improvement and embed inquiry as a way of working across the department.

Developing the NT Inquiry Cycle and related supports, including the Signature Strategies, has been an important first step in creating a common understanding of school, early childhood service and system improvement. The NT Inquiry Cycle promotes a culture of inquiry and collective responsibility.

The inquiry process enables us to identify areas of strength and areas to focus improvement efforts that will have the biggest impact on child and student outcomes. It also helps education leaders make evidence-informed decisions and provides a framework to strategically target resources.

The next step is to articulate the specific practices all leaders need to demonstrate at each stage of the NT Inquiry Cycle to accelerate improvement.

Work on this has already started, with education leaders working together to determine what we need to do at each stage of the NT Inquiry Cycle: Assess, Set Goals, Plan, Act, and Review and Adjust.

This strategy outlines further opportunities, including masterclasses and flagship development programs, for people across all areas of the department to understand and embed inquiry as a way of working.

Every member of our expert education workforce has an important role to play to accelerate improvement. Articulating critical leadership practices for education leaders linked to the NT Inquiry Cycle will help clarify roles and create a common understanding of what effective leadership looks like in our department.





An illustrative example of key steps education leaders need to take during the assess and set goals stages of the NT Inquiry Cycle is included below.

Assess and set goals stages of NT Inquiry Cycle

What school leaders need to do

- Identify learning growth by examining evidence of what children and students can say, do, make and write.
- Set goals and targets for improvement in a specific curriculum area.
- Analyse current practice in the curriculum area, including what we teach, how we teach and how we assess.
- Identify the changes in professional practice that need to occur in order to make progress towards goals and targets for improvement.
- Develop and implement improvement plans.
- Provide a place-based approach to support child and student engagement and focus on increasing community engagement in their education.

What system leaders need to do

- Provide data resources including PAT, E-Dash, Literacy and Numeracy Progressions, and related guidance.
- Provide guidance on best-practice curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, including exemplars and expertise.
- Provide targeted resources to support education improvement, including financial resources, physical resources and infrastructure, and human resources and expertise.
- Identify strategic priorities to support system improvement.
- Provide support to schools and Early Childhood Services to effectively engage children, students, families and communities through establishing strong cross-agency working relationships in regions.

Clearly articulating specific leadership practices at each stage of the NT Inquiry Cycle will inform roles and responsibilities for improvement for leaders across the system. This role clarity will help to:

- identify the knowledge, skills and capabilities leaders need to perform their roles
- shape a leadership pipeline that embeds these knowledge, skills and capabilities, and the identification, selection and recognition of leaders

- guide the creation of leadership development opportunities and flagship programs designed to develop the relevant knowledge, skills and capabilities and to embed inquiry as a way of working across the system.



The leadership pipeline is not linear. It shows many possible career trajectories – from teacher and officer to senior system leader – and how educators may move between the corporate and education tracks at various stages of their careers. Every role in the pipeline is valued.

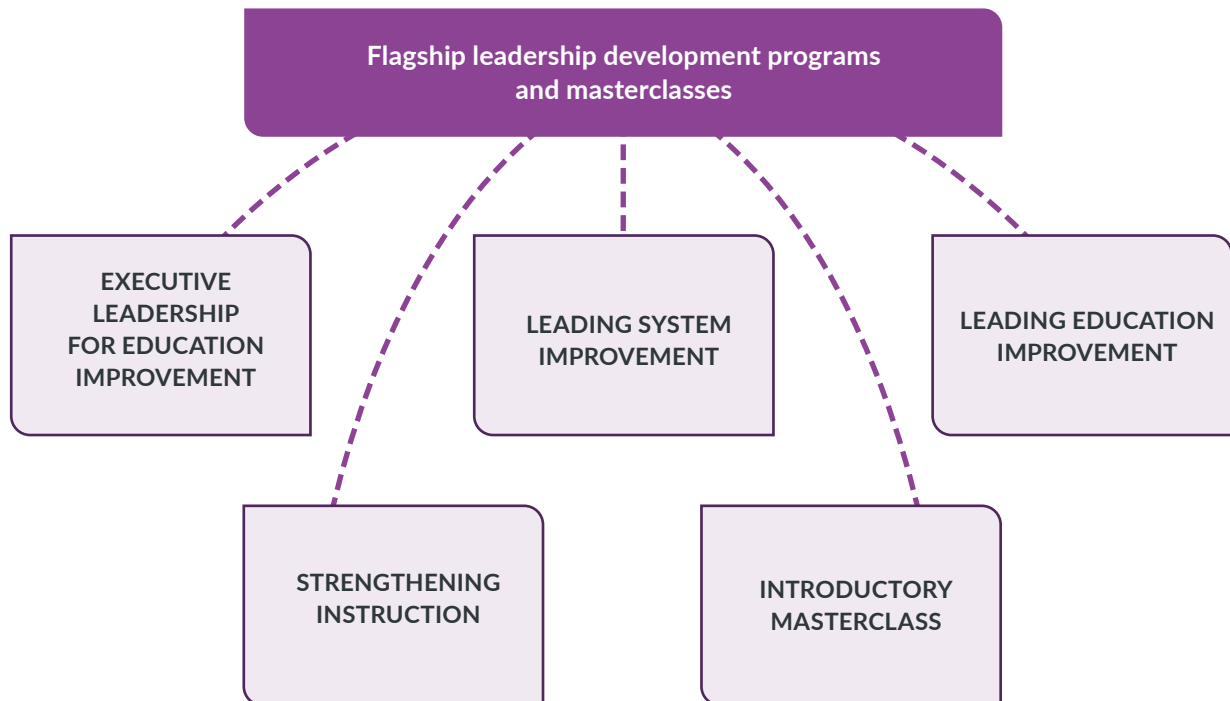
The leadership pipeline:

- sets out a roadmap for how people progress through various levels of the system and reach positions of education leadership
- provides role clarity for education leaders, emphasising critical leadership practices at each stage of their career that are necessary for education and system improvement

- prioritises developing the knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to execute practices for effective school, early childhood service and system improvement
- guides the creation of flagship development programs designed to develop critical leadership knowledge, skills and capabilities at each stage of the leadership pipeline.

Flagship leadership development programs and masterclasses will be created to help leaders develop as they progress through the leadership pipeline. They will target each stage of the leadership development pipeline.

Leadership development flagship programs and masterclasses



Four leadership development flagship programs and a series of introductory masterclasses, all linked to the leadership pipeline, will be developed to help build our expert education workforce, embed inquiry as a way of working across the system and strengthen instruction in schools and early childhood services.

The masterclass and flagship programs are:

- introductory masterclass: inquiry-based education and system improvement in the Northern Territory
- strengthening instruction flagship program
- leading education improvement flagship program
- leading system improvement flagship program
- executive leadership for education improvement flagship program.

The introductory masterclass will be open to everyone across the department and will be an introduction to inquiry-based education improvement. Each flagship program will be targeted to a specific cohort of leaders and will comprise a range of modules. Education leaders at each stage of the pipeline will complete some modules together, such as modules on inquiry-based improvement, ethical leadership and cultural responsiveness. Other modules will be tailored to specific roles and completed separately. For example, targeted modules for the school track will

include leading curriculum and pedagogy assessment, while targeted modules for the corporate track will include strategic policy for education improvement.

The flagship programs will all include opportunities for collaboration and mentoring, and will provide targeted opportunities for everyone in the department to be both effectively inducted into new roles and well prepared to take the next step in their careers.

One of the early phase offerings will be an Early Career Teacher Program, that supports transition from pre-service training to effective classroom teaching through tailored orientation and induction, professional learning and mentoring.

Some flagship program modules will be bespoke and developed by internal and external providers. Others, including middle management development options from the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment, already exist and will be integrated where relevant. All leadership development opportunities will be linked to the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership Standards for Teachers and Principals and the Northern Territory Public Sector Capability and Leadership Framework.

Masterclasses and flagship programs will begin to open for enrolment from 2022.



3. Improve the impact of leadership development programs

We will improve the impact of leadership development programs by developing principles of effective program design, delivery and evaluation.

The department is committed to investing in professional development to further build its expert education workforce across the leadership pipeline. It is critical that these investments hit the mark, creating high-quality professional development opportunities that strengthen instruction in schools and early childhood services.

While education systems internationally invest heavily in programs of professional and leadership development, research shows that professional development opportunities do not always help educators and leaders improve their practice in a meaningful way.

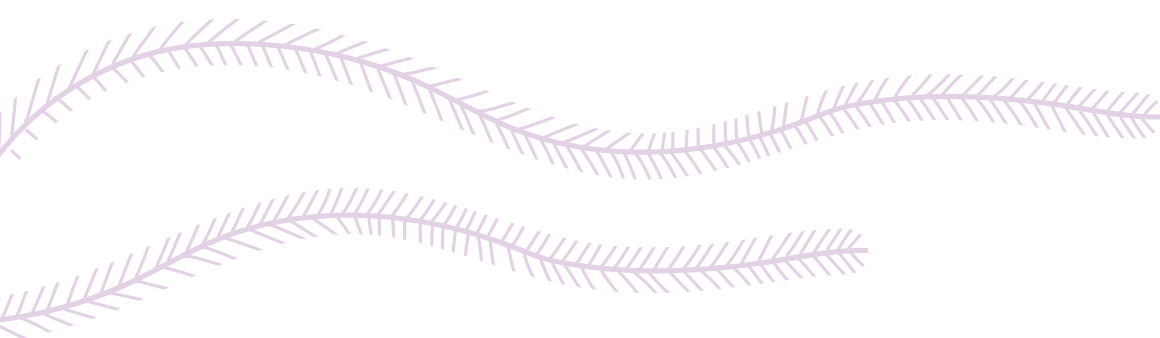
Low-quality leadership programs do not help to cultivate the skills and experiences people need to become high-performing leaders. These programs tend to be disconnected from leaders' day-to-day work, making it difficult to practically apply learning in a way that makes a difference to schools, early childhood services and students.

As part of this Leadership Strategy, the department will take steps to ensure the leadership development opportunities at every stage of the leadership pipeline are of a high quality to effectively build our expert education workforce and strengthen instruction for all young Territorians.

We will improve the impact of leadership development programs by:

- clearly articulating the features of high-quality professional development programs, including design and delivery principles
- highlighting how professional development opportunities relate to the leadership development pipeline, so participants know which programs are targeted to their career stage and professional aspirations
- evaluating the impact of leadership development programs on participants' relevant knowledge, skills and capabilities, career progression over time, and on improvements in teaching and learning in classrooms and early childhood settings.

By taking these steps, the department will give our staff confidence that the investment in their professional development will lead to improvements in professional practice and – ultimately – child and student learning.



4. Engage Aboriginal and remote staff to both participate in and shape leadership development opportunities

We will work with Aboriginal and remote staff to ensure they have opportunities, both to participate in and shape the leadership development pipeline, as well as to improve cultural responsiveness across the department.

The consultations we conducted for this Leadership Strategy showed that Aboriginal leaders and leaders in remote locations felt disconnected from leadership development and progression opportunities. This is not only detrimental to these individuals, but underutilising and underrepresenting their voices, perspectives and knowledge of these leaders, is also detrimental to the system and to our ability to effectively engage every child and student in learning.

The department is committed to ensuring all leaders are connected to this Leadership Strategy and the opportunities for development, progression and recognition. Specifically, we are committed to increasing the number of Aboriginal employees in positions of education and system leadership, in line with the goals set out in the Northern Territory Government's Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2021–25.

To help achieve this, we will take active steps to connect Aboriginal and remote employees to the leadership development pipeline, including by:

- inviting Aboriginal and remote educators to apply to the first cohort of masterclasses and flagship leadership development programs
- connecting the leadership pipeline with existing programs that provide development pathways for Aboriginal staff and bilingual workers, including Aboriginal educator initiatives such as the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program

- providing start-up funding to communities of practice to ensure all leaders in remote areas are connected to colleagues across the Territory.

To strengthen the cultural responsiveness of our workforce, we also commit to taking these steps:

- embedding cultural responsiveness training across all the flagship leadership development programs to develop the cultural responsiveness of all leaders across the leadership development pipeline
- working with Aboriginal leaders to lead improvements in the department's cultural responsiveness and design development opportunities for Aboriginal leaders.

The department is committed to ensuring all leaders across the system are connected to the leadership pipeline and have opportunities for development and progression. We will continue to engage with leaders across the Territory to monitor and respond to their feedback and ensure this Leadership Strategy meets the needs of all leaders – especially our current and aspiring Aboriginal leaders – and reflects and values their experience.



Timeline for implementing Strategic Actions



2021

Establish leadership pipeline and specify associated leadership practices and underlying skills and capabilities.

Articulate specific leadership practices at each step of the NT Inquiry Cycle. Conduct workshops with education and system leaders to articulate the leadership practices school principals and Early Childhood Education and Care directors need to demonstrate at each stage of the NT School Inquiry Cycle, and the steps system leaders must take to support, facilitate and resource this work.

Identify and develop focus areas for each flagship program, incorporating specific leadership practices, skills and capabilities at each stage of the leadership development pipeline and the most important areas for focus identified by leaders.

Publish masterclass and flagship program design and delivery principles and program evaluation plans to clearly signal to professional learning providers what constitutes high-quality leadership development in the Northern Territory.

Establish leadership project board with representation from each stage of the leadership development pipeline and from remote and Aboriginal leaders.

Launch Northern Territory Department of Education Leadership Strategy at 2021 Leaders' Summit.

Work with leaders across the system to identify the most important areas of improvement for leaders at each stage of the leadership development pipeline. Engage with education and system leaders across the Territory to review the specific leadership practices at each step of the NT Inquiry Cycle and determine areas for development.

Tender for providers to co-design and deliver the first of the masterclasses and flagship programs released for 2022 and beyond.



2022

2023

Launch first flagship programs and masterclasses and open applications for enrolment, inviting Aboriginal and remote leaders to apply to the first cohorts.

Monitor workforce changes and identify emerging leaders, ensuring they have opportunities to apply to enrol in the relevant flagship programs.

First evaluations of flagship programs and masterclasses conducted and results published.

Finalise selection and recruitment of new leaders across the leadership pipeline and extend opportunities for them to connect with relevant flagship programs and masterclasses.

Tender for providers to co-design and deliver masterclasses and flagship programs in 2024 and beyond.



Engage with Aboriginal leaders and develop work programs to lead improvements in the department's cultural responsiveness and design development opportunities for Aboriginal leaders.

Continued monitoring of workforce changes and identification of emerging leaders, ensuring they have opportunities to apply to enrol in the relevant flagship programs and masterclasses.

Finalise selection and recruitment of new leaders across the leadership pipeline and extend opportunities for them to connect with relevant flagship programs and masterclasses.

Tender for providers to co-design and deliver masterclasses and flagship programs in 2023 and beyond.

All remaining flagship programs and masterclasses at every stage of the leadership pipeline tendered, published and open for enrolments.



Northern Territory Department of Education
Level 10, Mitchell Centre
55–59 Mitchell Street
DARWIN NT 0800

GPO Box 4821
Darwin NT 0801

Telephone: 08 8999 5659
infocentre.det@education.nt.gov.au
www.education.nt.gov.au

Contact details for all Northern Territory government
schools are available on our website:
education.nt.gov.au/contact

EDUCATION NT
ENGAGE GROW ACHIEVE

