



NDIS Quality  
and Safeguards  
Commission



NDIS Workforce  
Capability Framework

# Training for Capability

A Guide for NDIS Providers

March 2023



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# Contents

- Introduction..... 3**
- Purpose of this guide..... 4
- Who should use this guide ..... 4
- What is in this guide ..... 4
- Related resources..... 4
- 1. Identifying learning and development needs..... 5**
- Understanding learning and development drivers ..... 5
- Assessing capability ..... 9
- Developing a learning and development strategy ..... 12
- 2. Understanding structured training options..... 12**
- Structured training as part of learning and development ..... 12
- Structured training options ..... 14
- 3. Finding training to meet your needs ..... 16**
- Relevance ..... 16
- Expertise..... 17
- Delivery methods ..... 18
- Reaching rural and remote learners..... 19
- Post-training assessment ..... 19
- 4. Evaluating training ..... 20**
- Measuring outputs ..... 20
- Measuring outcomes..... 21

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## User icon key

Each document in the training for capability resources uses one or more icons to show the intended user or users.

Icon	Key
	Participants
	Workers
	Supervisors and Managers
	Senior Managers and Leaders
	Providers

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# Introduction

## Purpose of this guide

The [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) requires all NDIS providers to “provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill”. Registered NDIS Providers must meet the [NDIS Practice Standards](#) outcome under Human Resource Management “Each participant’s support needs are met by workers who are competent in relation to their role, hold relevant qualifications, and who have relevant expertise and experience to provide person-centred support”.

Providers have a responsibility for ensuring workers have the necessary training, competence and qualifications to deliver supports and services. This guide is designed to support providers to fulfil this responsibility. It explains how to identify learning needs, then choose training to build and maintain workforce capabilities to achieve workforce management and planning goals. The guidance is mainly focused on how to choose external training. However, the same principles apply to choosing internal training solutions.

## Who should use this guide

The intended users of this guide are managers responsible for ensuring that workers have access to relevant learning and development, such as HR managers, learning and development managers, operational managers, and supervisors.

## What is in this guide

This guide has four sections:

1. Identifying learning and development needs
2. Understanding structured training options
3. Finding training to meet your needs
4. Evaluating training.

Each section has practical scenarios that illustrate the application of guidance in typical workforce learning and development situations.

## Related resources

This resource is part of a suite of tools developed by the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) to support NDIS providers to implement the [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) (the Framework) in all aspects of workforce management. The Framework describes the attitudes, skills and knowledge (the capabilities) that NDIS workers need to demonstrate.

Links to relevant resources are provided throughout this guide or you can access all the Framework [tools and resources](#) on its website.

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# 1. Identifying learning and development needs

## Understanding learning and development drivers

Taking an evidence-based approach to identify learning and development needs will help you choose relevant training solutions focused on your priorities. This involves reviewing data you have or will need to source on a range of different learning and development drivers. This section describes the main drivers and presents scenarios to illustrate them. You can find further information on learning and development drivers in the [Learning and Capability Development](#) guide in the [Supervision resources](#). You can also use the [Workforce Management and Planning tool](#) as a guide on how to use data to understand how well your workforce is supporting your current and future organisational needs.

## Learning and development priorities

There are three types of drivers:

1. **NDIS Participant drivers:** Participant needs and preferences, participant rights, participant context
2. **Worker development drivers:** Workers current capabilities, confidence, and personal development goals
3. **Organisational drivers:** Regulatory environment, business goals, workforce management and planning

### Participant drivers

An essential feature of the NDIS is supports and services must be tailored to the NDIS participant's individual needs. Participant drivers of a workers training needs are shaped by factors like participant goals and specific disability support needs, as well as factors including:

- **Participant needs and preferences:** For example, where a participant might have a health related need such as managing diabetes and want to engage in cultural activities within their community as an aboriginal elder. All NDIS workers should have the core capabilities set out in the Framework, however workers supporting this participant would also need additional capabilities, such as those required to deliver diabetes-related supports and to deliver culturally safe and appropriate support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.
- **Participant rights:** For example, feedback from participants or through supervision may highlight a lack of understanding by workers of support for decision making and respect for privacy. The core capabilities of upholding participant rights might be identified as a training need that is more frequently refreshed as part of all training.
- **Participant context:** For example, training for some workers on additional capabilities may be related to where participants live, work and engage with the community. To support participants where their background and previous experiences, such as past trauma impacts their behaviour it is important that additional training is provided.

The [Working Together Guide](#) in the [Supervision resources](#) explains how to facilitate collaborative conversations between supervisors, NDIS participants and their workers, to agree on what support is

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needed and how it will be delivered. A key next step is to check that the worker has the capabilities they need. To do this, organisations need systems in place to assess and record each worker's capabilities and plan for their ongoing learning and development. You can find more information in the [Systems to Support Supervision](#) and [Supervision and Support Relationship](#) guides. More information on how to assess capability is provided at the end of this section.

In the scenario below, a participant's need is driving specific training for the participants support workers, however the manager has also identified the organisational need for all support workers to undertake similar training.

### *Scenario – Finding the right fit*

Ronny is a NDIS participant with a spinal cord injury living in Darwin, and identifies as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. Ronny has had numerous support workers in the past and now has a small team from 123 Disability Care supporting him with daily activities and personal care.

Ronny's support worker notified Harpreet, the manager, that Ronny has expressed his interest in participating more in cultural events and a return to country now that his health has improved and he is able to do more things. Harpreet is aware of the importance of connection to culture, country and community for Ronny.

Harpreet take a person-centred approach with the participants he supports and meets with Ronny in person at his supported accommodation. He asks Ronny what types of community and cultural activities he would like to participate in, when he would like to return to country and if he requires any support connecting with his community. Ronny is eager to return to country in the next six months and wants to be involved with the local community in weekly events and activities. He gets on well with his support workers and tells Harpreet that he would like them to support him with accessing the community more.

Ronny's support team possess competency in the core capabilities set out in the [Framework](#), and he has a diverse team with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support workers. However, as Ronny has new support workers that have never supported him in a return to country program, Harpreet identified that there are additional capabilities required to deliver culturally safe and appropriate support to Ronny.

Harpreet understands how important it is to work with NDIS participants and their nominated family and community members. He asks Ronny if he is comfortable participating in a team meeting with his support team to ensure that his community engagement supports are individually tailored. Ronny agrees and brings along two community members to the meeting where they design an implementation plan for accessing Ronny's chosen community activities and return to country in the next four months and highlight the specific cultural elements his support workers will need to understand.

Harpreet has a great relationship with one of the training companies 'Do it my way' in Darwin. Harpreet advised 'Do it my way' that he would like the staff at 123 Disability Care to do a re-fresher training session to embed culturally appropriate considerations and delivering culturally inclusive supports to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. However, the training must be in-line with the 'Be responsive to my Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity' additional identity capability outlined in the [Framework](#). 'Do it my way' advised Harpreet, that their training packages

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are always being refreshed to keep up with sector changes and 'Do it my way' is able to meet his requirements for the training.

While some staff are more experienced and identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, he plans to use the training by 'Do it my way' to also help support his team in keeping up to date with mainstream and community organisations in the local area that can provide support to participants that 123 Disability Care support who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

## Worker development drivers

In addition to ensuring workers have the capabilities to meet immediate participant needs, the drivers from workers to inform training are related to job satisfaction and opportunities to develop. Factors that influence training needs for workers include:

- **Workers current capabilities:** For example, after assessing capability there might be specific areas a worker has strengths and others where extra training or refreshers are needed. How much knowledge or training a worker needs can also depend on their previous experience.
- **Worker confidence:** for example how secure a worker feels in their job and how valued they feel can affect their confidence to deliver supports. A workers confidence in delivering supports to their capabilities can be an important factor in job satisfaction and developing broad organisational capability. Training that is practical and provides feedback can boost the confidence a worker has in their skills.
- **Workers personal development goals:** workers value learning when it supports them to achieve their personal development goals – either to help with current work or to prepare for a new role. Understanding worker interests and providing aligned opportunities to support learning also benefits the organisation as it increases the likelihood that workers will stay. A regular six-monthly or yearly in-person meeting between worker and supervisor provides a good opportunity to explore these interests. The [Supervision and Support Relationship](#) guide provides practical advice on how to build ongoing development into performance agreements.

## *Scenario – Managing expectations*

Lee is new to working in disability. She participated in an on boarding program and has had regular contact with her supervisor (Jeff) since starting work, checking in and getting advice as needed. Lee has now worked for six months, and she is meeting with Jeff for her first 'in person' performance review to talk about how she is going in the job.

Lee understands how important it is to establish a good relationship with the NDIS participants she supports and is generally good at doing this. She enjoys talking with participants and getting to know them, but there is one participant she is a bit concerned about. They get on well – maybe too well, and Amahle (the participant) has started to ask Lee to come with her to family events out of working hours. Lee went to one of these but is concerned Amahle sees her as a close friend rather than as a paid worker and will ask her to come to more social occasions. Lee does not want to upset Amahle by saying 'no'. She decides to talk with her supervisor about how to handle this situation.

Jeff agrees that managing boundaries and expectations can be difficult and gives Lee some tips on how to handle this kind of situation in a respectful, positive, and professional way. He encourages Lee to raise the issue with Amahle in a low key but clear manner. He also arranges for Lee to do a

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short course on relationship management. He did the course himself a few years ago and it really helped him understand how to give feedback to workers in a way that is supportive rather than critical. He thinks some of the same techniques could give Lee confidence to discuss sensitive issues with participants rather than avoid them.

Jeff also decides to raise this as a topic in the next team meeting. While the other workers are more experienced than Lee, they can be set in their ways when it comes to managing relationships and agreeing on what both parties can expect from support. He plans to use some role play activities to help others open up about how they are approaching this issue.

## Organisational drivers

Organisational drivers of learning and development are those strategic or high operational level factors which show a need for training by all staff or a specific group of staff. They are shaped by factors including:

- **Regulatory requirements:** for example, there may be a new requirement concerning infection control or the delivery of a specific type of support.
- **Business goals:** for example, your new strategic plan may include a goal to expand services in a new geographic area or provide different types of support that rely on specific capabilities.
- **Service delivery performance:** for example, your NDIS participant feedback data may indicate a general need to improve worker capabilities in supporting participants to make their own choices.
- **Workforce management:** for example, informal worker feedback, risk management reports or climate surveys may indicate a need to improve knowledge of Work Health and Safety (WHS) risks and appropriate responses.
- **Workforce planning:** for example, an analysis of your data shows you that key positions are likely to become vacant in the near future due to the planned retirement or departure of experienced staff. This information is the basis for succession planning. Building capability and filling roles from within your existing workforce has many advantages, including offering career steps to existing staff and minimising service disruption by filling roles with staff who are already familiar with your organisational values and operational arrangements.

### *Scenario – Expanding to deliver new services to NDIS participants in remote locations*

XYZ Disability Services (XYZ) is a small service provider located in a regional centre in Queensland. One of their service delivery goals is to expand the business to offer support across a larger geographic area and to introduce new types of support to meet known participant needs. The service frequently declines requests for support from NDIS participants in more remote locations due to workforce and capability gaps. In addition, some of these requests are from participants requiring higher levels of health-related supports than the organisation currently provides. The Board decides it is ready to expand the business to support this growing demand.

Yasmin is the Chief Executive Officer and is responsible for briefing the Board members on workforce planning so XYZ can meet business goals. She uses the [Workforce Management and Planning Tool](#) to compare the size and capabilities of the current workforce to what she expects will be needed in the next 6 months, 12 months, and 2 years if the expansion of service goes ahead. Yasmin estimates they will need 20 additional support workers and 1.25 additional supervisors within the next 12 months.



To support this growth, Yasmin will need to budget for costs associated with on boarding new workers and providing more intensive supervision in the first few months.

In addition to increasing the number of workers, she will also need workers with the right mix of capabilities. A number of recent inquiries have been from NDIS participants needing support to manage their diabetes. Yasmin expects to meet this demand by procuring external training for existing workers with an interest in developing this capability, as well as training some new recruits in this aspect of support.

Yasmin has also reviewed feedback from the last 12 months provided by NDIS participants and XYZ supervisors. NDIS participant satisfaction is generally high but is markedly lower among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Expanding into more remote locations will increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants being supported.

Yasmin allows for likely costs of training workers to provide more relevant and effective support of the expected NDIS participant needs and includes this as a key point in her presentation to the Board.

## Assessing capability

Organisations need to assess worker capabilities to ensure they are equipped to meet current participant needs and to target training and development investment where it is most needed. It is also important for workers to receive regular constructive feedback about what they are doing well and any areas they need to further develop. This section describes how organisations can use assessment strategies to identify training priorities (this is known as a ‘training needs analysis’).

Organisations need to ensure that the supervisor or manager assessing a worker has the relevant skills, understanding and expertise to assess a worker. Assessing workers capability may at times need to be done by a different person to the direct supervisor if the skills are specialised or specific eg; use of a particular model of hoist.

Managers need to be confident that each worker has the capabilities needed to do any job they are tasked with. Deciding what to focus on is guided by factors such as:

- **Work requirements:** The [Position Description Tool](#) can help identify the key elements and capabilities needed in each role. Alternatively, the [Framework](#) can be used as a guide. The core capabilities are required to be demonstrated by all workers. For example, the first core capability in the Framework describes attitudes, skills, and knowledge that all workers need to establish and maintain positive, respectful relationships with NDIS participants. You can see how it applies in different roles by selecting the type of work, for either general or advanced support roles, or ancillary work. There may also be aspects of the role that require specific skills. For example:
  - A worker supporting a participant with intellectual disability who sometimes uses supported decision-making to reach a decision needs to understand the supported decision-making arrangements
  - Workers who support participants to communicate and manage behaviours of concern, need an understanding of positive behaviour support.
- **Existing experience and training:** Your approach is likely to be different depending on the experience of the worker you are assessing. For example, when assessing a new worker, you

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may need to do a broad assessment to check their understanding of what they learned in induction training and to check that they know how to apply this to different aspects of their role. Assessment of a more experienced worker might focus on assessing that their knowledge and practice reflects current requirements. For example, do they check in with the NDIS participant about their preferences for how supports are delivered, or do they simply do things the way they think they should be done?

- **Timing:** The [Supervision and Support Relationship](#) guide provides advice on capability assessment as part of the regular performance management cycle. This involves worker self-assessment and supervisor assessment, drawing on feedback and other evidence to give a picture of how a worker is going and what additional support or development they may need. If the worker's job requires them to follow a specific procedure or deliver higher risk support types, you should assess their capabilities in these specific areas prior to asking them to apply them in practice independently. You also need to plan to confirm the currency of these capabilities on a regular basis, particularly if time has elapsed since the worker last delivered this kind of support or if procedures have changed. If a worker is delivering one or more of the supports described in the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#) refer to the training advice in each of the skills descriptors for further information on the type and timing of assessment.
- **Practicalities:** Your approach needs to be realistic and practical, yielding sufficient information to give you confidence that the worker is capable, while not being so time or resource intensive that it is unsustainable. A planned annual program covering all workers is more effective than a reactive approach that relies on one-off actions to respond to unanticipated needs.

## Conducting capability assessments

The purpose of capability assessments is to ensure the worker is well-prepared to do the job you have assigned to them and to identify any support or further development they may need to feel confident and successful in delivering supports to participants. Assessments should be conducted collaboratively with the worker, in a positive and supportive manner. The [Supervision resources](#) provide extensive guidance on how to establish this kind of approach.

Some further useful tips to keep in mind when planning your approach to assessment:

- As the assessor, you should be confident that you have the content expertise prior to assessing the worker. If you as a manager or supervisor do not have the skill or understanding of the content, look around the organisation for someone that is across the content and expertise required to assess the worker.
- The assessment process should help workers self-identify strengths and where they may need to address gaps. A supportive and positive approach will encourage workers to see this as a useful regular opportunity to reflect on and develop practice.
- Always let workers know what to expect during the assessment process, inviting questions before beginning. Provide feedback on what you think they are doing well and where you see a need for further development. Ask for their viewpoint on both and discuss any points of difference in a constructive way.
- Basing assessment on more than one source of evidence will give you a more reliable indication of capability. For example, to assess core capabilities you could draw on worker

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self-assessment, participant feedback, and supervisor feedback. To assist you with this, you can download a [tip sheet on types of evidence](#) from the [Supervision resources](#).

- It is better to observe a worker demonstrating how they work on more than one occasion so you can be confident you are seeing typical practice rather than a one-off occurrence.
- The assessment method should be appropriate to what you are assessing. For example, to assess that a worker knows how to support a person at mealtimes, observing the worker demonstrate this is more reliable than relying on verbal or written questions. However, verbal or written questions are a good way to test formal knowledge. For example: list three examples of restrictive practices that require authorisation before they are used. This example should also elicit a broad response demonstrating an understanding of restrictive practices as a last resort, with the least restriction and proportionate to the risk of harm, used only for the shortest possible time and identified and approved in a lodged behaviour support plan.
- If the assessment process identifies capability gaps, think about the practical change you hope to achieve and the information you could use to tell you if it has occurred. Being clear about the change you expect is important when looking for training solutions and talking to potential training providers. It also gives you a benchmark to measure whether the training solution you use has the intended effect. See Section 4 of this guide for further information on measuring outcomes.

### *Scenario – Assessing core capabilities*

Anu is a learning and development manager responsible for managing assessment and is designing a strategy to assess recent recruits who have been in the role for about six months. She decides to focus on the quality of the worker-participant relationship as the starting point, using the 'Our relationship' capabilities from the [Framework](#). She also knows that some of these workers will be supporting NDIS participants with unpredictable or heightened behaviours. This can be confronting for new workers. They need to know how to support the participant in the moment rather than take it personally, recognise when they are becoming stressed themselves, and know how to look after their own emotional health. Anu adds the 'Your impact' capabilities to cover this aspect. Anu will use three types of evidence: worker self-assessment, NDIS participant feedback, and supervisor feedback over the previous 6 months.

Anu engages the leadership team in the strategy she has developed. The organisation has a goal of continuous improvement and learning which the leadership team want to champion. Anu holds a leader's forum and walks through the strategy's purpose, process and intent. She asks all the leaders individually to complete the self-assessment tool reflecting on themselves and the teams they lead. Anu holds a follow up forum where she highlights the key actions that the organisation can do to uphold the capabilities through continuous improvement initiatives.

Anu then meets with the workers she is assessing to explain the process. She starts by emphasising that the purpose of the assessment is to let each worker know how they are going, give them the opportunity to reflect on their practice, and provide them with extra support where they need it. She knows that some workers have not previously done a self-assessment and suggests that they partner up and discuss their understanding of each of the capabilities under 'Our relationship' and 'Your impact' as well as working through the 'What you know' section. She then asks them to individually complete a self-assessment to describe how they believe they are going under each capability and lets them know she will also seek feedback from their supervisors and the participants they support.

Their supervisor will then meet with each of them to talk with them about what they are doing well and how to address any gaps.

See our webpage on [Training for Capability](#) to download the [Self-assessment Guide](#) and worked example.

## Developing a learning and development strategy

A good starting point for developing or updating the organisation's learning and development strategy is reviewing the organisational, participant and workers drivers, and confirming the capabilities workers already have. The strategy should also guide individual worker development plans, which can be recorded in each worker's [Performance Agreement](#), including the capability development plan. You can find more information and a template for recording individual learning goals by accessing the Frameworks [tools and resources](#) or use your organisation's existing system, such as a Learning Management System (LMS), to manage training records.

The [Workforce Management and Planning Tool](#) and the [Supervision resources](#) provide further information on what to consider and how to plan for and provide a broad range of learning and development actions. Structured training is not a 'silver bullet' for addressing all workforce learning needs. It is only one of many options to consider when planning how to meet your workforce capability development priorities. Other options include on-the-job feedback, structured buddy shifts, coaching and reflective practice, and so on. These options are often more effective to address capabilities related to values and attitudes, while structured training may be more appropriate for providing broad foundational knowledge and developing specific skills. The next two sections of this guide are focused on understanding and finding structured training options.

## 2. Understanding structured training options

### Structured training as part of learning and development

Structured training describes a designed and time-limited program of learning to meet specific learning objectives. It is only ever one element of an integrated learning and development approach and needs to be supported by opportunities to apply the learning on the job. Understanding what you can expect from structured training and how to reinforce it with other elements of your learning and development program, increases the likelihood that it will achieve your objectives.

This section describes some of the different options available, when they are likely to be most useful, and what else organisations need to put in place to get the most from this kind of training investment.

The following scenarios illustrate how structured training fits into a larger learning and development solution.

#### *Scenario: XYZ plans to fill workforce capability gaps*

XYZ Disability Services (XYZ) in regional Queensland is expanding its services into more remote locations and will be supporting more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. XYZ will also

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be delivering more complex health-related supports. Yasmin is the organisation's Chief Executive Officer and she is aware that NDIS participant satisfaction is lower among XYZ's existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.

Yasmin checks the Framework's additional identity capability about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. She knows that supporting workers to develop this capability will depend on building connections with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders; therefore Yasmin arranges to meet with the manager of the local Aboriginal Health Service. The health service has excellent training on culturally appropriate service delivery that it could deliver to XYZ staff. In addition, the health service offers to link XYZ to cultural advisors who can provide a sounding board for workers who need more intensive advice and guidance. Yasmin also arranges for the supervisors to attend the first training session to build their own capabilities and understand how to better support the workers they supervise with this aspect of their work.

Yasmin then checks the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#) for information on more specialised health supports. She chooses a short course in supporting participants with diabetes that will equip workers with a basic understanding of diabetes and their role in delivering support. XYZ's in-house clinical manager will be responsible for on-the-job training and supervision in this area.

### *Scenario: Responding to individual worker development needs*

Michael uses a wheelchair and receives personal care support for two hours every morning, which includes showering. For the past two weeks, Michael has refused to take a shower and he has also developed a pressure wound infection. Initially, Michael's support worker, Fred, did not tell anyone, thinking this was how to respect Michael's choice. When Michael was admitted to hospital to treat his pressure wound, Fred told his supervisor, Bess.

Bess shows Fred the Framework's capability 'Support me to make my own choices', explaining that supporting participants to take the risks they want needs to be balanced with also keeping them safe.

They discuss the incident and Fred is happy to attend a short course about duty of care and dignity of risk. Bess knows that getting this balance right is often complicated and checks in with Fred more frequently to discuss how he is going in applying what he has learned. She suggests they meet with Michael when he is discharged to decide how best to support him to avoid this type of situation from happening again, as the outcome could be more severe. She also encourages Fred to share his experience at a team meeting on how to balance risk enablement with the organisation's responsibilities for risk management.

Both these scenarios illustrate how structured training can meet aspects of worker capability when supported by arrangements in the workplace that encourage workers to apply and refine what they learn. The scenarios also provide examples of how a provider is able to meet elements of the [NDIS Practice Standards](#) for example Risk Management, Human Resource Management and Support Planning if the appropriate records are kept and documentation is provided as part of the audit process.

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## Structured training options

### When to consider training

Different types of structured training suit different learning needs and each approach has advantages and limitations. The following description will help you understand what to expect from structured training and what elements you will need to address in-house. In practice, structured training programs are likely to combine different types of training. For example, an on-line learning program could include a hands-on workshop. Section 3 of this guide provides advice about what to look for when selecting training.

**Building knowledge:** Structured training can be a good way to build the foundational knowledge needed to underpin practice. You will find lists of essential knowledge in the ‘what you know’ section for each set of capabilities in the [Framework](#) and in the ‘knowledge’ section for each skills descriptor in the [NDIS Practice Standards: High intensity support skills descriptors](#).

If you are relying on training to build knowledge, consider how you will support the learner to apply their new knowledge in practice. For example, in [the scenario on supporting Michael](#), Fred can learn the principles of risk enablement and management by attending training. He then needs support back in the workplace to understand how to apply this when supporting Michael and how the principles fit with the organisation’s policies.

**Experiential learning:** This type of training provides opportunities for ‘hands on’ practice. Experiential learning is especially relevant to develop practical abilities involving motor skills, such as how to use safe manual handling techniques when supporting transfers of participants with limited mobility. The best training solution for practical skills is one that provides workers with opportunities to directly observe and practice in a real or realistic simulated environment.

Not all experiential learning needs to be done face-to-face. For example, building relational capabilities such as how to have difficult conversations is ideally supported by opportunities for learners to interact with others, such as in role play situations, to test out different approaches. This could be delivered either face-to-face or by interactive online learning.

### **Prompting good practice and refreshing existing capabilities:**

If a worker needs to refresh existing capability, they could review underpinning knowledge by accessing online resources, such as longer-form explanatory resources or micro-learning quizzes or tips. If they are confident about their knowledge but need practice, structured training may not be the best solution. It might be more useful to partner them up with an experienced worker to attend some buddy/shadow shifts.

### Accredited and non-accredited training

There are two broad categories of structured training.

**Accredited training** refers to training that leads to a nationally recognised, vocational qualification and can only be delivered by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The most common qualifications for support workers are Certificate 3 in Individual Support and Certificate 4 in Disability.

Qualifications are designed to provide broad, foundational or entry level skills based on a minimum number and type of units of competency. They are based on a combination of core (compulsory) and

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elective units of competency. ‘Skill sets’ are a different type of accredited training, based on one or a small number of units of competency. Skill sets are typically designed to meet specific occupational needs and can be counted towards a full qualification. The infection control skill set is one example.

Advantages of accredited training:

- Provides workers with a nationally recognised record of competency.
- May be free or subsidised - Government funding of training through subsidies and incentives is managed by state and territory governments, and you should check current arrangements based on your location.
- Training providers are required to meet minimum quality standards and are regulated by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

You can use the [National Register of Vocational Education and Training \(VET\)](#) to:

- Check details of a qualification, such as a Certificate 3 in individual support.
- Check what is covered in an individual unit of competency.
- Find out which RTOs deliver specific units of competency.
- Search by subject to see if accredited training is available for a specific topic.

You also can use the [MySkills](#) website to search for and compare nationally recognised training courses and providers.

**Non-accredited training:** In contrast to accredited training, which is based on competency standards, non-accredited training is not based on an agreed standard and there are no restrictions on who can provide it. It is up to the purchaser to check that it is fit for purpose and likely to meet their needs.

Non-accredited training is usually designed to address specific topics such as manual handling or communication skills. Within organisations, common examples include induction training or training developed by an in-house health practitioner for workers providing more intensive health-related supports.

Advantages of this type of training includes:

- Quick responses to industry-wide and organisation-level needs and priorities.
- Ability to utilise a wider range of subject matter experts. For example, you could engage a recognised behaviour support expert who does not work in the vocational education system.
- Can be used to deepen existing general skills developed through accredited training.
- May be more cost-effective and easier to tailor to specific learning needs.

There is no single website you can use to search for non-accredited training. A good place to start is word-of-mouth. Peak bodies, communities of practice, online resource hubs and professional networks are a good way to find out what has worked well for other organisations with similar training needs. The other thing to consider is your relevant state and territory governments, as they are a good place to find out whether there are any free or subsidised non-accredited training available. Section 3 of this guide provides advice on questions to ask and factors to consider when looking for external training.

You can find more information about the difference between accredited and non-accredited training as well as a range of guidance on selecting and working with accredited training providers by visiting

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the [About training and workforce development](#) page on the Human Services Skills Organisation's (HSSO) website.

## 3. Finding training to meet your needs

Unfortunately, finding quality training is not as simple as choosing accredited over unaccredited options. Both can be excellent or disappointing and it is up to the purchaser to do due diligence when deciding which training to choose. This section describes what to look for and questions to ask to help you make the right choice. You can download the [Training Selection Score Sheet](#) to keep track of your assessment against the criteria outlined in this section.

### Relevance

#### Course content

The first characteristic to look for is whether the training content is likely to meet learning needs and achieve the change in practical performance you are looking for. Look for a statement of course content and learning outcomes and check it against the aspects of capability you want to develop. For example, if you are thinking of using accredited training such as Certificate 3 in Individual Support or Certificate 4 in Disability, you can look at which competency standards will be delivered in the course.

Simply completing a qualification can be a good start but does not guarantee workers will have the capabilities they need unless training is aligned with your organisation's specific requirements. Training providers can include different elective units as part of a qualification, and you may want to discuss options to include those that best suit your needs. You can find details of both qualifications and individual units of competency by visiting [Training.gov.au](http://Training.gov.au).

The 2022 version of these qualifications generally align with the Framework capabilities so you should check that your training provider is using the most recent version. You can also ask training providers how their training maps against the Framework capabilities you want to develop.

You can use a similar approach when considering the relevance of non-accredited training. Check learning outcomes against your priorities. The Framework provides an authoritative description of required capabilities that can be used as a measure to judge the relevance of both non-accredited and accredited training. You can also use it to review in-house training.

#### *Scenario: Finding training content to deliver relevant capabilities*

Healthy Supports is a service provider in metropolitan Melbourne supporting NDIS participants with a range of needs, including participants with spinal cord injuries. They have assessed that they need to provide some specific training for staff on supporting people with spinal cord injury and that the training needs to include dysphagia support.

Mary is a qualified health practitioner who oversees the delivery of health-related supports and trains support workers in this aspect of their work. Mary developed some online training materials workers can use and also provides practical demonstration sessions before workers are assessed to make sure they are able and confident to work independently.



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Healthy Supports have contacted Mary and checked the description of her training and course content against the needs they have identified. They have also spoken to referees Mary has provided from similar services.

In discussion with Mary, Healthy Supports learn that she uses the Framework and related guidance, including the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptor](#) on Dysphagia Support to make sure training content is aligned with the NDIS Commission's expectations. Mary can do a follow up assessment and refresher training with those workers who are supporting participants with dysphagia.

Healthy Supports decide to engage Mary to provide general training for all staff and specific training to the workers providing dysphagia support.

## Fit with organisational requirements

If purchasing training from a training provider, you could check whether they will customise the content based on the expectations, procedures and equipment used in your organisation. If you are a larger provider with ongoing training needs, you could look for a learning provider who will spend time getting to understand and tailor training to your needs. If you are a small or medium sized organisation, you could consider combining with others with similar training needs to negotiate more tailored training and assessment activities to meet your needs.

## Expertise

The trainer's qualifications and experience can bring training to life for the learner, offering insider anecdotes and applied examples to illustrate how principles apply in practice. Here are some points you could check:

### NDIS knowledge and experience

Does the trainer have experience working in the NDIS context? It is important to be aware that qualifications such as Certificate 3 in Individual support are shared with aged care. Some trainers have no experience working in disability. At a minimum, you could expect that any trainer is familiar with the relevant capabilities in the Framework, is competent in the work that the training relates to, and has completed the NDIS Commission's [Worker Orientation Module: Quality, Safety and You](#).

Training providers may have a trainer with experience working in the disability sector, lived experience or have a person with disability deliver, or assist the trainer deliver, the training.

### Technical/subject-specific knowledge and experience

If you are choosing a training course to develop specific skills, you may want to check the qualifications and experience of the course developer and presenter. For example, if you are looking for training to develop health-related capabilities, such as how to support a person who uses a urinary catheter, it is important that training is based on current practice. Refer to the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#) for further information. You should also check for any relevant NDIS [Practice Alerts](#). For online training, you could check the credentials of the organisation hosting the training. Look for information available from credible organisations, for example a number of peak bodies provide advice and training resources to address specific health-related needs. For facilitated

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training, you may want to choose training presented by a relevant health or allied health practitioner.

### Highly specialised training

Finding trainers with highly specialised expertise can be difficult and high worker turnover adds to the cost and challenge of ensuring capable workers are available. For example, to train a worker to support a participant who relies on a ventilator, the trainer needs to be familiar with the type of ventilator the participant is using. Talking to health providers who are also supporting the participant, such as hospital discharge units, can be a good place to start to find out how best to meet this kind of training need. You could also consider contacting equipment suppliers for technical support on the equipment they supply. Another solution is to seek the participant's agreement (and keep a record of their consent) to video how to provide this support and use it as reference material for workers asked to provide that support to that participant.

Be mindful that training developed by health providers or equipment suppliers may be authoritative about technical procedures but may lack the emphasis on supporting participant choice and independence required in the NDIS. You need to consider what else you will do to equip workers with the capability to deliver support that is not only technically correct but aligned with a participant-centred approach. The Framework and the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#) describe specialised technical skills and knowledge as well as the attitudes and approach expected in the NDIS.

## Delivery methods

There is no single 'best' delivery method and often a single learning program combines mixed methods. Here is a summary of some features to consider.

### Relevance to learning needs

Does the training method suit what you want to get out of the training? For example, if you want workers to develop relational skills, a non-interactive course delivered entirely online is less well suited than one where learners have a chance to question and practice the techniques they learn about, including through role play. Building worker capabilities to support a person with limited mobility to transfer from a wheelchair would be difficult to do without providing hands-on opportunities to practice. Training that lacks practical demonstration can still be useful, provided you fill the gap in other ways.

### Individual learning needs and preferences

Understanding the abilities, needs and preferences of learners and identifying possible barriers to participation will help to ensure you make the right choice. For example, a worker with low English literacy skills will struggle if learning requires reading and writing at a higher level than they need on the job. Some training providers offer additional support and coaching for adult learners with different learning needs.

As online learning design improves, content is becoming more engaging. For example, Learning Management Systems (LMS) and apps can support micro-learning or bite-sized learning in formats such as quizzes, game-like activities, short podcasts and video clips to appeal to learners who are time poor and unlikely to wade through text-heavy resources.

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Online training options have a number of advantages, including cost and convenience. However, they also require the user to have computer literacy and access.

### Online learning solutions

Online learning solutions are increasingly popular. Initially this option was often associated with low-cost, low-quality training. While this is sometimes still the case, the increasing use of online technologies has seen significant improvements in the options and quality available.

One of the disadvantages of self-paced online learning is that workers lack encouragement and interaction from a trainer. Consider blended options that provide real-time sessions where learners interact directly with a facilitator and/or co-learners online. Examples of well-designed online training involves skilled practitioners directly observing and providing live feedback to the learner together with feedback from participants and their family members. Supervisors also have an important role to play in providing encouragement and the opportunity to discuss learnings.

### Course length

The length of a course is not necessarily a reliable indicator of quality, but very short courses are unlikely to deliver the same learning outcomes as longer courses on the same topic. Poor quality training undermines the viability of reputable training providers and confidence in the value of training credentials if workers hold 'qualifications' but lack real knowledge and skills. If a course is significantly shorter than others offering similar outcomes, you should check the offer carefully. The Australian Skills Quality Authority is the national regulator for vocational education and training. You can find information on expectations about course length on their [website](#).

## Reaching rural and remote learners

Accessing relevant, timely and effective training can be a challenge in rural and remote locations. However, advances in the design and availability of online learning solutions present promising opportunities to address ongoing challenges in reaching learners in more remote geographic locations. These options can open up access to recognised experts and can be complemented by online service delivery 'hub and spoke' models where centrally located expert practitioners connect on-screen with support workers to provide guidance and monitor and assess their work with participants.

## Post-training assessment

Even if a training provider issues a certificate or qualification, NDIS providers are still responsible to make sure their workers have the capabilities required. Therefore, it is important to ask the training provider if and how training is assessed.

Not all training programs include assessment. For example, a 'pass' may be based on course attendance rather than a test to confirm that the learner has understood and can apply course content in practice. The method of delivering training will also influence the options and reliability of any assessment. For example, an online course in manual handling could ask the learner questions but this is not a reliable way to know how a worker would demonstrate that learning back on the job.

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If you are not confident that the training provider's assessment is a reliable indicator that the learner can demonstrate capability on the job, develop your own assessment criteria and process. You can refer to the tip sheet on [Evidence for Assessing Capability](#) and the [Assessment Record template](#) in the [Supervision resources](#) for more information. Remember that it is always good practice to seek input from NDIS participants when assessing worker capabilities. In the example of the online course in manual handling mentioned above, this may be useful for developing theoretical knowledge but will not tell you whether a learner knows how to communicate with the participant to put them at ease when supporting them.

## 4. Evaluating training

Evaluating training is an important step to confirm that the training you selected is achieving your intended outcomes and has been a worthwhile investment for your participants, your workers and your organisation.

The easiest information to collect relates to training outputs. Outputs are activity-based and describe 'what' training was provided. For example, the number of people who enrolled in the training compared to the number who successfully completed it. Outcomes focus on 'why' training was provided, measured in terms of value and impact on performance. Outcomes are the most important measures, but they are also more difficult to measure.

### Measuring outputs

Output measures are about the training program and can provide useful information to assess whether the type of training you chose was well suited to the learning preferences of workers and whether it is likely to be seen as useful by other workers. Training providers routinely measure outputs such as enrolment numbers, assessment results (where assessment is conducted as part of the training) and learner satisfaction. Organisations should check with the training provider about the information they will provide on training outputs and consider whether to collect additional output data to inform their training choices.

Some information you may want to review is listed below. If the training provider does not collect and provide you with this information, you could adapt these questions and discuss them with workers who participated.

Content:

- What was most useful/relevant?
- What was least useful/relevant?
- Was there anything else you expected would be covered?

Format

- Did the format of the training suit your learning style?
- What types of activities did you find most/least helpful?
- Do you have suggestions about how the presentation of training could be improved?

### Trainer expertise (for facilitated presentations)

- Did the trainer seem to have a good grasp of the topic they presented?
- Did the trainer provide practical examples to illustrate how theory or principles apply in practice?
- Were the examples easy to relate to your work in disability?

### Application

- Describe how you expect to use this learning on-the-job. For example, are there ways you expect to do or approach things differently because of completing this training?
- Would you recommend this training to your work colleagues?

## Measuring outcomes

Outcomes describe the changes you expect to see because of training and can be measured in the short and longer-term. For example, at [XYZ Disability Services](#), one outcome of training is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants to have better access to culturally appropriate supports.

The next step is to determine the indicators that show that the outcome is being met, both in the short-term and over time. Short-term indicators track success in addressing an immediate challenge, such as the provider lacking workers with the appropriate capabilities to fill shifts. Medium and longer-term indicators track how training contributes to achieving longer-term goals and priorities. For example, where the provider has a goal to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants choosing XYZ Disability Services, this can be measured through word-of-mouth referrals as current participants feel they are supported in culturally appropriate ways.

Tracking data over time can be useful to indicate when you may need to refresh capabilities or consider other strategies to achieve your organisation's goals. The [Workforce Management and Planning Tool](#) provides guidance on using workforce data sources and indicators to track progress towards achieving business goals.

When measuring training outcomes, indicators should be considered from different perspectives. The participant perspective tells you about their assessment of access to the support they need. The worker perspective provides feedback about whether workers feel confident, supported and capable to deliver support. This is a strong determinant of job satisfaction and workforce stability. The organisational perspective considers the organisation's capacity to provide and maintain quality supports and services.

### *Scenario: XYZ measures training outcomes*

XYZ Disability Services arranges for workers to undertake training in delivering culturally appropriate support for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and in supporting participants to manage their diabetes. They measure outcomes from three perspectives:

#### **Participant Outcome Indicators:**

- Increased number of existing and new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants receiving supports that meet their needs in a culturally appropriate manner.

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- Decrease in numbers of complaints about workers not being culturally aware when delivering supports or not delivering supports that support the cultural needs of the participant.

**Worker Outcome Indicators:**

- Increased confidence to deliver support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants.
- Increased job satisfaction.

**Organisational Outcome Indicators:**

- Reduction in the number of unfilled shifts due to lack of worker capability.
- Reduction in unplanned absences.
- Increased demand for different supports and services from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, or increase demand for supports and services from new participants.

This [Training Outcomes Matrix](#) illustrates how to describe indicators and use data to measure each indicator.

Training is only one of many different variables that affect the delivery of support, and it is not possible to draw a direct link between training and outcomes, especially over the medium and longer term. The important point is whether you are seeing a positive trend in achieving your service delivery and workforce goals, with indicators such as supervisors reporting that workers are demonstrating the capabilities they need on-the-job, workers reporting that they feel more confident in delivering the relevant supports, and positive participant feedback about the relevant area of capability.