



Growing Australia's digital workforce

June 2023

Path to a digitally skilled economy



044

There are opportunities to extend and scale the progress to date in responding to Australia’s digital skilling challenges

The progressive standing up of ten JSCs from June 2023 offers an opportunity for continuation and extension of responses to Australia’s digital skilling challenges.

JSCs have a mandate through strategic industry engagement to “ensure Australia’s VET sector delivers stronger outcomes for learners and employers.”²¹

This will be achieved by a range of actions including identifying skills and workforce needs, training product development, supporting industry and training provider collaboration, and being a source of industry insights and intelligence.

The DSO’s efforts to enhance digital skilling in Australia during the past three years have provided important foundations and lessons for future work.

The lessons learned and evaluation results have been used to identify activities and projects that have the potential to make an impact. To make sure they are aligned with industry priorities, these have been tested with a small group of stakeholders. **See Exhibit 15.**

There will also be opportunities to share the approaches, successes and learnings with other JSCs through the Cross Council CEO network and working with Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA).

In addition, there may be opportunities as the JSC to consider these learnings to skilling approaches more broadly with the finance and business sectors alongside the technology sector.

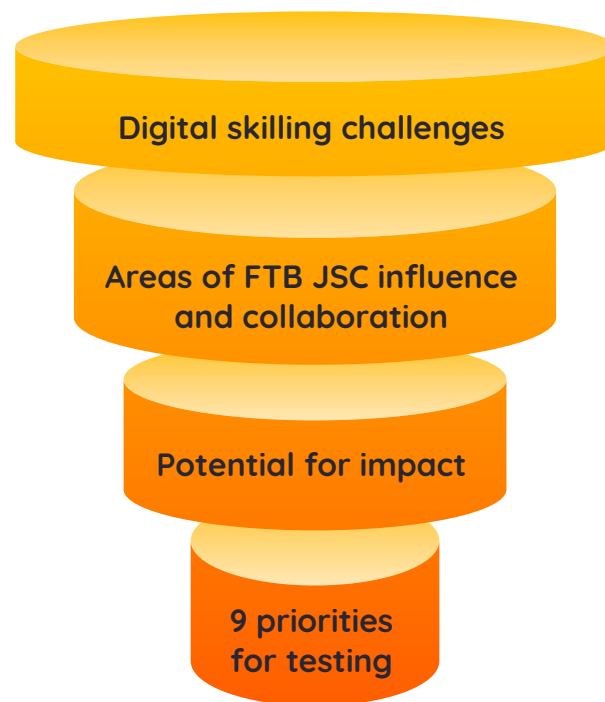
From evidence of the roll out to date, the DSO has identified action areas to be considered in the JSC context.

Nine priorities have been identified to extend and enhance work across existing workstreams to continue addressing identified challenges of:

- Insufficient pipeline of workers
- Low relevance of digital skills
- Skilling sector responsiveness

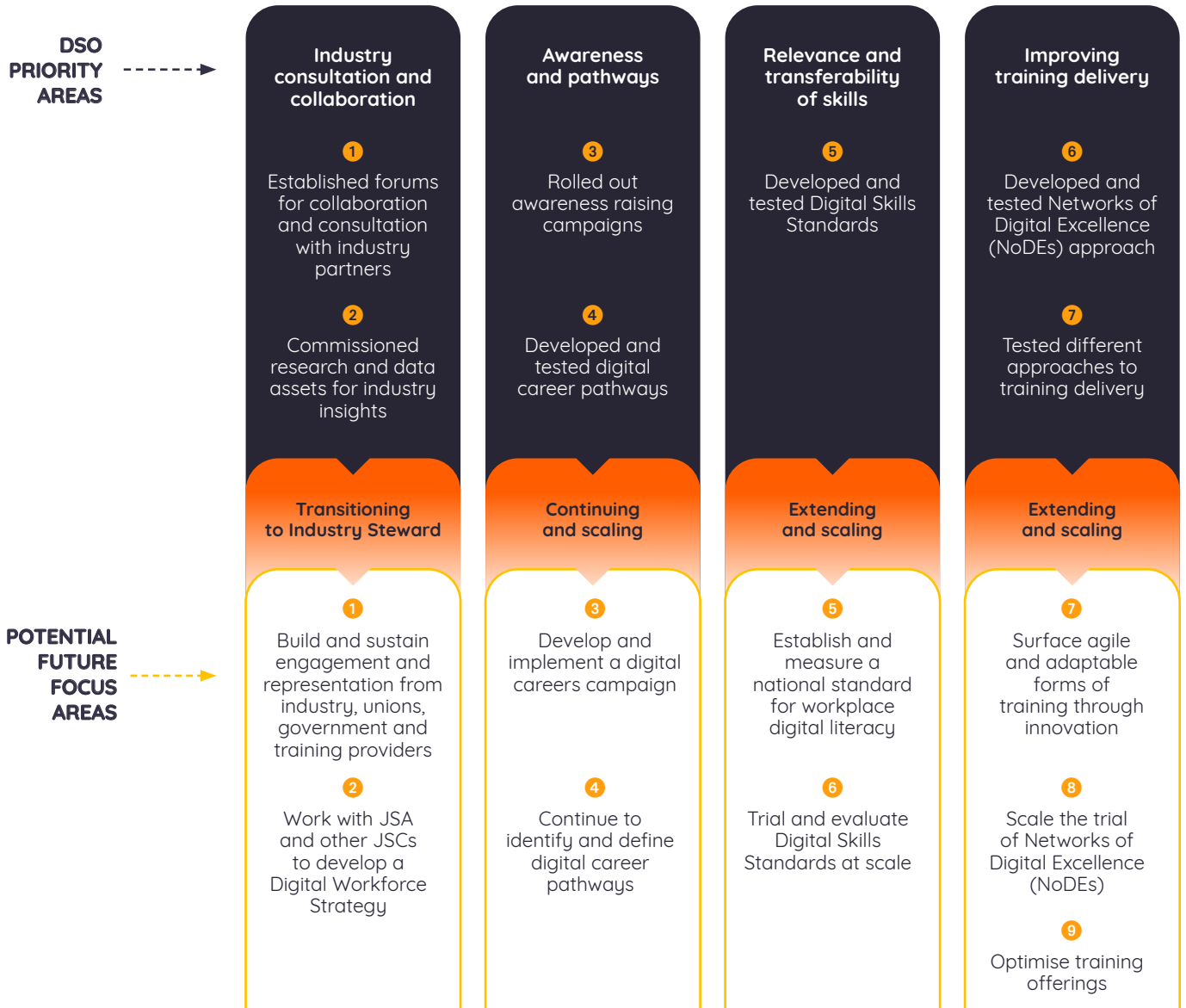
See Exhibit 16.

Exhibit 15: Priority area selection approach



21. Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Industry Engagement Reforms webpage, 2023

Exhibit 16: Building on DSO priority areas to inform potential future focus areas



An industry-led approach should continue to be underpinned by effective tripartite collaboration and consultation

1. Build and sustain engagement and representation from industry, unions, governments and training providers

Ongoing and strengthened collaboration and consultation across industry, unions, governments and training providers is critical to the success of Australia's future digital workforce.

There are existing consultation and collaboration forums established by the DSO in partnership with the TCA that have been effective at engaging multiple employers at once, and for testing approaches.

There are opportunities to continue developing these types of partnerships and associated forums as a mechanism to amplify industry stewardship and credibility.

As such, continuation of existing consultation and collaboration mechanisms, including the Digital Employment Forum and Digital Leaders Forum, may be of value. Evaluation findings also highlight opportunities to enhance the impact and reach of these forums, including:

- Replicating with parts of the sector that have been harder to engage to date
- Leveraging the outcomes of meetings of the Digital Employment Forum
- Giving small and medium size enterprises a greater role within the Digital Employment Forum
- Encourage employers to take on more of an advocacy role in promoting system change

It is important that future stakeholder engagement ensures the JSC governance model provides the main engagement vehicle. [See Exhibit 17.](#)

2. Work with JSA and other JSCs to develop a Digital Workforce Strategy

It is evident digital skilling challenges are no longer confined to the technology sector. So, whilst there will be a JSC for FTB, digital skill challenges will manifest across all JSCs.

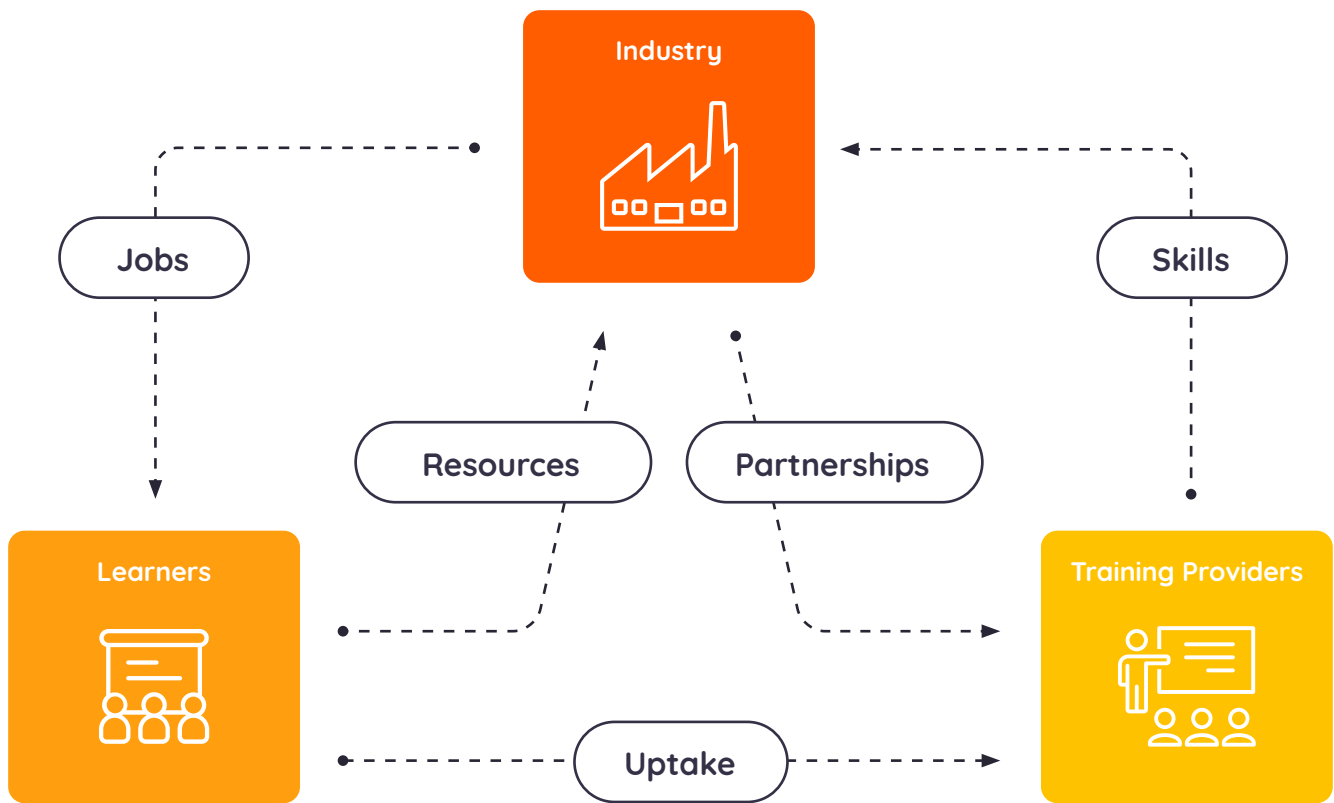
Accordingly, a Digital Workforce Strategy developed with other JSCs, through the Cross Council CEO network, and with JSA has the potential be a valuable asset for digital workforce planning and skilling across the economy.

There are clear advantages from tackling this collaboratively, including leveraging the assets the DSO has produced, such as the data cube on Digital Skills (see p.27), and the Digital Skills Standards, to enhance transferability across sectors; building on lessons learned from trials; and minimising duplication across JSCs.

A Digital Workforce Strategy could:

- Leverage and reference existing relevant workforce strategies by states, territories and industry bodies
- Include supply gaps in digital skills across both basic digital skills and specific digital skills utilised across all digital workforce segments
- Consider workforce cohorts across JSCs with comparable skilling challenges and where efficiencies across solutions may be achievable
- Consider workforce mobility across sectors and any implications for skill transferability and skilling solutions
- Promote the use of Pathways and Standards as workforce planning tools, as applicable to sectors, to allow training providers to more effectively respond to demand
- Promote tools, such as the Australian Skills Classification, for industries and employers to accurately describe their skill needs through a common language
- Appropriately leverage the full capacity of the higher education and skilling system identifying hybrid and agile skilling and workforce responses.

Exhibit 17: Collaboration and interaction of the ecosystem



Awareness raising and skilling pathway development should continue in order to increase the pipeline of digital workers

3. Develop and implement a digital careers campaign

There is a projected shortfall of digital expert workers and digitally enabled workers over the next five years. To increase the pipeline of digital workers, a digital careers campaign could be developed and implemented.

This campaign could:

- Bring to life real-world opportunities through a consistent language and skilling narrative
- Unify effort and action across training organisations, industry and government
- Target prospective workers currently underrepresented in these occupations (gender, disability, diversity and disadvantaged)

- Emphasise the relative remuneration and security of digital expert roles
- Be multifaceted for different target cohorts; building on learnings and successes of school leaver trials, but also developing targeted campaigns for mid-career professionals
- Clearly link through to relevant information about pathways to convert prospective workers into skilling opportunities
- Be transferable and accessible for scaling through different states, territories and industry groups

4. Continue to identify and define digital career pathways

Digital skills pathways signpost the skilling of the economy. Pathways enable workforce planning by informing the skills that provide entry to and movement along pathways to a range of jobs.

Pathway development and the SkillSchema prototype have shown promise (see Case Study 4), however further development and testing would be required.

Identification and definition of digital career pathways will assist further pathway development, and could:

- Prioritise high demand job roles for digital expert workers
- Move more into a co-design approach to maintaining / further development of Pathways
- Get employers to start using the Pathways model as champions
- Test and roadshow Pathways to iteratively maintain / commercialise the product
- Consider the role JSA may play at a national level (industries / economy) and linking of Pathways to the Australian Skills Classification (ASC) under JSA

For the SkillSchema pathways prototype, the JSC may consider positioning it as a technology demonstrator. This could include:

- Promoting the product as a tool to assist employers and industries with their workforce planning, including internal and external skills recruitment
- Publicising the application of the product as a tool to assist individuals navigating skilling pathways for job roles
- Encouraging feedback from users to contribute to further develop and enhance the product
- Considering broader applications beyond digital careers, with lessons and assets shared across other JSCs as appropriate.

To uplift digital skills across the economy, a national standard for workplace digital literacy should be established and the Digital Skills Standards scaled

5. Establish and measure a national standard for workplace digital literacy

Jobs are becoming more digitally intensive, especially as expectations of workers' utilisation of digital tools and technologies become fundamental to an increasing number of roles.

Digital literacy is a foundational building block for more advanced, specific digital skills. It is therefore key to ensuring equity of opportunity for people to thrive in their jobs – whether as digitally enabled workers, or those pursuing careers as digital expert workers.

There is a need for stakeholder consensus on establishing the essential skills for digital capability for work, learning and life as the basis for a national workplace digital literacy standard.

A national standard could:

- Be anchored by the Australian Digital Capability Framework
- Be used to measure the status of digital literacy of worker cohorts
- Identify critical gaps in digital literacy by worker and/or demographic segments
- Leverage learnings from digital literacy trials to inform strategies to address gaps
- Be used to monitor digital literacy over time.
- Support the Australian Curriculum for Schooling, and the uplifting of digital confidence and digital skills for pre-service teachers, and in teacher professional development.²²

22. Looking to the future: Report of the Review of secondary pathways into work, further education and training, 2020

6. Trial and evaluate Digital Skills Standards at scale

The establishment of a shared language to describe digital skills and levels of proficiency has been welcomed by industry and training stakeholders in trials to date.

Digital Skills Standards could be trialed and evaluated at scale to enhance the benefits for workers and employers across job roles and industries.

In doing so, scaling of the Digital Skills Standards could:

- Continue defining linkages of Standards to job roles
- Link skills clusters to job roles via pathways
- Formalise links between skill clusters and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- Determine the role Skills Standards could play in the different VET system components so Standards can be integrated into the system
- Be sponsored by training providers
- Be supplemented with supporting materials which enables effective utilisation and application
- Link to qualification reform
- Identify top five Standards and bring them to market
- Consider relevant interfaces and application by other JSCs, including as it relates to the Digital Workforce Strategy.

To contribute to a more responsive training system, training providers should be supported to innovate and collaborate with industry

7. Surface agile and adaptable forms of training through innovation

The Skills Standards provide a framework for training delivery innovation focused on meeting a skills outcome rather than the means of training.

As training providers adjust to the implementation and application of Digital Skills Standards, trials have indicated support and facilitation is valued and inherently important to the momentum and success of trials.

As the approaches and concepts are still in development, continuation of the facilitator role should be considered.

Future progression of surfacing agile and adaptable forms of training could:

- Focus on strengthening RTO capability to foster effective and deep connections with industry, supported by JSC-led industry stewardship and the collaborative application of Skills Standards
- Proactively work with jurisdictions that pursue innovation
- Bring together accredited and non-accredited training to meet the needs of the sector
- Explore the opportunity to bring together VET and Higher Education to deliver digital training
- Providing additional customisable support, guidance, and toolkits for RTOs to engage with employers without direct participation from a third party
- Encourage change in the VET system to be less compliance driven.

8. Scale the trial of Networks of Digital Excellence (NoDEs)

Surfacing agile and adaptable training methods through innovation requires localised collaboration through a localised network. As these evolve, NoDEs will support one another as networks share lessons learned.

Continued implementation and testing of NoDEs as a mechanism to facilitate engagement between RTOs and employers may be considered.

Continued implementation of the NoDE approach could:

- Identify and connect with other existing arrangements (which are functionally similar to NoDEs), such as TAFE Cyber network, and the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery in Victoria
- Seek buy-in from other JSCs on the NoDE approach
- Incorporate the NoDE approach in the Commonwealth state funding agreement
- Formalise the concept and develop terms of reference.

9. Optimise training offerings

Workforce planning may be informed by digital career pathways and Digital Skills Standards. It is expected this would identify gaps in training product provision where employers have unmet skills needs.

Analysis also indicates there are many undersubscribed programs, and there may also be instances of duplication between existing products.

As such, to improve responsiveness and effectiveness of the training system, optimisation of offerings is recommended.

Optimisation could:

- Map existing training products to the skills standards
- Consider offerings and capacity of the broader skilling sector, accredited and non-accredited, to meet identified skilling demands.





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