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Secretariat
National Skills Taxonomy
Jobs and Skills Australia

ACS Response to the National Skills Taxonomy Discussion Paper

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the National Skills Taxonomy Discussion Paper.

The Australian Computer Society (ACS) is Australia's leading professional association for the ICT sector. We proudly represent a thriving community of over 47,000 members across the nation's states and territories. Our members span every sector of the economy, putting ACS in a unique position to provide insight into the sector's workforce and skills development landscape.

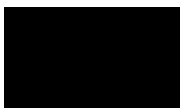
As an accredited partner, training provider, and assessing partner, ACS has been deeply involved with the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) since 2009.

ACS works to accelerate the growth of a highly skilled tech sector, supporting the development of a diverse and growing workforce by:

- Fostering an innovative and inclusive community dedicated to powering positive change through technology in Australia.
- Setting the standard for assessing, developing and recognising the skills and experience of technology professionals.
- Creating career pathways to guide technology professionals, securing a talent pipeline for our dynamic industry.
- Assessing and supporting technology-skilled migrants, addressing critical skills shortages for industry while we build a more diverse and skilled workforce.

ACS would be delighted to provide more information to the Committee on any aspect of our submission. Please feel free to contact me by email at troy.steer@acs.org.au or by phone at 0417 173 740.

Yours sincerely



Troy Steer
Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications
Australian Computer Society



ACS agrees that the National Skills Taxonomy (NST) should be interoperable with other recognised standards/frameworks.

Interoperability is a foundational characteristic of a successful national skills taxonomy. It ensures the taxonomy can connect with, build on, and enhance existing skills and capability frameworks. A taxonomy that does not integrate with widely accepted frameworks risks being counterproductive, leading to confusion and inefficiencies.

The taxonomy should be compatible with existing national and international standards, such as those developed by professional bodies, educational institutions, and industry groups, to achieve interoperability. This involves mapping the taxonomy to these frameworks, ensuring that the skills and competencies are consistent with those already recognised and valued by the industry.

Furthermore, interoperability facilitates the seamless exchange of skills data between different systems and platforms, enabling better workforce planning, skills assessment, and career development. It allows for a cohesive approach to workforce development, where individuals can easily transition between jobs and industries, supported by a clear understanding of their transferable skills.

Understanding the end-users of the NST and their use cases will be essential to successful adoption and use.

ACS recommends JSA develop a clear understanding of who will use the NST; the likely use-cases for the NST; the outputs that people will create using the NST; and the user interfaces required by these user groups. Clearly defining the intended use and users of the NST will help ensure that the developed product is fit for purpose and that its development, maintenance and expansion provides value for the taxpayer and the end-user.

We also recommend that the taxonomy be made available through an application programming interface (API) for the sake of interoperability and development, with user-friendly interfaces catering to different user groups' needs. This might involve developing web-based platforms, mobile applications, and other digital tools that provide intuitive access to the taxonomy.

ACS supports an NST that starts with general workplace and professional skills and then adds specialist capabilities for Australia's major and priority sectors.

General workplace skills are used to perform activities that are commonly undertaken across the workforce. These might include such baseline or generalist skills as word processing or customer service skills. Professional or technical skills are used to perform more specialist activities in order to achieve organisational outcomes. Examples might include financial or data analysis or strategic planning.

We recommend that the NST start as a map of general workplace skills applicable to as many Australian workers, roles and industries as possible before evolving to focus on specialist skills within particular sectors of the economy. This approach will see the taxonomy gradually develop with iterations and versions incorporating learnings from previous releases.



There may be significant value in mapping the NST to the IT profession after the general workplace skills. Not only does the IT profession have an existing skills framework that has been widely adopted by the public and private sectors, but its skills are in high demand across industries. IT skills enable much of the economy in one form or another and are increasingly overlapping with core business functions as evident by the inclusion of financial and marketing skills in forthcoming updates to the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA).

Having an early iteration of the NST mapped to the IT profession will also let the government lean on an existing ecosystem of products and services that cover SFIA and could, assuming a high level of interoperability, be adapted to the NST. Using an area with a high maturity of skills mapping and planning could help the government prove and expand on use cases for the NST.

SFIA can provide useful foundations for an NST

SFIA¹ delivers a consistent description of individuals' workplace capabilities. SFIA considers an individual's demonstrated levels of responsibility and serves as a measure of real-world ability beyond training certification. SFIA can map the expected skillsets of both roles and individuals. Individuals may have their skills certified and credentialed in the form of a digital badge to appear on their resume or social media profiles (e.g. LinkedIn) so recruiters and hiring managers can immediately see the certified capabilities of potential staff. SFIA is internationally recognised and is used in 195 countries.

The Australian Government recently renewed its whole-of-country license for SFIA². Both the Australian Public Service Commission and the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) use SFIA for workforce planning and development – in fact, the CEO of the DTA, Chris Fechner, sits on the SFIA Board.

Since 2009, ACS has been a SFIA accredited partner, training provider, and assessing partner, reflecting its ongoing dedication to quality service delivery. We maintain a strong network of SFIA Accredited consultants, skills assessors, learning and development specialists, and capability consultants. This network ensures high-quality micro-credential learning activities that align with the SFIA framework or other relevant standards.

Globally, ACS is one of four partners authorised by the SFIA Foundation to issue experience-based digital badges. Partnering with Credly, a leading digital credentialing platform, ACS issues SFIA-endorsed badges that provide global recognition, enhancing professional credibility and career prospects.

The SFIA Foundation updates its skills framework roughly every 3 years. Version 9 is currently in beta and features an expanded remit that demonstrates how the skills of IT professionals are increasingly overlapping with other areas of the economy. For example, SFIA is prototyping the inclusion of digital marketing in its 9th version with new skills like market research and brand management, alongside finance skills like financial analysis and cost management.

New SFIA skills in prototype:

- Budgeting and Forecasting
- Financial Analysis

¹ <https://sfia-online.org/en/about-sfia>

² <https://www.apsc.gov.au/about-us/working-commission/who-we-are/media-releases-and-statements/media-statement-australian-government-renews-whole-country-sfia-licence>



- Cost Management
- Delivery management
- Organisational change enablement
- Accessibility and inclusion
- AI and data ethics
- Job analysis and design
- Infrastructure design

New SFIA skills:

- Non-functional testing
- Identity and access management
- Analytical classification and coding
- Market research
- Customer experience
- Marketing campaign management
- Process testing
- Records management
- Bid/Proposal management
- Brand management
- Customer engagement and loyalty

New SFIA Business Skills/Behavioural Factors:

- Decision making
- Collaboration
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Learning and professional development
- Security, privacy, and ethics
- Planning
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Adaptability and resilience
- Digital mindset

The approach SFIA takes to development and improvement could work well for the NST.

SFIA is developed and maintained through a collaborative process that includes contributions from a wide range of stakeholders, including industry experts, educational institutions, and professional bodies like ACS. This collaborative approach ensures that the framework evolves to meet the changing needs of the industry.

The SFIA framework, including its descriptions of skills and levels of responsibility, is made publicly available. This allows organisations and individuals to use SFIA for free as a reference for assessing and developing skills, albeit with limits³.

While the basic framework is freely available, commercial licensing is offered for the development of additional services and products, such as software tools, consultancy, and training. This creates opportunities for businesses to develop SFIA-related solutions and services, thereby fostering an ecosystem around the framework.

³ <https://sfia-online.org/en/about-sfia/licensing-sfia>



ACS would strongly support an iterative approach to the NST's development that sees it released in versions that each build on their predecessors.

Conclusion

ACS advocates for an NST that is interoperable with other recognized standards and frameworks, such as SFIA, to ensure its relevance and effectiveness. We recommend developing the NST with a clear understanding of its end-users and use cases, making it accessible through various platforms.

Starting with general workplace skills and gradually incorporating specialist capabilities, particularly in high-demand areas like IT, will provide a solid foundation. This iterative and interoperable approach will enhance Australia's skills landscape, providing value to taxpayers and end-users while fostering a dynamic and adaptable workforce.