

Foundation Skills Study

Agenda Item 7

Purpose	To provide an update to the Ministerial Advisory Board on the Foundation Skills Study work in the last quarter.
Presenter/s	Fan Xiang, A/g Assistant Secretary, National Skills System, JSA
Recommendations	It is recommended that the Board:
	1 note the update provided
	2 ask any questions in relation to the paper
	3 endorse the communiqué for this item
Attachments	Nil

Background

- As part of the October 2022-23 Budget, the Commonwealth announced Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) would lead a new national study of adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills (the Foundation Skills Study).
- The Foundation Skills Study currently consists of four elements:
 - a survey of Australian adult literacy and numeracy skills
 - a feasibility study into how best to measure the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skill levels of First Nations people
 - analysis of Commonwealth administrative and other data to gain insights into the skill levels for priority groups, and
 - scoping digital literacy skills relevant to the study.

National Survey

- The survey, known as Understanding Skills Across Australia, will form an up-to-date evidence base to assist policymakers improve services related to foundation skills.
- The survey expects to achieve up to 10,000 responses and will provide reliable literacy and numeracy results at the national, state and territory levels.
- The survey's budget is approximately \$7 million, with results to be released in 2026.
- Given the size and complexity of this survey, JSA has contracted research organisation, Roy Morgan Research, to undertake the data collection and coordinate field operations.
- The survey will use the OECD's literacy and numeracy skills assessment tool Education and Skills Online, allowing comparison with other literacy and numeracy data sources.

8. Several rounds of testing have recently been completed, including a field trial with over 300 responses across Victoria and South Australia.
9. Results of the testing are currently being used to update and refine the survey design and procedures for the main data collection from February to August 2025.
10. JSA is continuing to consult with stakeholders through the study's steering committee and the survey's advisory group.

Murtu Yayngiliyn (pronounced mer-too yarn-ga-len), formerly the Feasibility Study

11. The Study has been developed in response to an absence of contemporary and cohesive national data on First Nations people's foundation skills. Strengthening foundation skills for First Nations people is a target for Australian Government aligning to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
12. The Study will provide recommendations on how best to measure the literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills levels of First Nations people, including those in regional and remote areas, in a culturally safe and responsive, and statistically sound manner.
13. Recommendations from the Study will enable governments and the community sector to better understand First Nations people's foundation skills needs and to implement strategies to address them.

Administrative data

14. The first report on analysis of administrative data will focus on foundation skills from participants of Commonwealth administered programs: Skills for Education and Employment, Adult Migrant English Program, Foundation Skills for Your Future, and Foundation Skills for Your Future – Remote Community Pilots. It will be published by the end of the year.
15. JSA has negotiated data sharing agreements with a range of foundation skills training providers and this data will inform future reports.

Digital literacy

16. This project is currently on hold and will be scoped in 2025. This has been separated from the national survey because there is currently no widely accepted definition of digital literacy and no established and validated tools for measuring digital literacy.

Discussion points

- The targeted groups of interest for the foundation skills administrative data project are: women, First Nations people, people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background and people living with disability. Are there any other demographic or geographic groups which could be included in future priority groups of interest for reporting foundation skills from administrative data?

Proposed communiqué

The Advisory Board received an update on the progress of the Foundation Skills Study and noted the significant amount of work that has gone into this project so far.

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