



Australian Government

2030 APS Data Profession Strategy

Empowering the Australian Public Service to harness data for informed decision-making, effective policy development and high-quality service delivery — enabling evidence-based outcomes that benefit all Australians.



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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the 2030 APS Data Profession Strategy, which explains how we will build the capability and culture needed to harness data across the Australian Public Service (APS). The Strategy builds on the progress made in our first 5 years and provides a roadmap for strengthening foundational skills, growing specialist expertise and embedding data-driven decision-making across government.

Accessing data and being able to make intelligent use of it has become an integral part of delivering high-quality policy, programs and services. As a result, it has become important to build data capability across the APS rather than relying exclusively on a cadre of data specialists to provide this capability.

As Head of the APS Data Profession, I will work to support agencies and individuals to build this capability.

This Strategy provides a practical framework for action. It outlines 4 focus areas and the enablers that will drive progress, supported by a roadmap of initiatives across 3 Horizons. These initiatives will help close capability gaps, strengthen leadership and support a culture where data is embedded in the way we work.

We all have a role to play helping transform the APS into a data-driven service, with the ultimate aim of delivering better outcomes for the Australian community.



DR DAVID GRUEN AO

Head of the
APS Data Profession

CONTEXT

The APS Data Profession

Established in September 2020, the APS Data Profession was launched alongside Digital and HR Professions in response to the *2019 Independent Review of the APS* (the Thodey Review). The Review highlighted the pivotal role of data to provide the evidence base for public policy decisions and to enhance service delivery. Key recommendations included accessing new data sources, making more use of integrated data assets, updating legislation and infrastructure, and building expertise in data and digital skills.

Now in its sixth year, the Data Profession plays a central role in building a skilled and collaborative data workforce across government. Its direction was shaped by the inaugural Data Profession Strategy (the 2020 Strategy), which focused on cultivating specialist expertise through a coordinated, APS-wide approach to professionalisation.

This strategy marks the next stage in the evolution of the Data Profession. It outlines the path forward in enhancing data capabilities among APS officers and leaders. The approach reflects the maturation of both the government data landscape and the Data Profession, while recognising how environmental factors such as changing government priorities and artificial intelligence are reshaping data work.

Reflecting on the past 5 years

Early direction

In the 2020 Strategy, Data Profession initiatives were designed to be broadly applicable. Capability-building activities were aimed at data users involved at all stages of the data lifecycle, across agencies and jurisdictions. Rather than focusing on strengthening foundational data skills, the Strategy prioritised intermediate to advanced capabilities among specialists.

Four pillars and themes supported the 2020 Strategy.

PILLARS
Sourcing, growing and mobilising capability
Sharing knowledge, expertise and best practice
Ensuring senior leadership oversight
Fostering collaboration

THEMES
Establishing governance and networks
Attracting and recruiting data specialists
Enhancing specialist capabilities
Embedding a professional workforce

Performance against objectives and key achievements

The Data Profession has made substantial progress against the objectives of the 2020 Strategy. Professional capabilities have been defined, with the skills and behaviours expected of data specialists across roles and classifications articulated. Staff now benefit from clearer career and development pathways, from entry level through to senior leadership. Professional networks have been established, encouraging peer-to-peer learning and reducing cross-agency and jurisdictional silos. Through these initiatives, the Data Profession has advanced the mission of the first strategy; strengthening data capability across the APS to generate deeper insights, inform evidence-based decision-making and enable more effective service delivery.

OBJECTIVE 1

Uplift and deepen APS **data capability** and instil a **culture of data excellence**.

- ✓ **Data Professional Network**
The APS Data Profession Members' Community Platform (MCP) supports more than 16,000 members and 10 Communities of Practice, spanning the APS and state and territory governments.
- ✓ **Data Capability Framework (DCF)**
The DCF defines the data-specific knowledge, skills and behaviours required when working with data in the APS.
- ✓ **APS Data Awards**
Created in 2023, the awards celebrate achievement and innovation across the Australian Government data landscape. The third set of Data Awards will be presented in March 2026.
- ✓ **Data training**
The Introduction to Data in Government and EL2 and SES Data Leadership courses offer all APS staff the opportunity to strengthen data skills.
- ✓ **Foundational Data Literacy Pathway**
The Pathway provides individuals with a route towards building foundational literacy, focused on learning solutions rather than leadership and culture.
- ✓ **Curated Data Courses**
The list of curated courses provides data professionals with a list of offerings aligned to the DCF and Data Job Role Personas (refer Objective 2).
- ✓ **Data Capability Seminars**
Held online, these seminars deliver insights on recent developments in government legislation and frameworks, technology and best practice.

OBJECTIVE 2 APS agencies will offer staff clearer pathways and greater mobility over their careers as data professionals.	✓ Job Role Personas 12 Data Job Role Personas provide the building blocks for identifying data capability requirements and career pathways for data professionals. ✓ Career Pathfinder Tool In partnership with the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), the Career Pathfinder Tool charts data career pathways with alignment to the Job Role Personas, DCF and Curated Data Courses. ✓ In Conversation series Hosted by Dr David Gruen AO, the series showcases distinguished and diverse careers in data. ✓ Data Professional Spotlight series Highlighting educational pathways, career journeys and data leadership, the series focuses on data professionals across the public service and their unique experiences. ✓ Jobs bulletin Published monthly via the Professional Network, the jobs bulletin promotes awareness of emerging job opportunities.
OBJECTIVE 3 APS agencies will attract, develop and retain a highly talented APS workforce.	✓ Streamline recruitment across the APS Data Graduate Recruitment is now in its sixth year of streamlining recruitment across the APS as part of the Australian Government Career Pathways program. More than 1,120 data graduates have been placed across the APS. ✓ Data Professional Employee Value Proposition (EVP) The EVP helps to attract the right people, retain talent and create a clear, shared understanding of what it means to work as a data professional in the public service. ✓ SES data specialist on recruitment panels The Data Profession facilitates the inclusion of data specialists on recruitment panels for SES in data roles, so that SES recruitment remains fit for purpose.

Current state

Digitisation of government services

Australians are engaging with the government through digital services more than ever. Initiatives like the myGov app, launched in 2022, are making it easier to access streamlined and secure online services in one place. With over 20 million active accounts generating usage data at each login (DTA 2024a), myGov exemplifies how digitisation is expanding the scale and complexity of data generation.

The vast amount of data generated through digital government services is creating new opportunities to improve how we understand and respond to public needs, as well as its own challenges. When data is underused or poorly managed, it leads to inefficiencies, bad decisions and the erosion of public trust. When used well, it can transform our understanding of complex problems, challenge assumptions and biases, and unlock new opportunities for more responsive and evidence-informed public services.

As more data is generated and its use becomes embedded in public service work, data literacy is becoming a core capability needed across the workforce rather than a capability for specialists alone. Under the 2020 strategy, foundational capabilities were addressed through the redevelopment of the APSC's data literacy learning modules. This strategy continues that work, this time placing greater emphasis on foundational literacy and acknowledging that expectations have evolved. What was considered foundational data capability 5 years ago no longer meets the standards expected of today's public servants.

Stronger Commonwealth data governance

Since 2020, the Australian Government has made progress toward its goal of managing data as a valuable national asset. This has involved modernising legislation, streamlining the collection of data, supporting data sharing and re-use, and enhancing data analysis through the ethical and transparent adoption of AI.

As legislation and policy governing the collection, management and use of government data evolve, APS employees face an increasingly complex regulatory environment. This means public servants need the knowledge and tools to understand their obligations and responsibilities as stewards of public data, ensuring compliance and maintaining public trust.

In recent years, important milestones have been achieved, reflecting the government's commitment to improve data governance and management. Developments include;

- The launch of the [Data and Digital Government Strategy](#) in 2023; the first combined data and digital strategy for the Australian Government and a blueprint for the use and management of data and digital technologies through to 2030.
- Establishment of the [Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022 \(DAT Act\)](#), which aimed to facilitate the sharing of public sector data with accredited users. A review of the DAT Act commenced in early 2025 and the government will respond shortly to the review's findings and recommendations.
- The establishment of the [Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data](#) which will help give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people greater agency over how their data is governed within the APS, so government-held data better reflects their priorities and aspirations.

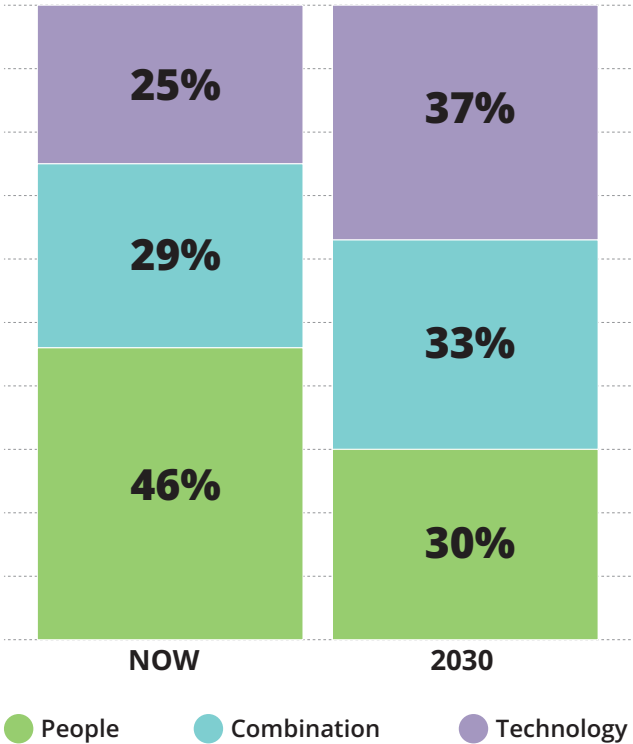
- Promoting best practice in the adoption of AI through the [Policy for the Responsible Use of AI in Government](#). The policy is a first step to position the Australian Government as an exemplar in its safe and responsible use of AI, in line with community expectations.
- Development and implementation of the [Data Maturity Assessment Tool](#), which provides agencies with a consistent approach to understanding their data maturity, and in doing so enables the government to measure the implementation of the Data and Digital Government Strategy.
- The release of the [APS Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025-30](#) (DDCWP) which provides a coordinated approach to attract, develop and retain people with skills in areas of growing need.
- Strengthening data governance across the APS, with the launch of the [Australian Government Data Governance Framework](#) and the establishment of a [Data Ethics Framework](#).
- Increasing the value of government-held data by making non-sensitive data open by default and improving access for re-use through platforms such as [data.gov.au](#) and [dataplace.gov.au](#).

Shifts in role and skill demand

Data-related roles are changing. The increasing sophistication of artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI, in particular, is leading to the automation of routine tasks while augmenting others. Big Data Specialists, AI and Machine Learning Specialists, Data Warehousing Specialists, and Data Analysts and Scientists are predicted to be among the fastest growing roles by 2030. In contrast, Data Entry Clerk is the third fastest declining job due to automation (World Economic Forum 2025). New roles are also emerging in response to technological advances. By 2030, these might include Data Privacy Expert, Machine Learning Engineer, Algorithm Bias Auditor and Data Detective (DTA 2025).

AI is having a similar impact on the skills required by data specialists. In data science and analytics, AI is automating routine tasks like data cleaning, while revolutionising predictive analytics. Processing large datasets is becoming significantly faster, enabling data scientists to shift their focus toward forecasting and strategic decision-making (Giri 2025). Over the next 5 years, AI will continue to augment data-related work and drive data professionals to expand their skillsets to work alongside AI technologies.

Share of work tasks expected to be completed by predominately people, predominately technology, or a combination of both by 2030 in Australia



Source: Adapted from World Economic Forum (2025)

Looking at the skills needed more broadly in the future, one forecast is that 35% of core skills will change by 2030 (World Economic Forum 2025). The top skill of increasing use is AI and big data, followed by technological literacy, leadership and social influence, resilience and flexibility, and curiosity and lifelong learning. AI is also accelerating the need to reskill, with the skills sought by employers changing much more rapidly in jobs most exposed to AI than in those least exposed (PwC 2025).

For generalists, AI presents new opportunities to harness the abundance of data in the public service and democratise data analysis. Natural Language Processing (NLP), for example, is empowering nontechnical staff to gain insight using natural language queries, reducing the need for coding expertise. Similarly, Generative AI is enhancing data communication by helping employees generate data visualisations and dashboards. By establishing baseline data literacy and coupling it with AI literacy, professionals across disciplines can unlock the full potential of their data holdings, reducing dependencies on data experts.

Bringing technical expertise in-house

As the public service responds to the disruptive potential of AI, it is simultaneously reducing reliance on external consultants, contractors and labour hire. The Australian Government's second Audit of Employment shows that in 2023-24 the Data and Research job family was the fourth highest area for external labour expenditure—equivalent to around 1,400 full time equivalent employees (Department of Finance 2025). For consultant spend in particular, Data and Research ranked as the second highest area.

Reducing reliance on external consultants will require a service-wide uplift in data capability. The scale of the challenge is reflected in the 2024-25 State of the Service Report, where 77% of agencies report critical data skill shortages, particularly in data analysis, governance and communication (APSC 2025b).

Together, developments in AI and a deliberate shift to strengthen in-house capability present an opportunity to build a more efficient, sustainable and skilled APS data workforce.

▶ **\$357 million**

was spent on external Data and Research contractors, labour hire and consultants by the Australian Government in 2023-24

(Department of Finance 2025)

▶ **Australia ranks 7th among OECD countries**

for a data-driven public sector

(OECD 2026)

▶ **2 out of 5**

was the average data maturity score across the APS in 2024—a rating of 'developing'

(Department of Finance 2024b)

▶ **Better use of collected data and stronger investment**

are common areas for development suggested by the APSC's capability reviews

(APSC 2023)

▶ **62% of Australians**

see the protection of their personal information as a major concern in their life

▶ **89% of Australians**

want government agencies to do more to safeguard their data

▶ **43% of Australians**

don't trust the government to collect only necessary information

▶ **1 in 5 Australians**

are comfortable with the government using AI to make decisions involving their personal data

(OAIC 2023)

Public trust in the government's use of data

Efforts to improve how the Australian Government collects, stores and uses data should remain aligned to public expectations. Trust in government data practices depends on integrity, transparency and capability.

Meeting public expectations is not just a technical challenge. Maintaining public trust is a core responsibility of the public service and should guide how we prioritise and invest in capability. Initiatives like the Digital ID system— which aims to reduce unnecessary data sharing and respond to growing concerns about third-party breaches—reflect this commitment.

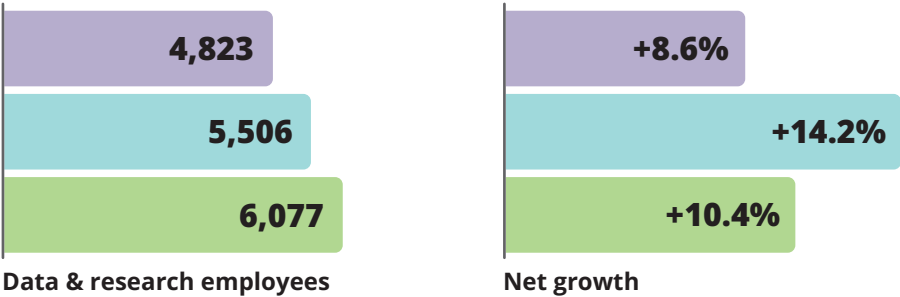
As capability building continues, efforts must be shaped by a strong foundation in data governance and ethics, ensuring that integrity remains central to every aspect of the APS data journey.

Workforce snapshot

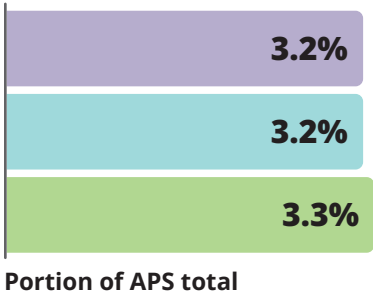
APS Data Workforce

(Ongoing employees, as at 30 June 2025)

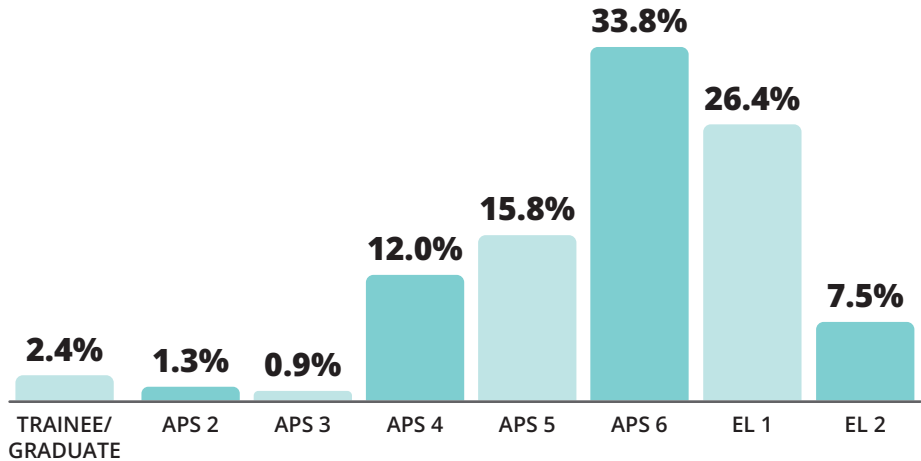
HEADCOUNT



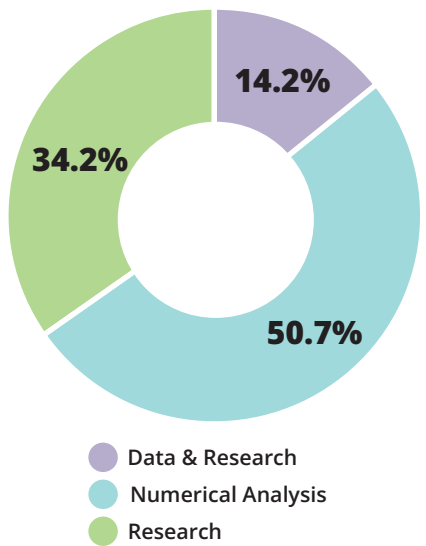
2023 2024 2025



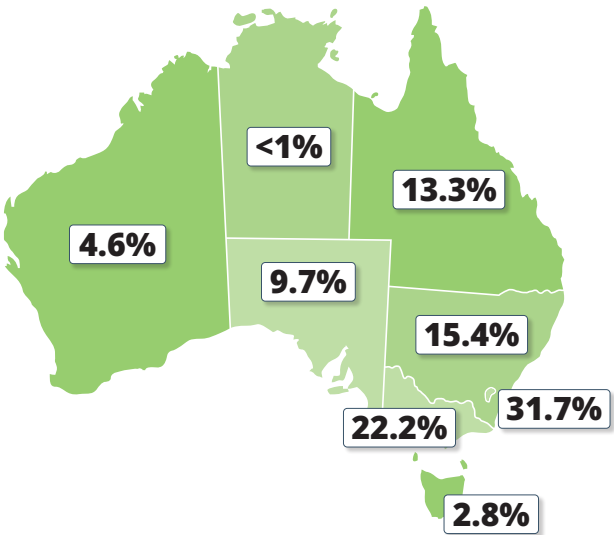
DISTRIBUTION BY CLASSIFICATION



JOB FUNCTION BREAKDOWN



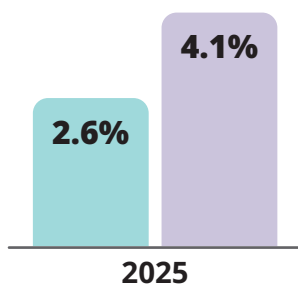
LOCATION



DIVERSITY

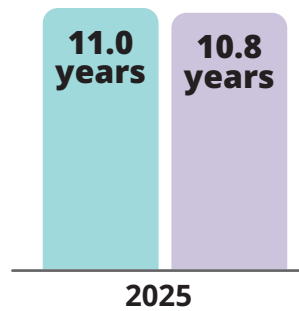
	Data & Research employees	APS average
First Nations	1.5%	3.4%
CALD	32.7%	26.9%
LGBTIQA+	11%	9%
Disability	5.8%	6.0%
Women	46.8%	60.4%
Neurodivergent	13%	11%
Age 55+	15.3%	18.2%

MOBILITY RATE

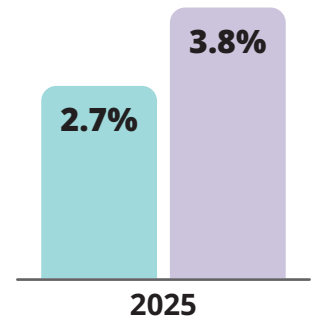


The mobility rate is the number of movements (promotion to another agency and/or permanent transfer to another agency) divided by the average headcount for the same period.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF SERVICE



VOLUNTARY SEPARATION (RESIGNATION) RATE



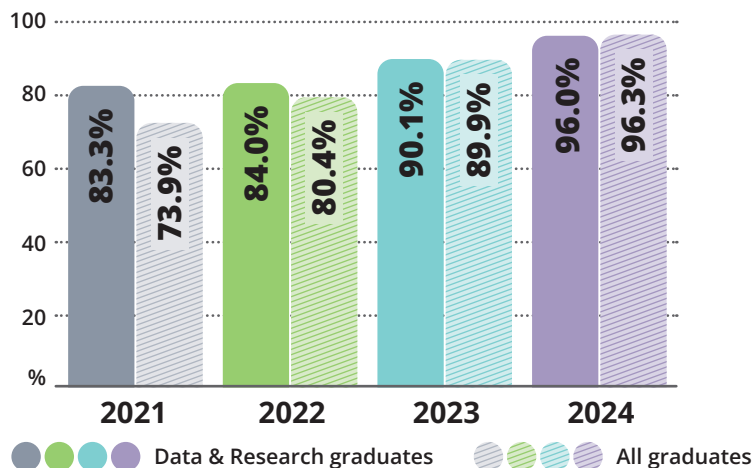
● Data & Research employees ● APS average

JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ONGOING DATA & RESEARCH EMPLOYEES

Overall, I am satisfied with my job
 I am fairly remunerated for the work I do
 I want to stay working in my position for the next 1-2 years
 I want to leave my position as soon as possible
 I am pursuing work outside the APS (among those who said they want to leave their position within the next 12 months)

	Data & Research employees	APS average
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	79%	77%
I am fairly remunerated for the work I do	67%	66%
I want to stay working in my position for the next 1-2 years	44%	39%
I want to leave my position as soon as possible	7%	9%
I am pursuing work outside the APS (among those who said they want to leave their position within the next 12 months)	13%	8%

DATA & RESEARCH GRADUATE RETENTION VS ALL APS GRADUATES



DATA SKILLS SHORTAGES

77% of agencies identify data as a **critical skill shortage**

Data analysis, data governance, general data literacy, and communication of data are the top critical data skills identified by agencies

49% of those in data roles say their workgroup is **missing data skills**

FORECAST CHANGES IMPACTING JOBS AND SKILLS IN AUSTRALIA

- 35%** of core skills will change in the next 5 years
- 37%** of tasks will be completed predominantly by technology by 2030, compared with 25% now
- AI and information processing technology** is the trend driving the most business transformation
- AI and big data skills** are reported by businesses as the highest skills of increasing use
- AI/ML specialists and Data Analysts and Scientists** are identified as the roles most likely to transform business

Source: World Economic Forum (2025)

DEFINING OUR REACH

Audience, scope and limitations

The Data Profession was established to strengthen data capability across the APS. While individual agencies face distinct workforce challenges shaped by their size, structure and operating context, the Data Profession provides a coordinated approach to uplift capability where it's needed most. The Profession cannot resolve every shortfall, but can target high-impact areas that support system-wide improvement.

Broadening the Profession's target audience

The Data Profession has laid strong foundations for building technical expertise within government. However, realising the full value of data requires a broader focus that extends beyond data specialists to include strengthening foundational data literacy more broadly across the service. This marks a shift from the focus of the last 5 years. The Profession's renewed approach aims to equip every public servant with the confidence to interpret and apply data in their work. Increasingly, this will involve using AI tools to refine, analyse and communicate data.

The Data Profession will continue to invest in deep technical capability through the attraction and targeted recruitment of specialists, and programs that build expertise in-house. Capability-building initiatives will recognise that employees value choice in what, how and when they learn. Flexible pathways, supported by a culture that champions lifelong learning and resilience, will be essential to preparing the workforce for the years ahead.

Strong collaboration with other Professions will extend the Data Profession's reach and amplify the impact of initiatives by demonstrating the relevance of data across disciplines. Partnerships are already in motion; the Data and Digital Professions are working together to deliver activities under the DDCWP, reflecting the natural overlap between data, digital and cyber expertise. Additionally, the Evaluation Profession is contributing to the redevelopment of the Data for SES Leaders course (further detail is provided under Focus Area 1).

Limitations

While the APS Data Profession supports capability uplift, its scope is deliberately focused. The development of data systems and solutions, and the enforcement of policy and compliance, remain out of scope. The Profession’s role is to build capability, not to regulate or mandate standards.

Resources and initiatives under this program are designed exclusively for Commonwealth, state and territory public service employees. They do not extend to external stakeholders, contractors or partner organisations. This ensures efforts remain targeted to strengthening capability within the public service workforce.

Finally, the reach and effectiveness of the program are influenced by available funding. While the Strategy sets an ambitious vision, the scale and pace of implementation will depend on resourcing and the contributions made by partner agencies. Emerging priorities or changes in funding may require that initiatives be adjusted to ensure they remain feasible.

Australian Government Data System



Source: Adapted from Department of Finance (2024a)

AREAS OF FOCUS

Through 4 areas of focus, the 2030 APS Data Profession Strategy aims to empower the Australian Government to harness data for smarter public services. The Strategy is underpinned by [four enablers](#). Implementation timelines are detailed in the Strategy's [Roadmap](#), structured across 3 Horizons.

★ Commitments made under the DDCWP are incorporated and are indicated with a star within each focus area's key activities.

1 Build foundational data literacy

Approach

A clear message emerged from the consultations undertaken for this strategy: the greatest impact in driving APS data transformation will come from building capability across the entire workforce, not just among data specialists. When asked which individual skills are critical to business improvement, agencies highlighted foundational skills like data analysis, communication, governance and general data literacy, rather than highly technical expertise.

Our goal is to demystify data and embed it as a core skill for all public servants. To achieve this, the Data Profession will take a multi-pronged approach to building foundational data literacy.

Top skills of increasing use by 2030 in Australia

1. AI and big data
2. Technological literacy
3. Leadership and social influence
4. Resilience, flexibility and agility
5. Curiosity and lifelong learning

(World Economic Forum 2025)

Defining and measuring baseline capability

To successfully target initiatives and measure impact requires a baseline. At the agency level, this could involve equipping agencies with standardised tools to assess the capability of individuals and teams. At a whole-of-government level, developing a baseline would require the implementation of an APS-wide program to identify skills gaps and inform investment. Currently, there is no detailed, whole-of-government measure of data capability.¹

Looking ahead, the Data Profession will identify methods to define and measure capability to establish a robust baseline. In Horizon 1, the Data Profession will develop a data capability self-assessment tool. Aligned to the DCF, a self-assessment tool will help to establish a clear definition of foundational data literacy and will allow individuals, managers, and HR teams to identify skills gaps and assess capability-building activities within their agency.

¹ Existing APS-wide measures of capability include the APS Agency Survey and APS Employee Census, with results published annually through the State of the Service Report. The Agency Survey asks agencies to identify critical skill shortages, including specific data skills, and whether strategies exist to address skills gaps. The Employee Census includes two data-related questions: whether SES managers promote the use of data and evidence, and which skills are missing within employees' immediate workgroups (with 'data' being one of the available responses). There is also the Data Maturity Assessment Tool (DMAT)—a commitment under the Data and Digital Government Strategy, which was implemented in 2024. While the DMAT asks agencies to report on their investment in data analytics capability and retention of data specialists, it is not a measure of agency-wide data capability.

Building on the outcome of the self-assessment tool project undertaken in Horizon 1, the Data Profession will investigate capability benchmarking solutions in Horizon 2. Options could involve developing and equipping agencies with a standardised benchmarking tool, or, on a larger scale, establishing a longitudinal assessment of data capability across the government.

Training tailored to an APS audience

Customised training will remain a core Data Profession offering.

Currently, the Data Profession offers the Introduction to Data in Government course through the APS Academy; a self-paced eLearning program designed for employees new to the APS or to working with data. The course provides an overview of data's role in government, covering principles of data security, ethical use, and the importance of evidence-based decision-making and data storytelling in policy and service delivery. Over the next 5 years, the Data Profession will maintain the course to ensure its relevance, with a content review planned for Horizon 3.

Redevelopment of the Data for SES Leaders course, previously offered until 2024, is underway. The course will be piloted and relaunched in Horizon 1. This program is central to strengthening data leadership, equipping senior executive with a deeper understanding of data governance, data's role in the public service, and the critical issues that affect data availability, integrity, and use.

To address mid-career data literacy, the Data Profession is planning to refresh the EL2 Data Leadership course, which was offered until the end of 2025. This course is currently on hold while Data for SES Leaders is refreshed. Subject to funding, the EL2 course will be updated in Horizon 1 to align with the SES course.

Additional training opportunities are being explored. In Horizon 1, the Data Profession will explore the feasibility of procuring a whole-of-government learning platform subscription to provide scalable, flexible learning solutions for both data specialists and generalists. Consultation with agencies has highlighted that many already hold licenses with the same learning platforms and are interested in coordinating a whole-of-government license to reduce costs.

In Horizon 2, the Profession will also assess whether existing agency-developed eLearning modules can be repurposed for APS-wide delivery through the APS Academy, increasing their impact and reach at minimal cost.

MCP engagement

The MCP supports thousands of members across Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Membership is open to anyone interested in learning about data and sharing knowledge. For those in non-data roles, the MCP offers a rich resource to connect with experts, solve data-related problems, and crowd-source information.

To date, efforts to build engagement with the platform have largely targeted data specialists rather than generalists. As the focus shifts to building foundational capability, the Data Profession will develop a refreshed MCP engagement plan that includes outreach to generalists. Potential strategies to be explored could include creating a Community of Practice dedicated to solving practical, low-complexity data challenges—providing a safe space for non-data staff to test ideas, seek advice, and build confidence in their data skills.

Actions



2 Uplift professional skills and standards

Approach

The Data Profession has laid the groundwork for a capable APS data workforce. The next chapter will focus on maturing the Profession's offering by evolving resources and exploring new offerings to develop advanced data capabilities.

Defining data capabilities and roles

In Horizon 1, the Data Profession will refresh the Data Job Role Personas to align with the latest release of the DCF. These personas define role responsibilities, industry standards, technologies and connections across the data lifecycle. Updating the suite provides an opportunity to incorporate emerging roles and reflect technology-driven changes in skills and responsibilities. Extending the Personas to include data leadership roles will also be considered as part of the review, ensuring data specialists have a clear career pathway from technical positions into senior leadership.

In Horizon 2, the Data Profession will support an initiative under the DDCWP to explore specialist work level standards or extended specialist classifications to enable career progression for specialist employees. This work is dependent on a broader review of APS work level standards being undertaken.

Building on feedback from agencies, a review of the DCF is planned for Horizon 3. The framework provides a common language for defining data capability areas within the public service and is designed to complement the [Skills Framework for the Information Age](#). Under the implementation of the Governance of Indigenous Data Framework, agencies are also required to build understanding of key Indigenous data concepts amongst agency staff by embedding definitions such as 'Indigenous Data Sovereignty', 'Indigenous Data Governance', and 'BADDR data' (blaming, aggregate, decontextualised, deficit and restricted access). These and other emerging capabilities will be reviewed as part of the next iteration. Given its links to frameworks, policy and other Data Profession products, scheduled reviews of the DCF are required to ensure it reflects current skills.

Training and learning pathways

Since 2023, the Data Profession has delivered a seminar program designed to build specialist data capability, and this will continue to the end of Horizon 3. Seminar topics are chosen based on community interest and capability gaps and are presented voluntarily by APS data professionals. The program offers several advantages. Its flexible, just-in-time training approach ensures content is relevant, often covering new frameworks or emerging technologies and tools. Development and delivery are low-cost, typically drawing on existing agency training for broader government application. Additionally, the program is accessible and scalable. Seminars are delivered online, with captioned recordings available in the MCP library for ongoing reference.

In Horizon 2, the Data Profession will build on the success of the program by engaging with experts to develop an AI for Data Specialists seminar series. Targeting AI capability uplift through this format ensures content remains quick to develop and adaptable to changes in technology and best practice.

Beyond foundational skills, the Data Profession’s exploration of a whole-of-government learning platform subscription in Horizon 1—outlined under the first area of focus—will also play a critical role in developing specialist expertise. If successful, procurement of a cross-agency licence will enable the Data Profession to offer a broad range of advanced technical skill pathways. This approach ensures that professionals can keep pace with emerging technology and the depth of knowledge required to lead in technical and strategic roles.

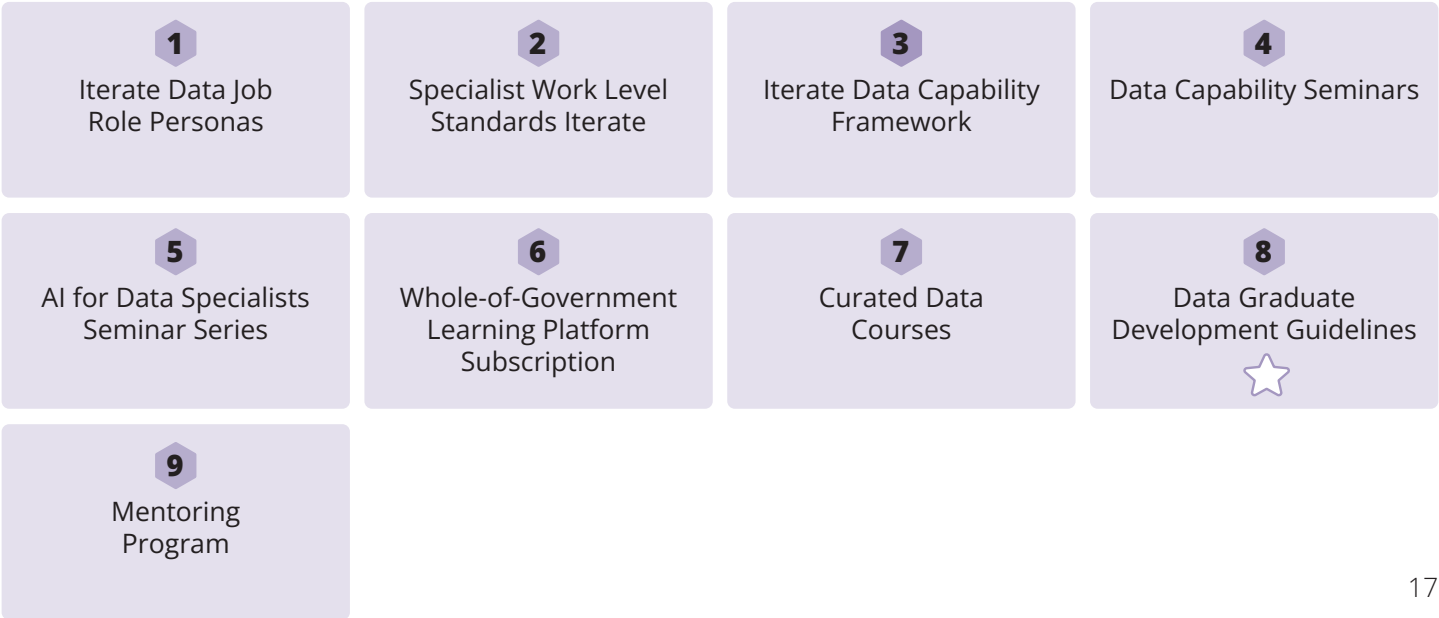
In Horizon 2, the Curated Data Courses resource will be updated to align with the DCF and Data Job Role Personas, offering data specialists an endorsed learning pathway tailored to their role and capability level. This work will be informed by the outcomes of the whole-of-government learning platform subscription initiative, which will guide course scope and inclusion.

Turning to data graduate capability, the creation of Data Graduate Development Guidelines in Horizon 1 will help agencies deliver a more consistent and standardised development program. The project will review existing agency development offerings for data graduates to identify gaps, duplication, and opportunities for improvement. Targeted investment in professional development during graduates’ first year is expected to also improve retention outcomes. Currently, 83% of data graduates who commenced in 2021 remain employed in the APS, compared with 74% of all graduates (APSC 2025a). While data graduate retention is comparatively strong, there remains scope to improve outcomes further. A more structured and consistent development experience could help lift these results over time.

Peer-to-peer learning

The Data Profession will scope and pilot a mentoring program in Horizon 2, with the aim of growing data specialists’ professional networks, supporting career progression, and fostering peer-to-peer learning and problem-solving. Mentoring opportunities will be particularly encouraged among under-represented groups. The mentoring models considered will include cross-disciplinary mentoring and reverse (upward) coaching to build capability across roles, disciplines and levels.

Actions



3 Grow and retain the APS data workforce

Approach

The number of employees permanently engaged in the APS Data and Research job family grew by 14% between 2023 to 2024 and a further 10% between 2024 and 2025, underscoring the rising demand for data specialists and the case for strengthening recruitment and retention strategies (APSC 2025a). Persistent challenges with regard to growing the data workforce remain however, including lengthy recruitment processes, Canberra-centric hiring practices, competition with the private sector, and limited pathways for rapid upskilling and reskilling.

To meet these challenges, the Data Profession will build on existing programs while introducing new initiatives to grow, retain and mobilise a capable and trusted APS data workforce.

Big Data Specialist is the top fastest growing job by net growth according to employer projections.

AI and ML Specialists, and Data Warehousing Specialists, are the third and sixth fastest growing, respectively.

(World Economic Forum 2025)

Positioning the APS as an employer of choice

In 2025, the Data Profession Employee Value Proposition (EVP) was introduced to articulate the unique attributes associated with APS data roles. The EVP complements the APS-wide EVP, helping to attract the right people, keep great talent, and create a clear, shared understanding of what it means to work with data in the APS. In the future, the Profession will monitor agency implementation of the EVP to identify opportunities for refinement and ensure its continued relevance. A review of the EVP is planned for Horizon 3.

Fostering a more diverse APS data workforce

Compared to the broader APS, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women, and people with disability remain under-represented in the data workforce. Representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is particularly low, accounting for 1.5% of all employees within the APS Data and Research job family, compared with 3.4% across the APS (APSC 2025a).

With an aim to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data capability and increase representation in data roles, in Horizon 1 the Data Profession will pursue initiatives that strengthen career pathways and provide targeted development opportunities. This will include exploring ways to reduce barriers to entry, considering ways to position the APS as an employer of choice for First Nations data professionals, engagement with universities to identify bridging programs, scholarships and micro-credentials, and programs that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career pathways and mobility.

Entry-level talent

At the entry level, the Data Profession will continue to support the Australian Government Data Graduate Recruitment Program, which has placed over 1,120 graduates across the APS over the first 6 years of the program. This program provides agencies with a strong pipeline of qualified early-career data professionals. Looking ahead, the Data Profession will explore ways to strengthen engagement with this cohort and standardise their development pathways within the program—helping to improve graduate retention.

Mid-career recruitment and retention

Over the past two years, as more data graduates have entered the APS, the demand for data graduate placements has plateaued. With the program firmly established, the Data Profession is well-positioned to shift focus to mid-career recruitment and mobility strategies for the years ahead. The DDCWP reflects this change and reports that while agencies see value in streamlined graduate recruitment, most APS agencies see a need for more mid- to senior-level data professionals (DTA 2024b).

To address mid-career shortages, the Data Profession will contribute to DDCWP initiatives such as the Mid-Career Recruitment Pilot, as well as explore other opportunities to grow this cohort. Ongoing engagement with agencies will help to identify high-impact projects, which could focus on reducing entry barriers, establishing clear career pathways, and supporting career progression.

Mobility

Increasing mobility among data professionals offers another pathway to retain expertise within the APS and reduce mid-career attrition to the private sector. While the DDCWP is exploring ways to narrow the remuneration gap between public and private sector data roles, mobility presents an alternative means of supporting retention through career growth and progression, while addressing peaks and troughs in workforce demand. APS Employee Database (APSED) data supports this focus; current mobility among data professionals is lower than the APS average (2.6% compared to 4.1%) and there is clear appetite for change (APSC 2025a). Of those planning to leave their position within the next year, 70% indicate they want to remain in the APS (APSC 2025c).

The Data Profession will continue to manage the Data Jobs Noticeboard via the MCP, which provides the community with a regular means of sharing and learning about upcoming job opportunities. In Horizon 2, it will expand on this foundation by exploring programs that increase mobility across agencies—enabling the APS to offer data professionals diverse experiences and build a more resilient and agile workforce.

Senior-level leadership

At the senior level, the Data Profession will continue to support recruitment activities with the inclusion of data specialists on agency selection panels for key leadership roles. Efforts will be made to streamline the administration of this process, in partnership with the Australian Public Service Commission, which leads this work on behalf of the APS Commissioner.

Actions

1

Iterate the Data Profession EVP

2

Supporting First Nations Data Career Pathways

3

APS Data Graduate Recruitment Program

4

Mid-Career Recruitment Pilot



5

Data Jobs Noticeboard

6

Mobility Program Pilot

7

SES Data Professionals on Specialist Recruitment Panels

4 Foster a data-driven culture

Approach

Successfully transforming how the Australian Government uses and manages data relies on cultivating a workplace culture where data is valued and embedded in everyday practice. This means championing evidence-based decision making, lifelong learning, collaboration and sharing, and data stewardship. The Data Profession's fourth strategic focus is to nurture these cultural characteristics and in doing so, to strengthen the impact of all other initiatives.

Recognising centres of excellence

Celebrating data innovation and leadership is key to fostering a data-driven culture within the APS. By showcasing real stories of impact, employees, teams and leaders can see how data is being used to deliver public value, reduce costs and drive improvement. The APS Data Awards, held in 2023 and 2024, showcase these achievements by recognising outstanding achievements in using data to benefit the Australian community. To maintain this momentum, the Data Profession will continue supporting the awards on an 18-month cycle through to Horizon 3.

Success stories from the finalists and winners of the APS Data Awards will continue to be repurposed into other formats, ensuring broad accessibility and impact. One example is the *Spotlight* series, published through the MCP, which features candid reflections from data professionals on what worked, what didn't, and how others can apply similar approaches.

The *In Conversation* series is another continuing Data Profession initiative that promotes stories from the Data Awards. Each episode features award winners—as well as leading data experts from government and academia—interviewed by the Head of the Data Profession. Through these conversations, the data community can hear leaders' personal stories, gain insight into real career journeys, and learn about industry trends. Building on the series' success, in Horizon 1 the Data Profession will explore a podcast format to improve accessibility.

Cross-Profession partnership

The Data Profession aims to empower employees and teams across disciplines to embed data in decision making—using it to interrogate problems and design solutions, rather than to validate assumptions. The challenge is in motivating public servants to learn and apply data skills at scale.

Cross-Profession partnerships offer a way to bridge this gap by demonstrating data's relevance to cohorts who don't see themselves as data professionals. In Horizon 1, the Data Profession will collaborate with other Professions to showcase the use of data in everyday APS work, making data's value tangible. A case study library will be developed, demonstrating how different disciplines have harnessed data to transform policy, service delivery, and programs.

Embedding stewardship and accountability

The Australian Government is committed to recognising data as a valuable national asset as part of its [Data and Digital Government Strategy](#). This means all public servants understand the importance of protecting the integrity of public data holdings, and that the connection between high quality, reusable data and improved outcomes sits at the heart of a data-driven culture. With stewardship now part of the APS values, supporting and training staff to practise data stewardship and protect public data holdings is a timely goal.

In Horizon 2, the Data Profession will promote data stewardship as a responsibility shared by all public servants. Building on the [SES Accountabilities for Data](#), which outline a principles-based approach to applying consistent SES accountabilities for data across the APS, the Data Profession will develop new practical guidance for agencies and individuals. The guidance will help public servants to safeguard the integrity, sustainability and reusability of public data, and support agencies to embed stewardship into everyday processes.

To encourage data capability uplift across the APS, the Data Profession will support employees, managers and HR teams with tools that describe data accountabilities—helping to embed data capability uplift in performance review processes and provide pathways to professionalisation. In Horizon 3, a resource will be developed to guide the integration of data expectations into workforce practices. This will help to ensure staff understand expectations around data literacy and responsibilities and are encouraged to engage with learning and development opportunities.

Working together, learning together

A culture of openness enables learning to travel and good practice to spread. The MCP will continue to serve as the Data Profession's backbone for sharing knowledge, strengthening networks and encouraging collective problem solving. Under this Strategy, the Data Profession will build on the work of the last 5 years to grow further engagement with the platform. A refreshed MCP Engagement Plan will guide efforts to increase interaction, identify new opportunities to connect data professionals, and enhance the platform's overall value and usability. Additional approaches to building on the relationships and communities established through the MCP will be considered. For example, the Profession will explore in-person networking opportunities targeted according to classification and job role, to support data specialists to connect with peers across the public service.

Actions



ROADMAP

	HORIZON 1 Year 1		HORIZON 2 Outer years 2-3	HORIZON 3 Outer years 4-5	
	What will we continue to build on?	What else will we do?	What else will we do?	What else will we do?	
Build foundational data literacy	Data Profession Members Community Platform Management	Iterate the Data for SES Leaders course (DDCWP commitment)	Data Capability Self-Assessment Tool	Assess Existing Training Offerings	Iterate the Introduction to Data in Government Course
		Iterate the Data for EL2 Leaders course (DDCWP commitment)	Refresh MCP Engagement Plan		
		Whole-of-Government Data Skills Learning Platform Procurement	AI for Data Specialists Seminar Series	Iterate the Data Capability Framework	
Data Capability Seminar Series					Iterate the Curated Data Courses
Iterate the Data Job Role Personas			Specialist Work Level Standards (DDCWP commitment)		
			Data Graduate Development Guidelines		APS Data Literacy Benchmarking
Uplift data professional skills and standards					
Grow and retain the APS data workforce					
Foster a data-driven culture					

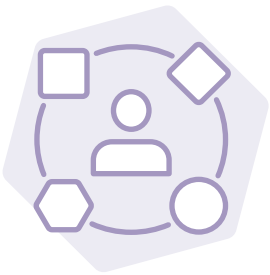
ENABLERS

Four foundational elements will enable the Data Profession to achieve the Strategy's objective.



Governance

Two governing groups were established in the Data Profession's first year to provide strategic direction and ensure alignment with government priorities. Sustained engagement from member agencies through these groups will ensure ongoing oversight, help to surface new priorities and initiatives, and enable APS leaders to actively champion and implement Data Profession initiatives within their organisations.



Codesign

Codesign is central to the successful delivery of Data Profession initiatives. Leveraging the skills and resources of multiple agencies reduces dependencies, accelerates progress, and encourages shared ownership of challenges and outcomes. Consultation with leadership and end users means Data Profession initiatives have broad relevance across the APS, avoiding duplication by building on existing work and aligning efforts.



Partnership

The success of this Strategy depends on deepening partnerships with other Professions and with key stakeholders. These include the Department of Finance, which leads Australian Government data policy, and the Digital Transformation Agency and the Australian Public Service Commission, which have key roles in supporting and coordinating implementation of the APS AI Plan—among others. These partnerships will expand the Data Profession's influence and ensure that data capability is embedded not only within data specialist teams but across the broader APS workforce.



Leadership

Leadership recognition of data's value is critical to fostering a data-driven culture. When leaders and managers invest in continuous learning, they create the conditions for sustained capability growth. APS leaders must also role-model data stewardship—demonstrating a commitment to quality, transparency and ethical use of data in their decision-making. By visibly upholding these standards, leaders reinforce the importance of data as a shared public asset.

OPPORTUNITIES AND MEASURING SUCCESS

Opportunities

By 2030, the APS Data Profession will deliver measurable improvements in capability, culture and impact. Success will be reflected in:

An adaptive workforce

A skilled, diverse and adaptable APS data workforce equipped to use new technologies to deliver evidence-based outcomes.

Embedded data literacy across the APS

Foundational data capability is recognised as a core skill for all APS employees, enabling confident use of data in everyday work.

Clear and connected career pathways

Data professionals have transparent, flexible pathways for progression, supported by mobility opportunities and professional development.

High professional standards

Updated frameworks, role descriptors and learning pathways ensure APS data capability remains relevant and aligned with global best practice.

A strong data-driven culture

Leaders champion data-informed decision-making, and agencies actively embed data stewardship, ethics and governance in their operations.

Improved public trust and service delivery

Better use of data leads to more efficient, transparent and responsive government services that meet community expectations.

Measuring success

Progress will be tracked through a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. Key measures include:

Workforce metrics

- Improved retention, mobility and job satisfaction rates in the Data and Research job family.
- Increased representation of under-represented groups, particularly among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Uptake of mobility programs and cross-agency career moves.

Capability and learning

- APS-wide improvement in data literacy scores, measured through self-assessment and benchmarking tools.
- Participation in APS data training programs and training satisfaction scores.
- Agency adoption of the DCF and Job Role Personas.
- Participation in mentoring programs and reported benefits.

Culture and leadership

- Inclusion of data capability in performance frameworks and agency workforce plans.
- Engagement with the Data Profession MCP and Communities of Practice.

Impact and maturity

- Improvement in APS Data Maturity Assessment Tool scores across agencies.
- Positive trends in the APS Employee Census responses and APS Agency Survey on data confidence.

Progress against the 2030 Strategy will be reported to the Secretaries Data and Digital Committee, Deputy Secretaries Data Group and the Heads of Professions network. Regular reporting will ensure accountability and allow for course correction. End-of-Horizon reviews will also assess overall progress and inform future priorities for the Data Profession.

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