

Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians

PROJECT PLAN

10 February 2025



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians is a three year project funded by the Australian Government to measure digital inclusion for First Nations people nationally and track changes in the scale and nature of the digital gap relative to non-First Nations Australians. The need for this data collection was identified as a priority by the [First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group](#) in its initial report (June 2023), and was included as a budget measure among a series of First Nations digital inclusion initiatives in the May 2024 federal budget. These measures were included in a public consultation process on a roadmap to guide future support by government and industry to help improve First Nations digital inclusion.

This project addresses the need for robust measures of digital inclusion for First Nations people across urban, regional and remote settings to track progress on [Closing the Gap Target 17](#) (CTG 17):

‘By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion’.

The project will be undertaken by the ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society ([ADM+S](#)) in conjunction with the [Australian Digital Inclusion Index](#) (ADII) and [Mapping the Digital Gap](#) (MtDG) research projects. The project will have First Nations leadership and governance throughout, including key staff within the ADM+S team, a First Nations steering group, contracting of First Nations survey company Ipsos Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Unit (ATSIRU), and partnership with First Nations organisations in targeted research sites.

The ADII provides a baseline and comparative framework for measuring digital inclusion across the Australian population. This project will use an adapted version of the Australian Internet Usage Survey, developed by ADII. Data will be weighed and processed to generate an Index of First Nations digital inclusion, benchmarked against non-First Nations averages collected by the ADII. This Index will be used to measure progress towards CTG 17. Results will be displayed on a dedicated First Nations dashboard on the ADII website, with breakdown against three dimensions of digital inclusion – Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. Data collection, management and access sets will be in accordance with Priority Reform Four – Shared access to data and information at a regional level – and best practice principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and governance. This data will help to inform targeted policy and funding initiatives to address the barriers to digital inclusion for different geographic and demographic groups.

Data collection will be undertaken in two rounds in 2024/5 and 2026/7, with up to 2800 surveys undertaken in each round with First Nations people in urban, inner regional and outer regional parts of Australia. 2000 of these surveys will be undertaken by Ipsos ATSIRU using a mix of online and face to face survey methods, with 500-800 additional face-to-face surveys collected by ADM+S in partnership with First Nations organisations in up to 10 regional towns. This data will be combined with Mapping the Digital Gap survey data, and compared with national data collection through the ADII to provide Index scores for First Nations people relative to non-First Nations averages, according to remoteness categories, state and regional jurisdictions, and demography.

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2. AIMS / BACKGROUND

Objectives

The objectives of the Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians project are to:

1. Accurately measure progress on Closing the Gap Target 17 by generating a representative and robust national measure of digital inclusion and media use among First Nations Australians in remote, regional and urban settings, relative to measures for other Australians collected through the Australian Digital Inclusion Index;
2. Track changes in digital inclusion and media use over two data cycles in 2024/25 and 2026/27;
3. Ensure First Nations leadership, governance and partnership in all aspects of the project;
4. Ensure data collection, management and access adhere to Priority Reform Four of the Closing the Gap National Partnership Agreement and principles of Indigenous data sovereignty.

Measuring Closing the Gap Target 17

The [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) has 19 national socio-economic outcomes and 17 targets. This includes [Outcome 17](#):

‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives’

and Target 17 (CTG 17):

‘By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion’.

However, there is currently a lack of data to measure the scale and changing nature of the ‘digital gap’ – the difference in levels of digital inclusion between First Nations people and national averages across Australia. This is due to First Nations digital inclusion being difficult to accurately measure, with a lack of nationally representative data since internet use questions were removed from the Census after 2016. The Productivity Commission’s CTG [dashboard](#) currently uses data from the 2014/15 NATSISS survey to measure CTG 17, with the ADII 2023 First Nations scores by remoteness as a [Supporting Indicator](#).

Accurate measurement is essential to understanding the scale and nature of the First Nations digital inclusion gap – by dimension, geography and demography – and measuring progress towards CTG 17. The ADII team at ADM+S brings extensive expertise in measuring digital inclusion in Australia since 2015, as well as tracking digital inclusion and media use in remote First Nations communities through the Mapping the Digital Gap project since 2022 (see Appendix 1). Building upon this experience, this project will engage First Nations leadership, governance and partnerships to measure CTG 17, adopting tailored approaches for urban, regional, rural and remote communities.

Closing the Gap Priority Reforms

The National Agreement outlines four key [Priority Reforms](#) to improve the way that governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These are:

1. Strengthen and establish formal partnerships and shared decision-making
2. Build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector
3. Transform government organisations so they work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
4. Improve and share access to data and information to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities make informed decisions.

The methodology for this project will ensure alignment with these priority reforms. In particular, we will abide by the data and information sharing elements within Priority Reform 4 to ensure robust systems for “collection, access, management and use of data to inform shared decision-making”.

Key indicators for CTG 17

This project will be aimed at addressing the following key [indicators for CTG 17](#):

- + Levels of digital inclusion among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as compared with other Australians (disaggregated by access, affordability and digital ability)
- + Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households accessing the internet
- + Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing the internet (disaggregated by point of access: home, work, school, public access, government shopfront)
- + Frequency of internet access at home in last 12 months (daily, weekly, monthly, yearly)
- + Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using internet to access government services for private purposes (e.g. health services, taxation, bill or social security payments)

Data Collection and Disaggregation

[Outcome 17](#) requires data to be disaggregated by: Geography (jurisdictions, remoteness and other geographic locations available); SES of locality; Gender; Age group; and Disability status.

This project will address the following items outlined under Data Development:

- + Ongoing development of regional and remote reporting of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index
- + Percentage of First Nations people with access to home phone, mobile and/or internet

Other data development items are out of scope for this project – media participation, audience and content data (which can be sourced from NIAA), media buying, and digital literacy training data. The ADII team will continue to contribute to the development of the [First Nations Data Map](#).

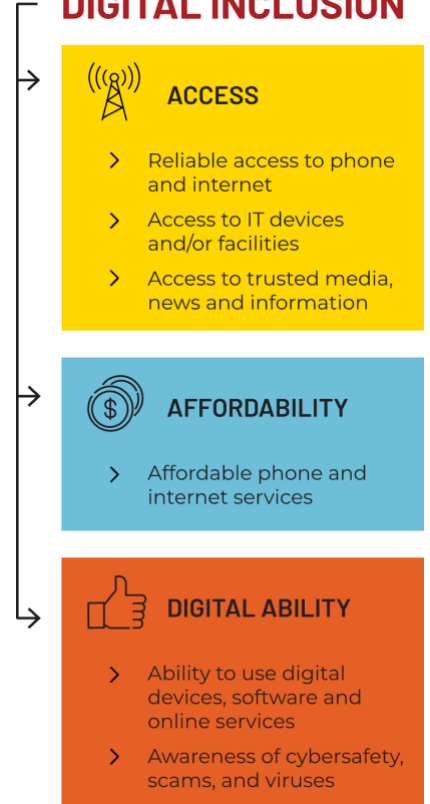
What is Digital Inclusion and how do we measure it?

Digital inclusion refers to equitable and reliable access and use of information and communication technologies for participation in social, cultural and economic life. As communications has increasingly become an essential service, and digital transformation is leading to key services being delivered online, digital inclusion is now critically important for all Australians. However, according to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) [2023 results](#), 9.4% of Australians were considered to be highly digitally excluded, meaning they lack the required resources and skills to effectively participate in an increasingly digital society and economy. First Nations Australians are one of the most digital excluded cohorts in Australia, particularly those in remote and very remote parts of Australia.

Barriers to digital inclusion can include a lack of access to mobile or household connectivity and online devices, costs of data and devices, and digital skills required to confidently and safely navigate the internet and use online services and tools.

The ADII undertakes a biennial national survey, using the Australian Internet Usage Survey (AIUS), to measure three dimensions of digital inclusion – Access, Affordability and Digital Ability (refer to figure above, also give the image a brief caption). ADII scores range from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater level of digital inclusion. ADII scores are relative, enabling comparison across demographic groups and geographic areas. Results are published on the ADII website, with [interactive dashboards](#), enabling users to explore the data in multiple ways.

DIGITAL INCLUSION



Current measurement of First Nations digital inclusion by ADII

The ADII has provided comparative Index results for First Nations people since 2016, albeit based on relatively low samples. Since beginning the Mapping the Digital Gap project in 2022, which tracks digital inclusion and media use in 12 remote First Nations communities over time, we have been able to establish a dedicated [First Nations dashboard](#) on the ADII website (see [Appendix 3](#)).

This provides a measure of the scale and nature of the digital gap for First Nations people nationally, by remoteness categories – major cities, outer regional, remote and very remote – and across various demographic indicators. This provides a baseline to track progress toward Target 17 and identify key barriers and enablers to meet this target. However, outside of remote contexts, we have a limited sample of First Nations people to provide more granular insights into First Nations digital inclusion at a national level. In response, The Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians will enable a significantly larger sample of First Nations people in urban and regional settings to enable more detailed analysis of digital inclusion levels by State, region, demographic group and dimension. This data will help to inform targeted policy approaches to help close the digital gap.

3. METHODOLOGY

First Nations research principles, leadership and governance

The Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians project will be guided by the core values and principles outlined in:

1. NHMRC Guidelines for 'Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities' (2018)
2. AIATSIS (2021) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research, structured around four key principles with the core ethical value of integrity and acting in the right spirit:
 - a. Indigenous self-determination
 - b. Indigenous leadership
 - c. impact and value
 - d. sustainability and accountability.
3. Principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty (e.g., Kukutai and Taylor 2016), in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

The project will have First Nations leadership and governance through the oversight of First Nations research lead (Associate Professor Lyndon Ormond-Parker) and a steering committee comprising up to four members of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group. A full-time First Nations post-doctoral researcher will be recruited to the project, with other administrative and support roles to preference First Nations applicants.

Below: Lyndon Ormond-Parker conducts survey with former Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation chairperson Linda (LT) Turner in Tennant Creek



Data management and access

The Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians project will embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles by:

- making the survey data analysis publicly available on the ADII dashboard for use by First Nations communities, organisations, peak bodies and individuals (see [Appendix 3](#) for example);
- De-identified, cleaned and weighted data will be downloadable from the ADII website. This will enable access by First Nations communities and organisations, DITRDCA, PC, NIAA, State / Territory government agencies to support policy and initiatives for Closing the Gap Target 17. The data will be de-identified, weighted and aggregated may be required;
- Providing a public facing report outlining the key findings from each round of research.

Data collection methodology

The approach to the Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians project will draw on learnings from the Mapping the Digital Gap (MtDG) project and the experience of our First Nations research team, Steering Group, external survey company Ipsos ATSIIRU and partner organisations.

Primary data collection will be undertaken in two tranches in 2024/25 to 2026/27 to align with the biennial ADII data collection and analysis. Data collected in this project will be combined with MtDG data to generate an overall picture of the scale and nature of First Nations digital inclusion across Australia, from urban to remote locations. The combined results will be merged with ADII national data to provide comparative Index scores to other Australians, enabling an accurate measurement of CTG 17, as well as changes over the two survey periods. To ensure comparability with the ADII, the survey tool is an expanded version of the Australian Internet Usage Survey (AIUS), with additional questions on First Nations language/s spoken, phone access, and news and media use, to align with CTG17 measures.

In order to ensure a representative sample of First Nations Australians, we will use a mixed-methods approach, using those techniques considered most appropriate to engage different cohorts across urban and regional Australia. Surveys will be undertaken by Ipsos ATSIIRU using two primary methods: 1) online survey completion through distribution to a nationally distributed panel, and 2) face-to-face surveys by a network of community researchers. Once the Ipsos research sites are confirmed, we will undertake analysis of the geographic spread of people reached through the panel and researcher network and identify coverage gaps. To address these gaps, ADM+S will partner with First Nations organisations and co-researchers to undertake additional surveys in ten targeted regional /remote research sites.

An iterative sampling approach will be applied to ensure a representative spread among the collected samples. We will review geographic and demographic distribution of sample against ABS data and to ensure a full range of digital engagement, from those who rarely or never use digital technologies to those with high levels of digital engagement. Small area estimates weighting to be applied to ensure results are representative of overall digital inclusion for First Nations people, as well as comparisons to other Australians.

In order to reach a representative sample of First Nations people across remote, regional and urban Australia, each round of the data collection for this project will involve four components, totalling between 2800 and 3,200 surveys in each of the two tranches of data collection. These are as follows:

1. About 650 surveys by Ipsos ATSIIRU with people identified through their existing iMob panel (i.e. First Nations people from urban and regional locations across Australia who have agreed to participate in surveys). Ipsos was contracted by RMIT through a Request for Quotations process. Participants will be paid appropriately for their time.
2. Face-to-face data collection of about 1350 surveys by Ipsos ATSIIRU, conducted using a network of community-based First Nations researchers. This component will help to fill geographic and demographic gaps in the panel sample as well as include responses from low or non-internet users. Again, participants will be paid for their time.
3. Supplementary data collection via face-to-face surveys in ten target regional / remote sites, coordinated by ADM+S in partnership with local First Nations organisations (similar to the Mapping the Digital Gap project model). The ten sites will be selected based on analysis of the geographic coverage by the external provider to ensure spread by remoteness categories, States / Territories and demography (age, gender, socio-economic status). This will contribute a further 500-800 surveys in regional Australia and ensure a wide as well as a range of usage of digital tools and services. (Note that the first round of this data collection will be undertaken in 2025 and will not be completed in time to contribute to the 2025 ADII or CTG measurement).
4. Remote and very remote community data collected through the ADM+S Mapping the Digital Gap project (sample 600-800). This will contribute to a comprehensive picture of First Nations digital inclusion across urban, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote Australia.

See [Appendix 2](#) for an initial list of potential research sites and sample sizes across these 4 components.

Data analysis

Data from all sources and survey methods will be collated and processed using a standardised approach. The data sets will be merged and weighted by the Social Research Centre (SRC) to derive small area estimates from our Index. The ADII team will then undertake detailed analysis and reporting on the First Nations data, and on gaps in Index scores relative to non-First Nations Australians.

Consistent with the national Index, we will apply blended weighting for the whole population with a separate weight for the First Nations community. This will take into account any oversampling and demographic characteristics of First Nations people (sample 2800-3200) relative to the national distribution (sample 3000-4000), enabling effective comparison with the National ADII.

Index creation and analysis will be conducted by ADM+S. De-identified, cleaned raw survey data will be shared securely with DITRDCA to enable further analysis. Cleaned raw (unweighted) data will also be shared with First Nations communities and organisations as well as to NIAA and other State and Federal agencies for their own analysis, subject to data protection provisions and Ethics requirements.



Above: Mapping the Digital Gap co-researcher Mel Langdon using the CAT mobile hotspot in Yuelamu, which enables access to the mobile signal from Yuendumu 43km away.

ADII and Mapping the Digital Gap Linkage

Comparability of data collected in this project relies on national data collection through the ADII, which is undertaken by ADM+S and funded by Telstra. Telstra have funded an extension of the ADII from 2024-27, ensuring continuity for the life of this project.

The Mapping the Digital Gap Phase 1 project was funded by Telstra from 2021-24. The 2024 MtDG survey data (807 surveys collected) will contribute to the 2025 ADII Index and will supplement the data collection in urban and regional Australia through this project. Telstra have committed to funding a second phase of MtDG phase from 2025-28, to be undertaken in 8-10 remote communities. The 2026 survey data collected under MtDG Phase 2 will contribute to the 2027 ADII report and CTG17 report.

Ethics Approval

This research project has received Ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committees of RMIT University (#28091) and Swinburne University (#8485). The Mapping the Digital Gap projects also have RMIT Ethics approval (MtDG Phase1 #24155 / MtDG2 Phase 2 #28005). The ADII has Ethics approval through Swinburne University (#4585).

4. DELIVERABLES

- + Public outcomes reports, for release in July / August 2025 and June 2027, outlining Closing the Gap measures for First Nations Australians, benchmarked against ADII results for other Australians, with breakdown by Access, Affordability, Digital Ability. The reports, which will be downloadable from the ADII website, will provide analysis and graphics based on ABS remoteness categories, State/Territory, and demographics (age, gender, education, employment, housing etc) as well as findings relating to media use, phone access and other CTG17 indicators. The reports can include case studies relating to relevant topics, initiatives or other CTG measures.
- + An interim report in 2026, outlining the results of first round research in ten targeted sites during 2025 (Note: Due to project timing, this secondary data collection will not align with the first round of the ADII data collection in 2024/5, however will align for the 2026/7 data collection).
- + First Nations digital inclusion dataset with combined survey results from national data collection and Mapping the Digital Gap remote research, to be delivered with report release in 2025 and 2027. The dataset will be de-identified, stratified and weighted and provided in a format that enables access and analysis by First Nations organisations, DITRDCA, BCARR, Productivity Commission and other stakeholders.
- + An expanded ADII dashboard to be developed in 2025 with additional pages for displaying and analysing the First Nations results, as well as comparison to national survey results throughout the dashboard by remoteness categories (i.e - Capital Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote) (see [Appendix 3](#)). Up to two new dashboard pages and four explanatory webpages will be provided.
- + Ongoing and regular engagement and meetings with DITRDCA staff and First Nations Steering group to provide project updates throughout the life of the agreement.

Below: Mapping the Digital Gap co-researcher Shalarna Thorpe conducting a survey with Tuvesi Williams in Wilcannia



5. PROJECT SCHEDULE AND DELIVERABLES

| Task | Actions / Deliverables | Due Date |
|---|---|----------|
| 2024/5 | | |
| Project start | Project underway | 2/9/24 |
| Ethics Application | Ethics app submitted and approved | 16/9/24 |
| Project Methodology and Plan | Draft Plan submitted to DITRDCA for sharing with PC, BCARR, CTG Data Working Group | 13/9/24 |
| First Nations Steering Group established | First Nations Steering Group confirmed (whole FNDIAG to act as Steering Group) | 20/9/24 |
| Project Plan finalised | Plan finalised following input from First Nations Steering Group | 20/9/24 |
| Funding guidelines and agreement finalised | DITRDCA to develop funding agreement following FNDIAG and Ministerial approval; Signed by Minister and RMIT / ADM+S | 23/9/24 |
| RFQ distributed to selected external survey companies | RMIT Procurement Plan approved; Request for Quotations document approved by DITRDCA; Distributed to selected providers (21 days to respond) | 30/9/24 |
| Survey tool finalised | Survey finalised, following input from DITRDCA, PC and Steering Group | 11/10/24 |
| Recruitment process for First Nations researcher/s begun | Position description developed; Recruitment process initiated with distribution through First Nations networks (applications due by 1 November) | 11/10/24 |
| External survey company Ipsos ATSIIRU contracted | RFQ selection process completed; contract executed with successful tenderer | 12/12/24 |
| Identify 10 targeted research sites | 10 First Nations communities confirmed as target research sites, with Agreements signed with First Nations partner organisations | 15/11/24 |
| First phase of external data collection begins | First round of data collection of 2000 surveys undertaken by Ipsos ATSIIRU | 13/12/24 |
| Schedule completed for 2025 targeted research sites | Fieldwork schedule completed for targeted research sites with partner organisations from February to September 2025 (to integrate with MtDG Phase 2 research) | 29/11/24 |
| Round 1 data collection begins in targeted research sites | Round one data collection in 5-6 of ten research sites to be undertaken by June 2025, with local partner organisations and co-researchers | 11/2/25 |
| Progress Report 1 | Progress report and funding acquittal (as per grant guidelines) | 30/1/25 |
| First phase of external data collection completed | 2000 surveys completed by Ipsos ATSIIRU; Data file delivered to ADM+S for cleaning / processing and merging with ADII data file for Index development | 14/3/25 |
| Dashboard and data access platform developed | Dashboard and data access platform and sharing protocols developed in consultation with DITRDCA, PC, ADII and First Nations Steering Group | 16/5/25 |
| Progress Report 2 | Progress report and funding acquittal (as per grant guidelines) | 30/6/25 |



Above: Mapping the Digital Gap co-researcher Djamika Ganambarr doing survey with Gawumala Gumana at Yirralka Ranger base in Gänngan

| Task | Actions / Deliverables | Due Date |
|---|---|----------------|
| 2025/6 | | |
| Round 1 research in remaining targeted sites | Round one data collection completed in remainder of the ten research sites, with local partner organisations | 29/8/25 |
| ADII Report Launch | ADII report to be launched, including case study on First Nations data collection and upgraded First Nations dashboard on ADII website | 3/9/25 (TBC) |
| First Nations DI Project 2025 report launch | First report of First Nations DI Project 2025 report launch | 17/9/25 (TBC) |
| Data file from targeted sites processed | Data file from 10 research sites to be cleaned, processed by SRC and analysed by ADM+S | 8/10/25 (TBC) |
| Outcomes report from round 1 in 10 target sites | Results of data collection in ten research sites compiled and published, with contextual data for each site | 28/11/25 (TBC) |
| Progress Report 3 | Progress report and funding acquittal (as per grant guidelines) | 30/1/26 |
| Public Presentation of Round 1 findings | Present of findings at various forums, including First Nations forums, and published articles to discuss Phase one findings | Ongoing |
| Round 2 data collection begins in targeted research sites | Round 2 data collection in 5-6 of ten research sites to be undertaken by June 2026, with local partner organisations and co-researchers | 26/6/26 |
| Progress Report 4 | Progress report and funding acquittal (as per grant guidelines) | 30/6/26 |
| 2026/7 | | |
| Round 2 research in remaining targeted sites | Round two data collection completed in remainder of the ten research sites | 11/9/26 (TBC) |
| Second phase of external data collection | Second round of data collection of 2000 surveys undertaken by external survey company Ipsos ATSIIRU | 27/11/26 |
| Progress Report 5 | Progress report and funding acquittal (as per grant guidelines) | 30/1/27 |
| Annual project outcomes report 2023 | Annual in-depth Round 2 research report submitted (including results from targeted sites), results published on ADII website | 21/5/27 (TBC) |
| End of Project Report 6 | End of project report and funding acquittal (as per grant guidelines); Project finalised, all project assets archived | 30/6/27 |

6. RISK ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT

This project is deemed low to medium risk, given the complexities of representative sampling for diverse First nations communities across Australia. While the ADII and MtDG team have experience in dealing with complex projects of this nature, there is a chance that issues could arise that affect the project delivery timelines, survey participation and/or data quality, and hence the data analysis and reporting. Below we have outlined our assessment of risks, details and potential impacts and risk management strategies.

The ADII team will mitigate risk in this project by abiding by the RMIT Risk Management [Policy](#) and [Procedure](#). We also seek to mitigate risk by following the NHMRC Guidelines for ‘Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities’ (2018) and AIATSIS (2021) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. The survey company will be ISO certified and will adhere to internal risk policies and industry codes (e.g. Australian Data and Insights Association).

| Risks | Details / Potential Impact | Management Strategies |
|--|--|--|
| Timing – Short timeframe to activate Round 1 surveys to align with ADII timelines | Availability of external survey company to undertake Round 1 surveys by February 2025, to align with ADII timelines for for data merging, processing, analysis | Release of Request for Quotations by late September, with two week response period Selection of survey company with experience undertaking projects of similar scale and capacity to rapidly mobilise |
| Research participation and sampling | Recruitment of 2000 participants by external survey company from a diverse geographic / demographic sample | Selection of survey company with existing national panel and researcher network to reach distributed and diverse sample Supplementary contract (if necessary) to address coverage /sampling gaps in Round 1 Vouchers provided to participants to recognise time spent doing survey |
| | Participation in 10 target sites | Partnership with local First Nations organisation and co-researchers in each site (proven MtDG model) |
| Data management/ governance in accordance with Priority Reform 4 and Indigenous data sovereignty | Lack of existing procedures | Early engagement with DITRDCA and PC re data governance, management and sharing processes; seeking input on Project Plan Assoc. Prof Ormond-Parker and Steering Group to provide governance and oversight |
| ADM+S Capacity | Capacity to deliver project alongside other ADM+S research projects (ADII, MtDG, etc) | Recruitment of additional First Nations researcher (1.0) & Research Assistant (0.5) to supplement existing ADII/MtDG team |
| Fieldwork risks (for ten research sites) | Scheduling, travel risks, local factors (weather, sorry business, other events etc) | A Fieldwork Hazard Identification Checklist and Risk Assessment has been prepared as part of the Ethic application process (available on request) |

Appendix 1: About ADM+S and the ADII Team

The [ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society \(ADM+S\)](#) brings together universities, industry, government and the community to support the development of responsible, ethical and inclusive automated decision-making.

A key project within ADM+S is the [Australian Digital Inclusion Index \(ADII\)](#) — a Telstra-funded collaboration between RMIT University and Swinburne University. The ADII offers an established methodology for measuring digital inclusion across time, places, and cohorts of interest. The ADII is a relative measure of inclusion. Using a scale of 0-100, it compares the degree to which individuals can be considered more digitally included than others based on the three dimensions of Access, Affordability, and Digital Ability. A score closer to 100 indicates higher inclusion while scores closer to 0 indicates greater exclusion. We identify four categories of digital inclusion — from highly excluded (an Index score of 45 or below) to highly included (an Index score of 80 and above) — providing benchmarks for evaluating progress and impact of digital inclusion initiatives.

ADII measures enable states, territories, local governments and advocacy groups to identify levels of digital inclusion or exclusion for populations of interest relative to the national average. These measures can inform and support targeted interventions.

For example, in 2022, the Queensland government commissioned an additional data collection and analysis alongside the main ADII data collection. The purpose was to enable deeper understanding of digital inclusion concerning remote Queenslanders, First Nations peoples, those living with disability, and seniors. The outcomes of this research will inform State-based digital inclusion strategies and policies, including First Nations digital inclusion.

Other examples of ADII-linked projects, and the policy impacts of the ADII, are outlined in the proposal document.

About Mapping the Digital Gap

The Telstra-funded [Mapping the Digital Gap](#) (MtDG) project, conducted by ADM+S, aims to make a significant contribution to the evidence base in the area of First Nations digital inclusion. Phase one of the project has been undertaken in 12 very remote and outer regional communities and towns to generate First Nations Index scores and track changes in digital inclusion over a three-year period (2022-2024). The MtDG project is undertaken in partnership with local First Nations organisations and support local digital inclusion strategies. Telstra have funded a second phase of the project, to visit a further 8-10 communities from 2025-27.

The MtDG project has substantially expanded our understanding of the uneven distribution of digital inclusion across the Australian population, focussing on First Nations communities where digital capabilities are critical for informed uses of digital modes of service delivery. It addresses a lack of up-to-date quantitative and qualitative research on digital inclusion levels and the use of media and communications in remote First Nations communities across Australia.

MtDG's research methodology was approved by RMIT's Human Research Ethics Committee and is guided by the core values and principles outlined in both the NHMRC Guidelines for 'Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities' (2018) and the AIATSIS (2021) Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. The project is also guided by the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty (e.g., Kukutai and Taylor 2016) and recognition of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights.

The 12 participating communities were chosen in consultation with First Nations community leaders and community-controlled organisations, using a criteria matrix to ensure a diverse national sample. Once identified, selected communities were invited to engage with the project. The research team has partnered with local or regional agencies for each research site to ensure the project adheres to local policies and cultural protocols, has community trust and engagement, and provides tangible research outcomes to the community. Individual community outcomes reports are provided after each

visit, enabling the use of the research results by local agencies for planning or advocacy. These community reports provide a locally informed and contextualised understanding of the research results.

The project is underpinned by a focus on digital equity and justice. Research results will assist communities in developing local digital inclusion plans to improve digital inclusion outcomes and access to services. More detail can be found in the [Mapping the Digital Gap Background Paper](#).

Below: Aerial photo of Mapping the Digital Gap site Yuelamu with recently installed 4G tower in foreground

The ADII Team

The Index's methodology draws on the research team's expertise in digital inclusion research, data analysis, and culturally appropriate engagement with First Nations communities, ensuring our capacity to draw on appropriate resources for this project. The project team is composed of highly skilled researchers and industry partners, each working at the forefront of digital inclusion research and initiatives.

This project will be delivered by the ADII and MtDG project team, which includes:

- ✦ ADII Lead / ADM+S Director: [Distinguished Professor Julian Thomas FAHA](#), RMIT University
- ✦ First Nations Principal Research Fellow / fieldwork /report writing: [Dr Heron Loban](#), RMIT University
- ✦ ADII Projects Lead: [Professor Anthony McCosker](#), Swinburne University
- ✦ Principal Research Fellow / fieldwork/ writing: [Dr. Daniel Featherstone](#), RMIT University



- ✦ Co-Investigator / Data management / report writing: Associate Professor [Sharon Parkinson](#), Swinburne University
- ✦ Researcher / report writing: [Dr Kieran Hegarty](#), RMIT University
- ✦ Project Manager: Alison Barton, RMIT University
- ✦ Communications / research support: Leah Hawkins, RMIT University

Administrative support and research assistance roles will also give priority to First Nations applicants.

External partners

Social Research Centre

The ADII is based on data collected from the Australian Internet Usage Survey, delivered by the Social Research Centre at ANU. Analysts at the SRC also conduct the Small Area Estimates used in the ADII to derive scores for most States/Territories and Local Government Areas. Analysts at the SRC will be contracted to conduct the necessary data modelling.

Dassier

Dassier provides custom built data visualisations, data dashboards, and online reporting platforms. Dassier has developed and maintains the existing interactive dashboards for the ADII and MtDG projects. To leverage the ADII project's investment into these dashboards, Dassier will be contracted to modify existing dashboards and/or create new ones to meet project communication needs.

First Nations survey company

External partner organisation Ipsos Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Unit has been contracted to undertake 2000 surveys in each round, using a mix of an existing First Nations panel for recruitment along with face-to-face surveys by a network of community-based First Nations researchers. The company was competitively selected through a Request for Quotations process in accordance with RMIT procurement processes and Indigenous procurement policies.

Appendix 2: Proposed Sample Sizes and Target Research Sites

The indicative list of research sites and sample sizes below represents the geographic and demographic spread being sought for each round of data collection. The majority of the urban and regional sample will be delivered by Ipsos ATSIU via its iMob panel and researcher network. Selection of the ten target research sites will be undertaken, following review of the geographic spread of the Ipsos researcher sites and panel locations, and in consultation with DITRDCA, PC and the First Nations Steering Group. A more detailed sample distribution and target site list will be developed during the project development phase.

| State | Site | Target Sample |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Western Australia | Urban: Perth | 150 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Broome | 75 |
| | Regional 2: e.g. Greater Geraldton | 75 |
| | Regional 3: e.g. Roebourne | 75 |
| | Geographically dispersed sample | 50 |
| Northern Territory | Urban: Darwin | 150 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Alice Springs | 75 |
| | Regional 2: e.g. Katherine | 75 |

| State | Site | Target Sample |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| South Australia | Urban: Adelaide | 150 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Port Augusta | 75 |
| | Regional 2: e.g. Ceduna | 75 |
| | Geographically dispersed sample | 50 |
| Queensland | Urban: Brisbane | 150 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Townsville or Cairns | 75 |
| | Regional 2: e.g. Cherbourg | 50 |
| | Regional 3: e.g. Thursday Island | 75 |
| | Geographically dispersed sample | 150 |
| New South Wales | Urban: Sydney | 150 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Lismore | 75 |
| | Regional 2: e.g. Dubbo | 75 |
| | Regional 3: e.g. Newcastle | 75 |
| | Geographically dispersed sample | 150 |
| Victoria | Urban: Melbourne | 150 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Greater Bendigo | 75 |
| | Regional 2: e.g. Greater Shepparton | 75 |
| | Geographically dispersed sample | 150 |
| Tasmania | Urban: Hobart | 75 |
| | Regional 1: e.g. Launceston | 50 |
| | Geographically dispersed sample | 50 |
| ACT | Urban: Canberra | 75 |
| Total Surveys | | 2800 |

Mapping the Digital Gap Sites

The current list of 12 remote sites for the Mapping the Digital Gap Phase 1 research project is provided below, along with target samples. See section 4 of the [Background Paper](#) for selection criteria. Eight new sites will be added for Mapping the Digital Gap Phase 2, beginning in 2025.

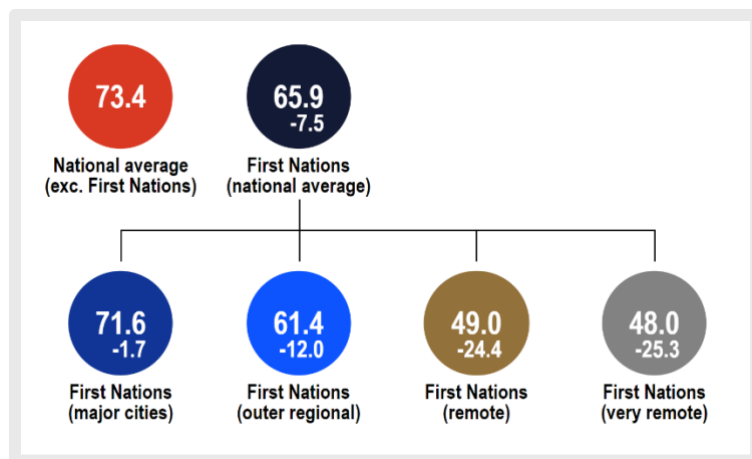
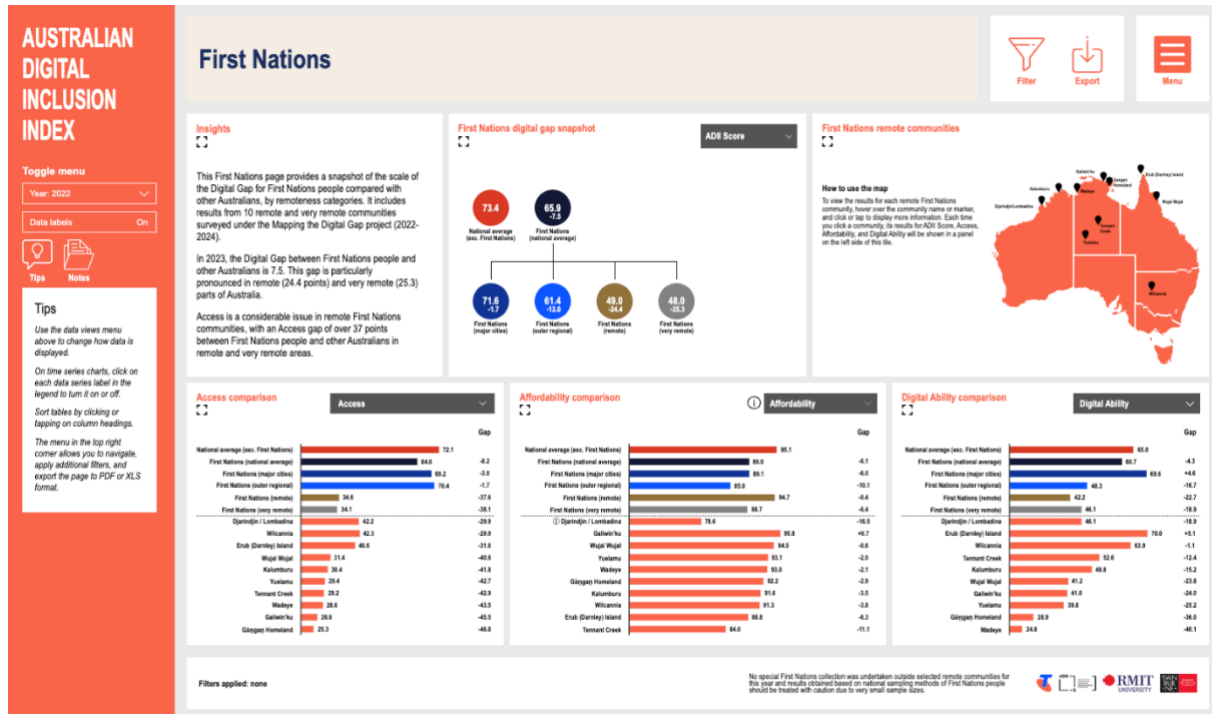
| Research Site | Alternate name | Region, State | Site Type | Remoteness ¹ | Target Sample |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Kalumburu | | East Kimberley region, WA | Major community | Very Remote | 65 |
| Djarindjin / Lombadina | | Dampier Peninsula, West Kimberley, WA | Major community | Very Remote | 90 |
| Tennant Creek | | Barkly region NT | Regional town | Very Remote | 70 |

¹ Using the ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/statistical-geography/remoteness-structure>). Remoteness Areas are based on the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), produced by the [Hugo Centre for Population and Migration Studies](#).

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| Gängan | | Laynhapuy Homelands, East Arnhem NT | Homeland | Very Remote | 35 |
| Galiwin'ku | Elcho Island | East Arnhemland NT | Major community | Very Remote | 80 |
| Wadeye | Port Keats | West Daly region, NT | Major community | Very Remote | 80 |
| Wujal Wujal | Bloomfield | SE Cape York, Queensland | Major community | Very Remote | 85 |
| Erub | Darnley Island | Torres Strait Islands, Queensland | Major community | Very Remote | 60 |
| Wilcannia | | Central Darling region, NSW | Regional town | Remote | 85 |
| Yuelamu | Mt Allan / Alpirakinga | Central Desert region, NT | Major community | Very Remote | 50 |
| Warakurna | Giles | Ngaanyatjarra region, WA | Major community | Very Remote | 50 |
| Pipalyatjara/ Kalka | Mt Davies | Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands, SA | Major community | Very Remote | 50 |
| Total | | | | | 800 |

Appendix 3: First Nations information on the ADII Dashboard

The First Nations interactive dashboard on the ADII website provides a summary of the scale of the digital gap by remoteness (capital cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote, very remote) as well as breakdowns by the Dimension of Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. Additional First Nations data can be accessed from other dashboards throughout the ADII dashboard. This project will provide additional dashboard pages and up to four explanatory website pages, as well as downloadable data files.





Co-researcher Lala Gutchen from the Meriam tribe on Erub (Darnley island) in the Torres Strait Islands searches for mobile reception while fishing

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