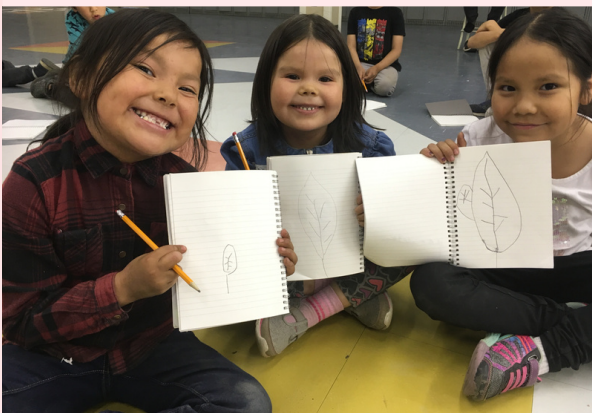


A NATIONAL LITERACY STRATEGY FOR CANADA

A federal strategy to strengthen productivity, employability, inclusion, and lifelong learning with dedicated federal coordination, investment, measurement, and reporting

By the National Literacy Alliance
September 2026



Executive Summary

Literacy is a core building block of our economy. It affects productivity, labour force participation, adaptability at work, health outcomes, civic participation, and the ability of people and communities to respond to change. In a more competitive and technology-driven economy, Canada can no longer afford to leave the close to five million people who have inadequate literacy skills without the skills they need to learn, work, and contribute.

The National Literacy Alliance, comprised of more than 60 organizations across the Canadian literacy sector, proposes the creation and implementation of a National Literacy Strategy. This strategy would give Canada a practical framework to strengthen foundational skills from birth through adulthood. It would also help federal, provincial, territorial, Indigenous, and community partners work more effectively and impactfully, as exemplified by other countries that have implemented similar coordinated approaches.

This would also directly support Canada's National Artificial Intelligence Strategy: AI for All, which recognizes that Canadians need the skills and confidence to benefit from it. A National Literacy Strategy would help deliver on that commitment by recognizing digital and AI literacy as essential skills for using technologies, online services and AI enabled tools safely, confidently, critically and equitably

The Alliance is asking the Government of Canada to establish a senior unit within Employment and Social Development Canada to lead the creation and implementation of a National Literacy Strategy. Reporting to the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for skills development, or to the Deputy Minister, the unit would coordinate across federal departments and work in collaboration with provinces, territories, Indigenous partners, and the literacy sector, supported by dedicated funding, jointly agreed outcomes, and public reporting.

The National Literacy Strategy would provide the federal government with a practical opportunity to advance three national priorities at once:

- **A stronger and more productive economy**, with more people able to access jobs, adapt to technological change, and contribute to priority sectors such as skilled trades and AI-driven industries.
- **A more educated country** where no one is left behind, and where children and youth build strong early literacy foundations, succeed in school, and are better prepared for further education and future employment.
- **A more inclusive country**, where literacy supports are easy to find, simple to use, and better designed for people who face barriers because of poverty, racism, disability, geography, language, or other forms of exclusion.

The Alliance proposes that the Strategy be built around five key pillars based on our shared expertise, research data, and literacy best practices from Canada and internationally:

- Early foundations
- Equitable literacy education and supports in primary and secondary years
- Lifelong learning
- Data for impact
- Inclusive access

Each pillar includes a clear goal and a defined set of objectives. Together, they create the basis of a Strategy that is practical, measurable, and aligned with Canada's current priorities.

Why Canada needs a National Literacy Strategy now

Canada is facing immediate economic pressures: weak productivity growth, labour shortages, rapid technological change, and rising demand for housing and infrastructure. Meeting these challenges will require more people to enter training, adapt at work, use digital tools confidently, and move into sectors where workers are urgently needed.

Yet recent adult skills data shows that too many working age adults still lack the foundational literacy skills required to take part in these opportunities. This creates a practical barrier to workforce participation, skills development, informed AI adoption, and the effective use of public programs.

Canada already has strong literacy expertise across communities, governments, institutions, employers, and civil society. What is missing is a coordinated national approach.

The scale of Canada's literacy challenge in 2026

One in five working age adults in Canada, approximately 19 percent, are at the lowest literacy levels measured by international adult skills data ¹. This means millions of people face barriers when reading safety instructions, completing forms, understanding written information, using public services, or making informed decisions for themselves and their families.

The challenge begins well before adulthood. The 2022 results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed that 18 percent of Canadian 15-year-olds did not reach the baseline level of reading proficiency, up from 10 percent in 2009 and 14 percent in 2018. Although Canada continues to perform above the OECD average, the trend shows that a growing proportion of young people risk entering adulthood without the literacy skills required for further education, employment, and full participation in society.²

National averages also hide deeper inequities. Recent research by the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition shows that literacy barriers among Indigenous adults are shaped by colonization, disrupted education, underinvestment, geography, language, and systemic barriers to employment and opportunity³. It reinforces the need for Indigenous-led, community-driven approaches that strengthen opportunity, wellbeing, and reconciliation.

Low literacy limits opportunity, weakens community wellbeing, and makes Canada less productive. However, the Canada West Foundation estimated in 2018 that a one percent increase in adult literacy could generate approximately \$50 to \$65 billion in additional annual GDP for Canada.

Low literacy also reduces the impact of public investments. Employment programs, health services, housing initiatives, immigration supports, justice programs, digital access, and skills training all depend on people being able to read, understand, assess, and use information.

¹ Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. (2024, December 10). *Canada ranks among top OECD countries in foundational skills: Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)*.

² Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, *Measuring Up: Canadian Results of the OECD PISA 2022 Study. The Performance of Canadian 15 Year Olds in Mathematics, Reading, and Science, 2023*, pp. 88–90

³ Ontario Native Literacy Coalition. (2026). *From literacy to legacy: Reviewing the current needs and opportunities to improve Indigenous adult literacy at the community level in Ontario*. Prepared by Bundled Arrows. Turtle's Back Publishing.

The literacy promise: what investment in a National Literacy Strategy would deliver

Smart investment in literacy gives people the foundation to participate more fully in school, work, health, and community life.⁴ The return is strongest when investment begins early. Evidence from early childhood development shows that early learning supports can reduce the need for costly interventions later.

Literacy improves labour force participation, access to skilled trades and apprenticeships, workplace adaptability, financial stability, civic engagement, and learner confidence. It also strengthens families. Parents and caregivers with stronger literacy skills are better able to support children's early learning, which has long-lasting benefits.

In short, literacy investment pays twice: it helps people now, and it helps prevent deeper barriers later.

How this Strategy was developed

This proposed Strategy is informed by evidence, domestic and international practice, and what literacy organizations across Canada see every day in their work with learners, families, communities, employers, and public systems.

It reflects consistent themes raised across the literacy field: the need for better national coordination, stable funding, stronger data, earlier intervention, adult learning pathways, workplace relevance, and supports that are easier for people to find and use.

The Strategy draws on lessons from other national policy models, including Canada's National School Food Policy⁵ which brings together a clear federal vision, guiding principles, progressive universal access, strong local delivery capacity, collaboration with provinces, territories and Indigenous partners, public reporting, and dedicated funding. It would also be grounded in current literacy evidence, including the latest results from Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies and research conducted by the Canada West Foundation.⁶

⁴ Deloitte LLP. (2020, November). *An economic overview of children's literacy in Canada*. Canadian Children's Literacy Foundation.

⁵ Employment and Social Development Canada. (2024, June 20). *National School Food Policy*. Government of Canada.

⁶ Statistics Canada. (2024, December 10). *Literacy, numeracy and adaptive problem-solving skills of Canadians: Results from the 2022 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)*

International examples informing a National Literacy Strategy

Several countries have adopted national literacy or foundational skills strategies that offer practical lessons in how to make literacy a national economic and social priority:

Finland: Literacy as National Infrastructure

Finland has positioned literacy as part of national infrastructure through its National Literacy Strategy 2030. The strategy links literacy to lifelong learning, workforce readiness, wellbeing, and social cohesion. Particularly relevant for Canada is Finland's emphasis on ongoing national coordination, rather than short-term projects.

Lesson for Canada: A Canadian strategy should establish a permanent national literacy coordination function, with a clear mandate to support implementation, measurement, and continuous improvement.

Ireland: Integration Across Education, Skills, and Digital Readiness

Ireland offers a strong model through its integrated literacy, numeracy, and digital literacy strategy, connecting early learning, school achievement, digital skills, and adult skills within one framework.

Lesson for Canada: Canada should connect literacy policy to productivity, digital readiness, and labour market participation, while maintaining strong attention to inclusion. This reinforces literacy as foundational to employability, innovation, and economic competitiveness.

Australia: Early Intervention and Community Based Support

Australia offers important lessons in prevention, emphasizing family supports, early intervention, transitions, and community delivery.

Lesson for Canada: Canada should keep family literacy and early intervention approaches at its core, recognizing that preventing literacy gaps is more effective and less costly than remediating them later.

These examples suggest a number of learnings for Canada. In short, effective national strategies include:

- A permanent coordinating function within government.
- Clear objectives linked to measurable outcomes.
- Integration of literacy with workforce development, productivity, and digital readiness.
- Dedicated data and evaluation systems.
- Sustained investment across early years, school age, adulthood, and lifelong learning.
- Explicit attention to underserved populations, including Indigenous peoples, newcomers, rural and northern communities, and people involved in justice systems.

These lessons align strongly with the proposed Canadian model and reinforce that a National Literacy Strategy would place Canada alongside countries similar to Canada already treating literacy as a strategic economic priority.

Framework for a National Literacy Strategy

A National Literacy Strategy would be built around the following vision, shared goals, and guiding principles:

Vision

Everyone in Canada has the literacy skills necessary to fully participate in learning, work, and community life.

Shared goal

A Canada where more people can participate fully in the economy, supported by literacy policies and programs that reduce barriers, strengthen employability and adaptability, and support individuals and communities at greatest risk of exclusion.

Guiding principles

- **Economic relevance:** Literacy policy should be connected to productivity, employability, workforce participation, Canada's ability to compete over time, and Canada's ability to adapt to the growing presence of artificial intelligence and other digital technologies. It should recognize that economic participation now depends on multiple kinds of literacy, including reading, numeracy, digital, and AI-related literacies.
- **Equity and inclusion:** The strategy must address systemic barriers that affect Indigenous, Black, newcomer, racialized, Francophone, disabled, institutionalized, rural, remote, and Northern learners, among others.
- **Reconciliation and Indigenous partnership:** Truth and Reconciliation must be woven throughout the strategy, with respect for Indigenous rights, sovereignty, languages, knowledge systems, and community-led approaches. Indigenous literacy initiatives should be designed with Indigenous communities and reflect culturally grounded programming, Indigenous languages, Elders, local knowledge holders, and local definitions of success.
- **Lifelong learning across all parts of life:** Literacy begins at birth and continues across home, school, community, workplace, and later life settings.
- **Local flexibility within a national framework:** National goals should be clear, but implementation must reflect local, cultural, language, workforce realities and existing provincial government mandates.
- **Accountability, evidence, and continuous improvement:** Public investment should be guided by measurable outcomes, strong data, and continuous learning. Evaluation approaches should recognize both short-term progress and longer-term literacy, social, economic, and intergenerational impacts.
- **Long-term impact and enduring investment:** A national literacy strategy must balance accountability for public investment with recognition that literacy outcomes develop over years and across generations. Federal partners should provide sustained, predictable support that enables communities and organizations to address root causes, build capacity, and achieve lasting change.

The five pillars of a national framework for literacy

A National Literacy Strategy must support people at every stage of life, from the earliest years through adulthood to older age. Literacy develops in families, schools, workplaces, community organizations, libraries, health systems, justice settings, and online spaces. It cannot be strengthened through one program, department, or government level alone. The five pillars below provide a practical framework for coordinated action. Together, they focus on early help, timely support, adult learning, better data, and easier access, so that every person in Canada has a fair chance to build the literacy skills they need to learn, work, participate, and thrive.

Pillar 1: Early Foundations

Goal

All families have access to language and literacy support from birth, both at home and in the community, ensuring that every child, regardless of postal code, has a solid foundation for lifelong learning, school success, and future employability.

Objectives

- Work with provinces, territories, Indigenous partners, and the literacy sector to strengthen early language and literacy supports in community settings, with particular attention to families facing barriers linked to poverty, geography, disability, language, or exclusion.
- Increase federal investment in family literacy approaches that support both caregiver learning and child development support stronger connections between early years systems, health and family services, community literacy organizations, and efforts to help children succeed in school.
- Promote public awareness of the long-term economic and social value of early literacy, including its links to school readiness, later learning, and future labour market participation.
- Encourage stronger access in underserved communities, including rural, remote, Northern, Indigenous, newcomer, and low-income communities.

Why this pillar matters

Children build literacy early, and small gaps can grow over time. Investment in early literacy is one of the most effective ways to reduce catch-up later, improve educational outcomes, and strengthen long-term productivity.

Pillar 2: Equitable Literacy Education and Supports in Primary and Secondary Years

Goal

All children and youth receive strong reading and writing instruction that is based on evidence and reflects students' cultures and realities. Further, support is available when needed in school, at home, and in the community, so they can acquire the literacy skills they need to thrive now and throughout their lives.

Objectives

- Encourage the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to convene provincial and territorial partners to share advances in evidence-based literacy practice including curriculum, assessment, screening, intervention, tutoring, and teacher preparation.
- Increase federal investment in student success initiatives that provide sustained tutoring, community-based literacy supports, and flexible bridge and reengagement models for children and youth facing barriers, including those who are behind, under credited, no longer attending school, or required to leave their community to continue their education. These investments should place particular attention on Indigenous, rural, remote, and northern learners.
- Recognize family- and community-based literacy supports as essential to school success. Strengthen alignment between schools and community organizations so learners can move more easily between systems of support.
- Promote high-quality tutoring and supports that help students catch up, including clearer quality standards, stronger evidence of use, and better access for lower income families.
- Support culturally inclusive approaches, including those shaped by Indigenous communities and by organizations serving Black, newcomer, racialized, Francophone, and multilingual learners.

Why this pillar matters

Canada's future workforce is being shaped in classrooms, families, and communities today. Stronger literacy outcomes in childhood and adolescence reduce later exclusion from college, university, trades, training pathways, and work. They also reduce the need for more costly remediation later in life.

For some Indigenous youth, especially in remote and Northern communities, school transitions are not simply academic transitions. They may involve separation from home community, language, culture, and familiar support systems. Literacy supports must therefore include culturally safe bridge programming that helps young people remain connected to learning without forcing a false choice between education and belonging.

Pillar 3: Lifelong Learning

Goal

All adults and youth who are no longer in school can access flexible learning and training opportunities in community settings and workplaces to strengthen their literacy skills for a 21st century economy and for full participation in society. This includes opportunities designed for diverse needs and background. These opportunities should be designed for people with diverse needs and backgrounds and should contribute to building digital and AI literacy skills so adults can use new technologies, online services, and AI-enabled tools safely and effectively.

Objectives

- Increase investment in flexible adult literacy and foundational skills programs across community, college, school board, workplace, and Indigenous-led organizations, so learners can access supports that reflect their needs, life circumstances, cultures, and goals.
- Position literacy as a foundation for employability, job retention, career progression, entrepreneurship, civic participation, and healthy aging, recognizing that literacy strengthens both economic participation and quality of life.
- Strengthen employer and workforce partnerships by increasing incentives for employers to support literacy and foundational skills development with existing literacy providers, including through workplace training programs and federal skills funding.
- Expand bridge and transition pathways for adults and young people who need foundational skills to enter or reenter education, training, apprenticeship, skilled trades, digital learning, employment, or secondary completion, with tailored support for Indigenous learners and those facing barriers after leaving high school.
- Advance digital and AI literacy as essential lifelong skills, while also supporting seniors and older adults through community-based literacy and digital learning opportunities that help them participate safely, confidently, and productively in daily life.

Why this pillar matters

Canada cannot meet its productivity and workforce goals by focusing only on new people entering the labour market. As AI and digital tools reshape workplaces and public systems, adults need strong foundational literacy plus digital and AI literacy to adapt, make informed decisions, and benefit from these changes. Adults already in the workforce, adults outside it, and youth who are no longer in school all need pathways to build new foundational skills, adapt to change, and connect to opportunity.

Research shows that adults who have left formal education need trusted and flexible pathways that rebuild confidence and connect learning to daily life, work, family, culture, and community. This is especially important for Indigenous learners, for whom culturally grounded and community-led approaches are central to trust, participation, and long-term impact.

Pillar 4: Data for Impact

Goal

Literacy data is collected, shared, and used across jurisdictions to guide prevention, remediation, program design, policy development, and public accountability, with special attention to why literacy gaps happen, how they differ by region, and which groups are missing from national data.

Objectives

- Establish a national literacy data strategy, led by Employment and Social Development Canada, in partnership with the literacy sector, provinces, territories, Indigenous partners, and relevant federal departments.
- Identify major literacy data gaps and invest in new data collection that better reflects literacy outcomes across the lifespan, including adult learning, community-based programs, workplace learning, justice settings, and diverse regional realities.
- Make publicly funded literacy data more accessible, transparent, and usable for the nonprofit sector, researchers, governments, and local delivery organizations.
- Develop Indigenous data and evaluation approaches in partnership with Indigenous organizations and communities, respecting Indigenous data governance principles and measuring outcomes that communities value, including confidence, cultural connection, reengagement, employability, family impacts, and learner-defined progress.
- Strengthen literacy research and knowledge-sharing across Canada by combining quantitative data, stories, and lived experience, supporting longer-term research, improving French language literacy research and access to data relevant to Quebec and Francophone communities, and sharing evidence, promising practices, benchmarks, and evaluation tools across jurisdictions.

Why this pillar matters

Better literacy data would help all levels of governments to make stronger policy decisions, target investments where they are most needed, and track whether programs are improving outcomes over time. Clearer evidence would also support public accountability by showing what works, where gaps remain, and how literacy investments contribute to economic participation, inclusion, and stronger public services.

Pillar 5: Inclusive Access

Goal

Literacy programs and information regarding them are accessible through clear communication, accessible design, culturally relevant approaches, and practical outreach that respects the needs, strengths, and realities of underserved communities and learners.

Objectives

- Promote the use of plain language and make literacy services easier to find and use: Use plain language, accessible formats, and clear service navigation so people can understand what is available and how to get help.
- Design programs for a wide range of learners: Ensure literacy programs work for people with different learning needs, disabilities, language backgrounds, and levels of digital access.
- Reach people who face the greatest barriers: Improve access for Indigenous learners, newcomers, non-official language speakers, people in the justice system, and people living in rural, remote, and northern communities.
- Create welcoming and practical entry points: Fund low-barrier and culturally safe programs that allow people to start with everyday needs, such as employment forms, digital tasks, financial literacy, health information, family learning, language, and culture.
- Keep maximal access in changing conditions: Protect human support if/when services move online, involve learners and communities in decisions, and plan for disruptions such as pandemics, evacuations, and climate emergencies.

Why this pillar matters

Access is not just about whether a program exists. It is about whether people can find it, understand it, trust it, reach it, and use it successfully. Access is also relational, not only logistical. Learners are more likely to participate when programs are offered in trusted spaces, reflect their culture and lived experience, connect to immediate needs, and are delivered by people and organizations with credibility in the community.

Roles and Responsibilities

A National Literacy Strategy would require shared leadership across the different levels of governments, Indigenous organizations and institutions, the literacy sector, and community organizations. It would complement, not replace, provincial and territorial responsibility for education and training.

Federal government

Employment and Social Development Canada, through a dedicated unit, would:

- Lead national coordination across governments, departments, and community sectors to secure endorsement and implementation of the National Literacy Strategy at all levels of government, including Indigenous governments, and monitor and report on progress.
- Provide sustained funding for literacy programs, delivery capacity, research, and data.
- Establish shared outcomes and measures for the National Literacy Strategy, monitor and publicly report on its implementation and results, and use PIAAC and other national data to track long term changes in literacy levels.
- Support effective approaches that can be adapted and expanded across Canada.

Province and territories

- Build on existing education, adult learning, and workforce development systems to advance shared literacy objectives.
- Strengthen and share effective approaches to early intervention, literacy instruction, adult learning, and community partnerships.
- Contribute data, evidence, and expertise to national measurement while adapting implementation to regional, linguistic, cultural, and community realities.
- Work with federal, Indigenous, and community partners to strengthen investment, scale effective approaches, and improve access to literacy supports.

National Literacy Alliance and delivery partners

The National Literacy Alliance would coordinate sector participation and mobilize community infrastructure to support implementation. Working with community and delivery partners, the Alliance should:

- Align organizations around shared priorities and outcomes.
- Deliver accessible, flexible, and culturally relevant programs.
- Ensure Indigenous partners lead approaches affecting Indigenous peoples and communities.
- Identify gaps and bring learner, practitioner, and community perspectives into national decision-making.

Implementation Approach

Building universal access through strong delivery capacity and targeted investment

Canada should work toward universal access to literacy and foundational skills supports throughout life. Implementation should begin by directing investment to the people, communities, and delivery organizations facing the greatest needs and barriers, while progressively expanding access across the country.

Who should be prioritized

A National Literacy Strategy should prioritize people and communities facing the greatest barriers, including Indigenous peoples, newcomers, Francophone minority communities, Black and racialized communities, rural and northern communities, persons with disabilities, people living on low incomes, people involved in justice systems, and adults who need stronger literacy skills to enter training, secure employment, retain a job, or advance at work.

Investment must also strengthen the organizations and partnerships that deliver literacy services in communities. This includes community literacy organizations, Indigenous led organizations, employers, sector partners, families, and public systems that depend on people having strong foundational skills.

What should be funded

Federal investment should support a range of needs across the lifespan, including:

- Immediate literacy assistance for people entering employment, training, or further education
- Longer-term learning opportunities for people facing significant or persistent literacy barriers
- Family literacy programs that strengthen caregiver skills and children's early development
- Community delivery organizations that need stable funding, qualified staff, training, technology, shared tools, evaluation support, and stronger data systems
- Employers and sector partners supporting workforce development, skilled trades, digital readiness, workplace learning, and career progression
- Public systems such as health, justice, immigration, settlement, and income support, where literacy barriers limit access, reduce effectiveness, and increase costs

When implementation should begin

Implementation should begin immediately, starting with populations, communities, and organizations facing the greatest needs and progressively expanding toward universal access.

Support must be sustained and predictable because literacy outcomes develop over time and across generations. The Strategy should therefore combine immediate action with long-term investment, clear milestones, and regular public reporting.

This approach would allow Canada to address urgent needs while building the infrastructure, partnerships, evidence, and delivery capacity required for lasting change.

Where services should be delivered

Literacy supports should be available across Canada and delivered as close as possible to where people live, learn, work, and access public services.

Implementation should build on existing community infrastructure, including literacy organizations, Indigenous-led organizations, schools, libraries, workplaces, training institutions, correctional settings, settlement services, and health and social service systems.

Services should be visible, trusted, culturally relevant, and easy to access. Strengthening local delivery would reduce stigma, encourage participation, improve workforce adaptability and community resilience, and help people benefit more fully from public programs and services.

Federal investment required

To implement the Strategy, the Government of Canada should provide dedicated, sustained funding through a senior level unit within Employment and Social Development Canada. Reporting to an Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for skills development, or to a Deputy Minister, this unit would coordinate efforts across federal departments and work with provinces, territories, Indigenous partners, and the literacy sector. It would be supported by dedicated funding, jointly agreed outcomes, and public reporting.

This investment would support coordination, research, data collection systems, and service delivery.

Collaboration with provinces, territories, Indigenous governments and organizations, employers, community organizations, settlement services, housing providers, and digital training partners would extend the reach of federal funding, attract complementary investments, and strengthen existing infrastructure across Canada.

Measurement and Accountability

A National Literacy Strategy should include a clear national framework to measure progress, strengthen accountability, and improve programs over time. Shared measures should support consistent reporting across Canada while allowing flexibility across jurisdictions, communities, learner populations, and delivery models.

Measurement must recognize that literacy development is not always linear and that success does not look the same for every learner. National data should therefore be combined with learner and community perspectives and with longer term evidence of progress.

National and system outcomes

The Strategy should track:

- Participation in literacy and foundational skills programs across age groups and settings
- Reach among underserved populations, communities, and regions
- Learner transitions into further education, training, apprenticeship, employment, or improved job retention
- Reductions in gaps in access and literacy outcomes
- Growth in program availability, delivery capacity, partnerships, and geographic reach
- Availability and use of public data, research, and evaluation tools

These measures should show whether the Strategy is improving both learner outcomes and the systems that support them. Data collection, measurement, and reporting should receive dedicated funding in addition to regular literacy programming. Evaluation requirements should be proportionate, useful, and designed in consultation with the literacy field to avoid creating an excessive administrative burden.

Learner and community outcomes

Learners and communities should help define meaningful progress based on their goals, circumstances, cultures, and priorities. Outcomes may include increased confidence, greater independence, improved ability to navigate services, stronger participation in family and community life, and progress toward education or employment goals.

These outcomes are essential because literacy growth may first appear through greater engagement, trust, confidence, and willingness to continue learning.

Public reporting and continuous improvement

The federal government should work with provinces and territories to secure their commitment to consistent and regular reporting. It should publish regular and accessible progress reports showing what is working, where gaps remain, who is not being reached, and how investments are contributing to economic and social outcomes across Canada. Evaluation should be used not only to demonstrate results, but also to improve programs, guide investment, share promising practices, and respond to emerging needs.

Conclusion

Canada's challenges with productivity, inclusion, and workforce participation are deeply connected to literacy. Research shows that when people have the skills to learn, work, adapt, and participate, public investments go further, communities become stronger, and the economy works better for more people.

A National Literacy Strategy would give Canada a practical framework to strengthen those skills across the lifespan. It would connect early learning, school-age support, adult upgrading, workforce development, digital readiness, and community-based delivery within one coordinated national approach.

Canada does not need to start from scratch. It needs to align, strengthen, and scale the solutions already demonstrating impact across communities. What is needed now is federal leadership, sustained investment, and a national framework that connects what is working with existing expertise to address persistent gaps and better prepare all Canadians for the social, economic, and technological changes ahead.

The time has come for Canada to treat literacy as essential infrastructure for a resilient, inclusive, and future-ready society. This includes treating digital and AI literacy as part of that infrastructure, so people are prepared not only to read and write, but also to navigate data, online systems, and AI-enabled tools safely and fairly.