KEY INSIGHTS

Greater Whitsunday Digital Capability Ecosystem Mapping

FINDINGS SNAPSHOT

Finding 1 — Middle Adopters are the Region's Fastest Path to Growth

More than half of regional SMEs are already using digital tools but not yet integrating them at scale.

54.8% of SMEs are classified as middle adopters

68.5% are using digital tools or AI

Adoption exists but is inconsistent and not fully integrated

WHY THIS MATTERS
This cohort represents the **largest, fastest and most immediate opportunity** for measurable productivity uplift.

WHAT UNLOCKS PROGRESS
Clear pathways, practical examples, and support delivered through trusted industry networks and peer learning.

Finding 2 — Capability Is Strong but Capacity Limits Action

The region has skills and motivation. What it lacks is the bandwidth to put them into practice.

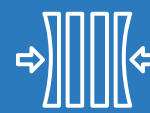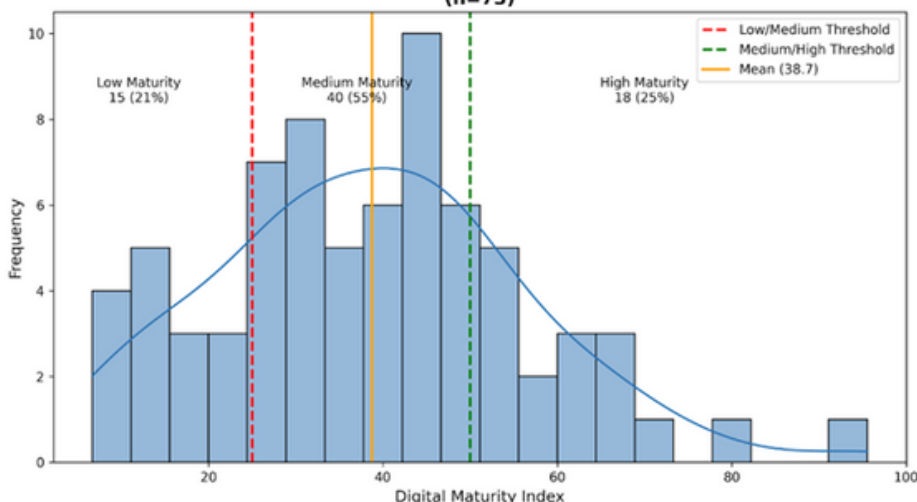**CONSISTENT BARRIERS reported across LGAs**
- Limited time
- Workforce constraints
- Competing operational priorities

SYSTEM IMPLICATION
Strong skills, limited capacity - progress needs coordinated support.

CAPABILITY   CAPACITY

Distribution of Digital Maturity Index Across SMEs (n=73)

Low/Medium Threshold
Medium/High Threshold
Mean (38.7)

Low Maturity 15 (21%)
Medium Maturity 40 (55%)
High Maturity 18 (25%)

Frequency — Digital Maturity Index

TRAINING DEMAND — TOP 5

- Microsoft 365 productivity/workflows **42.5%**
- AI & automation **32.9%**
- Digital ethics & responsible AI **26.0%**
- Cyber security & data privacy **23.3%**
- Project/task tools **23.3%**

Finding 3 — High Appetite but Fragmented Navigation

Businesses want to adopt digital solutions but struggle to find their way through a complex and disconnected support landscape.

135+ organisations operating across digital capability, training and support

MAPPING RESULT
- Limited visibility of pathways
- Activity occuring in silos

SYSTEM CONSEQUENCE
Fragmentation dilutes impact, increases duplication, and slows digital adoption across the region.

STRATEGIC SIGNAL
A stronger regional backbone role would convert fragmentation into a **cohesive, navigable and investment ready system.**

Finding 4 — Strong Foundations Already Exist

The region is not starting from zero. It already has the core assets required for rapid uplift.

EXISTING STRENGTHS INCLUDE
- A diverse base of digital service providers and training organisations
- Active chambers and industry groups with established SME relationships
- Innovation hubs and partners driving applied digital adoption
- A committed and engaged Digital Leaders Group
- Clear strategic direction through the Greater Whitsunday Digital Roadmap

WHAT IS MISSING?
Alignment, visibility and coordination action around shared priorities.

GW3 — GREATER WHITSUNDAY ALLIANCE — MACKAY ▸ ISAAC ▸ WHITSUNDAY

BMA — BHP Mitsubishi Alliance

GREATER WHITSUNDAY INNOVATION

KEY INSIGHTS

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PRIORITY OPPORTUNITIES
for the region

Opportunity 1
Target Support to middle adopters

Middle adopters deliver the **largest and quickest productivity returns.**

APPROACH
Stage support to move businesses from:
Basic use → Consistent application → Integrated practice

SECTORS IMPACTED
Tourism, professional services, mining/METS, and local manufacturing, with agribusiness benefiting through staged, foundation-plus progression.
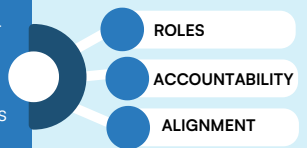
Opportunity 2
Strengthen Regional Backbone and Coordination

Formalising the regional backbone reduces reliance on individual organisations, strengthens system resilience and sustains momentum beyond individual programs or funding cycles.

WHAT STRONGER COORDINATION ENABLES
- Reduced duplication and clearer role delineation
- Easier navigation for SMEs and stakeholders
- Increased confidence for funders and partners
- Consistent translation of strategy into coordinated delivery

- ROLES
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- ALIGNMENT

Opportunity 3
Leverage Trusted Intermediaries

Chambers, peak bodies and hubs are trusted, high reach entry points for SMEs.

ROLE OF INTERMEDIARIES

- Digital awareness and outreach
- Peer learning and practical demonstrations
- Program activation and referral pathways

IMPACT Greater reach, relevance and uptake across a diverse SME base.

Opportunity 4
Unlock Cross Sector Capability Transfer

Digitally mature sectors can accelerate progress in others by sharing proven tools, practices and use cases.

EXAMPLES
METS and energy informing tourism and agribusiness.

Shared digital tools, systems and demonstrated use cases.

OUTCOME
Shorter adoption cycles and shared regional uplift.

Opportunity 5
Strengthen Regional Positioning and Advocacy

Coordination enables a credible, unified regional narrative.

BENEFITS INCLUDE
- Improved policy visibility
- Stronger funding outcomes
- Increased business confidence
- Clear regional digital identity

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT
Directly supports the region's collective advocacy and positioning efforts and amplifies the Digital Roadmap's vision.

ACTION READY SUMMARY
- Prioritise middle adopter SMEs as the primary uplift cohort
- Formalise regional coordination and backbone functions
- Maintain live ecosystem mapping and outcome tracking
- Mobilise trusted intermediaries as delivery partners
- Enable structured cross sector capability transfer
- Strengthen advocacy and external positioning
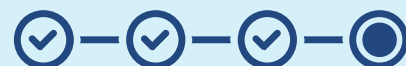
Download the full Greater Digital Capability Mapping report: See the report.
See the Greater Whitsunday Digital Capability Ecosystem: **Use the online map.**

DOWNLOAD + ONLINE MAP