



NEW ZEALAND DIGITAL SKILLS FORUM

Charter

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WHAT THE FORUM IS, AND WHATS IT'S FOR

Digital technology businesses report problems accessing — through finding, developing, using and keeping — people with the high level technical and creative skills they need. The Digital Tech Skills Forum is a tightly focused coalition of industry associations and government organisations that work together to identify key skills issues or opportunities in the ICT and digital sectors, and use their insights, resources and influence to help address them.

SCOPE

The Forum uses the terms 'ICT' and 'digital'/'digital technology' interchangeably. Its focus is on:

- **ICT focused firms** that engage in providing expertise in the field of information [or digital] technologies, such as writing, modifying, testing or supporting software to meet the needs of a particular consumer, or planning and designing computer systems¹.
- **ICT intensive firms** whose business is not focused on ICT per se, but is heavily enabled by computer system design — these firms make extensive use of high-end ICT or digital technology and develop it as a by-product of conducting their core business.
- **High level professional skills needed by the digital sector**, including:
 - Technical ICT skills
 - Entrepreneurial; and
 - Non-technical 'soft' skills.

OBJECTIVES

1. Connecting industry and government, and building shared understanding of current and future digital tech skill needs.
2. Being a vehicle for collaboration across and between government and industry, and facilitating a discussion between government and industry on skills requirements in the future.

¹ From ANSIC code M7000 "Computer system design and related services"

3. Co-ordinate and undertake joint or complementary actions to address issues or activate opportunities to improve access to the required skills, where these are within the influence of Forum members, for example:
 - De-duplication of efforts where appropriate and possible
 - Co-designing initiatives to tackle the tech talent shortage
 - Coordinating joint events focused on skills-related matters.
4. Act as an ongoing and open channel of communication between members.
5. Cultivating a skills-focused culture across relevant areas of Government and industry.

DIVERSITY

The Digital Skills Forum recognises that engaging people from a variety of backgrounds, views and experiences is critical to building the skills and talent New Zealand needs. Diversity benefits the digital sector, our community and the New Zealand economy as a whole and as such the Forum members and working groups are committed to promoting, diversity, equality, respect and inclusion.

The Forum wants a sector that represents the community of which we are a part. Recognising the technology sector is currently facing diversity challenges, including a gender imbalance representative of the broader Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines, the Forum will:

- promote and support initiatives to attract and retain women, and other under-represented groups, into digital and technology studies and careers
- create and foster a sector representative of a that reflects a diverse range of individuals, experiences and views, specifically promote and support initiatives that and treats all people with respect, regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, race, age, ethnicity, religion, culture or any other arbitrary feature

HOW THE FORUM WORKS

GENERAL APPROACH

The Forum takes a practical but information and evidence-based approach, focusing on harnessing the opportunities to address significant issues. It draws on the active contributions of all Forum members. This approach is intended to balance the dual aims of (1) clearly identifying the real issues to be addressed so actions have maximum effect, and (2) moving to action rapidly.

CHAIRING AND LEADING

The role of chairing the Forum revolves amongst the industry bodies on a quarterly basis. This role involves:

- Shaping the objectives and agenda for the quarterly meeting so as to progress the longer term goals of the Forum, with support from MBIE (see below).
- Chairing the meeting.
- Helping drive or follow up on actions agreed at that meeting.

STRUCTURE

The central part of the Forum is a small **core group** of government and industry member organisations that sets the direction and work programme for the Forum and uses its combined knowledge, resources and influence to identify and undertake practical actions.

The core group collectively has the ability to bring insights from, and to have an effect on, different parts of the skills demand-matching-supply “ecosystem” and should remain focused on high-level outcomes, with the majority of activities of the forum happening through various **Working Groups**.

The core group of the Forum is the connecting and overseeing hub for a number of **working groups** focused on key parts of the skills ecosystem. Most Working Groups are co-convened by an industry and a government representative, with the group chaired by the industry representative.

The initial working groups include:

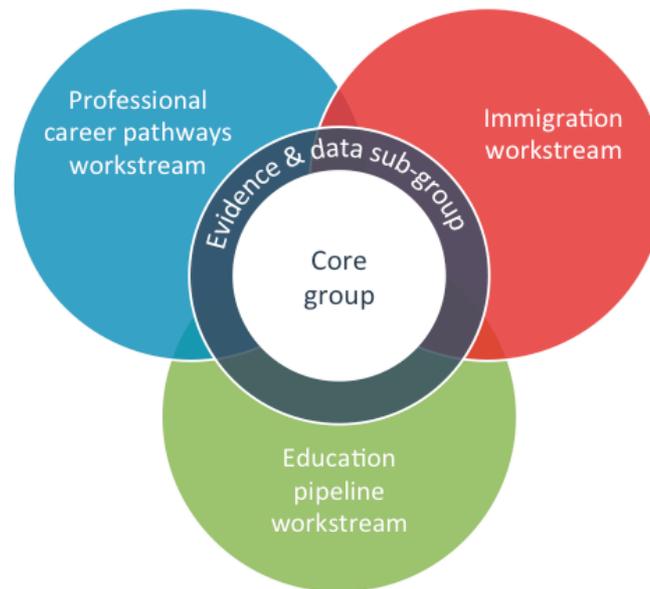
- **Education pipeline** into industry; including industry connections with the education and training system, “alternative” education-related entry routes to the industry:
 - Co-convened by IITP (Paul Matthews) and TEC (Tony Scott)/MinEd(TBC)
 - Initial activities include:
 - Completing an initial stock take of education-related skills activities (from existing sources such as the report produced by MBIE) and gap identification
 - Providing a vehicle for collaboration between major initiatives and a catalyst for additional support for successful activities in the space.
- **Immigration pipeline**; supplementing New Zealand industry entrants and the existing workforce:
 - Co-convened by NZTech (Jen Rutherford) and MBIE (Silke Radde)
 - Initial activities include:
 - Considering the impacts of the current reliance on qualification requirements as the basis for assessment of ICT skills for immigration purposes, exploring alternative systems (for example use of SFIA, or ‘trusted expert’ skills assessments), and establishing whether a review of policy is needed
 - Exploring barriers to accessing migrant tech talent already in NZ and identify solutions to redirect talent to other opportunities.

- Professional Career Pathways; within industry, e.g. SFIA adoption and skills, professional development, certification, upskilling and re-skilling etc; also attraction and utilisation of cross-industry entrants:
 - Co-convened by NZRise (Paul Ramsay) and MBIE (Andy Jackson)
 - Initial activities include:
 - Identifying opportunities and encouraging the adoption of SFIA and SFIA-related tools across Government and Industry
 - Considering alternative entry mechanisms to the sector, and how these can be supported (where appropriate and robust).
- Skills evidence and data (eg identifying the gaps in greater detail, providing evidence and meaningful data to the Forum and potentially to firms, government and public).
 - Co-convened by NZTech (Graeme Muller) and DIA GCIO (Sonitha Aniruth)
 - Initial activities include:
 - Identify existing and new sources of information to provide an evidential basis for decisions of the Forum and Working Groups, and input into other Government, educational and industry information requirements;
 - Looking at using a tool like SFIA as a standard language to create a skills “heat map”, and map trends and project future needs of the skills pipeline;
 - Create a broad Government and Industry skills survey of skill requirements in the sector (utilizing the DIA survey currently being constructed).

Working Groups provide the focal point for work on various projects, and for keeping a watching brief in the focus area. Each Working Group will have both an industry and government co-convenor responsible for:

- Leading the Working Group.
- Engaging with other areas of Government and Industry.
- Regularly briefing or updating the Forum on relevant issues or developments in the area.
- Ensuring progress on relevant projects and reporting back to the Forum.

Working Groups may have ongoing members, e.g. organisations in the core group, or organisations not in the core group but with specific perspectives, roles or insights with respect to ICT skills. Working Groups will involve subject experts and others to work on projects as appropriate.



Strategic and logistical support for the Forum will be provided by MBIE. This will include:

- Assistance to the Chair and Forum members in ensuring that the focus of meetings and projects are well aligned with the Forum’s objectives.
- Support to the Chair in developing the agenda and forward agenda for face-to-face meetings, and commissioning inputs to meetings.
- Distribution of material as required prior to meetings.
- Note taking at face-to-face meetings and following up on actions agreed at meetings.
- Practical arrangements such as setting dates for meetings, arranging for venues and catering etc.

This support by MBIE for the running of the Forum is distinct from its role as a member of the core group. That role includes being a source of information and insight about skills issues from a government and whole-of-system perspective, acting as a channel to and from policy-making and other MBIE functions, and contributing analytical or other capability. MBIE will have this role for two years at which point the role will be re-examined.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Face-to-face meetings of the core Forum are held **quarterly**. Working Groups meet as appropriate to their work programmes or project plans.

Brief **regular phone conferences** (approximately monthly) and email updates are used to maintain momentum and provide an ongoing means of informal information exchange at Forum level.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

CORE INDUSTRY MEMBERS

Participation from the firm or practitioner perspective is through ICT industry and professional bodies. The success of the Forum relies on these organisations having strong, close and very well-informed links with businesses and of all sizes and professionals across the spectrum of ICT-focused and ICT-intensive firms. Member organisations comprise:

- Institute of IT Professionals New Zealand (IITP)
- New Zealand Technology Industry Association (NZTech)
- NZRise.

CORE GOVERNMENT MEMBERS

- The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (*MBIE*), with representatives from the following areas:
 - Skills and employment policy,
 - Digital economy, and
 - Immigration areas.
- The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)
- The Ministry of Education (MoE)
- The office of the Government CIO Department of Internal Affairs (GCIO).

Other government agencies and industry representatives and bodies may be involved in either the Forum or Working Groups as appropriate, by invitation of the forum. In some cases these might be attendance for particular meetings, in other cases as a member of the forum.

FUTURE FORUM OR WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

Depending on focus and objectives of Forum and the projects it undertakes or sponsors, key champion firms, regional economic development agencies, local government bodies, other central government agencies or other parties might become part of the forum or its Working Groups, or be associated with it.