DIGITAL SKILLS FORUM CHARTER

Revised 1 October 2019

Background/Context

Digital skills are critical to Aotearoa's future. They are essential to the growth of our tech sector and other sectors of the economy that increasingly rely on digital technology. With digital skills we can move more New Zealanders into highly paid work in digital technology careers. We can also help prepare for the technological disruption that industries face, and for future of work challenges.

It is widely acknowledged that there is a digital skills shortage across New Zealand's economy and the global workforce more generally. Digital technology businesses report problems attracting, developing, and retaining people with the technical and creative skills they need. Not enough people choose digital technology careers and there is often a mismatch between what the education system provides and what the tech ecosystem needs. Employers are not offering enough on-job training, and there is a lack of diversity in our digital technology workforce.

The Digital Skills Forum (referred to as the Forum, and formerly known as the ICT Workforce Skills Forum) was established by Government in 2015. The aim was to bring government and industry together to collaborate on ideas and mechanisms to address digital skills and diversity challenges. Together, Forum members identify key skills issues or opportunities in the ICT and digital sectors (and in other sectors that rely on digital technology), and use insights, resources and influence to help address them.

Engaging people from different backgrounds, views and experiences is critical to building the skills and talent New Zealand needs. The Forum is committed to promoting, diversity, equality, respect and inclusion so that the sector represents the community of which we are all a part.

Objectives

The Forum seeks to:

1. Connect industry and government to build a shared understanding of current and future digital skill needs, decide on areas for action and move to action rapidly.

2. Advise industry and government on the investment needed in digital skills.

3. 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:
   – Co-design initiatives to tackle the tech talent shortage

- Coordinate joint events focused on skills-related matters
- Feed into government policy making on digital skills (including engagement with ministerial groups)
- Reduce duplication of efforts where appropriate and possible.

4. Promote and support initiatives to:
  - attract and retain women, and other under-represented groups, into digital and technology studies and careers
  - include and respect all people in the tech ecosystem, regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, race, age, ethnicity, religion, culture or any other arbitrary feature.

5. Act as an ongoing and open channel of communication between members.

6. Cultivate a skills-focused culture across relevant government and industry areas.

7. Provide a central co-ordination of industry voice into government policy development, specifically in areas such as:
  - Future of work (including the work the Future of Work Tripartite Forum)
  - Economic development (including the work on Industry Transformation Plans)
  - Education reforms (including the Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE))
  - Cyber Security (including the work on New Zealand's Cyber Security Strategy)
  - Digital skills in government (including the Digital Government Strategy)
 - Relevant existing or developing policy areas.

Scope

The Forum uses the terms "ICT" and "digital"/"digital technology[1]" interchangeably. Its focus is on:

- ***High level professional digital technology skills needed by the digital sector***, including:
  - technical skills;
  - entrepreneurial; and
  - non-technical "soft" skills.

- ***Digital focused firms*** that provide expertise in the information or digital technology fields, such as writing, modifying, testing or supporting software to meet the needs of a particular consumer, or planning and designing computer systems[2].

- ***Digital 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 digital technology in their business.

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[1] The OECD also uses ICT as an industry categorisation definition
[2] From ANSIC code M7000 "Computer system design and related services"

While the Forum does not generally deal with the most basic level of digital skills – often referred to as digital literacy or digital inclusion – we acknowledge that this can be the foundation for the more advanced digital skills needed in our economy. The Forum therefore engages on digital inclusion initiatives as appropriate.
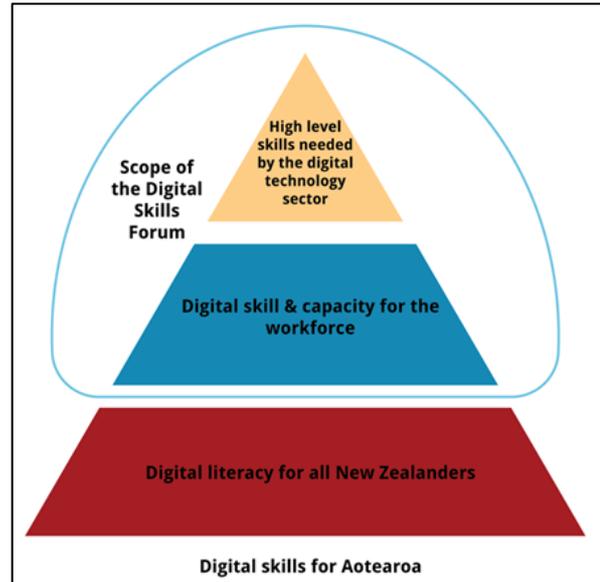
Outcomes Focus

The Forum has the ability to bring insights from, and have effect on, different parts of the skills demand-matching-supply "ecosystem". In efforts to achieve high-level and wide-reaching outcomes our themes of focus are:

- *Education pipeline* into industry; including industry connections with the education and training system, "alternative" education-related entry routes to the industry.

- *Immigration pipeline*; supplementing New Zealand industry entrants and the existing workforce.

- *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.

- *Skills evidence and data* (e.g. identifying the gaps in greater detail, providing evidence and meaningful data to the Forum and potentially to firms, government and public).

- *Diversity and inclusion* to redress the current challenges faced by the digital technology workforce.

Digital Skills Forum Charter
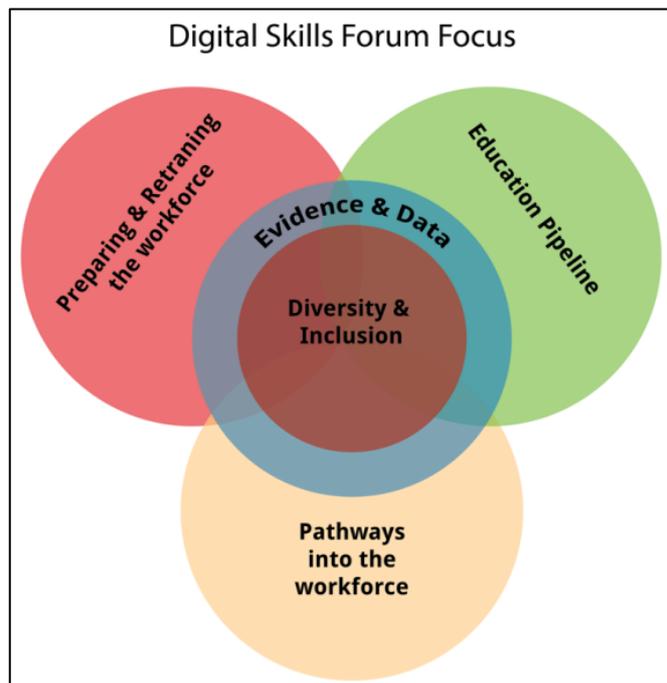
How the Digital Skills Forum works

General Approach

The Forum takes a practical but evidence-based approach to address issues. All members contribute to the Forum's work programme development, and support its outputs.

Chairing and Leading

Industry bodies will chair the Forum. Chairing involves:
- Shaping meeting objectives and agendas to progress the longer term goals of the Forum, with support from MBIE (see below)
- Helping drive or follow up on actions agreed at meetings.

Membership

Core industry members

Firm or practitioner participation is through Digital Technology industry and professional bodies. InternetNZ provides an Internet community perspective on digital skills. Member organisations comprise:
- Institute of IT Professionals New Zealand (ITP)
- New Zealand Technology Industry Association (NZTech)
- NZRise
- InternetNZ.

Core government agency members
- The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
- The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)
- The Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) office of the Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO)
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC)
- Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK).

Other government, industry, and/or non-industry bodies may be involved in either the Forum or projects as appropriate, by invitation of the Forum.

MBIE will provide secretariat support to the Forum. This will include:
- Assistance to the Chair and Forum members in ensuring that the focus of meetings and projects is well aligned with the Forum's objectives.

- Support to the Chair in developing the agenda and forward agenda for meetings, and commissioning inputs to meetings

- Distribution of material as required prior to meetings

- Note taking at meetings and follow up on agreed actions

- Practical arrangements such as setting meeting dates, arranging venues and catering etc.

MBIE's secretariat support is distinct from its role as a government member of the Forum. The role of government agency members includes:

- Providing information and insight on skills issues from a government and whole-of-system perspective

- acting as a channel to and from policy-making and other agency functions

- contributing analytical or other capability as appropriate.

All Forum members commit to:

- attend scheduled Forum meetings, or assign a delegated attendee

- contribute to the Forum's work programme

- follow up on agreed actions.

Frequency of Meetings

Forum meetings are held at least 9 times per annum. Phone calls, emails and other means of communication are used between meetings.   Special meetings with subsets of members and seconded parties are held on an ad hoc basis.