

**Perspectives and Information on Establishing a Government  
Effectiveness Advanced Research (GEAR) Centre**

# **The Federal Government of the United States**

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Submitted by:  
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## Our Understanding of the Objectives and Scope

### RFI Objectives

The project aims to drive the Federal Government's applied research to enhancing mission delivery, citizen service and stewardship of public resources as set out in the report *Delivering Government Solutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

A Government Effectiveness Advanced Research Center (GEAR) would be established to address the challenges of today and the future that the Federal Government faces in the Digital Age. The GEAR center would be established through public-private partnership, and key stakeholders such as researchers, academics, non-profits, private industry will be engaged to examine both operational and strategic challenges. The RFI endeavors to examine various areas of government and citizen interaction, the delivery of citizen services and data, and reorganization of core processes. Although the focus will be on the Federal Government, the State and local governments may also be involved. The outcomes of the project will shed light on the opportunities for transforming Federal Government activities to match the needs of American citizens and provide recommendations for best practices and roadmaps for change.

### RFI Scope

The rapid proliferation and convergence of different technologies, evolution of services and needs of American citizens, and evolution of government needs and capabilities, will bring about a tremendous change to enhance the agility of the government. In addition to automation, availability of progressively more data, factors such as demographics, climate and geopolitics will also have a substantial impact on the structure and processes within the Federal Government, including both the nature of work and how work gets done. Reskilling will be a key element to preparing the Federal workforce for future changes.

Given Willis Towers Watson's focus and competitive strengths, the focus of this document will be on the 7<sup>th</sup> question of the RFI which seeks to clarify the impact of the future of work and develop actionable insights to manage the expected shifts. To develop a deeper understanding of the future of work, the resulting skill requirements and skills gaps, and how these could be addressed through reskilling/upskilling efforts, we address a number of areas in this response including:

- Understand leading practices for effective reskilling, upskilling, and training adult workers, including opportunities for new applications of existing models
- Define approaches which could be piloted for possible application and understanding the scalability across the Federal sector in various learning domains (e.g., cognitive, affective, behavioral)
- Propose metrics currently used to assess the effectiveness of reskilling and upskilling efforts
- Areas of opportunities for "quick wins" in automation and reskilling

Reskilling and upskilling initiatives will consider broader economic forces, improvements to services rated most poorly by public feedback, and how data can be leveraged.

## Willis Towers Watson's Point of View

For Willis Towers Watson, as a global advisory, broking and solutions company, the future of work and the rapidly changing implications for current and future talent are one of the most important issues we are helping our clients address. The rapidly shrinking half-life of skills across all professions, including some that have been with us for almost 500 years like accounting, presents unique opportunities and challenges for

reskilling the global workforce. We consult to companies and governments around the world on this topic, working with hundreds of organizations of all sizes in both developed and developing countries. We also conduct ground-breaking research on the perspectives of governments, international organizations / NGOs, employers, workers, and various labor market intermediaries. These analyses, which incorporate data from millions of individuals and thousands of organizations, provide critical strategic context for our consulting. Our client work and research illuminate the challenges facing companies and point the way to solutions that are both innovative and practical. The following are a couple of observations from our consulting experience and global research.

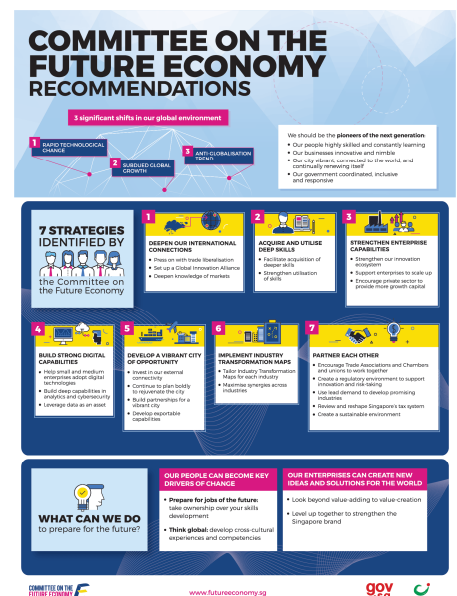
### **Automation will substitute, augment and create tasks for humans, creating the demand for radically different skills**

Our research has revealed two major forces that are shaping the future of work: automation and the democratization of work. Our research and work with global organizations has clearly reinforced the conclusion that automation affects individual tasks, not entire jobs. Automation and democratization together are allowing organizations to deconstruct jobs, disperse or automate various tasks and reconstruct new and different types of jobs with radically different skill premiums. As some activities are substituted, others augmented and new activities created, the need to accurately measure the gap between current and future technical and enabling skills while creating reskilling pathways that transition talent from legacy to future work will be critical. This is the work we have done with the and companies in the natural resources sector where we have analyzed existing jobs and tasks, applied automation to substitute, augment and create work and reconstructed new jobs that both preserve employment and raise skill premiums.

### **Governments around the world are transforming both the delivery of services and how they collaborate with private enterprise to ensure sustainable workforce development**

Our work with governments such as Singapore to develop flexible work architectures have enabled the measurement of emerging skills and defined reskilling pathways to increase the visibility of talent to these skills while identifying developmental options.

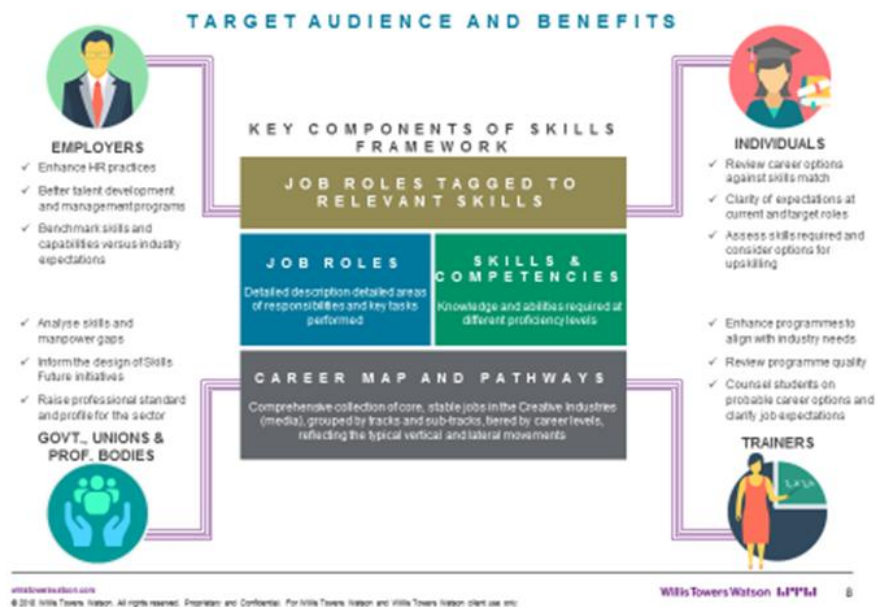
The Singapore government recognizes that the “Future of Work” is a broad and complex topic, - while there has always been planning for the development of the economy, the most recent interventions are leveraging a more integrated approach to responding to the technical, economic and societal disruptions. The Committee on the Future Economy was set up in the end of 2015 to look into future areas of growth, job creation, and helping companies cope. In addition to a commitment to keeping the labor market flexible, tight, and responsive and to embrace the rise of digital platforms and the “gig” economy, a clear commit was made to pro-actively investing in skills upgrading, lifelong learning, and to facilitate employment efficiently and effectively. A new statutory board has been set up under the Ministry of Education - SkillsFuture Singapore to drive and coordinate the implementation of the national SkillsFuture movement, promote a culture and holistic system of lifelong learning through the pursuit of skills mastery, and strengthen the ecosystem of quality education and training in Singapore. At the intersection of jobs and skills are the Ministry of Manpower and its statutory board, Workforce Singapore, which match individuals with the right skills to the right jobs. The SkillsFuture Singapore leverages Industry Transformation Maps created as part of the Future Economy Initiative, and partners with a Lead government agency for the sector to work with professional service firms like Willis Towers Watson to engage the industry and create Skills Frameworks





The Industry skills frameworks are expected to support stakeholders in both the supply and demand side of the skill ecosystem

The Skill Framework aims to benefit various stakeholders in the targeted sector ecosystem



The Skills Frameworks for the over 30 identified industries is only one area of focus for SkillsFuture Singapore. Given its mandate to “Enable individuals to learn for life, pursue skills mastery and develop fulfilling careers, for a future-ready Singapore” it is supported by a slew of initiatives targeting not just employers and training providers, but most importantly individuals – adult citizens.

These include:

- SkillsFuture Credit - aims to encourage individuals to take ownership of their skills development and lifelong learning. All Singaporeans aged 25 and above will receive an opening credit of S\$500 from January 2016 towards accredited skills development courses
- The SkillsFuture Study Awards - encouraging mid-career Singaporeans to develop skills for new functions and existing ones requiring updated skillsets.

The financial incentives are one part of the multi-pronged strategy; creating opportunities for career switching is another.

Individuals who need to reskill for a career switch can tap on programs designed to go beyond just re-training, to job placement, including the Adapt and Grow (A&G) Professional Conversion Programs and Place-and-Train programs

**The use of educational technology (Edtech) and blended/experiential learning tools will enable reskilling efforts that are agile and easily adaptable to various Federal sectors**

Apprenticeship programs have a proven track record and are a more traditional form of learning, however, they can be time and resource intensive. An example of a successful apprenticeship model in practice is Germany where a blend of knowledge and application-based study is applied across various industries and government sectors.

The traditional approaches to developing technical skills and qualifications like accounting are increasingly being challenged by a new breed of technology-enabled education platforms (Edtech, MOOCs, gamification, etc.). These tools offer flexibility in content and resources in comparison to traditional approaches to reskilling/upskilling. However, MOOCs in particular have been criticized as lacking standards and employers are not able to gauge the value of a MOOC and how it benchmarks to other MOOCs. Also, MOOCs are typically used to gain specific knowledge in one technical area. Our research has shown that there is a call for technology-enabled education platforms to create an understanding of value and move towards experiential / blended learning where cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills can be also augmented.

**Our work with client on talent assessment development programs has yielded insight on the optimal metrics for assessing workforce development**

While there are many metrics that are typically tracked with regard to talent development like access to opportunity, completion rates and cost of learning, probably the most critical metric we track is time to productivity as it provides the clearest snapshot of the ROI of development

## Why Willis Towers Watson

Throughout its 150 year history, Towers Watson has long stood out as an innovator and thought leader in the area of human capital. We regularly conduct numerous groundbreaking research projects including:

1. We are currently engaged in a project with the World Economic Forum to define a shared vision for talent in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. The project will focus on defining a common taxonomy for skills and defining how best to match the development of emerging skills with evolving demand in an era of increased automation
2. *Talent 2021 (in partnership with Oxford Economics)*: A global study and 10 year projection of the supply and demand for talent in 46 countries around the world and a survey of 350 Chief Human Resources to identify the skills most in demand in the future
3. *The Towers Watson Global Workforce Study*: An annual global survey conducted since 2000, looking at the factors that engage, retain and attract working people around the world. The study includes detailed analysis of the variations in preferences across industries, countries and generations
4. *The Towers Watson Talent Management and Rewards Study*: A global survey employer survey which has been running since 1996 and looks at programmatic and policy changes

Our thought leadership has manifested itself in numerous publications and articles including the following books:

1. *Closing the Engagement Gap*, Julie Gebauer and Don Lowman, 2004
2. *Transformative HR*, John Boudreau and Ravin Jesuthasan, 2011
3. *Lead the Work: Navigating a World Beyond Employment*, John Boudreau, Ravin Jesuthasan and David Creelman, 2015
4. *Reinventing Jobs*, Ravin Jesuthasan and John Boudreau, September 2018

Our work style is a highly collaborative one that is built on a foundation of strong technical competence and robust change management skills. Our disciplined and hypothesis-driven approach to research ensures the development of solutions that deliver evidence-based change.