

Closing the UK workforce digital skills gap



Roadmap Update
The 2024 plan for action and progress so far

January 2024

The skills gap

Industry and government have defined 20 digital tasks essential for work. These are outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework (see page 26).

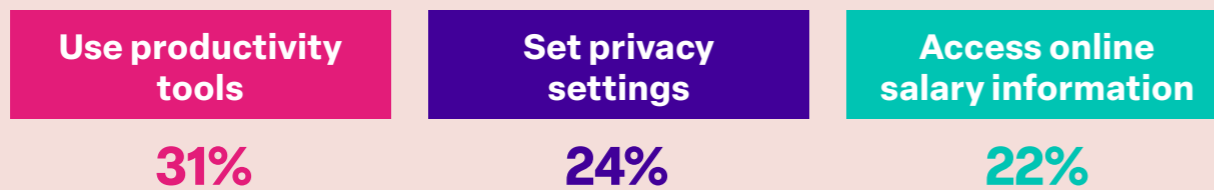
54%

of the workforce unable to do all 20 tasks essential for work

Only 4 in 10

people considering digitally upskilling in 2024

The three tasks most people can't do:



The impact on the UK

Closing the workforce digital skills gap is critical for individuals, their employers and the UK as a whole. It has a proven impact on:



The ambition

To achieve the UK's tech and science superpower ambitions, we need a digitally confident and capable workforce.

We need immediate and significant action to close the UK workforce digital skills gap, ensuring everyone is able to do at least all 20 digital tasks essential for work.

All data 2023 UK Consumer Digital Index and Essential Digital Skills report unless otherwise specified.

Welcome to our 2024 plan for action

This document sets out the plan for action in 2024 to close the UK's workforce digital skills gap.

Developed with key partners from across industry, government and civil society, it takes the recommendations in the Digital Skills Roadmap to the next level of detail, laying out priority outcomes for the next 12 months and the activity needed to achieve them.

In the Summer of 2023 FutureDotNow's Digital Skills Roadmap set the path for action to close the UK's workforce digital skills gap. It distilled the landscape and imperative into ten recommendations and delivered consensus from industry and policy makers on the best next steps.

No-one has all the answers but this plan, developed collectively, brings specificity and focus to a complex landscape. It will enable progress to be made at pace on this critical issue that is holding back personal prosperity, the economy and productivity.

Whether or not you're already part of the FutureDotNow community, we invite you to come alongside, and play your part in delivering it.

Together we can close the workforce digital skill gap and ensure everyone is equipped with the digital skills they need to thrive today and in the future.

To read the 2023 Digital Skills Roadmap, visit www.futuredotnow.uk/roadmap.

Over the Autumn, FutureDotNow convened industry-led working groups that explored the recommendations in detail and developed the actions required to achieve them. Use of the sprint model enabled the FutureDotNow community to move quickly, and identify priority outcomes for impact. This delivery plan for 2024 is the outcome of that work. Our thanks to everyone who has contributed.

2024 will see three further action sprints designed to ensure that, collectively, we achieve these ambitious goals. In this document, you'll find the detailed plans and how you can get involved throughout 2024.

The latest data on the size of the Essential Digital Skills gap underlines the importance of this mission. Over half (54%) of working adults still cannot perform all 20 tasks industry and government agree are vital for today's workplace. That's 22 million adults unable to do things like checking a payslip online, setting secure passwords or using digital tools to improve productivity.

This often overlooked digital skills gap impacts workers at every level, in every sector, and, probably, in every organisation. It's holding back individuals, and employers at a time when both are facing rapid and significant technological change including from AI and automation.

Navigating the roadmap update

- Action in 2023 and what's happening in 2024, [page 4-5](#)
- The 2024 delivery plan: 7 areas for action, [page 7](#)
 - The 2024 delivery plan: Strategy action areas, [page 8-9](#)
 - The 2024 delivery plan: Employer Action action areas, [page 10-11](#)
 - The 2024 delivery plan: Culture action areas, [page 12](#)
- Joining a workstream team, [page 13](#)
- Joining the FutureDotNow community, [page 14](#)
- 2023 - A year of progress, [page 16-17](#)
- About FutureDotNow, [page 18-21](#)
- Appendices, [page 22-31](#)

Closing the workforce digital skills gap in 2024

Getting started: Action during the Autumn of 2023

Over the Autumn, three industry-led working groups (Strategy, Employer Action and Culture) reviewed the 10 Roadmap recommendations to identify priorities for 2024 (see page 20 for more detail on the recommendations).

Collectively, they streamlined the priorities into **seven action areas** for scale impact. These are the workstreams for 2024 action.

- 1. Shared statement of ambition**, adopted across all sectors, that recognises Essential Digital Skills as a critical challenge for UK industry.
- 2. Future-fit work skills framework** for Essential Digital Skills in the workforce, with a review process to ensure it keeps up with advancements in tech.
- 3. Economic impact assessment of the workforce Essential Digital Skills gap** based on comprehensive research, enabling better prioritisation of skills development.

4. Workforce digital skills recognised as a method of delivering social impact, thereby motivating businesses to invest in skills development for social impact.

5. Help organisations assess and understand Essential Digital Skills levels in their workforce, providing the data and tools needed to inform targeted training interventions.

6. Help organisations train the workforce in Essential Digital Skills, making it easier to access and utilise existing training resources and guidance.

7. Culture and Motives scoping project to conduct exploratory work on the cultural factors and motivational drivers for improving digital skills.

Autumn 2023 industry-led working groups

Strategy	Employer Action	Culture
<p>Co-leads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emma Kendrew, Accenture • Chintan Patel, Cisco • Liz Williams MBE, FutureDotNow 	<p>Co-leads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deb O’Neill, Oliver Wyman • Stuart Mills, Salesforce 	<p>Interim lead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holly Chate, FutureDotNow
<p>Working Group members:</p>	<p>Working Group members:</p>	<p>Working Group members:</p>

What is happening in 2024?

Pace and focus are the watch words for 2024. A series of three action focused sprints across the year will each culminate in an event for key parties to come together to reflect and consolidate progress.

This builds on the learning over the Autumn, during which the sprint approach proved highly effective, enabling teams to work in a focused manner, with appropriate urgency and commitment, and creating a strong sense of community.

End-of-sprint events will be an opportunity to galvanise action from others, and secure ongoing support from sprint teams. We will also encourage teams to interconnect during the sprints to manage interdependencies and ensure overall alignment.

Reviewing progress at the end of each sprint will inform the next phase of work through reflection and consolidation with the FutureDotNow community. For example, FutureDotNow’s flagship event, Accelerate 2024: the workforce digital skills summit, will bring coalition members together at the end of the first sprint.

Each workstream project team will also include members and expert advisors from across the FutureDotNow community and together they are accountable for progress.

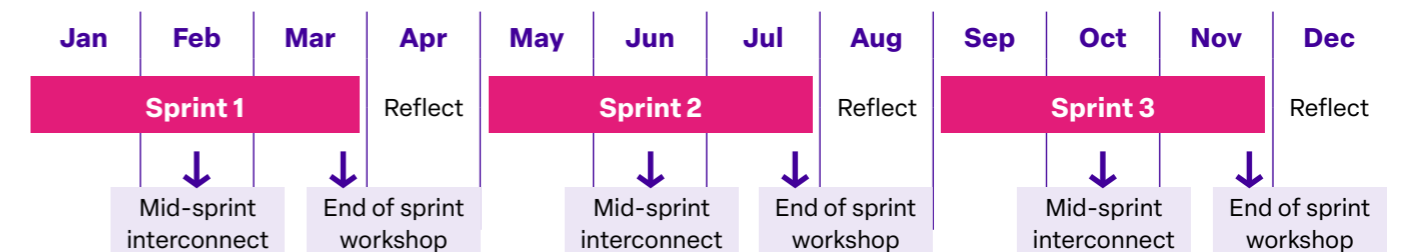
Each workstream reports into one of the three action areas:

- **Strategy**
This team will continue to be led by Accenture (Emma Kendrew) and Cisco (Chintan Patel) alongside our CEO Liz.
- **Employer Action**
Oliver Wyman (Deb O’Neill) and Salesforce (Stuart Mills) will continue to lead this workstream.
- **Culture**
Kicking off with a call for evidence, our COO Holly Chate will be the interim lead.

The workstreams and seven action areas will be supplemented by a small number of “verticals”. Subject matter experts in key communities (e.g. priority sectors, SMEs, local/regional activation) will look at all seven action areas through their respective lenses.

Across the following pages the full delivery plan for 2024 lays out what good looks like by the end of the year and priority outcomes for the first sprint ending in March.

Timeline for action in 2024



The 2024 delivery plan to close the workforce digital skills gap

The 2024 delivery plan

In the next 12 months, cross sector workstreams will focus on seven areas for action to close the workforce digital skills gap. The following pages detail a delivery plan, including what good looks like by the end of 2024 and priority outcomes for the first sprint of activity.

Strategy

- 1 Shared statement of ambition
- 2 Future-fit work skills framework
- 3 Economic impact assessment of UK workforce Essential Digital Skills gap
- 4 Workforce digital skills recognised as a method of delivering social impact

Employer Action

- 5 Help organisations understand Essential Digital Skills levels in their workforce
- 6 Help organisations train their workforce in Essential Digital Skills

Culture

- 7 Motives and culture scoping project



Priority sectors

SMEs

Regions

Cross cutting themes

The seven action areas will be supplemented by a small number of “verticals”. Subject matter experts will look at all seven action areas through their respective lenses.

Developing a shared national strategy to upskill millions of working age adults with Essential Digital Skills for Work.

Strategy action areas

1 Shared statement of ambition	
What good looks like by the end of 2024	Upskilling the workforce in the Essential Digital Skills recognised as a critical part of the UK’s digital skills challenge. A shared statement of ambition (manifesto) developed and adopted by industry, opinion formers and policy makers has delivered a consistent mantra for action. New approach developed to measure collective impact on helping the workforce build essential digital skills, with first round reporting.
Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifesto drafted and socialised with first signatories secured • Messaging being adopted by key opinion former partners such as techUK, BusinessLDN, CIPD • Manifesto formal launch at Accelerate 2024

2 Future-fit work skills framework	
What good looks like by the end of 2024	The framework for Essential Digital Skills in the workforce has been validated by industry, with an appropriate review process established that ensures it keeps pace with tech developments (e.g. AI). Formal ownership and review process in place. The framework is underpinned by appropriate standards and curriculum. Framework recognised and adopted by industry as the digital skills baseline for workers.
Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear statement of requirements for the current framework developed and tested by industry. • Identify and engage key stakeholders to take forward any improvements. • What is meant by standards and curriculum defined, along with residual open questions (carry into future sprints). • Clarity delivered on the relationship between the work skills in the essential digital framework and emerging AI skills needed by the workforce.

3 Economic impact assessment of UK workforce Essential Digital Skills gap	
What good looks like by the end of 2024	Gaps in the evidence base on economic impact of the workforce essential digital skills gap will have been closed. Richer understanding of the economic impact allows workforce essential digital skills to be appropriately prioritised.
Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for evidence on existing economic impact data underway to enable consolidation of knowledge and gap identification. • Work underway with stakeholders to identify what data matters and to whom to inform next phase of work.

4 Workforce digital skills recognised as a method of delivering social impact	
What good looks like by the end of 2024	Building essential digital skills within the workforce will be established as a credible method of delivering ESG social impact. This unlocks capacity and impact by creating new appetite/motivation among business leaders to build skills in their workforce and wider community.
Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation completed on how (if) building essential digital skills in the workforce can be evidenced as social value in public sector bids. • Exploratory activity underway on wider ESG social relationship.

Over the past year, the digital skills gap has closed by 4%. That means, if we keep going at this pace, it’s going to take over 10 years to close the gap completely. The delivery plan is all about making sure we have the foundations in place to start to close the gap at speed and scale across the whole of the UK.

Emma Kendrew, Technology Lead
Accenture Technology UKI
Co-lead of Strategy working group



We need businesses, big and small, government and organisations involved in education programmes to lean into the Strategy workstreams and give their input and advice. It won’t be perfect but working collaboratively on this collective mission of driving digital skills up in the UK can only be a good thing.

Chintan Patel, CTO
Cisco UKI
Co-lead of Strategy working group



Making sure all organisations have the insight and tools required to upskill the UK workforce.

Employer Action action areas

5

Help organisations understand Essential Digital Skills levels in their workforce

What good looks like by the end of 2024

There will be better access to data and insight on the workforce essential digital skills to inform and empower action by individual organisations.

New developments will mean organisations can:

1. Interrogate national essential digital skills data more effectively and efficiently to inform their interventions.
2. Run their own assessments and measure individual and organisational progress.

Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024

- Webinar delivered to help organisations understand new workforce data in the 2023 Consumer Digital Index.
- Scoping underway to understand what data organisations require to inform their interventions and the merit of developing a more sophisticated front end to the Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index data.
- Prototype assessment tool to assess essential digital skill levels in organisations developed and tested by companies in the working group, with a view to wider launch at Accelerate 2024.

6

Help organisations train their workforce in Essential Digital Skills

What good looks like by the end of 2024

It will be easier for organisations to take action and train their workforce in essential digital skills because existing training resources and guidance will be more readily accessible.

Feedback loops will have been developed to surface what content works, what doesn't and where the gaps in training are. Training content gaps will be identified to inform action to close them.

Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024

- Review completed to make existing training assets and guidance more readily available (priority focus on 'being safe and legal online' skill area as area with lowest capability levels).
- New area developed on FutureDotNow website to house key content and make easy to access, for launch at Accelerate 2024.

As part of these workstreams, we really want to drive the opportunity for employers to assess where they are, in terms of digital skills, in a really targeted way. We also want to help give every employee the opportunity to sit down with their employer and say this is where I want to get with my digital skills.

Deborah O'Neill, Partner and Head of Digital
 Oliver Wyman
 Co-lead of Employer Action working group



We've had a wonderful group of people engaged in the early stages of the Employer Action workstreams. Next year, we really want to broaden that engagement. Bringing in more people who are involved in developing digital skills in their company would be great.

Stuart Mills, Vice President EMEA
 Salesforce
 Co-lead of Employer Action working group



Understanding the cultural factors and motivational drivers for improving digital skills.

Culture action areas

7	Culture and motives scoping project	
What good looks like by the end of 2024	Consensus from the workshop to de-prioritise in favour of other more immediately impactful priorities. Attention will therefore be on a call for existing evidence, which will be scoped further during Sprint 1.	
Priority outcomes by the end of March 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping underway on call for evidence on culture and building motives content from stakeholders. • Watching brief with other workstreams to identify relationship / dependencies where culture and motivation may affect outcomes. • Review of potential future activity including co-chair and forward working group. 	

The Essential Digital Skills gap is about people. You could have all the necessary resources at your disposal to upskill, but still not feel compelled to do so. That's why we need to understand the human angle of this issue. What drives a person to build their skills? And what are the barriers preventing them from doing this?

Holly Chate, COO
 FutureDotNow
 Interim Lead of Culture working group



Join a workstream team

Involvement from organisations from across the private, public and third sectors is required to achieve these ambitious outcomes, for both the first sprint and by the end of 2024. Now is the time to get involved.

Each workstream is made up of members who play a direct role shaping and delivering activity, and expert advisors to provide essential insights.

There are also other ways you can get involved in the FutureDotNow community and play a part in our work to close the UK workforce digital skills gap. See more on the following page.

The teams are already forming and we're pleased to already have commitment from Accenture, Cisco, Oliver Wyman, Salesforce and more. To find out more about joining them visit www.futuredotnow.uk/joining-a-workstream.

I really enjoyed working on Employer Action last year. It's a great learning experience and a great shared mission.

Lisa Brown, Chief Operating Officer
 Good Things Foundation



Join the FutureDotNow community

The digital landscape is evolving rapidly, FutureDotNow and its coalition of industry leaders are shaping a digitally capable and confident UK. By joining us, you become a key player in this transformative journey, aligning your organisation and its people for a successful digital future.

Three ways you and your organisation can be involved with FutureDotNow and its mission.

1. Become a member of FutureDotNow

Commit to accelerating the digital skills of your people. The FutureDotNow coalition brings together organisations that want to work together to accelerate the digital upskilling of their employees, customers and wider community.

As members you will:

- a. Leverage the common language and framework of Essential Digital Skills
- b. Assess the Essential Digital Skills of your workforce
- c. Help your workforce to build the Essential Digital Skills for Work

2. Help deliver the plan for action in 2024

Directly support the delivery of our 2024 priorities. Whether as a project team member or an expert advisor, contributing your insights and expertise can make a significant difference. Complete the form on the previous page to express your interest.

3. Join the FutureDotNow leadership community

By becoming one of our strategic partners, you will:

- Play a pivotal role in our strategy, offering your insights to shape our approach.
- Provide crucial funding and guidance, shaping our key initiatives.

FutureDotNow Strategic Partner Community



Whatever role you'd like to play in the FutureDotNow community, visit www.futuredotnow.uk/get-involved for more information and to take the next step.

Technology is the engine that drives economic growth, and ensuring people are equipped with digital skills is vital if we are to unlock all it has to offer.

Alongside the Digital Skills Council, FutureDotNow plays an important role in ensuring working adults have the know-how they need to thrive.

Saqib Bhatti MP
Minister for Tech and Digital Economy



2023 – A year of significant progress

Throughout 2023, FutureDotNow’s activities helped more of the UK’s workforce become digitally confident and capable, and continued to cement us as the leading authority on the Essential Digital Skills gap.

January to March

Development of the Digital Skills Roadmap begins

Before its launch in July, industry and other stakeholders begin to shape and refine the Roadmap content.

UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report

Together, Lloyds Bank and FutureDotNow launch the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report. It provides the most detailed view yet of who’s embracing digital and who’s being left behind.



Accelerate 2023

At the flagship FutureDotNow event at the Guildhall in London, the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report is launched, bringing attendees together to identify barriers to improving digital skills and create solutions to overcome them.



April to June

Contributing to House of Lords enquiry

Liz Williams MBE, Chief Executive of FutureDotNow, gives evidence to the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee as part of its enquiry into digital exclusion and the cost-of-living crisis.

Learn and Solve events

Online sessions with FutureDotNow members such as Marks & Spencer and Travis Perkins help other organisations close the Essential Digital Skills gaps in their organisations through shared experience and insight.



Digital Skills Roadmap finalised

Industry and government partners share input and feedback on the roadmap, securing broad consensus and buy-in for the final recommendations.

FutureDotNow Regional Guide

The launch of a new guide offering practical advice to help regional and local authorities develop their employees’ Essential Digital Skills and upskill the communities they serve.



Closing the UK workforce digital skills gap: Roadmap Update



July to September

Digital Skills Roadmap launch

At the BT Tower in London, over 120 leaders from business, government, policy, academia and civil society attend the launch of the Digital Skills Roadmap.

Development of 2024 delivery plan

The Roadmap Activation Project is launched, with the support of Oliver Wyman. Through this, three industry-led working groups (Strategy, Employer Action, and Culture) are established to interrogate the 10 recommendations of the Digital Skills Roadmap.



FutureDotNow

October to December

Activation Project Groups in action

Working at pace, the working groups and an advisory team start to define a delivery plan for 2024 to make the recommendations a reality.

Delivery plan workshop and evening reception

On 27 November, all three working groups attend a workshop, sharing ideas and identifying priorities. In the evening, a stakeholder event at the Royal Academy of Engineering is attended by the new Minister for Tech and Digital Economy and over 100 guests.



Introducing the 2024 delivery plan

Online introductory sessions to the 2024 delivery plan encourage digital skills stakeholders to get involved and support its delivery.



About FutureDotNow

FutureDotNow is the leading authority on the digital skills of the UK's workforce. Since 2019, we've increased understanding of the Essential Digital Skills gap at the heart of business and the economic and social opportunities that closing it offers.

We've established a coalition of industry leaders dedicated to equipping every working age adult with Essential Digital Skills for Work, developed reports and resources to support this action, and influenced government policy and the behaviour of other organisations.

Our expert understanding of the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK and relationships with organisations across many sectors allows us to narrate the challenge we face, provide authoritative insight, and put forward practical solutions to close the gap.

Our strong links with business leaders, policy makers and experts from a wide range of organisations place us at the centre of a powerful network. We use this position to coordinate collective action, share learnings and resources, and connect organisations who can support each other.

Core to our mission is to influence business action, public policy and individual behaviour, all with the aim of accelerating long-term progress. Our campaigning work has anchored the topic of Essential Digital Skills in the UK government's digital strategy and made it one of the three priority workstreams for the Digital Skills Council.

When Amey first became a member of FutureDotNow, we realised straight away the value of all the work and research that it had done. We used the Essential Digital Skills Framework as the basis for our digital skills training programme, and now we want to be a greater part of this fantastic coalition. That's why we became a strategic partner of FutureDotNow for 2024."

Naomi O'Neill
Head of Digital Skills and Governance, Amey



We have over 200 members who share learnings and resources, support each other and take action to accelerate the digital upskilling of their employees, customers and wider community.

Thank you from Liz Williams MBE, Chief Executive of FutureDotNow

Since FutureDotNow was established in 2019, we have come a long way in increasing understanding of the Essential Digital Skills gap and identifying what action needs to take place to close it.

We now have a clear path forward in the shape of the Digital Skills Roadmap. And our new working groups are already making excellent progress, turning the Roadmap's 10 recommendations into a reality in 2024 and beyond.

On behalf of FutureDotNow, I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to and supported our work to make all this possible.

I'd like to say a special thank you to our Board members, Senior Leadership Council and 2024 delivery plan working group members for their insight, commitment and energy.

I'd like to thank the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology for the grant funding that has made this most recent phase of work possible.

Finally, I'd like to say thank you to our new community of Strategic Partners whose support is allowing us to continue our work in 2024 and beyond.

Without doubt, this year is set to be really exciting for our movement. By the end of 2024, we should see a significant rise in the number of working age people who have the digital capability and confidence they need for work. But we can only do this together.

If you're not already a member of the community, get in touch.

Liz Williams MBE
CEO, FutureDotNow



Our thanks to everyone who's been instrumental in progress to close the workforce digital skill gap in 2023, whether as a Strategic Partner, grant funder or Board member, or as part of the roadmap activation project - or in any other way. These include the following people:

<u>Elizabeth Barr, Cisco UKI</u>	<u>Dr. Melanie Garson, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change</u>	<u>Deborah O'Neill, Oliver Wyman</u>
<u>Thomas Beautyman, Cabinet Office</u>	<u>Virginia Goodhew, DWP</u>	<u>Naomi O'Neill, Amey</u>
<u>Peter Beesley, Marks & Spencer</u>	<u>Emma Griffiths, Nationwide</u>	<u>Chintan Patel, Cisco UKI</u>
<u>Anna Bird, The Behavioural Insights Team</u>	<u>Aidan Hancock, Johnson Matthey</u>	<u>Nimmi Patel, techUK</u>
<u>Eleanor Bradley, Nominet</u>	<u>Tola Haskell, Accenture</u>	<u>Sunil Patel, PwC</u>
<u>Natasha Bright-Wray, Good Things Foundation</u>	<u>Mark Hilton, BusinessLDN</u>	<u>Conor Rose, Marks & Spencer</u>
<u>Lisa Brown, Good Things Foundation</u>	<u>Judith Jackson-Merrick, Accenture</u>	<u>Zeshan Sattar, CompTIA</u>
<u>Helen Burrows, BT</u>	<u>Rachel Kay, Learning People Global</u>	<u>Josh Smith, Ufi VochTech Trust</u>
<u>Anna Collins, Barclays</u>	<u>Emma Kendrew, Accenture</u>	<u>Tommaso Spinelli, Cabinet Office</u>
<u>Elisabeth Costa, The Behavioural Insights Team</u>	<u>Chris Leeming, Nominet</u>	<u>Rebecca Stephens, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology</u>
<u>Kirsty Donnelly MBE, City & Guilds</u>	<u>Anthony Mazen, Lloyds Banking Group</u>	<u>Kent Valentine, Oliver Wyman</u>
<u>Camilla Drejer, Accenture</u>	<u>Stuart Mills, Salesforce</u>	<u>Claudia Varney, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology</u>
<u>James Freed, NHS England</u>	<u>Helen Milner OBE, Good Things Foundation</u>	<u>Jemma Waters, Lloyds Banking Group</u>
	<u>Anita O'Connor, Accenture</u>	<u>Gori Yahaya, UpSkill Digital</u>

We'd also like to thank our 2022/23 Senior Leaders Council for their advice and guidance which was instrumental in the initial conception of the original Digital Skills Roadmap:

<u>Olly Benzecry CBE</u>	<u>Sir Peter Estlin</u>	<u>Kevin Parry OBE, Nationwide</u>
<u>Warren Buckley</u>	<u>Paul Fletcher, Nominet</u>	<u>Ed Petter</u>
<u>Sir Robin Budenberg CBE, Lloyds Banking Group</u>	<u>Vivek Ganotra, THG Ingenuity</u>	<u>Roy Rickhuss CBE, Community Trade Union</u>
<u>Peter Cheese, CIPD</u>	<u>Irene Graham OBE, ScaleUp Institute</u>	<u>Phil Smith CBE, Digital Skills Council</u>
<u>Steven Cooper CBE, Aldermore Group</u>	<u>Emma Griffiths, Nationwide</u>	<u>Phil Swan, Greater Manchester Combined Authority</u>
<u>David Dempsey, Salesforce</u>	<u>Matt Hammerstein, Barclays UK</u>	<u>Antony Walker, techUK</u>
<u>Kevin Ellis CBE, PWC</u>	<u>Anthony Impey MBE, Be the Business</u>	<u>Susanna Yallop, Starling Bank</u>
	<u>Rachel Kay, Learning People Global</u>	

Appendix A

Digital Skills Roadmap

A major vision for closing the digital skills gap in the UK workforce.

What is the Digital Skills Roadmap?

Launched in July 2023, [The UK workforce digital skills gap: why it matters and a roadmap for action](#) is an urgent call to action that details 10 recommendations for government, business and civil society to boost the digital capability and confidence of the UK's workforce and ensure everyone has the Essential Digital Skills needed for work.

These recommendations sit under three headline areas for action:

- Strategy
- Delivery
- Culture

These areas are closely linked – as improvements are made in one area, the likelihood of success in the other two will increase, delivering a vital multiplier effect.

How was the Digital Skills Roadmap developed?

The Roadmap is the culmination of everything FutureDotNow has seen, learnt and done over the past four years with our 200-plus members, which includes large businesses, small and medium enterprises, not-for-profit organisations and local and national government.

We drew on insights and expertise from across the FutureDotNow community and worked with senior leaders from business, government and civil society to test and finalise its 10 recommendations.



The Digital Skills Roadmap is a homing point for different sectors.

It helps us to see the issue of the Essential Digital Skills gap in full and drive the solutions in full.

Dr Melanie Garson
Tony Blair Institute for Global Change



To read the Digital Skills Roadmap in full, visit www.futuredotnow.uk/roadmap.

The 10 recommendations of the Digital Skills Roadmap

Co-created with business, government and civil society, FutureDotNow’s Digital Skills Roadmap features 10 recommendations for boosting the digital capability and confidence of the UK’s workforce. These recommendations fall under three action areas: Strategy, Delivery and Culture.

Strategy

A national strategy and delivery plan are urgently needed to equip every working age adult with Essential Digital Skills and land the UK’s tech superpower ambition.

The six Strategy recommendations of our Digital Skills Roadmap are central to making this happen at speed and scale.

Recommendations for government and policy makers

1. Establish a national ambition

- Set a national ambition for essential digital capability and confidence in working age adults for the UK to coalesce around. This should be specific, measurable and time-bound.

2. Own and promote a common language and framework

- Adopt the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework as the national minimum digital skill set needed by people of working age.
- The Essential Digital Skills Framework to be owned by government.
- Government and industry to formally and regularly review the framework so it keeps pace with technological advances.

3. Increase awareness of the Essential Digital Skills gap

- Increase visibility of current data on the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK workforce.
- Close critical data gaps, including the economic impact of the Essential Digital Skills gap in working age adults, to provide stronger evidence of the social and economic case for investment in digital skills.

4. Galvanise business

- Use the convening power of government to galvanise businesses to equip employees with the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

5. Equip business to act

- Create at least one best-in-class training resource for businesses to assess and equip their workforces with all the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

6. Monitor, coordinate and report on progress

- Monitor and coordinate action and formally report on progress at a national level, to create greater visibility and accountability for progress.

Delivery

Employers are uniquely placed to help their employees build Essential Digital Skills, and 57% of workers said they find it easiest to learn new digital skills through work, according to the 2021 Consumer Digital Index.

Yet in 2020, only 23% of employers were offering basic digital skills training; and only 41% of SMEs arranged or funded any type of training for employees in 2021, the lowest rate since 2010.

To help change this situation, the Digital Skills Roadmap features three Delivery recommendations that are drawn from our work with our members and civil society partners. Businesses can also access resources from futuredotnow.uk/resource-bank to help them fulfil these key actions.

Recommendations for business

7. Leverage the common language of the Essential Digital Skills Framework

- We encourage all businesses to leverage the framework to help people build Essential Digital Skills.

8. Assess the Essential Digital Skills of your workforce

- We are calling on all businesses to assess the current digital capability and confidence levels of their workforce.

9. Help your workforce to build the Essential Digital Skills for work

- We’re calling on all businesses to actively help people grow their core digital skills and ensure they can do at least the 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

Culture

Evidence to date shows most people need help and incentives to pick up the fundamentals of technology, and people typically don’t recognise the need the personal benefits of upskilling. Yet little is known about what motivates people to invest time in building digital skills and what might be unintentionally acting as barriers.

We are calling on business, government and civil society to work together to increase insight into the cultural aspects of digital upskilling in the UK workforce. We urgently need to understand how we can motivate and help people to build their confidence and capabilities.

Recommendations for business, government and civil society

10. Gather evidence on how to motivate people

- Government to commission behavioural insights research into the required culture change, including collating insights from organisations who have already invested in this work to date.

In addition, we recommend two other areas to be part of any culture change programme:

- Government to convene private and public sector organisations to explore how messaging focused on encouraging working age adults to digitally upskill could be more coordinated. Ideally, this would lead to the development of a compelling national narrative similar to the ‘Five a Day’ healthy eating campaign.
- Ensure individuals are aware what digital skills are essential and make it easy for them to build them. One solution could be the development of an open-source digital solution that enables an individual to assess their starting point and follow curated pathways to close gaps. This could be an area for government and business collaboration, building on the Department for Education’s Skills Toolkit.

Appendix C

The 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework

Defined by industry and government as essential for work, there are 20 tasks all individuals should be able to complete, across five skill areas: handling information and content, communicating, transacting, problem solving and being safe and legal online.

Handling information and content

1. **Follow my organisation's IT policies when sharing information internally and externally** (e.g. classifying emails/documents, encrypting sensitive information, sharing appropriate information on social media)
2. **Securely access, synchronise and share information at work across different devices** (e.g. manage email, calendar or appointment system via different devices)

Communicating

3. **Communicate in the workplace digitally using messaging applications** (e.g. Email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack, internal intranet, WhatsApp)
4. **Use workplace digital tools to create, share and collaborate with colleagues** (e.g. Microsoft Teams, OneDrive, G-Suite, Office 365, WeTransfer, DropBox, WebEx, Slack)
5. **Set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community/job site** (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed)

Transacting

6. **Complete digital records on behalf of, or within my organisation** (e.g. absence management, holidays, timesheets, expenses, tax returns)
7. **Access salary and tax information digitally** (e.g. password protected payslips, P60, P45)

Problem solving

8. **Find information online that helps me solve work related problems** (e.g. search engines, IT helpdesk, software providers, peer networks)
9. **Improve my skills and ability to do new things at work using online tutorials, learning platforms and how-to guides** (e.g. LinkedIn Learning, YouTube, iDEA, Skillsoft, internal learning platforms)
10. **Use appropriate software that is required of my day-to-day job** (e.g. spreadsheets, online booking systems, HR management, workflow or sales management)
11. **Improve my own and/or the organisation's productivity using digital tools** (e.g. Trello, Microsoft Projects and Planner, Slack)

Being safe and legal online

12. **Act with caution online and understand that there are risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online** (e.g. use anti-virus software, classify and share information securely or avoid certain types of websites such as piracy websites)
13. **Follow data protection guidelines online** (e.g. following data storage and retention guidelines, not sharing or using other people's data or media such as movies or music without their consent)
14. **Recognise suspicious links and know that clicking on these links or downloading unfamiliar attachments is a risk** (e.g. spam/phishing emails, texts, pop ups)
15. **Be careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others** (e.g. publicly shared photos, forums, personal information or opinions)
16. **Respond to requests for authentication for online accounts** (e.g. resetting my password when I've forgotten it, two factor authentication, using a remote access key or an authenticator app)
17. **Identify secure websites** (e.g. by looking for the padlock and https in the address bar)
18. **Identify secure Wi-Fi networks to connect to** (e.g. Wi-Fi networks where a unique password is required, trusted source or padlock next to Wi-Fi network)
19. **Update my device software/operating systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks** (e.g. enabling automatic updates, or installing when prompted to do so)
20. **Set privacy and marketing settings for websites and my accounts** (e.g. managing social media privacy settings, managing cookie settings, updating contact preferences)



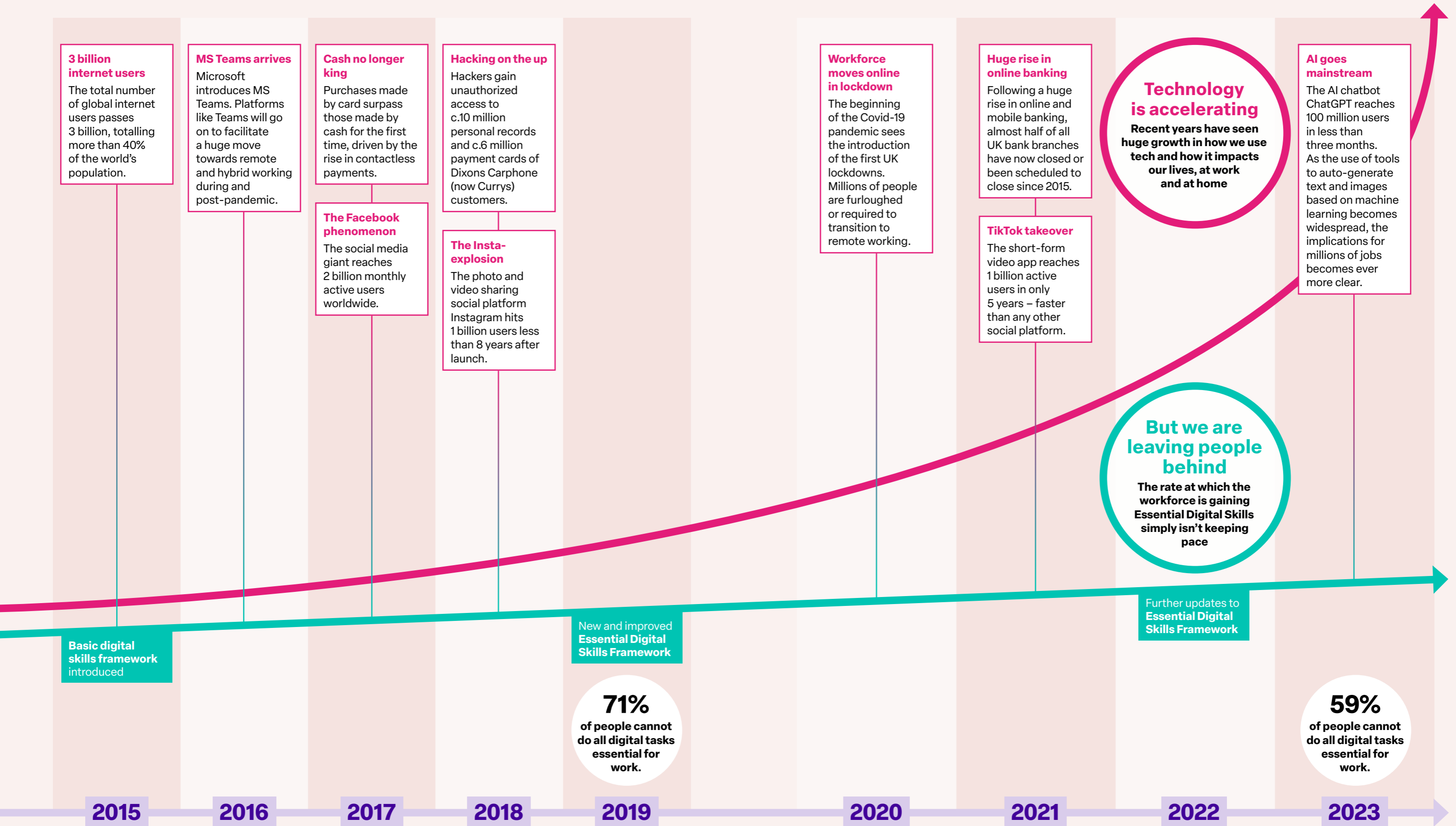
To find out more about the Essential Digital Skills Framework, including the latest data on national skills levels, visit www.futuredotnow.uk/framework.

Appendix D: Summary of the pace of change in technology vs. Essential Digital Skills

Technology is accelerating but people are not keeping up

Key:

- Technology growth
- Skills growth



Appendix E

FutureDotNow resources

Over the past four years, we have worked with our members to develop resources that can help businesses and other organisations close digital skills gaps in their workforces and across the UK.

These resources are listed in this section. Some are freely available on our website, while others are restricted to our members.

To find out how you can join the FutureDotNow coalition, please visit futuredotnow.uk/join-us

Or if you'd like to discuss membership or have any other queries, please contact us at hello@futuredotnow.uk

Reports



The Hidden Middle

Published in May 2021, FutureDotNow's The Hidden Middle report documented for the first time the size of the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK workforce.

futuredotnow.uk/the-hidden-middle



Unpacking the Hidden Middle

Published in March 2022, the report provides greater detail about the Essential Digital Skills most lacking in the UK workforce.

futuredotnow.uk/unpacking-the-hidden-middle-2



UK Essential Digital Skills for Work

Developed by Lloyds Bank and FutureDotNow, and published in March 2023, the report provided the most detailed view yet of the Essential Digital Skills of the UK's workforce.

futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report

Networking

Accelerate

Held every spring, our main face-to-face event typically features networking opportunities, the launch of new research findings and practical activities.

Learn & Solve events

Held throughout the year, our online Learn & Solve events involve a FutureDotNow member sharing their expert insights and answering questions.

Collective Action

MEMBERS ONLY

Held every autumn, our main online event for members celebrates progress and encourages further action.

The Community Space

MEMBERS ONLY

You can use our online collaboration and engagement platform to share ideas, ask questions and collaborate with other members.

Guidance and tools



Essential Digital Skills Framework

Created by industry and government, the framework features three levels: Foundation Level, Essential Digital Skills for Life, and Essential Digital Skills for Work.

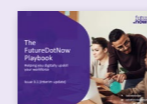
futuredotnow.uk/about-us/the-essential-digital-skills-framework



Training models to help build basic digital confidence and capability

Five training models currently used by businesses to help equip their workforces with basic digital skills essential for work.

futuredotnow.uk/training-models



The FutureDotNow Playbook

MEMBERS ONLY

Developed with FutureDotNow members, the Playbook is a complete guide to setting up and running your own digital skills programme.



Top 10 essential digital tasks the UK workforce struggles with

Featured on page 12 of the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report, we suggest your training focuses on these skills if all 20 work tasks in the Essential Digital Skills Framework are too much.

futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report



FutureDotNow Digital Skills Directory

A directory of FutureDotNow members who offer free or paid-for training and can work with you to design your digital skills programme.

futuredotnow.uk/how-we-help/digital-skills-directory/



FutureDotNow Regional Guide

MEMBERS ONLY

Offers practical advice to help regional and local authorities develop their employees' Essential Digital Skills and upskill the communities they serve.



FutureDotNow's four workplace personas

Each of the four workplace personas feature personal characteristics, common digital skill gaps, areas of strength and suggested ways to engage with this group.

futuredotnow.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Hidden-Middle-Personas.pdf



FutureDotNow Impact Measurement Guide

MEMBERS ONLY

Helps businesses analyse the impact of their digital upskilling activities for employees and customers. Findings can improve training and resources, and secure investment.



FutureDotNow's assessment tool

MEMBERS ONLY

Currently in development with Accenture, the tool will allow any company to capture the Essential Digital Skills levels of their workforce through an anonymous survey.

Contact us

✉ hello@futuredotnow.uk

✂ [@FutureDotNowUK](https://twitter.com/FutureDotNowUK)

in [@FutureDotNow](https://www.linkedin.com/company/futuredotnow/)

📍 www.futuredotnow.uk

FutureDotNow is a registered charity: 1197358