

Theory of Change to close the workforce digital skills gap

Theory of Change is a standard approach used in the Not-for-Profit sector when tackling complex, multi-dimensional challenges. It provides a visual method to explain how specific interventions or set of actions lead to a social change. For FutureDotNow, it helps us connect the dots between activity, outcomes and the impact we are ultimately working to achieve.

The Challenge

Today, over half of working-age adults in the UK cannot perform all 20 digital tasks industry and government agree are vital for today's workplace, such as checking payslips online, setting secure passwords, or using productivity tools. That's c.22 million adults right across the workforce, in every sector, region and age group, including high earners and those with high levels of education.

This reality has largely been hidden in plain sight, potentially masked by assumptions that adults naturally gain core digital competence through use. Worryingly, against that backdrop, only 4 in 10 adults plan to improve their digital skills in 2024.

Closing this skills gap is not just a problem to solve, it's an opportunity to realise. A digitally proficient workforce would impact personal prosperity, drive economic growth, enhance digital transformations, and bolster cybersecurity. The rapid rise of AI heightens both the risks and opportunities, making it crucial for everyone in the workforce to develop essential digital skills to thrive now and in the future.

NARRATING

FutureDotNow is building a common agenda on workforce essential digital skills, alongside provision of authoritative insight. Expert understanding and cross-sector relationships enable us to narrate the challenge and how to solve it in new and compelling ways.

How FutureDotNow delivers change

CAMPAIGNING

Continuous communication is core to our work. FutureDotNow's campaigning mindset and strategy is designed to influence business action, public policy and ultimately individual behaviour.

CONVENING

A powerful coalition of business leaders, policy makers and experts enables us to surface practical solutions and coordinate collective action to drive systemic change through mutually reinforcing activities. We also ensure focus on impact metrics and shared measurement systems.

Five levers for change

FRAMING THE ISSUE & MAKING THE CASE

Clearly articulating the essential digital skills gap in working-age adults and the benefits of closing it, in a way that is compelling for business and public policy makers.

STRONG DATA & STORYTELLING

Surfacing and closing critical data gaps alongside qualitative content including case studies.

POWERFUL VISION & PLAN FOR ACTION

Setting clear direction, with a milestone-based programme of work that builds momentum and delivers progress.

COORDINATION & COLLABORATION

Establishing a national challenge that requires targeted and effective collaboration to deliver scale impact at pace. Mobilising and coordinating a community of changemakers.

SHARED MEASUREMENT

Developing and convening attention around a consistent set of shared metrics.

Outcomes FutureDotNow is working to achieve

A DIGITALLY EMPOWERED UK WORKFORCE WITH UNLOCKED POTENTIAL

Everyone of working age is equipped with the essential digital skills and confidence they need today and to keep pace with tech development. Improved digital confidence and capability gives people the opportunity to progress and prosper. This helps organisations improve productivity, digitally transform, and fill the talent gap, benefitting the whole UK economy.

NATIONAL

The whole UK economy benefits because people have improved digital capability and more opportunity to progress and prosper, and business have access to a future-proofed workforce that helps them improve productivity, digitally transform, and fill the talent gaps.

BUSINESS

As a result of closing the Essential Digital Skills gap in their workforce, businesses become more resilient, productive, and sustainable. Profiling the importance of digital confidence and capability leads to a more joined-up, systematic approach to prioritising and investing in upskilling.

INDIVIDUALS

People see the value of improving the digital skills they need for work and can access the resources they need to do so. Building digital capability and confidence leads to benefits in their daily lives and careers.

Learning & assumptions

Specificity on the different parts of the digital skills challenge is crucial in order to drive change. The term 'digital skills' currently encompasses everything from high-end specialist tech skills to getting the most marginalised in society online. This obscures the current level of essential digital capability across the workforce and its impact on business and economic goals.

Overestimating what digital capability people have now leads to the development of products and services designed for an idealised future rather than current realities, hampering adoption, productivity and transformation gains.

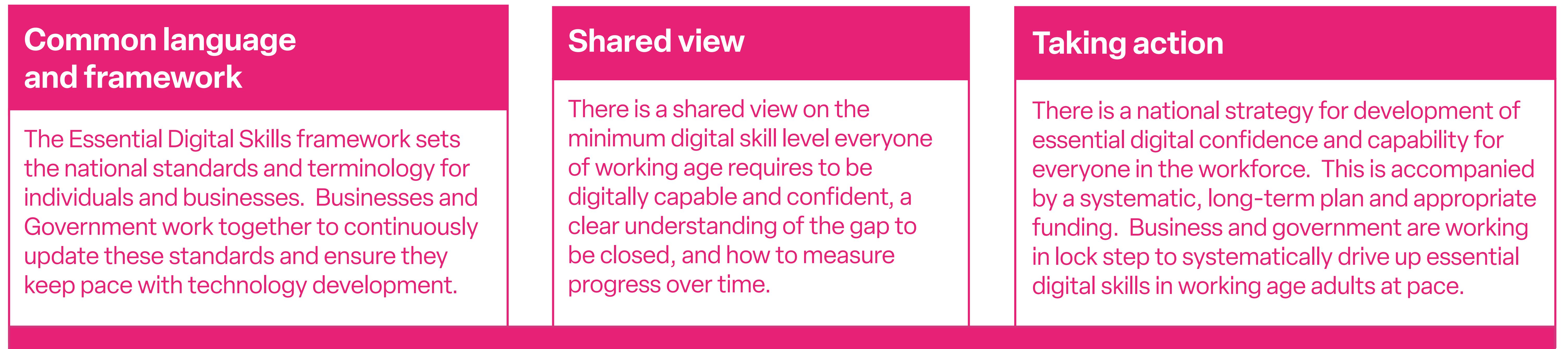
The route to scale impact and accelerated change is cross-sector collaboration.

A central convening organisation is vital to deliver large scale collective impact on the challenge.

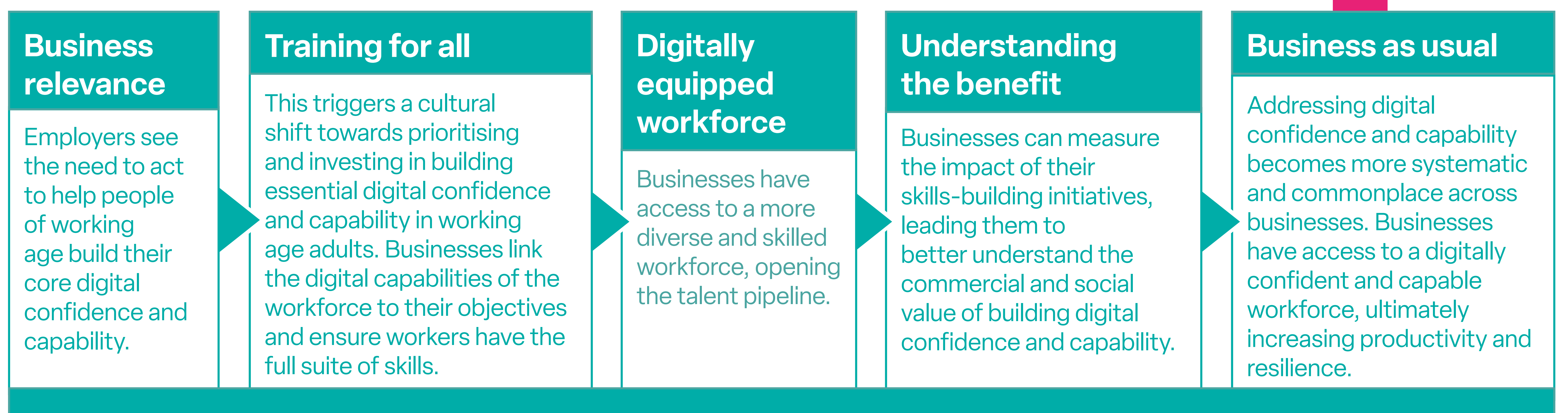
Developing a base level of digital skills increases people's confidence and capability to continue to develop and grow their skills as tech evolves.

Everyone, particularly working age adults, needs the Essential Digital Skills to prosper today, increase productivity and prepare for a changing world of work impacted by automation and AI.

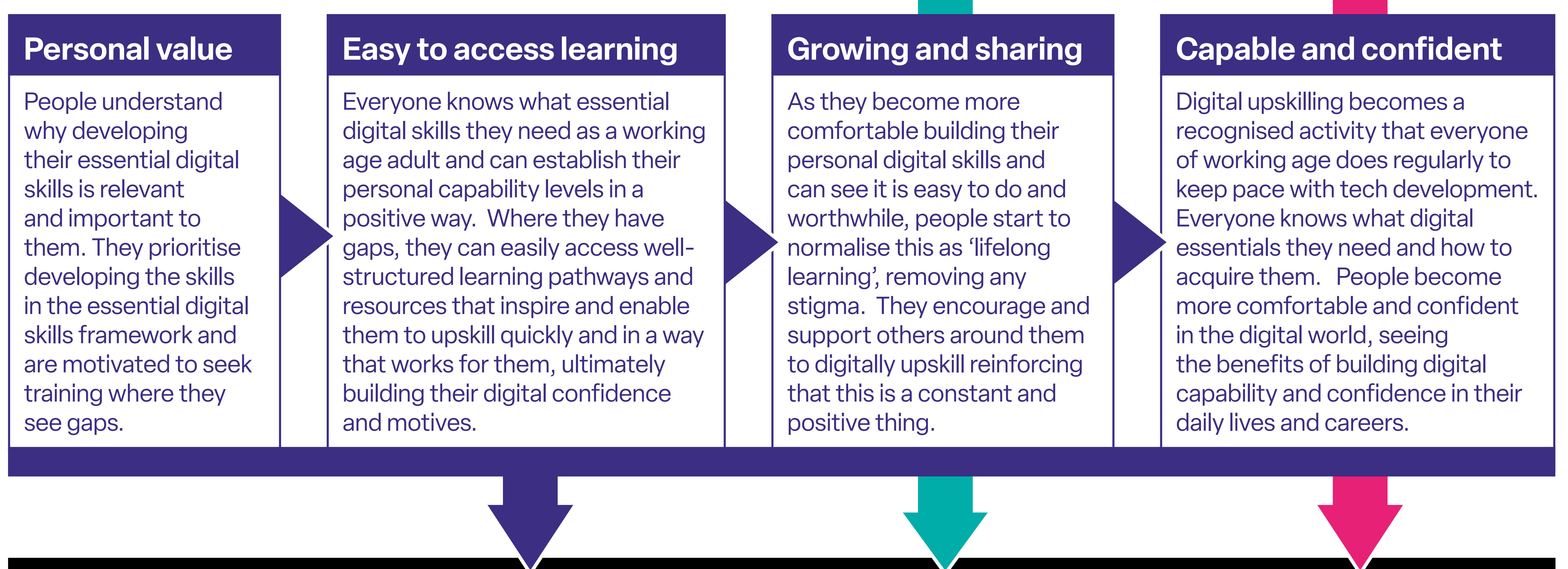
National outcomes



Business outcomes



Individual outcomes



Digitally empowered UK workforce with unlocked potential

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