

SKILLS-FIRST: OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Why skills-first must matter

Making skills-first matter to enterprises' transformation and competitiveness

Key benefits for enterprises:

- Higher productivity through better skills utilisation
- Efficiency gains through reduced mismatch and underutilisation
- Faster strategy-to-workforce translation
- Lower hiring and redeployment risk
- Wider and more resilient talent pools

Making skills-first matter to individuals' multiple career-life-learning transition

Key benefits for individuals:

- Portable and trusted skills signalling
- Lower-waste reskilling through identifying adjacent capabilities
- Stronger career health
- Fairer access based on demonstrated capability

Systemic Weakness



Training does not consistently translate into business outcomes



Skills developed are not consistently recognised or optimally used



Business strategy and people strategy remain weakly integrated



Skills-first adoption and outcome monitoring are not yet established

Skills-first requires collective actions

Policy-makers & Sector Agencies

1 Working Together to Make Training Count Towards Business Outcomes

Shift from a participation-oriented CET model to an outcome-oriented capability model

- Anchor Continuing Education and Training (CET) to enterprise and career outcomes
- Applied learning, work-based projects and performance-based assessments become baseline expectations for training
- Strengthen business needs articulation and post-training deployment of newly acquired skills in the workplace

3 Working Together to Integrate Business Strategy with People Strategy

Normalise skills-first as a default way of organising work and making workforce decisions

- Translate business strategy into skills requirements
- Move from isolated experimentation to coordinated adoption of skills-first practices to reduce risk and accelerate diffusion
- Reinforce skills use beyond hiring into deployment, and evaluation and reward systems

2 Working Together to Build Career Resilience for Individuals

Shift from episodic placement support to an integrated skills-first mobility system aligned around progression and career health

- Build career-learning-skilling literacy in individuals
- Strengthen skills signalling and validation to enable portable, recognisable skills across contexts
- Align guidance, training and placement around progression pathways

4 Working Together to Develop Collective Outcome Measures

Build a measurement and learning infrastructure to track behavioural change and outcomes

- Track adoption of skills-first behaviour
- Define and measure outcomes for individuals and enterprises
- Conduct applied research and scaling experiments
- Use evidence to inform policy and ecosystem adjustment

Employer and Business Organisations

Unions

Professional Bodies

Trade Associations & Chambers

Employment Intermediaries

Training Providers

Employers

Institutes for Higher Learning & Research Institutions

Through coordinated action across stakeholders, Singapore can shift from **infrastructure readiness to system-wide adoption of skills-first practices, strengthening both enterprise competitiveness and individual career health.**



Scan to view the full working paper

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