

GC Digital Talent Strategy

Draft

Table of contents

1. Introduction
2. The purpose
3. The scope
4. The challenge
5. The opportunity
6. Expectations of departments
7. The missions
 - Mission #1 – Attract and recruit digital talent
 - Mission #2 - Develop and retain digital talent
 - Mission #3 – Set digital talent and the enterprise up for success through fit-for-purpose processes, policies, and tools
 - Mission #4 - Create a digital culture defined by diversity, equity, and inclusion and putting people first to drive service excellence
8. Conclusion

Annexes

- Annex 1 – GC Digital Talent Strategy Infographic
- Annex 2 – Connection to GC initiatives
- Annex 3 – Highlights from other jurisdictions

Introduction

The Government of Canada (GC) needs in-house digital talent, like developers, designers, and digital leaders, to design, deliver, and maintain digital services to the people we serve.

Improving digital services is critical for supporting the people we serve to ensure services are delivered in an accessible, safe, and welcoming way. However, the GC has been in the process of modernizing digital services for many years without major digital service improvements. This has largely been driven by a focus on technology without a rethink of existing frameworks and the GC workforce required.

Today, the GC is addressing this modernization challenge with a different perspective: **good digital services are driven by enabling technology that is interoperable, clear and optimized structures, with empowered digital talent.**

For example, teams across the GC are leading the change to attract, retain, and develop digital talent, including:

- **GC Digital Talent** led by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), a platform that shares GC opportunities in digital and technology from entry level to executive for people thinking about joining the GC and current employees;
- **IT Apprenticeship Program for Indigenous Peoples** led by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), a pathway to employment in the federal public service for Indigenous peoples who have a passion for IT; and
- **Cloud Skills Adoption** led by Shared Services Canada (SSC), a pathfinder project to test trusted GC and industry curricula on cloud to ensure digital talent have modern technical knowledge.

To build upon this progress and increase digital capacity, a GC-wide Digital Talent Strategy is needed as a call-to-action to attract, develop, and retain digital talent across departments with a unified approach.

The purpose

The Government of Canada (GC) Digital Talent Strategy aims to set direction and identify priorities for the GC to work collectively on building a skilled and diverse digital workforce to design and deliver human-centered, secure and sustainable digital services.

Digital talent refers to any person whose primary role is developing or delivering GC digital initiatives, products, or services. Digital talent work in many classifications and domains across government, including cyber security, information management, data management, data science, analytics, user experience, and service design.

The foundation of the GC Digital Talent Strategy is [Canada's Digital Ambition](#), namely Strategic Theme 4: a structural evolution in funding, talent, and culture.

The scope

The Strategy is driven by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS), which is tasked with managing the digital community: the largest functional community in the GC comprised of roughly 30,000 roles.

To date, TBS and departments have begun piloting, iterating, and scaling services for digital talent. The Strategy builds on this progress by improving and developing more services to attract, develop, and retain digital talent.

The main stakeholders of the Strategy is the GC digital community, as a call-to-action to attract, develop, and retain digital talent together with a unified approach.

The Strategy has four missions:

1. Mission #1 – Attract and recruit digital talent
2. Mission #2 - Develop and retain digital talent
3. Mission #3 – Set digital talent and the enterprise up for success through fit-for-purpose processes, policies, and tools
4. Mission #4 - Create a digital culture defined by diversity, equity, and inclusion and putting people first to drive service excellence

These missions are designed to increase and retain digital talent in the GC by directly addressing systemic recruitment and retention challenges.

Missions demonstrate priorities over the next three years (2023-2026).

Each mission is supported by actions, which are concrete steps that TBS and departments can take. Specific departments will be outlined in an upcoming plan.

Actions are designed to be achievable within three years, and progress toward them be reported annually.

The challenge

Extensive research shows that the biggest challenge facing today's organizations is a **shortage of digital talent**. Some factors are global while others are specific to the GC.

Globally, government and businesses are being transformed by rapid technological advances. Organizations in every sector are seeking to grow their digital capacity, leading to fierce competition for specialized digital talent and an urgent need to help existing staff adapt to the shifting technical landscape. Many organizations are also grappling with systemic and cultural changes needed to attract and retain digital talent, including adjusting to the opportunities and challenges of remote work, reducing organizational silos, and increasing tolerance for experimentation.

The GC must modernize while maintaining and improving service delivery, and grappling with challenges unique to the GC. Lengthy hiring timelines, siloed recruitment efforts, and rigid employment structures make it challenging for the GC to attract digital talent. Excessive oversight, risk aversion, and organizational silos within the GC also make it challenging to set digital initiatives and practitioners up for success.

The GC must regularly collect and analyze data to understand the digital talent landscape and make data-driven decisions. Findings, including the excess spending on Information Technology (IT) contracts, the need for advanced skills in cloud computing and other emerging digital domains in the GC, and the significant need for continuous learning opportunities, have helped design the Strategy. However, these findings did not come without challenges: data collection, data sharing, and reporting barriers are ongoing and make it harder to develop services for the digital community in a timely, coordinated, and evidence-based way.

The opportunity

Why would top digital talent want to work for the GC?

- **A civic mission like no other:** The GC is uniquely tasked with designing and managing services that address some of the most complex, high-impact needs of people who live in Canada. People who seek to use digital skills for the public good can contribute to broad and vital goals, like accelerating claims processing for Employment Insurance and Old Age Security, streamlining immigration application processing, and providing faster services to veterans.
- **A renewed focus on building an environment for digital-era work:** Digital talent in the GC seek the ability to work across sectors, treat careers as missions with purpose, and learn from peers and senior practitioners. GC leadership is intentionally championing a flexible, collaborative, and enabling environment where digital talent are empowered to bring service delivery from functional to five-star.
- **A reflection of diversity in Canada:** the GC is actively working to build a public service that reflects the people they serve to ensure services work well for everyone.

The GC aims to be an employer of choice for digital talent who want to contribute to the public good, by offering high-impact roles within a world-class digital organization. With a skilled and diverse digital workforce, the GC will be able to deliver on Canada's Digital Ambition and ultimately, enable delivery of government in the digital age that designs robust services for the people who need them, not for the organizations that deliver them.

Expectations of departments

All departments offer some type of digital service, whether it's internal or external, which requires digital talent to develop, design, or maintain sustainably. Organizations greatly differ in how many services they offer, their stages of development, and their users.

With that in mind, the Strategy's implementation will vary across departments, which will be outlined in an upcoming plan.

However, there are seven (7) common actions that all departments should take to uplift digital talent:

1. Explore and use existing enterprise recruitment and development services before developing new ones
2. Review the Policy on Service and Digital and its digital talent component, the Directive on Digital Talent and Mandatory Procedures on Digital Talent
3. Align with GC-wide direction on building multidisciplinary teams and using flexible staffing options to recruit and develop digital talent
4. Review your department's internal processes that impact digital service development and adjust those that are not fit for purpose
5. Create space for continuous learning through the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) or specialized training offerings
6. Instill a human-centric, outcomes-focused, and service-focused culture to help increase the GC's digital government maturity
7. Identify and communicate barriers when recruiting, developing, or retaining digital talent to the TBS Digital Talent and Leadership team

The missions

This Strategy will help the GC seize this opportunity, by:

1. Mission #1 – Attract and recruit digital talent

Targeted enhancements and tools to help the GC better meet digital talent needs and expectations when joining the public service.

2. Mission #2 – Develop and retain digital talent

Skill development initiatives that enable digital talent to keep pace with the continuous evolution of technology, and career pathways that enable meaningful advancement in both individual contributor and leadership roles.

3. Mission #3 – Set digital talent and the enterprise up for success through fit-for-purpose processes, policies, and tools

Efforts to enhance and evolve the GC system to more effectively support digital ways of hiring and working.

4. Mission #4 - Create a digital culture defined by diversity, equity, and inclusion and putting people first to drive service excellence

Commitments to help create a community-driven public service that reflects the diverse people they serve, to better equip the GC to design and deliver equitable, inclusive, and accessible services.

[Visual of the logic and missions]

The missions

The four missions demonstrate priorities over the next three years (2023-2026):

Mission #1 – Attract and recruit digital talent

Actions:

1. **Expand the GC Digital Talent Platform**

The GC Digital Talent Platform shares GC opportunities in digital and technology from entry level to executive for people thinking about joining the GC and current employees. Candidates apply to opportunities by creating a profile that emphasizes skills gained from diverse experiences, not only formal education or training.

For example:

- Launch the IT Apprenticeship Program for Indigenous Peoples to attract Indigenous talent
- Develop processes to continuously recruit digital talent into GC from across Canada
- Onboard the current GC digital talent management program for aspiring and current digital leaders

2. **Offer and streamline a GC-wide digital talent centralized recruitment service**

For example:

- Conduct research to understand how to improve the candidate experience when hiring digital talent using the centralized recruitment service
- Enhance the matching experience between hiring managers and potential candidates
- Develop common assessment tools that can fully assess a candidate's technical and behavioural skills to simplify processes and reduce time-to-hire

3. **Coordinate recruitment campaigns with departments to hire and retain digital talent in high-demand domains**

For example:

- Strengthen relationships with partner departments and agencies

- Increase recruitment campaigns in high-demand domains in the GC, including cloud, cyber security, machine learning, data analytics, and application development
- Complete the IT-05 individual contributor pilot by placing candidates and taking stock of the candidate experience

4. Facilitate a tour of service program focused on deploying multidisciplinary service teams to enterprise priorities

A tour of service program would allow people interested in joining the public service to contribute to a critical government mission for a select period, ranging from a few months to three years. People would be deployed to an organization as a multidisciplinary team to bring a new outlook to a service, solve meaningful problems, and make a meaningful impact.

For example:

- Explore and, if required, enhance staffing options (e.g. Interchange, Free Agent, short term rotations, micro missions, etc.) best suited for tours of service
- Assess compensation and benefits necessary to attract people who want to join the public service for tours of service and other short-term opportunities within the GC
- Test a tour of service model by deploying a multidisciplinary team to a key digital modernization initiative

5. Research targeted enhancements to make it easier to hire digital talent interested in joining the public service

For example:

- Explore how the GC might hire more early-career digital talent by building apprenticeships
- Explore how the GC might hire more mid-career digital talent by fostering talent pipelines
- Explore how the GC might customize offers based on what's most important for a candidate
- Explore how the GC might improve each stage of the hiring process for people in Employment Equity groups
- Explore how the GC might attract and develop international digital talent

This action draws on insights from Employment and Social Development Canada, the Canadian Digital Service, and the Public Service Commission who have completed research to better recruit digital talent.

6. Build efficient, inclusive, and seamless onboarding and transition experiences

For example:

- Implement onboarding pilots for employees at partner departments, including National Research Council and Transport Canada
- Build tools to improve the employee and manager onboarding experience, including automatically sharing tailored materials before an employee starts and upon arrival
- Pursue pilots that will test how to cultivate community building, relationship management, and coaching during onboarding and transition experiences

Mission #2 – Develop and retain digital talent

Actions:

1. Establish a baseline of current digital capabilities, talent and culture across the GC

For example:

- Create digital skills assessments for all federal public servants and teams to identify and close skill gaps
- Ensure all planning, sourcing, and mobilizing of digital talent aligns with the Mandatory Procedures on Digital Talent
- Collect and analyze digital community workforce data inside and outside of government to develop evidence-informed, coordinated, and sustainable workforce planning recommendations for the GC

2. Define foundational digital skills and continue to develop learning offerings on digital topics for all public servants

For example:

- Complete the GC Digital Skills Strategy: the GC-wide approach to defining, building, and managing foundational digital skills for all federal public servants
- Share learning opportunities on key topics, including data literacy, accessibility, cyber security, and business process reengineering
- Ensure learning resources available to the GC apply to the public service context and align with GC Digital Standards

3. Facilitate and scale specialized learning offerings for digital practitioners

For example:

- Build external delivery partnerships that deliver high-quality training and resources in both Official Languages that are shared openly with the digital community

- Offer learning offerings in cloud, artificial intelligence, and robotic process automation
- Identify and review the high demand digital domains and key skill gaps for departments that are leading key digital transformation initiatives

4. Build career pathways for individual contributor and leadership roles

For example:

- Pilot self-service career pathways that:
 - Align with the digital community's evolving interdepartmental HR products
 - Involve skill development, mentorship, job shadowing, coaching, micro missions, and community networking
 - Highlight high priority digital domains, such as cloud, IT security, or application development

5. Build a common framework for digital development programs across the GC

IT development programs are cohort-based programs designed for new digital talent to hone digital skills and leadership skills. IT development programs are facilitated by departments.

For example:

- Evaluate current landscape of IT development programs in the federal public service
- Perform research with IT development program participants and facilitators across the GC to improve the experience for future cohorts
- Create a common framework that is aligned with career pathways alongside departments that facilitate development programs, starting with a focus on cyber security
- Pilot a leadership development program for digital executives with external delivery partners

6. Explore internal development programs focused on short-term placements for digital practitioners

An internal development program would allow individual digital practitioners in the public service to rotate through a series of placements across the public service to gain hands-on learning experiences.

For example:

- Explore and, if required, enhance staffing options (e.g. Interchange between departments and agencies, micro missions, etc.) best suited to internal short-term placements

- Build partnerships with departments and agencies to pilot a program, with a focus on new graduates

7. Maintain and expand talent management services

Talent management services offered by TBS include providing career advice, sharing new job or development opportunities to help digital talent meet their potential, and succession planning.

For example:

- Help hiring managers find the digital talent they need and provide development opportunities for strong digital talent through personalized referral services
- Identify and develop aspiring and current digital leaders across the GC digital community
- Expand talent management services to include aspiring and current digital leaders beyond traditional IT domains
- Host networking and mentorship opportunities for aspiring digital leaders in employment equity or equity-seeking groups
- Pilot a talent management model that offers high-touch support
- Support succession planning for C-Suite digital leaders to ensure smooth transition periods

Mission #3 - Set digital talent and the enterprise up for success through fit-for-purpose processes, policies, and tools

Actions:

- 1. Support departmental implementation of the Directive on Digital Talent to improve GC-wide coordination and data collection**

For example:

- Maintain and share guidance on staffing options and HR flexibilities available when recruiting or developing digital talent
 - Digitize templates and questionnaires as required in Directive and Mandatory Procedures on Digital Talent
 - Analyze and share business intelligence with departments for data-informed workforce planning
 - Create data generation cycle between annual reporting and employee profile creation, leveraging key moments in annual cycle to encourage departments and employees to participate on the GC Digital Talent Platform
- 2. Enhance and expand the digital community's interdepartmental HR products to easily recruit and hire digital talent in new and emerging roles:**

For example:

- Develop interdepartmental HR products that reflect the current and future digital community. These include: job descriptions, job evaluation rationales, job competency profiles, and competency-based management tools for digital domains.
- Priority digital domains that require a refresh include:
 - Information and data management
 - Data analytics
 - Service design
 - Product management
 - Software development
- Define key behavioural skills for the digital community, including the ability to have a learning mindset
- Engage with departmental Heads of HR throughout the development process

3. Create a permanent senior individual contributor role to hire highly experienced digital technologists at scale

For example:

- Create a business case to justify the need for a new classification for senior individual contributors in digital roles
- Review where language requirements affect the career progression of digital practitioners aiming for more senior roles

4. Adopt flexible and responsive work environments, including the creation of multidisciplinary teams

For example:

- Review and revise GC-wide and departmental HR products (such as policies and job descriptions) that may limit the creation of multidisciplinary organizational structures
- Develop practical guides with examples of multidisciplinary organizational structures and teams with diverse domains and skills
- Providing clarity on the variety of existing and emerging digital roles at different levels within team structures

5. Simplify service and digital policies and processes so as not to slow down delivery

For example:

- Review and strengthen the Policy on Service and Digital to drive organizational agility and orient it further around services

- Further integrate of the GC Digital Standards into the Policy on Service and Digital
- Measure and reduce administrative burden caused by policies and processes

6. Develop action-oriented guidance that will help organizations and teams prioritize value-added work and deliver against the GC Digital Standards

For example:

- Develop and share recommendations on how organizations and teams can:
 - Hire digital talent from across Canada
 - Create organizational structures suitable for in-house multidisciplinary digital teams
 - Follow a service design life cycle approach from Discovery to Live from the lens of teams and vendors
 - Right size product reporting and governance that maintains stewardship without slowing down delivery
 - Adopt product-management approaches in funding, procurement, risk management, and governance
 - Advocate for mental health and psychological safety for the digital community
 - Consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in service design and delivery

7. Review and improve methods for digital talent to access tools and technology

For example:

- Identify common technical tools used across GC and review the process to request and access them
- Develop direction that helps build productive and tailored work environments for individuals and teams, including:
 - Provide commonly used software at the outset
 - Consistent and shared approvals for tools across departments
 - Ability to configure a developer environment with ease
 - Ability to test new or emerging technology securely and responsibly
 - Access and control over cloud-based environments to rapidly equip teams with the scale and type of compute they need

8. Assess Official Language impacts on recruiting and retaining digital talent

For example:

- Assess where language requirements have greatest impact on recruiting and retaining digital talent, hiring new Canadians, and creating opportunities for digital
- Work with mandate authorities to develop a path forward to help assess the necessary language levels for the digital community, balancing classification and official language considerations

9. Review working models to enable hybrid working environments across departments

For example:

- Evaluate consistent use of “Return to Office” exceptions across departments for employees within the IT classification
- Review the effects of IT exceptions on recruitment, retention, and diversity in the digital community on a bi-annual basis
- Analyze current working models across departments to develop improved working models that prioritize flexibility and collaboration

Mission #4 - Create a digital culture defined by diversity, equity, and inclusion and putting digital talent first to drive service excellence

Actions:

- 1. Create mentorship, sponsorship, and other development opportunities for those who are underrepresented in the digital community**

For example:

- Lead a communications campaign promoting diverse digital careers in the public service that emphasize the mission, community, and inclusivity
- Showcase diversity in leadership by profiling digital leaders and providing opportunities to learn from them
- Advance programs that build a diverse digital community, including:
 - IT Apprenticeship for Indigenous Peoples
 - Coding for Veterans Program
 - Recruitment campaigns for persons with disabilities
 - Recruitment campaigns for people in Employment Equity or equity-seeking groups
 - The Digital Community Mentorship Program for aspiring C-Suite digital leaders in Employment Equity or equity-seeking groups
 - Learning resources and offerings on cultural intelligence for the digital community
 - Using digital community workforce data to find gaps in representation and focus on the recruitment, retention, and career progression of people who are in underrepresented groups

2. Openly welcome people interested in joining the federal public service

For example:

- Engage with prospective digital talent to showcase the value of digital careers in the public service
- Host open houses to introduce what it's like to work in government, available roles, and how to apply
- Build partnerships with post-secondary institutions, industry, and other organizations to find sources of diverse digital talent across Canada and internationally and foster talent pipelines
- Facilitate the engagement of passive job seekers via resume databases, social media platforms and professional networks

3. Convene, celebrate, and scale community-driven engagement across the GC

For example:

- Publish a regular communiqué to promote programs and services available to everyone in the digital community and adjacent communities
- Host reputational events, including the Digital Government Leaders' Summit and the Digital Government Community Awards
- Collaborate with partners who support the digital community, including the DPI Association of Public Sector Information Professionals

4. Encourage a commitment to continuous learning

For example:

- Ensure C-Suite digital leaders follow new performance commitments, including supporting the Digital Ambition and aligning and engaging with OCIO enterprise-wide community services to enable digital talent in their organizations
- Facilitate a GC Digital Community Innovation Fund where individuals or teams identify a problem in their organization, provide evidence, present a possible solution, and gain leadership support and potential funding to grow and expand ideas
- Engage with, expand, and help develop new Communities of Practice and other community-driven groups, including the Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence, to drive cross-departmental networking, mentorship, and events
- Encourage leaders to carve out professional development time for their employees and take advantage of available learning opportunities

Conclusion

Over the next three years, departments will progress towards building the digital workforce capacity and capability needed to design and deliver robust services to people who live in Canada.

The Strategy is now being implemented, starting with actions to expand Digital Talent Platform, define essential digital skills for all public servants, and create modern job descriptions for digital roles. Progress over the next year will be evaluated, measured and shared publicly in the coming months.

Annexes

- Annex 1 – GC Digital Talent Strategy Infographic
- Annex 2 – Connection to GC initiatives
- Annex 3 – Highlights from other jurisdictions