



09 DEC, 2021

SkillsFuture report maps out key skills for jobs of tomorrow

The Straits Times (Thu - Fri)



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It will help workers in their learning journey and to plan for careers in 3 key growth areas

Ng Wei Kai

With the employment market evolving quickly and the nature of jobs set to change, Singapore has made an effort to identify the sort of skills that the jobs of the future may demand, to help workers stay ahead of the curve.

The inaugural Skills Demand for the Future Economy report highlights the top 20 clusters of skills,

from carbon footprint management to managing ethical conduct of staff, in the expanding digital, green and care sectors that will be most needed in the next one to three years.

Said Education Minister Chan Chun Sing on the report by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG): "We hope individuals will be able to contextualise the report to their own situation – their work experience, strengths and aspirations – and use this to plan ahead for their lifelong

learning journey."

SkillsFuture, launched in 2015, encourages workers to adapt and thrive in the face of technological disruptions.

The report, Mr Chan added, does not cover the entire economy but focuses on jobs and skills in three sectors that he called "key growth areas" for the country.

The Covid-19 pandemic has underlined the need for digitalisation while the need for a green economy is becoming critical for countries like Singapore.

The third key area, the care sector, is linked to Singapore's ageing population.

Mr Chan said: "Today, more

than 450 job roles across 17 sectors require green skills in their job tasks... With an ageing population, the demand for local workers in the care economy will continue to grow rapidly.

"We are not here just to figure out which are the growth sectors but, more importantly, we want to help our people plan and figure out which are the skill sets required across the different sectors and across the different job scopes."

The skills highlighted are those that are required by the highest number of jobs in the sectors, he added.

The report identifies 20 key skills clusters in the three sectors, called "priority skills".

In the digital sector, the top three are technology application, data analysis and market research.

In the green sector, the report highlights the need for skills involving green process design, carbon footprint management and environmental management system. In the care sector, there will be a need for skilled professionals dealing with the ethical conduct of staff, and managing stakeholders, among other things.

Educators told The Straits Times that Singaporeans should focus not only on gaining sector-specific

skills, but also general skills identified in the report, such as critical and creative thinking.

Professor Lam Khee Poh, dean of the National University of Singapore (NUS) School of Design and Environment, said: "Because more so than specific technical skills, these help you learn and adapt. Specific, technical skills can come after."

The report also identified other soft skills that workers would need, like interacting with others.

Professor Susanna Leong, NUS vice-provost (lifelong education), said both workers and employers should use the report as a road map to navigate the key growth areas.

She said: "With the information made available in the report, learners could find out how to map out their learning pathways to gain skills required for the job roles by taking reference from SSG's Skills Frameworks."

The report also guides workers on charting skills development.

Calling the report a "first step", Mr Chan said SSG will be adding to it in the future.

weikai@sph.com.sg

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Poll: Few very confident of their skills' future relevance

But business leaders say it's a good sign and shows Singaporeans are not complacent

Ng Wei Kai

A straw poll of the audience at a panel discussion on future skills showed 64.5 per cent were only slightly confident that their skills would be relevant in a few years' time.

However, business leaders said this is a positive response that shows Singaporeans are not complacent about their skills mastery and are open to upgrading.

The poll was conducted among about 550 participants at the Skills Demand for the Future Economy Forum held as a hybrid event yesterday, where Education Minister Chan Chun Sing unveiled the inaugural Skills Demand for the Future Economy report.

The report pinpoints the top 20 clusters of skills in the digital, green and care sectors most needed in the next one to three years.

The panel discussion was held after Mr Chan's speech and featured Dr Gog Soon Joo, chief skills officer at SkillsFuture Singapore; Mr Shee Tse Koon, group executive and Singapore country head at DBS Bank; Mr Yuen Kuan Moon, Singtel's chief executive officer; Mr Robert Chong, Sembcorp Industries' chief corporate and human resource officer; and Ms Chin Wei Jia, HMI Group's CEO.

In the poll, another 19 per cent of respondents said they were not confident their skills would be relevant in the next three to five years, while the remaining 16.5 per cent said they were very confident.

Dr Gog said it was heartening that the majority of respondents were in a state of "conscious incompetence", adding that a survey done by SkillsFuture last year showed a gap between employer and employee perceptions of the relevance of workers' skills.



Education Minister Chan Chun Sing unveiled the inaugural Skills Demand for the Future Economy report at yesterday's event. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

She said employers were more likely to think their workers' skills would not be relevant for the next few years, while employees were less likely to think so.

The panelists also discussed how their organisations were looking to help their employees gain new skills or switch jobs and careers, and how individual workers can stay relevant in fast-moving industries.

They also took questions from the audience, including one on whether it is realistic for a mid-career worker to make the leap to acquire new skills like data analytics.

Mr Yuen said it is absolutely possible for workers to make the leap and workers should think about how to reframe their skill sets, instead of focusing on roles they can no longer do.

He said: "For example, if a worker learnt coding many years ago and his technical skills are no longer relevant, he should tell himself, 'Okay, I'm not going to be a programmer, but I can learn some new skills to fill another related job.'"

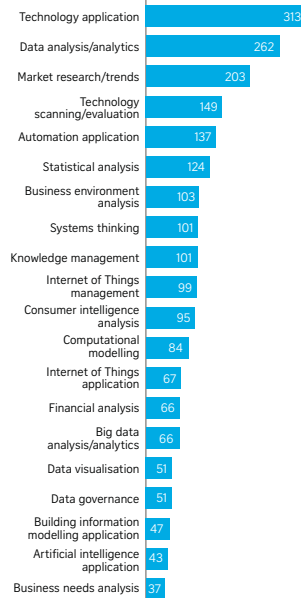
ngweikai@sph.com.sg

Top 20 clusters of skills most urgently needed in Singapore's digital, green and care sectors

To determine these priority skills, SkillsFuture Singapore took reference from national economic priorities and employer demand from big data and job postings. It looked at job roles in each sector and prioritised the skills required by employers across a large number of roles.

■ Number of job roles requiring these clusters of skills

Digital economy



Green economy



Care economy



Source: SKILLSFUTURE SINGAPORE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Taking courses helped her make transition to healthcare

Ms Jaya Latchime Mutasammy, 46, spent 10 years in the aviation industry and three in logistics before switching to healthcare.

The mother of one, who is now a clinical assistant in a private clinic, told The Straits Times that she made the switch as she wanted a job where she could care for others.

In 2019, she took a Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) healthcare support framework course to help her make the transition.

Ms Jaya's profile is one story featured in SkillsFuture Singapore's inaugural Skills Demand for the Future Economy report, which pinpoints the top 20 clusters of skills in the digital, green and care sectors most needed in the next one to three years.

It also has resources for those wishing to make career switches, and information on where they

can sign up for new courses.

Ms Jaya, who joined the healthcare sector right before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, said that it was difficult to make the career switch, but taking courses helped her adapt and make the transition.

She said: "I told myself, I'm learning something new; you can't expect things to be the same (across different industries), but you have to keep an open mind and there is nothing scary about healthcare."

Ms Jaya added that she has continued to take more healthcare courses so that she can be more helpful in the clinic.

She has just completed a course in phlebotomy to learn how to draw blood from veins with a needle.

She has also enrolled in a specialist diploma course in active ageing at Republic Polytechnic.



Ms Jaya Latchime Mutasammy, a clinical assistant in a private clinic, worked previously in the aviation and logistics industries. She has just completed a course in phlebotomy to learn how to draw blood from veins with a needle. PHOTO: COURTESY OF JAYA LATCHIME MUTASAMMY

She said: "It really helps calm patients down when assistants like myself are able to explain the procedures like ECGs (electrocardiograms) and what patients can expect, even if I'm not the one performing them."

"It's really important to me to be able to do that."

Ng Wei Kai