

Chapter 1.

Public sector skills in the search for public value

Today's civil servants address problems of unprecedented complexity in societies that are more pluralistic and demanding than ever. At the same time, the systems and tools of governance are increasingly digital, open and networked. Civil servants need the right skills to keep pace. This chapter looks at how the work of civil servants is changing, and presents a framework to identify which skills will be needed to produce a civil service which is fit-for-purpose today and into the future. These include skills to develop evidence based policy advice, to engage citizens for more effective service design, to commission services through third party delivery agents, and to manage in networks that extend beyond institutional borders. Each of these four skills areas contribute to a professional, strategic and innovative civil service.

Civil servants create, protect and positively impact public value. However, there is a growing concern that the context and conditions in which the public sector operates are quickly changing, suggesting that public value cannot continue to be created in the same way as in the past. This change is happening in multiple ways simultaneously. On the demand side, the problems civil services are trying to address are increasingly interdependent and multidimensional; and are within societies which are increasingly pluralistic in views and expectations. On the supply side, the systems and tools of governance are increasingly digital, open and networked. Civil servants are needed who have the skills to address increasingly complex problems in increasingly pluralistic societies using new tools available to governments.

The OECD's work on skills and skills strategies looks at how countries can align education and labour market policies to ensure they are producing citizens with the right skills to drive economic growth and address economic inclusion and social mobility in the national economy. The OECD skills strategy (2012) addresses three inter-related policy levers: developing the right skills (ensuring the skills supply is sufficient in both quantity and quality), activating skills supply (improving participation in the labour market of under-represented groups), and putting skills to effective use (addressing the match between skills needed and those available). Until now, the work on skills has not looked specifically at the public sector and what kinds of skills are required to drive performance and manage productivity. This report builds on some of the insights in the skills strategy, with a focus on the civil services of OECD countries, to raise issues about the nature of work, how it is changing, and which policies are needed to ensure the skills of civil servants keep pace with changing societies and technologies.

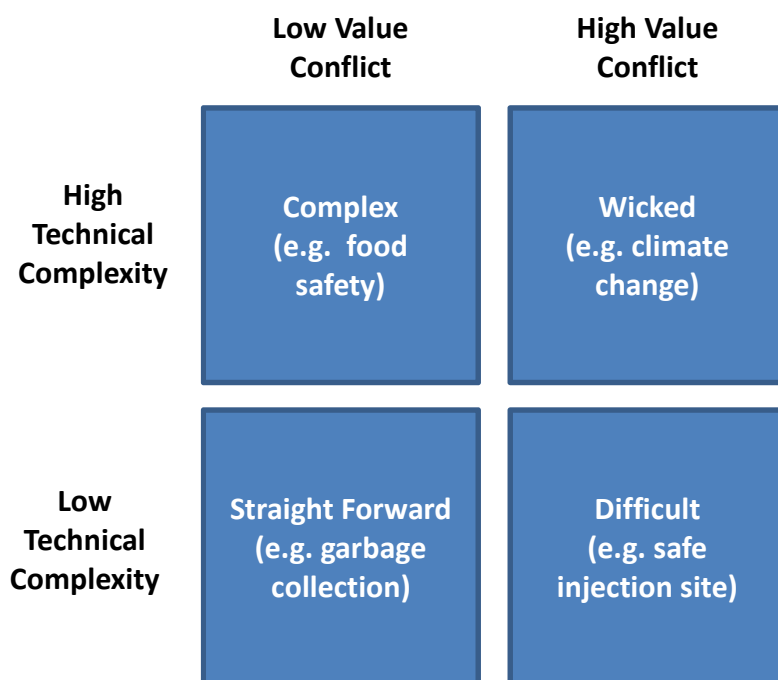
Wicked problems in complex societies

Many observers, analysts and practitioners are aware the most pressing problems existing in the public sector are increasingly complex, interconnected, uncertain and values-based - see, for example, (Bao, Wang, Larsen, & Morgan, 2012) (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014) (Head & Alford, 2015) (OECD, 2017a). While many of the big challenges of the post-war years were seen as large-scale engineering projects, addressed through rational planning and scientific process, this approach may only have a limited impact on the multidimensional problems that remain, such as climate change, youth unemployment, inclusive growth, and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals committed to by United Nations (UN) member states. Systems analysis (OECD, 2017a) shows that social and economic problems cannot be understood and addressed in isolation, and the complex challenges related to inclusive growth (OECD, 2016a) require interventions that embrace rather than over-simplify complexity.

Many of the difficult social problems left to the scope of the public sector are complex issues from a scientific as well as a values perspective. Modern societies are characterised by a greater plurality of ideas, perspectives, needs and expectations of what society should be, how government should behave, and what kinds of trade-offs between the individual and collective are desirable. Such differences can make it difficult to reach a consensus across those impacted by problems and policy interventions. In such situations there can be no absolute certainty of the best way forward, and resorting to more information gathering and scientific analysis will rarely result in a perfect solution. Instead, it is often suggested that interventions need to be based on adaptive, open and networked approaches that bring diverse stakeholders together (OECD, 2017b). This

implies a skill set for civil servants based on public engagement, mediation, facilitation and co-management of public solutions.

Figure 1.1. Categories of public problems



Source: Adapted from Bao, G. et al. (2012), “Beyond New Public Governance: A Value-Based Global Framework for Performance Management, Governance, and Leadership”, *Administration & Society*, pp. 443-467.

Technological change and blurred boundaries in an increasingly networked society

Technology has significantly changed the landscape in which governments operate, and provides opportunities and challenges to civil servants and the skills they need to produce public value (Box 1.1). Today’s societies are more interconnected than ever before, and the network society presents new challenges and complexities for traditional governance models based on hierarchy and bureaucracy. Under the right conditions, information and communication technology (ICT) and data can contribute to more informed policy making, and a more informed citizenry, however ICT networks can also contribute to information overload, ambiguity and/or the spread of falsehoods. While civil servants will not all need to be digital specialists, they will need to understand the potential (and associated risks) of new technological tools, and develop skills complementary to these new tools for engaging with citizens, analysing policy problems and leveraging digital opportunities. At a minimum, they will need to be comfortable in an increasingly digital workplace and using increasingly digital tools.

Box 1.1. Going digital: What changes for governments?

The considerable pace and breadth of the uptake of digital technologies and data use across the public sector is pushing many governments to rethink the management of core processes and activities and the governance of ICT use in government. Governments increasingly need people with the skills to steer decisions and investments in technology and management of data value chains to deliver improved outcomes across policy areas. This requires overcoming organisational barriers to integration, sharing and horizontality of decisions, and use of data and digital technologies across the public sector. Questions exist around how to design public services that draw on distributed knowledge and expertise; how to shift ICT spending from operating legacy systems to supporting innovation; how to safeguard citizen trust in the public use of technology and data; and what skills are required to answer these questions and meet the challenges.

- **Public service delivery:** The digital revolution disrupts public service delivery in several ways. Citizens expect the public sector to have a more comprehensive view of their needs and to provide them with services that consider their specific needs and contexts, making their lives easier and avoiding having to deal with several institutions to complete a single procedure. This implies a whole-of-government effort and significant inter-institutional co-ordination to ensure that the building blocks for integrated digital service delivery are in place (e.g. shared resources, such as a common digital identity; enabling public institutions to have comprehensive view of the user’s digital interactions with the public sector; and a coherent policy framework for data sharing within the public sector). Such a framework should make service delivery simpler and more convenient for the user, while protecting the user’s personal data from abuse. Countries such as Australia, Portugal, the United States and the United Kingdom have looked at ways to transform public service delivery as a whole-of-government strategy.
- **New partnerships and ways of solving problems:** The digital age brings about opportunities for governments through new forms of partnerships that are re-designing the role of government as a whole. Government is no longer necessarily the provider of public services, but acts increasingly as a convener that allows for the right solutions to a specific user’s problem to emerge, delivered by the best fit provider. As such, many governments have embraced the strategy of “Government as a Platform” for public value (co)creation. This idea, first put forward by the UK’s Government Digital Service, has gained traction as others understand the potential of these trends for government as a whole.
- **Resource-sharing:** New digital trends enable a thorough re-engineering of how government works. These opportunities are not simply about the marginal efficiency gains of digitalising a procedure, or even a whole sector, but about the exponential gains associated with the transformation of government processes and their ecosystem. Digital technologies enable governments to benefit from the effects of scale and network to share infrastructure and resources such as storage, data and processing capability in ways that were not possible before. However, these will entail new and more complex trade-offs, such as balancing privacy and convenience. For instance, Canada has put in place Shared Services Canada to help public agencies share services in new ways. It has also, as in Norway and the United Kingdom, developed cloud strategies.

Box 1.1. Going digital: What changes for governments? (cont.)

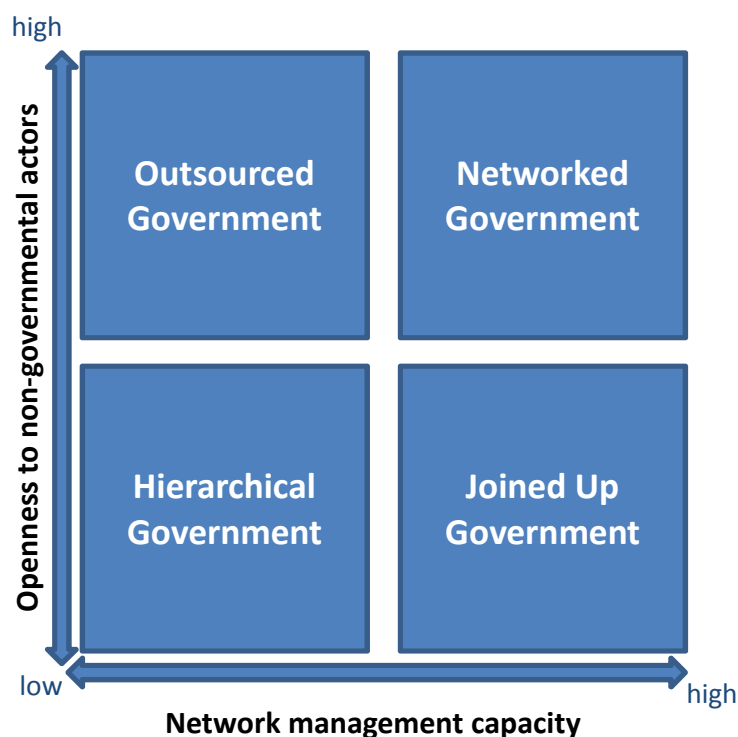
- **Data, policy making and oversight:** The growing availability of data enables governments to make more informed and evidence-based decisions on public issues. However, creating a data-driven public sector requires recognising data as a strategic asset and a framework for the whole public administration that helps reap the benefits of evidence-based decision making. Awareness of data’s potential is rapidly changing how policy, rule-making and public management are conceived and informed. For instance, Colorado has leveraged sensors to implement data-driven regulation of the new marijuana market, and France is using data mining to identify and fight fraud in family allowances and social benefits, leading to a 56% increase in fraud detection in 2014.

Source: Adapted from OECD (forthcoming-a), *The Digital Transformation of the Public Sector: Helping Governments Respond to the Needs of Networked Societies*, OECD, Paris.

Technology is not the only force generating significant shifts in governance systems and the tools and skills required to manage these systems. Recent calls for more open, productive and innovative government have been challenging the traditional pyramid-shaped bureaucracy for some time. “New public management” challenged governments to focus on managerial accountability, efficiency and more technically proficient results-based performance management. The limits of this approach, however, often resulted in a focus on outputs instead of outcomes; a separation of the policy/delivery functions, which resulted in a fragmentation of knowledge and learning; and competition between providers, which undermined collaboration (Head & Alford, 2015).

Various authors have suggested these limitations have led to a new era, sometimes called “new public governance” (Osborne, 2010) or “networked governance” (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004; Kettl, 2009), which recognises that government has no monopoly on producing public value. They point out that the division between public and private is increasingly blurred and emphasise that public value is rarely created by one public actor, but through a web of (public) agencies, organisations, firms, institutions and private citizens. In some cases these systems are so complex few people have a complete view over the whole. This raises particular challenges, but also opportunities since governments alone rarely have all the resources, knowledge and expertise to effectively address wicked problems in complex societies. Civil servants today need to rely on a range of skills to work effectively through and with others to leverage knowledge and expertise beyond their own organisations to advance societies, grow economies, and manage diverse and conflicting expectations and values.

Figure 1.2. Systems of governance



Source: Adapted from Goldsmith, S., & W.D. Eggers (2004), *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector*, Brookings Institute, Washington, DC.

Box 1.2. The future of work in a digital economy

The world of work is in flux due to digitalisation, the development of the digital economy and broad technological change. These processes, coupled with globalisation, population ageing and changes in work organisation, will shape the world of work and raise challenges to public policy in unknown ways.

OECD analyses have begun to understand the relationship between digitalisation, jobs and skills, the magnitude of potential job substitution due to technological change, the relationship between globalisation and wage polarisation, as well as the changes to the organisation of work. With a focus on policy, the OECD is looking at the challenges these trends place on the labour market, skills and social policy. This work has resulted in research summarised in policy briefs on the impacts of automation on independent work and skill implications of the digital transformation. (www.oecd.org/employment/future-of-work.htm).

These highlight the following insights:

- Digitalisation is reducing demand for routine and manual tasks while increasing demand for low- and high-skilled tasks and for problem-solving and interpersonal skills. Despite the replacement of some work by digitalisation, aggregate job demand has not been impacted.

Box 1.2. The future of work in a digital economy (cont.)

- Digitalisation raises questions on technology’s potential to substitute work. Estimates based on the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) show that on average across countries, 9% of jobs are at high risk of being automated, while for another 25% of jobs, 50% of the tasks will change significantly because of automation.
- Digitalisation has opened the ground for new forms of work organisation (e.g. outsourcing, shared services). Although the “platform economy” (Uber, AirBnB, etc.) may bring efficiency in matching workers to jobs and tasks, it also raises questions about wages, labour rights and access to social protection for the workers involved.
- ICT is profoundly changing the skill profile of jobs. Skill development policies need to be overhauled to reduce the risk of increased unemployment and growing inequality.
- Among the adult population, 56% have no ICT skills or have only the skills necessary to fulfil the simplest set of tasks in a technology-rich environment. Young people, however, are much more ICT proficient than older generations.
- To thrive in the digital economy, ICT skills will not be enough, and other complementary skills will be needed, ranging from good literacy and numeracy skills through to the right socio-emotional skills to work collaboratively and flexibly.
- Digitalisation will provide new opportunities to many but will raise challenges for others, with the risk of growing inequalities in access to jobs and their quality and career potential. More rather than less policy is needed to allow workers to grasp new opportunities and respond to challenges.
- Skills policies should seek to: strengthen initial learning, anticipate and respond better to changing skill needs, increase the use of workers’ skills, and improve incentives for further learning

Sources: OECD Future of Work Initiative: www.oecd.org/employment/future-of-work.htm.

OECD (2016b), Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en>.

OECD (2016c), Automation and Independent Work in a Digital Economy, Policy Brief on The Future of Work, OECD Publishing, Paris.

The civil service is one actor among many, but a central player in a public value chain

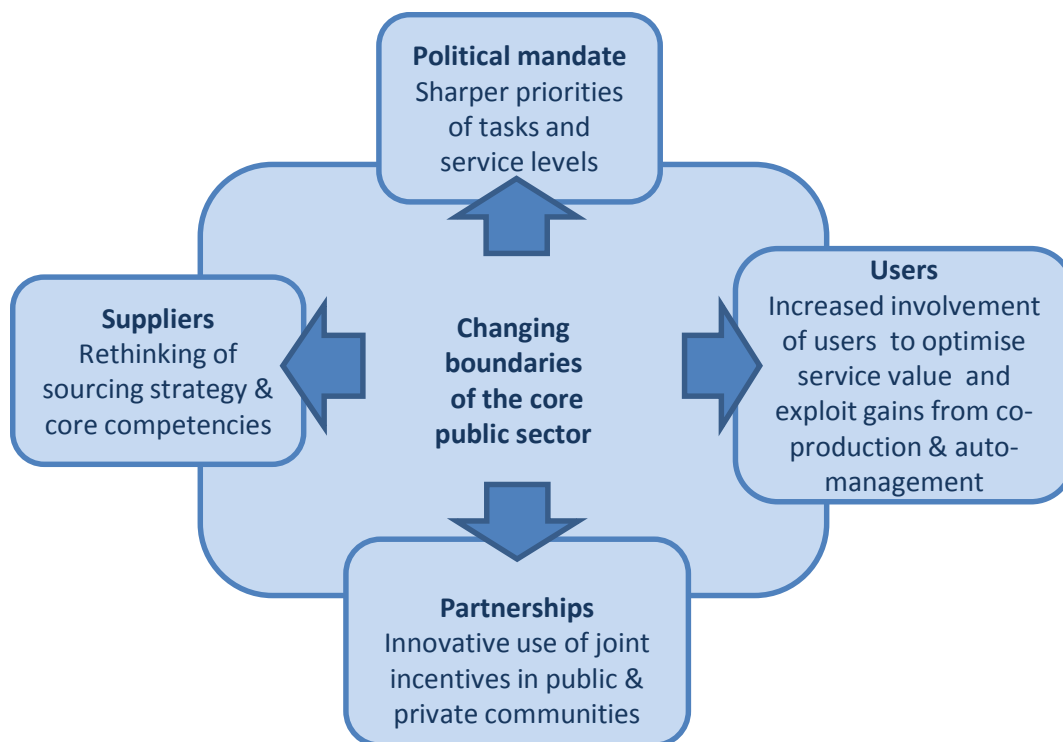
A networked approach to government calls for new measures to address the production and delivery of public value. For example, rather than treating individual services and processes as discrete elements that can be optimised outside any context, thinking of them in terms of a value chain to deliver public services provides a model for considering strategic alignment, citizens’ experiences and efficiency and productivity issues. Further, the public value chain allows policy makers to visualise possible gaps, alignment failures, improved resource sharing (e.g. data, processing) and potential system improvements – all of which may imply changes in stakeholder and user interactions, the role played by different professions, and the reduction of barriers to entry for new actors, which further improves the openness and contestability of public services.

This network approach suggests the boundaries of the public sector in relation to four key policy stakeholders are changing (see Figure 1.3 below). First, the political constituents who are held accountable for their capacity to recognise and achieve the right priorities across service areas, defining the mandate and the legitimacy of the public sector.

Second, the post-crisis trend has seen attempts to reduce the size of the public sector, diminishing or privatising some responsibilities. These changes have affected how governments are engaging with suppliers, including how new markets are nurtured, by outlining the current and future roles in the eco-systems of welfare service delivery. Boundary changes include framing and maturing current and future markets, and maintaining competitiveness and competition.

Third, the sharpened policy priorities also shed light on roles non-governmental actors in general can play to support policy objectives. By building partnerships, including with private business, the public sector can increase its capacity to promote desired policy outcomes, functioning as an orienting platform. Fourth, the increasing engagement and inclusion of users is changing the boundaries of frontline service delivery, creating better targeted personal value added through co-production.

Each of these shifting areas suggests a different interface and/or channel for investing in public value, and therefore an associated set of skills that could be identified. At the top, public value is enhanced through senior civil servants' policy advice to ministers, based on evidence-based analysis conducted by their civil servants. Interfacing with suppliers through contractual arrangements brings the idea of commissioning into focus, along with a set of associated commercial skills required to becoming skilled buyers of public value. Working directly with users requires a skill set linked to engagement, facilitation and co-production. Working in partnership brings networked governance into focus, prioritising a skill set related to coalition building, collaboration, boundary spanning,¹ and risk management.

Figure 1.3. The changing boundaries of the public sector

Source: OECD (forthcoming-b), *OECD working paper on digital welfare*, OECD, Paris.

The implications of these changes on the roles, competencies and capabilities of civil servants have rarely been considered from any systematic international perspective. Dickinson and Needham have begun to address these issues in the United Kingdom and Australia. Their 21st Century Public Servant project aims to identify the changing role of public employees at central and local levels, the changing skills required to fulfil these roles, and support and training implications in order to provide insights into the ways central government can support civil servants to meet these changes. Their review of the literature (Box 1.3) supports many of the claims made in this paper, and suggests all of these changes will have a profound impact on the jobs civil servants do and the skill they need to be effective. (Dickinson & Sullivan, 2014).

Box 1.3. Eight lessons about the future of the public service workforce

As part of their programme of work on the future of the public service workforce, Drs. Catherine Needham, Catherine Mangan (University of Birmingham) and Helen Dickinson (University of Melbourne), conducted a search of the literature relating to the public service workforce. This review explored academic and policy literature on public service change, and examined how change is impacting people working in these services. The review outlines eight lessons about the future of the public service workforce:

1. **Future public services will require a different set of workforce roles than in the past.** Whilst professional skills remain important (also see lesson 3) public servants increasingly have a role in negotiating and brokering interests among a broad array of different groups. The public service workforce therefore requires a set of relational skills which aid in forming shared values among a range of competing interests. Crucial in this skill set is the ability to understand services from the citizen or consumer's perspective.
2. **Citizens are changing too.** Citizens are less deferential than in the past and increasingly have higher expectations of what public services should offer. Co-production is a central plank of future public services and there are a diverse range of implications for this in terms of the workforce. There are presently gaps in this respect not only in the skills base of public servants, but also in the development opportunities available to hone these skills and the time and space to practice within organisations.
3. **Generic skills will be as important as technical skills for future public servants.** This lesson is potentially controversial and does not argue that technical skills are not needed. Technical skills are required and there are gaps often reported in these, particularly in relation to contracting and data analysis. However, there are a set of softer and less tangible skills that are becoming increasingly important in relation to communication, digital literacy and person-oriented skills.
4. **Ethics and values are changing as the boundaries of public service shift.** The public sector ethos has been a common reference point in discussions about public service reform for many years. Ethos captures the sense of an intrinsic motivation to service the public, distinctive from extrinsic motivations such as material reward or fear of sanctions. In a context of increased outsourcing, there is a question of whether public sector ethos can survive. Better understanding the bundle of incentives that motivate people to serve the public is part of the workforce challenge for 21st century public services.
5. **Emotional labour will be a key element of future public service work.** Many public service roles are inherently emotionally demanding, and there is consensus emerging over the need for resilient responses to this as a dimension of public service practice. Research evidence suggests that emotions are important constituent components, not just of the caring professions, but also in any roles that involve the spanning of boundaries. If the future of public service roles is to involve greater boundary spanning, then this is likely to become even more important to public servants.
6. **Permanent austerity is catalysing and inhibiting the emergence of new roles.** Recent UK literature has much to say about the impact of austerity on public service workforces. The evidence suggests that in some places, austerity is severely inhibiting the emergence of new roles, whilst in others, organisations are using this opportunity to fundamentally transform their services. Understanding the contexts under which successful transformation might take place within circumstances of fiscal constraint is clearly an important task.

Box 1.3. Eight lessons about the future of the public service workforce (cont.)

7. **Hero-leaders aren't the answer.** When leadership is spoken about in the media and in literature it is often focused on individual heroes or heroic models of leadership. However, the evidence suggests that there is a need for a new kind of public sector leader to respond to the changing context, in which leadership beyond boundaries and beyond spans of authority will become important. Rather than focusing on individuals it is necessary to think about forms of distributed or dispersed leadership.
8. **Many professions are coming to these conclusions, but are tackling the issue separately.** A striking feature of the policy literature is that many different professions are coming to the same conclusions, but there is little dialogue between service sectors about how to share lessons and encourage staff to work across boundaries. Whilst these individual conversations have immense value, there may be benefit from bringing together these contributions and thinking about public service issues in a broader way.

Sources: Needham, C., C. Mangan, & H. Dickinson (2013), *The 21st Century Public Service Workforce: Eight Lessons from the Literature*, University of Birmingham.

Dickinson, H. & H. Sullivan (2014), *Imagining the 21st Century Public Service Workforce*, Melbourne School of Government, Melbourne.

The OECD's recommendations on public governance set high expectations for civil servants

The OECD Council has developed a range of recommendations to which civil servants are expected to comply and aspire. Taken together, these create a complex body of principles intended to provide guideposts for effective governments and public institutions. Each of these recommendations implies needs for certain groups of skills in the civil service, in some more explicitly than others. For example:

- The **recommendation on regulatory policy and governance** presents regulatory policy and governance as a whole-of-government activity integrated in the policy cycle of regulatory design, enforcement, review and evaluation supported by appropriate institutions. It emphasises the importance of co-ordination, consultation communication and co-operation throughout the policy cycle. Adhering to this recommendation will require civil servants with skill sets related to a broad range of impact analysis, risk assessment, and strategic foresight to conduct ex ante regulatory impact assessment and ex post evaluation; as well as communication and engagement skills to build buy in and clarify policy challenges (OECD, 2012a).
- The **recommendation on principles for public governance of public-private partnerships (PPPs)** covers the governance pre-conditions for the successful use of PPPs regarding the institutional framework and the skills and competence of the relevant authorities; how to assess, select and manage PPPs to boost value for money; and the use of the regular budget process to minimise fiscal risks and create long-term sustainability. The recommendation makes direct reference to the need for in-depth financial, legal, economic and project management skills. Skills alluded to include assessment of value for money, risk management, commercial, contract management and commissioning skills (OECD, 2012b).

- The **recommendation on the governance of critical risks** promotes a comprehensive, all-hazards and transboundary approach to country risk governance to serve as the foundation for enhancing national resilience and responsiveness. The principles of this recommendation suggest a highly responsive networked governance with the foresight needed to minimise the negative impacts of risk and hazard. This implies skill sets related to broad engagement and network management, top down and collaborative leadership, data foresight and evidence analysis (OECD, 2014a).
- The **recommendation on effective public investment across levels of government** offers a whole-of-government approach that addresses the roles of different levels of government in the design and implementation of public investment, contributing to both national and sub-national development and long-term growth. Skill sets implied to adhere to this recommendation include assessment of risk and uncertainty, negotiation and co-ordination, community engagement and network management. Section 7 of the recommendation explicitly calls for effective human resource management (HRM), knowledge development, relationship management, and a specific focus on capacity at sub-national levels where, in some cases, professional skills may be lacking (OECD, 2014b).
- The **recommendation on budgetary governance** gives countries guidance for designing, implementing and improving budget systems to meet the challenges of the future. The overall intention is to provide a reference tool for policy makers and practitioners involved in the budget process, and help ensure public resources are planned, managed and used effectively to make a positive impact on citizens' lives. It explicitly recommends promoting the integrity and quality of budget forecasts, fiscal plans and budgetary implementation through various activities, including continuous investment in the skills and capacity of staff to perform their roles effectively. These include a range of deep financial analyses, such as performance assessment, value for money, financial risk, forecasting and foresight (OECD, 2014c).
- The **recommendation on public procurement** reaffirms the role of public procurement as a strategic function and provides clear and effective guidance on how to implement a public procurement system that employs state-of-the-art tools and techniques to apply public funds sustainably and efficiently. It explicitly recommends the development of a procurement workforce with the capacity to continually deliver value for money efficiently and effectively. This includes professional standards, attractive and competitive merit-based career options for procurement officials, and promoting collaborative approaches with other knowledge centres to improve skills and competencies (OECD, 2015).
- The **recommendation on digital government strategies** helps governments adopt more strategic approaches for a use of technology that spurs more open, participatory and innovative governments. It posits that values of transparency and citizen engagement need to be explicitly built into how ICT is deployed, which requires a basic understanding of digital opportunities and challenges. The recommendation underscores the need to rethink the concept of traditional civil service skills in light of the digital transformation. It calls for the creation of a data driven culture in the public sector and for the reinforcement of institutional capacities by investing in digital and project management skills (OECD, 2014d).

- The **recommendation on public integrity** provides a new strategic approach for countries to move away from distinct frameworks and develop a coherent integrity system for the public sector that integrates related policies and practices in a mutually supportive way. Thirteen principles are organised in three pillars: 1) building a coherent and comprehensive public integrity system; 2) cultivating a culture of public integrity; and 3) enabling accountability and transparency. This recommendation highlights the need for: skills related to values-based ethical leadership; skills concerning the exercise of appropriate judgement in matters where public integrity issues may be involved; and information, training, guidance and timely advice for public officials to apply public integrity standards in the workplace (OECD, 2017c).
- The draft OECD **recommendation on open government** recognises that open government principles are progressively changing the relationship between public officials and citizens in many countries, making it more dynamic, mutually beneficial and based on reciprocal trust. The recommendation will aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the main tenets of the governance of open government strategies and initiatives in order to help countries improve their implementation of open government strategies and initiatives and their impact on peoples' lives. This recommendation calls for adequate human, financial, and technical resources, together with adequate professional incentives and the required skills to design and implement successful open government strategies and initiatives, while promoting a supportive organisational culture (OECD, forthcoming-c).

Taken together, this rich body of normative agreements begins to establish a series of common competencies required of civil servants. Cross-cutting themes that emerge include financial analysis, forecasting and foresight, cross sectorial co-ordination and collaboration, citizen/third sector engagement, commercial skills, and project management - all of which are within the context of public service ethos and values.

Not all civil servants will need to be experts in PPPs, regulatory policy, risk governance and digital transformation, but it is expected that almost all government organisations will need some level of competence in all of these areas, and that most civil servants will need some awareness of the concepts and be fluent in the language of their guiding principles. This leads to questions regarding the kinds of skills that exist and that should be prioritised in civil service workforce development, as well as how these skills are organised and managed, whether centrally or dispersed.

Skills, competencies and capability: Some considerations

Despite the broad use of the concept of “skill” in OECD, academic and governance literature, there is no universally agreed definition. At its most basic, a skill is an ability to do something acquired through training and/or experience. Although most people probably have a sense of the word, there is a debate about how wide the definition should be applied. Should it include only measurable, observable skills, or also qualities related to personality and mindset? This can have policy implications related to, for example, the ability to teach and develop some skills, versus behavioural traits which may appear to be harder to teach.

Another challenge to the concept of skills is to define not only the what, but also the how. Moving from simple abilities (typing, reading) to the way these are combined to

achieve impact in a job setting means moving from skills into competency. For the purposes of this report, the concept of skill includes competency, as the focus is on the essential attributes of employees (knowledge, skill, behaviour, mindset, etc.) required to achieve outcomes in the public sector/civil service context.

A further discussion around skills regards their contextual nature. Workplace skills exist in a workplace and are only useful when they interact with the tools, people and culture of that workplace. This is certainly the case when thinking about impact – skills alone will not translate into capacity and capability at an organisational level – only when they are combined and used effectively (competency) within an organisational context (team, resources, tools, etc.) that allow them to be mobilised.

Another related factor is motivation, which also brings values into focus. Values are “goals or criteria that we use to determine the desirability of certain actions or motives in our lives” (Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2006, p. 605). The existence of public service motivation suggests individuals who choose careers in the public sector do so because they value the public interest and are motivated to contribute to social change and shape policies that improve society. A recent OECD report shows how values congruence (between employee and employer) and values-based leadership and management contribute to employee engagement, which in turn contributes to performance, productivity and innovation in public organisations (OECD, 2016d).

Wu, Ramesh and Howlette (2015) present a useful model for contextualising policy-related skills within broader organisational and systems perspectives. Using the example of policy analysis in public agencies, they argue that consideration is required at three levels:

1. Individual: what governments will be able to do depends first on whether they have people with the skills required to analyse problems and consider solutions. (This is the focus of this report.)
2. Organisational: in order for people with these skills to accomplish their tasks, they need resources provided to them by organisational systems. This could include, for example, information and data management systems and the availability of other ICT resources and tools.
3. The system level: the organisation itself sits within a wider system. To follow the policy analysis example, capacity can depend on how information and knowledge is generated, shared and mobilised among public and private organisations.

Much of the work to date on public governance has been done at the second and third level of this analysis. Taking the recommendations outlined above as an example, the principles focus mainly on the organisational process and system-level preconditions for success. While most recognise the need for skilled employees, the human resources recruitment and development implications tend to remain vague. This report begins to address this gap.

Box 1.4. Future competencies

The OECD's 2011 report, "Public Servants as Partners for Growth" discusses how employees' competencies and the integration of human resource (HR) policies and practices with business strategies play a central role in sustained competitive advantage and suggests that countries are witnessing a shift from "people as workforce to people as competitive force" (Prastacos et al., 2002: 67). Strategic thinking, innovation, creativity and business sense are absolute requirements for succeeding in almost any kind of job, and that drives the need to define and develop new competencies. Any changing policy environment has a significant impact on both the public service workforce and the range of skills it needs for the future.

The report highlights the future competencies governments have identified to face the challenges of the 21st century. The sources of these competencies are speeches and statements from politicians and senior officials, policy notes, reports on the civil service, annual reports, and local experts' perceptions. Based on these lists, eight "key" future competencies clustered into four meta-competencies are identified:

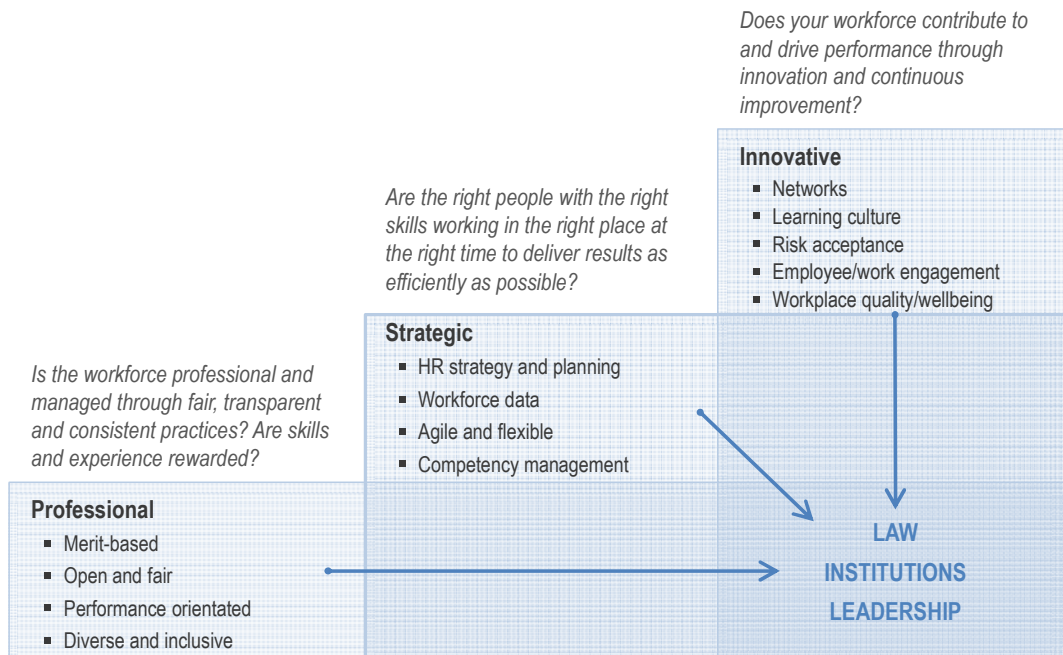
- creative thinking (creativity and innovation)
- flexibility (flexibility and change management)
- co-operation (work collaboratively across boundaries and relationship building)
- strategic thinking (vision and future orientation).

Sources: OECD (2011), *Public Servants as Partners for Growth: Towards a Stronger, Leaner and More Equitable Workforce*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264166707-en>.

Prastacos, G.P., K.E. Soderquist, Y. Spanos and L. Van Wassenhove (2002), "An Integrated Framework for Managing Change in the New Competitive Landscape", *European Management Journal*, Vol. 20, pp. 55-71.

Skills in a professional, strategic and innovative civil service

In the OECD's recent report on fostering innovation in the public sector (OECD, 2017b), the OECD began to outline the possible contours of three different and complementary approaches to civil service management (Figure 1.4). A professional civil service emphasises transparent, fair and merit-based management to ensure integrity and capacity. This is considered to be fundamental and foundational. The strategic view emphasises forward-looking planning, data to understand current capacity, and agility to ensure human resources can be allocated efficiently to areas of high and emerging need. A third layer, innovative HRM, looks at mechanisms to harness the creative potential of knowledge workers in the public sector to contribute new ideas and make innovation happen. Each of these may emphasise a different way of thinking about the skills, competencies and capabilities in the public sector.

Figure 1.4. An HRM for public sector innovation?

Source: OECD (2017b), *Fostering Innovation in the Public Sector*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264270879-en>.

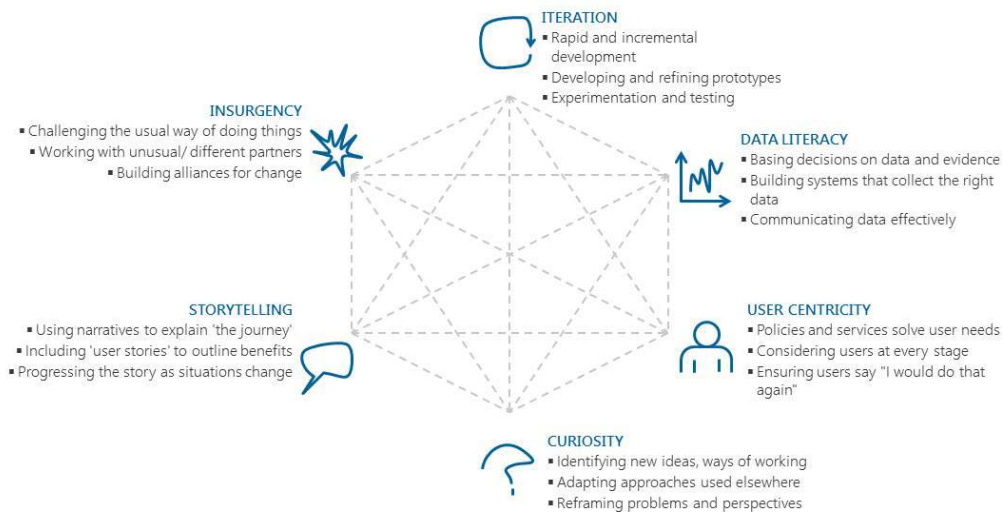
According to Susskind and Susskind (2015), “members of today’s professions, to varying degrees, share four overlapping similarities: 1) they have specialist knowledge; 2) their admission depends on credentials; 3) their activities are regulated; and 4) they are bound by a common set of values” (p. 15). Civil servants in a professional civil service are expected to be qualified, independent of political influence, values-driven and ethical. Skills in a professional civil service may be thought of as the basic building blocks of each of the various professions that make up a civil service. In most countries, these may traditionally include various combinations of professionals, such as economists, lawyers, statisticians, political scientists, policy experts, and communications specialists. More recently, civil services may also emphasise professional skills, such as ICT, data science, design, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), HRM, project management, and acquisitions/procurement. Each of these would have the associated training, experience and body of knowledge. These skills can be taught in universities and/or acquired in previous positions.

If professional skills are the building blocks of an independent, values-based and capable civil service, then strategic skills are those that enable professionals to create impact and improve public value for their citizens and clients. Strategic skills emphasise future-oriented and evidence-based problem solving, often by collaborating across professional skills and competencies. They suggest skills related to risk management, foresight and resilience. Strategic civil servants must be networked and able and ready to draw on a range of research, insight and experience beyond their own immediate workplace to inform policy ideas and service delivery outcomes.

Moving to innovation skills requires looking at how civil servants approach their day-to-day work, and their capacities to redesign the tools of governance to develop novel

solutions to persistent and emergent policy challenges. The OECD’s Observatory for Public Sector Innovation has defined six skills areas needed in public sector organisations to drive more innovation (Figure 1.5). The first three are of a technical nature. Innovative civil servants need skills to approach their work in iterative ways that generate learning and adaptation over short periods of time. They need some data skills in order to be aware of the potential of data and how to structure projects that can collect and use data to inform and drive change. They need skills to be citizen-centred and to use a broad set of tools and methods to interact with their stakeholders and direct beneficiaries to understand their reality and design a service that meets their needs. The next three skills areas are of a cognitive/behavioural nature. Innovative civil servants need to be: curious in order to search out opportunities to expand their own knowledge and understanding; storytellers, ready to leverage a range of tools to communicate with various stakeholders in ways that they can understand and engage with; and insurgents capable of effecting change in the systems within which they work, able to know when to push, how to negotiate, fight and/or compromise. (see Annex for more details on the OECD’s innovation skills framework).

Figure 1.5. Six core skills areas for public sector innovation



Source: OECD Observatory for Public Sector Innovation (OPSI).

Towards a framework for skills in the civil service

The axes of change described above: increasingly wicked, multi-dimensional problems; increasingly pluralistic and interconnected societies; and the changing/blurred boundaries of the public sector (increasingly open and networked governance), leads to the question of what skills are required in governments today to maximise public value and meet the high expectations presented by the recommendations of the OECD Council.

One way to approach this question is to look at how public value is created and consider the skills implied. Following the changing boundaries of the public sector as described in Figure 1.1, public value can be created through four main channels: policy development in the political sphere, service delivery directly to and with citizens, commissioned delivery through contracted suppliers, and delivery through collaborative partnerships and networks. Each of these may suggest different, although complementary and overlapping, bundles of skills:

- **Policy advisory skills:** leveraging technology and synthesising a growing range of evidence-based scientific insights (e.g. behavioural economics, data science, strategic foresight) and a diversity of citizen perspectives for effective and timely policy advice to political decision makers.
- **Engagement skills:** working directly with citizens and users of government services to improve service experience, legitimacy and impact by leveraging the “wisdom of the crowd” to co-create better solutions that take into account service users’ needs and limitations.
- **Commissioning skills:** designing and overseeing various contractual arrangements (outsourcing, PPPs, service level agreements, etc.) and managing projects to achieve impact through organisations (public, private, not-for-profit) that are best placed to deliver services due to their expertise and/or local position.
- **Network management skills:** collaborating with a range of independent partners to address complex/wicked policy challenges by developing a shared understanding of the problem, collectively identifying potential solutions and co-implementation. If money and legal contracts are the currency of supplier management, communication trust and mutual commitment is the currency of network management.

These four areas are combined into a framework model displayed in Figure 1.6, in which skills-driven network interactions deliver public value. Policy making and policy skills are at the top of the triangle and represent the moment an issue makes it onto the political agenda and some level of decision is taken regarding the best course of action to address the issue. This course of action is represented by the continuum along the lower bar of the triangle, which may include direct delivery to the citizen (right side), or a contractual relationship with a third party delivery organisation (left side). Between the two is a zone of networked governance, which represents a variety of multi-organisational arrangements in which the government plays a partnership and/or platform role to advance a common agenda and build public value. Each of the four skills groups are discussed in the next sections.

Figure 1.6. Civil service skills for public value: a framework



Source: Author's own design.

Skills for developing policy

What are the skills?

Providing evidence-based, “frank and fearless” policy advice is a long-standing civil service function in most OECD countries, and the traditional principles of evidence-based, balanced and objective advice to ministers remain fundamental.

Policy analysis skills have traditionally been based on a cost-benefit analysis of multiple options for addressing a particular situation. Such analysis should, it has always been thought, be done with scientific objectivity, with a view to identifying the trade-offs among policy tools and options (e.g. regulation, spending programmes) and isolating an optimal choice. This requires a multidisciplinary skill set to draw evidence and data from a wide range of scientific and technical fields, including economics, sociology, environmental sciences, law and engineering.

The traditional policy cycle approach would expect time to competently research and analyse a policy problem, design a policy through long chains of consultation and approval processes, implement the policy, and then wait for years to run an evaluation and determine whether the policy has achieved its goals. Each of these functions would be carried out by separate people, with specialised skills in each of these areas. This not only leads to a process which can, in many cases, no longer keep pace with the changing speed of society, but it has also led to significant disconnects that have hindered good policy making due to gaps between evidence, policy and implementation.

Kingdon (1984) suggests policy making is not a linear cycle, but results from an alignment between problems, available solutions and actors that come together at particular moments to make policies politically viable. These factors, detailed below, may help to provide a structure to map the kinds of skills required of civil servants who advise ministers and decision makers in policy matters.

- **Problems:** (diagnostic skills) detecting and understanding the root causes of complex policy problems requires analytical skills that can synthesise multiple disciplines and/or perspectives into a single narrative.
- **Solutions:** (design skills) civil servants need an understanding and awareness of a wider range of policy solutions. Traditionally this would include the main policy instruments of government: regulation, taxation, and spending.
- **Political timing:** policy advice is inherently political and although civil servants in most countries espouse political neutrality as a core value, they cannot be tone deaf to the tune of politics. Policy windows open at moments in political cycles, or as the result of shifts in public opinion and perception. This requires skills related to timing, and designing policy proposals in a way that responds to the needs of the moment.

New Zealand has recently brought together policy professionals to develop a common framework showing the kinds of policy skills required today in its civil service (Box 1.5).

Box 1.5. New Zealand policy skills project

The Policy Skills Framework (PSF) is a common description of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required of the modern policy professional. Rather than focusing on competencies, the framework outlines the mix of skills policy that practitioners need. It allows for varying levels of experience in each component (from developing to expert/leading), acknowledging that individuals have different strengths (skills breadth and depth).

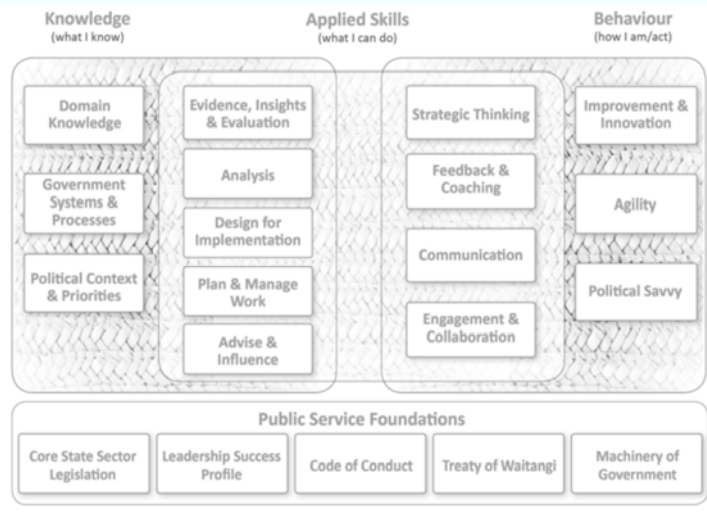
On the demand side, the skills framework will help policy managers articulate the skills mix they require when recruiting, and help them to map the overall skills profile of their teams and any gaps and overlaps.

It also provides the foundation for the senior policy community to agree on levels (developing, practicing, expert/leading) for each component in the skills framework and expectations for key levels of the policy workforce (analyst, senior analyst, principal analyst and beyond). It could enable a more collective approach to training (both formal and on-the-job).

The PSF has the potential to support and signal diverse policy career pathways. It provides a platform for a future articulation of “policy archetype” – deep analytical expert, engagement specialist, policy innovator/entrepreneur – reflecting the growing consensus that the policy community requires diversity, not a one-size-fits-all conception of the policy analyst/advisor role.

Box 1.5. New Zealand policy skills project (cont.)

On the supply side, a common skills framework will allow individuals to show their skills and experience profile –. Individuals have different strengths and may be operating at different levels depending on the skill domain. For example, an individual could be expert at engagement and collaboration, but less skilled at project management. The PSF allows individuals to show their breadth and depth and where they can contribute most to a policy team/process.



Source: New Zealand Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2016), *Policy Skills website*, www.dPMC.govt.nz/policyproject/policy-skills (accessed 01/08/2017).

How are these skills changing?

Expectations for open and innovative government, technological transformations and other societal forces are significantly changing the traditional skills of policy analysis and advising. Charting all of these changes is not simple, partly due to the fact policy analysis draws from so many disciplines, which makes it challenging to define a policy “profession” with clearly defined and specialised knowledge and expertise.

Furthermore, the field of policy advice appears to be increasingly diverse and competitive. Current OECD research on policy advisory systems (OECD forthcoming-d) underlines the broad skill set that is needed to develop policy advice. In this context, governments often rely on either permanent or ad hoc policy advisory bodies, which are operating at arms’ length from core government departments, to help frame policy options. These bodies offer an opportunity for greater inclusiveness and for engaging with a range of either political parties or social and economic partners. These publicly-mandated advisory bodies operate themselves in a full and open context, where other think tanks, academia and various research institutes can also be active.

The civil service often provides the secretariat for such bodies, which can still benefit from greater input and a varied membership. This work is often complementary and upstream, compared to the more direct and downstream policy advice function of policy advisors operating within government departments or in ministers’ cabinets. The fact the civil service is operating in a broader, more open and diverse context than in the past may

have led to some questioning the central function of the civil service in terms of its privileged position as a supplier of policy advice. In a context of open data, diverse and inclusive societies, this may imply that developing policy advice can no longer be a monologue within the civil service that is behind the doors of government departments. While the policy advisory skills of the civil service remain essential, they have to operate in a more dynamic and open environment, where civil servants are plugged in to broader policy communities and networks in order to understand the most recent research and arguments being developed, where they come from, and the political agendas of those responsible for their development. The capacity to exert influence will also be connected to the capacity to listen and integrate a set of various voices in the context of policy design.

Returning to Kingdon's three streams, technology and openness influence the kinds of policy skills required to understand problems, design solutions and be politically proficient.

- **Problems:** (diagnostic skills) Pluralistic societies interpret policy situations differently and demand that problem definition no longer be undertaken in a closed environment by experts. Opening up policy making means problems are often raised to the attention of civil servants by citizens and politicians. However, initial problem statements often require refocusing and reframing through, for example, an exploration of data, consultations and discussions with multiple stakeholders, horizon scanning, scenario development and other tools. One of the most important steps in all cases is to identify the right stakeholders and the right experts. This requires civil servants who are networked into broader policy communities beyond their own civil services. The digital transformation provides opportunities to understand the complex interactions of the policy sphere as never before through, for example, bigger and more interlinked data sets and opportunities to engage the public and crowdsource insights. This suggests skill sets related to data science, network analysis, social networking and social media, crowdsourcing and foresight techniques, in addition to more traditional methods of analysis, forecasting, and community outreach and consultation.
- **Solutions:** (design skills) Traditional cost benefit analysis quickly finds its limits in an open society which contests many of its basic assumptions (e.g. the financial value of life, the environment, forecasting accuracy). Today's policy advisers need an understanding of what has worked well in the recent past and how these successes can be adapted and scaled to current problems, while responding to the local context. They need skills to design solutions informed by advances in behavioural economics, social finance, sociology and ethnography, and the range of services delivered through networks of actors. Civil servants need foresight skills to understand potential future scenarios to find solutions that are future proof, i.e. resilient to future uncertainties and sustainable over time. They need systems and design thinking to understand the interactions among the various actors (third party service delivery organisations, other levels of government etc.) and tools to influence their roles in solution creation and implementation when governments don't manage an entire service production system. This includes an understanding of the range of online methods available for delivery solutions, and the skills needed to measure success and adjust along the way. They also need to move from being sector experts to being able to confront and blend different sector expertise.

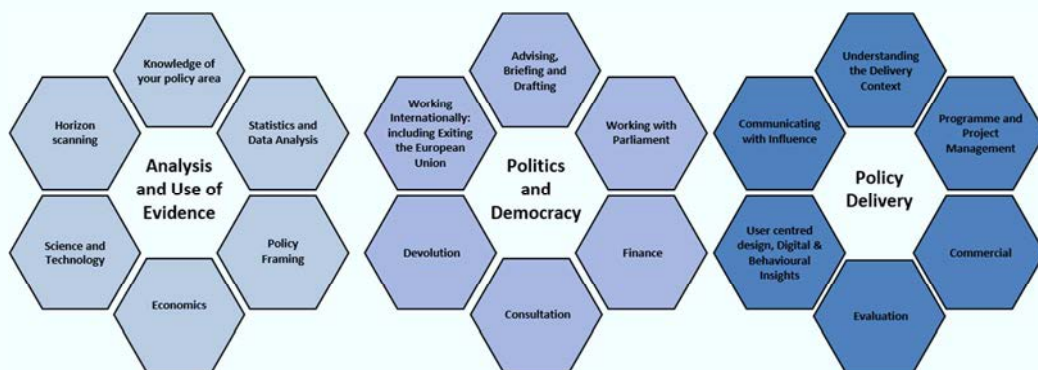
- Political:** Balancing the often short-term and urgent needs of politicians for policy solutions with the democratic and evidence-based values and capacity of the civil service is a long-standing challenge that is becoming more difficult given the speed at which politics progresses. Civil servants need skills to understand the timing of how to deliver analysis in a quick and agile way that responds to the needs of the moment. It also means recognising and managing risk and uncertainty. Similarly, the tools for communicating policy ideas to elected officials have significantly advanced to enable more compelling visual presentations and storytelling.

The United Kingdom is working on a project to professionalise its policy function, and has developed three clusters of skills and capabilities it wishes to reinforce through learning in order to define career paths for policy professionals. The three groups reflect roughly those mentioned above: analysis and use of evidence, politics and democracy, and policy delivery (Box 1.6).

Box 1.6. Professionalising the policy function in the United Kingdom

The UK Policy Profession Support Unit aims to create a career path for civil servants involved in policy advising and to assure a level of skill consistency across departments. Through a process of broad consultation they have created a framework of 18 skills, each with three levels:

- Level 1: Identify and attain the working-level knowledge required to operate effectively in a policy environment.
- Level 2: Progress from awareness to active demonstration of policy-making skills.
- Level 3: Demonstrate they are fully competent at a high level in the relevant skills and are leaders of exemplary behaviours across the civil service.



Source: Provided to the OECD by the UK Cabinet Office.

When applying the professional, strategic and innovation lenses described above: professional skills provide a foundation for policy making and advice, strategic skills are mobilised to ensure policy is future oriented and sustainable, and skill sets related to innovation in the public sector help to rethink the tools and processes of the policy making process itself. While not an exhaustive list, some ideas are found in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1. Policy skills

Professional	Traditional building blocks of policy making and advice include professionals with expertise in law and regulation, economics, political science, public administration, statistics, etc.
Strategic skills	Designing new policies and refreshing old ones by bringing multiple perspectives to a problem, using foresight techniques to test different scenarios, and building resilience into policy design from potential shocks and unforeseen events.
Innovation skills	Rethinking the tools of policy making, through, for example, experimental policy design, (big) data-driven policy development, open policy making (including the use of ICT for crowdsourcing), design/systems thinking, and behavioural insights.

Why should governments invest in this skill set for civil servants?

The civil service does not have a monopoly on policy analysis and advice. Policy advisory systems extend far beyond the public ministry charged with overseeing the policy field to include a range of actors specialising in specific fields with their own sets of values and agendas. In some cases, the public sector may appear to play a diminished role in policy advice, and may be in competition with these other actors. The case for investing in policy-making capacity in civil services depends on the kinds of challenges a country faces, the extent to which it has invested previously in the analytical capacity of its civil service, and the system of governance. Some of the advantages offered by civil servants are as follows:

- **Focus on the public good and the public sector ethos:** many in the policy profession outside government have a particular ideological perspective on policy development, or exist to promote the advancement of certain groups. As much as possible, independent and professional civil services provide evidence-based advice in the interests of the public good, finding the balance between different interests and voices. This serves to build public trust in government and in government policies.
- **Accountability and integrity:** public sector organisations are generally held to a higher standard of transparency, accountability and integrity than private sector or not for profit organisations, with a clear statement of values and commitment to defensible policy analysis.
- **Longer-term horizon:** while many policy players will be motivated to propose policies that fit the government of the day, it is the civil service's responsibility to implement the policies on a sustainable basis, and it should therefore have an intrinsic motivation to ensure long-term implications and sustainability are properly considered. Similarly, a civil service represents a wealth of institutional memory that can be leveraged to design policies that take into account lessons from earlier administrations.
- **Understanding of delivery and implementation:** many policy advisors see their job as ending the moment a law is passed or a policy announced. The implementation experience developed within the civil service represents an added value that can be used to design policies that can be implemented on time and on budget.
- **Ownership of data:** governments and the public sector have the potential to collect a huge amount of data that can be mobilised to inform policy and service design. With the movement towards open data, this is increasingly being made

accessible to others, but the ability to choose which data is collected in the first place remains a core civil service function.

- **Presence and size:** governments have extensive reach into communities across a country, and can therefore be “on the ground” and connected to the realities faced by citizens. This means the potential for a broader range of research methods, and the ability to understand variation across geographic regions. This implies a need to network across levels of government.

Skills for citizen engagement and service delivery

What are the skills?

Engaging with citizens has long been undertaken by governments in one form or another at various stages of policy and service development. It is also a common component of almost every recommendation the OECD Council has developed related to public governance. Input from citizens can help to design better and more cost-effective policies, as well as build the community ownership for policy and service solutions required to ensure sustainable impact over a long term.

The quality of interaction with citizens varies, depending on the purpose. Government employees who interact regularly with citizens to provide services require service skills. These employees are physical ambassadors of the state and their service competency can have a direct impact on the perception that citizens have of their government, including their trust in public institutions and services (Heintzman & Mason, 2005).

Employees involved in service management, design and/or policy making require skill sets that enable input from citizens into these processes. This is often represented as a spectrum, from informing at one end, to collaborating (making decisions together) at the other, for example (OECD, 2016c). Each of these may imply a different set of tools and skills that emphasise different combinations of communication, consultation, outreach and facilitation. Part of the challenge includes knowing which tools to apply to which situations, and an awareness of which voices to engage in the process and how to avoid such processes being captured by organised interest and pressure groups.

How are these skills changing?

While service delivery, communication, consultation and engagement have long been part of the government toolkit, three trends are changing the skills required. The first is an increasingly complex service delivery landscape in many countries. The second is technological change which results in new channels and tools for engagement. The third is the push for more open and innovative government, which means civil services are expected to incorporate meaningful input and participation at a greater number of stages of the policy/service design process.

The complexity of public service delivery has grown in most countries as the channels for service delivery increase and services are increasingly delivered by networks of agents who may or may not be directly employed by the government. In many ways, client-facing employees are required not only to provide services, but also to help citizens to find their way through these complex service systems to get the help and service they need. This means client-facing public employees need to be more than transactional, and also need to act as guides or pathfinders to help citizens navigate complex webs of services, entitlements, benefits and eligibility requirements.

Client-facing employees have a direct impact on the quality of the service experience and, by extension, overall trust in government services. However, to serve well requires a detailed knowledge and awareness of the community and the government – skill sets which are not always easy to find or to develop. This implies a need for high-level communication skills, empathy and reflection, as well as a level of discretion and empowerment to resolve issues. In some governments, frontline positions are considered entry-level or even outsourced to private service providers. The risk is that citizens will quickly discover the limits of the information and knowledge possessed by these employees, resulting in an inadequate service experience.

When Service Canada was established as a cross-governmental portal for government services, it recognised that effective HRM and the development of a service excellence culture was essential for achieving its ambitious goal of transforming service orientation towards a citizen-centred rather than programme-centred service. This was achieved through training initiatives and a career development programme in service excellence co-ordinated through the Service Canada College, the inclusion of service excellence as a competency for employees, and awards to recognise service excellence among employees. (Flumian, Kernaghan, & Coe, 2007)

The digital transformation in governments is resulting in an ever increasing number of ways in which civil servants can interact with citizens to identify problems and design better policy and service solutions. Social media can allow governments to crowdsource ideas from citizens and can provide platforms for policy discussions and debates to overcome geographical and time-related barriers. Managing social media is a particular skill set that is not usually combined with policy expertise, and that requires a new and constantly updated skill set to maximise potential. However, most OECD countries have not developed strategies or plans to develop social media skills (Mickoleit, 2014).

User centricity is also a recognised ingredient of public sector innovation, as highlighted in the innovation skills annexed to this report. At its most basic, this means designing policies and services with a specific end user in mind and actively working to understand how the intervention will positively impact their lives. Human-centred design principles emphasise how people interact with systems and processes, while behavioural science can help to analyse the way people think and respond to different situations. The OECD has compiled 112 case studies of the use of behavioural insights from around the world, and conducted a survey which shows only 45% of institutions involved in behavioural insights employ behavioural scientists and/or experts (OECD, 2017d).

To develop effective user-centred services and policies, officials must adopt participative approaches that involve users throughout the life of the project. This may be as simple as undertaking user research at different stages (to identify needs and test prototypes, alpha, beta, and live versions) through to deep participatory exercises such as the co-production of a policy or service which aims to foster a sense of joint ownership between officials and users. Specific skills in this regard involve facilitation and design skills, ethnographic research skills, and online consultation and engagement skills.

Applying the professional, strategic and innovation lenses described above, professional skills provide a foundation for service and engagement, strategic skills are mobilised to ensure these skills are used to achieve results, and skill sets related to innovation in the public sector help to rethink the tools and processes of interactions with citizens. While not an exhaustive list, some ideas are found in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2. Skills for citizen engagement and service delivery

Professional	Traditional building blocks of service and engagement skills include professionals with expertise in public relations, communications, marketing, consultation, facilitation, service delivery, conflict resolution, community development, outreach etc.
Strategic	Using engagement skills to achieve specific outcomes to inform, for example, better targeted interventions, or nudging public behaviour towards desirable outcomes, such as healthier eating habits or smoking reduction.
Innovative	Innovation skills applied to engagement to expand and redesign the tools themselves through, for example, co-creation, prototyping, social media, crowdsourcing, challenge prizes, ethnography, opinion research and data, branding, behavioural insights/nudging, digital service environments and user data analytics.

Why should governments invest in these skills?

Bringing insights from the public into the design of better policies and services is one of the main challenges facing public servants in today's modern governance environment. In 2010, the OECD conducted a study on the co-production of public services and found that developing the knowledge and skills of government in this work is a key success factor. Conversely, a lack of knowledge and skills in this area was among the most commonly identified barriers. Similar findings re-emerged in 2016 from the survey conducted on open government (OECD, 2016c): the skills knowledge and abilities of civil servants were consistently rated among the highest barriers countries faced in meeting their open government objectives. The digital government agenda has provided a renewed focus on the potential for putting citizens at the centre of service design.

Engaging with citizens is not something that can be easily outsourced, as meaningful insights generally come from the quality of the interaction between designers, decision makers and service users. As governments find themselves under increasing pressure to be open to new ideas and innovation, public employees who may have previously worked primarily behind closed doors will find themselves increasingly interacting with an informed and demanding public. Handing over the engagement work to private consultants may reduce the impact of the engagement activities by reducing the interaction between citizens and government, while also opening up more potential for capture by particularly well-organised interest groups.

Skills for commissioning and contracting services

What are the skills?

Increasingly, civil services establish contractual relationships with third party service providers to deliver services to citizens on their behalf. This can take many forms, from service contracts, grants to non-profits, social impact bonds, and PPPs. The OECD recognises the importance of providing guidelines for managing these relationships in the form of the recommendation on public procurement and PPPs. Expectations are that civil servants will be able to conduct complex impact assessments, cost benefit analysis, risk management, forecasting and foresight, and assess value for money.

This implies a range of commercial, legal and regulatory skills that go far beyond most countries' expectations of traditional procurement agents. They include knowledge of markets and the ways firms operate, how to design and manage contractual relationships in a way that provides value to all parties (and especially the public) and how to regulate markets. This implies not only commercial skills to set up and manage contracts, but also the ability to set market-based policy frameworks and design systems

for providing feedback on how the various actors (regulators, commissioners, providers) are achieving policy objectives (Blatchford & Gash, 2012). Finally, public employees setting up and managing contracts need to have skills related to integrity and managing conflicts of interest.

Box 1.7. What competencies do contract managers need?

Don Kettle charts the growth of government “contracting out” in the United States and suggests that today, much of the government’s substantive work is done by contractors. This requires public employees to manage a range of contracts, for which Dr. Kettle believe many are poorly prepared. He suggests that in order to manage such contracts effectively, public employees require the following competencies:

- They must have strong substantive backgrounds so that they can understand the issues that bubble up from the contractors.
- They must be quick students in complex areas, so that they can steer contracts in the direction that governmental policy requires.
- They must be adept negotiators.
- They must be good financial managers, for control of the money flow is typically the strongest control of programmatic results.
- They must be good auditors to ensure that money ends up going where they intend.
- They must be able to evaluate the outcomes of these complex relationships among government, contractors and subcontractors, so that they can assess whether government is getting its money’s worth.
- They must, in short, be experts in steering complex processes.

Source: Kettle, D.F. (2010), “Governance, Contract Management and Public Management”, in S. P. Osborne, *The New Public Governance? Emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance*, Routledge, London.

How are these skills changing?

The significant increases in commissioning amounts and complexity, the high levels of public funds implied, and the potential for high profile failure push the skill set for commissioning into the spotlight. Furthermore, the shift towards increased transparency and accountability for government spending has led many to question how the government is able to account for the impact of such spending. This means a need not only to design a contract and oversee its management, but also to conceive of performance indicators that are able to track value for money, and investment instruments that are flexible enough to adjust when indicators suggest a need for change. Technological change provides new opportunities for contracting, but also increases the complexity of the project and technical risks involved. There is a sense that in many cases an information asymmetry challenges government to be a smart buyer and manage the associated risks.

One challenge that has been outlined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the United States is to increase both the capacity of the “acquisition” workforce in terms of skills and numbers and to strengthen the linkages between contracting officials and the programmes they contract for. This implies the need for some level of

contracting and commercial skills within the broader programme analyst profession in order to “1) describe requirements in a way that generates interest from capable sources and robust competition; 2) support them in negotiating lower prices, favourable contract terms, and the right incentives for contractors to control their costs and perform efficiently; and 3) perform day-to-day contract management as the contracting officer’s technical representative (COTR) to ensure that contractors perform as they promised” (US Office of Management and Budget, 2011). The challenge is that most programme and policy specialists are not contracting or commercial specialists.

This is similar to the UK’s broad interest in improving commercial skills across its civil service workforce. According to the 2013 capabilities plan, obtaining better value from the GBP 45 billion spent each year on goods and services requires commercial skills across the whole civil service, not just in the procurement profession. The challenge is ambitious: “how to plan and engage with the market to obtain most choice and innovation; how to procure and contract intelligently; and how to manage the delivery of goods or services so that our expectations are met” (UK Cabinet Office, 2013).

Box 1.8. Commercial capabilities in the UK civil service

The UK Capabilities plan recognised that value is obtained during three phases of commercial engagement, and argues that civil servants overly focus on the procurement phase. It calls for all civil servants involved in policy development and delivery (not only procurement specialists) to do the following:

- **Pre-procurement:** Develop better skills to specify needs confidently, clearly and concisely, while not being overly prescriptive, in advance of commencing a formal procurement. This will allow for meaningful, planned and competitive engagement with the whole market.
- **Procurement:** Understand the underlying economics and contracting aspects of suppliers’ tenders, including pricing techniques, margins and open book arrangements, as well as basic contracting terms, such as contract changes, intellectual property rights and termination. Knowing how to negotiate a good deal and applying commercial judgment is as important as understanding the procurement process.
- **Post-contract:** Understand and apply commercial techniques to ensure that suppliers deliver to meet (contractual) expectations in order to maintain best value, and be able to negotiate with suppliers when they do not deliver, including competently and confidently handling disputes.

Source: UK Cabinet Office (2013), Meeting the Challenge: A Capabilities Plan for the Civil Service, Cabinet Office, London.

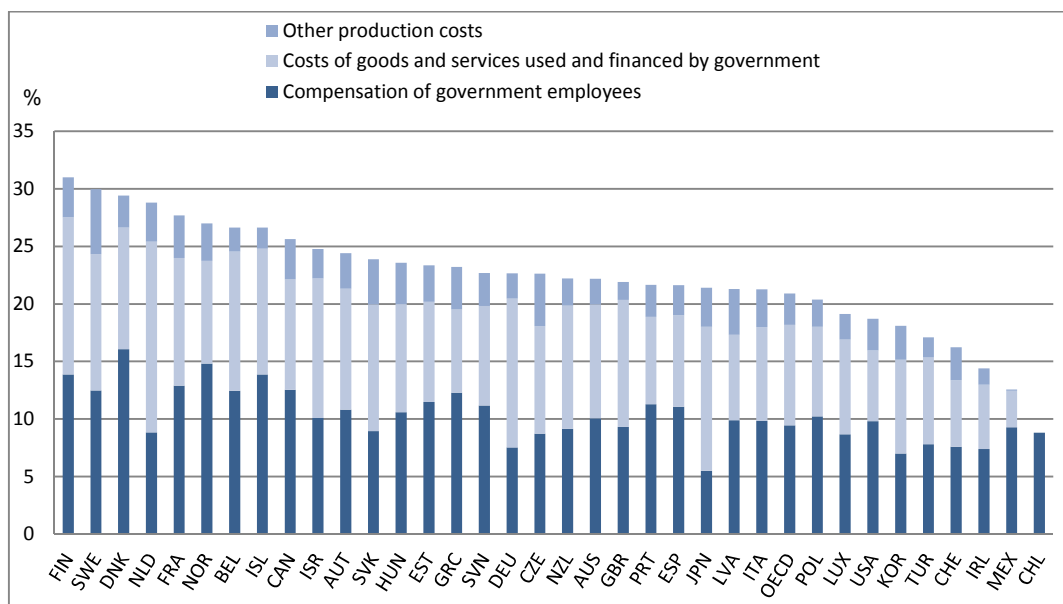
Applying the professional, strategic and innovation lenses described above, professional skills provide a foundation for commissioning based on value for money, strategic skills use markets to achieve policy objectives, and skill sets related to innovation in the public sector help to rethink the tools and processes of commissioning and interaction with delivery organisations. While not an exhaustive list, some ideas are found in Table 1.3 below.

Table 1.3. Skills for commissioning and contracting services

Professional	Building blocks of commissioning skills include professionals with expertise in value for money, contract design and management, procurement, business management, commercial law and economics, finance and investment, audit and control, project and risk management etc.
Strategic	Using commissioning skills and techniques to increase medium term policy impact; working with the market to develop innovations; using commissioning to achieve secondary policy objectives, such as building a greener economy; and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and social enterprises, etc.
Innovative	Rethinking the processes of commissioning through approaches and financial tools that support innovation in and outside government such as agile development, data-driven key performance indicators (KPIs), early market engagement and partnerships, instrument selection, social finance, impact investing, social impact bonds, vouchers, etc.

Why invest in these skills?

Many OECD countries have seen a rapid growth in government contracting and commissioning for the delivery of services in recent years. The money spent on goods and services used and financed by OECD governments (intermediate consumption) is, on average, almost equal to that spent on public employment (Figure 1.7). In the United States, government contracting has almost tripled since 2000, and the Government Accountability Office’s concerns about the lack of capacity to manage complex contracts places the issue on its high-risk list (US Government Accountability Office, 2015a). In some government areas, commissioning is the primary delivery vehicle for government services. This represents a significant shift in the roles of civil services and civil servants, from delivering impact to buying the impact they seek to achieve. However, the skill set involved in managing contracts, PPPs, and service level agreements is rarely prioritised in the civil services of OECD countries.

Figure 1.7. Production costs as a percentage of GDP, 2015

Notes: Data for Australia are based on a combination of National Accounts and Government finance statistics data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Data for Chile and Turkey are not included in the OECD average because of missing time series or main non-financial government aggregates.

Source: OECD National Accounts Statistics (database).

In an extreme sense, if governments move closer towards outsourcing all functions, the one function that must remain is the outsourcing function itself. In this sense, the skill set implied may be the most core of all, but is often sidelined in government agencies. In many countries, commissioning is not considered to be a highly skilled and well-paid function, despite the significant amount of money spent. Slow and ineffective commissioning threatens the quality of the services the government pays for, and ultimately the impact these services will have on the ground. Contract managers need to understand much more than the rules of the procurement and contracting system. They need keen management, policy and business sensibilities, which are skills that are particularly difficult to come by in many civil services. Therefore, many observers agree that contract oversight skills are a significant, high-risk gap. Some point to the lack of attractiveness, stature and career paths for this type of work in government agencies, for example, (Kettl, 2010); (Durant, Girth, & Johnston, 2009); (US Government Accountability Office, 2015b); (UK Cabinet Office, 2013).

Skills for managing in and through networks

What are the skills?

Somewhere between working directly with citizens and working through contractual relationships there exists a modality that is receiving increased attention: collaboration and adaptive management through networks. There are many examples of collaborative partnerships and networks that combine multiple government agencies and various private and not-for-profit organisations to collectively address common problems. Some suggest this is the primary governance model of the future as collaborative networks can tap into a wider body of knowledge, perspective and technology than any one organisation, and can help to generate consensus around problems, definitions, potential solutions and collective implementation (see, for example, (Williams, 2012); (Osborne, 2010); (Agranoff, 2007); (Goldsmith & Eggers, 2004)).

Managing networks requires a mix of information and relational skills, and ultimately depends on trust within the network participants. Key skills in the literature on networked governance include trust building, systems thinking, high-level interpersonal skills (coaching, mediation, negotiation, facilitation, diplomacy), building consensus and joint problem solving, brokerage and political entrepreneurship, risk analysis, project management, flexibility and adaptability, bridge-building, feedback loops, communication skills, and creative problem solving. This is the realm of boundary spanners and implies a very different approach to leadership and solutions development. Williams (2012) studied boundary spanners functioning in public networks, and identifies four roles, each with their own competencies (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4. Boundary spanners' roles and competencies in public administration

Role	Dominant images	Main competencies
Reticulist	Informational intermediary, gatekeeper, entrepreneur of power	Networking, political sensitivity, diplomacy, bargaining, negotiation, persuasion
Interpreter/Communicator	Culture breaker, frame articulator	Interpersonal, listening, empathising, communication, sensemaking, trust building, conflict management
Co-ordinator	Liaison person, organiser	Planning, co-ordination, servicing, administration, information management, monitoring, communication
Entrepreneur	Initiator, broker, catalyst	Brokering, innovation, whole systems thinking, flexibility, lateral thinking, opportunistic

Source: Williams, P. (2012), *Collaboration in Policy and Practice: Perspectives on Boundary Spanners*, Policy Press, Bristol.

How are these skills changing?

Of the four areas, managing in networks may be the least studied and therefore represents a newer skill set, at least in the way it is presented. Collaborating in networks was not emphasised in Weberian hierarchical bureaucracy. New public management emphasised contractual, market-oriented relationships which align with the commissioning skill set described above. Managing in networks may best align with the emerging model of governance – be it new public governance, new public service, or other labels which analyse the role of government regarding civil society (the difference between government and governance) and emphasise a broad array of alternative delivery mechanisms, cross-sector collaboration and citizen engagement. “[The role of] public managers goes well beyond that in traditional public administration or new public management; they are presumed able to help create and guide networks of deliberation and delivery and help maintain and enhance the overall effectiveness, capacity, and accountability of the system” (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014, p. 448). “The neutral, competent servants of the political executive must now master the skills for managing the complex, non-routine issues, policies and relationships in networks; that is, meta-governing, boundary spanning, and collaborative leadership. The task is to manage the mix of bureaucracy, markets and networks” (Rhodes, 2016, pp. 640-641).

Box 1.9. Systems thinking in the public sector

Systems thinking is an emerging approach in both innovative service delivery and public sector reform. The OECD has analysed the methodology in a recent report: “Working with change: Systems approaches to public sector challenges”. The term “systems approaches” is used to describe a set of processes, methods and practices that aim to affect systemic change. These include systems engineering, systems innovation, systems thinking and design thinking. While systems approaches are not new, their use in the public sector is recent and still largely unexplored. Nevertheless, system thinking has great potential to affect transformative change within the public sector in areas where institutions are outmoded by 21st century problems stemming from interconnectivity, cyber threats, climate change, changing demographics and countless other factors. Rather than just looking at policy problems and accepting the immediate issue, systems thinking encourages looking at where that problem is situated, and seeks to explore where the actual cause of the problem might be. Thus, systems thinking does not only address the resilience or robustness of public sector systems, but helps to redefine the functions and purpose of systems to respond to new realities. As such, systems approaches help government confront, in a holistic way, problems that span current administrative and territorial boundaries.

Box 1.9. Systems thinking in the public sector (cont.)

While systems approaches can be very complex, not all public servants have to become systems thinking specialists. Using these approaches to initiate wide-scale systems change in the public sector usually necessitates expert help. However, as systems thinking implies transformative change in the face of complexity, it requires new types of skills, (adaptive) capacities and ways of working for public servants to be effective in the public sector. Consequently, using systems approaches in the public sector implies “reflection-in-action” and “learning by doing”, because in areas where systems thinking is most effective, uncertainty is high and there may not be an evidence base to fall back on. Thus, in addition to being aware of systems approaches, public managers should start to monitor (develop feedback systems from implementation) and evaluate complex processes continuously to be able to identify and work on problems. Policy experts within specific fields should have more precise knowledge of how their policy systems work, who the stakeholders are, and the possible causal relationships within the system or types of uncertainty the system faces.

Source: OECD (2017a), *Working with Change: Systems approaches to public sector challenges*, OECD Publishing, Paris, www.oecd.org/governance/observatory-public-sector-innovation/library/28.02%20systems%20thinking%20schedule%20FINAL.PDF.

While this has implications for skills throughout the civil service, leadership is particularly implicated. Collaborative leadership is a growing field and provides a counterbalance to the top-down transactional and transformational leadership styles emphasised in bureaucracies and new public management. Collaborative leadership emphasises leadership as a trait projected horizontally. Leaders catalyse and facilitate collective action, and leadership roles are generally dispersed among different levels of an organisation and multiple stakeholders (for a good discussion, see Head and Alford, 2015; or Sorensen and Torfing, 2015). Nevertheless, leaders at the top remain of key importance as they establish the culture of trust and frameworks for delegation and accountability.

Applying the professional, strategic and innovation lenses described above, professional skills provide a foundation for network management, strategic skills are mobilised to ensure these professions are used to achieve policy objectives, and skill sets related to innovation in the public sector help to rethink the tools and processes of networking and partnering with others. While not an exhaustive list, some ideas are found in Table 1.5 below.

Table 1.5. Skills for managing networks

Professional	Building blocks of network management skills include professionals with expertise in stakeholder relations, partnership development, knowledge management and sharing, project management and co-ordination.
Strategic	Using partnerships and networks to establish common objectives, align responsibility and resources, and effect positive change.
Innovative	Rethinking the processes of government through approaches and tools that support innovation in and outside government, incubating social innovation, leveraging government as a platform, building partnerships around open government data, systems thinking and analysis, framing issues around results, identifying and engaging new actors, change narrative, alternative regulation (e.g. behavioural insights), etc.

Why invest in these skills?

Answering the call for open, innovative and agile government will require more than adequate citizen consultation, good contract management, and effective policy design. The blurring of the lines between public, private and third sectors is increasingly profound, and governments must respond. The idea of collaboration and co-operation is more and more common in public sector leadership frameworks in recognition of the fact public policy dilemmas are too complex for governments to solve on their own.

Recognising the benefits of working in networks, and the fact this is happening, does not lead to a de-skilling of the civil service, but the recognition that there needs to be investment in this skill set. Kettle (2009) looks at a range of case studies and concludes, “policy problems define processes, goals drive interactions, and leaders co-ordinate across multiple boundaries” (p.13). The network is an empirical reality, but because they tend to be policy driven and context specific, this skill set is particularly hard to define. What is clear is it requires a different approach to leadership – one which reduces the reliance on the heroic model and instead emphasises collaboration (Wilson, 2013). Rhodes (2016) suggests it may be more of a craft than a science “to accept the importance of experiential knowledge as well as formal knowledge” (p.642).

However, skills alone won't be enough

Moving from professional to strategic and innovative level skills needs to be matched by a change in the way they are organised, managed and led. For example, the traditional policy cycle view has often led to organisational separations in the policy and delivery functions, which many have reduced the intended impact of policies and services. These kinds of silos are often reinforced by traditional heroic and transactional command and control leadership styles. Innovative skills will need to be matched by a more innovation-oriented and dispersed approach to leadership that values collaboration, bottom-up expertise and horizontal sharing of knowledge and insight. This implies moving from a compliance view of management to a values-based model, where common values and trust enable autonomy and debate. These ideas are further developed in the OECD's report, “Engaging public employees for a high performing civil service (OECD, 2016d) (see Box 1.10).

Box 1.10. Leadership in a professional, strategic and innovative civil service

According to Bass (1997, 1985) the transactional-transformational leadership paradigm is a proven universal phenomenon in all cultures. At its most basic, leaders and followers enter into an exchange through a process of negotiation. Leaders then reward or punish followers depending on the level and quality of their achievements. This is transactional leadership. This may be emphasised in a professional civil service.

Moving towards a **strategic** civil service may require transformational leadership, which recognises the role of motivation and human emotion in the leader-follower relationship. “Authentic transformational leaders motivate followers to work for transcendental goals that go beyond immediate self-interests” (Bass, 1997). Bass identifies the following components of transformational leadership:

- **Idealised influence** (charisma): leaders display conviction; emphasise trust; take stands on difficult issues; present their most important values; and emphasise the importance of purpose, commitment, and the ethical consequences of decisions.

Box 1.10. Leadership in a professional, strategic and innovative civil service (cont.)

- **Inspirational motivation:** leaders articulate an appealing vision of the future, challenge followers with high standards, talk optimistically with enthusiasm, and provide encouragement and meaning for what needs to be done.
- **Intellectual stimulation:** leaders question old assumptions, traditions, and beliefs; stimulate in others new perspectives and ways of doing things; and encourage the expression of ideas and reasons.
- **Individualised consideration:** leaders deal with others as individuals; consider their individual needs, abilities, and aspirations; listen attentively; further their development; advise; teach; and coach.

While the transactional–transformation paradigm appears to have dominated leadership discussions in recent years, researchers and observers are beginning to ask whether even transformational leadership is appropriate for the challenges facing the public sector today and in the future. Sorenson and Torfing (2015) suggest that collaborative innovation in the public sector requires a different kind of leadership and management. They argue that, “Transactional and transformational leadership continue to be important to ensure an efficient implementation of predefined goals through well-described bureaucratic practices, but they have limited value when it comes to rethinking goals and practices and changing the way that problems and challenges are reframed and new practices are designed, tested and adjusted.” They point instead to the discussions and debates around “adaptive” and “pragmatic” leadership:

- **Adaptive leadership** aims to determine which public activities to maintain and which to adapt and transform. It then seeks to develop new practices by crafting and testing prototypes and by aligning people across an organisation in order to ensure effective execution and to facilitate the integration of new with old activities.
- **Pragmatic leadership** aims to transform the culture of public organisations in ways that enhance double loop learning and use existing tools to solve problems by changing established practices – including transformative learning that develops new metaphors and narratives that help frame what is difficult to comprehend, expand knowledge and toolboxes, and change identities and roles.

Sources: Adapted from OECD (2016d), *Engaging Public Employees for a High-Performing Civil Service*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267190-en>.

Bass, B. (1997), “Does the Transactional-Transformational Leadership Paradigm Transcend Organizational and National Boundaries?”, *American Psychologist*, pp.130-139.

Bass, B. (1985), *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*, Free Press, New York.

Sorenson, E., & J. Torfing (2015), “Enhancing Public Innovation through Collaboration, Leadership and New Public Governance”, in A. J. Nicholls, & M. Gabriel (eds.), *New Frontiers in Social Innovation Research*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Civil servants do not need to be masters in all of the above skill sets, but will likely need a basic understanding of them as they develop their careers towards leadership positions. Specialists in each will need to be organised so they can provide their skills when and where appropriate in order to provide the right mix and balance as the situation requires.

Bringing these various elements together requires bringing the skill sets together organisationally and in practice. It requires bold new ways of approaching policy and

service experimentally so interventions can be tested and adjusted in real time as they are incrementally implemented. It also means building feedback loops across all areas of the framework above to ensure that insights from users of services, organisations that make up the delivery networks and contractors can feed into the evidence base. This kind of flexibility and adaptive management is not part of a traditional approach to policy making.

The next section of this report will tackle these organisational issues more directly by looking at how civil services in central public administrations are organising themselves to attract, develop and manage skilled civil servants. It looks at the use of workforce planning processes to assess what skills are needed and to determine skills gaps, how these gaps can be filled through recruitment and development, and how people with these skills are organised to ensure the best use of their skill sets.

Notes

- ¹ Williams (2012) defines boundary spanners as, “individuals who have a dedicated job role or responsibility to work in collaborative environments such as, partnership co-ordinators, crime and community safety officers, anti-poverty co-ordinators and health promotion managers who co-ordinate, facilitate and service the processes of collaboration between a diverse set of interests and agencies. These boundary spanning posts occur at different levels in the organizational hierarchy – at a senior level with posts combining health and social care, at a middle management level for example in relation to partnership co-ordination, and at the frontline with responsibility for special cross-cutting programmes.” (p.19)

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