

# The Future of Work: Closing the Skills Gap



In this Q&A, **Tony Holmes**, Practice Lead for Solutions Architects Public Sector at Pluralsight, discusses how state and local government agencies can better understand their skills gaps to enable better workforce development.

## How are government agencies taking new and innovative approaches to retraining and upskilling their existing workforce?

Agencies are dealing with a skills gap that has been a problem for some time, and COVID has made this problem even more complex. Agencies are having to rethink how they execute on their strategies and close the skill gaps without having as much in-person training.

More and more, agencies are seeking tech skills platforms like Pluralsight for virtual learning. One of the benefits to this model is that Pluralsight has the ability to benchmark skills and create individualized learning paths.

## How can agencies create programs around skills development, and why should they invest in skills development programs?

One of the best ways is to create a culture of learning. This means giving employees permission to learn. The traditional approach has been to keep training separate from the actual job. Forward-thinking organizations realize that technologists' training needs to be a part of their day-to-day jobs. It is one thing when the boss says, "Go and take a little

time to do some learning," but it is absolutely another thing when the CIO says, "I expect our technologists to learn as part of their jobs." Making time for learning has always been a struggle within government, but agencies need to move away from the idea that people cannot afford to take time away from their jobs to learn new skills.

## How can an agency most effectively assess the technical skill levels of their staff?

In the past agency leaders would typically call an auditor or consultancy. They would spend months evaluating peoples' skills and write a report based on the agency's objectives. The whole process might take six months or more, by which time the mission priorities might have changed. Pluralsight uses tools like artificial intelligence and machine learning to perform a skills gap analysis in real time. Executives go into the analytics within the platform to get a real-time view of where they are at that point in terms of skills. The data is always up to date. We also provide suggestions of content that can help agencies easily provide additional training. One of the biggest obstacles we have as learners is that we don't know what we don't know; we don't know what we need to learn.

## What is involved in implementing a workforce development strategy?

Our customers gain a huge amount of success from using data and analytics tools. The data drives the transformation of programs, and you need the right tools to address the problems you have encountered with workforce development. They also need that culture of learning within the organization to help sharpen employees' skills.

One successful example is Utah's Department of Technology Services (DTS). DTS wanted to leverage tools to help its employees build new skills and identify areas where additional training could help the agency adapt to the sea change in how the state does business.

With more than 7,000 online courses across more than 850 technologies, Pluralsight's web-based Skills platform offered a range of training and tools for DTS employees. DTS managers also worked with Pluralsight to create "channels" of aggregated training content.

At the same time, DTS used Pluralsight's Flow platform to help managers take a closer look at ongoing projects for potential skills gaps. By analyzing code from projects in progress, managers have targeted additional skill-building for their teams based on the efficiency of the work being done.



PLURALSIGHT

Pluralsight is the leading technology workforce development company that helps companies and teams build better products by developing critical skills, improving processes and gaining insights through data, and providing strategic skills consulting. Trusted by forward-thinking companies of every size in every industry, Pluralsight helps individuals and businesses transform with technology. Pluralsight Skills helps enterprises build technology skills at scale with expert-authored courses on today's most important technologies, including cloud, artificial intelligence and machine learning, data science, and security, among others. For more information about Pluralsight visit [www.pluralsight.com/industries/government](http://www.pluralsight.com/industries/government)