

# Future-proof your workforce through Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP)

Organizations today face growing pressure from multiple directions. They must navigate increasing budgetary constraints while managing workforce costs - their largest expense - and simultaneously adapt to rapid technological shifts that are transforming the skills needed for the future. This is in parallel with evolving demographics, such as an aging workforce and the rise of the contingent workforce. These challenges raise a critical question: **how can organizations build a future-proof workforce that aligns with their broader objectives while avoiding costly restructurings?**

The World Economic Forum highlights the urgency of future-proofing the workforce in their latest Future of Jobs report.\* In the next five years, 92 million jobs are expected to be lost, while 170 million will be created. Required skills are shifting, and by 2030, analytical thinking, AI proficiency, and human-centric capabilities will be essential to thrive in a tech-driven world. According to the majority of Belgian employers, preparing for the job landscape of the future and closing the skill gaps is pivotal to successfully achieving fit-for-purpose business transformations.

How can you anticipate this shifting job and skills landscape and start taking short-term action to maintain a future-proof workforce in the long run? **Putting a structured Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) approach in place sits at the heart of addressing this challenge in a sustainable way.**

58%

of Belgian employers sees the **skill gaps** of their workforce as the **biggest barrier** for business transformations in the next five years.

93%

of Belgian employers believe **AI and big data** will be the **most important skills to have** as employees.

49%

of Belgian workers are expected to **need up- and re-skilling** to guarantee sustainable employment.

170M

**jobs** are projected **to be created** in the next five years globally, with the majority driven by technological developments.

92M

**jobs will become obsolete** globally due to the advancements of technology, highlighting the importance of up- or re-skilling.

\*Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs report, January 2025

# Is your workforce ready to thrive as 35% of their core skills are expected to change in the next five years?

At its essence, **SWP** is a **proactive, data-driven approach** to anticipating future workforce needs and strategizing accordingly. It is an organization-wide effort that requires alignment with core business processes, such as the financial cycle, to ensure a cohesive and integrated approach.

The objective is to **balance talent supply and demand** by forecasting workforce needs, ensuring the right mix of skills and employment models, all enabling the organization to achieve its long-term strategic objectives.

**What does that mean in practice?** By balancing talent demand (workload evolution) driven by factors like growth, technology and AI, and new business activities, with talent supply (workforce evolution) influenced by natural attrition, pensions, and outsourcing, SWP can provide a clear picture of the workforce needs.



## 01. Turning SWP into action – How to get started

Despite its importance, SWP is a complex exercise. In KPMG's 'The future of HR: From flux to flow' survey, 300 HR leaders revealed that while most see SWP as the top workforce priority by 2025, merely 25% of HR practitioners feel they are currently able to effectively understand how the size, skills, and organization of the workforce must change to meet future needs.

That is why we help organizations embed **SWP through a step-by-step approach, which can be tailored to your scope (e.g., department, organization-wide, pilot projects) or executed in phases**. Below, we outline how KPMG's four-step approach offers a forward-looking perspective on workforce needs and the necessary actions to address them.

“Prepare today for a workforce that successfully copes with people challenges 3 to 5 years from now.”

# KPMG's SWP Framework

## 1. Baseline | A comprehensive workforce overview

- First, we start by getting a clear view on the job architecture, mapping all roles in a function classification system to create a structured view of the total workforce, both internal (salary positions) and external (contractors) resources. This holistic framework categorizes activities, domains, and specialties, ensuring alignment across the organization.
- ✓ **Outcome:** a clear and overarching view of the total workforce - both internal and external - and their corresponding activities

## 2. Workload evolution | A quantified view on workload drivers and their effect on workload needs across the organization

- Once we have a view on the current workforce distribution, we organize **workshops** with departmental leadership **to identify key workload drivers linked to strategic priorities/programs** (e.g., AI), whilst considering the budgetary framework, that will **impact the workload in the coming years**. In close collaboration with HR and the business, we can estimate the extent of workload increase or decrease linked to these drivers, and develop workforce strategies tailored to your needs to tackle the workload evolution, based on distinct methodologies:
  - **Workload drivers:** provide an estimation of the impact on each workload driver per activity domain and/or function family:
  - **Percentage-based distribution:** expresses the change in workload in percentages, which are directly translated into staffing needs.
  - **Pro-rata based volume approach:** calculates workforce requirements based on the evolution of activity volumes, which are then directly translated into the number of full-time employees (FTEs).
- Afterwards, **the identified workload drivers can be aligned with the organization's strategic objectives**.
- ✓ **Outcome:** a projection of evolving workforce needs for the coming years across activities.

## 3. Workforce evolution | A gap analysis revealing workforce shortages and surpluses

- **We estimate how the workforce will evolve through a thorough gap analysis:** together with the HR-team we gather data and insights on what we can expect in terms of workforce evolutions. These consider the primary workforce levers within each department, encompassing factors like natural attrition, pension, performance exit files, and will reveal workforce gaps and surpluses.
- ✓ **Outcome:** a consolidated view of the organization and a view per department on workload and workforce evolutions. This gives insights into what lies ahead and how the workforce will evolve in the coming years and will show organizations what workforce risk and opportunities they can anticipate in the coming years. The gap analysis will reveal how to mitigate them effectively.

## 4. Implement solutions | identifying HR solutions for the most important gaps and surpluses

- **Finally, we develop a detailed workforce action plan for each department**, providing a strategic framework for workforce decisions in the coming years. This plan addresses identified staff shortages and surpluses through targeted measures such as upskilling, reskilling, internal mobility, and recruitment. We ensure sustainable career paths by transitioning employees in at-risk or obsolete roles to positions aligned with their skills, supported by tailored learning trajectories. To strengthen workforce resilience, we also collaborate across departments to find collective solutions and make structural decisions on future workforce risks and challenges.
- ✓ **Outcome:** tailored re-skilling and/or upskilling programs, along with other tailored HR solutions to ensure a balanced and future-ready workforce.



**Strategic workforce planning as a holistic approach, combining data and business insights**



## 02. SWP as added value, embedded in a holistic and organization-wide people approach

**SWP** is more than a one-off exercise; it's a transformative approach that must be integrated into broader organizational processes to ensure sustained effectiveness. At KPMG, we recognize SWP as a powerful lever to optimize and future-proof your workforce, providing your HR organization with clear priorities and direction to achieve these goals effectively. To bring these priorities to life, establishing the right operating model is essential. Through our Powered HR methodology, we can help you re-design your HR operating model, embedding SWP into your HR processes and aligning it with your organization's overarching priorities. This will enable you to structure and manage your workforce with agility in an increasingly tech- and data-driven world. With effective and embedded core HR processes, centralized tools, advanced analytics, HR technology and AI, we empower you to maximize efficiency, enabling SWP to guide sourcing decisions, align talent with strategic goals, and support ongoing workforce optimization. This ensures SWP becomes a continuous, scalable solution that evolves with your business for the coming years.

Furthermore, a clear understanding of **workforce capabilities** throughout the employee life cycle is key to driving tailored programs that support employee growth in alignment with the company's future needs, enhance employee engagement, foster retention, and enhance internal mobility. These insights help HR evolve into a strategic partner, identifying skills and competency gaps that need to be bridged, either by talent sourced internally or externally. It will provide you with insights that enable you to focus on re-skilling and upskilling initiatives, empowering your workforce to effectively meet both current and future challenges. Leveraging accurate data on skills, activities, and associated costs also allows SWP to integrate seamlessly with critical processes, creating a comprehensive and connected approach. So, the question remains:

**“Are you ready to make workforce planning your competitive advantage ?”**

### 03. Key factors to ensuring SWP success

Through our extensive experience with clients, KPMG has identified several critical success factors to unlock the full potential of SWP

01

#### Total workforce data is key

Access to comprehensive workforce data enables organizations to understand dynamics and to better anticipate employee needs effectively.

02

#### Link with core business processes

Aligning workforce planning with core business processes such as financial planning ensures realistic and sustainable workforce strategies.

03

#### Over-Engineering vs. Actionability

Striking a balance between complexity and feasibility is vital for creating actionable plans.

04

#### Link with skills management

Integrating workforce planning with skills management guarantees that organizations have the talent required to achieve strategic objectives.

05

#### Involvement of the entire organization

It is a strategic exercise that encompasses the entire organization, making buy-in and stakeholder management crucial for its successful implementation.

06

#### Technology & systems for support

Using the right tools and systems streamlines data collection, analysis and tracking for effective workforce planning.

# Let us help you shape the future of your workforce, starting today.

## Contact us for more information



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