



مبادرات محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم العالمية
Mohammed Bin Rashid
Al Maktoum Global Initiatives

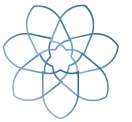
كلية محمد بن راشد
للإدارة الحكومية
MOHAMMED BIN RASHID
SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT



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AGILE GOVERNMENT

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The Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government

The Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (formerly Dubai School of Government) is a research and teaching institution focusing on public policy in the Arab world. Established in 2005 under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, in cooperation with the Harvard Kennedy School, MBRSG aims to promote good governance through enhancing the region's capacity for effective public policy.

Toward this goal, the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government also collaborates with regional and global institutions in delivering its research and training programs. In addition, the School organizes policy forums and international conferences to facilitate the exchange of ideas and promote critical debate on public policy in the Arab world. The School is committed to the creation of knowledge, the dissemination of best practice and the training of policy makers in the Arab world. To achieve this mission, the School is developing strong capabilities to support research and teaching programs, including:

- applied research in public policy and management;
- master's degrees in public policy and public administration;
- executive education for senior officials and executives; and,
- knowledge forums for scholars and policy makers.

The MBRSG Research Department focuses on the following six priority policy areas:

1. Future Government and Innovation
2. Education Policy
3. Health Policy
4. Public Leadership
5. Social Policy, Wellbeing and Happiness
6. Sustainable Development Policy

For more information on research at the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government, please visit: <http://www.mbrsg.ae/home/research.aspx>

Future Government and Innovation

This research area is focused on the evolution of digital governance, growth of the innovation economy and emergence of smart cities and how these phenomena are transforming the ways which governments, businesses and societies function and interact globally. Building the "government of the future" depends heavily on understanding opportunities challenges and policy implications brought about by these emerging digital transformations. In the UAE and wider Arab region, these digital transformations are giving away to new models of governance where policymaking is becoming digitally-driven, data-heavy, predictive and "smart".



Objectives of the Workshop

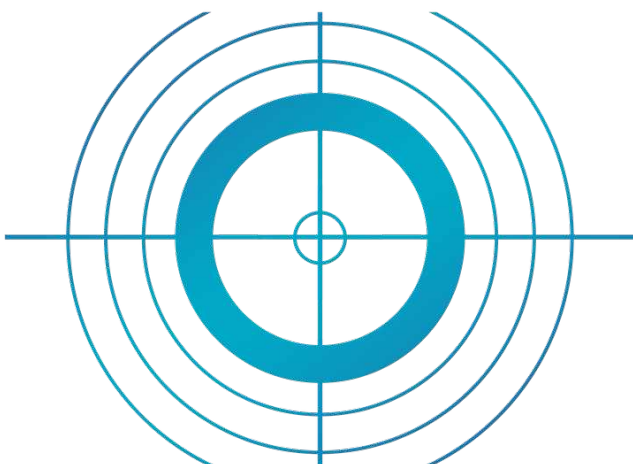
Aligned with its 2021 National Strategy, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) strives to become one of the most competitive countries in the world. According to the latest Global Competitiveness Index report, the UAE ranks as the most competitive country in the MENA region. Some of the key pillars explaining UAE's pioneering positioning in the region include its continuous macro-environmental stability, its state-of-the-art infrastructure, and its readiness for information and communication technology adoption. While these pillars significantly contribute to the country's leading position and enable it to secure the top 27th place when benchmarked globally against other 139 countries, there still seems to be a variety of areas for improvement. These areas represent important opportunities for national development and enhanced competitiveness.

One of these areas is pivoting around education and skills development among its citizens. If the UAE aims to increase its national competitiveness and improve its national positioning in the Global Competitiveness Index report over time, it needs to deploy efforts to develop the right advanced skills for

each job role. These skills must help the employee effectively cope with future challenges in both the public and private sectors. The development of advanced in-house capabilities should be made a top national priority as the wealth of the nation is its people.

There seems to be a common agreement among scholars, business practitioners and government officials on the extent to which there exists a compelling gap between the current set of skills that represent the soft platform driving employees and managers' actions on the one hand, and the advanced skills that may be required to deal effectively with challenges of the future, on the other hand. Because this skills' gap in both the public and private sectors hampers the development of UAE's innovation capacity, competitiveness advancement and its economic development, it would require immediate attention and corrective action.

Tremendous work has been done in the UAE with the UAE Advanced National Skills. To move forward, especially to help public sector employees effectively cope with future situations and manage change, the department of Academic Affairs from the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government (MBRSG) in collaboration with Dubai Future Academy (DFA) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) organized their first Policy Council on Agile Government. The event took place on 2nd May, 2019. The Policy Council on Agile Government was kicked off by Mr. Saeed Al Gergawi, the Director of Dubai Future Academy, who offered his generous support for this initiative and delivered the opening speech. This was



followed by a brief presentation on the objectives of the Policy Council on Agile Government by Prof. Raed Awamleh, the Dean of the Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government.

The ultimate goal of this Policy Council was to identify the specific skills required by government employees to contribute to and create an agile government. This analysis

opens up an opportunity window for acknowledging the various types of skills identified by all the 50 plus participants who attended the event, and helps us reflect on how to eventually incorporate them into the re-design of our existing academic curricula and the development of future academic and executive education programs.





Agile Governments: The Tensions

There are many definitions of “Agile Governments”, however they all agree on the premise that agility in government is needed to respond faster and in a more personalized fashion to rapidly changing citizens’ needs,ⁱ in an economic and international environment, which has become less predictable and more complex.ⁱⁱ Basically, agility is the ability to create and respond to change in needs and demands in the business and technical domains by being rapid, flexible, and nimble.ⁱⁱⁱ

This suggest that agile governments (1) need internal alignment, where goals, systems, structure and culture are aligned, and (2) they need to adapt the organization itself (services, systems, people) to external demands. The ideal strategies public sector organizations can pursue are prospecting (finding new opportunities), and defending existing strategies using incremental strategies, but very rarely reacting strategies (which is being given instructions on what to do), which rarely work effectively.^{iv}

Internal alignment provides stability,^v and adaptability provides flexible maneuvering allowing navigation in the context of the dynamic nature of multilevel, and interconnected social-ecological systems.^{vi} Agility in government comes both from the

institutional setup of processes (checks and balances and ability to reform and adapt policies and redeploy resources where there are most needed), and from the skills and capabilities of government employees as individuals who need to adapt and respond to changes and new challenges, in order to make the most of the institutional framework in which they operate, or even to propose and implement reforms to this framework when needed.

The focus of the first Policy Council on Agile Governments is the later, i.e. what are the specific skills required by government employees to contribute to and create an agile government. According to the OECD,^{viii} governments today face a double challenge: first, to identify which skills will be needed for today’s challenges and into the future, and second, to figure out how to attract, build and retain these skills in the civil service. The ultimate objective of MBRSG’s current work is to identify the skills required for an Agile UAE public service, in order to develop and deliver adequate training to help build this skills-set.

While academic literature extols the many positive effects of an agile government, there are some cautions. Five weaknesses in agile government software development have been identified, which can also apply to other areas of public policy: (1) Less predictability to the inability to quantify the full level of effort required; (2) More time commitment necessary due to the close communication required across teams involved in the effort; (3) Greater demands on developers and clients (e.g. training, participation); (4) Lack of necessary documentation due to the just in time nature of development; and (5) Potential for projects

Higher levels of government that develop reform frameworks for lower levels must consider the circumstances they face, as organizations need latitude to adapt such reforms to their setting and attain high performance outcomes – Walker (2013:683)^{vii}

to get off track due to continually redefined needs.^{ix} These result in inadequacies in the system processes and losses in resources (time, human capital, money etc.) that governments cannot afford in the global race to compete and achieve global goals.

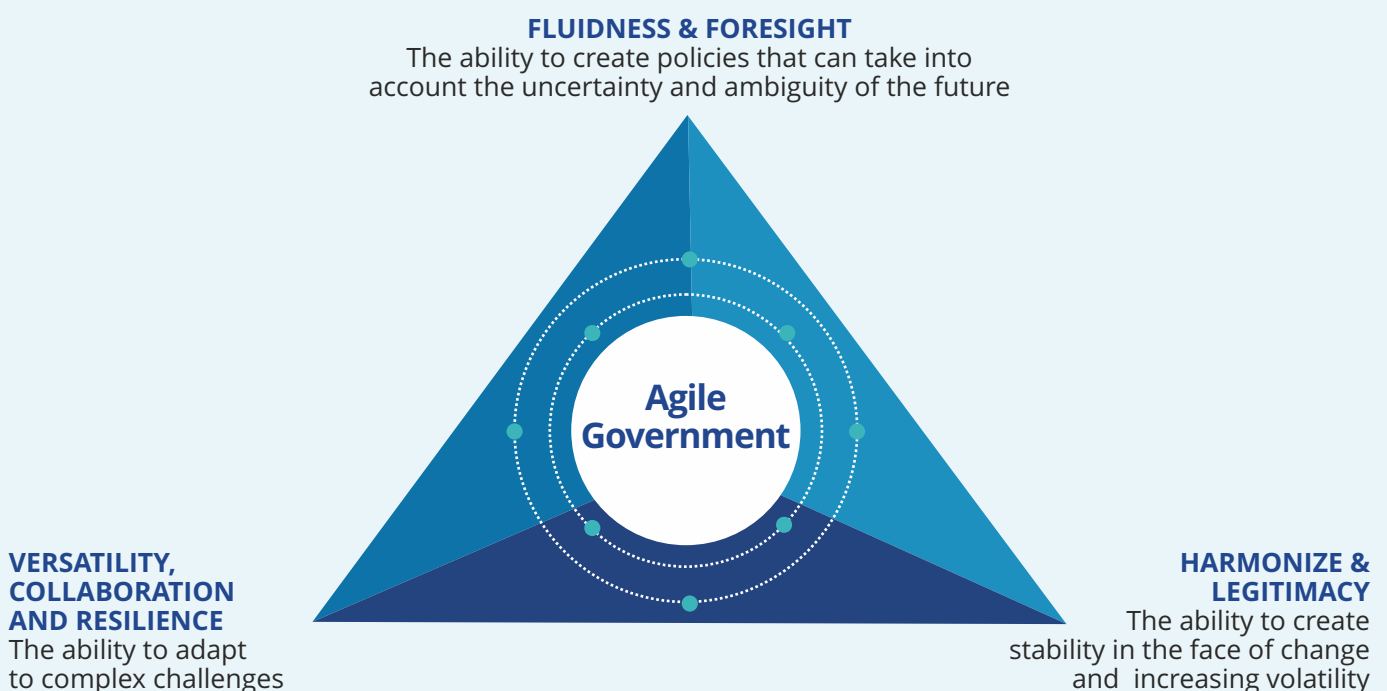
Based on OECD research, consultancy and think tank reports, and academic research on agile government and skills for agile government employees, we have identified three tension areas that agile governments and government employees must manage:

Tension Area 1: Fluidness and foresight. Agile government employees must have the ability to create policies that can take into account the uncertainty and ambiguity of the future. Increasingly, citizens are becoming more pessimistic about their future with just 1 out of 5 people believing the system still works for them.^x This suggests that the policies must have foresight yet should be fluid enough to iterate. What are the employee skills this demands?

Tension Area 2: Versatility, collaboration and resilience. Agile government employees must have the ability to adapt to complex challenges. The organizations themselves must display versatility, collaboration and resilience - this suggests an organic response. What skills must employees display at both an individual level and a collective level?

Tension Area 3: Harmonization and legitimacy. Agile government employees must have the ability to create stability in the face of change and increasing volatility. Fear creates apathy and loss of trust.^{xi} This suggests that the role organizations must play is one of harmonizing and legitimizing. What are the skills employees must display?

EXHIBIT 1: Agile Governments: Structural Tensions





Governments of the Future

The challenges of tomorrow are unknown and cannot be forecast with high accuracy. Survival is a minimalistic strategy used to face the challenges of tomorrow. Governments of the future must become agile governments. Studies show agile governments are more competitive,^{xii} become more transparent and accountable,^{xiii} more customer centric,^{xiv} increase intra-organizational efficiency,^{xv} create more sustainable and inclusive policy making,^{xvi} and have greater leadership unity.^{xvii} Most agile government projects don't get much buy-in, but part of the reason is that it requires an organizational overhaul - culture, employee values, systems, structures, technology, and the institutional ambition needs to change. Failure is possible, learning is fast, and recovery is key. The concept of agile organizations is not new and overlaps with theories that outline multidimensional strategy, open innovation, an integrated value chain process, proactive culture, and a customer experience focus.

Being agile is difficult. On one hand, legacy systems act as deadweight and on the other hand, technological innovations quickly become threatening as they scale too quickly to be regulated.^{xix} But when you over-regulate an industry, innovation dies. Where is the fine balance? There is need for a proactive, silo

Governments must be quick and responsive in a strategic way. This means being aware of emerging opportunities, being able to make tough collective decisions and stick to them, and mobilizing appropriate financial and human resources rapidly and efficiently to where/when they are needed most –

OECD^{xviii}

An Agile Government operates at the cusp of what seems to be the impossible and hence can only be described as 'transformational'.... this requires the delicate balance of keeping momentum, and adapting to change but being stable enough to keep trust.

breaking approach to understand the potential of new technologies and innovation, yet monitor them to ensure long term core values are not eroded. Change is inevitable and the onset of crises are more frequent, yet governments need to offer some stability and be a safe haven to ensure trust and legitimacy with the citizens of their country and the citizen of the world. This requires the delicate balance of keeping momentum, and adapting to change, but being stable enough to keep trust. An agile government operates at the cusp of what seems to be the impossible and hence can only be described as 'transformational'.

We need agile governments - but agile governments need employees that can contribute to organizational agility.^{xx} All employees need not have the same competencies. But what are essential skills and at what levels are these most important?



Methodology

The Policy Council on Agile Government was structured around two different groups. The first group of participants was composed of very senior managers and government officials who were asked to give their unique point of view on the advanced skills that an ideal agile employee should possess to successfully deal with complex issues in the future. The second group of participants was composed of junior managers and employees working in the public sector who were asked to give their unique point of view on the set of skills that an ideal agile manager should exhibit to successfully manage employees to work effectively in turbulent and unpredictable times while coping with the challenges inherent in the creation of future governments.

To ensure people were not influenced by existing theories on skills, archetype cards were developed, using descriptions and animals' pictures to help spark creative thinking. A total of 14 archetypes were developed. Blank archetype cards were also made available, for those who wanted to create their own typology.

The sessions were divided into multiple activities and tightly monitored for time. Time management as a skill was reinforced as an important quality of working under pressure and ensuring tasks were completed. Initially participants were told to focus only on the first side of the card (the pictures) to see which symbolisms they were attracted to for a manager or employee typology. The symbols chosen were as far as possible relevant to the UAE. Each picture also had a descriptor (see Exhibit 2 & 3).



EXHIBIT 2: Archetypes

Symbol	Descriptor	Symbol	Descriptor
Falcon	Visionary	Fox	Adventurer
Sidr Bee	Networker	Camel	Explorer
Mountain Goat	Rebel	Seagull	Wanderer
Horse	Maverick	Turtle	Ambassador
Owl	Sage	Ant	Innovator/Entrepreneur
Snake	Gambler	Butterfly	Dreamer
Ghaf tree	Servant/Mentor	Monkey	Entertainer

EXHIBIT 3: Sample of an Archetype Card



Participants were then asked to flip the cards around and read the descriptions, change/modify them if needed, and highlight the skills they felt most relevant. This was done as an individual exercise to limit group bias.

Participants then used stickers to vote on skills most required for agile employees or agile managers. Groups were encouraged to cluster

similar skills and come up with their own names for the skills. This was done to prevent strong ownership to one idea. No reference to existing skills (as previous research had identified) were given. Participants were then asked as a group to write the skills of an agile employee or manager and create a typology archetype (see Exhibit 4).

EXHIBIT 4: Archetype Ideal Manager/Employee

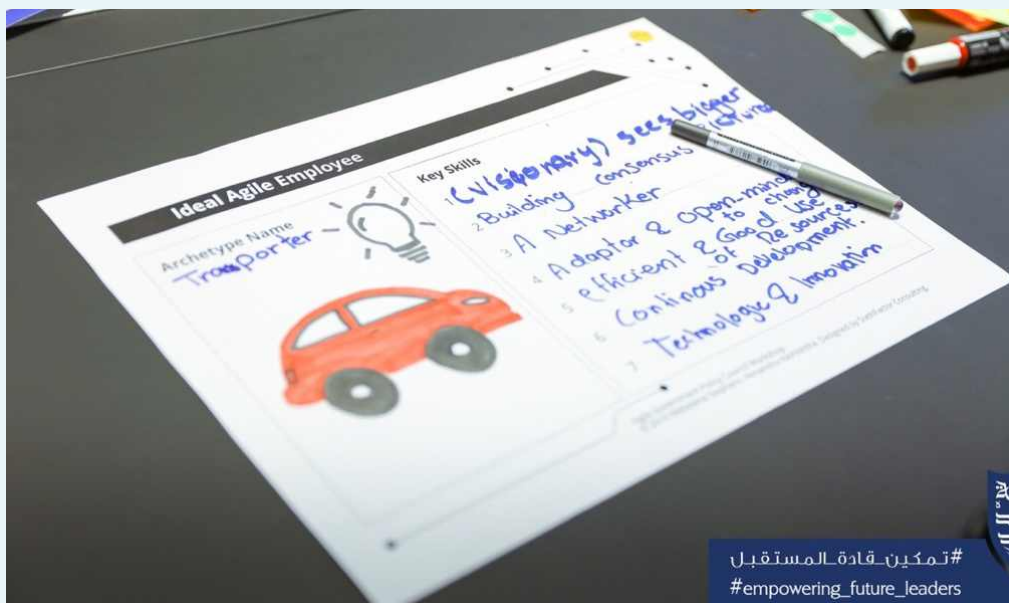


EXHIBIT 5: Wish list of Employees Skills Typology



In addition, Group 1 classified archetypes into top, middle and lower management (see Exhibit 5). This was to understand what senior managers were looking for in terms of peers and junior employees and identify any gaps present in the skills between the various levels.

Later, each subgroup in Group 1 and Group 2 were asked to come up with a story (see Exhibit 6). The scenario was an extreme one, a crisis situation. Groups were free to come up with any situation, past, present, future, that were plausibility real and showcase how some of the

EXHIBIT 6: Crisis Storyboard



“ ” **CRISES SITUATION**

AGILE MANAGER

How will an agile manager use his top three skills to resolve the crisis?

1

2

3

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agile skills they shortlisted were used. The focus of this exercise was to understand what made these skills important.

As impulses, posters were also strategically placed around the room. Examples of the posters are given in Exhibit 7. To support the participants, there were at least four facilitators working with the groups in each session.

Four crisis situations were imagined by the managers – AI ethics breach, fake news about an Ebola epidemic, a high profile 3-day international event where the internet was erratic, and a data breach where 800,000 health cards were released to the public. Five crisis situations were imagined by the employees - an airport closure due to an unauthorized drone, a sudden school closure, an Ebola epidemic, a situation where high unemployment was destabilizing the country

and a gas leakage and the subsequent evacuation of a population. All had consequences on the country and it required managers and their employees to go 'above and beyond'. The skills they highlighted was how an agile employee or manager or leader would deal with the unexpected situation. In all cases, the emphasis was on teams rather than any one individual. Suggesting agile managers need agile employees and vice versa. An agile employee would not exist without an agile manager.

In all cases, the emphasis was on teams rather than any one individual. Suggesting agile managers need agile employees and vice versa. An agile employee would not exist without an agile manager.

EXHIBIT 7: Agile Government Posters

AGILE GOVERNMENT

Tension 1

Policies must have foresight yet should be fluid enough to iterate for the future. What are the employee skills this demands?

AGILE GOVERNMENT

Tension 2

The organizations themselves must display versatility, collaboration and resilience - this suggest an organic response to complex challenges. What skills must employees display at both an individual level and a collective level?

AGILE GOVERNMENT

Tension 3

The organization must have the ability to create stability in the face of change and increasing volatility, taking the role of harmonizing and legitimizing. What are the skills employees must display?

AGILE GOVERNMENT

FLUIDNESS & FORESIGHT
The ability to create policies that can take into account the uncertainty and ambiguity of the future

EXHIBIT 1: AGILE GOVERNMENTS: STRUCTURAL TENSIONS

Agile Government

VERSATILITY, COLLABORATION AND RESILIENCE
The ability to adapt to complex challenges

HARMONIZATION & LEGITIMACY
The ability to create stability in the face of change and increasing volatility

Governments must be quick and responsive in a strategic way. This means being aware of Emerging opportunities, being able to make tough collective decisions and stick to them, and Mobilizing appropriate financial and human resources rapidly and efficiently to where/when they are needed most. - OECD

There was a slight variance in methodology between group 1 and 2 (see Exhibit 8).

EXHIBIT 8: Methodology

Group 1 Activities	Group 2 Activities
<p>Task 1: Sort cards into three management levels (top, middle, lower management) - Create an ideal wish list</p> <p>Activity type: Individual</p> <p>Objective: Understand type of archetypes managers preferred at each level to understand skill gaps</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p>	<p>Task 1: To find the typology and skills of an agile manager - participants worked with archetype cards. Individuals chose two cards from a set of two archetype cards (28 cards with additional 6 blank cards).</p> <p>Activity type: Individuals</p> <p>Objective: Start creative brainstorming process, symbolism, start identifying skills.</p> <p>Time: 10 minutes</p>
<p>Task 1: To find the typology of an agile employee - working with archetype cards, participants needed to choose, customize cards, and using five green stickers find five skills representative of an agile employee. They wrote these five skills on Post-its which they put in the center of the work table. After which, they stuck their archetypes on the wall.</p> <p>Activity type: Individual</p> <p>Objective: Start creative brainstorming process, symbolism</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p>	<p>Task 2: Employee Archetype - Participants flipped the cards and chose skills most representative of an agile manager, wrote it on a Post-its and these were put in the center of the table. Each participant used their five voting stickers to vote for the skills of an agile manager. The group then sorted, classified and selected the five most voted skills and filled the archetype card.</p> <p>Activity type: Individual/Group</p> <p>Objective: to find the skills that are required to show leadership in an agile government</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p>
<p>Task 3: Employee Archetype - Using the skills written on Post-it, participants sorted, classified and selected seven skills to create an archetype of an Agile employee.</p> <p>Activity type: Group</p> <p>Objective: to find the skills that are required to show leadership in an agile government and move up the ranks.</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p>	<p>Task 3: Storyboard</p> <p>Activity type: Group</p> <p>Objective: To come up with a scenario where at least three skills of the agile manager could be illustrated</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes</p>
<p>Task 4: Storyboard</p> <p>Activity type: Group</p> <p>Objective: To come up with a scenario where at least three skills could be illustrated</p> <p>Time: 30minutes</p>	<p>Task 4: Tell a Story & Feedback</p> <p>Activity type: Individual</p> <p>Objective: To get the participant understanding on what they thought an agile government was, what were their fears, and what were the skills they felt were necessary.</p> <p>Time: 30 minutes (was combined with storytelling)</p>
<p>Task 5: Tell a Story & Feedback</p> <p>Activity type: Individual</p> <p>Objective: Participants told a short story illustrating the skills. They took five minutes. A feedback form was also given to get the participant understanding on what they thought an agile government was, what were their fears, and what were the skills they felt were necessary.</p> <p>Time: 20 minutes</p>	



Findings

Is There a Skills Gap? Yes! In Knowledge, Perception and Evaluation.

An analysis of the symbolic skills shortlisted by the managers based on archetype cards, there are different expectation of agile skills for employees at various levels as represented by Exhibit 9. The skills highlighted in each typology

also differ (Exhibit 9 & 10). This reinforces the fact that all skills identified by previous studies are highly relevant but the skills grouping may differ based on the management level.

EXHIBIT 9: Skills Across Levels

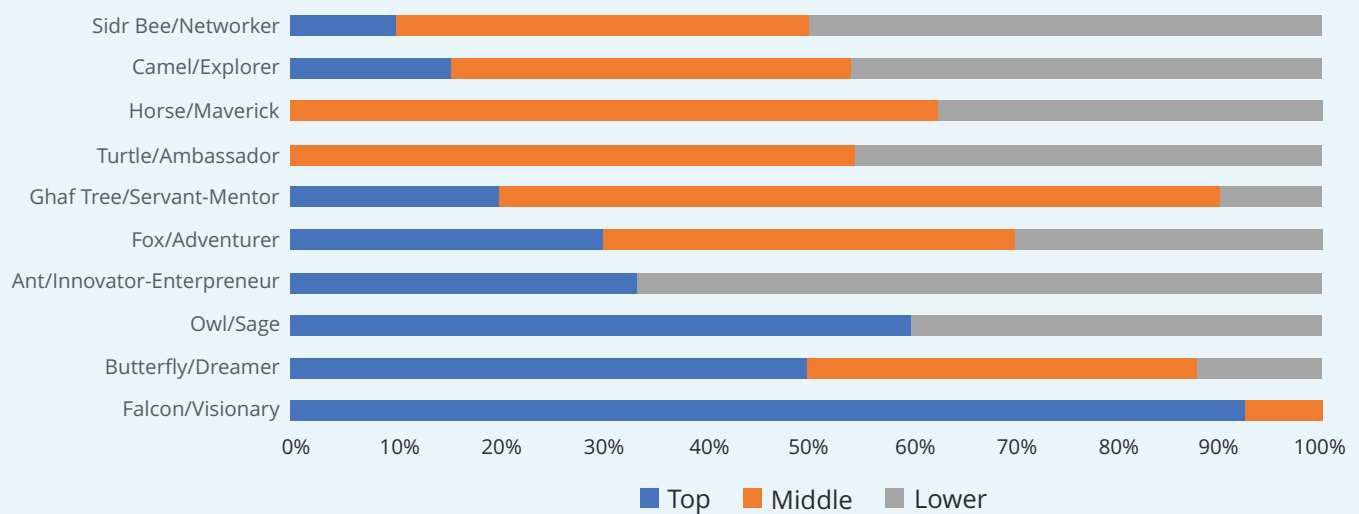


EXHIBIT 10: Top archetypes and skills highlighted

Category	Top Management Skills	Middle Management Skills	Lower Management
Falcon/Visionary	Big picture, problem solver	-	Foster loyal relationship
Butterfly/Dreamer	Loves to interact with various groups, thinker	Can come up with right ideas with inspiration	Thinker
Owl/Sage	Clarity of decision making	-	Gets 360 degree feedback
Ant/Innovator-Entrepreneur	Able to get others to follow them	Finds a way or makes a way	Finds a way or makes a way, get others to follow
Fox/Adventurer	-	Will challenge established norms	Takes risk
Ghaf tree/Servant-Mentor	Mentors and protects weaker ones allowing them to thrive	Ability to tap into additional resources, ecosystem builder	-
Turtle/Ambassador	Not chosen	Needs a challenge	Enjoy new journeys, aligned to cause, idealist and advocates on behalf of others
Horse/Maverick	Chosen but no skill highlighted	High spirited, values independence	Fast learner, great endurance
Camel/Explorer	Will shoulder additional burden when needed	Will shoulder additional burden when needed	Brave and not afraid of difficult situations
Sidr Bee/Networker	Team player	-	Believes in the vision

On diving down deeper into previous studies on skills, and classifying these skills, we have identified three categories of skills: policy entrepreneurship skills, boundary spanning skills and transformational skills. A combination of these skills are required to solve the three tensions present in an agile government, suggesting teams will succeed and not individuals (see Exhibit 11).

Policy Entrepreneurship Skills

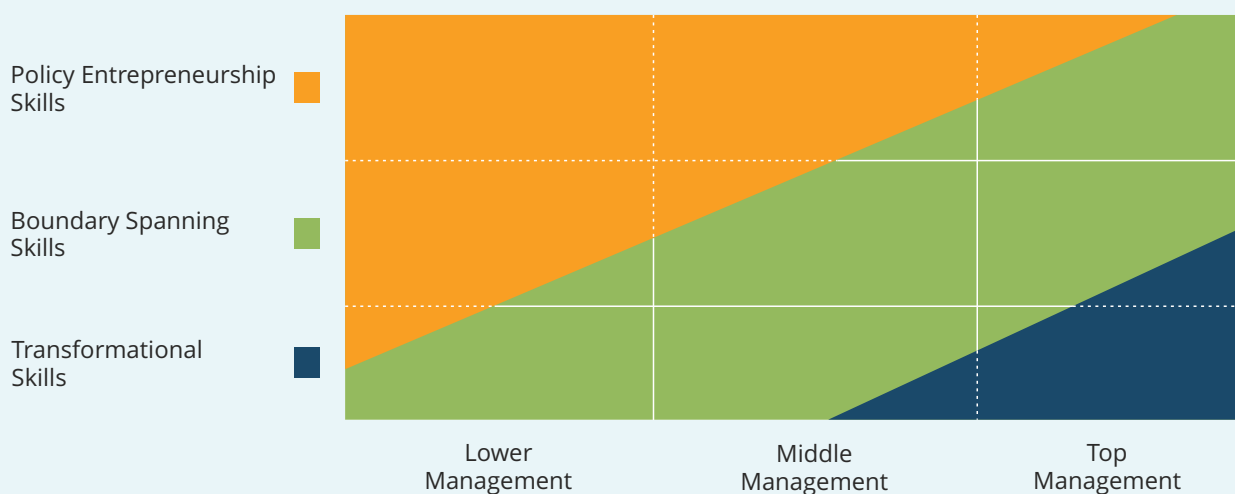
At the lowest management level, is the policy entrepreneurship skills which is by far, the easiest type of skills to identify for the agile employee. These skills are also the most rewarded as they are based on individual employee capabilities – not necessarily the employee contribution to collective organizational performance. Policy entrepreneurship skills are linked to the actions, behavior and qualities of dynamic policy actors in pursuit of policy change^{xxi}. These employees often work behind the scenes, where they ‘chase’ problems with

recommended solutions.^{xxii} The skills are often associated with founder type behaviours, and it requires self-motivation to succeed and skills like insurgency.

Boundary Spanning Skills

The next level of management, i.e. middle management, is strongly associated with boundary spanning skills, though these skills are something an upwardly mobile employee at lower management needs to develop as they have to “sell” their policy ideas to get buy-in at the highest level and to diverse networks to collaboratively work towards a common agenda.^{xxiii} Ideally, middle management should have strong characteristics of boundary spanning skills as they work between levels and across departments and organizations (horizontally and vertically), and internationally to deliver results. Boundary spanning skills revolve around four functions: exchanging, linking, facilitating, and intervening with information, ideas, knowledge, talent, resources and decisions.^{xxiv}

EXHIBIT 11: Agile Government Skills by Management Level



As you progress up the management level, more boundary and transformational skills are required, and less policy entrepreneurship skills

At lower management this may be at an individual level but at senior management, boundary spanning skills should be at an organizational level, where the focus is creating communities and ethical decision making.

Transformational Skills

This leads us to the next category of skills, which are transformational skills. In the government sector where roles are embedded in complex social structures, increasing complex environments, and limited access to information, more employees with boundary spanning and transformational skills will be required, especially if we are to harness tacit information.^{xxv} Tacit information exchange will flourish where there is a trust based relationship as boundary spanners face tremendous challenges in dealing with tensions and ambiguities arising from complexity, multiple accountabilities, and governance forms, which may suggest they can develop these skills to the next level of skills which are transformational skills.^{xxvi}

Transformational skills are often a sign of a charismatic leader. A transformational leader is one that is able to (1) encourage their

employees through intellectual stimulation for creative problem solving, (2) support them or help them help themselves, with individualized consideration for assignment development and building personal relationships, and (3) provides inspiration, faith and respect to allow commitment and emotional attachment to the leaders future vision.^{xxvii} Agile employees with transformational skills are team players and use participative decision making, and elective delegation.^{xxviii}

In the workshop, participants identified and shortlisted various skills. In the management category, 37 skills were shortlisted for top management, 45 skills in middle management and 40 skills for the lower management. Employees shortlisted 44 skills for an agile manager after discarding 39 other skills from their shortlist. These 73 skills were clustered around the three types of category of skills: the Policy Entrepreneurship Skills, Boundary Spanning Skills and Transformational Skills and then grouped for comparison with existing skills identified. After clustering we identified 12 skills and have put the definitions of the same below (see Exhibit 12).



EXHIBIT 12: Agile Government Skills Defined

Skill	Definition	Skill Category
Policy Entrepreneurship Skills	More individual performance skills, and involves founder type skills and self-motivation to succeed in new areas	
Adaptable	Is able to use cognitive flexibility to change thinking as required over long periods of time	Policy Entrepreneurship
Insurgency	Willing to challenge existing norms and imaginative about how to get things done	Policy Entrepreneurship
Enterprising	Is goal oriented, yet curious about options and willing to take risks in implementing innovative ideas, but using iterations to do so. Has objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement	Policy Entrepreneurship
Achievement Oriented	Strong internal locus of control and knows how to get things done efficiently and effectively, yet willing to shoulder additional burden if needed	Policy Entrepreneurship

Boundary Spanning Skills	The ability to connect and work with different groups and individuals to get “buy-in” to deliver results. Involves four functions: exchanging, linking, facilitating, and intervening with information, ideas, knowledge, talent, resources and decisions	
Facilitator	Is able to connect people (within and outside the organization) to get flow of information, ideas, knowledge, resources hence contributing to the ecosystem	Boundary Spanning
Networking Skills	Is able to work with multiple groups and bring diverse people together, for alignment to the cause	Boundary Spanning
Resourcefulness	Is able to tap into self and others for additional resources to find a way to get things done	Boundary Spanning
Improviser	Is able to creatively solve difficult problems using whatever resources are available	Boundary Spanning

Transformational Skills	This is the ability of a leader to not only articulate path to the future and get buy-in through mentorship, building of teams and facilitating personal growth	
High Level Vision	Is able to articulate a future that inspired others, yet is realistically grounded in the present	Transformational Skills
Resilient	Is able to bounce back after a set-back to former or at an even higher level	Transformational Skills
People Centered	Is able to build high functioning teams through identifying talent, training, developing and motivating individuals that trust each other to perform their best	Transformational Skills
Advocacy	Is able to champion other people and causes to get traction and alignment with diverse groups	Transformational Skills

There is a mismatch on what skill managers think are important and what skills employees think are important for managers to help them succeed (see Exhibit 13). For example, managers thought the ability to be “dreamers” might be important, but as one employee clarified, “Not every leader needs to have the best idea, it's about creating an ecosystem and letting others run with their great idea.”

Managers perceived their top skill is to be visionary and long-term thinking, and while employees agree, their interpretation is slightly different where they are looking at managers to take a more problem solving role and create stronger (or more strategic) relationships. They stressed that it was important that their managers could communicate quietly to all related parties.

Managers felt their skills were to be problem solvers and be able to make clear decisions, the employees agree but with a much lower emphasis. The ability to manage teams and not spread panic was highlighted in crisis stories from both managers and leaders.

Managers must take mentorship roles, which was emphasized more by employees than managers. In many of the stories, since the

crisis situations did not have precedent, it required quick ‘out of the box’ thinking (highlighted by employees). Employees stressed that their managers should be open minded and quick to create new policies and ‘do what is right, even against the odds’.

It was clear that the managers needed to (1) work with small teams with implicit trust that they would get the work done, (2) work with other departments or entities and if needed convince them to get involved, and (3) have a unified goal and message.

Managers placed a higher emphasis on boundary spanning skills but this would be the case when the middle management has not been sufficiently developed to succeed. This came across in each of the crisis cases where the leaders and their teams had no choice but to work with various stakeholder’s. As one employee articulated, time was of essence and it was about getting everyone to agree to a common agenda. Either you already had developed these relationships (which took time and patience) or you had no choice but to collaborate as the crisis was greater than the internal rivalry. A key barrier identified for an agile government to succeed was the resistance to collaborate between various

EXHIBIT 13: Weightage of Skills Emphasis for an Agile Manager

Skill Category	Level of Importance	
	Employee Perception of Manger	Manager Self-perception
Policy Entrepreneurship	24.5%	37.8%
Boundary Spanning	28.6%	44.4%
Transformational Skills	46.9%	17.8%

stakeholders, which was attributed to the commitment to one's personal agenda versus collective agenda. Sometimes this was an outcome of fear and uncertainty which is a common scenario in political environments. This also further highlights the need for "matchmaking between talents and opportunities".

Similarly, managers placed an almost similar weightage on policy entrepreneurship and transformational skills. This would also be the case if the lower management skills were not sufficiently developed to help teams succeed. Managers indicated the importance of employees at lower levels having the skills of adaptability (policy entrepreneurship skill) and resourcefulness (boundary spanning skills). Yet too often, employees have little decision-making authority and without that support, it was hard for employees to know what they were able to do or could not do. In the crisis stories, managers highlighted the need for agile employees to find evidence to support their

decisions, getting validation of ideas, by 'diving deep' into the issue', and identifying the original cause of the problem. Managers wanted agile employees to bring all relevant stakeholder together to and getting 'collective action'.

Employees in contrast put the highest weightage of skills for their managers in the transformational skills category and then policy entrepreneurship skills followed by boundary spanning skills. This scenario will be true when there is huge interdepartmental rivalry and competition requiring co-opetition skills. Employees need to feel that their managers had their backs especially when they were being asked to work outside their comfort zone and in areas that were not officially outlined in their "job roles and responsibilities". Often leaders are expected to lead by being role models and in the early stages of creating an agile government, this may be perceived as important, which is why policy entrepreneurship skills are being highlighted.





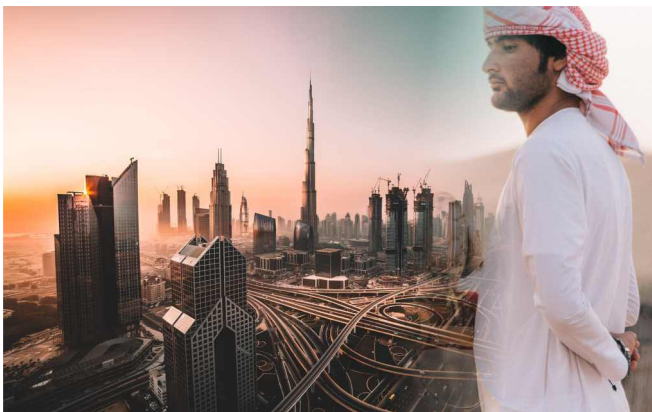
Recommendations

The purpose of this first Public Policy Council on Agile Governments was to identify the skills needed for the UAE government employees to ensure agility in government policies and responses. This is aligned with the OECD (2017) main conclusion that the first step towards

developing a fit-for-purpose civils service for the twenty-first century should be to identify the skills needed. Based on the results of the activities carried out with more than 50 high level government officials, we propose the following three recommendations.



Continue to Develop a UAE Agile Government Agenda



For creating a strong agile government, there is a need to have a common foundation in terms of understanding what agile government means and what skills are required in that context. As seen in Appendix 1 (Skills Mapping),

there are many skills identified under the categories of policy entrepreneurship skills, boundary spanning skills, and transformational skills.

Each government department and organization must choose from the portfolio of skills available, keeping in mind the employee management level, organizational purpose, organizational size and the needs of the future organization. Clearly the skills gap between levels will grow, especially in scenarios where public sector employees may be promoted based on length of service or other criteria, and this will lead to inefficiencies in the system.



Revisit and Redeploy Effective HR Policies to Attract, Develop and Retain Agile Employees

To develop agile employees, there needs to be strong onboarding, continuous training and systematic performance appraisals. Often new employees did not have sufficient knowledge about work responsibilities, let alone the inventory of skills they must develop not the competencies needed to succeed in the job.

Continuous training is required to help employees develop to their full potential and to move between levels or across organizations. One of the challenges for the government will be, as articulated by a

manager, “how to keep them [employees] updated with new knowledge without

“Supporting a learning culture in the civil service will ensure that skills are up to date allowing the workforce to keep up with the fast-changing nature of work. This means investing in learning opportunities, developing carrier paths, and reinforcing managers' responsibility to develop their employees” (OECD, 2017) ^{xxix}

destroying the flow of work?" In terms of work responsibilities, a key barrier for performance was the perceived gap between what is wished for in terms of delivery and what is being rewarded.

For performance appraisal, best practices would be to have a 360-degree feedback, alignment to government vision, interdepartmental collaboration (not MOUs but more robust metrics), and a fair judgment of employee commitment to networking and support for innovation. By promoting

employees without the rights skills, in the absence of training, we may actually be hurting the capacity of agile government.

Having said this, all skills identified may not be required.

Further, the ability of a manager to be able to approach those employee with the requisite skills and second them for projects is also much needed in the government sector. This requires the organizational culture to be welcoming to new talent.



Install a Learning Culture in Organizations to Support Agility

An agile government needs a collaborative culture with a mindset of experimentation. As the government of the future, it must be as one participant stated, "open to change, accepts uncertainty of circumstances, free of bureaucracy but regulated."

Though innovation was commonly spoken about, there is much work to be done at each level of government on education of what is innovation (versus creativity), designing experiments, understanding resources required, deploying resources and monitoring innovations and their impact.

An organization culture encouraging experimentation, needs to have a tolerance for failure and transparency in discussing the

learning from experimentation. If only successes are discussed, there is no learning nor any understanding of the routes to success which is needed for an innovative culture. With policies there needs to be a culture of evidence-based policy research that would encourage validation of ideas and ensure rapid prototyping, and flexibility of change.

The results of this report are applicable to the broader management context and more work needs to be done on understanding which skills can be taught and are transferable, which skills come with experience, and which skills are innate capabilities.





Appendix: Skills Mapping - Public Sector

	Skills Identified for Public Sector	British Council Future Skills (2018)	UAE 12 Advanced Skills for the Future Workforce (2019)	OECD 6 Innovation Skills in Public Sector (2017)	Education 2030 OECD Future of Skills (2018)	OECD High Performing Civil Service (2017)	WEF Future for 2022 (2018)	McKinsey 2030 (2018)	World Government Summit & PWC (2019)	Agile Government Workshop (2019)
LITERACY SKILLS (Individual and life long learning)	Growth Mindset	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
	Data Literacy	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓*
	Judgment and Decision Making	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Scientific Literacy	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Financial Literacy	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Tech Literacy	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
POLICY ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS (More individual performance skills, and involves founder type skills and self-motivation to succeed)	Adaptability	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Insurgency	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Enterprising	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	User Centricity	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Policy Advisory Skills	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Commissioning Skills	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓*
	Achievement Oriented	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
BOUNDARY SPANNING SKILLS (The ability to connect and work with different groups and individuals to get "buy-in" to deliver results)	Facilitation	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Reconciling Tensions & Dilemma	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
	Problem Solving	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓
	Communication	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓*
	Network Management Skills	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Negotiation	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓*
	Coordinating with Others	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓*
	Collaboration	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Resourcefulness	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Social & Cultural Awareness	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓*
Improvising	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	
TRANSFORMATIVE SKILLS (This is the ability of a leader to not only articulate path to the future and get buy-in through mentorship, building of teams and facilitating personal growth)	High Level Strategic Planning	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Leadership	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	Complex Problem Solving	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Taking Responsibility	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓*
	Service Orientation	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Resilient (overlaps with EI)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Emotional Intelligence	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	People Centricity	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
	Creating Shared Value	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
	Engagement Skills	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Empathy	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓*
	Advocacy	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓*
	Storytelling	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓

* Subset of skills category, implied in qualitative data and research

Skills Definitions

Growth Mindset

Ability to believe in and pursue self-development through dedication and hard work

Data Literacy

that, wherever possible, decisions should be based on data, not hunches or guesses

Judgment and decision making

The ability to judge, make a decision or form an opinion objectively, authoritatively and wisely, especially in matters affecting action

Scientific Literacy

Ability to use scientific principles to understand one's environment and test hypotheses

Financial Literacy

Ability to understand and apply conceptual and numerical aspects of finance in practice

Tech Literacy

Ability to understand, use and emerging technologies to effectively access and manipulate data and find and share information to enhance learning and working environments

Adaptability

(includes cognitive flexibility)

Is able to use cognitive flexibility to change thinking as required over long periods of time

Insurgency

Is imaginative, willing to challenge existing norms and imaginative about how to get things done

Enterprising

(includes Critical thinking, creativity and innovation)

Also overlaps with User Centricity, Policy Advisory and Commissioning Skills)

Is goal oriented, yet curious about options and willing to take risks in implementing innovative ideas. Has objective analysis and evaluation of an issue in order to form a judgement and will use iterations to do so.

User Centricity (overlaps with Enterprising Skills)

having services and policies that solve user needs, with users considered at every stage at the process

Policy Advisory Skills

Evidence based support for decision making

Commissioning Skills

Designing, Monitoring and implementing Project

Achievement Oriented

Strong internal locus of control and knows how to get things done efficiently and effectively, yet willing to shoulder additional burden if needed

Facilitation (includes reconciling tensions & dilemmas & complex problem solving, communication)

Is able to connect people (within and outside the organization) to get flow of information, ideas, knowledge, resources hence contributing to the ecosystem

Reconciling Tensions & Dilemma Not only can individuals think for themselves and work with others. Equally and creativity for problem solving but they are able to consider the future consequences of one's actions, to evaluate risk and reward, and to accept accountability for the products of one's work.

Problem Solving

Defined as a higher-order cognitive process that requires the (1) breakdown of complex problems (2) identifying key stakeholders (3) negotiating agenda setting to get to a solution

Communication

Ability to listen, understand, convey, and alter information to different audiences

Network Management Skills (includes negotiation, coordinating with others, and collaboration,) Collaborate with a wide range of independent partners to address complex or wicked problems - by developing a shared understanding of the problem, collectively identifying possible solutions and co-implementation

Negotiation

Discussion aimed at reaching an agreement

Coordinating with Others

Bring the different elements of a complex activity or organisation into a harmonious or efficient relationship, collaborating across borders.

Collaboration

Ability to work in a team toward a common goal, adjusting responses to others' actions as needed in order to advance group goals

Resourcefulness (includes Social & Cultural Awareness)

Is able to tap into self and others for additional resources to find a way to get things done

Social & Cultural Awareness

Ability to navigate conflict, reconcile differences, and interact with other people in a socially, culturally and ethically, beyond your boundary in appropriate way to solve problems

Improvising

Is able to creatively solve difficult problems using whatever resources are available (overlaps with creativity/innovation)

Skills Mapping designed by Marouen Ghazel (MBSRG)



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