

SUMMARY

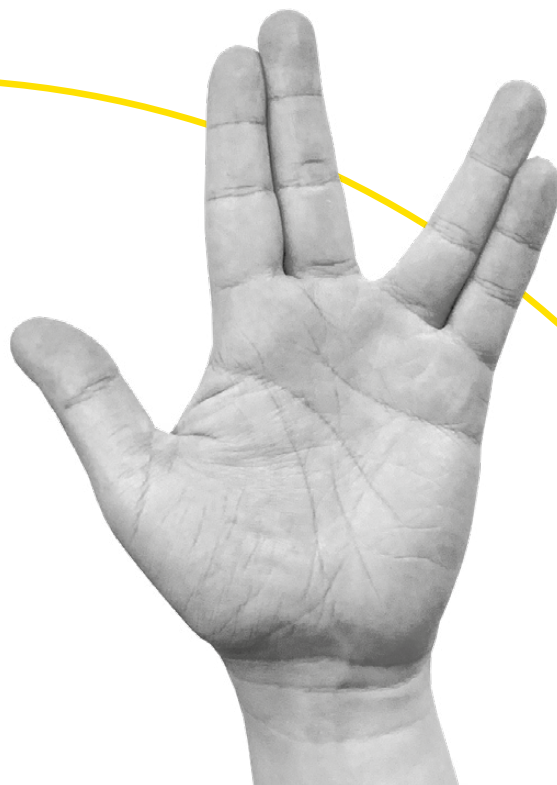
# FUTURE SKILLS ARE CREATED IN ECOSYSTEMS

Description of the new skills system



*“The need to renew skills and mindsets concerns all people and the entire skills system. Future skills are created in ecosystems by people, businesses and other organisations working together.”*

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# Why a new skills system?

This summary describes how new skills are created in Finland and explores a new skills system that makes lifelong learning possible for everyone. The description of the new skills system is intended for use by all national and regional actors involved in lifelong learning and all those interested in the comprehensive renewal of competence. The new skills system is explained in more detail in the publication “Tulevaisuuden osaaminen syntyy ekosysteemeissä” (Future skills are created in ecosystems).

The results of the publication reflect the shared vision of 30 key actors representing working life, education, and the public sector on lifelong learning in Finland and Sitra’s seven recommendations to promote lifelong learning. The description of the new skills system is based on Sitra’s co-operation with stakeholders and pilot projects carried out in various parts of Finland, as well as studies produced by Sitra.

The rapidly changing operating environment challenges us to continuously renew our skills and thinking. This need for renewal is reflected throughout the skills system and concerns everyone. To enable continuous renewal, particular attention needs to be paid to the development of four elements: competence data, needs-based approach, having an ecosystem-oriented approach, and making a measurable impact.



# Reform of mindsets in the new skills system

The rapidly changing operating environment challenges us to continuously renew our competence, methods of development and collaboration and thinking. Competence is never static, but it evolves and takes shape throughout life.

## The changing working life requires a strong competence identity

For individuals, competence ecosystems offer an opportunity for networking, learning together and revising one's skills. The ability and will to connect to diverse networks is strongly connected to the concept of competence identity. People who have a strong competence identity, can identify and communicate their competence and perceive the best ways to use it.

### What is a community with a strong competence identity like?

- It can identify the community's diverse and evolving competence and also acknowledge how it can be used in the future.
- It can also identify its competence shortages, is capable of supplementing and developing its competence and finds suitable partners to supplement its competence, if necessary.

### Direction of competence management and strategic development

- Collaboration and networking are seen as important tools for developing competence.
- An organisation whose members all have a strong competence identity have the ability to enrich and benefit the community in full.

Risk: If an organisation is not outward-looking, it will not pursue new competence. In practice, the organisation shuts itself off and ends up protecting its current competence.

## Ecosystems make it possible to challenge and renew our mindsets

*“Individuals, ecosystems and society cannot evolve if we strictly stick to the learned mental models. A systems change is possible only when each stakeholder is prepared to analyse and change their mental models and the ways they operate.”*

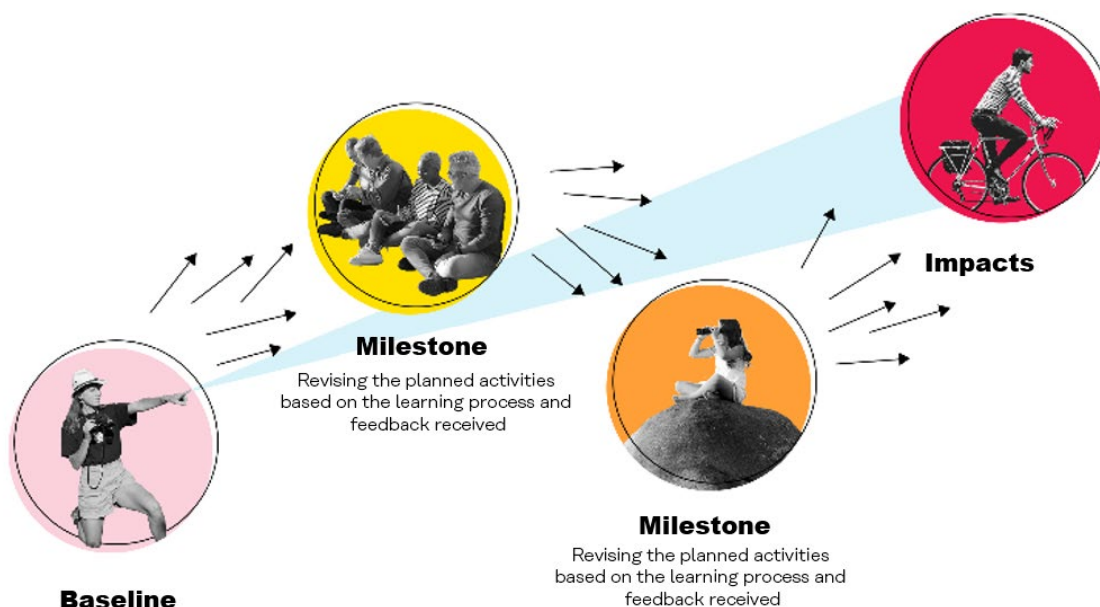
The dynamic nature of the new skills system and its ability to renew itself depends on how diverse and close an interaction between the different parties within the competence ecosystem can be created. The ability to learn together and from each other is essential.

## Funding criteria that emphasise the impacts of development work

The choice and wording of financing criteria make it possible to adhere to the desired long-term development plans and accelerate the achievement of impacts through the use of pilot projects and experiments.

Adopting an iterative approach to the allocation of funding allows decision-makers to monitor the implementation of pilot projects and ensure the desired outcome more closely. Steering can adapt the activities to reach the desired result.

A model in which not all resources are fixed makes it possible to also suspend the project, redirect the activity or goal and reallocate funding.



# The new skills system and the prerequisites for its success

The new skills system is a model of learning that can be employed in the workplace, during leisure time and within the education system. The model focuses particularly on the development of competence in working life and outside the education system. Most new competence is gained outside the education system. Individuals and businesses also have a need to create and share knowledge outside of a formal educational environment. The forms of learning outside the education system need to be revised, even though the education system does have an important role in supporting learning at work.

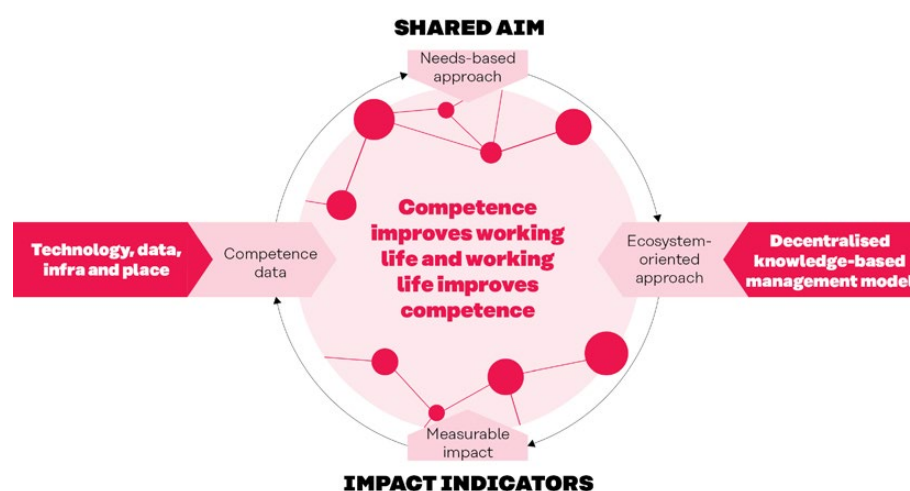


Figure 1. presents the new skills system at different levels: in cross-organisational and regional competence ecosystems and at the national level. The prerequisites for the success of the new skills system are competence data, being needs-based, having an ecosystem-oriented approach and making a measurable impact. The four elements are connected to all activities of the skills system.

# 1

## Competence data

In this context, competence data means a wide range of data related to competence, learning-related preconditions and needs, and the operating environment and changes therein. Having access to competence data is important for measuring the impact of actions related to lifelong learning, facilitating co-operation and managing the activities in a more targeted manner.

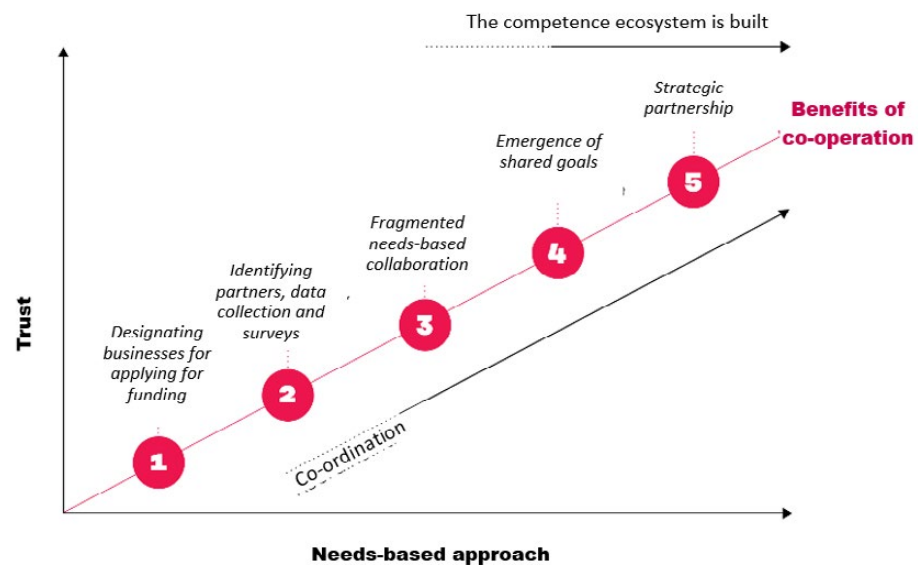
High-quality data is essential for both management and setting future goals. In the new skills system, closed data held by public authorities and open data from the public and private sectors make up a complementary data foundation for the development of operations. A knowledge-based operating model makes it possible to interpret data together and thereby continuously update the common direction. With everyone having access to data indicating the results of activities, each party can directly observe how well the measures generate the desired outcomes.

# 2

## Being needs-based

Both competence ecosystems and partnerships require high-quality and up-to-date information about the actual needs of people and businesses.

In order to ensure being needs-based and for the development work to have an impact, the perspectives of businesses must be considered during the preparation phases of the projects. The long-term nature of development emerges from understanding customers' needs and paying attention to the effects and impact of the measures.



The five-step model summarises things that need to be taken into consideration in the development of ecosystems and partnerships. A “win-win-win mindset” and building trust are vital to maintain and promote goal-oriented collaboration within the competence ecosystem. The emergence of strategic partnerships requires shared goals, joint development and making the activities and their tools flexible. The models for co-operation require a form and a co-ordinator. The modelling also functions as a tool for allocating funding and self-evaluation.



### 3

## **Ecosystem-oriented approach**

An ecosystem-oriented approach is a tool for companies, other organisations and individual people to cope with a world that is changing rapidly and becoming increasingly complex. Linking an organisation’s or individual’s needs and goals with the ecosystem’s shared needs and goals results in more sustainable success. Goal-driven co-operation characterised by high-quality interaction makes diverse competence and high-quality data available to everyone, thereby creating added value for all the parties involved.

## **Joint view of the situation**

A joint view of the situation is required as the starting point for development and for creating a joint understanding. Ideally, it is the parties’ joint understanding of the challenges of the development work and the resources used in it. This joint understanding and mapping of a region’s competence identity are prerequisites for regional vitality.

- The view of the situation in the region should be continuously updated together. Its guiding impact is created in this way, and the joint direction is maintained amid changes in the operating environment.
- The emergence of a joint view of the situation requires interpreting data together, discussing and giving meaning to the data, and it lays the foundation for drawing conclusions.
- A tripartite foundation comprised of businesses, the public sector and education institutions creates a comprehensive base for building the future.



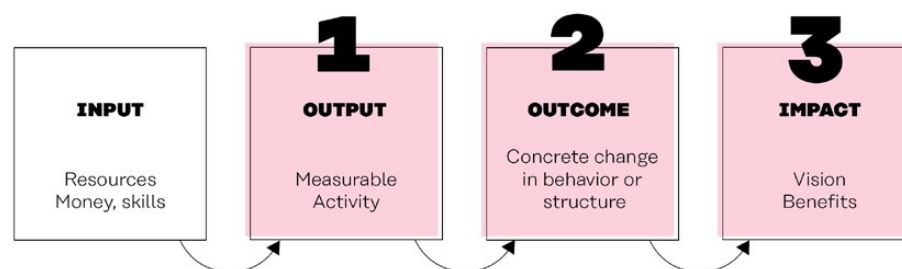
## 4

## Measurable impacts

The impact of the activities is ensured by assessing the effect of the actions taken by various participants. There is a need for more comprehensive performance indicators that collectively guide co-operation between various parties. They help measure the extent to which the conditions for the comprehensive renewal of competence are realised in working life and at the national level.

In achieving the desired change, it is important to understand which outcomes result in impact. When pursuing change, it is easy to perceive the desired impact, such as an improved employment rate. On the other hand, the direct outputs of a development programme, for example, are also easy to specify. What are most difficult to specify are the outcomes, pursued two or three years from now. Impact thinking helps to achieve results, and it supports success in management, funding and development activities.

### IOOI model



## A collection of indicators enables the integration of feedback

A collection of indicators jointly agreed upon by all sectors of government is needed to monitor the overall impact of measures to promote lifelong learning. The collection of indicators helps decision-makers and other parties to monitor the impacts of development efforts and allocate their efforts with increasing impact.

# Competence improves working life and working life improves competence

Ecosystems are a way of responding to multifaceted changes and competence challenges that no party can solve alone. Local competence ecosystems comprised of businesses, education institutions and the public sector make it possible for competence to improve working life. Goal-oriented co-operation provides everyone with added value, and it is also a way of reforming.

## A new way of learning in working life

As a place of learning, a working community differs from education institutions in that learning takes place directly in context. New operating methods and co-operation models can be developed by learning from hands-on activities and developing through experimentation. It is important to give rise to a separate framework of learning at work that does not repeat old operating models and, for example, transfer models or ways of working from the educational context that will not translate to the working community.

## Developing local competence ecosystems

- A** Modelling learning at work requires applicable resources from organisations.
- B** The capability to learn at work requires structures for learning and facilitating diverse paths for learning.
- C** Peer learning groups and mentoring packages based on the idea of learning from peers are functional solutions for increasing interactive learning at work.
- D** Education institutions are required to develop the strategy, operating methods, and provision of lifelong learning to flexibly respond to the needs of working life in real-time. The development takes place in genuine co-operation with working life, learning together.

In an organisation's operating culture, sights should be set on the world outside. Individuals are provided with space to join networks, in which the renewal of competence takes place. Organisations are provided with an opportunity to form competence ecosystems in which they can tackle challenges together that cannot be resolved alone. A working community is an excellent learning environment because the starting point is not to take people out of the workplace but to facilitate learning at work.



# Conclusion

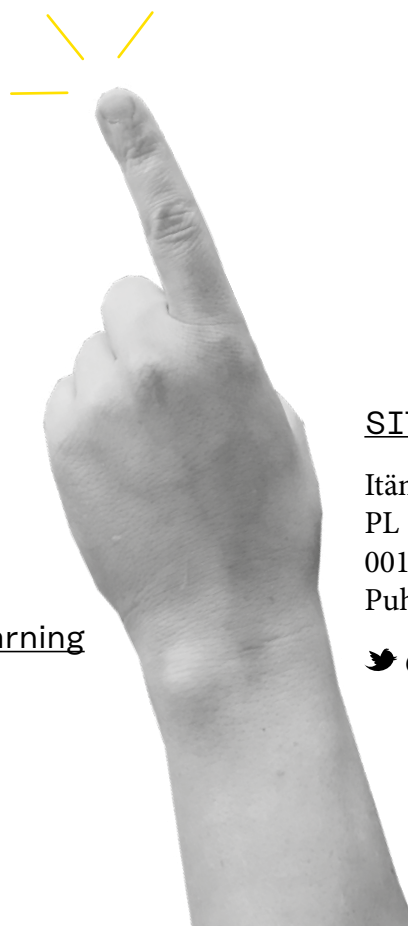
In the new skills system, mindsets, interactions, and practices are revised to match the changing needs of society, working life and people. Long-term investments are made in the development of competence at all levels of society. The activities are comprehensive and viewed from a whole systems perspective. In this way difficult and complex questions can be addressed and the impact of efforts to develop competence can be increased.

Working life, leisure and family life are increasingly important spaces for learning. Making the competence that emerges in them visible is becoming ever so important. This results in the need to develop learning in every sphere of life and to not simply provide education within the education system. This makes it possible for competence to improve working life and working life to improve competence.

There are no simple answers to complicated and rapidly changing questions. The need for continuous reform and the ability to live amid change remain. This need is reflected throughout the skills system and concerns everyone. Therefore, we need to view the new skills system as a continuously evolving whole. Future skills are created in ecosystems that have the capacity to renew themselves.

*“Taking care of the ability of people in Finland to reform their competence in the long term helps us to cope with unforeseen changes and to build a sustainable future.”*

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[sitra.fi/en/topics/lifelong-learning](https://sitra.fi/en/topics/lifelong-learning)

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