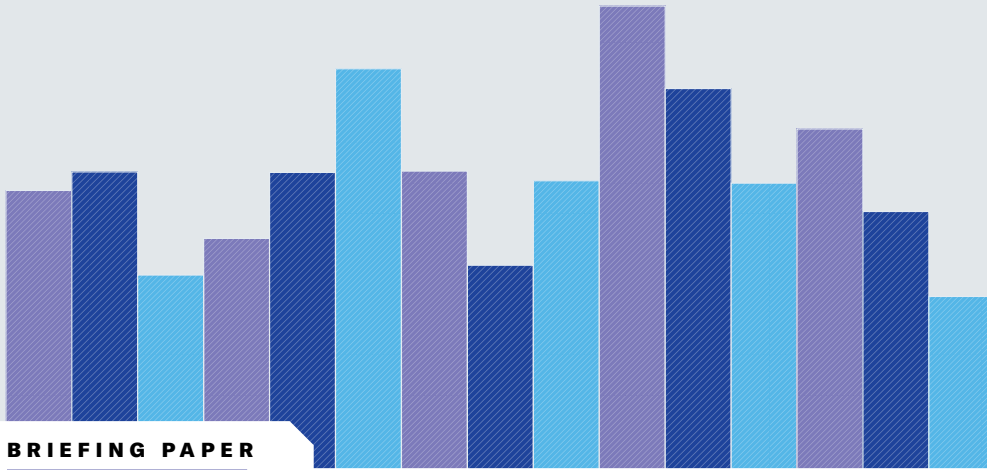




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BRIEFING PAPER

Training Workers for the Future Through Tripartite Partnerships



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Ng Chee Meng
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Trades Union Congress

How do we ensure that workers continue to have good jobs?

At the Singapore National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), the question “How do we ensure that workers continue to have good jobs?” is always on our mind. NTUC, being the heart of The Labor Movement in Singapore, champions the rights and interests of workers across all collars, ages, and nationalities, so that they enjoy better lives and livelihoods. Traditionally, this mission means focusing on protecting existing jobs and negotiating for higher wages.

But as our world continuously grapples with increasing uncertainty and complexity, the nature of jobs and the demand for skills are rapidly evolving. How do we then help workers navigate these shifts?

In our view, the best protection for workers is not just preserving existing jobs but also creating new, higher-value ones while helping workers adapt. Workers need to undergo training to develop new skills and deepen existing ones to stay relevant and employable. Employers, too, need to transform their businesses and capitalize on a more skilled workforce in tandem with economic development.

To tighten the nexus between business and workforce transformation, NTUC introduced Company Training Committees (CTCs) in 2019. CTCs bring management staff, union representatives, and relevant partners together to establish a coherent transformation and training strategy. NTUC has developed capabilities and resources to support companies in business roadmapping, technology implementation, skills identification, training needs assessment and change management. We introduced the Operation & Technology Roadmap to help companies identify new business areas or operations, leading to new or redesigned job roles and training opportunities

for workers.


NTUC also evolved to enhance our support for CTCs and workers. In 2021, we formed the NTUC Training and Placement Ecosystem, a one-stop intermediary to help companies transform and better serve workers’ training and job placement needs.

As a result of CTCs, companies benefit from innovation and higher productivity, while workers enjoy better wages, welfare, and work prospects. Singapore, too, becomes more competitive and continues to attract investments that fuel economic growth. This win-win outcome showcases what we can achieve when the tripartite partners—NTUC, government, and employers—come together and act in solidarity. Convinced of the impact of CTCs, the Singapore government has taken the support a step further by providing a S\$100 million grant to help companies with CTCs in implementing their transformation plans.

As we move forward with CTCs, NTUC has sponsored research by Harvard Business Review Analytic Services to reacquaint readers with global training initiatives for workers and identify innovative training models in Singapore that they might want to reference.

I encourage readers to use this report as a practical guide to transforming their business and workforce in tandem for better outcomes, and I invite them to get in touch with us to share best practices.

Training Workers for the Future Through Tripartite Partnerships



As companies plan for the future of work, one key challenge is ensuring they have workers with relevant skills in order to thrive in the years ahead. A major driver of this challenge is that new digital technologies are quickly rendering some workers' skills obsolete and shortening the half-life of others. A May 2023 report by the World Economic Forum estimates that 44% of workers' skills will be disrupted in the next five years and notes that only half of workers have access to adequate training opportunities today.¹

Artificial intelligence, automation, and other advances are also forcing executives to reconsider which roles humans are best suited to and which skills they will need to support companies' digital ambitions. Answering these questions effectively will ensure companies have the talent to stay competitive and seize new opportunities for growth and profitability.

"In Singapore, there is a need for enterprises to continuously transform themselves, be it adoptions of digitalization, automation, or even globalization," says Soon-Joo Gog, chief skills officer at SkillsFuture Singapore, the national skills authority and agency for promoting lifelong learning. "But that business decision has to be supported by a skilled workforce, and the question is to what extent the workforce is ready to support the business moving forward."


Among the ways companies are tackling these challenges is through tripartite partnerships for workforce reskilling and upskilling. Historically, companies and governments have shared the costs and risks of large-scale initiatives, such as infrastructure projects, through public-private partnerships. Tripartite partnerships—three-party agreements that involve companies, labor unions, and government—are being used to prepare workers for new roles

HIGHLIGHTS

Digital technologies are quickly **rendering some workers' skills obsolete** and shortening the half-life of others.

Tripartite partnerships can help ensure that **employees, organizations, and national workforces** have a **sustainable pipeline of future-ready skills**.

The payoff of building trust, transparency, and flexibility is **a learning ecosystem that lifts everyone collectively**.



commensurate with the business growth of their employers. These partnerships help their members coordinate training and needed skills, share information and data on the program's operations and success, and implement best practices.

Singapore's use of tripartite partnerships provides a compelling example. The country takes a collaborative approach adopted by unions, employers, and the government, with a focus on using company training committees (CTCs), which bring company management together with union and government representatives to establish coherent transformation and training strategies for businesses. CTCs are championed by unions, related organizations, and worker associations allied in a coalition known as The Labor Movement. The Labor Movement works closely with employers and the government to shape the national continuing education and training ecosystem, drive the efforts to train workers, and support business growth through consultations and collaborations between tripartite partners. But while Singapore is unique in some ways, it is not the only country where such partnerships are being used. And even where there may be political resistance to them—such as in the United States, which is less friendly to organized labor than other countries are—socioeconomic factors may ultimately favor them.

Even so, using tripartite partnerships can present myriad challenges. Chief among them is assuaging workers' fears that they could lose their jobs to new technologies. Also important is agreeing on goals for the partnership and revising the goals as priorities and demographics evolve over time. In addition, tripartite partnerships must build trust and transparency among partners and have leadership that is open to change and new ideas. And they need to measure success—as well as areas for improvement—in both the short term and the long term, adjusting their methods accordingly. When done right, initiatives rolled out with the support of tripartite partnerships can help ensure that employees, organizations, and national workforces have a sustainable pipeline of future-ready skills, leading to better prospects for everyone.

“What we see to be success,” says Valerie Lee, senior HR director for Singapore and the Philippines at ams OSRAM, a Premstaetten, Austria-based intelligent sensor maker, “would be programs that result in economic growth in metrics like [gross domestic product], maintaining a low unemployment level, and ensuring wages across all strata of society keep pace with the rising cost of living, together with the socioeconomic progress of all workers and ensuring industrial harmony and cooperation.”

This report will explore how tripartite partnerships among employers, labor unions, and government are helping companies' and countries' workforces prepare for the future of work. It will touch on the training initiatives that are made possible by collaborations, such as those involving Singapore's

CTCs. The report will also examine the benefits and risks of training programs, the best practices for ensuring they run smoothly, the ways their success is measured, and the emergence of tripartite partnerships to push them forward.

Company Training Committees in Singapore

The tripartite partnership in use in Singapore, where companies, unions, and the government collaborate to strengthen the workforces of organizations as well as the nation, is seeing results.

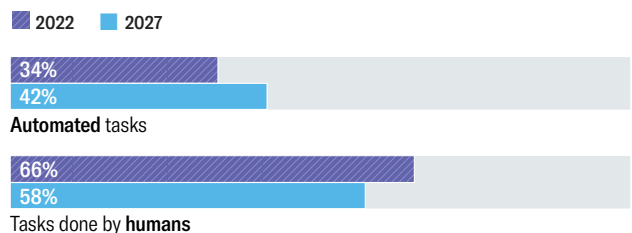
A key part of the collaboration is the involvement of CTCs, which were introduced by The Labor Movement to help workers upskill and reskill in tandem with business transformation. Besides monitoring the organization's talent and skill needs on an ongoing basis, CTCs can identify jobs that are likely to be disrupted by digital transformation, coordinate training plans to help workers learn new skills, and encourage workers to embrace change and think about long-term career growth. This kind of proactive oversight is important since more and more jobs are being affected by digital advances; 34% of tasks were able to be automated by 2022, and the percentage is only going to rise in the years ahead. **FIGURE 1** Tripartite representatives say that CTCs help companies achieve greater productivity, innovation, and profitability, while workers both learn new skills and achieve higher wages or bonuses through gainsharing by companies.

The collaboration process begins with workshops conducted by The Labor Movement with the participation of company management and union representatives. The goal is to chart the company's plans for the future and the changes that will be necessary for the organization to continue growing and competing. Changes might include, for example, digitally transforming areas of the business and reskilling or upskilling

FIGURE 1

The Increasing Automation of Jobs

More business tasks will be done by machines in the coming years



Source: World Economic Forum, May 2023



“[The roadmap] covers personnel, the operations side, the system members, and human resources,” says Li Cheng Ew, general manager of supply chain at Singapore Epson Industrial Pte Ltd.

workers for new types of roles. At the end of the workshops, the company is presented with a customized operations and technology roadmap that charts its strategic direction as well as the resources it will need—including talent, technology, and products—to fulfill its plans.

“After we finish this training to understand our transformation roadmap, we are able to identify the areas where we need some improvement,” explains Li Cheng Ew, general manager of supply chain at Singapore-based company Singapore Epson Industrial Pte Ltd. “It covers personnel, the operations side, the system members, and human resources.”

Retraining a workforce—a task that will remain essential as technologies advance and jobs evolve—can come with considerable costs. According to a January 2023 study by Boston-based consultancy firm Boston Consulting Group, top companies spend up to 1.5% of their annual budgets on learning and skill building, which is comparable to what many organizations spend on transformation programs or IT.² Because of the strong tripartite partnership in Singapore, the government is willing to fund companies and workforce transformation through CTCs. Once a company has established its CTC and made plans for reskilling workers in accordance with its roadmap, it can receive a grant from the government that covers up to 70% of the initiative’s cost. These grants, administered by The Labor Movement, support companies in implementing transformation plans that lead to better work and business outcomes.

“In recent years, during Covid-19, the Singapore government has realized that transformation is very important in order to stay relevant,” says Ew. “So, the government and the respective authorities have focused more efforts and started to get very much involved with us by coming in to assist us.”

Besides enabling The Labor Movement to be progressive in supporting workers to upgrade their skills to stay relevant, CTCs offer various supports to companies. One example is CTCs connecting companies directly to education and training providers, facilitating conversations about skill needs and modes of learning. Another is the partnership offering individuals career coaching services, which help people assess their professional options and draw on resources and support if they want to make a career change. A third example is a S\$500 credit that all Singaporeans receive upon turning 25 years old, which can be used to pay for eligible government-approved training courses, encouraging individuals to take ownership of

their skill development and learning journeys. Together, these initiatives form a robust approach to reskilling and upskilling the country’s workers. “In Singapore, our arrangement is always making sure that we take care of the workforce, together with the unions,” says SkillsFuture Singapore’s Gog. “We also ensure we have skilled workforces to support companies’ business requirements.”

As companies plan for their future workforce needs, and as governments and unions look for ways to partner with them to benefit all workers, tripartite partnerships through CTCs are one approach to training that they may want to consider.

Tripartism for Training Worldwide

Singapore is not the only country to use tripartite partnerships for workforce training. Other countries have leveraged them as well, though not always in the same ways; additionally, in some countries, the training efforts are led by industry partners, as compared with Singapore’s CTC approach.

Germany, for example, is known for its vocational education and training (VET) system, in which the government, employers, and unions collaborate. The system includes several kinds of training programs that young people can choose from as an alternative to higher education, with courses that can be completed in an educational institution, a company, or a combination of the two, depending on the qualifications the person is seeking. The core of the VET system, according to a 2020 report by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, is the apprenticeship program, in which people learn theoretical knowledge in school and on-the-job skills in a company.³ Organizations and public institutions sign contracts with apprentices to participate and then cover the cost of training—companies by paying for it themselves and educational centers through government funding. Companies also pay apprentices for their work. When people complete the program, they leave with qualifications that give them access to the labor market as skilled workers. More-advanced training programs are available as well to those who want them.

Sweden, meanwhile, launched its “fast-track” program in 2015 to help newly arrived immigrants find jobs faster based on the skills they have. Tripartite talks between the Swedish Public Employment Service and the social partners (employers and trade unions) were used to establish more-efficient

pathways into specific jobs, including teacher, doctor, nurse, and dentist. The program included elements such as Swedish language classes, vocational courses in which participants learn professional vocabulary and how their future jobs operate in Sweden, guidance on getting certified to perform those new jobs, and internships or traineeships. In May 2023, the Swedish government announced that the fast-track program would be discontinued and replaced with a new certification scheme for work permit applications, due to the current application process becoming too slow and putting companies at risk of losing talent. The new program is expected to begin by the end of 2023.

Switzerland, too, has a tripartite VET system—one that is largely led by the private sector. Trade associations, unions, training providers, and companies that host apprenticeships jointly create and implement VET policy—participation is mandated by law—and the Swiss government regulates the process. Similar to the system in Germany, young people work in companies to pick up trade skills and learn complementary knowledge in vocational schools, and they're paid by the companies that host the apprenticeships. At the end of the program, which typically lasts three to four years, participants are awarded federal diplomas once they pass the federal examination. The system's success is due to factors including the tripartite structure, in which members collaborate to maintain the system's standards, and the federal examination, which ensures that skills are standardized and transferable. According to a 2015 report by the Legislative Council Secretariat in Hong Kong, Switzerland's VET system is widely regarded as one of the best in the world, and the country has helped other countries—including South Korea, India, Spain, and China—develop their own VET systems.⁴

While other countries also have tripartite systems for worker training, some of them similarly focused on VET programs, these examples show just a few of the forms that such systems can take.

The Benefits of Tripartism

A tripartite partnership like Singapore's CTC-based approach can have a number of benefits, from establishing a shared language of skills to drawing on unions' expertise in bringing together organizations and talent to connecting companies to the suppliers and partners they need.

Organizations and governments around the world are thinking about how to ensure workforces have skills for the future, but one obstacle is the lack of a shared skills taxonomy. Different companies and countries may use the same words to refer to different skills or different words for the same skill, which can present issues when trying to understand exactly where skill gaps exist. In a 2021 report, the World Economic Forum called for the development of a global skills taxonomy



“From the government perspective, we try to ensure that we have a common language when we talk about skills. So, when we articulate the skill needs of the economy, we are on the same page,” says Soon-Joo Gog, chief skills officer at SkillsFuture Singapore.

to support reskilling efforts across countries, explaining how agreed-upon definitions are essential for assessing workers' proficiency levels and exploring new career pathways.⁵ The report noted, for example, that cashiers have more than a 92% skill similarity to ticket agents, travel clerks, restaurant hosts, retail salespeople, and baristas—the kind of reskilling-focused insight that a shared skills taxonomy can unearth.

Singapore's CTC initiative has prioritized establishing a common language of skills, including sectoral skills frameworks. These frameworks help the government, trade associations and chambers, unions, and companies focus on continual upskilling of the workforce. Shared definitions also help workers pursue new training on their own, since they can be confident about investing their time and money in the courses they truly need. “From the government perspective, we try to ensure that we have a common language when we talk about skills,” says Gog. “So, when we articulate the skill needs of the economy, we are on the same page.”

The participation of unions is another central benefit of tripartite collaborations, especially in Singapore, where unions and The Labor Movement are key partners for a range of activities. Applying for government training grants can be complicated for companies that are new to the process, says Ew, and unions can offer assistance. “We will seek some advice from them on how to do the presentation of our project, and then they help us in that area because they work closely with all the relevant authorities in Singapore,” she explains. Ew adds that unions can help companies find talent when filling open positions is difficult. “They play the role of a connector between the government authorities and companies,” she says.

An additional boon of working with unions is that they bring a practical perspective to high-level discussions about talent, skills, and national workforces. Conversations about skill gaps, course offerings, and how fast training can be scaled up are always ongoing at the sectoral level in Singapore,

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Gog explains, and it's important to shift those conversations to company-level dialogues as well. "The union can really bring it down to where the tires hit the road and say, 'Hey, this is serious, we are going to do this for the company.' I think that's very, very important," she says. At the same time, unions also take part in conversations at the sectoral and national levels about the future of the economy, the direction of transformations, and how the tripartite partnership can help people more—making them core partners in thinking broadly about Singapore's workers. "It's a very holistic approach to supporting the workforce," she says.

A third benefit of Singapore's tripartite arrangement is the ability to connect companies to suppliers and partners. Since The Labor Movement has an overview of the organizations participating in the partnership, companies can ask for assistance when they're searching for valuable new partners. "If we have any issues—for example, if we don't know what we need or we are looking for certain suppliers—we can always contact them and ask whether they have some contacts, and then they'll connect us together," says Ew. CTCs can also encourage companies to exchange information and advice about training with each other and even share training themselves. "Sometimes other companies have some relevant courses that they share with us to see whether we are interested [in attending]," Ew explains.

These kinds of benefits show the many ways that tripartite partnerships can benefit participants and in particular the necessity of having unions and government—and, in Singapore's case, The Labor Movement—involved.

Overcoming Challenges and Risks

Tripartite partnerships can help overcome several kinds of challenges, including reassuring workers about their fears of losing their jobs, setting and maintaining agreement on the goals for the partnership, and adapting to changing demographics.

Anxiety about job security is common in her company, says Ew, especially for older workers who have a wealth of experience but whose jobs are becoming much more technology driven. As Singapore Epson Industrial shores up its strengths in automation and digital tools, these workers can sometimes be resistant to change due to their worries of being replaced by technology. The tripartite partners can help communicate to workers what's changing and why and, crucially, how workers will benefit from the new technologies. Ew points out that these kinds of messages can be more persuasive when they come from an outside authority rather than from company executives. "Sometimes for us as a company to explain to the employees—I think the first impression is that they feel that we are trying to replace them," she says. "But on the other hand, when the tripartite

partnership comes into the picture, they can explain to the employees as a neutral party that, actually, this is not a job replacement, but this is actually job enrichment."

Also important for a tripartite partnership is agreeing on the goals of the initiative, especially as priorities for the partners change over time. While governments, companies, and unions may broadly want many of the same things—a competitive workforce and good jobs and salaries for workers—they may differ on the best ways to achieve them. The partners may disagree, for example, on which kinds of training workers need most urgently, as well as which training will best fill skill gaps.

Maintaining these shared goals is also difficult during societal shifts or when the business environment undergoes changes, notes ams OSRAM's Lee. While reaching consensus about the partnership's goals may never be simple, doing it while dealing with extra economic pressure can be a formidable task. "Economic downturns or global crises can strain the partnership, as the government, employers, and workers may all have differing priorities and interests during such periods," she says. "Balancing job security, wage growth, and business sustainability becomes a challenge."

Tripartite partnerships also must stay abreast of demographic shifts that are relevant to their goals and react accordingly. In Singapore, for example, the population is aging—by 2030 nearly one in four citizens will be 65 or older, according to "Population in Brief 2022," a report jointly issued by several Singapore government entities⁶—and there is a need for a more diverse and multicultural workforce, says Lee. "Adapting the partnership to address these changing demographics and skill requirements is a continuous challenge," she says.

At the same time, Gog asserts, it's imperative that the tripartite partnership takes the lead on responding to a multigenerational workforce, since doing so will help ensure that inclusive training solutions can support the greatest number of people, ensuring access to training for all. "We need a robust and responsive skills ecosystem to respond to the skill needs of the economy and sectors of the workforce," she says. Developing more skills development partners, such as trade associations, professional bodies, and union groups that can get involved with skill training, can build up a reskilling ecosystem that will be sustainable into a country's future. "The key challenge is really to keep building this capability over time," she explains.

Proactive moves like these can prepare a tripartite partnership to respond to whatever challenges come up for its members.

Making Tripartite Partnerships Work

To set up a tripartite partnership for success—which includes win-win outcomes such as higher productivity for companies and higher wages and new skills for workers—a few steps can



“In Singapore’s model of tripartism, as long as there is visible and obvious success for any program for the population at large, the government and companies will find a way to make it happen,” says Valerie Lee, senior HR director at ams OSRAM.

help: building trust, transparency, and flexibility; staying coordinated on goals and approaches; and having open, supportive leadership.

Trust in the partnership means that all partners are involved in conversations about skills, jobs, and the needs of the future. “No one is left behind. Everybody knows what we’re talking about, and cocreation is key,” explains Gog. Transparency is a parallel factor; tripartite partners should be open about their goals and concerns so that they can solve problems together. And flexibility involves giving workers many options for training, which lets them choose the ones that best fit their lives and schedules. Flexibility can mean, for example, offering both in-person and online training, during-work and after-hours courses, and options at professional institutions, universities, and employers.

The payoff of building trust, transparency, and flexibility is a learning ecosystem that lifts everyone collectively. Demonstrating these three elements, in Lee’s view, shows a commitment to mutually beneficial growth. “In Singapore’s model of tripartism, as long as there is visible and obvious success for any program for the population at large, the government and companies will find a way to make it happen,” she says.

Also important is for the tripartite partners to stay clear on the direction forward over time by engaging in continual conversations. Discussing what workers need, or need more of, will remain a core part of the collaboration as workforce needs continue evolving. Tripartite partners must be committed to sharing insights on topics such as whether new kinds of training are needed, how to scale current training, how to help workers apply what they’re learning, and whether the financial support offered to companies and workers is sufficient. “Continuous dialogue is very key,” explains Gog. “Conversations like this have to be ongoing all the time.”

Ew says that building consensus around key factors like these often comes naturally in Singapore, whose culture values social cohesiveness and collectivism. “This is something in our culture that doesn’t need to be spelled out,” she says. “When we want the economy to grow, we need the company to grow. And when we need the company to grow, we need the employee to grow.” Discussions of those factors also reinforce the elements of trust, transparency, and flexibility that help tripartite partnerships run smoothly.

Social cohesiveness and collectivism are clearly less prevalent in countries such as the U.S., but even there, worker interests are starting to draw more attention as the environmental, social, and governance movement gains traction. Indeed, the influential group of leading corporate executives known as the Business Roundtable now urges management to place as much emphasis on worker welfare as on shareholder value. Among the commitments made in its landmark 2019 Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation was “investing in our employees. This starts with compensating them fairly and providing important benefits. It also includes supporting them through training and education that help develop new skills for a rapidly changing world.”⁷ However, whether the public-private partnerships in the U.S. will eventually evolve into tripartite arrangements, with the national-level perspective that other countries take, remains to be seen. “We look at this at a national level, because we truly believe an inclusive and competitive economy has to be the way to go forward,” says Gog. “Everybody has to have a part in it.”

When it comes to leadership for tripartite initiatives, key characteristics are willingness to collaborate, openness to new ideas, and ability to adapt to change. Embracing collaboration is an obvious requirement for the partnership, but it’s also useful for executives to be proactive about their role, says Gog. She points out that tripartite partners in Singapore from both industry and unions have taken the initiative to convene discussions and drive the dialogue forward. “All of us, we volunteer our time and the willingness to come together,” she says.

Meanwhile, being open to new ideas means that leaders can strategically consider which opportunities will best support their workforces. Finally, tripartite partnerships benefit from leadership that can adapt to new circumstances, including by keeping future needs, trends, and circumstances in mind. “They have to have a certain mettle in them to ensure that they will be able to make decisions that are not just for immediate gains but also ensure that Singapore as a whole will gain in the long run,” says Lee.

If tripartite partnerships build trust, transparency, and flexibility; stay coordinated in achieving their goals; and have leadership that can support forward-looking collaboration, they’ll be on a firm foundation for success.

Measuring Success

To gauge the effectiveness of their initiatives, including CTCs, tripartite partnerships can use a range of measures, such as participation rates in training programs, whether the programs are helping people achieve their career goals, and how happy and effective workers are.

Some of the most straightforward metrics are Singapore's annual training participation rates, which help tripartite partners understand whether training programs are reaching the people who need them. But just as important is knowing whether the training is helping people reach their career goals, says Gog. She cites indicators such as whether people have mobility in their careers, whether they're advancing in their companies, and whether their wages increase over time. "It's not just about the motions of going for training—it's more about the outcomes of training, whether people have career growth and salaries that do not stagnate," she says.

Other metrics help the partnership get a fuller view of how it helps workers. The partners monitor, for example, the bottom 25% of the country's workforce, keeping a close eye on how those workers are progressing in comparison with their peers. Singapore's government also commissions researchers both within the country and globally to review the partnership's projects and offer feedback. Gog says these structured reviews take two to three years to complete and offer an objective view of how well the partnership's goals are being met. At the same time, the tripartite partners make smaller, more regular tweaks to their initiatives according to what they hear from workers. "We might adjust based on what is working well, not working well, what is most effective, what employers desire, what individuals will be most motivated to do," she explains. "You cannot wait too long to make those adjustments."

For more on-the-ground success metrics, Ew says how accurately workers do their jobs and how happy they are can both be useful indicators. Especially when workers are bringing new skills to their roles from training, performance accuracy can show supervisors where workers may need additional help to strengthen their skill sets. On the other hand, workers' happiness at, for example, more-routine parts of their jobs being automated can be a sign that the tripartite partnership's goals and message—including that technology won't replace people—are being heard. "In the past, our workers may be doing a huge volume of manual data management, but all this could be replaced by digitalization," Ew explains. "Now they are happy that we have completed our project under the grants for the digitalization platform."

There are a number of ways that tripartite partnerships can measure their success and find areas for improvement. What may be most important, though, is carefully tying those measures to the outcomes the partnership is seeking.



“The goal is not about just reskilling workers; reskilling is a means to an end. The end has to be a competitive, inclusive economy where everybody benefits—not just the enterprise. The workforce must benefit too,” says SkillsFuture Singapore’s Gog.

Conclusion

Tripartite partnerships for workforce training can offer a number of benefits to workers, companies, and countries' economies. Working closely with unions and government, companies can draw on their collective expertise in the skills workers need, the career goals they're targeting, and how best to help them continue learning and growing. Using financial support from governments, companies can reimagine their workforces for future business needs, retraining employees in areas such as digital skills at scale and at lower cost. By sharing insights and feedback about how training initiatives are helping workers and where improvements are needed, tripartite partners can cocreate a skilling ecosystem that supports all workers, especially as changes in demographics and economic circumstances mean new training approaches are required.

As Singapore's example shows, such an ecosystem can create the foundation for future training initiatives as well, such as by bringing in additional professional bodies and learning institutions to increase the partnership's capabilities. Through its CTC initiatives, Singapore's Labor Movement serves as a nexus of industry, company, and workforce transformation, and it must continue to innovate to be a champion of workers and help them stay competitive and relevant.

The task of preparing workers for the future is an ongoing one, so the work of a tripartite partnership may never be complete. Yet the results of a successful partnership are profound and wide-ranging; companies and nations alike have the workers they need to thrive for years to come and, just as important, workers have the skills to advance in their careers, increase their salaries, and build the quality of life they desire. "The goal is not about just reskilling workers; reskilling is a means to an end," says Gog. "The end has to be a competitive, inclusive economy where everybody benefits—not just the enterprise. The workforce must benefit too."

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