ED3 WORKFORCE ANNEX

ED3-S18

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People capability is on the critical path to delivering our (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy (10-year Delivery Strategy). This annex sets out how we identify, build and secure the workforce capacity and capability required to deliver our network over the next decade, while providing clear assurance that the workforce required for ED3 is mobilised ahead of need. It connects our long-term view of delivery requirements with workforce demand, capability development, delivery partner capacity, productivity and risk management, ensuring workforce constraints are identified early and actively managed.

Our approach is grounded in evidence from ED2 delivery and engagement with our employees, suppliers, customers and sector partners.

Since April 2021, we have;

- Grown critical workforce capability by [redacted]
- Increased learning and development activity from 7.2 to 9.2 days per employee
- Redesigned our craft pathways to reduce time to competence from around four years to around 18 months.
- Mobilised 10 new pathways accommodating c700 colleagues through these routes per year.

This provides a strong foundation for the next decade and demonstrates our ability to grow and develop critical capability at pace, while maintaining the competence and authorisation standards required for safe and reliable network delivery.

Our strategic workforce planning is directly linked to the 10-year Delivery Strategy. We translate forecasted workload into the roles, skills, competencies and authorisations required by geography and over time, combining top-down resilience modelling with bottom-up activity modelling. [redacted] Looking beyond ED3, our 10-year view enables us to anticipate emerging capability requirements, long lead-time skills constraints and changes in how work is delivered. These longer-term requirements inform adaptive capacity and capability planning and do not represent fixed workforce or expenditure commitments beyond ED3.

The scale and pace of delivery over the next decade means this requirement cannot be met through recruitment alone. Competition for safety-critical craft, engineering, authorised and digital capability across energy and infrastructure creates a material delivery dependency. At the same time, technology, changing network requirements and new ways of working will change the skills and capacity required. We therefore take an integrated whole-workforce approach, combining our directly employed workforce, delivery partners and wider supply chain with targeted investment in training, development, retention and productivity. Our focus is on securing the competent, authorised and deployable capability required to deliver, rather than workforce growth in isolation.

Our approach is focused on four outcomes:

- Secure the capability required to deliver ED3 and maintain a forward view of requirements across the 10-year horizon, mobilising critical capability ahead of demand and adapting our approach as future requirements develop.
- Build and deploy capability efficiently, using targeted recruitment, accelerated development pathways, reskilling, retention and appropriately assured delivery partner capacity to address identified gaps.
- Increase workforce productivity and adaptability, simplifying how work is delivered and using data, digital tools, AI and automation where these can safely increase capacity, improve outcomes or reduce future workforce requirements.

Strengthen the resilience of the whole delivery ecosystem, improving visibility of internal and supply-chain capability and working with delivery partners and the wider sector on training, transferable skills and structural skills constraints. Underpinning these outcomes is our commitment to inclusion and diversity. In delivering these outcomes, we will

increase the diversity of our workforce to reach at least 40% female representation in senior leadership, 10% minority ethnic representation in our overall workforce, and 8% representation for both disability and LGBTQ+ employees by April 2033.

Success means having the right competent and authorised capability available where and when it is required throughout the 10-year delivery horizon, with firm ED3 requirements delivered and longer-term capability actively planned and adapted as needs evolve. In doing so, workforce planning supports a delivery model that is safe, resilient, productive and affordable for customers, positioning workforce capability as an integral part of 10-year deliverability and assurance while growing a future workforce that more proportionately represents the communities we serve.

Table 1.1 ED3 Commitments

Our ED3 commitments	Metrics
We will support regional skills and employment by increasing earn-as-you-learn opportunities to more than 10% of our workforce by the end of ED3, while supporting every successful learner to progress into a substantive role on completion of their programme	Increase the diversity of our workforce to reach at least 40% female representation in senior leadership, 10% minority ethnic representation in our overall workforce, and 8% representation for both disability and LGBTQ+ employees by April 2033
	Building on our ED2 workforce growth, we will optimise training delivery by shifting 10% of current in-person training to blended and innovative learning, increasing training capacity and accelerating time to competence while maintaining safety, quality and technical standards.
	Exceed our minimum of 10% of workforce in earn as you learn opportunities through investment in talent pipelines by March 2033, supporting 100% of learners who successfully complete programmes into substantive roles.

2. OUR VISION FOR THE WORKFORCE OF 2035

2.1 OUR WORKFORCE STRATEGY TO 2035

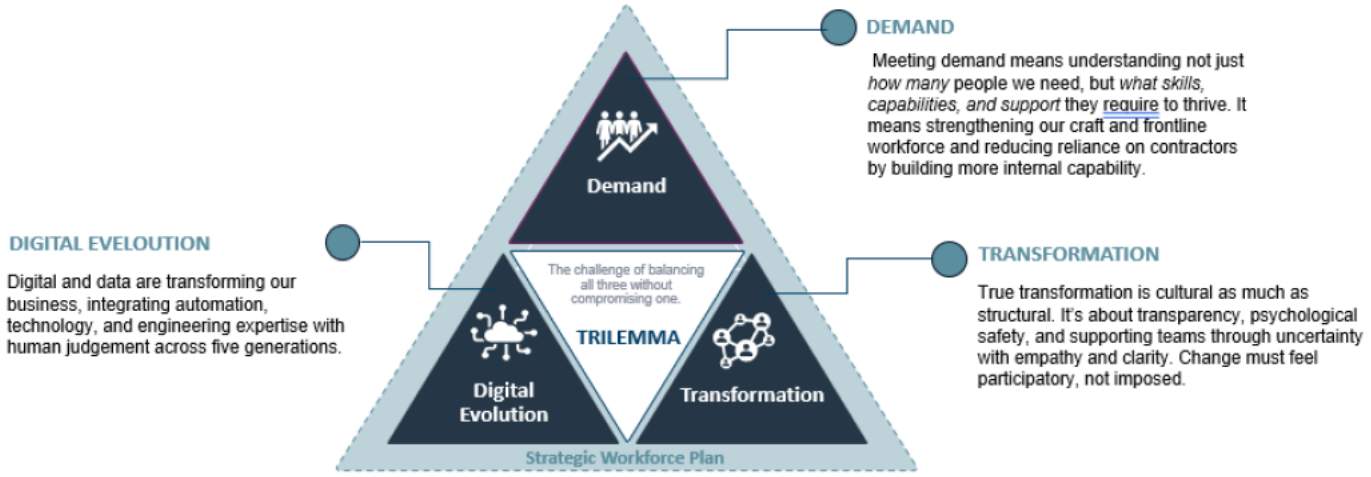
Our workforce strategy provides the skilled, competent and authorised capability required to deliver ED3 while building the enduring capability needed for ED4 and beyond. Our firm workforce requirements are driven by the ED3 workbank. Beyond ED3, the LINP and Strategic Development Plans provide an indicative and evolving view of future demand, allowing us to anticipate capability requirements and address long lead-time constraints while retaining flexibility as network needs evolve.

Our 2035 workforce will retain the craft, engineering and operational expertise fundamental to safe and reliable network operation, alongside an increasing requirement for digital, data, cyber, commercial and programme capability. This reflects both the changing network and the changing way in which it will be planned, operated and delivered.

For us, workforce readiness is therefore about more than the number of people we employ. We need the right skills, competence and authorisations, in the right locations and at the right time. We plan these requirements alongside supply chain capacity, long-lead plant, design, consents and access to the network. This helps us identify workforce constraints early enough to act before they affect delivery.

Our Strategic Workforce Plan considers three connected challenges: rising workforce demand, rapid advances in digital technology and the organisational change needed to make both work in practice.

Figure 2.1 Strategic Workforce Plan



We use three complementary routes to build the capability we need. We grow critical internal capability where network knowledge, operational control, safety or resilience make this important. We work with strategic delivery partners where we need additional scale, flexibility or specialist skills. And we improve productivity so that workforce growth doesn't have to increase at the same rate as our investment programme.

Technology supports all three. We use data, digital tools, automation and appropriately governed AI to support decisions, remove repetitive tasks and reduce safety exposure. This helps people with scarce skills focus on work where their expertise adds most value. Accountability remains with our people for safety-critical and material network decisions.

This approach means we can make workforce choices based on the nature and duration of demand. We mobilise early where recruitment, training or authorisation takes time. We retain critical operational capability where it matters most and build scalable capacity with our partners. We then monitor workforce readiness alongside our other delivery constraints through our performance and programme governance arrangements, alongside the other constraints to delivery, so that emerging capability or capacity gaps can be identified and addressed early.

2.2 OUR ED3 APPROACH

- Translate ED3 outputs into workforce requirements by role, capability, competence, authorisation, geography and timing.
- Mobilise early where recruitment, training or authorisation lead times could constrain delivery.
- Retain critical operational and network capability internally while developing scalable capacity with strategic partners.
- Use digitalisation, innovation and work redesign to improve productivity and release scarce capability.
- Monitor workforce readiness alongside other delivery dependencies through the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy's governance and assurance framework.

2.3 INDUSTRY COLLABORATION

Some workforce constraints affect the whole energy sector. We work with other networks, government, industry bodies, training providers and our delivery partners where working together can provide a better solution than acting alone.

We use the Electricity Networks Sector Growth Plan, our engagement with Ofgem and government, Energy & Utility Skills and wider industry forums to share evidence on the skills that electricity distribution needs. This helps the industry improve skills pathways, make it easier for people to move between compatible roles and widen routes into the sector without weakening safety, competence or authorisation standards.

Our role is practical. We share what our workforce modelling tells us about future demand and critical skills. We contribute to common descriptions of roles and capabilities and support more transferable approaches to training and competence where these can improve access to scarce skills. We also share learning from our own training pathways so that successful approaches can be applied more widely.

Innovation gives us another way to address shared constraints. Through initiatives such as the Energy Networks Association's Future Workforce challenge, we can work with other network companies, training providers and innovators to test how technology and new workforce models could improve productivity or help people become competent more quickly. Areas of focus include immersive training, skills passports, robotics, data and AI-supported tools. These plans are detailed in our innovation and digital strategies as well as through investment proposals such as intelligent works management and VR. We focus our involvement on areas where collaboration can remove a real delivery constraint. Where the issue sits within SSEN Distribution, we act directly. Where it depends on common standards, policy, training capacity or the wider labour market, we work with the organisations that can help address it.

3. STRATEGIC WORKFORCE DEMAND

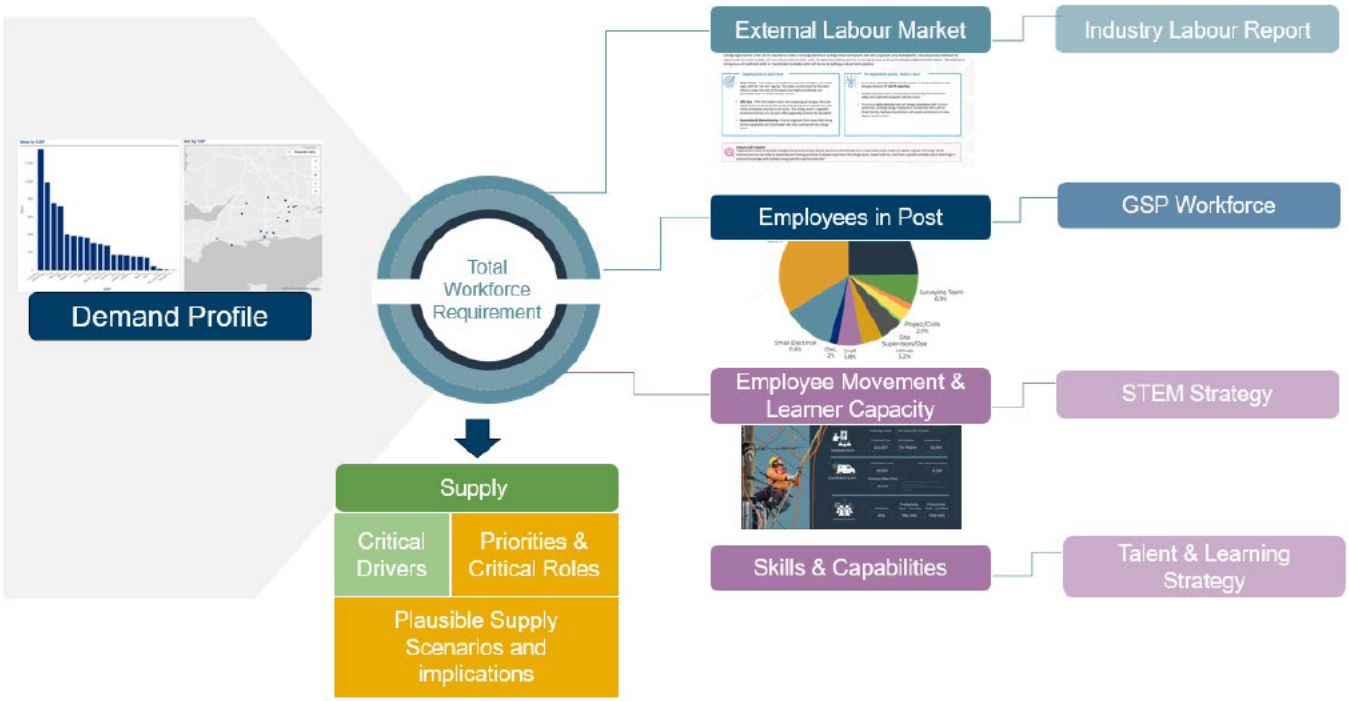
Our Strategic Workforce Plan translates the firm ED3 asset workbank into the workforce capability and headcount needed to deliver it safely and efficiently. We establish the roles, skills, competence and authorisations required by geography and timing, test these requirements against operational conditions and available capacity, and use the results to select the safest and most efficient delivery route. Beyond ED3, our LINP and Strategic Development Plans provide an indicative view of future demand so that we can anticipate capabilities with long development lead times while retaining flexibility as requirements evolve.

3.1 ESTABLISHING WORKFORCE DEMAND

Our workforce demand is driven by the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy. We use planned investment volumes, programme phasing and operational requirements to understand how much work needs to be delivered and when. Using our demand calculator we then translate that work into workforce requirements, taking account of activity volumes, time for each task, geography and travel, productive time, skills and authorisations. For operational activity, we also consider fault demand and the capability needed to operate the network safely and maintain customer service. This means our workforce requirement is driven by delivery and operational need rather than by a top-down headcount target.

This approach connects workforce planning directly to the integrated planning process set out in our (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy. Workforce requirements can therefore be considered alongside partner and supply chain capacity, outages, network access and other delivery dependencies, enabling constraints to be identified before they affect delivery.

Figure 3.1 Strategic Workforce Demand



Workforce requirement trajectory

Our workforce modelling indicates a significant increase in workforce requirements during ED3, followed by a more gradual evolution across the illustrative ED4 horizon. The profile below shows how this requirement is distributed across occupational groups. ED3 requirements are informed by the firm workbank, while the ED4 profile is indicative and will continue to evolve as longer-term network requirements and delivery assumptions mature.

[redacted]

Note: ED3 reflects firm workforce requirements associated with the current delivery plan. The ED4 profile is indicative and is included to illustrate potential future workforce requirements and support long-term capability planning.

3.2 TESTING WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS

We apply complementary top-down resilience and bottom-up programme modelling to test whether the workforce requirement is sufficient, safe and efficient.

Our top-down resilience modelling tests the operational capability needed to operate the network safely under normal and peak conditions. It uses historic workload and fault profiles and considers when activity occurs, geography and travel, task duration, productive utilisation and the skills and authorisations needed to undertake the work. We also stress-test frontline capability against periods of increased operational pressure, including historical fault patterns scaled to defined peak scenarios.

This provides assurance that our workforce plans do not rely on average conditions or sustained overtime to maintain operational resilience. It also identifies dependencies within the capability pipeline. For safety-critical roles, recruitment alone does not create deployable capacity: people need the appropriate training, practical experience, assessment and authorisation. We therefore model these requirements alongside frontline demand so that constraints in training, mentoring, assessment and authorisation can be addressed early.

Our bottom-up programme modelling complements this resilience assessment by translating the ED3 workbank and indicative ED4 volumes and delivery phasing into resource requirements by role, capability, geography and timing. We compare this with existing capability and people already progressing through our development pipelines and test the assumptions against time to competence, productive utilisation, labour-market availability and partner capacity.

We also test the potential contribution from standardisation, digitalisation, automation and new ways of working. This ensures that our resource requirement reflects credible productivity improvements rather than assuming that workforce numbers must increase in direct proportion to investment volumes.

These tests provide a view of the deployable capability required to deliver the plan, rather than headcount alone. They also provide the workforce capacity test used within the wider (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy assurance process, where workforce requirements are reconciled with delivery volumes, market capacity, operational requirements and costs.

3.3 FROM WORKFORCE DEMAND TO DELIVERY DECISIONS

The modelling informs how we meet each capability requirement. We do not assume that additional delivery demand requires an equivalent increase in permanent headcount. Instead, consistent with the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy, we design the workforce response around the characteristics, scale and risk of the work.

We retain and grow internal capability where network knowledge, operational control, safety and resilience are essential. This includes core operational activities such as fault response, network control and critical authorised capability.

We use strategic delivery partners and specialist providers where programme scale, specialist expertise or flexibility make this the more efficient delivery route. Longer-term partnerships and improved visibility of the workbank allow partners to plan their own recruitment, training and investment, increasing deployable capability across the wider delivery ecosystem.

We use productivity and innovation to reduce the underlying resource requirement where better planning, standardisation, digitalisation, automation or changes to ways of working can release capacity or allow scarce skills to be deployed more effectively.

We select between these routes based on the safety and criticality of the activity, need for operational control and network knowledge, scale and duration of demand, time to competence, market and partner capacity and whole-life value for consumers.

Stakeholder engagement has helped shape our sourcing approach. Employees emphasised the importance of structured career pathways and clearer progression routes, while delivery partners highlighted scarce technical skills, limited training capacity and the value of longer-term workforce visibility. Customers reinforced the need for affordability and efficient delivery. These perspectives informed the development of our 7Bs framework, balancing internal capability, strategic partners and automation.

Figure 3.3 7Bs Workforce Framework



Our 7Bs Workforce Framework provides a consistent way to make these choices. We **Build** enduring internal capability; **Borrow or Buy** capability where partners or specialists provide a more efficient route; and **Boost** productivity through better processes, deployment and technology. **Bot, Bounce** and **Bind** provide further options to automate appropriate activity, flex capacity as requirements change and retain scarce skills.

Over the 10-year delivery horizon, the 7B approach enables us to:

- Optimise total workforce cost by selecting the most efficient sourcing route for each capability need, reflecting the duration and criticality of demand.
- Reduce reliance on high-cost contingent labour through phased investment in critical internal skills where this delivers better long-term consumer value.
- Improve productivity sustainably through role flexibility, process redesign and automation, enabling increased delivery without proportional workforce growth.
- Maintain resilience and adaptability as delivery requirements evolve, while avoiding premature or speculative workforce growth ahead of confirmed need.

We also use workforce trials to test new approaches and make evidence-led decisions about whether they should be scaled, adapted or discontinued. Recruiting experienced jointers can be challenging because the geographic footprint of our network can restrict the available candidate pool. To address this, we trialled three teams of travelling jointers, recruited from a wider geographic area and deployed through planned rota patterns to locations experiencing peak

demand or requiring additional skilled resource for specific projects. This provided additional flexibility without reducing business-as-usual capability. A key success criterion was meeting resource requirements while maintaining value for money, and we therefore closely monitored the impact on unit rates. Although the trial demonstrated that the model could provide additional operational flexibility, the associated travel and accommodation costs limited its scalability. We therefore did not recruit further teams as employees naturally progressed from the arrangement. The learning has informed the commercial and operational criteria we apply to future workforce trials, ensuring that new approaches are scaled only where they deliver sustainable benefits and value for consumers.

4. WORKFORCE ECOSYSTEM

Our workforce strategy considers the full delivery ecosystem required to deliver over ED3, ED4 and beyond, spanning SSEN Distribution, strategic delivery partners, Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers, specialist providers and manufacturers. This directly supports the blended delivery model set out in the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy, which combines critical in-house capability with strategic delivery partners and specialist expertise to provide scalable delivery capacity while retaining the network knowledge and authorised capability required for safe and resilient operation.

Our focus is therefore on available, competent and authorised capability. This is particularly important for safety-critical and specialist roles where labour-market availability is constrained and competence and authorisation take time to develop. The (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy identifies workforce availability as a principal delivery risk and combines internal capability growth, strategic delivery partnerships and productivity improvements to mitigate that risk.

4.1 JOINT STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

Our ED2 programme provides practical evidence of how we are developing this approach with our delivery partners. Workforce composition data from three of our lead partners shows reliance on a broad mix of design and engineering, electrical, operational, craft, project and professional capabilities. Contractor Strategic Workforce Plans also identify common priorities around securing critical resources, strengthening learning pathways, increasing training and assessment capacity and developing workforce capability in line with the forward programme.

In response to delivery partner feedback on training capacity, coordinated skills planning and the importance of long-term workforce visibility, we have strengthened joint workforce planning with our partners to align capability development with future programme requirements.

[redacted]

An annual joint planning cycle, supported by quarterly capability reviews, aligns programme forecasts with contractor workforce plans, critical-role pipelines, recruitment, training and assessment throughput and competence and authorisation capacity. This creates a common view of capability across the delivery ecosystem and enables us to understand where partner capacity is genuinely additional and where we may depend on the same constrained labour pools.

This is particularly important as we evolve our commercial model into longer-term strategic partnerships for ED3. Greater visibility and continuity of workload provides partners with the confidence to invest in recruitment, training and retention, while joint workforce planning provides the evidence needed to test whether that investment is keeping pace with programme requirements. This supports the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy approach of using longer-term partnerships to make better use of scarce skills while developing sustainable delivery capacity for ED3 and beyond.

5. BUILDING CAPABILITY AT SCALE

Our workforce modelling identifies the capability we need and when and where we need it. We use this evidence to build the recruitment, development and authorisation pipelines that turn workforce capacity into competent, authorised and deployable capability.

As set out in the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy, we grow critical internal capability where network knowledge, operational control, safety and resilience are important, alongside strategic partner capacity and productivity improvements. This section explains how we create that internal capability at the pace required by the ED3 delivery profile.

For many critical roles, recruitment is only the first step. People need technical training, practical experience and assessment before they can work independently and, for some roles, must also achieve the relevant authorisation. We therefore plan the full pathway from recruitment to deployment against the timing of the workbank, including the trainers, mentors, assessors and authorised people needed to support progression.

This is particularly important for the safety-critical craft, engineering and operational roles identified through our workforce modelling. Where capability takes time to develop, we mobilise ahead of delivery need. Firm ED3 requirements determine the capability we need to build and the rate at which it needs to become available. Beyond ED3, our longer-term network plans allow us to anticipate capabilities with extended development lead times without creating fixed workforce commitments ahead of confirmed need.

We have demonstrated our ability to grow workforce capacity and develop new sources of talent during ED2. Since April 2021, we have increased engineering and craft workforce capacity by almost [redacted], while expanding pathways that recognise transferable capability and provide structured routes to competence and authorisation.

5.1 ACCELERATING COMPETENCE SAFELY

Our measure of success is the number of people who become competent and productively deployed, not recruitment or learner numbers alone. We use apprenticeships, traineeships, adult learner programmes, reskilling and upskilling to provide different routes into capability. We select the route according to the requirements of the role and the learner's existing skills and experience.

Where the evidence supports it, we redesign development pathways to reduce time to competence without reducing the competence standard. Our accelerated craft pathway demonstrates this approach. By bringing technical training, practical experience, assessment and deployment together as a single pathway, we have reduced time to competence from approximately four years to around 18 months for the applicable route. This demonstrates that we can bring scarce capability into productive deployment earlier by redesigning how people develop, rather than relaxing the technical or safety standards they must achieve.

5.2 SCALING THE CAPABILITY PIPELINE

Increasing learner intake without increasing the capacity of the development system would create another constraint. We plan training, mentoring, assessment and authorisation capacity alongside recruitment. This allows us to identify where progression could become constrained and intervene before it affects the delivery profile. We monitor learner intake and progression, assessment outcomes, authorisation and productive deployment, as well as the availability of

trainers, mentors and assessors. This gives us an early view of whether the pipeline is producing deployable capability at the rate assumed in the Strategic Workforce Plan.

Where appropriate, we use blended and technology-supported learning to increase capacity and improve the learner experience. Practical training, assessment and face-to-face learning remain where these are required to demonstrate safety-critical competence.

5.3 BROADENING THE TALENT POOL

Competition for experienced electricity network skills means that we cannot meet our future workforce requirements by relying on traditional recruitment from an already constrained labour market. We are therefore broadening the pool from which we recruit and develop talent, using transferable-skills pathways, adult reskilling, earn-as-you-learn programmes and more inclusive routes into critical roles.

Our established apprenticeship and early-career programmes remain an important source of long-term capability. We complement these with adult learning, reskilling and transferable-skills pathways for people who already have relevant engineering, operational, safety or field experience. During ED3, we plan to maintain at least 10% of our workforce in structured earn-as-you-learn pathways, providing a sustained source of future capability rather than relying solely on experienced external recruitment.

For people joining from adjacent sectors, we start with the capability they can already demonstrate. We assess this against the requirements of the target network role, identify the competence gap and focus development on the technical knowledge, practical experience and assessment needed to close it. This allows relevant skills to transfer more efficiently while maintaining the same safety, competence and authorisation standards. Engagement with Openreach generated interest in project and field management roles and resulted in new candidate pool. We are also exploring the transferability of rail overhead-line skills, including alignment of terminology, competence requirements and potential skills-passport approaches.

By opening routes for adult learners, career changers, returners and people from under-represented communities, the approach supports social mobility, regional economic participation and a workforce that better reflects the communities we serve. Research with under-represented groups has informed the design of more accessible entry pathways into critical infrastructure careers, helping widen participation while increasing the addressable talent pool from which we can build the capabilities identified through our workforce modelling.

Broadening the talent pool also means understanding where under-represented groups enter and progress through our recruitment pathways. Evidence from our recent apprentice, trainee and graduate recruitment demonstrates strong interest from a diverse candidate pool, but also variation in representation through different recruitment stages and programmes. We are using this insight to understand where participation or progression is lower, review our attraction, eligibility and selection approaches, and target interventions where the evidence identifies barriers or under-representation. Alongside expanding adult learner, career-change and transferable-skills routes, this will help us widen access to the critical roles identified through our Strategic Workforce Plan and support our ED3 diversity commitments. We will continue to monitor representation and progression through our recruitment and development pathways so that our approach can adapt as the evidence develops.

5.4 ALIGNING CAPABILITY WITH WHERE IT IS NEEDED

Recruitment and development plans take account of the different geographic and labour-market characteristics of our SEPD and SHEPD licence areas, helping us avoid a position where sufficient capability exists overall but is not available in the location required for delivery.

We measure the effectiveness of these pathways through progression to competence and productive deployment, not intake alone. Comparing recruitment, training, assessment and authorisation performance with the requirements in our Strategic Workforce Plan allows us to identify where a pathway is not providing capability at the rate required and adjust intake, development capacity or the workforce route accordingly.

Beyond ED3, we will continue to test and develop talent and conversion pathways against the emerging requirements in our longer-term network plans. This enables us to prepare for capabilities with long development lead times while retaining flexibility as delivery requirements, labour-market conditions and evidence evolve.

6. WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY AND ADAPTABILITY

Our workforce strategy combines growth in capacity with improvements in productivity and capability. We do not assume that higher investment requires a proportionate increase in workforce numbers. Alongside recruitment and development, we use better planning, standardisation, digital tools, automation and changes to ways of working to make better use of the capability available to us.

One way we are putting this into practice is through our award winning Perform programme, which embeds continuous improvement into day-to-day operational management. Perform equips managers and teams with short performance huddles, visible workload and performance measures, demand and capacity planning, standardised processes, structured problem-solving and targeted coaching. In the teams where Perform has been deployed, these routines have supported improvements in the management of Tree Cutting General Enquiries, substation inspections, maintenance and consenting activity. Managers can now identify ageing work, backlogs and delivery barriers during the working week, assign clear actions and track whether interventions are improving performance, rather than relying on retrospective monthly reporting. Perform also uses skills matrices, side-by-side coaching and cross-skilling to reduce performance variation and increase workforce flexibility. Together, these changes help create operational capacity, strengthen team resilience and enable increasing delivery requirements to be met more efficiently, reducing reliance on proportionate workforce growth.

The capabilities we need are also changing. Technical competence and authorisation remain fundamental to safe network operation, but the scale and complexity of our future workbank places greater emphasis on programme and project delivery, commercial and financial management, digital and data skills and leadership. Our Critical Capabilities framework provides a common view of these broader requirements alongside role-specific technical competence, helping us target development as roles and delivery models evolve. This complements the future-skills requirements identified through our Strategic Workforce Plan.

Figure 6.1 Critical Capabilities Framework



6.1 BUILDING DIGITAL CAPABILITY

Digital capability is becoming part of a wider range of roles as data, connected systems and technology become more important to how we plan work, operate the network and make decisions. We build these skills within existing roles as technology changes, alongside deeper specialist capability in areas including Operational Technology, cyber security, data and analytics, digital engineering, system planning and control.

Better workforce information supports this. We are improving how information on skills, competence, training and authorisation connects with our people, planning and field systems. This gives us better visibility of the capability available against the workbank and helps us identify gaps early enough to adjust recruitment, development or deployment.

Digital tools support rather than replace professional and operational accountability. People remain accountable for safety-critical and regulated decisions, with appropriate operational controls and alternatives maintained where technology is unavailable.

CASE STUDY 01

WORKFORCE CAPABILITY AND AUTOMATION

Combining operational capability with network automation

We have combined growth in operational capability with network automation to improve fault response and restoration. We have authorised 139 new HV Switchers, while targeted HV automation has delivered 143 schemes across 519 sites in SEPD, with 310 schemes planned by March 2026. SHEPD also plans to automate more than 100 rural manual open points. Automation has delivered £7.3m of benefit to date and benefited 550,000 customers.

6.2 USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

We use technology where it can address an identified delivery constraint, reduce safety exposure, make work more efficient or enable scarce skills to be used more effectively. This includes remote inspection, LiDAR and drone-enabled asset data, predictive maintenance, automated scheduling, digital planning tools, immersive learning and remote expert support.

We assess the benefits before reflecting them in workforce assumptions. This means demonstrating that an intervention improves task time, deployment, quality or workforce capacity rather than assuming that introducing technology automatically reduces the number of people required. As evidence develops, we update the productivity assumptions within our Strategic Workforce Plan.

6.3 DEVELOPING AND RETAINING OUR PEOPLE

Our ability to deliver ED3 depends on retaining the skills and experience already within our workforce as well as bringing in new capability. Recruitment is therefore only one part of our approach. We provide clearer development routes so that people can build the technical skills, authorisations and wider Critical Capabilities required as our work and delivery model change.

We use employee insight alongside workforce data to understand what can affect people's ability to work effectively. This includes role clarity, access to development, systems and information, leadership, workload and the capacity of teams to absorb change. We use this evidence to inform career pathways, leadership development and changes to ways of working.

Employee feedback supports the strategic direction while highlighting delivery-critical risks: fragmented systems and data, inconsistent communication, role ambiguity, uneven development access, workload pressure and change capacity. The ED3 response is therefore not limited to attraction and retention activity; it builds employee insight into the operating model through clearer career pathways, stronger leadership and change capability, safer workload design, better systems integration and continued employee involvement through Future Ways of Working.

Our workforce requirement is tested against normal and peak operating conditions so that resilience does not depend on sustained overtime. Workload and fatigue are considered as part of workforce planning and deployment, with the specific controls set out in the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy's supervision, workload and fatigue management approach.

CASE STUDY 02

FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

Using employee insight to shape how we work

Our Future Ways of Working programme has involved 80 employees to understand the practical issues that affect how effectively our people can work. It identified priorities including fragmented systems and data, communication, role clarity, access to development, workload and capacity for change. We use these findings to inform career and skills pathways, leadership development, systems improvement and changes to ways of working.

Additionally, our 2026 Great Place to Work survey shows statistically significant improvements across key measures of employee experience compared with the previous survey.



7. WORKFORCE RESILIENCE AND RISK MITIGATION

The principal workforce risk is not simply whether we can recruit enough people. It is whether competent, authorised and deployable capability is available in the right place and at the point when the workbank requires it.

Our Strategic Workforce Plan gives us a forward view of this risk. We compare forecast demand with existing capability, people progressing through development, training and authorisation capacity, retention and retirement profiles, labour-market conditions and the capability available through our delivery partners. This allows us to identify where workforce constraints could emerge and act before they affect delivery.

Some of these constraints have long lead times. Recruiting an apprentice or trainee does not immediately create deployable capability, and recruitment into an experienced role does not remove the risk where the underlying labour market is constrained. For safety-critical and authorised roles, we therefore monitor the whole route to productive deployment, including training, practical experience, mentoring, assessment and authorisation.

This is particularly important for the roles identified as critical through our workforce modelling. Our 10-year assessment identifies a gap of [redacted] across critical frontline roles, concentrated in a small number of craft, operational and engineering capabilities. We plan these pipelines against when capability is required rather than treating the gap as a single recruitment target.

7.1 MANAGING WORKFORCE RISK ACROSS THE DELIVERY ECOSYSTEM

Our assessment extends beyond our directly employed workforce. Strategic delivery partners and specialist providers are an important source of scale and specialist capability, but external capacity is not automatically additional. We recognise that both us and our partners draw on the same constrained labour markets.

We therefore use joint workforce planning with our strategic delivery partners to test their workforce plans against our forward programme, including critical-role pipelines, recruitment, training, assessment and authorisation. This helps us identify where partner capacity is genuinely additional and where several organisations may be relying on the same people or skills. The annual planning cycle and quarterly capability reviews described earlier in this Annex provide the mechanism for keeping this position under review.

Table 7.1 Managing Workforce Risk

Workforce Risk	Mitigation
Insufficient critical skills and authorised capability	We use Strategic Workforce Planning to forecast critical role requirements and build capability ahead of need through recruitment, apprenticeships, development and reskilling. We plan against competent and authorised resource, not headcount alone.
Long lead times to competence and constrained training capacity	We plan the full route from recruitment to productive deployment, including training, mentoring, assessment and authorisation. We monitor pipeline progression and trainer, mentor and assessor capacity so that bottlenecks can be addressed early.
Competition for scarce skills and delivery partner capacity	We combine internal capability with strategic delivery partners and specialist providers. Joint workforce planning tests partner capacity, skills pipelines and reliance on common labour pools against our forward workbank rather than assuming contracted capacity is additional.
Loss of critical capability through attrition and retirement	We monitor retirement and attrition exposure in critical roles and use succession planning, career pathways, development and knowledge transfer to retain and replace scarce operational and technical capability.

7.2 FROM EARLY WARNING TO INTERVENTION

We monitor workforce risk through the same principle used across the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy: leading indicators allow us to act before a constraint affects delivery. At workforce level, this means looking beyond vacancy numbers to whether capability is progressing at the rate assumed in our plan. Our key indicators include:

- critical-role coverage against forecast demand;
- recruitment and progression through development pipelines;
- training, assessment and authorisation throughput;
- trainer, mentor and assessor capacity;
- attrition, retirement and succession exposure; and
- partner capability and workforce availability.

These provide the supporting workforce evidence for the critical-role coverage measure within the (ED3-S05) ED3 Delivery Strategy's resilience framework, rather than creating a separate set of delivery measures.

Where the evidence shows that capability will not be available when required, we intervene according to the nature and timing of the constraint. We can adjust recruitment or learner intake, increase training and assessment capacity, accelerate development where competence standards allow, reskill or redeploy existing employees, use strategic partner or specialist capacity, or apply proven productivity improvements to reduce the underlying requirement. If the constraint cannot be resolved through workforce action alone, it is considered alongside the wider programme and may require work to be re-sequenced or reprioritised.