

The Best Person(s) for the Job

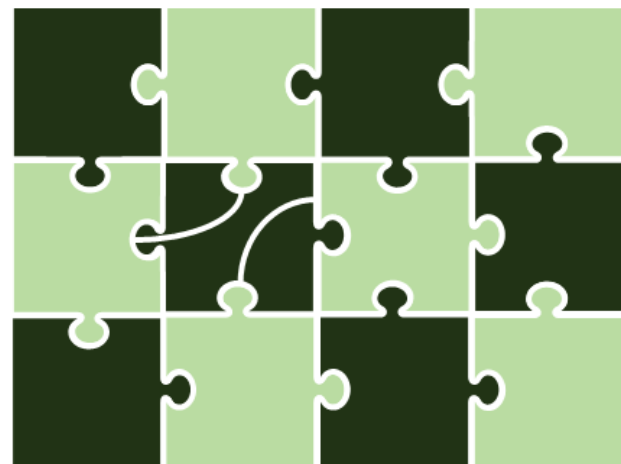
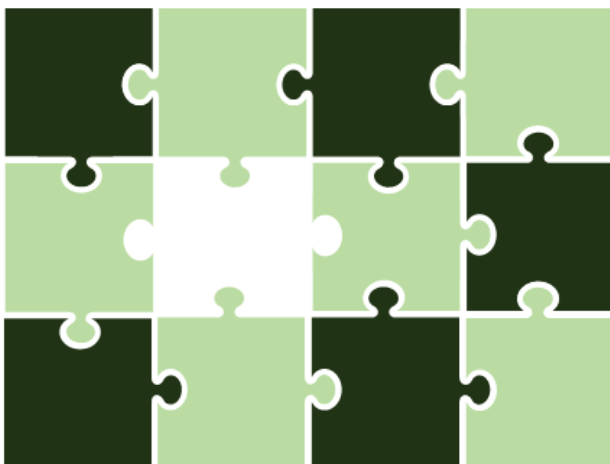
Publicly funded organisations deliver dynamic, specialised work, assembling a jigsaw puzzle of skills usually not found in a single person. These organisations are expected to be both efficient and flexible, paying only modest salaries, but still able to quickly reconfigure resources. Traditional models of recruiting for whole roles can mean paying underutilised, highly skilled staff to do lower skilled work, or missing important pieces of the skills puzzle.

Traditional approaches to staffing seek to organise work into roles that can be delivered by one employee. Roles might be part-time or shared between people who do not want to work full-time, but the goal is to frame work into 'chunks' that can be matched to the skills of a whole person.

This helps to simplify provision of supports and services like line management, software, office space, and recruitment and training for employees. It is the well-worn path of least resistance in many organisations where workers are perceived to be interchangeable, or workers and industrial organisations favour full-time employment models.

Although its simplicity is appealing, this approach may not always maximise public value, and may not suit the preferences of some workers. Highly specialised skills, for example, may not be required on a full-time and ongoing basis, and the people who have those skills may be unwilling to consider permanent employment in a publicly funded organisation.

Simultaneously, the expertise of employees in full-time roles may be underutilised much of the time, and employing large numbers of ongoing workers can limit flexibility to adjust the workforce over time. Access to rare capabilities for specific projects is often sourced from large consulting firms with high overheads.



a skills gap could be framed as one role, but may be better filled by multiple people with complementary skills

Different models are common in other settings, where technology enables access to a mix of skills from different workers in small and flexible chunks. Organisational needs can be met by assembling 'frankenworkers' that bring together labour from different people with complementary skillsets.

Skilled labour is available in smaller units, with more people working part-time across multiple projects or clients, or in temporary, contract-based roles. Workers performing to the top of their capability can command higher prices while delivering more value.

Thinking about work and skills, rather than roles, enables more targeted, efficient, and flexible resourcing solutions where the best person for the job is actually several different people.

Frankenworkers are not right for every role or organisation, and these flexible employment models have been criticised for disadvantaging some workers. Creating small teams instead of single roles can, however, address some types of organisational need. Publicly funded organisations that are comfortable with consulting firms building teams with specialist skills, where each team member might contribute only a few days to a bigger project, may hesitate to build similar teams of their own.

The trend toward frankenworkers is likely to continue as workers and organisations become more comfortable thinking about work in chunks smaller than a whole role. Publicly funded organisations should be thinking about opportunities to assemble the skills they need from smaller pieces of the puzzle.

To find out more about how you can use this approach in your organisation, contact us: info@h4consulting.com.au
Find additional resources at www.h4consulting.com.au/resources