Prestudy

Tomorrow's Competence

– Competence Development and Lifelong Learning in Knowledge-Intensive Companies
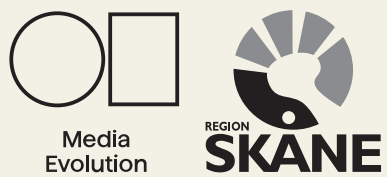
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Research Purpose, Reporting and Structure

"Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn."
– Alvin Toffler (Future Shock, 1970)

The purpose of this pre-study and report is to identify what strategies and structures regional organisations in Skåne report that they need now, in order to identify and develop their teams' competencies and skills *for the futures* of their work.

This report includes insights from surveys, secondary data analysis, desk research on professional learning and competence development—globally, in the EU, in Sweden and in Skåne—and results from a needs assessment conducted with regional companies and experts between October 2024 and January 2025. The needs assessment, or pre-survey, key insights from 1:1 interviews with regional experts, company representatives and from a Collaborative Foresight Cycle on the same topic.

Finally, we outline an impact logic and key partners, roles and potential applications for using this pre-study

to anchor a future project on the topic of the futures of professional learning and competence development in the region of Skåne.

Methodology and Participation

This pre-study investigated mature, knowledge-intensive organisations' strategic and structural needs to support professional learning and competence development. The following three research questions informed this research:

- *How do mature regional companies identify future skills*, specialized training needs, and Learning and Development needs in their organisations as a result of digitalisation, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, and novel forms of human–machine collaborations?

- What strategies and structures do mature regional organisations currently have—or are building— to anticipate, adapt to and proactively shape their employees' overall competence (and competencies) for the future of their industry?

- *What do mature regional organisations need* to upskill or reskill employees across a range of departments and across technical, interpersonal, relational and sustainability competence categories?

Insights in the pre-study are derived from several sources and collected through a combination quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, including the following[1]

- Online surveys (39 responses for 2024-2025)

- Semi-informal interviews with regional experts and representatives of mature Scanian organisations re-present (29 participants)

- Expert interviews with regional academic research-ers (3 researchers)

- Five Interactive workshops with a core group of ex-perts, as part of the Collaborative Foresight Cycle "Futures of Professional Learning and Competence Development" (20 participants/workshop (average))

- Desk research, secondary data collection and ana-lysis (including data collected in previous research on the topic, conducted by Media Evolution[2]).

Participation Overview

Survey and interview participants represented a broad cross-section of lived experience, industry perspec-tive, demographics, and career experience. Depart-mental expertise includes that from Human Resources, People and Culture, Learning and Development, Con-tinuing Education/Training, Project Management and Leadership. Industries reported include IT/Web deve-lopment, Communications, Food/Ag, and Creative/Cul-tural sector with 65% reporting "other" as industry. More than 60% of participants had at least 15 years' ex-perience. 56% of participants surveyed said they parti-

[1] See Survey questions, final survey results report, and interview promps in the appendix.
[2] 2020-2022-Mind the Gap and Co-skill analyses; 2023-membership competence development needs pre-servey; Summer-fall 2024-Membership Foresight+Competence needs assessment

cipated in at least 3-5 learning activities a year, and had "very senior" roles. Job titles included *L&D manager; Learning Development designer, Project leader; Creative leadership coach, organisation Culture designer; Associate Product Manager; Chief of Staff; Learning consultant; People and Development manager and HR Manager.*

More than half of surveyed participants represented organisations in business for more than 10 years, have more than 250 employees, and are located in or just around Malmö and describe their organisation's Learning & Development maturity as "Learning and Development Excellence." 70% respondents rate their learning and development structures and strategies as "Integrated" (with aligned teams, defined processes and metrics, with managed performance).

Examples of organisations represented in the surveys and interviews include the following
(non-exhaustive list):

Axis	IKEA/inter IKEA/Ingka Systems	Beiijer Electronics	ustwo	Duni	Oatly
MINC	KAN	Unity Technologies	Stratitq	IO Interactive	VA Syd
Pink Programming	Mannheimer Swartling	Ambition	Massive Entertainment	Neodev	Celemi

Definitions and Vocabulary

Below are some key terms, definitions, and frameworks underlying this pre-study and conversations during the Collaborative Foresight Cycle.

Language Matters: Defining "Competence Development" and "Professional Learning"

For this research, when we refer to a person's competence, we refer to their baseline understanding and general knowledge about a specific subject. This is different from a competency, which we'll use to refer to specific knowledge, skills or abilities (KSA's). Often these words are used interchangeably, especially in Swedish, where *kompetens* can mean both general authority and specific qualifications in a subject.[3]

By learning, using and then combining several competencies over time—with training and experience—an individual develops competence. Think of competence as the knowledge bucket (*the what, most often used in the singular*), filled with specific competencies (*the how, most used in the plural, as skills and abilities*). For example, a person can be considered to be competent (to *have competence*) riding a bike by training and learning competencies in balance, hand-eye coordination and physical stamina.

Job descriptions often include specific competencies—the skills, training, abilities—that people need to

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[3] *In Competence-based approaches in organisational and individual context (2022)*, author Bruno Škrinjarić says "the definition of competence diverges into two distinct directions: a collective approach, centered on requirements for organisational performance, and an individual approach, centered on individual behaviors and outcomes, and most definitions fall somewhere between these two extremes."

have to successfully perform a role at work, or in an educational setting. Some examples include:

- Functional competencies: Skills that are required to use on a daily or regular basis, such as technical, methodological, and linguistic abilities

- Interpersonal competencies: Oral, written and visual communication skills, as well as the ability to work effectively with diverse teams

- Critical thinking competencies: The ability to reason effectively, use systems thinking and make judgments and decisions toward solving complex problems

Professional Learning is improving one's competence in a particular subject by completing competency-based education, often at work (*kompetensutveckling* in Swedish). Employees can gain new competencies in their subject through training, certificate courses, and classes, often provided through a Learning and Development function in their organisation. Professional Learning in a digital product design agency, for example, might require their employees to learn functional competencies in 3D modeling and animation techniques, graphic design principles and/or digital image editing tools, color theory and composition. Continuing education helps employees upskill in new competencies to complete their work, and then apply them in practice over and over to develop a certain level of competence, which is the goal of professional learning. Organisational Maturity as a Classification
Media Evolution chose to use "Organisational Maturity" as a qualitative variable for classifying participants. A simplified definition and adapted model allowed us to

test associations between participants' reported level of maturity and their organisational learning maturity, and identify structures or strategies used to successfully navigate (or optimize for) professional learning, competency development and digital transformation.

We define organisational maturity as one "that efficiently and effectively adapts to change. Everyone follows documented processes. This compliance reduces waste and discord. Employees feel empowered to make job-related decisions. Finally, a mature company is always working to improve itself...Maturing entities are sometimes called
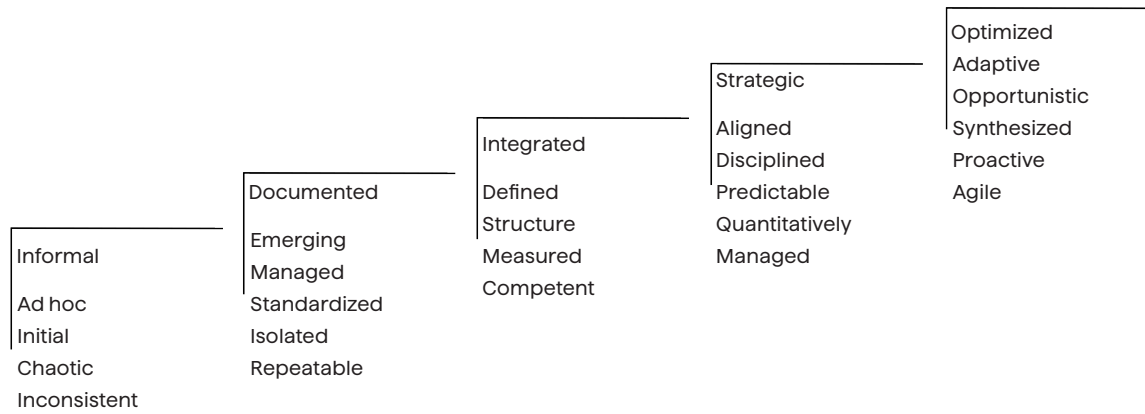learning organisations because they are continually adapting to changes as they grow." [4]

We adapted a simplified model of Capability Maturity Models, Industry 4.0 or digital maturity models, and process-oriented models that defined organisational maturity across five levels[5]. The primary purpose of using this adapted model is to establish mature, regional companies' *"capability to make core business decisions across functions like strategy; technology; operations; organisation and culture."* [6]
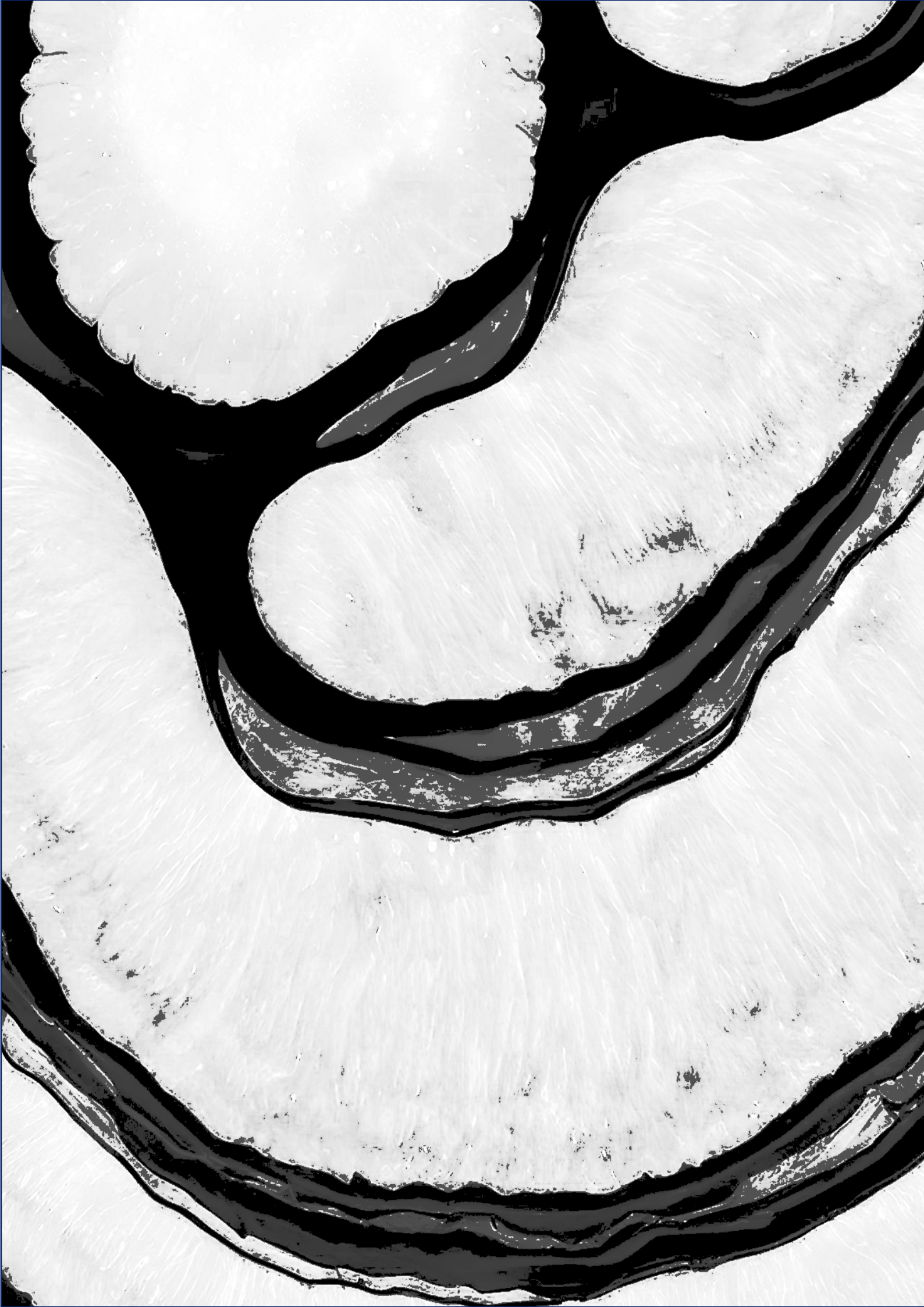
[4] Eby, 2022.
[5] Adapted from Fowler, Rezvani, and the Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI). See references and appendix.
[6] Axon et al., 2019

In the survey and in interviews, participants were asked to report their overall organisational maturity, as well as their learning and development maturity, using the following simplified model (Rezvani, 2020):

Optimized
Adaptive
Opportunistic
Synthesized
Proactive
Agile

Strategic

Aligned
Disciplined
Predictable
Quantitatively
Managed

Integrated

Defined
Structure
Measured
Competent

Documented

Emerging
Managed
Standardized
Isolated
Repeatable

Informal

Ad hoc
Initial
Chaotic
Inconsistent

Current Research and Reports

Reports: The World Economic Forum 2025 Jobs Report and Skills Forecast for 2035 Sweden from the European Centre for Vocational Training (CEDEFOP)

The WEF 2025 Jobs Report for Sweden lists resilience, flexibility, and agility as the top core skills of 2025 *and* the second-most essential skillset for 2035. Swedish organisations report curiosity, lifelong learning and creative thinking as critical competencies of increasing use by 2030. Finally, technological literacy is listed as the 5th core skill of 2025 (behind analytical thinking, leadership and social influence, and service orientation) and Swedish organisations report it will continue to increase in importance (specifically skills in AI, big data, cybersecurity and networks). Importantly, the Swedish labor force is expected to grow slowly between 2025 and 2035, with the highest growth rates among those aged 65+ [7](CEDEFOP).

[7] See CEDEFOP country-specific Skills Forecast for Sweden, 2025-2035

Research: Structures and Strategies for
Learning How to Learn

Desk research as part of this pre-study found several insights on creating learning environments that promote both individual and organisational growth and development. By and large, current case studies and applied research in organisational leadership, adult learning, and emerging learning and development technologies echoed a theme we found in survey responses and interviewees: professional learning is not merely a mechanical process, but a deeply human experience that requires self-awareness, relationality, motivation and practical application.

The following three key themes from current research into individual and organisational learning are critical to understand now, to better anticipate learning needs in organisations in the futures: 1) learning reflexivity and self-awareness skills will be critical to adapting to work futures 2) organisational power structures must support transformative learning approaches, which, in turn, supports 3) learning experiences that are personalized, integrated, and continuous.

1. Learning reflexivity and self-awareness skills are critical for adapting to future work environments: Current research emphasizes that the ability to engage in self-reflection, critical reflexivity, and a continuous questioning of one's assumptions will be essential for navigating the complexities of future work. This is in line with Ann Cunliffe's concept of the "philosopher leader" [8] who is reflective, ethical, and relationally-aware. This involves going beyond simply acquiring new skills; it requires a deep engagement with one's own experi-

"Only three things happen naturally in organisations: friction, confusion, and underperformance. Everything else requires leadership."

— Peter Drucker

ences and a willingness to question ingrained beliefs. As INSEAD professor Gianpiero Petriglieri notes[9], transformative learning starts with paying attention to one's present experience, "the hum within, the buzz around". The Inner Development Goals (IDG) framework also supports this by highlighting the importance of self-awareness, presence, and humility. Furthermore, applied research case studies with Google[10] show the ability to learn, unlearn and practice new skills is crucial, as is having an open and growth-oriented mindset that allows for continuous adaptation and development.

2. Organisational power structures must support transformative learning approaches: The research suggests that for transformative learning to be effective, organisations need to foster a culture of trust and psychological safety where employees feel comfortable challenging existing assumptions and power structures. Expert and survey responses echo this call. This looks like creating spaces where individuals can experiment and be different without fear of repercussions and where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. Additionally, leaders should act as coaches and role models, encouraging employees to apply new skills in their work. Moreover, as the IDG framework and expert interviews also emphasize, co-creation and inclusive approaches will be needed for creating more collaborative forms of knowledge-production[11]

3. Learning experiences that are personalized, integrated, and continuous are crucial for development:

[8] Cunliffe, 2009
[9] Petriglieri, Learning for A Living (2020)
[10] Orienting Inner Development in organisations (2023)
[11] Inner Development Goals, Full Report (2021)

The research suggests that effective learning experiences should not be limited to formal training. They should be personalized, taking into account the specific needs and experiences of the learners. Such experiences should be integrated into the flow of work, rather than being treated as isolated events. This can involve blended-learning approaches, which combine digital modules with in-person training. Further, continuous learning is seen as a necessity, as competencies are dynamic and evolve over time. organisations must facilitate opportunities for continuous development, not only to support career progression but to ensure that employees remain relevant and adaptable in a rapidly changing environment. The IDG framework also highlights this need for continuous development through emphasizing a learning mindset.

Research: Emerging Technologies, digitalization of learning, and inclusion

Robert Ennis defines critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking focused on deciding what to believe or do," [12] highlighting the need for moving from simply learning skills to putting them into action. Research is helping clarify both the skills needed for emerging technologies, and their application in digitized future learning environments.

According to recent research, a core structural skillset for taking action with data-driven technologies like AI and machine learning will be using it ethically and responsibly. Developing *AI literacy*—or the "human proficiency in different subject areas of AI that enable purposeful, efficient, and ethical usage of AI technolo-

[12]Gerlich, 2025

gies" (Baskins, 2024)—involves some degree of technical understanding of both basic computing skills and human-machine capabilities, as well as understanding how to work effectively with AI (eg. through prompt engineering, task delegation).

Demonstrated competencies and strategic guidance for minimizing ethical issues with AI use will also be a crucial dimension of learning and development in the future. As both AI-powered learning and hiring systems are trained on historical data, they often reflect existing societal biases. Research shows this can lead to the perpetuation of discrimination and exclusion of already-marginalized groups. For instance, AI models trained primarily on data from male speakers may struggle to accurately process and evaluate the voices and ideas of women[13]. This is not only limited to gender and can impact other marginalized groups, such as differently-abled candidates, employees and learners. Findings have recently highlighted how digital learning assessment design choices reflect and reinforce biases, leading to discriminatory outcomes and ineffective measurement of job-relevant skills.[14]

Another recent study saw a potential correlation between over-use of AI and reduced critical thinking skills. Researcher Michael Gerlich looked at the effects of using AI in professional learning, and while "…AI tools can enhance learning outcomes by providing personalised instruction and immediate feedback, thus supporting skill acquisition and knowledge retention. However, growing evidence shows that over-reliance on these tools can lead to cognitive offloading." [15]

[13] Nura Mahmod, The Conference 2022
[14] Luria et al. 2024
[15] Gerlich, 2025

"...we are not yet replaced by computers, we are not yet obsolete at our workplaces. So how do we make sure that the future of work means healthy working environments with more inclusion and less discrimination? AI is history-based...our reliance on data means that we're drawing from the past [and] data is inherently historical."

- Nura Mahmod, Futures of Digital Work, Media Evolution 2023

Key Insights

In survey responses and interviews, regional company representatives report being aware of the need to anticipate future skills, specialized training, and learning and development due to digitalization and emerging technologies like AI and machine learning. However, the approaches and maturity of these companies vary. Participants report they need a mix of strategic discussions, client feedback, internal assessments, and annual reviews to anticipate future skills needs. They use a variety of methods to address these needs, including hiring, training programs, and individual development plans. However, they face challenges in balancing short-term goals with long-term planning, engaging employees in learning, and fully integrating emerging technologies into their learning and development strategies. Many also are working to understand the balance between human-centered skills with technological advancements in learning and development.

Survey Insights

Professional Learning or Performative Competence?

"I think a lot of this is just for the buzz. My role as Chief of Staff was essentially made up because of commentary in the market and we've created several new roles in my time here for the same reason. 'Need' is relative and can be just as much about marketing as actual necessary capabilities." - Survey respondent

Appearing to have employees who are highly competent in certain technology tools skills (eg. "prompt engineering"), or who have titles that indicate an expertise in emerging technologies may have market penetration and talent attraction benefits. One interview respondent also identified a similar talent attraction tactic as "learning-washing," where organisations showcase their employees' micro-credentials in the latest technology tools on LinkedIn, for example, in order to attract new talent with the optics of being futures-ready or highly competitive in their industry.

Learning with AI at Work VS. Meeting Sustainability Commitments

"...my organisation has a net carbon zero goal by 2030, and investments into AI have begun to make those goals look impossible, roles to offset the impact of AI should be considered." - Survey respondent

The World Economic Forum's 2025 Future of Jobs Report shows that Sweden is ahead of many nations in its turn towards upskilling and job creation related to digi-

tization and technology, as well as towards "green jobs," including those "...that help to protect ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high-efficiency strategies; de-carbonize the economy". [16] But survey respondents, workshop participants and interviewees all shared a tension they were experiencing between being expected to put learning strategies and structures in place to help meet their organisation's sustainability goals, and the learning strategies needed to adopt AI wisely into their processes and workflows. This tension indicates a potential future learning need and future competence for sustainability roles or green transition experts who will track and advise businesses (and governments) on the environmental impact of their adoption of AI tools, and ways to minimize it.

Quarterly Proof - Measuring the impact of professional learning activities on business outcomes is hard

"In an organisation as large as mine there are few skills that are truly unneeded, but undue burden is placed on individuals to prove business need before development can happen." - Survey respondent

No survey respondents and only one interviewee reported having concrete structures or strategies in place to measure the impact (or the return on their investment) of professional learning activities on business outcomes. Yet proving the business value of learning and development was revealed as a challenge, when leaders prioritize quarterly KPIs, which overshadow the

[16] United Nations Environment Programme, 2008

value of investments in long-term professional learning. This indicates a current and future learning need and strategic growth area for regional organisations.

Q3.8 What are some structures or strategies you currently have that measure the impact and/or ROI of professional learning activities?

Data	Responses
none that I know of	1
none so far	1
.	1
I don't. Intuition and how much of learning is applicable to my work (and life) directly.	1
I'm not sure we have this in any meaningful way	1
No set structures for this	1
none	1
I don't know	1

Interview Insights

Strategic Need: Prioritize Existing Employees By Improving Their LQ

"We aim to promote internally over external hiring, even though it puts a lot of strain on our processes to support that." - Survey respondent

Both current research and responses from participants in this pre-study indicate that developing employees' "learning quotient" (LQ)—their ability and desire to continuously learn and adapt their existing skills[17]—may be more crucial than their learning new skillsets. And while not easy, reskilling may still be a cheaper learning and development strategy than hiring new. One interviewee says "quiet hiring" is a way to invest in their current employees through learning and development and suggested that the value of internal growth within a company may be increasing.

In an expert interview, a regional VP in a technology company indicated that "playbook-style skills"—in product development, data analysis, project or process management—will be less important competencies to prioritize in future learning, as they can be easily self-taught and will be increasingly automated. But noted that finding ways to "quiet hire" employees who have a high learning quotient and already have other valuable tacit knowledge would be less expensive than developing and hiring for new roles.

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[17]A Knox, *Why LQ Matters More Than IQ in Today's Fast-Changing World*, Forbes 2023.

"We have to not only learn new skills, but also unlearn old ways of doing things"

- Aliza Knox

Structural: Create Financial Structures
to Incentivize Learning

In 10 years, "everyone" will use generative AI services to explore areas of interest and learn new things. However, corporate structures and incentive models will largely be the same. Most workplace cultures will still prioritize short-term deliverables/results and the appearance of "being busy" over a balanced perspective where leaders make room for continuous learning and show that it is important through action—e.g., through the goals they set and how they incentivize and promote employees." - Survey response

Expert and regional company representatives touched on the importance of encouraging agency and ownership in learning, suggesting that more organisations should consider deeper structural incentives to add value to the learning process for individuals. Organizations can explore alternative financial incentive structures, such as co-ownership or equity sharing models, to drive individual engagement in learning. Incentives should align with both organisational needs and individual values and intrinsic motivations. Some respondents indicated that providing employees with personal yearly education budgets and dedicated time off for training (e.g., five paid training days per year) signals an investment in their growth and allows individuals to pursue learning opportunities aligned with their interests and career goals, fostering intrinsic motivation. Some company interviewees also offer volunteer days for learning and contributing to the community.

Strategic + Structural: Meet learners
where they are

"A little effort, a little effortless" - Interviewee

"...if you don't know what's happening [inside], you're in trouble. And I was in trouble because my inner child was driving..while I was, like, trying to lead the team. And so the core of learning is self-knowledge." - Expert interview

Future professional learning needs to be personalized, contextualized, and integrated into the daily workflow, moving away from "one-size-fits-all" models. Competence development can be redefined to be more inclusive with diversified learning approaches like being "open/closed, structured/unstructured, facilitated/unfacilitated, certified/uncertified" (Gourlay et al., 2021).

The importance of human connection, belonging and inclusion was repeatedly highlighted in surveys, interviews and conversations. And while technology can be a tool for creating engaging and data-driven professional learning, many responses encouraged thinking about learning in the context of the "entanglement" of learning technology's social, cultural, historical, and environmental aspects, especially when viewed as "neutral" learning tools.

Several respondents and interviewees saw a need for evaluating how well their future learning systems, approaches and technologies met their organisation's sustainability goals and inclusion and equity commit-

ments. To do this, HR and L&D teams will need better ways to recognize skills and knowledge acquired informally, unconventionally, peer-to-peer, or through experiences outside work. organisations will need structures to encourage and support "learning by doing"—including encourage employees to bring their lived experience to work as valuable competencies for work.

Strategic Need: Build Trust and Psychological Safety first

Experts, interviewees, and workshop participants all discussed the importance of trust and the concept of belonging and feeling safe to offer feedback to leadership in open dialogue in mature (learning) organisations. One expert emphasized the need (and skill) for maintaining reasonable transparency about power dynamics in an organisation—especially about giving and receiving feedback—as a fundamental structure driving future learning and development strategies and capacity. A workshop participant noted that professional learning is a transaction of work and time between companies and employees—and learning to "exchange" these resources skillfully is a future learning need. Organizations need to focus on learning how to maintain trust internally, build in feedback strategies that are reasonably transparent. A final insight was a question posed by a core group participant: can employee learning ever be "bought" by the companies employees work for?

"...transformative learning makes us misfits. It invites responsible subversion. That takes courage. It takes courage to own our complicity in the status quo, and it takes courage not to remain captive to it. Just as shame impedes learning and hampers leadership, having the courage to learn gives us the courage to lead."

- Gianpiero Petriglieri

Structural Need: Defining Roles
that Don't Exist Yet

New roles in sustainability have recently emerged—Chief Heat Officers, renewable energy procurement managers, carbon accountants and carbon removal procurers—as a result of net-zero pledges, climate-related commitments, or in response to climate change impacts that no one could have predicted years ago[18]. Participants indicated a need for learning structures that could help their People & Culture or HR departments identify and/or define these emerging roles—or adapt existing roles—in their organisations, especially as extreme weather events like the recent disastrous wildfires in LA escalate globally.

Strategic Need: Move towards
Living Systems Thinking

"…Businesses can be organisms who have a unique ability to shape shift according to not only external forces, but internal forces." - Expert interview

In future organisations, learners and especially leaders will need to find ways to space to adapt learning at work to challenges as they emerge. Expert interviewees challenged conventional "systems thinking" about professional learning by expressing a desire to move away from a reactive, individualistic, and a skills-based approaches and towards a critical, relational, and responsive view. According to one interviewee, moving towards "living systems thinking" shifts the focus from

[18] Nature, Careering Ahead (2023)

mechanistic, output-driven learning to more organic, adaptive, and humane approaches. Another expert interview overseeing global L&D put it succinctly,"...there is no business without people, and if people aren't at their best, then the company won't be at its best."

Collaborative Foresight Cycle Workshops Insights

- Key signals: Foresight as a key competence; "Severance" analogy of work/life separation is untenable, working with your hands in digital companies, orgs moving towards inner work / IDGs are onto something, AI as foresight assistant of what we could reskill/upskill/map for career trajectories (and companies)

Social and Relational Learning Futures will Thrive

"Social learning is embedded in everything we do, and it happens at work too, and especially when it's with people who are not your colleagues. This learning is actually more valuable, and it's what "sticks." - Core group participants

Social and relational learning structures and strategies enhance thinking, build trust, promote adaptability and engagement, and foster a more effective learning ecosystem within organisations. According to expert participants in our four-month collaborative cycle building futures scenarios of professional learning, infu-

sing possibility, philosophy and play into competence development—when done with technologies and in a top-down structure— primed human learning.

A key focus of social and relational learning that the expert participants highlighted should be on building foresight and futures thinking competencies both at individual, organisational, sectoral and inter-sectoral levels. This includes both sharing and making sense of changes potentially impacting our work in the future and how we might prepare for them. Likewise, they emphasized the need for envisioning desirable futures, setting directions to work towards and being in touch with values and purpose of our work. Finally, the group emphasized the need to work with uncertainty and prepare for 'anything' instead of 'everything' by collectively learning competencies we need for adapting to the changes we meet.

"Build resilience by learning to handle the unknown. Skills as being adaptive, solutions-oriented, reflective and curious." - Key insight identified by the group of experts in the Collaborative Foresight Cycle

Social and relational learning approaches often emphasize learner agency and ownership, allowing individuals to take responsibility for their learning. When

people are empowered, they develop a stronger sense of purpose. Futures scenarios that focused on performance, productivity and "proof" of knowledge- or skills-sharing enhanced stress. Heavily mechanized, top-down structures were the least likely to thrive for people, planet and the organisations themselves.

Messy vs. Measurement: Professional Learning Without Proof

"Learning is messy, and it gets killed when we measure, control and try to force it. 99% of all people wanna solve their problems. They will learn how, if you trust it." - Core group participant

"I think there's a movement towards having orgs/teams get certifications or trainings that look good on paper (to the market) as a sales/account penetration tactic. I'm wondering if/how that might dilute the concept/ space because it might be tough to discern which are legitimate and which are just marketing." - Survey respondent

In The Business Improvement Process, H. James Harrington famously said "Measurement is the first step that leads to control and eventually to improvement.
If you can't measure something, you can't understand it. If you can't understand it, you can't control it. If you can't control it, you can't improve it." But interviewees and participants echoed a common theme: measu-

ring and assessing learning at work seems to kill the intrinsic, individual motivation to learn, especially when mandated and used as a marketing tactic.

One expert interviewed went so far as to say that constant assessment via top-down mandates from global HR teams are counterproductive to professional learning, and push employees further away from reaching their potential in terms of competence, confidence, and capacity.

Especially when organized without individual employee involvement, mandated learning "can lead to organisational passivity and helplessness," which inhibits the growth of self-managing, self-organizing, motivated teams who will know best how to adapt their professional learning to the demands of their daily work.
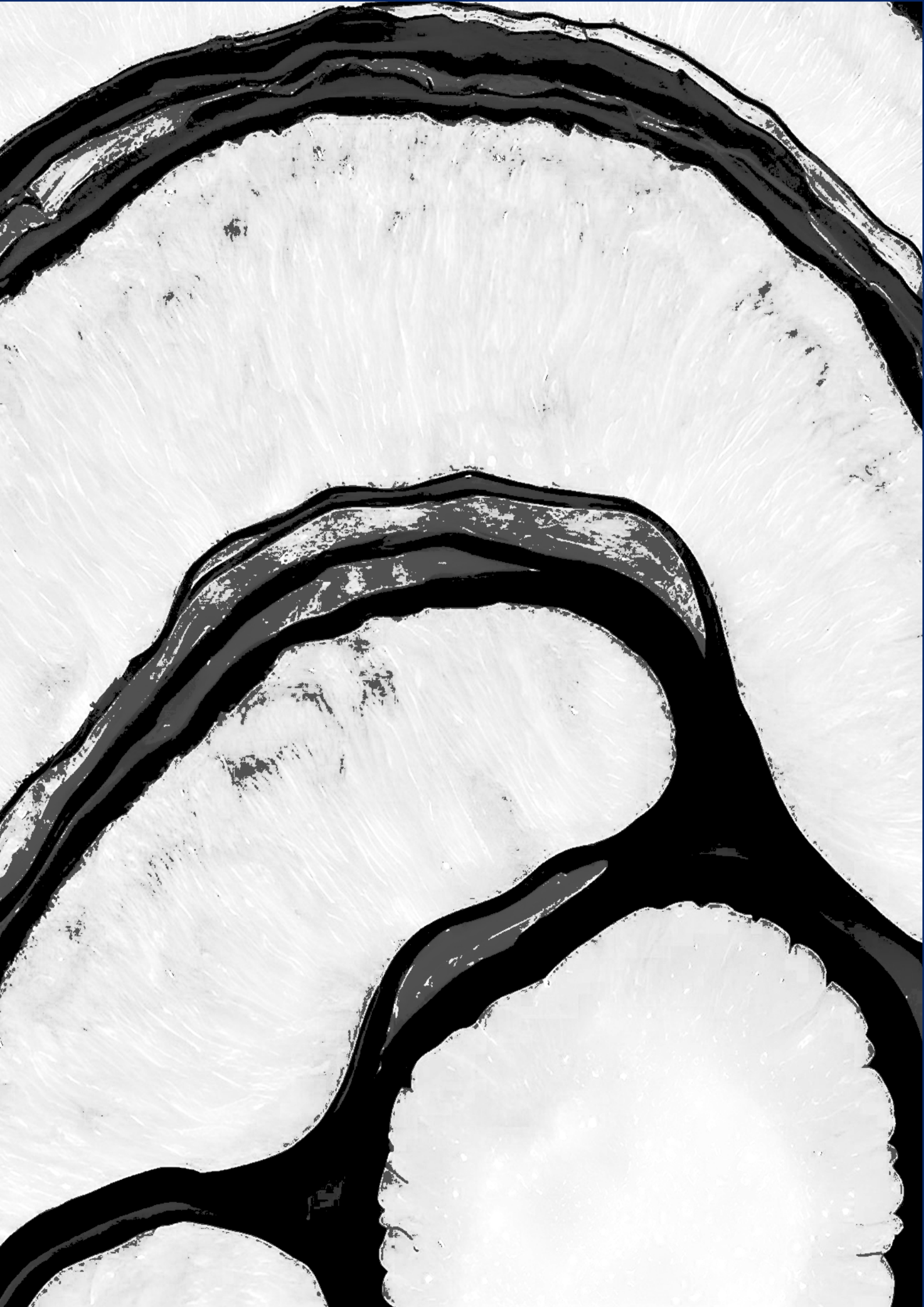
Impact Logic, Interventions and Next Steps

The following impact logic is provided as a jumping-off point for a future project investigating how to improve regional competence development, based on the insights, challenges and opportunities identified in this pre-study. This impact logic addresses the complexity of professional learning and competence development—which spans multiple areas including policy, financial incentives, emerging technologies, education, and industry. We also offer insights-based recommendations as additions to this logic based on the expertise offered in interviews, workshops, and from current organisational learning, inclusive design, ethical technologies, adult learning and leadership scholarship.

Impact Logic

The following is a breakdown of potential elements of an impact logic, with recommendations based on the insights and current research uncovered
as part of this pre-study:

Promote Lifelong Learning and Adaptability

"If you have an interest and attitude that you want to learn I think you can learn anything." - Interviewee

- Problem: Rapid technological advancements and digitalisation mean that existing skills are quickly becoming obsolete. Individual employees need to be trusted and take responsibility for their own learning and development, and organisations need to support continuous learning. There is also a need to address the tension between company-mandated learning and individual decision-making processes about what to learn, how, where, and when.

- Intervention: Promote a culture of lifelong learning through both formal and informal means. This includes flexible educational opportunities and diversified learning experiences, including those offered by higher education institutions, vocational training programs, and individually-prompted, "unconventional" social learning (eg. via social media platforms, peer-to-peer mentorships). The implementation of foresight in organisations can also minimize resistance to change and enhance participatory social learning opportunities[19]

- Impact: Improved adaptability of the workforce, enhanced innovation, and a more future-proof economy.

[19] Galang et al., 2025

Avoid "Learnification," Measure Reasonably

- Problem: Responses indicate that existing methods of measuring competence and learning impact in the region are often limited, difficult to implement and there's a lack of longitudinal data to correlate long-term impacts of investment in professional learning with short-term business growth. Conversely, experts and participants caution against inflexible learning processes and over-assessment of competence development that aren't inclusive, focus on short-term learning outcomes, and become barriers to intrinsically-motivated learning.

- Intervention: Develop more inclusive, robust evaluation frameworks that assess the impact and inclusivity of competence development initiatives. Combine quantitative and qualitative methods—including using longitudinal studies—to track accessibility of and engagement in professional learning, and the development of competencies over time. Also, there's a need to assess the transfer of learning into practice. Future studies should focus on mapping learning outcomes to existing skills gaps, exploring the relationships between more inclusive experiences and long-term impact ("stickiness" of learning interventions on business-relevant outcomes).

- Impact: Long-term data collection and decision-making, impact evaluation on equitable allocation of resources to business outcomes, and greater inclusivity in professional learning and competence development initiatives.

"...learning may have fallen into the same hole as higher education more generally—namely a collapse into pure process, a fetishization of interaction for its own sake, even a new version of what Biesta (2012) calls 'learnification'... it could benefit from a move away from process (and wish-fulfilment), towards a more ethnographic sensibility, opening up educational settings in terms of the actual, situated, more-than-human 'mess' of specific contexts, disciplinary content and cultures, and also the wide diversity of ways of engaging, some of which might value solitude, reticence, silence, and different ways of 'being' in education—digital or otherwise, connected or not."

- Gourlay et al, 2021

Adopt Emerging Technology into Organisational Learning Wisely

- Problem: Organisations, eager to avoid being left behind, may implement new learning technologies like AI without a clear understanding of their potential benefits or drawbacks. This can lead to over-reliance on technology, which can hinder critical thinking, and a neglect of human-centered learning approaches. There is also a risk of investing in hyped technologies that may not deliver lasting value, and a lack of awareness of the ethical implications of using data-driven AI in learning. Furthermore, organisations may lack the internal skills to implement these technologies effectively.

- Intervention: Integrate emerging technologies when they enhance learning and competence development, and prioritize human skills. This would involve using AI to create personalized learning experiences, while also focusing on the development of critical emotion-based skills such as communication, empathy, and critical thinking.

- Impact: Enhanced learning outcomes, more efficient training processes, and a workforce prepared to adapt to technological changes.

Enhancements to Impact Logic, Based on Pre-study Insights and Research

Below are several strategic or structural considerations to enhance the impact logic above. These additions are based on insights and recommendations shared by regional company representatives via survey and

the Collaborative Foresight Cycle, local experts, and research on current organisational learning and the current research covered at the beginning of this report.

Emphasize Transformative Learning and Inner Development

- Insight-based recommendation: Explicitly emphasize the importance of transformative learning, which changes perspectives and relationships, laying the foundation for personal growth and innovation.

- Addition: Integrate principles of transformative learning, which includes self-reflection, questioning assumptions, and envisioning new possibilities. Encourage trust for and investment in learning experiences that move beyond incremental knowledge gain to foster deeper shifts in mindset and behavior. This also involves promoting inner development through approaches like the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), which focus on personal qualities such as self-awareness, empathy, and ethical reasoning. This kind of learning is essential for navigating complex and ambiguous situations.

- Impact: More resilient and adaptable individuals, capable of leading change and contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future.

Strategy: Promote Relational and Collaborative Learning, especially between generations

"Training is not the same as learning." - Interviewee

"[What's missing is...] A reversed mentorship where younger co-workers are mentoring senior colleagues to create a culture of adoptability and continuous learnings. Lack of role models for e.g. "Omställningsstudiestöd" - Survey respondent

- Insight-based recommendation: Stress in-person learning experiences between employees and go deep into the relational aspects of learning.

- Addition: Shift the focus from individual skill acquisition to relational learning, emphasizing the importance of learning in connection with others. This involves creating spaces for dialogue, co-creation, and knowledge sharing. Encourage peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, and cross-functional collaboration to foster a sense of community and shared responsibility for learning. According to one source, "the value of human interaction—mentorship, peer learning, and hands-on collaboration—will remain critical".

- Impact: Stronger learning communities, enhanced knowledge transfer, and more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Strategy: Foster Cultures of Safety, Belonging and Trust

"...as a global company, we must ensure the global trends are followed with regards to DEIB [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging] efforts, and hyper nationalistic trends are avoided. DEIB frameworks and benefits should be reinforced through additional positions, or internal [in the] organisations."
- Survey respondent

- Insight-based recommendation: Explicitly address the importance of psychological safety, belonging and trust at work for
increasingly diverse workforces.

- Addition: Prioritize creating learning environments where individuals feel safe to take risks, experiment, and make mistakes. Build trust between leaders and employees with. leaders modelling vulnerability and creating open feedback structures. Foster courageous environments to encourage open dialogue amongst employees.

- Impact: Increased engagement, more open communication, and a greater willingness to learn from mistakes.

Structure: Integrate Embodied and Experiential Learning

"I would also have loved to integrate more Experience design into education as a whole - many courses and classes I have attended are good for knowledge but bad at the experience which means I do not bring the knowledge home and use it - there is no wow to the way it is presented or executed." - Survey respondent

- Insight-based recommendation: Focus on the importance of embodied and experiential learning, as well as incorporating "unconventional," individual learning (e.g. from social media platforms) that fill future skills gaps.

- Addition: Incorporate experiential learning methods that engage the whole person (mind, body, and emotions). This includes hands-on projects, simulations, and real-world problem-solving opportunities. Encourage reflection on lived experience as a source of learning. It also means that learning should extend beyond the classroom to incorporate embodied experiences that engage different ways of knowing.

- Impact: Deeper learning, increased retention of knowledge, and a more holistic approach to development.

Strategy: Acknowledge the Role of
Emotions in Learning

"The human perspective and the feelings that we have will remain important when it comes to how well we learn and develop." - Interviewee

- Current Logic: Give specific attention to the role of emotions in learning, and the value of emotional intelligence as a critical futures competence.

- Addition: Recognize the role of emotions in the learning process, both as a motivator for learning and as a way of knowing. Create opportunities for learners to explore their values, beliefs, and experiences, in relation to competence development. Encourage the development of emotional intelligence as a key leadership competency.

- Impact: A more humanistic approach to learning, where individuals feel empowered to develop their full potential.

By integrating these additions into a future project exploring competence development in Skåne, project partners will move beyond a purely skills-based approach to ensure that individuals are not only equipped with the necessary skills, but also with the mindset and values to lead and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable models of professional learning.

Future Project Partners and Roles

"If companies want to make effective strategy in the face of uncertainty, they need to set up a process of constant exploration—one that allows top managers to build permanent but flexible bridges between their actions in the present and their thinking about the future. What's necessary, in short, is not just imagination but the institutionalization of imagination. - Learning From the Future, Harvard Business Review (2020)

Academic Research partners: Adapting to
digital work futures and
activating organisational knowledge

" Now we know. Now what do we DO? ...how do you actually learn from all this knowledge?" - Anna Jonsson

A critical *structural need* (and challenge) about professional learning and competence development expressed by participants in this pre-study and in research is evaluating the business impact (and ROI) of learning and development activities - responsibly, continuously and reasonably. *Only one interviewee* in this pre-study reported having any structures or strategies in place to measure the correlation between their competence development activities and business performance. Clearly regional companies have a need to ensure their learning activities apply to the mission, vision and to account for the evolving nature of competence in an increasingly mobile, diverse workforce.

Based on their inclusive ethnographic research in how digital workers experience, anticipate, and adopt

emerging and evolving work technologies—as well as network of global and regional experts in work futures—we recommend The Digital Work Futures Research Lab (DWF) at Malmö University as a key partner in any future project investigating the futures of professional learning. Their role could include observing, documenting how regional companies are using automation as adaptation and learning-by-doing to help them responsibly and consistently evaluate the impact of professional learning initiatives on organisational mission and vision.

A second key *strategic need* uncovered in this pre-study is how to integrate all the different tools and methods for professional learning in order to move beyond just knowledge handling and knowledge sharing towards reflexive knowledge *development* in organisations. In order to help regional companies address this need, we recommend Dr. Anna Jonsson at the School of Economics and Management at Lund University as a key partner in any future project investigating the futures of professional learning. Her research emphasises "knowing in practice," developing human Expertise and emotional Skills in organisational learning and connects it with practical application and innovation conversations. She has worked extensively with global corporates on applying knowledge
development in real-world situations.

Regional Business Community partner:
Media Evolution as Future(s) Learning Platform

"Networked learning involves processes of collaborative, co-operative and collective inquiry, knowledge-creation and knowledgeable action, underpinned by trusting relationships, motivated by a sense of shared challenge and enabled by convivial technologies." - Networked Learning Editorial Collective[20]

Through the process of this pre-study and with experiences from hosting knowledge sharing and educational activities for a diverse and cross-sector community of companies and professionals Media Evolution has learned that it's hard to model how to practice emergence, balancing measured-unmeasured in terms of approach (ambidextrous).

Other research suggests that employees will also need to become more comfortable working in multi-disciplinary teams to extract value from AI-driven insights. The importance of soft skills such as those related to interpersonal skills, empathy, and social and emotional intelligence will also be critical as a new "feeling economy" emerges and workers focus more on tasks requiring these skills [54]. More generally, such skills will also continue to help people thrive in increasingly AI-enabled work environments. Identifying, and helping workers to develop, these required skillsets is the responsibility of many stake-holders" [21]

There's a need to help professionals stay at the systems edge, provide an alternative space for—or build in a

[20] Galang et al., 2025

little social slack to— the professional learning ecosystem (e.g. be complementary to, not instead of, bootcamps, courses, or executive education training).

Media Evolution's role can be to increase foresight capability and practice to build companies capacity to learn how to learn, and what to learn by creating participatory scenario planning based on regional community, then drawing a map back from potential futures to present day learning gaps.

Furthermore Media Evolution and a future implementation project can strive to provide methodologies for moving from knowledge learning to knowledge "doing" and as such continue to define, establish the need for, and evaluate a community of practice as an alternative learning platform for the business community that fills regional organisation's professional learning needs.

Finally Media Evolution's role as community organisation can be to promote life-long learning as a collaborative practice across Southern Sweden's business life. Together and between companies develop and strengthen a culture of learning, and acknowledge the fact that professionals change workplace over the course of their career, and the better individuals are educated during their periods in one company, the more valuable they are for the next, and vice versa.

[21] Baskins et al, 2024

Potential Funders for an implementation project Funding:

ERUF – Regionalfonden i Skåne-Blekinge
For structural development Tillväxtverket plans to open for a new round of applications for Regionalfonden i Skåne-Blekinge in August 2025 in which the targets *1.1 Strengthen research and innovation,1.3 Strengthen the growth and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises and 1.4 Develop skills for smart specialization - proposed focus: to provide support to companies* to train/strengthen skills within companies can be of relevance for the needs stated in this report.

The EU funded regional fund Regionalfonden i Skåne-Blekinge's objective is to "invest in innovation and strengthened collaboration between companies and research. Partly through business development in small and medium-sized companies, efforts to provide skills, investments in test beds and green transition."

Co-funding

Companies in Skåne
Getting companies onboard in the application process and as such commit to co-finance with their time spent in the project is a way to increase both the business community's commitment and broaden the financial base of the project.

Region of Skåne – Näringsliv och kompetensförsörjning
The Region of Skåne has a long history of initiating, leading and funding competence development projects (most recently Coskills and SPIK). As such their support both financially and expertise wise is crucial for an implementation project.
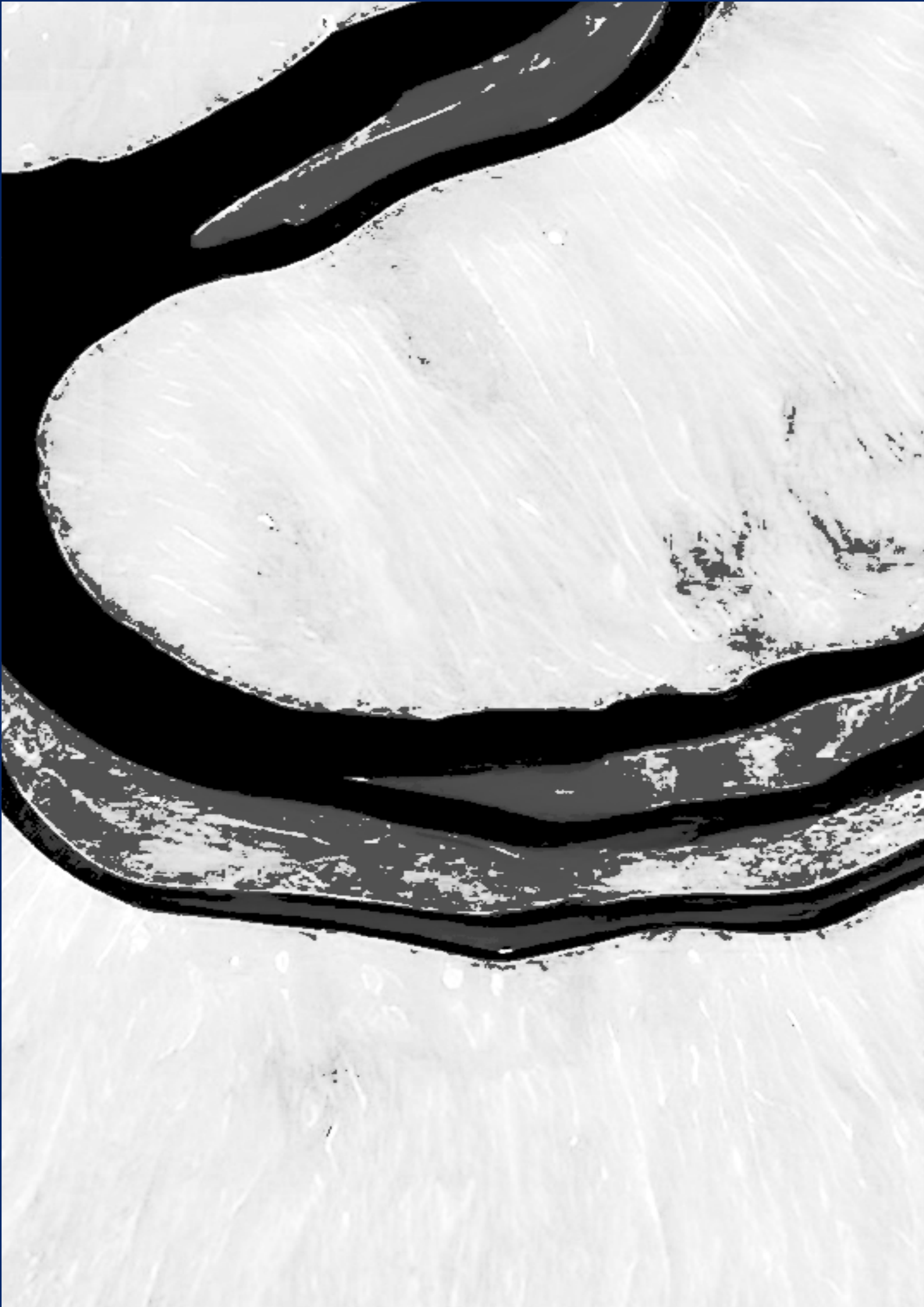
Closing

Building on previous research projects into the topic of learning professionally, and in community, Media Evolution has conducted this preliminary study as a needs assessment—in parallel with a 4-month Collaborative Foresight Cycle exploring the futures of the same topic— to further understand regional organisations's needs for learning and competence development in the future.

This report explores the evolving landscape of competence development and professional learning in mature organisations in Skåne, focusing on the impact of technological advancements, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), on skills, and the need for adaptable organisational structures and learning strategies. The report analyzes frameworks for identifying and measuring competencies, both individually and organisationally, and includes insights from experts and regional company representatives outlining the challenges of implementing effective learning initiatives within various organisational contexts.

The role of leadership in navigating these changes is also highlighted, emphasizing the importance of fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. Finally, the report explores the Collaborative Foresight Cycle's core group insights and recommendations for a more holistic approach to learning that incorporates human-centered skills and addresses the emotional aspects of change.

In addition to informing a larger project in 2025, Media Evolution hopes to strengthen the regional business community's ability to become high-impact learning organisations that identify and develop futures-ready skills, and to promote lifelong learning through alternative learning contexts, new inclusive foresight methods, and a community-focused approval.
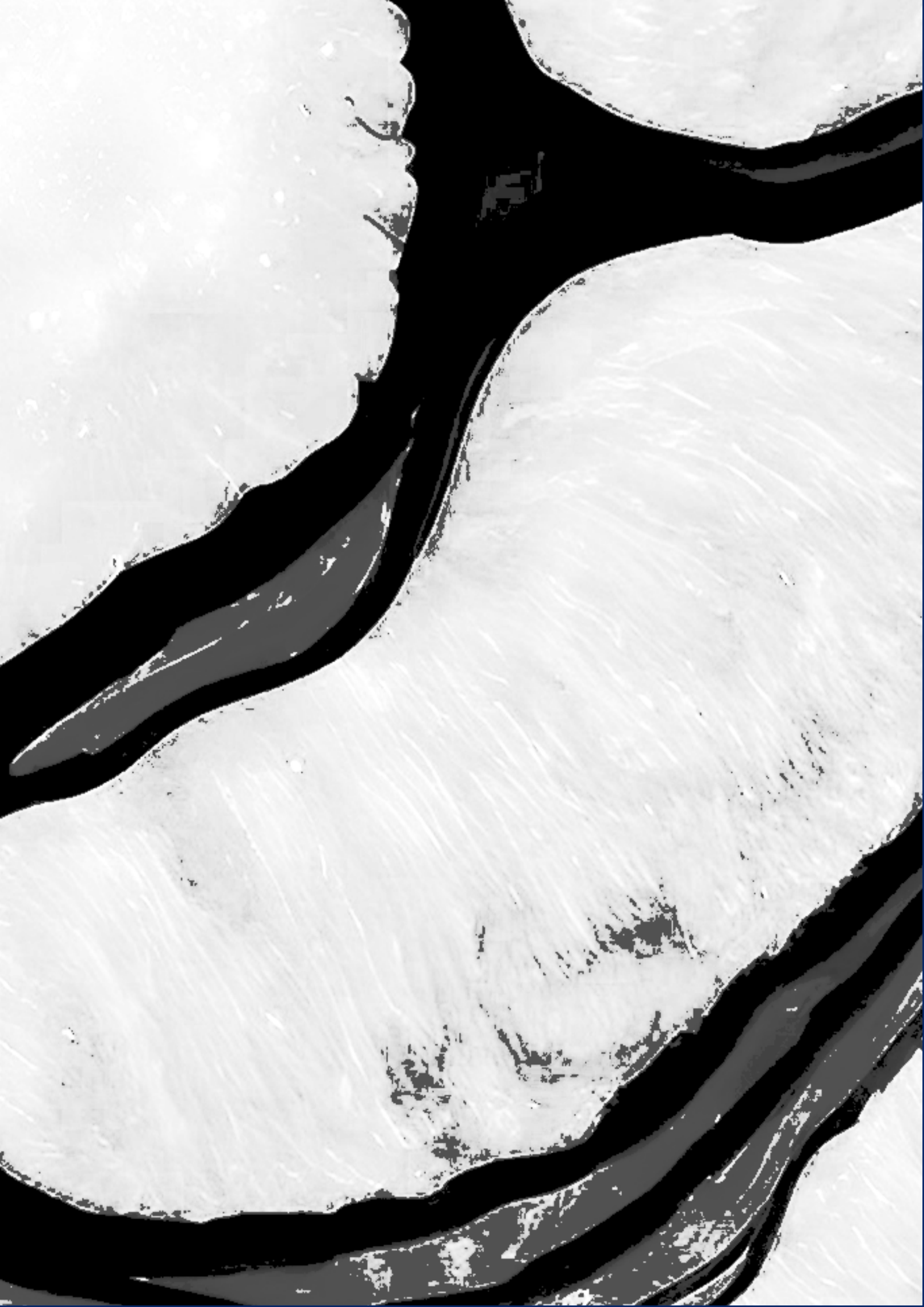
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