

Key Takeaways from Orgvue's Public Sector Org Community Event – 24th September 2026

Building capability and buy-in for continuous workforce change

18 organisations were represented by 27 attendees at this event. This document summarises the key takeaways from the presentations and discussions among participants.

Bring stakeholders on the journey

- Successful workforce planning and organisational change depend on more than software, data and a well-constructed business case. A logically sound plan can still fail if stakeholders do not understand or support the intended outcome.
- Every stakeholder has a different motivation. HR leaders may need a workforce plan that finance will believe, while finance leaders want a trusted baseline they can take to the board. Operations leaders need productivity without additional risk, and team leaders need to understand what will change for their people and why.
- Securing support may require several different “yeses” from economic buyers, senior sponsors, influencers and the people who will experience the change.
- Do not assume that stakeholders are already on board. Ask what a good outcome would look like for them, listen for the concern beneath their words and reflect the case back in language that is meaningful to them.
- Before entering an important stakeholder conversation, consider who is in the room, what each person cares about and who could block progress.

Understand the barriers to ongoing change

- The difference between delivering individual change programmes and being equipped for continuous change is the presence of a repeatable mechanism that enables the organisation to evolve over time.
- Six common barriers can prevent workforce planning and organisational change from becoming part of business as usual:
 - **No natural owner:** ongoing change can fall between operations, which is focused on delivery, and transformation teams built around time-bound programmes.
 - **Middle management squeeze:** the people best placed to lead change often have the least capacity to experiment because they are managing immediate operational demands.
 - **Risk asymmetry:** unsuccessful change is highly visible, while the benefits of successful change may be less obvious, making inaction appear safer.
 - **Structural inertia:** relatively small changes can require disproportionate effort, encouraging informal workarounds that create a gap between the formal organisation and operational reality.
 - **Change fatigue:** previous large-scale transformation programmes can cause even small improvements to be viewed as disruptive.
 - **Absence of shared language:** without an agreed framework, changes are treated either as minor adjustments or major projects, leaving no repeatable approach for the useful changes in between.
- Business-as-usual change does not necessarily fail because people are unwilling to change. It often fails because the organisation lacks the ownership, capacity, processes and language needed to make change repeatable.

Build internal capability around real business needs

- Avoid establishing a new team or function without a clear organisational mandate. Instead, connect the work to an existing priority, process or function that already has authority and support.
- Do not expect teams to move immediately to self-service. Use a tiered support model that meets different parts of the organisation at their current level of maturity and capacity.
- Rather than leading with a large business case that requires commitment before any value has been demonstrated, identify a live problem and solve it quickly at a manageable scale.
- Give structural change a single, shared home that remains connected to the central HR system. This helps ensure that the information used by teams is also visible to HR.
- Avoid presenting every improvement as another major initiative. Address an existing problem and allow the results to demonstrate the value.
- Begin with three to five simple, shared principles that can be understood and tracked across the organisation, rather than launching a complete operating model before common language and support have been established.

Start with business outcomes, not perfect data

- Treat data integrity as a means to an end rather than an objective in itself. Define the data required to support a particular decision and prioritise the gaps that materially affect the outcome.
- Aim for data that is good enough to support action rather than delaying progress while pursuing perfection.
- Identify and deliver measurable value early. Establish clear success measures and KPIs, and communicate progress to maintain momentum and support.
- Maintain a clear “so what?” connection between workforce insight, the decision it informs and the action that follows.
- Workforce assumptions and forecasts will not be perfect in the first planning cycle. Significant value also comes from the conversations, alignment and decisions that the planning process enables.
- Aim to be “broadly right, rather than precisely wrong”, and refine data quality, forecasting accuracy and methodology through repeated cycles of testing and learning.

Embed workforce planning into how the organisation operates

- Integrate workforce planning with existing financial, operational, commercial and strategic planning processes rather than creating parallel governance structures or additional planning cycles.
- Position workforce planning and organisational change as continuous organisational capabilities, not one-off exercises.
- Establish a regular cadence of reviews and use each cycle to improve plans, assumptions, data and forecasting confidence.
- Balance local ownership with central orchestration. Business units should retain accountability for workforce decisions, supported by a central framework that provides consistency and alignment with organisational priorities.
- Look beyond workforce volumes and costs to consider the skills, capabilities and competencies needed to deliver future objectives.
- Connect workforce insight to operational action through regular planning conversations, decision-making forums and clear ownership of follow-up activity.

Create the conditions for sustainable change

- Secure visible executive sponsorship and develop champions and allies across the organisation who can reinforce the importance of workforce planning.
- Align stakeholders around the problem being addressed and establish appropriate senior leadership touchpoints within existing organisational processes.
- Workforce planners cannot deliver change in isolation. Business leaders, HR business partners, recruitment teams, workforce planning teams and technical training functions all have an important role.
- Offer different levels of support according to organisational maturity. Begin by doing the work alongside them before expecting full self-service.
- Use greater visibility to improve data quality, identify opportunities and track movement from the current to the future organisation.
- Recognise that transparency can also create resistance when risks, inefficiencies or gaps are exposed. Address concerns proactively and position visibility as a tool for improvement rather than blame.

Lessons from a mature workforce planning capability

- One large organisation began its journey with a group-wide strategic workforce planning project, establishing common principles, an interim process, supporting technology and ownership within key business areas.
- Over time, workforce planning evolved from a project into an embedded organisational capability supported by an enduring centre of excellence and stronger integration with finance and business planning processes.
- Mature workforce planning requires a regular planning rhythm. Annual refresh cycles, operational reviews and ongoing workforce discussions helped create greater visibility of workforce risks and priorities.
- Four factors were identified as critical to success:
 - senior-level sponsorship
 - stakeholder engagement
 - a continuous improvement culture
 - data and tools
- Workforce insight creates value only when it leads to action. Regular operational reviews, a focus on critical roles and active management of workforce pipelines help connect long-term planning to day-to-day decision-making.
- Building workforce planning capability is a long-term journey rather than a one-time implementation.

Three overarching takeaways

- **Deliver business value:** focus on outcomes and decisions, demonstrate measurable value early and maintain a clear connection between insight and action.
- **Embed planning into operations:** align workforce planning with existing financial, operational and strategic processes, and treat organisational change as continuous.
- **Build the conditions for sustainable change:** establish ownership, secure sponsorship, engage supporting functions early and tackle barriers to adoption directly.

For more information on the presentations, or how these approaches can be applied in practice, please get in touch with Mike Smith at mike.smith@orgvue.com.