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Tip sheet

Navigating Australia's federal ICT talent market

Australia's Federal Government is in the middle of its most ambitious digital transformation to date. Under the Australian Public Service (APS) Data, Digital and Cyber Workforce Plan 2025–2030, departments are accelerating programs designed to modernise systems, improve service delivery, and strengthen resilience.¹

The appetite for digital talent within the APS is vast, yet supply remains tight. Skills shortages, competition with the private sector, and complex security requirements all contribute to a market where opportunities are plentiful but difficult to fill.

At the core of the challenge is the need for professionals who can deliver and secure technology change. Departments cannot compromise on security or performance, making the search for high-calibre ICT specialists relentless.

¹ <https://www.dataanddigital.gov.au/workforce>

Skills in demand

The scale of transformation explains why demand is concentrated in very specific roles. Government cannot modernise without software engineers and solution architects to design scalable systems, or without cyber specialists to defend them. It cannot deliver on its data-driven agenda without scientists and engineers to translate information into policy insights. Nor can it bring projects to completion without business analysts and project managers to connect technical delivery to broader public outcomes.

This concentration of demand has created intense competition across both the public and private sectors. For professionals, it means opportunities exist at every level, though agencies are competing for the same finite pool of talent. For hiring managers, it reinforces the urgency of identifying which skills are most critical and adjusting recruitment strategies accordingly.



The most in-demand roles



Software engineers and solution architects are central to rebuilding outdated infrastructure and designing future-ready platforms. Their expertise underpins everything from core public services to specialist defence systems.



Cybersecurity analysts and architects remain at the top of the hiring agenda. Government agencies are high-value targets, and breaches can have national implications. Cyber roles command some of the highest rates in Canberra, with architects attracting daily fees above \$1,600.



Cloud engineers and DevOps specialists are increasingly critical. Their ability to automate processes, manage hybrid environments, and drive continuous integration is shaping the pace of transformation. Agencies with access to this talent move faster, innovate more effectively, and reduce operational risk.



Data scientists and engineers are equally important. Policy development, service planning, and crisis response now rely on robust data modelling. Turning vast volumes of raw data into actionable insights is a competitive advantage that government agencies can't ignore.



Project managers, business analysts, and delivery managers keep projects aligned with broader policy outcomes. Business-facing professionals remain crucial and, without these roles, even the best technical initiatives risk stalling.



Workforce strategies

Demand is concentrated within the largest government departments. Services Australia, Defence, and Home Affairs lead the way, managing programs that affect millions of citizens and require robust digital capacity. Smaller agencies also play a growing role. Departments such as Veterans' Affairs and Geoscience Australia are investing in digital programs that may be smaller in scope, yet are equally significant in impact.

The Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) adds another dimension. The DTA is tasked with coordinating whole-of-government digital reform and is shaping demand for professionals skilled in integration, service design, and cross-departmental collaboration. Remuneration pressure is the inevitable result, and daily rates for ICT contractors in Canberra demonstrate the competition. Even more traditionally abundant roles such as software developers now command \$900–\$1,200 a day.

The APS is developing structural strategies to balance this:

Mid-career pathways and cadetship programs open access for professionals transitioning into ICT.

Fast-track digital skills pilots create accelerated training for priority roles.

Benchmarking remuneration against private industry mitigates the risk of government losing scarce talent to more lucrative offers.

Mobility frameworks let professionals rotate across departments, directing scarce skills to priority programs while giving individuals broader career experience.

Bridging the talent gap between hiring managers and candidates

Pressure on ICT talent in the APS is shaping the market for both employers and professionals. Agencies face the dual challenge of competing for scarce skills while retaining existing talent, making recruitment and workforce planning more complex than ever. At the same time, professionals weighing opportunities in government must navigate clearance requirements, competitive pay structures, and the promise of long-term stability balanced against slower hiring cycles.

These dynamics create different imperatives depending on perspective. For hiring managers, the task is to streamline processes, offer compelling conditions, and highlight the purpose and impact of their programs. For candidates, the priority is preparation: understanding where demand lies; how to stand out in applications; and how to align skills with government expectations.

Hiring manager implications



Speed: the APS Career Pathfinder helps streamline recruitment, though lengthy processes still put agencies at risk of losing candidates to private sector employers.



Flexibility: while some roles require secure, on-site work, hybrid models and flexible hours remain strong drawcards for candidates choosing between multiple offers.



Purpose: professionals want to work on meaningful projects, develop skills, and contribute to initiatives with national impact. Agencies that highlight purpose have an advantage.



Security: security clearance is an unavoidable bottleneck for the APS. Hiring managers must plan ahead, factor in clearance processing times, or prioritise candidates who already hold clearance.



Succession planning: over-reliance on contractors creates knowledge risks when engagements end, making mentoring and structured handovers essential to preserve capability.



Mobility: pathways for staff to move across projects can prevent attrition, particularly when private sector offers compete on salary.

Candidate considerations



1

Preparation: breaking into the APS ICT market requires understanding clearance requirements, tailoring applications to high-demand roles, and demonstrating adaptability.



2

Alignment: cybersecurity, cloud, and data remain the strongest bets for career growth in the APS ICT market. Professionals who position themselves in these areas align most closely with government priorities and skill shortages.



3

Transferable skills: business analysts, project managers, and testers are vital for aligning technical delivery with policy intent. Breadth of experience can be a differentiator in complex projects.



4

Strong soft skills: the ability to bridge technical language with policy objectives, manage competing priorities, and collaborate across disciplines separates high performers.



5

Patience: recruitment processes can be slower than in the private sector, though APS roles often provide greater stability and career progression once secured.



6

Networking: professionals who participate in APS initiatives, industry forums, and professional associations often gain visibility before roles are widely advertised. This proactive engagement is a proven advantage.



Looking ahead

Demand for ICT professionals in government will remain high as digital transformation accelerates. The APS is embedding digital capability as a core function of public service, making ICT roles critical to its future.

For employers, this means adapting to a market where talent has choice. Competitive pay, faster hiring, flexible arrangements, and clear purpose will all be necessary to attract and retain the best professionals.

For candidates, adaptability, clearance, and a commitment to continuous learning will be the strongest differentiators. Those who demonstrate technical expertise alongside a broader sense of public service commitment will stand out.

The APS's digital agenda ensures that both opportunity and competition will remain intense. Employers that evolve their strategies and candidates who prepare strategically will be best positioned to succeed.

At Experis, we work at the intersection of technology and talent, helping government agencies and ICT professionals navigate this shifting landscape.

We support both employers seeking specialist skills and professionals looking to build meaningful careers in the APS with deep experience in federal workforce planning, niche ICT recruitment, and talent development.

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