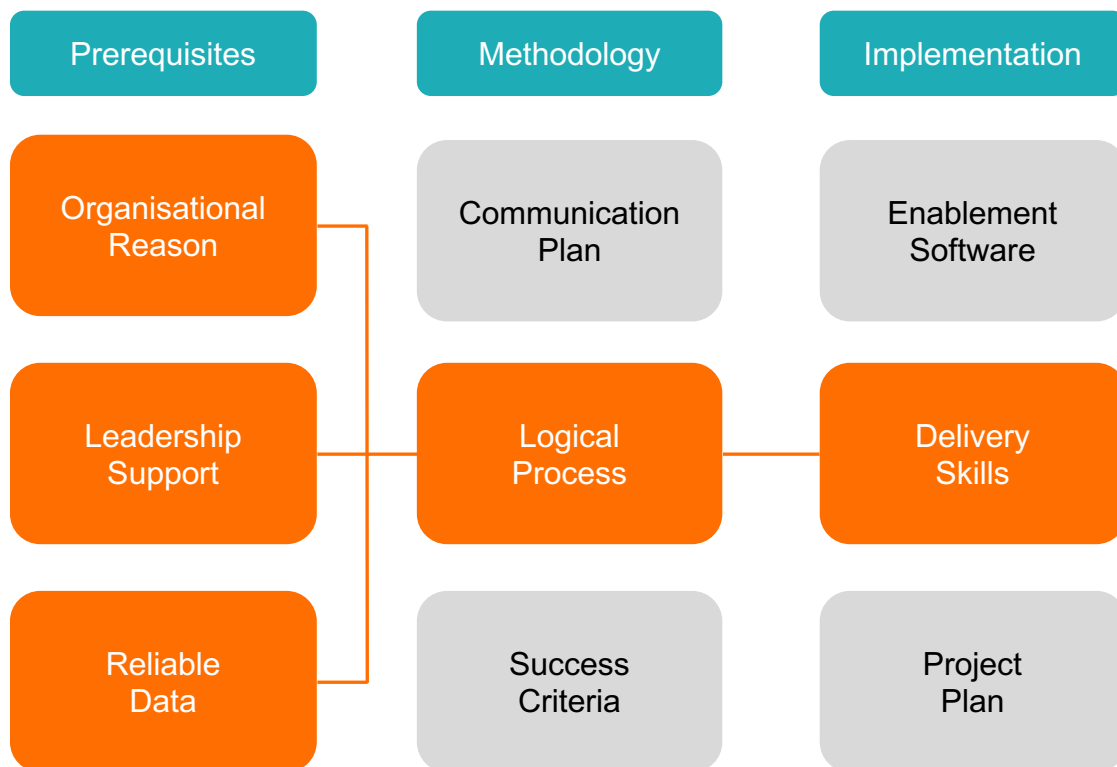## Strategic Workforce Planning Foundations

A significant proportion of Strategic Workforce Planning initiatives fail to deliver their desired outcomes - often because the organisation just wasn't ready.

Foundations need to be in place before an organisation acts.

Prerequisites	Methodology	Implementation
Organisational Reason	Communication Plan	Enablement Software
Leadership Support	Logical Process	Delivery Skills
Reliable Data	Success Criteria	Project Plan

Firstly, there must be a significant business driver for Strategic Workforce Planning – a tangible risk or opportunity. If this doesn't exist, or if it can't be demonstrated, it will be a challenge to get organisational managers to engage. Strategic Workforce Planning initiatives are typically facilitated by HR, but informed by the organisation, so their involvement is vital.

The articulation of business risk or opportunity will also help foster leadership (executive level) engagement. These leaders can then be positioned to actively champion the initiative and nurture organisational participation.

A primary output of any Strategic Workforce Planning initiative is a projection of optimal people numbers (by job role)you will have at the end of the forecast period. There are multiple relevant datasets, however, as a minimum, access to the *current* employee profile is essential. And this data must be robust.

If any of these prerequisites are absent do not proceed until they are in place.

Once those fundamental conditions have been met, a methodology will be required. If such a framework is adopted from a third party, it may need to be adapted to fit the specific needs and circumstance of an organisation.

This is an overview of the Workforce Dimensions methodology:
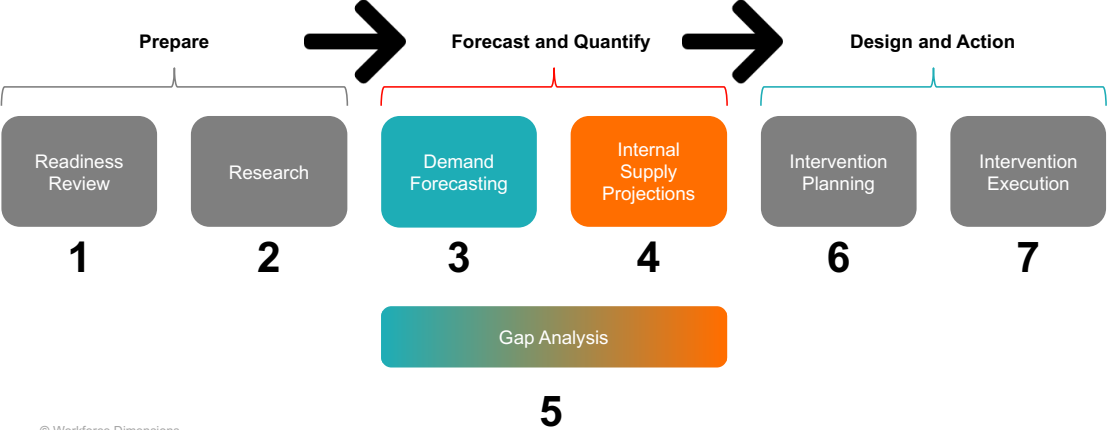
This methodology must be communicated and explained to all stakeholders. As part of this communication, the difference between strategic and operational planning should be clearly articulated.

It is also advisable to decide and share the KPIs that will be referenced to determine the success of the initiative.

Implementation

The skills required to deliver successful strategic workforce planning outcomes are many and varied, it is unlikely that all these skills will exist within an organisation – particularly if this is the first time such an initiative has been undertaken.

Assuming there are gaps, these should be closed before the formal project launch.

Typically, organisations engage advisory services in parallel with capability development.

At this stage an initial project plan with suggested timelines, key milestones and assigned responsibilities should also be drawn up and shared. Timelines will inevitably be tested because so much depends on the availability of key stakeholders, never-the-less broad aspirations should be flagged.

For smaller organisations, or to prove the concept, a spreadsheet is probably sufficient to capture forecasts and calculate projections, however beyond that, primarily for reasons of scalability, enablement software very likely be needed to support the process.

Software should not dictate methodology (although if a methodology does not exist, software may offer a workable framework).

Running a Pilot

One final thought, although the strategic workforce planning process is easy to conceptualise, it is often difficult to deliver a successful result, particularly in larger organisations. Best practice is to run a pilot project within an empathetic area of the organisation - working in partnership with them to test and refine the process.