



02 September 2020

Commissioner David Thodey
National COVID Coordination Commission
Submitted electronically

Dear Commissioner Thodey

BSA would like to thank you and the team again for meeting with us on 4 August 2020 to discuss the digital economy and *BSA's Response and Recovery Agenda* policy paper. As we highlighted in the meeting, software and cloud-based services have been a big part of the solution for governments and businesses globally as they respond and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the meeting, BSA offered to seek input from members on exemplar programs from around the world of industry and government programs that assist small and medium businesses as they transform themselves into digital businesses, and help retrain the workforce to be better equipped for the digital economy.

Industry programs

BSA members¹ have risen to the challenge thrown down by the COVID-19 pandemic in several ways around the world and in Australia. They are providing free access to their services; free training, advice and help regarding remote work and business digitization. As members continue to partner with businesses of all sizes and are discovering new ways of operating and new markets are being unlocked.

A comprehensive list of the programs offered by BSA members can be found on the BSA website². Some examples from Australia include:

1. Project Spirit³ was created by Salesforce along with Google and PWC. It is a free online community for Australian businesses of all sizes, industries, and locations to collaborate and share capacity, skills and resources and learn from each other as they rapidly digitize their businesses.

¹ BSA's members include: Adobe, Amazon Web Services, Atlassian, Autodesk, AVEVA, Bentley Systems, Box, Cadence, Cisco, CNC/Mastercam, IBM, Informatca, Intel, MathWorks, Microsoft, Okta, Oracle, PTC, Salesforce, ServiceNow, Siemens Industry Software Inc., Sitecore, Slack, Splunk, Synopsys, Trend Micro, Trimble Solutions Corporation, Twilio, and Workday.

² <https://www.bsa.org/covid19>

³ <https://www.projectspirit.com.au/>

2. Oracle worked with the Melbourne East GP Network to move their sensitive health data to Oracle's public cloud facility located in Melbourne. This enabled the GP Network to provide all their research clients with secure, scalable access to the data using Oracle's Autonomous Data Warehouse and Data Science tools.
3. When COVID-19 hit, Twilio worked with Lifeline Australia, a 24-hour Telephone Crisis Support service, to spin up an entirely cloud-based and remote escalation portal within one week, enabling crisis supporters to escalate urgent cases to supervisors, and debrief each case remotely via webchat⁴.
4. BSA members Adobe, Atlassian, AWS, IBM, Microsoft, and Salesforce, along with Google have joined with Australian company //balance internet to develop the Skill Finder website. Skill Finder aims to create a marketplace to help the Australian workforce and SMEs engage with the digital economy by providing access to technology, training courses, and learning opportunities.

Government Programs

Governments all around the world face similar challenges when it comes to assisting small and medium enterprises through the COVID-19 pandemic. Most government schemes have been financial, aiming to provide either direct financial support or indirect support by offsetting expenses through wage support or tax and other government duties relief schemes.

As noted in the meeting, governments are also providing support for training, upskilling, and reskilling the workforce. Government programs seeking to promote worker skilling and retraining benefit from the participation of the private sector in their design and implementation. A close collaboration between public and private sector is important to ensure workers receive skills training that are relevant to the market, which will help them advance their careers and contribute to economic growth.

The Singapore Government provide an excellent example of taking a systemic approach to workforce retooling and connecting workers with training in skills of national importance. These programs focus on short high-quality training programs aligned with market valued skills over four-year degree programs.

In a similar vein, the US Government has programs in place to encourage the private sector to leverage apprenticeship initiatives to help workers gain new skills, including in fields extremely relevant for the digital economy and that require technical skills such as cybersecurity and software development. Examples of these efforts, which precede the COVID-19 pandemic but continue to be leveraged, include activities conducted under the umbrella of the National Council for the American Worker. The Council's role is to develop a national strategy for training and retraining the workers needed across high-demand industries, including through fostering opportunities to increase apprenticeship, earn-and-learn, and work-based learning opportunities⁵.

Another US program that might be of interest is the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)⁶. The MEP is a public-private partnership and has 51 state-based centers that train employees and help small and medium manufacturers take advantage of advanced manufacturing technologies. The centers also help connect manufacturers

⁴ <https://www.twilio.com/hub/communication-crisis-how-organizations-are-innovating-serve-their-communities-digitally>

⁵ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-establishing-presidents-national-council-american-worker/>

⁶ <https://www.nist.gov/mep>

with other suppliers of critical components and provide advice and assistance in managing cyber risks. This successful model is very focused on advanced manufacturing, which is a policy priority for the Australian Government, but this style of distributed public-private model may have wider application in other verticals (i.e. modernizing agricultural practices) or digitization of small and medium businesses.

I hope that these examples have been helpful. If you require any clarification or further information in respect of this submission, please contact me at brianf@bsa.org or +65 8328 0140.

Yours faithfully,

Brian Fletcher

Brian Fletcher

Director, Policy – APAC

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cc Kylie Bryant, NCC Advisory Board, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

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