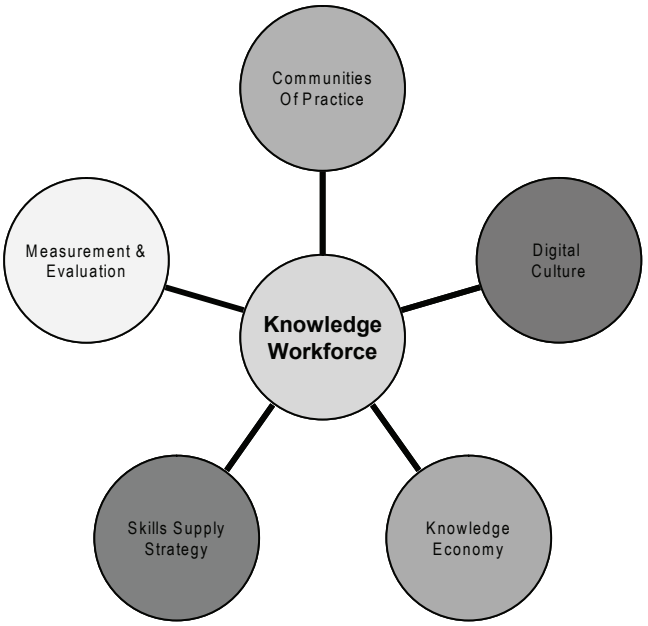
Chapter IV
Knowledge Workforce



"R&D and education in the traditional sense are not enough for growth. Technology becomes more soft and increasingly depends on the cooperation between people in networks." Lambert Van der Laan (2005, p. 276)

Overview: This chapter focuses on knowledge workers—who they are and what they do, and the impact they have on organisations and communities in the Network Society. As technology-savvy individuals, they have the training to understand and apply telecommunications and electronic media at work, at home and in the community. Because of their ICT skills and potential contributions to innovation and

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productivity, knowledge workers constitute a critical labour market for networked communities. Training and education institutions can play an important role in ensuring the local supply of ICT skills. To illustrate these points, four networked communities are described:

- **Issy-les-Moulineaux, France.** This suburb of Paris has transformed itself into a preferred location for knowledge workers to live and work;
- **Mitaka, Japan**. Mitaka is a suburb of Tokyo offering exceptional quality of life to its knowledge workers;
- **Taipei, Taiwan.** This is a large city with a CyberCity Plan and an impressive labour force;
- **Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.** This university town has developed an international reputation based on public-private collaboration and entrepreneurship.

The chapter ends with suggestions for the measurement and evaluation of a community's knowledge workforce.

KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND ITS WORKERS

Key Concept: *Prosperity within the Network Society depends upon the knowledge-base economy and its knowledge workers who are both local and global in nature.*

Within the Network Society, the economy is driven by information and knowledge, which trigger rapid innovation in products and services for the markets of the world. The terms information and knowledge are often used interchangeably but they are not identical concepts (Steinnmuller, 2002). Computers process information and telecommunications provide ample mechanism for sharing information, but selecting and interpreting information requires knowledge and purpose. Information serves as the raw material that becomes the basis for acquiring knowledge, which comes about through experimentation and learning. Such trial and error learning can take place at the individual, group and organisational levels (Antonacopoulou & Papamichail, 2004; Mentzas & Apostolou, 2004). We live in a time that is frequently referred to as the Information Age, and certainly we individually and collectively have access to so much information that we sometimes feel inundated by it.

Data indigestion is often what happens when digital networks stream more information than can be processed and productively put to use. The successful communities of the future will not only have access to ICTs, interconnected infra-

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