



The Dundee Digital Skills Hub

Year One Social Impact Report June 2023 – May 2024

Executive Summary.



In KwaZulu-Natal, where youth unemployment is at a severe 63.8% and industries face stagnation or decline, the digital economy presents new pathways for local talent.

The Dundee Digital Skills Hub (DDSH) is tackling this issue by sourcing and re-skilling rural talent for digital roles, focusing largely on Salesforce, through a work-integrated learning model.

This report, developed by **Paladin and Uhalisi**, showcases the DDSH's impact beyond traditional metrics such as throughput, certification, and employment numbers.

It highlights growth in current wellbeing and in all but two character traits, demonstrating the potential of local digital skills hubs to address not just immediate unemployment but also to enhance individuals' wellbeing and future potential.

The DDSH will continue to evolve,, with the current group working to amplify the program's impact. Additionally, the expansion to new digital skills hubs in KwaZulu-Natal will extend the program's reach, connecting even more local talent to global opportunities.

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Year One Social Impact Report
June 2023 – May 2024

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Introduction.

Unlock & **connect** raw potential in rural KZN to a global digital market.

The QLFS data for the fourth quarter of 2023 revealed that the youth unemployment rate in KwaZulu-Natal stood at 63.8%, significantly higher than the national average of 56.9%.

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) highlighted in 2022 structural factors contributing to youth unemployment in KwaZulu-Natal, including skills mismatches, and the enduring legacy of apartheid-era spatial inequalities (HSRC, Youth Unemployment Report, 2022).

Reframing the Key Challenge.



South Africa grapples with persistently high levels of unemployment, with KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) bearing a significant portion of this burden.

Despite relatively high education rates, rural areas in KZN face a stark reality of limited job opportunities. The scarcity of employment prospects often compels individuals to consider relocation, but this comes with significant financial and social costs.

The upheaval of leaving familiar surroundings and networks can have detrimental effects on wellbeing, exacerbating the already challenging circumstances of unemployment.

As such, we see the urgent need for targeted interventions to create sustainable employment opportunities.

Yet, the DDSH recognises that rural towns in South Africa also have great potential to become thriving socio-economic hubs.

With abundant space, healthier lifestyles, and lower costs for businesses and employees, these areas can attract global business.

Access to fresh water, local food, and affordable shelter fosters sustainable living. Investing in community can shift focus from hyper-consumerism to grass-roots values. These strengths can make rural areas vibrant centers of economic activity and wellbeing.

The Dundee Digital Skills Hub Demonstrates a **New Model** for addressing High Youth Unemployment by leveraging the Growing Need for Digital Skills in the Global Market.

The Dundee Digital Skills Hub is a first of its kind. The Hub has injected new opportunity into a rural town, urging stakeholders to shift from biases to belief in unexpected talent.

Over twelve months, seventeen individuals underwent reskilling and upskilling, connecting them with new capabilities to a hungry global digital market.



DIGITAL SKILLS HUB MODEL

Reskilling & upskilling to match the global digital skills needs & opportunities.



Our **Unique** Approach.

1. **Significant investment in work readiness**, including technical, professional, and personal development.
2. **Significant investment in work-integrated learning** to gain meaningful practical experience in a safe environment with coaching and mentorship.
3. **Utilised BPO and remote work to distribute jobs** to Dundee, creating employment opportunities closer to home.
4. **Re-skilled talent with a focus** on developing agile, versatile, and adjacent skill sets in high demand in the digital economy.



DDSH Journey Roadmap

MILESTONE 2

Start of Pathfinder | Aug 2023



1 new Trainee joined in August

MILESTONE 4

Pathfinder graduation | Dec 2023



All 13 passed Associate Exam



Trainee @DDSH



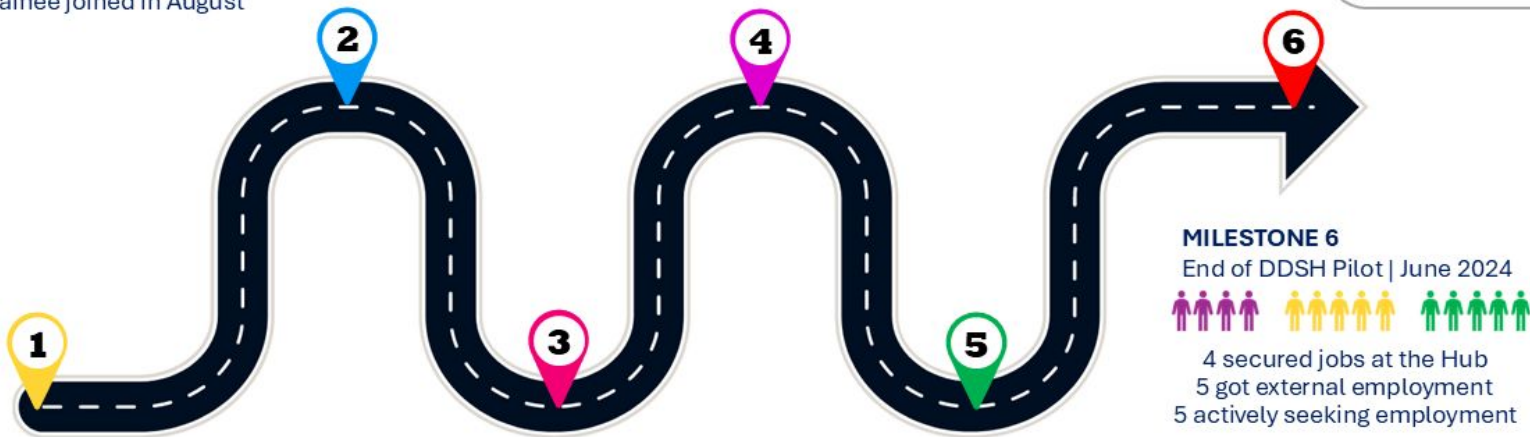
DDSH new Trainee



External employment



Actively seeking employment



MILESTONE 1

Launch of DDSH | Jun 2023



1/14 Trainee got a job offer in July

MILESTONE 3

Work Integrated Learning | Sep 2023



1 Trainee exited the Hub due to misconduct and breach of contract

MILESTONE 5

Salesforce Implementation | Jan 2023



1 Trainee got a job offer, 2 additional Trainees were recruited to join the Hub

MILESTONE 6

End of DDSH Pilot | June 2024



4 secured jobs at the Hub
5 got external employment
5 actively seeking employment

Quality
Digital
Work.



Challenging Misconceptions.



In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the importance of social impact and purpose-driven initiatives cannot be overstated.

However, despite the growing recognition of the value they bring, biases often hinder companies from fully embracing organisations with a social impact purpose.

There is a persistent misconception that individuals from underprivileged backgrounds or those emerging from poor contexts lack the ability to deliver quality digital work.

The DDSH bravely challenges this prevailing bias by delivering exceptional results, paving the way for a more inclusive and impactful business ecosystem.

Case 1: Salesforce Cloud Implementation

From January to June 2024 (ongoing), a local processed meats factory specialising in Russian sausages is undergoing digital transformation. Already a strong competitor in KwaZulu Natal, the client aims to become South Africa's leading provider of Russians and other meat products, leveraging a state-of-the-art facility.

The focus is on implementing Salesforce Sales Cloud as the core CRM to boost marketing, sales, and customer service. Field Representatives engage customers and leads across KwaZulu Natal, while back-office services support marketing, sales, and Salesforce adoption. The Salesforce platform streamlines sales and delivers data-driven insights. A small contact center handles inbound and outbound services. This partnership is enhancing the client's market presence, sales performance, business growth, operational efficiency, and customer engagement, paving the way for new markets and further Salesforce use.

Salesforce Sales Cloud, an omni-channel contact center, and a new client website were designed, developed, and deployed.

Sales turnover
increased by +40%
in 6 months.

Driving business growth through lead generation, securing new clients, and optimising existing retail relationships.

Case 2: CX Survey Project

In August and September 2023, the DDSH team partnered with a not-for-profit social enterprise dedicated to tackling youth unemployment in South Africa. This partnership aimed to provide young people with valuable job and skill opportunities through a Customer Experience survey project.

Candidates participated in comprehensive training covering technical skills, product knowledge, POPIA, and customer service. Over three weeks of part-time dialing, they executed outbound calls and data capturing, adhering to a detailed call guide.

This initiative showcased Paladin's commitment to youth development. By providing practical experience, the partnership led to significant skill acquisition and prepared candidates for customer service roles. The collaboration was highly effective, demonstrating the success and impact of the program.

Over 4000 outbound calls, 1700 completed surveys.

94% QA pass rate against an 80% target, indicating high competency.

High levels of curiosity, engagement, and enthusiasm.

Skills Development: Effective preparation for contact center roles, strong foundation in customer service.

Case 3: Entry-level digital work Service Center

From December 2023 to June 2024 (ongoing), the accredited Academy, part of a leading South African BPO specialising in Customer Experience, is driving a mission to empower 100,000 unemployed youth by 2030, focusing on Tier 2 and Tier 3 areas.

A key initiative is the creation of a managed service center in Dundee, KwaZulu Natal, for entry-level digital work. This project leverages talent from the Dundee Digital Skills Hub. A proof of concept (POC) was implemented, involving four interns—three in Business Intelligence and one in IT Technical Support.

This partnership not only proves the viability of the service center model but also supports the Academy's broader goals. The initiative is already showing success in skill development and employment for youth in Tier 3 locations, aligning with national employment goals. The next steps in this partnership include replicating and scaling this POC across more rural towns and communities in KZN.

High performance against KPIs, with all four interns meeting attendance, reliability, connectivity, uptime, and quality of service standards.

Early indicators suggest **the model's potential for scalability and success** in rural KwaZulu Natal.

Case 4: Logistics Management Services

A local agri-business recently started focusing on the growth of one of its service lines – managed services for road freight including the management of loads and transport. The managed service is complex and fast-changing requiring strong back office management of bookings, processing, verifications, remediation, and management of accounts.

The business agreed to partner with the DDSH in September 2023 to test run back office services in data capturing, document processes, cloud platform administration, and basic accounting support.

The collaboration quickly demonstrated the quick assimilation of DDSH talent into the Client's environment, a quick speed to competence and a significant boost to the company's capacity to handle high volumes of load management.

The client went from testing the service for an initial 1–3 month period to permanently hiring two DDSH alumni with the goal to keep expanding.

Fleet size managed doubled from September to date translating into 100% growth

This case study demonstrates the versatility of skills developed and speed to competence in a new industry sector.



Social
Impact
Metrics.

In its first year, has the DDSH generated sustainable social impact?

“2023 has been a significant year for the Global Goals. We reached halftime and we are way down, with only 15% of the goals on track.”
– GlobalGoals.org/ new December 14, 2023

The DDSH addresses multiple SDGs:

1 No Poverty

8 Decent Work & Economic Growth

10 Reduced Inequalities

Beyond its economic impact, the DDSH is keen to delve deeper into the true impact experienced by participants.

The simple answer is “Yes”.

1. The program has positively influenced the wellbeing of the participants, increasing their happiness and satisfaction while lowering anxiety.
2. Additionally, it has strengthened all but two character traits and boosted confidence in employability, demonstrating the program's potential to create a sustainable impact.
3. The program has not only provided income for these individuals and supported a large group of dependents, but it has also changed the role participants play in their households.

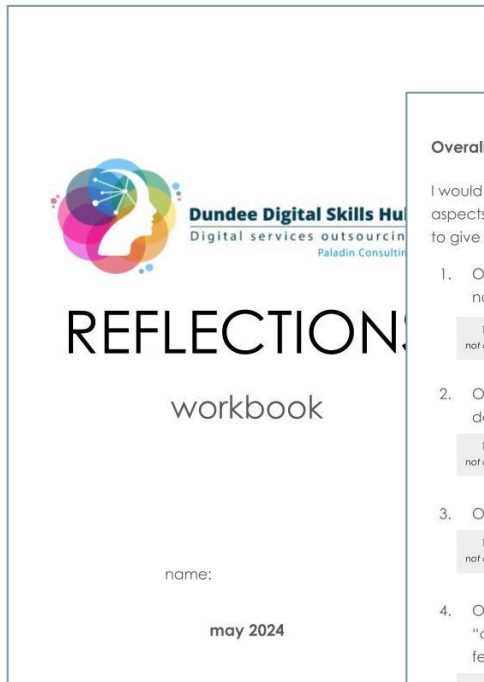


Reflections Workbook

Uhalisi developed and designed a “reflection workbook” for the DDSH. This workbook guides users through reflective exercises while acting as a mechanism to collect specific impact data, providing value to both the DDSH and the beneficiaries.

Qualitative Input

This work additionally included one-on-one semi-structured interviews with four participants, exploratory conversations with leadership, and a reflection group exercise with twelve participants.



The cover of the 'REFLECTIONS workbook' features a colorful logo of a person's head in profile, composed of various colored segments. To the right of the logo, the text reads 'Dundee Digital Skills Hub', 'Digital services outsourcing', and 'Paladin Consulting'. Below the logo, the title 'REFLECTIONS' is written in large, bold, black letters, followed by 'workbook' in a smaller font. At the bottom, there is a line for 'name:' and the date 'may 2024'.

Can you tell me more?

If there was one thing you would like to change in your life, what would it be? Could you come up with three very small steps you could take to start making that change for

Overall, how do you feel about life right now?

I would like to ask you four questions about your feelings on aspects of your life. For each of these questions I'd like you to give an answer the scale.

1. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

2. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

3. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

4. On a scale where 0 is "not at all anxious" and 10 is "completely anxious", overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

Measuring Sustainable Impact.



Character Traits as Proven Predictors of Future Wellbeing and Achievement

Our measurement on Character Traits is based on the research provided by 'Character Lab Research Network'. Character Lab is recognised and supported by a diversity of frameworks including SEL, whole child, and 21st-century skills.

Character Traits are often called "soft skills", however, overwhelming evidence proves that character traits are strong predictors of future achievement, earning potential and wellbeing of individuals.

Part of the reflection workbook explains each character trait, asks for self-reflection, followed by journaling questions designed to inspire growth. The next pages present the self-reported changes over year one. Growth is considered a great success, while lack of growth is considered an opportunity to evolve the program.

How strong is your ability to connect with other people?

"Social intelligence" is as important as IQ when it comes to happiness, health, and success. Empathetic people are less likely to experience anxiety, depression, and addictions later in life. They are also more likely to be hired, promoted, earn more money, and have happier marriages.

23. How true are the following statements for you?

- I have a lot of relationships that are mutually beneficial, enjoyable, and supportive.
- Most of the time, I can tell how other people feel and have a good idea about how to respond appropriately.
- My relationships make me feel good about myself.
- The people in my life help me be my best.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

Strengths of Heart

Strengths of Heart, such as Gratitude, enable harmonious relationships with other people.

- The program's focus on self-awareness has likely had a strong positive impact on self-perceived growth in emotional intelligence.
- In addition, self-perceived growth in kindness has been significant, which can likely be contributed at least partially to the healthy work environment, psychological safety and lowered levels of anxiety.

Self-reported HEART growth in Year One.

A positive value indicates growth, a negative value indicates decline, and a 0% value indicates no change perceived by the beneficiaries.

+5%

Gratitude

+12%

Kindness

+0%

Honesty

+3%

Purpose

+21%

Emotional
Intelligence

+4%

Social
Intelligence

Strengths of Mind

Strengths of Mind, such as Curiosity, enable independent thinking.

- A noticeable change in self-reported everyday creativity suggest the group is more open to new ideas and possibilities, and more likely to seek out multiple solutions to problems.
- Noticeable is also that participants haven't reported a change in curiosity and little in intellectual humility (recognising the limitations of your knowledge).

Self-reported MIND growth in Year One.

A positive value indicates growth, a negative value indicates decline, and a 0% value indicates no change perceived by the beneficiaries.

+0%

Curiosity

+16%

Creativity

+2%

Intellectual
Humility

+4%

Judgement

+10%

Decision Making

Strengths of Will

Strengths of Will, such as Grit and Self-control, enable achievement.

- The program's routine and real life work-integrated learning approach, is likely a strong contributor to the self-reported increase in grit and self-control. These traits, much like muscles, become stronger with training.
- There is a great opportunity in cultivating Growth Mindset and Proactivity more intentionally as the program evolves. These are key skills for career growth and leadership development, see also page 25.

Self-reported WILL growth in Year One.

A positive value indicates growth, a negative value indicates decline, and a 0% value indicates no change perceived by the beneficiaries.

+11%

Self-control

+17%

Grit

+7%

Growth
Mindset

+7%

Proactivity



Cultivating Character Traits is Challenging & Time-consuming.



The DDSH program has been particularly effective in developing self-awareness. From the data, interviews, and conversations, the following key aspects stood out as contributing to the cultivation of character strengths.

- **A BioMastery course, in the earlier stages, ignited a higher level of self-awareness**, which was crucial for those who had experienced stifled self-awareness due to trauma or high anxiety around their needs.
- **A leadership approach that values honesty, respect, kindness, and psychological safety** has created a healthy work environment where peers are supportive, failures are lessons, and individuals can grow within a competitive business setting.

Reflections on Generative Drive & Sense of Agency.



Generative Drive is our internal drive to create, construct, and contribute meaningfully to the world around us. We asked:

“Overall, **how easy has it been** to get up and do things in the past few days?” on a scale of 1-10

Academia, and nowadays mainstream outputs, defines Sense of Agency and Gratitude as its key elements. We also asked:

“How much do you feel like you are **in control of what happens** in your life and what the future looks like for you?” on a scale of 1-10

Self-reported Experiences. A positive value indicates growth, a negative value indicates decline, and a 0% value indicates no change perceived by the beneficiaries.

+0%

Sense of
Agency
Average score
at 4.8 / 10

-1%

Generative
Drive
From 5.6 to 5.5
average score

+5%

Gratitude
From a 9.1 to a
9.6 average
score

People with a strong generative drive tend to seek improvement for themselves and their surroundings, influencing their decisions and behaviors in a positive way. A lack of self-reported change does not mean that there is no generative drive, however, the average score of 5.5 does mean there is an opportunity for the program to address this metric and enhance sustainable impact.

+3%

Purpose

+0%

Curiosity

+7%

Proactivity

+7%

Growth
Mindset

Reflections on Leadership Skills Development.

A key challenge for the team has been transitioning from a task-oriented approach to a more hands-off leadership style, where workers begin developing leadership skills and taking ownership of work streams rather than merely executing tasks they are assigned.

In a competitive business environment, meeting deadlines is crucial, which can make it challenging to create opportunities for exploration, ownership, and tackling more complex challenges, particularly for less experienced workers.

We believe to see this reflected in the scores for purpose, curiosity, growth mindset and proactivity. These showed little self-reported growth.

We expect some of it may be a result of limited focus on these specific character traits in lower quintile schools in South Africa, though we also consider one year to be a short and challenging timeline for significant change.

It does highlight the need to intentionally cultivate these traits as participants progress in their careers.

Impact on Personal Wellbeing.



Our measurements on personal wellbeing are based on the UK Office of National Statistics four subjective wellbeing questions (ONS4), answered on a scale from 1 to 10, and show great results.

- Overall, how **satisfied** are you with your life nowadays?
- Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are **worthwhile**?
- Overall, how **happy** did you feel yesterday?
- On a scale where 1 is “not at all anxious” and 10 is “completely anxious”, overall, how **anxious** did you feel yesterday?

+18%

Satisfied
From 5.2 to 6.1
average score

+16%

Worthwhile
From 5.8 to 6.7
average score

+26%

Happy
From 4.9 to 6.2
average score

-31%

Anxious
From 6.5 to 4.5
average score

The results reflect the difference between self-reported scores of participants' current experiences (at one year in the DDSH program) and their experiences before joining the DDSH.

Confidence in employability has gone up by 35%.

The most significant self-reported change has been in terms of confidence in employability. We asked:

“If you’d have to go find a new job now, how confident do you feel about your chances?”

The average score increased from a 5.8 to a 7.8.

Household Impact.



Through qualitative research activities and conversations, four key sentiments emerged among the participants.

- Firstly, through interactions with Salesforce individuals from overseas and witnessing their own achievements and growth, a sense of **pride is widely shared**.
- Additionally, pride arises from the **transformation into breadwinners and contributors to their households**, contrasting with previous negative feelings of being burdens on their families and experiencing a sense of failure.

64%

Of income goes
to the family
On average

3.2

Average number
of dependants
Total number: 45

- This transformation has also shifted the role they play within their households or family units, bringing forth new responsibilities. Some participants experience **heightened pressure now that they are relied upon** as breadwinners.
- However, with the addition to household income, they also **gain a louder voice and more influence in decision-making** processes, a fact that many find empowering and fulfilling.

Ability to Provide.

A key set of questions in the reflection workbook centers on Basic Needs, assessing whether individuals can fulfill these needs for themselves and their dependents.

This set of questions is derived from “Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs”, aiming to address basic needs without drawing a distinction between the individual and their dependents.

This approach reflects the understanding that when one has dependents, the allocation of finances is typically viewed as a collective responsibility rather than being divided between individual and dependent needs.

How do you feel about the basic things you need?

Fulfillment of needs is strongly connected to happiness. I would like to ask you to score each of these basic needs on how many days you were not able to provide these for yourself and your dependant, as well as how worried you have been about each of them.

5. How many days in the past month have you and your dependants not had a long-term safe place to live?

____ days (out of 30)

6. Have you been worried in the past month about losing your place to live?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

7. How many days in the past month have you not been able to have and provide three meals per day?

____ days (out of 30)

8. Have you been worried in the past month about having enough food for you and your dependants?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

9. How many days in the past month have you felt you or your dependants were not physically safe?

____ days (out of 30)

10. Have you been worried in the past month about you or your dependants staying safe?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

11. How many days in the past month have you not had enough money to provide your dependants with clothes, medical care or transport?

____ days (out of 30)

12. Have you been worried in the past month about having enough money to provide for your dependants needs?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all completely

Worrying About Basic Needs.

Worrying about meeting basic needs, for oneself or dependents, hampers one's ability to address higher needs such as Belonging and Self-actualisation.

Participants rated the question "Have you been worried in the past month about..." on a level from 1 to 10, allowing us to compare their experience before they joined the DDSH with their experience after one year at the DDSH. The findings reveal that financial security remains the primary concern among participants, even though self-reported worries have decreased by 18%. Concerns regarding physical safety and food security have also notably decreased.

However, the notable increase in self-reported worries about having a long-term safe place to live is striking. Several participants did relocate to minimise travel time and costs, which could explain the heightened concern: being away from family and in temporary housing solutions will contribute to feelings of instability and apprehension about long-term housing arrangements.

Concern for Self and Dependents.

A positive value indicates an increase in worrying, and a negative value indicates a decline.

+22%

Stable Home
From 1.9 to 2.4
average score

-15%

Food Security
From 3.4 to 2.9
average score

-22%

Physical Safety
From 3.2 to 2.5
average score

-18%

Financial Security
From 7.2 to 5.9
average score



Conclusion.

DDSH has Demonstrated Potential for **Sustainable Social Impact** in Rural Communities using a Differentiated Model & Approach.

This report highlights growth in current wellbeing and in all but two character traits, demonstrating the potential of local digital skills hubs to address not just immediate unemployment but also to enhance individuals' wellbeing and future potential.

In the upcoming year, the DDSH will continue evolving, with the current group enhancing and amplifying the program's impact. Additionally, new digital skills hubs in KZN will multiply the program's reach, connecting more local talent to global opportunities.



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+5%

Gratitude
From 9.1 to 9.6
average score

+12%

Kindness
From 8.6 to 9.6
average score

+0%

Honesty
8.1 average score

+3%

Purpose
From 7.6 to 7.9
average score

+21%

Emotional
Intelligence
From 6.7 to 8.1
average score

+4%

Social
Intelligence
From 7.6 to 7.9
average score

+4%

Judgement
From 6.3 to 6.6
average score

+10%

Decision Making
From 7.2 to 8.0
average score

+0%

Curiosity
7.2 average score

+16%

Creativity
From 6.8 to 7.9
average score

+2%

Intellectual
Humility
From 7.6 to 7.7
average score

+17%

Grit
From 6.9 to 8.1
average score

+7%

Growth
Mindset
From 8.5 to 9.1
average score

+11%

Self-control
From 7.1 to 7.9
average score

+7%

Proactivity
From 7.1 to 7.6
average score