

The GCTools

Connecting public servants

to the information and people they need to work better

The GCTools are a suite of enterprise digital collaboration applications that connect federal public servants with each other and with the information and development opportunities they need to work and thrive in the digital age.

The GCTools, open to federal public servants, include:

- **GCpedia**, a wiki-based collaborative workspace and knowledge sharing platform (similar to Wikipedia);
- **GCconnex**, a professional networking platform for connecting people and ideas (similar to LinkedIn, Twitter & Medium);
- **GCcollab**, the Government of Canada (GC)'s first public-facing platform to enable open collaboration between experts, partners and citizens wherever they may be;
- **GCintranet**, a central repository for information and communications; and
- **GCdirectory**, an employee directory service.



The GCTools contribute to the transformation of the federal public service by enabling interdepartmental sharing of knowledge and information, and helping public servants build and grow communities to work together to meet the needs of Canadians in an open and transparent environment.

With a focus on agile development and user-centric design, the GCTools provide a simple, easy to navigate ecosystem that today connects more than 160,000 federal public servants, representing over 60% of the federal public service. They help to create relationships, spark experimentation and innovation, and support the sharing of best practices. They have been used to drive and sustain whole-of-government employee engagement activities (e.g., Blueprint 2020), a reset of the Government of Canada's policy management framework, peer-to-peer IT support services and many other initiatives.



This evolving digital workspace connects employees to employment and professional development opportunities through the Opportunities Platform on GCconnex. The platform quickly and easily matches employees with at-level mobility (i.e. micro-missions and job swapping) and development opportunities (i.e. mentoring and job shadowing) by leveraging the content in employees' GCconnex profiles.

Created with the vision of an open and transparent government, the GCTools team recently launched GCcollab, a digital collaboration platform to build cross-sectoral awareness and relationships between federal, provincial and territorial public servants and academics and students from universities and colleges across Canada. GCcollab enables open data and information sharing among members of the



public sector and academia, helps the public service to identify and recruit key talent for hiring/bridging, and works to demystify and strengthen cross-sectoral impressions of the public service.



GCconnex, GCpedia and GCcollab are built using open source software (OSS). The development, maintenance and enhancement of these three tools are managed by the Digital Collaboration team within the Chief Information Officer Branch of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). To ensure the GCTools continue to provide an excellent user experience, the team adopted a more modern and nimble approach to application development. The team follows an agile

two-week “sprint” cycle of programming and development, ensuring the GCTools to respond to user needs through incremental, iterative improvements. This means the GCTools can deliver faster and better work for less money than traditional application development methodologies – ensuring public funds are spent more efficiently and delivering more value for money to the Canadian taxpayer.

Moreover, as part of its commitment to open source software, the Digital Collaboration team has taken steps to deepen its involvement in the open source community and to align its platforms with the development of the core open source software from which they were created. This year the Digital

Collaboration team moved all code, issues and sprint (coding) work for GCconnex and GCpedia tracking to GitHub (web-based version control repository), and began to share the improvements it made with the open source community. The goal is to align GCTools development to match pace with the open source platforms on which they are based so that improvements made by the community can be incorporated. This alignment also means that the Digital Collaboration team can actively contribute its improvements to the GCTools back to the open source community and truly be a full participant in the open source movement.

In late 2016, the GCTools took their commitment to open source software for enterprise collaboration with government to a new level as the team partnered with TBS-Open Government to include Canada as signatory to the [Open Government Partnership](#) (OGP):



“The Government of Canada will lead and partner with other governments to jointly share experiences to support open and digital government across the globe. We will first engage in peer learning and collaboration around “opening and sharing civic technology tools for opening government” by sharing the tools and open source code we use to enable digital collaboration in Canada. Second, we will work with partners to build communities around these tools. Third, we will ensure that government contributes back to the open source communities. Through the efforts of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Canada will share its experiences with its open source internal wiki and collaboration platforms that, combined, provide services to over 147,000 registered users. The Secretariat will also host and convene a virtual conference on open source in government and work with and learn from existing inter-governmental communities on GitHub and beyond to develop the building blocks and best practices for opening government and engaging citizens.”

Through the OGP, the GCTools will be key to supporting information sharing on open government both within the GC and with governments around the world.

The Digital Collaboration team is not only looking for constant improvement for the GCTools, it also continually seeks to better its management and business practices. In order to ensure the team stays on top of its priorities in a fast-paced environment, weekly team meetings have been abolished in favour holding of rapid daily stand-ups. Moreover, the team uses online lean project management tools to increase productivity, automate collaboration and approval processes, and reduce reliance on paper-based business.



However, what contributes most to the success of the Digital Collaboration team and the GCTools is its people. The team is composed of motivated, enthusiastic, creative, and innovative public servants who want to transform the public service into a better organization so that it can adapt and remain relevant to the citizens it serves. This philosophy is imbued in the can-do attitude demonstrated by every member of the team not only in the above examples, but throughout each and every working day. Every employee in the team starts with the assumption that things are possible and figures out a way to make it happen.

The Digital Collaboration team is a model of public service excellence that spreads its enthusiasm, desire and drive for change and innovation through its partnerships and engagement with public servants in-person and via its online tools every day, and the above examples are concrete manifestations of how this team is making a difference for all public servants.

