

# SFIA 7



The complete reference

# SFIA and skills management

SFIA provides a resource to support skills and competency management. Adopting SFIA provides clarity in identifying and deploying the required skills within an organisation and throughout the supply chain.

SFIA provides a common language throughout the skills management cycle. This improves communication and understanding for all involved e.g. line management, HR and employees. By using SFIA, organisations can achieve a consistent and integrated skills and people management system.

## Complete resource strategy and skills management

SFIA is used for measuring current capability and identifying requirements, including planning for future demand, using the same capability criteria used throughout the skills management processes.

Organisations achieve consistency in sourcing and deployment, through the use of easy to understand definitions of skills and levels. This reduces risks and potential costs from incorrect placement of personnel.

Using the same language for understanding the capability of the workforce and professional development planning provides a structure and focus for skills development.

Using the same language and a structure for their development, consistency can be achieved in sourcing and job assignment, professional development planning and understanding the capability of the workforce

This cycle view does not imply a starting point for the use of SFIA. The initial use of SFIA may be to address a specific issue or opportunity, e.g. employee satisfaction or skills development. The issue may affect only one team or project or maybe part of something broader like a new operating model for an entire technology function. Regardless of the starting point, the use of SFIA can be extended to other parts of the cycle, as, and when, required.

From an organisational perspective, one logical starting point might be knowing that a new resource needs to be recruited.

## Plan and organise

### Designing target operating models and organisation structures and conducting workforce planning

SFIA can be used to design and validate proposed organisation designs and target operating models. Using SFIA for position/role analysis and skills mapping provides a quick cross-check and an effective bottom-up review of the scope of the positions in the organisation design. The SFIA levels of responsibility help optimise spans of control and the number of organisational levels. Generic, SFIA based, profiles are a significant enabler of organisational agility. They allow operating models and organisation designs to flex and change without needing to be re-written.

SFIA does not assume specific operating models or organisation structures. It is equally effective in enabling agile, collaborative, working practices as it is for functional, hierarchical or process-driven models.

### Creating job descriptions and role profiles

SFIA-based role profiles, job descriptions and skill profiles are probably the most common use of SFIA in organisations. Context is important in the use of any framework, and it is crucial to understand the organisation's needs rather than simply use the skills in an isolated manner to form a single job description or role profile. The specific mix will be different from one organisation to another.

SFIA aligned job descriptions and role profiles are useful and popular for many reasons.

- They can support the complete skills management cycle.
- They provide clarity to enable productivity and performance to match expectations



- They reduce business risk by increasing the chances of recruiting and developing individuals with the required skills, at the right level. This is positive for both the organisation and the individual and reduces the costs of churn, when individuals feel ‘the job is not what they thought it would be’, or the organisation discovers the individual has not got the right set of skills to do the job effectively.

Many organisations streamline this process by recognising standard combinations of skills. These are typically called Role Profiles or Professional Profiles. To apply SFIA appropriately, it is helpful to be clear on the relationship between skills, roles, and jobs.

SFIA does not attempt to cover everything that an individual may be required to do. SFIA does not describe any product or technology-specific skills or knowledge, industry years of service or qualifications. For example, a service desk manager requires knowledge of a particular process framework (such as ITIL or COBIT) and the specific service desk tools which are used in that organisation and they may also need specific industry experience, security clearance and defined qualifications.

Although Job/Role design is greatly assisted by the use of SFIA, the framework itself does not describe roles, jobs or organisational units - it simply provides the building blocks to help create these. There are no organisational design templates, examples or suggestions in SFIA. In addition, the SFIA categories and sub-categories should not be used to imply specific organisational units, departments, teams or jobs.

A job can be made up of one or more roles, which, in turn, include one or more skills at appropriate skill levels. For example, there may be a job advertised in an organisation for a Service Desk Manager. This job could include the roles of Incident Management Process Owner, Major Incident Manager and Knowledge Management Process Owner (and possibly several more). Each role would require one or more skills at various levels, with the skills being defined using SFIA.

The role of Major Incident Manager, for instance, and detail of the activities which anyone carrying out this role would have to complete, can be defined in the Incident Management process. This role profile would use SFIA to describe the generic level of responsibility for the role and include the SFIA skills and levels for these skills which are required in order to perform this role consistently to the required standard. This role might be carried out by several different people with various job titles, and therefore be referred to in a number of job descriptions.

## Acquire

### **Sourcing and recruitment of the right skills, staff augmentation or supplier engagement**

SFIA supports the acquisition of people with the right skills. Acquisition could be through different routes:

- recruitment of resources (permanent and / or contingent / contract workers)
- mergers and acquisitions
- the engagement of service providers (e.g. for outsourcing, staff augmentation, managed services, education, training, and consultancy services).

A SFIA-based Position / Job Description provides clarity on the required level of responsibility and skills. In turn this attracts the right candidates. Subsequent assessment and selection criteria can be aligned to the SFIA skills and levels.

A similar approach can be used to support processes for resource divestment or separations. e.g. as a result of headcount reduction.

In the case of outsourcing and off-shoring, SFIA provides both the client and the supplier with a clear and transparent basis for describing the capability being sought or provided.

Procurement of resource-based services benefits from the use of SFIA Rate Cards. These enable a like-for-like comparison of resource-based services from suppliers. Service providers map their offerings and/or personnel to SFIA skills and levels. Difference in costs for resources is made clear. Clients can confirm that deployed resources have the skills needed to meet their requirements.

## Deploy

### **Assigning resources by capability**

Effective skills management enables people to work in a way that is best for the organisation and best for the individual. Managers will improve motivation, engagement and productivity by deploying people to the right work. Targeted deployment also provides the best opportunity for individuals to develop new skills.

Project and operational risks are reduced by assigning the right skilled people. Using SFIA means this is based on their actual capability, not just their technical knowledge. Getting this right leads to more effective use of resources, appropriate development, and potentially reduced expenditure on contractors. Managers use SFIA to highlight scarce skills in their teams and deploy resources to mitigate those risks.

As well as enabling functional organisational structures, the flexibility of SFIA supports other approaches for resource deployment. This includes competency centres or resource pools. In these models, resources are allocated to temporary endeavours, agile project teams, or even individual tasks.

Ensuring that externally sourced capability – whether contractors or service providers – is deployed to appropriate tasks, is essential to ensure the desired outcome and value for money. Organisations can use SFIA to identify potential cost saving through contractor replacement programmes. By identifying the skills provided by contractors, plans can then be made to acquire or develop those skills internally.

## Assess

### **Assessing skills, skills needs, performance and capability**

SFIA is used extensively in the assessment of existing capability, at both an individual and an organisational level. Assessment is a valuable initial diagnostic stage that feeds into subsequent analysis and development.

SFIA provides a powerful diagnostic tool to enable skills assessments to be made. Individuals can assess their current skills and experience, identify their goals, and use such assessments for planning their personal professional development journey by determining the skills and levels they want to achieve.

Organisations can assess an individual's skills in an objective manner to support subsequent analysis and development planning. The objective nature of the SFIA descriptions help managers to reach an assessment that is agreed by the person being assessed.

The framework itself does not provide instructions for assessment or the specific mix of skills that an individual or organisation should be assessed against as it focusses on a common language to describe the skills and competency required.

## Analyse

### **Analysing performance and capability to identify gaps, skills development needs and opportunities**

Analysis goes hand-in-hand with assessment. Having established a skills assessment, the assessment data may be analysed to inform decision-making, including development needs. Performance is assessed against business objectives and, in the case of development objectives, by reference to SFIA skills.

SFIA's practical descriptions enable performance to be analysed to reveal an individual's strengths and development needs. This presents managers with the ability to assess an individual's competence, and to analyse the reasons for their level of performance. This greater objectivity in analysis of performance and explanation to the individual leads to greater staff satisfaction with appraisals, better motivation and improved levels of retention.

Assessment data can be combined to determine an organisational view of the skills capability that the organisation has and its skills needs, this characterises the 'skills gap' and by using a recognised framework it is less open to misinterpretation.

In times of business change, whether driven by changing customer requirements, mergers and acquisitions, new services or products, market trends or evolving business objectives, SFIA can be used to identify and express the skills impact, supporting planning and delivery.

## Develop

### **Planning and executing development activities to build capability and performance and to provide career pathways**

The development of individual capability in line with the organisation's needs is based on SFIA's objective statements of competence.

SFIA can be used to help define development objectives by:

- identifying the skills or aspects of skills which need to be developed
- providing clarity on the targeted levels of competence

- helping to identify and reach agreement on how development can be achieved and what support is required

Support can be provided by a range of different interventions or activities, not just classroom learning or training courses. e.g. coaching, mentoring, stretch-tasks, work shadowing, training and certification, attending an external event, participating in special interest groups and communities of practice.

Proper analysis of how current skill levels affect the individual's performance enables the construction of relevant development plans that really work. Obtaining value for money from training is always important. Creating focused development plans will make a real difference to the value obtained from the training budget.

Use of SFIA encourages appropriate individual growth, effective budgeting and a way to confirm skills development is in line with the organisation's real needs.

SFIA can be used by employers to set education and training objectives for individuals and groups. It can also be used by providers of education and training to explain learning outcomes and improve the effectiveness. This helps employers to understand the relevance of qualifications and certifications, and to make targeted investment in training and education for existing staff.

The individual's defined development needs can also be fed into the process by which individuals are assigned to tasks.

## Reward

### **Rewarding and compensating an individual for their skills and competence**

Organisations can use SFIA levels of responsibility to support job evaluation and grading. Particularly useful is the clear difference between the attributes of one level and those at the next level. Aligning job descriptions to SFIA levels provides clear support for job grading.

The attributes of autonomy, complexity, influence, knowledge and business skills are complementary to most job grading methods. This enables salary benchmarking in a consistent way for all the professional disciplines.

The use of SFIA to support job descriptions and professional profiles adds greater objectivity to the assessment of the levels of jobs and of people. The use of SFIA to assess and to analyse an individual's performance supports making and communicating decisions about the individual's place within any corporate scale. It is essential that individuals and service providers are recognised for their performance, whether through salary and benefits, bonus schemes or feedback and SFIA can form the basis of such mechanisms.