



Using SFIA to manage IT Skills

What is SFIA

Skills **F**ramework for the **I**nformation **A**ge (SFIA) is a globally recognised IT generic skills capability framework. Used throughout the world as a standard for IT professional’s capabilities by governments and organisation, with 7 levels of attainment and 121 skills allowing assessment of professional competencies.

SFIA offers individuals and organisations a comprehensive guide to IT skills used in multiple IT disciplines. The 121 skills across 7 levels help HR understand what's required from a job description. For example, if HR do not know what a Data Scientist does, the skills code DATS (Data Science) can help them understand the job role (see below). SFIA offers a level of responsibility which can easily be aligned to an organisation chart from entry job roles up to CIO (Chief Information Officer). SFIA can help decipher tech jargon in the HR world.

Just three level examples of SFIA skill descriptors for Data Science (DATS)

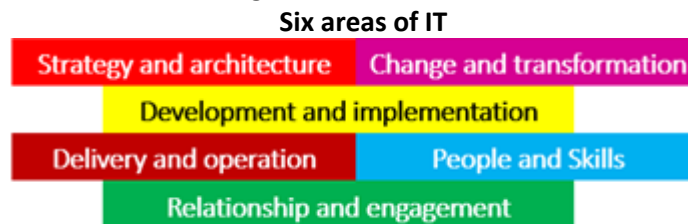
Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Applies existing data science techniques to new problems and datasets using specialised programming techniques.	Investigates the described problem and dataset to assess the usefulness of data science and analytics solutions.	Plans and drives all stages of the development of data science and analytics solutions.
Selects from existing data sources and prepares data to be used by data science models.	Applies a range of data science techniques and uses specialised programming languages. Understands and applies rules and guidelines specific to the industry, and anticipates risks and other implications of modelling.	Provides expert advice to evaluate the problems to be solved and the need for data science solutions. Identifies what data sources to use or acquire.
Evaluates the outcomes and performance of data science models. Identifies and implements opportunities to train and improve models and the data they use.	Selects, acquires and integrates data for analysis. Develops data hypotheses and methods and evaluates analytics models. Advises on the effectiveness of specific techniques based on project findings and comprehensive research.	Specifies and applies appropriate data science techniques and specialised programming languages.
Publishes and reports on model outputs to meet customer needs and conforming to agreed standards.	Contributes to the development, evaluation, monitoring and deployment of data science solutions.	Reviews the benefits and value of data science techniques and tools and recommends improvements. Contributes to developing policy, standards and guidelines for developing, evaluating, monitoring and deploying data science solutions.

SFIA can help HR personnel understand what IT skills are required in the IT world; it is a common language between all IT staff and extended professionals who work within skills and people management. Implemented successfully, SFIA can help with aligning the many cross functional processes between IT and HR. SFIA provides a common language for IT professionals globally, enabling better communication and collaboration across regions and cultures. Organisations can ensure they are using their resources effectively, avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring that their IT staff are working towards the same goals. (Ask about our “Implementing SFIA” Workshop).

How can SFIA help

SFIA and job description

HR are able to align skills required in IT areas which are needed to operate effectively and competently. Building a SFIA job role profile will offer an insight into what skills can be picked from the 121 available in line with what you are asking the employee to do or be competent in. A SFIA profile can be built; between 6 and 8 core skills would be considered a good number. There is no set rule as to how many codes are selected to make up a SFIA skills profile. A team leader who is carrying out tasks, but also has people and team responsibilities would require a few additional skill codes. With a number SFIA skill descriptors chosen in a role profile; it outlines what is expected of a person in any given IT role. Businesses can then go on to utilise SFIA in a number of ways as outlined below.



SFIA ensures a consistent, standardised approach to defining and measuring IT skills and competencies needed in each IT job role. This helps ensure that IT staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to support business operations effectively. (Ask about our “Role Mapping” workshop.)

SFIA in recruitment

There are many ways SFIA can help in recruitment, a simple process would be to use SFIA descriptors from a role profile when posting a vacancy on job boards. The skills aligned in the role can be offered to applicants by you or the recruitment agencies to find the right candidate. Check out [Indeed.co.uk](https://www.indeed.co.uk) and search for SFIA to see employers who are using SFIA to their advantage. It would be simple to use SFIA descriptors to interview potential recruits or internal staff for PDPs/PDRs especially when multiple SFIA skills have been selected to make up a profile. Take a SFIA role profile in with you to recruitment interviews as a way of asking questions to prove competence.

As approved providers of SFIA tools and services we often talk to IT recruitment agencies who have posted roles aligned to SFIA. They frequently tell us they don't know what SFIA is, they simply do what has been asked by the client. How can you be sure they are finding the most appropriate candidate? If you do engage with agencies, it would benefit them knowing about SFIA - why not hand them this document?

Can someone be SFIA Certified?

Contrary to popular belief, there is no qualification or certification programme for IT experts to gain a professional qualification or certification. Proving an applicant or employee is SFIA competent will require an assessment, preferably with the help of an approved SFIA consultant. The closest thing available would be to gain credibility by having a SFIA consultant to verify a number of skills within a role, effectively much the same as interviewing. However, we do offer skills testing using SFIA as the question content in recruitment campaigns; this has been used successfully in recruitment screening by our clients. (Ask for details about our objective assessment and test tool)

If you wish to seek further information, why not check out our **FREE** skills profiling tool? IT professionals can register on our online skills profiler, pick a SFIA level which they believe they align to and skills codes which fit to their own skill competencies. Not only can they build a SFIA profile, but also add technical skills which would help define the competencies from a recruitment perspective.

FREE to individual IT professionals to use, after building a profile of themselves they can request recruitment agencies or organisations to view (read only). Click the image below for more details.



ValidateSkills Profiler

(Ask about our Skills Profile accounts for businesses)

SFIA in development reviews

SFIA provides a clear, standardised approach to defining, developing, and measuring skills and competencies in a development review. This helps organisations build high-performing employees that can support business operations effectively and deliver consistently high levels of service to its customers.

We all know in HR the annual or bi-annual development review is not a welcoming process. It's that time of year when people management is drawn into play. No doubt managers involved would welcome guidance that the SFIA framework can bring to the process. As indicated above, using SFIA skill profiles at this time can benefit the understanding of skills in the role, and career opportunities from other roles mapped across an organisation. When SFIA is used in PDPs/PDRs it can be directly compared against what skills the employees believe they have against what would be expected of employees in their role. Managers involved in development reviews are asked to verify as they are closest to the competency needs of the business and can verify using the SFIA descriptors in the interview process if there are development needs.

When implementing PDPs/PDRs, using SFIA means it doesn't need to be a total change in your existing review process. Using SFIA as an additional information tool within this process can allow your managers to follow an international skills framework. If you use our ITSA skills assessment tool, capability and competency data is captured throughout the business. Our tool will enable you to have an incredibly detailed view of how your organisation, departments, roles, and each employee are doing at any time. Understanding the skills gaps and aspirations using an international framework can only bring rewards in staff retention and employee job satisfaction.

(Ask about our ITSA skills assessment tool)

SFIA in training

SFIA provides a standardised approach to training and development, enabling organisations to identify skill gaps, develop career paths, and build a high-performing IT departments. By aligning skills, organisations can deliver a consistent level of service to customers and optimize their IT operations. Training budgets can be focused on the skills needed by the business aligned to the core skills of the roles. Organisations can offer a learning library according to skills known in each role and also offer guidance to managers when talking about increased capability in development reviews. This offers a direct line from skills as defined in a role, skills gaps as defined in a development review and the negotiated learning library as offered by the organisation. With our ITSA tool, once the assessment has been agreed and skills gaps highlighted, the employee can search into the uploaded skills library for information on the course that best suits their needs.

Career development

SFIA provides a well-defined career development framework for IT professionals, allowing organisations to offer structured career paths and training programmes to service desk and support staff. In the processes above, especially when using the SFIA levelling, the grade structure can easily be aligned therefore offering a structure to follow in a skills capability format. We previously mentioned a SFIA level 1 would be a starting point to any career; each SFIA level offers descriptors for attributes, as seen below, with a clear relevance to what is expected of employees at those levels.

Increasing responsibility, accountability and impact

Level 1 Follow	Level 2 Assist	Level 3 Apply	Level 4 Enable	Level 5 Ensure, advise	Level 6 Initiate, influence	Level 7 Set strategy, inspire, mobilise
-------------------	-------------------	------------------	-------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

Using the attribute Influence as an example:

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7
Minimal influence. May work alone or interact with immediate colleagues.	Interacts with and may influence immediate colleagues. May have some external contact with customers, suppliers and partners. Aware of need to collaborate with team and represent users/customer needs.	Interacts with and influences colleagues. May oversee others or make decisions which impact routine work assigned to individuals or stages of projects. Has working level contact with customers, suppliers and partners. Understands and collaborates on the analysis of user/customer needs and represents this in their work. Contributes fully to the work of teams by appreciating how own role relates to other roles.	Influences customers, suppliers and partners at account level. Makes decisions which influence the success of projects and team objectives. May have some responsibility for the work of others and for the allocation of resources. Engages with and contributes to the work of cross-functional teams to ensure that customers and user needs are being met throughout the deliverable/scope of work. Facilitates collaboration between stakeholders who share common objectives. Participates in external activities related to own specialism.	Influences organisation, customers, suppliers, partners and peers on the contribution of own specialism. Makes decisions which impact the success of assigned work, i.e. results, deadlines and budget. Has significant influence over the allocation and management of resources appropriate to given assignments. Leads on user/customer and group collaboration throughout all stages of work. Ensures users' needs are met consistently through each work stage. Builds appropriate and effective business relationships across the organisation and with customers, suppliers and partners. Creates and supports collaborative ways of working across group/area of responsibility. Facilitates collaboration between stakeholders who have diverse objectives.	Influences policy and strategy formation. Initiates influential relationships with internal and external customers, suppliers and partners at senior management level, including industry leaders. Leads on collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders across competing objectives within the organisation. Makes decisions which impact the achievement of organisational objectives and financial performance.	Inspires the organisation, and influences developments within the industry at the highest levels. Makes decisions critical to organisational success. Develops long-term strategic relationships with customers, partners, industry leaders and government. Collaborates with leadership stakeholders ensuring alignment to corporate vision and strategy.

The above chart is used to pinpoint where a role sits within the organisation and offer information on what skills are needed in order to progress in one's career.

Using SFIA in your business processes provides even more benefits. SFIA is a globally recognised framework that provides a common language and reference model for skills and competencies in the IT industry with SFIA. Organisations can benefit from:

Standardisation: SFIA provides a consistent, standardised approach to defining and measuring IT skills and competencies. This helps ensure that service desk staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to support business operations effectively.

Career development: SFIA provides a well-defined career development framework for IT professionals, allowing organizations to offer structured career paths and training programs to service desk and support staff.

With our ITSA tool, employees are free to search other departments and job titles to view what skills lay within. We can also allocate what we call a 'natural progressive role' - basically what role would naturally be the next step up for.

(Ask for an ITSA Extra demo with no obligation)



Who's it for?

The SFIA framework is designed to holistically support a wide range of business stakeholders, including:

HR professionals can use G-SKILL to support the recruitment, training, and development of staff. They can use the framework to identify skills gaps, develop job descriptions and career paths, and design training programs.

Learning and development professionals can use SFIA to design and deliver training programs that are aligned with industry standards and meet the needs of the organisation. They can also use the framework to evaluate the effectiveness of training programmes and identify areas for improvement.

Senior leaders can use SFIA to support talent management and succession planning. They can use the framework to identify high-potential employees, develop career paths, and ensure that the organisation has the skills and competencies needed to achieve its strategic objectives. Senior leaders can also stay up-to-date regarding the latest industry practices and skills needed to increase organisational efficiency and expertise.

Line managers can use a global skills framework to support the development of their team members. They can use the framework to set goals, identify training needs, and provide feedback on performance.

Employees can use SFIA to identify their current skill level, set goals for skill development, plan their career path and use the framework to identify the skills and competencies needed for specific job roles and track their progress over time.

What are the benefits?

Using the SFIA framework to develop skills and careers can provide a range of benefits for both organisations and individuals, including:

Standardisation: SFIA provides a standardised approach to skills development, ensuring that employees are trained to consistent and high-quality standards. This can improve the quality of work and services delivered and increase overall organisational efficiency.

Talent management: SFIA can be used to support talent management and succession planning, enabling organisations to identify and develop high-potential employees and attain the skills and competencies needed to build high-performing teams to achieve strategic objectives.

Recruitment and retention: SFIA can be used to design job descriptions and career paths that are aligned with industry standards and provide a clear path for career progression. This can improve the recruitment and retention of staff, as employees are more likely to stay with an organization that supports their professional growth and development.

Performance management: SFIA can be used to set clear expectations for performance and provide employees with a roadmap for development. This can improve employee engagement and motivation, leading to better overall performance and outcomes.

Providing a common language: SFIA can help establish a common language for skills and competencies across different regions and cultures. This helps ensure that employers and employees have a shared understanding of the skills required for specific job roles.

Enable benchmarking: SFIA can provide a reference model for assessing skills and competencies across different organisations, industries, and regions. This enables employers to benchmark their own skills requirements against industry standards and identify areas for improvement.

People Benefits:

Career development: SFIA can be used to support career development and provide a clear path for career progression, enabling employees to acquire new skills and competencies, plan and manage their careers effectively for advancement.

Skill development: SFIA can be used to identify skills gaps and prioritise development, and provide training and development opportunities to fill these gaps, enabling employees to acquire new skills

and improve their performance. This enables individuals to develop the skills and competencies needed for their current and future roles.

Motivation: SFIA can be used to set clear expectations for performance and provide employees with a roadmap for development, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction. A number of research papers often indicate an average of 30-40% of leavers indicate lack of career and development opportunities as a reason when asked at exit interviews.

Other benefits

Resource optimization: By using SFIA, organisations can ensure that they are using their resources effectively, avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring that their IT professional employees are working towards the same goals.

Improved communication: SFIA provides a common language for IT professionals globally, enabling better communication and collaboration across regions and cultures.

Growing talent: As the IT industry faces talent shortages, effectively developing talent has become a critical consideration. Building a self-sustaining talent pool within an organisation can be an effective strategy to address talent shortages and meet this challenge.

Something to reflect on:

Budget constraints: Developing and delivering development programs can be expensive and some organisations may not have the budget to invest in skills development programmes. This can be particularly challenging for small and medium-sized businesses. SFIA can offer small steps at low cost. Our ITSA tool can be purchased at around £40 per IT employee – a cost effective way forward.

Lack of awareness: Some employers may not be aware of the benefits of skills development programmes or may not know how to go about developing and delivering training programmes. This can lead to a lack of investment in training and skills development. Simply introducing SFIA as a guidance to a skills framework will get managers and employees thinking about skill competencies. The SFIA programme is free to use by any organisation for their own internal use.

Staff retention: Staff retention has become a priority for many organisations. The lack of future career development remains a key driver of employee attrition. Investing in people by providing development opportunities can lead to higher employee engagement levels and reduce the likelihood of skilled employees leaving an organisation.

Why not book a session with one of our approved SFIA consultants simply to discuss what could be achieved in your organisation. This will give you an idea of effort and cost before any button is pressed.



enquiries@validateskills.com

or email our Director - Kevin Tibbs: kevin@validateskills.com