

What are the archetypes?

The Government as Employer Playbook is designed to meet you where you are, regardless of your role and/or department/agency

Start by identifying your archetype

Opportunity@Work has developed five archetypes – Explorer, Activator, Ally, Builder, and Connector – to reflect different levels of authority, engagement, and organizational readiness that shape implementation. You can either:

- **Self-identify** using the [Archetype Definitions](#), or
- **Take the [Archetype Quiz](#)** to quickly determine which archetype best fits your role.

These archetypes help you focus on the guidance most relevant to your context and position you to drive change effectively.

Follow the sections that resonate most

Each section of the playbook addresses a key action area, such as building a work plan, aligning stakeholders, or measuring progress and adapting. You can move through the sections sequentially or go directly to the areas that address your current challenges.

At the end of each section, you will find archetype-specific tips to help you apply that chapter's guidance in a way that fits your role. These tailored insights make it easier to move from concept to action, no matter your starting point.

The playbook includes a variety of templates, activity guides, and planning tools designed for adaptation. You can use them as-is or tailor them to your department/agency's structure, language, and change readiness. These resources are meant to accelerate — not complicate — your implementation efforts.

Return to this resource as you scale

This isn't a one-time read. As your organization evolves and your role shifts, so might your archetype. You can always come back to this playbook to reassess, retool, and realign as your skills-based talent practices grow over time.



What are the archetypes?

The archetype model draws on dimensions of organizational and individual context to enable more relevant and practical support

Why archetypes?

Rather than assume one-size-fits-all readiness, the playbook centers on five archetypes that reflect a wide range of roles and conditions across government. The archetypes combine organizational and individual context. Together, these dimensions shape the guidance you receive on how to lead, support, or scale skills-based talent practices in your department/agency.

What shapes an archetype?

Organizational context:

1. **Policy commitment:** Presence and maturity of formal policies related to skills-based talent practices (e.g., executive orders, legislation, internal mandates)
2. **Leadership engagement:** Degree to which organizational leaders actively support, champion, and communicate the value of skills-based talent practices
3. **Formal structure/team:** Whether there is a dedicated group or function responsible for leading and coordinating skills-based talent practices efforts

Individual context:

1. **Authority and/or influence:** The individual's ability to shape hiring practices, strategy, or decision-making
2. **Mindset and/or confidence:** The individual's readiness to engage, belief in the approach, and confidence in applying skills-based talent practices effectively
3. **Level of engagement/action:** The extent to which the individual has already taken steps to explore, support, or lead skills-based talent practices implementation

What are the archetypes?

Understanding your role in advancing skills-based talent practices begins with knowing where you, and your organization, stand today

Whether you are just beginning to explore new approaches or already leading implementation efforts, identifying your archetype can help you focus on the most relevant guidance, tools, and strategies throughout the playbook.

Archetype	Organizational context	Individual context
Explorer	Demonstrates emerging interest from leadership but formal policies and dedicated teams are not yet in place	Explores ideas and opportunities for skills-based talent practices; champions skills-first practices and seeks guidance, tools, and allies to get started
Activator	Operates in a context with limited formal skills-based talent practices policy or dedicated structure but experiences moderate leadership engagement	Drives early skills-based talent practices efforts using their authority or influence; initiates change and tests ideas while seeking strategic alignment or direction to sustain progress
Ally	Has clear skills-based talent practices policy and established structure/team, while working to strengthen strategic leadership engagement	Supports skills-based talent practices efforts aligned to policy, but needs guidance on how to lead; expresses readiness to engage and contribute if a clear pathway or role is provided
Builder	Combines formal policy and active leadership support, while building the structure/team needed to scale efforts	Advances skills-based talent practices initiatives; identifies roadblocks and actively works to build momentum
Connector	Brings together strong skills-based talent practices policy, active leadership engagement, and a dedicated structure/team to support widespread implementation	Mobilizes internal and external stakeholders to align interests, bridge silos, and drive systems-level impact; act as a translator between policy vision and practical execution

How can you determine your archetype?

The quiz is not evaluative — it's a directional tool to provide a tailored entry point into the playbook

Question 1: Has your department, agency, or central government established a formal policy or directive supporting skills-based talent practices (e.g., degree removal, competency frameworks, alternative credential recognition)?

1. I am unsure whether my department/agency/government has policies related to skills-based talent practices. *(0 points)*
2. No formal policies related to skills-based talent practices are in place. *(0 points)*
3. There is informal guidance or emerging practice, but no formal policy. *(2 points)*
4. A formal internal policy or directive to my department/agency has been established. *(3 points)*
5. Multiple formal policies are in place and consistently referenced in hiring processes for my department/agency. *(4 points)*
6. Skills-based talent practices are embedded across hiring practices, reinforced by executive mandate or legislation action at the central government level. *(5 points)*

Question 2: To what extent do leaders within your department/agency champion and communicate support for skills-based talent practices?

1. I am unsure whether department/agency leadership is engaged in this work. *(0 points)*
2. Leadership has not expressed support or opposition for skills-based talent practices. *(0 points)*
3. Leadership has signaled passive or occasional support but not consistently. *(2 points)*
4. Leadership occasionally speaks to the importance of skills-based talent practices and supports some initiatives. *(3 points)*
5. Leadership regularly champions skills-based talent practices and encourages teams to take action. *(4 points)*
6. Leadership visibly and consistently drives skills-based talent practices efforts, embedding it into organizational practices. *(5 points)*

Question 3: Does your department or agency have a dedicated team, function, or process responsible for leading skills-based talent practices efforts?

1. I am unsure whether any team or structure exists for this work. *(0 points)*
2. There is no formal team or structure in place. *(0 points)*
3. An individual or team supports this informally alongside other responsibilities. *(2 points)*
4. A team or working group has been designated but lacks clear scope or resources. *(3 points)*
5. A formal team is in place and actively leading skills-based talent practices implementation. *(4 points)*
6. A fully resourced and empowered team or structure leads and coordinates skills-based talent practices across the department/agency. *(5 points)*

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Question 4: What level of influence or authority do you have to shape hiring practices in your current role?

1. I am unsure of my influence or authority in shaping hiring practices. *(0 points)*
2. I have no influence or authority to shape hiring practices. *(0 points)*
3. I have limited influence in shaping hiring practices. I may provide input but don't shape hiring decisions. *(2 points)*
4. I have moderate influence in shaping hiring practices. I advise or contribute to hiring decisions. *(3 points)*
5. I have some authority to shape hiring practices. I help shape or guide hiring strategies. *(4 points)*
6. I have significant authority to shape hiring practices. I lead and directly shape hiring strategies and decisions. *(5 points)*

Question 5: How would you describe your current mindset and confidence toward supporting skills-based talent practices?

1. I'm just starting to learn about skills-based talent practices and don't feel confident yet. *(0 points)*
2. I'm interested but unsure how to get started and would need support. *(0 points)*
3. I see the value of skills-based talent practices and want to play a role in advancing it. *(2 points)*
4. I feel confident contributing to efforts with some guidance or collaboration. *(3 points)*
5. I believe strongly in the value of skills-based talent practices and can help lead change. *(4 points)*
6. I actively champion skills-based talent practices and feel fully equipped to lead efforts. *(5 points)*

Question 6: Have you taken actions to promote or apply skills-based talent practices in your organization?

1. I haven't taken any steps yet. *(0 points)*
2. I've thought about it but haven't taken action. *(0 points)*
3. I've started exploring what actions or approaches might make sense for my organization. *(2 points)*
4. I've taken some initial steps to support or apply skills-based talent practices. *(3 points)*
5. I'm actively involved in promoting or applying skills-based talent practices in my organization. *(4 points)*
6. I've led or supported significant efforts to apply and embed skills-based talent practices. *(5 points)*

How can you determine your archetype?

Once you have completed the quiz, you can score your responses to identify your archetype

To calculate your results:

1. **Review your responses to each questions**

- Each answer options corresponds to a point value indicated at the end of the response

2. **Calculate two separate scores**

- Organizational score: Add your total points for Questions 1 – 3
- Individual score: Add your total points for Questions 4 – 6

3. **Interpret your combined scores using the rubric below**

- The matrix will help you identify the archetype that best reflects your current context. First, identify which range your organizational score falls into. Then, find the range your individual score falls into.

Organizational score	Individual score	Archetype
0 – 5 points	0 – 5 points	Explorer
	6 – 15 points	Activator
6 – 10 points	0 – 5 points	Ally
	6 – 15 points	Builder
11 – 15 points	0 – 5 points	Ally
	6 – 15 points	Connector

As your responsibilities evolve or your organization progresses in its adoption of skills-based practices, your archetype may shift — and that's expected. We encourage you to revisit the quiz over time to reassess your context and realign your approach.

Explorer tips across the playbook

Section	Archetype Tips
Identifying your starting point	You are just beginning to explore skills-based talent practices. This playbook will help you build foundational knowledge, identify practical entry points, and take early actions that match your pace and context. • Start with the “Building a narrative for skills-based talent practices” section to shape how you explain skills-based talent practices to others • Lean into the examples to see what skills-based talent practices look like in action • Use the templates as learning tools, even if you don’t implement them yet • Return often, especially as you test ideas, to find new insights in each section
Building a narrative	You are just beginning to make the case for skills-based talent practices, so you should focus your efforts on sparking interest through relatable needs, early examples, and low-risk entry points. • Ground your message in real needs using local data (e.g., vacancy rates, job turnover) • Introduce STARs simply and clearly with one strong statistic or example of a STAR already thriving in your organization • Request lightweight support (e.g., permission, time, resources) to explore SBH in parallel to ongoing work • Anticipate resistance and prepare responses using the “Responding to Common Misconceptions” resource
Crafting your vision	At this stage, you can focus on defining achievable goals that test skills-based talent practices and build a foundation for deeper adoption. • Leverage peer examples from case studies to show what’s possible • Frame the SBH vision around challenges leadership already cares about (e.g., vacancy rates or retention) • Define “early wins” and set OKRs around awareness or stakeholder engagement (e.g., “Increase SBH awareness among 3 departments” or “Host 2 listening sessions on STARs”) • Start small by identifying one opportunity to implement a skills-based approach (e.g., a job family, high-turnover role)
Developing a work plan	You are experimenting with skills-based talent practices for the first time, so your work plan should emphasize simplicity, learning, and room to iterate. • Start small and focused by identifying one step in the hiring journey to explore and document • Use informal team check-ins to surface early barriers, questions, and ideas for process improvement • Develop a basic template to map early-stage efforts—like reviewing job descriptions or applicant flow • Incorporate flexible timelines to account for learning, discovery, and organizational readiness
Aligning stakeholders	As you begin to engage stakeholders, your alignment efforts should focus on listening and building early relationships. • Build informal alliances within your agency or network to share resources and co-learn • Use low-stakes conversations to uncover assumptions and opportunities • Identify a “coalition of the willing” (e.g., HR partners, hiring managers) • Focus narrowly on 1 – 2 key stakeholder groups to keep scope manageable
Measuring progress and adapting	You should start by identifying simple indicators and informal ways to learn as you go to lay the foundation for measurement and feedback. • Track one or two early signals of change (e.g., application completion, hiring rates for STARs vs BA+ candidates) • Pilot informal feedback loops with staff (e.g., quick surveys or debriefs) to surface friction points • Ask stakeholders what kind of feedback loops would be most helpful to them during the hiring journey • Incorporate job seeker feedback through informal check-ins, surveys, or notes from interviews to understand the process from the candidate perspective

Activator tips across the playbook

Section	Archetype Tips
Identifying your starting point	You are ready to turn strategy into early implementation. This playbook will help you focus your efforts, build credibility through quick wins, and involve others to create momentum. • Use the “Crafting your vision” and “Developing a work plan” sections to define goals and make progress visible • Download tools to formalize your early efforts (e.g., OKRs, stakeholder mapping) • Involve others by using the “Aligning Stakeholders” section to build support • Apply the “Measuring Progress and Adapting” section to track early outcomes and prepare for scaling
Building a narrative	As you introduce skills-based talent practices to a broader audience, you need to translate strategy into messaging that inspires trust, action, and cross-functional buy-in. • Highlight success stories from STAR-focused efforts to build credibility • Use diagnostics to legitimize the need. The Archetype Quiz may be your top choice to run a diagnostic. • Localize the STARS story by spotlighting STARS in your region who already excel in key government roles • Frame the message with urgency, connecting workforce pain points to the benefits of skills-based talent practices
Crafting your vision	You bring focus to the work by setting clear, measurable outcomes that reflect your team’s strategic intent and create space to learn. • Tie SBH goals to broader workforce initiatives already on leadership’s radar • Focus on outcomes within your sphere of control (e.g., “Remove degree requirements from 10 focus roles” or “Train 5 hiring managers in SBH principles”) • Use OKRs to formalize experimentation by framing goals as prototypes, which can reduce risk aversion and invite feedback • Use your momentum to secure leadership airtime and use the time to name the opportunity, share the vision, and propose next steps)
Developing a work plan	Because you are moving from ideas to execution, you should focus on building a structured, visible work plan that drives momentum and demonstrates early progress. • Kick off with a an activity that can generate early outcomes and spark broader engagement • Create a draft work plan with clear deliverables and share it with your leadership or peers for feedback • Establish a weekly rhythm of progress tracking—brief updates can help keep momentum • Document lessons learned to inform scaling and institutional adoption
Aligning stakeholders	You can formalize stakeholder engagement to drive adoption by clarifying roles, closing communication gaps, and building shared commitment. • Target strategic partners who can help institutionalize early momentum (e.g., HR systems, leadership) • Conduct short interviews to quickly fill “Know/Feel/Do” gaps • Clarify decision-making roles to resolve ambiguity • Use mapping to maintain momentum and accelerate change, not just track activity
Measuring progress and adapting	Your focus should center on building early systems to track progress and adapt quickly, which will require choosing relevant metrics, setting routines, and sharing what you learn. • Choose a few key metrics tied to your strategic goals and begin tracking them monthly • Set a cadence for team reflection, such as brief reviews of hiring metrics during regular meetings • Leverage early learnings to refine metrics • Close the loop by sharing how input has shaped changes and justify scaling or deeper investment

Ally tips across the playbook

Section	Archetype Tips
Identifying your starting point	You are supporting implementation from within your organization. This playbook will help you align teams, reinforce consistency, and connect everyday actions to broader skills-based talent goals and policies. • Refer to the “Aligning stakeholders” section to understand how you can connect people and ideas • Use the “Developing a work plan” and “Measuring progress and adapting” sections to reinforce consistency across teams • Scan the archetype tips in other sections to coach Explorers and Activators in your department/agency • Help translate guidance into department/agency-specific language or planning formats
Building a narrative	You help shape the skills-based talent message from behind the scenes, grounding it in data, aligning with policy, and ensuring it resonates across stakeholder groups. • Use existing policy as a springboard • Run a diagnostic to reveal where current practices still conflict with policy. The SHRM Skills-First Future Assessment may be your top choice to run a diagnostic • Lift up internal STARS and showcase them already succeeding in critical roles • Advocate for a cross-agency working group or team to define responsibilities and timelines
Crafting your vision	You can translate the high-level intent into department/agency-specific OKRs, assigning ownership and reinforcing alignment between policy and execution. • Translate organization-wide skills-based talent policy into tangible agency-level OKRs (e.g., “Ensure 75% of new postings in X department meet SBH standards by Q3”) • Assign OKRs to specific leaders or teams within the department/agency to clarify roles and promote accountability • Incorporate skills-based talent practices into performance reviews by aligning OKRs with individual and team evaluations • Celebrate and socialize agency wins to build agency pride and motivate others to follow suit
Developing a work plan	You support implementation by strengthening the work plan. Your focus centers around bringing clarity, consistency and realistic expectations to every phase of the effort. • Create a template of each step of the talent lifecycle to use during the entire process • Track progress of the work plan during each working team meeting by highlighting where the team is expected to be at that stage • Give substantial time for the completion of the design phase • Partner with other Allies or Builders to coordinate efforts across teams and drive a more consistent SBH rollout
Aligning stakeholders	Your role is to think through how to make alignment sustainable. As a result, you should focus on surfacing assumptions, validating needs, and facilitating feedback across stakeholders groups. • Review maps collaboratively with your working team to gather feedback and improve clarity • Draft strategies in advance of workshops to guide structure input • Validate assumptions with peer reviewers who have implemented skills-based talent practices • Audit feasibility of enablers and escalate barriers early
Measuring progress and adapting	You reinforce learning by helping teams clarify what to measure, coordinate data collection, and maintain feedback loops aligned with the intent of skills-based talent practices. • Identify what feedback loops already exist across the department/agency • Offer guidance on what to track based on the intent of the skills-based talent initiative • Coordinate with other Allies or Builders to ensure consistent metrics and methods across teams • Make feedback loops visible during design sessions

Builder tips across the playbook

Section	Archetype Tips
Identifying your starting point	You are leading structured implementation across teams or departments/agencies. This playbook will help you coordinate delivery, embed skills-based talent practices into systems, and track progress across phases of work. • Use the “Developing a work plan” and “Crafting your vision” sections to align goals, timelines, and owners • Leverage the Appendix templates to embed skills-based talent practices into operations • Revisit the “Measuring progress and adapting” section to guide reporting and feedback loops • Share success stories internally to reinforce what’s working and bring visibility to STAR impact
Building a narrative	You lead communications at scale, connecting the narrative to delivery through consistent storytelling and visible proof points. • Refresh your baseline with a deeper diagnostic to see what’s working and where momentum has stalled. A combination of the SHRM Skills-First Future Assessment and stakeholder interviews may be your top choice to run a diagnostic • Map misalignment to show which teams excel and which need targeted support • Create short case studies or visuals to share STAR success stories broadly • Revisit the “why” through updated data and stories to reignite commitment
Crafting your vision	You can do the work to make sure the vision does not just inspire – it endures. You drive coordinated delivery across systems by establishing OKRs that connect interdependent teams, initiatives, and performance indicators. • Create OKRs that will move beyond initial implementation efforts to broader system shifts (e.g., “By year-end, 80% of government job descriptions reflect skill requirements over degree preferences”) • Identify pain points in implementation (e.g., hiring manager resistance, outdated tech systems) and set OKRs to address them directly • Set goals for communication and adoption, not only for implementation (e.g., “Train 100 hiring managers; achieve 75% satisfaction rate on training”) • Link OKRs across HR, IT, and agency leadership to prevent siloed progress
Developing a work plan	While you focus on sustainable implementation of skills-based talent practices, you coordinate complex delivery across teams and timelines, ensuring that the works stays on track and tied enterprise goals. • Develop a multi-phase implementation roadmap that builds from initial efforts to scale • Engage working teams across departments (e.g., HR, IT) to co-create deliverables and deadlines • Use project management tools to assign tasks, monitor progress, and escalate roadblocks • Build in midpoint reviews to assess alignment with executive expectations and surface emerging needs
Aligning stakeholders	As you align leadership and delivery teams across systems, you can use this moment to re-establish a shared vision, uncover barriers to scale, and realign efforts around what’s proven to work. • Use stakeholder mapping to uncover blockers (e.g., technical, structural, or political challenges) • Co-create the “From → To” vision with stakeholders to build shared ownership and buy-in • Share draft maps with leadership to secure resourcing (e.g., training budgets, new roles) • Update mapping regularly to reflect changes in people, priorities, and/or implementation
Measuring progress and adapting	Since you are focused on delivery at scale, your role is to embed structured measurement and improvement practices into your implementation plan, which will require using data to monitor adoption and report on outcomes. • Build metrics into project timelines and assign owners for collecting and reporting data • Integrate stakeholder feedback into governance routines • Use measurement dashboards to spot trends and escalate risks early • Track variation across departments/agencies to inform targeted support

Connector tips across the playbook

Section	Archetype Tips
Identifying your starting point	You are operating across organizations or systems to sustain and scale skills-based talent effort. This playbook will help you align stakeholders, unify tools and messaging, and ensure that lessons flow across the ecosystem. • Start with “Building a narrative for skills-based talent practices” and “Aligning stakeholders” sections to ensure consistent framing across departments/agencies • Use the “Crafting your vision” section to align OKRs and drive system-level performance • Facilitate shared work by guiding partners through the “Developing a work plan” and “Measuring progress and adapting” content • Pull from Appendix tools to equip others and scale skills-based talent practices across your ecosystem
Building a narrative	Connector You operate across systems with a birds-eye view. You align messaging to reinforce a shared narrative that builds momentum and highlights the value of a skills-based talent system. • Tailor your message to each audience • Share findings from diagnostics across departments to break down silos and align goals. The SHRM Skills-First Future Assessment may be your top choice to run a diagnostic • Show STARS as a local solution, not just a national concept • Equip new champions by providing narrative decks and business cases so others can spread the story themselves
Crafting your vision	You ensure that skills-based talent goals reflect long-term system change, cascading across departments/agencies and aligning with broader workforce objectives. You should focus your efforts on building coherence across the broader ecosystem. • Co-design OKRs with community voices (e.g., STAR workers, community organizations, hiring managers) to ensure relevance and buy-in • Model cascading OKRs by setting top-level government OKRs and supporting departments/agencies in translating them into local, contextual versions • Anchor OKRs in long-term systems change and use OKRs to institutionalize skills-based talent practices (e.g., “Integrate skills-based talent metrics into all workforce dashboards by end of year”) • Track ecosystem-wide impact and define OKRs not just for hires, but for STAR career pathways, cross-agency mobility, and job quality
Developing a work plan	You operate across systems, bringing visibility into interdependencies. Your work plan should ensure coherence, alignment, and momentum across diverse partners. • Host a collaborative planning session with agency partners to co-design a timeline and roles • Map key dependencies across teams to ensure alignment and sequencing of workstreams • Develop a shared project tracker or roadmap that all partners can use • Build in shared check-in points to maintain alignment and adjust when needed
Aligning stakeholders	Your goal is to align multiple actors and departments toward a unified strategy. You can use stakeholder mapping to illuminate interdependencies, coordinate cross-functional collaboration, and equip new champions. • Map systems as well as roles — look for cross-functional dependencies • Use mapping sessions to break down silos and reveal interconnections • Identify stakeholder champions to lead engagement within their own teams or departments • Translate mapping insights into enterprise-wide communications, tools, and performance tracking
Measuring progress and adapting	You sit across systems and teams, helping to ensure that insights flow and adaptations are coordinated. Your role is to unify data sources, elevate lessons, and guide adaptation across departments/agencies and stakeholders. • Map how feedback travels between levels (e.g., hiring managers to HR, HR to government leads) • Facilitate cross-agency learning loops by organizing retrospectives or sharing promising metrics • Highlight where data silos exist and help build bridges for more consistent tracking • Translate insights into action plans that can be shared across partners and stakeholders