

# Trailblazers

Companies using essential skills to boost their recruitment, staff development and outreach



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# Executive Summary

**This paper brings you practical insights on why and how to build essential skills into your business. It is based on years of research by professionals and academics as well as practical experience, with case studies from a range of employers that have leveraged a structured approach to skills in order to boost their recruitment, staff development & outreach.**

Essential skills are those highly transferable skills required for almost any job. The Skills Builder Universal Framework gives the same sort of rigour to essential skills that you might see for technical skills or numeracy. It does this by breaking each of the 8 essential skills into measurable, learnable components. Its power lies in its universal applicability across sectors, roles, ages and even education and outreach.

Essential skills are in strong demand from both employers and employees. McKinsey found recently that “the need to address skill gaps is more urgent than ever,” with the need for transferable skills to redeploy talent even more acute due to the pandemic. At the same time, 89% of working age adults in the UK believe essential skills to be important for employment, career progression or success in a recruitment process. 83% of workers would like more opportunities to build essential skills, while 92% believe that they should form part of professional development.



## RECRUITMENT

### Recruiting employees with essential skills

- There is a lot of noise in recruitment decisions, something which behavioural economists like Daniel Kahneman have written about at length.
- Many employers increasingly value the importance of very clearly defining the skills required for roles along with reliable ways of measuring them through recruitment.
- In order to recruit skilled and diverse teams, many organisations now assess essential skills through their recruitment process. This can lead to accessing a far wider talent pool than simply filtering by experience or education level. At the same time, higher levels of essential skills have been shown to be a predictor of career success across industries and job types.
- From a candidate perspective, clearly defining the essential skills required for the role reduces any potential for misunderstanding and enables them to prepare for the recruitment process effectively. It feels more inclusive and leaves less to chance, guesswork or social advantage.
- Employers providing transparency, resources and learning through the recruitment process are not only improving the candidate experience, but helping to level the playing field for more diverse recruitment.
- Embedding the Universal Framework and Skills Builder approach into recruitment practices drove a 23% improvement in employers being able to recruit candidates with the skills they need in their business. This was due in part to a 29% improvement in employers' confidence at identifying skills in the recruitment process.
- "The Framework has allowed HR professionals to coach and support managers to identify the essential skills required for success. It has also given us a specific language to communicate these skills." HR Professional, AKW Group

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### Building employees' essential skills

- Your employees want to build essential skills. Eighty-three percent of UK workers would like more opportunities to build essential skills, while 92% believe that they should form part of professional development.
- Research shows that employees with higher levels of essential skills are by some measures more productive. There is a wage premium of between 12%

and 18% associated with an increase in skill score from the lower quartile to the upper quartile. For the average worker, this increase translates into an essential skills annual wage premium of between £3,900 and £5,900.

- 89% of employees who benefited from learning & development that had embedded the Universal Framework believe that the experience improved their performance in role with 75% feeling more engaged in their work.
- Three quarters of these employees reported an improvement in their essential skill levels, with 63% of this improvement attributed to the Universal Framework building awareness and confidence.
- The employee experience of a structured approach to essential skills was reflected by their managers and talent teams. After only six months, 67% reported an improvement in their team's performance thanks to building essential skills with the Skills Builder approach.

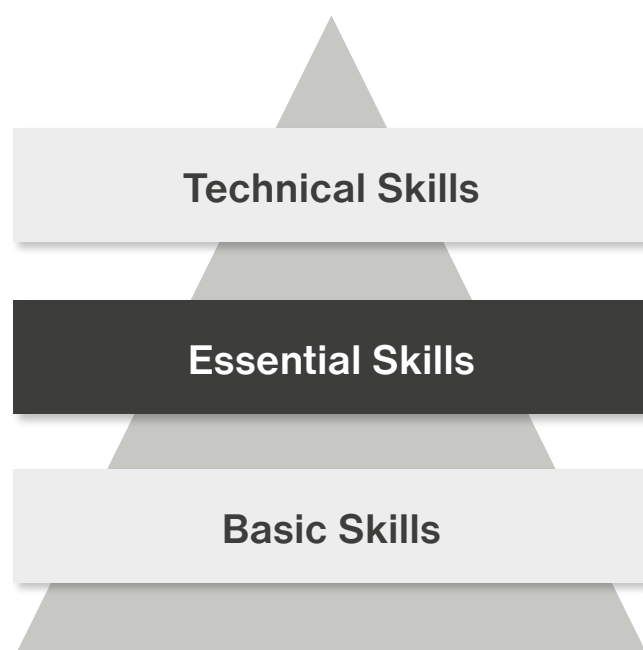
## OUTREACH

### Effective outreach & CSR that builds skills

- Employers running outreach or CSR programmes often aim to build a range of skills and knowledge. One of the challenges is doing this in a way that is both relevant for the programme participants and also for potential future employment in their organisations.
- Another hurdle is targeting learning effectively and understanding the impact that the outreach programme is having.
- Using a Universal Framework for essential skills that spans the career spectrum solves these issues by ensuring that participants in outreach programmes are learning the same skills that will be required in future.
- Embedding the framework into outreach drove a 17% increase in CSR professionals reporting that their programmes effectively build essential skills, with 100% reporting that it improved their programmes' impact.
- Employers using Benchmark to measure pre- and post- programme skill levels while structuring their programmes around the Universal Framework have seen participants make rapid progress. 98% of participants achieved progress, with an average 2.2 steps of progress over their 20-week programme

# Essential Skills: what they are

Essential skills are those highly transferable skills that everyone needs to do almost any job. In themselves, skills like leadership and teamwork are at the core of an effectively operating business. In the skills taxonomy, they sit in the middle between basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills) and technical skills (anything from plumbing to accounting). In the shift from a focus on basic skills in education, to technical skills in employment, essential skills are often under-invested in. This presents a significant opportunity for employers looking to make outside gains in their workforce's skill level and adaptability.



Essential skills underpin the ever-changing technical requirements of the workforce. Skills like problem solving, creativity and aiming high enable individuals to both rapidly acquire job-specific knowledge and technical skills they'll need in their roles. Whether that's engineering apprentices moving from an electrical to mechanical team, or a finance manager moving into a net zero role, it is those essential skills that will enable them to rapidly learn and achieve objectives in a new domain. These essential skills are:



## 1. LISTENING

receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas



## 2. SPEAKING

oral communication of information and ideas



## 3. PROBLEM SOLVING

the ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge



## 4. CREATIVITY

use of imagination and generation of new ideas



## 5. STAYING POSITIVE

ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals



## 6. AIMING HIGH

ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them



## 7. LEADERSHIP

supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal



## 8. TEAMWORK

working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal



The Skills Builder Universal Framework breaks down the eight essential skills into 16 measurable, teachable, learnable components, from Step 0 to Step 15. It was developed in collaboration with organisations including the CBI, CIPD and Gatsby Foundation as well as leading businesses, educators and academics with two-way validation to ensure it is both relevant and comprehensive.



# Essential Skills: why they matter

According to a recent piece of research by McKinsey, “the need to address skill gaps is more urgent than ever.” A majority (58%) of businesses said that closing skill gaps in their companies’ workforces has become a higher priority since the pandemic began. For most businesses, addressing the skills gap is nothing new: the annual CBI Employer Skills Survey has consistently found that despite essential skills like leadership being one of employers’ primary focus, there is a significant skills gap both in their workforce and talent pool.

Given labour market conditions, many employers are finding that higher levels of essential skills are required to redeploy talent across their organisations. According to work by Deloitte, “Only 18% of executives strongly agree that their workforce is using their skills and capabilities to their fullest potential, and fewer than half of executives report that they can quickly and easily move skills to where they are needed most as work evolves.” This situation was exacerbated by the pandemic, with 46% of respondents to McKinsey’s study reporting “an increase in redeploying talent at their organisations”, making redeployment the second most critical activity for closing skill gaps.

Employers have a clear incentive to both recruit for and build these highly transferable skills. For employees, there is a similarly compelling case for essential skills. A review of existing evidence by CfEY in 2020 found numerous studies linking essential skills to employment outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The most recent research by Skills Builder has found a wage premium of between 12% and 18% associated

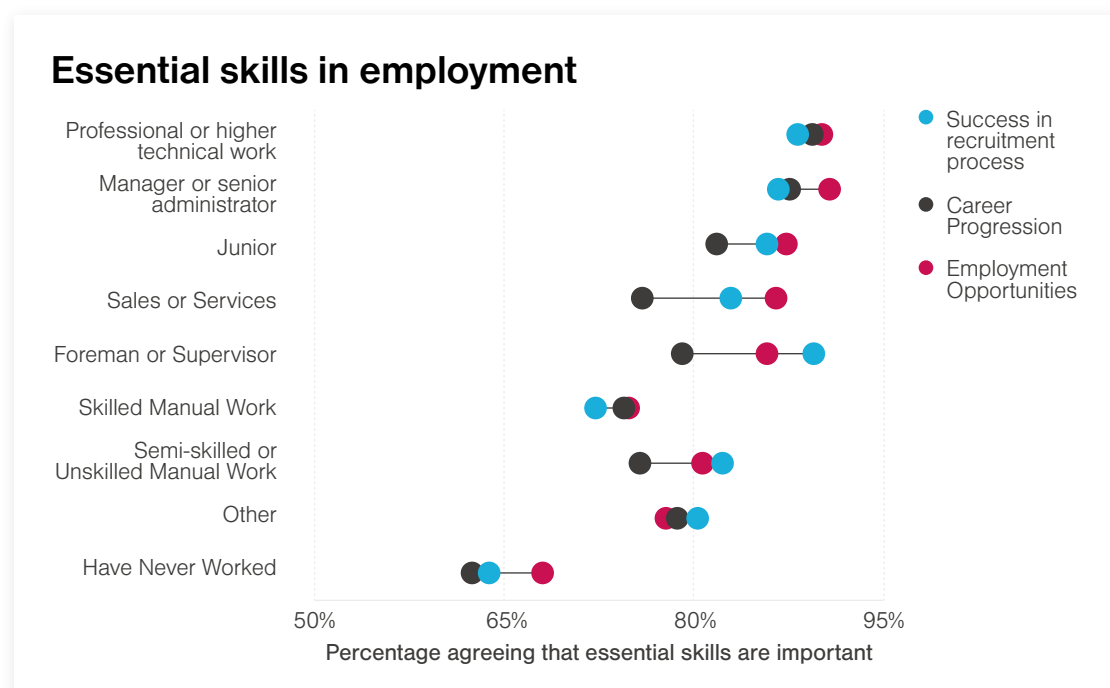




with an increase in skill score from the first quartile to the third quartile.<sup>2</sup> For the average worker, this equates to an essential skills wage premium of between £3,900 and £5,900. And against the backdrop of employees becoming increasingly concerned about their wellbeing, research has also shown a clear link between higher skill scores and greater life satisfaction.

89% of working age adults in the UK believe essential skills to be important for employment, career progression or success in a recruitment process.<sup>3</sup> This rises for those in professional or managerial jobs where 90% and 91% respectively believe that essential skills are important for employment opportunities.

Given both the real impact on income and life satisfaction, as well as the perception that essential skills are important across life, it is unsurprising that demand for more opportunities to build essential skills is very high. 83% of workers would like more opportunities to build essential skills, while 92% believe that they should form part of professional development.<sup>4</sup>



# Skills Builder



## Partnership: a bit about us

We exist to ensure everyone can access the tools and resources they need to develop essential skills. We do this by working with partners to embed the skills into their organisations, providing training and practical knowhow, and expertise.

Our team of learning professionals have all studied the science of pedagogy and have thousands of hours of teaching and resource development under their belts. This is what has enabled them to work so effectively with partners, delivering evidence-led, tangible outcomes across sectors.

We leverage our unique position at the intersection of business, education and social impact to add value to our partners' work.

Anyone can pick up the Universal Framework and start using it in their organisation for free. Indeed, that is the point of it. Many organisations, from large corporates to SMEs, have rapidly adopted the framework in their business and implemented it with an entirely 'DIY' approach.



### Recruitment

#### **Hire the right person for the right role**

Ensure transparency throughout your hiring process and remove barriers to entry by using the clear and consistent language of the Skills Builder Framework across your recruitment cycle.



### Staff development

#### **Build a skilled and inclusive workforce**

Identify essential skills strengths and gaps in your workforce and provide individuals at all levels of the business with opportunities to build these skills at each stage of their journey.

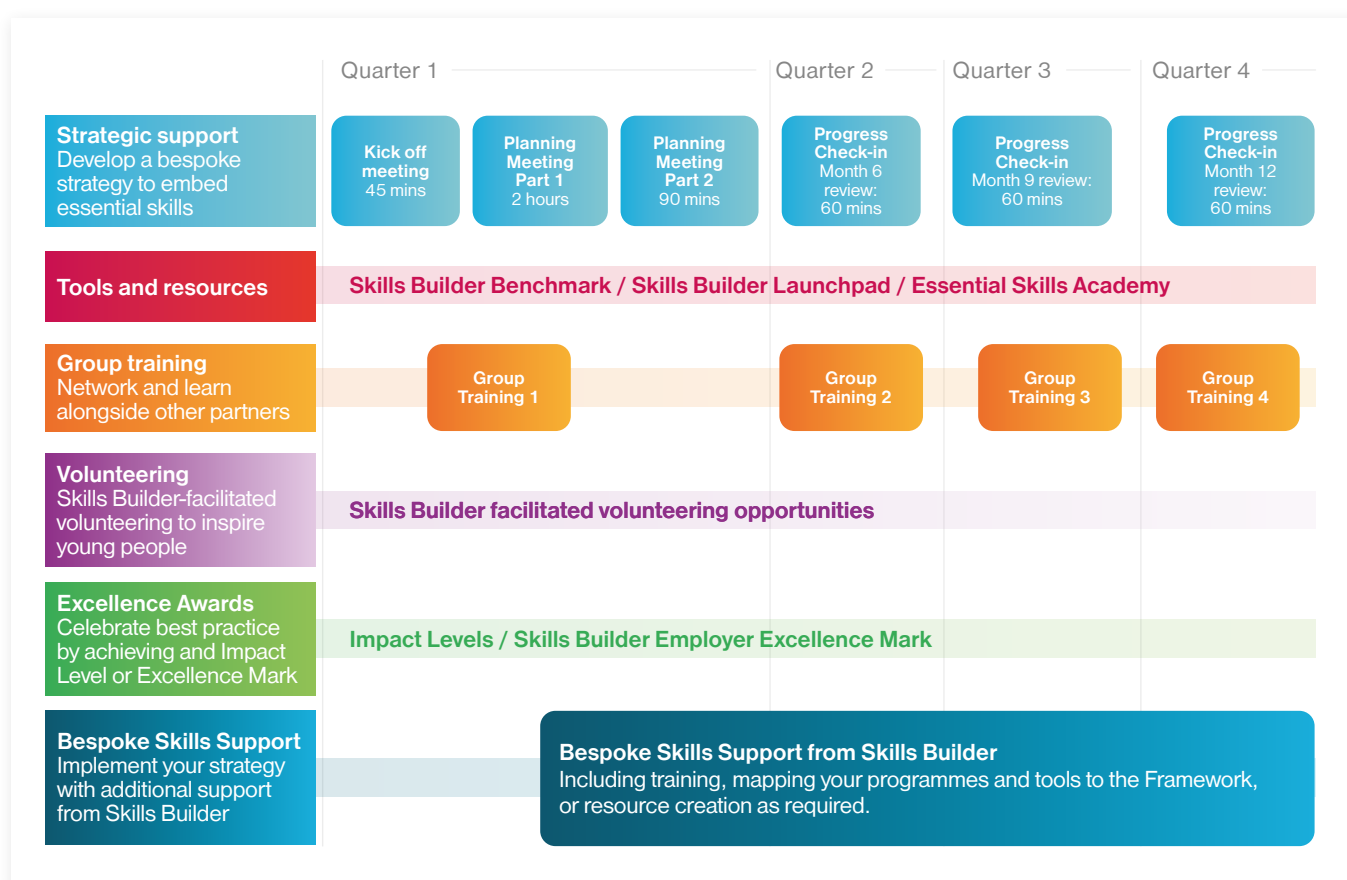


### Outreach

#### **Ensure essential skills for all**

Provide meaningful opportunities for young people and adults to develop the skills to succeed through outreach activities equipping the workforce of tomorrow with the essential skills.

Equally, some employers are keen to get expert advice and tools to optimise their implementation. That's why we developed a structured programme for employers: we work together to create a tailored strategy for achieving excellence in essential skills development. Achieving high standards in skill development is recognised through Excellence Marks, which we award to businesses to enable them to easily communicate their best practices. You can find the Excellence Standards in full in Appendix 1.



# Employers realising measurable gains from essential skills

Here we set out the impact of taking a rigorous approach to essential skills in Recruitment, Learning & Development and Outreach. This is based on both national research in partnership with YouGov as well as surveys of employers and employees with first-hand experience of using the Skills Builder Universal Framework.

You can find detailed Case Studies of how some of these trailblazing employers are working toward a set of Excellence Standards. The full standards are set out in Appendix 1

## RECRUITMENT

### Recruiting employees with essential skills

Building a diverse team with the skills for the job can be hard. Recruitment processes aim to predict the future success of candidates in the role while providing a positive and inclusive candidate experience.



*“It’s challenging to find the right people, and our person specifications were very broad and generic, using unqualified phrases such as ‘good communication skills’ – but we didn’t know how to improve them.”*

**HR BUSINESS PARTNER, AKW**

Much progress has been made over the last decade by businesses looking to reduce psychological bias in their recruitment processes, for example through the widespread practice of scoring applications without personal information. While removing these biases are an important step to building more diverse and inclusive teams, that alone is unlikely to be sufficient.

Recruitment decisions are hugely important judgements, but often they involve multiple stakeholders across a business, meaning decision making can be variable and unpredictable. The compound effect of randomness at each stage can reduce the value of a recruitment process to almost nothing if:

- The skills required for the role haven’t been clearly defined
- The capabilities being assessed for by each recruitment exercise are therefore not clearly defined
- The success criteria, or ‘what good looks like’, for each exercise do not have consistent, reliable, clear measures
- The candidates do not know what the success criteria for each exercise are



*“We used to have a scoring system using numbers – but that was so subjective.”*

**HR BUSINESS PARTNER, AKW.**



In order to recruit skilled and diverse teams, many organisations now assess essential skills through their recruitment process. This can lead to accessing a far wider talent pool than simply filtering by experience or education level. At the same time, higher levels of essential skills have been shown to be a predictor of career success across industries and job types.



*“We want to provide a better candidate experience. What we care about with any candidate is that they get lots out of the process.”*

**R&R**

Employers providing transparency, resources and learning through the recruitment process are not only improving the candidate experience, but helping to level the playing field for more diverse recruitment.

Embedding the Universal Framework and Skills Builder approach into recruitment practices drove a 23% improvement in employers being able to recruit candidates with the skills they need in their business. This was due in part to a 29% improvement in employers' confidence at identifying skills in the recruitment process.



*"The Framework has allowed HR professionals to coach and support managers to identify the essential skills required for success. It has also given us a specific language to communicate these skills."*

**HR PROFESSIONAL, AKW GROUP**

But it wasn't just the ability to successfully recruit correctly-skilled candidates that improved. Three quarters of employers also report that their recruitment processes were inclusive because the essential skills required were clearly explained, with a 5% improvement in the ability to recruit diverse candidates.



*"It added to the professionalism of our recruitment, and gave us an 'off the shelf' framework we could apply when going into a time constrained recruitment process."*

**RECRUITING MANAGER, ON PURPOSE**

Finally, applying the Skills Builder approach meant that recruitment was no longer just a one-way process. Three quarters of employers felt that candidates' essential skills were stronger following the updated recruitment process and had more confidence in applying the skills.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

## Building employees' essential skills

Your employees want to build essential skills. Eighty-three percent of UK workers would like more opportunities to build essential skills, while 92% believe that they should form part of professional development. The employee experience of building these skills with the Universal Framework is resoundingly positive: 100% of those surveyed said they wanted to continue with more opportunities in future.



*“Essential skills are very important in my role because I need to be able to motivate people from across the organisation to be involved in different projects and opportunities, being most of the time extra activities in their day to day.”*

**EMPLOYEE, HS2**

While most employers would agree that skills like teamwork and leadership are essential in their workforce and explicitly recruit for these, the structured focus on these skills often ends at the front door. This is disjointed and creates a mismatch: if those skills are required for the role and are sought through recruitment, why aren't they developed systematically by those in the role? Equally, a broad recognition that teamwork, for example, is important and a desire for more of it is hard to translate into tangible progress without a comprehensive framework of its constituent parts and 'what good looks like'.

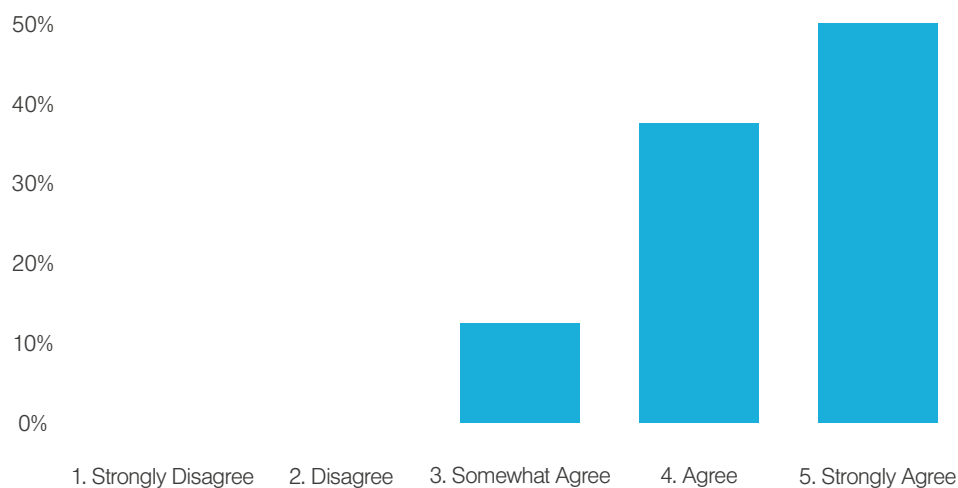
The Universal Framework solves for these challenges by providing clear, consistent structure. It breaks down the eight essential skills into measurable, learnable components. Using the same framework in recruitment and learning & development means that the skills required for the role and measured in recruitment are exactly the same as the skills employees are building as part of their professional development.

National level research by Skills Builder shows that employees with higher levels of essential skills are by some measures more productive.<sup>5</sup> There is a wage premium of between 12% and 18% associated with an increase in skill score from the lower quartile to the upper quartile. For the average worker, this increase translates into an essential skills annual wage premium of between £3,900 and £5,900.

And as many employers look at the wellbeing of their employees, it is worth noting that there is a clear link between higher levels of essential skills and greater life satisfaction. Building employees' essential skills is therefore not just about productivity and the bottom line, but also a core part of being a responsible business.

89% of employees who benefited from learning & development that had embedded the Universal Framework believe that the experience improved their performance in role with 75% feeling more engaged in their work. Three quarters of employees reported an improvement in their essential skill levels, with 63% of this improvement attributed to the Universal Framework building awareness and confidence.

**“Building essential skills has improved my performance in role”**



*“The framework provides a useful basis for Professional Development discussions with direct reports and highlighting areas for improvement.”*

**LINE MANAGER, THE BRILLIANT CLUB**

The employee experience of a structured approach to essential skills was reflected by their managers and talent teams. Eighty-three percent believe that the skills are central to their team’s professional development. After only six months, 67% reported an improvement in their team’s performance thanks to building essential skills with the Skills Builder approach.

## OUTREACH

## Effective outreach that builds skills

Many responsible businesses care about their local communities and do impactful work to support them. At the same time, they are looking for ways to ensure that they have a diverse and skilled workforce to recruit from in the future.

Employers running outreach or CSR programmes often aim to build a range of skills and knowledge. One of the challenges is doing this in a way that is both relevant for the programme participants and also for potential future employment in their organisations. Another hurdle is targeting learning effectively and understanding the impact that the outreach programme is having.

*“Building essential skills has made me more confident in my day to day life. These skills will also help me massively to get onto placements and jobs as I learnt how to analyse a job description and highlight what skills are needed and how to amend my CV. These skills will also help me when I go to university as it provides great insight on how to communicate effectively, and work alongside a team which will help me be my best productive self.”*

**ESSENTIAL SKILLS ACADEMY PARTICIPANT**

Using a Universal Framework for essential skills that spans the career spectrum solves these issues by ensuring that participants in outreach programmes are learning the same skills (albeit it perhaps lower steps) that will be required in future. It also allows for tightly focused learning on a couple of steps or skills and the ability to measure the impact of the intervention.





*“Participants have much greater clarity on their skill set as they understand how to apply what they enjoy with a focus on essential skills”*

**CSR MANAGER, PWC**

Research from Skills Builder shows that individuals who have the opportunity to build essential skills early on seek out more opportunities to build them and go into higher skilled, higher paid jobs where they add to their skillsets. By providing these opportunities early on, employers are building the workforce of tomorrow with transferable skills to succeed in roles that may not exist yet.



*“Learning about essential skills made participants more employable and better prepared for the professional world.”*

**CSR MANAGER, CAPGEMINI**

Outreach work isn’t just about the programme beneficiaries. For many organisations, it should also provide meaningful and rewarding experiences for employees. By focusing on building highly transferable skills that are relevant in the employees’ roles, outreach can also be a unique opportunity for employees to see and reflect on their own skills in a new light.

Embedding the framework into outreach drove a 17% increase in CSR professionals reporting that their programmes effectively build essential skills, with 100% reporting that it improved their programmes’ impact.



*“Without good transferable skills, I wouldn’t have been able to completely change careers, demonstrate my strengths, have someone take a chance on me and get into stable employment.”*

**AMBER, KICKSTART PARTICIPANT**

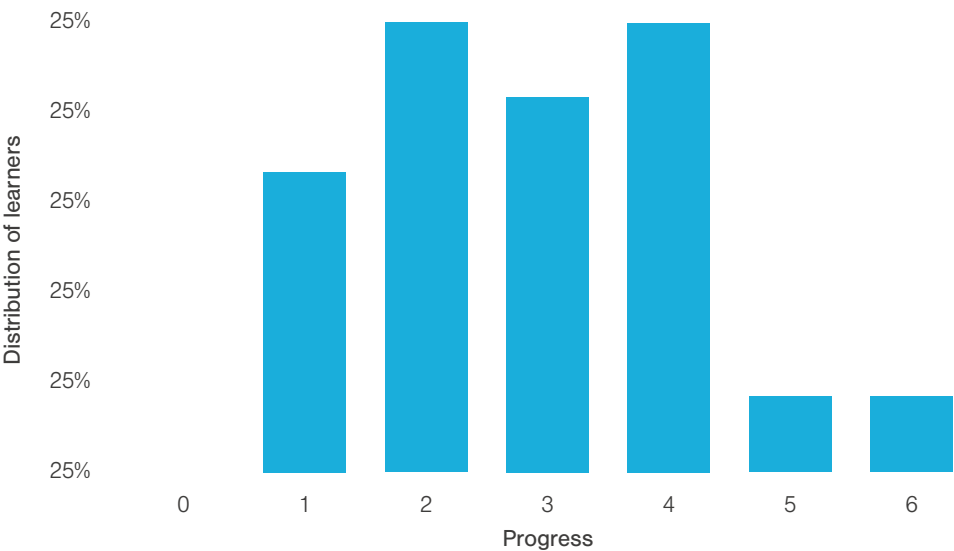
This same structured approach to building essential skills has demonstrably boosted participants’ skill levels. It has also enabled granular measurement so that employers can confidently report on the impact of their work experience and outreach. Employers using Benchmark to measure pre- and post- programme skill levels while structuring their programmes around the Universal Framework have seen participants make rapid progress. For example, a listed infrastructure service company saw 98% of participants achieve progress, with an average 2.2 steps of progress over their 20-week programme.



*“Skills Builder has provided a consistent way to measure impact across the programmes.”*

CSR MANAGER, PWC

Distribution of learner progress



But it’s not just participants that built their skills. Eighty-three percent of volunteers also developed their own skills through programmes using the Framework, all reporting a better understanding of the skills.



*“Carrying out STEM education activities and events has helped to develop my own listening, speaking, leadership and teamwork skills.”*

HS2 LTD OUTREACH VOLUNTEER

# Case Studies







Company:

PwC

Business area:

Outreach

## Context for adopting the Skills Builder approach

PwC has a key focus on social mobility, offering a range of Outreach initiatives and programmes. Several of its partner schools had already adopted the Framework and suggested there was an opportunity for even greater impact by using a common language with a tight focus on specific skills in outreach programmes that learners were using in school.



*“Our focus as a team is to upskill the next generation. That’s why we are working with Skills Builder.”*

**SOCIAL MOBILITY LEAD, PWC**

## How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

PwC’s outreach programmes often built skills implicitly. Skills Builder reviewed all of the learning content and outlined ways to explicitly embed the essential skills throughout, breaking them down into teachable, measurable steps with a consistent language, all based on the Framework. PwC found this “fitted seamlessly” into the content it already had.



*“Skills Builder provided extra support and helped us to see how we might go about things differently. This enabled us to take a step back from the session content and instead, think about the skills being developed. It also helped us really sell the programme to schools in a way that is relevant and attractive for teachers.”*

**SOCIAL MOBILITY LEAD, PWC**

PwC also wanted to clearly evidence the impact that its programmes had on learners’ skill levels. Using Skills Builder Benchmark, a tool for individuals to self-assess their essential skills, PwC were able to measure skill levels as well as progress.



*“Skills Builder has provided a consistent way to measure impact across the programmes.”*

**SOCIAL MOBILITY LEAD, PWC**

## Impact on the business

Pre-post analysis of the participants' Benchmark data showed a significant improvement across all of the skills. Participants and volunteers were more engaged with the content, which clearly linked from school through to education, and teachers gave extremely positive feedback. Several students have been offered places on PwC's apprenticeships following the programme. PwC has also seen benefits engaging new partner schools that see value in the Framework-based programmes.

## Tips to other employers

The sooner you start, the better: there is a huge benefit to be had by working with Skills Builder when you are at the development stage. This will make it even easier to focus learning content on skills throughout while also making the sessions impactful for volunteers.



*"Content creation is great to get Skills Builder involved with, working with them to create activities that are interesting to students and also valuable to volunteers."*

**SOCIAL MOBILITY LEAD, PWC**

## What's next?

PwC wants to achieve similar outcomes in their other programmes, refining content to ensure it is tightly focused on building essential skills in line with the Framework.



**Company:**

AKW

**Business area:**

Recruitment

### Context for adopting the Skills Builder approach

AKW is a business with 250 people working across multiple subsidiaries. It was struggling to recruit in several areas - customer services, warehouse operations and sales - and wanted to have a consistent and inclusive approach to recruitment across the group. To be effective, this required buy-in from managers across all business functions.

### How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

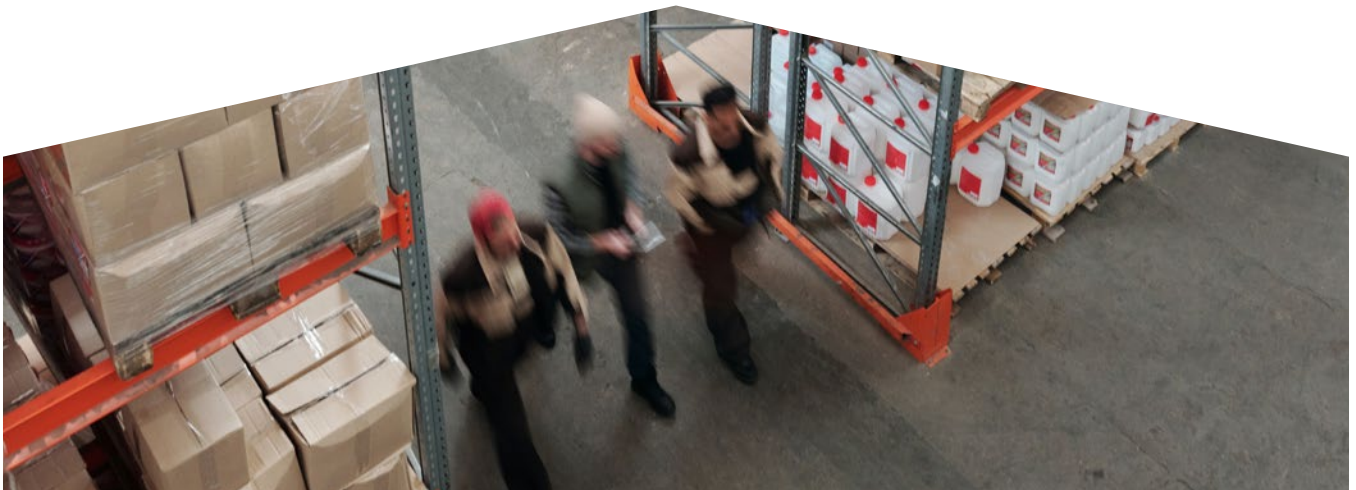
To attract and identify more candidates with the right skills, AKW's solution was to adopt a common skills framework across the group, upskilling hiring managers to define and assess the skills needed in their teams.



*"The Framework gave us a language to use and refer to, enabling us to recruit more appropriately and build a more skilled workforce."*

**HR BUSINESS PARTNER, AKW**

The rollout has been incremental: each time a manager has wanted to hire, they have met to map out the role requirements using the Universal Framework. This led to the creation of clear, compelling and inclusive job descriptions.





*“We decided to take an approach that solved fundamental business problems for line managers ... you can tell they really bought into it.”*

**GROUP HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES, AKW**

Interviewers now have a streamlined and consistent way of structuring interviews and feel more confident identifying the skills they need at interview thanks to collaborative coaching sessions with HR.

## Impact on the business

Managers have been really positive about how the approach is helping them recruit roles that were previously proving hard to fill.



*“There’s a lightbulb moment when the Managers talk through it and say, ‘this is what I’ve been looking for but I haven’t known how to articulate it.’”*

**HR BUSINESS PARTNER, AKW**

AKW has been able to level the playing field for candidates, meaning it can upskill throughout the process and are empowered to demonstrate their skills to the best of their potential.



*“It’s aided a more collaborative approach around recruitment.”*

**RECRUITMENT MANAGER, AKW**



*“It’s definitely been an engaging process. It’s proving to be working, it’s engaging managers... All in all it’s been a really positive thing to get involved in.”*

**MANAGER, AKW**

## Tips to other employers

At the outset, you might see a lot of different ways the framework could help the business. Start with an area where you’ll see the biggest gains most quickly and use that as a blueprint for the rest of the business.

## What’s next?

AKW wants to embed the Skills Builder approach across its business. It started with recruitment and will build on its success to ensure that a focus on essential skills doesn’t stop at the front door - staff continue to build and develop throughout their careers.



OUTREACH

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Company:

HS2

Business area:

Outreach &amp; Staff Development

## Context for working with Skills Builder

HS2 joined Skills Builder Partnership in 2018 and began to use the Framework within STEM workshops and work experience. The organisation decided to further roll out the Framework into its future talent programmes, apprenticeship and graduate schemes, and volunteering.



*"We're not reinventing the wheel. There's already a Framework out there that we want to use."*

EDUCATION MANAGER, HS2

## How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

Skills Builder provided HS2 with bespoke support (via in-person and online sessions) to implement the Framework across its outreach. It ran training sessions with apprentices and their mentors to encourage the use of the Framework as part of staff development. It also provided HS2 with Skills Builder Benchmark for use in line management and mentoring conversations.



*"It can sometimes be difficult to obtain buy-in from decision makers who want to see the benefits of essential skills. Citing the Framework is useful to demonstrate this is a tested and well-established approach already used by companies, supported by an evidence base."*

## Impact on the business

Staff and volunteers have provided positive feedback for their training sessions and are becoming familiar with the Framework. HS2 further found its partner schools - some of which had already worked with Skills Builder - were very receptive to the Framework and demonstrated good progress in essential skills.



### Tips to other employers

The quicker you start, the better. Integrate the Skills Builder approach with what your company already does. Obtain buy-in from a senior sponsor for the programme, who can keep up the momentum.

### What's next?

HS2 will launch its new learning modules which are modelled around the Framework. It also wants to develop a more organised approach to connecting activities - such as apprenticeship induction and its reverse mentoring programme - with the Skills Builder approach.



*"We want to ensure that our business's internal milestones link up with the Skills Builder approach."*



## RECRUITMENT


**On — Purpose**
**Company:**

On Purpose

**Business area:**

Recruitment

## Context for working with Skills Builder

On Purpose enlisted Skills Builder to help fill gaps in its recruitment and operations.

## How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

On Purpose modelled its final-round interview questions around the Framework, and supplied candidates with the Skills Builder interview preparation guide.

## Impact on the business

Both interviewers and candidates reacted positively to the Framework. Many thought that it had made the process more efficient, clearer, and transparent.



*“It added to the professionalism of our recruitment, and gave us ‘off the shelf’ frameworks we could apply when going into a slightly rushed recruitment process.”*

**RECRUITING MANAGER, ON PURPOSE**

Candidates also remarked that they had used the interview preparation guide extensively.

## Tips to other employers

Consider designing additional questions around more advanced parts of the Framework to distinguish between strong candidates. Align the Framework’s language with your job descriptions from the outset, rather than inserting it into interviews retrospectively.

## What’s next?

On Purpose will combine Skills Builder’s questions with its own to differentiate between strong candidates.

**Company:**

Capgemini

**Business area:**

Outreach

### Context for working with Skills Builder

Capgemini started working with Skills Builder to embed the Framework into its work experience programme. After this trial period, the company expanded its work with Skills Builder into wider volunteering programmes.

### How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

As part of Capgemini's successful work experience programme, the business was keen to ensure that every participant gathered clear evidence of the skills and experiences they had gained through the initiative. To do this, it gave beneficiaries the opportunity to create a portfolio outlining what they had done and the skills they had developed through the programme.

Skills Builder provided guidance on how to align these portfolios with the Framework to include meaningful skill reflections and a structured journey of development. Students then compiled their portfolios using the language of the eight essential skills to capture progress. Finally, Skills Builder created a handbook



for Capgemini to share with volunteers supporting their work experience programme. This guidance helped them understand their role and develop and reflect on their essential skills. Volunteers received detailed briefs in advance which contained past examples of work in their area.

## Impact on the business

Skills Builder's language made portfolios structured, consistent, and easy to understand.



*"The fact that you made it simple helped our target audience to understand the content the best."*

EDUCATION TEAM, CAPGEMINI



*"Work experience lasts a week, where some people haven't been in a professional setting. Having structure makes them confident and comfortable with everything."*

EDUCATION TEAM, CAPGEMINI

Volunteers felt that they gained a clearer understanding of their role and personal development.

## Tips to other employers

Be open minded and creative in how you apply the Framework - it can be used for more than outreach. Apply a trial and error approach, and design options that suit different individuals' needs and preferences.



*"If you're not sure, then I'd say to definitely try the Framework because I don't think it can have a negative effect at all."*

EDUCATION TEAM, CAPGEMINI

## What's next?

Capgemini looks to trial the Framework in more outreach programmes and continue embedding it into its work experience and volunteering.

OUTREACH

RECRUITMENT



## HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT RESTORATION & RENEWAL

**Company:**

Houses of Parliament  
Restoration & Renewal (R&R)

**Business area:**

Outreach and recruitment

### Context for working with Skills Builder

R&R's partnership with Skills Builder has established the Framework in its early careers programme and apprentice recruitment. Most recently, R&R have been using the Framework to recruit and upskill its 2022 intern cohort.



*"The Framework breaks everything down in a really clear way, so improving our recruitment practices was the aim of joining the Skills Builder."*

RECRUITING MANAGER, R&R

### How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

Skills Builder supported R&R to design job descriptions, candidate preparation guides, interview questions and candidate feedback using the essential skills. This achieved a clear and common language to the skills running through the entire recruitment process.



*"Differentiating between a top-level skill and its component steps is not something I would have considered before."*

CSR MANAGER, R&R

### Tips to other employers

Apply the Framework when you have vacancies and capacity. Be open minded and commit to the approach. Attempt to apply the Framework at different levels to gain a full scope of its effectiveness.

### What's next?

R&R wants to gauge how hiring managers have found intern recruitment with the Framework. They also want to trial applying the Framework to senior positions.



**The  
Brilliant  
Club**

**Company:**

The Brilliant Club

**Business area:**

Staff Development

### Context for working with Skills Builder

The Brilliant Club found that annual reviews and performance reviews varied between managers, and therefore wanted to embed the Framework to add structure, consistency, and clarity to the process. Instead of a full-scale rollout, it opted to focus on coordinator and officer roles as a pilot group - particularly as these groups required more targeted support for progression.

### How Skills Builder and the Universal Framework are helping their business

The Brilliant Club had already been using a competency framework to shape conversations around development, but it lacked guidance on how to achieve each competency statement. It mapped the skills of the Skills Builder Universal Framework against its internal framework to set goals and identify tangible skill steps for progress.



Skills Builder introduced The Brilliant Club to Benchmark and Launchpad, which coordinators and officers used to self-assess and upskill. Skills Builder ran line manager training alongside this, so that line managers could discuss Benchmark and Launchpad scores with their team, provide feedback using the Framework, and identify opportunities to improve.

## Impact on the business

Managers recognised that their teams were more confident in discussing essential skills.



*“The Framework provides a useful basis for personal development discussions with direct reports and highlights areas for improvement.”*

**MANAGER, THE BRILLIANT CLUB**



*“I’ve been able to identify where I need to focus my time on developing skills, and have the ability to articulate what I want to develop.”*

**EMPLOYEE, THE BRILLIANT CLUB**

Employees mentioned that embedding the Framework allowed them “to perform at a higher level and be more efficient”.

## Next steps

The Brilliant Club intends to evaluate impact in more detail, and consider further options for rolling out the Framework into other business areas.



# Appendix 1:

## Excellence Standards

### Recruitment

Standards	Indicators		
4. The essential skills required and developed through job roles are shared	4.1 The minimum step requirements for essential skills in different roles are specified	4.2 The essential skill requirements for recruited roles are communicated through job descriptions	4.3 The opportunities that a job role offers to further develop essential skills are shared
5. All applicants are given a fair chance to demonstrate their essential skills	5.1 Information on essential skills and the Skills Builder Framework are provided prior to the selection process	5.2 The language of essential skills is used during the selection process to make expectations clear	5.3 Feedback is shared with applicants about whether they demonstrated essential skills through the selection process
6. Assessors use the Skills Builder Framework to objectively assess applicants' essential skills	6.1 Assessors are trained to use the Skills Builder Framework as part of the recruitment process	6.2 Assessors analyse applicants' essential skills rigorously against the Skills Builder Framework	6.3 Assessors evaluate candidates using Skills Builder Framework as part of an objective hiring decision

### Staff Development

Standards	Indicators		
7. Employees are aware of the essential skills and the benefits of developing them	7.1 Employees are made aware of the essential skills and their value	7.2 Employees self assess against the Skills Builder Framework and are aware of their strengths and development areas	7.3 Employees set goals to build their essential skills further, and find opportunities to do so
8. Employees are supported to develop their essential skills	8.1 Learning opportunities are available for employees to build their essential skills	8.2 Managers or Learning & Development staff are trained to give feedback on essential skills	8.3 Managers or Learning & Development staff are trained to coach employees to boost their essential skills
9. The employer promotes and recognises the development of essential skills	9.1 Essential skills form part of appraisals and reviews	9.2 The employer recognises and rewards progression in essential skills	9.3 The employer continues to provide stretch opportunities to develop essential skills further

### Outreach

Standards	Indicators		
1. Outreach activities raise awareness of the essential skills and their value for participants	1.1 The essential skills are named consistently in outreach resources or activities	1.2 The organisation contributes learning materials that explain how essential skills are used in the workplace	1.3 Volunteering activity by employees promotes building essential skills and their relevance to participants
2. Outreach activities offer participants opportunities to build essential skills	2.1 Outreach activities provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework	2.2 Insight days provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework	2.3 Work experience or internships provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework
3. Outreach activities measure and demonstrate progress in building participants' essential skills	3.1 Participants' essential skills are assessed before and after an outreach programme to track changes	3.2 Outreach programmes demonstrate a positive impact on participants' essential skills	3.3 Participants' progress data is used to inform continued improvements to outreach programme



## Interested in working with the Skills Builder Partnership?

**[Click here to book a consultation or download a prospectus.](#)**

### Endnotes

1. Angus, Millard, Joshua, Baars & Bowen-Viner. (2020), *How do essential skills influence life outcomes?*
2. Seymour & Craig. (2020), *Essential Skills Tracker 2022*.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.



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