



Skills Builder
PARTNERSHIP

Skills Builder Excellence Mark

Guide for Employers



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Introduction & Overview

The world of work is changing quickly, with those trends accelerated by the pandemic. We have seen quicker automation, greater autonomy, more virtual working and an increased focus on projects. As organisations adapt to this increasingly flexible model of working, there are a set of essential skills that are ever more vital:



These essential skills are those highly transferable skills which almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They support the application of technical skills and knowledge. They support ways of working that are more dynamic, flexible and responsive.

These skills are now critical for individuals to thrive. The Skills Builder Partnership brings together educators, impact organisations, and employers to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills they need to succeed.

The opportunity for employers

Employers are increasingly investing in building these skills for their teams. This is a significant shift from the technical skills and specific role-based knowledge that used to be the focus.

Because the Skills Builder Framework and approach are used across education, training and the world of work, we are able to join up the complete journey for individuals building these essential skills throughout their lives. In the last year, more than 1.4 million opportunities to boost essential skills were delivered through the Skills Builder Partnership.

Leading employers are using the Skills Builder approach in three ways:

- 1) Outreach:** Supporting essential skills development in education and for individuals who are outside of training, education or employment. Partners align their programmes to the Skills Builder Framework and best practice principles to maximise their impact of skills development.
- 2) Recruitment:** Ensuring objectivity and transparency in recruitment, supporting diversity, inclusion and social mobility. Excellent employers use the Skills Builder Framework to increase clarity in job design and recruitment decisions.
- 3) Staff Development:** Engaging all staff to boost their essential skills throughout their careers – whether apprenticeships, graduate training, or at any other point. The Skills Builder Framework allows an assessment of current strengths and development areas, and then provides the materials to build each skill, step-by-step.

Skills Builder Employer Excellence Mark

We want to start recognising the excellent practice that is happening among our employer partners in these three areas and are delighted to introduce our Excellence marks for employers.

When a partner joins us on our Employer Programme, they are guided to work towards a set of Excellence Standards. These Excellence Standards provide structure and clarity for our partners in defining what best practice looks like across a business. They are made up of nine standards, split across the three key strands: Outreach, Recruitment and Staff Development.

The Excellence Mark is awarded at four levels; Bronze, Silver, Gold or Platinum. It celebrates best practice by employers, recognising the efforts that have been made to support teams to build their essential skills and acting as an inspiration to others.

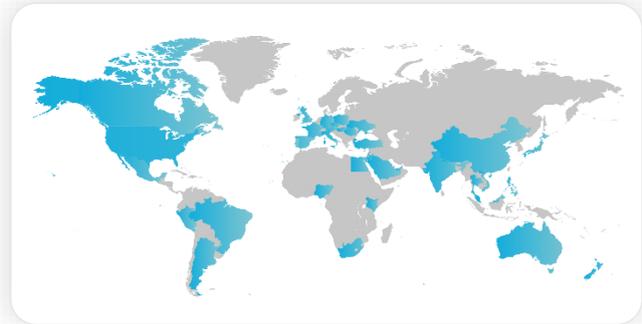
Within this guide, we explore into the Excellence Standards in more detail and how to achieve an Excellence Mark, along with providing some tips and practical ideas to put into action.

We look forward to working with you to achieve an Excellence Mark for your organisation.

The Skills Builder Approach

The Skills Builder Partnership

The Partnership brings together educators, employers and impact organisations around a collective mission to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills to thrive. More than 700 organisations in the Partnership are committed to using the same language and shared outcomes that the Skills Builder Framework provides, and working collectively to help everyone build them.



The Essential Skills

Although the language and terminology in this area can often be confusing, over the last five years, the Partnership has carried out a comprehensive set of reviews of essential skills. We define *essential skills* as ‘those highly transferable skills that almost everyone needs to do almost every job’ and which support the application of technical skills and knowledge.

We found that despite great variation in the language, there are four broad areas that fulfil that definition: communication skills, self-management skills, interpersonal skills, and creative problem-solving. We balance nuance and pragmatism to focus on eight essential skills, with a pair of skills focused on each of those four broad themes. This gives us:



There is no shortage of people who care about these skills. The challenge is that previously there has been no common language or shared outcomes to align our efforts – or to give individuals the confidence in building them effectively.

The Skills Builder Universal Framework

In May 2020, we launched our Universal Framework, derived from our education-facing framework which had seen success in educator settings for over 10 years. The Universal Framework was developed as part of an Essential Skills Taskforce. Institutions such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and Business in the Community reviewed the completeness and relevance of the Skills

Builder approach in a variety of settings and tested this through a series of round tables, with employers, such as IBM and KPMG, educators and other individuals to ensure it was rigorous and applicable to all settings.

The Universal Framework brings clarity and consistency, breaking down each essential skill into 16 learnable, measurable steps. With this structured progression, it becomes possible to build essential skills effectively.



The Skills Builder Employer Programme

The Skills Builder Excellence Mark is available for those on the Skills Builder Employer Programme. This programme has been designed for organisations who want to drive improvements within their business by using the Skills Builder Framework and approach.

The programme guides organisations to identify areas where there are opportunities to enhance existing activities or provide new routes for essential skills development, creating and implementing a strategy to achieve essential skills goals for the organisation.

Focus areas include outreach provision, recruitment processes, staff learning and development, or a combination of all three.



As well as tailored strategic support, the Employer Programme includes a wide range of tools, resources and networking opportunities.

More information about the Skills Builder Employer Programme can be found at skillsbuilder.org

The Excellence Standards

The Skills Builder Excellence Standards define what excellence looks like for an employer in a business or organisational setting. These standards underpin our Employer Programme to bring clarity, structure and rigour as we guide you towards providing high-quality essential skills training throughout your organisation.

There are three main strands within the Excellence Standards. These are Outreach, Recruitment, and Staff Development. Each of these strands include three standards, and nine best practice indicators. Ultimately, it is assessment against the indicators that will be used to assess whether an Excellence Mark has been achieved.

Outreach

The Outreach Excellence Standards are focussed on helping partners to create opportunities for everyone in their community to develop their essential skills, contributing towards more skilled community and future workforce. This includes creating meaningful volunteering opportunities with measurable impact for participants and the organisation.

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 the 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 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 the outreach programmes

Recruitment

The Recruitment Excellence Standards focus on recruiting skilled employees through an inclusive process that levels the playing field. This includes articulating the essential skills that are required from the outset, ensuring this is transparent for applicants, and then ensuring that these essential skills can be consistently assessed.

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 applicants using the Skills Builder Framework as part of an objective hiring decision

Staff Development

The Staff Development Excellence Standards focus on building a skilled and inclusive workforce, providing meaningful development opportunities for employees within their role. This includes using the essential skills to support progression and lateral movement, and understanding and addressing skill gaps in particular cohorts or business areas.

<i>Standards</i>	<i>Indicators</i>		
(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

The following pages explore the Excellence Standards in more detail. Each Standard is summarised, before each indicator is outlined using the following structure:

- What this looks like
- Why this indicator matters
- Some tips for implementing it
- How to put it into practice
- Tools which can help you

Standard 1:

Outreach activities raise awareness of the essential skills and their value for participants

This Standard is focused on providing outreach activities that raise awareness of the essential skills and their importance and promotes this to participants. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 1.1:** The essential skills are named consistently in outreach resources or activities
- **Indicator 1.2:** The organisation contributes learning materials that explain how essential skills are used in the workplace.
- **Indicator 1.3:** Volunteering activity by employees promotes building essential skills and their relevance to participants.

Indicator 1.1:

The essential skills are named consistently in outreach resources or activities

What this looks like

Outreach resources and activities name and define the essential skills consistently using the Skills Builder Framework. These resources and activities could range from internal documentation such as volunteer briefings to external learning materials for participants.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Consistently naming and defining the essential skills helps secure participants' and volunteers' understanding of the eight essential skills.
- Providing this common language helps participants connect where they might have seen these skills elsewhere.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Consider which of the eight essential skills you want to build as part of the outreach initiative. This might be all eight, or it could be a few focus skills which align to organisational values or learning outcomes of the programme.
- Try to be as specific as possible when referring to the essential skills, differentiating between technical skills and essential skills and avoiding organisational jargon.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use the language of the Framework to gain consistency in names and definitions.* For example, if your resources and activities refer to communication skills, try making these more explicit. How can you use the terms 'Listening' and 'Speaking' instead?
- *Make use of the Skills Builder skills icons on resources.* These visual reminders help participants to connect the skills in different settings. Where could you add these icons onto resources?

Tools which can help:

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 1.2:

The organisation contributes learning materials that explain how essential skills are used in the workplace

What this looks like

Teaching and learning materials provided by the organisation explain to participants how the essential skills are used in their workplace in a variety of roles and responsibilities. These might include materials that are widely distributed beyond direct delivery.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- It is important for participants to realise the transferability of essential skills from education into employment.
- It is key for participants to understand the value of the essential skills and how they can support success in the workplace.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Consider the simplest way to explain how the essential skills are used in your workplace. Try to avoid assuming knowledge or technical language to help participants better understand the role these skills play.
- Try to highlight the most relevant essential skills rather than attempting to highlight how all eight essential skills can be used within one role or responsibility.
- Think about the full range of roles in your organisation – not just those who are most directly involved in delivery your products or services, but also other support roles.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use examples within their organisation to help bring the skills to life.* Could you ask team members to film a short video explaining how they use essential skills in their role?
- *Ensure the essential skills are named and defined consistently* in learning materials. Could you use the Skills Builder skills icons to help make visual connections too?

Tool which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 1.3:

Volunteering activity by employees promotes building essential skills and their relevance to participants

What this looks like

Volunteering activities which are delivered by the employees of an organisation include sharing the essential skills – what they are and why they matter. This might include talks, presentations, visits, workshops, or taking part in the Skills Builder Virtual trips.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Making regular reference to the essential skills helps to highlight their importance and transferability to participants.
- Highlighting the relevance of the skills will help participants to understand why they are important to them as an individual.
- Promoting essential skills gives a clear focus for volunteering, which can draw on volunteers' own experiences.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Select key essential skills you would like the volunteering activity to build. Reflecting on the programme aims will help you choose the best fit.
- Consider how the volunteers themselves are building essential skills through their volunteering role. Make this clear so that they understand how they will build their own essential skills alongside facilitating the development of the participants.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Take part in Skills Builder facilitated volunteering.* There are at least two opportunities on offer as part of your Employer programme.
- *Provide volunteer training* to increase employees' confidence in facilitating essential skills development for others. How do you train volunteers?
- *Encourage volunteers to explain how the essential skills are important in their role to participants.* This can be included within the volunteering activity itself.
- *Encourage volunteers to complete a self-assessment on Skills Builder Benchmark.* Which essential skill(s) would you like volunteers to develop?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Standard 2:

Outreach activities offer participants opportunities to build the essential skills

This Standard is focused on providing outreach activities that include opportunities for participants to apply and practise their essential skills. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 2.1:** Outreach activities provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework.
- **Indicator 2.2:** Insight days provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework.
- **Indicator 2.3:** Work experience or internships provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework

Indicator 2.1:

Outreach activities provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework.

What this looks like

Learning materials provided as part of the outreach activity are aligned with individual steps of the Skills Builder Framework, to be precise about the steps that individuals should build through participating in an outreach activity. This activity might be a workshop or mentoring.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Outreach activities can provide a safe space for participants to practise and apply the skills before thinking about application in other areas of their lives.
- Focussing on a skill stage or step ensures that their progression is targeted. This increases the likelihood of making progress, rather than setting an objective which is either too broad or vague, or too ambitious for a limited amount of time.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- When planning learning materials, identify the specific one or two essential skill steps you would like to build throughout the outreach activity. These should form part of your session or activity's learning objectives or aims.
- Try to ensure that participants have the opportunity to learn, apply and reflect during learning materials.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use the language of the Framework to ensure development is specific.* Instead of encouraging students to build 'Listening', which stage or step of the Listening framework could you specify instead? How does this stage or step relate to the learning aims of the outreach activity?
- *Use the Framework's practical ideas* as part of an outreach activity. Select the 'build it' button on a skill step and filter 'Employers' in the advice section at the end of the page.

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 2.2:

Insight days provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework

What this looks like

Insight days provide opportunities for participants to practise and apply their essential skills, in line with the steps of the Universal Framework. This could also apply to other experiences such as workshops or master classes.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Insight days can provide a safe space for participants to practise and apply the skills before thinking about application in other areas of their lives.
- By focussing on a small number of 2 – 4 skill steps across the essential skills, participants are more able to get more value out of a single day.
- Using the language of the Skills Builder Framework can help participants to connect the essential skills development to their journey across education and employment.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- When planning the insight day, identify specific steps you would like to build during the day. These should form part of the day's objectives or aims, or the learning objectives involved in each session of the day.
- Consider the level of progress from participants that you would expect to see at the end of the day. Try to avoid setting expectations too high. You could expect to see participants' progress is 2 - 4 skill steps in a day, if the activities are then aligned behind those objectives.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Select 2 – 4 skill steps to focus on throughout the day.* This will provide a progression opportunity for participants to work towards. Which step(s) is most appropriate for your participants?
- *Think about how to align activities for the steps.* This will allow participants to practise the steps multiple times across the day. What activities can support your target steps?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#)
- [Skills Builder Launchpad](#) provides short activities to build skill steps that you can use or adapt to fit in with your Insight Day.

Indicator 2.3:

Work experience or internships provide opportunities for participants to build essential skill steps, in line with the Skills Builder Framework

What this looks like

Work experience or internships are designed to provide opportunities for participants to practise and apply their essential skills, in line with steps of the Universal Framework.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Work experience or internships provide an important opportunity for participants to practise and apply their skills in a safe space.
- The value of the experience can be enhanced if it is connected to the essential skills that participants will already have been developing through education or previous employment.
- Over the extended period of work experience or internships, meaningful progress can be made if this is carefully targeted, supporting positive long-term outcomes.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- When planning the work experience or internship, identify specific skill steps you would like to build during the day. These could be identified by the organisation or informed by participants' preferences on which skills they see as priorities.
- Consider the level of progress from participants that you would expect to see at the end of the experience and the metric you would like to measure and report on. This could be participant awareness of the skills, confidence or mastery within the skill steps.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Seek opportunities across the business or organisation for participants to develop the focus skill steps.* Where will participants have an opportunity to observe the skill in action and apply it for themselves?
- *Ensure participants take ownership of their development.* How will participants be involved in setting their skill development goals and be encouraged to meet them?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Standard 3:

Outreach activities measure progress in building participants' essential skills

This Standard is focused on providing outreach activities that include measuring participant progress to demonstrate a positive impact. This is used to inform improvements to the outreach programme. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 3.1:** Participants' essential skills are assessed before and after an outreach programme to track changes
- **Indicator 3.2:** Outreach programmes demonstrate a positive impact on participants' essential skills
- **Indicator 3.3:** Participants' progress data is used to inform continued improvements to the outreach programmes

Indicator 3.1:

Participants' essential skills are assessed before and after an outreach programme to track changes

What this looks like

An outreach programme includes a pre- and post-activity assessment of the essential skills to measure participants' progress and shares this with the participant.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- It is difficult to see progression without a clear understanding of where participants started from and where they got to through engaging with the programme.
- An assessment process helps to drive a sense of ownership for participants, helping them to understand their progress in quantifiable terms to boost their confidence and better understand the next steps of their development.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Consider the most effective assessment tool to collect this data, and at what level. This could range from self-assessment by the participant using surveys or Skills Builder Benchmark, to group-level assessments by volunteers or programme leads. For example, Skills Builder Hub could be useful here.
- The length of the programme will determine the expected level of progress. Try not to set expectations too high for programmes with a shorter duration.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Consider the most appropriate time to collect the 'pre-activity' data.* Ensure that participants have built an understanding of the essential skills first before asking them to complete a self-assessment.
- *Include relevant skills only with an assessment.* Which essential skills will the programme build? Ensure that it is only these skills which are included in the assessment, rather than all eight. For shorter programmes, you might want to focus on a small number of skill steps.

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.
- [Skills Builder Hub](#) includes a group-level assessment tool which could be completed by a course facilitator to track progress.

Indicator 3.2:

Outreach programmes demonstrate a positive impact on participants' essential skills

What this looks like

Impact measurement data collected from the outreach programme highlights a positive impact on the participants' essential skills. This would ideally be gathered through pre-activity and post-activity surveys for sustained programmes, or through targeted questions around particular skills steps for short programmes.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Being able to demonstrate a positive impact on participants' essential skills proves that the outreach programme has been successful in relation to the essential skills.
- This can help to reassure the organisation that the programme has achieved what it set out to when it comes to support people's essential skills.
- Sharing this impact across the organisation can help to encourage more employees to take part as volunteers.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Try to visualise the positive impact you would like to achieve as a result of the outreach programme to set expectations for the data you expect to see.
- Consider the timeliness of data collection and feedback. Participants are more likely to provide accurate data and feedback when engaged with the programme or shortly after.
- Collect both quantitative and qualitative data. For longer programmes, asking participants to provide written reflections on their skills development can be valuable.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use Skills Builder Benchmark to measure development.* At which stage of the programme will you collect the pre- and post-activity assessment scores?
- *Think about how this data can be used effectively.* For example, how can it support participants' learning as well as impact assessment?
- *Consider how to collect qualitative data.* At which stage could you ask participants to fill out a feedback form? What would this look like and how could it be a useful activity?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Indicator 3.3:

Participants' progress data is used to inform continued improvements in outreach programmes

What this looks like

Progress data is collected from participants during the outreach programme and evaluated. These insights are fed back into supporting the continuous improvement and development of outreach programmes, increasing effectiveness at building essential skills over time.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Using participant data will help you to understand which essential skills the programme is building effectively and where there are still gaps and improvements to be made.
- Making these improvements will involve time and resources. If improvements are driven by data, you can justify these investments.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Ensure the data used for evaluation is significant in sample size and provides a good representation of participants involved in the programme.
- When evaluating the data, reflect on which essential skills your programme aimed to build and which steps. Where there are still gaps, reflect on where and how the programme activities and resources could be strengthened to close these gaps.
- Consider the extent of the improvement you want to make. This doesn't always have to be a complete redesign. Instead, look for small tweaks and refinements which have high impact potential.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use the Skills Builder Framework* to understand expected level of progress and gather practical ideas for building the stages or steps of the skills.
- *Identify one or two improvements at a time* to keep things manageable. This will also help you to identify which improvements are having the most impact.

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Standard 4:

The essential skills required and developed through job roles are shared

This Standard is focused on building the essential skills into how job roles are designed and articulated. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 4.1:** The minimum step requirements for essential skills in different roles are specified.
- **Indicator 4.2:** The essential skill step requirements for recruited roles are communicated through job descriptions.
- **Indicator 4.3:** The opportunities that a job role offers to further develop essential skills are shared.

Indicator 4.1:

The minimum step requirement for essential skills in different roles are specified

What this looks like

When a job role is being designed or reviewed, the role should be analysed to understand which essential skills will be required, and at a stage or step level, for someone to be able to succeed in the role. This should then be clearly specified in the job role.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Thinking about the level that is really required to succeed in the role will help to move beyond broad, generic statements – for example, of needing an ‘excellent communicator’ or a ‘team player’.
- The process of thinking through the essential skills required in a role can help to clarify the expectations of the role for prospective and existing employees.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- While your dream candidate might well be at the highest step for each of their essential skills, try to be realistic about what you really *need* for the individual to succeed.
- Don’t feel that you need to list out all of the skill steps that are required – if you focus on the higher steps, you can normally assume that the earlier steps will be covered.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Consider which essential skills are vital to the success of the role:* You might not decide to include all of them in every job role. Which essential skills are relevant to this role?
- *Use the Universal Framework* to review the skill stages and steps. Which are key that the successful individual must be able to demonstrate?
- *Try to reach a consensus* by talking to those who are either in similar roles, or who would be leading that role to make sure you have everything covered. Are these the correct skill steps?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 4.2:

The essential skill step requirements for recruited roles are communicated through job descriptions

What this looks like

When a job role is advertised internally or externally, the expectations for essential skill stages or steps should be clearly communicated to the prospective applicants.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- The increased transparency can help prospective candidates to accurately gauge in advance whether they really are a good fit for the role.
- Providing this clarity can also support hiring best practices by ensuring that candidates are fully prepared, and have equal access to information about the role and what will be expected of them.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Ensure the essential skills are framed positively within the job role, and potentially include explanations of what a skill stage or step might look like in the context of the role if it might not otherwise be clear to participants.
- Try to avoid intimidatingly long lists of skills steps – pick a handful of the most important skill steps and expand on those.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Consider which essential skills are vital to the success of the role:* You might not decide to include all of them in every job role. Which essential skills are relevant to this role?
- *Consider linking to the Universal Framework* so that candidates are able to better understand essential skills and the way they will be evaluated. How can you use this to support more objective, equitable recruitment?
- *Contextualise the essential skills* by thinking about how they interact with the technical skills needed in the job role. Do you need to provide examples to illustrate how essential skills will be used?
- *Make essential skills a default* by building them into template job descriptions or recruitment packs. Are there other ways of making this default behaviour?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 4.3:

The opportunities that a job role offers to further develop essential skills are shared

What this looks like

Within a job role, it makes clear that there are opportunities build essential skills in the role. This is communicated to both prospective candidates and existing employees.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Communicating the opportunities available to further develop essential skills within a role can help prospective candidates and existing employees to realise their essential skills are not fixed but something that can be continually developed.
- Highlighting these opportunities helps to position the organisation as one which prioritises progression and development for their employees.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Present these opportunities as encouraging. Try to avoid presenting opportunities as daunting to a prospective employee. They should be framed as an appealing opportunity which will them to build their essential skills.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Consider which essential skills are vital to the success of the role:* You might not decide to include all of them in every job role.
- *Use the Universal Framework* to help identify where these opportunities might lie. Are there are projects or key responsibilities which align to particular steps or stages?
- *Create profiles of employees doing similar roles.* Ask these employees to talk about which opportunities they have engaged with to help build their essential skills

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Standard 5:

All applicants are given a fair chance to demonstrate their essential skills

This Standard is focused on ensuring all applicants are given equal opportunities to demonstrate their essential skills before, during and after the selection process. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 5.1:** Information on essential skills and the Skills Builder Framework are provided prior to the selection process.
- **Indicator 5.2:** The language of essential skills is using during the selection process to make expectations clear.
- **Indicator 5.3:** Feedback is shared with applicants about whether they demonstrated essential skills through the selection process.

Indicator 5.1:

Information on essential skills and the Skills Builder Framework are provided prior to the selection process

What this looks like

Information about the essential skills and the Skills Builder Framework is available and shared to prospective applicants. This might be through the recruitment pack or links from your recruitment website.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Using a consistent language for essential skills will help to provide a collective starting point for all applicants.
- This ensures a fair starting point of all candidates, whether they are already familiar with the Skills Builder approach through their prior experience or not.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- This indicator is about giving all applicants a fair chance. Try not to see this as providing them with the answers or giving them a head start.
- Try to avoid presuming that all applicants will be equally familiar with the Skills Builder Framework. Providing this information prior to the selection process will help to ensure that no applicant is disadvantaged due to unfamiliarity with the Framework.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Signpost applicants to the Universal Framework* as part of the job advertisement or vacancy page. Where will applicants find this easily?
- *Signpost applicants to Skills Builder Benchmark* to support self-reflection on their essential skills prior to the selection process.
- *Provide applicants with a guidance pack* which includes advice on how to prepare for the selection process in relation to the essential skills. Do you have an existing pre-application pack you could enhance with the essential skills?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).
- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Indicator 5.2:

The language of the essential skills is used during the selection process to make expectations clear

What this looks like

Throughout the selection process, applicants have a clear understanding of which essential skills are being assessed, and at which stage or step. There is also an understanding of why these essential skills are a focus.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Having introduced the language of the essential skills during application process, it is important to be consistent in using the same language during the selection process.
- Applicants are more likely to effectively articulate their skills strengths when they recognise the language that is being used by assessors.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Carefully consider the use of particular terminology or language for skills and attributes when communicating with prospective candidates. It can be easy to assume candidates understand the specific and technical language used within your organisation.
- Providing a common language here can support candidates to articulate their essential skills.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Increase consistency in the language used as part of the selection process* by using that of the Universal Framework. How could you embed essential skills into interview questions or other assessment activities?
- *Train assessors to increase their confidence in using the language.* How can you ensure they are using the language at every stage of the selection process?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 5.3:

Feedback is shared with applicants about whether they demonstrated essential skills through the selection process

What this looks like

Both successful and unsuccessful applicants are given feedback on where they demonstrated essential skills well during the selection process, and where they could be developed further.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Giving feedback where applicants have fallen short of essential skill requirements helps to clarify how applicants can improve in the future.
- It is also important applicants understand which essential skills they have demonstrated well to increase their confidence and where appropriate, build on these further.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Provide feedback to both successful and unsuccessful candidates. Successful candidates will benefit from understanding what contributed to their successful appointment, whilst unsuccessful candidates will benefit from understanding how they can improve for next time.
- Try to keep feedback clear and concise, using the language of the Framework to structure this

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Create a structure for assessors to provide feedback* that is clear and constructive, which helps to highlight the applicants' essential skills strengths and areas for improvement. Do you have an existing feedback structure which you could enhance with the essential skills?
- *Signpost unsuccessful applicants to a stage of step of the Framework* as an optional next step for their development.
- *Explain to successful candidates how the essential skills that they demonstrated in the application process will be useful in their new role.*

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Standard 6:

Assessors use the Skills Builder Framework to objectively assess applicants' essential skills

This Standard is focused on ensuring that assessors are confident in using the Skills Builder Framework and use this to objectively assess applicants' essential skills. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 6.1:** Assessors are trained to use the Skills Builder Framework as part of the recruitment process.
- **Indicator 6.2:** Assessors analyse applicants' essential skills rigorously against the Skills Builder Framework.
- **Indicator 6.3:** Assessors evaluate applicants using the Skills Builder Framework as part of an objective hiring decision.

Indicator 6.1:

Assessors are trained to use the Skills Builder Framework as part of the assessment process

What this looks like

Training on the Skills Builder Framework and how it can be used to effectively support objective hiring decisions is provided to assessors.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- For assessors to confidently assess applicants against the essential skills, they need to be familiar with the Framework and understand how it works and how it can support hiring decisions.
- The more confident the assessors are in using the Framework to assess applicants, the more objective and effective the hiring decisions will be in relation to the essential skills.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Using the Framework as part of objective hiring decisions might mean a change of practice for assessors. Try to think about the best way to frame the training session to ensure the reason for adopting this Framework is understood.
- Assessors will need time to become familiar with Framework and to understand its nuances. Try to think about a support system that assessors can access if required.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Deliver a training session to assessors* to increase their understanding and confidence in using the Framework. Who is best placed to deliver this training?
- *Explain the importance of the essential skills and the Framework.* What messages will resonate with assessors to help them understand the reason for adopting the Framework? How will it help you to achieve your recruitment goals?
- *Provide guidance and support* for assessors after training has been provided. Could you offer a guidance sheet for assessors to refer back to?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 6.2:

Assessors analyse applicants' essential skills rigorously against the Skills Builder Framework

What this looks like

Assessors use the Skills Builder Framework to analyse an applicant's essential skills, by looking at the level of steps to make an evidenced-informed view of whether they think the applicant can demonstrate that step.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Using the Framework to assess applicants' essential skills provides an objective, impartial and unbiased way of considering each applicant.
- Referring back to the Framework regularly makes it possible to make grounded comparisons between applicants.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Assessments which are carefully designed to target particular steps will make it easier for the assessor to analyse the applicant. This could include asking for specific examples which highlight where applicants have had the opportunity to demonstrate the skill step.
- Try to be specific in the questions and activities used to analyse essential skills. This will help the applicant to correctly interpret which skill step the assessor is looking for.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Consider which essential skills are vital to the success of the role* and use these to design questions and activities which provide opportunities for applicants to demonstrate them
- *Create a checklist for assessors.* Help make it easy for assessor to score against the step they are looking to identify.
- *Explore Skills Builder Launchpad* for some potential activity ideas as part of the selection process. Is there anything here that can help you?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#). The [Expanded Framework](#) breaks down each step into building blocks.
- [Skills Builder Launchpad](#) provides interactive activities to learn and practise every step of the Universal Framework.

Indicator 6.3:

Assessors evaluate applicants using the Skills Builder Framework as part of an objective hiring decision

What this looks like

Assessors use the Skills Builder Framework to evaluate applicants' essential skills. This informs and allows for an objective hiring decision to be made. These decisions are objective because scores are provided in relation to candidates' essential skills.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Objective hiring decisions in relation to essential skills ensures that all applicants have been assessed equally, consistently and fairly.
- Using the Framework as part of this decision can also help to provide valuable and targeted feedback for applicants.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Consider your existing scoring and evaluation systems for candidates and try to integrate essential skills criteria within these.
- Consider activities where individual bias may be more prevalent such as, group assessments, and use the essential skills to frame assessment of these activities in particular.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use the language of the Universal Framework to devise a consistent scoring system.* This can then be applied to all applicants.
- *Explore the Employer Guidance in the Universal Framework* for ideas on how to assess for each skill step.
- *Use building blocks of each step to set specific criteria for assessment.*

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#). Select the 'build it' button on a skill step and filter to 'Employers' in the advice section.

Standard 7:

Employees are aware of the essential skills and the benefits of developing them

This Standard is focused on ensuring employees are aware of the essential skills and their importance in the workplace, including self-assessment against the Skills Builder Framework to inform goal setting. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 7.1:** Employees are made aware of the essential skills and their value.
- **Indicator 7.2:** Employees self-assess against the Skills Builder Framework and are aware of their strengths and development areas.
- **Indicator 7.3:** Employees set goals to build their essential skills further, and find opportunities to do so.

Indicator 7.1:

Employees are made aware of the essential skills and their value

What this looks like

Employees are aware of what the eight essential skills are and why they are important in the workplace. This might include through training sessions, line management discussions, the organisation's articulated priorities and job descriptions, or many other approaches.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- The starting point for developing essential skills is to raise awareness of these skills and their importance.
- Given the variety of ways skills can be interpreted, it is really important that a consistent language is used to clarify exactly what we mean by *essential skills*.
- Promoting the importance of the essential skills to employees will better support them to understand why they should dedicate time to build them.

Some tips for implementing this

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Try to consider how all eight essential skills could be relevant in all roles. This doesn't mean each role needs to build all eight essential skills but it avoids suggesting that certain essential skills are only relevant for some roles or employees who are on particular tracks.
- When referring to skills, try to differentiate between *basic* skills (literacy, numeracy, digital), *essential* skills, and *technical* skills, and promote the benefits of each.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Use team training opportunities* to introduce the essential skills. Which upcoming training opportunities could you incorporate this in to?
- *Encourage shared reflection in individual discussions*. How can you ensure this conversation is built in to one-to-one discussions?
- *Use visual aids in physical and online work spaces*. Which platforms or spaces do employees come into contact with the most? How could you display the skills here?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Indicator 7.2:

Employees self-assess against the Skills Builder Framework and are aware of their strengths and development areas

What this looks like

Employees use assessment tools, underpinned by the Skills Builder Framework, to understand their own essential skills. They are able to identify where their strengths and development areas lie, as a foundation for building their essential skills further.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- It is important that employees understand those skill steps that they have already secured. This will help boost their confidence and motivate them to continuing developing their skills.
- Employees also need to understand which essential skill steps to develop further. This will help them to seek relevant, targeted development opportunities.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Essential skills levels should *not* be perceived as *fixed*. Assessment is about understanding the skill step an employee is working at and what their next step for development should be.
- Employees should benchmark their skills whilst considering their workplace context and individual role, rather than how these skills manifest in other contexts such as education or wider life.
- Try to remember that any employees might have unexpected strengths or development areas, regardless of their position in an organisation.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Find time for employee to reflect on their own skills.* In your organisation, where could you provide employees with the opportunity to do this?
- *Use Skills Builder Benchmark* as a tool to support employee self-assessment in the eight essential skills. How will you ensure employees understand how to use this tool?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Indicator 7.3:

Employees set goals to build their essential skills further, and find opportunities to do so

What this looks like

Employees agree meaningful and manageable essential skill goals that they are motivated to work towards. These are reviewed regularly. Employees seek current and relevant opportunities to practise their essential skills in the pursuit of these goals.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Setting goals ensures that essential skills form a key part of an employee's progression and development.
- Goals that are meaningful and manageable are more motivational for employees to work towards, making it easier for an employee to seek and engage with development opportunities.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Support employees to set goals which are realistic, engaging and are aligned to their upcoming projects or responsibilities.
- Encourage employees to seek opportunities to practise their essential skills in pursuit of the goals they have set themselves. Ensure these opportunities are visible and accessible to all employees.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Find time for employees to reflect on their own essential skills to identify target areas.* In your organisation, where could you provide employees with the opportunity to do this?
- *Use Skills Builder Benchmark* as a tool to support employee self-assessment in the eight essentials skills
- *Align upcoming projects and other responsibilities to the essential skills.* This will support employees to seek out appropriate opportunities to practise their essential skills. How could you promote these opportunities across your organisation?

What tools can help?

- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Standard 8:

Employees are supported to develop their essential skills

This Standard is focused on ensuring employees are supported to develop their essential skills through the learning opportunities available and the feedback and coaching they receive from managers and Learning & Development staff. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 8.1:** Learning opportunities are available for employees to build their essential skills.
- **Indicator 8.2:** Managers or Learning & Development staff are trained to give feedback on essential skills.
- **Indicator 8.3:** Managers or Learning & Development staff are trained to coach employees to boost their essential skills.

Indicator 8.1:

Learning opportunities are available for employees to build their essential skills

What this looks like

Employees have regular access to essential skills related learning opportunities within the organisation. This might include online learning or information, workshops, or other training.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Learning opportunities provided by the organisation offers all employees accessible and tangible chances to build their essential skills and strengthen their areas of development.
- It is important to offer these learning opportunities to all employees to demonstrate their importance at every level of the organisation.
- A range of learning opportunities covering the eight skills will highlight the transferability of these skills, further promoting their importance to the workplace.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Provide learning opportunities which are accessible and engaging to all employees, across the full range of experience and job types.
- Try to ensure these opportunities are not only useful in the immediate future, but there is also space for wider and longer-term development.
- Employees should be encouraged to learn through experience. Engaging with a learning opportunity will allow employees to put their skills into practise and provide an experience to reflect on.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Clarify which essential skills are explicitly being developed.* For example, in a project management training session, where can you make clear links to Problem Solving?
- *Align upcoming projects or responsibilities with the essential skills* to help employees identify suitable opportunities. Do any of the projects in your organisation align with one or two of the essential skills? How will you communicate this to employees?
- *Create bespoke opportunities in relation to the essential skills.* How will you communicate and promote these to employees?
- *Promote Skills Builder Launchpad* as an optional platform to build essential skills.

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Launchpad](#) provides interactive activities to practise every step of the Universal Framework

Indicator 8.2:

Managers or Learning & Development staff are trained to give feedback on essential skills

What this looks like

Managers and Learning & Development staff are trained to provide constructive and timely feedback to their employees in relation to the essential skills, making links to the Skills Builder Universal Framework.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- It is important that managers and Learning & Development staff are regularly talking about the essential skills with their employees to maintain focus in this area.
- In skills development, regular feedback is important to build awareness – and managers or Learning & Development staff are likely to be the main source of this feedback.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- It will take time for employees to practise and develop their essential skills and this should be recognised.
- Feedback relating to the essential skills should be provided regularly, with employees receiving reminders when appropriate.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Frame feedback using the Skills Builder Framework* and make suggestions for improvement rather than just critique. What is the employee doing well, and what tips would you give for improvement?
- *Provide training for managers and others* to build their confidence in incorporating the language of the Framework into their feedback. Which training opportunities lend themselves to building this in?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).
- [Skills Builder Launchpad](#) provides interactive activities to learn and practise every step of the Universal Framework.

Indicator 8.3:

Managers or Learning & Development staff are trained to coach employees to boost their essential skills, using the Skills Builder Framework

What this looks like

Managers and Learning & Development staff are trained on how to coach employees to boost their essential skills, in line with the Skills Builder Framework. This coaching helps employees take ownership of their own essential skills development, whilst helping them along the journey.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- It is important that employees have access to someone who can act as a sounding board to support them to explore ideas for themselves in relation to the essential skills, and work through problems to reach solutions.
- This encourages employees to develop their own ideas to boost their essential skills, increasing their sense of ownership and their drive to achieve their goals.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Consider how to offer essential skills coaching to all employees, rather than target groups which might be seen as 'high potential'. For example, by using line management or supervisions.
- Ensure that employees are conscious of the difference between giving direct feedback and the coaching approach which is more about helping the individuals to work through their own analysis and idea generation.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Provide training to managers and Learning & Development staff* on how to be an effective coach in relation to the essential skills. Who can deliver this training?
- *Encourage managers and learning and development staff to explore Step 11 of the Leadership Framework* to build an understanding of their role as a coach.
- *Use regular line manager time* as a space for coaching discussions. How can you ensure this is built into conversations?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).

Standard 9:

The employer promotes and recognises the development of essential skills

This Standard is focused on ensuring that essential skills are recognised and rewarded, through forming part of appraisals and reviews as well as providing further stretch opportunities for development. It is made up of three indicators:

- **Indicator 9.1:** Essential Skills form part of appraisals and reviews.
- **Indicator 9.2:** The employer recognises and rewards progression in essential skills.
- **Indicator 9.3:** The employer continues to provide stretch opportunities to develop essential skills further.

Indicator 9.1:

The Skills Builder Framework forms part of appraisals and reviews

What this looks like

As part of the appraisal and review process, employees are given the opportunity to reflect and receive feedback on their essential skills. The Skills Builder Universal Framework provides a simple, objective way of doing this.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Essential skills are a core component of how effectively someone can do their work, so it is right that they are recognised as part of the appraisal process.
- Using the Skills Builder Framework means that there is greater clarity about what expected performance looks like and ensures that it is communicated effectively to employees.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- It can be helpful to give the employee time to reflect on their performance against the Skills Builder Framework, and to gather their reflections and evidence in advance of the discussion.
- Think about how to build the Framework into templates that are used around the appraisal or performance review processes.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Help to structure employee's reflections.* Could you suggest employees reflect on something they are doing well and something they believe they could improve on?
- *Take a balance approach to feedback.* Try to recognise both strengths and areas of development of an employee and use specific examples of their practice to illustrate this. Where have they demonstrated a specific skill step well and what did this look like?
- *Consider embedding Skills Builder resources into the existing Learning Management System.* Could you signpost employees to Skills Builder Benchmark before an appraisal so they have a better understanding of their development?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).
- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Indicator 9.2:

The employer recognises and rewards progression in essential skills

What this looks like

Employees' success in building essential skills is recognised and rewarded. This could involve informal feedback or including essential skills in existing employer reward schemes.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- Recognising and celebrating an individual's success is a key contributor to their motivation.
- Recognising and celebrating essential skills progress can motivate employees to continue progressing in their development. It can also help employees to recognise where they are doing well.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Try to ensure equal value is placed on both technical progression and essential skills progression so essential skills are not undervalued.
- Use the essential skills to form part of the requirements for individuals to take on additional responsibilities or promotions.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Embed essential skill recognition and reward into organisational reward schemes.* How could you tie in essential skills development with your existing employee rewards?
- *Consider employees' preferences and an appropriate approach to giving feedback.* Some organisations have cultures that include public celebration or recognition, whereas others are more focussed on individuals.

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).
- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

Indicator 9.3:

The employer continues to provide stretch opportunities to develop essential skills further

What this looks like

Employees see the essential skills as an important part of their long-term success, regardless of their career stage, and are provided with further stretch opportunities by the employer. Essential skills form part of new responsibilities and promotions within a role.

Why this indicator matters

This indicator matters for a number of reasons:

- It is important that employees understand the essential skills are required in order to progress within the organisation.
- Providing stretch opportunities for all employees helps to promote the importance of these skills regardless of seniority.

Some tips for implementing it

Some things to think about when implementing this indicator:

- Essential skills should be seen as fluid, not something that is fixed for an employee. All employees should receive stretch opportunities regardless of how highly they are demonstrating a particular skill.
- Try not to assume stretch opportunities fall solely into the higher stages and steps of the Framework. An individual's skill set is unique and these opportunities will look very different from employee to employee. Even senior employees may benefit from revisiting lower stages and steps of the Framework.

How to put it into practice

Employers who are putting this into use effectively often:

- *Consider the opportunities available across the business.* Are there any which would provide an appropriate stretch for particular employees?
- *Model best practice* by asking managers and other seniors to share their own stretch goals. How could these be shared with others sensitively and appropriately?

Tools which can help

- [Skills Builder Universal Framework](#) breaks down the essential skills into learnable, measurable steps, and it can also be [downloaded as a PDF](#).
- [Skills Builder Benchmark](#) supports individuals to self-assess against the eight essential skills to understand areas of strength and development.

The Skills Builder Employer Excellence Mark

We want to recognise and celebrate Employer partners who are adopting the Skills Builder approach and embedding the Excellence Standards across their organisation.

To help our partners to celebrate and promote their achievements, there are four levels of Excellence Mark:

- Bronze - For teams who are starting to introduce the Skills Builder approach to building essential skills into their organisations.
- Silver - For teams who are committing to using the Skills Builder approach to building essential skills into their organisations more widely.
- Gold - For teams who are demonstrating a sustained commitment to using the Skills Builder approach to build essential skills in their organisation.
- Platinum - For teams who are leading and championing best practice in using the Skills Builder approach to build essential skills in their organisation.

How this fits with your programme

When you partner with us on an Employer Programme, we will arrange a planning meeting to explore how to embed essential skills development into a specific programme, department or across the whole organisation. This conversation will establish the scale at which you are working with Skills Builder and the specific area you want to embed essential skills within. This could fall into one or more of our strands: Outreach, Recruitment or Staff Development.

For example, this might be a Corporate Social Responsibility team at a large employer working towards achieving the Outreach indicators, or, for a smaller organisation, it might be the whole organisation working towards some of the indicators for Staff Development and for Recruitment.

The scale which you decide to work at within your organisation will not impact the level of excellence you can achieve. For example, your area(s) of focus could involve one team within your organisation or the whole business. During the planning meeting, we will ask for an estimate of scale and during check-ins across the year, we will collect actual reach when and where appropriate.

For Partners working in the Outreach strand

It should be noted that if you are working within the Outreach strand only, we will firstly need to ensure that you have at least two programmes, initiatives or set of resources accredited through our impact levels before we invite you to work towards achieving a Bronze Excellence Mark or above.

This will demonstrate your commitment towards a whole-business approach in essential skills for which the Excellence Mark is designed to recognise.

For partners focusing on Outreach and working towards Silver or above, we only require one impact level accredited programme, initiative, set of resources as you will also be working towards either Recruitment, Staff Development or both and therefore on your journey towards the whole-business approach to essential skills.

The kitemark associated with your excellence level will be reflective of the scale at which you embedded your essential skills approach, as shown in these examples:



How decisions are made

To recognise Employer Excellence, we take into account all 27 of the best practice indicators of the Excellence Standards:

- To achieve an Excellence Mark at a Bronze level, 5 out of the 27 indicators need to be achieved. This could be within one Strand or across two or more Strands.
- To achieve an Excellence Mark at a Silver level, 10 of the 27 indicators needs to be achieved. This could be within two or three Strands.
- To achieve an Excellence Mark at a Gold level, 15 of the 27 indicators need to be achieved.
- To achieve an Excellence Mark at a Platinum level, 20 or more of the 27 indicators need to be achieved.

Once you achieve an Excellence Mark, it will be valid for one year. At the end of the year, there will be a light-touch review to ensure that best practise is being followed, and your Excellence Mark can be renewed.

When decisions are made

There is no fixed time frame to achieve any of the indicators by. On your programme, there will be three opportunities to check in on your progress against the strand(s) you have chosen to work towards. You can bring your evidence to discuss with us at any one of these checks-ins and we will update your programme plan to reflect your achievements, marking the relevant indicators as complete accordingly. You can find examples of the evidence we review the next page. However, given the variation we see across our employer partners, we are open to reviewing any evidence you believe is indicative of your approach to essential skills.

Examples of Evidence

At each level of Excellence, we will need to see evidence of each indicator in order for it to be marked as achieved. The table below provides some examples of the types of evidence we review.

Please note this list is not exhaustive and we will welcome a wide range of evidence which you feel is indicative of your essential skills approach in your organisation.

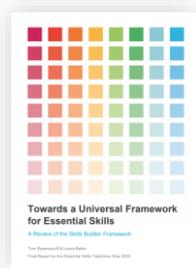
Strand	Standard	Examples
Outreach	(1) Outreach activities raise awareness of the essential skills and their value for participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach resources: e.g., session plans, volunteer briefings, reports • Learning materials and resources: e.g., session PowerPoints, worksheets, participant booklets • Employee videos or testimonials
	(2) Outreach activities offer participants opportunities to build essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning materials and resources e.g., session PowerPoints, worksheets, participant booklets • Insight day aims / plan / timetable • Work experience aims / plan / timetable
	(3) Outreach activities measure progress in building participants' essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant surveys • Skills Builder Benchmark reports
Recruitment	(4) The essential skills required and developed through job roles are shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum step requirements at an organisational level • Job descriptions or adverts • Apprenticeship descriptions
	(5) All applicants are given a fair chance to demonstrate their essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application packs • Applicant feedback sheets • Skills Builder signposting on website/vacancy pages • Employee testimonials
	(6) Assessors use the Skills Builder Framework to objectively assess applicants' essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessor training materials • Interview check lists • Assessment templates for candidates • Post-interview debriefs
Staff Development	(7) Employees are aware of the essential skills and the benefits of developing them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation values mapped to essential skills • Essential skill visuals in physical and online workspaces • Skills Builder Benchmark reports • Employee goal setting proformas

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of line management conversations
	(8) Employees are supported to develop their essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications around learning opportunities • Volunteering opportunities that reference essential skills • Feedback and observation forms • Training materials
	(9) The employer promotes and recognises the development of essential skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal proformas • Essential skill related rewards • Evidence of line management conversations

Resource Summary

There are lots of insights and resources available to support you in the journey to embed essential skills in your organisation.

Publications and guides



Towards a Universal Framework for Essential Skills

Read the full report of the research behind the development of the Universal Framework.

skillsbuilder.org/towards-a-universal-framework-for-essential-skills



Impact Report 2021

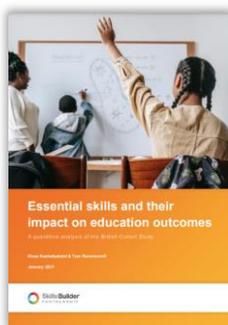
Read the full report documenting the work our 725 partners over the last year

skillsbuilder.org/impact

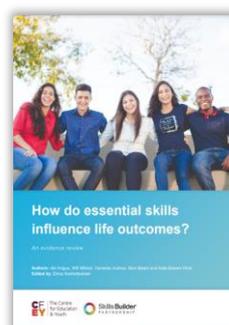
Insights



Our [Better Prepared report](#) surveyed 3000+ young people in partnership with YouGov highlighting the correlation between essential skills and employment outcomes



[This report](#) built off analysis of the British Cohort Study which highlighted the links between essential skills and higher literacy, numeracy and career aspirations



Written by the Centre of Education & Youth and Skills Builder, [this report](#) reviews existing academic studies exploring the links between essential skills and wider life outcomes

Practical resources



Skills Builder UNIVERSAL FRAMEWORK

Explore the complete interactive Universal Framework online and access detailed descriptions of how to build every skill at every step – in any context.

skillsbuilder.org/framework



Skills Builder HUB

*Access a huge **range of resources** on our online platform for building skills – complete with a **built-in assessment tool**.*

skillsbuilder.org/hub



Skills Builder BENCHMARK

*Benchmark against the 8 essential skills with our **independent self-assessment tool**.*

skillsbuilder.org/benchmark



Skills Builder LAUNCHPAD

*Individuals can access a range of **interactive** modules and activities to **build their own essential skills**.*

skillsbuilder.org/launchpad

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