



SKILLS BUILDER IMPACT LEVELS



Skills Builder
PARTNERSHIP

Impact Levels Guide

UPDATED
AUTUMN 2026





Introduction

Skills Builder Partnership is working to ensure that one day, everyone builds the essential skills to thrive.

Together, we focus on eight essential skills which are those highly transferable skills that almost anyone needs to do almost anything, and which support individuals to thrive:



Building these skills for every individual is beyond the capacity of any single organisation - but by working together with a shared language this is possible.

The **Skills Builder Universal Framework** provides that common language through an open source shared language, outcomes, and assessment criteria for these skills.

At Skills Builder, we work to recognise those brilliant programmes and provision from our partners who have opened up opportunities to learn about, reflect on, practise, and build essential skills. We recognise these with Impact Levels, at four different levels:



Impact Level 1: Raising awareness of essential skills

Programmes that are successful at this level make individuals more aware of the eight essential skills and their importance for success.



Impact Level 2: Reflecting on essential skills

Programmes that are successful at this level give individuals the opportunity to become more self-aware of their skill levels and next steps by reflecting on the essential skills.



Impact Level 3: Practising essential skills

Programmes that are successful at this level give individuals the opportunity to apply and practise their essential skills and the steps.



Impact Level 4: Progressing in essential skills

Programmes that are successful here combine the chance for individuals to reflect on the essential skills before and after applying them, with programme content that is specifically targeted on making steps of progress.

This guide outlines the approach to embedding the Universal Framework into your programme or provision to achieve the Impact Level you want.

Once an Impact Level is achieved, the **Skills Builder Impact Directory** includes these excellent programmes, and acts as a clear quality assurance standard. It allows schools and colleges, educators, employers and individuals around the world to find the best programmes to build essential skills.



Impact Levels Guide





Skills Builder Impact Levels Guide

For programmes and Awards from 2026-27 onwards

Impact Levels

Skills Builder Impact Levels are a set of four progressive levels used by the Skills Builder Partnership to recognise and promote programmes that demonstrate best practice in embedding their approach to essential skills development.

These levels reflect the depth with which an organisation’s programme addresses the measurement and building of essential skills.

Achieving an Impact Level requires meeting the relevant criteria for that Impact Level. The criteria are cumulative with those programmes or products achieving the highest Impact Level 4 being those which achieve all of these criteria.

	A. Raising awareness of essential skills	B. Reflecting on essential skills	C. Practising essential skills	D. Progressing in essential skills
Impact Level 1	YES			
Impact Level 2	YES	YES		
Impact Level 3	YES	YES	YES	
Impact Level 4	YES	YES	YES	YES



Summary of Criteria

Criteria	Detailed requirements
A. Raising awareness of essential skills	Skills Builder skill names, icons and definitions are used consistently where those skills are being taught or applied in programme materials or a product.
	Learning content in the programme or product helps to build learners' understanding of essential skills, which might include what they are and why they matter.
B. Reflecting on essential skills	Learners' abilities against the steps of the Universal Framework are assessed through at least one of: • Self-assessment against individual skill step descriptors • Assessment by the trainer or educator against individual skill step descriptors • Gathering evidence against individual skill step descriptors • Testing of underpinning knowledge of individual skill step descriptors
	After completing the assessment, learners are given insights or feedback which helps them to understand their existing essential skills against individual steps of the Universal Framework.
C. Practising essential skills	The programme or product plans how essential skills will be taught or used at the level of skill steps.
D. Progressing in essential skills	Learners' abilities against the steps of the Universal Framework are assessed at the end of a programme or using a product through at least one of: • Self-assessment against individual skill step descriptors • Assessment by the trainer or educator against individual skill step descriptors • Gathering evidence against individual skill step descriptors • Testing of underpinning knowledge of individual skill step descriptors
	There is evidence that, on average, learners are progressing in their essential skills through the programme or product

The following pages outline the key criteria in more detail, as well as sharing examples of how these can be achieved.

Criteria A:

Raising awareness of essential skills

To achieve Criteria A, the programme or product builds understanding of essential skills while using Skills Builder names, icons, and definitions consistently.

Achieving this criteria is required to be awarded Impact Levels 1, 2, 3 or 4.



Key criteria to achieve and evidence:

Key criteria	Evidence examples
Skills Builder skill names, icons and definitions are used consistently where those skills are being taught or applied in programme materials or a product.	Examples drawn from any of: <i>Learner materials</i> (e.g. workbooks, posters, reflections) <i>Educator or trainer materials</i> (e.g. planning guides, slides, programme overviews) <i>Product screenshots</i> (e.g. online learning, videos, activities) Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides.
Learning content in the programme or product helps to build learners' understanding of essential skills, which might include what they are and why they matter.	At least three examples drawn from any of: <i>Learner materials</i> (e.g. workbooks, posters, reflections) <i>Educator or trainer materials</i> (e.g. planning guides, slides, programme overviews) <i>Product screenshots</i> (e.g. online learning, videos, activities) Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides.

Questions for partners to answer:

- What do individuals learn about essential skills through your programme or product?
- How do you use the Skills Builder Universal Framework in your programme?

Traps to avoid:

- Including essential skills icons where they are not relevant to content
- Being inconsistent in the definition of essential skills

Criteria A: Raising awareness of essential skills



The Economist Education Foundation: Topical Talk, UK & International

The Economist's **Topical Talk** programme supports learners to discuss the news through lessons and learning content. It meets Criteria A by building learners' understanding of essential skills and why they matter for engaging with current affairs and future employment.

The Foundation resources consistently incorporate Skills Builder names and icons for skills like Creativity, Problem Solving, Speaking, and Listening where they are relevant. This consistent visual language builds familiarity and clearly demonstrates to students what they should practice when discussing the news.



The Alsama Project, Lebanon

The **Alsama Project** provides accelerated, 44-week education for displaced youth, blending core academic learning in English, Arabic and Maths with "Professionalism and Awareness" workshops.

Alsama integrates Skills Builder icons and definitions directly into its lesson materials to highlight where these essential skills are being built. Educators also use the Skills Builder Hub platform to introduce and model essential skills, helping students understand their importance. This consistent branding and instructional focus ensure learners recognise, define, and value these skills before applying them in practical assignments.



Linklaters

Linklaters LLP: Business Foundation Course, UK

The **Business Foundation Course** is a three- or four-day work experience at international law firm Linklaters to enable young people aged 14-18 to develop their employability skills.

The programme begins with an introductory session focused on essential skills. Young people develop their Speaking, Listening and Teamwork skills through a mixture of live Q&As and speed-networking with employees and real-work tasks which involve working in teams and presenting back to a panel of Linklaters employees.

The young people hear directly from employees about which essential skills are needed in different job roles, helping them to link their current experiences with future career options. They are also introduced to the research data which explains the wage premium associated with higher levels of essential skills, to support their motivation to build their skills beyond the programme itself.



Criteria B:

Reflecting on essential skills

To achieve Criteria B, the programme or product allows individuals to measure and understand their essential skills against steps in the Skills Builder Universal Framework.

Achieving this criteria is required to be awarded Impact Levels 2, 3 or 4.



Key criteria to achieve and evidence:

Key criteria	Evidence examples
Learners' abilities against the steps of the Universal Framework are assessed through at least one of: • Self-assessment against individual skill step descriptors • Assessment by the trainer or educator against individual skill step descriptors • Gathering evidence against individual skill step descriptors • Testing of underpinning knowledge of individual skill step descriptors <i>See Handbook for examples of these for each step</i>	Examples drawn from any of: • Written assessment questions • Online questionnaires • Trainer or educator observation or assessment rubrics • Screenshots or photographs of tools for building online or offline learner portfolios Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides.
After completing the assessment, learners are given insights or feedback which helps them to understand their existing essential skills against individual steps of the Universal Framework.	Examples drawn from any of: • Results or feedback from written or online assessment questionnaires • Examples of written feedback to learners on their essential skills • Screenshots or photographs of completed online or offline learner portfolios Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides.

Questions for partners to answer:

- How do you build a picture of individuals' essential skills at a step level?
- How do you ensure that assessment of essential skills is fair and accurate?
- How is assessment information shared with individuals so that they understand their essential skills at an individual step level?

Traps to avoid:

- Reflecting on the skill as a whole, rather than individual steps

Criteria B: Reflecting on essential skills

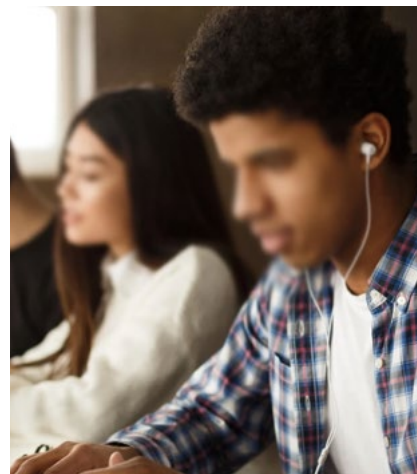


Morrisby: Morrisby Tracker, UK & International

Morrisby Tracker is a careers management platform that allows learners to reflect on their own skills and explore and learn about different careers.

It meets Criteria B by integrating opportunities for reflecting on essential skills directly into its careers management platform: Learners track their progress against the Universal Framework by logging activities and tracking their progress against specific skill steps. This evidence can then be reviewed and audited by educators.

Following this assessment, learners receive targeted feedback through the platform. These insights and the audited evidence populate a comprehensive Learner Passport. This continuous loop of evidence-gathering, educator assessment, and structured feedback ensures learners gain a clear understanding of their current abilities against individual essential skill steps.



Inqui-Lab Foundation: Think & Make Programme, India

The **Think & Make programme** is a 12-session, in-school intervention for public school students that builds problem-solving and innovation skills through hands-on, experiential learning. Delivered weekly within classrooms, the programme engages entire cohorts of 11-16 year-old learners in team-based challenges rooted in real-world design and community problems.

The programme achieves Criteria B by integrating reflection throughout its 12-session curriculum. Learners begin and end the journey with a skill survey to reflect on each skill step covered in the curriculum. Each session follows an 'Introduction, Practice, and Reflection' structure, ensuring learners don't just complete activities but actively evaluate their performance. Using dedicated workbooks, learners self-rate their mastery of each session's focal skill step, while facilitators provide objective feedback via observation forms rating how many teams were able to use the skill step. This multi-layered approach provides students with continuous insight into their strengths and areas for improvement.



Tata Consultancy Services & Jaguar Land Rover: Virtual Work Experience, UK

As part of Tata Consultancy Services' **virtual work experience programme**, under the banner of Jaguar Land Rover, participants are introduced to digital innovation, design thinking, and real-world problem solving.

Participants explicitly develop the essential skills of Problem Solving, Creativity, and Speaking through structured daily activities linked to the Universal Framework skill steps. Towards the end of each session, participants self-assess themselves against specific skill steps. This enables them to achieve Criteria B: reflecting on essential skills.



Criteria C:

Practising essential skills

To achieve Criteria C, the programme or product demonstrably applies and practises specific essential skill steps from the Universal Framework.

Achieving this criteria is required to be awarded Impact Levels 3 or 4.



Key criteria to achieve and evidence:

Key criteria	Evidence examples
The programme or product plans how essential skills will be taught or used at the level of skill steps.	Examples drawn from any of: <i>Learner materials</i> (e.g. workbooks, posters, reflections) <i>Educator or trainer materials</i> (e.g. planning guides, slides, programme overviews) <i>Product screenshots</i> (e.g. online learning, videos, activities) Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides.

Questions for partners to answer:

- Which essential skill steps are built in your programme or product?
- How is your programme or product effective in practising or using these essential skill steps?

Traps to avoid:

- Using essential skills at the skill level but not breaking learning down into individual essential skill steps, as set out in the Universal Framework

Criteria C: Practising essential skills



Asante Africa Foundation: Youth Livelihood Program, Tanzania, Kenya & Uganda

The Asante Africa Foundation's Youth Livelihood Program focuses on equipping rural secondary students with practical skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Through school-based clubs, students engage in real-world projects, peer mentoring, and business idea development.

These activities are explicitly aligned with skill steps from the Universal Framework. For example, a leadership session isn't just a general discussion; it involves a roleplay specifically designed to practice Leadership Step 6 (Mentoring). By embedding these specific steps into hands-on tasks, the programme ensures that students are intentionally practicing the individual components of the Universal Framework within meaningful, real-life contexts.



PGL: Skills 4 Life, UK

PGL's Skills 4 Life programme achieves Criteria C by transforming outdoor education into a deliberate arena for practising essential skills. The programme aligned activities like raft building, climbing, and team exercises to specific Universal Framework skill steps.

Facilitators, trained in the Framework, deliver 'skill introductions' at the start of each session, setting a clear objective for practice. This might be to allocate tasks between team members, or to apply problem solving. Then, by integrating guided reflection questions at the close of activities, participants don't just experience the challenge; they consciously apply and articulate the specific steps used, ensuring every session is a purposeful building block for skill development.



PA Consulting: Essential Skills Workshops, UK

PA Consulting's Essential Skills Workshops series is a provision aimed at young people aged 11-18 designed to hone the eight essential skills identified to succeed in the workplace.

Participants learn about the skill in the context of PA Consulting and have the opportunity to practise Universal Framework steps which are aligned to real-life examples from PA's client work.

Participants are introduced to the skill step strategies through short videos and then apply their learning to the client scenarios, to build a comprehensive understanding of the focus skill throughout the session. This enables them to achieve Criteria C, to practise the essential skills.



Criteria D:

Progressing in essential skills

To achieve Criteria D, the programme or product measures participants' essential skill levels using Skills Builder Universal Framework to demonstrate progress.

Achieving this criteria is required to be awarded Impact Level 4.



Key criteria to achieve and evidence:

Key criteria	Evidence examples
Learners' abilities against the steps of the Universal Framework are assessed <i>at the end</i> of a programme or using a product through at least one of: • Self-assessment against individual skill step descriptors • Assessment by the trainer or educator against individual skill step descriptors • Gathering evidence against individual skill step descriptors • Testing of underpinning knowledge of individual skill step descriptors	Examples drawn from any of: • Written assessment questions • Online questionnaires • Trainer or educator observation or assessment rubrics • Screenshots of tools for building learner portfolios • Photographs of learner portfolios if being built offline (for example, through skills passports) Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides. All evidence must be anonymised.
There is evidence that, on average, learners are progressing in their essential skills through the programme or product	Aggregate data (<i>excluding</i> individual learner data) demonstrating differences in essential skill levels at the beginning and end of a programme or when using a product Evidence might be in the format of images, video, PDF documents, or slides.

Questions for partners to answer:

- How do you measure changes in individuals' essential skill levels across your programme or when using your product?
- What is the average impact in terms of essential skills steps progress?

Traps to avoid:

- Very high progress in essential skill steps needs to be critically assessed

Criteria D: Progressing in essential skills



Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Bhutan

The **Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA)** programme empowers young people to join a long-term network dedicated to community development. The week-long training is explicitly mapped to the Universal Framework, with activities designed to increase in difficulty to ensure progressive skill development.

Participants complete a Skills Builder Benchmark pre-assessment on day 1 and a re-assessment by the end of the week. This data, combined with reflective prompts, provides tangible evidence of growth. Beyond the initial training, the programme encourages ongoing reflection over several months as they develop their community projects, ensuring that improvements in leadership, teamwork and problem-solving are both sustained and measurable.



London Luton Airport: LLA Launchpad, UK

LLA Launchpad for learners aged 16-18 is an intensive, week-long programme to immerse local learners into the world of aviation.

Learners spend 5 days at London Luton Airport, attending workshops, completing a group project, meeting volunteers and culminating in an airside tour on the final day. The Skills Builder Universal Framework was used to measure growth across the 10 focus essential skills steps. The 2026 cohort saw an average increase across all areas, with the most significant growth in Speaking (using facts) and Adapting (managing wellbeing) which both increased by 0.6 points.

This data-led approach allows LLA to prove the value of its investment while ensuring learners leave with tangible, transferable skills for the next stage of their career journey.



Street League: Sports and Employability Programme, UK

Street League is a leading sport for employment charity, supporting young people who live in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the UK to learn the skills they need to overcome their practical and personal barriers and become economically active.

Street League's **sports and employability academies** for unemployed young people develop the life and workplace skills, self-worth and sense of belonging young people need to thrive and move into high quality employment, education or training. By focusing on explicit skill steps, young people are supported to self-assess themselves against individual skill step descriptors and gather evidence of where they have demonstrated these.

Over time, individuals revisit these self-assessments to track where they are progressing in their essential skills through the programme.





Information requirements to achieve an Impact Level

In order to achieve an Impact Level, the organisation must share key information through the Impact Levels Management Tool:



A. About the Skills Leader:

- Contact and role details for a key contact and two further contacts
- Confirmation of Skills Leader eligibility to submit Impact Level application



B. About the organisation:

- Organisation name
- Organisation overview (100 words)
- Organisation logo
- Organisation website



C. About the programme or product:

- Programme overview (100 words)
- Image or video that summarises the programme for use in Impact Directory entry
- Target age group of participants
- Geographical availability: Countries where the programme or product is available
- Beneficiaries in the last year by country [Note: Optional for external sharing]
- Programme delivery format: Online; In-person; Blended
- Programme access: Through a school or college; through an organisation; open access
- Skills focus: Which of the eight skills are covered

Issuing and promoting the Impact Level

An Impact Level will be issued to organisations who have demonstrated that their programme meets, and has evidenced meeting, the criteria required for that Impact Level.

This will require the review of the national Lead Partner for your country and final approval from the Skills Builder Global team.

At this point, an entry in the Impact Directory will be automatically generated and your organisation will be issued with a Digital Badge which recognises the programme or product and the Impact Level it has achieved. This Digital Badge can be used by your organisation to promote your programme, to which it will be uniquely tied, for as long as your Impact Level is maintained.

Maintaining an Impact Level

When granted, an Impact Level may be maintained as long as the organisation holding it annually updates its Impact Level record, including:

- Verifying the number of beneficiaries of its programme or product by country annually
- Confirming three key contacts in the organisation
- Confirming that there are no changes to the programme that undermine its eligibility for its existing impact level

If this data is not updated in the annual window, then the programme or product's entry in the Impact Directory will be suspended. This is to ensure that Impact Directory users have confidence in the information that is being shared.

NOTES



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