



SFIA defines the skills and competencies required by professionals who design, develop, implement, manage and protect the data and technology that power the digital world.

SFIA was formally launched in 2000. Its origin can be traced back to collaborative skills initiatives from the 1980s. The SFIA Foundation was formed as an international not-for-profit foundation that brings together the global community to develop and maintain the SFIA Framework for the benefit of all.

SFIA has become the globally accepted common language for the skills and competencies for the digital world. Within its scope are many of the world's most in-demand occupations, encompassing professionals working in areas such as (but not limited to):

- information and communications technology
- business change
- digital transformation
- data science and analytics
- software engineering
- information and cyber security
- learning and education
- applied computing and computational science
- user centred design
- digital product development, sales and marketing
- human resource and workforce management

SFIA remains a collaboration: it has been regularly updated through a global open consultation process. People with real practical experience of developing and managing skills and competencies in corporate, public sector and educational environments from all around the world, contribute to ensuring SFIA remains relevant and true. It is built by industry and business for industry and business. Many have copied SFIA, been inspired by it or simply choose to map to it so as to promote their own frameworks and products.

It is these features that set SFIA apart from other frameworks and has resulted in its adoption by governments, corporates and individuals in almost 200 countries. Its unique and ongoing success can also be attributed to:

- Built and owned by the global user community
- Global collaborative development
- Global governance and steering boards
- A 20+ year track record of successful use
- Proven sustainability with an established ecosystem and trusted infrastructure
- A neutral approach – it is not aligned to any specific technologies, vendors or professional bodies

SFIA remains free of charge for most non-commercial use

- The SFIA Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation
- There is a modest licence fee for large organisations using SFIA and for organisations that use SFIA for commercial purposes
- The licence fee supports the continued development of the framework and ecosystem support
- Organisations and individuals who contribute a licence fee can be proud that they are helping the continued development of the industry

SFIA – What is it?

SFIA is an easy-to-use common reference model

SFIA is a practical resource for people who manage or work in or with business and technology professionals who design, develop, implement, manage and protect the data and technology that power the digital world.

SFIA brings together professional skills, behaviours / behavioural factors and knowledge. The behavioural factors are distributed throughout the generic attributes specified for each level of responsibility.

- It provides a framework consisting of professional skills on one axis and seven levels of responsibility on the other.
- It describes the professional skills at various levels of responsibility.
- It describes the levels of responsibility, in terms of generic attributes of Autonomy, Influence, Complexity, Business Skills and Knowledge.

SFIA is updated frequently to remain relevant and aligned with the needs of industry and business and current thinking.

A common language for skills in the digital world

SFIA gives individuals and organisations a common language to define skills and expertise in a consistent way. The use of clear language, avoiding technical jargon and acronyms, makes SFIA accessible to all involved in the work as well as people in supporting roles such as human resources, learning and development, organisation design, and procurement. It can solve the common translation issues that hinder communication and effective partnerships within organisations and multi-disciplinary teams.

This consistency means that SFIA works well for both large and small organisations: they share an approach, a vocabulary, and a focus on skills and capability. SFIA works well across large multi-national organisations and throughout the supply chain to establish a common language for skills and competency management. SFIA is especially beneficial for small and medium-sized enterprises who simply do not have the resources to develop and maintain their own skills and competency framework and yet want to benefit from one.

Why use it?

SFIA has been designed to be completely flexible and to fit seamlessly with a user's established ways of working.

- SFIA does not define a fixed methodology or prescribe organisational structures, roles or jobs: it simply provides clear descriptions of skills and levels of responsibility.
- SFIA can be used across multiple industries and organisational types. It's an ideal framework, whether for individuals, small and large teams, departments or business functions, small and medium-sized enterprises or entire organisations with thousands of employees.

Key design principles

Since its early development, SFIA has maintained a number of design principles. These have persisted throughout all versions of SFIA.

- **SFIA is straightforward, generic and universally applicable.** The breadth of coverage is broad and SFIA is designed to be applicable to all sectors.
- **SFIA is an experience-based framework based on levels of responsibility and skills.** An individual has a particular competency because they have demonstrated that they have a level of responsibility and have demonstrated a number of skills at the levels required in real-world situations. Certifications and qualifications can be aligned to SFIA, but if they only test knowledge they do not indicate experience nor a level of responsibility.
- **SFIA is flexible and works with all organisational structures, job or role designs.** The SFIA skills and levels can be configured flexibly to support all organisational structures. It works for individuals, small and large teams, whole departments or entire organisations with thousands of employees. It can be used to define jobs, roles, people, processes or areas of activity. In addition, the inbuilt flexibility in SFIA supports all organisational models including traditional hierarchical structures, competency centres, resource pools, agile project teams and individual tasks.
- **SFIA defines the essence of skills.** SFIA is descriptive, not prescriptive. It does not define low level tasks nor deliverables as these are highly context dependent.
- **SFIA provides an integrated view of competency.** SFIA recognises levels of responsibility, professional skills, behaviours or attributes, knowledge and qualifications and certifications. It shows how these fit together and how they complement each other.
- **SFIA is independent of technology and approach.** SFIA does not provide a comprehensive list of individual technologies, methods, approaches or technical knowledge – these change rapidly and can be mapped to the underlying SFIA skills and competencies which are more persistent. These attributes can relate to multiple SFIA skills and competencies, depending on how they are used. Roles and jobs needed for specific technologies and working practices such as Cloud, DevOps, Agile, Big Data and digital transformation etc. can be described using a combination of the SFIA skills.

- **SFIA is updated by real practitioners from the international user base.** SFIA is driven by its end users – the content reflects what industry and business want and it is not driven by any single stakeholder group.

Who is it for?

The design and structure of SFIA makes it a flexible resource with a proven track record of being adopted and adapted to support a wide variety of skills and people-management related activities. The following list provides an indication of the current usage of SFIA by different stakeholder groups.

Note that this list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, and new uses of SFIA are continually being developed and described by the SFIA community.

Individuals

- assessing current skills and competencies
- identifying future interests, career goals, and planning personal development
- identifying suitable courses, qualifications, and professional memberships
- creating CVs, resumés, and personal skills profiles
- applying for job vacancies which match their skills and experience
- developing high quality, focused, learning and development objectives

Line managers

- resource management and resource deployment
- identifying operational risks in teams and developing succession plans
- measuring current capability and planning for future demand
- creating role profiles and job descriptions supported by skill and skill level definitions

Organisational leaders

- strategic capability planning
- aligning organisational capabilities to technology and business strategies
- planning and implementing transformations and mergers / acquisitions

Human resource professionals

- creating role profiles / job descriptions supported by consistent skill and skill level definitions
- strategic workforce planning, talent management, succession planning, assessment centres
- designing and implementing career families and career pathways
- supporting organisational performance management and personal development processes
- improving employee engagement by supporting careers and professional development

Learning and development professionals

- defining required competency and skills profiles
- creating learning catalogues, blended learning solutions, curriculum, and mixing formal and on the job learning

Operating model and organisation design consultants

- aligning operating models and process roles with required people capabilities
- designing new roles and validating the skills needed to deliver a new operating model
- assessing organisational skill gaps and developing plans to close the gaps

Procurement, supplier management and service providers

- supporting the management of service providers (e.g. for outsourcing, staff augmentation, managed services, education, training, and consultancy services)
- providing a clear and transparent basis for describing capabilities being sought or provided
- using SFIA Rate Cards for like-for-like comparison of resource-based services from suppliers

Recruiters

- specifying required competencies based on having the right skills with the required level of experience
- helping employers to accurately describe what they need, in language that potential employees understand
- creating competency-based selection criteria and assessment approaches

Professional bodies and their Bodies of Knowledge

- creating discipline-specific competency frameworks aligned to a global standard
- linking bodies of knowledge to competencies
- mapping to support membership levels, certifications, professional development and mentoring programmes
- developing and mapping qualifications, accreditations and career paths
- creating and maintaining a professional register of members' skills and skill levels

Education providers, training providers, curriculum designers

- aligning curriculum to industry / employer needs and improving employability
- mapping curriculum to skills and knowledge attainment
- supporting developmental and evaluative skills assessment

Reward and recognition consultants

- aligning organisation structures, salary banding and benchmarking
- linking to an industry standard for levels of skills experience, and being compatible with standard approaches for job architectures, job sizing and job evaluation

If you would like to learn more about our services and SFIA management and assessment tools please contact enquiries@validateskills.com

Or visit: www.validateskills.com

We would be proud to give you a demo of our assessment platforms.