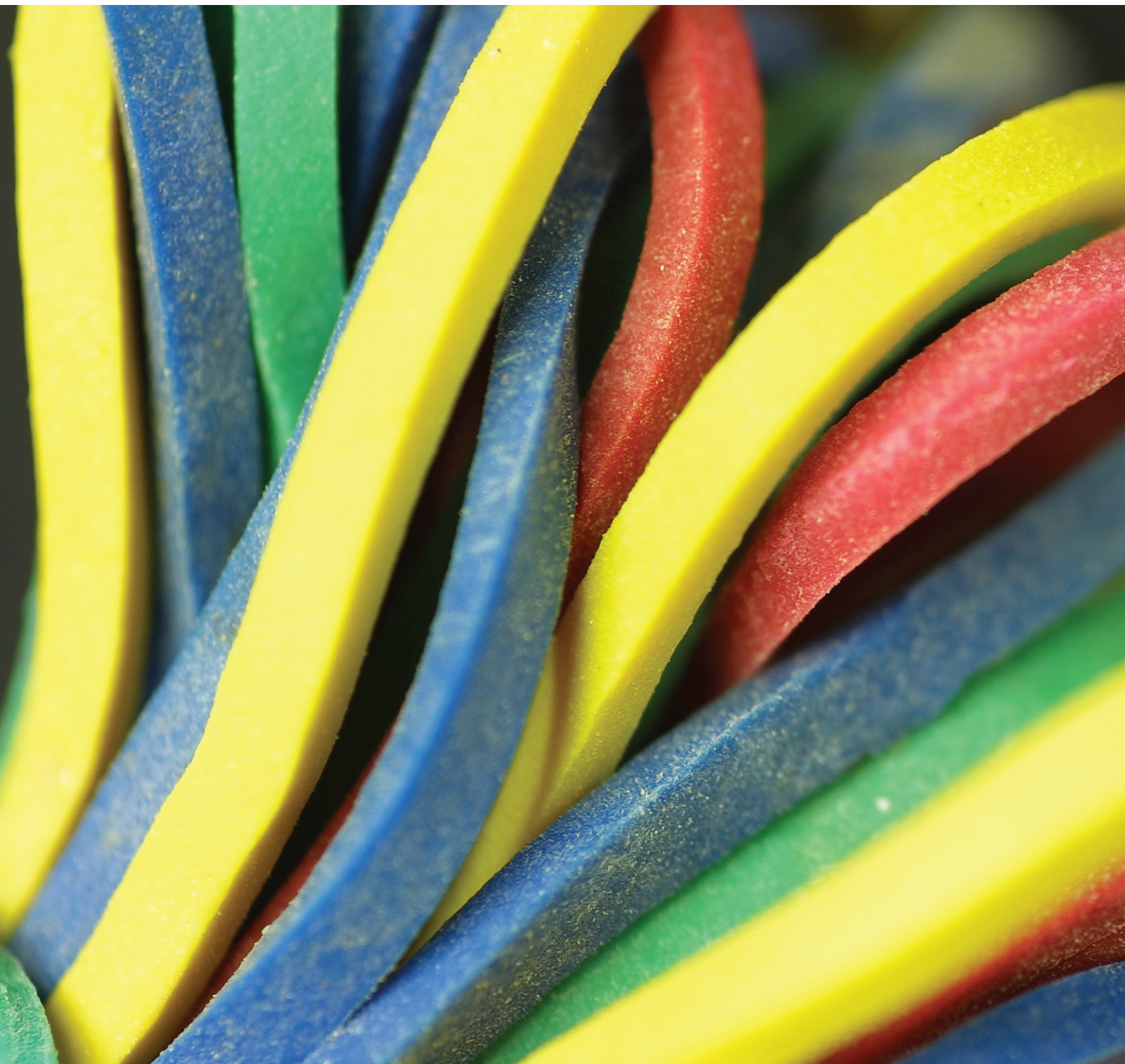


Introducing SFIA

Version 3



Contents

About SFIA 1
Why we need SFIA 1
How SFIA works 3
How SFIA is used 3
Getting started with SFIA 4
The Framework in Summary 5

About SFIA

Purpose

The Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) provides a common reference model for the identification of the skills needed to develop effective information systems (IS) making use of information and communications technologies (IT). It is a simple and logical two dimensional framework consisting of areas of work on one axis and levels of responsibility on the other.

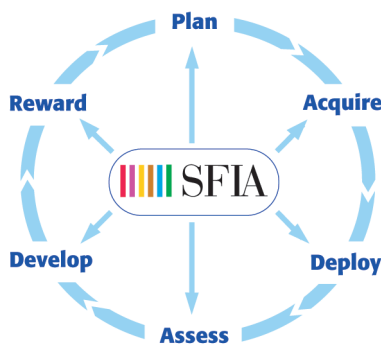
The overall purpose of SFIA is to assist organisations employing IT professionals to

- reduce IT project risk
- retain staff
- make recruitment effective
- enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the IT function

by developing the right skills, by deploying them to best effect and by providing appropriate development and career paths for IT professionals.

SFIA uses a common language and a sensible, logical structure that can be used to facilitate the processes of skills development in all business using or providing Information Technology. It is easily understood by:

- IT practitioners
- managers
- HR professionals
- employers
- education and training providers; and
- government personnel.



Why we need SFIA

The right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

Information systems are essential to the success of most modern organisations. Consequently, they recognise that IT skills are key assets that the organisation must manage correctly in order to maintain effectiveness and competitiveness.

Stakeholders expect to see organisations embracing initiatives and standards that promote effective skills management. The requirement to report annually on human capital can only add emphasis to this area.

Without a standard framework, even the best-organised companies still have no external validation of their skills methods. Other organisations suffer more seriously from the lack of a common language of skills management:

- the skills available on the ground don't match the aspirations of the strategic resource plan
- inappropriate candidates arrive for job interviews
- interviewing is based on inappropriate criteria
- projects are put at risk when the wrong skills are assigned
- people don't seem to understand what's expected of them
- people complain that they don't know how to get promotion
- people cannot see any career path
- the best people leave; those that stay are inflexible
- productivity is not high enough, or it is not known whether it is improving or declining
- the corporate IT investment management (life cycle management) process is unreliable
- decisions on promotions and pay are not seen to be fair.

How SFIA can help

The management of skills development processes is critical. Recruitment, deployment, assessment, development and reward all need to be done with reference to a common definition of skills and their levels. SFIA's standardised reference model provides that common language.

Like all tools, SFIA's success depends upon thoughtful use. Those exploiting it can expect some significant advantages:

Managers and IT professionals can use SFIA as a management tool

- managers can reduce internal project risk by ensuring that projects are staffed by professionals with appropriate skills
- employers can identify skills needed and skills available, so as to identify the gaps
- managers can make decisions on organisational structure on the basis of reliable information on capability
- managers can make assessments of practitioners' skills, and identify realistic and relevant development plans
- professionals can identify and develop the skills they need for their own career progression
- HR professionals can make pay decisions that relate to rationally-defined levels of capability
- managers and HR professionals involved in recruitment can clearly state skills requirements, and use SFIA as input to criteria-based interviews
- management communication can benefit from the use of a common skills language throughout the organisation, whether by IT professionals, IT managers, HR professionals or accountants.

In addition to these primary benefits for SFIA users, other organisations can benefit from the adoption of the SFIA standard.

Service providers can use SFIA to add value to their offerings

(subject to licence arrangements)

- incorporate the Framework into products and services
- refer to the Framework in order to indicate the relevance of services such as training courses
- use the Framework as a reference model in information services, such as IT salary surveys.

Governmental and educational organisations

Government and educational organisations can use the standard to:

- gather Labour market intelligence coherently and consistently
- quantify the skill requirements of the IT market
- identify skills which are in short supply, or report on how short the supply is
- establish appropriate curricula for education and training services.

Where SFIA comes from

A group bringing together industry trade associations, government, professional bodies, practitioners and the academic world developed SFIA. The framework has been validated and extended by public and private sector organisations which test and refine its descriptions to make sure they work in practice. It has been a collaborative effort, organised by e-skills UK, and representing all the key bodies involved in the development of skills in the UK.

SFIA version 3 has been developed from version 2 after a substantial consultation exercise involving workshops and input from many user organisations.

The use of SFIA to manage skills is not a technical issue: it is a 'how we run the company' issue.

How SFIA works

The Framework provides a clear model for describing IT practitioners' skills. It is constructed as a two-dimensional matrix.

Categories, subcategories and skills

SFIA categories
Strategy & planning
Development
Business change
Service provision
Procurement and Management support
Ancillary skills

One axis presents the whole set of SFIA skills. These are defined in a way that makes them easily recognisable in the workplace: the practical nature of the descriptions means that they can effectively be used to construct an organisation's internal competency framework.

The skills are grouped for convenience into categories which are further broken down into subcategories.

The categories and subcategories are purely for the convenience of the SFIA user: they form a navigation aid. For example, SFIA does not claim to be offering a standard definition of the term 'Business change management', nor is it suggesting that this should be the title of a business role or job. It is simply a convenient heading under which to group certain related skills (business analysis, programme management, project management, change implementation planning and management, organisational design and implementation, benefits management).

Levels of responsibility

SFIA levels
7 set strategy, inspire, mobilise
6 initiate, influence
5 ensure, advise
4 enable
3 apply
2 assist
1 follow

The other axis defines the different levels of responsibility and accountability exercised by IT practitioners. Each of seven levels – from new entrant to strategist level – is defined in terms of autonomy, influence, complexity and business skill.

The matrix shows the complete set of skills used by IT practitioners. For each skill at each level, SFIA provides a clear description of the level of competence required.

The matrix is not fully populated; many skills are not practised at every level of responsibility.

SFIA can readily be understood by

- IT professionals and their managers
- HR managers
- non-technical managers
- companies' internal staff training and people working on their development schemes
- staff working in professional bodies
- lecturers and curriculum planners in education and training organisations
- Government personnel
- people working in IT service organisations.

How SFIA is used

Primarily, SFIA is a model that allows the various skills management processes to refer to the same set of competency definitions.

SFIA allows the organisation to describe what individuals are capable of and/or what their jobs require. It does not say what their jobs are called; nor does it prescribe what the roles or jobs should consist of: that is a matter for the organisation.

Business roles

An organisation using SFIA normally identifies the various professional roles that need to be present in order for the business to work successfully. This applies whether the organisation is an IT product or service provider, or whether it is primarily a user of IT products and services. The next step is to define those roles in a set of role profiles containing descriptions of the skills required (as provided by SFIA), together with other information according to the organisation's HR standards. Each role profile would normally consist of more than one level.

The role profiles are then used (in conjunction with specific technological or application experience) as the basis for assigning people to projects. They are also used for assessment (how well people match the profile) and development (what actions are necessary for professionals to meet the requirements of the profile, or to achieve the next level).

Flexibility

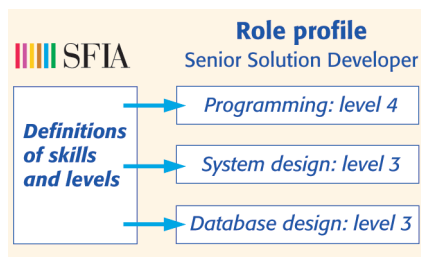
Typically, a role profile would specify SFIA skills that are not all at the same level. For example, an organisation might recognise the role of Principal Software Engineer, having the skill of *Programming/software development level 5*, but having the skills of *Software development process improvement level 6*.

SFIA does not dictate how the responsibilities should be distributed in an organisation.

Working with existing corporate skill models

SFIA has been 'mapped' successfully to the internal skill models used by the largest specialist IS service organisations in the world, and has been used successfully by small companies. This has confirmed SFIA as a comprehensive model, describing IT skills at all levels in a language which everyone can understand.

SFIA clarifies competencies and the way competencies contribute to the business.



Getting started with SFIA

Access to the Framework

The information relating to SFIA (including this brochure) is all available subject to conditions outlined on the back of this brochure. The information can be downloaded from the SFIA web site. Alternatively, visitors to that site can place orders for a CD containing all SFIA publications. There is a distribution charge for the CD.

Use of SFIA for the management of IT skills internal to an organisation is subject to an End User Licence, but that licence is free of charge.

The SFIA Foundation welcomes any organisation that wishes to become an Accredited SFIA Partner, and to use SFIA as part of a commercial product or service. Such organisations should contact the Foundation via the SFIA web site.

Implementation

Different organisations have different reasons for refreshing their skills management methods. Pay, productivity, development, re-organisation, mergers and other corporate factors can all provide the initial stimulus that leads to such a decision.

It is clear that all skills management activities depend in some way upon a rational, practical and consistent definition of the skills that are being managed.

So SFIA provides the definitive input to the first step: that of defining or re-defining the role profiles or job descriptions on which all skills management activity is based.

The Foundation operates an accreditation scheme for consultants who can provide expertise in SFIA combined with experience of skills management. In addition, there are training services to help staff rapidly develop their understanding of the new information. Details may be found on the SFIA web site.

The Framework in summary

Category	Subcategory	Skill	Code
Strategy and planning	Information strategy	Information management	IRMG
	Advice and guidance	Consultancy	CNSL
		Technical specialism	TECH
	Business/IS strategy and planning	Research	RSCH
		Innovation	INOV
		Business process improvement	BPRE
		Strategic application of information systems	STPL
		Business risk management	BURM
		Information security	SCTY
		Information assurance	INAS
	Technical strategy and planning	Systems architecture	ARCH
		Emerging technology monitoring	EMRG
		Continuity management	COPL
		Software development process improvement	SPIM
		Network planning	NTPL
		Methods and tools	METL
Development	Systems development	Systems development management	DLMG
		Data analysis	DTAN
		Systems design	DESN
		Network design	NTDS
		Database design	DBDS
		Programming/software development	PROG
		Safety engineering	SFEN
		Web site specialism	WBSP
		Systems testing	TEST
	Human factors	Systems ergonomics	HCEV
		Content creation	DOCM
		Non-functional needs analysis	UNAN
		Usability evaluation	USEV
		Human factors integration	HFIN
	Installation and integration	Systems integration	SINT
		Porting/software integration	PORT
		Systems installation/decommissioning	HSIN
Business change	Business change management	Business analysis	ANAL
		Programme management	PGMG
		Project management	PRMG
		Business process testing	BPTS
		Change implementation planning and management	CIPM
		Organisation design and implementation	ORDI
		Benefits management	BENM
	Relationship management	Stakeholder relationship management	RLMT
Service provision	Infrastructure	Configuration management	CFMG
		Change management	CHMG
		Capacity management	CPMG
		Systems software	SYSP
		Security administration	SCAD
		Radio frequency engineering	RFEN
		Availability management	AVMT
		Financial management for IT	FMIT
	Operation	Data protection	DPRO
		Application support	ASUP
		Management and operations	COPS
		Network control and operation	NTOP
		Database administration	DBAD
		Service level management	SLMO
	User support	Network support	NTAS
		Problem management	PBMG
		Service desk and incident management	USUP

Category	Subcategory	Skill	Code
Procurement and management support	Supply management	Procurement	PROC
		Supplier relationship management	SURE
	Quality	Quality management	QUMG
		Quality assurance	QUAS
		Quality standards	QUST
		Compliance audit	COMP
		Safety assessment	SFAS
	Resource management	Project office	PROF
		Asset management	ASMG
		Information System coordination	ISCO
		Client services management	CSMG
		Professional development	PDSV
		Resourcing	RESC
Ancillary skills	Education and training	Education and training management	ETMG
		Training materials creation and maintenance	TMCR
		Education and training delivery	ETDL
	Sales and marketing	Account management	ACMG
		Marketing	MKTG
		Selling	SALE
		Sales support	SSUP

The SFIA Foundation

The SFIA Foundation exists to own, promote, develop and maintain the Skills Framework for the Information Age; to encourage the adoption of SFIA; to facilitate its use; and to enable the delivery of quality services based on SFIA.

SFIA is owned by The SFIA Foundation, a not-for-profit body. The members of The Foundation are UK organisations in the field of Information Technology: British Computer Society, e-skills UK, The IEE (Institution of Electrical Engineers) and IMIS (Institute for the Management of Information Systems).

Our purpose is to maintain SFIA as the generally accepted standard and tool for all IT skills measurement, development, deployment and debate.

This will serve the interests of employers of Information Technology professionals, the professionals themselves and many other groups, including training companies and other service providers, education and the government.

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The terms of this licence shall be governed by English law and the parties shall submit to the jurisdiction of the English Courts.

Contacting The Foundation

The SFIA Foundation is happy to hear from organisations planning the use of SFIA. Information about Accredited SFIA Consultants is available on the SFIA website.

The Foundation operates an accreditation scheme for consultants and partners: details may be found on the SFIA website.

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