

# Explanatory notes for the ICT capability assessment strategy

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## How does the ICT Capability Assessment Strategy fit in with other capability resources?

- ICT managers, HR professionals and recruiters should refer to the ICT Capability Assessment Strategy to help them define their assessment approach when filling a role. While use of the Strategy is not mandatory, it is strongly recommended.
- The focus of the ICT Capability Assessment Strategy is on what to assess, giving examples using capabilities from the Capability Framework and ICT occupation specific (SFIA) skills and, where necessary for the role, technical knowledge, essential requirements and other attributes. The Strategy includes two case studies as examples of how a hiring manager might choose to assess the various

factors in a way that is relevant to the specific role. For further information on how to assess capabilities, please refer to the Recruitment and Selection Guide

- The Strategy works together with a suite of resources including the ICT Career Pathway Framework.

## What are the SFIA skills?

- The Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) is a globally recognised framework used in over 100 countries. SFIA provides a common language to describe capabilities required by professionals in roles involving information and communications technology (ICT).
- The NSW Public Service Commission has an accredited partner licence to use the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) as the sector's ICT occupation specific capability set.
- SFIA skills are professional capabilities which are diagnostic, not prescriptive. They contain enough information to enable a consistent judgement as to whether someone has a particular capability, and if so at what level.
- SFIA skills do not list all the things that an individual may be able to do. The descriptions for each skill provide statements of the various levels of skill required, but don't cover the many complex aspects, processes and methods that may relate to the skill. Not all statements at a particular level will apply to a role.
- The SFIA definitions are not, in general, described in terms of technologies or products. They do not describe processes, jobs, general areas of activity, or even parts of an organisation – just skills.

## Who should design and deliver the assessment of capabilities in the Capability Framework?

- Agencies may choose to design and deliver their own assessments, or to share with and borrow resources from other agencies to contextualise to meet their needs where individuals with the appropriate subject matter expertise are available.
- Where agencies choose to engage an external assessment supplier to assess capabilities from the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework, a pre-approved supplier from the **Assessment Services Panel** should be used.

## Do I need to use an accredited provider to assess SFIA skills?

No, there is no requirement for SFIA-accredited assessors or tools to be used.

Agencies may assess candidates’ SFIA skills themselves by using many of the same assessment techniques, such as interviews and work sample assessments, that they are already using to assess capabilities from the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework.

Where agencies choose to engage an external assessment supplier to assess capabilities from the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework, a pre-approved supplier from the Assessment Services Panel should be used. However, there is no similar procurement arrangement for SFIA-accredited assessors, so agencies may select a vendor of their choice. Agencies may wish to request evidence that the assessments are valid and reliable, and to contact referees who have previously used the vendor before making a choice.

## When is specific technical knowledge important for effective performance in a role, and when is it a “nice to have”?

In certain circumstances, it may be important for a new recruit to possess specific technical knowledge, for example when:

- The technical knowledge needs to be used from the first day in the role
- The technical knowledge is time-consuming or difficult to acquire
- No resources are available to build the new recruit’s technical knowledge (e.g. there is no-one else in the business who has the knowledge; budget is not available to cover the costs of providing development opportunities).

Technical knowledge example:

Technical knowledge requirement	Technical knowledge essential	Technical knowledge desirable
Example Role	Application Developer (Grade 7/8)	Business Analyst –ICT (Grade 7/8)
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical knowledge of a computer programming language like C or Python may be required for the role</li> <li>• Technical knowledge of programming language is detailed and time-consuming to acquire, so the new hire may need to arrive in the role with these skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transferable knowledge gained from previous experience in the implementation of an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system would be useful but not essential</li> <li>• Could work on the implementation of a Human Capital Management (HCM) system without having prior specific technical knowledge of that type of system</li> </ul>

## How should I assess technical knowledge?

- Technical knowledge assessments should be developed by a subject matter expert in the functional area, or sourced from an appropriate vendor
- Assessors administer and score the exercises based on clear and consistent procedures and criteria. The process should be done in the same way for each candidate
- Work sample assessments, including written tasks and case interviews, may be used to assess technical knowledge and should be relevant to the day-to-day duties of the role
- Assessment centre exercises such as role plays and group activities can also be used to assess technical knowledge
- Guidelines on administering work sample exercises and assessment centres are available in the Recruitment and Selection Guide

## When is role-specific experience important for effective performance in a role, and when is it a “nice to have”?

Experience demonstrates how you have applied capabilities and knowledge at a particular level of proficiency to achieve outcomes in a practical environment.

Through experience, candidates develop capabilities, SFIA skills and technical knowledge. Experience also builds individuals' general knowledge of the context in which they perform their work, including organisational processes, expectations and influences. Through their experience in trying a range of approaches and observing the results of their own and others' efforts, people learn 'what works'.

The specific context in which a candidate has previously applied their capabilities and knowledge may not need to be the same as that for the role they are applying for. Consider the relative importance of having technical knowledge of specific products or processes, versus the transferable capabilities required to access, understand, interpret and apply technical information.

For example, role-specific experience may be less important for roles where an individual has the opportunity to learn on the job, or where fewer or lower-level capabilities, SFIA skills and technical knowledge are required. These roles are often junior roles, for example, Technical Support Assistants.

Prior role-specific experience may be required when effective performance of the role requires specific technical knowledge and, in some situations, higher-level capabilities and SFIA skills. Such roles are often mid-level or highly technical roles, where the role must be filled by a subject-matter expert who supplies knowledge and expertise in the organisation. The individual will need sufficient relevant experience across a range of situations and will have addressed a variety of problems similar to those they will encounter in the subject role. They should bring to the role a broad understanding of how a team and business operates, or perhaps management experience, if the role they are applying for has a leadership or management component.

Experience examples:

Experience requirement	High requirement for relevant prior experience	Low requirement for relevant prior experience
Example Role	Chief Information Officer (CIO) (Senior Executive Band 2)	Technical Support Assistant (Grade 3/4)
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role may require high level, relevant, validated experience in:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Partnering with other executives</li> <li>◦ Interacting at a sector-wide level to undertake strategic activities with large scope/scale</li> <li>◦ Managing people</li> </ul> </li> <li>• General experience in ICT governance, planning and strategy may be required</li> <li>• Specific experience in technical ICT roles (e.g. coding) may be less important</li> </ul>	<p>Role may require some experience in ICT operations to validate that the candidate has the SFIA skills Service desk and incident management – Level 2 and IT Operations – Level 2</p>

## What are the principles of assessment of experience?

- Ask the candidate to describe real-life examples of their experience in previous roles
- The experience should be recent, preferably within the last five years
- Experience where the candidate has demonstrated the capabilities from the Capability Framework may have been in a role outside the functional area of the current role
- Experience where the candidate has demonstrated the SFIA capabilities or technical knowledge is likely to have been in roles in a similar functional area of ICT to the current role

Integrating assessment of technical knowledge and experience – examples:

Requirement	Information Architect (Gr 9/10)	Principal Project Manager (Gr 11/12)
Technical knowledge	Knowledge of how to develop information management standards and define data models may be required, as it would be difficult and time consuming to develop it in the role	Specific technical knowledge may not be required, but SFIA capabilities in project management may be transferable to this role
Experience	Specific prior experience in developing information management standards and defining data models may be required	General prior experience in managing other ICT projects of a similar size to those to be managed in the new role may be required – the projects could have a different technical focus

## How can we make assessment processes as valid and consistent as possible?

- Choose an appropriate assessment methodology that suits the predetermined role requirements, and use the same methodology for each applicant to the role
- If you are purchasing capability assessments, use a vendor from the Assessment Services Panel. Where a suitable vendor is not available and you must procure off Panel, ask the vendor for evidence that their products meet high standards of validity and reliability
- Select assessors who understand the role requirements well and provide them with training in administration and interpretation of assessments. The same assessor/s should administer and score the same assessments for a role.
- Refer to the Recruitment and Selection Guide for assistance in selecting or designing good quality assessments.