

FSA University Modernization Support Project Description

Overview

The FSA Skills Catalog is a compilation of the associated knowledge, abilities and professional qualities required at FSA. The FSA Skills Catalog is a principal tool for FSA Management to identify skill gaps and workforce development needs. The FSA Skills Catalog was originally created in 2000 by FSA HR and FSA University with the support of Integration Partner. Updates and revisions to the catalog were made in 2001. The current project will apply information provided by FSA on skill gaps to revise the current FSA Skills Catalog and provide a consolidated summary of FSA's current skill needs.

The revised FSA Skills Catalog will chart competency development within and across the FSA organization. It may be used by FSA to support reorganization, recruiting, staff deployment, training, knowledge management, retention, and transition. Support will be provided to FSA to revise and deploy the FSA Skills Catalog. Further efforts may assist FSA University staff to assess the needs and identify options for developing competencies and capabilities with the channels and other enterprise units. Best practices and supporting materials will be developed to help FSA University in this role. The Integration Partner will work alongside FSA University staff on this effort, with the Integration Partner focusing on design and best practices and FSA University staff focusing on information gathering and analysis. This project description outlines all aspects involved in the FSA Skills Catalog revision effort.

Business Need

FSA has several ongoing integration initiatives designed to meet its five objectives: modernize and integrate systems, improve program integrity, reduce costs, improve human capital and improve products and services. One goal of these broad objectives is to update/enhance the FSA Skills Catalog to support the skill development of FSA staff. The revision of the FSA Skills Catalog is the first step in the larger and underlying initiative of workforce development.

With an accurate and updated FSA Skills Catalog, not only will program integrity improve with the ability to refocus on workforce development, but by identifying skill gaps, reductions in cost will be possible through temporary sourcing and long term employee training. A better qualified and trained workforce will also strengthen human capital and subsequently improve the products and services provided.

Objectives

As previously mentioned, the overarching objective of this project is to apply information provided by FSA on skill gaps to revise the FSA Skills Catalog and provide a consolidated summary of FSA's current skill needs.

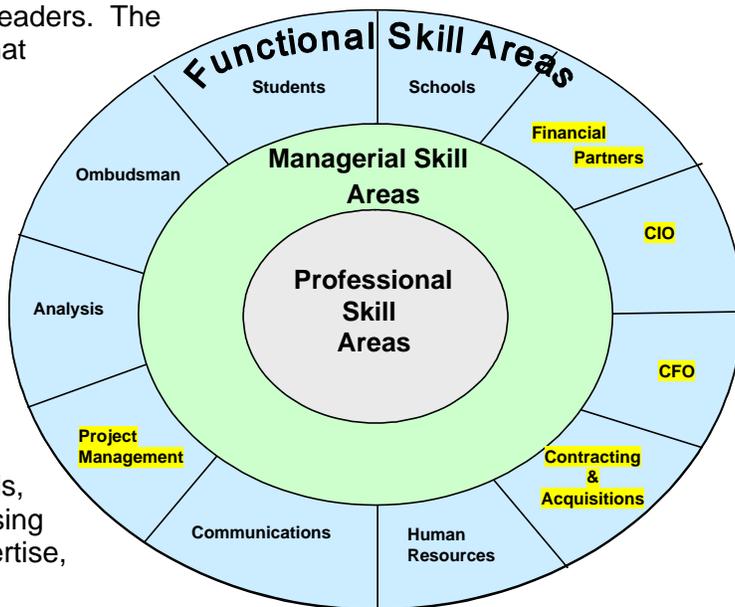
More specifically, an updated FSA Skills Catalog will allow FSA employees to help plan their development and increase their involvement in developing FSA's workforce. This will provide employees with the opportunity to identify individual skill strengths and areas for development. The catalog will also provide employees the opportunity to proactively participate in his/her career development. The success of this objective can be measured by employee engagement through tracking employee access of the FSA Skills Catalog. This could be easily done if the FSA Skills Catalog is made accessible online.

Also, competency development within and across FSA organizational lines will be charted by the catalog. Both employees and leadership will be able to align workforce development opportunities with FSA’s goals. Expectations will be outlined for the different roles in FSA and the FSA Skills Catalog will provide a clear picture of the skills needed to succeed in each role. The success of this objective can be measured by employee skills assessment and tracking progress towards FSA’s goals.

In addition to the objectives, it is important to note what the FSA Skills Catalog is not designed to do. It is not intended to identify the employees who should be downgraded or dismissed. The FSA Skills Catalog is not provided to compare employee performance or reward employees arbitrarily. Nor is it planned for use in determining candidates eligible for promotion. If used appropriately, the FSA Skills Catalog will help facilitate the workforce development process and help FSA reach their current objectives.

Scope

The skills in the existing FSA Skills Catalog were determined based on best practices and multiple working sessions with organizational leaders. The FSA Skills Catalog is based on a skill model that categorizes employee skills into three areas: professional, managerial and functional. Professional skills are necessary to conduct daily FSA activities and required by all FSA employees, regardless of job position. Managerial skills are associated with leading and managing FSA and are required by FSA supervisors, managers and executives. Functional skills are required for a channel/organization to successfully perform in FSA and are often unique to that organization. Using the current three-tiered skill model and beginning with the existing skills, it is necessary to review and modify content using best practice research, and departmental expertise, aligned with the new organizational structure.



The following organizations will be targeted in this effort: the CFO, CIO, Financial Partners, Project Management and Contracts and Acquisitions. Within each organization, a development process will be followed. This development process is described in the Process Section below.

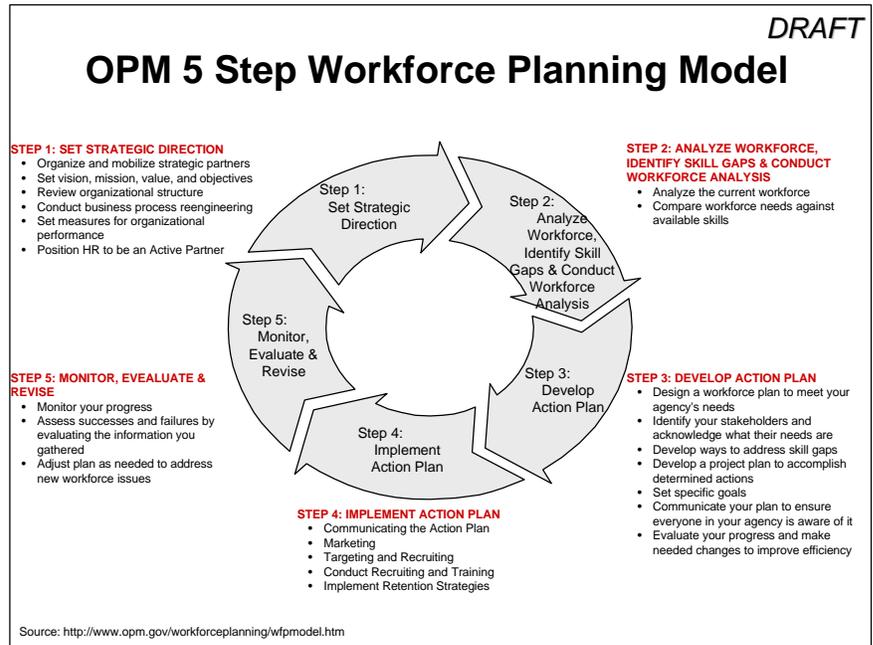
Process

The revision of the FSA Skills Catalog involves an integrated and repeatable process. This 11 step process is based on adaptations of previous efforts and best practices both inside and outside of the Department of Education. The FSA Skills Catalog itself is part of the larger capability building process at FSA. With the revised FSA Skills Catalog, FSA will be able to track competency development throughout the organization. Future efforts may include workforce training and development initiatives based on the results the FSA Skills Catalog provides.

Capability Building Overview

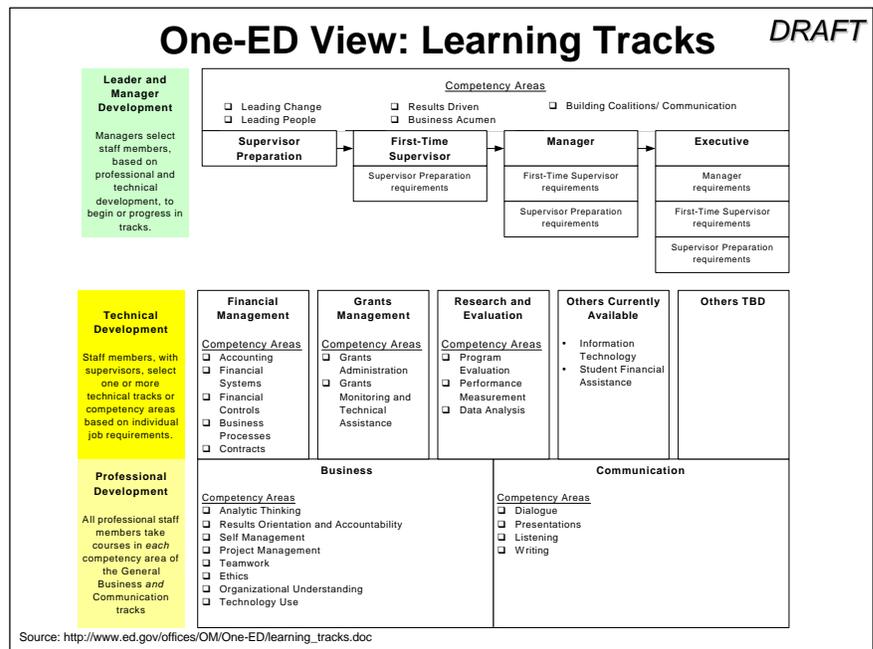
OPM 5 Step Workforce Planning Model

The OPM 5 Step Workforce Planning Model is a best practice used to support the FSA Skills Catalog revision effort. The OPM perspective on workforce planning begins with a strategic direction. Like OPM, FSA has set a strategic direction based around the organization's 5 objectives. The second step of OPM's process is to analyze the workforce to identify skills gaps. This step supports FSA's creation of the FSA Skills Catalog, as the workforce could not be analyzed and workforce needs compared with available skills without an accurate FSA Skills Catalog. The last three steps of the process describe future actions FSA will take based on the success of the FSA Skills Catalog.



One-ED View: Learning Tracks

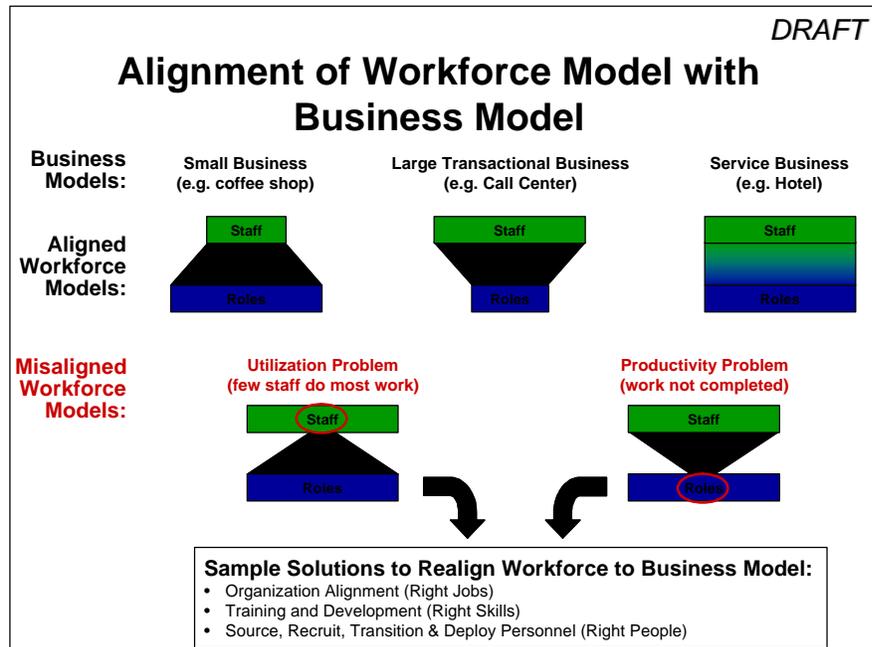
Learning Tracks provides a three-tiered, competency-based, training and development curricula. These curricula are formatted into the following three sections: Professional Development, Technical Development, and Leader and Manager Development. Professional Development competencies are general skills that all staff members need including business and communication learning tracks. Technical Development competencies include learning tracks in three areas: grants administration, financial management, and program evaluation and are catered specifically to that area's needs. Leader and Manager Development competencies (including for pre-supervisors, supervisors, managers, and executives) consist of five learning tracks from the OPM executive core qualifications: (1) leading people, (2) leading change, (3) results driven, (4) business acumen, and (5) building coalitions/communication. The FSA Skills Catalog



likewise is divided into three competency levels (professional, managerial, and functional), a modified version of Learning Tracks.

Alignment of Workforce Model with Business Model

The alignment of the workforce model and the business model explains the importance of having an adequately trained workforce. Each diagram represents a different model. The small business model has limited staff that can perform multiple roles. This model is successful for a small business because staffing costs are kept a minimum due to the employees' ability to handle multiple responsibilities. Using the coffee shop example, one employee would be able to efficiently make and distribute the coffee, run the cash register, and clean and care for the shop.



In a large transactional business, there is a large number of staff to do a minimum number of roles. A large staff is needed because of the full engagement these roles require. For example, in a call center thousands of phone calls are received each day. Multiple employees are handling the same type of call, based on the sheer volume of calls received.

In a service oriented business, such as a hotel, the staff should equal the necessary roles. With specific and constant service being provided, it is necessary for the staff to specialize in certain areas in order to do the role effectively. For example, housekeeping staff are responsible for maintaining the guests' rooms, whereas, reception/front desk staff handles the administrative needs of the guests, and the bellman handles the guests' luggage. It would not make sense for the bellman to handle guests' reservations as he would be unable to perform his bellman duties concurrently.

In a misaligned workforce model, the ratio of staff to roles is off balance. Depending on the type of business being discussed, this imbalance can occur in several ways. However, regardless of the business type, two main problems will occur, utilization and productivity.

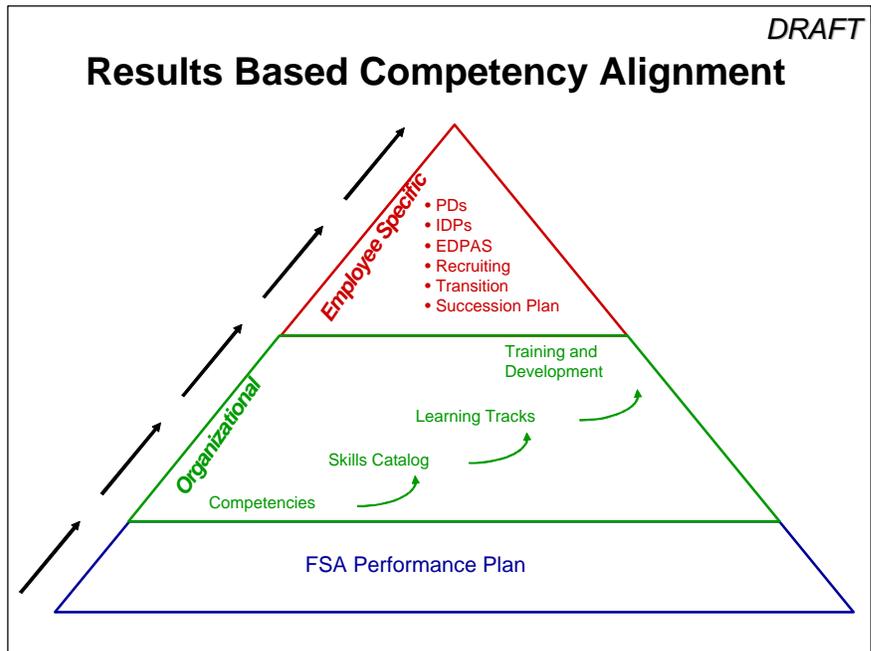
In a utilization problem, an organization has very few qualified staff to do a majority of the work. Therefore, those qualified staff members are overworked whereas other staff members are being under utilized. To remedy this situation, the number of trained staff must be increased either through hiring or a training curriculum.

In a productivity problem, an organization has a large number of staff, but too few roles to complete the necessary work. With the majority of the staff performing the same tasks, other tasks are not getting

completed. To remedy this situation, some of the staff must either be retrained to perform different roles or the number of staff increased to provide resources for the remaining roles.

Results Based Competency Alignment

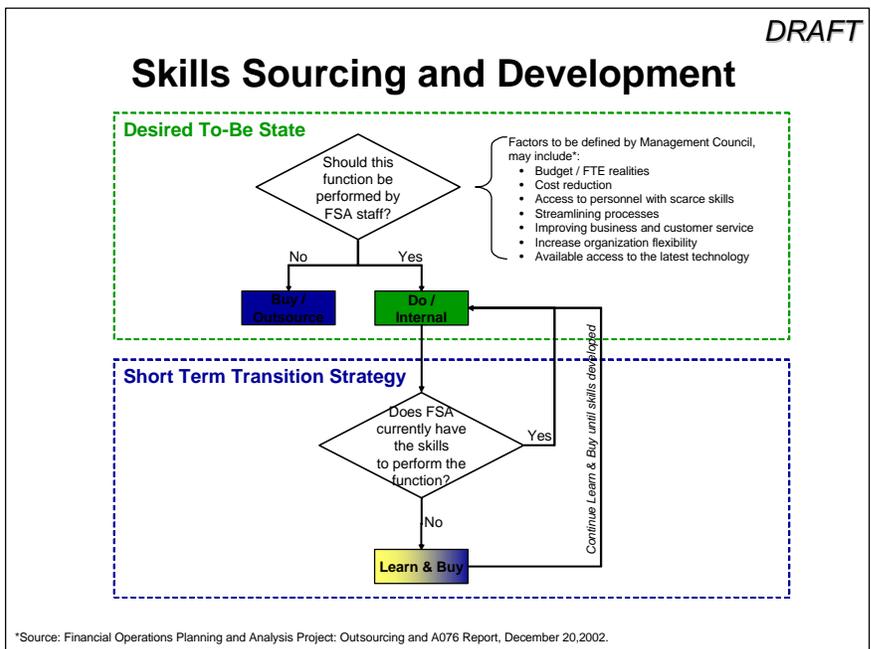
According to a statement made by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in *Looking to the Future Human Resources Competencies* (September 1999), "There is a recognition that the role of [the human resource management function] is moving from an emphasis on rules to a focus on results...Competencies are being used as a way to refocus the organization on what is really important and what it takes for the workforce to be successful." These are the concepts on which the FSA Skills Catalog has been based. By using the pyramid diagram, it is easy to see that employee specific results will lead to organizational results, which will help FSA achieve the goals on its performance plan.



The FSA Skills Catalog specifically allows the employee to better control his/her career development and allows FSA to monitor and build its competencies, a goal of the performance plan.

Skills Sourcing and Development

The Skills Sourcing and Development view depicts what has been referred to as the "Do, Learn, Buy" concept. This process walks through the steps taken when FSA is deciding whether or not a function should be performed by FSA staff. If the decision is no, then the function will be outsourced, or in other words, bought. If yes, then the question of whether FSA currently has the skills needed to perform the function must be answered. If the answer is yes, then FSA staff will perform the function. If no, then the function must be temporarily outsourced while FSA staff can learn the skills necessary to



*Source: Financial Operations Planning and Analysis Project: Outsourcing and A076 Report, December 20,2002.

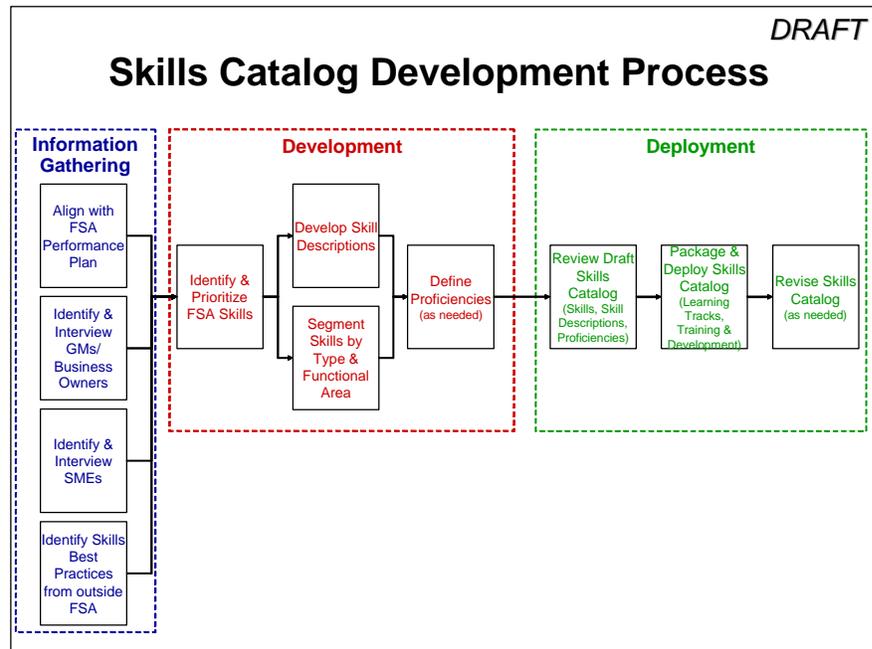
perform the function. The Do, Learn, Buy theory supports the idea of short-term outsourcing in an effort to increase future work done by FSA staff through a process of continual learning.

FSA Skills Catalog Development Process

The FSA Skills Catalog development process is viewed in 3 main steps: information gathering, development and deployment. To align with the six step project approach (vision, plan, design, develop, deploy, and close), the vision and planning phases are categorized into the information gathering step and the development step includes the design phase. Within the three steps: eleven tasks occur as follows:

1. Align with FSA Performance Plan
2. Identify & Interview GMs/Business Owners
3. Identify & Interview SMEs
4. Identify Skills Best Practices from Outside FSA
5. Identify & Prioritize FSA Skills
6. Develop Skill Descriptions
7. Segment Skills by Type & Functional Area
8. Define Proficiencies (as needed)
9. Review Draft FSA Skills Catalog (Skills, Skill Descriptions, Proficiencies)
10. Package & Deploy FSA Skills Catalog (Learning Tracks, Training & Development)
11. Revise FSA Skills Catalog (as needed)

These tasks make up a repeatable process with the end result being the revised FSA Skills Catalog.



Deploy/Communicate

A deployment plan is critical to the success of the project. A deployment plan ensures that the appropriate audiences are fully engaged and reach varying levels of acceptance. If the FSA Skills Catalog is not properly deployed, it will mostly likely be a shelved document and will not provide necessary value. However, if the FSA Skills Catalog is successfully deployed it will assist FSA and FSA University in achieving desired objectives and initiatives. Per the approach, specific recommendations will be further developed by the team and may include:

- Review of previous deployment effort
- Early examination of deployment options
- Criticality of stakeholder support

Risks

The success of the FSA Skills Catalog effort will be based on a structured approach, strong project management, and stakeholder and customer support. However, the following risks should be monitored for potential impacts:

Risk	Mitigation Strategy
<p>Customer Availability is critical to the success of the FSA Skills Catalog. Without access to organizational management, best practices cannot be confirmed and skills and skill descriptions cannot be validated. If the organization is not available to tailor the FSA Skills Catalog to suit their needs, it will prove futile to that organization.</p>	<p>To ensure support, it is necessary to engage the customer early in the process and update the customer often with the status of the project. By soliciting management’s help early on and reaffirming their commitment with regular status meetings, it will place partial ownership of the project on the customer.</p>
<p>The deployment process has not yet been defined. This is a key issue, as the previous two versions of the FSA Skills Catalog were not utilized fully because no deployment process was created.</p>	<p>To mitigate the risk of poor deployment, the team needs to examine deployment options early. Also, by reviewing the past deployment attempts, lessons can be learned and value added to the current deployment plan.</p>
<p>Additional funding is not in the budget for a deployment.</p>	<p>By providing best practice research and templates, FSA should be able to solely facilitate the deployment process.</p>
<p>The early adoption of the FSA Skills Catalog by employees and supervisors is vital to the overall success of the effort.</p>	<p>By engaging the customer early and often, support is more easily gained. Additionally, by mandating frequent updates to the stakeholders, leadership will be better able to sponsor the initiative and maintain motivation and enthusiasm.</p>