

An Employer's Guide to Kickstart

Building essential skills for employment and life



CIPD



Skills Builder
PARTNERSHIP

October 2020

Contents

- Overview of the Kickstart Scheme
- What are essential skills and why do they matter?
- The Skills Builder Universal Framework of Essential Skills
- How to build essential skills?
- Tools and resources to support you
- Appendix: The Skills Builder Universal Framework

Introduction

This short guide has been put together by the organisations behind the Skills Builder Universal Framework: the Skills Builder Partnership, Business in the Community, CIPD, and the CBI.

In a difficult environment, the Kickstart programme provides a huge opportunity for both individuals and businesses. To seize that opportunity though, there need to be three things in place:



Clearly designed, purposeful roles. Businesses should ensure young people have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, by using jargon-free job descriptions and providing quality inductions regardless of whether placements are taking place remotely or physically.



The right support in place for participants to thrive. Employers should allocate a buddy to support the Kickstart participant throughout their placement, and particular attention should be given to ensuring participants have the right working environment and access to technology if placements take place virtually. If businesses cannot deliver the wrap-around support required, they can work with a partner to put this support in place, to make their placement a success.



A structured approach to building the essential skills for them to succeed in work Participants need to be given opportunities to understand, identify and develop their essential skills, as this will increase the impact of their placement and improve their chances of sustained employment beyond Kickstart.

Conversations so far through the networks of the organisations behind this guide suggests that it is this latter point that is proving the most challenging.

This short guide focuses on how the Skills Builder Universal Framework, already used by more than 800 organisations, can help to structure what progress in essential skills looks like. It provides advice and ideas on how to support participants to develop their essential skills. It also shares some tools and resources that can be used to build the approach that works best for you and your participants.

Overview of the Kickstart Scheme

The Government's Kickstart scheme has been developed in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The goal is to create hundreds of thousands of high quality 6-month work placements for young people to support them to develop the experiences and the skills to thrive in employment in the long-term.

There is a potentially huge value to businesses in employing these young people and benefitting from their efforts, and big benefits to those individuals too.

What is on offer

- The Government Funding available for each job will cover the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.
- There is also funding available of £1,500 per job placement for setup costs and training, which can be used to help young people build new skills in partnership with other organisations, if appropriate.
- Through the scheme, you'll be able to access a large pool of young people who are open to the opportunity. The scheme will initially prioritise young people aged between 16 and 24 who are ready for an opportunity and will be supported by their Jobcentre Plus work coach to enrol in the scheme.
- If your organisation will be creating more than 30 job placements throughout the scheme, you can apply directly on the Kickstart website. If you are applying for fewer jobs you can partner with other organisations. The Government has published a list of regional 'Gateway' contacts to support in this process.

What is expected of employers

- The job placements created with Kickstart funding must be new jobs. They can't replace existing or planned vacancies, or cause existing employees or contractors to lose or reduce their employment.
- The roles have to be a minimum of 25 hours per week, for 6 months. They should be paid at least the National Minimum Wage for their age group. They shouldn't require people to undertake extensive training before they begin the job placement.
- There is an expectation that all employers will support participants to develop their skills and experience including:
 - Support to look for long-term work
 - Support with CV and interview preparation
 - Training to develop essential skills for employability (including teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills)

From speaking to the employers who are part of our networks through CIPD, the CBI, Business in the Community and Skills Builder Partnership, we know that developing these essential skills presents a potential challenge.

What are essential skills, and why do they matter?

What are essential skills and why do they matter?

The importance of developing a set of essential skills for individuals to thrive in education, employment and entrepreneurship has been long documented, from the CBI's landmark 1989 report through to the Taylor Review in 2017.

Essential skills are those which 'almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They are the skills that make specific knowledge and technical skills fully productive'. (UKCES, 2009)

Our focus here is on those essential skills, because building them will:

- Have the greatest immediate impact on participants' ability to add value to your business.
- Best position them to transition out of their six month placement – either to a role with you, or elsewhere.

Skills Builder Universal Framework of Essential Skills

The Universal Framework was developed over two years, building off an approach honed over a decade in education by the Skills Builder Partnership. It's been backed by a Taskforce including CIPD, CBI, Business in the Community, the Gatsby Foundation, the Careers & Enterprise Company and the EY Foundation .

It breaks down the broad set of essential skills into eight critical skills:



Listening: The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas.



Speaking: The oral transmission of information or ideas.



Problem Solving: The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge.



Creativity: The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas.



Aiming High: The ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them.



Staying Positive: The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals.



Leadership: Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal.



Teamwork: Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal.

Breaking the skills into steps

The Framework then goes further by breaking each of these essential skills into a series of 16 steps that take an individual from being an absolute beginner through to mastery. In doing so, it provides a clear roadmap for organisations to see progress over time.



For example, starting out in Listening might just mean being able to listen for a time without interrupting. At a more sophisticated level, this might mean being able to capture information effectively, to spot when someone is trying to influence you, and to identify bias.

As another example, a beginner at Teamwork might be getting a grip on the norms of behaviour in a workplace – including norms, time keeping and being a reliable part of the team. At an intermediate level, they might be contributing to a group's decision making, and helping to resolve conflicts. At an advanced level, they might be building relationships beyond their immediate team and influencing as work progresses by suggesting improvements.

The value of this level of detail and specificity is three-fold:

- Having an objective set of measures helps individual to understand their skillset in a higher level of detail.
- Seeing what progression looks like supports the notion that improvement is possible with the right focus and efforts in the right direction.
- Managers can track progress, and give more specific, usable feedback to improve performance.

The Skills Builder Universal Framework gives the 'what' in building essential skills for work and life.

See the full Framework from Page 9

How to build essential skills?

Over the last ten years, the Skills Builder Partnership have been working with employers, educators and skills-building organisations to hone an approach that answers the question of how to build essential skills.

We have found that there are six principles which hold true when essential skills are being built effectively. Here, we share those six principles and some questions to consider when developing your ideas around how to support your Kickstart participants to thrive:



Principle 1: Keep it simple

A consistent focus on the clearly defined essential skills helps ensure everyone's shared understanding and makes building these skills as tangible as possible. Using the same language all the time makes a big difference. Think about:

- Introducing the Skills Builder language early, from recruitment, and linking opportunities that use those skills across the business to that language.
- Ensuring that all skills training links back to that same language.
- Training line managers to be comfortable using that language with the participants who they are supporting.



Principle 2: Start early, keep going

Mastering these essential skills isn't simple and takes time, and sustained effort. These underpinning skills are relevant and worth revisiting and refining throughout a career. Think about:

- Planning out how participants are exposed to these skills from day one – ensuring they add value in your company from the outset.
- Modelling how different roles at different levels of seniority draw on the essential skills – potentially using different steps though.
- Revisiting these skills regularly over the course of the Kickstart programme, rather than just seeing them as a crash-course at the start of the 6 months.



Principle 3: Measure it

Take time to reflect on the skills of individuals – by observing or by self-assessment. This gives a balanced understanding of strengths and weaknesses, highlights progress and shows next steps. Think about:

- Using tools like Skills Builder's Skills Benchmarking Tool to give individuals the space to reflect on their own skills at the start of the programme.
- Sharing the results of that self-assessment with a line manager or mentor as a basis for discussion and reflection.
- Revisiting the Skills Benchmarking Tool later on, to see progress and to continue to think about next steps.



Principle 4: Focus tightly

Building essential skills should be timely and focused appropriately. It should allow dedicated time just to explicitly build the skill. Think about:

- Running workshops that are closely focused on one or two steps of the skills – this level of focus makes all the difference in seeing tangible progress.
- Alternatively, the Skills Builder Learner Platform can act as a useful tool for individuals to find learning materials that they can use themselves to boost their essential skills further, step-by-step.
- Managers or mentors can also use the Skills Builder Interactive Framework to see how each skill step can be built, with clear guidance they can use to support participants.



Principle 5: Keep practising

To accelerate progress in the essential skills, they should be used and reinforced as often as possible – including opportunities for reflection. Think about:

- Ensuring that the participants have regular opportunities to practice their essential skills in different contexts. This might be possible through their day-to-day work with you, or it might mean creating a challenging standalone project.
- Introducing deliberate practice. This means that rather than just using the skill, they should also be thinking about using the specific skill step and reflecting themselves afterwards on whether they were able to do that effectively.
- Observing and coaching from a manager or mentor is an important part of deliberate practice too.



Principle 6: Bring it to life

Ensure individuals see how their essential skills can transfer between different settings and be applied to different problems. Think about:

- Framing the essential skills not just in the context of their current work, but how they can be helpful at the end of the six-month placement in getting other jobs.
- Practising with individuals how they can articulate the skills that they have developed, including particular reference to steps and examples of using them.
- Exploring how these essential skills can also be helpful in wider life and education beyond the workplace too. There is more guidance on this as part of the Interactive Framework Tools.

Tools and resources to support you

There are a raft of tools and resources which are available to support you to use the Skills Builder Universal Framework, many of which are freely available:



Essential Skills through Work Placements Webinars

A 45-minute webinar exploring how to build essential skills development into your work experience, apprenticeship or Kickstart programme:

- Discover how to embed essential skills within your programme from application and selection to feedback and next steps
- Hear tips for delivering skills development through online placements

Go to: [book your place on the webinar](#)



Interactive Framework Tool

This tool enables managers to explore the Skills Builder Framework in more detail, digging into individual steps to:

- Reflect on what it looks like to have mastered that skill step
- Learn what you need to know to put that step into practice
- Practise the step with some of the exercises suggested

Go to: www.skillsbuilder.org/framework



Skills Builder Hub

This platform has a wealth of tools and resources to help you to assess the development needs of your participants, and then use the short lessons, skills workbooks and other reflective tools to support progress.

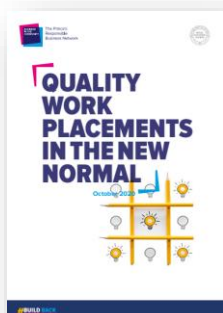
Go to: www.skillsbuilder.org/hub



Skills Benchmarking Tool (from late November 2020)

The Skills Benchmarking Tool is an immersive experience that supports individuals to reflect on their essential skills, and to assess where their strengths and development areas currently lie. It provides useful outputs that can then be shared with managers or mentors.

Go to: www.skillsbuilder.org (from late November)



Quality Work Placements Guide

Business in the Community have put together a great guide for how to make the most of the Kickstart scheme and broader work placements, which expands on some of the ideas covered here.

Go to: www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/work-placements-in-the-new-normal/

More support from Skills Builder Partnership

In addition to the free resources and materials shared, there is additional support available from Skills Builder to help you take a structured approach to developing essential skills through your Kickstart programme:



Join the Partnership

Work with us to embed the Skills Builder approach within your Kickstart programme.

- Skills Builder Membership
- Bespoke support to incorporate essential skills development within your Kickstart training programme
- Access to the Skills Benchmarking tool with cohort tracking features
- Access to the Skills Builder Hub with tools and resources to enhance your programme
- Access to line-manager training modules



Essential Skills Academy

Partner with Skills Builder to deliver your essential skills training

- A fully facilitated 10 session essential skills training programme tailored to your cohort
- In-depth insight and coaching across all 8 essential skills
- Individual Skills Benchmarking
- Progress tracking and personalised next steps road map
- Optional in-role activities
- Optional line manager training

To find out more about how we can support you to take a structured approach to building essential skills please:

- Contact Rosa Morgan-Baker (Director of Development, Skills Builder) at rosa.morgan-baker@skillsbuilder.org
- Join us for an Essential Skills through Work Placements webinar, by clicking [here](#).



Skill: Listening

The receiving, retaining and processing of information or ideas

| Step | Statement |
|------|--|
| 0 | I listen to others without interrupting |
| 1 | I listen to others and can remember short instructions |
| 2 | I listen to others and can ask questions if I don't understand |
| 3 | I listen to others and can tell someone else what it was about |
| 4 | I listen to others and can tell why they are communicating with me |
| 5 | I listen to others and record important information as I do |
| 6 | I show I am listening by how I use eye contact and body language |
| 7 | I show I am listening by using open questions to deepen my understanding |
| 8 | I show I am listening by summarising or rephrasing what I have heard |
| 9 | I am aware of how a speaker is influencing me through their tone |
| 10 | I am aware of how a speaker is influencing me through their language |
| 11 | I listen critically and compare different perspectives |
| 12 | I listen critically and think about where differences in perspectives come from |
| 13 | I listen critically and identify potential bias in different perspectives |
| 14 | I listen critically and use questioning to evaluate different perspectives |
| 15 | I listen critically and look beyond the way speakers speak or act to objectively evaluate different perspectives |



Skill: Speaking

The oral transmission of information or ideas

| Step | Statement |
|------|--|
| 0 | I speak clearly to someone I know |
| 1 | I speak clearly to small groups of people I know |
| 2 | I speak clearly to individuals and small groups I do not know |
| 3 | I speak effectively by making points in a logical order |
| 4 | I speak effectively by thinking about what my listeners already know |
| 5 | I speak effectively by using appropriate language |
| 6 | I speak effectively by using appropriate tone, expression and gesture |
| 7 | I speak engagingly by using facts and examples to support my points |
| 8 | I speak engagingly by using visual aids to support my points |
| 9 | I speak engagingly by using tone, expression and gesture to engage listeners |
| 10 | I speak adaptively by changing my language, tone and expression depending on the response of listeners |
| 11 | I speak adaptively by planning for different possible responses of listeners |
| 12 | I speak adaptively by changing my content depending on the response of listeners |
| 13 | I speak influentially by changing the structure of my points to best persuade the listeners |
| 14 | I speak influentially by changing the examples and facts I use to best persuade the listeners |
| 15 | I speak influentially by articulating a compelling vision that persuades the listeners |



Skill: Problem Solving

The ability to find a solution to a situation or challenge

| Step | Statement |
|------|---|
| 0 | I complete tasks by following instructions |
| 1 | I complete tasks by finding someone to help if I need them |
| 2 | I complete tasks by explaining problems to someone for advice if I need |
| 3 | I complete tasks by finding information I need myself |
| 4 | I explore problems by creating different possible solutions |
| 5 | I explore problems by thinking about the pros and cons of possible solutions |
| 6 | I explore complex problems by identifying when there are no simple technical solutions |
| 7 | I explore complex problems by building my understanding through research |
| 8 | I explore complex problems by analysing the causes and effects |
| 9 | I create solutions for complex problems by generating a range of options |
| 10 | I create solutions for complex problems by evaluating the positive and negative effects of a range of options |
| 11 | I analyse complex problems by using logical reasoning |
| 12 | I analyse complex problems by creating and testing hypotheses |
| 13 | I implement strategic plans to solve complex problems |
| 14 | I implement strategic plans to solve complex problems and assess their success |
| 15 | I implement strategic plans to solve complex problems and draw out learning to refine those plans over time |



Skill: Creativity

The use of imagination and the generation of new ideas

| Step | Statement |
|------|--|
| 0 | I imagine different situations |
| 1 | I imagine different situations and can say what I imagine |
| 2 | I imagine different situations and can bring them to life in different ways |
| 3 | I generate ideas when I've been given a clear brief |
| 4 | I generate ideas to improve something |
| 5 | I generate ideas by combining different concepts |
| 6 | I use creativity in the context of work |
| 7 | I use creativity in the context of my wider life |
| 8 | I develop ideas by using mind mapping |
| 9 | I develop ideas by asking myself questions |
| 10 | I develop ideas by considering different perspectives |
| 11 | I innovate effectively when working in a group |
| 12 | I innovate effectively by seeking out varied experiences and stimuli |
| 13 | I support others to innovate by sharing a range of tools |
| 14 | I support others to innovate by evaluating the right creative tools for different situations |
| 15 | I support others to innovate by coaching them to be more creative |



Skill: Staying Positive

The ability to use tactics and strategies to overcome setbacks and achieve goals

| Step | Statement |
|------|--|
| 0 | I can tell when I feel positive or negative |
| 1 | I can tell when others feel positive or negative |
| 2 | I keep trying when something goes wrong |
| 3 | I keep trying and stay calm when something goes wrong |
| 4 | I keep trying when something goes wrong, and think about what happened |
| 5 | I keep trying when something goes wrong and help cheer others up |
| 6 | I keep trying when something goes wrong and encourage others to keep trying too |
| 7 | I look for opportunities in difficult situations |
| 8 | I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and share these with others |
| 9 | I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and adapt plans to use these opportunities |
| 10 | I look for opportunities in difficult situations, and create new plans to use these opportunities |
| 11 | I identify risks and gains in opportunities |
| 12 | I identify risks and gains in opportunities, and make plans to manage them |
| 13 | I support others to stay positive, by managing my own responses |
| 14 | I support others to stay positive, by helping others to see opportunities |
| 15 | I support others to stay positive, by helping others to see opportunities and creating plans to achieve them |



Skill: Aiming High

The ability to set clear, tangible goals and devise a robust route to achieving them

| Step | Statement |
|------|---|
| 0 | I know when I am finding something too difficult |
| 1 | I know what doing well looks like for me |
| 2 | I work with care and attention to detail |
| 3 | I work with pride when I am being successful |
| 4 | I work with a positive approach to new challenges |
| 5 | I set goals for myself |
| 6 | I set goals informed by an understanding of what is needed |
| 7 | I set goals, ordering and prioritise tasks to achieve them |
| 8 | I set goals and secure the right resources to achieve them |
| 9 | I set goals and plan to involve others in the best way |
| 10 | I create plans that are informed by my skill set and that of others |
| 11 | I create plans that include clear targets to make progress tangible |
| 12 | I create plans that are informed by external views, including constructive criticism |
| 13 | I develop long-term strategies taking into account strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats |
| 14 | I develop long-term strategies that use regular milestones to keep everything on track |
| 15 | I develop long-term strategies that include feedback loops to support flexibility and adaptability |



Skill: Leadership

Supporting, encouraging and developing others to achieve a shared goal

| Step | Statement |
|------|---|
| 0 | I know how I am feeling about something |
| 1 | I know how to explain my feelings about something to my team |
| 2 | I know how to recognise others' feelings about something |
| 3 | I manage dividing up tasks between others in a fair way |
| 4 | I manage time and share resources to support completing tasks |
| 5 | I manage group discussions to reach shared decisions |
| 6 | I manage disagreements to reach shared solutions |
| 7 | I recognise my own strengths and weaknesses as a leader |
| 8 | I recognise the strengths and weaknesses of others in my team |
| 9 | I recognise the strengths and weaknesses of others in my team, and use this to allocate roles accordingly |
| 10 | I support others through mentorship |
| 11 | I support others through coaching |
| 12 | I support others through motivating them |
| 13 | I reflect on my own leadership style and its effect on others |
| 14 | I reflect on my own leadership style, and build on my strengths and mitigate my weaknesses |
| 15 | I reflect on my own leadership style, and adapt my approach according to the situation |



Skill: Teamwork

Working cooperatively with others towards achieving a shared goal

| Step | Statement |
|------|--|
| 0 | I work with others in a positive way |
| 1 | I work well with others by behaving appropriately |
| 2 | I work well with others by being on time and reliable |
| 3 | I work well with others by taking responsibility for completing my tasks |
| 4 | I work well with others by supporting them if I can do so |
| 5 | I work well with others by understanding and respecting diversity of others' cultures, beliefs and backgrounds |
| 6 | I contribute to group decision making |
| 7 | I contribute to group decision making, whilst recognising the value of others' ideas |
| 8 | I contribute to group decision making, encouraging others to contribute |
| 9 | I improve the team by not creating unhelpful conflicts |
| 10 | I improve the team by resolving unhelpful conflicts |
| 11 | I improve the team by building relationships beyond my immediate team |
| 12 | I influence the team by reflecting on progress and suggesting improvements |
| 13 | I influence the team by evaluating successes and failures and sharing lessons |
| 14 | I support the team by evaluating others' strengths and weaknesses, and supporting them accordingly |
| 15 | I support the team by bringing in external expertise and relationships |



www.skillsbuilder.org/employers

© Enabling Enterprise CIC, 2020