

# Royal Corps of Signals - Project CADUCEUS Case Study

## Context

Within the British Army's Royal Corps of Signals (R SIGNALS), the CADUCEUS project team, aimed to deliver a user-centric method of mapping, identifying and managing an individual's Knowledge, Skills, Experience and Behaviours (KSE-B) across R SIGNALS. This requirement was generated to help the R SIGNALS identify and close critical skills gaps across its cyber, digital and data career fields. Another driver was R SIGNALS to align to common industry skills frameworks and deliver increased fidelity between workforce supply and demand; subsequently acting as a decision support tool to drive appointments, promotions and professional development requirements.

The focus was to:

- Increase accuracy in matching the right individual to the right job.
- Assist the organisation to find suitably skilled individuals for assignments.
- Ascertain whether current job specifications could be written more objectively to highlight skills required for specific roles.
- Give individuals the ability to more accurately describe their skills and understand the skills requirement for specific career pathway.
- Develop individuals aligned to the skills required in role.

## Why

The team looked to add value to an existing process and identified a customisable skills framework that suited the organisation's needs and offered the ability to derive the following outcomes:

Organisational Value	Individual Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data driven decision support</li><li>• Capability management</li><li>• Job design and workforce planning</li><li>• Recruitment, selection, assignments and trawls</li><li>• Learning and development</li><li>• Performance management</li><li>• Recognition and reward</li><li>• Business process efficiency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Role and career transparency</li><li>• Understanding of personal development needs</li><li>• Progress measurement</li><li>• Better understanding of performance needs</li><li>• Increased motivation through better career ownership</li></ul>

## How SFIA Helped

The project set out with no preconceived ideas as to which framework to use, it all came down to research, what was out there and what would be the best model to fit the initial intent. Several areas were looked at which included:

- Over 100 differing frameworks reviewed and their implementation success across a multitude of organisations.
- Review of many talent applications to understand what could be done.

- Baselining of roles, people and functions across multiple frameworks.
- Cross mapping of industry and defence pathways against frameworks.
- Review of other national forces and international organisations.
- Lesson analysis and hypothesis testing.

At the end of an extensive period of research; the skills framework SFIA (Skills for the Information Age) was chosen. SFIA is a well-established internationally recognised framework; it has an easy to follow structure, it is simple in its approach and the flexibility of the SFIA architecture meant R SIGNALS, could manipulate it for their unique needs as an open source product. The seven SFIA levels of responsibility, how they are described and the consistent descriptions of the skills throughout reflected reality for the Army.

## **The R SIGNALS Approach**

Project CADUCEUS analysed in broad terms what skills are required in the R SIGNALS by breaking down each role into career aligned skill. It became evident that some existing SFIA skills were suitable for common ICT skills but there was a requirement for niche and non-ICT skills within the organisation.

The project subsequently identified a number of skills we needed for our particular environment and defined them in the SFIA style within the concepts of the SFIA Framework to establish a comprehensive hybridised framework for our particular needs, such as Explosive Ordnance Disposal Measures or Electronic Warfare. The process continued following the example from the first tranche of around 30 skills which soon grew into 56 skills adding new areas such as Cloud, Data and Logistics.

CADUCEUS set to work creating the Army's own skills and descriptors, digesting the skills requirements from their own Role Performance Statements and Specifications and other supporting documentation. The team spent several months thereafter researching and meeting managers and relevant competent authorities to make sure there was enough information to write the skill descriptors in readiness for pilot.

## **Pilot**

The pilot's first step was to map each role using a role builder available within the assessment tool we went on to use. The project team tasked Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) (middle management) with this and after a short brief they were quick to grasp the process of building role profiles.

With the roles mapped into the tool the next phase was to get circa 120 soldiers to sit a short skills questionnaire which would offer three things; what level they believe they are, what area of the skill they use and which of the skills best map to that area. With everything now ready in an online assessment portal the next step was to trial the concept in a live environment with a significant number of personnel in order to generate enough data and ensure the approach was as expected.

## Outcomes

Participants generally agreed that the hybridised framework allowed them to describe their skills more accurately and the associated career pathways. Soldiers also agreed that they would recommend the framework to others. Finally, they said the application's visual representation of the data made it easy to understand.

User feedback – notable quotes:

- 'This system would be a game-changer'.
- 'I love the concept as a way of improving visibility and allowing people to manage their careers better'.

## Next Steps

For the size of the organisation, the next logical step is to expand the trial to a larger group which the project intends to do in February 2021 with 400 personnel. Focusing the existing set of Army skills developed with the possibility of adding additional skills focussing around Cyber Security in an Army context. This should set the conditions for wider delivery and implementation in late 2021.

## Lessons Identified

There were several lessons identified from the pilot which were expected given the differences in approach between current methods and what the framework wants to achieve. Some of which are listed below.

- Military terminology and delivering cultural change.
- The belief that the levels are aligned to seniority within the organisation, rather than depth of knowledge in that field.
- Attribute questioning (Stage 1). It became clear using the stock questions to evaluate the SFIA attributes, although adequate; the words and phrases were not ideal for Army purposes. A consideration for the next phase would be to introduce a local level of terminology but still retain its commonality and externality. Example, the word organisation should be considered change to "Army".
- It was evident that the participants had answered the questions at a local level within their troop and not considering the wider scope of skills levels across the Army. We anticipate making slight adjustments to the wording within the questionnaire itself in order to offer a more direct correlation to "Army speak".

## Conclusion

The delivery of an Army skills framework will enable R SIGNALS to understand its workforce skills within the Cyber, Digital and Data career fields and use that data to optimise workforce planning and place talent and skills where the Army needs it within the Information Age. Using SFIA as a baseline to build upon and gradually grow this through interactive, incremental trials is coming to fruition with near term benefits already starting to underpin this huge change. Selecting SFIA as the basis for our skills development has been the right

decision; its sound principles and structure along with its flexibility and its ability to be extended for our special needs has proven to be invaluable in underpinning our skills needs.

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