

SKILL WORKS

ATTRACT THE RIGHT TALENT



PARTICIPANT GUIDEBOOK



COLORADO
Department of
Labor and Employment



SKILLFUL
A MARKLE INITIATIVE



COLORADO
WORKFORCE
CENTER

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
Part 1: Skills-Based Hiring	05
Part 2: Job Posting	11
Conclusion	17
References	18

Skillful Overview

Skillful, a non-profit initiative of the Markle Foundation with many partners, is working to achieve a skills-based labor market to help millions of Americans overcome barriers to obtaining better-paying jobs in today's digital economy. Skillful helps employers achieve the workforce they need by providing data, tools, and resources that enable the adoption of skills-based hiring and training practices. Coaches and digital services enable job seekers to learn what skills are in demand and access training at any stage of their career. At the same time, Skillful aligns employers and educators so that their training programs teach the skills required to succeed in today's economy.



DOWNLOAD SKILLFUL'S FREE RESOURCES AND TOOLS

VISIT [SKILLFUL.COM/EMPLOYERS](https://www.skillful.com/employers) TO LEARN MORE



CDLE and Workforce Centers

The Colorado Department of Labor & Employment connects job seekers with great jobs, provides an up-to-date and accurate picture of the economy to help decision making, assists workers who have been injured on the job, ensures fair labor practices, helps those who have lost their jobs by providing temporary wage replacement through unemployment benefits, and protects the workplace - and Colorado communities - with a variety of consumer protection and safety programs.

FIND ADDITIONAL SERVICES AND SUPPORT AT

[COLORADO.GOV/PACIFIC/CDLE/WFC](https://colorado.gov/pacific/cdle/wfc)



COLORADO
Department of
Labor and Employment



Skill Works

Skill Works is a four-part workshop series designed to help you learn and adopt skills-based hiring and employment practices. By implementing skills-based practices, you can fill positions faster, reduce turnover, and improve employee retention and engagement. Skill Works also includes local and digital resources to help you find and retain talent.

Each session has standalone content; you do not need to attend previous sessions to understand later ones. The four workshops cover the following topics:



Skill Works, Attract the Right Talent Objectives:

At the end of the training, you should be able to:

- ✓ **Articulate** what skills-based hiring is and the benefits of skills-based job postings
- ✓ **Write** a skills-based job posting
- ✓ **Reduce** bias in your job posting

Skillful Resources:

Visit www.Skillful.com/employers

*Download free tools and resources you can use to implement skills-based practices.
You can also sign up to receive Skillful updates.*



Part 1

Skills-Based Hiring

Overview

After this section, you should be able to:

- ✓ **Articulate** what skills-based hiring is and the benefits of skills-based job postings

What Is Skills-Based Hiring?

Skills-based hiring structures your company's hiring process around the competencies (the knowledge, skills, and abilities) needed to do a job. Each step of the hiring process is designed specifically to help you attract, evaluate, and hire candidates based on the skills the candidate needs to succeed in the position.

Key Elements of Skills-Based Hiring

- 1 **Remove credential requirements** such as degrees and number of years experience from hiring criteria.
- 2 **Use competencies specific to the job** on the job posting and to guide the entire hiring process.
- 3 **Reduce bias** in the hiring and selection process.

Why Skills-Based Hiring

- ✓ **Ensures** you find great talent in all labor market conditions.
- ✓ **Provides** consistency across hiring managers and departments when hiring.
- ✓ **Opens** your position to all available, qualified talent.

How Is a Skills-Based Job Posting Different?

Traditional Job Posting

Uses proxies (degrees, work experience) to assume skill mastery.

Includes a **laundry list of requirements** and preferences without specificity on how they apply to the position.

Uses language that **may contain unintentional biases** that discourages qualified applicants from applying.

Skills-based Job Posting

Uses skills to increase certainty that candidates have what is needed to do the job.

Clearly distinguishes between required and preferred qualifications.

Uses thoughtful language to **reduce bias** and create an inclusive, inviting job posting to all qualified readers.

Traditional Job Posting Example

Title:

Executive Assistant

Company Overview:

Skillful helps businesses open and expand their talent pools by hiring based on skills. Skillful, an initiative of the Markle Foundation, works in partnership with Microsoft, the state of Colorado, LinkedIn, and many other partners.

Responsibilities and Activities:

This role will be responsible for executive administration functions including:

- Assisting with scheduling of meetings and conference calls, including maintenance of calendars and arranging conference calling card numbers
- Planning and arranging meetings; making conference room reservations, handling catering orders, and preparing meeting documents
- Making travel arrangements and travel itineraries; preparing trip reimbursement reports in compliance with employee travel policy
- Providing reception coverage as needed
- Handling staff telephones, screening calls, and taking messages as requested
- Assisting with maintaining the office files, including scanning documents to maintain electronic file system

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree required
- 2-4+ years of administrative support experience is required
- A true professional, supports the team in achieving our goals
- Takes a proactive approach to problem-solving to remain ten steps ahead
- Computer skills including Word, Excel, Email, Internet, and Outlook. Adobe InDesign and CRM experience is a plus
- Work in a fast-paced environment
- Spanish fluency is a huge plus
- Highly organized and excellent attention to detail
- Leadership and management experience a plus

Skills-Based Job Posting Example

Title:

Executive Assistant

Company Overview:

Skillful helps businesses open and expand their talent pools by hiring based on skills. Skillful, an initiative of the Markle Foundation, works in partnership with Microsoft, the state of Colorado, LinkedIn, and many other partners.

Responsibilities and Activities:

This role will be responsible for executive administration functions including:

- Assisting with scheduling of meetings and conference calls, including maintenance of calendars and arranging conference calling card numbers
- Planning and arranging meetings; making conference room reservations, handling catering orders, and preparing meeting documents
- Making travel arrangements and travel itineraries; preparing trip reimbursement reports in compliance with employee travel policy
- Providing reception coverage as needed
- Handling staff telephones, screening calls, and taking messages as requested
- Assisting with maintaining the office files, including scanning documents to maintain electronic file system

Required Competencies:

- **Writing:** Ability to draft clear and concise letters and emails with proper spelling
- **Judgment and Decision-Making:** Ability to make decisions related to needs of the team. Has discretion and is able to maintain confidentiality at all times
- **Team Player:** Excels in an open office environment; effective and efficient at balancing the needs of numerous team members
- **Computer Literacy:** Proficiency using Microsoft Outlook, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
- **Contact Management Software:** Comfort using contact management software such as Salesforce

Preferred Competencies:

- **Graphic Design:** Ability to use InDesign or other design software to design digital and printed documents
- **Leadership:** Ability to take initiative, including assigning tasks to other team members
- **Spanish Language:** Fluency in speaking and writing Spanish

Benefits of Skills-Based Hiring

Despite Colorado having a

LOW unemployment rates

for people with a bachelor's degree or higher, degree inflation is on the rise.¹

Degree inflation threatens

6.2 million

qualified employees nationally, preventing them from meeting the degree requirements for their current employment.²

Education does not predict employee productivity

Penguin House Publishing found no productivity differences between employers with and without a degree in the same position.³

Yet, the use of degrees as a job requirement is on the rise in Colorado.

Skills-Based Hiring Ensures You:

Attract more qualified candidates

Open up your talent pool by including the **61% of the workforce** that do not have a degree⁴



Evaluate candidates with better selection criteria

A study by **Michigan State University** found that **using skills as criteria for hiring was five times better at selecting candidates** for entry-level positions than education.⁵



Increase the speed of hiring

Burning Glass found that **removing degree requirements decreases time to hire by 2-12 days.**⁶

Content of job descriptions make a huge difference

41%

The percentage of employees that strongly agree that their job description aligns well with the work that they do.⁷

2.5 times

Employees that strongly agree are 2.5 times more likely to be engaged (increased retention, productivity, happiness).

Bias and a Skills-Based Approach

Skills-based hiring structures the hiring process to remove areas in which bias is most prevalent while focusing on factors that increase the likelihood to hire the best candidate.

Increase diversity in your workforce

TalentSonar found that a focus on skills and a reduction of bias resulted in

30% more qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds that were often eliminated as a result of bias, not their ability to do the job.⁸



Improve competitive edge

Mercy Health, using a skills-based approach to hiring increased the racial diversity in their workforce.

This increase was attributed to hiring the best candidates which before fell out of the candidate pools as a result of bias.⁹



Bias in the hiring process is a result of the hiring manager valuing characteristics about an applicant that are not relevant to job performance. When one makes assumptions about someone based on physical appearance, personal preferences, and other characteristics, it creates, what psychologists call, “noise” in the hiring process that prevents you from evaluating effectively an applicant’s relevant talents. Bias inherently reduces the likelihood of hiring the most qualified candidate.

Psychologists have found that bias is most prevalent when trying to make judgments about a person’s overall ability. Instead, people make the best decisions when breaking down decisions to smaller parts. In hiring, it means understanding each relevant skill separately, then making an overall assessment.

Resources to Reduce Bias:

-  [Bias Interrupters](#) helps you use metrics to reduce bias in hiring and create an inclusive workplace.
-  Examine your own bias using Harvard University's [implicit bias test](#).
-  Use [Textio](#), [Gender Decoder](#), or [TalentSonar](#) to remove gender bias in your job postings.



Part 2

Writing a Job Posting

After this section, you should be able to:

- ✓ Write a skills-based job posting
- ✓ Reduce bias in your job posting

What Is a Competency?

Definitions:

 **Credential** - An achievement, qualification, or other aspect of an individual's background.

Commonly used credentials include degrees and other educational attainments, specific work experience, and certifications.

 **Competency** - A knowledge, skill, or ability used in a professional setting.

Examples of competencies include knowledge of HR practices, providing excellent customer service, and the ability to write code.

Process for Identifying Competencies:

- 1 **Describe** job responsibilities and activities
Example: Employee helps customers find the right product or service for their needs
- 2 **Identify** competencies needed to perform the activity
Example: Customer service
- 3 **Define** the competencies in the context of your position
Example: Customer Service - Able to understand and respond to the needs of shoppers; provide guidance on finding the correct product or service to meet customer needs; adapts explanations to shoppers' diverse levels of technical knowledge of the products
- 4 **Assess** whether the competencies are foundational or occupational
Example: Customer service is an occupational competency because employee needs to understand specific products and services to advise customers appropriately
- 5 **Determine** whether the competencies are required or preferred
Example: Customer service is a preferred competency, because it can be taught to a new employees



NOTE:

In some industries, specific credentials and certifications are required.

For instance, safety certifications are legally required in manufacturing and construction, and most healthcare positions require certifications. In these cases, certifications should be used as an addition to competencies.

Occupational vs. Foundational

Occupational Competencies:

These competencies are specific to an industry or job. These competencies are the technical skills a person needs to perform narrowly defined tasks and duties.

Example: A software developer’s ability to code, a nurse’s ability to diagnose common illnesses, a supervisor’s knowledge of HR practices

Foundational Competencies:

These competencies are professional knowledge and skills that are transferable from one job to another and across industries.

Example: Some refer to these as “soft skills,” but that language implies they are less important than technical abilities—and nothing could be further from the truth. Foundational competencies include social perceptiveness and the ability to use judgement to make difficult decisions.



NOTE:

Some competencies may be one or the other depending on the job.

The ability to communicate effectively is an occupational skill for a reporter, but a critical foundational skill for anyone leading teams and working in collaborative environments.

Required vs. Preferred:

Limiting your requirements to what is truly required increases your chances of finding a candidate with the skills needed to get the job done. Make sure to clearly distinguish between required and preferred competencies.

ABLE TO LEARN ON THE JOB

		ABLE TO LEARN ON THE JOB	
		ABLE:	UNABLE:
IMPORTANCE	NEEDED	<p>PREFERRED: Individuals need this skill but can learn it after being hired</p>	<p>REQUIRED: This skill is a deal breaker, they must know this skill day one</p>
	HELPFUL	<p>PREFERRED: Individuals can learn this skill over time to make them better at the job</p>	<p>PREFERRED: Skill is not necessary, but having it improves job performance</p>

Required vs. Preferred

Required Competencies:

These competencies are absolutely necessary; a candidate must have them on day one to complete job responsibilities and activities.

Example: *Coordination is often a required competency as it's necessary for the employee to coordinate staff on their team with one another, other departments, and leadership. This skill will be applied immediately upon hiring, so the company cannot afford a 3-6 month training period to develop this skill.*

Preferred Competencies:

These competencies are ones that can be learned or taught during onboarding. Also, preferred competencies are skills that improve job performance, but are not necessary.

Example: *Using a contact management software is necessary for this position, but the ability to use the CRM can be taught within the first 3-6 months on the job.*

Example: *Although designing documents is not a core responsibility for this role, graphic design skills will allow this employee to provide a beneficial service to the team.*

Identify Competencies for Your Position



On the next page, you'll add competencies that apply to your position. Use the following resources to gather competency data for your position.

- ✓ Use **competency cards** to find applicable competencies to your position
- ✓ Paste your existing job posting into [SkillsEngine Text Analysis](#) to reveal the skills for your position
- ✓ Search through additional competencies from [O*Net Data](#)
- ✓ Find similar occupations on [O*Net Occupation Quick Search](#) and select from existing competency lists that apply to your position
- ✓ Ask your [local workforce center](#) about [EMSI](#) Job Posting analysis

Defining Your Competencies



Below, add competencies that apply to your position and determine if they are foundational vs. occupational and required vs. preferred.

Job Title:

	Competency	Foundational or Occupational?	Required or Preferred?
1.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
5.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
6.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
7.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
8.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
9.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
10.	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>



Open the [Job Posting Blank Template](#) and use the above competencies to write your skills-based job posting.

Using Your Skills-based Job Posting

Below are steps to use your new skills-based job posting:

1. Collect all necessary skill data for your position
2. Get approval and buy-in from leadership, as applicable
3. Meet with employees currently in the position and supervisors to confirm skills are applicable and comprehensive for the position
4. With supervisors, discuss competencies that are required and competencies that can be taught on the job
5. Ensure all competencies are clearly written for the position
6. Use [Textio](#), [Gender Decoder](#), or [TalentSonar](#) to remove gender bias and replace with inclusive language in your job posting
7. Post your skills-based job posting to the company's website, [ConnectingColorado](#), and other job boards are relevant
8. Reach out to [workforce centers](#) and other organizations with a direct connection to local talent



Reminder:

When you look for perfection, you miss out on qualified applicants.

By reducing the number of qualifications and requirements listed on a posting to ones truly required, you'll get a better applicant pool and avoid missing qualified applicants that did not apply due to not meeting all the requirements listed.

Conclusion

Skills-based hiring and training help your company identify, attract, and hire the top talent you need to succeed. Make sure you attend **Skill Works 102: Candidate Evaluation** to learn about skills-based screening, interviewing, and assessment.

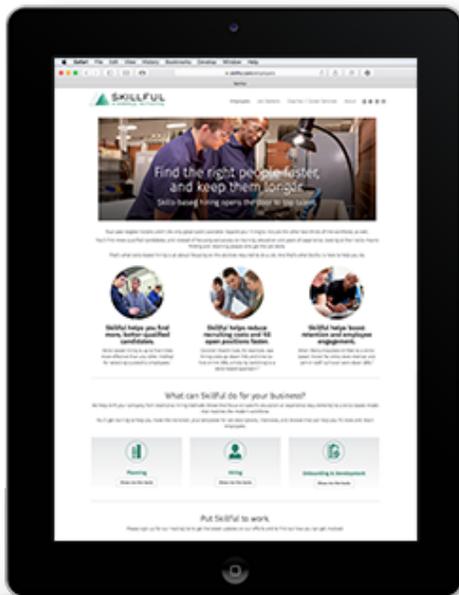


Commit to making the change to skills-based practices by writing down the next steps you will take to move your company to skills-based practices.



DOWNLOAD SKILLFUL'S FREE EMPLOYER TOOLKIT

VISIT [SKILLFUL.COM/EMPLOYERS](https://skillful.com/employers)



Be sure to go to skillful.com/employers to download guides, tools, and resources to help you accomplish your next step. Sign up to receive tips on skills-based practices, updates on new resources, and newsletter.

Ask your trainer for additional resources at their organization to improve your hiring practices!



If you have questions for Skillful or want to share feedback about the training, please contact info@skillful.com

References

1. “The practice of seeking a candidate with a four-year college degree for a position currently held by someone with a high school diploma or an associate’s degree.” Fuller, J., Raman, M., et al. (October 2017). *Dismissed By Degrees*. Published by Accenture, Grads of Life, Harvard Business School, 5.
2. Fuller, *Dismissed by Degrees*, 9.
3. “Penguin ditches degree requirement for job applicants.” Weale, Sally, (January 2016), *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/18/penguin-ditches-the-need-for-job-seekers-to-have-university-degrees>.
4. “Colorado Unemployment Rate by Educational Attainment (25 years and over).” Office of Labor Market Information, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment, November 6, 2017.
5. “Validity and Utility of Alternative Predictors of Job Performance.” Hunter, John E. & Ronda F. Hunter. (1984), Michigan State University, https://www.uam.es/personal_pdi/psicologia/pei/diferencias/Hunter1984JobPerformance.pdf, 90.
6. Fuller, *Dismissed by Degrees*, 11.
7. “The State of the American Workplace,” Gallup, Inc., 2017, 78-79.
8. Talent Sonar Outcomes Data, TalentSonar.com (Accessed January, 2017).
9. “Talent Acquisition Evidence-Based Selection Process Retention and Diversity Improvement.” Welch, Shana & Bill Guest (December 2015), Mercy Health, http://www.metricsreporting.com/assets/Mercy_Health_Talent_Acquisition_Retention_Diversity_2015-12-09.pdf, 21.