Finding untapped capability from within, using SFIA

Understanding individual skills of current staff at CenSus using SFIA provided invaluable data.

The intention and plan at CenSus was to form a single team capable of providing ICT support services for the participating organisations, both for Business As Usual (BAU) activities and for transformational and developmental projects. To do this, it was necessary to understand the skills and capability of each team member to ensure that the right people were in the right roles. It was determined that the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA) was a framework that could be used to identify ICT skills and understand if there were any skills gaps.

Central Sussex (CenSus) Partnership ICT provides ICT Infrastructural support services for the Horsham, Mid-Sussex District Councils and the Adur-Worthing Partnership.

The organisation was formed in 2006 with Adur, Horsham and Mid-Sussex participating. Worthing subsequently joined in 2011. The CenSus ICT team also supports the CenSus Revenues and Benefits Service that provides benefit processing for Adur, Horsham and Mid-Sussex councils.

The CenSus ICT Team has three principal locations (Horsham, Haywards Heath & Worthing) and has been formed from the respective Council teams.

The Solution

BSMimpact were engaged to help CenSus implement SFIA. With the arrival of the new Interim Head Of CenSus ICT (himself SFIA accredited) it had been determined that a skills assessment for the 46 staff involved should be undertaken prior to any possible reorganization of the service. To make sure that the service was able to meet current and future demands in a rapidly changing environment, they needed to know what skills and capabilities were present within the team. This included not only technical skills, but also professional and customer service skills.

The initial activities proposed involved the following:

- Undertake a SFIA based skills assessment for all staff
- Document the results of the assessment at both an individual and organizational level
- Confirm the skill requirements for the organization moving forward
- Understand the capabilities of the team and ensure that any reorganisation results with the right people in the right roles.

Following a short briefing and Q&A session at each of the key locations, each member of the CenSus ICT team was asked to take a SFIA online self-assessment. The self-assessment took the participants through a number of questions to determine the generic level of responsibility and the skills they had at what level.

It also took into consideration skills that matched; that were a partial match; and those which an individual had held earlier in their career but might not be considered current. These still represent a potential opportunity, as people with partial or previous skills can have gaps addressed or brought up-to-date. Individuals with previous skills can often be potential candidates for mentoring or support roles even if their current position does not require the particular skill.

Following the self-assessment, an analysis of the results showed that the majority of staff were self-taught and many entered ICT from a different background.

It was found that some of the SFIA skills were not fully present, however this was deemed to be an issue only if they were required skills. The Assessment results provided a baseline to identify gaps once the future strategy and requirements were agreed.

> "An excellent service provided by a thoroughly professional organisation. BSMimpact's Consultants were knowledgeable and had sufficient experience to be able to put the information gathered into a suitable context."
>
> - Ian Henderson, Interim Head Of CenSus ICT

Recommendations

The BSMimpact report showed exactly which skills were already present in the organization, using the internally accepted standard SFIA skills framework.

This gave the organization the information necessary to optimise the structure, grouping teams and capabilities taking into account skills rather than job roles. It enabled job/position descriptions to be better defined, using the SFIA Framework to indicate key skills required for each role.

In addition, it provided an excellent way to determining any training or further development requirements, essential for Continual Professional Development (CPD) plans.

Benefits / Lessons Learned

The results for CenSus found that there was a significant amount of potentially untapped capability in resources not currently using previously held skills. Often this represented experience which could be used to mentor others, or to support those working to close their own skill gaps.

The resulting report identified that some SFIA skills were not fully present, facilitating an informed discussion about which skill gaps might need to be addressed based on whether they are required by the organisation. The Assessment results given to CenSus provided a baseline to identify gaps once the future strategy and requirements were agreed.

CenSus can now move forward with defining roles and responsibilities, and produce SFIA-based Role Profiles and Job Descriptions. Using the data provided, they can perform a mapping of requirements to current skills, identify gaps and opportunities, and build Continual Professional Development (CPD) plans for all their staff.