

# Bridging the Skills Gap: A 90-Day Framework to Upskill Your Team



## Content:

INTRODUCTION.....	1
COST OF INACTION.....	2
WHY 90 DAYS.....	3
THE FRAMEWORK.....	4
DAYS 1-30.....	5
DAYS 31-60.....	8
DAYS 61-90.....	10
IDEAS TO ACTION.....	12
ADDITIONAL MODEL.....	14
APPENDIX.....	15
90-DAY CHECKLIST.....	16

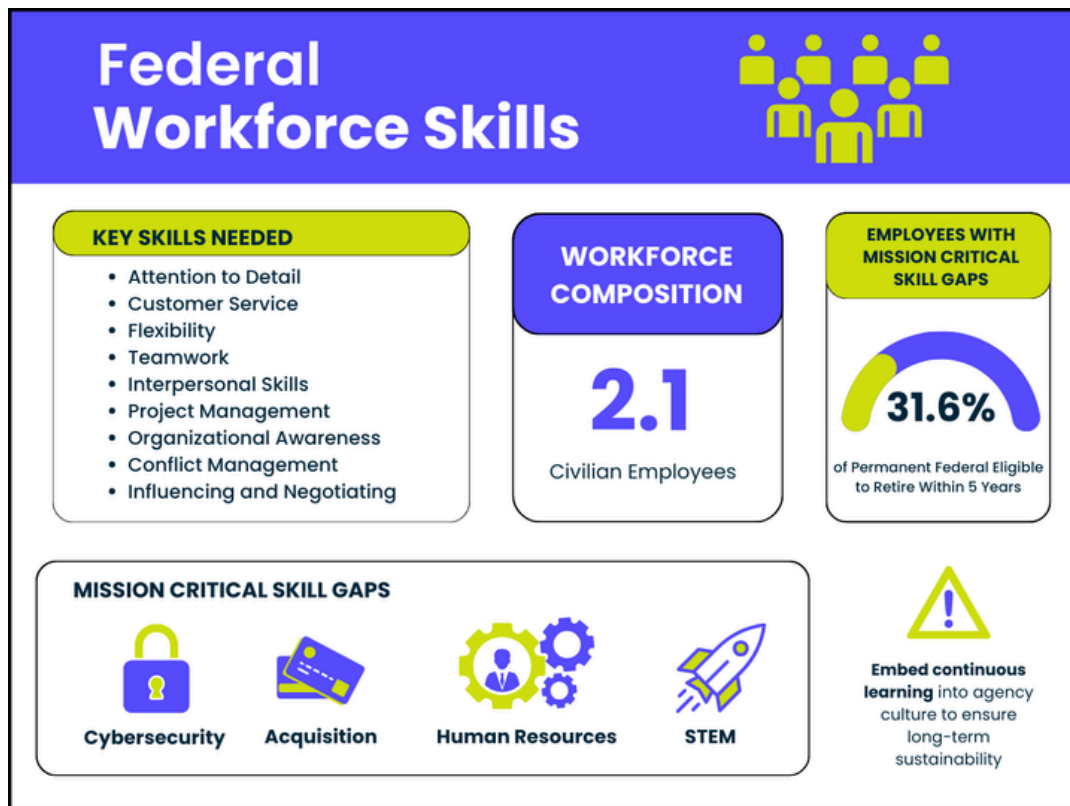
Federal agencies are navigating an unprecedented workforce landscape. Shifting policy priorities coupled with a leaner workforce leave agencies to answer a critical question:

## HOW DO WE MAINTAIN OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS WITH FEWER RESOURCES?

A shrinking workforce also creates significant skill gaps across federal operations. Yet, the mission remains unchanged, and agencies must continue to deliver essential services while adapting to these new constraints.

## THE COST OF INACTION

The stakes for teams in federal agencies couldn't be higher. Failing to address these skill gaps proactively carries significant consequences that extend far beyond internal operational challenges.



Perhaps most importantly, teams that successfully navigate this transition will establish more resilient operational models that can withstand future disruptions, whether they come in the form of budget constraints, policy shifts, or unexpected crises. The question before federal leaders is not whether to upskill, but how to implement effective upskilling strategies with limited resources and immediate impact. The answer lies in a structured, systematic approach that makes the most of existing resources while creating sustainable pathways for continuous improvement.

This white paper provides a structured framework for upskilling (and reskilling) the federal workforce, ensuring agencies can maintain operational resilience despite hiring limitations. It outlines a practical approach to workforce development that works within current constraints. Rather than relying on new hires or external solutions, the framework focuses on maximizing existing resources to build internal capacity

### Sources:

- [New OPM 'handbook' details skills-based job qualifications for governmentwide roles](#)
- [Federal Workforce: OPM Advances Efforts to Close Government-wide Skills Gaps but Needs a Plan to Improve Its Own Capacity | U.S. GAO](#)
- [FedScope – Federal Workforce Data – OPM.gov](#)

## WHY A 90-DAY UPSKILLING PLAN WORKS

A 90-day upskilling plan offers a focused, achievable, and high-impact approach to workforce development, especially in resource-constrained environments like federal agencies. Here's why it's recommended:



### Immediate Momentum

A 90-day window is short enough to generate urgency and engagement, yet long enough to deliver meaningful skill development. It helps teams move from planning to action quickly, avoiding the inertia that often stalls longer-term initiatives.



### Clear Scope and Measurable Outcomes

With a defined timeframe, agencies can set specific goals, track progress, and evaluate impact. It also allows for rapid deployment of learning resources and early wins that build confidence and buy-in.



### Agile and Adaptable

A 90-day plan is inherently agile. It allows leaders to pilot new learning methods, adjust based on feedback and performance, and scale successful approaches across teams.



### Foundation for Long-Term Strategy

Rather than being a one-off effort, a 90-day plan serves as a launchpad for sustained workforce development. It creates a repeatable model for continuous improvement, a framework for integrating learning into daily operations, and a culture of proactive skill-building.



### Resource-Efficient

A 90-day plan leverages existing personnel and infrastructure, making it a cost-effective way to build internal capacity without relying on external hires.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR FEDERAL WORKFORCE OPTIMIZATION

This framework centers on three critical dimensions:



### READINESS

Solutions that can be implemented immediately with existing resources and minimal disruptions to operations



### SUSTAINMENT

Approaches that create enduring capabilities that persist through leadership changes and shifting priorities



### SCALABILITY

Methodologies that work across team sizes, from small units to entire departments, and can expand or contract based on evolving needs

## FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The workforce optimization framework consists of five interconnected components:

- 1 Assessment:** Identifying critical skill gaps and operational vulnerabilities
- 2 Prioritization:** Focusing limited resources on high-impact training initiatives and knowledge transfer activities
- 3 Deployment:** Implementing cost-effective, scalable learning solutions
- 4 Measurement:** Tracking progress and optimizing training effectiveness
- 5 Integration:** Embedding continuous learning into agency culture

Each component builds upon the previous one, creating a sustainable system for workforce development that evolves with changing organizational needs.

## GETTING STARTED: DAYS 1 – 30

### Assess Workforce Needs & Identify Skill Gaps

The foundation of effective workforce development begins with a clear understanding of where you stand. Before implementing any training initiatives, first identify critical skill shortages and operational vulnerabilities created by workforce losses.

#### Key Actions:

- Conduct a rapid skills inventory using existing HR data, performance evaluations, team leader input, and answers to these key questions:

How well does the current workforce align/support your strategy?

What is the composition of the workforce at each organizational level and/or location?

What impact will turnover of key staff have on your organization's ability to deliver services?

Where are the positions difficult to fill with qualified applicants?

What is the current distribution of employee years of service?

What is the current distribution of retirement eligibility?

- Align identified skills with mission-critical functions to determine where gaps create operational risks.
- Document high-risk areas within your organization, including functions with immediate skill gaps and knowledge silos.

#### Tools for Program Managers:

- Adapt competency-based assessment questionnaires to fit your agency's context. [Planning a Strategic Approach](#)
- Reference the [OPM Workforce Planning Model](#) for additional information.

#### Implementation with Limited Resources:

- Assign a small cross-functional team to conduct the assessment.
- Use existing data sources before creating new surveys or assessment tools.
- Set a realistic timeframe (2–3 weeks) for completing the initial assessment.

## SUCCESS METRICS:







- **Completion of a comprehensive workforce skills assessment** covering critical functions. Here's a sample from [Partnership for Public Service](#)
- **Identification of the top 3-5 priority skill gaps** that pose the greatest risk to mission delivery.
- **Creation of a skills matrix** mapping existing capabilities to mission requirements.

## Prioritize Key Upskilling Initiatives

Focus limited resources on the training initiatives with the highest mission impact.

### Key Actions:

- Segment your workforce to identify roles and individuals requiring immediate attention.
- Evaluate available training options with an eye toward resource efficiency.
- Create a decision framework to objectively evaluate potential upskilling initiatives.
- Design learning approaches that fit into the flow of work
- Apply the 70:20:10 model for learning

ASPECT		70:20:10 MODEL
 <b>Focus</b>		Emphasizes holistic learning
 <b>Mindset</b>		Encourages a growth mindset
 <b>Learning Environment</b>		Dynamic and collaborative
 <b>Outcomes</b>		Comprehensive skill development
 <b>Implementation</b>		Flexible and integrated approach
 <b>Application</b>		Suited for industries with rapidly changing technologies and roles

### Tools for Program Managers:

- Evans Critical Knowledge Interview Guide to capture employees knowledge and document key processes.
- Access enterprise subscriptions to platforms like LinkedIn Learning or Coursera for Government for access to relevant learning topics.
- Utilize domain-specific resources like the DoD Cyber Service Academy or other resources specific to your agency.
- Leverage internal Learning Management Systems for targeted upskilling.
- Use Individual Development Plan (IDP) templates within your agency to document employees' upskilling plans for accountability.

### Implementation with Limited Resources:

- Focus on peer learning and knowledge transfer programs by identifying knowledge sharers and knowledge seekers.
- Utilize free government training platforms before considering paid options.
- Implement train-the-trainer models to multiply the impact of limited training investments

#### SUCCESS METRICS:

- **A list of identified prioritized skills** and competencies to be targeted.
- **Track the percentage of employees** in high-priority roles who have received targeted upskilling.
- **Monitor the reduction** in identified high-risk skill gaps within defined timeframes.

## EXECUTING THE PLAN: DAYS 31 – 60

### Deploy Cost-Effective Training Strategies

Implement scalable, budget-friendly learning solutions that minimize operational disruption.

#### Key Actions:

- Create a structured roadmap for delivering training effectively and efficiently.
- Obtain the necessary support, funding, and authorization to implement the training plan.
- Explore interagency agreements or government-wide contracts to reduce costs and streamline approvals.

#### Tools for Program Managers:

- Use a project management tool like Jira Align for Government for agile project management.
- Utilize Asana for Government to take advantage of workflow automation and project tracking capabilities
- Leverage tools like Microsoft Planner to create plans, assign tasks, and track progress and SharePoint for a central location to store and manage project documents and information.

#### Implementation with Limited Resources:

- Schedule regular 'lunch and learn' sessions.
- Create protected skill-sharing time blocks.
- Develop simple job aids and reference materials.

#### SUCCESS METRICS:

- **Track training hours** completed per employee and post-training competency assessments.
- **Gather qualitative feedback** on training relevance and quality.
- **Measure engagement metrics** and gather regular feedback.
- **Measure knowledge transfer** between experienced and newer employees.



**Tip: To build sustainable learning ecosystems:**

- Establish Knowledge Continuity Plans for critical roles.
- Incorporate learning activities into Standard Operating Procedures.
- Develop internal Capability Academies for mission-critical functions.



## EVALUATING IMPACT: DAYS 61 – 90

### Measure, Monitor & Optimize Training Effectiveness

Ensure upskilling efforts lead to measurable improvements in operational efficiency.

#### Key Actions:

- Establish baseline metrics before training initiatives begin.
- Implement robust feedback systems to gather intelligence on training effectiveness.
- Use data collected to continuously refine your approach.

#### Tools for Program Managers:

- Use the OPM Data Products for federal workforce measurement and engagement.
- Adapt simple spreadsheet-based tracking templates for measurement.

#### Implementation with Limited Resources:

- Use brief pulse surveys to gather feedback on training effectiveness.
- Conduct informal check-ins with training participants.
- Create simple visual dashboards to track progress on key metrics.

#### SUCCESS METRICS:

- **Track improvements in operational performance** metrics following training initiatives.
- **Document time savings** achieved through improved process efficiency.
- **Measure employee confidence** in performing new skills.

### Embed Upskilling into Team Culture

Make continuous learning a core part of agency operations and culture.

#### Key Actions:

- Establish Learning Champions at multiple levels of the organization.
- Create recognition systems that acknowledge and celebrate skill development.
- Formalize knowledge-sharing mechanisms that sustain learning beyond initial training programs.

### Tools for Program Managers:

- Leverage existing recognition programs to acknowledge learning achievements.
- Establish Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with academic institutions or private sector partners.

### Implementation with Limited Resources:

- Begin with informal recognition of learning achievements.
- Integrate learning discussions into regular team meetings.
- Share success stories highlighting the impact of upskilling.

#### SUCCESS METRICS:

- **Track the percentage of employees** participating in ongoing learning.
- **Monitor the number of employees** applying for developmental opportunities.
- **Assess leadership support** and advocacy for learning initiatives.

## IDEAS TO ACTION

In today's environment where speed, flexibility, and usability are paramount, this framework offers practical pathways that operate within current constraints and build future capabilities. Federal agencies can't afford to wait for perfect conditions—they must deploy solutions immediately, evolve them continuously, and adapt them to changing scales and contexts.

The question is not whether agencies should invest in upskilling — it's how quickly they can implement strategic approaches that maintain mission delivery today while building capability for tomorrow. This framework charts that path forward, transforming workforce constraints into a catalyst for positive, sustainable change. Here are some ways the framework can be applied:

**\*Note: The following are fictitious organizations**

### Scenario: Assess Workforce Needs & Identify Skill Gaps

*Angela – Program Manager, Federal Infrastructure Authority (FIA)*

Angela oversees a team managing infrastructure grants. With new federal mandates on digital reporting, she conducts a skills inventory using surveys and performance data. She discovers that while her team excels in project management, they lack proficiency in data analytics and geographic information system (GIS) tools. She collaborates with HR to map current competencies against future needs and creates a skills matrix to visualize gaps.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Identified 3 critical skill gaps across 12 team members.
- Developed a workforce capability map to guide training investments.

### Scenario: Prioritize Key Upskilling Initiatives

*Marcus – Program Manager, National Environmental Response Agency (NERA)*

Marcus is leading a climate resilience initiative. After identifying several skill gaps, he prioritizes training in climate modeling software and stakeholder engagement. He uses a risk-impact matrix to align training priorities with mission-critical goals and secures leadership buy-in by showing how these skills support the agency's strategic plan.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Secured \$50,000 in training funds for high-priority skills.
- Increased team readiness score by 25% in quarterly review.

### **Scenario: Deploy Cost-Effective Training Strategies**

*Janelle – Program Manager, Veterans Support Services Bureau (VSSB)*

Janelle needs to train her team on new case management software. With limited budget, she partners with the agency's learning office to roll out a blended learning approach: vendor-led webinars, peer-led lunch-and-learns, and a curated library of microlearning videos. She also leverages interagency training agreements to reduce costs.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Trained 100% of staff within 6 weeks at 40% below projected cost.
- Achieved 90% satisfaction rate in post-training survey.

### **Scenario: Measure, Monitor & Optimize Training Effectiveness**

*David – Program Manager, Cybersecurity Operations Directorate (COD)*

After deploying cybersecurity awareness training, David uses pre- and post-assessments, feedback surveys, and incident reports to evaluate effectiveness. He notices a drop in phishing click rates and improved audit scores. He refines the training based on feedback and shares success metrics with leadership to justify continued investment.

Measurable Outcomes:

- Phishing click rate dropped from 18% to 4% in 3 months.
- Training audit score improved from 72% to 91%.

### **Scenario: Embed Upskilling into Team Culture**

*Sofia – Program Manager, Public Health Innovation Agency (PHIA)*

Sofia fosters a learning culture by integrating upskilling into team goals and performance plans. She celebrates learning milestones in team meetings, encourages knowledge-sharing sessions, and mentors junior staff. Her team begins to proactively seek out learning opportunities and propose innovations aligned with their training.

Measurable Outcomes:

- 80% of team members completed at least one self-paced training course in 6 months.
- Increased internal promotion rate by 30% year-over-year.

## ADDITIONAL MODEL AND REFERENCE

In addition to the framework presented in this white paper, other models offer valuable insights into embedding learning within the workplace. One particularly compelling approach is the Deliberately Developmental Organization (DDO) model, introduced by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey in *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization* (2016).

DDOs position employee development as a central business strategy rather than a peripheral HR function. These organizations cultivate environments where continuous learning, candid feedback, and personal growth are not only encouraged but expected. By normalizing vulnerability and reducing the hidden costs of “image management,” DDOs unlock greater human potential and drive organizational performance.

Unlike traditional workplaces—where employees often expend energy concealing weaknesses—DDOs eliminate this “second job” by fostering a culture of transparency and growth. Mistakes are reframed as learning opportunities, and every individual is expected to engage in self-reflection and ongoing development.

This model aligns closely with modern upskilling initiatives that emphasize adaptability, self-awareness, and lifelong learning. Kegan and Lahey argue that when development is embedded into the core of an organization’s strategy, it leads to higher engagement, greater innovation, and enhanced resilience.

### ***Deliberately Developmental Organization (DDO)***

#### **1. Developmental Community**

Cultivate a culture where everyone shares responsibility for development.  
Value and respect individual – even at their well-intentioned worst.

#### **2. Developmental Aspirations**

Prioritize growth as fundamental at both individual and organizational levels.

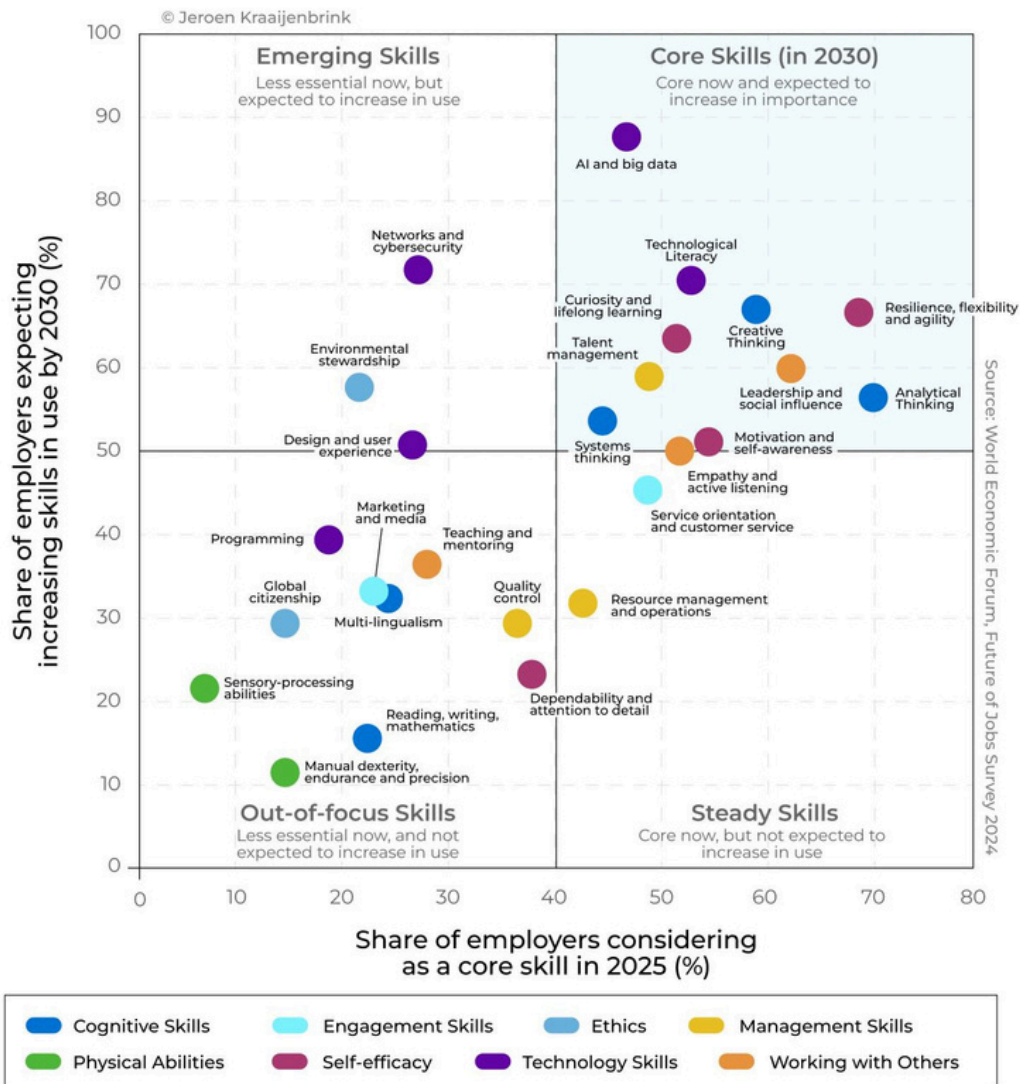
#### **3. Developmental Practices**

Design routine work to highlight and leverage failures for improvement at both personal and organizational levels.

#### **Reference:**

- Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. L. (2016). *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization*. Harvard Business Review Press.

# The Core Skills for 2030



Source: [LinkedIn](#)

## 90-DAY UPSKILLING CHECKLIST

Tactical steps to ensure effective execution:

### Phase 1: Assessment & Planning (Days 1-30)

**Objective:** Identify workforce skill gaps and prioritize upskilling initiatives.

#### Step 1: Conduct a Workforce Skills Inventory (Week 1)

- Extract data from HR records, performance evaluations, and team leader assessments.
- Hold quick one-on-one interviews with managers to pinpoint operational vulnerabilities.
- Use tools like the OPM Workforce Planning Model for structured analysis.

#### Step 2: Map Skills to Mission-Critical Needs (Week 2)

- Cross-reference identified skills with key operational functions.
- Highlight immediate risks from workforce gaps (e.g., knowledge silos, retirements).
- Build a skills matrix—use a standardized format to show current vs. needed capabilities.

#### Step 3: Prioritize Training Needs (Week 3-4)

- Rank skills gaps based on mission impact and identify top 3-5 critical priorities.
- Select the most cost-effective and scalable training solutions.
- Assign a cross-functional task force to oversee initiative execution.

#### Resources:

- Competency Assessment Questionnaires (adapted to organization needs).
- Existing HR data & performance evaluations for faster insights.

### Phase 2: Targeted Upskilling & Deployment (Days 31-60)

**Objective:** Implement low-cost, high-impact training strategies.

#### Step 1: Launch Rapid Training Interventions (Week 5-6)

- Peer Learning Model: Assign senior employees as learning mentors for critical areas.
- Knowledge Transfer Sessions: Hold structured 1-hour weekly skill-sharing meetings.
- Train-the-Trainer Model: Equip select employees to scale learning across teams.



### **Step 2: Utilize Cost-Effective Learning Resources (Week 7)**

- Deploy government training platforms before investing in paid solutions.
- Offer LinkedIn Learning & Coursera Government access for high-demand skills.
- Schedule structured "Lunch & Learn" workshops to minimize work disruptions.

### **Step 3: Introduce Skill Application & Reinforcement (Week 8)**

- Assign micro-projects to apply newly learned skills in real-world scenarios.
- Require post-training knowledge-sharing reports from participants.
- Develop simple job aids and workflow references for reinforcement.

#### **Resources:**

- FDS Digital Skills Catalog (for technology upskilling reference).
- Agency-specific Learning Management Systems for tracking progress.

## **Phase 3: Monitor, Improve, and Develop a Learning Culture (Days 61-90)**

**Objective:** Establish feedback loops and embed continuous learning into operations.

### **Step 1: Implement Training Effectiveness Metrics (Week 9)**

- Set baseline performance indicators before training begins.
- Gather feedback after each training session to assess immediate impact.
- Develop dashboards to track participation, engagement, and effectiveness.

### **Step 2: Recognize & Reward Upskilling Achievements (Week 10-11)**

- Nominate Learning Champions to advocate skill development.
- Feature success stories in agency newsletters to highlight real impact.
- Launch peer recognition initiatives for training milestones (badges, certificates).

### **Step 3: Sustain a Continuous Learning Ecosystem (Week 12)**

- Embed training into standard operating procedures (SOPs) for long-term success.
- Formalize internal Capability Academies focused on mission-critical skills.
- Create a Knowledge Continuity Plan for high-risk roles.

#### **Resources:**

- OPM Data Products (for workforce measurement).
- Spreadsheet tracking templates for skill development monitoring.
- Recognition systems leveraging existing HR programs.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



### Shashuana J. Littlejohn

Shashuana J. Littlejohn is a seasoned learning strategist who helps organizations build workforce capability through mission-focused learning solutions. Her work strengthens leadership, elevates employee engagement, and positions organizations for sustainable growth. With over 20 years of experience designing learning programs, developing leaders, and transforming teams across the financial, technology, non-profit, and federal government sectors, Shashuana is driven by a passion to help individuals and organizations become the best version of themselves.

As Senior Principal of Learning, Development, and Training at Evans, she partners with clients to optimize workforce performance through tailored learning strategies and programs that are focused, scalable, and aligned with organizational goals. Her approach blends strategic insight with practical execution – delivering workforce development, leadership training, and organizational learning programs that build agile, high-performing teams.

Shashuana received a Master of Science in Organization Development and Knowledge Management from George Mason University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Human Resource Management from Syracuse University. She also holds certifications in Leadership Coaching, Team Effectiveness, and Emotional Intelligence (EQ-i 2.0), enabling her to guide organizations through transformation and toward greater mission impact.



### Mercedes Sotomayor

Mercedes Sotomayor has over 14 years of experience designing business transformation efforts, and developing leaders and teams in the manufacturing, pharma, technology, aviation, and federal government sectors. She is currently the Principal of Leadership and Team Development at Evans and focuses on supporting leadership teams in strategy definition, effective decision-making, and leading changes. Mercedes' profound understanding of human behavior help her to connect with others in a meaningful way. As a result, she supports and witnesses transformational changes in leaders, teams, and organizations that lead to collective success and exceptional results.

Mercedes holds an Industrial-Organizational Psychology doctorate, is an Associate Certified Coach, and is a Yellow Belt Lean Six Sigma. She has participated in and presented her research findings at various professional conferences and is affiliated with the American Psychological Association. She has also taught undergraduate and graduate-level courses in the areas of psychology and leadership.



## Rasha Fakhreddine

Rasha Fakhreddine is a Senior Principal of Organization Development and Organizational Strategy at Evans. She specializes in partnering with leadership teams to identify organizational challenges that prevent goal achievement, engaging diverse stakeholders to align toward common objectives, and developing comprehensive strategies to address these barriers.

Rasha excels at collaborating with interdisciplinary teams to synthesize user research and data, transforming insights into actionable solutions for complex organizational challenges. She designs and facilitates targeted workshops that drive alignment and innovation across teams. Leveraging Design Thinking principles with a human-centered approach, she translates conceptual solutions into tangible prototypes and refines them through iterative feedback processes.

She is driven to enhance organizational effectiveness by building bridges between different perspectives and empowering teams to work together more effectively. Her approach combines analytical rigor with human-centered design to create lasting organizational change.

Rasha holds an M.S. in Organization Development and Knowledge Management from George Mason University and a B.A. in Business Administration from the American University of Beirut. She also served as the Vice President on the Board of the Chesapeake Bay Organization Development Network (CBODN).