

Blackstone Skills-based Hiring Playbook

OCTOBER 2023

Setting up your Skills-Based Hiring Approach

This document is provided to Blackstone portfolio companies as an informative resource to assist them in the development, adoption, and implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”) efforts. Any references to Blackstone’s recommendations are advisory in nature and are not tailored to any particular portfolio company, sector or industry. This general guidance is not a substitute for legal advice, and some jurisdictions may have applicable rules, regulations or standards governing DEI. Portfolio companies should consult with legal counsel in their jurisdictions to understand how those considerations may impact such activities. Portfolio companies retain discretion and responsibility for adopting DEI efforts that are appropriately tailored to their particular facts and circumstances.

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Vision

“We have an obligation as a leader in the business community to ensure that diverse backgrounds and perspectives are represented at all levels of our companies, including on their boards. Not only is championing diversity the right thing to do, it will also make our companies better.”

- Joe Baratta, Global Head of Private Equity

Through Career Pathways, Blackstone is setting a bold vision for what can collectively be achieved by its participating portfolio companies: Increase employment opportunities and career mobility for untapped talent into entry and mid-level jobs.

Blackstone portfolio companies employ over 500,000 people, creating an opportunity for outsized impact. The Career Pathways program is designed to foster economic mobility and support ongoing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts by adopting inclusive workplace practices and expanding applicant pools through partnerships with non-profit organizations, colleges / universities, and other workforce development programs. These organizations provide training for untapped talent to prepare them for entry and mid-level roles, including customer service, IT, and operations. Through Career Pathways, we aim to create conditions within portfolio companies that support diverse hiring, retention and advancement and enable untapped talent to thrive. We plan to continue to track our progress in these areas annually with the knowledge that companies that support employees and advance DEI at every level are simply stronger.

Definitions

Untapped talent refers to individuals from traditionally untapped talent pools who seek economic stability through employment, specifically: veterans, disabled people, Opportunity Youth (young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who are neither working nor in school), people of color, individuals without college degrees and those with refugee / newcomer status.

Entry-level professionals can take two forms (1) some training, no college degree or (2) require a B.A. but with minimal work experience (0-2 years).

Mid-level professionals have career pathways or are considered careers requiring specialized training, knowledge, and experience (in some cases a B.A. degree). Mid-level professionals may have managerial or supervisor responsibilities.

Stepping-stone jobs: Offer salaries <≈\$40,000 and require less than a bachelor's degree; often also called "low-skill" jobs. May or may not have career pathways.

Why Skills-Based Hiring?

Through your participation in Career Pathways, you are committing to achieving two overarching goals:

1. Increasing access to jobs for untapped talent, demonstrated by

- Hiring untapped talent into entry and mid level roles at your company
- Hiring untapped talent from historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) at your company

2. Adopting inclusive practices to enable advancement of untapped talent, demonstrated by

- Increasing promotion rates of untapped talent at your company

One of the key ways that you can increase access to jobs for untapped talent is through **removing degree requirements from select roles and adopting a skills-based hiring approach** (Strategic Activity 1A). **Skills-based hiring emphasizes skills, rather than degrees or credentials, as the most important determinant of job success.** This approach values diverse experiences and proactively seeks to hire candidates from untapped sources.

This playbook outlines how to increase access to jobs for untapped talent by adopting a skills-based hiring approach and includes:

- Key considerations for designing and launching a skills-based hiring initiative
- Activities and resources for implementation teams

Depending on the number of Strategic Activities your company is pursuing, these skills-based hiring activities will represent a portion of what's included in your overall Career Pathways Action Plan. Other Activities that can support the success of your skills-based hiring efforts include Creating Clear & Accessible Career Pathways and Upskilling Opportunities (Strategic Activity 2C) and Equipping Managers & Leadership (Strategic Activity 2D).

Note: If the majority of your entry and mid level roles already do not require degrees, then this is not an activity that you need to focus on. Instead, ensure these roles are sourcing untapped talent and have clear upward career paths.

The business case for adopting skills-based hiring

While college degrees remain the primary screening mechanism for many employers, they prematurely screen out large pools of potential qualified talent. In fact, three in five employers reject qualified entry and mid level candidates with relevant experience in favor of recent college graduates.¹ By requiring a degree, employers automatically exclude 60% of white people, 74% of Black people, 80% of Latinx people, and 85% of Indigenous people from the candidate pool.² At the same time, two-thirds of recruiters say that bachelor's degree requirements make jobs harder to fill.¹

¹ Harvard Business School, Accenture, and Grads of Life, "Dismissed by Degrees," 2017.

² 2020 US Census, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2020/educational-attainment.html>.

Although college degrees can offer some insight into a person's abilities, previous employment and life experience are also excellent ways for a person to develop the technical and soft skills that employers desire. Instead of using degrees or credentials as proxies for a role's needed qualifications, **skills-based hiring emphasizes skills as the most important driver of job success**. Removing unnecessary degree requirements in select entry and mid level roles does not eliminate college graduates from consideration, rather it gives untapped talent greater access to career opportunities at your company while enabling you to meet your business needs. Consider these benefits:

- **Maintaining quality employee performance**
 - Employers pay more for degreed candidates yet report non-graduates perform equally well on critical performance metrics.³
 - Hiring based on skills is 5x more predictive of future performance than hiring for education and 2.5x more predictive than hiring for work experience.⁴
- **Decreasing time to hire.** A report by Harvard Business School, Accenture, and Grads of Life found that hiring for skills decreases time-to-hire and diversifies candidate pools.⁵

For additional research on the benefits of skills-based hiring, see [Additional Research](#) within the Tools & Resources section.

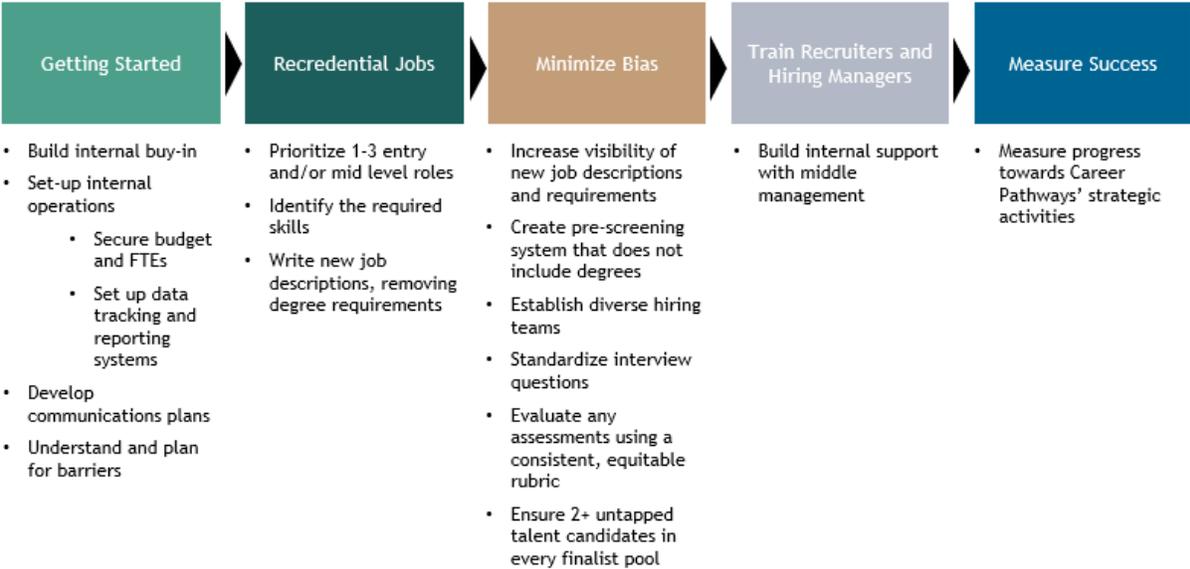
³ Ibid.

⁴ Michigan State University, Hunter, John E.

⁵ Harvard Business School, Accenture, and Grads of Life, "Dismissed by Degrees," 2017.

High-Level Steps

Success will require both an initial set of activities that are important for most new company initiatives as well as steps specific to the practice of skills-based hiring. The below image outlines a high-level overview of all steps.



Getting Started

As with the overall Career Pathways efforts, there are a number of initial operational activities that will be essential for establishing the foundation for adopting practices that support a skills-based approach to hiring. As a reminder, below are some guides for your consideration.

I. Build Internal Buy-in

Revisit your initial Career Pathways stakeholder management plan to ensure it accounts for all individuals required for building internal buy-in and internal alignment for skills-based hiring.

CEO and leadership team

- Begin by engaging and aligning the CEO and leadership team on the high-level vision and goals of Career Pathways and adopting skills-based hiring practices.
- Follow up with your CEO and leadership team once you have developed an action plan and set specific goals for your company; make sure they allocate necessary resources for implementation.
- Have your CEO communicate to internal stakeholders and employees about skills-based hiring to demonstrate their buy-in and support.

Executive sponsorship

- Identify an executive sponsor who can champion Career Pathways' goals and the accompanying skills-based hiring activities within the organization (this may or may not be your CEO) and remove blockers.

Essential stakeholders

- Each of Career Pathways' strategic activities will require engaging with different stakeholder groups. Develop a plan for educating business line leads, talent acquisition, hiring managers, etc., on the goals and vision for your company's engagement in Career Pathways. As you finalize your action plan, train these stakeholders on the new practices and policies you need them to adopt.
- Particularly important stakeholders for skills-based hiring include hiring managers, talent acquisition, legal, finance, and any staff who support with interviewing.

Internal subject matter experts (SMEs)

- Existing SMEs can be great partners when figuring out how to implement skills-based hiring strategic activities. Spend time identifying SMEs and involve them in the implementation planning and process.

Internal champions

- In addition to an executive sponsor, identify and develop champions at different levels and in different departments within your company. These people can help get others on board with Career Pathways' vision and activities.

See the [Develop Communication Plans](#) section for more ideas on how to manage communications.

II. Set-Up Internal Operations

Revisit your initial Career Pathways internal operations plan to ensure your internal infrastructure accounts for the budget and data tracking systems needed for skills-based hiring.

Secure budget and FTEs

- To be successful, your Career Pathways efforts (including skills-based hiring) will require dedicated budget and staffing. Identify any new expenses for your first year (e.g., recruiting costs, internal training costs, FTEs to support implementation, training, or reporting). Make sure these items are included in your HR organizational development, and/or DEI budgets.
- It is recommended that you dedicate at least one FTE to implementing your Career Pathways activities; otherwise competing priorities will make it difficult to stay on track.

Set-up data tracking and reporting systems

- You will be responsible for tracking and reporting on specific key performance indicators (KPIs) on an annual basis. To track your company's progress, it is vital that these KPIs get integrated into your regular data systems.
- See the [Measure Success Using Career Pathway's Defined KPIs](#) section for details on these requirements

III. Develop Communication Plans

As with any change management process, consistent and clear communication to all stakeholders is vital for success. Below are some tips for effective communication:

Internal Communication Plan

As with any change management process, consistent and clear communication to all stakeholders is vital for success. Below are some tips for effective communication:

- Connect why your company is participating in Career Pathways with your company's values, mission and business goals
- Reference Blackstone's guidance and support on Career Pathways as appropriate; as **Remco Teulings, CEO at BME** notes, "As a relatively 'young' company we are also heavily focusing on and investing in Company culture based on DE&I. As such, having been able to participate in the Career Pathways project created an enormous opportunity for us, seeing that it provided us not only with very valuable insights and a 'proven approach' but also allowed BME to co-create and be at the forefront. It also helps us in establishing the ESG – S – KPI's and baseline and as such the support of Career Pathways to connect us with the right companies to drive this was very valuable."
- Announce Career Pathways goals and activities to your company, creating a positive story about the journey the company is on and efforts underway
- Educate employees about the benefits of building an inclusive culture and diverse workforce
- Send out regular updates, particularly highlighting successes and personal stories

- As implementation continues, keep reiterating why this initiative matters and how it contributes to your company’s culture and business success

External Communication Plan

Consider publicizing your DEI commitments or efforts on a dedicated DEI page on your company’s website (see [TaskUs](#)). Increasingly, candidates are interested in how companies are approaching these topics. According to a CNBC / SurveyMonkey Workforce Survey, nearly 80% of workers say that they want to work for a company that values diversity, equity, and inclusion.⁶ You might also set up a dedicated page in your hiring section (see [Great Wolf Lodge’s](#)).

Example skills-based hiring goals you might consider publicly sharing include:

- Your commitment to skills-based hiring
- The percent of jobs you commit to making accessible to pre-baccalaureate talent

IV. Understand and Plan for Barriers

Consider the stakeholders you identified for building internal buy-in and name champions who are best positioned to address and remove critical roadblocks. Plan to schedule regular check-ins to discuss progress, identify challenges and remove any blockers and barriers that may arise during implementation. Example roadblocks may include:

Barriers	Recommended Actions
Cultural Barriers	
Pedigree Bias: Hiring managers are not supportive of skills-based adoption and culture highly values degree “pedigree”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start small with champions and prove value of new efforts through company-wide storytelling ▪ Create accountability metrics for managers in scale deployment
Equity and Equivalence: Current employees with degrees feel lack of equivalence or “disrespected” so two “classes” of employees emerge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be transparent about rationale for re-credentialing and emphasize skill requirements as a tool to ensure equivalency ▪ Monitor performance, retention, and advancement of all untapped talent candidates to ensure there is equity, particularly in advancement
Tactical Barriers	
H1B Visas: Re-credentialing roles currently held by talent holding H1B visas can compromise their visa and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partner early with legal and immigration experts to assess risk and guide final decisions for where degree requirements can be removed from job descriptions

⁶ CNBC / SurveyMonkey. [Workforce Happiness Index](#). April 2021.

Barriers	Recommended Actions
<p>Degrees as Filtering Tool: Degree attainment is currently used as a filter for rejecting large volumes of applicants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adopt new tools to make skills-based hiring more efficient for hiring managers (see Recommended Vendors) ■ Consider using manual processes external to ATS systems if filters are hard to change
<p>A Failed Hire: One bad experience can sometimes provide enough evidence to validate the opinions of detractors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create a strategy to mitigate against the “failed hire”, being transparent with the launch team and hiring managers about any reasons an untapped talent hire was not successful ■ Understand and document the individual circumstances behind any unsuccessful hire and help stakeholders understand that this doesn’t mean the entire practice adoption, as a whole, is unsuccessful

Champions are especially important for addressing culture barriers. They can help with:

- Recognizing the scope of culture change and change management needed to address barriers
- Developing simple, powerful messages to change hearts and minds
- Empowering other business line leaders and champions to address culture changes
- Rewarding and celebrating individual employees’ positive behavior, as well as strongly discouraging behavior which shows bias
- Allocating sufficient resources to make changes possible

Outside DEI training organizations are also helpful for navigating cultural barriers. See the [Recommended Vendors](#) section for more information.

Skills-Based Hiring Implementation Roadmap

Now that you have addressed the initial operational steps outlined above, this section will guide you through a series of steps for implementing skills-based hiring.

I. Recredential Jobs by Removing Degree Requirements From Entry and Mid Level Jobs

During your Onboarding Assessment, you may have completed the Occupation Review, an analysis of internal jobs data that identified high-need / high-demand, middle-skill entry and mid level roles in specific geographies that can be filled by untapped talent through skills-based hiring. Reference this list of entry and mid level jobs as you begin the recredentialing process. If you did not opt to do an Occupation Review the same steps still apply—you will instead start your journey by assessing all of your jobs versus working from a narrowed starter list.

It is essential to note that the practices of skills-based hiring, career pathing, and upskilling offer a holistic skills-based approach. Given both removing degree requirements (Strategic Activity 1A) and creating clear and accessible career pathways (Strategic Activity 2C) are required activities, we recommend you build your plans in alignment with one another to focus on the same set of jobs.

Entry-level professionals can take two forms (1) some training, no college degree or (2) require a B.A. but with minimal work experience (0-2 years).

Mid-level professionals have career pathways or are considered careers requiring specialized training, knowledge, and experience (in some cases a B.A. degree). Mid-level professionals may have managerial or supervisor responsibilities.

1. **Prioritize 1-3 entry and mid level roles to begin with.** Changing your hiring processes takes time, so start small and pilot with 1-3 roles. If you completed an Occupation Review, start this step by narrowing down from the list of identified entry and mid level roles. Otherwise, focus your list on jobs that are:
 - Entry and mid level jobs
 - Difficult to recruit for and retain untapped talent
 - High-volume, high demand, high cost-to-hire and/or have low retention
 - In key geographies with a high volume of roles, particularly those in regions with known high proportions of untapped talent
 - On teams that have strong internal champions who support a skills-based approach to hiring

Activity 1: Prioritizing Jobs Using Ease of Implementation and Business Impact

The following 2x2 matrix offers one method for thinking through which 1-3 roles you'd like to prioritize for your skills-based hiring approach.

Ease of Implementation and Business Impact: Outline the entry and mid level roles in terms of the ease of potential implementation and the business impact of a skills-based hiring initiative. As you think through the business impact of this change, consider things like:

- Current availability (or lack of availability) of talent
- Total costs to hire for these roles
- Time to hire, train, and onboard new talent
- Retention of talent and long-term performance

As you think about difficulty of implementation, consider:

- Strength of support from internal champions
- Ease of removing any current degree requirements
- Ability to provide a family-sustaining wage (reference MIT's [living wage calculator](#))

High Business Impact and Difficult to Implement	High Business Impact and Easy to Implement
Low Business Impact and Difficult to Implement	Low Business Impact and Easy to Implement

Based on your matrix, identify 1-3 roles that you predict will be easier to shift into a skills-based approach and will result in a high business impact when implemented well.

Role	Why did you identify this role?	What challenges will you need to overcome if this role becomes part of your skills-based hiring initiative?

2. Identify the required skills for each prioritized role

- Review the current job description, recording all of the skills listed and separating them into three categories:
 - **General Skills:** not specific to the role but are needed more broadly in the workplace (e.g., MS Office Suite, strong reading, writing and/or Excel skills)

- **Technical Skills:** specific to the role (e.g., JAVA or HTML for coders, clinical skills for an RN, curriculum development and student assessment for teachers, financial modeling for accountants)
- **Professional Skills:** people skills and professional norms needed to thrive in the role (e.g., teamwork, resiliency, leadership, empathy, work ethic)
- Identify common skills for each prioritized role by supplementing your initial list with skills outlined on the US government’s [O-Net database](#) of job categories and Markle Foundation’s free [Skillful Job Postings Generator](#) (a tool designed to help you identify important skills for any role that is in the O-Net database). If you completed an Occupation Review, you can also reference the top skills included in your final report.
- For any degree and experience requirements currently included on your job descriptions, consider what skills you are equating to these requirements and work with hiring managers to replace those with the specific technical, industry-specific and soft skills needed for position.
- Rank identified skills in order of importance:
 - Divide the identified skills into **required** skills (must have on day one and are non-negotiable) and preferred skills (nice-to-have, but can be taught on the job).
 - Narrow the total list of required skills down to no more than 10. This will help hiring managers facilitate targeted and intentional interviews based on the most important skill sets while creating transparency for candidates regarding which skills they must know on day one versus which they are expected to learn on the job overtime.

Activity 2: Mapping Required and Preferred Skills

Use this template to map out your required and preferred skills for each prioritized job.

	General Skills	Technical Skills	Professional Skills
Required Skills	▪	▪	▪
Preferred Skills	▪	▪	▪

If you are having difficulties narrowing down to 10 skills, consider bundling critical skills into one larger category (e.g. Outlook, PowerPoint, and Word could become MS Office Suite; or kindness, empathy, and teamwork could be broadly listed as “strong people skills”).

3. Leverage the defined skills to write new job descriptions, removing degree requirements

- Re-write job descriptions to include your top 10 required skills, (Note: Markle Foundation’s free [Skillful Job Postings Generator](#) offers a guided process to both narrow the required skills as well as create new job descriptions. There is also an example of a job description pre- and post-skills-based language was applied in the [Tools & Resources](#) section,)
- Check for bias, such as gendered language (see [Recommended Vendors](#) for recommended tools),
- Include an [inclusivity statement](#) and signal your commitment to diverse candidates,

- Partner with in-house legal and immigration experts to review new job descriptions, ensuring degree requirement removals will not negatively impact any H1B visa holders you currently employ,
- Communicate broadly about new job descriptions and requirements,

II. Implement Practices to Minimize Bias in the Hiring Process

Removing degree requirements is just one part of adopting a skills-based approach to hiring. For this approach to work and truly increase access to roles for untapped talent, you must also implement practices that minimize bias in the hiring process.

We all have unconscious biases that impact our actions and perceptions. These can include appearance bias (mental pictures of what a “professional” in a role looks like), affinity bias (gravitating towards people who look like us or hold similar beliefs), education bias (assumptions that graduates of prestigious schools are smarter or more hard working), or experience bias (assumptions that years spent doing a particular job always equates to competency within that role). By its very nature, unconscious bias can be hard to recognize; the good news is that setting up the right systems and structures in the workplace can help mitigate our unconscious biases. Together, the following steps create systems that support the equitable evaluation of candidates.

- 1. Increase the visibility of new job descriptions and requirements** by internally posting all newly updated roles
- 2. Create pre-screening system that does not include degrees or experience**
 - Focus screening process on determining demonstrated proficiency in the identified required skills rather than particular credentials or years of experience,
 - Limit pre-screening assessments to 5-10 minutes and ensure focus on required skills for the role,
 - Can include short answer questions, mini-tests, and work samples
 - Test the assessment with current employees and any training or sourcing partners to ensure effectiveness and evaluate for bias.
 - Identify existing external tools or assessments that may be helpful in the pre-screening process. When choosing, evaluate these closely for bias.
 - Consider masking candidate names on application materials to reduce racial and/or gender bias
- 3. Establish diverse hiring teams**
 - Secure racially and gender diverse hiring teams to serve on interview panels
 - When possible, have 2+ people with different backgrounds review resumes and interview questions
 - Train all interviewers on unconscious bias
- 4. Standardize interview questions to effectively assess for required and preferred skills,**

- Have interview panel use consistent, skills-based interview guides that list your 10 required skills.
 - Each question should focus on evaluating one skill in the job description
 - Use behavioral and situational questions, e.g., “Tell me about a time when...”
 - Focus questions on “culture add” not “culture fit” as the latter rewards like-me biases, e.g., ask “What is something new you would bring to the organization?”
- Evaluate interview based on a clear, skills-based rubric tied to the interview guide
 - Ensure the hiring team is calibrating their ratings so there is a common understanding of each of the defined categories you are assessing

5. If required, ensure any additional post-interview simulations, work assignments, or assessments (e.g., case activities) are also evaluated using a consistent rubric for clear, equitable comparison among candidates,

- It is ok for these to be more involved than your pre-assessment(s)

6. Ensure there are 2+ untapped talent candidates in every finalist pool before convening with the hiring team to make a final decision,

- A study conducted at the University of Colorado’s Leeds School of Business found that by creating a new status quo where 2+ women or racially diverse candidates were added to finalist pools ranging from 3 – 11 people, the decision makers were statistically more likely to hire a woman or racially diverse candidate⁷

Activity 3: Developing Skills-Based Interview Questions

Use the following guide to develop skills-based interview questions.

- Reference the top 10 skills you identified earlier and rank them into the most critical skills, followed by those that are less important

Skills 1-5	Skills 6-10

- For each skill, determine the level of performance you expect on day-1 and write an example of what this performance might look like in action. Your responses will be an input for crafting targeted behavior-based interview questions.

Day-1 Skill	Definition of Success	Successful Behaviors in the Workplace

⁷ Stephanie K. Johnson, David R. Hekman, and Elsa T. Chan, [If There’s Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There’s Statistically No Chance She’ll Be Hired](#), April 2016.

- If you are having difficulties narrowing down to 10 skills, consider bundling critical skills into one larger category (e.g., Outlook, PowerPoint, and Word could become MS Office Suite; or kindness, empathy, and teamwork could be broadly listed as “strong people skills”).
- Learn about ways you might inadvertently frame questions that unconsciously guide the candidate to your preferred answer by reviewing this short article: [How to Create Behavioral Interview Questions that Don’t Give Away the Answer](#).
- Reference your skills and definitions of success to craft a behavioral interview statement for each skill that gives candidates an opportunity to describe a time where they successfully demonstrated this skill in the workplace.

Day-1 Skill	Behavioral Interview Statement

The [How to Create Behavioral Interview Questions that Don’t Give Away the Answer](#) article recommended pairing common statement stems with realistic workplace situations where you’d like to assess the candidate’s behavior.

Common Stems	Situations to Assess Behavior
Tell me about a time when ...	you were engaged in a conflict in the workplace
Give me an example of a situation where ...	you were confronted with an unexpected challenge
Describe for me an example of when ...	you had to make a quick decision

- Refine your behavior based interview statements and add 2-4 follow-up questions that:
 - Zero-in on the skills you are trying to assess
 - Push for more detail about the candidate’s thinking process and/or outcomes of the scenario
 - Push for more information about how the candidate works with other people

Activity 4: Developing Skills-Based Rubrics

Consider using the following guide develop a skills-based rubric.

- Take five minutes to review [this short article](#) about the elements of a rubric.
- Reference the outputs you had from the skills-based interview question activity. Your rubric structure should align with the flow of interview statements and follow-up questions.
- For each skill, look at how you defined success on day-1. Make sure to have a clear definition for each skill you are evaluating.

Day-1 Skill	Definition of Success

- Create a rating system that allows the hiring team to draw distinctions between the candidates’ responses. We recommend three categories (Excellent, Fair, and Poor), but you can have as many as five. Assigning point values will make it easier to calculate a quick comparison between candidates.

Day-1 Skill	Definition of Success	Excellent (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)

Total: # Score

- Use your definition of success to define what each category (Excellent – Poor) means. Before evaluating a candidate, take some time to ensure your hiring team is aligned on the criteria.

Day-1 Skill	Excellent (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
	Language defining an “excellent” rating	Language defining a “fair” rating	Language defining a “poor” rating

Total: # (Score)

- Leave space for notes next to each skill. These can be helpful when making hard decisions about which candidates are the best fit.

Day-1 Skill	Excellent (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Notes
	Language defining an “excellent” rating	Language defining a “fair” rating	Language defining a “poor” rating	

Total: # (Score)

- Finally, add a place for the candidate’s and reviewer’s name.
- For your reference, below this exercise is an example rubric of how to assess your own rubric.

Example Rubric for Evaluating your Rubric

Criteria	Excellent 4 points	Good 3 points	Fair 2 points	Poor 1 point
Our rubric clearly articulates each skill that the reviewer is assessing.	Yes. The rubric clearly articulates each job skill that the evaluator is rating and each skill has its own row in the rubric.	Sort of. The rubric articulates a job skill that the evaluator is rating, but each skill may not be clearly articulated or have its own row in the rubric.	Meh. The rubric has a mixture of job skills and other criteria and/or the criteria may not be clearly articulated in the document.	No. The rubric does not clearly articulate each job skill that the evaluator is rating. Each skill does not have its own row.
Our rubric has a clear and concise rating system for each of the evaluation criteria.	Yes. The rubric has a clear and concise rating system which allows evaluators to identify a rating and assign each variable a score.	Sort of. The rubric has a rating system which allows evaluators to identify a rating but it may not be easy to determine the difference between ratings or scores.	Meh. The rubric has a rating system, but the criteria are not clear and concise and the rubric may not have a clear scoring system.	No. The rubric does not have a clear and concise rating system. The evaluator cannot easily identify a rating and cannot assign each variable a score.
Our rubric has space for interviewers to record notes during the interview process.	Yes. The rubric has space for evaluators to record notes and thoughts. This space is lined up with the rating system so that comments about a specific skill are in line with the rating.	Sort of. The rubric has space for evaluators to record notes and thoughts. The space is sufficient but it is not lined up with the rating system so it is hard to determine what notes are linked to which score.	Meh. The rubric has space for the evaluators to record notes, but the space is not sufficient, nor is it lined up with the rating system so it is difficult to see which comments are related to any given score.	No. The rubric has no space for evaluators to record their notes and thoughts.

III. Train Recruiters and Hiring Managers on New Skills-Based Hiring Protocols and the Value of this Approach

Adopting skills-based hiring practices is a huge first step! For successful implementation, it is equally important to train your recruiters and hiring managers to ensure they understand the value of a skills-based approach as well as feel supported implementing the new protocols.

As mentioned in the Career Pathways Playbook, hiring managers and leaders, in particular, will be critical stakeholders in removing degree requirements and adopting a skills-based approach to hiring. They also play a vital role in supporting untapped talent in thriving and advancing. Research shows a strong relationship with one's people manager is the number one factor in job satisfaction⁸ and that 57% of employees quit because of their manager.⁹ In addition to any DEI training, consider:

- Building internal support with middle-management by broadly communicating your skills-based hiring strategy with a plan to regularly share candidates' success stories.
 - Frame all communications around why skills-based hiring matters; each communication is an opportunity to change mindsets within the organization.
- Ensuring hiring managers feel supported through the new initiative, giving them access to resources and training.
 - Offer training for unconscious bias and how to implement skills-based practices (i.e., job descriptions, interview questions, and rubrics).
 - Create a centralized skills-based hiring toolkit.

As mentioned earlier in this playbook, consider including Equipping Managers and Leadership to Facilitate Including and Hiring Paradigm (Strategic Activity 2D) into your overarching Career Pathways Strategic Plan, as it can positively impact the success of your skills-based hiring efforts.

IV. Measure Success Using Career Pathway's Defined KPIs

Once you have your foundational and implementation activities in motion, the final step is using your data tracking and reporting systems. Adopting skills-based hiring practices is most related to the first goal of helping expand access to entry and mid level roles for untapped talent. By tracking outcomes, or KPIs, on a consistent basis, you will be well-positioned to understand whether your efforts are having their intended impact.

It is recommended that you establish clear accountability by ensuring each KPI has clear owners, ideally for all those involved in making skills-based hiring a success including the CEO, CHRO, CDO, Talent Acquisition leadership, recruiters, and hiring managers

⁸ T. Allas and B. Schaninger. [The Boss Factor: Making the world a better place through workplace relationships](#). McKinsey & Company. 2020.

⁹ Development Dimensions International. [The Frontline Leader Project](#). 2019.

What to report

You will be responsible for reporting the KPIs listed below on a quarterly basis for skills-based hiring and advancement. We encourage you to collect and review these KPIs quarterly with your internal leadership team so that you can make implementation adjustments as needed.

The Career Pathways team will collaborate with you on setting realistic and ambitious goals for the KPIs that match your skills-based hiring strategy.

Career Pathways KPIs	Increase Access to Jobs	Enable Advancement
# hires of untapped talent by portfolio companies into entry and mid-level jobs from Career Pathways partner organizations	✓	
# hires of untapped talent by portfolio companies into entry and mid-level jobs from portfolio company partner organizations	✓	
# promotions of untapped talent by portfolio companies into entry and mid-level jobs from Career Pathways partner organizations		✓
# promotions of untapped talent by portfolio companies into entry and mid-level jobs from portfolio company partner organizations		✓
# of partnerships with Career Pathways partner organizations	✓	
# of partnerships with portfolio company partner organizations	✓	

Setting up data tracking

Establishing your data systems now, including your method for consistently tagging untapped talent candidates and hires, will set you up for long-term success of tracking your progress of new untapped talent hires overtime as well as provide baseline information to track promotion rates for this group of talent; which will be essential for measuring KPIs related to creating clear and accessible career pathways (Strategic Activity 2C).

Identifying and tracking untapped talent will be done through your Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and Human Resources Information System (HRIS). While the ATS is designed to track information about candidates who apply for a job at your company, the HRIS is designed to track information about current employees. Successfully tracking and reporting on the KPIs will require using and connecting data from both systems.

Linking ATS and HRIS

Much of the data that helps you identify who qualifies as untapped talent is collected only during the application phase in your ATS system. Often these demographic data points do not transfer

over to an individual’s record in the HRIS system once they become employees. Consequently, unless the two systems are linked, once candidates become employees, it becomes difficult to determine who qualifies as untapped talent (e.g., disability or veteran status may be collected in ATS during the application process, but once that person is hired, it does not transfer over to their employee profile in HRIS).

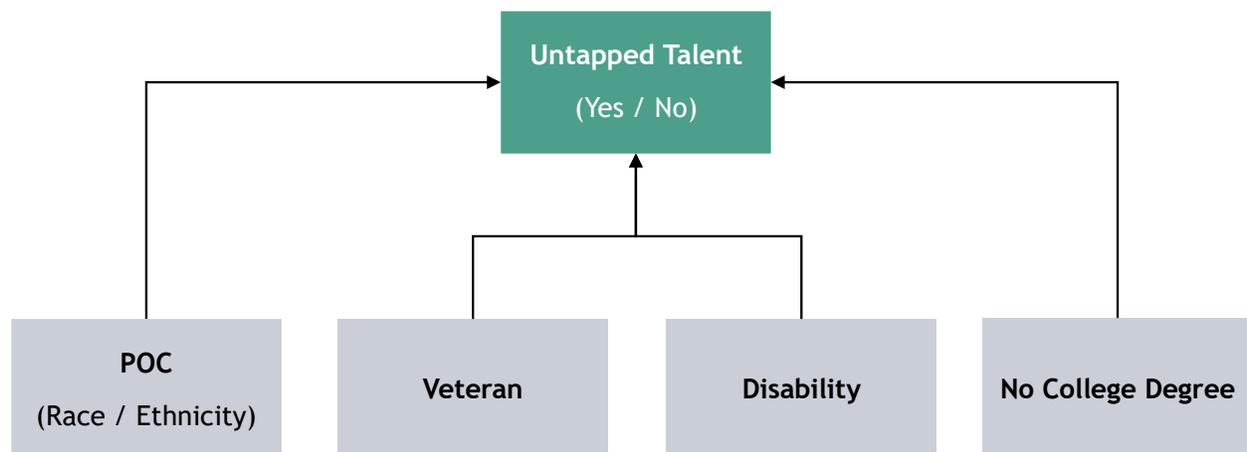
To link applicant records in ATS with employees records in HRIS:

1. Create a unique identifier for each employee that crosses all systems. If an employee is tagged as A1260 in ATS, they should also be tagged as A1260 in HRIS.
2. Link the two datasets so that information collected in one system is also present in the other.
3. Add a field within the ATS and HRIS system indicating that the employee is a Career Pathways hire including where the employee was sourced from

Determining Who Qualifies as Untapped Talent

You may not already track all the subpopulations that qualify as untapped talent. Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good – start with what you already track and build from there. Race and ethnicity are typically the most well-tracked data fields, followed by veteran status and disability status. Historically, most companies have struggled to track educational attainment (e.g., who has a college degree and who does not) in a consistent fashion, so we offer some recommendations on this specific challenge below. Blackstone wants you to track data fields that are permissible to track by culture and law. Please note, Blackstone is not encouraging your company to track the incarceration status of potential hires, but instead encouraging companies to consider working with organizations that support formerly incarcerated individuals and changing background check screening processes to remove hiring barriers.

Once you have identified the subpopulations and associated data fields that your systems already track, you will need to use those data fields to tag candidates as untapped talent in both ATS and HRIS. This will likely require asking your HRIS and ATS administrator to create a new field called “untapped talent.” You will not enter data directly into this new field; rather, the field will rely on data that already exists about the subpopulations.



Your HRIS and ATS administrator will use a series of if / then statements to identify untapped talent. It will look like some version of the following:

If [race] = Asian, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [race] = Black or African American, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [race] = American Indian or Alaska Native, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [race] = Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [race] = Two or more races, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [ethnicity] = Hispanic or Latino, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [veteran status] = yes, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [disability status] = yes, then [untapped talent] = yes;

If [college degree attainment] = no, then [untapped talent] = yes;

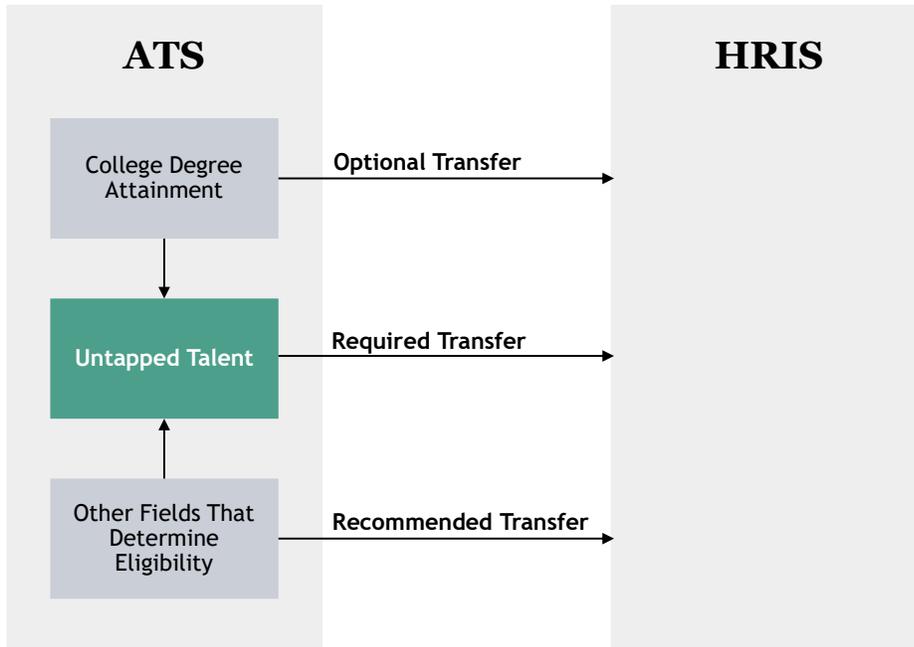
Otherwise, [untapped talent] = no

Again, it is perfectly normal for your company to be collecting data about some subpopulations and not others. Please start with what you do have and work toward building the capacity to collect data for any missing fields.

How to Track Educational Attainment

There is a very good chance your company does not already keep track of each employee's educational attainment. Because there is no single way to solve this problem, below are two options to consider:

- Create a new “college degree attainment” field in ATS and start asking new hires to self-report their degree status when they apply to a job. The field can be binary and store yes/no answers to the question “do you have a four-year degree?” Starting here will enable to, at a minimum, track KPIs associated with newly hired untapped talent
- Do the above PLUS transfer some or all the data collected in ATS over to HRIS. This requires merging data from the two systems. You can choose to transfer the data stored in the “college degree attainment” field or only the data stored in the “untapped talent” field (which incorporates the degree attainment information but is not exclusively about degree attainment.) See diagram below. Transferring college attainment / untapped talent status from ATS to HRIS will allow you to track the promotions of new hires over time



Tracking a KPI

Once your HRIS and ATS administrator has created the untapped talent field, you should be able to use it to filter the dataset for people who meet the qualifications of untapped talent. Below is an example of how to identify how many untapped talent were hired into entry and mid level jobs from Career Pathways partners:

To measure this KPI, you will need to apply the following three filters to the dataset:

- **Untapped talent** – filter for only those who have a “yes” in the untapped talent field.
- **Career Pathways partner** – filter for only those who received training from a Career Pathways partner prior to being hired (**note: this is a specific question you will need to build into your application process and subsequently track in ATS**).
- **Time period** – set the filter to a specific date range. You may want to know how many new hires of untapped talent from Career Pathways partners occurred in the last month, quarter, or year, etc. Make sure to set the hire date range so that it matches your preferred time frame.

Career Pathways Team Involvement	Flash Diagnostic Score	DEI Resourcing	Data Tracking & Reporting
High-Touch	Received an early-stage or developing overall maturity score on the flash diagnostic. Most prominently, scores are early-stage or developing in the Career Pathways pillar.	Lacks resources to effectively build and execute against the results of the flash diagnostic	No structure exists to capture DEI data to report back to Career Pathways team
Low-Touch	Received an advancing or leading overall maturity score on the flash diagnostic	Has adequate resources to effectively build and execute against the results of the flash diagnostic	A structure to capture DEI data exists today (note: small modifications may need to be made to properly capture required data for overall CP reporting purposes)

Tools & Resources

I. Ongoing Career Pathways Supports

Blackstone’s Career Pathways team is available to provide ongoing support as your company plans and implements its Career Pathways activities. Career Pathways support will vary depending if a company is considered high-touch or low-touch after taking the flash diagnostic (see supplementary material on flash diagnostic). High-touch and low-touch companies are characterized as the following:

Depending on the needs of the company, the Career Pathways team can offer the following support:

- [Career Pathways Marketplace](#) to provide a platform for portfolio companies to share open entry and mid-level roles with partner organizations, for partner organizations to access those roles on behalf of their students / clients, and for both to share other engagement opportunities
- **All cohort meetings** to share lessons learned, resources, and advice
- **1:1 coaching support** from Career Pathways team to review results and build personalized action plan and goal setting (regular cadence of coaching support depends if a company is high-touch or low-touch)

- Advising from ESG and Career Pathways team to set up reporting structures
- **Employer-led learning sessions** on inclusive topics (i.e., re-credentialing, pathways, veterans) as needed
- **Board advocacy** to support executive engagement
- **Ongoing coaching and 1:1 support** from Blackstone team for ongoing implementation questions
- **Tools and templates**
- Annual **meeting** on Career Pathways to bring participants together with opportunities to network and hear from experts in the field

In addition, to the resources provided by Blackstone, you are encouraged to share any recommendations you have about vendors, training partners, and trainings with the Career Pathways team. Your knowledge and experience can make the Career Pathways initiative stronger.

II. Example Job Description Pre- and Post-Skills-Based Language

Before Skills-Based Language Applied

Description of Job:

Duties are as follows:

- Work in a high-volume call center environment, taking in-bound calls from customers pertaining to the State Medicaid Program and other public health insurance programs offered by the State of Colorado
- Elicit relevant facts and provide information, advice or instruction in accordance with the understood prescribed protocol about eligibility benefits and health care alternatives
- Work skillfully in multiple system applications, policies, procedures, practices, and methods in order to resolve consumer inquiries
- Understand basic eligibility requirements for Medicaid, Colorado Indigent Care Program and Advance Premium Tax Credits
- Assist customers in navigating a complex health care environment by telephone, in person, internet chat, fax, e-mail, or through written correspondence
- Research customer inquiries and assist with proper resolution
- Interpret and apply program policies, procedures, and established standard guidelines to assist the customer and provider
- Advise, counsel and direct consumers towards community resources and health care options for the uninsured
- Provide information to the general public about departmental programs, benefits, rules and policies

- Refer customers to appropriate party for resolution when out of scope
- Ability to handle 75 calls a day
- Typical call volume 25,000 per month

After Skills-Based Language Applied

Description of Job:

This position serves to apply established techniques, procedures, practices, and methods relevant to the below job description. After successfully completing training and on the job performance in this role, employees may be promoted to Health Care Coverage Specialist III with the potential for a pay increase. This is an entry-level, customer service position with opportunities for advancement.

The Health Care Coverage Representative will be responsible for informing and assisting members to access appropriate health care, answering members questions regarding the services and benefits, and resolving problems a member is experiencing.

We are looking for hard-working team members who are passionate about making an impact on and serving the community. Additionally, team members should work well in a structured environment. The ideal candidate will need to have strong reasoning skills, provide excellent customer service, have the communication skills to guide clients through complex issues, and possess the ability to navigate complexity (e.g., systems, laws). While the Member Contact Center is a high-volume call center environment, inquiries are frequently complex. The combination of speed, efficiency and quality is valued.

Duties are as follows:

- Provide information to the general public about departmental programs, benefits, rules, and policies; additionally, evaluate member issue and draw on available resources to direct members toward community resources and health care options for those uninsured.
- Actively listens and interprets members case while eliciting relevant statements to advise or instruct the member in accordance to our Member Contact Center standard protocol regarding eligibility, benefits, and health care alternatives.
- Takes in-bound calls from members pertaining to the State Medicaid Program and other public health insurance programs offered by the State of Colorado (i.e., Colorado Indigent Care Program).
- Assist members in navigating a complex health care environment by telephone, internet chat, fax, e-mail or through written correspondence regarding State Medicaid program, Colorado Indigent Care Program, and coordinating programs such as Medicare, CHP+, Connect for Health, etc.
- Expresses healthcare policies and relevant information clearly and accurately; provides instruction and guides members through various steps or processes. Speaks clearly, responding well to questions. Participates in meetings.

Source: Skillful, Markle Foundation.

- Navigates through multiple computer applications as well as the State of Colorado policies, procedures, practices, and methods in order to resolve member inquiries.

III. Recommended Vendors and Tools to Explore

Skills Databases and Skills Mapping Vendors and Tools

Emsi Burning Glass's Skill ID

<https://www.economicmodeling.com/skill-id/>

Overview: The leading company for labor market data. Their analytics software identifies skills mapped to jobs helping to identify current skillsets and gaps.

Skillful Job Posting Generator

<https://generator.skillful.com/?stay=yes>

Overview: A free job description generator to help companies compose skills-based job postings.

Skills Engine's Profile Builder

<https://builder.skillsengine.com/>

Overview: Free tool that generates a custom competency / skills profile based on thousands of quality skill statements across more than 1,100 occupations, detailed by state.

O*Net

<https://www.onetonline.org/>

Overview: Database containing standardized and occupation-specific skills-based descriptors for almost 1,000 occupations within the entire US economy.

Skills Base's Agile Skills Management

<https://www.skills-base.com/tour>

Overview: Skills management software used to assess, track and report employee skills with flexibility for employers to add skills they wish to measure and track within their organization.

SkyHive Enterprise

<https://www.skyhive.ai/products/skyhive-enterprise>

Overview: Quantum Labor Analytics platform that compares insights between employee skill data and real time stamped labor workforce data, identify skill gaps and provide suggested career pathways.

Workday's Talent Management Skills Cloud

<https://www.workday.com/en-us/products/talent-management/performance-optimization.html>

Overview: A cloud-based software that helps organizations gain insight into employees' strengths, identify skills gaps, and guide development experiences in order to attract, retrain and develop workforce talent.

Tools for Removing Gendered Language

Datapeople's Language Analytics for Job Posts

<https://datapeople.io/language-analytics-for-job-posts/>

Overview: Job description management software that analyzes for biased language postings including for sexism, racism, tokenism, ableism, ageism, elitism, and religion.

Gender Decoder

<https://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>

Overview: Gender decoder tool used to look for subtle bias in job postings.

Ongig

<https://www.ongig.com/text-analyzer#/>

Overview: A for profit, text analyzing tool to eliminate bias in job descriptions, which provides analysis and suggested language for gender, racial, ability, and age bias.

Textio

<https://textio.com/products/>

Overview: Augmented writing tool that provides language insights and suggestions to eliminate bias in brand postings, e-mails, websites, etc. This tool assesses for gender, age, and ability bias.

Talvista

<https://www.talvista.com/job-descriptions-optimized/>

Overview: Tool using algorithms powered by scientific research to write more effective and bias-free job descriptions with real-time feedback. The tool identifies problematic terms based on gender, race, and ability. TalVista can help with blinding candidate information.

Resume Masking Tools

Entelo

<https://www.entelo.com/products/platform/diversity>

Overview: A recruiting automation platform that uses predictive algorithms, data-backed insights, and recruiting data to help companies source for talent. Unbiased sourcing mode allows you to anonymize applicants by initializing names when sourcing and the Inclusive Language alert mode allows you to be aware of non-inclusive language in job postings and e-mails.

Pinpoint

<https://www.pinpointhq.com/>

Overview: Applicant Tracking System for in-house talent acquisition and people teams whose Blind Recruitment Software allows you to anonymize all personal information for applicants until they have received an interview. Using their "Blind Hiring" option enables all bias removal functions built within the tech.

DEI Consultants and Training

Cohesion Collective

<https://www.cohesioncollective.com/>

Cohesion Collective, or CoCo, is a specialized Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training, assessment and advisory firm. They offer strategic consulting, research and training on all matters relating to EDI and organizational culture for corporates, educational institutions, and other organizations. This can be done as a fully virtual experience or in-person. Their passion is change and transformation as it relates to the individual, the organization and society.

Developing Capacity Coaching

<https://www.developcapacity.com/>

DCC partners with teams to build conscious organizations that advance equity. They transform ecosystems by developing people, strengthening policies, and enhancing processes that fully integrate equity into the fabric of an organization. DCC also offers an array of coaching services.

Grads of Life

<https://gradsoflife.org/>

GOL engages employers to become leaders in the movement for racial and economic justice. They partner with employers to design and build inclusive talent strategies that advance equity and offer support building inclusive cultures through company-specific workshops and training for frontline managers, HR managers and C-Suite executives. GOL's leadership seminars, manager webinars, and online frontline manager training offer meaningful insights and tangible takeaways related to addressing unconscious biases in the workplace and developing an inclusive culture.

Racial Equity Institute

<https://www.racialequityinstitute.com/>

REI is an alliance of trainers, organizers, and institutional leaders who have devoted themselves to the work of creating racially equitable organizations and systems. They offer trainings and help individuals and organizations develop tools to challenge patterns of power and grow equity.

III. Additional Research

“Dismissed by Degrees: How degree inflation is undermining US competitiveness and hurting America’s middle class”

Accenture, Grads of Life, and Harvard Business School

<https://gradsoflife.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Dismissed-by-Degrees-10.26.17-1.pdf>

“Developing America’s Frontline Workers”

Institute for Corporate Productivity, UpSkill America

<https://www.cael.org/hubfs/Developing-Americas-Frontline-Workers-i4cp-UpSkill-America-2016.pdf>

“Why Skills-Based Hiring Starts with Your Job Descriptions”

LinkedIn: Gopika Maya Santhosh and Greg Lewis

<https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-strategy/why-skills-based-hiring-starts-with-job-descriptions>

“7 Skills-Based Hiring Best Practices: Hire for Skills, Not Just Degrees”

WorkforceHub (powered by Swipeclock)

<https://www.workforcehub.com/blog/7-skills-based-hiring-best-practices-hire-for-skills-not-degrees/>

“Skills-based hiring: Invest in people and HR change”

Accenture: Kristen Hines

<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/business-functions-blog/skill-based-hiring>

“Skills-Based Hiring: Hire Based on Skills, Not Pedigree”

Opportunity@Work

<https://opportunityatwork.org/key-topics/skills-based-hiring/>

“How to Adopt Skills-based Hiring Practices”

SHRM: Jennifer Arnold

<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0318/pages/hiring-for-skills-not-pedigree.aspx>

“The Rise of Skills-Based Hiring and What It Means for Education”

Forbes: Tom Vander Ark

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanderark/2021/06/29/the-rise-of-skills-based-hiring-and-what-it-means-for-education/?sh=1cc368384fa7>

“You Need a Skills-Based Approach to Hiring and Developing Talent”

Harvard Business Review: Ryan Roslansky

<https://hbr.org/2021/06/you-need-a-skills-based-approach-to-hiring-and-developing-talent>