

COMMON SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND PATHWAYS TO ADVANCEMENT USER GUIDE

OVERVIEW

The Value of Competency Mapping. Retail employment provides workers the opportunity to develop skills and abilities that can transfer to other occupations. As part of a retail workforce strategy, it can be helpful to understand the competencies developed within retail jobs – and which of those competencies are valued for advancement within retail or by employers in other industries. Knowing those competency-based pathways can help you advise retail workers about future career opportunities.

The Pamphlets: Common Skills for Employability and Pathways to Advancement: This set of two pamphlets presents a synthesis of research on retail competencies and pathways conducted for the Walmart Foundation’s Retail Opportunity Initiative. These pamphlets can be used directly with retail and adjacent industry employers or other stakeholders to communicate the value and inform the creation of competency-based workforce activities in retail.

This Guide: The purpose of this guide is to assist retail initiatives in understanding the different parts of the pamphlets and how they can be used with retail workers and employers.

CAEL created two pamphlets: one to be used with employers who are only interested in pathways within retail and another that show potential pathways into adjacent industries.

DEMONSTRATING THE VALUE OF COMPETENCY MAPPING TO EMPLOYERS

There are many ways that competency maps can support the retail employer. But doing so could take some convincing. Use the pamphlets as a visual aid to your conversations with retailers about the many ways that focusing on skills and skill development can benefit them. The table below shows how the pamphlets – and other competency maps – can be used at various stages of the employment life cycle, and how the retail employer benefits from those kinds of activities.

EMPLOYMENT LIFE CYCLE STEP	COMPETENCY-BASED ACTIVITIES	RATIONALE
Hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing competency-based job descriptions help employers recruit better qualified candidates • Creating job-specific competency profiles helps employers better understand the specific needs of jobs and how those change across an organization • Using competency-based hiring techniques to better identify and screen candidates • Improve on-boarding and new hire training to help new workers understand their role and contribute to the bottom line faster 	Employers can improve the quality and productivity of their front-line staff by identifying the skills they need to be successful. Employers can then develop methods for recognizing those skills during the hiring process.
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating competencies into professional development including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping performance assessments to competencies • Developing supervisor coaching and mentorship programs around competencies • Delivering customized training, that is integrated with and aligned to industry credentials • Tracking competencies of successful team members and the skill gaps of team members who did not stay helps inform better hiring and training practices 	Developing workers’ skills and recognizing their growth can help employers retain their most successful team members. Communicating and rewarding the transferrable skills they are developing may help them better value and extend their time with that employer.
Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying organizational competency requirements for advancement helps employers recognize internal promotion opportunities • Creating competency-based career pathway models to better identify and communicate next steps for effective workers 	Competency-based activities provide employers with a more qualified source of talent within their own organization for advanced responsibility and promotion.

USING COMPETENCY MAPS TO BENEFIT RETAIL WORKERS

Retail workers might not have a clear picture of what kind of career pathways are open to them. The pamphlets – or select information from them – could be used to inform efforts around helping retail workers understand what skills have already been developing in their retail jobs, and how those skills have prepared them for other opportunities.

COMMON SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY AND PATHWAYS TO ADVANCEMENT REPORTS

Below are overviews of each section of the pamphlets and how they support competency-based workforce activities. The first three sections are identical for both versions of the report

Why Employability Skills Matter (Page 1)

This section introduces the concept of competencies, referred to as “common employability skills.” Use this section to educate employers on how competency-based activities in workforce initiatives are beneficial.

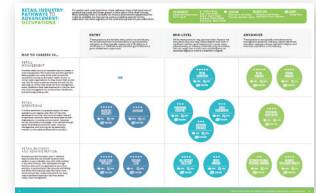


How Learning Occurs in Retail (Page 1)

This section describes ways learning occurs through retail and may be used to expand the audience’s definition of learning from traditional classroom-style to the range of ways learning happens both informally and through formal processes. It may also help convince employers employee development does not always require creating expensive new initiatives, but that they can be more intentional about cultivating existing learning processes.

Common Employability Skills (Pages 3-6)

This section defines the specific competencies embedded in the National Retail Services Initiative Competency Model’s seven broad competency categories. These competencies are presented as clear and measurable statements of what a worker should know and be able to do. The competency statements are organized by employment level (entry, advanced responsibility, and management) and are intended to build on each other. Competency statements can be used to develop better job descriptions, more effectively test skill proficiency during the hiring process, and more effectively recognize skills and gaps in an employer’s current workforce. Competency statements can also be incorporated into training materials, performance assessments, and individual professional development plans.



Pathways to Advancement (Pages 7-10)

This section contains two parts. The first half (pages 7-8) focuses on potential next steps and career pathways from entry level retail jobs. The retail focused report identifies jobs a retail employee might advance to in management, operations and logistics, and business administration jobs within retail. The adjacent industries report maps to three industries that rely heavily on transferrable skills like customer service: Financial Services, Information Technology, and Healthcare. Jobs are characterized as entry, mid-level, and advanced based on skills, education, experience, and average salary. It is important to note that these are not comprehensive career paths but rather highlight some jobs that may require skills developed through retail. Use this section to inform possible career pathways within and outside of an organization. They can be customized based on community and individual employer needs.



The second half (pages 9-10) identifies the overlap and gaps in skills developed through three retail jobs and the industries identified on the previous two pages. Use this section to inform training and professional development, create career pathways, and to demonstrate to adjacent sector employers the overlap between retail workers and their own jobs. The skill buckets can be customized based on the competencies developed for a specific retail employer or the needs of local adjacent industry employers.

Who We Are: The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is a national non-profit organization that is focused on linking learning and work, with a special focus on frontline workers and adult learners. This work on retail competency-based pathways has been funded by the Walmart Foundation as part of its Retail Opportunity Initiative.

SELECT RETAIL OPPORTUNITY INITIATIVE RESOURCES

- **CAEL** is creating local implementation guide to assist in implementing place-based retail workforce initiatives.
- **ACT Foundation** created the National Retail Services Initiative (NRSI) Competency Model that identifies competency alignment with select jobs in other industries.
- **Center for a Skilled Workforce** and **Hope Street Group** are developing a Competency-Based Retail Talent Management Guidebook.
- **FHI 360** is implementing competency mapping in the workplace through a game-based approach to developing soft skills.
- **Innovate + Educate** incorporated the ACT’s competency model into its SEEK career exploration tool in order to match users with jobs based on their skills.