

Building Organizations **Delivering Results**

Organizational Design + Effectiveness

Establishing Common Competencies for Government Professional Groups and Specialty Areas

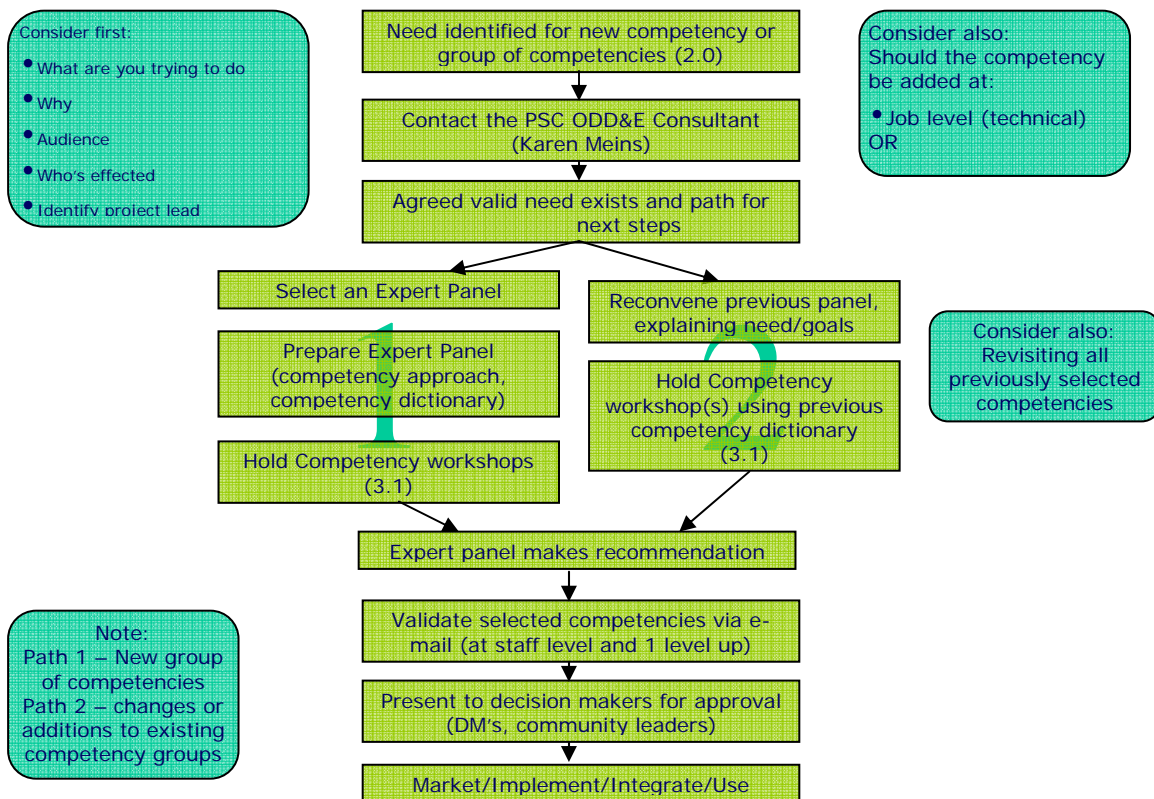
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1.0 Introduction

As part of the HR Strategy, competency frameworks have been developed for MCP employees and the, HR and Financial communities. These frameworks are an integral part of the human resource processes including performance management, career planning, training and development, and recruitment.

This document is intended to guide the HR Community and Line Managers through the task of adding a competency or group of competencies for their professional group or specialist area and to provide help with integrating them into their other human resource processes. The below diagram is a best practice at a glance guide to adding new competencies.



2.0 Assessing the need for competencies in your professional group or specialist area

Every organization needs certain skills and behaviours (i.e. competencies) in order to be successful. Driven by management, groups identify the skills and behaviours needed to move the business forward. Before deciding to proceed with selecting new competencies for your professional group or specialist area you should consider the following things.

- What is your business plan and how do competencies move it forward
- How will you measure success
- Why is your professional group or specialty area looking to select competencies
- How will this project be financed
- Who is the audience (*see 2.1 competency category descriptions below*)
 - should you be adding competencies at a job level, using technical competencies
 - or at a community level using common and leadership competencies
- Who will be affected by this change
- Who is going to lead this change initiative
- Are you including Bargaining Unit (BU) employees in your model
 - Note: BU competencies can only be used for development purposes and are not linked to compensation
 - Is the union aware of this initiative?

After considering the answers to the above questions please contact the PSC ODD&E Senior Consultant, currently Karen Meins, to discuss the next steps in adding competencies for your professional group or specialist area.

2.1 Competency Category Descriptions:

Common Competencies

Common competencies, either behavioural or technical, are required by all members of the Specialist Group, usually for development purposes only. These competencies will be leveled differently for each category of work within a Specialist Group.

Leadership Competencies

All MCP employees are responsible for demonstrating eight (8) leadership competencies. These eight competencies form part of the performance management system and make up a portion of the overall performance rating. The MCP competencies are: Decisiveness, Strategic Orientation, Development of People, Team Leadership, Achievement Orientation, Self-Confidence/Courage of Conviction, Impact & Influence, and Relationship Building.



Technical Competencies

The framework supports the identification of technical competencies for individual positions. These competencies will be specified in the detailed competency profiles for key positions within your Specialist area. These competencies will be identified using both focus groups and job descriptions.

Please see Appendix D for an example illustration of the framework, Appendix E for MCP Leadership Competencies, and Appendix F for the NS Public Service Commission Competency Dictionary. Note: that the NS OSC Competency Dictionary has been developed by the Hay Group and we have purchased the use of these competencies for internal use. Please contact the PSC ODD&E Consultant if you have any questions.

3.0 Selecting Competencies

Once you have decided that competencies are required for your professional group or specialist area. We recommend that you choose an expert panel and hold competency workshops to select competencies. Normally, all employees within the specialist area are given an opportunity to validate the chosen competencies and their associated levels.

3.1 Expert Panel/Competency Workshops

Best practice is to have full representation, using employees from all levels of work on your expert panel. You will need to have workshops to determine the competencies you feel are best representative of your group/specialty area. Once you have come to a consensus the Expert Panel should send the competencies to all staff for validation.

Please see Appendix A for workshop and panel selection best practice, and Appendix B for a competency sorting framework.

3.2 Target Levels for Competencies

Proficiency levels need to be determined for all of your competencies. Not everyone is expected to perform required competencies at the same level. Each competency has 4 - 6 levels of proficiency to be assigned to different roles and these levels need to be assigned to the groups within your Community or Specialty areas.

Please see Appendix C for additional detail on selecting expected target levels.



4.0 Using Competencies in practice

Once your competencies are agreed at the highest level it's time to integrate, implement, market and most important of all use them in practice. The below human resource processes highlight the key areas in which your competencies should be integrated allowing you to use them on a daily basis.

Career Path Model

Competencies will be used to help plan career paths. Using a career path model, employees will be able to determine which competencies they need to develop to eventually move into the next position on their career path.

If an employee is looking to make a lateral or upward move, they can determine if the move would be a good fit with their skills and what competencies they may need to develop to make the move.

Performance Management

As stated earlier, MCP employees are responsible for demonstrating the eight leadership competencies. For MCP employees, how they achieve their goals is just as important as what they achieve. This approach will help achieve results in a manner that is consistent with organizational expectations and desired behaviours.

For specialist communities who use competencies for development purposes, these competencies will likely appear under the Development Plan. They could also be associated with some of the performance goals. They are not rated for performance management purposes.

Assessing competencies as part of the performance management process will also enable managers to clearly communicate to employees how they can develop competencies that are at their current work level or for a desired future level.

Career Planning

Competency profiles and competency expectations for different positions can be used to assist in career planning and decision-making. Individuals will be able to explore transferable and desirable skills as well as have the opportunity to identify interests.

Learning and Development

HR systems such as performance management will help managers and employees identify the employee's strengths and areas that may require development. Competencies can be developed (included in learning plan) and used to improve performance, either in a current role or for a future role.



Employee Information, Involvement and Recognition

To be effective, employee recognition needs to be consistent with organizational expectations and linked to organizational goals. Competencies for the Group should be incorporated into the Employee Information, Involvement and Recognition initiatives.

Succession Management

Competencies can be used to assist in succession management including an assessment of potential and future development. Competency based succession management focuses on the development of employees to get them ready to take on key roles and/or fill critical positions in the future.

Recruitment

Competencies will be used to help ensure individuals applying for a position within a specialist community fully understand the requirements of the position, both technical and behavioural. Competency-based interview questions help ensure that those selected meet not just the technical requirements but also the behavioural requirements of the job.



APPENDIX A - Workshop Best Practice

The following is 'Best Practice Process Steps' for selecting competencies and is meant to assist you in the process of selecting your competencies

Prior to the Workshop

Planning meetings with the Competency Framework Project Team and the Public Service Commission to ensure common understanding of the work to be done and the approach to be taken.

Define the Community

While it might seem clear who should be a member of the community, it is best to decide before any competency work is done as to who will be included in the specialist community.

Expert Panel Approach

An 'expert panel' should be recruited to select common competencies. It's recommended that you have representatives from the executive group, managerial group and individual contributors including Support staff. Your group should be large enough to be representative but small enough to work with in a panel.

Preparing the Expert Panel

Chose an appropriate facilitator and presenter (example: for the Financial Community The Chair of SFEF and the HR Strategy Steering Committee was chosen). Have them present Professional Group/Specialty Area's mission, values, vision, challenges and priorities to workshop participants as appropriate. Ask workshop participants to consider the characteristics needed to meet current and future challenges and enable the specialist area to achieve its vision.

Competency fundamentals including what are competencies, why we use competencies, types of competencies and how to select competencies should also be presented to workshop participants.

Competency Framework

The competency framework design for the Financial Community (see Appendix D) can be presented to the group as an example.



Selecting Competencies (this was the process used for the Financial Community, you may find it helpful to use a similar structure)

Tools used to select competencies may include:

Nova Scotia Public Service Competency Dictionary

Competency Cards

Competency Sorting Worksheet

The expert panel can be provided with the Nova Scotia Public Service Competency Dictionary that includes 25 competencies appropriate to government. See Appendix F for a complete list of all 25 competencies.

Individuals should prioritize competencies by sorting competency cards in terms of each competency's importance in achieving their Specialist Groups Vision.

Each competency card represents one competency and includes a definition of that competency. Each person was asked to sort their cards and identify:

five (5) competencies as 'critical'

five (5) as 'important'

seven (7) as 'nice to have'

Participants were asked to use a competency sorting worksheet to record their results. See *Appendix F Competency Sorting Worksheet*.

Note – The Government has a dictionary of 25 Competencies. We have implemented 8 Leadership Competencies for MCP employees, which leaves 17 to choose from.

Once recorded, participants were asked to transfer their results on to flipcharts. Four flipcharts were set up, each representing a competency cluster.

Thinking Capabilities
Leadership Effectiveness
Self-Management
Social Awareness

Participants used green, yellow and red sticker dots (25 in total, 1 dot per competency) provided to transfer their results, their 'votes' on to the flipcharts.

5 green dots: 'critical' competency

5 yellow dots: 'important' competency

7 red dots: 'nice to have' competency

Group results were tabulated and any differences were discussed until consensus was reached on the top ranked competencies.

Once selected, target levels for each of the selected competencies should be identified for each group (executive, managerial, officer/technical and support). This can be done through an informal voting process and discussion using the levels identified in the dictionary.



Appendix B - Competency Sorting Worksheet

After sorting your cards: For each competency, put a checkmark in the category in which you think it belongs.

*** You should have **five (5) "Critical" competencies, five (5) "Important" competencies,** and **seven (7) "Nice to Have" competencies.**

THINKING CAPABILITIES CLUSTER	1 - Critical	2 - Important	3 - Nice to Have
Analytical Thinking			
Conceptual Thinking			
Information Seeking			
Innovativeness			

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS CLUSTER	1 - Critical	2 - Important	3 - Nice to Have
Change Leadership			
Holding People Accountable			
Planning, Organizing and Coordinating			

SELF-MANAGEMENT CLUSTER	1 - Critical	2 - Important	3 - Nice to Have
Adaptability and Flexibility			
Attention to Detail			
Initiative			
Self Control			

SOCIAL AWARENESS CLUSTER	1 - Critical	2 - Important	3 - Nice to Have
Client Orientation			
Conflict Resolution			
Effective Interactive Communication			
Interpersonal Understanding			
Organizational Awareness			
Team Orientation			

	1 - Critical	2 - Important	3 - Nice to Have
TOTAL = 17	(MUST = 5)	(MUST = 5)	(MUST = 7)



APPENDIX C – Target Levels for Common Competencies

Next Steps

Following the workshop, the selected Competencies need to be assigned associated levels for the executive, managerial, officer/technical and support groups.

Competency Scales

Not everyone is expected to perform required competencies at the same level. Each competency has 4 - 6 levels of proficiency to be assigned to different roles within an organization; in this case levels need to be assigned to the groups within your Community or Specialty areas. Each level includes illustrative examples of associated behaviour. The levels are arranged in ascending order, increasing in complexity. Individuals are required to be able to demonstrate the behaviours of the lower levels within a competency in order to be effective at the higher levels.

Target Levels

Is the highest level that can reasonably be expected of successful performers in their roles.

Take ‘Analytical Thinking’ competency from the Financial group as an example:

Analytical Thinking

A. Breaks Down Problems

Breaks down problems into simple lists of tasks or activities

Uses basic judgment to determine what information is needed to assess a situation

Uses known procedures to address problems

B. Sees Basic Relationships

Recognizes and reviews the relevant factors of a situation or problem; differentiates between cause and effect

Knows when it is appropriate to seek advice from, or consult with others

Identifies the cause-and-effect relationship between two aspects of a situation (A leads to B)

Assesses the strengths and weaknesses of arguments to judge the merits of validity of a case and the actions to take

Makes the appropriate “call” given what was known at the time

C. Sees Multiple Relationships

Defines and confirms the nature of the problem; looks at it from different angles and considers alternative solutions before moving forward with a plan to resolve it

Analyses relationships among several parts of a problem or situation

Anticipates the risks or implications inherent in a suggested plan of action and devises appropriate strategies to mitigate their impact

Makes a well-reasoned response even when faced with incomplete or contradictory information

D. Applies Advanced Analytical Strategies to Complex Issues

Evaluates and interprets situations or issues that are complex or multidimensional, identifying connections between situations not obviously related. Integrates the analyses into a complete response



Draws interpretative commentary from complex numerical or financial data
 Uses complex analytical techniques as necessary to integrate thinking into an appropriate conceptual framework
 Evaluates alternative responses systematically for possible implications and consequences before reaching a judgment

Target Levels for Analytical Thinking (an example)

Analytical Thinking				
<i>Level</i>	<i>Executive</i>	<i>Managerial</i>	<i>Officer/Technical</i>	<i>Support</i>
Expected Level	D	D	C	B

Competency Profiles

Competency profiles include all of the competencies required for a particular role, as well as target levels for expected (successful) performance. These should be confirmed for all of your selected competencies.

Appendix D – Competency Framework (Financial Community Example)

		L1 Team Leadership	L1 Team Leadership
		L2 Development of People	L2 Development of People
		L3 Strategic Orientation	L3 Strategic Orientation
		L4 Decisiveness	L4 Decisiveness
		L5 Achievement Orientation	L5 Achievement Orientation
	L 1 - 8 to be determined	L6 Self Confidence	L6 Self Confidence
L 1 - 8 to be determined	L 1 - 8 to be determined	L7 Impact and Influence	L7 Impact and Influence
L 1 - 8 to be determined	L 1 - 8 to be determined	L8 Relationship Building	L8 Relationship Building
Financial Community	Financial Community	Financial Community	Financial Community
Financial Community	Financial Community	Financial Community	Financial Community
Support	Technical	Managerial	Executive
Technical/Knowledge Competencies <i>Examples: Knowledge of generally accepted accounting principles and practices, risk management skills, presentation skills, knowledge of modern controllership objectives etc.</i>			



Appendix E - MCP Leadership Competencies

Thinking Capabilities Cluster

- Decisiveness:** Decisiveness is the ability to make decisions based on analysis of the information presented in the face of ambiguous or conflicting situations, or when there is an associated risk.
- Strategic Orientation:** Strategic Orientation is the ability to link long-range visions and concepts to daily work. It implies the ability to think conceptually and to “see the big picture”. It includes an understanding of capabilities, nature and potential of the department and Organization.

Leadership Effectiveness Cluster

- Development of People:** Development of People involves working to develop people’s contribution and potential. Involves a genuine intent to foster the long-term learning or development of others, including direct reports, peers, team members or other staff. The focus is on the developmental intent and effect rather than on a formal role of training.
- Team Leadership:** Team Leadership is the intention to take a role as a leader or other group. Leadership involves communicating a compelling vision and embodying the values of the Nova Scotia Public Service. Team Leadership is generally, but not always, shown from a position of formal authority. The “team” here should be understood broadly as any group in which the person takes on a leadership role, including the organization as a whole.

Self-Management Cluster

- Achievement Orientation:** Achievement Orientation involves working to achieve results and improve individual and organizational contribution. Achievement Orientation is a concern for working well or for surpassing a standard of excellence. The standard may be one’s own past performance (striving for improvement); an objective measure (results orientation); outperforming others (competitiveness); challenging goals one has set; or trying something new that will improve organizational results (innovation). Achievement Orientation also involves effectively managing internal and external resources to achieve the Government’s goals.



Self-Confidence/

Courage of Convictions:

Self-Confidence/Courage of Convictions is a belief in one's own capability as expressed in increasingly challenging circumstances and confidence in one's decisions or opinions, within the framework of public interest, ethics and values and organizational integrity. It may include providing leadership, direction, and inspiration to others by making difficult decisions and taking actions that may not be popular but are in the best interests of the organization and its clients.

Social Awareness Cluster

Impact and Influence:

Impact and influence implies an intention to persuade, convince, influence or impress others (individuals or groups) in order to get them to go along with or to support the organization's direction. The "key" is understanding others, since Impact and Influence is based on the desire to have a specific impact or effect on others where the person has his or her own agenda, a specific type of impression to make, or a course of action that he or she wants the others to adopt.

Relationship Building:

Relationship Building involves the ability to develop contacts and relationships internal and external to the organization to facilitate work efforts or to gain support/cooperation. It implies building long-term or on-going relationships with clients or stakeholders (e.g. someone internal or external to the organization, on whom your work has an impact). This type of relationship is often quite deliberate and is typically focused on the way the relationship is conducted.



Appendix F – NS Public Service Competencies (Dictionary)

Thinking Capabilities Cluster

Analytical Thinking
Conceptual Thinking
Decisiveness*
Information Seeking
Innovativeness
Strategic Orientation*

Leadership Effectiveness Cluster

Change Leadership
Development of People*
Holding People Accountable
Planning, Organizing and Coordinating
Team Leadership*

Self-Management Cluster

Achievement Orientation*
Adaptability and Flexibility
Attention to Detail
Initiative
Self-Confidence / Courage of Convictions*
Self Control

Social Awareness Cluster

Client Orientation
Conflict Resolution
Effective Interactive Communication
Impact and Influence*
Interpersonal Understanding
Organizational Awareness
Relationship Building*
Team Orientation

*MCP Leadership Competencies

