Competency Backgrounder

HayGroup®

Enhancing the lives of the people we support

DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGY

Contents

Overview

The purpose of this Competency Backgrounder is to help you understand what competencies are all about, and will support the competency training you will receive.

In the rapidly changing and complex environment of the Developmental Services sector, the implementation of workplace competencies is intended to enhance and sustain a quality workforce, one that will continue to deliver a very high standard of service and support to those with developmental disabilities.

The increased expectations of families and government, new legislation, and changing demographics have led the Developmental Services sector to strategically position itself for the future. With job roles undergoing a significant transition from supporting people with a developmental disability primarily through "traditional services" to promoting and facilitating community inclusion, meaningful participation and full citizenship, core competencies will support a successful transformation of these job roles. Competencies will not only provide employees with a clear picture of the behaviours required for success in their current role, but will be valuable for career planning, enabling employees to identify the behaviours required for success in future roles, whether in their own agency or across agencies in the sector – this will also help to position the Developmental Services sector as a viable career choice.

Ultimately, the implementation of competencies will enable us to enhance the lives of the people we support.

Competency Background

Searching for performance

Knowing that superior performance is so valuable, managers and human resources professionals have always searched for qualities such as "initiative" and "communication skills" in the people that they hired. However, two things remained uncertain until recently:

- How to assess these qualities

- Whether these qualities were actually related to successful performance on the job

Using a competency-based approach is the key to defining, assessing and linking such qualities to job performance.

Research-based approach

Thirty years of research in the field of applied psychology have shown that there are distinct differences between typical performers and superior performers in jobs. Superior performers don't just do more work, or better work, they often approach their jobs differently, think about things in a different manner, and do some critical things much more often than typical performers.

The results of this research are not a surprise to most of us. We can all identify with the fact that some individuals perform better than others. Each of us can think of examples of people we have seen who get superior results in their jobs by doing some things differently, or more often, than others.

Working smarter, not harder

This isn't about working harder, it's about working better. Studies have shown that top performers do the work of almost 1.5 average performers. Knowing what makes the difference in our service oriented business, and being able to deliver that difference, is the key. This is why we are introducing competencies. We want to use approaches that are objective and fair for all of us, and that help us grow as individuals and contribute to our ongoing success.

What are competencies?

Competencies are a way to identify what really makes a difference in performance on the job. They are the characteristics that drive performance. When people can identify more clearly what is expected in terms of behaviour on the job, then they can do their job better. Similarly, managers and supervisors can be more objective and provide the appropriate coaching to support employees in their personal growth.

This is very important to all of us. We all want to do well in our jobs and be appreciated by our customers. This is the way that we can continue to be focused on service and reliability in an efficient manner.

Competency
definition

A competency is defined as:

A competency is any skill, knowledge,
behaviour or other personal characteristic that
that drives superior performance in a job role.

In other words, a competency is whatever outstanding performers think or do more often, in more situations and with better results than typical performers.

Two types of
competencies

There are two types of competencies – *behavioural* and *technical* – as outlined in the table below:

Technical Competencies	Behavioural Competencies
• What a person needs to know and be able to do (knowledge and skills) to perform the job	• The behaviours a person demonstrates in applying their knowledge and skills on the job

In other words, technical competencies are WHAT a person needs to know or know how to do, and *behavioural* competencies are HOW an individual approaches his or her work.

Technical competencies are necessary to perform the job role; however, they are not the differentiating factors of performance. While each is important, it is the *behavioural* competencies that truly differentiate superior from average performers.

What are competencies?, continued

Focusing on behavioural competencies

The focus for us is the on the behavioural competencies. We are going to put effort here because higher levels of performance in this area will help us maximize our performance. This does not mean that we will not continue to develop and maintain our technical skills. It simply means we have another powerful tool we can use to maintain and enhance the quality service we provide.

What is a competency model?

A competency model is the set of behavioural competencies (typically 8-12 competencies) that have been identified as the drivers of superior performance in specific role – they are the ones that truly make the difference in performance for that role.

While many of the behaviours across all behavioural competencies are helpful in each job role, the ones included in a given competency model can be considered as the "all-stars" for your role.

Components of a competency

Components of a competency

For each competency there is a *definition* or description of what it means and a *scale of behaviours* called a competency measurement scale. These are described in more detail below

Definition

The definition or description of each competency is important because it captures the essence of the competency and helps everyone understand the competency in the same way.

Behavioural scales

The behavioural scale attached to a competency describes the various levels of behaviour associated with a competency – what the competency "looks like" at each level. The scales are numbered in ascending order: 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on, and each scale typically includes 4-6 levels.

Each level on the scale starts with a **bolded statement** that describes the *underlying intent* of the level. The levels are incremental and additive, which means that to perform the behaviours at any one level, you must be able to perform the behaviours at the level(s) preceding it. In addition, the degree of complexity increases as one moves "up" the scale.

Each level has a series of behaviours associated with it that describe what that particular level of performance looks like. These are not exhaustive as they vary depending on the nature and circumstances of the position. The behavioural indicators are provided only to help you better understand what each level in the scale is about.

The behaviours in the scale are *observable* and *measurable*. In other words, you can see yourself or others performing at each level, and the behaviours at each level are more complex or challenging than the behaviours in the level(s) preceding it. This is the key. What we can describe we can measure, fulfilling our need for a more definitive and objective way of determining how well we are doing.

Components of a competency?, continued

Competency example

Here is an example of a competency:

Advocating for Others

Definition: Individuals demonstrating the competency "Advocating for Others" show through their behaviours an inclination to champion a cause or issue and try to get others to support it (i.e., trying to win the support of others).

Scale:

1. **States facts to persuade or motivate**
    - Uses direct persuasion in a discussion or presentation.
    - May appeal to reason, data, and others' self-interest.
    - May use concrete examples, visual aids, demonstrations, etc.
    - At this level, focuses on fact but makes no apparent attempt to adapt presentation to the interest and level of the audience (adapting presentation or language is level 3).

2. **Takes multiple actions to encourage**
    - Makes two or more different arguments or points in a presentation or a discussion.
    - Takes two or more steps to convince. Includes careful preparation of multiple sets of data for presentation (e.g. may use both statistics and actual examples).

3. **Calculates impact of actions or words**
    - Adapts a presentation or discussion to appeal to the interest and level of others.
    - Anticipates the effect of one's words or actions on others' perceptions of himself/herself.
    - Takes a well-thought-out dramatic or unusual action in order to have a specific impact.
    - Anticipates and prepares for others' reactions.

4. **Uses indirect influence**
    - Uses chains of indirect influence: "get A to show B so B will tell C such-and-such".
    - Takes two or more steps to influence, with each step adapted to the specific audience.
    - Anticipates areas where support or influence will be required and takes steps to add these key individuals to own network.
    - Judges when to seek support to enlist the involvement of credible resources/objective experts to bolster arguments or improve buy-in of reluctant or resistant people.
    - Solicits and engages the support of like-minded individuals to help convince others.
    - Uses experts or other third parties to influence.
    - Sounds out key decision-makers and influencers prior to meetings.
    - Uses a combination of logical argument, personal conviction and passion to create a winning case.

5. **Uses complex influence strategies**
    - Uses an in-depth understanding of the interactions within a group to move toward a specific agenda (e.g., may give or defer information among individuals to have specific effects); uses "group process skills" to lead or direct a group.
    - Assembles political coalitions; uses complex manoeuvering to reach a goal or have an effect.
    - Builds "behind the scenes" support for ideas. This may include building support within the Board for management suggestions.
    - Builds and continuously maintains a network of contacts and resources to support initiatives.

What's in it for you?

Benefits of competencies

There are a number of benefits of competency-based approach to performance, that make competencies a win-win situation for all of us. These benefits are outlined in the table below:

Training and Development	☑ Provides you with more focused training and the basis for better development planning
	☑ Provides managers and supervisors with more focus for coaching and leads to partnership with employees
Career Management	☑ Helps you better understand the needs of other jobs and what you need to get there in addition to the technical skills you have
Staffing	☑ Provides a better template for job search and selection
	☑ Helps ensure better initial job/person fit
	☑ Leads to greater personal satisfaction for you as the employee
Performance Management	☑ Leads to more meaningful, objective feedback
	☑ Provides more options to understand your performance and development requirements
	☑ Removes the personal bias as much as possible from the performance management process