

Statewide Competency Modeling Project

Executive Summary

Agencies may now use the Training and Workforce Development (TWD) division of State Civil Service to assist in solving workforce development challenges. TWD, the home of the Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP), can assist agencies in developing a competency model for critical needs positions, career progression groups or overall agency performance. In addition to creating the model, TWD has the capacity to help agencies implement it by designing custom training, selection instruments, process mapping, and strategic initiatives that support the acquisition and retention of key competencies.

TWD has completed competency modelling that will allow agencies to better understand which competencies to seek and develop in employees in order to improve agency performance, regardless of job title. The following competencies have been linked to exceptional employee performance:

- Initiative
- Accountability
- Ethics and Integrity
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Problem Solving
- Judgment and Decision Making
- Results Orientation

In addition to the statewide competencies above, TWD has also identified an additional five competencies critical to success as a state supervisor:

- Situational Adaptability
- Communication
- Workforce Development
- Building Trust
- Courage

These competencies are embodied in the existing Mandatory Supervisory Training Requirements, but TWD will continue to develop additional training, performance support and workforce development tools to support the acquisition and development of these competencies.

TWD will continue to develop the statewide competency model by targeting research efforts at high turnover job areas and/or unrealized or under-realized potential job areas for analysis, such as Human Resources, MIS, or Program Management in addition to agency-driven research.

Scope of Project

TWD has begun an extensive project aimed at identifying competencies that are linked to exceptional performance of state workers, regardless of job title, department, or rank within the organization. TWD sees the creation of such a model as a first step in directing talent management and workforce development activities that increase employee efficiency, proficiency, and engagement, ultimately allowing departments and agencies to better fulfill their mission and serve the citizens of Louisiana.

What is a competency?

Competencies are discussed throughout the HR and academic world. One issue with competencies is that the definition of “competency” can vary. A widely-accepted definition of competency is: a combination of one or more skills, abilities, personality traits and knowledge an employee has that allows him/her to successfully complete a task. Another definition, from McEvoy et al. is “what a person is, knows, and does that is causally related to superior performance.” A third definition is the knowledge, skills, attributes and attitudes one possesses that allows one to perform a task or job.

Whichever definition is used, some elements are universal: a situational, causal and behaviorally-articulated relationship. Basically, a person **has** a competency that allows him to **do** something well **within** a particular environment, usually a work environment.

Why are competencies important?

Competencies are important in the working world for a number of reasons. In today’s technological society, jobs change, are newly created, and become obsolete very quickly. Traditional job analysis approaches can become obsolete almost in less time than it takes to complete them. Competencies and competency models, however, broaden the scope of interest from a particular job to a wider career or even organizational focus. As an example, a job analysis of a Customer Service Agent Intern may reveal that the job requires the ability to follow a telephone script, use polite language and complete a form. A competency-based focus would instead look at customer service as a whole, and would perhaps include more nuanced and detailed skills of decision-making, exception-handling and conflict management. Setting up a model for customer-service competency would address the needs of not only Customer Service Agent Interns, but anyone who needs these skills, abilities, traits within an organization. In our real-world example, this could include more experienced customer service agents, managers of customer service centers, vendor managers and more.

What is a Competency Model?

A Competency Model is the gathering and arranging of individual competencies to cover broad areas of an organization’s business. The entire model may represent the complete set of competencies found to

be important organization-wide, or depending on the model's design, a progressive set of competencies and/or competency levels important for a specific job field.

TWD's initial model comprises 41 individual competencies, placed into related clusters. Related clusters were further grouped into four factors.

Factors and Clusters

We've divided our framework into four factors: Insight, Outcomes, Relationships and Character

Insight: This factor groups competencies that deal with how employees think about the job and how to do it. The clusters included in this factor include Business Knowledge, Decision-Making and Innovation.

Outcomes: This factor groups competencies that address how employees achieve results on the job. Included in this factor are the clusters of Initiative, Operating Effectively, and Performance Management.

Relationships: This factor addresses competencies revolving around building and sustaining relationships with coworkers, subordinates and leaders. The competency clusters included in this factor are Collaborating, Talent Management and Thought Leadership.

Character: This factor's competency clusters address employee behavior, including Authenticity, Transparency, and Meeting Shifting Demands.

Individual competencies are defined below.

Where did TWD get the competencies to be used in the statewide model?

TWD staff did an extensive search to find sources applicable to public service in general and state government in particular. Models set up by the state of California and Georgia, as well as the University of Syracuse were considered as well as models set forth by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Association for Talent Development (ATD).

TWD compared definitions across sources, and in many cases, and with the help of the State Civil Service Executive Management Team, modified competency definitions to best align with the environment of the state of Louisiana and its public workforce.

Figure 1 below depicts the statewide competency framework and how it is organized. The framework consists of forty-one individual competencies that are arranged according to factors and clusters. The factors, clusters, and individual competency definitions follow.

State of Louisiana Competency Framework



Figure 1: TWD Competency Framework

Factor 1: Insight

Cluster A: Business Knowledge

Business Acumen: Understand and apply information to contribute to the organization's strategic plan.

Customer Focus: Identifying and responding to current and future client needs, providing excellent customer service to internal and external clients.

Financial Savvy: Interpreting and applying understanding of key financial indicators to better plan, allocate, spend and manage monetary resources.

Leveraging Technology: The extent to which one recognizes the impact of technological advances and is willing to integrate technology in performing job tasks to achieve efficiency, quality and productivity.

Cluster B: Decision-Making

Managing Complexity: Makes sense of abundant, complex and sometimes conflicting information to find effective solutions.

Judgement and Decision Making: Analyzes problems by evaluating available info and resources; develops effective, viable solutions to problems which can help drive the effectiveness of the department and/or state.

Managing Stakeholders: Understands agendas and perspectives of others, recognizing and effectively balancing the interests and needs of one's own group with those of the broader organization.

Problem Solving: Gathers all necessary information, thoroughly states a problem and the desired result, contemplates the optimal process of achieving that result, summons assistance when necessary, and ultimately takes action.

Cluster C: Innovation

Macro Perspective: The ability to recognize and address issues that are outside our local perspective. Issues are viewed without any pre-set biases or limitations. Ability to see the "big" picture.

Creative Thinking: The ability to look at situations from multiple perspectives. Tendency or ability to do or create something new. Creates solutions to problems using novel methods and processes

Strategic Thinking: Supporting, promoting, and ensuring alignment with the organization's vision and values. Understanding of how an organization must change in light of internal and external trends and influences.

Change Leadership: Initiates and/or manages the change process and energizes it on an ongoing basis, taking steps to remove barriers or accelerate its pace.

Factor II: Outcomes

Cluster D: Initiative

Initiative: Does more than is required or expected in the job; does things that no one has requested that will improve or enhance products and services, avoid problems, or develop entrepreneurial opportunities. Plans ahead for upcoming problems or opportunities and takes appropriate action.

Resource Management: Ensures the effective, efficient, and sustainable use of public service resources and assets; human and financial resources, real property and business information.

Cluster E: Operating Effectively

Talent Management: Clearly establishes and communicates expectations and accountabilities; monitors and evaluates performance; provides effective feedback and coaching; identifies development needs and helps employees address them to achieve optimal performance and gain valuable skills that will translate into strong performance in future roles.

Planning and Organizing/Time Management: Establishes a systematic course of action for self or others to ensure accomplishment of a specific objective. Sets priorities, goals, and timetables to achieve maximum productivity.

Innovation: Applies original thinking in approach to job responsibilities and to improve processes, methods, systems or services.

Cluster F: Performance Management

Accountability: Accepts full responsibility for self and contribution as a team member; displays honesty and truthfulness; confronts problems quickly; displays a strong commitment to organizational success and inspires others to commit to goals; demonstrates a commitment to delivering on his/her public duty and presenting oneself as a credible representative of the Agency and State to maintain the public's trust.

Results Orientation: Consistently delivers and surpasses required business results; sets and achieves achievable, yet aggressive goals; consistently complies with quality standards and meets deadlines; maintains focus on Agency and State goals.

Factor III: Relationships

Cluster G: Collaborating

Teamwork and Cooperation: Cooperates with others to accomplish common goals; works with employees within and across his/her department to achieve shared goals; treats others with dignity and respect and maintains a friendly demeanor; values the contributions of others.

Conflict Management: Addresses conflicts by focusing on the issues at hand to develop effective solutions when disputes or disagreements occur; helps manage conflict collaboratively and also provides impartial mediation when needed.

Interpersonal Skills: Extent to which an individual gets along and interacts positively with co-workers. Degree and style of understanding and relating to others.

Relationship Building: The ability to develop, maintain, and strengthen relationships with others inside or outside of the organization who can provide information, assistance, and support.

Cluster H: Talent Management

Developing Others: Enhances the capabilities of the organization by openly and effectively sharing and/or coaching others on his/her subject matter expertise; supports a continuous learning environment by preserving and compiling intellectual capital which can be used by others within his/her work group, department and state entities, as appropriate.

Values Diversity: Demonstrates an open-minded approach to understanding people regardless of their gender, age, race, national origin, religion, ethnicity, disability status, or other characteristics; treats all people fairly and consistently; effectively works with people from diverse backgrounds by treating them with dignity and respect, promotes the advantages/values of a diverse workforce.

Workforce Management: The effective recruitment, selection, development, and retention of competent staff; includes making appropriate assignments and managing staff performance.

Team leadership: Effectively manages and guides group efforts; tracks team progress, adequately anticipates roadblocks, and changes course as needed to achieve team goals; provides appropriate feedback concerning group and individual performance, including areas for improvement.

Cluster I: Thought Leadership

Communication, Open and Oral and Written: 1. Creates an atmosphere in which timely and high-quality information flows smoothly up and down, inside and outside the organization; encourages open expression of ideas and opinions 2: Appropriately adapts his/her message, style, and tone to accommodate a variety of audiences.

Fosters Engagement: Creates and sustains an environment where people are motivated to help the organization achieve its goals.

Organizational Awareness: Understanding the workings, structure, and culture of the organization as well as the political, social, and economic issues affecting the organization.

Influence: Asserts own ideas and persuades others, gaining support and commitment from others; mobilizes people to take action, using creative approaches to motivate others to meet the organization's goals.

Drives Vision and Purpose: Communicates a compelling and motivating picture of the organization's vision and strategy, and links that vision to the daily actions of others.

Factor IV: Character

Cluster J: Authenticity

Courage: Addresses difficult issues proactively; says what needs to be said.

Ethics and Integrity: Degree of trustworthiness and ethical behavior of an individual with consideration for the knowledge one has of the impact and consequences when making a decision or taking action. Demonstrating concern that one be perceived as responsible, reliable, and trustworthy.

Cluster K: Transparency

Self-Awareness: Increases knowledge of own personal strengths and weaknesses by purposely seeking out feedback and reflecting on one's performance.

Professional Development: Demonstrates a commitment to professional development by proactively seeking opportunities to develop new capabilities, skills, and knowledge; acquires the skills needed to continually enhance his/her contribution to the State and to his/her profession.

Cluster L: Meeting Shifting Demands

Manages Ambiguity: Executes work effectively, even during times of uncertainty.

Active Learning: Demonstrates eagerness to acquire necessary technical knowledge, skills and judgment to accomplish a result. Learns through experimentation when solving new and unique problems.

Resiliency: Recovers effectively when faced with setbacks, adversity, and difficult situations.

Flexibility: Adapts to change and different ways of doing things quickly and positively; does not shy away from addressing setbacks or ambiguity; deals effectively with a variety of people and situations; appropriately adapts one's thinking or approach as the situation changes.

Cluster M: Professionalism

Professionalism: Demonstrates awareness of one's impact on others' perceptions of both himself/herself and the organization. Consistently demonstrates traits, behaviors and characteristics that foster positive, productive, and respectful work relationships.

Research Process

The process used to create the model was to conduct competency sort analyses with a statistically significant number of employees rated exceptional in Performance Year 14-15, as well as the supervisors who rated the employees exceptional. Analysis sessions were held statewide over a period of five months.

In each session, participants were asked to categorize the forty-one competencies into one of three areas: competencies in which the participants felt they (or their exceptional employees) were highly skilled, competencies in which the participants felt they (or their exceptional employees) were moderately skilled, and competencies in which the participants felt they (or their exceptional employees) were least skilled. Participants were required to place only twelve competencies in the highly skilled and least skilled category, which resulted in seventeen competencies remaining in the moderately skilled category. This “forced sort” approach was used to encourage participants to focus on those competencies in which they (or their exceptional employees) were most and least skilled.

TWD ultimately exceeded statistical significance by collecting over 1300 distinct data sets. The results of the project follow.

Project Results

Statewide Competencies

After conducting over two hundred competency sort analyses to obtain 1366 data sets, TWD calculated the mean scores of all forty-one competencies analyzed by participants. Results were separated by employee perspective and supervisor perspective. While rankings varied between the two groups, both groups selected the same competencies in which they felt they (or their employees) were most skilled. The scores were combined, with the result that only eight competencies achieved a combined mean score of 2.4 (of a possible 3) or higher. These eight competencies became the statewide tier of TWD’s competency model. In other words, the eight competencies selected were most highly linked with exceptional performance. The eight statewide competencies are shown below (with mean score):

	Competency	Combined Mean Score
1.	Initiative	2.649
2.	Accountability	2.621
3.	Ethics and Integrity	2.539
4.	Teamwork and Cooperation	2.504
5.	Professionalism	2.485
6.	Problem Solving	2.454
7.	Judgment and Decision Making	2.389
8.	Results Orientation	2.358

Supervisory Competencies

TWD combined the competency sort analysis information with a needs assessment conducted in 2012 regarding supervisory training. In that needs assessment, quantitative data was obtained through surveys of all classified state supervisors. Surveys collected indicated which competencies classified state supervisors chose as most important to supervision in the state. Of the top eight competencies selected by supervisors in the 2012 needs assessment, three of them overlap with the statewide competencies. The three overlapping competencies are: Judgement and Decision Making, Ethics and Integrity, and Problem Solving.

Five competencies, however, were identified as being distinctly pertinent to supervisors. These five supervisory competencies are: Situational Adaptability, Communication, Building Trust, Workforce Management, and Courage.

Supervisory Competencies															
Situational Adaptability		Communication		Building Trust		Workforce Management		Courage							
Statewide Competencies															
Ethics and Integrity		Teamwork and Cooperation		Initiative		Accountability		Professionalism		Problem Solving		Judgment and Decision Making		Results Orientation	

Figure 2 TWD Competency Model for Louisiana

Next Steps

Working with the Model

The purpose of building the model was to provide TWD with research-driven information that will allow the program to provide training and workforce development projects that support state agencies and departments in achieving their mission.

TWD will use the information provided by its research activities to develop, implement and facilitate training that develops competencies which allow classified state employees and supervisors to be successful.

TWD has already adopted the information gleaned in the needs assessment research in its Mandatory Training Program for classified state supervisors. TWD plans to develop additional training that supports each statewide competency and to regularly offer this training to individual employees and agencies.

Additionally, TWD has begun to develop talent management tools that reflect the information gleaned in the competency sort, including behavior-based interview questions and selection activities, as well as expanded workforce planning training and facilitation.

Expanding the Model

TWD plans to continue its research to build on the model in ways that best benefit the state. TWD plans to achieve this objective in two ways: continuing general research and agency-directed research.

General Research

TWD will continue to identify professional or technical job areas throughout the state that suffer from high turnover or inefficiency, and conduct additional research to identify key competencies that should be targeted for recruitment, selection, and development. These broad job areas could include such hierarchical levels such as executive level competency, or could address professional or technical areas such as human resources, finance, accounting or IS.

Executive Competencies							
TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Professional/Technical Competencies							
TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Supervisory Competencies							
Situational Adaptability	Communication	Building Trust	Workforce Management	Courage			
Statewide Competencies							
Ethics and Integrity	Teamwork and Cooperation	Initiative	Accountability	Professionalism	Problem Solving	Judgment and Decision Making	Results Orientation

Figure 3 TWD Statewide Competency Model Future Development

Agency-Directed Research

TWD has already received several requests to perform competency research and modelling for specific jobs, career progression groups, technical/professional areas and organizations. In these and future instances, TWD staff will work with agency staff to determine the scope of the research, conduct research, report findings, and assist the requesting agency with next steps such as executive retreats, specialized training, performance support, selection assistance, and other talent management activities.

Additional Resources

The TWD division has a number of additional resources available on the TWD or the Workforce Development webpage, including:

- an introductory video explaining the project
- a document listing behavior-based interview questions and selection activities for the eight statewide competencies
- sample agency reports

For more information regarding this project or to arrange agency-directed research, please contact Dana LeBherz at dana.lebherz@la.gov or Glyn Hays at glyn.hays@la.gov.