

THE WEB-BASED CORE COMPETENCY PROFILE ASSESSMENT TOOL

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ABSTRACT. The Professional Development and Certification Program for the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community is a key initiative that supports the Government of Canada's priority to strengthen and streamline government operations. The Program is designed to provide the tools to help functional specialists better serve clients and exercise higher levels of delegated authority in order to meet the challenges of an evolving and increasingly complex environment. The Program Management Office of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat has developed an innovative web-based Assessment Tool that enables practitioners and their managers to create a core competency profile and assess their competencies. The tool generates a gap analysis report and learning solutions to assist in the development of individual learning plans.

INTRODUCTION

Citizen-focused, values based and results-oriented government requires the sustained efforts of a professional and motivated workforce, across the public service, working with the right values. The *Public Service Modernization Act*, introduced by the Government of Canada on February 6, 2003, is the centrepiece of ongoing efforts to modernize the management of the government's human resources. One of the objectives of Human Resource Modernization is more coherent training and learning to help employees pursue professional development and meet

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the corporate needs of the public service. The government is strongly committed to learning as a key enabler to renewing the public service, strengthening integrity and accountability, implementing modern management practices and initiatives. To support this commitment, a new *Policy on Learning, Training, and Development* came into effect on January 1, 2006 outlining provisions to support employees by providing for learning plans as well as learning and training opportunities designed to foster excellence and a world-class workforce serving the needs of Canadians today and for future generations.

More recently, on April 11, 2006, the Government of Canada introduced the *Federal Accountability Act* and Action Plan, to strengthen and streamline government to make it more effective and accountable. The comprehensive Action Plan includes supporting policy and other non-legislative measures. One of these measures pertains to how government contracts are procured, since the Government of Canada, in carrying out its programs and providing services to Canadians, is one of the largest purchasers of goods and services in Canada. Key to improving the contracting process is a commitment to provide training and accreditation for procurement officers.

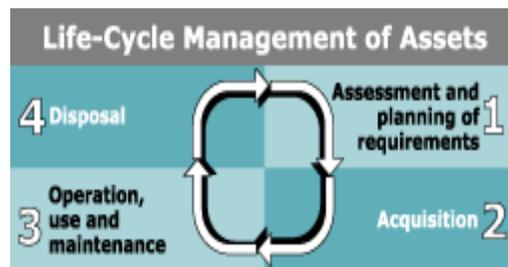
Delivering the Government's commitment to greater accountability will require enhanced knowledge, skills and expertise of functional specialists. It is essential that they be equipped with the tools to meet the challenges that are presented by increasing levels of parliamentary scrutiny and public accountability, evolving trade agreement obligations, globalization and the impact of e-commerce, to name only a few.

The Professional Development and Certification Program for the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community, a key initiative in support of Human Resources Modernization and the new Treasury Board *Policy on Learning, Training and Development*, is the vehicle to accomplish this goal.

The objective of this Program is to provide learning tools to help employees increase their skills, knowledge, and expertise and to foster a professional community that is:

- Strategic and results oriented;
- Conscious and informed about sound risk management practices;
- Aware and accountable for spending in a disciplined and responsible manner, understanding the impact of financial and non-financial decision giving consideration to the integrity of programs critical to the public interest;
- Able to sustain public scrutiny as a result of high ethical standards and values; and
- Flexible to ensure response to emerging and on-going changes.

The Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community is both large and diverse, with approximately 6,000 employees involved in these three functions. The Program recognizes that its members have many common competencies, learning goals, and knowledge requirements as they are they are all involved in the life-cycle management of assets: the assessment and planning of requirements; acquisition; operation, use and maintenance; and, disposal. Consequently, some of the knowledge and skills required to perform these functions are common to all three groups of specialists.



With this in mind, the Program has been designed to deliver learning opportunities that provide standardized core (common to all) and function-specific knowledge and skills that are not only relevant to how the employees carry out their functions in the Canadian federal government but are also fully transferable across specific functions and organizations.

In short, the Program has been designed to help employees gain the knowledge and skills they need to accomplish their learning goals and be recognized as professionals.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The Program has three integrated components.

The Core Competency Profile and Web-based Assessment Tool:

The Profile describes the competencies and behavioural indicators that are required of professionals in Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property. The Assessment Tool enables the manager and/or employee to create a competency profile, assess the employee's level of proficiency and identify competency strengths and gaps. The Tool generates a gap analysis report and lists the Program's learning solutions to assist in the development of employee's individual learning plan.

The Standardized Program Curriculum

The goals of the Program Curriculum are two-fold:

- to ensure that functional specialists and line managers across government departments and agencies have a common exposure to the context and challenges of procurement and asset management in government and the core functions that support the life-cycle management of assets; and
- to provide a foundation for common, standardized knowledge based on core and functional knowledge and skills modules on topics identified as highest priority.

Core and functional knowledge and skills learning solutions have been developed on topics identified in a 2001 study conducted with Canadian federal departments to identify the highest priority learning areas for the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community. The topics also relate to and support the competencies listed in the Core Competency Profile.

Core knowledge and skills topics combine theory and practice and focus on the "must-have" knowledge and skills common to all three functions and related to leadership and management, business perspective and personal and interpersonal skills required to successfully interact with others and serve clients.

Functional knowledge and skills topics provide opportunities to develop function-specific knowledge and skills fundamental to the business of each functional area: procurement, materiel management and real property within the legal and policy environment of working in the Canadian government context.

These topics are offered through:

- Courses, workshops, seminars and sessions offered by the Program's recognized training delivery agents and departments,
- Alternative Learning events, such as e-learning, Business Television (BTVA) that expand the opportunity for learning to take place outside of a formal classroom setting, a key concern of employees in regions that may not have the resources to attend courses offered in just a few locations.
- Learning opportunities offered by recognized external professional certification organizations and by professional institutes.

The Certification Component

The Certification component offers a first ever Government of Canada professional designation to formally acknowledge federal government employees' level of knowledge, learning and experience achievements. Procurement specialists can acquire the designation of *Certified Federal Specialist in Procurement - CFSP* and those in materiel management can acquire the designation of *Certified Federal Specialist in Materiel Management – CFSMM* from the Canadian General Standards Board, an ISO accredited certification organization. The Canadian General Standards Board follows the *ISO/IEC 17024:2003 Conformity Assessment – General Requirements for Bodies Operating Certification of Persons*.

The Canadian General Standards Board has published a standard for *Competencies of the Federal Government Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community* (CGSB-192.1-2005) that defines the competencies and related knowledge, training, and experience required for professional development, career planning and/or certification. The competencies are taken from the Core Competency Profile for the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community. In addition to the Standard, there is a *Certification*

Program Manual and Certification Application and Maintenance Handbook that explain the Certification Program, how a person will be assessed and the process and forms to apply for and maintain certification.

METHODS

Importance of Developing a Competency Profile

The Framework for Competency-Based Management in the Public Service of Canada provides the legislative, policy and practical guidelines for using a set of competencies to manage people's performance, including the learning they undertake, within the Public Service of Canada.

Human Resource Modernization also recognizes the importance of identifying the competencies required for success in a changing work environment. As government priorities and policies evolve, one of the methods to address the gap between required and existing skills and knowledge is continuous learning and professional development. Specific areas of knowledge must be developed and/or strengthened to enable the community to meet the challenges of the government's environment and requirements.

Methodology Used to Develop the Core Competency Profile

The Core Competency Profile and web-based assessment tool provide employees with a self-directed approach to effectively identify and manage their learning and development needs.

The core competencies were identified by a subcommittee of the Treasury Board Secretariat's Continuous Learning Working Group, which provides advice to the TBS Program Management Office in the development and implementation of the Program. The committee members represented various departments and agencies in training, procurement, materiel management and real property functions. The competencies were also validated by other members of the community from various departments and agencies and from bargaining agents across Canada to ensure that they reflect the knowledge, skills and attributes required to meet the challenges of modern government.

The creation of the Core Competency Profile also involved:

- Analysis of related information and other competency profiles through literature, studies and database review, models, and interviews with members of the Community;
- Integration of various competencies from the Middle Manager, Human Resource Officer and Financial Officer Competency Profiles developed under the leadership of the Public Service Commission and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

Structure of the Core Competency Profile

Competencies defined:

Competencies are the knowledge, skills and attributes expressed as observable behaviours that are necessary to perform successfully in a particular business role.

A competency profile is a set of competencies and levels of proficiency for each competency that are required for achieving quality results in a specific business role.

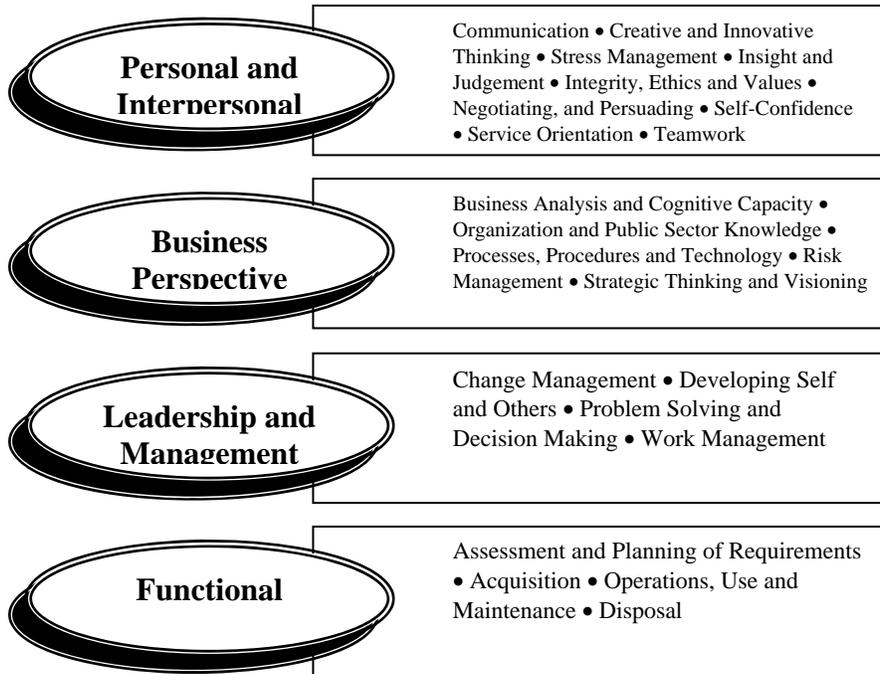
Each competency is associated with statements regarding observable behavioural indicators that relate to progressive and cumulative degrees of complexity. These degrees do not correspond with job classification levels but rather with the complexity of the behaviours needed to meet the work objectives.

Competency Clusters

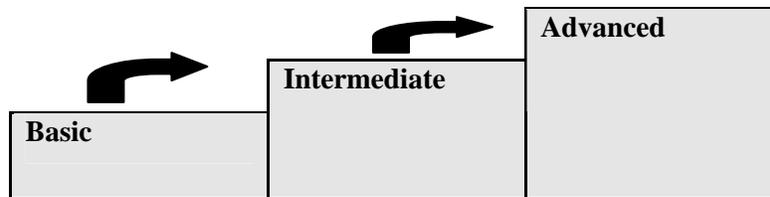
The following outlines the competency clusters and individual competencies that are contained within each cluster of the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Competency Profile.

In any given context, an individual's profile will be made up of a combination of competencies with various degrees of complexity.

No one is expected to possess all of these competencies. The profile of each procurement, materiel management and real property specialist will be unique and will change over time as he or she learns and demonstrates new capabilities. Profiles will also differ depending on factors such as whether the employee works at head office or in a region, in a large or small department, in a common service organization or within a department or an agency. Accordingly, the profile developed is only a guide to planning the employee's learning and development requirements.



Progressive and Cumulative Degrees of Complexity



The Core Competency Profile can also be used in combination with, or to supplement, other functional competency profiles developed for specific job families in various departments or in the public service.

GUIDE TO USING THE CORE COMPETENCY PROFILE AND ASSESSMENT TOOL

The purpose of the Guide is to provide the Procurement, Materiel Management and Real Property Community specialists with a core competency profile and explain how to use the web-based assessment tool to assess their level of proficiency in terms of knowledge and skills. This in turn will assist employees in identifying and managing their ongoing learning and professional development requirements in the context of the Program. Whether an employee is new to the function or has several years experience, or is in a regional office or at head office, they can use the Core Competency Profile to better manage their learning and to invest in professional development.

Using The Core Competency Profile

The recommended approach for establishing a profile is for the manager to create a position profile based on the proficiency level expected of an employee to be able to perform his responsibilities. The employee then completes a self-assessment against the established position competency profile, using a proficiency rating scale. Based on the system-generated report of strength and gaps, the employee and manager meet to discuss the employee's competency development needs and goals. This way, they can jointly identify the employee's learning requirements and prepare an individual learning plan for the employee.

If this approach is not feasible, the employee is still able to assess his competencies in order to identify the areas where further development and learning are required, and to choose from the learning solutions offered through the Program's course delivery agents.

While designed to support a joint process, the profile can be completed by an employee to assist in developing an individual learning plan that includes achievable objectives, steps and measures to assess progress

Using the Assessment Tool

The assessment tool contains 22 competencies that are defined by behavioural indicator statements that cover the four competency clusters. The assessment tool enables the manager and/or employee to determine the following:

- The competencies required for the employee's responsibilities.
- The employee's individual competency strengths and gaps.
- The learning solutions required to address the gaps.

Both the employee and manager are strongly encouraged to use the assessment tool to determine the employee's learning needs based on the employee's assessment. While the tool is designed to support this joint process, employees can complete it as an individual process. The assessment will be based on the employee and his manager's perceptions of the competencies required to meet work responsibilities, as well as on an assessment of the employee's own competencies. Therefore, a discussion with the manager is an important step in clarifying the employee's learning needs as they relate to the employee's responsibilities, assignments, workload priorities, constraints, etc. Comparing the two assessments will give the employee a comprehensive picture of their competency status as well as of their learning and development needs.

Rating Scale

The following rating scale is used by an employee to select the competencies required for their responsibilities and to assess their level of proficiency against those competencies.

- High
- Medium
- Low
- Not applicable

Steps in the Assessment Process

The process to identify the competencies required for the employee's responsibilities and to assess the level of proficiency in those competencies entails four steps:

Step 1	Preparing a Competency Profile for the Employee's Responsibilities
Step 2	Assessing Competencies and Identifying Learning Gaps
Step 3	Determining Learning Needs and Developing an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)
Step 4	Evaluating Competency Progress

Step 1 - Preparing a Competency Profile for the Employee's Responsibilities

It is important to take an inventory of all the competencies associated with the employee's responsibilities. This ensures that the competency profile reflects all the behaviours required to achieve the work objectives.

In this step, the manager selects all the competencies associated with the responsibilities of the employee's position.

The manager then reviews all the behavioural indicator statements of each competency selected, and identifies a proficiency level expected for the position using the rating scale.

The employee reviews the resulting competency profile to see if it reflects their understanding of the requirements of their position prior to completing the employee self-assessment.

Step 2 - Assessing Competencies and Identifying Learning Gaps

Once the competency profile for the employee's responsibilities has been established, the employee can identify any variance between the competencies needed and those he possesses. He will then be able to establish his learning priorities.

The employee should rate his ability to demonstrate each behaviour using the established rating scale.

Based on the proficiency level selected for each behaviour, an assessment report will be generated indicating the employee's competency ratings, including strengths and gaps. It is important that

managers review and provide honest and open feedback on the employee's assessment of his competencies. The employee's assessment is based on his perception of his strengths and gaps. A discussion with the manager about what is required in his job, and what competencies need to be developed, will help the employee decide which competency gaps to address, and when.

Step 3 - Identifying Learning Needs and Developing an Individual Learning Plan

The employee is asked to contact his or her manager to set up a counselling session to review the assessment results. If the manager has also done an assessment of the employee's competencies, the employee should read that report prior to the meeting. To take full advantage of his counselling session, the employee should be prepared to play an active role in the discussion.

During the meeting with the manager, the employee should be encouraged to ask questions to make sure they understand the rationale behind the manager's assessment. If the employee's self-assessment is significantly different from that of the manager, they should try to find out why their opinions diverge.

The employee can also use the discussion to further brainstorm and discuss other opportunities to develop his competencies. What new skills or knowledge should be acquired or developed? What kind of assignments should be sought to develop competencies? What courses should be taken?

The employee must be aware that not all identified gaps must be filled immediately. The following should be considered in determining where to focus priorities for learning:

- setting priorities for acquiring the knowledge and skills;
- balancing current responsibilities versus future-oriented competency gaps;
- balancing individual development versus business/organizational needs;
- budget and workload constraints.

The employee and manager should set progress milestones and discuss competency development opportunities. This can be the basis for the employee's plans and achievements during the coming year.

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

The employee uses the results of this discussion to develop an Individual Learning Plan. To be useful, a learning plan should be as concrete as possible, listing achievable objectives, steps and measures to assess progress. As a result of the employee's self-assessment and reflection, the plan will identify the knowledge and skills areas in which to develop and/or improve. It also allows the employee and the manager to articulate the steps and progress measures required to achieve these objectives.

Step 4 - Evaluating Competency Progress

Regular monitoring and recording of the employee's progress will draw more attention to the tangible improvements made throughout the learning and development activities identified in the Individual Learning Plan, serving as both a reward and motivator.

Ongoing monitoring also allows early identification of areas that require more effort and/or time to develop than originally planned. This will allow the employee to modify the learning plan proactively and on a timely basis.

An annual review of the employee's competencies and Individual Learning Plan should be conducted to see if the learning objectives have been achieved and to identify further developmental requirements for the coming year.

The Program Curriculum of Courses

To assist the employee in selecting the most appropriate courses to address the competency gaps, the TBS Program website contains information on all courses in the Program as well as links to the Canada School of Public Service and Public Works and Government Services Canada web sites.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE WEB-BASED CORE COMPETENCY PROFILE ASSESSMENT TOOL

The “How To Use” section on the TBS Program website explains how to use the Web-Based Competency Profile Assessment Tool.

New Users

The first time a user visits the Competency Profile Assessment Tool Web site, they must create a **user account** to access the areas where they can create a Competency Profile and/or conduct a Personal Assessment.

There are two user types:

1. Employee

To create a personal Competency Profile and to assess one’s competencies, the employee must create an employee account. This is done by clicking on the “New User” button on the “Main” page of the site, taking the employee to the New User Registration page. To set up an account, the employee merely selects and provides a username and password.

2. Manager

To create a Competency Profile for an employee’s area of responsibilities, a manager account must be created.

The user information will be stored in a database. Because this is a voluntary process, the Web-Based Competency Assessment Profile Tool has been designed to protect an employee’s privacy. All access to personal information is password protected. Any use of this information without the employee’s consent is strictly prohibited.

If the manager has not created a Competency Profile, the employee is able to log on as a manager to set up a manager account, and will be asked to complete all required fields.

When the required information is entered, the user must click on the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form.

The employee’s username and password will be confirmed in the next window that appears on the screen. It is suggested that the username and password be stored in a safe place. They will be needed to retrieve personal information during future visits to this site.

Returning Users

When the employee makes a return visit to the Competency Profile Assessment Tool website, they will be required to log in to access their personal assessment. The employee may log in by clicking on either the “Employee Log In” or “Manager Log In” button on the “Main” page, or by clicking on the Employee’s Area or Manager’s Area sections on the left-side navigation options. The employee is then asked to enter their personal username and password on the Log In page, and then click on the “Submit” button.

Manager’s Instructions

Managers play an important role in assisting employees to identify their learning needs. They know their employees’ job requirements and their areas of strength and weakness, and can provide valuable feedback to help address their competencies gaps. An employee preparing a learning plan will benefit greatly from the managers’ involvement.

There are two options available to a manager:

1) Prepare a Competency Profile for an Employee’s Responsibilities

A manager can use this tool to create a Competency Profile for their employee’s responsibilities. The profile can become the basis for their personal competency assessment. It is important to inventory all the competencies associated with the work that the employee should perform in his position. This ensures that the competency profile reflects all behaviours required for the employee to achieve the work objectives.

2) Retrieve a Competency Profile

Over time, a Competency Profile may go out of date. Competencies may change, or the manager may decide that the profile as it was created does not include the correct competencies, behaviours or ratings. A manager cannot delete a Competency Profile once it has been created, because it is linked through this online tool to the employee’s completed Personal Assessment Profile.

If a Competency Profile for a given business role is no longer valid, the manager should deactivate the Competency Profile to prevent employees from using it for future Personal Competency Profile Assessments.

The manager must review the profile carefully. If they would like to discontinue use of this Competency Profile for future employee assessments, they must follow the instructions to “Deactivate Profile”.

To create a new profile to replace the inactive profile, the manager must follow the instructions to return to the Manager’s Area and follow the steps to create a new Competency Profile.

Employee's Instructions

Step 1 – Preparing a Competency Profile for Your Responsibilities

If the manager has created a Competency Profile, his name will appear in the list on the page. The employee must follow the instructions to select the manager’s name, if present. After the employee selects his manager’s name, the next page will list the Competency Profile titles that the manager has created. If the employee wants to use the Competency Profile prepared by his manager as the basis of his personal Competency Profile Assessment, he is ready to move to Step 2 – Assess Your Competencies. If the employee chooses not to use the Competency Profile prepared by the manager as the basis of the personal Competency Profile Assessment, he will need to prepare his own Competency Profile.

Step 2 – Assessing Your Competencies and Identifying Your Learning Gaps

Once the Competency Profile for the employee’s work responsibilities has been established, either by his manager or by the employee, he can assess his proficiency level for the competencies required. The web-based assessment tool then generates a Gap Analysis Report.

Step 3 – Identifying Your Learning Needs and Developing Your Individual Learning Plan

Based on the gap analysis created in Step 2, courses offered by the Program will be identified as recommended Learning Solutions for the gaps demonstrated in the employee’s assessment.

In addition to the learning solutions offered by the Program Curriculum of Courses through the Canada School of Public Service and Public Works and Government Services Canada, many others are offered by departments and private sector organizations. Employees should explore these options to develop the competencies they need.

Employees must realize that not all identified gaps must necessarily be filled immediately. They should consider the following as they determine where to focus their learning priorities and develop their Individual Learning Plan in consultation with their manager:

- balancing competency gaps in their current job versus those for future work situations;
- balancing personal development versus the needs of the business or organization;
- budget and workload constraints.

Step 4 – Evaluating Competency Progress

Regular monitoring and recording of an employee's progress will draw attention to the improvements achieved throughout their learning and development program. Ongoing monitoring also allows the employee to identify, early on, competencies that will require more effort and/or time to develop than originally planned, and to modify the learning plan proactively and on a timely basis.

The employee and the manager should review the employee's competencies and learning plan every year to see if the employee has achieved his learning objectives and to identify further developmental requirements for the coming year.

DISCUSSION

System Requirements for the Core Competency Profile Assessment Tool

The Core Competency Profile Assessment Tool is a web-based application developed for the Government of Canada's Professional Development and Certification Program of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. The Government of Canada is pleased to share this application for this tool with other governments and interested parties.

In order for another organization to use this application, it must be operating on a web server infrastructure similar to the one used at the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. The following outlines these requirements:

a) Microsoft Internet Information Server Version 5.0 or greater

A Windows-based web server running Microsoft Internet Information Server is required to host this application. It is written in classic ASP code. The application has been tested with IIS version 5.0.

b) Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 or greater

The backend database for this application was designed in Microsoft SQL Server. Data is accessed through stored procedures.

If a Microsoft SQL Server installation is not available – calls to database could be re-written by the user of the application to work with another database (MySQL, MS Access, etc.)

Regardless of the system used, some adjustments will be required to make the application function in a new environment. There is no automatic installation available for the Core Competency Profile Assessment Tool.

Any questions regarding the technical requirements of this application can be directed to the Professional Development and Certification Program Management Office.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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