



## Hiring with Competencies

A competency is a combination of interrelated knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that enable a person to act effectively in a job or situation.

**Competencies are not the same as job tasks.** Competencies are what a person needs to be successful in a job. Competencies include all the related knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes that form a person's job. This set of context-specific qualities is correlated with job performance and can be used as a standard against which to measure job performance as well as to develop, recruit, and hire employees.

**Competencies define a target to hire toward,** not a minimum that must be met. Without a clearly defined target, hiring managers may each be looking for different things in the selection process, and there could be greater susceptibility to legal issues.

### Selecting Position-Specific Competencies

To select effective competencies ensure they are job-related and predictive of success in the position. Position-specific competencies need to focus on the competencies that are most important to success in the role, as well as the ones that you are not equipped or willing to provide as much training and coaching for. For example, if the competencies Adaptability or Design are highly important to a job and they're things you expect candidates to come in the door with (as opposed to training them first), those competencies should be prioritized when hiring.

Consider the level of authority, the job responsibilities, and the specific skills and motivations that are necessary for completing the tasks effectively. Select Position-Specific Competencies that reflect successful performance of the primary duties of the job. Carefully screen for, and remove, competencies that may have been possessed by a prior "rock star" performer. Focus on what is needed to do the routine work.

Each candidate will likely not be strong on 100% of the competencies in a job, but if hiring managers select candidates who are fit to the essential ones, some simple training can help to raise the other competency areas to higher levels of performance.

### Types of Competencies

Competencies are commonly separated into three categories:

1. Core/Foundational/Workplace
2. Cross-Functional/Industry-Wide
3. Functional/Technical/Occupation-Specific

A Core/Foundational/Workplace competency is a set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors necessary for broad job functions and support successful performance in any area of expertise or role. Examples: Teamwork, Oral Communication, Customer Focus, Adaptability, Initiative, Professionalism.

Cross Functional/Industry-Wide competencies are required for a number of jobs across many functions and businesses. Examples: Computer user skills, budgeting, customer service.

Functional/Technical/Occupation-Specific competencies represent the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to work within a specific occupation and that are directly related to the position and its place in the industry and organization. Examples: Employee training, software programming, tax accounting.

### **Competency Master List**

A dictionary of competencies has been assembled by Classification and will be added to as necessary. Use the master list to select position-specific competencies that match the duties of the position with the considerations above. When using competencies from the master list, **do not edit them**. If necessary, you can draft a new competency and send it to Classification for review and adding to the master list.

If you would like help in selecting or drafting competencies, contact Classification.

### **How Classification Writes Competencies**

Competencies are written with a title followed by its definition.

For example:

Analytical Thinking/Problem Solving: uses a logical, systematic, sequential approach to address problems or opportunities or manage a situation by drawing on one's knowledge and experience base and calling on other references and resources as necessary.

### **Classification's Guidelines for Writing Competencies**

- Define competencies simply and clearly. Any reader should be able to easily identify what the competency is.
- Make sure competencies embody a single, readily identifiable characteristic. For example, Oral Communication is different from Written Communication; therefore, both characteristics should not be included in one competency.
- Avoid making the competency too specific. For example, it's better to have a competency that encompasses computer skills in general rather than highlighting one particular computer program.
- Make the competency definition behaviorally-based. This ensures the competency can be verified and assessed. To do this incorporate action verbs (e.g., "Recognizes", "Identifies", "Organizes") into the competency definition.
- Remove unnecessary qualifiers (e.g., "Thorough Knowledge," "Considerable Skill," or "Basic Understanding"). Clearly distinguish examples of performance without trying to describe a proficiency level.

### **Competency progression**

When writing the competencies for the different levels of a class series, Classification staff will determine the competencies common to the job class. Typically, the competencies listed in the class specification for entry level classes will cover core competencies. Journey and advanced

professional level classes will typically include cross functional and functional competencies, with higher responsibility and authority work getting narrower functional competencies.

Management classes will typically include cross functional competencies specific to the five roles of management: Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, and Business Coalitions. First- and Mid-level management classes will typically have a mix of functional competencies specific to the subject area and management functional competencies. Higher level management and executive classes will typically only reflect the functional competencies of management.