



Personnel & Labor Relations Competency Based MQ Guidance

Purpose

The State is adopting a competency based MQ format for professional and management level job classes. This format provides hiring managers greater authority over hiring decisions and the ability to consider candidates whose job-related competencies were acquired through atypical paths.

The purpose of this document is to introduce the new format and provide information on how the recruitment and selection process differs when hiring for a position under the new format. For assistance with requesting the competency based format be adopted for a specific job class or class series contact your HR representative.

What it looks like

The competency based MQ format uses a standard layout with information specific to the job class. The statement will include 2 to 4 principle competencies required of all positions in the job class and how the competencies are commonly gained.

Example Job Class #1

Any combination of education and/or experience that provides the applicant with competencies in

- First main element in the class specification's KSAs
- Second main element in the class specification's KSAs

equivalent to those typically gained by:

a description of the education and/or experience that is the common preparation for entry to the job.

If a job class has a requirement that must be met to be able to perform the work (such as a professional license, certification, or other item) it will be listed above the "any combination" section:

Example Job Class #2

Eligibility for licensure to practice as a *Profession* in the State of Alaska

AND

Any combination of education and/or experience that provides the applicant with competencies in

- First main element in the class specification's KSAs
- Second main element in the class specification's KSAs

equivalent to those typically gained by:

a description of the education and/or experience that is the common preparation for entry to the job.

Special Note:

A candidate not currently licensed by the State of Alaska, who meets the eligibility requirements for licensure, may apply and be considered. If selected the applicant may receive a conditional job offer; however, proof of licensure will be required prior to appointment.

How it's used

The competency based MQ format does not screen on a specific type or amount of education or experience. Instead applicants are screened by the hiring manager on competencies, however gained. The “any combination of education and/or experience” means anything will be considered qualifying. The screening will be based on the essential core competencies specified. The “typically gained by” section shows how those competencies are usually acquired or may be acquired but **does not describe the only allowable method or set a minimum ‘time-spent’**. An applicant who believes they have the competencies listed can apply, whether they gained them in the specified ‘normal’ manner or through any other blend of training and/or experience.

How Hiring Manager's role changes

The hiring manager is being given greater authority for hiring decisions and responsibility for ensuring hires are in keeping with the merit principles in employment. This includes responsibility for:

- Determining if an applicant has credibly indicated possession of the required competencies;
- Evaluating applicants' relative competencies through the screening process;
- Selecting the successful applicant for the specific vacancy based on evaluation of:
 - possessed knowledge and skills to do the job;
 - attitude and motivation to do the job effectively; and
 - alignment of values and working styles with those of the unit; and
- Documenting the hiring decision.

Merit Principle of Employment

Alaska's constitution requires employment by the State be governed by the merit principle. The Personnel Act details how this governs employment in AS 39.25.010(b). As a hiring manager you are responsible for applying the merit principle of employment in recruitment and selection. This includes:

“(1) recruiting, selecting, and advancing employees on the basis of their relative ability, knowledge, and skills, including open consideration of qualified applicants for initial appointment;
...

(3) retention of employees with permanent status on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, reasonable efforts of temporary duration for correction in inadequate performance, and separation for cause;

(4) equal treatment of applicants and employees with regard only to consideration within the merit principles of employment; and

(5) selection and retention of an employee's position secure from political influences.”

How HR Staff's role changes

Recruitment HR staff will no longer be assessing an applicant's training or experience to apply a minimum threshold. HR's role is to:

- Assist the hiring manager in creating an effective job posting;
- Guide the hiring manager through documenting the hiring process; and
- Ensure the hiring manager is making a legally defensible hire.

As part of the change in role Recruitment staff are given responsibility for guiding hiring managers in using the new format. This includes the authority to determine:

- If a job posting may be published or must be revised;
- If appropriate screening methods are established; and
- If the hiring decision is sufficiently documented.

What's required to post a vacancy

The competency based MQ format requires the hiring manager use the applicant-focused job posting format, apply position-specific screening tools, and meet documentation standards. In keeping with the intent of the flexible MQ, the recruitment scope must be open to Alaska Residents or All Applicants.

The new process includes:

1. Evaluating the PD¹ to:
 - a. Determine if it accurately reflects the duties the new employee will be assigned (if it doesn't, talk to HR about whether the PD should be updated);
 - b. Determine if the KSAs of the job class reflect the competencies a new employee will be evaluated on (if it doesn't, talk to HR about whether the position should be reclassified); and
 - c. Identify one-to-five competencies (Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Behaviors) specific to the position that, in addition to the job class competencies, will be used to evaluate the relative capabilities of applicants.
2. Creating an applicant-focused job posting open to Alaska Residents or All Applicants that:
 - a. Accurately and concisely describes the core duties of the position; and
 - b. Describes the main position-specific competencies on which relative merit will be evaluated.
3. Creating an initial screening tool that applies the competencies listed in the class specification's MQ section and the position-specific competencies in the job posting, such as:
 - a. 3-5 questions to be included in the job posting each applicant must answer; and
 - b. Questions to be used in a first phone interview, if applicable, to assess applicant competencies and determine who to pass through to a second interview.
4. Documenting each interview, reference check, and other inquiry with sufficient detail to support and defend the decisions made on candidates.
5. Completing the Hiring Manager Certification of the planned job offer with sufficient detail to support and defend the selection of the successful candidate over other applicants.

Definitions:

“Competencies” means a combination of interrelated knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that enable a person to act effectively in a job or situation.

¹ This includes ensuring the PD is in OPD and within recency standards for recruitment.

“Professional experience” means work that is creative, analytical, evaluative, and interpretive; requires a range and depth of specialized knowledge of the profession's principles, concepts, theories, and practices; and is performed with the power or right to decide or act according to one's own judgment.

“Progressively responsible” means indicating growth and/or advancement in complexity, difficulty, or level of responsibility.

“Qualified” means is assessed to credibly possess the competencies needed to learn the job in a reasonable period.

“Training” and “education” in this guidance are synonyms for the process of acquiring knowledge and skills through instruction. It includes instruction through formal and informal methods (such as classroom, on-line, self-study, and on-the-job), from accredited and unaccredited sources, and long-duration (such as a post-secondary degree) and short-duration (such as a seminar) programs.

“Typically gained by” means the prevalent, usual method of gaining the competencies expected for entry into the job.

Addenda

1. Applicant-focused Job Posting Format Instructions
2. Sample Applicant-focused Job Posting
3. Hiring Manager Certification Form