

GUIDE FOR WRITING FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES



10/13/2005

Guide for Writing Functional Competencies



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What is the Purpose of this Guide?

The purpose of this Guide is to provide managers and subject matter experts (SMEs) with information on how to write functional competencies that accurately reflect the skills, knowledge, abilities, and personal characteristics essential for successful job performance.

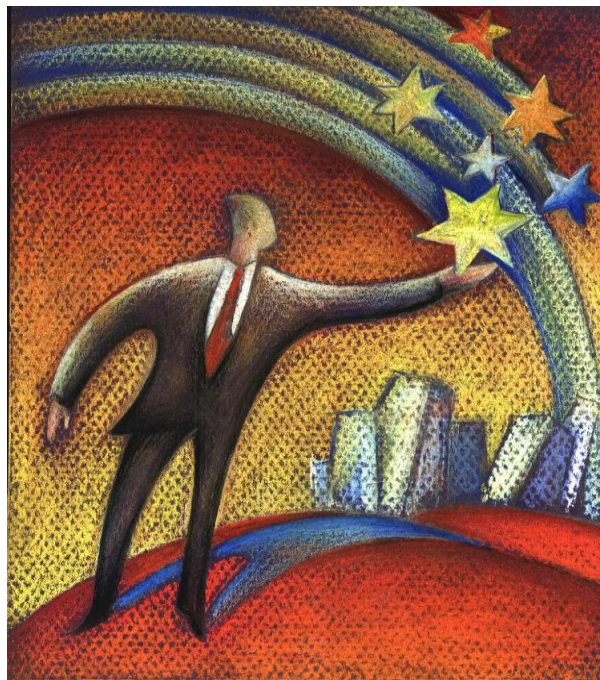
Functional competencies may be used for many purposes within the human resources system as will be discussed in greater detail later. Depending on how the competencies are used, there may be legal liability. While this “Guide” incorporates procedures that adhere to the requirements for legal defensibility, it should not be considered a guarantee against legal action.

When using competencies to make high stakes personnel decisions (e.g. selection, promotion, appraisal), other resources should be consulted to ensure adherence to legal guidelines and technical standards considering the specifics of the situation.

How is This Guide Organized?

This guide is organized into four major sections:

- Section 1: Overview of Competencies
- Section 2: Career Levels of Functional Competencies
- Section 3: Writing Task Statements & KSAPs
- Section 4: Step-by-step Guide for Writing Functional Competencies



SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF COMPETENCIES

What are Competencies?

After conducting an extensive literature review, we found the definitions for competency and categories/types of competencies (e.g. core, functional, organizational) vary depending on the source consulted. In some instances, the definitions are not only different but also conflict with each other.

Since there are no agreed upon definitions, the definitions provided in this Guide are based on the literature review and selected to best serve the purpose of this Guide. These definitions are intended to provide consistency in how the terms are used. ***Therefore, please remember to only use the definitions provided.***

General Definition of a Competency

– A competency is a characteristic of an employee that

1. contributes to successful job performance
2. the achievement of organizational results.

These include measurable or assessable knowledge, skills, and abilities plus other characteristics such as values, motivation, initiative, and self-control that distinguish superior performers from average performers (Shippmann et.al. 2000; Spencer, McClelland, & Spencer 1994)

What are the types of Competencies?

Just as there are multiple definitions to describe competencies, there also are multiple ways to categorize them. This “Guide” looks at the types of competencies according to their breadth or levels of specificity. Below are some major competency types.

A. Organizational Competency – An organizational competency is an aspect of the business believed to have the greatest strategic value.

An organizational competency is measured at the level of the organization rather than at the level of the individual. This concept, introduced by Prahalad and Hamel in a 1990 Harvard Business Review article, was initially called “core competencies”. Subsequent to the Harvard publication, the term “core competencies” has been defined in many different ways, which has caused confusion when people use the same word to describe different concepts.

This Guide uses the term “organizational competency” to refer to the Prahalad and Hamel concept. Thus, organizational competencies are design components of an *organization’s* competitive strategy.

Organizational Competency Examples:

Organization	Competency
↻ Wal-mart	Value pricing
↻ Nordstrom	Customer service
↻ McDonald's	Quick service
↻ Toyota	Reliability



B. Foundational Competency (Rear Wheel Competencies) – A foundational competency represents a set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes/attributes necessary for broad job functions. These are supporting level competencies linked to successful performance, and are desirable regardless of an individual’s area of expertise or role.

Foundational Competency Examples:

- ~ Teamwork
- ~ Oral Communication
- ~ Customer Focus
- ~ Adaptability
- ~ Initiative
- ~ Professionalism
- ~ Cultural Sensitivity



Functional Competency (Front Wheel Competencies) – A functional competency is a specific knowledge or skill area that relates to successful performance in the job.

Functional Competency Examples:

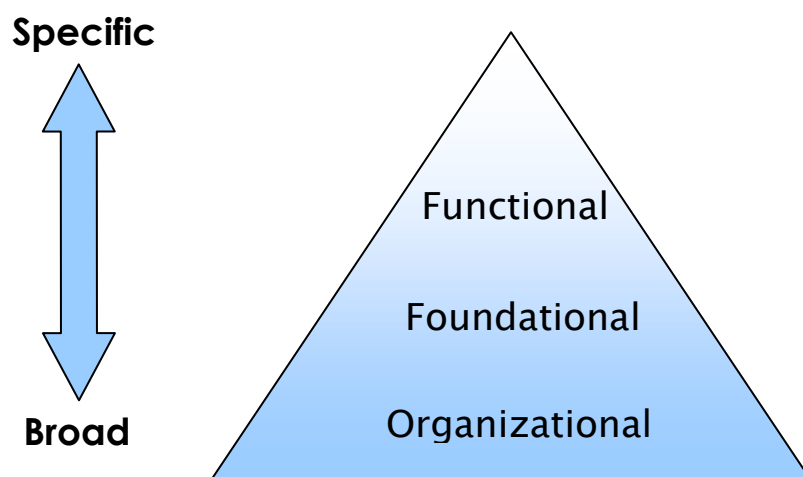
↻ Financial Specialists need the functional competencies of financial analysis and setting up accounting systems.

↻ Information System Analysts need the functional competencies of programming and systems analysis.

↻ Contract specialists need the functional competencies of acquisition planning, contract formation, and contract administration.



The triangle below shows the breadth of the types of competencies.



How May Competencies be Used?

Competencies may be used to:

- **Recruit - position vacancy announcements** may use competency-based language (e.g. knowledge, skill, ability, personal characteristics and behavioral indicators) to describe those factors that are important for successfully performing the major job duties.
- **Select - possession of a set of competencies may be a determining factor in who is selected for a position.**
- **Train & Develop – Individual Development Plans (IDPs)** may be competency-based, and a lack of those competencies might generate future training and development requirements for the individual. Future automated IDP tools, linked to the institutional schoolhouse, may be competency based.
- **Assign** - Depending on desired outcome, a manager's determination of who will be assigned/reassigned to a specific position permanently or temporarily may be based, in part, on who possesses the needed competencies to step in and get immediate results or on who could benefit from a developmental assignment that provides an opportunity for building needed competencies.
- **Appraise** – National Security Personnel System (NSPS) will establish competency-based core performance factors against which all employees will be appraised. Appraised competencies need to be measurable and scalable, and should provide managers with key behaviors that support and define the competency and provide managers with performance measurement capability.
- **Draft Position Descriptions** (PDs) - Future PDs may utilize a Standard Position Requirements statement that would contain competency-based language to communicate what is needed to perform the work.
- **Assess - Assessment tools may be competency-based.**
- **Forecast** - Managers may have an Army-developed competency-based forecasting tool available to determine short and long term skill set (competency) requirements for future staffing.
- **Classify** – competencies may be used to determine the type and level of positions.

Why Should the Competencies be Legally Defensible?

Personnel decisions (e.g. hiring, promotion, demotion, performance evaluation, retention), made as a result of an assessment or test of competencies may be subject to scrutiny of the courts. Other personnel decisions such as training and transfer may also be subject to legal scrutiny if they lead to any of the decisions previously mentioned. Personnel decisions made on the basis of an assessment of competencies must comply with the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978).



While this Guide incorporates many of the legal considerations, care should be taken to ensure that the degree of adherence to the “Uniform Guidelines” meets the requirements for how the competencies are used (e.g. adherence to the “Guidelines” should be strict when making hiring decisions but may not need to be as strict when used for general employee development).

Who Should Write Competencies?

Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) should write the functional competencies. SMEs are individuals who have a thorough knowledge of the job under study. SMEs should be close enough to the job to be able to give current and accurate information (Albemarle v Moody).

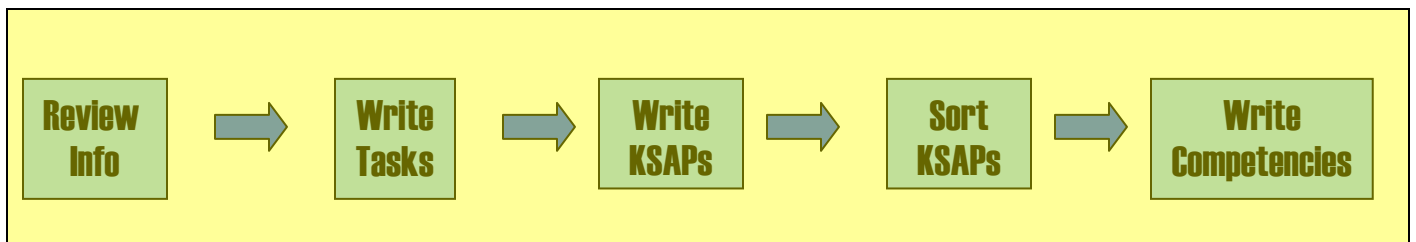
SME Qualifications:

- ✓ Current job incumbent (perceived as the “role model” for proper job performance), a direct supervisor, a trainer, or job analyst
- ✓ Highly skilled and knowledgeable regarding the job steps.
- ✓ Aware of new procedures, equipment, and “lessons learned”.



What is the Process for Writing Competencies?

The diagram below is a flowchart of the competency writing process. A detailed step-by-step approach will be presented later. The purpose of this flowchart to show how the different steps fit together to produce the competencies that underlie successful job performance.



SECTION 2: CAREER LEVELS OF FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES

What Is a Functional Competency Again?

Functional Competency – A functional competency is a specific knowledge or skill area that relates to successful performance in the job.

What are “Career Levels”?

Different levels of proficiency are expected based on the amount of experience an employee has.

Generally, employees are able to perform with less supervision, accept more responsibility and handle increasingly more difficult problems/challenges as their careers progress.

This guide defines three Career Levels that may be considered when identifying the types of training and developmental assignments that provide the knowledge or skills for the next higher career level.

Career Levels for professional and administrative employees are developmental/basic; full performance/intermediate; and expert. Estimates of grade levels that correspond to the Career Levels are included in parenthesis. Of course, the grade levels will vary depending on highest grade within the career ladder and will change once the National Security Personnel System (NSPS) pay structure is implemented.

- **Developmental (e.g., GS-5 to 9):** General knowledge of and the principles, concepts and/or methodologies of the competency as attained from education or basic/familiarization/overview courses and/or initial on-the-job orientation/training and closely supervised assignments. Becomes qualified to advance to intermediate courses and perform a range of routine assignments under general supervision relying on the competency.
- **Full Performance (e.g., GS-10 to 13):** Thorough, complete understanding of the principles, concepts and/or methodologies of the competency as attained from education and intermediate courses, and in some cases advanced courses, as well as successful experience in a variety of complex assignments, under normal supervision, that require the competency. Able to lead and guide lower-graded personnel.
- **Expert (e.g., GS-14 to 15):** Mastery of the principles, concepts and/or methodologies of subject/competency and expertise as attained from the most advanced training and graduate level education, as well as significant success in performing the most demanding assignments requiring the competency. Able to

experiment and apply new developments in the competency to problems/tasks not susceptible to treatment by accepted methods.

EXAMPLE: CAREER LEVELS FOR HISTORIAN

Developmental Level. Positions at the developmental career level require basic knowledge of history and knowledge of professional historical research methodology. Work assignments are very narrow in scope and limited in complexity, generally restricted to one clearly defined topic. Source materials are relatively readily available in agency files and records or in other records depositories or libraries. However, the incumbent must possess a working familiarity with the content and organization of these records in order to determine which records to consult. Work assignments are selected to provide training in the judgment aspects of professional historical research methodology, and become progressively more difficult as the incumbent's knowledge and experience advance.

Full Performance Level In addition to knowledge of history and professional historical research methodology, some positions at the full performance level require additional specialized subject matter knowledges such as one or more periods of United States history or the history of other nations, international relations and foreign affairs, military affairs, one or more foreign languages or other special fields. Assignments usually involve one or more major topics or themes of history and require consideration and treatment of several related topics in order to place the study in its proper context. Incumbents at the full performance level function with professional independence. Incumbents engaged in special historical studies for use by management officials and are required to establish and maintain continuing working relationships with such officials in order that they may keep abreast of current policy, planning and operational problems, and make known to such officials the background resources available to them through the medium of historical research studies. Work is reviewed for completeness of coverage, soundness of conclusions, adequacy of presentation and conformance to professional standards and agency policy, rather than for the adequacy of the research or the methodology employed.

Expert Level Assignments are distinguished from those at proceeding levels by their broader scope, greater depth of treatment, more varied subject matter, greater need for sound critical judgment and increasing number of considerations which must be taken into account. Incumbents may be assigned individual or collaborative projects, or may function as "team" leaders. In addition to an authoritative knowledge of specialized subject matter areas and a broad historical outlook based on wide knowledge of various historical fields, incumbents frequently are required to visualize and anticipate management's requirements for historical information for both current and long-range program planning and policy deliberations and to tailor the scope and emphasis of their studies for most effective use by management in making important program and policy decisions. Due to the authoritative nature of their knowledge within their special areas of competence, incumbents may be called upon to provide "on the spot" background historical data to agency officials at top management and policy levels in connection with urgent problems, or to attend interagency or international conferences for the same purpose.

SECTION 3: WRITING TASK STATEMENTS & KSAPs

Before providing a more detailed explanation about the process of writing competencies, there are a few additional terms that must be defined. These terms are used to describe work. Functional competencies consist of a label, important job tasks, and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics necessary for successful job performance.

What is a task?

Task – A task is a unit of work or set of activities needed to produce some result. A task is described by a statement consisting of an **action verb** (what the worker does), the **object of the verb** (to whom or what it is done), and a phrase explaining **why** and **how** the work is done.



TASK EXAMPLES:

Action Verb (What the worker does)	Object of the verb (To whom or what it is done)	Why the work is done (Expected Output)	How the work is done (Procedures, tools, equipment, work aids)
Sort	correspondence and reports	to facilitate filing them	alphabetically.

Action Verb (What the worker does)	Object of the verb (To whom or what it is done)	Why the work is done (Expected Output)	How the work is done (Procedures, tools, equipment, work aids)
Evaluate	facility master plans and project plans for organizations	to make recommendations whether or not to fund projects	Using guidelines in the operations manual and facilities plan guidelines.

Action Verb (What the worker does)	Object of the verb (To whom or what it is done)	Why the work is done (Expected Output)	How the work is done (Procedures, tools, equipment, work aids)
Writes	policies, issue papers, correspondence, program plans, reports, etc. oftentimes dealing with sensitive or politically charged matters	to provide information and/or gain support	using electronic hardware and word processing and presentation software

What are KSAPs?

Knowledge – A knowledge is an organized body of information that a person mentally possesses as a result of formal education, training, or personal experience.

Examples:

Knowledge of contract price and cost analysis/cost accounting techniques so as to compile and evaluate price and/or cost data for a variety of pre-award and/or post-award procurement activities.

Knowledge of state-of the-art radiobroadcast systems to be able to perform fault isolation, troubleshooting and repair of the digital and analog broadcast equipment and systems.

Knowledge of transportation regulations, methods, and practices to perform a wide variety of routine and specialized transportation support to include movement of hazardous materials by all modes of transportation

Skill – A skill is proficient manual, verbal, or mental manipulation of data or things. The task may involve physical or mental activities performed with ease and precision by a worker possessing the skill. Skill involves actual proficient application of knowledge and abilities used in the performance of the task.

Examples:

Skill in typing at the rate of 40 words per minute with less than 3 errors per 100 words typed.

Skill in operating specialized medical equipment such as cardiac monitor, blood pressure cuff, and CAT scans to obtain accurate results.

Skill in driving a full size automobile, with standard transmission, obeying traffic rules, in urban and rural areas in all types of weather and traffic conditions to deliver courier documents to various locations in the city.

Ability – An ability is the natural aptitude or acquired proficiency to perform an observable activity; e.g., ability to write reports, ability to analyze numerical data, ability to plan and organize work.

Examples:

Ability to speak before groups for the purpose of providing information and explaining new rules, policies, or procedures.

Ability to interact with individuals and groups to establish and maintain contacts and relationships and to represent the interests of an organization.

Ability to make both short term and long term decisions by accumulating and evaluating information and taking appropriate and timely actions to meet a desired goal.

Personal Characteristic/Attributes – A personal characteristic is a predisposition on the part of an individual to behave in a certain way. Personal characteristics represent what an individual wants to or will do, as opposed to what the individual can do or has the capacity to do.

Examples:

Patience

Tact

Willingness to travel

Willingness to relocate for job advancement



SECTION 4: STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR WRITING COMPETENCIES

1. Review job and organization related information

- Strategic vision, mission statement, and organizational goals
- Position descriptions, job announcements, sources of job analysis materials such as job duties and knowledge, skill, and ability statements, unit objectives or performance appraisal standards, work flow charts, etc. for job under study
- Organization charts
- Governing rules, regulations, policies, professional standards, laws, training manuals pertaining to the job
- Typical problems, turn-around time, internal/external customer complaints related to the job
- Work equipment/tools – technology/computers, software necessary for the job

2. Write major job tasks.

- Determine the scope of the job to be analyzed after reviewing the job- related information. If the scope is too broad, you could analyze multiple jobs; if the scope is too shallow, you might not have complete information for the job you're trying to analyze
- Write major tasks statements only. Whether you are using an existing task list or are writing new ones consider the following criteria to determine if a task is major:
 - Consequence or error - if a task is not performed or if it is performed incorrectly (e.g. loss of life, severe physical injury, property damage, expensive cost overruns, extensive project delays)
 - Time spent - If large amounts of time are spent performing the task, it is probably important.
 - Do not include tasks that are incidental or unimportant to successful job performance.
- If you are writing new or reviewing existing tasks, include the four parts of the task statement:
 - **Part 1:** Action verb – describes the worker's observed behavior. Appendix I includes a list of suggested action verbs for writing task statements. Appendix II includes a list of verbs not to use when writing task statements and Appendix III includes a list of verbs to be used with caution.
 - **Part 2:** Object of the verb – receiver of the action
 - **Part 3:** Why the worker performs the action – this part of the task forms the foundation for understanding what KSAPs may be required for performance (e.g. conducting performance appraisal to provide

employees with information on needed improvements requires different KSAPs than those required to provide information for career progression within the organization). This part of the task statement describes the immediate output of the action and may begin with the phrase “in order to” or “to”.

- **Part 4:** How the work is done. The fourth part of the task may not be included in all statements. This part describes procedures used, tools, equipment, or work aids. The task worksheet may help you write statements in the required format. Refer to page 8 for an example.
- Review the task to determine if all of the major tasks within the duty area have been captured. If not, write the additional task statement(s) to ensure that all major tasks have been covered.
- Review the task according to the Task Checklist. If necessary, rewrite.
- Task statements serve as a description of important job behaviors and help in deriving specific KSAPs.

3. **Write Knowledge, Skill, Ability, and Personal Characteristics/Attributes (KSAPs).**

- The KSAPs should be:
 - Clearly linked to important tasks. It should be obvious to an informed reviewer that the KSAPs are required to perform the task(s) to which they are linked. Clearly identify the task to which the SSAP is linked at the end of the KSAP description. Note: KSAPs are often linked to more than one task.
 - Observable and measurable.
 - Needed when the employee first begins the job or can be learned during a brief orientation period.
 - Distinguish superior from average/barely acceptable employees.
- Review the KSAPs to determine if all of the major KSAPs for the important task have been captured. If not, write the additional KSAP statement(s).
- Review the KSAPs according to the KSAPs Checklist. If necessary, rewrite.

4. **Group related KSAPs to form a competency category.**

- ### 5. **Write Functional Competencies.** Do not write foundational competencies (competencies that apply across multiple jobs e.g. oral communication skills, problem solving). Only write the functional competencies that are specific to the job under study. Functional competencies consist of three parts: a label, important job tasks, and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics necessary for successful job performance.

- **Develop a label for each functional competency based on related KSAP groupings.** The label is a shorthand way to describe the concept presented by the related KSAPs.
- Include task statements developed in Step 2 to describe major job duties.
- Include the KSAPs developed in Step 3 to describe what a person must possess to successfully perform the job
- Write the task(s) to which the KSAP is linked in parenthesis after the KSAP statement to document linkage between tasks and KSAPs.
- Review list of competencies to ensure inclusion of all the major functional skills, knowledge, and attributes required to perform the job.
- **Check that each task is linked to at least one competency. Review your list of competencies to ensure that all of the important tasks have been recorded.**
- **Review competencies using the Functional Competency Checklist and revise if necessary**
- Refer to page 18 for an example of a competency.



TASK WORKSHEET

Action Verb (What the worker does)	Object of the verb (To whom or what it is done)	Why the work is done (Expected Output)	How the work is done (Procedures, tools, equipment, work aids)

EXAMPLE OF FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCY WORKSHEET

Job Title: Employee Training Specialist: (Example is illustrative only). Although the job of Employee Training Specialist consists of several functional competencies, only one example is provided here. Examples of other competencies might be adult learning, training delivery skills, computer and distance learning technology, etc.

Competency Label	Important Tasks (Major tasks developed in step 2)	Description (groups of related KSAPs as developed in step 3)
Curriculum Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Write behavior based instructional objectives to build knowledge or skills identified through needs analysis 2. Research training content to obtain information that is relevant current, and based on literature and/or law review and best practices by using resources such as books, periodicals, internet, professional contacts/organizations/associations 3. Write training content to facilitate learning instructional objectives using information from research and knowledge of adult learning principles and instructional design 	<p>Ability to establish instructional objectives for training that are behavior based (Linked to task 1)</p> <p>Ability to write in a concise and grammatically correct manner to clearly convey information to audiences with varying levels of knowledge on the topic discussed/presented (Linked to tasks 1 & 3)</p> <p>Ability to research training content to obtain information that is relevant, current, and based on literature and/or law review and best practices using credible, accurate, reliable references on the internet and in books, magazines, periodicals, abstracts, and organizational documents (Linked to tasks 2 & 3)</p> <p>Ability to organize instructional material in sequencing, integration of theory and practice, pacing of material and depth of material in relation to audience (Linked to tasks 3)</p> <p>Knowledge of adult learning theory and instructional design (e.g. case studies, role plays, simulations, self-evaluations) Linked to task 3</p>

FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCY WORKSHEET

Competency Label	Behavioral Indicators (Major tasks developed in step 2)	Description (groups of related KSAPs as developed in step 3)

TASK CHECKLIST

	Evaluation Criteria	Yes	No
1.	Contains specific information: what is done – action verb; to whom or what – object; to produce what – expected output; and using what tools, equipment, work aids, processes		
2.	Easy to read and understand		
3.	Work described produces an identifiable product which could be used by someone other than the performer		
4.	Describes work performed by one person		
5.	Describes an important part of the job		
6.	Is specific enough for deriving KSAPs/competencies		
7.	Each statement is precise and short		
8.	Use terminology common to the job		

KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, ABILITY, AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS (KSAPs) CHECKLIST

	Evaluation Criteria	Yes	No
1.	Developed and verified by individuals who thoroughly understand the tasks performed		
2.	Clearly linked to tasks. If the link between a KSAP and the work for which it is required is not obvious to competent reviewers, a description of the relationship of the KSAP to the work performed should be provided		
3.	Stated in measurable terms		
4.	Sufficiently specific to write competencies. Include the level, scope, and kind or type of requirement including any precision or speed required. Qualifiers such as “Expert Knowledge, Considerable skill or Basic Understanding are unnecessary when the KSAP is appropriately written		

FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCY CHECKLIST

	Evaluation Criteria	Yes	No
1.	Related KSAPs are grouped together		
2.	Observable (able to be seen, heard, or otherwise perceived by a person other than the person performing the action)		
3.	Measurable		
4.	Distinguishing – characteristics that differentiate average from superior performance		
5.	Clearly linked to major tasks and KSAPs		
6.	Simple, clear, and embody a single, readily identifiable characteristic		
7.	Required upon entry into the job		
8.	Contains a label, important tasks, and the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal characteristics necessary for successful job performance		
9.	Linked to the organization's strategic vision, mission statement, or goals		

APPENDIX I: SUGGESTED VERBS FOR TASK STATEMENTS

Reminder for Writing Task Statements: The verbs should be specific and active (e.g., “writes” rather than “responsible for”). The verb should have an object (e.g., “writes reports”). Unless the purpose of the task is obvious, the statement should say why the task is done, or what is supposed to be accomplished by the completion of the task (e.g., “writes reports to summarize new enrollment procedures for students and faculty”).

- **Account:** to give a report on; to furnish a justifying analysis or explanation
- **Act:** to perform a specified function
- **Adjust:** to bring to a more satisfactory state; to bring the parts of something to a true or more effective position
- **Advise:** to recommend a course of action; to offer an informed opinion based on specialized knowledge
- **Answer:** to speak or write in reply
- **Appraise:** to give an expert judgment of worth or merit
- **Approve:** to accept as satisfactory; to exercise final authority with regard to commitment of resources
- **Arrange:** to prepare for an event; to put in proper order
- **Assemble:** to collect or gather together in a predetermined order from various sources
- **Assign:** to specify or designate tasks or duties to be performed by others
- **Assist:** to help or aid others in the performance of work
- **Attain:** to come into possession of; to arrive at
- **Attend:** to be present
- **Audit:** to examine officially with intent to verify
- **Authorize:** to approve; to empower through vested authority
- **Budget:** to plan expenditures
- **Build:** to construct
- **Calculate:** to make a mathematical computation
- **Call:** to communicate with by telephone; to summon; to announce
- **Circulate:** to pass from person to person or place to place
- **Code:** to put into words or symbols used to represent words
- **Collaborate:** to work jointly with; to cooperate with others
- **Collect:** to gather
- **Communicate:** to impart a verbal or written message; to transmit information
- **Compare:** to examine for the purpose of discovering resemblances or differences
- **Compile:** to put together information; to collect from other documents
- **Compute:** to determine or calculate mathematically
- **Confirm:** to give approval to; to assure the validity of
- **Consolidate:** to bring together
- **Construct:** to make or form by combining parts; to draw with suitable instruments and under specified conditions
- **Consult:** to seek advice of others; to give professional advice or services
- **Contact:** to communicate with
- **Control:** to measure, interpret, and evaluate actions for conformance with plans or desired results
- **Coordinate:** to regulate, adjust, or combine the actions of others to attain harmony
- **Correct:** to make or set right; to alter or adjust to conform to a standard
- **Create:** to bring into existence; to produce through imaginative skill

- **Delegate:** to commission another to perform tasks or duties, which may carry specific degrees of accountability and authority
- **Design:** to conceive, create, and execute according to plan
- **Develop:** to disclose, discover, perfect, or unfold a plan or idea
- **Direct:** to guide work operations through the establishment of objectives, policies, rules, practices, methods, and standards
- **Distribute:** to deliver to proper destination
- **Divert:** to turn from one course or use to another
- **Eliminate:** to get rid of; to set aside as unimportant
- **Encourage:** to inspire with spirit, hope; to give help or patronage to
- **Enlist:** to engage for duty; to secure the support and aid of
- **Estimate:** to forecast future requirements
- **Evaluate:** to determine or fix the value of
- **Expedite:** to accelerate the process or progress of
- **Gather:** to collect; to harvest; to accumulate and place in order
- **Generate:** to bring into existence; to originate by vital or chemical process
- **Guarantee:** to secure; to answer for the debt, default, or miscarriage of
- **Help:** to be of use to; to relieve; to remedy; to serve
- **Identify:** to establish the identity of; to associate with some interest
- **Improve:** to make something better
- **Inform:** to make known
- **Initiate:** to start; to introduce; to originate
- **Innovate:** to exercise creativity in introducing something new or in making changes
- **Install:** to place in office; to establish in an indicated place, condition, or status; to set up for use in service
- **Instruct:** to teach
- **Interpret:** to give the meaning of; to explain to others
- **Interview:** to obtain facts or opinions through inquiry or examination or various sources
- **Inventory:** to catalog or to count and list
- **Investigate:** to observe or study by close examination and systematic inquiry
- **Issue:** to put forth or to distribute officially
- **Justify:** to prove or show to be right or reasonable
- **Lead:** to guide or direct on a course or in the direction of; to channel; to direct the operations of
- **Maintain:** to keep in an existing state
- **Make:** to cause to happen to; to cause to exist, occur, or appear; to create; to bring into being by forming, shaping, or altering material
- **Mediate:** to interpose with parties to reconcile them; to reconcile differences
- **Modify:** to make less extreme; to limit or restrict the meaning of; to make minor changes in
- **Negotiate:** to confer with others with a view to reaching agreement
- **Obtain:** to acquire or gain possession of
- **Operate:** to perform an activity or series of activities
- **Participate:** to take part in
- **Permit:** to consent to; to authorize; to make possible
- **Persuade:** to move by argument or entreaty to a belief, position, or course of action
- **Place:** to locate and choose positions for
- **Plan:** to devise or project the realization or achievement of a course of action
- **Practice:** to perform or work at repeatedly in order to gain proficiency
- **Prepare:** to make ready for a particular purpose
- **Present:** to introduce; to bestow; to lay as a charge before the court; to offer to view

- **Process:** to subject to some special treatment; to handle in accordance with a prescribed procedure
- **Procure:** to obtain possession of; to bring about
- **Produce:** to grow; to make, bear, or yield something; to offer to view or notice; to exhibit
- **Project:** to throw forward; to present for consideration; to communicate vividly, especially to an audience
- **Promote:** to advance to a higher level or position
- **Propose:** to form or declare a plan or intention
- **Purchase:** to buy or procure by committing organizational funds
- **Receive:** to acquire, come into possession of
- **Recommend:** to advise or counsel a course of action; to offer or suggest for adoption
- **Reconcile:** to adjust; to restore to harmony; to make congruous
- **Reconstruct:** to rebuild; to reorganize or reestablish
- **Record:** to register; to set down in writing
- **Refer:** to send or direct for aid, treatment, information, or decision; to direct attention; to make reference to
- **Report:** to give an account of; to furnish information or data
- **Research:** to inquire specifically, using involved and critical investigations
- **Respond:** to make an answer; to show favorable reaction
- **Retrieve:** to regain; to rescue
- **Revise:** to rework in order to correct or improve; to make a new, improved, or up-to-date version
- **Schedule:** to plan a timetable; to fix time
- **Secure:** to gain possession of; to guarantee; to make safe
- **Select:** to choose the best suited
- **Send:** to dispatch by a means of communication; to convey
- **Solicit:** to approach with a request or plea; to strongly urge
- **Solve:** to find a solution for

APPENDIX II: VERBS TO AVOID USING IN TASK STATEMENTS

- **Appreciate:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Assists:** Not specific. Does not identify the actions of one person.
 - **Become aware of:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Be familiar with:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Believe:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Clarify:** Usually indicates an enabling objective.
 - **Consider:** Rarely observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Enjoy:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Execute:** Vague. Another version of 'Do'.
 - **Know:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Participate:** Not specific. Does not identify the actions of one person.
 - **Processes:** Not specific
 - **Relate:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.
 - **Summarize:** Not an action verb.
 - **Supports:** Not specific
 - **Synthesize:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Understand:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
 - **Use:** Vague. Another version of 'Do.'
 - **Utilize:** Vague. Another version of 'Do.'

APPENDIX III: VERBS TO BE USED WITH CAUTION IN TASK STATEMENTS

These verbs should be used with care. Some are only variants of the verb 'Do,' and don't convey any special meaning. Their overuse defeats the purpose of standardized verbs and results in vague, "fuzzy" task statements.

- **Achieve:** This verb implies you are going to measure the product (or quality), not the process. A common mistake is to use the verb "achieve" and then to use standards that represent steps in the task rather than the quality of the outcome.
- **Administer:** The use of this verb should be restricted to fairly mechanical or structured activities or to medical activities. It is not a synonym for 'Manage.'
- **Analyze:** One usually analyzes something in order to accomplish a real task.
- **Apply:** The use of "Apply" often leads to unobservable or unmeasurable task statements.
 - **Example of improper use:** Apply the Army Values.
- **Assess:** Difficult to observe or measure. Usually the analyst would be better off stating what the individual has to do in order to assess something.
- **Check:** Checking is usually done as part of supervision or verification.
- **Conduct:** The verb 'Conduct' should be used ONLY when a more precise verb does not exist. The verb "Conduct" (as well as "Perform" and other verbs that simply mean 'Do').
- **Counsel:** This has the connotation of simply providing general information. The verbs "advise" and "recommend" are usually what is really meant and indicate "action."
- **Define:** Use of this verb often indicates an enabling objective that would be used in a classroom setting, not the task itself.
 - **Example Of Improper Use:** Define the Purpose of a Front End Analysis.
- **Demonstrate:** Like "define", "demonstrate" is usually indicative of an enabling objective.
- **Describe:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.
- **Discuss:** Usually indicates an enabling objective or a learning activity. Not an action verb.
- **Effect:** Similar in meaning to "achieve" but more vague.
- **Elucidate:** Not measurable or observable. Not an action verb.
- **Ensure:** Difficult to observe or measure. Usually the analyst would be better off stating what the individual or unit has to do in order to ensure something happens or doesn't happen.
- **Evaluate:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.
- **Explain:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.
- **Inspect:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.
- **List:** Usually indicates an enabling objective. Not an action verb.
- **Manage:** Difficult to observe or measure. Usually the analyst would be better off stating what the individual has to do in order to manage something. Since management is a complex set of skills, a task that uses the verb "manage" should be closely examined. It will often be found to be so broad that it must be split into several more well-defined tasks.
- **Monitor:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.
- **Name:** Nearly always indicates an enabling objective.

- **Orchestrate:** To organize, manage, or arrange.
- **Oversee:** To watch over and direct.
- **Perform:** “Perform”, like “conduct”, is simply another way of saying “do.”
- **Prioritize:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.
- **Review:** Usually indicates a step or enabling objective.

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