

Competency Framework for Policy Practitioners

OBJECTIVES

The intent of this competency framework is to provide federal policy practitioners with a common understanding of what **skills and mindsets are required to support policy excellence**.

It aims to provide a cohesive framework that will help to **guide learning, development, mobility, staffing and recruitment for non-EX policy practitioners**. It complements existing TBS competencies that apply to all federal public servants, by setting out in more detail the competencies for practitioners in various policy functions (e.g., policy research, policy development, strategic policy, program management, communications and evaluation).

The framework marries both **time-tested and emerging competencies**, relevant to policy practitioners in their roles both today and in the future, as they respond to complex public policy problems in a rapidly changing environment. It will be a living document, evolving over time to reflect changes that impact the policy community.

STRUCTURE

The framework is comprised of **eight competencies**:

1. Analytical

2. Data Literate

3. Collaborative

4. User-Centric

5. Storytelling/Communicator

6. Results-Oriented

7. Creative

8. Adaptable

For each competency, the **definition** is broken down into its component parts to facilitate measurement. Each component part of the definition has **three proficiency levels**: awareness, practicing and mastery, along with indicators for each level.

- **Level 1 - Awareness**: policy practitioners have general understanding and basic capability
- **Level 2 - Practicing**: policy practitioners are able to effectively apply the competency on a day-to-day basis
- **Level 3 - Mastery**: policy practitioners have a breadth and depth of lived experience, and in certain cases, are able to teach/mentor the competency to others

The proficiency levels build on each other (i.e., a practitioner at the mastery level is expected to also demonstrate the indicators found in the previous two levels). The proficiency levels are **not tied to classifications, levels or position titles**. For example, an

EC-06 senior policy analyst does not necessarily have or need to have mastery in all competencies. As another example, the indicators for mastery level storytelling/communications were not developed with IS's in mind.

The proficiency levels facilitate both individual use and use by a manager to balance the competencies on a team. Depending on the position, role and/or function, managers and organizations can determine which level of proficiency is required for each competency.

PROCESS

The competency framework has been informed by:

- a literature review based on Government of Canada, Canadian and international work on competencies;
- a series of co-design sessions with policy practitioners, including those working in various policy functions, and managers;
- an advisory group of Government of Canada competency experts; and
- an industry leader in competency-based management.

This version 1.0 (or beta version) of the framework will be tested in different contexts, such as:

- building assessment tools with managers for recruits to the Cross-functional Policy Mobility Program,
- by certain managers for staffing positions in their organizations or determining their team composition; and
- by certain policy practitioners to assess clarity and usability to inform learning plans.

This testing will inform the look, feel and content of a releasable version of the competency framework that is expected to be shared broadly with the Policy Community at end of FY 2018-19.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

To make the competencies practical, PCPO is developing **assessment and self-assessment tools** to allow the competencies to be measured.

PCPO is also developing a **resource guide that will inform learning** to support the development of the competencies. These supporting materials are expected to accompany the release of the framework at the end of FY 2018-19.

Analytical

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
QUESTION	Asks questions and explores problems and possibilities without a predetermined outcome.	Demonstrates interest in understanding policy issues. Open to exploring new situations and information.	Is able to look at an issue differently, change their assumptions, and consider various inputs and how to achieve an outcome results. Is able to grasp multifaceted problems and make complex ideas or issues clear, simple, understandable.	Promotes questioning as a regular part of policymaking. Creates new models and ways of thinking.
EVIDENCE	Sources relevant information, synthesizes, makes connections, and identifies implications to develop recommendations and advice based on evidence.	Understands the relationship between variables in data and diagnoses situations or problems. Is aware of and understands the strategic requirements set by an organization and aligns behaviour and activities accordingly.	Identifies patterns, similarities and differences in data and evaluates the implications. Uses knowledge of past patterns and trends to identify missing pieces and fill in the blanks. Able to translate broad trends into actionable analysis by positioning a policy issue within the broader political and organizational context.	Brings relevant information nuanced considerations, and connections to bear and formulates advice for highly complex policy issues. Looks at situations from various perspectives based on careful analysis of end user needs and resources. Has political acuity and is well-versed in the machinery of government to effectively navigate the system and see advice through.
CRITICAL THINKING	Thinks critically and frames/reframes the problem, options and proposed solutions, taking into account the system, context and new information.	Identifies similarities and differences between past and current situations and applies previous experience to the problem at hand.	Conceptualizes and reframes information that helps others to understand how to take action. Thinks holistically and strategically, taking into account context, objectives, and multiple perspectives. Makes linkages between policy problem, options and delivery to ensure the solution	Consistently considers and shares the “big picture” when looking at situations. Able to think in short, medium and long-term scenarios and identify appropriate strategies to resolve complex problems.

			is implementable. Applies sound judgement.	
METHODS	Uses appropriate methods of analysis and policy instruments and approaches.	Uses appropriate methods for gathering and understanding evidence. Is familiar with traditional policy instruments and approaches and is willing to learn and try new ways of policy making.	Uses appropriate methods to validate, to reveal biases, and generate new data. Is comfortable with experimenting, trying out new policy approaches and goes beyond one's comfort zone.	Actively tries new policy development methods and seeks out expertise in emerging approaches to deepen their organizations' capacity for innovation.

Data Literate

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
INFORM	Creates, gathers, interprets, translates and/or visualizes data to inform policy advice, development and implementation.	Presents relevant data to inform decision-making. Seeks out expert advice when required. Is comfortable with using technology in data analysis.	Is comfortable manipulating data and using the resulting information in policy development. Uses technology and data visualization to explain findings and support recommendations.	Is able to use technology to clean, repair, create and/or manipulate data to make sense of complex numeric information. Able to translate and communicate results of data to inform policy. Guides non-data specialists.
ANALYZE	Evaluates quantitative and qualitative evidence recognizing patterns to draw conclusions.	Understands the different data and the types of conclusions that can be drawn from them.	Is able to apply qualitative and quantitative methods to make linkages, describe findings and make recommendations.	Is able to advise others on determining cause and effect or correlational evidence using advanced computer skills and analytics. Explores using different types of data sources (e.g. traditional knowledge). Guides non-data specialists
EVALUATE	Is comfortable in determining validity,	Is able to find appropriate data sources. Understands that not all data is created	Is able to analyze data sources and draw conclusions appropriate to the	Able to determine validity and reliability using advanced data analytics. Applies advanced

	accuracy and quality of data sources.	equal and is able to determine data quality. Assesses usability of data. Safeguards data as appropriate.	data type including the limitations of data and quality of data sources.	statistical and economic models to data. Guides non-data specialists.
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Collaborative

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
INCLUSIVE	Works inclusively and openly with others to build relationships and partnerships both inside and outside of government, to move toward a shared objective.	Shares information, and invests time and effort to achieve goals. Receptive of new ideas and seeks to understand others' point of view. Reaches outside their team and actively seeks the contribution of others.	Shares knowledge and information freely with others. Is approachable and honest. Actively creates opportunities for listening to alternative perspectives through effective facilitation and mediation. Works horizontally to create effective partnerships.	Encourages and demonstrates to others how to embrace a collaborative culture. Does not allow obstacles to get in the way of collaboration. Creates alignment between diverse parties. Acts as a "silo buster" by persuading/motivating others to adopt new perspectives to improve working together and cross-functional collaboration.
ENGAGE	Recognizes the appropriate level of participation by others (e.g., inform, consult, engage, co-create) and involves users, the public stakeholders, partners and/or colleagues accordingly.	Connects and relates with others. Values and seeks out diversity of opinion/input. Values differences and interdisciplinary approaches to policy-making. Uses digital collaboration tools when appropriate.	Establishes networks to actively seek input from others outside own unit or organization using a variety of methods and approaches. Builds cooperation through creating shared goals and removing barriers.	Creates diverse networks and partnerships. Uses collaborative tools such as co-creation to bring people together and integrate ideas. Asks questions and is able to deepen understanding through interactions with others. Leads and mentors others on effective collaboration and engagement.

DIVERSITY	Seeks a diversity of opinions from traditional and non-traditional sources.	Seeks diverse perspectives. Proactively shares best practices, ideas and insights with others. Gathers input from others when forming options.	Understands that ours is not the only way of seeing things. Asks who are we not hearing from and seeks out those voices. Encourages and facilitates collaboration with different functional areas.	Insists on working with diverse stakeholders. Resolves conflict between individuals, groups and departments even when it is difficult.
LISTEN	Incorporates input and perspectives into policy making	Supports others and seeks out opportunities to hear other viewpoints. Continuously looks for opportunities to learn.	Voices own views openly, but also listens to others and is willing to change their view.	Cultivates shared ownership through active listening and iterating. Has a growth mindset and adapts to new ways of thinking by listening to others. Understands what is being said and not being said.

User-Centric

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
EMPATHY	Understands others' experiences and frames of reference (empathetic).	Respects others. Listens to others and is willing to change their own view(s).	Actively creates opportunities for listening to alternative perspectives. Relates to others and situations that are different to their own experiences.	Considers user needs at every step of the process. Anticipates others' reactions based on their situations and experiences, and tailors response. Provides direction and supports others to practice empathy.
DIFFERENCES	Appreciates users' particular needs (e.g., gender, regional differences) and is culturally aware (e.g., Indigenous).	Understands differences are strengths. Seeks out diversity of opinion.	Routinely asks for input from others outside own unit or organization and from diverse groups. Applies the knowledge that diversity and inclusion creates better outcomes.	Creates alignment between diverse parties by embracing diversity and learning from differences.

CO-DESIGN	Involves users, both internal and external, in the policy process.	Seeks to understand others' point of view during the formulation of options. Involves others in policy-making.	Uses a participative approach and actively gathers input from users when forming policy options and advice. Uses appropriate tools (traditional and/or digital) to solicit user input.	Co-designs policy solutions, using innovative tools where appropriate, that meet the needs of the end-user because the solutions are designed with the user.
SERVICE	Understands, considers and incorporates user needs and designs /delivers policy at every step with the users in mind.	Understands that the policy process results in the delivery of services to citizens, including digital.	Considers service delivery, including digital, in the formulation of policy options. Ensures communication tools and methods (e.g. digital) are appropriate for users.	Involves those responsible for implementing the policy in the design of the policy to mitigate implementation risks and include.

Storytelling / Communicator

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
CONNECT	Connects the dots to effectively describe the issue to influence or prompt action.	Aware that the information used to comprehend public problem complexity is dispersed. Effectively gathers and summarizes information and evidence to demonstrate the policy issue in a way that is useful for the intended audience.	Compiles information in a reliable way that is meaningful to the audience. Summarizes the issues. Able to identify preferable communication options based on the evidence.	Uses complex information from atypical sources to deepen the understanding of an issue. Understands the sensitivities of the intended audience(s). Advises others on effective ways to strengthen messaging using different types of communication channels and techniques.
CONVEY	Communicates and conveys information relevant to the audience.	Knows the audience. Presents information in an appealing way. Distils what is important. Is tactful and finds the common ground of competing perspectives.	Understands different audiences require different types or levels of information. Chooses accessible communication formats, including digital, appropriate to the preferences of the audience. Reconciles different perspectives to creatively communicate complex	Articulates (pitches) the reasons, benefits and costs for the various policy options. Builds consensus and selects media for communication based on the needs of the audience.

			ideas. Uses various communication techniques.	
COMPEL	Uses the narrative approach and appropriate format to bring relevant information to life in an accurate, factual and compelling manner (written and verbal)	Writes clearly for a range of purposes. Provides articulate oral advice. Engages in two-way communication.	Has organizational and contextual awareness so that information is communicated in a way the intended audience will be receptive to. Produces logical and consistent storylines and uses a variety of tools to tell the story.	Able to persuade and inspire. Uses words in a way that resonates with the audience to compel action. Able to communicate the ideas and options of their organization in uncertain situations. Inspires the audience including recipients, colleagues and leaders. Delivers clear and compelling messages that suit the purpose and the audience.

Results-Oriented

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
OPTIONS	Considers a range of delivery options and translates a vision or strategy into outcomes.	Understands the vision of the organization. Demonstrates enthusiasm around achieving policy results. Expresses constructive suggestions to develop policy options.	Works to improve policy options. Compares options chosen in other jurisdictions to identify potential gaps and create more nuanced alternatives. Continues to iterate as long as improvements create value.	Articulates (pitches) the reasons, benefits and costs for the various policy options to show how vision can be achieved. Ensure that the quality of options meets the expectations of internal and external stakeholders.
OUTCOMES	Works to deliver results that achieve desired outcomes and demonstrate value for citizens.	Understands that policy is intended to solve public problems and ultimately help citizens. Recommends policy options that will achieve agreed upon outcomes.	Determines outcomes for policy-making activity. Stays focused on achieving results, even in the face of significant obstacles such as uncertain or difficult to articulate outcomes.	Persists despite obstacles. Is willing to take risks to shift the conversation to positively influence the organization and its strategic direction to increase the value of policy outcomes for citizens. Ties outcomes to larger federal strategies to demonstrate

				short and longer-term results for citizens.
MEASUREMENT	Ensures that results are measurable and are measured to assess impact.	Understands there are different types of evidence and various ways to measure and assess the impact of policy. Researches assessment tools and techniques appropriate to the selected policy options.	Develops appropriate criteria for measurement of policy outcomes for both the shorter and longer term. Recommends measurement tools and techniques. Can use different types of evidence to demonstrate results.	Builds measurement in at the beginning of policy development. Applies measurement tools and techniques. Generates new evidence. Able to demonstrate both short and long term impact of policy decisions.

Creative

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
CURIOSITY	Is open to new ways of doing things, demonstrates divergent thinking and a mind-set of growth and continuous learning.	Sees a situation as an opportunity to explore, learn and/or create. Is willing to learn about new ways of policy-making/delivery. Accepts feedback and shows humility.	Actively goes beyond what is familiar to seeks out new ideas. Connects previously unrelated ideas to created new ones. Pursues novel lines of enquiry and formulates possibilities even if faced with challenges. Tries new ways of policy-making/delivery, such as new policy instruments and approaches.	Uses creative, conceptual or inductive reasoning to understand issues. Sees and creates possibilities rather than barriers. Takes time to learn available approaches and stays on top of emerging ones. Drives change and actively seeks new ways to tackle complex policy problems.
CHALLENGE/ EXPERIMENT	Knows when to question the status quo, but shows contextual awareness when challenging. Takes thoughtful risks, experiments and applies lessons learned from both success and failure. Iterates.	Understands and articulates that “It’s always been done this way” is not an acceptable reason for poor policy. Understands learning happens through trial and error. Identifies opportunities for trying	Asks questions to promote a deeper understanding of the problem. Uses evidence and logic to challenge existing approaches and assumptions in the appropriate context. Takes reasoned risks and is willing to experiment. Admits when they do not know something or have made a mistake, and shares experiences.	Asks difficult questions to identify existing boundaries and expand possibilities to overcome them. Speaks up when evidence is not what was expected or contradicts direction. Faces failures head on and tells the whole story. Is willing to try again/iterate applying previous learning.

		something new. Asks for help to experiment.		
COURAGE	Is conscientious and stands up for unpopular positions when necessary.	Is honest and demonstrates personal and professional integrity.	Steps out of one's comfort zone occasionally. Speaks truth to power, but knows when to let go.	Practices courage over comfort on a regular basis. Advocates an unpopular position even in the face of risks. Encourages and enables others to be courageous.

Adaptable

DEFINITION		1. AWARENESS	2. PRACTICING	3. MASTERY
CHANGE	Actively participates in an environment that is constantly changing.	Open to and responds quickly to a change in priorities. Keeps an open mind and maintains professionalism when dealing with changing circumstances and priorities.	Promotes and endorses organizational change efforts through own words, actions and priorities. Able to obtain buy-in from others.	Helps build a change culture. Empowers and encourages others throughout the organization to identify opportunities for change.
PIVOT	Pivots or adjusts to new priorities, evidence, challenges and technologies, taking a constructive approach.	Expresses positive feelings about the change progress and results. Adapts own approaches and behaviour if required.	Plans ahead to prepare for changes that may affect the organization. Makes contingency plans by anticipating future changes and incorporates them into the strategy. Shifts gears when necessary.	Convinces others of the need for change. Creates the appropriate systems and processes to support change. Able to adjust quickly.
RESILIENT	Resilient and shows perseverance even when faced with uncertainty, resistance, setbacks and/or initial failure.	Maintains a positive and confident attitude when facing uncertainty or constant change. Is comfortable with	Deals well with ambiguity. Does not need a road map to move forward. Keeps moving forward in the face of obstacles. Challenges defaults and usual system expectations. Pushes boundaries.	Withstands repeated setbacks and presses forward. Helps others remain composed in stressful or emotionally charged situations. Knows when it is appropriate to

		resistance/awkwardness and shows determination.		persist and when to desist. Causes meaningful disruption.
LEARN	Incorporates lessons learned and pushes forward, seeking opportunities to apply new learning and experiences.	Recognizes lessons learned and can apply to similar situations. Is self-aware.	Extrapolates and expands learning to apply to different situations. Admits to not knowing. Acknowledges mistakes and limitations. Is accountable for self.	Learns from situations and experiences quickly and is able to apply and share knowledge with others.