
A Process for Developing Competency Models

Step 1. Conduct Research: Gather and analyze background information

The development of an industry competency model is based on an analysis and synthesis of existing national and state resources, skills standards, technical curriculum, and certifications in the industry sector. This step is best accomplished using industry or subject matter experts who familiar with the terminology, processes, and skills required in the industry.

The process of gathering information involves:

- Defining the industry
- Identifying the key occupations in the industry
- Analyzing the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) using the O*NET database to determine commonalities across the key occupations
- Identifying and cataloging existing resources
- Aligning the KSAs defined in the resources to the building blocks framework

Step 2. Develop draft competency model framework

The draft competency model framework includes competency names with definitions and descriptions. ETA undertakes this step with the knowledge that the original developers may have used slightly different terms to indicate a competency--e.g., using the term *communication* rather than *listening and speaking*. Competencies might also be shown on a different tier of the building blocks model than what was indicated in the original material--e.g. *critical thinking* might have been referred to as a workplace or organizational competency whereas it is shown with academic competencies in the Building Blocks Model. The critical issue is to ensure that the required competencies are included in an industry model. It is less important to display them on any particular tier.

Use the Building Blocks Model to ensure that the draft industry framework is comprehensive:

- Identify themes and patterns existent in the information.
- Relate the terms to the building block content areas.
- Develop a draft competency model for the industry.

Step 3. Gather feedback from industry representatives

Refine the draft model developed in Step 2 through input from subject matter experts and target users of the competency model. Focus groups' members representing high growth/high demand industry sectors were selected based on:

- Familiarity with the competency requirements of the industry
- Representation across geographic and industry sub-sectors
- Representation of diverse viewpoints.

The following activities were used to gather feedback from the focus group members either in person or through a series of telephone and electronic communications:

- Summarize the purpose and process of the competency model development project at the beginning of the session.
- Review draft competency model. The group members were provided an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the competency model.
- Discuss each competency in turn.

Gather input regarding:

- The competency names, definitions, and (as relevant) the specific behaviors used to describe each competency. Discuss how this material should be edited to ensure that it accurately captures the essence of the competency in language that will "ring true" to users.
- Whether any of the competencies in the draft model should be deleted because they are not relevant to, or important to, the target occupation(s), organization, or industry
- Whether any competencies should be added. If so, work with the group to derive definitions and behaviors describing those competencies.

Step 4. Refine the competency model framework

Using industry experts as in Step 1, refine the draft model:

- Analyze the information gathered through the focus group session.
- Edit the competency names, definitions and (as relevant) behaviors to reflect the input gathered.
- Add or delete competencies from the model as appropriate.

Step 5. Validate the competency model framework

To ensure acceptance by the target community of users, the behaviors associated with the competencies identified in the framework should be those that are important for successful job performance. The competency model framework should be distributed widely to industry associations and their membership. It is ETA's expectation that business and industry will then assume responsibility for ensuring that the model becomes a useful and usable tool that is updated regularly to meet their changing workforce needs.

Step 6. Finalize the model framework

Industry models are available on the Competency Model Clearinghouse Web site. The framework for an industry model is displayed as a graphic representation of the content building blocks customized to the industry.

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