

DEVELOPING A COMPETENCY MODEL FOR DIFFERENT UTILITY JOBS

Using the process described in this chapter, utility personnel can develop a competency model for a position that is different from the twelve positions for which this project developed competency models.

OVERVIEW OF THIS PROCESS

To develop a competency model for a job at a water utility that is dissimilar to the twelve general jobs for which competency models were developed (Appendix A), the simplest approach is to convene a special meeting with several persons who hold this job and several managers of persons who hold this job (Resource Panel). In the first part of the meeting, the Panel is guided by a facilitator through a series of questions about the job so that the participants identify in their own language the competency requirements of the job. Participants' ideas are captured on flip chart pages. As part of this process, the group will also identify the information needed to prepare a Job Description.

In the second part of the meeting the group reviews the Competency Glossary to identify and adapt competencies to be included in the Competency Model and to conceptualize any additional competencies that are needed but not included in the Competency Glossary. Someone from the Panel then uses the notes from the meeting and competency model templates (Appendix D) to prepare the new competency model and Job Description.

PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR THE RESOURCE PANEL

Here are some key steps in planning and preparing for the Resource Panel. These are also summarized in Figure 4.1.

1. Identify the participants. You should include two to four capable persons currently holding the job and two to four managers of jobholders.
2. Identify a facilitator. The facilitator could be one of the managers or persons in the job or an HR or Learning and Development person. The facilitator should be someone with experience leading meetings.
3. If the facilitator is not highly familiar with the job in question, he/she should conduct two one-hour Job Analysis Interviews with jobholders. A guide for conducting this interview is included in this document. The purpose of conducting the interviews is to ensure that the facilitator has some understanding of the job, before leading the Resource Panel.
4. Identify how the competency will be used and how this will benefit the organization. You will include this information when inviting the participants and when starting the Resource Panel meeting.
5. Schedule a meeting room and a half-day block of time for the meeting.
6. Invite the participants. In your email communication explain the purpose and format of the meeting.
7. Prepare materials for the meeting, including:

- a. Flip chart(s), new markers, and masking tape for hanging flip chart pages
- b. Copies for each participant of the following materials:
 - 1. Existing Job Description, if any, for the job
 - 2. Competency Glossary(available at www.eetinc.com/competency)
 - 3. Competency Model Template, included in Appendix B
- 8. Meet with the facilitator for the meeting and review the plan and materials for this Resource Panel.

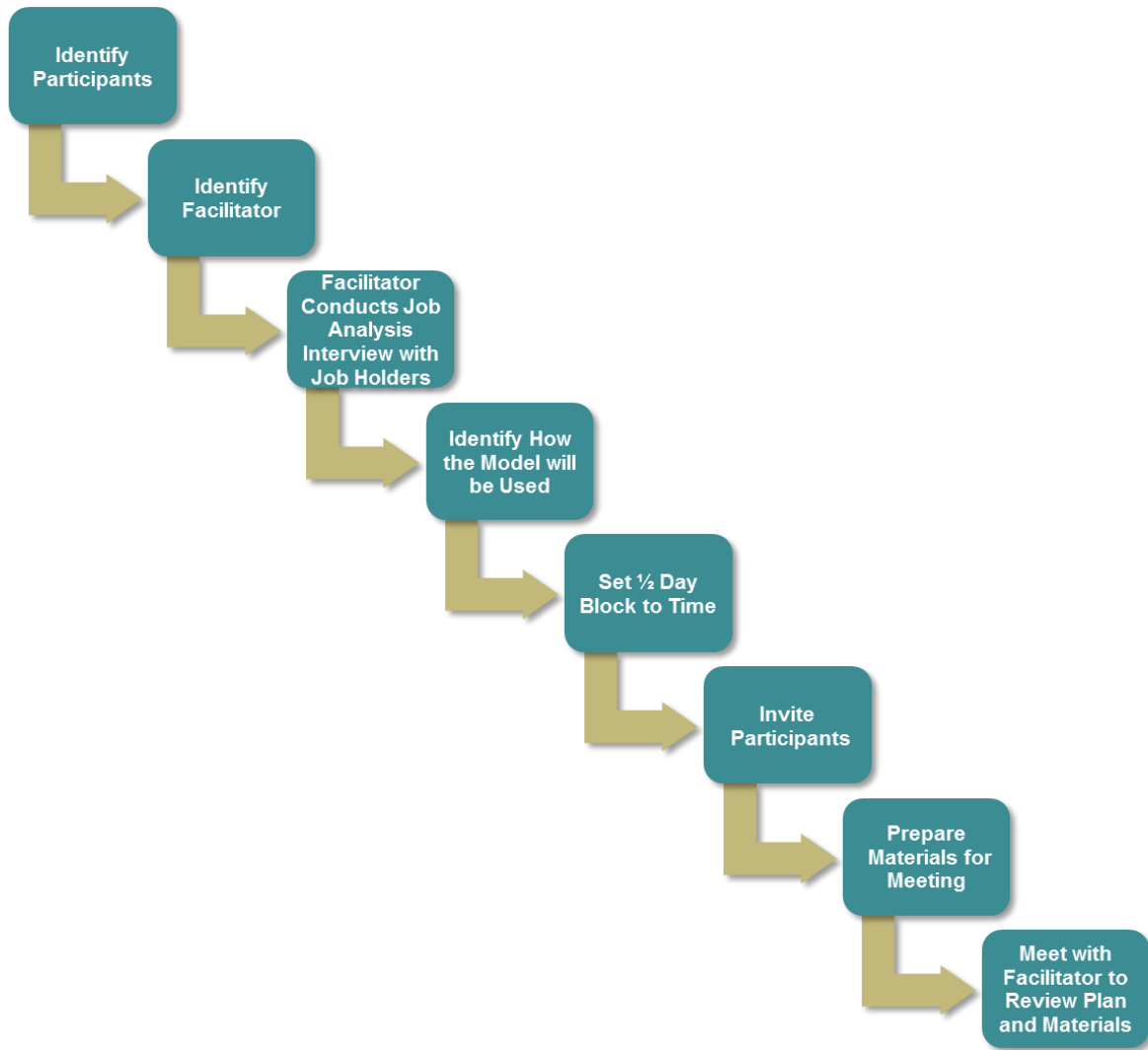


Figure 4.1 Planning steps for the resource panel

HOLDING THE RESOURCE PANEL

The facilitator or the project sponsor should explain the purpose of the project: why a competency model is needed and how it will be used. The facilitator writes a series of questions from the section below, “Gather Information Needed for a Competency Model” at the top of a flip chart page and captures participants’ ideas below the question. As flip chart pages are

completed, they should be numbered and posted on walls of the meeting room so that participants can refer to the ideas, as needed.

After the Panel has completed the questions about the job, the facilitator leads them through a process of reviewing the Competency Model Template and the Competency Glossary and identifying content to be included in the Competency Model. The facilitator should ask someone from the Panel to write clear and complete notes about the agreed content to be added to the Competency Model Template.

For almost all non-technical competencies and many technical ones, the Competency Glossary should include competencies which can be used or adapted in the Competency Model. If a new technical competency is needed, it should be written in a format similar to the format of other technical competencies in the Competency Glossary. Most often, this involves specifying the domain of expertise and possibly some sub-domains.

In managing the Panel, the facilitator should keep the Panel focused on its tasks, ensure that everyone has a chance to respond to a question, and, when appropriate, ask Panel members to clarify their ideas.

At the end of the meeting the facilitator should ensure that someone commits to taking the flip chart notes and the notes from the discussion of additions and changes to the existing competency model and using these notes to prepare the Competency Model and a Job Description, if one is needed.

The process is outlined below.

Gather Information Needed for a Competency Model

Capture the group's ideas for each numbered question on flip chart pages.

1. What are the three to five most important main responsibilities for the job? (First generate a list of ideas about main responsibilities. Condense and combine the ideas to identify the three to five main responsibilities that the Resource Panel will use.)
2. For the first main responsibility, answer each question below:
 - a. What are the most important tasks?
 - b. What technical skill/knowledge is needed?
 - c. What non-technical skills and personal characteristics are needed?
3. Repeat question 2 for each additional main responsibility.
4. What are the most challenging situations that the jobholder must deal with?
5. What skills and personal characteristics are needed to deal with these challenging situations?
6. What skills, personal characteristics or behaviors distinguish outstanding performers?

Identify Content for the Competency Model

7. Review the overall structure of the Competency Model Template.
 - a. Main competencies, divided into technical and non-technical sections
 - b. Foundational competencies (expected before entry into the job), divided into technical and non-technical sections
 - c. Competencies and behaviors leading to superior performance
 - d. Main responsibilities for the job
8. Review all the technical skill requirements that you identified in the first part of the Resource Panel.
9. Compare the technical skill requirements with technical competencies in the Competency Glossary.
 - a. Identify technical competencies which can be taken, as is, from the Competency Glossary, and included in the competency model.
 - b. Identify technical competencies from the Competency Glossary that will need to be modified when included in the competency model. Discuss and agree on the modifications that are needed. (Take clear notes about needed modifications on a copy of the Competency Glossary.)
 - c. Identify technical skill requirements that need to be included in the competency model but cannot be found in the Competency Glossary.
10. Review the Competency Model Template and identify which technical competencies will go in which sections. (Take clear notes.)
11. Compare the non-technical skill requirements that you identified in the first part of the Resource Panel with the non-technical competencies in the Competency Glossary.
 - a. Identify non-technical competencies which can be taken, as is, or adapted from the Competency Glossary, and included in the competency model.
 - b. Discuss and agree on the modifications that are needed – such as the elimination modification of specific behavioral indicators. (Take clear notes about needed modifications on a copy of the Competency Glossary.)
 - c. Identify any non-technical skill requirements that need to be included in the competency model but cannot be found in the Competency Glossary. (*Such instances should be rare, because the Competency Glossary includes a comprehensive set of non-technical competencies.*)
12. Based on the Resource Panel's ideas for Question 6, regarding superior performance, select which of the competencies to include in the section of the Competency Model describing superior performance.

Information Needed for Job Description

Note: *If time is available, complete this section as part of the Resource Panel; if not, assign this section to one or two of the managers of jobholders, to be completed as part of the follow-up activities.*

13. If an existing Job Description is available, review it and identify any needed changes or additions.

If a new Job Description is needed, prepare answers these questions:

14. What is the title(s) for this job or set of jobs?
15. What is the purpose of this job? (1 sentence)
16. What is the title of the position to which this job reports?
17. What supervisory responsibility is there, if any? (number of persons supervised and their roles)
18. What decision-making responsibility is there?
19. What educational degrees or certifications, if any, are required (essential)?
20. What previous work experience, if any, is required (essential)?
21. What is the travel requirement, if any? (percentage of time)

Post-Resource Panel Follow-Up Activities

- Use the notes from the Resource Panel and the Competency Model template (in Appendix D) to prepare a draft version of the general competency model.
- Use notes from the Resource Panel and the Job Description template in Appendix C to prepare a Job Description.
- Send the new Competency Model and the Job Description to panel members for review. Ask them to identify any editorial changes that may be needed.
- Make any edits that are needed and distribute the revised Competency Model and Job Description to all appropriate stakeholders.