

SHAPE Project Competency Framework Toolkit

Part of: Output 2
2023

Summary:

This toolkit will aid in implementing the accompanying managerial competency framework, created as part of the SHAPE project. The toolkit provides insights to help the MEF use the competency framework in processes such as hiring, training and performance management. These insights are informed partly by lessons and best practices learned from the international exchanges organized throughout the SHAPE project.

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1 Introduction

The OECD, in collaboration with the MEF project team, has designed a customised competency framework for the Ministry which focused on change and innovation-oriented management. The toolkit in this document will help the ministry to use the framework in meaningful ways, applying it to HR processes such as learning and development, performance assessment, and recruitment. Alongside these topics, this toolkit also provides insights on organisational factors that can help to promote the development and deployment of the competencies outlined in the framework. These are outlined in the table below.

The insights in this toolkit are, in part, informed by several international exchanges held throughout the project and an in-depth study visit to Dublin, Ireland.

Topic	Sub-topic
Learning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competency-based training for new managers • Continuous learning for existing managers • Informal learning • Using data and analysis to measure effectiveness and outcomes
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of competencies in recruitment decisions and processes • Evaluation of competencies in recruitment
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal performance evaluation • Informal feedback cycles • Growth and promotion decisions
Organisational Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications across levels and the hierarchy • Prioritisation by leadership • Prioritisation within the organizational culture • Networks and communities for sharing knowledge and learning • Innovation • Modern and digital tools • Rewards and incentives

2 Learning and development

Learning, training and continuous improvement of the skills, competencies and capacities of public sector leaders are vital elements of maintaining a capable senior public service. Implementing well-designed systems and practices for managerial and leadership development is an essential component of fostering the capabilities and behaviours identified in any managerial competency framework. Specific training not only fosters their use on the job but also signals the importance of their development over the course of a career. More informal methods of learning can also be used to support the personal and professional development of managers.

Competency-based training for future and/or new managers

To be effective in managerial positions, a newly hired or promoted person can be given support in the form of learning and development opportunities designed to enhance managerial competencies. This training can take place before the person starts in the position, as an induction upon entering, or over time in the first weeks to years of a person's start in management. For new managers, this training signals the importance of competencies from the framework, supports them in their development, and creates an environment and culture from the beginning where using managerial competencies is a habit and an expectation. This kind of training can also be helpful to build new managers' networks to enable the development of competencies related to the partnership and networking aspects of the framework.

In order to be effective, managerial learning and development should be participatory and practice-based, rather than theoretical. To the extent possible, managers should be asked to consider how the competencies can be operationalised in the context of their own job – since many jobs are different – and how the same competency will be used in different ways to suit different positions. The training should also be designed to provoke reflection and exchange, so that people can work together to discuss their own strengths and challenges. Training should also be continuous, as part of a comprehensive strategy. While there may be a specific induction period with more intensive training, it is also good practice to bring the managers together regularly (e.g., every three months) for shorter sessions to reflect on what they learned and how they are putting the competencies to use in their jobs.

This toolkit contains a specific training programme developed to help managers – new or already in position – become acquainted with the framework and to reflect on their own managerial qualities. This training could be delivered in two days, spread over a longer period with shorter sessions, or further developed into a more detailed and extensive course. It is meant as an introduction to managerial competencies and should be complemented with regular follow-up sessions as suggested above.

Learning and development should also be tailored to individuals' needs. The recruitment process

is a good opportunity to assess managers' potential strengths and challenges. This can be used to design tailored learning and development plans that take a longer time-horizon and include formal trainings as well as informal job opportunities. For example, if someone wants to improve their innovation-oriented competencies, they could be assigned to lead an innovative project within the MEF, for a period of time.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

United Kingdom

A comprehensive managerial induction is available to all staff in the senior civil service. A flagship foundation programme further trains staff in managerial positions across a broad spectrum of topics and competencies. There is also a training programme that takes place for future directors general, to be undertaken before they enter their posts.

Estonia

There is a competency framework for senior public servants that is used in the development of learning and development strategies, including those for civil servants entering the senior ranks.

The Netherlands

There is a managerial competency framework that informs the learning and development offerings given to newly hired managers. There are also selective, long-term development programmes for small groups of promising candidates that are undertaken before entering managerial positions.

Portugal

There is compulsory managerial training, including on competencies, for the first two years for newly hired managers.

Recommendations for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Have a comprehensive strategy for competency development for new managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use training to signal the importance of managerial competencies for new managers • Give new managers opportunities to use and develop competencies in their roles and to reflect on this development at regular intervals. • Create networking opportunities for new managers to learn from each other
Develop specific and unique learning plans at the hiring stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use recruitment processes to identify areas for training and development • Work alongside new managers to develop clear and comprehensive plans • Agree on ways to measure the success of learning and engage in frequent feedback to make adjustments and support new managers as necessary • Refer to the framework when making learning plans, and keep the specific person, role and desired outcomes in mind

Continuous learning for existing managers

The development and use of managerial competencies is not a process with a finite end. Effective managers continue to learn and enhance their competencies and abilities through their career, and as they experience career growth. Lifelong learning and development, and the use of managerial competencies, can be an expectation of progression in a career and for advancement to more senior, higher-responsibility positions. Learning should not take place only in onboarding, and managers who are not new to their roles can also be supported in their development through dedicated learning opportunities.

When designing learning opportunities for more senior managers, some specific points should be carefully considered. Often senior managers have very limited time to devote to specific training, and the issues that they look for insights to help with are very specific to the position they hold and the projects they are leading. Therefore, to be most effective, training for senior leaders should be tailored to their realities as much as possible and organised in relatively specific “bite-sized” pieces to fit around their busy and often unpredictable schedules. This may involve peer-driven learning, where senior managers bring real life challenges to a group of peers who help them to think through various options. Coaching is an increasingly popular, although expensive, approach to tailor learning and reflection to real problems. But senior leaders also appreciate opportunities to network with other leaders they respect and admire, and so efforts can be made to bring them together in discussions groups around hot topics (e.g., with experts from the private sector, or political leadership) to share and learn from each other.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

United Kingdom

One of the five topical strands of learning and development offerings within the UK government is devoted specifically to leadership and managerial competencies and skills. Within the topics and modules offered in the strand, there are advancing levels of proficiency depending on the seniority of the manager and position in leadership. Staff in managerial roles are expected to continually develop these competencies and continue undertaking learning throughout their career and to advance in seniority.

Estonia

Senior managers are assessed against the competency framework every two years, and the results of this assessment inform learning and development plans going forward. Managers are expected to continue developing these competencies through dedicated learning efforts in order to remain in, and advance through, senior leadership roles.

The Netherlands

The competency framework informs a learning and development strategy that focuses on three levels of seniority (managers, senior managers and the top management group). Managers continue undertaking learning and development activities in order to further develop competencies and grow to more senior levels.

Ireland

There are targets for certain competencies depending on the seniority level of staff, which are incorporated into strategies and plans that are monitored and enforced (e.g. innovation capabilities).

Insights for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Enhance the offering of competency-based learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide learning opportunities specific to the framework's competencies, with emphasis on those required in specific roles • Provide non-financial incentives to undertake the learning opportunities (use in performance reviews, growth and promotion opportunities, etc.) • Use workforce and team-based planning to prioritise areas for development • Provide learning opportunities suited to the time constraints of senior managers • Provide opportunities to tailor learning to individual managers' specific needs (e.g., through coaching)
Create expectations around the development and use of competencies for all managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the development and use of competencies into feedback and reviews • Create and adhere to learning plans based on the individual, their performance assessment, the role and the learning opportunities undertaken • Consider compulsory training as a pre-condition for career growth

Informal learning

Only a small portion of learning – especially for behaviours and competencies, and for adults – takes place in a formal, classroom setting. The rest happens informally, seemingly almost accidentally; through activities like trying and doing new things, observing others, sharing experiences, hearing about different viewpoints or techniques, and reflecting on successes and failures. While these things may seem difficult to plan, they can be included in a learning and development strategy through several means.

Examples and insights from international exchanges*United Kingdom*

Peer learning groups are strategically used to help managers share experiences and support and learn from each other. These groups are an element of the full managerial training and participation is expected as part of the courses.

The Netherlands

There is a strong focus on more informal means of learning for leadership competencies. One element of this is the use of networks and intercollegiate consultations, in which managers can discuss experiences in a structured and intentional way. There are also events organised that strongly focus on reflection of learning, including a summer programme for managers that gives more time for sharing successes and failures amongst the leadership group.

Ireland

There are dedicated sharing networks and communities of practice for certain capacities and competencies across the public service (for instance, for strategic foresight and innovation).

Recommendations for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Incorporate informal learning into learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement offerings and techniques such as networks, specific opportunities and tasks for reflection on successes or failures, teams comprised of diverse background and skills, or progressively senior short-term leadership roles/tasks • Foster improved communication between teams and departments and across levels of the hierarchy

Using data and analysis to measure effectiveness and outcomes

It is important to know whether the learning opportunities being offered for competency development are working as intended. Therefore, using data and indicators to measure and monitor outcomes – and make adjustments when necessary – is an essential aspect of any training strategy. The collection and use of data is sometimes difficult and requires expertise and planning. Utilising techniques that seek to track the effectiveness of training, whether newly-learned competencies are being used on the job, and their impact when implemented, is a challenge – and an opportunity – for all countries and learning from the successes and best practices of others is valuable.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

United Kingdom

A database of skills and competencies is being developed to make better placement and promotion decisions by matching qualified people with roles. Further, learning outcomes evaluation techniques are being further developed to measure the use of competencies on the job after undertaking training.

Estonia

The information and data resulting from biannual assessment of top managers is used to evaluate the outcome and success of learning and development courses and strategies.

The Netherlands

A specific impact methodology is in use that evaluates managerial learning and development opportunities and their impact on competencies based on visible behaviour changes, personal growth, the consistency of results and the enjoyment of the learning process by participants.

Recommendations for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Make and follow through on data and indicators for evaluating learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make plans for the collection and use of data and create accountability mechanisms to ensure they are followed

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore new innovative ways of getting and using data and developing useful indicators, and be comfortable with some degree of experimentation and failure when forming data strategies
Make data collection and use a priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have data experts in-house to design strategies, collect data, and analysis it to inform decisions. • Ensure that managers making decisions with the data have the required knowledge to understand it • Invest in the required technologies to collect and use data
Use data to measure and monitor overall learning systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use data on learning outcomes and skills needs to continually adjust training offerings and learning strategies

3 Recruitment

Recruiting effective and skilled managers and senior leadership is a crucial element of building and maintaining a high-functioning and future-ready public service. Finding in-demand and much needed managerial competencies – externally or from within the existing public service – can be a complex and difficult endeavour, though the recruitment stage is an invaluable time to source needed competencies. Role-specific competencies can be identified to align with open positions, and managerial candidates can be evaluated against specific required competencies. This can not only signal the importance of the framework’s competencies but also create an expectation around their use and development in the role. Crucially – over time – a culture of competencies will become the norm when it is part of the recruitment process upon entry; it is a strategy that pays dividends when consistently applied over the long term.

Including competencies in job profiles and descriptions

The first step to using the competency framework in recruitment is to align it to the requirements specified in job profile or description. Given the general process for managerial recruitment in MEF, the framework as a whole could be communicated alongside the competition announcement, so that candidates know which competencies matter to the MEF. In the second stage of staffing, when individual managers are assigned a specific positions, a well thought-out analysis of which competencies are the most important for specific roles, and a process for communicating them and considering them in job openings, would be necessary.

Concretely and substantively linking the framework to the opening of recruitment processes allows for the acknowledgement and use of outlined competencies further in the process, when evaluating candidates. Clearly stating competencies in information about roles can broadly signal their importance.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

Portugal

Requirements including competencies of the management position are clearly indicated in the published job posting for all recruitment processes. A mission statement for each position is created, specific to the role.

Belgium

Managerial job descriptions outline the required managerial competencies for the role. A set of competencies is expected of all roles and publicly available.

France

There is an ongoing shift to focus on managerial candidates’ competencies and experience rather

than only technical skills or rigid requirements around membership in certain bodies.

Recommendations for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Use the competency framework for the general competition for managers in the MEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link the competency framework to the general requirements for managerial performance in the MEF, thereby communicating this as a priority for new managers • Use this to assess potential managers in the competitions processes (see next section)
Include a reference to specific competencies for each individual managerial position and use these to assign managers to these roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each managerial position, identify the most needed competencies from the framework that the ideal manager will have. • Reflect on why these competencies are the most relevant and make the decision as a panel • Considering making it a regulation that this be a completed process for each opening
Incorporate competencies into posted job descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make mention of the identified relevant competencies in written job profiles and/or descriptions • Consider adding a section on competencies to job descriptions as well as the level needed in each competency for the position

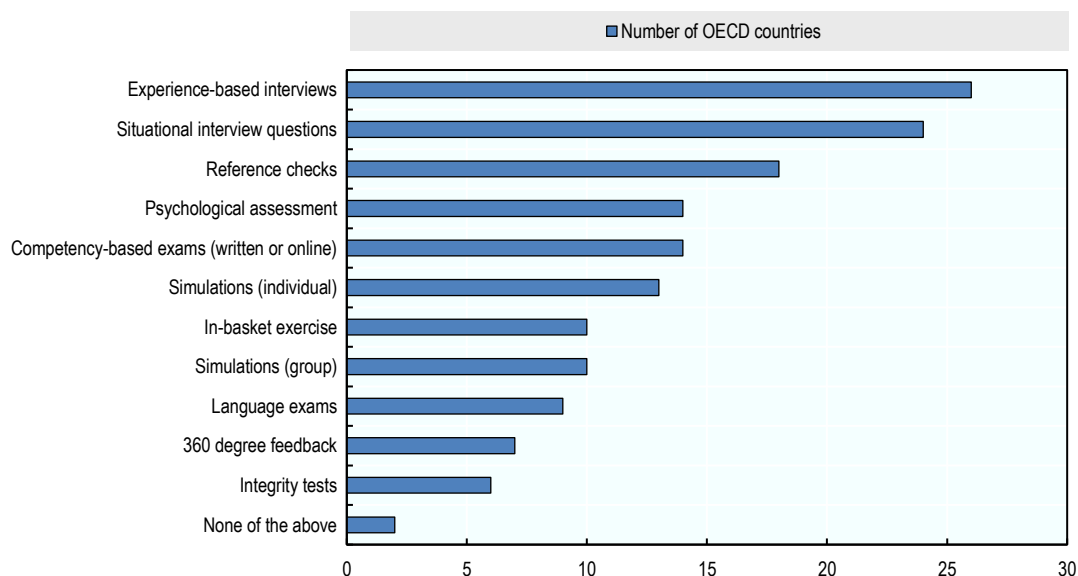
Evaluation of competencies in recruitment

Once competencies are identified and communicated in information about the job, evaluating candidates against them becomes the second important stage. Methods to effectively assess candidates on competencies can be defined and applied equally and fairly. Commonly used methods include the following:

- **Experiential interview questions:** candidates are often asked to describe a time when they used a certain competency in detail, to give the recruitment panel and understanding of their ability and experience with certain competencies.
- **Simulation exercises:** in a group or individual format, candidates can be presented with a situation or problem to resolve and asked to explain or demonstrate how they would address it.
- **Written self assessments:** candidates can undertake structured assessments of themselves, being asked to do such tasks as rank or explain their level of skills on different competencies.
- **In-basket exercises:** a type of role-playing exercise; candidates are presented with a number of theoretical tasks that need to be addressed – often based on emails, memos or messages – and are asked how they would deal with them and with what priority.
- **Reference checks:** the candidates provided references can be asked not only about the candidate's technical skillset but also their competencies, through a variety of question types.

The figure below illustrates the prevalence of use of some of these tools and methods, from across the OECD.

Figure: Assessment of senior public servants' competencies during recruitment, by number of OECD countries that use this method or tool, 2020



Source: OECD (2020), Survey on Public Service Leadership and Capability.

Assessing complex competencies with simple methods (e.g., one interview question) is challenging to do. Furthermore, it could expose the process to the personal biases of individual interviewers. Bias is common in any recruitment exercise where decision-makers are asked to rate candidates on imperfect information, and indeed, some degree of bias is an expected part of being human. This is why it is important to build processes into recruitment that work to counteract bias. Common biases include representation bias, where interviewers rate people who remind them of themselves, or fit their preconceived image of a good manager, as higher than others – despite the actual quality of their answers, competency levels or qualifications.

To avoid bias, and its undesired outcomes, there are a number of steps that many OECD countries take. For example, having multiple diverse perspectives and inputs when making a hiring decision is important, so many countries require an interview panel to be gender balanced and made up of appropriate experts. Indeed, some countries require full committees – made up of people from different areas of government, outside experts, and human resource professionals – for top leadership decisions. Some countries also use trained professionals to assess managerial competencies, such as occupational psychologists. Most countries also require a certain level of open transparency in the hiring process, to analyse certain indicators of fairness and lack of bias, such as the number of women or other groups in the recruitment process, and how well they fare at each stage.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

Portugal

Candidates for management roles are assessed for competencies in a variety of ways, including a self-assessment questionnaire of 12 different competencies on an existing framework, a behavioural assessment test, and an interview. The weighting of competencies and other criteria is pre-defined within certain bounds and can be adjusted based on the specifics of the role.

Belgium

The weighting of criteria, including competencies, is defined for each role. Higher levels of each competency are expected in more senior management positions. The interview process included a presentation exercise intended to evaluate managerial competencies.

Ireland

Specific competencies are evaluated in the hiring of top managers, with consideration on the level and types of competencies needed depending on the seniority of the positions (e.g., between Assistant Secretary or Secretary General level, different levels of competencies are required in the evaluation process). Methods for evaluating competencies include experience-based and situational interview questions, simulations, and competency-based exams.

Recommendations for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Evaluate candidates against the competencies in the job description during the assessment process, using appropriate tools and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate methods of assessing competencies into the recruitment/hiring process and make this evaluation a tangible component in the choice of candidate • Behavioural or situation questions in interviews and other assessment can be useful in competency evaluation (candidates may also be asked to explain or present information about their competencies) • Make clear in the process that competencies are important for the role and are being evaluated • Once in the role, candidates should be supported in the use of competencies
Systemise an evaluation scale or method for consistency in evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidates should be evaluated on competencies in a way that is equal for each • As an example, candidates can be asked the same set of questions in an interview and then rated on the same scale on their level of attainment for each competency
Take steps to mitigate the risk of personal bias in the assessment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make staffing decisions in an open and transparent way, so that staff see a direct link between skills, performance in the process, and the final decision • Make decisions based on the assessment of multiple people who can bring different perspectives; strive for gender balance in the recruitment panels • Ensure adequate processes for people to signal if they think they have been treated unfairly, with defined processes to investigate and resolve • Collect data on the recruitment process and address any indication of bias

Consider the weighting of competencies versus other skills for managerial positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The importance of the competencies held by candidates should be considered against the other needed skills and knowledge for the job• In managerial positions, competencies are often more important than certain technical skills that may currently be prioritize so it is important to substantively assess the importance of all factors and address current mindsets around the subject
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4 Performance management

Effective and fit-for-purpose performance management systems are an essential component of modern public sector workforce management and leadership development. They are important and emerging processes in OECD countries, where concerted effort is being put into designing – or redesigning – effective, fair, and modern systems, which create feedback cultures and align the goals of both employees and the organisation. More than ever, performance management is used to build managerial competencies and help employees develop, rather than about reward or punishment.

Countries that do well in performance management of senior managers tend to have a well-thought-out system that includes several tools, such as competency frameworks (integrated into HR processes), digital and other technological support, and frequent feedback cycles.¹ Performance management, when done well, can contribute to fostering and enabling the competencies required of modern public sector managers by providing opportunities for managers to reflect on how they have used different competencies effectively, and how they can further develop their competencies in the future. The competency framework designed for managers in the MEF can be integrated into performance management systems in several ways, including through the following set of insights.

Formal performance evaluation

Performance evaluation can provide incentives to managers to develop competencies and deploy them. They do this by looking backward at the results managers have achieved, and how they achieved them. Performance evaluation generally begins with goal setting, which can be an important way of signalling the kind of change a manager is expected to contribute to. This aspect of performance management is important to get right, if the administration wants to embed the change-oriented competencies highlighted in the OECD/MEF competency framework.

Once change-oriented goals are agreed on between the manager and their hierarchy, the performance evaluation should not only assess progress towards these goals, but also the way the manager achieves them. Designing and implementing change is challenging to do well, but when it is, change is achieved in ways that improve the working experience and boosts productivity of all involved. When not done well, change results in a general sense of frustration, fear, and anger – reducing overall productivity. This is where the competency framework can be used – by providing regular opportunities for the manager to reflect on which competencies they are (or should be) using, how well they are using them, and where they could use them differently.

Formal evaluations are effective when they have substantive outcomes, and when their outcomes truly reflect the efforts, skills, and achieved results of the people being evaluated. This does not mean to suggest that such evaluations need to be linked to material benefits (pay for

¹<https://www.oecd.org/innovation/leadership-for-a-high-performing-civil-service-ed8235c8-en.htm>
<https://www.oecd.org/gov/38990099.pdf>

performance). In fact, it is very hard to effectively calculate performance in this way and linking pay to performance may have unintended consequences of rendering the evaluation less meaningful. By using the competency framework as a core part of these evaluations at regular intervals, managers can instead identify developmental opportunities to build their competencies and advance in their careers.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

Canada:

There are performance agreements for all managers, and subsequent assessments of managerial performance. The performance agreements include a few objectives that specify the contribution a manager is expected to make towards organisational change priorities. This way all managers are part of the transformation efforts of their organisation and government. Executives are assessed on whether they meet goals, but also how they meet them, using Canada's competency framework (Key Leadership Competencies).

Latvia:

The results of performance evaluations use a five-point rating scale (excellent very good, good, fair and poor). The formal evaluation is weighted, with 60% placed on outcomes, and 40% on competencies and development goals. Latvia uses an integrated online platform and IT system, called NEVIS, to provide technological support for the performance management and evaluation process. The system allows to evaluations to be completed and tracked, for performance objectives and goals to be set, and for easier and clearer communication between employees and managers.

The Netherlands:

Regulations establish a standardised outline for the annual performance reviews. In the reviews, management employees and their own managers agree on objectives, results and development goals for the coming year, and also review those which were set the previous year. Factors within these that are evaluated include agreed performance, competencies, career development, training initiatives and integrity. There is an emphasis on two-sided dialogue, explicit milestones, documentation, and consequences when needed.

Insights for implementation

Action	Guidance
Evaluate against the framework at regular intervals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the performance management system to set change and innovation-oriented goals for managers, giving them a sense of purpose, direction and motivation to be change-oriented managers • Integrate management competencies into some substantive aspect of formal performance evaluations, focusing on <i>how</i> managers achieve their objectives • Evaluations should reflect discussions and agreements on performance between a manager and their own manager
Identify the most needed competencies for the role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and agree on which competencies are the most pertinent for a specific managerial role and focus on these in evaluations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise both talent and the competencies a manager already excels at, as well as growth, development and true efforts to improve
Ensure substantive outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an evaluation system that rewards the development and effective use of competencies by providing access to career development opportunities (use of the system should be consistent across all staff it is applied to) Ensure that performance evaluation is not a "box-ticking" exercise; it should reflect the actual performance of the employee Performance management platforms can be digitised and streamlined to foster clarity and ensure consistency

Informal performance feedback for managers

Feedback that happens consistently and outside of formal evaluations can be equally important to the development and management of staff. Doing so creates an environment of continuous development, and also reduces pressures or fear of punishment around any negative feedback. Managers can be given information and insight that helps them develop their competencies throughout the year.

Giving (and seeking) regular feedback on work done by managers and their employees is a managerial competency that needs to be developed in and of itself. This is why this competency is explicitly included in the competency framework developed for this project. It requires managers to find effective ways to provide positive reinforcement when things are done well, and constructive ways to address issues and errors when things are not done well enough. It requires managers to embrace their role as people developers, seeing each project as an opportunity for learning and growth.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

Canada:

Continuous feedback is part of the systematised process, in addition to formal checkpoints at beginning, mid- and year-end. Priorities going forward include better equipping managers to develop their own staff, increasing the focus on mentoring and coaching.

Latvia:

Reforms in Latvia aim to create a culture of continuous feedback. Performance review meetings will also become more informal, though more frequent, with the aim of using feedback cycles to motivate and develop staff rather than only assess for the purpose of creating rankings or deciding on salaries.

The Netherlands:

Top managers are invited to undertake 360° feedback once per year; the process is voluntary, but highly encouraged. The purpose of 360° feedback is to help managers improve and develop themselves. The review is organised and implemented by an external party and the results are not shared with anyone in the administration other than the person receiving the feedback.

Recommendations for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Set expectations around giving and receiving feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach managers to give feedback – recognising that it's not easy or comfortable, particularly when negative. • This type of learning requires training, practice, and support • Make it a part of managers' jobs to provide feedback on competencies and hold informal discussions about performance with their teams and staff (doing the above can be among the tasks a senior manager themselves are evaluated against) • Feedback should focus on areas to develop and what a manager excels at, and can be used to set agreements and goals in more formal settings
Provide feedback without repercussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal feedback should not be formally recorded in performance management systems or used in formal evaluations; the competency framework can be used to guide discussions • Informal feedback can be used to identify training needs or to discuss roadblocks, and to find solutions or learning opportunities without forming a sense that these are punishments or need to be feared • Informal feedback can be used to reduce fear of formal evaluations by providing transparency and clarity on performance throughout the year • If informal feedback is coherent and consistent, formal evaluation results will never be surprising
Use a variety of feedback tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentorship and coaching are valuable informal tools that create positive and supportive cultures around feedback • 360° degree feedback, as another example, can be a valuable tool to provide feedback to senior employees from multiple stakeholders and without negative consequences; the focus is on personal improvement undertaken by the manager themselves, and also helps to ensure that feedback is not only given in one downward direction

Growth and promotion decisions

With the MEF's framework in place, managers can be assessed against the competencies that are relevant to their roles and those to which they aspire. In this way, the competency framework is an important career planning and development tool. First, the framework can be used to assess strengths and gaps in their current positions and identify areas for development. Secondly the framework can be used to identify the competencies that would be needed in a higher-level position, giving the manager a view as to the areas they would need to develop to be considered for a promotion. This is often done by describing the nature of each competency at each level of the management hierarchy. For example, competencies related to networking and partnerships may be described differently for more senior and more junior managers.

Since each type of job may require different competencies from the framework, it can also be used as a tool to identify developmental opportunities for lateral mobility (at the same level of seniority). For example, if a manager aspires to develop more competencies in the area of innovation, but doesn't feel their current position gives them the opportunity to develop these skills, they could move to a job that does. In this way, the competency framework becomes a tool to develop well-rounded managers through job placements on their way up the hierarchical ladder.

Hence, the framework can also inform decisions about learning and development, career planning and workforce needs. Importantly, the competencies in the framework can be formally considered in staffing and promotion decisions, making these more consistent and transparent for managers in the MEF.

Examples and insights from international exchanges

France:

Top managers are evaluated by a higher committee at least once every six years, with the aim to identify training and development needs, plan progression or career changes when warranted, and to identify high-potential managers for purposes of overall managerial workforce planning.

Latvia:

Latvia plans to reengineer competency models to reflect job families, including managers. Training and evaluation criteria can subsequently be based around these frameworks when decisions on promotions and hiring are being made.

Canada:

In Canada, the Deputy Ministers (the highest ranking senior civil servants) have an annual meeting where they discuss the results of managers' performance assessments and their career prospects. For each senior manager, the Deputy Ministers consider their proven strengths and challenges, based on the outcomes of their annual performance evaluation. They identify developmental opportunities for each of them, which often include transfers to other positions at the same hierarchical level where they can further refine their managerial skills, before being promoted. These meetings result in a very active management of managers' career paths.

Insights for implementation

Actions	Guidance
Use the framework to help managers develop their careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the competency framework to clarify the different expectations for junior and senior management positions, so that junior

	<p>managers know how they are expected to develop and grow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the framework to include different descriptions of the competencies according to levels of management • Use the competency framework to identify lateral mobility opportunities to develop promising junior managers
Match competencies with roles when promoting staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make promotions decisions with needed competencies for the role in mind • Evaluate candidates against needed competencies in the hiring/screening process for managerial roles
Refer to the competency framework when filling the leadership pipeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and development plans can be used to prepare staff for future managerial roles or to bring a manager up to speed once hired • The competency framework can be an essential component of developing a leadership pipeline and should be used in the development of staff who are managers and who will become managers

5 Organisational factors

The previous sections of this report outlined ways in which the managerial competency framework can be implemented through specific HR processes involving the managerial workforce. Following the above guidance is a significant step towards enhancing managerial competencies through the consistent implementation and use of the framework. However, certain organisational cultural factors can also act as enablers, or hinderances, in implementing the competency frameworks and the processes and actions needed to enhance competency use. Addressing these may be equally important to the successful implementation of the framework, and therefore the following non-exhaustive table and guidance seeks to address and begin a discussion around these organisational factors for future reforms efforts in the MEF.

Factor	Insights
<p>Communication among managers throughout the MEF</p> <p>Many of the competencies in the framework focus on communication. Building these skills in the managerial community also requires organisational processes and culture to put them to use. Ensuring that managers have the tools and incentives to communicate with each other, on issues of common interest, is essential to building a culture of learning and competency development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster an increased culture of communication between and across staff of different levels of seniority to avoid “communication roadblocks” and enable the use of many competencies related to dealing with people and networks as well as cooperation and change management • Consider tools such as mentoring and networking to empower more junior managers to express their ideas and encourage knowledge transfer across levels of seniority and tenure • Organise and facilitate formal networks for information sharing and communication • Ensure that such networks and activities are “marketed” and that opportunities are well-known • Align incentives and allow time for participation in such groups, being especially conscious of barriers or disincentives that would discourage participation
<p>Prioritisation of competency development by leadership</p> <p>Developing the <i>supply</i> of competencies through hiring and training should also be matched by <i>demand</i> from those at the top. Top leadership can do this by setting clear expectations from their direct reports and modelling the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the values and priorities of leadership when making promotion or appointment decisions into these roles • Consider the ability of a leader to lead cultural change and reforms, as well as their demonstrated commitment to their own development and competency use • Develop and implement formal strategies and plans on fostering or evaluating

<p>behaviours themselves. This can, over time, lead to an organisational culture that rewards good managerial competency development and use.</p>	<p>competency use in the workforce by staff, that managers/leadership can adhere to and use in their own strategies for developing and evaluating staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that these strategic long-term plans will remain consistent regardless of changes in leadership, with formal commitments • Set benchmarks for leaders and consider the improvements in competency use in the evaluation of leadership • When making general promotion decisions for managers, strongly take competencies in mind • In performance reviews, ask managers to demonstrate their ability to use their own managerial competencies and develop them in others
<p>Building a culture of Innovation</p> <p>Many of the competencies in the framework focus on innovation and change. To put these competencies into action, steps could be taken to assess the working culture and environment to embrace new ways of thinking and innovative solutions to challenges, alongside a dominant culture of direction-taking and maintaining norms. This may include the creation of safe places for experimentation and its establishment in the organisational culture (e.g., policy or innovation labs), and incentives to motivate innovation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to embed a culture of safe experimentation. • Actively encourage innovation through incentives and consider it in promotion decisions • Visibly reward those who undertake innovative ways of working or thinking, even if the project doesn't turn out as planned – it can still be a valuable learning experience (for example, Ireland holds annual Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards to recognise the achievements of innovative employees) • Consider setting up specific “innovation labs” to demonstrate innovative behaviours and solutions, and their results. • Ensure that managers working within highly innovative settings and roles are of a high calibre, to set a good example and so that the roles are not viewed negatively or as punishment
<p>Modern and digital tools</p> <p>Many of the innovation and change-oriented competencies in this framework can be supported by digital and data-driven tools that could underpin innovation and improve organisational decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerate the use of new digital technologies and set expectations around the improvements of digital skills to use them • Provide learning and development opportunities for digital skills, and measure and monitor the outcomes of these trainings and the use of new skills on the job