CCSA's Workforce Competencies Implementation Quick-Start Guide

Supporting Organizational Leaders to Begin Using CCSA's Workforce Competency Framework

Canadian Centre
**on Substance Use
and Addiction**

Evidence. Engagement. Impact.

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WELCOME!

Welcome to the quick-start guide for implementing the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction's (CCSA's) Workforce Competencies, a resource for effectively integrating these competencies in your organization. This guide is meant for those working in human resources (HR), organizational leaders, team leaders or those who would have a direct role in implementation. It is designed to help you get a jump-start on your competency initiatives and showcase best practices from those who are already using the competency framework.

This guide was informed by the National Implementation Research Network, an evidence-based approach to implementation.

The following steps will help you determine the fundamental components required to implement CCSA's competencies.

PHASE 1: PLANNING

Take time to consider whether you have the following levers to support implementation.

Supports and Scope

Gaining Buy-In

FROM LEADERS

To achieve sustained organization-wide impact, an executive or senior leader who is willing to champion the initiative is needed to secure organizational resources and facilitate change management. Check out this Competency Factsheet that can be useful to create buy-in with leaders.

Approval will be determined by your organization's structure. When planning your project roll-out, clarify the levels of approval that will be needed to launch your project.

FROM EMPLOYEES

Engage with employees early to confirm whether a competency framework responds to needs and challenges that they have been expressed at the team, individual or both levels. Explore the concept of a competency framework and gauge where there may be support, hesitation or resistance. This will offer insight into the type of communication and coaching the implementation team will need to consider during the implementation phases.

If you are in a unionized environment, collaborate with union partners from the start of the project.

Available Resources

Resources typically include financial, human and informational. When planning your resource needs, consider the level of effort and expertise required for your competency initiative. For HR, determine the roles and responsibilities for your implementation team. Typically, HR teams are responsible for leading competency projects.

If you do not have enough capacity and expertise internally, consider scaling down your project, drawing on existing resources or materials to improve efficiency or hiring external consultants.

Consider a Phased Approach and Start Small If Necessary

Sometimes it will be more feasible and effective to start with one area of workforce management or one specific part of the organization. For example, an organization may start with identifying core competencies as the initial phase of implementation, incorporating the competencies in hiring interviews as the second phase and rolling out competency-based training in a later phase.

When choosing where to start, refer to the "helpful questions" bullets in the next section where the answers can help outline the specific needs for your team or organization. Consider where competencies can help you address high-priority needs in a manageable timeframe.

Prioritize areas where employees can easily see how they can benefit. For example, do you want to identify your organization's core competencies to support a cultural change? Do you want to enhance training for employees and new hires that is better targeted to address key skill gaps?

Needs and Impact

Before embarking on any competency initiatives, make sure you have clearly identified the goals and objectives.

Having clear answers to the following questions will help guide your implementation of competencies and help to align decisions to support improved organizational outcomes.

There are some helpful questions to answer as you prepare:

- What challenges are you aiming to address by implementing competencies?
- What are the intended outcomes that competencies will offer for your organization?
- What assets and resources do you want to optimize and amplify?

Common organizational needs that may be addressed through a competency framework include:

- Strengthening organizational culture,
- Navigating organizational change,
- Improving clarity of HR practices,
- Creating consistency in training and performance,
- Promoting internal career mobility,
- Developing leaders,
- Enhancing employee engagement and
- Creating clear expectations for roles and responsibilities.

How Do You Know It Will Make a Difference?

Measuring the impact of the competency implementation is vital for measuring change, identifying lessons learned, informing future implementation, building organizational support and promoting accountability.

To ensure you're measuring impact, follow these steps when planning a project:

1. Set clear objectives and establish measurement criteria.
2. Next, confirm the criteria with leadership to ensure alignment with organizational strategy, and then establish baselines by collecting data before the competencies are implemented.
3. Finally, plan a post-implementation measurement to compare the data with your baselines.

When the implementation is done in phases, the measurements can be taken at each phase to track trends and adjust as needed.

FIT

Consider How Competencies Fit in with Existing Standards and Processes

If your organization has implemented other workforce standards or processes in the past, consider how competencies should be positioned. For example, if you have value statements, core competencies should be aligned with them. If there are regulatory or professional standards for certain roles, consider how competencies complement these standards without creating conflicts or redundancy. If there is a job-levelling system for a particular role, consider whether the competency proficiency levels need to be mapped to the job levels.

Explore Existing Competency Content

Using existing content will help you save time and effort. CCSA's Workforce Competencies website provides a comprehensive glossary of behavioural and technical competencies, as well as templates for applying them in interviews and performance management. These resources are developed through extensive consultations with individuals working in the substance use and mental health workforce.

Use Existing Technology

For small-scale projects, common digital tools (e.g., online documents, surveys) will be sufficient. For large-scale implementation, consider opportunities to use technology (e.g., HR systems) to streamline processes. If you have an HR system in place, check to see how it can accommodate competencies and allow you to use them for the intended purposes.

Check-In with Employees

Continue to check-in with employees to confirm whether a competency framework is responding to needs and challenges. This will add to the initial insights you gathered at the beginning and further support your understanding of communication and coaching needs during the implementation phases.

CAPACITY

Implementation Team

Depending on your organization and the scope of the implementation, the team leading the initiative will vary by size. During the planning, ensure there is capacity and expertise in the team to achieve your goals.

Skills that are helpful on your implementation team include:

- Experience in change management;
- A working understanding of CCSA's competencies;
- Experience in performance management;
- A strong understanding of organizational values, culture, mission and vision; and
- A strong understanding of the competencies needed for the roles and teams where the framework is being implemented.

Roles typically found in the implementation team include:

- Implementation lead (i.e., someone championing the change and often functions as the project co-ordinator);
- Implementation team members (i.e., individuals who will conduct core tasks related to implementing the framework, such as drafting job descriptions, mapping core competencies, conducting focus groups with staff during the planning and implementation phases); and
- Change champions (i.e., individuals who are excited about the change, endorse the implementation, and will pilot and review material; often employees who have demonstrated a high level of competence in their roles and responsibilities).

Internal Champions and Supporters

Consulting with internal partners (i.e., employees) is a key element to the success of many competency initiatives. Depending on the nature of the project, various internal partners will play different roles. Some partners may participate actively while some may be asked to provide feedback as needed. Others may not participate actively but will need to be kept informed. For example, identifying core competencies will require input from representatives across the organization's division or team. Building a competency profile for one role will mostly involve employees in that role as well as their supervisors.

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION

Engage Employees

Engage employees throughout the implementation process to gain input and build support. Ensure diversity and representation in consultations. This will help you gain a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences, and ensure the outcomes are inclusive and equitable.

Be transparent about the goals of the initiative, the roles of different employees and how the outcomes impact them. When employees see their role in the initiative and how they will benefit ("What's in it for me?"), they are more likely to be supportive and to participate actively.

Consider a variety of approaches for engagement, such as interviews, surveys and focus groups. Choose the activities based on the teams and the types of input you are seeking. Think about how you can be inclusive of different communication styles.
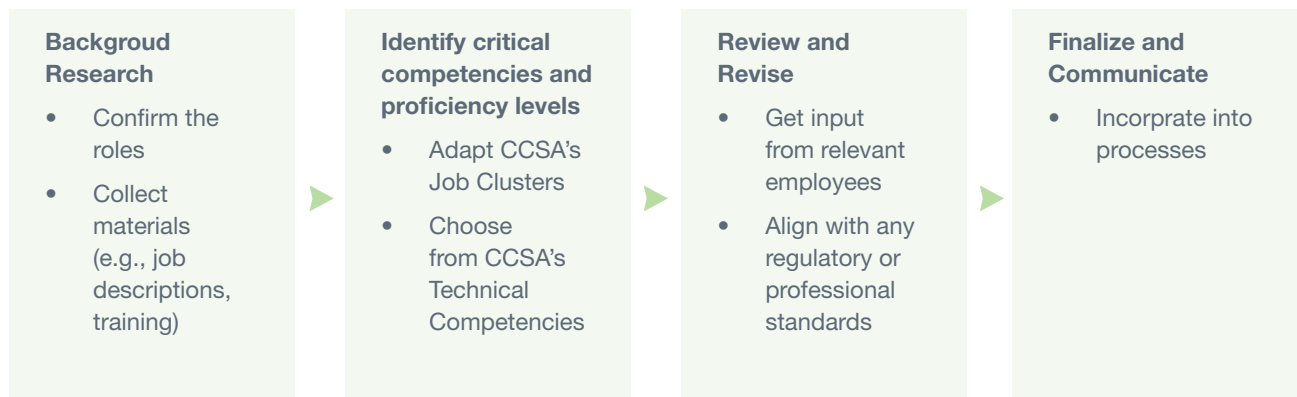
Map Out the Steps

The implementation steps will differ based on your goals and objectives in each phase, as well as your organizational culture. To get you started, here are some examples.

Identify Core Competencies to Support Organizational Values

Background Research	Identify Competencies	Review and Revise	Finalize and Communicate
• Talk with leaders • Review value statements • Review the organization's mission and vision	• Choose from CCSA's Behavioural Competencies • Engage with employees early to validate	• Tailor the content for your organization • Identify proficiency levels	• Incorprate into processes

Develop Competency Profiles for a Group of Jobs

Backgroud Research	Identify critical competencies and proficiency levels	Review and Revise	Finalize and Communicate
• Confirm the roles • Collect materials (e.g., job descriptions, training)	• Adapt CCSA's Job Clusters • Choose from CCSA's Technical Competencies	• Get input from relevant employees • Align with any regulatory or professional standards	• Incorprate into processes

Adapt Existing Competency Content

To make the best use of the Workforce Competencies, consider them as a starting point. You may need to work with your internal partners to adapt the content, so it is aligned with the roles and the culture in your organization. You may also want to revise the language, so it better resonates with employees. Depending on the scope of your project, the adaptation may be minor or extensive. Assess how much adaptation is needed, and plan your project accordingly.

Document the Process

Documenting the process used for competency and profile development promotes transparency and accountability. This will also support future implementation. Ensuring documentation is in line with HR and organizational processes and policies will help demonstrate that the process was fair and inclusive.

Measure the Impact and Evaluate the Process

There are different approaches for measuring impact. Performance-related metrics focus on the impact on service quality. For example, is the implementation of competency-based training linked to higher client satisfaction ratings, fewer safety incidents and better service outcomes over time? Organizational metrics focus on the impact on the workforce. For example, is the implementation of competencies linked to better staff retention rate and more efficient training budgets? In addition to metrics, consider conducting interviews with employees and managers about their experiences. For example, how have competencies influenced performance discussions? Do managers find competency-based interview questions helpful in making hiring decisions?

PHASE 3: ASSESS AND SHARE SUCCESS

As you reach various milestones in the implementation process, share success stories to increase awareness and buy-in from the wider organization. This will help you gain support for further implementation. Consider sharing the stories in multiple ways, such as newsletters, presentations and social media.

Reflect on lessons learned continuously through the implementation process. Review success measures and use the data to gain further insight. Document the lessons learned and adjust in the next phase.

CONNECT WITH US!

If you are planning on implementing the competencies or have begun implementing the competency framework feel free to email our team at competencies@ccsa.ca for questions or support.