# BEHAVIOURAL COMPETENCIES

## for Canada's Substance Use Workforce v. 3

### Interview Tool for Person-to-Person Support

**Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction**

Evidence. Engagement. Impact.

# MODIFYING INTERVIEWING TOOLS FOR THE NEW OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS

Each of the new occupational clusters has an associated competency profile that outlines the required **behavioural competencies** and the recommended **proficiency levels**.

There are different positions that can fall under each of the occupational clusters. Therefore, the competency profile for each occupational cluster should be reviewed to determine whether modifications are required. For example, some of the positions that fall under a particular occupational cluster may require a different proficiency level for one or more of the competencies. In these cases, adjust the proficiency level to best reflect the position of interest. Similarly, some of the positions that fall under a particular occupational cluster may not require some of the competencies included in the competency profile. In these cases, remove any nonessential competencies to ensure that **only** essential competencies are focused on during the interview.

The steps for modifying the existing interview tools for the new occupational clusters are outlined below. Additionally, Figure 1 illustrates the steps in a flow chart.
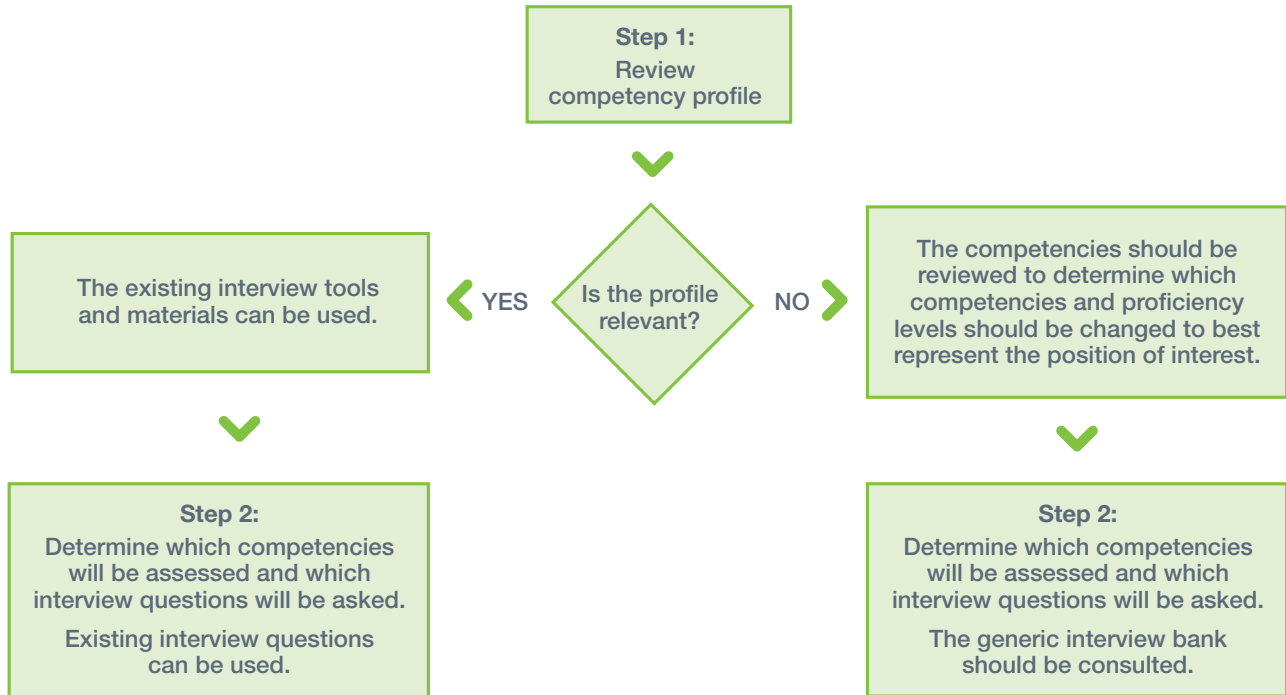
## Step 1: Review Competency Profile to Determine Relevance.

- If the competency profile is relevant (i.e., no changes are required), then the existing interview tools and materials can be used.
- If the competency profile is not relevant, then the competencies should be reviewed to determine which competencies and proficiency levels should be changed to best represent the position of interest.

## Step 2: Determine Which Competencies Will Be Assessed in the Interview and Decide on the Questions that Will Be Asked.

- Each competency profile is associated with sample questions for the relevant proficiency levels.
    - If no changes were made to the competency profile, then the existing questions can be used.
    - If changes were made, then the generic interview bank should be consulted to help select and adapt alternative questions.

## Figure 1. Modifying interview tools for the new occupational clusters

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │      Step 1:        │
                        │      Review         │
                        │ competency profile  │
                        └─────────────────────┘
                                  ▼
                              ◇ Is the profile ◇
    ◄ YES                     ◇  relevant?    ◇          NO ►
┌──────────────────────┐      ◇              ◇      ┌──────────────────────────┐
│ The existing interview│                           │ The competencies should be│
│ tools and materials   │                           │ reviewed to determine which│
│ can be used.          │                           │ competencies and proficiency│
└──────────────────────┘                           │ levels should be changed to best│
                                                    │ represent the position of interest.│
                                                    └──────────────────────────┘
         ▼                                                      ▼
┌──────────────────────┐                           ┌──────────────────────────┐
│      Step 2:         │                           │        Step 2:           │
│ Determine which      │                           │ Determine which          │
│ competencies will be │                           │ competencies will be     │
│ assessed and which   │                           │ assessed and which       │
│ interview questions  │                           │ interview questions      │
│ will be asked.       │                           │ will be asked.           │
│ Existing interview   │                           │ The generic interview    │
│ questions can be used.│                          │ bank should be consulted.│
└──────────────────────┘                           └──────────────────────────┘
```

## Competencies and Interviewing Best Practices

- Prioritize the competencies you will evaluate.
  A typical competency profile will consist of **only** critical competencies (i.e., those essential to perform the job successfully). Generally, a profile *will not exceed 12 competencies*. Although all these competencies are essential, *not all competencies can be assessed through an interview*. For a one-hour interview, a reasonable number of competencies and questions to assess or ask can range between five and seven.

- Make it relevant to your work and organization.
  The questions included in this guide are samples of **generic behavioural interview questions** for each proficiency level of each of the behavioural competencies. These questions can be used with their original phrasing, or they can be used as the basis for developing more tailored questions.

- Maximize efficiency and prioritization by minimizing redundancy.
  In deciding which questions to ask, the **relative importance of a competency should be considered**. In some cases, there will be overlap between competencies. In these cases, only assess **one** of these competencies as the interviewee's answer may provide valuable information that is relevant to the overlapping competency. For example, two competencies that overlap with one another are **Effective Communication** and **Interpersonal Rapport**. If both competencies are included in the competency profile, only assess **one** of these competencies.

## New Occupational Cluster: Person-to-Person Support

| Interviewing Tool for Positions Related to Person-to-Person Support |
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Position Title:

Candidate's Name:

| Interviewer's Name: | Interviewer's Title: |
| --- | --- |
| Date of Interview: | Location of Interview: |

## Interview Preparation Checklist

- ☐ Review resumé and candidate file for skills and experience that are relevant to the job competition.
- ☐ Review the required competencies for the position.
- ☐ Determine which five to seven competencies to focus on in the interview.

## Suggested Competency Profile

| Job Cluster | Example Job Titles |
| --- | --- |
| **Person-to-Person Support** | Peer Support Worker, Harm Reduction Worker, Community Engagement Specialist, Peer Mentor, Peer Group Support Worker, Peer Recovery Support Specialist, Experiential Worker |

| Competency Required | Proficiency Level |
| --- | --- |
| Adaptability and Flexibility | 3 |
| Analytical Thinking and Decision Making | 2 |
| Collaboration and Network Building | 3 |
| Continuous Learning | 3 |
| Creativity and Innovation | 2 |
| Culturally Safe and Anti-Oppressive Practice | 3 |
| Effective Communication | 2 |
| Ethical Conduct and Professionalism | 2 |
| Interpersonal Rapport | 3 |
| Person-Directed Care | 3 |
| Planning and Organizing | 3 |
| Self-Care | 3 |
| Self-Management | 3 |
| Self-Motivation | 1 |

## Sample Questions

**Choose five to seven of the most relevant or most important questions.**

### Question 1: Creativity and Innovation

**Definition:** Use evidence-informed practices in innovative and creative ways to initiate effective new ways of working and advance the understanding of the field of practice. Innovation and creativity are achieved by collaborating with system partners to optimize improvements in service delivery and professional practice.

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**LEVEL 2 [DEVELOPING]**

**Question:** Describe a situation where you came up with a creative approach to addressing an issue.

- Describe the situation.
- What made you consider modifying an existing way of doing things or implementing a new way?
- Describe the new approach you came up with.
- How was it an improvement over the existing approach?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 2: Culturally Safe and Anti-Oppressive Practice

**Definition:** Provide inclusive, anti-oppressive, sex- and gender-sensitive, equitable and timely services to diverse populations and cultures,* including but not limited to, age, sex, gender, language, ethnicity, socio-economic status, legal status, health, ability, sexual orientation, type and mode of substance use, continued substance use, concurrent conditions, etc. Challenge oppressive structures, unequal power relations, affirm and value the worth of all individuals, families, groups and communities, and protect the dignity of all with cultural awareness, competence, sensitivity, humility and cultural safety. (*Refers to the distinct cultures that exist around Indigeneity, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, substance use, etc.)

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### LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]

**Question:** Tell us about an experience where you worked collaboratively with an individual, family, group or community from a diverse background (e.g., cultures, faiths, sexual orientation) and how your understanding of their circumstances prepared you to provide a service tailored to their needs.

- Describe the situation, background and unique characteristics of the person, family, group or community.
- How did you assess the sensitivities of the situation?
- Describe the principles of anti-oppressive practice that you used in this situation?
- What practices, services or techniques did you employ to adapt to their needs?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 3: Adaptability and Flexibility

**Definition:** Willingly adjust one's approach to meet the demands and needs of constantly changing conditions, situations and people, and work effectively in difficult or ambiguous situations.

### LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]

**Question:** Tell us about a time when you supported someone who uses substances to adapt to changes.

- What were the changes that required adapting to?
- What challenges or barriers were they facing to brace the changes?
- How did you support the individual?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 4: Analytical Thinking and Decision Making

**Definition:** Gather, synthesize and evaluate information and evidence to determine possible alternatives and outcomes and make well-informed, timely decisions. Includes critical thinking and reasoning skills.

**LEVEL 2 [DEVELOPING]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time where you identified multiple courses of action while considering the potential impact on the person you were supporting.

- Describe the situation.
- Describe the potential impacts.
- How did you identify the course of action?
- What did you do?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 5: Collaboration and Network Building

**Definition:** Identify, create and build capacity with informal and formal interdisciplinary networks and allied community groups, including people with lived and living experience, families and communities from diverse backgrounds, to support the provision of service delivery and achievement of the organization's objectives. People who use services include individuals, groups, organizations and communities.

### LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]

**Question:** Describe a time when you promoted dialogues between system partners, including people with lived and living experience of substance use.

- Describe the situation.
- Who was involved?
- How did you promote dialogues and what role did you take on?
- Were there any challenges? If so, how did you address them?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 6: Continuous Learning

**Definition:** Identify and pursue learning opportunities to enhance one's professional practice and development, and the delivery of high-quality programs and services.

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**LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time when you supported someone in their learning and development.

- Describe the situation.
- How did you identify areas where they could benefit from learning and development?
- How did you support the individual?
- What coaching or mentoring techniques did you use?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 7: Effective Communication

**Definition:** Articulate both verbally and in writing across a range of technologies in a manner that builds trust, respect and credibility, including in-person and technology-assisted communication (e.g., video conferencing, texting, social media). Checks with the audience to ensure the message is received and mutually understood. Includes active listening skills (attending, being silent, summarizing, paraphrasing, questioning and empathizing), communicating with gender sensitivity, cultural humility and congruent non-verbal communication.

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**LEVEL 2 [DEVELOPING]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time where you adjusted your communication approach based on the body language or non-verbal cues of the individual you were supporting.

- Describe the situation.
- How did you interpret the body language or non-verbal cues?
- How did you adjust your communication?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 8: Ethical Conduct and Professionalism

**Definition:** Provide professional services according to the principles and values of integrity, competence, accountability, respect and trust to safeguard both self and others. Includes the development of professionalism and ethical behaviour in self and others (individuals, groups, organizations, communities).

**LEVEL 2 [DEVELOPING]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time when you clarified personal and professional boundaries while providing person-to-person support.

- What challenges did you have, and how did you address them?
- What boundaries did you set?
- How did you communicate these boundaries to the individual?
- How did you address it if boundaries were not respected?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 9: Interpersonal Rapport

**Definition:** Establish and maintain relationships based on mutual respect and trust, appropriate sensitivity and transparency, empathy and compassion with people using services, colleagues, professional associates and the greater community. Encompasses skills of tact, engagement and sensitivity in all encounters with others.

**LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time when you recognized or acknowledged someone's emotions that they felt were difficult to express.

- Describe the situation.
- How did you recognize or acknowledge their emotions?
- What communication tools, skills or resources did you use?
- How did you address the situation and/or provide support?
- How did the individual respond?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 10: Person-Directed Care

**Definition:** Support people to exercise choice in the services and supports they are seeking, and to practise self-determination in all aspects of their unique goal of well-being. Also described as service engagement led by people seeking services. For those who work with people seeking substance use services, this means supporting and empowering them to achieve their well-being goals through collaboration. The service provider acts as a bridge and navigator to supports, knowledge, information and services.

### LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]

**Question:** Tell us about a situation where you asked people with lived and living experience of substance use for knowledge and guidance to improve how you serve them.

- What was the situation?
- What engagement approaches did you use?
- How did you use their guidance or feedback?
- What was the outcome?
- How might you engage in feedback differently as a result of this experience?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 11: Planning and Organizing

**Definition:** Identify and prioritize tasks, develop and implement plans, evaluate outcomes, and adjust activities to achieve objectives.

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**LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time when you supported an individual to create realistic and achievable goals.

- Describe the situation.
- What did you do? Describe the tools, resources and skills you used.
- How did you ensure that the goals were realistic and achievable?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 12: Self-Care

**Definition:** Deliberately and continuously apply professional and personal principles of well-being. Intentionally support others to sustain optimal well-being, while maintaining physical, mental, spiritual and emotional health.

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**LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]**

**Question:** Describe a situation where you developed a support system for positive self-care and well-being.

- What was the situation?
- How did you find the support system?
- Who was involved in the support system?
- How did they support positive self-care and well-being?
- How did you integrate this support system into your daily routine/living to support long-term, positive self care?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 13: Self-Management

**Definition:** Appropriately manage one's emotions and ***strong feelings***; maintain a calm and respectful composure under a broad range of challenging circumstances; and think clearly and stay focused under pressure. Encompasses self-regulation and mindfulness.

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**LEVEL 3 [PROFICIENT]**

**Question:** Tell us about a time when you coached someone who uses substances on how to cope with difficult situations.

- Describe the situation.
- How did you prepare for this conversation?
- What tools, techniques or skills did you use to stay present when supporting someone through a difficult situation?
- What guidance did you provide to the individual going through this experience?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Question 14: Self-Motivation

**Definition:** Remain motivated and focused on goals until the best possible results are achieved, with both passion for making a difference in the substance use field and persistence despite confronting obstacles, resistance and setbacks.

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**LEVEL 1 [FOUNDATIONAL]**

**Question:** Describe a situation where you addressed challenges in providing person-to-person support.

- What motivated you to address the challenges?
- What did you do?
- What was the outcome?

| Notes | | |
|---|---|---|
| Situation | Action | Results |
| | | |

## Evaluating the Interview

All the energy and effort devoted to capturing good job-related information during the selection interview will be lost if this information is not evaluated consistently and appropriately for all candidates. This section provides guidance on how to evaluate information from the candidate gathered through the competency-based interview.

Each behavioural question is designed to elicit information relevant to a specific competency. However, human behaviour can be complex and the following situations can arise:

- A behaviourally based question is asked focusing on one competency area, but a candidate provides an example that relates to another area.
- A candidate provides examples that relate to more than one competency area.
- A candidate provides examples that relate to the required competencies during the introductory phases of the interview or during the close of the interview.

The whole interview should, therefore, be reviewed carefully for evidence of the competencies being assessed. One method for doing this is to circle each behavioural example and, if one demonstrates a competency other than the one intended by the question, note the competency demonstrated alongside the example. Then cross-reference this example in the section of the interview tool devoted to that competency.

Once all relevant information from the interview has been reviewed and correctly classified, the interviewer is in a position to understand and evaluate a candidate's past behaviour for each competency.

The next step is to assign a rating, or score, for each competency, using the rating scale below. The assigned score is based on the candidate's demonstration of the relevant behaviour indicators for the proficiency levels in the competency profile at the beginning of this tool. Refer as necessary to the *Behavioural Competencies for Canada's Substance Use Workforce* for an extended sample of appropriate behaviour indicators for each competency.

Record the score in the scoring grid on the next page. Add any particular comments needed to support the rating.

If there are multiple interviewers, each interviewer completes the scoring grid individually, without consulting the others. Upon completion of all scoring, the interviewers discuss the ratings they assigned and arrive at a consensus score for each competency.

| Interview Rating Scale | |
|---|---|
| 5 | **Well Above Standard** *(significantly exceeds requirements)* <br> Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is exceptional and reflects superior ability to perform; all aspects of the competency are demonstrated to a high degree. |
| 4 | **Above Standard** *(exceeds requirements)* <br> Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is above average and reflects more than an adequate ability to perform; all or most aspects of the competency are demonstrated at an above-average level. |
| 3 | **Meets Standard** *(meets requirement)* <br> Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency meets expectations and reflects an adequate ability to perform; candidate may have demonstrated minor weaknesses in some aspects of the competency, but none of major significance. |
| 2 | **Below Standard** *(falls below requirements)* <br> Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is inadequate in key respects. |
| 1 | **Well Below Standard** *(falls significantly below requirements)* <br> Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is far from adequate in all or most respects. |

## Scoring Grid

| Competency | Interviewer Score | Rationale/Comments | Consensus Score |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Adaptability and Flexibility** | | | |
| **Analytical Thinking and Decision Making** | | | |
| **Collaboration and Network Building** | | | |
| **Continuous Learning** | | | |
| **Creativity and Innovation** | | | |
| **Culturally Safe and Anti-Oppressive Practice** | | | |
| **Effective Communication** | | | |
| **Ethical Conduct and Professionalism** | | | |
| **Interpersonal Rapport** | | | |
| **Person-Directed Care** | | | |
| **Planning and Organizing** | | | |
| **Self-Care** | | | |
| **Self-Management** | | | |
| **Self-Motivation** | | | |