

# VA HR Academy Career Map for HR Specialist Position Classification



U.S. Department of  
Veterans Affairs



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## ***General Information***

This document provides the recommendations within each of the career models for each of the identified HR functions. This includes training, education, and certification recommendations; VA-specific experience recommendations; and other VA-specific recommendations (e.g., manuals, job aids) needed to attain the stated level of proficiency within that function. The core, technical, and strategic competencies associated with each function are also provided in this document. The career model will be used to guide the professional development of VA HR professionals in aligning their skill set with the VA HR competencies.

## ***Function Summary***

Individuals in the Position Classification function work to ensure the accuracy of position descriptions, determine the appropriate title, series, and grade of positions within the VA, and advise management on organization and position management issues to ensure equity.

## ***What is a Competency?***

Competency Models support a streamlined, data-driven approach to professional development, serve as the foundation to all Human Capital practices, and are becoming increasingly important to the Federal Government as a way to show accountability. A competency is a standardized job requirement for an individual to properly perform a specific job or role. It is observable and measurable. Competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), attitudes, and behaviors used to improve performance.

## ***What are the differences between core, strategic and technical competencies?***

The current competency model contains three competency types - Core, Leadership, and Technical. Each competency type denotes a specific competency area and scope. Core and Leadership competencies are standardized throughout the VA, while Technical competencies are unique to jobs.

- **Core:** Foundational competencies that apply to all functions and levels regardless of job specialty.
- **Leadership:** Competencies for those in a leadership role. Not applicable to the Foundational functional level of a career.
- **Technical:** Job specific competencies required to perform tasks or activities.

***Required Competencies (Refer to competencies defined in Appendix)***

Core Competencies	Technical Competencies	Leadership Competencies
Analytical Reasoning*	Employee Benefits*	Accountability
Communications*	Employee Development*	Developing Others*
Conflict Management*	Employee Relations*	Human Capital Management
Customer Service*	Human Resources Info Systems (HRIS)	Leveraging Diversity*
Flexibility*	Labor Relations*	Political Savvy
Information Assurance	Pay Administration*	Technology Management
Integrity/Honesty	Performance Management*	-
Interpersonal Skills*	Position Classification & Management	-
Organizational Awareness	Recruitment & Staffing	-
Problem Solving*	Workforce & Succession Planning*	-
Self-Management*	Work/Life Integration	-
Strategic Thinking*	-	-
Teamwork*	-	-
Veterans Service Motivation	-	-

*\*Note: Indicates competencies represented by courses in the career map.*

## *How to Acquire Competencies*

During an exercise at the September 2010 VA HR Academy Curriculum and Career Mapping workshop, the subject matter experts chose the preferred “acquisition method” that would allow an individual to obtain the desired proficiency standard at each level for every competency. The acquisition method options selected were:

- **Training:** VA or vendor provided courses that have learning objectives (i.e., Time Management Fundamentals).
- **Experience:** Activities the incumbent can engage in to enhance their recommended competencies (i.e., complete a time sensitive assignment with limited notice).
- **Other:** Another method of obtaining the necessary competencies without completing an action with a defined end result (i.e., referencing a job aid or shadowing an experienced professional).

The information contained within the Training, Education, and Certification table lists out the educational information that was identified during the September 2010 VA HR Academy Curriculum and Career Mapping workshop. The “✓” in each table indicates that the training, education, or certification is needed to demonstrate proficiency at the functional level. Additional information on the courses listed in this table can be found on the VA HR Academy website at [www.vahracademy.va.gov](http://www.vahracademy.va.gov). Similarly, a “✓” in the Experience or Other Requirements tables indicates that the element is also needed to demonstrate proficiency at the functional level. All of the information taken together provides the overarching framework of what is needed to demonstrate the desired proficiency level within each function across the identified competencies. Activities in the following sections marked with an asterisk (\*) indicate those which may be effectively delivered or supported through social learning.

## *Function Levels*

Each VA HR function has three levels. Each employee is assigned to the most appropriate level. These levels represent the primary work you do, the level of experience, and the level of supervision.

- **Foundational (F)** - A Human Resources Specialist at the Foundational Practitioner:
  - Typically has 1-2 years of experience
  - In a learning role; requires guidance, supervision, or oversight to perform most activities
  - Can perform basic tasks without guidance
- **Intermediate (I)** - A Human Resources Specialist at the Intermediate Practitioner level is expected to:
  - Typically has 3-4 years of experience
  - Has responsibilities for evolving operational needs
  - Can perform most tasks independently with occasional guidance/oversight
- **Advanced (A)** - A Human Resources Specialist at the Advanced Practitioner level is expected to:
  - Typically has 5+ years of experience
  - Higher level staff with a managerial role
  - Provides guidance to lower level staff
  - Technical experts in the role

## *Recommended Training, Education, and Certifications*

HR Specialist Position Classification Training, Education, and Certifications	Competency	F	I	A
PAID Coding: Processing HR Actions	Pay Administration	✓	✓	✓
PAID Coding: Veterans' Preference	Pay Administration	✓	✓	✓
Enhancing Your Attention to Detail (CDN)	Analytical Reasoning	✓	-	-
Measurement: Assessment and Metrics	Analytical Reasoning	✓	-	-
Effective Listening	Communications	✓	-	-
Presenting with Your Audience in Mind	Communications	✓	-	-
Presenting with Your Audience in Mind (CDN)	Communications	✓	-	-
Customer Service for HR Professionals	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Customer Service in Government	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Customer Service in the Field	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Customer Service over the Phone	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Dealing with Irrational Customers and Escalating Complaints	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Internal Customer Service	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Shaping the Direction of Customer Service in Your Organization	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Support Center Services and Work Environment	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Team and Customer Relationships	Customer Service	✓	-	-
Federal Human Resources Management	Employee Relations	✓	-	-
Fundamentals of Legal Research	Employee Relations	✓	-	-
Integrity in the Workplace	Employee Relations	✓	-	-
Administrative Professionals: Interacting with Others	Interpersonal Skills	✓	-	-
Using Feedback to Improve Team Performance	Interpersonal Skills	✓	-	-
Federal Labor Relations	Labor Relations	✓	-	-
Fundamentals of Legal Research	Labor Relations	✓	-	-
Integrity in the Workplace	Labor Relations	✓	-	-
Promoting a Substance-free Workplace	Labor Relations	✓	-	-

HR Specialist Position Classification Training, Education, and Certifications	Competency	F	I	A
Policy Interpretation Tips and Tricks (CDN)	Organizational Awareness	✓	-	-
Strategic Human Capital Management (CDN/3949109)	Performance Management	✓	-	-
Advanced Position Classification for HR Practitioners	Position Classification & Management	✓	-	-
Position Classification and Position Management	Position Classification & Management	✓	-	-
Position Classification for Practitioners	Position Classification & Management	✓	-	-
Position Management and Position Classification	Position Classification & Management	✓	-	-
Principles of Classification	Position Classification & Management	✓	-	-
Advanced Staffing Module 1: Problem Solving and Decision Making	Problem Solving	✓	-	-
Pragmatic Problem Solving	Problem Solving	✓	-	-
Determining Service Computation Dates	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Employee Benefits	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Employee Benefits for Federal HR Professionals	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Federal Employee Benefits	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
FERS Benefits Applications	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Processing Voluntary Retirement Applications for Civil Service Employees (CSRS)	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Processing Voluntary Retirement Applications for Civil Service Employees (CSRS)	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Processing Voluntary Retirement Applications for Federal Employees (FERS)	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Processing Voluntary Retirement Applications for Federal Employees (FERS)	Employee Benefits	-	✓	✓
Adverse and Performance-Based Actions	Employee Relations	-	✓	✓
Employee Conduct and Performance	Employee Relations	-	✓	✓
FMLA Leave and More: An Overview of Legally Protected Leave	Employee Relations	-	✓	✓

HR Specialist Position Classification Training, Education, and Certifications	Competency	F	I	A
I-9 Compliance: Verifying Employment Eligibility of US and Non-US Citizens	Employee Relations	-	✓	✓
MSPB	Employee Relations	-	✓	✓
HR Smart: Fundamentals for HR Specialists	Human Resources Information Systems	-	✓	✓
HR Smart: Managers Self Service	Human Resources Information Systems	-	✓	✓
HR Smart: Overview	Human Resources Information Systems	-	✓	✓
Alternative Dispute Resolution	Labor Relations	-	✓	✓
Alternative Dispute Resolution (CDN)	Labor Relations	-	✓	✓
EEO in the Federal Sector	Labor Relations	-	✓	✓
I-9 Compliance: Verifying Employment Eligibility of US and Non-US Citizens	Labor Relations	-	✓	✓
Negotiation Skills (CDN)	Labor Relations	-	✓	✓
Rightful Employment Termination	Labor Relations	-	✓	✓
Effective Team Communications	Communications	-	✓	-
Negotiation Skills	Communications	-	✓	-
Presenting Your Case	Communications	-	✓	-
Negotiations and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)	Conflict Management	-	✓	-
First Steps for Turning Around a Performance Problem	Developing Others	-	✓	-
Giving and Receiving Feedback (CDN)	Developing Others	-	✓	-
Developing Your Political Savvy (CDN)	Political Savvy	-	✓	-
Advanced Position Classification	Position Classification & Management	-	✓	-
Federal Position Management	Position Classification & Management	-	✓	-
Position Management (1328705)	Position Classification & Management	-	✓	-
Decision Making: Tools and Techniques	Problem Solving	-	✓	-

HR Specialist Position Classification Training, Education, and Certifications	Competency	F	I	A
Generating Creative and Innovative Ideas: Maximizing Team Creativity	Problem Solving	-	✓	-
Problem Solving: Determining and Building Your Strengths	Problem Solving	-	✓	-
Strategic Human Capital Management (3884547)	Strategic Thinking	-	✓	-
Strategic Human Capital Planning (3852270)	Strategic Thinking	-	✓	-
Leading Teams and Groups	Teamwork	-	✓	-
Leading Teams: Fostering Effective Communication and Collaboration	Teamwork	-	✓	-
Managing Internal Dynamics in a Cross-functional Team	Teamwork	-	✓	-
Assessment Questionnaire	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	✓	-
Hiring and Retention Overview	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	✓	-
HR2U Virtual	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	✓	-
Job Analysis	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	✓	-
Strategic Human Capital Planning (3858380)	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	✓	-
The Supervisor Role in the HR Competency Self Assessment and eIDP Process	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	✓	-
Writing a Business Case	Communications	-	-	✓
Essential Mentoring Techniques: Building and Maintaining Mentoring Relationships	Developing Others	-	-	✓
Essential Mentoring Techniques: Designing and Initiating Mentoring Programs	Developing Others	-	-	✓
Essential Mentoring Techniques: Evaluating and Ending the Mentoring Program	Developing Others	-	-	✓
Essential Mentoring Techniques: Mentoring Fundamentals	Developing Others	-	-	✓
Instructor Training	Employee Development	-	-	✓
Planning Your Professional Development (CDN)	Employee Development	-	-	✓

HR Specialist Position Classification Training, Education, and Certifications	Competency	F	I	A
Developing Your Political Savvy	Interpersonal Skills	-	-	✓
Leveraging Multicultural and Multigenerational Diversity	Leveraging Diversity	-	-	✓
Establishing Team Goals and Responsibilities	Teamwork	-	-	✓
Leading Teams and Groups	Teamwork	-	-	✓
Career Mapping Course	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	-	✓
Federal Workforce Analysis and Planning	Workforce & Succession Planning	-	-	✓

*\*Note: Indicates courses do not map to the competency*

## *Recommended VA-Specific Experience*

HR Specialist Position Classification Experience	F	I	A
Provide a 15 minute presentation on your experience, in a learning event, to managers and peers.	✓	-	-
Participate in discussions with supervisor concerning classification problems.	✓	-	-
Identify, to the manager, the references most frequently used to classify positions.	✓	-	-
Draft a position report for review by the HR manager.	✓	-	-
Review the applicability of appropriate articles in bargaining unit agreements and discuss with the HR manager.	✓	-	-
Prepare questions for desk audit for review from manager.	✓	-	-
Advise an employee on the appeals process by providing established checklists.	✓	-	-
Respond to basic questions from employees about the appeals process.	✓	-	-
Identify inconsistencies in organizational structures and discuss concerns with HR manager.	✓	-	-
Identify changes in new or revised classification standards and provide feedback on the impacts to the HR manager.	✓	-	-
Evaluate a position description and prepare a final position report for review by the HR manager (including completion of the Optional Form 8 (OF-8) (cover page for GS and FWS PDs)).	✓	-	-
Take appropriate action based on outcome of position report as directed by the HR manager.	✓	-	-
Select and apply the appropriate reference(s) for classification, given a position description.	✓	-	-
Recommend appropriate determination on the FLSA and bargaining unit coverage, competitive level code and whether a position is a single or multiple incumbency for review by the HR manager when given a position description.	✓	-	-
Make recommendations for adjustments to special salary rate schedules for review by the HR manager, given the annual increases/COLAs.	✓	-	-
Perform desk audits for a variety of positions independently.	-	✓	-
Prepare written summary of results of a desk audit to an employee and their manager.	-	✓	-

HR Specialist Position Classification Experience	F	I	A
Identify inconsistencies in organizational structures and recommend solutions to service managers.	-	✓	-
Identify changes in new or revised classification standards and provide recommendations to the HR manager and the service manager.	-	✓	-
Classify a position description and take appropriate action.	-	✓	-
Classify a leader or supervisor position and take appropriate action.	-	✓	-
Make appropriate determination, given a position description, on the FLSA and bargaining unit coverage, competitive level code and whether a position is a single or multiple incumbency.	-	✓	-
Analyze salary and staffing data and make recommendations to upper management for adjustments to special salary rate schedules.	-	✓	-
Assist supervisors by writing position descriptions using various formats, e.g. FES, GS narratives, FWS.	-	✓	-
Provide training to staff and new supervisors.	-	✓	-
Review proposed organizational changes and discuss solutions with upper level management.	-	-	✓
Identify changes in new or revised classification standards and provide recommendations to the upper management.	-	-	✓
Advise staff on proper format for evaluating positions.	-	-	✓
Assist staff with determining appropriate standards and levels.	-	-	✓
Provide training to experienced supervisors.	-	-	✓
Present a formal plan for implementation of new classification initiatives.	-	-	✓
Serve as a consultant to other classification specialists across the VA.*	-	-	✓
Participate in a roundtable discussion in an HR field. Debate ideas regarding recent developments and/or emerging trends.*	-	-	✓
Evaluate and comment on proposed classification standards.	-	-	✓

*\*Note: Indicates a social learning activity*

### *Recommended VA-Specific Other*

HR Specialist Position Classification Other	F	I	A
Review standard appeals procedure letter.	✓	-	-
Review Classification Appeal Checklist - both advisory and employee (OHRM website).	✓	-	-
Review OHRM website (compensation & classification)	✓	-	-
Review OPM website (classification).	✓	-	-
Review OPM Guides (Classifiers Handbook).	✓	-	-
Review OPM Guides (Primary Standard).	✓	-	-
Review standard forms for evaluating positions under the Factor Evaluation System and Narrative formats.	✓	-	-
Review VA Handbooks and directives.	✓	-	-
Review 5 CFR.	✓	-	-
Review OHRM website (compensation and classification).	✓	-	-
Review Classification Appeal Checklist - both advisory and employee (OHRM website).	-	✓	-
Conduct formal or informal mentoring relationship - discussions etc.*	-	✓	-
Review OPM Guides (Classifiers Handbook).	-	✓	-
Review OPM Guides (Primary Standard).	-	✓	-
Review standard forms for evaluating positions under the Factor Evaluation System and Narrative formats.	-	✓	-
Review OHRM website (compensation and classification).	-	✓	-
Review OPM website (classification).	-	✓	-
Review 5 CFR.	-	✓	-
Review VA Handbooks and directives.	-	✓	-
Read prior classification appeals decisions.	-	-	✓
Read prior consistency reviews.	-	-	✓

HR Specialist Position Classification Other	F	I	A
Review OHRM website (compensation & classification)	-	-	✓
Review OPM website (classification).	-	-	✓
Review 5 CFR.	-	-	✓
Review Classification Appeal Checklist - both advisory and employee (OHRM website).	-	-	✓
Review OPM Guides (Classifiers Handbook).	-	-	✓
Review OPM Guides (Primary Standard).	-	-	✓
Review VA Handbooks and directives.	-	-	✓

*\*Note: Indicates a social learning activity*

## APPENDIX

### CORE Competencies Defined:

- Analytical Reasoning: Identifies issues and analyzes information to draw accurate conclusions, ensuring careful attention to detail. Dissects problems and information into their meaningful parts, and uses logic and judgment to evaluate alternatives and develop solutions.
- Communications: Effectively expresses information to multiple audiences through clear, convincing oral and written communications; demonstrates logical thinking when describing facts and concepts, and shapes communications to meet the needs of a specific audience; actively listens to others and demonstrates understanding of their comments and/or questions.
- Conflict Management: Helps to manage and resolve conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements in a constructive manner to minimize negative personal impact; collaborates with others to encourage cooperation and teaming.
- Customer Service: Anticipates, identifies, and manages the needs and expectations of internal and external customers; makes the effort to understand customer issues and priorities to deliver quality services and support; solicits regular formal and informal feedback and takes action to drive high levels of customer satisfaction.
- Flexibility: Is open to change and new ways of approaching working and solving problems; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; deals effectively with ambiguity.
- Customer Service: Working with clients and customers to assess their needs, provide information or assistance, resolve their problems, or satisfy their expectations.
- Flexibility: Adapting behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Open to change and new information.
- Information Assurance: Applies knowledge of methods and procedures to protect information systems and data by ensuring their availability, authentication, confidentiality, and integrity.
- Integrity/Honesty: Contributes to maintaining the integrity of the Department of Veterans Affairs; displays high standards of ethical conduct at all times and understands the impact of violating these standards on the organization, self, and others; is trustworthy.
- Interpersonal Skills: Develops and maintains effective relationships with others; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of subordinates, peers, and seniors. Gains cooperation to obtain information and accomplish goals, including managing disagreements in a constructive manner to minimize negative personal impact.
- Organizational Awareness: Knows the organization's (e.g., VA, domain, work unit) mission and functions. Knows how its social, political, and technological systems work and operates effectively within them. Understands how programs, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations drive and impact the work and objectives of the organization
- Problem Solving: Identifies problems, determines accuracy and relevance of information, and uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives; makes well-informed, objective decisions that take into account facts, goals, constraints, and risks while perceiving the impact and implications of decisions.

- **Self-Management:** Sets well-defined and realistic individual goals; displays a high level of initiative, effort, and commitment toward completing assignments in a timely manner; accepts feedback and works with minimal supervision; is motivated to achieve even under stressful conditions; demonstrates responsible behavior.
- **Strategic Thinking:** Formulates effective strategies consistent with the objective, vision, and competitive strategy of the organization (e.g., VA, domain, work unit). Applies knowledge of planning, coordination, and execution of HR services, business functions, and resource allocation when examining issues and determining priorities. Takes a long-term view to recognize opportunities. Determines objectives and sets priorities. Anticipates potential threats or opportunities.
- **Teamwork:** Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity; fosters commitment and team spirit; works with others to achieve goals.
- **Veterans Service Motivation:** Shows a commitment to serve Veterans, and works to ensure all actions are focused on meeting and supporting Veterans' needs; aligns organizational objectives, processes, and practices with Veterans' and the public's interests.

### **TECHNICAL Competencies Defined:**

- **Employee Benefits:** Applying HR concepts, principles, and practices relating to retirements, insurances and other employee benefit programs.
- **Employee Development:** Applying employee development concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, evaluating, and administering training, organizational development, and career development initiatives.
- **Employee Relations:** Applying laws, rules, regulations, case law, principles, and practices related to employee conduct, performance, and dispute resolution.
- **Human Resources Information Systems:** Knowledge of HR management concepts, principles, and practices related to identifying and analyzing HR processes, translating functional requirements into technical requirements, and delivering and maintaining HR information systems.
- **Labor Relations:** Applying laws, rules, regulations, case law, principles, and practices related to negotiating and administering labor agreements.
- **Pay Administration:** Applying pay administration concepts, principles, and practices relating to pay setting, pay schedules, pay determinations, and other pay administration regulations.
- **Performance Management:** Applying performance management concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, monitoring, rating, and rewarding employee performance.
- **Position Classification & Management:** Determining the correct title, series, and grade of a position. Ensuring the accuracy of a position description, and advising management on organization and position management issues.
- **Recruitment & Staffing:** Applying HR concepts, principles, and practices related to identifying, altering, and selecting individuals and placing them into positions to address changing organizational needs.
- **Work/Life Integration:** Helping others meet the needs of their lives in a way that helps them be most productive, effective, and healthy, both at work and outside of work.
- **Workforce & Succession Planning:** Applying HR concepts, principles, and practices in order to determine the composition of the workforce, projecting the composition of the future workforce, and identifying current and future competency gaps to align human capital with organization goals. Consulting with organizations to produce action

plans to bridge both workforce and competency gaps and ensuring an adequate and well qualified workforce to fulfill the mission.

**LEADERSHIP Competencies Defined:**

- **Accountability:** Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with guidelines and rules.
- **Developing Others:** Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.
- **Human Capital Management:** Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.  
**Leveraging Diversity:** Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization
- **Leveraging Diversity:** Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.
- **Political Savvy:** Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.