



Overview of HR Competency Models

Participant Guide



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

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Introduction

This guide accompanies the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Human Resources Academy (HRA) Overview of Human Resources (HR) Competency Models Training, provided by IT Workforce Development (ITWD). It outlines the HRA's competency models for HR Specialists and how these models serve to support professional development. This guide also provides links to important resources, which include detailed instructions for using the VA Talent Management System (TMS) to support these competency models by tracking professional development and aligning appropriate learning activities to individual training needs.

The purpose of the competency models is to identify a common set of focus areas in the development of role-specific skills and abilities across all HR roles. Models were customized and validated for each role by VA HR subject matter experts and will help to guide training and professional development across the HR workforce.

The VA Competency Model Approach



Competency models support a streamlined, data-driven approach to professional development. Above is a graphical representation of the competency model approach, which shows how the elements work together.

The bottom of the graphic depicts employee roles and position descriptions that outline what employees do in their day-to-day job functions that determine which competencies are required for the positions at varying levels of expertise.

- Required proficiency levels for each competency will vary by profile level depending on the level of expertise required to perform in a particular job role. Proficiency levels range from 1 to 5.
- Individuals may advance in a competency proficiency level through learning events, such as training courses (in all modalities, such as instructor-led training [ILT], web-based training [WBT], or videos), certifications, conferences, workshops, etc.
- To track and manage each employee's required competencies, proficiency levels, training, and professional development activities, we use the TMS.

Competency Model Terminology

Term	Definition
Competency	An observable, measurable set of skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics an individual needs to successfully perform work roles or occupational functions
Proficiency Level	Levels of skill and expertise associated with the competencies
Example Behaviors	Examples of actions or activities that correspond to the proficiency levels for that competency
Competency Profile	A collection of competencies related to a performance level or job function for a parenthetical
Competency Model	The competency dictionary (names/definitions/example behaviors) and the proficiency expectations for all of the profiles

The terms listed above are essential to fully understanding the competency model.

- **Competency:** An observable, measurable set of skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics an individual needs to successfully perform work roles or occupational functions.
- **Proficiency Levels:** Level of skill and expertise associated with a competency. Example behaviors are attached to each competency to provide examples of behaviors so individuals can use these as a guide for performing self assessments. It is important to note here that when we speak of “levels,” we are not referring to better or worse ratings, but rather proficiency levels, which are used to signify different types of actions and responsibilities.
- **Example Behaviors (Also referred to as Behavioral Indicators or BIs):** Examples of actions associated with a proficiency level. BIs are attached to each competency to help provide examples of behaviors attached to varying levels of proficiency for the competency.
- **Competency Profile:** A collection of competencies, with target proficiency levels, related to a job role.
- **Competency Model:** The competency dictionary (names/definitions/example behaviors) and the proficiency expectations for all profiles.

Proficiency Levels

Proficiency Level	Description
1 Novice	Knowledge of Subject Matter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual knows the terminology associated with this competency and is capable of performing tasks applying this competency with guidance and supervision.
2 Foundational	Understanding of Subject Matter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual can perform basic or developmental level work in activities requiring this competency. Individual is capable of demonstrating this competency after being given specific instructions and guidance. Individual can engage in general conversation about this competency.
3 Intermediate	Independent Application of Subject Matter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual has the capability to fully perform work that requires application of this competency. Individual is capable of demonstrating this competency in increasingly complex situations and can contribute knowledge or new ideas in applying this competency.
4 Advanced	Analysis of Subject Matter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual can immediately contribute to the success of work requiring this competency. Individual is confident in serving as an advisor and is sought out to provide insight in the application of this competency.
5 Expert	Synthesis and Evaluation of Subject Matter: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual is looked to as an expert in this competency. Others view this individual as a role model who is capable of leading or teaching others in this area; they consult with him or her for assistance or guidance with work requiring this competency.

Proficiency levels are the levels of skill and expertise associated with a particular competency.

- Proficiency levels range from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest level and 5 being the highest level.
- In the TMS, BIs similar to the table above are provided upon hovering over each competency, as a guide for completing self assessments.
- In addition, in the *HR Competency Model Reference Guide*, multiple BIs are provided for each proficiency level to highlight a variety of example behaviors one might demonstrate at that proficiency level. Individuals do not need to fulfill each BI but should consider these examples when completing their self assessments.
- This table can be referenced while completing your self assessment for a better understanding of which proficiency level you fall in for each competency. You can also refer to the *HR Competency Model Reference Guide* to see more customized BIs.

Note: While competencies are often similar across competency profiles, the proficiency level expectations (1–5) for competencies will vary across profiles.

HR Specialist Competency Models

Role	Competency Profile
Employee Benefits	Foundational Intermediate Advanced
Employee Development	Foundational Intermediate Advanced
Employee Relations	
HR Generalists	
HRIS	
Labor Relations	
Position Classification	
Recruitment/Placement	

Role	Competency Profile
Employee Benefits: Assists employees with benefits, maintain employee data base, supplement payroll, manage all insurance billings, and maintain employee files. Employee Benefits staff work closely with employees and HR Generalists	Foundational: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically has 3–4 years of experience Has responsibilities for evolving operational needs Can perform most tasks independently with occasional guidance/oversight Advanced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically has 5+ years of experience Higher level staff with a managerial role Provides guidance to lower level staff Technical experts in the role

HRA has developed competency models for nine types of HR Specialists.

Within each HR Competency Model, there are three profiles: Foundational, Intermediate, and Advanced. A profile is a subset of a competency model, and it reflects specific roles and levels of experience. The Workforce Planning specialty model is unique in that it includes six profiles; profile alignment depends on both years of experience and percentage of time spent performing workforce planning activities.

Each employee is assigned to the most appropriate competency profile for his or her role in the TMS. Your competency profile alignment represents the primary work you do and the level of experience you have.

Alignment to the correct profile ensures that employees are assigned appropriate competencies and proficiency targets necessary to their job.

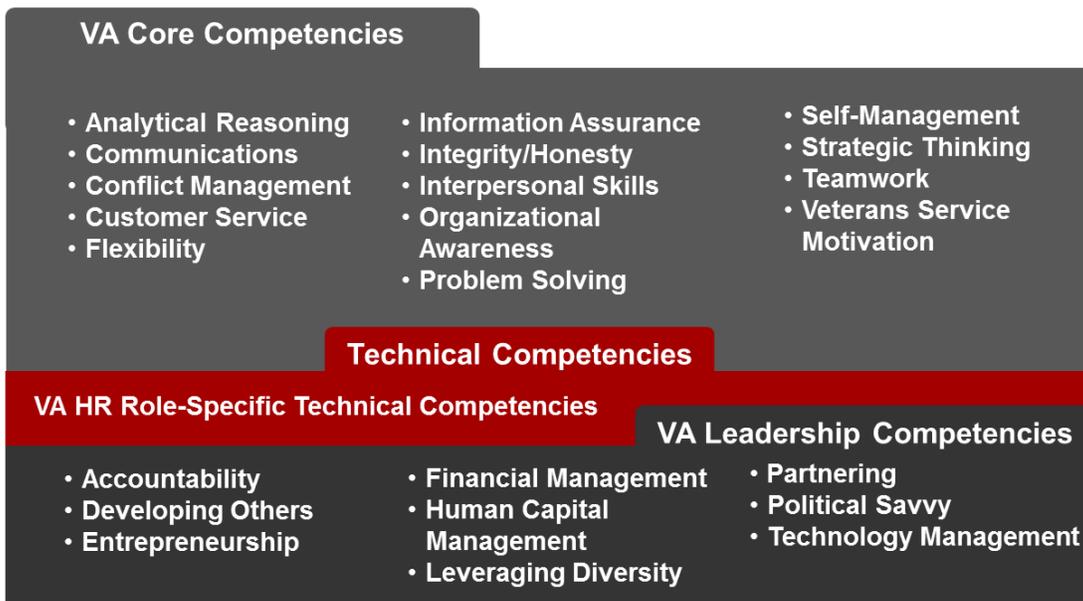
To ensure your profile alignment is correct, refer to the *How to Verify Your Competency Profile* guide on www.vahracademy.va.gov.

Competency Framework

There are three distinct layers of competencies.

- **VA Core competencies** are applicable to all HR Competency Models.
- **Technical competencies** are knowledge, skills, or abilities that are required for specific roles, such as Employee Benefits, Employee Relations, and HRIS, but are cross-cutting for all employees across all HR Competency Models.
- **VA Leadership competencies** are applicable to all HR supervisors.

VA Core and Leadership Competencies

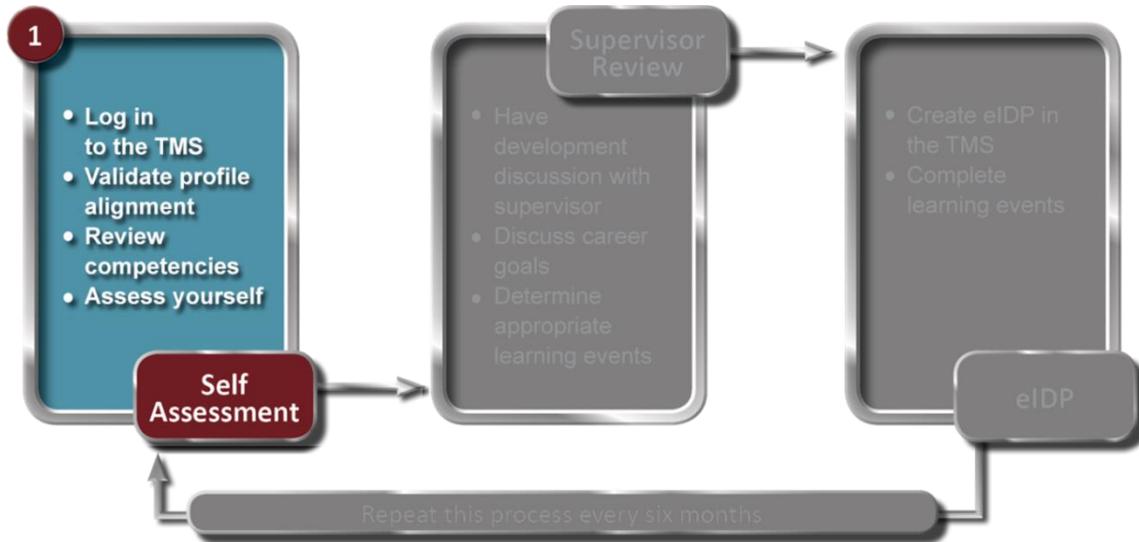


- There are 14 VA Core competencies that are applicable to all HR employees.
- There are nine VA Leadership competencies that are assigned to anyone with responsibility for managing others.

Technical Competencies

- Technical competencies are included in each model and proficiency levels vary based on the competency profile for a specific role.
- Competency models for all HR Specialists include 11 Technical competencies:
 - Employee Benefits
 - Employee Development
 - Employee Relations
 - Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS)
 - Labor Relations
 - Pay Administration
 - Performance Management
 - Position Classification and Management
 - Recruitment and Staffing
 - Workforce Planning and Succession Management
 - Work/Life Integration
- The Workforce Planning (WFP) competency profiles include 11 Technical competencies:
 - Budget Planning
 - Change Management
 - Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS)
 - Position Classification and Management
 - Process Design and Implementation
 - Project Management
 - Recruitment and Staffing
 - Strategic Planning
 - Workforce Data Analysis
 - Workforce Technology/Tools
 - Workforce Risk Assessment

Completing a Competency Assessment

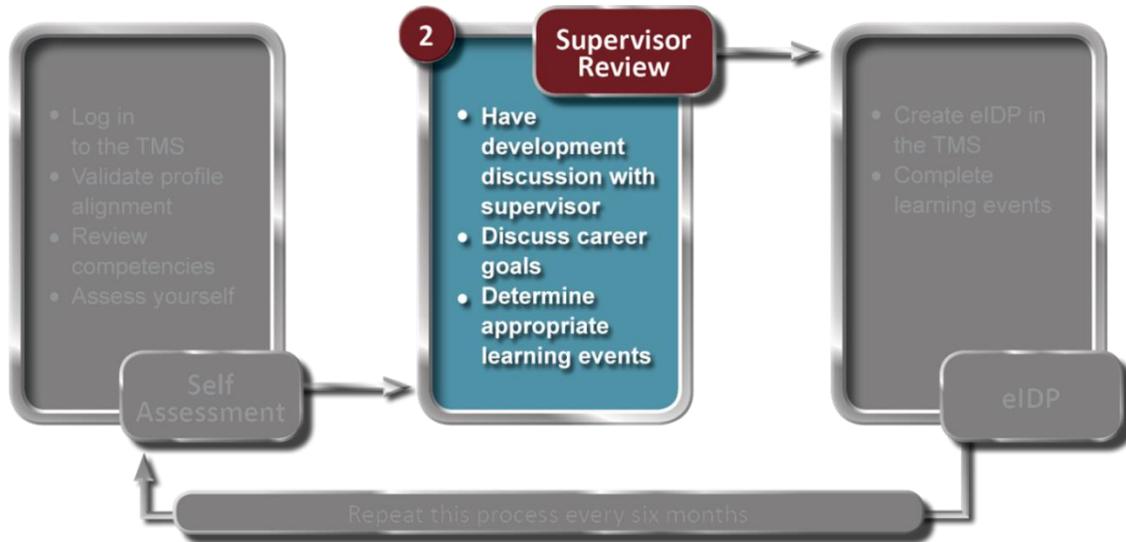


There are three steps associated with the professional development process. First, employees complete a competency self assessment by doing the following:

- Log in to the [TMS](#) and select the Start a Self Assessment link.
- Review each competency and select the proficiency level (1–5) that describes your current abilities.
- Submit the assessment for supervisor review.

Important: The competency self assessment is *not* a performance assessment. It is a professional development tool to help employees and their supervisors identify learning opportunities.

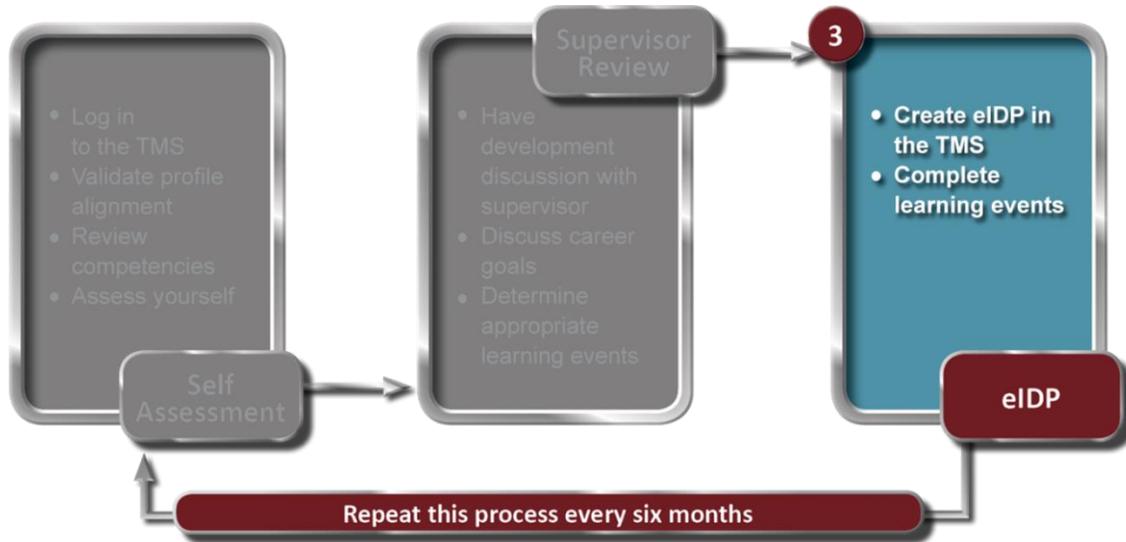
Supervisor Review of the Assessment



In the second step:

- Supervisors review the employee's competency self assessment and validate it by submitting a Supervisor Assessment.
- Supervisors and employees discuss the employee's current abilities as compared to the target proficiency levels. Employees work with their supervisors to:
 - Discuss preferred career path and prioritize competency gaps
 - Identify areas to improve on in the immediate future
 - Identify areas to focus on long term
 - Discuss learning events that can address development areas.

Creating the eIDP



Finally, employees create an electronic Individual Development Plan (eIDP) by assigning agreed-upon training to their plan in the TMS. Employees can continue to identify relevant training and build upon their eIDP throughout the year. At this step, employees will begin to complete assigned learning activities to help close competency gaps.

Refer to www.vahracademy.va.gov for links to important resources and step-by-step TMS instructions to help complete a self assessment and develop an eIDP.

HRA recommends repeating this process every six months to ensure that competency assessments and the eIDP are updated. Training completed by the employee and changes in career goals or organizational priorities may impact the self assessment and/or eIDP. A new competency assessment must be completed and the eIDP must be updated annually.

HR Competency Model Resources

If you have competency model or TMS-related questions, please contact VA HRA at VAHRACompetencyModel@va.gov.

Additional competency model resources are available at www.vahracademy.va.gov, including:

- A dictionary of competencies and example behaviors for the HR models (*HR Competency Model Reference Guide*)
- TMS assessment and eIDP development guides for users and supervisors
- Guidance for validating your competency profile alignment
- Information on upcoming HR training events, including course catalog, career maps, and training links.