Making the Difference:
Cambridge City Council Competency Frameworks

CAMBRIDGE
CITY COUNCIL

Introduction to competency frameworks

WHAT ARE COMPETENCIES?

Competencies provide us with a common language for describing how people perform in situations. Competencies usually summarise behaviour. Behaviour is what we can see when personal characteristics combine with work characteristics.
This is illustrated below:

What are competencies?

PERSONAL
CHARACTERISTICS

Skills
Knowledge
Attitudes
Values

COMPETENCIES
ARE ABOUT WHAT
WE CAN SEE

Behaviours

WORK
CHARACTERISTICS

Job Tasks
Work environment
Relationships
Resources

An ability based on behaviour is usually referred to as a competency (plural: competencies). Competencies are used to describe characteristics that influence a person's performance in a job, role or task.

WHAT ARE BEHAVIOURS?

Competencies or behaviours can be thought of as:

"Those abilities and characteristics that mean an individual can perform a job consistently more successfully in more situations and more often. The focus on HOW an individual does things – their attitudes and behaviours – rather than WHAT they do. They are those factors which distinguish the best from the rest, those things that really make a difference."

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Introduction to competency frameworks

WHAT IS A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK?

Competencies need to be presented in a usable way – this is called a framework. Frameworks cover a wide range of jobs with different demands. The framework enables employees to be clear about what is expected of them in terms of their behaviour in their job role.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK?

A common set of competencies benefits both the organisation and its staff:

- Having a clear definition of the behaviours the organisation expects from its staff helps us all recognise that it's not only what we do in their job but also how we do it that's important.
- The values of the organisation underpin the competency framework and the behaviours indicate the culture that the organisation values and wants to embed.
- When assessing performance a greater degree of consistency is ensured as all staff are being assessed against the same set of competencies. It provides a fair and transparent system of assessment.
- Having a common understanding about what effective performance is contributes to a more focussed organisational management.
- The competencies help to identify individual strengths, potential for progression and role models of excellent performance.
- The competencies help to identify learning and development needs, making it easier to give constructive feedback and enabling training to be targeted where it will be most effective.

Introduction to competency frameworks

Cambridge City Council has the following frameworks:

CORE COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK	For all staff who are not senior managers.
COMPETENICES FOR FIRST LINE MANAGERS	These are to be used **together with** the Core Competency framework, for staff who have supervisory or line management responsibilities – but are not senior managers.
CITY LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	For the Corporate Management Team, Head of Services and other senior managers.

For more detailed guidance on applying the frameworks, see **'Guidance on Application of Competency Frameworks' on the HR website.**

HOW THE FRAMEWORKS ARE STRUCTURED

Within these frameworks, each competency has:

- The competency **Title**
- The competency **Definition**
- The **Skills and Attributes** associated with the competency
- Examples of **Effective Behaviours** (positive behavioural indicators) describing excellent ways of working
- Examples of **Ineffective Behaviours** (red flag behaviours or negative behavioural indicators) describing unacceptable ways of working

Introduction to competency frameworks

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING PERFORMANCE REVIEW	The competencies can be used to aid performance management by helping to set out what the expected standards of behaviour are. As part of the performance review process managers and employees will look together at the extent to which the employee has displayed the appropriate behaviour in the course of the preceding year. In addition to assessing competencies, performance review can be used to set targets and action plans for improving competencies.
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT	All staff will find they are better at displaying some competencies than others. The process of identifying an employee's strengths and weaknesses, either within the Performance Review or at other times, can become the basis for identifying and prioritising learning and development. Where staff seek to progress within the organisation, e.g. into management, or from management to senior management, the competencies can be used to help employees understand what is expected at the more senior role and plan their development.
RECRUITMENT	Competencies can be used to communicate the expected standards to those applying for jobs. In interview, candidates can be tested against the competencies, to assess how well suited they are to a given role and help ensure the right person is appointed.

Core competency framework

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
CUSTOMER SERVICE & SUPPORT Takes personal responsibility for delivering an excellent service to meet internal and external customer needs.	Responsive Empathic Approachable Assertive	• Is interested in customers and attentive to their needs • Treats customers politely and respectfully • Strives to build quality relationships with customers • Considers the impact of own behaviour and actions from a customer perspective • Makes it easy for customers to access the service • Encourages and uses customer feedback to improve the service • Acts assertively. Is open and realistic about what can be achieved • Sees things through and does what they say they will	• Sees customers as interruptions to 'the day job' • Is abrupt, dismissive or patronising • Blames other people or other departments for mistakes • Avoids dealing with difficult customers • Gives poor service to customers seen as demanding • Allows the customer to suffer because of personal or internal issues
TEAM & PARTNERSHIP WORKING Committed to working with team, partners and the wider community to achieve common goals and ensure performance at the highest level.	Co-operative Reliable Participative Trustworthy	• Is a team player and makes the effort to participate fully in the team • Has a positive view of collaborative working • Shares appropriate information and knowledge willingly with others • Is reliable and approachable • Supports colleagues to achieve goals • Balances a focus on task with attention to relationships • Helps the team to try different ways of thinking and working • Understands the wider operating context and the impact of own role	• Takes the credit for others' work • Constantly distracts or disrupts the team • Cherry picks the best/most interesting tasks • Works in isolation or only with immediate colleagues • Repeatedly finds fault with other people's ideas and/or actions

Core competency framework

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
RESPECTING DIVERSITY & EQUALITY Encourages and values the contribution of all people; recognises the benefits of difference.	Respectful Tolerant Open minded Challenging	• Respects people from varied backgrounds • Is open to diverse views and sensitive to group differences • Sees diversity as opportunity and strength • Challenges bias and intolerance • Is aware of how own culture, beliefs and attitudes affect their behaviour.	• Tries to impose personal views and work methods • Ridicules others and dismisses their views • Assumes all people are the same • Ignores discrimination
COMMITMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY Committed to working with partners and the wider community to achieve common goals and ensure performance at the highest level.	Co-operative Reliable Participative Trustworthy	• Takes pride in working for the City Council • Does the job to the best of their ability • Is loyal to the values of the organisation, especially when communicating with others • Meets commitments and keeps promises • Works consistently to promote a positive working environment • Is aware of the impact of individual actions and behaviours on the reputation of the organisation • Is prepared to admit mistakes	• Puts self interest first and has an "I'm alright Jack" attitude • Maliciously or carelessly damages the reputation of the City Council • Coasts – only does enough to get by • Blames the system or others for own poor performance

Core competency framework

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS Is aware of own impact on others; works to develop own strengths and capabilities.	Self awareness Self confidence Self-composure	• Realises that own feelings affect performance • Is confident in own ability to work with others • Choose to control own behaviour and responses; • Remains calm and level-headed under pressure • Is keen to develop own abilities and strengths • Organises time effectively, plans ahead and deals with issues as they arise • Learns from experience, is open to feedback and able to ask for support when necessary	• Is indifferent to how they come across to others • Deliberately indulges in volatile or emotionally unpredictable behaviour • Takes personal problems out on others • Uses status or experience to undermine others • Intimidates or upsets others through destructive feedback • Uses non-verbal behaviour to express negative feelings
MOTIVATION & DRIVE Sets high standards for personal performance and shows determination to meet goals. Focuses on achieving positive outcomes.	Persistence Energy Optimism Enthusiasm Attention to detail	• Focuses on the end result and takes deadlines seriously • Is determined to do a good job • Understands own motivation and enthuses others • Takes personal responsibility for making things happen • Pro-actively looks for better ways of working and delivering the service • Remains positive and puts difficulties into perspective • Strives to get things right first time, every time	• Moans and demoralises others • Is content to deliver what is adequate • Gives up easily

Core competency framework

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
ADAPTABILITY & FORWARD THINKING Looks to the future, understanding and adapting to the need for change.	Flexibility Resilience Creativity Pro-active Initiative	• Takes the initiative to look for solutions rather than identifying problems • Is willing to try out new ideas and ways of working • Is receptive to change, reacts quickly and implements it positively • Adjusts well to shifting priorities and is confident in own skills and abilities • Adapts own behaviour in response to unexpected obstacles or challenges • Sees change as opportunity and makes the best of new situations	• Takes things personally **all** the time • Is inflexible; and sticks to the same course of action • Is cynical and negative about change • Always takes a narrow view of own role
COMMUNICATION Communicates effectively in a clear, concise and open manner.	Clarity Sensitivity Courtesy Listening	• Uses plain language to communicate clearly at all levels • Uses the simplest and most appropriate means of communication for the situation • Ensures understanding by listening carefully • Speaks as they would like to be spoken to themselves • Uses appropriate/effective body language and tone to improve communication • Adopts a consistently friendly and approachable manner • Shows sensitivity to others needs and feelings when communicating	• Gives contradictory or conflicting messages • Is aggressive, sarcastic or patronising to others • Uses email to avoid difficult conversations • Hides behind jargon • Dominates conversations • Interrupts when others are speaking

Competencies for first line managers

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
DEVELOPING PEOPLE & TEAMS Creates opportunities to maximise the potential of people and teams.	Supportive Empowering Innovative Coaching	• Encourages people to work together as a team • Builds team identity and commitment • Develops staff through coaching & mentoring • Makes time available to support individuals • Encourages staff to make best use of their abilities • Gives praise where it is due • Successfully develops staff for future roles in the organisation	• Puts self-interest before staff interest • Is impatient with others when they ask for help • Doesn't see any benefit in 'team building' • Blocks development opportunities
INFLUENCING & NEGOTIATING Builds effective relationships. Influences others to gain support for ideas and commitment for particular courses of action.	Credible Diplomatic Persuasive Adaptable	• Promotes a friendly and co-operative climate • Handles difficult situations with tact and diplomacy • Uses a variety of means for influencing others • Quickly establishes positive communication • Works to build consensus and looks for win-win solutions • Is aware of the impact of own actions and words • Is assertive without being insensitive • Adapts own style to impact positively on others	• Moans and demoralises others • Is content to deliver what is adequate • Gives up easily

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Competencies for first line managers

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
MANAGING PEOPLE Committed to managing and motivating a high performing team.	Consistency Assertiveness Listening Feedback	• Clearly identifies and communicates what is expected of staff • Delegates effectively and knows when to step in and when not • Deals effectively and openly with difficult issues • Builds and maintains team motivation • Makes best use of team expertise to improve team performance • Provides regular feedback to manage, review and improve future performance • Is visible and approachable to staff	• Is reluctant to deal with poor performance • Is inconsistent in approach to managing performance • Is only interested in the task and not the people • Shows favouritism by allocating tasks unfairly
DELIVERING RESULTS Achieves measurable results and continuous improvement.	Timeliness Quality focus Planning/ organising Decisiveness	• Takes responsibility for ensuring plans are delivered on time and outcomes are monitored • Thinks ahead to spot problems or opportunities • Sets and meets challenging goals • Prioritises, prepares in advance and sets realistic timescales • Shows a creative and constructive approach to problem solving • Constantly seeks to improve the way things are done	• Finds it difficult to say 'No' to unreasonable requests • Cannot see 'the wood for the trees' • Puts off making decisions • Is disorganised and works in chaos

City leadership & management framework – Personal effectiveness

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
PERSONAL IMPACT Operating effectively at individual, group and organisational levels with the wider community.	Self development Self confidence Self awareness Professionalism Respect for others	• Consistently sets a high standard of personal honesty, integrity and fairness • Actively seeks feedback and opportunities for personal development • Understands own strengths and weaknesses • Is aware of personal impact on others • Make explicit what they stand for in terms of their ethics, values and standards of behaviour • Learns from mistakes or resistance and moves on to achieve important objectives in other ways • Demonstrates a "can do" attitude	• Takes the credit for others' achievements/work • Has blind spots about own abilities and does not see the need for development • Is indiscreet • Displays professional arrogance • Is unapproachable
CONTRIBUTION Adds value to the organisation.	Influence Enthusiasm Responsibility/ accountability	• Inspires and generates a positive supportive response from staff, managers and colleagues • Provides a positive role model • Sees and seizes opportunities to make things happen or do things which make a positive difference	• Low contributor to groups • Ignores the concerns/opinions of others • Doesn't accept responsibility for own actions and behaviour
RESILIENCE The ability to keep going in difficult and challenging circumstances.	Tenacity Perseverance Self motivation Composure	• When resistance encountered, looks for alternative ways to achieve the end goals • Pursues important objectives despite setbacks and deals effectively with any conflicting interests • Learns from mistakes and moves on • Willing to be patient in the achievement of long-term goals, overcoming obstacles on the way • Controls own pressure even in very difficult situations, without unduly impacting on others • Maintains a positive outlook and avoids unproductive confrontation	• Gives up at first sign of resistance • Changes professional advice in response to pressure • Takes failure personally • Doesn't know when to give up, to the detriment of the team
COMMUNICATION The ability to communicate in effective and compelling manner.	Persuasive Sensitivity Open minded	• Communicates complex ideas in a way that can be easily understood • Recognises their own preferred communication style, how it is received by others and if necessary be prepared to adapt or change • Ability to communicate clearly and persuasively in order to get commitment from others • Checks for shared understanding	• Uses communication methods that excludes others e.g jargon • Gives conflicting or contradictory messages • Uses "one way" communication • Fails to deliver difficult messages honestly and openly

City leadership & management framework – Leadership

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
STRATEGIC FOCUS Having an outward looking, long-term approach to develop and deliver the vision for the Council.	Creativity Long-term planning (conceptual and analytical) Organisation awareness Direction setting	• Contributes effectively to strategic thinking • Gets commitment to the vision from Members and key stakeholders • Forecasts future scenarios and feeds these into planning processes • Keeps up to date with and responds to Local Government challenges/agenda • Evaluates options before making a choice • Ensures strategy incorporates stakeholder needs • Actively takes on a community leadership role	• Accepts existing assumptions and the prevailing culture • Does not take account of the diverse needs of the community • Is concerned with short term issues and detail
CORPORATE FOCUS Taking responsibility for the direction and performance of the organisation as a whole.	Collaboration Initiative	• Uses the vision to develop goals for organisational change and improvement • Focuses on service delivery in the context of corporate priorities • Maximizes the potential for diversity within the organisation for managing people • Promotes a learning organisation • Evaluates performance against vision and strategy • Challenges accepted practices	• Gets immersed in detail • Fails to translate the vision into own service planning • Has insular approach to job • Blocks ideas and discussion
MANAGING CHANGE Understands and applies sound principles for the management of change.	Adaptability Critical thinking Credibility Influence	• Analyses the external and internal environment and understands the need to change • Defines the change and assigns resources to its implementation • Champions the agreed change and gains support from all stakeholders • Manages feelings of insecurity and resistance to change • Promotes efficient and effective communication practices • Delivers on promises • Continually reviews, refines and learns from the results of the change programme • Communicates the vision effectively and continually	• Fails to understand reasons for resistance to change • Sees change as upheaval rather than growth • Creates a culture of distrust by sending mixed messages • Does not involve and enthuse staff in the change process • Fails to support staff through the change
MANAGING FOR RESULTS Working consistently to set and achieve objectives by establishing a culture of outcome-focussed working.	Decisiveness Problem analysis Evaluation Assertiveness	• Turns strategic goals into specific objectives and tasks that include equality and diversity targets • Sets and agrees objectives which are realistic, achievable and cost effective taking into account available resources • Ensures action plans are produced with clearly identifiable "milestones" of progress and achievement which are regularly reviewed • Evaluates results and shares the learning with others • Presents the arguments clearly, succinctly and assertively for a particular course of action • Makes decisions on time	• Fails to identify the cause of problems • Allows identified problems to drift and hopes for the best • Refers difficult issues/problems to someone else • Continues to follow a course of action when it is already proving unworkable

City leadership & management framework – Partnership & community

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
PARTNERSHIP WORKING Developing partnerships to support shared objectives and achieve collaborative working.	Influence Networking Empathy Advocacy Diplomacy	• Looks for opportunities to maximise resources/creative use of resources • Strives to create the conditions for successful partnership working • Recognises the role the Council plays in facilitating partnership working • Acts as an ambassador for the City Council in any context (adding value) • Mediates between conflicting interests to seek solutions • Networks with other Councils and partner agencies to co-ordinate activities and share learning	• Thinks the Council has the right to decide • Uses professional status as a block to partnership working • Works only within own silo/Council • Stays in the office!
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Committed to engaging with stakeholders to continuously review and improve services.	Influence Networking Empathy Advocacy Diplomacy	• Seeks involvement from hard to reach and excluded groups • Sets clear parameters to avoid unrealistic expectations • Carries out consultation in a planned and measurable way • Communicates appropriately using a range of techniques • Changes the way things are done in response to what users have to say • Feeds back to show people how their contributions affect decision-making	• Arrogant and/or patronising attitude • Favours one or more groups to the exclusion of others • Conducts consultation in isolation from the rest of the Council • Consults only to "tick the box" • Consults with everybody in sight!
POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE & SENSITIVITY Working with and supporting members to understand the impact on the organisation of political interests and the wider agenda.	Influence Networking Empathy Advocacy Diplomacy	• Pro-actively works to develop and maintain open working relationships with councillors • Understands what Councillors want to achieve and supports them to find appropriate solutions • Manages Councillors' expectations • Is aware of potential political reactions and takes appropriate steps to minimise resistance • Recognises the community leadership role of councillors • Briefs councillors impartially, openly and flexibly • Supports and encourages councillors to develop themselves within their wider political role • Values the experience and perspectives contributed by Councillors	• Doesn't know or care who the key councillor contacts are for their own service area • Fails to keep informed of relevant political issues • Blames councillors • Avoids contact with councillors whenever possible

City leadership & management framework – Performance management

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
MANAGING PEOPLE PERFORMANCE Committed to developing and maintaining a high performing workforce.	Sets standards Delegation Teambuilding People development/ succession planning Promotes equality and diversity Coaching and mentoring	● Involves all staff by encouraging ideas and discussion ● Builds a sense of being valued and being part of something which is exciting and worthwhile e.g. regularly uses praise in a genuine and sincere way ● Builds teams with the appropriate skills mix to achieve objectives ● Allocates roles and responsibilities clearly and fairly ● Openly tackles conflicts/tensions and disputes ● Regularly reviews performance and encourages staff to take responsibility for their own development ● Provides timely, constructive and regular feedback and encourages staff to reciprocate ● Ensures that staff development implications are identified as a key element of any service development plan ● Develops individuals and builds on their strengths to meet the needs of the organisation in the future ● Promotes openness and trust ● Challenges discriminatory behaviours	● Is inconsistent when dealing with people performance ● Holds on to tasks they like to do ● Doesn't believe in "team-building" ● Criticises performance without providing examples or support ● Provides vague objectives and is unclear about outcomes required ● Ignores poor performance and difficult issues ● Blocks development opportunities ● Interested only in the task and not the people ● Appoints/promotes/prefers people who offer no challenge to own position and will not be stretching to manage ● Passes on poor performers for others to deal with
MANAGING PROJECTS & RESOURCES Ensuring projects contribute towards the City Council's objectives and that the capacity/capability is available to deliver these.	Effective judgement and decision-making Problem solving Time and resource management Risk management	● Gains agreement at the outset to the scope of the project ● Celebrates achievements/milestones along the way ● Understands how the project links to corporate objectives aligned to corporate priorities ● Analyses and assesses the impact on resources ● Works with people to think through development options and produce realistic plans based on analysis rather than emotions ● Abandons or varies projects or their plans when necessary with agreement ● Monitors time and resource plans, predicts when the project will vary from its plan and takes action ● Identifies, assesses and mitigates risks ● Ensures that projects are seen through and completed ● Learns lessons from completed projects	● Is rigid in approach ● Overlooks key facts and data ● Fails to communicate the links between major project and objectives of the service and departments ● Is unaware of the skills needed to manage a project effectively ● Focuses on 'pet' projects

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City leadership & management framework – Performance management

COMPETENCY & DEFINITION	SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES	EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS	INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS
MANAGING INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE Creating environments for sharing organisational and personal knowledge.	Information gathering/networking Information and knowledge dissemination Building expert (best practice) knowledge	• Keeps colleagues up to date with relevant and timely information. • Is well informed on social, political and economic issues involving the organisation • Demonstrates a breadth and diversity of knowledge related to the organisation • Seeks out opportunities to network within and outside the organisation • Shares own knowledge	• Expects others to keep them informed • Fails to build positive networks and relationships with partners, colleagues in related organisations and voluntary groups/community leaders representing minority groups • Deliberately withholds information
CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICE DELIVERY Ensuring that the service is focused on the needs of the customer	Responsiveness Proactivity Awareness of specific needs, e.g. equality and diversity	• Ensures that a user/customer focus is established for all areas of the community • Ensures wherever possible that the workforce is representative of the customer base • Gives clear explanations when customer expectations cannot be met • Seeks out examples of best practice to raise and maintain the quality of customer service • Goes the extra mile for the customer • Provides consistent opportunities for individuals from diverse communities to access services and information • Seeks customer feedback and acts on it	• Only provides what is expedient or convenient • Allows those who shout loudest to take priority • Blames others in the Council when talking to customers • Reacts defensively to criticism • Doesn't do what they say they're going to do • Applies stereotypes to individuals/groups/communities • Hides behind jargon • Develops a rigid 'one size firs all' approach