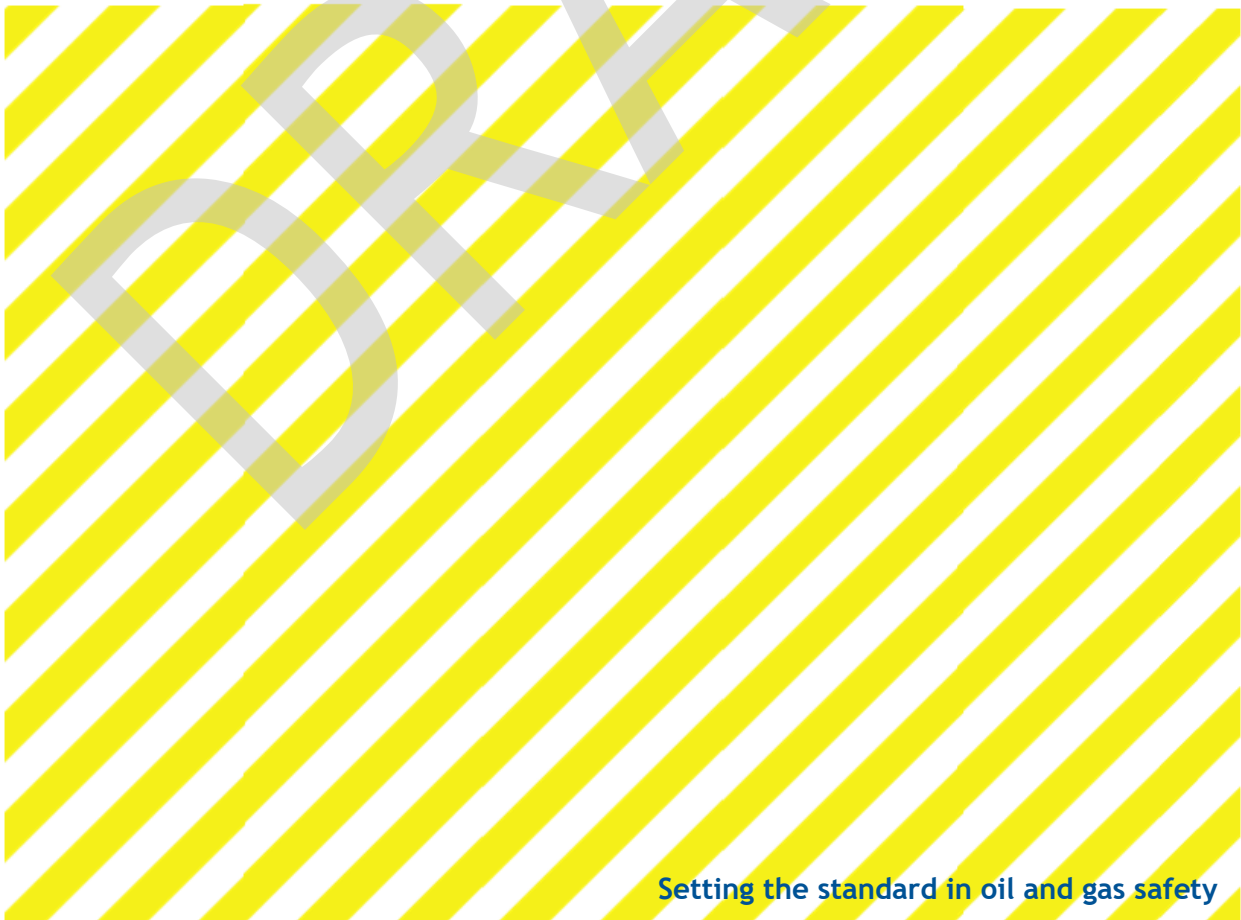




# Supervisor Competency

How to build and use a supervisor  
competency program

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## ABOUT ENERGY SAFETY CANADA

Energy Safety Canada is the oil and gas industry's advocate and leading resource for the continuous improvement of safety performance. Our mission is to help companies achieve their safety goals by providing practices, assessment, training, support, metrics and communication.

## AVAILABILITY

This document as well as future revisions and additions, is available from:

Energy Safety Canada  
150 - 2 Smed Lane SE  
Calgary, Alberta T2C 4T5  
Phone: 403 516 8000  
Toll Free: 1 800 667 5557  
Fax: 403 516 8166  
EnergySafetyCanada.com

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## PREFACE

### PURPOSE

The intent of this document is to provide companies with updated concepts of competency and verification; explain how they can be applied, and highlight the challenges faced by new and mature programs.

This will be achieved by breaking down concepts to their basic level and providing examples of common industry challenges when implementing, adjusting or verifying a supervisor competency program.

This guide can be used to augment existing industry resources including:

- [Energy Safety Canada - Competency Management Systems, A Program Development Guide](#)
- [Energy Safety Canada - Supervisor Competency, A program Development Guideline](#)
- [CAPP - Critical Roles and Competency Guide](#)
- [DACC IRP 7 - Competencies for Critical Roles in Drilling and Completions](#)

The objective is to position industry to be better suited to identify, assess and manage competency to increase our industry's collective capabilities.

### PROJECT SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The scope of this document is to provide considerations for how to build and implement a supervisor competency program. These include overviews for competency concepts, considerations for building programs and advice to overcome program implementation challenges.

The guidance provided herein is not intended to be prescriptive, as there are many ways to build and implement a supervisor competency program.

When using this document, a company should be able to baseline its competency program specific to supervisors (both in-house and third party) and work on continuous improvements as a measure of success.

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# 1.0 Introduction

## Background of Organizational Competency

Determining and verifying competency is a complex puzzle for most organizations, and the ways to manage competency—represented by the puzzle pieces—have changed continually over the years.

Many organizations started down the path of competency by verifying and documenting their systems by aligning them with industry standards such as Energy Safety Canada (ESC) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA), or verifying their system through programs like the Certificate of Recognition (COR). They would also verify and document staff's abilities to address due diligence. For example, new staff would be provided with a basic orientation and a list of required/critical courses. Older competency programs typically focused on tracking certification cycles for employees and/or the system itself.

Today, competency programs are much more in depth: organizations manage and track employees' understanding, training, experiences and alignment with corporate values to ensure continual improvement and overall success.

The most effective competency programs provide a framework for performance assessment, management and improvement while clearly communicating employee and contractor expectations.

## 1.1 Why Supervisor Competency?

Competency programs are one way for an organization to clearly communicate its values and expectations to employees. Supervisors have a critical role in ensuring those under their direction understand the expectations – corporate, regulatory, industry and due diligence – for the wellbeing of others when performing work tasks.

Supervisors must be able to determine what is required to safely perform work to the desired standard in varying conditions. This includes the skills to gauge workers' understanding of the job process, hazards and controls, and establishing when they should either check in or stop and re-evaluate the plan.

Additionally, supervisors must be able to recognize the signs of a worker who is not fit or capable to complete their duty and beware of other potential hazards that could violate Life Saving Rules.

Having competent supervisors is key to ensuring work is executed appropriately while reducing the risk of incidents and injuries.



## 1.2 How to Use This Guide

The concepts discussed in this guide are not only specific to a supervisor competency program but can be transferred to any target audience.

The intent of this guide is to:

- Provide companies with updated concepts of competency and verification.
- Highlight strategies to overcome common implementation and assessment challenges.

With these goals in mind, most chapters first provide concepts for building the program and then tips and advice to overcome implementation challenges.

Key concepts are highlighted at the beginning of each chapter to help readers find the information they need.

## 2.0 Common Language and Concepts

There are many ways to define competency. Below are some examples from industry. Competency is...

- "... the application and integration of qualification, knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours to achieve an outcome under conditions to a specific standard of performance." (International Network of Safety & Health Professional Organizations – INSHPO)
- "... the measurable skill, or set of skills, and level of knowledge required to perform occupation-specific tasks." (Energy Safety Canada – ESC)
- "... a predictive ability to perform based on a combination of knowledge, practical and thinking skills and experience. Acceptable competency depends upon the context, regulatory expectations and the environment in which the activity/function is being performed and on the organization's risk tolerance." (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers – CAPP)
- "... the measurable or observable knowledge, skills, experience, and behaviours that you need to have in order to perform the tasks assigned to perform your job." (ESC)

While these definitions have similarities, the differences speak to the values and perspective of the organizations using them. At their basic level, definitions of competency include:

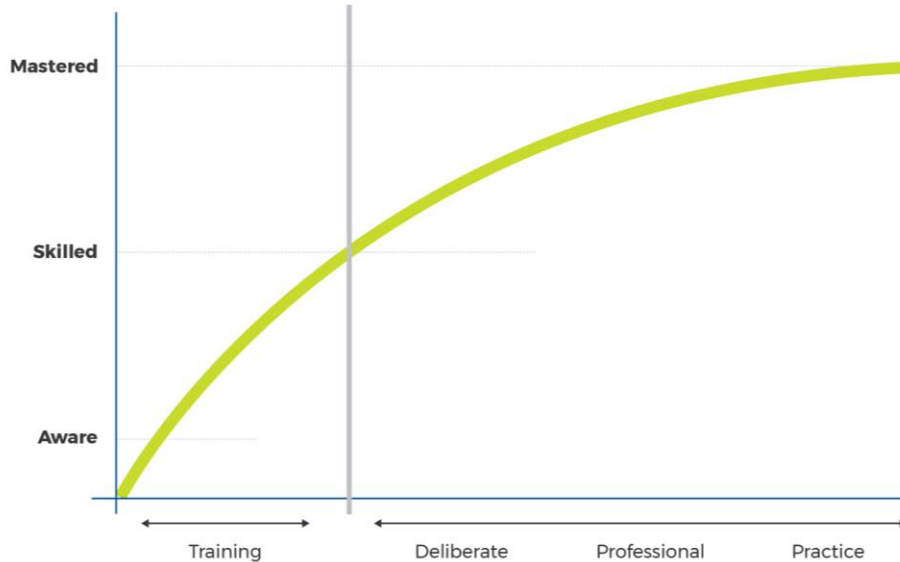
- Standard(s) of performance expectations.
- Combinations of "thinking" (cognitive) and "doing" (skills and attitude) that can be measured or observed.

Subset definitions of competency may include:

- Core Competencies – Specifically identifies the knowledge, skills and strengths employees in the organization should ideally possess and incorporate in their daily work.
- Critical Competencies – Knowledge, skills and experience used to mitigate risks and keep operations safe.
- Collective Competencies – The cumulative knowledge and skills of individuals, teams and contractors working together to achieve the desired outcome.

Competencies should be established with room for individuals to develop their skills and experience. Employees need to have a clear understanding of how they can achieve the competency *and* how they can further develop in that area. This becomes increasingly important when relying on a competency for risk mitigation. The organization must determine the level of an individual's expertise (see Figure 1) to ensure successful mitigation of the risk.

## Proficiency



**Figure 1: Spectrum of task competency**

Determining the level of an individual's expertise is the concept of proficiency. Proficiency is a measure of how effectively and efficiently an individual completes a task or role. If completing tasks or roles are thought of as a spectrum, on one end are individuals learning, remembering and applying new concepts while at the other end are those who can defend opinions or create new ideas for the task or role.

Blooms Taxonomy (Figure 2) is a framework for categorizing educational goals. It consists of six major categories: Knowledge, Understanding/Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Evaluation, and Creation. The classifications range from lower order thinking skills, such as recalling knowledge and understanding what it means, to high order thinking skills such as analysing, evaluating and creating.



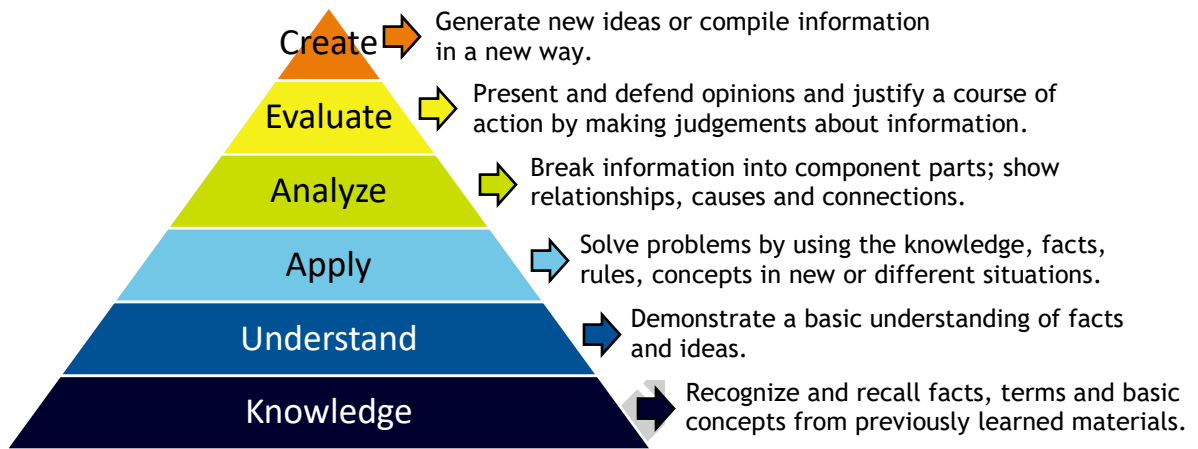


Figure 2: Model of Blooms Taxonomy

Knowledge is the necessary precondition for putting all the other skills and abilities into practice – before you can understand a concept you must know it. Moving up the framework, in order to apply a concept, you must first understand it; to evaluate a process you must have analysed it; to create an accurate conclusion you must complete a thorough evaluation.

When designing competencies for supervisors, include higher order thinking competencies. In other words, competent supervisors should be able to assess a situation, analyse their options and create and evaluate solutions to mitigate the issue at hand.

### 3.0 Getting Started

The most challenging step in developing or updating a competency program is determining where to begin. This decision should be based on the unique circumstances of each organization.

- Is this the first competency program for your organization?
- Are you looking to test or strengthen your current program?
- Are you growing an already mature program?

It is important to first clearly define and document the vision for the program and how success will be measured. This helps ensure the program stays on track, is fit for purpose, and is appropriate for the needs of the organization. In addition, describing the high-level vision will guide the development, allow for quicker decisions and reduce distractions.

Questions to keep in mind are:

- What is the definition of success?
- How will the program’s success be measured?

- Does the program (still) meet the organization's needs?
- Does the program have reasonable timelines for updates, improvements and employee participation?
- Is the program linked to existing processes within the organization or does it stand alone?

After reading this chapter, the user will have a better understanding of:

- Elements required for a supervisor competency program.
- Steps to develop it.
- How vision statements can guide the development process.
- Where to find and collect information to build a program.

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## 3.1 Program Overview and Planning

A competency program provides a framework for performance assessment, management and improvement. Successful programs will describe:

- Intended outcomes/goals
- How success is measured
- Connections to existing processes and programs
- Data and records that must be maintained
- How frequently the program will be evaluated
- Responsibilities and accountabilities

Proper planning is essential to developing an effective competency program and/or choosing the right technology to help manage it. Jumping past this step without understanding the needs and goals of the organization is a common mistake and increases the risk of being stuck with a program or technology that doesn't provide value. Having a detailed plan will help the development team know what is needed and anticipate conflicts with existing processes, programs or priorities. The plan will make execution easier, as everyone will know where to focus their efforts.

### Realistic Timelines

Building or revising a competency program takes considerable effort and resources, especially since most organizations do not have experience developing a competency program. Having realistic timelines to develop and implement the program will allow the team to prioritize and focus on what is important and where their time should be allocated.

Each organization's unique challenges should be considered when creating the program development timeline. For example, large organizations may need to align multiple groups or create business unit specific paths and follow established approval processes; while smaller organizations may succeed with less complex programs but need additional external assistance to collect data and develop resources.

It is not uncommon for it to take six months to a year to develop a basic program and framework. Once that is complete, successful implementation of the program could take more than a year depending on the size of the organization. Creating a visual timeline, such as a Gantt chart that shows multiple tasks against a timeline, will allow the team to keep track and adjust the schedule as needed.

## Development Team

When deciding who should be represented or included on the development team, ask the following questions:

- Who will be affected by this program?
- Who will own and operate the program?
- Who is responsible for the existing program(s)?
- Who are the in-house subject matter experts for developing programs and processes?
- Who is already in this role that continues to meet or exceed expectations?
- Will the program involve expectations for third party contractors?

A development team that understands what needs to be achieved and has clear expectations leads to increased collaboration and effectiveness.

## Function of the Program

An effective program will provide users a clear process to complete the required actions. In addition, linkages to existing programs will help employees understand timing and alignment. For example: will the assessment process align with annual performance reviews, or will the assessments be done over the course of several months?

At a minimum, there should be descriptions for:

- How individuals are selected for assessment
- What is involved in the assessment
- How assessment data is collected
- How assessment results are verified and communicated
- When and how the program is reviewed

## Communications

Communications should include a plan for the roll-out/implementation of the program and educating employees about the project requirements. Choose the communication channel(s) most preferred by employees (e.g. face-to-face, newsletter, safety meeting), and provide managers/supervisors with clear expectations for what information is communicated and when.

The program should be adaptable to include new operations or roles and address changes within the organization and industry. An overview of the steps required to develop a supervisor competency program is presented below.

## Overview of Program Development

- Assemble development team.
- Review or develop the vision and goals for the program.
- Create a strategy that supports the program vision and identifies measures of success.
- Assess what information is needed and what can be used from existing programs.
- Develop and test the program.
- Create supporting tools (communications, presentation, templates, etc) to implement, track and capture measures of success.
- Communicate and promote the program within the organization.
- Provide opportunities for feedback.
- Regularly evaluate program with a minimum goal of continuous improvement.

### 3.1.1 Example Vision Statement and Measures of Success

A vision statement describes the overall goal of the supervisor competency program. This succinct statement is a way for the organization to communicate what it wants to achieve with the program. It should be concise, specific to the organization and easily interpreted by others.

Below are two examples of vision statements for a supervisor competency program:

- Empower supervisors to support organizational goals by protecting the health and safety of employees, communities and environment while providing a quality product (or service)
- Enable supervisors to realise the organization’s vision and ensure work is planned and executed to the recognized standards

The program’s vision is supported through an aligned strategy detailing objectives and tactics that will keep the program development on track and to specific timelines.

Statement Item	Purpose	Example
<b>Vision</b>	Describe the overall goal/main outcome of the program	Enable supervisors to realise the organizations vision and ensure work is planned and executed to the recognized standards
<b>Strategy</b>	Describe the required approach to achieve the vision.	Supervisors are supported by the organization in their efforts to uphold standards
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>Define the steps to achieve the strategy.</p> <p>Objectives should follow “SMART” writing principles. They should be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Specific - well defined and focused on the who, what and where of one outcome</li> <li>2. Measurable - able to quantify the targets and benefits</li> <li>3. Achievable - able to access the people, technology or finances required</li> <li>4. Realistic - able to obtain the level of change</li> <li>5. Time bound - state the time period in which it will be accomplished</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a development team represented by each business unit to create the program’s scope by Q1</li> <li>2. Development team to identify key supervisor duties to incorporate in the program by Q2</li> <li>3. Development team to select competencies required to achieve key supervisor duties by Q3</li> </ol>
<b>Tactics</b>	List the tool(s) or resource(s) that should be used to achieve the objectives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development team will use an online platform to collaborate.</li> <li>2. In-house experts and field staff to be included in the project.</li> </ol>

An example template for the vision statement is provided on the [Supervisor Competency webpage](#).

## Measuring Success

Having well defined measures of success enables objective assessments and the ability to track progress over time.

The measures of success must be clearly defined and anyone using the program must be able to understand and implement them. If there can be more than one interpretation, the measurement may not be captured correctly and, therefore, will fail to provide reliable information.

It is also important to consider that the success measures will change over time and must be evaluated and updated as part of the program's continuous improvement process.

What is Being Measured?	Example of Measurement of Success
<b>Development of the program</b>	Development team adheres to the schedule and completes defined objectives.
	Consensus achieved on identified supervisor competencies by executives and business leads.
<b>Program implementation</b>	There is a set timeline for each business unit to present and address questions on the program.
	Target established for percentage of employees who are engaged and using the program.
<b>Results of the program</b>	Defined frequency for formal reviews and audits of the program.
	Set a target percentage of employees actively using the program.
	Set a percentage retention rate for supervisors.
	Set the percentage of supervisors achieving goal of their development plans.

The vision statement and measures of success are best used to communicate the program expectations to the development team. In addition, the development team members may change throughout the project, so the vision statement can be used when onboarding new staff to reduce the risk of assumptions or incorrect redirections.

### 3.1.2 Program Structure and Competency Framework

A common approach is to structure the program either on task-based competencies or role-based competencies. While both have their benefits, this document focuses on role-based competencies specific to supervisors because it allows the organization to identify performance gaps and develop supervisors' skills to meet the organization's needs.

#### Competency Framework

A competency framework provides direction for assessing and managing the knowledge and skills of people in the organization. A reliable framework measures the performance and growth both of individuals and the entire team. This allows management to make informed decisions about training requirements, recruitment, retention and succession planning.

The framework should be kept as simple as possible. Think of it as an expectation guide summarizing the competencies valued by the organization for a specific role. These competencies will be used to verify that expectations are being met. The following elements should be included in the program's framework:

1. **Categories:** Program developers should group the competencies into broad categories. This helps to reduce the overall number of listed competencies and avoid redundancies. Providing an outcome statement describing the desired result for each category will provide clarity for the organization.
2. **Competencies:** The wording for each competency should be clear and simple enough that anyone reading it can understand the expectations and how they can be achieved.



**Example Framework: Basic Setup**

<b>Supervisor Competency Framework</b>	
<b>Plans and Prioritizes:</b> The resources required to achieve the desired standard(s) can be used under the conditions at the required time.	
Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops work plans and applies lessons learned</li> <li>• Prioritizes and re-evaluates work tasks</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>Hazard Identification and Mitigation:</b> The risk is reduced to a level acceptable to the organization.	
Competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducts workplace and worker assessments</li> <li>• Anticipates hazards</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>	

**Example Framework: Advanced Setup**

<b>Supervisor Competency Framework</b>				
<b>Plans and Prioritizes</b>		The resources required to achieve the desired standard(s) can be used under the conditions at the required time.		
		<b>Aware</b> (knowledge-understanding)	<b>Skilled</b> (application-analysing)	<b>Mastery</b> (evaluating-creating)
		Plans (monthly, quarterly, yearly to anticipate timelines and barriers	Manages and acquires resources	Collaborates with others completing critical tasks
		Documents, reports and communicates to other on key performance indicators	Organizes tasks and manages time based on importance	Concludes when a plan can't be achieved and applies mitigations
		etc.	etc.	etc.
<b>Hazard Identification and Mitigation</b>		The risk is reduced to a level acceptable to the organization.		
		<b>Aware</b>	<b>Skilled</b>	<b>Mastery</b>
		Communicates hazards to others and expectations to apply controls	Prioritizes hazard controls in relation to risk	Evaluates hazards and effectiveness of controls relating to chemical, physical, biological and psychological risk

## 3.2 Gathering Background Information

Having the right information on hand makes the development/revision process easier because it helps you answer some key questions: Has the organization's vision changed? Are there new processes or programs? Are there new industry requirements? The table below lists the types of background information to have on hand and the value they add.

Type of Information	How It Can Be Used
<b>Organization Mission Statement</b>	The vision and strategy for a supervisor competency program should align with the organization's high-level goal(s) described in its mission statement.
<b>Job Descriptions</b>	These describe the experience and education requirements for individual roles. They also include core behaviours valued by the organization.
<b>Formal Hazard Inventory</b>	These list the workplace hazards that could result in incidents, illness or injury. A supervisor plays an important role in reducing the risk of workplace hazards by upholding mitigation expectations.
<b>Operational Procedures</b>	Review the documented procedures for key outcomes and operational concepts that should be explained, applied and evaluated in the competency program.
<b>Operational/Health and Safety Programs</b>	Existing programs can be used to understand the details of hazard mitigations and success measures. They can provide ways to distinguish between entry level and experienced employees.
<b>Health and Safety Organizations &amp; Sector Specific Organizations</b> (e.g. Energy Safety Canada, The CSA Group, CAPP, EPAC, CAODC, CAGC, DACC)	<p>Industry health and safety organizations can provide safety information and statistics relevant to your industry sector.</p> <p>For example, Energy Safety Canada can provide safety performance statistics for organizations in their WCB funding codes. This information can be used to assess injury trends and provide a starting point for improvements.</p> <p>Standardized guidelines and programs highlight industry expectations for various topics including: Life Saving Rules, potentially serious incidents, psychological health and safety in the workplace, impairment standards, management of impairment in the workplace, etc.</p> <p>Industry recommended practices (IRPs) describe the best</p>

	practices for achieving operational excellence.
<b>Employees in the role</b>	Typically, the best information for the role comes from those that perform it well. Using in-house subject matter experts can provide valuable insights to the organization and also create worker buy-in.

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## 4.0 Processes

Processes provide the structure for building and using a supervisor competency program. Processes best suited for the organization's needs ensures the right information is captured and the program stays on track.

For example, pretend the goal is to visit a friend in a city three hours away. The process is the systematic approach used to plan the details of the trip, including selecting the mode of transportation and the time of day for travel. If the process is too simple, options such as flying instead of driving may be missed. And if the process is too complex, the combination of options and decisions may become daunting and take more time than necessary.

After reading this chapter, the user will have a better understanding of:

- How to identify the organization's competency needs.
- Practices and approaches to develop and write competencies.
- Considerations for establishing proficiency levels and employee development plans.

### 4.1 Building the Program

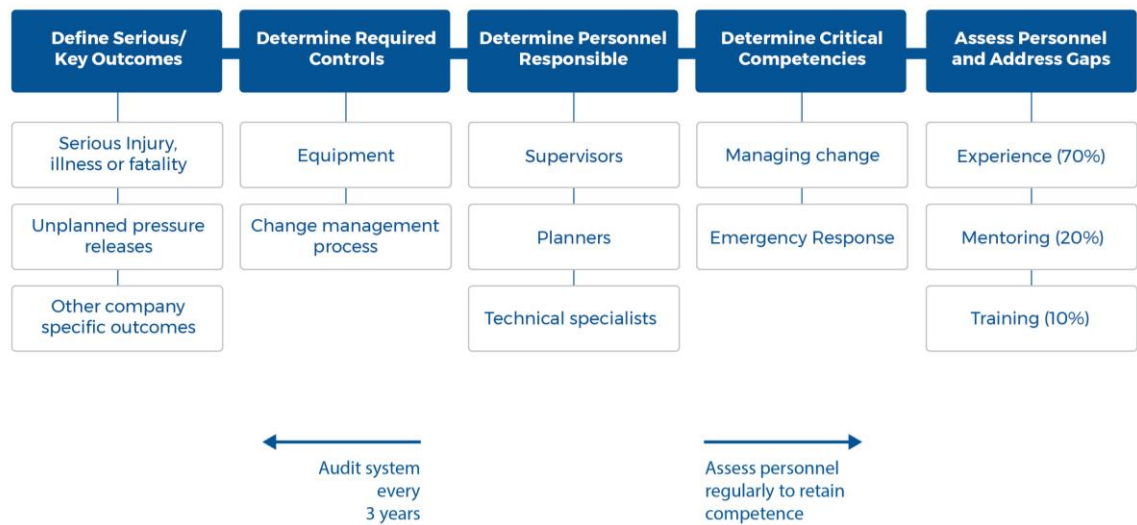
#### 4.1.1 What does the organization need?

Organizations have differing needs and starting points based on the maturity of their program. A new program will focus on critical elements and specific roles to achieve outcomes within the timelines. A mature program may focus on streamlining existing processes, consolidating technology platforms or incorporating non-critical aspects of the role for the organization.

To assist with identifying desired outcomes, the Drilling and Completions Committee (DACC) published [IRP 7: Competencies for Critical Roles in Drilling and Completions](#), which provides a five-step process for employers to define what is important in a competency framework. In its simplest form, IRP 7 uses these steps:

- **Define serious outcomes.** Serious outcomes are events that result in significant negative consequences to workers, the environment or assets. What is the organization trying to avoid? What keeps you up at night?
- **Determine controls required to avoid the outcome.** Preventing the serious outcomes requires controls in the form of equipment, people, communication, change management and emergency response.
- **Determine personnel responsible for preventing the outcome.** The identification and control of hazards are the responsibility of key personnel, including supervisors, and may also include external/third party contractors.

- Determine critical competencies.** Establishing which competencies apply to each role is the responsibility of the employer and is based on the work being performed. Employers must decide what knowledge, technical training and abilities are required to complete and verify the competencies.
- Assess personnel and address deficiencies.** Competencies need to be verified through methods that are objective, repeatable, measurable and practical. Any identified gaps should be addressed through development plans.



**Figure 3. IRP 7 Process Overview**

The exercise outlined by IRP 7 allows an organization to link specific areas of supervisor’s responsibilities and duties to the prevention of serious outcomes. The resulting links provide a starting point to identify supervisor competency areas or a way to test and improve an existing system.

### 4.1.2 Determining Competency Profiles

When determining competency profiles, i.e. the grouping of relevant competencies for a role, focus on creating a concise list. Only include the essentials, what employees *need* to know/do/achieve/create and apply. Be careful not to let it become a list of everything that *could* be known – a lengthy list of loosely defined items that cannot be measured inevitably leads to a misalignment of expectations and performance.

It is also critical to remember that every person has a different background with different skills and different ways of learning. Regardless of these differences, the program should work *for* supervisors, not against them. It should enhance their current capabilities rather than trying to rebuild them from scratch.

When developing profiles, follow these principles:

- **Define competencies that deliver results.**  
A competency is not simply what an individual *believes* is important for a role; rather each competency must be tested to ensure it achieves the desired result. For example, if one believes that having supervisors provide feedback to workers is essential for success, there should be data available to support that claim or refine the description. In this example, it may be determined that having a supervisor check work against a standard and then correct as needed is the behaviour/ability that better supports the desired outcome, rather than simply “providing feedback”.
- **Focus on what can be developed and measured.**  
For each desired outcome, the supporting competencies listed should be measurable. Employees should be encouraged and supported to achieve them by augmenting their current capabilities.  
  
Building on the previous example, requiring a supervisor to check work against a standard and correct as needed is something that can be taught and consistently measured.
- **Emphasize “will do” more than “can do”.**  
The fact something can be done does not always mean it will be done or done well. Limit the list of competencies to those behaviours and actions that are expected of supervisors/workers to support the desired goal.

## Structured Collaboration

Using a structured approach when planning and writing competencies helps ensure the development team stays on task. A common approach used by many companies is to create a focus group that is knowledgeable about the role and understands the difference between acceptable and excellent performance.

The “DACUM” (Developing A Curriculum) method allows for a systematic approach to identifying the significant duties and tasks performed by a competent employee for each role. The premise is that expert workers are best able to define their roles, rather than relying on what others think they do. The DACUM method allows for the description of tasks, including the knowledge, skills and attitude workers must possess to perform and meet expectations.

The DACUM approach uses a facilitated workshop with a focus group of experts and field personnel to determine what ideal performance looks like for the role. The outcome of a DACUM is a concise profile chart that details the duties and responsibilities related to ideal performance. These can then be used to decide what workers will be required to know about their roles and the expectations for performance. This information can also be used to create or update job descriptions/profiles, identify gaps in knowledge and skills, and help employees assess their readiness for the role.

This approach provides an effective way to identify and defend relevant tasks, promotes consensus among the development team, identifies future trends, and is quicker than conducting interviews, surveys or field observations.

Below are some tips to help keep the group on track:

1. Consider a duty as a grouping of related tasks (i.e. general areas of competency). A duty must include at least two tasks.
2. Explore from start to finish a typical process or day in the life of workers in that role.
3. Do not include one-time activities or special projects.
4. A task is a very specific activity and each task must include two steps.
5. Duty and task statements can be achieved, observed and measured; have a definitive beginning and end point; and result in a product, service or decision.

## Creating Competencies

There are two primary approaches for creating competencies:

- Borrow and build from existing competencies. There is no shortage of information and examples relating to competencies that can be borrowed or modified. Using existing verbiage saves time in finding the right way to articulate the competencies. Note, however, that borrowed competencies should be used with caution as they may not work as intended within your organization.
- Create new competencies specific to the organization. Taking time to develop unique competencies will ensure the program works for the organization, makes use of in-house subject matter expertise, and promotes employee engagement and ownership of the program.

Whichever approach is chosen, the developed competencies must be tested and adjusted to confirm they provide value. Competencies may need to be re-written and tested several times to find what works best. The general process is shown in Figure 4.

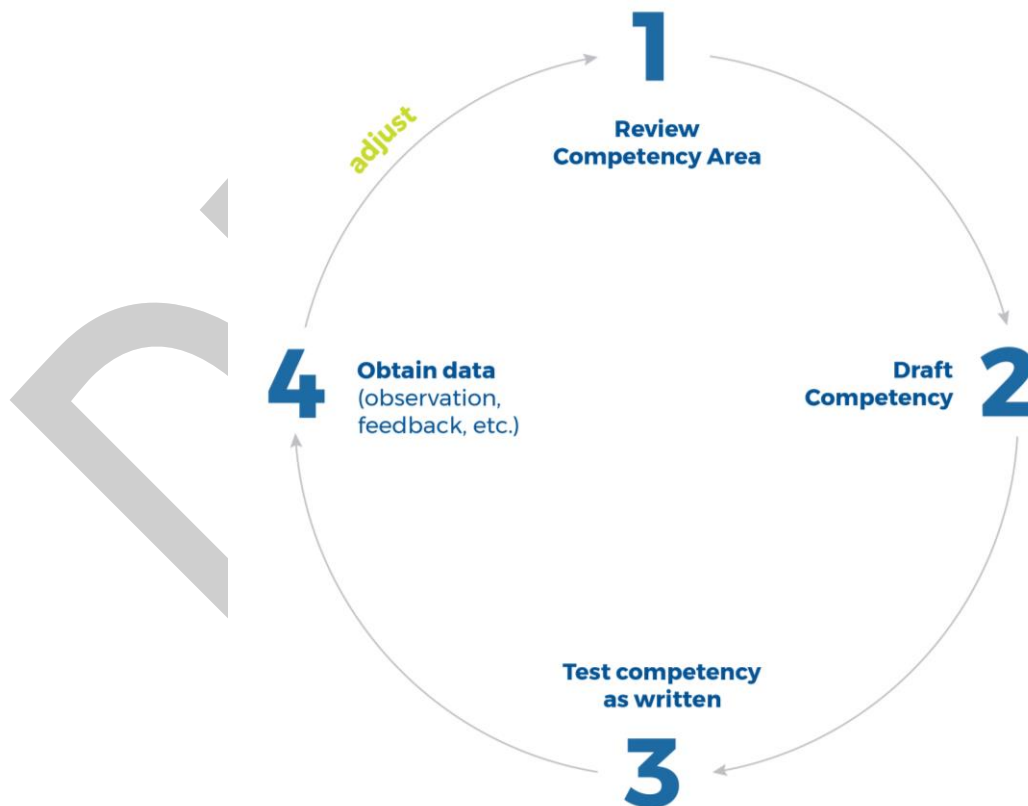


Figure 4. Creating Competencies



Earlier in this guide, the idea of Blooms taxonomy was presented (refer to Figure 2). Building on that concept, using the right verbs and phrasing for the competencies speeds up the process. Effective competency statements will have a verb (action), modifier and noun (object) as essential elements; this also makes it easier to verify the competency.

The key to capturing the right competency is to decide where it sits on the spectrum of thinking skills and then apply the appropriate wording. Table 1 provides examples of words best used to describe the level of thinking skill.

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**Table 1: Blooms Taxonomy Descriptions** (adapted from [My Growth Mindset](#))

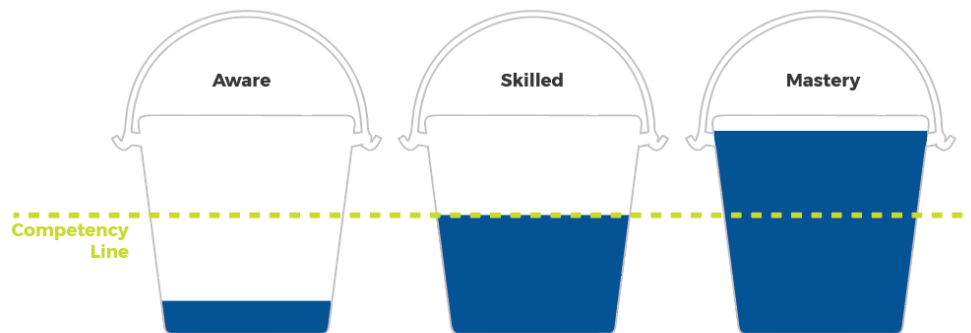
Lower Level thinking Skills				Higher Level Thinking Skills							
Knowledge		Comprehension		Application		Analysis		Evaluate		Create	
Recognize and recall facts, terms and basic concepts from previously learned materials.		Demonstrate a basic understanding of facts and ideas.		Solve problems by using the knowledge, facts, rules, concepts in new or different situations.		Break information into component parts; show relationships, causes and connections.		Generate new ideas or compile information in a new way.		Generate new ideas or compile information in a new way.	
<b>Keywords:</b>		<b>Keywords:</b>		<b>Keywords:</b>		<b>Keywords:</b>		<b>Keywords:</b>		<b>Keywords:</b>	
Choose	Recognize	Ask	Illustrate	Act	Organize	Analyze	Examine	Agree	Estimate	Adapt	Elaborate
Define	Relate	Cite	Indicative	Administer	Practice	Appraise	Inference	Argue	Evaluate	Build	Formulate
Identify	Reproduce	Classify	Interpret	Apply	Relate	Arrange	Order	Assess	Influence	Change	Innovate
Listen	Retell	Compare	Outline	Categorize	Represent	Assumption	Organize	Conclude	Judge	Choose	Invent
Locate	Select	Contrast	Predict	Connect	Solve	Breakdown	Prioritize	Convince	Measure	Compile	Maximize
Observe	Show	Demonstrate	Report	Construct	Teach	Categorize	Question	Criteria	Perceive	Create	Minimize
Quote	State	Discuss	Summarize	Develop	Transfer	Choose	Research	Debate	Rate	Design	Model
Read	Tell	Estimate	Translate	Illustrate	Translate	Discover	Select	Deduct	Validate	Devise	Predict
Recall	Write	Explain	Outcome	Model	Outcome	Distinction	Outcome	Defend	Outcome	Discuss	Transform
Actions	Outcome	Actions	Examples	Actions	Demonstrate	Actions	Abstract	Actions	Report	Actions	Outcome
Describing	Definition	Classifying	Explanation	Carrying out	Interview	Attributing	Checklist	Attributing	Database	Constructing	Plan
Finding	Fact	Comparing	Outline	Executing	Presentation	Outlining	Report	Checking		Designing	Project
Identifying	Test	Explaining	Summary	Implementing	Simulation	Structuring	Survey	Integrating		Inventing	Story
Locating		Inferring				Establish				Producing	
<b>Questions</b>		<b>Questions</b>		<b>Questions</b>		<b>Questions</b>		<b>Questions</b>		<b>Questions</b>	
Can you list....?		How would you classify		How would you use?		Why do you think..		What is your opinion of...?		What changes would you make to solve...?	
Can you recall		How would you summarize		What approach would you use?		What inference can you make...		What would you recommend...?		Can you propose an alternative...?	
How would you describe?		What statement supports		What questions would you ask?		How would you categorize?		How would you evaluate..?		What way would you design..?	
How would you explain?		Will you interpret in your own words?				What is the relationship between?		What judgement would you make about...?		How would you test...?	

### 4.1.3 Establishing Proficiency Levels

Defining expected levels of proficiency provides a path for individuals to develop their capabilities. The basic levels of proficiency are:

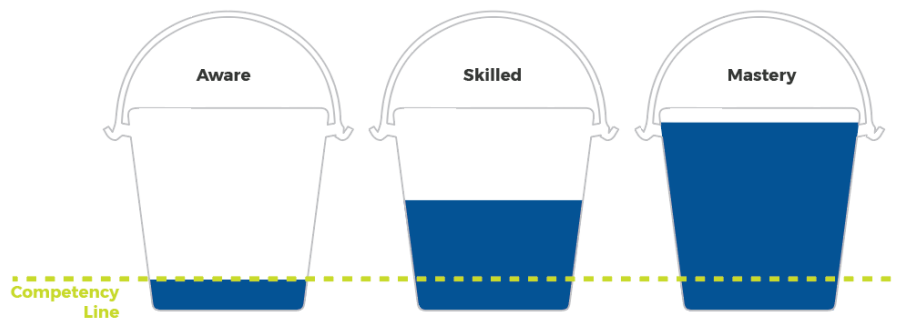
- **Aware:** Has a basic understanding of the concepts and requires guidance when applying the competency. At this stage the individual requires feedback to continue learning.
- **Skilled:** Has detailed knowledge/understanding and can assist others in the application of this competency. The individual can apply concepts effectively and recognizes there are additional issues to be considered but consults others for guidance on how to address them.
- **Mastery:** Has specialist knowledge and can explain concerns in relation to broader organizational issues. These individuals can optimize solutions and know which outside or additional factors to consider. They require little to no supervision or support and others seek their advice.

If we think of competency as a bucket of water, the amount of water describes a person's level of competency to complete the job task.



**Figure 5: Competency Line**

In terms of proficiency, competencies must be considered in the context of how they apply in the specific job/role. For example, a supervisor may need to understand how to support the incident investigation process but does not need to be an expert in the subject.



**Figure 6: Setting the Competency Line**

Competency program tasks should be evaluated to determine the competency line for each role. For tasks involved with risk mitigation the required level of competency will likely be higher.

## 4.2 Using the Program

### 4.2.1 Execute/Maintain the Program

Defining the roles required to manage the program, such as program ownership and sponsor, should be established before implementation. The selected individual(s) must be able manage, monitor and address questions about the program. A strong understanding of the processes and appropriate authority within the organization are required to ensure consistent application of the program.

Creating templates and forms provides a method for standardizing data collection. A guidance document or frequently asked questions may be helpful to re-iterate how the program should operate.

Enlisting other staff who routinely use the program— “program champions” — will help address questions from other employees and provide consistency.

#### Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) help organizations measure their actual performance against their strategic goals and objectives. Data can be collected for just about anything; when developing KPIs, the distinction is collecting and using key data. Just because data can be collected through observations or measuring doesn't mean it should be or that it will provide significant value.

Organizations' KPIs should measure only the key performance factors, so there should only be a few of them. Other characteristics of a meaningful KPI include:

- Simple to understand to ensure consistent measuring
- Allows you to understand and address the root causes of why progress is lacking
- Have owners that are accountable for the results
- Are aligned with the organization's goals
- Works in conjunction with other KPIs

#### Four-Step Approach to Developing KPIs

**Step 1:** Refer to the organization's values and goals to determine what is most important and what questions should be asked. For example, if the organization values positive brand recognition, then the KPI data should provide information about how the company is viewed.

**Step 2:** Create a few broad categories from the organization's values and goals to provide boundaries for developing KPIs. This can also provide a visual map of any overlap between KPIs. Examples of categories are compliance, productivity, financial and organizational growth.

**Step 3:** Understanding what employees are expected to produce will assist in developing KPIs that are aligned with their job duties. Do they drive a process? Develop a product? Generate revenue?

**Step 4:** Focus on the right metrics. This is critical to avoid producing a lengthy list of items to be measured. Use the values from Step 1 to assess which KPIs will provide the most useful information.

### 4.2.2 Employee Development Plans

Development plans help employees enhance their current capabilities and acquire knowledge and skills for new roles and responsibilities in the organization. A well written plan provides employees with detailed steps and actions to achieve short-term and long-term career goals.

These plans work best when developed in collaboration with employees and should be individually tailored to help them succeed. Employees involved with creating their career path are more likely to succeed in their development plan.

In addition to individual success, development plans should help strengthen and shape the organization's overall workforce. Questions to consider include:

- Does the workforce have gaps in knowledge, skills or behaviours?
- Do development plans align with the organization's vision and strategy?
- Are there considerations for developmental training vs required competencies?
- Is succession planning included?
- Are changes in industry, such as the use of technology, being addressed?

Offering employees the right development opportunities helps ensure they are engaged and have the tools and abilities to improve their contributions. Some examples include:

**In the workplace:**

- Coaching or mentoring
- Structured cross training
- Stretch assignments
- Job shadowing
- Corporate university
- Group training classes

**Online:**

- Videos
- Webinars
- Self-directed learning

**Other:**

- Industry events (conferences, seminars)
- Educational institutions

The concept for development planning is shown in Figure 7. The development process identifies gaps that should be addressed to ensure work is completed to the desired standard(s). It is important to track development plan progress and adjust, as unintended situations may arise. These are not static documents and should be modified to grow with the employee or as new development opportunities arise.



**Figure 7 Development Planning**

The CAPP document, [Critical Roles and Competency](#), outlines the importance to establish development plans using a 70-20-10 learning model with established goals and reassessment dates.



**70%** of development is through participation in challenging assignments, new initiatives, etc.

**20%** of development is social based and involves interactive work relationship

**10%** of development is based from coursework and training.

Plan development and review can be linked to the timing of the organization’s annual strategy, goal, budget, performance programs or other check points.

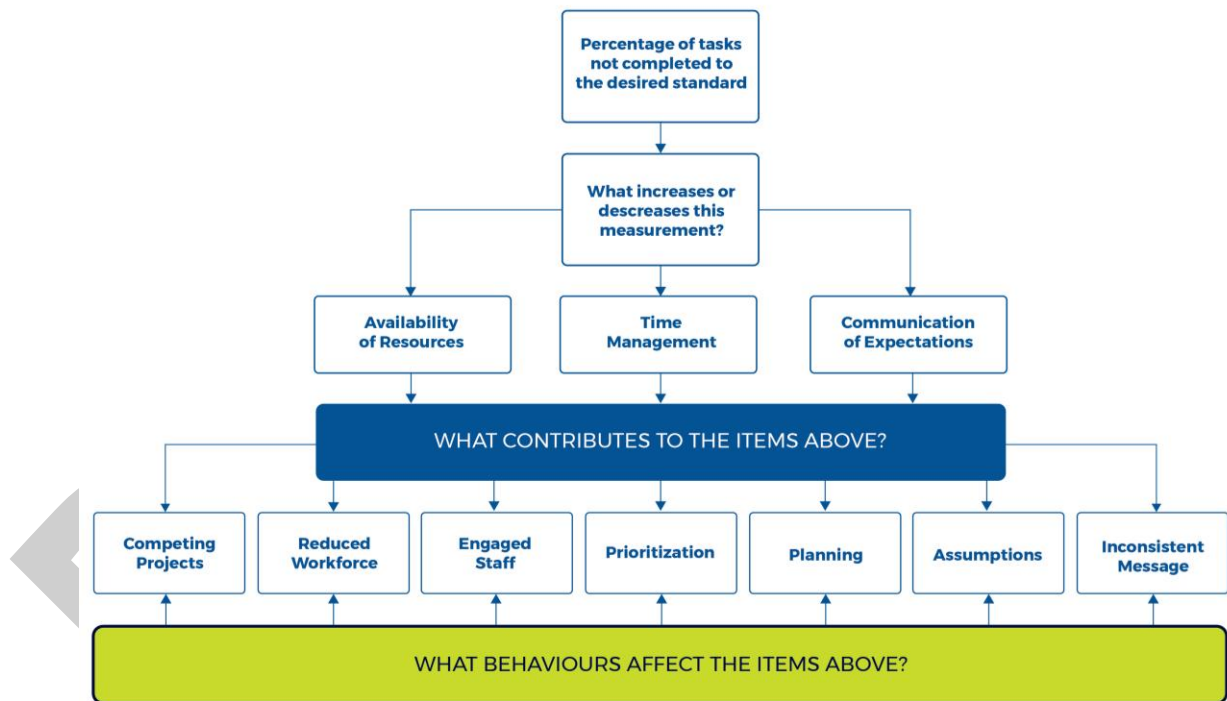
The plans should make connections between individual competencies and organizational goals and values as much as possible.

### Identifying Behaviours that Drive Performance

KPIs can also be used to identify ideal behaviours that drive performance, thereby allowing the opportunity to improve outcomes. Developing meaningful KPIs helps to focus an organization’s efforts on what matters and what needs to be developed.

KPIs do not depend on a single action, rather they are influenced by several underlying activities. Understanding of the details and relationships between those activities will help identify behaviours that improve performance.

A flow chart, such as the example below, helps to determine ideal behaviours and development plans. Using an example of productivity, the starting point of “% of tasks not completed to the desired standard” is used to raise questions and further understand the behaviours that affect the outcome.



Using the example above, some may draw the conclusion that enhancing employee communication and collaboration behaviours could affect the KPI resulting in the team working more efficiently.



### 4.2.3 Helpful tips

- Other policies and practices used by the organization should be reviewed to ensure they support the supervisor competencies identified by the program.
- Competency profiles offer versatile information that can be used to focus efforts for training, development and succession planning.
- Piloting the program with a small group will help identify errors and frequently asked questions.
- Implementation must be carefully monitored to ensure employees' questions and concerns are addressed. People have a natural tendency to resist change, and changing behaviours takes time, discipline and practice.

## 5.0 Verification

**“Without data you’re just another person with an opinion.”**

*W. Edwards Demming*

The use of verification methods provides organizations confidence in understanding their collective strengths and where improvements need to be made. In other words, **verification is showing your work.**

Verifications focus on outcomes. Did employees read and understand the company policies? Did they obtain X, Y, and Z certificates? Was the project completed on time, on schedule, and on budget? These types of outcomes are easy to verify and almost anyone can complete them by following policies, guidelines and procedures.

What must be considered is how a worker will act when the work conditions change to unfavourable and the situation is not outlined in policy or procedure. Will that individual demonstrate ideal behaviours in performing the work task? Asking the right questions and collecting the right data is crucial for a meaningful verification process.

After reading this chapter, the user will have a better understanding of verification methods and considerations for completing and documenting competency data.

## 5.1 Building Verifications

### 5.1.1 Methods of Verification

If competency is thought of as the capacity to use combinations of knowledge, skills and attitudes in relation to the task at hand, then it stands to reason that assessing competency requires multiple techniques.

Applying appropriate verification methods depends on the combination of skills being assessed – technical, critical thinking or interpersonal skills (also called “soft skills”). These can be defined as:

- **Technical skills:** Knowledge, ability to follow directions and carry out procedures, psychomotor and cognitive skills
- **Critical thinking skills:** Problem solving, time management, priority setting, planning, change management
- **Interpersonal skills:** Communication, conflict management, delegation, facilitation, collaboration, articulation, understanding diversity

Examples of verification methods include:

- Exams
- Demonstrations
- Evidence of daily work
- Case studies
- Peer review
- Self-assessment
- Providing presentations
- Drills or mock events
- Discussion groups

**Exams:** Assess conceptual and technical knowledge to determine if the information has been retained. Exams are generally not designed to assess an individual’s behaviour or soft skills. Examples of exams include quizzes, oral tests, surveys, calculations.

**Demonstrations:** Assess ability to complete an actual task relating to an individual’s technical skills. The person observing/assessing must be skilled in the task and should know when to stop the demonstration if there is potential for negative consequences to occur. Examples include driving tests, starting equipment and performing maintenance activities.

**Evidence of daily work:** This assesses the typical actions individuals use to complete a job. The assessor must capture and document the individual’s ability to complete their daily work. Examples include completing risk evaluation forms and leading a “toolbox talk” meeting.

**Case studies:** Assess the individual’s critical thinking skills as case studies should typically address a specific situation and competency to be measured. This can also be achieved by having the individual share a real-life situation as the story. Case studies are ideal for showcasing an individual’s understanding

of concepts and ability to apply them to real-life situations. Examples include interviews and performance evaluations.

**Peer review:** Assesses the individual's critical thinking and soft skills. A peer can be considered anyone that witnesses the individual performing his/her duties. Examples include 360 evaluations, surveys, lessons learned.

**Self-assessment:** Self-assessments allow individuals to use reflective critical thinking skills to assess their actions and identify what behaviours help and hinder in achieving the desired result. Examples includes surveys, identifying opportunities from learned opportunities, personality quiz.

**Providing presentations:** Assesses competencies associated with the understanding and knowledge of a topic. Provides an opportunity for an individual to demonstrate soft skills and the ability to explain and apply concepts.

**Drills or mock events:** Assess the individual's responses to specific tasks in either simulated or real-life situations. Debriefing after the event is an opportunity for individuals to reflect on their actions and identify areas for improvement. Examples include emergency situations, mock interviews.

**Discussion groups:** Primarily assess critical thinking skills and may also be used to measure technical and soft skills. Having a skilled facilitator is important to ensure the group conversations are respectful and promote teamwork and mutual support. The facilitator should also provide the final assessment. Discussion should allow individuals to share their thoughts and strategies for the topic as well as the benefits and consequences of each approach. Examples include debriefing after a mock event, discussing a hypothetical situation.

Once the appropriate verification method has been selected, it should be tested to ensure it is effective.

### Helpful Tips

- Having competencies that can be objectively measured is critical for consistent understanding, application and verification by assessors. To appropriately verify someone's competency, the standard they are being compared to must be clear. What is the required proficiency (aware, skilled, mastery) for the competency and how will it be measured?
- Considerations must be made for which assignments, instruction and feedback will be provided to the person being assessed. The table below provides an example for assessors providing instructions, assignments and feedback to different proficiency levels. The example is using a competency of analysing work tasks to identify and mitigate resulting hazards.

	Proficiency Level		
	Aware	Skilled	Mastery
<b>Instruction</b>	Explain the concept and process for hazard identification and mitigation	Explain what factors are important to consider when assessing work task hazards	Instruct supervisor to review past incidents and identify lessons and impacts to other tasks within the organization
<b>Assignment</b>	Create scenarios of a task and ask the individual to fill out the organization's hazards assessment form	Provide a list of worksite constraints and ask the individual to recommend which work tasks could be completed	Instruct the individual to optimize the design of the hazard reporting system for field staff
<b>Feedback</b>	Inform the individual if the answer meets the standard	Explain what was done well and what could be improved	Discuss the efficiencies and quality of answer/product

## 5.2 Using Verifications

### 5.2.1 Completing Verifications

#### How to select assessors

A competent assessor understands the standard being measured and the ways it can be verified. These individuals are knowledgeable about the hazards, risks, and systems in a particular field and the importance of maintaining standards.

Typically, assessors are those with an area of expertise who would be called upon for advice. While the skill sets of supervisors and mentors may suit the role, be careful not to simply default to those people when selecting assessors.

#### Before Verification

When preparing to verify a competency, the assessor must be well-versed in the standard.

A quick reminder checklist could include:

- What competencies are being verified?
- What are the criteria for successfully demonstrating the competencies and how will they be measured?
- Was a development plan considered for the employee during the last verification?
- Are there observation and/or other field sheets to be completed?

Talk to other assessors to learn what was completed during their reviews. What types of questions were asked? For competencies progressing from basic to advanced, is there a criterion for how people will be consistently compared?

The verification should be planned for a time when it is possible to observe the individual putting the competencies into action.

An example verification form template is provided on the [Supervisor Competency webpage](#).

#### During Verification

The verification should be scheduled with plenty of time for the selected competency to be observed. The person being assessed should be informed of the verification timeline and method being used along with any other required instructions.

It is common for verifications to be completed by two assessors, ensuring the necessary information is captured and is consistent between both assessors. Having a second assessor allows for re-phrasing of questions and matching of personalities. This ensures the results are less likely to be challenged by the assessed individual.

Assessors should take detailed notes of what is being assessed, the conditions at the time, and what is discussed and observed in relation to the competency.

### After Verification

Feedback should be provided to the assessed individual as soon as possible to reinforce what went well and to flag any items that require improvement.

When providing feedback whether written or face-to-face:

- Keep it short and to the point relating to the competency
- Measure only those aspects that are seen by other people

The individual's records should be updated and the supporting field forms and collected data stored as directed by the program.

## 5.2.2 Data and Documentation

### Qualitative vs Quantitative

Data can be collected in quantitative or qualitative forms. Quantitative data is expressed in numbers and can be consistently measured. It addresses questions such as “how many”, “how often” or “was it completed”. Examples of information that could be collected include the number of safety meetings held, audits completed or incidents reported.

Qualitative data is subjective information that can be influenced by perception and opinion. It addresses questions such as “what was observed” or “how would you rate this”. Qualitative information methods can help identify complex issues and underlying reasons for employee actions. An example of information that could be collected is notes from observations, interviews or group exercises.

While quantitative and qualitative data each have strengths and weaknesses, together they provide clarity of the larger picture.

Considerations should be made for the type of information that will be documented during the verification and the information to be captured in the reporting system.

Successfully managing and entering the program data will be restricted by the number of supervisors included in the program. A general rule is if the program includes:

- Less than 60 supervisors, the data can be managed by spreadsheets or word files
- 61 to 100 supervisors, the data should have a dedicated platform or site for people to access
- More than 100 supervisors, considerations should be made to use a dedicated system that can provide reminders, reports and updates

### 5.2.3 Helpful Tips for Workplace Observations

- Workplace observations are a way to assess the competency of employees and reinforce the organization's desired values and behaviours.
- Workplace observations can take place formally, as part of a scheduled evaluation, or informally, incorporated into daily work routines. They can confirm what is occurring during a specific work task and help uncover underlying issues related to efficiencies at the work site.
- Organizations using workplace observations benefit from improved performance and productivity, consistent quality standards and an engaged workforce.

## 6.0 Continuous Improvement

While a process can only work as well as it was designed, even careful planning may not produce the desired output. There is always room for improvements such as increasing efficiency, streamlining the time and effort required to manage the program, increasing engagement, improving value and generally maturing an organization.

Programs need to be tested to determine how they measure up to expectations and to identify areas for improvement. Once again, the starting point for adjustments begins with the organization's vision. Does the program still meet the organization's needs? Is this the direction the organization plans to keep moving over the next two, five or 10 years?

Frequent reviews allow employees to raise concerns or ideas, which could help to advance the program. In addition, these reviews encourage supervisors to be engaged, improving their view of the program and their value to the organization.

Organizational leadership (executives/corporate members, business units, etc.) should review the plans and ensure alignment with the organization's goals. Strategic decisions can then be made to close supervisor competency gaps through work experience or training, which enhances the company's collective capabilities.

After reading this chapter, the user will have a better understanding of continual improvement benefits and the questions to ask when reviewing the program.

## 6.1 Evaluating the Program

Setting the scope for an evaluation helps focus the questions and data being obtained. The following questions must be addressed before conducting an evaluation:

- What is being evaluated?  
Depending on the program maturity, the focus could be on processes and efficiencies or achieving overall results.
- What is the evaluation timeline?  
Setting a timeline dictates what can reasonably be collected and reviewed. For example, it may not be feasible to interview the entire staff, so selecting a subset may work better.
- Who will evaluate the program (internal or external)?  
Having a perspective from outside the organization can be helpful to look for improvement opportunities and keep out bias.
- Which stakeholders should be involved?  
Including stakeholders during the evaluation or review of results will help guide decisions for how the program may be updated in the future.
- What templates and measures of success are being used to evaluate the program?  
Knowing what questions to ask and how to document the information keeps the process on track.

## 6.2 Improvement Opportunities

Taking the time to learn what was effective or ineffective increases an organization's collective competency. Actioning those learnings to streamline the program is what separates good companies from great ones.

Lessons learned and improvements implemented are best tracked through a regularly updated corporate knowledge base. The knowledge base can be consulted when organizational changes are being planned or when an opportunity to make program updates arises.

When assessing the risk associated with change, consider the following:

- Involve the right people.
- Review the risk of misalignment with the organization's vision or strategy.



- Understand the assumptions and limitations of the change.
- Weigh the impact of disruptive change.

#### Helpful Tip

- Anticipating the required skills for the organization two to five years out ensures the right competencies are captured or will be included in future planning. What skills will be required of your supervisors to support the organization? Will a new technology or learning platform be introduced?

DRAFT



**CALGARY**

T 403 516 8000 150 - 2 Smed Lane SE  
F 403 516 8166 Calgary, AB T2C 4T5

**NISKU**

T 780 955 7770 1803 11 Street  
F 780 955 2454 Nisku, AB T9E 1A8

**FORT MCMURRAY**

T 780 791 4944 Box 13 - 8115 Franklin Avenue  
F 780 715 3945 Fort McMurray, AB T9H 2H7

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

T 250 784 0100 2060 - 9600 93 Avenue  
F 250 785 6013 Fort St. John, BC V1J 5Z2

**SASKATCHEWAN**

T 306 842 9822 208 - 117 3 Street  
F 306 337 9610 Weyburn, SK S4H 0W3

[Info@EnergySafetyCanada.com](mailto:Info@EnergySafetyCanada.com)  
Enrolment Services and Certificate of Recognition:  
1 800 667 5557

[EnergySafetyCanada.com](http://EnergySafetyCanada.com)