

USFWS Mission Critical Mid-Level Leader Competencies

Mid-Level Leader

*Team Building Creativity/Innovation
Problem Solving Accountability Partnering
Conflict Management Technical Credibility*

ACCOUNTABILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Assures that effective controls are both developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds their self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within their area of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Importance

Accountability application ranges from individual responsibility for setting and meeting high standards for personal performance to the very definition of government workers as stewards of the commonwealth. It is the vehicle through which value is created for the public dollar, and public services are improved. The accountable individual remains in touch with the changing needs of those who are served, and earns their ongoing trust. Accountability is a mark of a mature worker and is dependent on each individual being held responsible for achieving agreed upon outcomes. It is essential to a well-functioning organization that each individual proactively take the responsibility to follow work through to completion, to provide both quality products/services and quality customer service, while meeting commitments in a timely manner and within budget. Government workers must also hold themselves accountable for protecting the privacy of employees, customers and members of the public. The leader is also accountable for the results of their team.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders must prioritize team/project/unit tasks, clearly communicate guidance about the task including its importance and its elements, and establish deadlines while maintaining both short- and long-term focus on the completion of tasks. They set clear and consistent performance expectations for team managers, project managers and unit groups, review performance against standards and established benchmarks, provide feedback and coach subordinate leaders, and address performance problems in a timely fashion. They build ongoing review into programs/projects to track progress towards stated goals and identify performance gaps enabling course corrections.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Makes efficient and effective use of resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges strong performance and addresses poor performance among team and group members. • Maintains good overview and control of contract performance. • Maintains good overview and control of project/group budgets and costs.
Takes responsibility for personal and team/group performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes personal responsibility for outcomes. • Anticipates and takes action over impending problems. • Focuses on fixing the problem rather than assigning blame. • Communicates and enacts consequences for performance—both good and bad. • Holds team and project members accountable for achieving results within assigned deadlines. • Guides the development of teams/groups.
Meets or exceeds standards of excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and evaluates personal and team performance standards and adjusts to ensure those standards are being met or exceeded. • Uses a variety of techniques to help the team/group move forward and continually improve. • Builds on the experience and insights of others. • Prioritizes team/project tasks while maintaining focus on end results. • Provides regular feedback and coaches team/group members about their performance. • Develops others to deepen their sense of pride in and commitment to their work.
Ensures compliance with policies and laws while addressing stakeholder needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands organizational expectations and needs. • Understands stakeholder expectations and needs. • Translates Congressional and other stakeholder mandates into effective strategies and achievable programs of action. • Seeks performance feedback from customers, stakeholders, and staff. • Ensures stakeholders understand the benefits and consequences of proposed alternatives or actions.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses a full range of tools to continually review the success of programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses project management tools. • Utilizes basic evaluation strategies and practices to measure program success. • Measures performance against established benchmarks. • Addresses performance problems to improve individual performance and end results in a timely manner.
<p>Disseminate and acts on lessons learned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful performance. • Makes clear plans for improving organizational performance. • Makes necessary adjustments to processes and strategies. • Uses various communications tools, group affiliations and networks to disseminate knowledge and lessons learned. • Keeps managers informed of valuable lessons learned, as well as project results. • Uses feedback to improve products, processes, services and delivery.
<p>Conducts operations within the legal and ethical framework of the Dept., Service, and organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks legal and ethical advice when not clear how to proceed in a particular circumstance. • Listens to experts and balances various assessments of risk before making important decisions.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Take time to learn applicable policies and procedures.
- Work on setting clear goals with yourself and others, and monitor progress.
- Follow through with positive and negative rewards and consequences.
- Consider whether you are successful at multitasking, and if not, focus on one project at a time.
- Volunteer to lead a large scale project team or community based project.
- Volunteer to be an apprentice on a large-scale project (shadow opportunity).

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Read a book on project management, risk management, evaluation systems, etc.
- Read and understand your program's guidance on ethical policies.
- Give a presentation at a professional society meeting to present your project's results.
- Take a 360-degree assessment tool as a way to receive feedback from others.
- Request permission to shadow an experienced leader you admire.
- Ask to fill in for your supervisor in an "acting" role when the opportunity exists.

Training

- Apply for the [Stepping Up To Leadership Program](#).
- Attend a course on scientific ethics and integrity.
- Attend a course on project management.
- Attend the NCTC course "[Introduction to Management Skills](#)".

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.

Importance

Performance and productivity within an organization are significantly impaired when conflict is not anticipated and managed. Competency in Conflict Management, which is based on one's ability to inspire confidence and engender trust in all parties involved, is reflected in the ability to recognize, resolve and/or manage disagreements that have the potential to grow into confrontations that undermine the culture and performance of a team or organization. It is critical to learn from disagreements by understanding and analyzing the source of the dispute. It is also important to work strategically to establish organizational cultures and procedures that value the basic rules of civility and encourage divergent thinking.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level Leaders must identify the potential for conflict that may arise from work schedules, assignments, working conditions or changes in policies and/or procedures. They should listen actively to employee concerns, encourage open discussion, seek common ground in settling disagreements, and assist others in seeing the cause of a problem, distinguishing it from its symptoms. They must know and be able to effectively use in-house resources to manage conflict, display negotiation skills, and work with Employee Assistance Programs, union groups, training sources, and other entities to promote the cultural health of the organization.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates self-understanding and emotional control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the causes and consequences of feelings. • Is attentive to emotional cues. • Is able to monitor and reflect on emotions. • Is able to engage, prolong or detach from an emotional state depending on its utility.
Demonstrates empathy and understanding of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the emotional expressions of other people. • Actively listens to the concerns of employees regarding issues such as organizational changes, quality of work life, and other issues that might cause employees worry or stress. • Sees opportunities for and orchestrates positive outcomes in conflict situations. • Appreciates and honors the emotions of others and recognizes the needs related to these feelings.
Analyzes personal, structural and other sources of conflict within the team or organization and plans for long-lasting, long-term improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spots the potential for conflict, brings issues into the open, and helps de-escalate them. • Ensures that subordinates have training that helps them to understand the perspective(s) of others. • Follows up on conflict issues that require it. • Works with others to identify and remove obstacles to understanding and a positive workplace culture. • Encourages debate and open discussion. • Actively involves others in planning that might circumvent conflict; such as the development of work schedules, assignments, rewards, etc. • Coaches, teaches, counsels, and motivates employees towards greater mutual respect and understanding. • Refers complex conflicts and others that are not amenable to informal resolution to mediation specialists. • Provides employees with information regarding mediation services and other employee assistance programs.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Develops a culture of inclusiveness, respect and civility that values and respects different ideas and preferences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates through own actions respect and inclusiveness to subordinates, staff, and management. • Ensures the ability of employees to function together in the workplace environment. • Exercises authority as necessary to maintain civility, inclusiveness and fairness. • Promotes objectivity.
<p>Uses conflict management skills and continues to enhance them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and helps others see the root of a problem and distinguish its symptoms from its causes. • Promotes collaborative approaches to problem solving. • Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate policies and procedures in dealing with conflicts. • Understands the difference between positions and interests and can help others find common ground. • Seeks opportunities to develop conflict management skills.
<p>Embraces change and recognizes the role that change has in contributing to possible conflict.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipates the range of reactions that typically occur when change is introduced. • Communicates the impending change and the forces that have driven it to reduce resistance and/or conflict. • Communicates the benefits that will accrue as a result of planned change.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to lead committees--especially if it may be contentious.
- Volunteer to work on a multi-disciplinary project team with varied stakeholders.
- Volunteer to facilitate meetings where disagreement is possible.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Read case studies that involve successful resolution of contentious issues.
- Interview someone who you see as a good conflict manager for advice and suggestions.
- Read a book about resolving conflict at work and at home.
- Strive to maintain a healthy balance between work life and home life.
- Educate yourself about the process of arbitration, and consider using a third party to resolve extremely challenging situations.

Training

- Take change management training if applicable.
- Take an assessment specifically targeted at conflict management to gain more self-awareness about how you resolve conflict personally.
- Seek out formal conflict management training.
- Take NCTC's "[Effective Facilitation](#)" LED5122 training.
- Take team building training for your intact team – have an outside professional work with your group.
- Take formal stress management training.
- Take improving your influencing and negotiating skills through formal training such as NCTC's "Applying Collaboration to Environmental Issues" OUT8122 and NCTC's "Interest-Based Negotiation".

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; supports a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new and innovative programs and/or processes.

Importance

Creative and innovative thinking leads to new insights, novel approaches, fresh perspectives, new ways of understanding and conceiving of things, and leads one to see the world in imaginative and different ways. Creativity and innovation represent a core competency in successful organizations that are able to anticipate and meet strategic challenges including change, advancing technology, an increasingly diverse work force, and constant budget constraints. This is about exploring all options in a systematic way, one that also moves thinking past conventional mental and organizational boundaries. It is using one's full range of skills, knowledge, and experience to search for and address the complex causes, not just symptoms, of problems and to imagine and pose improvements to the organization. At the higher levels it means creating a culture and the organizational means that encourage, support and reward innovative thinking and continual improvement.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders model the concepts of innovation and creativity. They encourage critical thinking, innovative problem solving, brainstorming and other techniques that support the generation of alternative approaches. They recruit for diversity of thought, talent and perspective and invest in training that leads to better analysis, problem-solving, and creative solutions. They demonstrate and encourage the use of innovative thinking and problem-solving approaches while acknowledging and rewarding innovation and creativity.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates commitment to personal and organizational improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies opportunities to improve team processes, products, and service delivery. • Develops ideas and implements change. • Models creative thinking and problem solving. • Recognizes when a situation calls for or could benefit from a different approach. • Sets high expectations for continuous staff development. • Communicates a personal commitment to continual organizational improvement.
Offers new ideas and is open to new ideas from others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes team/unit processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. • Challenges team/unit members to look at issues/situations from different perspectives. • Allows and encourages creative, innovative, and non-conventional contributions, even when this leads to conflict. • Adapts own thinking to meet changing circumstances, unexpected constraints, or challenges. • Accepts reasonable risk.
Generates new approaches using conventional and divergent thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages others to employ a variety of techniques for exploring different options. • Leads the work group to use brainstorming, systems thinking, and other techniques that might offer new perspectives, ideas or solutions. • Encourages the work group to identify the best solution(s) to problems by thinking past simple cause and effect understandings.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Encourages and supports a culture that is open to alternatives and non-conventional thought.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes offering new ideas and perspectives safe and valued. • Develops and weighs alternatives before settling on a solution. • Encourages flexibility of thought as challenges and opportunities arise. • Establishes opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices. • Establishes mechanisms that provide continuing feedback on processes and services. • Understands the role of conflict in creative processes and can manage such conflict towards positive outcomes.
<p>Recognizes, encourages and employs the creative capacity of others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively recruits for diversity of thought, talent, and perspective among team/group members. • Facilitates team roles and processes that take greatest advantage of creative talent and innovative thought • Establishes/influences the staffing strategies and work processes that encourage the consideration of multiple approaches and non-conventional thought. • Uses performance measures that encourage and reward new ideas. • Works with other teams, groups, and disciplines to achieve broader perspective on issues and to build on the good work of others. • Works closely with internal and external customers and stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives and interests are understood and encourages their contributions.
<p>Uses a variety of analytical tools to assess the feasibility of alternative approaches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invests in training that enables self and others to better weigh potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility and enhance risk analysis and decision-making skills. • Understands the role of evaluation and testing and applies it in creative processes.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leadership (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Work on a task force that requires you to sell ideas and try to influence the opinion of decision makers, either within the Service or in an outside community organization.
- Apply for a job swap/detail that would require you to try new approaches.
- Ask more questions, and be sure you are defining the problem correctly.
- Remove unnecessary constraints, and break out of your comfort zone.
- Generate ideas without passing judgment first.
- Be open to the creative suggestions of others.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Get involved on teams with people that are not like you.
- Read a book on creative thinking and innovation.
- Try some creative arts such as creative writing, sculpture, music or art.
- Practice brainstorming out loud with others.
- Change your daily routine and try out some new ways of doing business.
- Keep an open mind while attending a meeting of an organization that manages resources differently. Observe how they do it – control your emotions, and you may learn something new.

Training

- Attend a creative thinking workshop.
- Learn how to effectively use different analytical tools to solve problems.
- Attend and join your local [Toastmasters](#) club.
- Apply for the FWS [Stepping Up to Leadership Program](#).

PARTNERING (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS & COMMUNICATIONS)

Definition

Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities, collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

Importance

Collaboration is a critical dimension of modern leadership in public service today. Highly effective government today requires partnerships, coalitions, and other collaborative, participative approaches. Leaders must be ready to seek out and work with others to make interdependent decisions and implement solutions based on an understanding of the issues and resources that partnering with others brings. The Service must move away from being rule-based and be guided by principles and outcomes. This will require leaders who involve others, manage change, and communicate an overarching mission and common purpose. Partnering provides the opportunity to build an effective community between the Service and its stakeholders, reduce or avoid duplications, establish a team culture, and deliver superior service.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level Leaders search out opportunities to collaborate across organizational boundaries. They realize that partnerships are often required to accomplish the mission of the Service. They develop and manage partnerships by effectively planning and committing human and financial resources to the partnership effort while monitoring and evaluating progress and achievements. They facilitate cross-functional collaboration and information sharing among varied constituencies. They identify, build upon, and disseminate partnering lessons and facilitate training that supports the formation and maintenance of productive relationships. They establish a healthy partnering culture that creates opportunities and incentives to learn and share knowledge with others. They identify areas of potential conflict and work to avoid that conflict by establishing procedures, clarifying problems early on, and working to resolve those problems quickly and they take time to really get to know their partners and their needs/concerns and develop a trust/comfort level with them.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes and supports a partnering culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses collaborative work initiatives to increase the effectiveness of the station/unit. • Encourages and participates in assignments with internal and external stakeholders to develop partnerships where appropriate. • Works to maintain a relationship of trust and commitment with various stakeholders. • Shares ownership in, benefits of, and responsibility for the success of the partnership. • Rewards active exploration of partnering possibilities. • Reports to upper management the lessons learned from implemented partnerships. • Creates opportunities and incentives to learn and share knowledge with others about partnering successes and opportunities. • Facilitates training in areas that supports the ability to form and maintain productive relationships.
Creates and develops partnerships to achieve common goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to maximize strategic opportunities by aligning and integrating efforts, core processes, activities and resources with partners. • Understands the types of cooperative arrangements (from networking to complex multi-sector collaboration) and chooses the one appropriate to achieving set goals. • Ensures that lessons learned are disseminated and built upon. • Shares innovative partnering ideas with others. • Realigns resources, processes and approaches proactively. • Facilitates cross-functional collaboration, information sharing and establishment of shared work goals. • Empowers others to develop partnerships while realizing that some partnerships take longer to develop. • Identifies appropriate goals with concrete objectives around which to create partnerships.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Manages existing partnerships and monitors achievements and progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the operational implications of the partnership. • Effectively plans for the commitment of time, skills, financial resources, external support, commitment and personnel to the partnership effort. • Understands which resources, roles and responsibilities have been committed to by each partner. • Ensures that procedures are in place to evaluate the achievements of partnerships. • Ensures that innovative partnerships operate within legal and regulatory boundaries. • Selects proper legal/ethical agreements (i.e., MOU vs. MOA vs. 501(c)3, etc.) and understands responsibility and authority as signatory/participant. • Ensures that the Service treats all partners fairly and ethically. • Sets clear parameters and goals with partners to avoid misunderstandings

Developmental Activities

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Primary Developmental Activities

- Get involved in multi-agency teams and cross-program activities.
- Be a representative for the Service on a committee/project.
- Volunteer to lead a cross-program committee.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Learn about other agencies/programs by doing some individual research to see if there are partnering opportunities.
- Learn about the different type of funding mechanisms/partnership agreements available to you.
- Read books on team leadership and establishing partnerships.
- Shadow someone who is considered a partnership champion.
- Initiate a partnership.
- Identify a resource issue and the stakeholders to see if partnership opportunities exist for the Service.
- Learn about different financial agreements available for funding partnerships.
- Gain experience writing effective project proposals involving multiple partners.

Training

- Take partnership courses at NCTC such as Building Partnerships Between Gateway Communities and Public Lands (ITV Workshop) and [Conservation Partnerships](#) OUT8110.
- Attend training on team leadership/team building from NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Attend training on interpersonal relationships and communication at NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Attend training on political savvy.

PROBLEM SOLVING (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Identifies and analyzes problems, distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions, and provides solutions to individual and organization problems.

Importance

Problems are often ill-structured situations and may not be recognized as problems until they loom large. Leaders identify emerging problems so that they may be addressed before they become critical and cause damage to the organization or its objectives. Successful problem solving must include the application of critical thinking so as to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant factors, identify the dimensions of the problem, and explore multiple options. Leaders use collaborative problem solving processes to yield a fuller, deeper understanding of the problem, expand the ownership of the situation, focus multiple and diverse resources on the issue, and enhance the likelihood of a successful solution.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-level leaders must routinely review programs, processes, and progress, keeping alert to emerging issues and the need for modifications or reengineering. When issues arise, leaders clearly articulate the problem and work to find the root cause(s), not focus on the symptoms and superficial causes. They consider all aspects of the problem, identify connections, and look for ways to improve the situation. They utilize individual, collaborative, lateral, innovative, radical and/or unconventional approaches by involving partners and/or stakeholders when generating alternatives. They consider interim solutions while addressing underlying causes, identify priorities and evaluate alternatives, implement solutions, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their decision(s) in achieving organizational goals.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Anticipates problems and identifies steps to prevent their occurrence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews projects, processes and progress, keeping alert to the need for modifications or reengineering. • Identifies gaps in information and modifies data gathering/analysis processes to fill those gaps. • Prioritizes issues and problems, judging importance, feasibility, appropriateness and consequences in selecting those to address. • Knows when information is adequate for decision making. • Recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action on internal and external stakeholders. • Understands the operational implications of a strategy and looks beyond solutions that are merely expedient. • Recognizes the different perspectives and desires of internal and external stakeholders. • Effectively manages conflicts between stakeholder desires and policy or resource availability. • Monitors staff satisfaction, employee relationships and workplace climate to anticipate potential problems/concerns.
Analyzes current situations, issues, approaches and information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes opportunities for the exchange of ideas and best practices. • Encourages and shares new ideas and successful approaches with internal and external stakeholders. • Establishes mechanisms that provide feedback on processes and services. • Monitors and evaluates current conditions and shifts resources and approaches as necessary when priorities change. • Solicits advice from others on the implications of any trade-off decisions that may need to be made. • Invests in training for self and others that enhances the range of analytical and modeling tools for the group. • Invests in training for self and others that enhance risk analysis and decision-making skills. • Evaluates staff satisfaction, employee relationships and workplace climate to identify problems/concerns.

<p>Solves problems affecting the work of the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes when a situation calls for, or could benefit from, a different approach. • Identifies potential resolutions to the problem using critical and creative thinking. • Adapts thinking to meet changing circumstances, unexpected constraints or challenges. • Manages conflict in creative processes toward positive outcomes. • Shares new approaches with others and encourages input from others and the exploration and adoption of new ideas. • Communicates a clear understanding of internal/external stakeholder needs and makes these central to decision-making and service delivery. • Seeks and identifies solutions to problems which maximize the benefit to the resource within the parameters of legal and regulatory boundaries. • Empowers others by delegating authority and responsibility to others who may be closer to the problem and holds them accountable. • Accepts reasonable risk. • Assumes responsibility for risks taken and actions embarked upon.
<p>Uses a variety of problem-solving techniques and collaborative approaches to identify and evaluate alternative courses of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses effective group processes to enhance problem-solving and decision-making abilities, to increase participation and ownership, and to enhance the likelihood for a successful solution. • Utilizes collaborative approaches and values a range of perspectives and input from others. • Networks to address common issues. • Fosters shared “ownership” of the problem without assigning blame. • Manages conflict, ensures that all voices are heard, and steers the group towards mutually beneficial solutions. • Assesses lessons learned from actions and identifies potential improvements and/or course corrections. • Utilizes decision making tools that distinguish among choices in ethical dilemmas and risk assessment.

Implements the changes necessary to make solutions work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops and implements an appropriate action plan for change, taking into account what, who, why, when, and how.• Communicates change using vision, clear and detailed steps, and persuasive skills to help people realign their work and energy behind the new approach,• Informs employees how their work effort is related to the change and how they will be expected to participate in the new effort.• Delegates effectively and strategically in response to change or crisis.• Encourages innovation within broad guidelines and clear goals to foster ownership of change.• Communicates decisions made and the reasons behind them to keep others in the loop.• Advises others of possible impacts of decisions made and actions pursued.
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Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-level leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Become an officer on a community board.
- Volunteer to be on a team/project that is trying to solve an important issue.
- Shadow a higher-level leader who is working on a complex project.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Develop, discuss and review performance measures with your employees.
- Read a book on an applicable topic.
- Interview a good problem solver to learn how he/she does it.
- Join the safety committee of your organization.
- Take up a hobby that requires complex problem solving skills; e.g., chess, Sudoku puzzles, etc.
- Determine whether you are defining the problem correctly.
- Develop a philosophical stance toward mistakes and failures in problem solving. Clearly articulate to others what your philosophy is.
- Force yourself out of your comfort zone.
- Be aware of analysis paralysis. Recognize whether your perfectionism is contributing to the problem.
- Reflect on whether you get “hung up on the process” and miss the big picture.

Training

- Learn a variety of modeling techniques, risk analysis and cost benefit analysis techniques.
- Take training in effective communications, crucial conversations, or difficult conversations.
- Take training in change management.
- Take training in problem solving and decision making.
- Learn about ethical decision-making tools as well as Federal ethics regulations and other laws which might pertain to problems.

- Take an assessment that teaches “how and why people are different”—i.e. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), or looks at behavioral styles and preferences (i.e. DISC).
- Take training that teaches you to deal with ambiguity.
- Take training that helps you set priorities better.

TEAM BUILDING (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with stakeholders, fostering commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

Importance

Team-based approaches to work (formal and informal groups, work groups, committees, etc.) can be an effective way to increase organizational performance. Collaborative work, group work, and team work are forces for productivity, quality, synergy, and cost reduction. Teams have a greater diversity of resources which contributes to improved problem solving and to higher productivity. Teams help “socialize” new members, facilitate organizational performance, build leadership skills, and inspire innovation. Teams provide benefits for their members as they learn about the organization(s) and acquire new skills. For some team members, they also serve important personal needs for affiliation and esteem.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders form and task teams to maximize successful outcomes by selecting team members that represent diverse interests, specialties, and technical expertise. They identify team members to achieve both the immediate task and to develop positive and ongoing working relationships throughout the organization and use team leadership assignments to foster leadership talent throughout the unit. They assist with the team launch by clearly communicating team purpose, expectations, parameters of authority, resources and other relevant information. Mid-level leaders communicate, implement, and coordinate the team’s work or results with relevant workgroups and advocate for the work of the team with other groups and with higher level managers. They support the team in obtaining resources, expertise, and the cooperation needed to achieve results. They provide (or acquire) the coaching/training needed to achieve results, enhance group processes, and make better decisions. They also recommend or approve formal recognition for the work of the team.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes teams as needed to accomplish goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies whether a team is appropriate for the particular task/project. • Understands the various types of formal and informal teams and selects the appropriate style that will best meet the goals. • Evaluates personnel, time and other resources to develop teams that will best achieve the goals. • Plans team membership to achieve the immediate task as well as to develop positive and ongoing working relationships that span the organization. • Selects team members that represent diverse interests, specialties, and technical expertise.
Assigns task(s) to the team and delegates responsibilities within the team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicates team purpose, expectations, and parameters of authority, resources and other relevant information. • Uses team assignments to develop collaboration, managerial, and leadership skills for the organization. • Invests in training for self and others that enhance team building, group process, and decision-making skills.
Supports the team and advocates for its success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports innovation by empowering the team to pursue its goals and make decisions without micromanaging. • Supports the team in getting resources, expertise, and cooperation necessary to achieve results. • Monitors on-going individual and team performance. • Establishes mechanisms for the exchange of ideas and best practices with other teams. • Manages and works to resolve conflict within the team. • Advocates for the work of the team with other groups and higher level managers. • Recommends or approves formal recognition for work of the team.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-level leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to be a coach in a youth sports league, scout leader, etc.
- Volunteer to lead a team.
- Work on a committee in a community organization.
- Create a climate of innovation and experimentation.
- Function as team member on a team, and observe the leader to learn things to do and not do.
- Read a book on team building and team leadership and motivating others.
- Spend time developing your interpersonal skills through your own self-awareness.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Use your behavior to model the way for others and set the standard.
- Reflect on whether you are comfortable delegating important work to others.
- Utilize the skills of a team coach to help you problem solve and get an objective opinion while providing you with feedback.
- Structure work so that you can have fun while working.
- Reflect on whether all the team members are committed to the team vision.
- Reflect on whether you create a climate that enables people to perform their best (or worst), whether it is intentional or unintentional.
- Reflect on whether you are too much of a hard driver, and if you are just interested in getting the work out of people. If so, consider the impact and effect this may be having on your team.

Training

- Take NCTC's course "[Effective Facilitation](#)" LED5122.
- Take NCTC's course "[Introduction to Management Skills](#)" LED6176.
- Take NCTC's course "[Team Start-Up](#)" LED5118.

- Take NCTC's course "[Team Effectiveness Training](#)" LED5021.
- Take NCTC's "[The Leadership Challenge Workshop](#)" LED6109.
- Take taking a course on team leadership from an outside vendor.
- Take taking a meeting facilitation or meeting management course.
- Take taking a course on project management, task prioritization and/or delegation

TECHNICAL CREDIBILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Appropriately applies procedures, regulations, standards and policies related to specialized expertise. Combines expertise, administrative processes, and organizational knowledge to make sound, ethical resource recommendations and/or decisions in support of the mission.

Importance

Accomplishing the Service's mission is contingent upon its leaders having expertise across a diverse array of disciplines. The reputation of the FWS is based upon technical credibility in science and in business practices. The Service is a science based organization, using a high level of technical expertise to make decisions and take actions. Leaders with specialized knowledge and technical abilities improve the Service's operations. They inspire confidence among employees, the American public, customers, Congress, stakeholders, and partners. A leader with technical knowledge and integrity helps the Service avoid risk from legal and ethical challenges.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders keep up with advances in their discipline. They ensure that they are operating within the proper legal, regulatory and policy framework. They accurately identify problems, evaluate alternatives, and recommend appropriate actions. They recognize their own limitations and consult with others who have the specific, technical expertise required. They are proactive in working with their employees to identify developmental opportunities to improve the technical skills of the team. They are recognized as experts in their field and as such may publish manuscripts, present at professional meetings, and/or be involved in training others.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates expertise in his/her field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishes research he/she conducted. • Teaches others his/her craft. • Presents at conferences and meetings. • Takes a leadership role in professional associations, conferences, and meetings. • Sets challenging goals for self and group and achieves them. • Participates and actively promotes participation of others in a community of practice. • Actively participates and refreshes fundamentals by continuing to expand his/her knowledge base.
Has a thorough knowledge of his/her organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a network of other subject matter experts, both internally and externally. • Actively maintains/uses the collective knowledge in their network. • Makes administrative decisions that follow current Service/organization policies and procedures. • Assigns team responsibilities that distribute team work according to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of team members. • Works to grow the capacity and capability of team members. • Evaluates assignments and determines whether they can be accomplished with their allocated resources/ability.
Understands legal and regulatory policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds the answers to questions. • Identifies the steps needed to take a project from initiation to completion. • Knows where to go for advice when a legal or ethical dilemma is present. • Understands the policies and laws that guide his/her field of expertise and can find answers to questions related to that field. • Advises others on legal and regulatory guidelines and helps them maintain compliance with standards.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Represent your discipline on a National level team.
- Volunteer for a detail to the Washington Office.
- Detail to another agency with a different technical focus or on a cross-program team.
- Detail to a sister agency with a greater scientific technical focus.
- Focus on a global perspective in your area of expertise.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Seek a leadership position in a professional association in your discipline.
- Consider a job swap in or outside your field of expertise.
- Work with NCTC on a course design team, as a peer reviewer, or as an instructor for a course.
- Write white papers for a Regional Director in your area(s) of expertise.
- Answer public questions in an open forum as a Service representative.
- Present Service work to an NGO, and participate in high school job fairs.
- Maintain a personal library on your discipline, subscribe to professional journals, and ensure your team has the “latest and greatest” publications, and circulate materials.
- Publish your research/Service work in governmental and intergovernmental publications.
- Be a mentor to someone junior to you or find a mentor and be a mentee.
- Look “in your own back yard” for learning opportunities.
- Be a member of professional association dealing with specific discipline.
- Consider community involvement within your realm of expertise (science fair judge, volunteer expertise to non-profits, etc).
- Take advantage of public speaking opportunities and consider becoming a member of your local [Toastmasters](#) club.
- Give presentations at lunch meetings (“brown bag” gatherings).
- Network and share your experience with others.

Training

- Do not discount the value of continuing education in your profession.
- Continue to keep up-to-date on your computer skills and technological knowledge.
- Consider hiring a consultant in the technology field of interest to tutor you to accelerate your learning.
- Whenever new technology surfaces, volunteer to learn and try it first.
- Apply to attend international conferences or workshops for a global perspective.