

CONTINUAL LEARNING

Definition

Grasps the essence of new information, masters new technical and business knowledge, recognizes personal strengths and weaknesses, pursues self-development, and seeks feedback from others and opportunities to master new knowledge.

Importance

Continual learning is particularly critical in times of change, since those organizations that are flexible, adaptive and productive (learning organizations) will excel. The active pursuit of learning and development, the creation of intellectual capital, the transformation of experience into knowledge, and the use of that knowledge to address new challenges and to improve future performance contribute to continuous improvement. This organizational knowledge is essential to future success as government is facing massive retirements in the near future.

How is this competency demonstrated?

An organization that embraces continual learning requires individuals at all levels to take the responsibility and the initiative to build knowledge and skills, maintain currency in their professional field, and be open to new ideas. Individuals must be reflective and possess the ability to accurately assess themselves, including identifying their own strengths and knowledge “gaps.” Such learning entails soliciting honest feedback to discover what is difficult to see in oneself.

At higher levels (mid-level leaders through executive) it means investing in people; creating and maintaining support for creative developmental opportunities for others. It includes the capacity to coach, to identify the strengths of others, and to build on them. It results in the creation of a learning organization and preparing one’s team, group or organization for an ill-defined future. It requires the systematic development of a learning culture that encourages mutuality, collaboration, curiosity, and reflection, as well as an effective learning infrastructure, developmental framework, and knowledge management. It means developing specific ways of organizing resources and opportunities that promote regular reflection and sharing and profiting from lessons learned across the organization. It means building opportunities for learning/continuous improvement within groups and across the organization. To begin with, management must, themselves, model continuous self-development.

A first appointment leader must be able to identify gaps in knowledge and skill on a team and promote individuals’ further technical development so as to keep the team current with the latest knowledge and information. They must identify and make

assignments that challenge abilities and develop self confidence. They have insight into individuals' learning profiles and styles and use that knowledge to develop team members. They foster learning, use relational skills, and network with others to share knowledge and resources

Mid-level leaders must provide support for traditional and creative developmental opportunities, identifying and building on the strengths of individuals, and coaching and mentoring them. They analyze actions and contribute to procedures that enable learning from past outcomes while fostering knowledge sharing and learning across units. Mid-level leaders ensure that all employees have an Individual Development Plan (IDP), and link IDPs to both developmental assignments and the agency's strategic needs. They assume the role of career coach and see it as an investment in human capital resources.

Senior leaders must clearly define training goals and expectations and link them to Agency strategic objectives and goals, ensuring that effective IDPs that support the Agency mission and strategy are present for all and they incorporate measures of effectiveness into all training and development initiatives. Senior leaders design and implement Knowledge Management (KM) systems, applying the tools and techniques of KM to transfer learning and share it across the organization as they plan strategically for changing organizational needs in skills and knowledge, assessing organizational skills and strengths against current and future requirements.

At the Executive level, continual learning means investing in human capital and incorporating employee development into the agency budgeting and planning processes. The Executive must create and support an environment that facilitates learning, networking, and knowledge sharing, and translate that into strategic planning and work activities. They promote benchmarking and other techniques that help build upon best practices, use "Balanced Scorecard" and/or other tools to ensure that resources to develop the Agency's human resources are identified and obtained, and set high expectations for learning achievements. It is essential that Executives communicate the importance of learning as part of the organizational strategy and ensure that senior leaders and mid-level leaders have been properly trained to coach, evaluate and conduct employee career discussions.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| Values learning and takes initiative to build knowledge and skills. | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strives for continuous improvement and is actively engaged in exploring new ideas and concepts. • Seeks out and engages in self-improvement activities. • Spends time learning from others. • Creates time within and away from the job to learn. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks challenging assignments and unfamiliar tasks. • Seeks out new developments, techniques, advances in knowledge and ideas. • Seeks out new approaches, tools, and methods in their own field of expertise. • Maintains professional certification or license, if appropriate. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages and supports professional growth including pursuit of appropriate certifications and licenses. • Gives others the autonomy to approach issues in their own way, including the opportunity to make and learn from mistakes. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invests in the further development of personal supervisory skills, in better understanding the issues and needs that affect customers, and in their own field-specific expertise. • Reinforces knowledge, skills and new behaviors gained through training and development by helping employees apply them on the job. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models continuous self-development. • Adds to managerial knowledge, strategic thinking, financial planning and analysis, as well as skills in supporting a learning organization. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually updates their own and others' awareness of the organization and the big picture context within which we work. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Is reflective and learns from mistakes.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes both successes and failures for clues to improvement. • Is resilient towards setbacks and failures, analyzing them for lessons learned and building on them. • Confronts problems instead of avoiding them. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses after-action reviews to assess performance. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of approaches to analyze and understand how actions led to certain outcomes and how to improve one’s approach to similar situations in the future. • Is open about mistakes and failure with self and others. • Contributes to procedures that enable the organization to learn from past actions. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans, implements and learns from program and policy evaluation strategies. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that new organizational policies, programs, procedures and services are built to incorporate and profit from lessons learned. • Ensures that stakeholders understand results of policy and program evaluation. |
| <p>Assesses gaps in knowledge and skill in self and in others.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses their own strengths and weaknesses. • Actively seeks feedback on their performance • Understands their strengths and potential “fatal flaws” in knowledge and performance. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes and addresses team and team member strengths and potential “fatal flaws” in knowledge and performance. • Draws on individual team member strengths rather than weaknesses to fashion assignments and help develop others in the team. • Gives decision making authority to the team, where appropriate. Avoids taking over all decisions. • Rewards and recognizes the good use of team skills, not just individual contributions. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures current skills and knowledge against competencies needed for continuing success and to meet future problems. • Evaluates the impact of training on performance. |
| <p>Understands the value of knowledge sharing.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seeks learning in areas beyond their own technical expertise in order to become a broader resource. • Participates actively in professional associations(s). <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks with others and supports team-networking to share resources, knowledge, and build upon rather than replicate the work of others. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches and mentors employees. • Fosters knowledge sharing and learning across units. • Actively engages in partnering activities that align common goals and services. • Serves as a source of wisdom and expertise on technical and organizational matters for employees |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies tools and techniques of Knowledge Management to share learning widely across the organization. • Identifies best practices from high-performance organizations with similar missions. • Helps the organization learn from customers and stakeholders and translates that learning into improved ways of performing. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops processes and/or systems to ensure that what is learned in training or practice is shared throughout the organization and applied to work activities and strategic planning. • Cooperates and/or networks across disciplinary, organizational, agency and public/private boundaries to establish and reach common understanding on issues and opportunities. • Promotes benchmarking and other techniques that help an agency build upon best practices. • Broadly communicates throughout the organization the need to understand others' viewpoints, agendas, values, constraints and behaviors and be willing to take others' ideas into consideration. |
| <p>Demonstrates knowledge of learning styles and uses a variety of strategies to close learning gaps.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafts and uses for their own development a variety of learning approaches, including formal course work, reading, talking with others, attending formal training, shadowing, detail assignments, and on-the-job experiences. • Understands their preferred learning style and methods. • Uses the IDP to link assessments, career goals and organizational strategies to personal development plans. • Works to deploy strengths. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the team’s use of a variety of learning methods, including reading, talking with others, after-action reviews, attending formal training, and on-the-job experiences. • Shows insight into individuals’ learning profiles and styles when making assignments or devising developmental strategies. • Identifies and makes assignments that challenge team members to stretch their abilities and self confidence. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates and makes developmental assignments to stretch and foster learning and development in employees. • Delegates responsibility and decision making to lower levels to develop employees. • Ensures that all employees have an IDP. Links IDPs and developmental assignments to current and future organizational needs. |
| <p>Understands the concept of knowledge management and leads knowledge management efforts.</p> | <p>FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates an environment that facilitates knowledge sharing, learning, and networking which can support change. • Builds the organization’s capacity to learn, improve, anticipate and meet new challenges. • Designs, implements, and orchestrates Knowledge Management strategies and initiatives throughout the organization. |
| <p>Integrates the development of human capital into strategic planning and creates an integrated approach to address current problems and meet emerging demands.</p> | <p>FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses organizational skills and strengths against current and future requirements. • Manages expenditures for training and development as investments that maximize the value of human capital plans strategically for changing organizational needs in skills and knowledge. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops a strategic approach that establishes priorities and leverages investments in training and development to achieve agency results. • Uses planning tools to ensure that resources to develop an organization's human resources are recognized and secured. • Provides consistent support and appropriate funding for training and development efforts. • Assesses and demonstrates how training and development efforts contribute to improved performance and results. • Incorporates employees' development goals into agency planning processes. • Has in place prioritized training goals and resources that are consistent with agency mission, goals and culture and are in line with strategic and tactical changes. • Provides needed tools and training resources to senior leaders and mid-level leaders. • Ensures that senior leaders and mid-level leaders have been properly trained to coach, evaluate and conduct employee career discussions. |

INTEGRITY AND HONESTY

Definition

Instills mutual trust and confidence, creates a culture that fosters high standards of ethics, behaves in a fair and ethical manner toward others, and demonstrates a sense of corporate responsibility and commitment to public service.

Importance

Public service is a public trust. Every public servant is vested with power and authority. The highest obligation of every individual in government is to fulfill this basic trust with professional and personal integrity. Public servants take an oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States,” and the values which it proclaims of justice, equality, morality. They further pledge to “well and fully discharge the duties...of office.” Thus, in addition to faithful adherence to the ethical principles enjoined upon all honest and decent people, public employees have an additional duty to discern, understand and meet the needs of their fellow citizens. They are pledged to ensure integrity in the products and services they provide, as well as provide fair and equitable access to them.

Public servants must understand the larger context of their work, and the implications and consequences of what they do. Their judgment and behavior must be built upon more than a list of rules. They must have a clear understanding of and allegiance to the moral standards they have taken an oath to uphold. Only in this way can Government leaders hope to find a guide in times of ambiguity, be able to choose among tough choices between competing claims, and to find the ethical balance between risk and responsibility. This understanding of the principles and values are our Government’s link to credibility and legitimacy and to maintaining the public’s confidence.

How is this competency demonstrated?

Fair and ethical behavior and following through on commitments and promises are integral to the ability to build trust. They are prerequisites to being effective in all roles in government service. These competencies and/or behaviors are closely allied to the concept of “servant leadership” and are needed from the foundational roles through the executive level. If one is not ethical and trustworthy, one cannot be placed in any position of trust. One should not even be considered to become a team leader without having demonstrated the integrity, honesty and trustworthiness to have and maintain a position of public trust. Individual at all levels with integrity and honesty demonstrate high moral values in word and deed, demonstrate accountability for preserving the integrity of products and services, and build trust through reliability and authenticity. They meet formal ethical requirements, maintain confidentiality as appropriate for personal and/or organizational information, and refrain from spreading gossip, rumor,

and false information. They understand and adhere to ethical standards for public officials, demonstrate belief in the concept of human dignity, and understand the Constitution, our system of government, and what the Oath of Office requires of public officials. At all levels, individuals with integrity and honesty show moral courage by doing the right thing even when it is not popular or by expressing dissent when actions or pending decisions would violate organizational and/or constitutional values, laws, and regulations. In addition, they confront unethical behavior in others.

First appointment leaders, mid-level leaders and senior leaders must understand the legal and ethical framework of the civil service and must create a climate that supports integrity and honesty and that sets the ethical tone for the work units. They must articulate that all government workers are the stewards of the public trust. First appointment leaders, mid-level leaders and senior leaders should recognize and support honesty, integrity and ethical behavior of employees, confront unethical behavior in others, hold individuals/units accountable for failures of integrity and honesty, and act consistently with espoused values, even when it might be difficult or unpopular. They must ensure the integrity of accounting and performance data, inspire others through actions as well as words, encourage and support discussions about ethical issues, interpret ethics regulations for others in a way that meets both the letter and the spirit of the law, and provide counsel to others facing ethical dilemmas in the workplace.

The Executive must articulate public service values and the meaning of the Oath of Office under the Constitution and ensure that the Civil Service is responsive to elected leaders and faithful to Constitutional values and processes. They should create an organizational culture that fosters high standards of ethics, service and honor and establish procedures, policies, standards, and training that support an organizational “moral compass.” Executives should inspire others to act at the highest level of honesty and integrity and work with all responsible to develop and implement ethics regulations that embody the spirit of public service.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| Exhibits personal and organizational Integrity and Honesty. | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds a sense of purpose in the larger mission and finds value and personal satisfaction in the intrinsic rewards of service. • Practices “servant leadership,” and serves out of concern for the well-being of others and the good of our nation and communities. • Understands the larger context of one’s job, its implications, and consequences. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defends what’s right with courage and fortitude. • Deals effectively with pressure. • Acts as a good steward of all public resources. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APOINTMENT, MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models commitment to service. • Communicates and acts in concert with the understanding that public service has an ultimate responsibility to the customer, rather than the institution. • Does not sacrifice trust and integrity to expediency, even under pressure. • Does not make inappropriate decisions for personal gain, to include career advancements. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates public service as a higher calling and an honorable profession, both through personal example as well as through the principles that visibly guide the organization one leads. • Inspires others to act at the highest level of honesty and integrity. • Can be counted on to act with courage and consistency with espoused values, even when it might be unpopular, or personally inconvenient to do so. • Does not yield to inappropriate personal or group requests for favors or sacrifice integrity to political pressure. • Does not compromise on values or principles. • Creates an organizational culture that fosters high standards of ethics, service and honor. • Ensures that agency purpose and direction are clearly and transparently service inspired. |
| <p>Acts to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution through the practice of formal ethical requirements and the demonstration of high moral values.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates loyalty to the Government and citizens of the U.S. by fulfilling, “well and faithfully,” the highest obligations of service. • Understands and implements the principles and inherent responsibilities of democracy. • Understands the constitutional, political, legal and regulatory environment for government. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates leadership whatever one’s level of authority might be. • Expresses dissent when actions or pending decisions would violate organizational and/or Constitutional values, laws, and regulations. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT, MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds others accountable for issues of integrity and honesty and duty. • Encourages and supports conversations about ethical issues and provides counsel to those facing such dilemmas. • Brings in expert sources to help clarify issues, legal requirements and thought processes in ethical decisions. • Understands the legal and ethical framework of the civil service and does not transgress against it, even when it might seem to offer some benefit to the project or program. • Seeks the input of legal and ethical advisors when not clear how such framework must be applied in a given context. • Ensures appropriate oversight and control over hiring practices, procurement and contracting. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses the values of trust, respect, and responsibility that hold democracy together, and uses these to conceive and articulate the goals of the agency, and to unite employees in the pursuit of honorable, selfless service to others. • Ensures that the civil service is responsive to elected leaders and faithful to Constitutional values and processes. • Develops and implements ethics regulations that embody the spirit of public service. • Ensures that the Agency has the information, expert advice and other support it needs to act using the full breadth allowable, yet transgressing neither against public perception of what is right nor against the law itself. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Acts in a just, fair, and ethical manner and encourages ethical behavior among others.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts out of motivation to do the right thing, rather than out of pleasure, fear, inclination, habit, peer approval, or social or political pressure. • Treats all others with respect and fairness, and openly, consistently challenges bias, intolerance, and incivility. • Neither participates in nor condones offensive or discriminatory behavior. • Does not join cliques that practice offensive and exclusionary behavior. • Recognizes and avoids mental models, ego, and other blind spots which might cloud understanding of fair and just. • Makes fair judgments based on merit. • Uses control over resources and other sources of power as a means to do good. • Is forthright with self and others about one’s own mistakes. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT, MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a climate that supports integrity and honesty in the organization, through personal example but also through processes and procedures that reward and encourage ethical behavior. • Understands diversity and inclusiveness as sources of strength and acts accordingly in hiring, development, group organization, and decision making. • Fairly distributes opportunities and benefits across the entire team/group. • Sets team goals and develops procedures dedicated to serving internal and external stakeholders. • Ensures that individuals/ teams and units receive appropriate rewards and recognition for good work. • Bases reward and recognition decisions on merit and outstanding service, not on expediency. • Confronts unethical behavior in others. • Offers honest, useful feedback and identifies people’s needs for development • Ensures that all employees have training adequate to prepare them for competent and ethical performance. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes procedures and policies that support an organizational moral compass-- teaching the principles of integrity and honesty, setting clear and explicit standards of behavior, and ensuring aggressive and visible commitment to observing these standards. • Serves as a role model inspiring others to emulate integrity, honesty, justice, respect and civility. |
| <p>Inspires trust and confidence among stakeholders through reliability, authenticity, and accountability.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holds self accountable for preserving the integrity of products and services, and meeting the highest standards of quality and safety. • Uses actions to let others know one's values and principles, intentions and feelings, and acts in ways that are consistent with them. • Holds self accountable for meeting objectives and keeping commitments; follows through. • Takes on a fair share of the work. • Does not make promises that are expedient but cannot be kept. • Keeps organizational and personal information confidential when required and/or appropriate. • Corrects problems promptly and non-defensively. • Shows allegiance to meaningful work, using one's time and agency resources fully in support of the welfare and safety of citizens. • Is open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development. • Shows moral courage – does the right thing even when it is not popular. • Refrains from spreading gossip, rumor, and false information. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT, MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements programs, policies and procedures that maximize trust and confidence both within the group, as well as between the group and its internal and external stakeholders. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports personnel-, training-, procedural- and technological strategies that ensure competent, reliable and appropriate service and products to others. • Addresses poor performance among team and group members. • Makes decisions and the thinking behind them transparent to those affected by them. • Gets beyond bureaucracy, jargon and red tape in service to the customer. • Listens to experts and assesses the ethics of risk before making decisions of critical importance. • Ensures the integrity of accounting and performance data through good data collection and analysis systems. • Maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of employees, customers, and other members of the public. • Keeps the confidence of performance discussions, mentoring, and personal issues raised by the employee. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspires public appreciation for, confidence, and a trust in the necessary work of government both through personal example and Agency policies, procedures, products and services that deserve such appreciation, confidence and trust. • Ensures accountability throughout the Agency. • Ensures that the Agency is well aligned in its culture and processes to serve the public through demonstrated expertise and commitment to service goals. • Provides accurate, current and understandable information to policy makers and citizens, exposing the implications of choice in an unbiased fashion. • Ensures that plans, resources and decisions reflect the organization's focus on public service. |

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INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Definition

Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings, and capabilities of different people in different situations, is tactful, compassionate and sensitive, and treats others with respect.

Importance

Well-developed interpersonal skills are essential to productivity in a diverse workplace that increasingly utilizes a team approach to accomplish the complex tasks of the organization. Leaders at every level must understand, motivate and communicate with others. No matter the brilliance of the thought or the approach, convincing others to work to accomplish it requires well-developed interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills (empathy, tact, discretion, respect, helpfulness, integrity, openness to and courtesy for the ideas and cultures of others, active listening, effective and sensitive written and oral communication, cognitive flexibility, emotional maturity, understanding the positions of others, etc.) promote an atmosphere of confidence and trust that grows valuable relationships and inspires a group or a team to accomplish the tasks of the organization.

How is this competency demonstrated?

Interpersonal skills are exhibited at the foundation level through self-awareness and understanding of one's impact on others, demonstration of interest in others, and empathy to the needs of others. Individuals with strong interpersonal skills are willing and able to view things from another's perspective, reflect an understanding of another's concerns, and demonstrate listening and other skills, allowing others to be and to feel heard. They treat others with respect, understand and use effective body language, build trust through reliability and authenticity, and meet commitments. All employees should be attentive to emotional cues, collaborate with others, and seek feedback to clarify issues and ensure mutual understanding of goals and performance objectives.

First appointment leaders must promote an atmosphere of confidence and trust, building a team that is characterized by trust, involvement and empowerment. They must foster a friendly climate, good morale and cooperation among team members, develop and maintain cooperative working relationships, encourage the contributions of others, and guide team members through effective listening, questioning, and discussion skills. First appointment leaders assist the group in establishing norms that encourage respect, participation, and trust. They are cognizant of the ways in which emotions and feelings impact a situation, and they demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of those who perceive offence. They identify and reward supportive behaviors, develop

a structure that permits and encourages everyone’s ideas to be heard, and are a positive role model of appropriate interpersonal skills and behaviors.

Effective mid-level and senior leaders coach, teach, counsel, empower and motivate direct reports to interact with others in a respectful manner. They actively contribute to problem solving especially in difficult, contentious situations, promoting win-win situations. They display sensitivity working with people from diverse backgrounds and treat all individuals (from all levels of the organization) with respect, caring and courtesy. They establish the foundation for a high-performing organization by investing in training to ensure that direct reports have skills that help them understand the perspectives of others, by creating an environment of helpfulness and courtesy, and by treating the public with deep respect and tact while conducting the organization’s work. Mid-level and senior leaders should communicate enthusiasm, be assertive but flexible, be aware of and sensitive to body language and other interpersonal signals, understand and display an in-depth understanding of the underlying reasons for a person’s behavior or responses, and provide timely, candid, constructive feedback to help others develop.

Executives must inspire others and set the standards for a workplace culture that is open, secure, confident, empathetic, tolerant, self-aware, caring, engaged, trusting, and trustworthy, while promoting and rewarding direct reports who foster these ideals. They must use their knowledge of interpersonal relationships to develop integrated, pragmatic, process solutions which cross traditional department boundaries and which foster agency-wide and “enterprise-wide” consistency and cooperation. Executives should establish long-term connections and trusting relationships with stakeholders and political leaders and work effectively with diverse individuals in a variety of settings. Executives should build a legacy of collaboration, appreciation and individual development. They accurately evaluate employees, they maintain positive and productive relations with peers, and they identify and provide appropriate support to stakeholders to ensure negotiation of win-win outcomes.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| Promotes and models courtesy, respect, and trust. | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats others with respect. • Values the ideas of others. • Displays skill and tact when addressing interpersonal problems. • Handles difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact. • Does not cause others to loose face; is not blaming. • Is not retaliatory. • Neither participates in nor condones offensive or discriminatory behavior. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not join cliques that practice offensive and exclusionary behavior. • Does not feed the rumor mill. • Is discreet and tactful when correcting or questioning another's idea or action. • Is tactful, compassionate and sensitive. • Understands how to use effective body language and tone of voice that convey the right attitude, respect and knowledge. • Personally embodies impartiality. • Shows respect for the values and ideas of others, even when not agreeing with them. • Corrects problems promptly and without defensiveness. • Gladly offers appropriate assistance. • Keeps private discussions confidential. • Keeps all agreements. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes an environment of helpfulness, courtesy and civility. • Treats all members of the team with respect. • Pays attention to how the team supports its members. • Teaches team members to work collaboratively with others. • Helps others respect and listen to the input of others. • Gives credit where due in team and other group projects. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes the cultural foundations for a high performing organization. • Communicates clear organizational values and builds commitment, engagement and trust. • Exercises official authority when necessary, but relies on personal authority and interpersonal skills, whenever possible, to maintain civility, inclusiveness and fairness. • Communicates enthusiasm. • Coaches, teaches, counsels, and motivates employees towards greater mutual respect and understanding. • Maintains agreed upon confidentiality. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that others understand the power of open communication to enhance workplace relationships and have the skills to be effective members of a learning organization. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embodies and sets the standards for a culture that is open, secure, confident, empathetic, tolerant, self-aware, caring, engaged, trusting and trustworthy. • Develops and articulates goals which unite people in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts. • Inspires public confidence and trust in the necessary work of government through personal example as well as Agency policies, procedures, products and services. • Inspires and holds others accountable to act at the highest level of honesty and integrity. • Is a visible anchor for others by reaffirming key values and the importance of the mission in times of change. • Personally exemplifies or embodies the desired change through strong, symbolic actions that are consistent with the change. • Is a personal source of energy and direction. • Is visionary; sets direction in a way that broadly inspires trust and confidence. |
| <p>Demonstrates personal leadership.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps forward to lead as needed, regardless of position. • Builds trust through one's reliability and authenticity. • Leads by example. • Engages others; inspires, motivates and guides others toward goal accomplishment. • Challenges bias and intolerance. • Takes tough, principled stands even if these are unpopular. • Persuades others and is assertive, when necessary. • Is sought out by peers for expertise and counsel in resolving difficult interpersonal situations. • Takes responsibility for personal performance. • Facilitates an atmosphere of open communication. • Deals with difficult issues straightforwardly. • Is proactively involved in mediating misunderstandings and defusing arguments among peers. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Is self-aware and understands their impact on others.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes emotions and their effects and manages their own disruptive emotions and impulses. • Seeks awareness of the culture, beliefs, values, biases, preferences, feelings and other drivers of behavior—both conscious and unconscious—in oneself and others. • Has a sense of humor. • Is aware of their personal hot buttons, fears, mental filters and assumptions, and doesn't let them interfere with working relationships. • Understands the implications of personality differences in the workplace. • Lets others know one's values, principles, intentions and feelings, and acts in ways that are consistent with them. • Can express one's position and feelings clearly and concisely without accusation, sarcasm or hostility. • Stays composed, positive, and unflappable even in trying moments. • Thinks clearly and stays focused under pressure. • Seeks feedback from others to avoid blind spots that can cause misunderstandings. • Routinely questions one's own possible role in the creation of misunderstanding or dissent. • Admits own mistakes. • Can let go of the need to be right. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is open, receptive, nonjudgmental, compassionate and willing to learn and can leave ego out of the equation. • Is an empathic listener; cares about others. • Listens for the context of what someone is saying vs. focusing on the content. • Knows when to step in and when not to. • Can distinguish between requirements and preferences. • Is approachable and easy to talk to. • Takes the time to listen to employees and stakeholders. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Builds rapport and develops and maintains cooperative working relationships.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relates well with other people. • Listens well; remains attentive to emotional cues and unexpressed or poorly expressed meanings. • Builds shared understanding by balancing inquiry and advocacy. • Does not work in isolation. • Collaborates; shares plans, information, and resources. • Seeks feedback from others to ensure mutual understanding of goals and performance objectives; clarifies others' understanding of the issue or situation. • Recognizes and values the talents and experience of others. • Builds consensus through give and take. • Meets commitments and keep promises. • Holds self accountable for meeting objectives. • Facilitates win-win situations; understands the difference between interests and positions by inquiring into others' views and remaining open • Leaves customers feeling they have been heard, understood, respected and well served. • Demonstrates empathy for customers. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads and manages an inclusive workplace that maximizes the talents of each person to achieve sound business results. • Creates a safe environment for others by helping people get to know one another. • Builds a team characterized by trust, involvement and empowerment by exploring team issues, sharing information, soliciting ideas and using participative decision-making processes. • Understands collaborative leadership and has good facilitation skills. • Identifies and rewards supportive behaviors within the group. • Helps the group set norms that it can live by and that encourage respect, participation and trust. • Helps team members learn to communicate in productive ways with each other and with other units or groups. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surfaces and resolves conflicts that impede a healthy work environment. • Clarifies by restating arguments, ideas or issues so that everyone understands. • Negotiates the objectives of the project among team members and clarifies respective contributions and expectations. • Develops a structure that allows for everyone's input. • Emphasizes the benefits of collaboration to help others get beyond turf issues. • Develops a mutually supportive environment by recognizing and capitalizing on opportunities for members of workgroups and teams to understand each other. • Fairly distributes opportunities and benefits across the entire team. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses collaborative work initiatives to build relationships and to increase the coherence, strength and effectiveness within the unit. • Builds better communications and cooperation between levels and across agency divisions. • Involves people in the decisions that affect them. • Encourages and participates in intra/extra organizational assignments to develop partnering. • Steps in to repair relationships among various groups when trust and/or commitment are endangered. • Ensures that all partners are treated fairly and ethically. • Establishes clear goals/parameters with partners to avoid misunderstandings. • Ensures that direct reports have training that helps them to understand the perspective of others. • Creates a culture in which feedback is valued, sought out from a full range of stakeholders, discussed broadly, and acted upon. • Works with union officials and others to create 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. • Orchestrates win-win solutions. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works towards common purpose with various government offices and agencies and public and private entities. • Develops integrated, pragmatic, process solutions which cross traditional department boundaries and which foster agency-wide and “enterprise-wide” consistency and cooperation. • Networks with the full range of stakeholders, inside the government and without, to identify and pursue high potential service alliances. • Understands, from a systems perspective, how people, teams, departments, contractors and customers work and interact and positively shapes these processes and relationships. • Disperses power and decision-making authority in keeping with level of responsibility and knowledge. • Uses media to advocate effectively changing the way an issue is viewed. Creates a consistent stream of relevant knowledge and motivates others to support the issue. • Establishes clear messages in strategic goals as well as performance expectations for collaborative work towards common goals. |
| <p>Understands others and demonstrates cognitive and behavioral flexibility.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers and responds appropriately to the needs, feelings and capabilities of different people in different situations. • Looks beyond the standard black and white answer; is conceptually complex. • Respects, understands, and values individual differences and is comfortable working with different styles, backgrounds, perspectives, and worldviews. • Demonstrates empathy with others and can help others understand differing perspectives. • Understands and responds appropriately and flexibly to the differing needs of diverse internal and external customer groups. • Listens to other views and modifies own perspectives when appropriate. • Understands how the issues at hand affect other people and is aware of the consequences. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks points of agreement between own views and those of others while remaining receptive to experience, ideas, views and preference styles that differ from one's own. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is a skillful facilitator of group processes; has an intrinsic understanding of what's happening in a group and how to intervene to address whatever needs to be addressed. • Seeks to understand the needs of people and the underlying reasons for behaviors. • Takes into account the impact of emotions and feelings on a situation. • Assesses people's specific strengths and weaknesses. • Observes interaction patterns occurring within the team, steps in when situations might generate disagreement and is sensitive to the needs of those who perceive offence. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL & SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses effective interpersonal skills, including listening, as indispensable performance management tools. • Uses coaching and consulting skills to encourage exceptional performance. • Helps others to think differently and bigger. • 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. • Skillfully probes and asks questions that help others reflect and create insight. • Ensures mutual understanding of goals and performance expectations. • Provides reinforcing coaching to employees to maintain performance. • Provides redirecting coaching to employees with performance issues in a way that maintains a positive relationship. • Provides feedback that is specific, candid, timely, focused on the future and fair. • Gains commitment from others for improvement and performance. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides fair, equitable, and consistent discipline, never resorting to inappropriate behavior or humiliating employees. • Spots potential conflicts and brings issues into the open and helps deescalate them. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVE LEADERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates broad ownership of the vision throughout the organization, engendering energy and engagement to help sustain it. • Defines a compelling and tangible vision for the future of the organization. • Provides structure and information that helps employees and organizational units react to new demands and circumstances by employing existing resources to fulfill new mandates. • Ensures that a clear understanding of client needs is central to decision-making and service delivery. • Uses a systems approach to make policy and program decisions which are aligned with the needs of the public. • Communicates the vision to all stakeholders in a way they can relate to. • Demonstrates understanding of the role of political leadership and other external stakeholders. • Implements long-term agency goals which keep employees involved and committed. • Develops integrated, pragmatic, process solutions which cross traditional department boundaries and which foster agency-wide and “enterprise-wide” consistency and cooperation. • Establishes communications processes within the organization which enable greater recognition of common issues and which foster the organization’s ability to address these collaboratively. |

ORAL COMMUNICATION

Definition

Makes clear and convincing oral presentations to individuals or groups, listens effectively and clarifies information as needed, facilitates an open exchange of ideas and fosters an atmosphere of open communication.

Importance

Clear and accurate communication, the process by which two or more parties exchange information verbally and share meaning, is essential in life and in the workplace. Inaccurate, incomplete or poorly understood communication has been correlated with injuries, death on the job, and business failures. There is a mandate that government communication is accurate and supported with adequate data and research. Thus, the civil servant must be articulate, clear, concise and effective, actively checking to make sure that the message has been understood. This minimizes misunderstandings that can undermine organizational effectiveness. In addition, in today's multicultural federal workplace, clarity of meaning is increasingly important.

Good oral communication also provides internal and external stakeholders with a "human voice" and is a vital factor in developing and maintaining positive relations with Congress and national or international groups. This "human voice" is equally an essential element in successful performance management. On the management and executive levels, the requirement stretches to include abilities to foster good organizational communication skills.

How is this competency demonstrated?

Individuals at all levels of the organization use oral communication to achieve organizational goals and must consider the receiver(s) and their familiarity with the topic, treating all with respect and fairness and using common conventions of language and grammar. They should prepare in advance for such communication whenever possible, speak accurately and clearly in all settings, support thoughts with facts, recall that non-verbal and tonal elements are projected along with the verbal message and therefore should use pitch, rhythm and pauses effectively. All individuals should monitor the receiver's behavior, clarify the message as needed and seek feedback to ascertain that the message has been received. All persons should actively consider the environment in which the communication occurs so as to minimize potential barriers to the communication process and they should be able to effectively use a variety of channels, choosing those appropriate to the situation.

First appointment leaders must effectively communicate the team's role in the Agency's mission, both to the team and to others within the organization. They effectively reduce

and communicate complex goals or tasks to a workable set of fundamentals so that others can understand and take necessary actions. They must help team members learn to communicate in productive ways, with each other and with other units or groups. First appointment leaders must develop sensitivity to personal space, cultural nuances, and individual differences that affect the communication process and they should model reciprocal, dynamic communication processes, consistently reinforcing the need to check for understanding.

Mid-level leaders should plan effective strategies for communicating complex messages; providing information to help focus attention and anticipate and control distracting behaviors. They must plan strategies to manage challenging or difficult exchanges and identify strategies to integrate reticent participants into the discussions. They should expand presentation skills including voice quality and non-verbal behavior, effectively use a variety of media and minimize environmental distractions. Mid-level leaders should ensure mutual understanding of goals and performance expectations, objectively describing performance problems and providing feedback that is candid, timely, and fair.

Senior leaders and Executives must provide accurate, current and understandable information to policy makers and citizens by effectively communicating Agency and Federal policies by fully preparing for presentations and deliberately selecting communication styles to fit the audience and situation. When addressing legislative hearings, large employee forums or external stakeholders, presentations should be well planned, consistent, clear, powerful, and persuasive. They should identify and plan to overcome potential barriers to communication, be adept at handling contentious situations, and use a variety of nonverbal techniques to enhance and reinforce the message. Senior leaders and Executives should develop a climate that encourages open communications, ensure that others understand the power of open communication to enhance workplace relationships, and be accomplished at using a wide variety of media. They should plan a crisis communications strategy that can support quick and flexible organizational responses to unforeseen, new, and complex situations. During crisis situations, they should be articulate spokespeople, projecting a personal and organizational image of competence and credibility.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Speaks honestly, effectively and with integrity.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates belief in the concept of human dignity; treating all others with respect and fairness, and openly, consistently challenging bias, intolerance, and incivility. • Expresses one’s position and feelings clearly and concisely without accusation, sarcasm or hostility. • Publicly supports and defends others against unfair or inappropriate criticism. • Refrains from spreading gossip, rumor, and false information. • Persuades others and is assertive when necessary. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses fact, reason and persuasion to bring others in line with the vision, rather than skewed arguments that are not a fair representation of the issue. • Provides accurate, current and understandable information to policy makers and citizens, exposing the implications of choice in an unbiased fashion. • Does not sacrifice civility for short-term productivity goals. • Models assertive communication and positive attitudes even in extremely challenging situations. • Communicates with customers, employees and other key stakeholders with openness and transparency. • Fosters a climate that allows any subordinate to pose a challenge to any idea, encouraging their own skills at leading. • Creates a recognizable “voice” that is personal, visible and recognizable and that inspires trust and commitment among employees and stakeholders alike. • Communicates the public service vision of the organization. |
| <p>Makes convincing, articulate and accurate oral presentations using non-verbal and vocal qualities that support the verbal spoken message.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaks in a way that reflects and communicates clear and compelling thought processes, and authenticity of message. • Is accurate; supports communication with fact and research. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is articulate, clear, concise and effective in communicating with others. • Understands that good communication skills, oral and written, are an integral element of one’s professional competence, and works continually to improve them. • Stays composed, positive, civil and unflappable even in trying moments. • Gains customer confidence through competence, good communications and trust. • Uses a vocabulary that is appropriate for oral presentations, that enhances clarity and that conveys professionalism. • Ensures that colleagues, supervisors and other key decision makers are well informed. • Uses common conventions of language and grammar appropriate to professional settings. • Uses gestures, eye contact, vocal pitch and intensity appropriately to add positively to the impact of the message. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates the team’s role in the Agency’s mission, both to the team, and to others within the organization. • Articulates and can generate enthusiasm for a shared vision and mission. • Champions necessary change and enlists others in its pursuit. • Regularly, clearly and enthusiastically communicates to team members high expectations for good customer service. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects competence and credibility. • Responds appropriately, accurately, and with composure to challenging questions or comments. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR/EXECUTIVE LEADERS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shapes the debate and influences how an issue and potential solutions are perceived by others. • Distills the vision and new ideas into focused, strategic and targeted messages that inspire and guide others in times of change. • Understands and uses marketing techniques that are appropriate for enhancing customer knowledge and use of government services. • Gives clear and explicit view that signals where the organization is headed and why. • Creates broad ownership of the vision throughout the organization, engendering energy and voluntary engagement which is the key to the vision's sustainability. • Publicly challenges the status quo by comparing it to a vision of change and takes dramatic action to enforce the change effort. |
| <p>Effectively uses various communication channels, including meetings, presentations and briefings.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chooses the appropriate medium for the message and adapts spoken language effectively to that medium. • Knows how and when to support oral presentations with other media. • Speaks in a way that makes complex technical concepts understandable and uses appropriate supporting materials (charts, illustrations, etc.). <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands and uses various channels of communication effectively, including meetings, briefings, and the media. • Maximizes effectiveness in meetings, formal conversations and presentations by being prepared. • Plans meeting agendas and distributes these in advance to maximize contributions to the topic and sharpen the focus of the meetings. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans effective strategies for communicating complex messages, including information regarding behavior, performance, policies, and new directives. • Prepares strategically for interviews, performance reviews, and other meetings to establish focus, goals and strategic approach. • Helps others prepare well for interviews, performance reviews and other meetings to ensure the meetings yield common understandings and achieve strategic goals. • Skillfully probes and asks questions that help others reflect and create insight. • Influences the unit’s performance through effective feedback, coaching, counseling and mentoring. • Ensures mutual understanding of goals and performance expectations. • Confronts performance problems in a way that maintains a positive relationship. • Provides feedback that is candid, timely, focused on the future, and fair. • Objectively describes performance problems concretely and with specificity. • Gains commitment from others for improvement and performance. • Provides fair, equitable, and consistent discipline, never resorting to inappropriate behavior or humiliating employees. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS & EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that others understand the power of open communication to enhance workplace relationships and that they have the communication skills to be effective members of a learning organization. • Creates a culture in which feedback is valued, sought out from a full range of stakeholders, discussed broadly, and acted upon. • Understands the effectiveness of “management by walking around” as a communication strategy. • Encourages debate and open discussion. • Conducts debriefing of stressful situations as needed. • Cultivates a learning culture of reflective openness. • Values face-to-face discussion. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans and implements a crisis communications strategy that can support quick and flexible organizational responses to unforeseen, new, and complex situations. |
| <p>Actively considers, plans for, and reacts appropriately to the audience and the contextual environment in order to minimize barriers to understanding.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitually considers and responds flexibly to the audience and other contextual environmental factors in order to maximize understanding. • Considers the audience, their familiarity with the topic and degree of interest prior to speaking. • Demonstrates empathy with others and helps others try to understand differing perspectives. • Leaves customers feeling they have been heard, understood, respected and well served. • Actively checks to make sure that the message has been understood. Looks for visual feedback from others and uses questions to check understanding. • Ensures written text of oral presentations is carefully edited for perspective, accuracy, and correctness. • Listens to other views and remains flexible and willing to modify their own perspectives, when presented with adequate evidence. • Understands how the issues at hand affect other people and is aware of the consequences. • Seeks points of agreement between own views and those of others. • Avoids language which is too technical for the audience or which others might misunderstand or find offensive. • Arranges for interpreters, sign-language interpreters, or other facilitative media to ensure full access and understanding. • Handles difficult people with diplomacy. • Understands and responds appropriately to the differing needs of diverse internal and external customer groups. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifies communications techniques as necessary in order to reach understanding with and among different groups. • Fine-tunes presentations strategically to the listener. • Anticipates and responds to the needs of all affected groups, including employees. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes into account the impact of emotions and feelings on a situation. • Models reciprocal, dynamic communicative process and checks for understanding. • Is sensitive to patterns of interaction occurring within the team. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates effectively within a wide range of contexts and understands the impact of culture and individual styles. • Anticipates and plans responses to potential questions and challenges. • Is sensitive to personal space, touch and other cultural and individual differences that affect communication. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS & EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses strategic analysis tools to recognize and overcome barriers to communication. • Is politically adroit in addressing, informing and negotiating buy-in from all key stakeholders. • Engages broadly in consultation that is participatory and empowering. • Selects an appropriate communication style to the audience and the situation. • Strategically plans to overcome barriers to communication such as selective exposure, selective attention, selective perception, selective retention, and selective recall. • Understands the complexities of organizational and group cultures and uses that knowledge to circumvent barriers to understanding among them. • Anticipates likely contextual barriers to effective understanding and cooperation. Employs processes that maintain regular and clear lines of communication in order to overcome such barriers. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Explains complex information clearly and accurately, and seeks feedback to determine that understanding has occurred.</p> | <p>FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively and appropriately reduces complex goals or issues, tasks and/or problems to a workable set of fundamentals so that others can understand and take necessary action. • Can break down problems and situations into discrete parts that are easier to understand and to manage. • Makes decisions and the thinking behind them transparent to those affected by them. • Gives clear explanations about why action has, or has not been proposed or taken. • Gets beyond bureaucracy, jargon and red tape in service to the customer. • Offers honest, useful, empathic feedback and identifies people’s needs for development. |
| <p>Is an effective facilitator.</p> | <p>FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps team members learn to communicate in productive ways with each other and with other units or groups. • Is a good facilitator and uses strategies that draw more reticent team members into the discussion. • Uses effective communication strategies to manage disagreement or difficult exchanges. • Knows when to step in and when not to. • Deals quickly with disagreement or conflict among team members. • Is approachable and easy to talk to. |
| <p>Listens actively; seeks clarification when needed and demonstrates sensitivity to a diverse workforce.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks clarification of comments, particularly if the message is internally inconsistent, or if word usage differs from the norm. • Listens attentively to others to hear and understand what is being said and to assess what is meant. • Evaluates non-verbal cues for confirmation of the verbal message. • Restates individual’s comments for clarity and confirmation of understanding. • Demonstrates sensitivity to cultural meanings that may appear in both word usage and non-verbal behaviors. |

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SERVICE MOTIVATION

Definition

Creates and sustains an organizational culture which permits others to provide the quality of service essential to high performance. Enables others to acquire the tools and support they need to perform well. Shows a commitment to public service and influences others toward a spirit of service and meaningful contributions to mission accomplishment.

Importance

Service Motivation is at the core of the term “Public Servant” and epitomizes what the citizenry seeks from government employees. It is evidenced in unwavering integrity and honesty, outstanding customer service that is delivered to both internal and external partners, and in commitment to the mission and role of the Agency. A vital element of service motivation is personal responsibility on the part of all civil servants to enhance trust in the government. Civil servants must provide outstanding service that is above ideological conflict, displays continuity, spurns the undue influence of special interests, and functions effectively despite the polarization of partisan politics.

How is this competency demonstrated?

Employees at every level must “meet the mission” of the Agency by providing effective, responsive, and timely service to a wide variety of constituents under conditions that may be stressful and/or lacking in special recognition. They must hold themselves accountable for meeting objectives, keeping commitments and following through. They must demonstrate belief in the concept of human dignity, treating all with respect and fairness and pursue to completion all public inquiries, requests and complaints in a timely manner. All employees should understand the role of taxes and appropriations in the funding of operations and act as “good stewards” of all public resources. They should correct problems promptly and non-defensively, provide helpful information to others both within and outside the government, and act in a manner that welcomes questions, inviting others to seek help.

First appointment leaders and mid-level leaders must demonstrate in word and deed that public service has an ultimate responsibility to the customer, rather than the institution. They practice servant leadership within the organization, helping employees get beyond obstacles, and enabling employees to focus on and fulfill service commitments. They create a workplace culture that fosters performance, pride and purpose while maintaining clear non-bureaucratic communication with customers. They support training, procedures and technology that lead to competent, reliable and appropriate service and products, actively address the roots of employee burnout,

disillusionment and cynicism and address poor performance among team and group members.

Senior leaders must determine the needs of the customer and then ensure that resources are aligned to support initiatives, and adjust approach, plans, policy, selections and resources accordingly. They align policies and programs with the true needs of the public. They must demonstrate expertise and commitment to common goals and be recognized as a trusted advisor and partner to monitor customer satisfaction, apply lessons to improving services, and partner with internal and external stakeholders to enable them to see long term benefits and to identify initiatives that best fulfill the agency’s mission.

The Federal Executive has ultimate responsibility to ensure that policies and programs work toward the best interests of the citizens of the U.S. and must demonstrate service motivation with integrity, wisdom, knowledge, fortitude, tact, and persuasiveness. The executive must engender high levels of public trust in the government by personally embodying service to the U.S. and its citizens, and employing open, transparent, and broadly participatory processes in decision making. They do not yield to pressure to act in ways counter to the spirit and letter of the laws of the U. S. or against the best interests of the Public. The executive should be fully cognizant of appropriate issues, their interrelationships and their implications for achieving the Agency’s mission. They should focus all employees on improving service by clearly communicating the relationship of the organization’s mission to public service, identify, develop, execute, and assess policies, programs and services that support the broad objectives of the Agency and the true needs of the customer, and champion those issues most likely to make significant contributions to public service.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| Understands, practices, and exemplifies a commitment to public service | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates loyalty to the Government and citizens of the U.S. by fulfilling, “well and faithfully,” the highest obligations of service. • Demonstrates personal responsibility (accountability), outstanding customer service, unwavering honesty, high ethical standards, and a commitment to the mission and role of the Agency. • Embodies the integrity and ethics expected of a public servant. • Finds a sense of purpose in the larger mission and understands the larger context of one’s job, its implications, and consequences. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT & MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates, and acts in concert with the understanding that public service has an ultimate responsibility to the customer, rather than the institution. • Assumes personal responsibility to engender trust in government. • Regularly, clearly and enthusiastically communicates to employees high expectations for good customer service. • Does not sacrifice trust and integrity to expediency, even under pressure. • Does not make inappropriate decisions for personal gain, to include career advancements. • Uses legal and ethical standards to help resolve issues of fairness, equality, and appropriate scope of services and approaches. • Maintains confidentiality and protects the privacy of employees, customers, and other members of the public. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets high personal and organizational standards for integrity and service. • Does not yield to pressures to act in ways counter to the spirit and letter of the laws of the U.S. or against the best interests of the Public. • Implements sound, research-based, program policy, programs and service that support the true needs of the citizens. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to engender high levels of public trust in the government by exemplifying civic leadership • Employs open, transparent, and broadly participatory processes in decision making. • Works to ensure service that is above ideological conflict and undue influence of special interests. • Buffers important civic goals against political polarization. • Ensures that plans, resources, priorities, and human capital strategies reflect the organization’s focus on citizen-centered service. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is willing to go out on a limb personally to persuade policy makers to support the direction most likely to achieve the mission of the Agency and the greatest public good. |
| <p>Inspires and enables others to be service oriented.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves as a personal model of service to others. • Is trusted by others. • Is a good citizen in the workplace, of the U.S. and of the global community? • Treats others with respect and fairness and openly, consistently challenges bias, intolerance, and incivility. • Defends what’s right with courage and fortitude. • Is involved in activities and groups which enhance the quality of the workplace, is involved with Agency-sponsored community projects and takes a leadership role in own community. • Acts in a manner that welcomes others’ questions and invites others to seek help • Mentors junior colleagues and new employees. • Neither participates in nor condones offensive or discriminatory behavior. • Takes on a fair share of the work. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT & MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices “servant leadership” within the organization and encourage employees and work groups to practice a similar role in their relationships with internal and external customers. • Helps employees get beyond obstacles. Does not allow the shortcomings of policy or resources to halt the work of the team. • Actively combats the roots of employee burn-out, disillusionment, and cynicism. • Does not confuse service with workaholism. • Counsels and assists others to find a balance between commitments to the Agency and to their community and family. • Enables employees to focus on and fulfill service commitments by finding and allocating resources and other needed support. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that rewards are allocated for outstanding service to the public. • Sets unit goals and develops procedures and standards dedicated to serving internal and external customers. • Is able to convince others of the need for change in order to fulfill the service mission. • Creates a workplace culture that fosters performance, pride and purpose. • Focuses all employees on improving service. • Helps all employees connect the organization’s mission to public service. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through demonstrated expertise and commitment to common goals, is recognized as trusted advisor and partner to the customer. • Cascades strategies to employees and teams to build shared understanding of the links between policy, programs and public service. • Rigorously monitors customer satisfaction and applies these lessons to improving services. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates the public service vision of the organization. • Rewards service to the public, to include championing and supporting employees who volunteer in the community. |
| <p>Demonstrates responsiveness to the needs of all stakeholders.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaves stakeholders feeling they have been heard, understood, respected and well served. • Demonstrates empathy for stakeholders. • Understands and responds appropriately and flexibly to the differing needs of diverse internal and external stakeholder groups. • Gives clear explanations using plain language to clarify needs and interests with stakeholders. • Ensures that referrals of requests or issues are made to the most appropriate organizational resource and that contact instructions are clear and accurate. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT & MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consults with internal and external stakeholders by gathering feedback to develop an understanding of their needs and changing requirements/uses to ensure service provided meets their needs. • Interacts effectively with external stakeholders to understand how they operate and uses this knowledge in achieving results. • Supports personnel-, training-, procedural- and technological strategies that ensure competent, reliable and appropriate service and products to others. • Maintains clear communications with stakeholders. • Avoids bureaucracy, jargon and red tape in service to others. • Uses input and feedback from customers and team members to anticipate and make improvements in customer service. • Suggests different approaches for customers with diverse needs. • Works closely with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives and interests are understood, and to encourage them to make their own contributions to policy and process. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strives to understand, at the broadest level, the changing issues, needs, and perspectives that impact the welfare of the citizen-customer. • Discovers the needs of the customers through research and study. Goes beyond “handed-down” knowledge and assumptions. • Looks for information about the underlying needs of others, beyond those expressed or recognized initially. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes policy and program decisions which are aligned with the needs of the public and are made only after considering the full impact of these decisions on the public. • Champions those issues most likely to make the most significant contribution to public service. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts on independent, but factually-based opinions, if these approaches seem to better meet the customer’s actual and long-term needs. |
| <p>Takes personal responsibility for providing friendly, cheerful, helpful service.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes the extra mile to satisfy demand within the scope of own skills and authority. • Provides effective, responsive and timely service. • Holds self accountable for meeting objectives and keeping commitments by following through. • Takes personal responsibility for dealing with and/or correcting customer service issues and concerns; is efficient and responsive. • Follows through on customers’ questions, requests, and complaints. • Gains customer confidence through competence, good communications and trust. • Corrects problems promptly and without becoming defensive. |
| <p>Is a responsible steward of the nation’s welfare and resources.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses own time and other resources prudently and appropriately to further the goals of the Agency. • Understands the role of taxes and appropriations in the funding of operations and acts in general as good stewards of all public resources. • Practices efficient, effective procurement, management, application, utilization and monitoring of resources (including property, people and financial) to achieve effective service. • Understands accountability in terms of results, not rules, and measures work done in output, not seat time. • Actively maintains high quality skills and cutting edge knowledge. • Seeks out opportunities to maximize resources. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT & MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures the risks of innovation and tests against the public good and Constitutional rights. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses poor performance among team and group members. • Ensures the integrity of accounting and performance data through good data collection and analysis systems. • Ensures appropriate oversight and control over hiring practices, procurement and contracting. • Practices decision making tools that are proven to help distinguish among choices in ethical dilemmas and in weighing risk. • Assumes responsibilities for risks taken and actions embarked upon when direction is ambiguous. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks for long-term benefits to the customer and adjusts approach, policy and resources accordingly. • Focuses the efforts of the organization on the needs of the ultimate customer, rather than on issues or tasks that seem urgent, but which are actually less important, and sometimes, even counter-productive. • Takes a long-term perspective and weighs true value for the public vs. just mere efficiency. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares insights and research findings in tactful, but persuasive ways to ensure that resources are aligned behind initiatives that truly benefit the citizens of the U.S. • Expends resources to ensure an adequate evidence base is available to support plans and decisions. |
| <p>Works with internal and external stakeholders to create a shared vision of service.</p> | <p>FOR SENIOR LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes full account of appropriate issues, their interrelationships (across organizations) and their implications for achieving the Agency's mission to the Public. • Works to establish and make clear connections between and common interests among effected groups and to help the discussions get beyond positional understandings of needs and wants. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <p>ADDITIONAL FOR EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees service from a systems perspective and works to align all stakeholders' efforts towards integrated programs, shared knowledge, and mutual understanding of common interests. • Partners with internal and external stakeholders in a way that enables them to see long term benefits and to find initiatives that best fulfill the Agency's mandate of service to them. • Promotes policy, programs and perspectives that serve the best interests of the people of the U.S., rather than serving the organization. |

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WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Definition

Expresses facts and ideas in writing in a clear, convincing, and organized manner.

Importance

The use of clear, accurate and persuasive language is a key to a leader's ability to set clear goals for an organization, to motivate others to support those goals, and to make strategic thought and planning transparent and understandable to employees and diverse stakeholders. At the lower levels it is about sharing information with accuracy and clarity. At higher levels it is about garnering support by using an authentic and unique voice to communicate one's vision often and persuasively. The written word carries beyond the moment. It provides insights, influences and persuades people, markets the organization and its services, aids in achieving budgetary and legislative goals, motivates employees, and serves as a recording of events.

How is this competency demonstrated?

All employees should display writing that reflects and communicates clear and compelling thought processes and use a written vocabulary that is appropriate to the audience and that enhances clarity and conveys professionalism. They should solicit feedback on written communications regarding voice and clarity from those able to judge appropriateness for a given audience. They should understand the advantages and limitations of email, using strategies to mitigate its limitations and resulting misunderstandings. All employees (and especially technical and professional employees) should write so that complex technical concepts are understandable, and be able to utilize a variety of visual elements such as graphs, charts and illustrations to enhance understanding of the written content.

First appointment leaders and mid-level leaders understand and can convey the legal and regulatory requirements for written communications. They use written communication to keep individuals informed about changes and developments in organizational strategy, goals and performance. They successfully compose and send messages based on an understanding of the audience and use written communication to amplify oral, face-to-face communications and solicit information from others. They develop and write performance agreements, position descriptions, and other Human Resource documents in a way that accurately describes expectations and in language that can be easily understood by the employee.

Senior leaders and Executives compose, review, edit and issue critical and sensitive written materials for diverse audiences including national and international groups. They provide powerful written presentations for Congress and other constituencies to

support budgetary and other requests. They use compelling written communication to create widespread ownership and commitment to the Agency’s policies, goals and strategies by keeping stakeholders and employees informed. They reiterate research-driven conclusions, and outline appropriate and achievable strategies. Senior leaders and Executives communicate and support organizational policies and goals by developing written plans that communicate clarity of purpose, and project enthusiasm and commitment. They disseminate lessons learned from important initiatives that would enhance the productivity and effectiveness of government. They ensure that performance agreements, position descriptions, and other HR documents are written in a way that accurately describe findings and expectations and in language that can be easily understood by the employee.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Expresses thoughts in a clear and organized written manner that accurately reflects the facts.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes in a way that reflects and communicates clear and compelling thought processes. • Uses a written vocabulary that is appropriate to enhance clarity and convey professionalism. • Writing makes complex technical concepts understandable. • Determines when graphics, charts, and sketches are needed to support and clarify text. • Ensures written text is carefully edited for perspective, accuracy and correctness. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT & MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes performance measures that make them meaningful and understandable for the employee and with the technical accuracy that ensures that they are measurable, verifiable, equitable and achievable. • Understands and can convey the legal and regulatory requirements in written communications. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS & EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and communicates organizational policies and goals by developing written plans and reports that communicate clarity of purpose and project enthusiasm and commitment, reiterate research-driven thought processes and conclusions, and outline appropriate and achievable strategies. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| <p>Writes convincingly for different audiences.</p> | <p>FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a writing style and vocabulary that is appropriate to the audience. • Solicits feedback on written communications regarding voice and clarity from those best able to judge appropriateness for a given audience. • Understands the advantages and limitations of e-mail to communicate with others and uses strategies to mitigate its limitations and resulting misunderstandings. • Avoids language which is too technical for the audience, or which others might misunderstand or find offensive. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT & MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes performance agreements, position descriptions, and other HR documents that accurately describe expectations and uses language that can be easily understood by the employee. • Uses written communication effectively as a management tool to supervise and mentor off-site employees. • Understands when face-to-face communication should be used instead of writing and uses the channel most appropriate for the message, not merely the one that is most convenient. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS & EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a written voice that is personal, visible and recognizable and that inspires trust and commitment among employees and stakeholders. • In the face of challenges to policy or strategy, writes convincingly for continued stakeholder support. |
| <p>Uses channels of written communication effectively as a knowledge management tool.</p> | <p>FOR FIRST APPOINTMENT AND MID-LEVEL LEADERS AND ABOVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses written communication to enhance and support oral communication in a way that is regular and timely and that presents the facts at a level of detail that is necessary for full understanding. • Keeps people informed about changes and developments in organizational strategy, goals and performance. |

| Element | Distinguishing Behaviors |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures those who are affected by decisions are aware of them and for the reasons behind them. • Solicits information from others. • Ensures that staff understands and uses electronic, written communication effectively and appropriately. <p>ADDITIONAL FOR SENIOR LEADERS & EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates widespread ownership and commitment to the organization's policies, goals and strategies by keeping stakeholders and employees informed. • Disseminates lessons learned from important initiatives that would enhance the productivity and effectiveness of government. |
| <p>Edits complex or sensitive reports and materials.</p> | <p>FOR SENIOR LEADERS & EXECUTIVES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writes, reviews, and edits reports of critical importance in a way that delivers the message and the information, but does not transgress against political, cultural, racial, or national sensibilities. • Edits to avoid stereotypes, region-specific metaphors and images, innuendoes, and culture-specific humor. |