Introduction to the Competency Development Cycle

What is this for?
This guide introduces a competency development cycle which can support competency development processes in programme teams. It aims to provide guidance and tools to prepare staff each stage in the cycle. It includes:

- a rationale for using a competency development planning and action cycle
- an overview of the competency development cycle
- guidance and tools for introducing the competencies and the competency development cycle to programme teams
- ideas for next steps.

What is the competency development cycle?
The competency development cycle is a framework to help staff think through, manage and facilitate effective and efficient staff competency development. It involves a continuous cycle of action, reflection and learning that can be used to:

- **identify strengths and development needs**
- **develop an action plan** to effectively engage staff in competency development activities
- **support and monitor** competency development progress, including the application of learning
- **evaluate impact** on behaviour and work performance.

See Figure 1 for a more detailed diagram of the competency development cycle.

Who is this for?
This resource is for a range of staff members who are planning and implementing competency development activities for programme teams. For example:

- capacity building managers or officers
- technical area specialists or coordinators, including DME staff
- People & Culture staff (HR)
- operations directors and managers (at national, regional and zonal levels).

It is particularly relevant for team leaders in programmes who are taking responsibility for supporting the competency development of their staff members. The tools and guidance in this section may also be of interest to development facilitators and other local level staff as they develop their capacity building skills to use with community stakeholders and partners.
Why focus on competency development as a cycle?

A lifelong learner:
- continually acquires knowledge and skills through education, training, work and general life experiences
- includes reflection in all planning processes
- develops skills and attitudes to successfully adapt to new challenges and changing contexts.

To be a lifelong learner who contributes to an effective team, it is helpful to view competency development as a personal and collective journey. A team is composed of individuals who are likely to begin their personal development journeys from different starting points and who travel in different ways and at different speeds.

While there are many differences between individual learners, approaching competency development with a degree of intentional reflection, planning and action helps strengthen staff as lifelong learners. Individual and team competency development is also more effective when the team is supported to facilitate each other’s learning. This involves all staff members taking responsibility to share their knowledge, engage in peer mentoring or coaching, and give each other feedback.

Figure 1. The competency development cycle: an action, reflection and learning cycle to support the competency development journey
The competency development cycle can help the journey be more efficient and effective. The cycle is continuous; it can be followed many times to help prioritise learning needs, choose the best learning activities, allocate resources appropriately, and ensure learners receive the support they require to apply and evaluate their learning.

The competency development cycle is not intended to be followed rigidly but aims to help staff members consider questions and issues that are critical to ensuring a quality approach to staff development.

Before starting . . .

When preparing to use the competency development cycle for the first time with staff it’s important to ensure they:

- understand the competency development cycle
- be familiar with the Integrated Competency Development (ICD) competencies for local level staff (for example, how to use, their benefits, which competencies are needed for certain roles and how competencies can be developed).

Use the suggested session plans to introduce staff and familiarise them to the ICD competencies and the competency development cycle.

- **Session Plan 1 - Introducing the ICD Competencies**
  It offers a suggested way to introduce the ICD competencies to programme teams. See ‘Appendix A’.

- **Session Plan 2 - Introducing the Competency Development Cycle**
  It provides a suggested way to introduce staff to the key elements of the competency development cycle. See ‘Appendix B’.

What now?

With an understanding of the competency development cycle and how it can be used to support competency development for programme teams, the next step is to start using it to plan and implement competency development activities. Use the other guides in this series to help:

- **identify** the competency development strengths and needs of the programme team (see Identifying Strengths and Needs)
- **plan** competency development (see Planning Competency Development)
- **support** and **monitor** staff in their competency development (see Supporting and Monitoring Competency Development)
- **evaluate** the effectiveness of the competency development process that have been implemented (see Evaluating Competency Development).

TIP

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<th>This series of guidance and tools</th>
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<td>is provided separately so it can be used flexibly and according to your needs and interests.</td>
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<td>However, when planning capacity building it is vital to also plan how staff will be supported and monitored and how it will be evaluated.</td>
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OBJECTIVES

- To understand the core competencies required for programme teams
- To become familiar with the ICD competencies
- To consider a variety of ways the competencies can be used to support local level staff, including competency development and recruitment

Overview

This session gives the group an opportunity to explore the use of competencies to support their local level staff development in World Vision’s programmes. It includes:

- an examination of the structure of the ICD competencies
- activities to help explore ways the ICD competencies can be used both by national office staff and by programme teams.

This is an essential ‘getting started’ session before beginning the planning process.

Recommended process

Introduction (15 min)

This activity is designed to introduce the concept of ‘competencies’ in a simple, fun way.

1. Introduce the ‘competency’ of driving a motorbike by finding out from group who rides a motorbike and who does not.
Invite participants to describe ‘what they would observe to see if someone was driving safely’. List the behaviours on a flipchart.

With a list of behaviours, ask participants to describe skills. Next ask them to describe the knowledge needed, and then the attitudes needed to drive safely.

Invite participants to think about the concept of competency as made up of behaviours, skills, knowledge and attitudes. If the term ‘behaviours’ causes difficulty, explain that behaviours are like ‘performance indicators’ – expressed as observable behaviours (behaviours we would be able to observe if someone has a particular competency level).

Provide the definition of competency:

‘Competencies summarise the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required to perform effectively in a given job, role or situation.’

Activity One:
The structure of the competencies (20 min)

Put participants in groups and give them two or three different competency documents per group.

Ask participants to look through the competency documents (without reading them word for word), to work out what the structure of the document is.

Ask participants to identify and explain the different components of the competency document using the following questions as a guide for their discussion:

- What are the common components?
- How does each of those components relate to the competency itself?
- How can those components be used to support competency development with staff?
- How would you apply it?

In plenary, ask participants to share their observations about the competency documents. During the discussion, ensure that all the components of the competency have been covered.
Activity Two: Exploring the competencies (55 min)

1. Divide participants into groups by asking them to select a competency that they are particularly interested in. Limit the number in each group so that the group numbers are even.

2. Give each group printouts of their competency document, flipchart paper and pens.

3. Ask each group to prepare a visual-based flipchart for each competency to present it to the plenary (including elements, behaviours, key words, knowledge, skills, attitudes, strategic importance, links to the Critical Path and possible adaptations).

4. Ask participants to consider the following two questions and write the response to each on a post-it note:
   - At which stage of the Critical Path is this competency required or important?
   - What does aligning of competencies to the Critical Path tell us about key issues to consider when planning and implementing competency development?

5. Teams present their flipcharts to the plenary. They should place their post-it notes at appropriate steps on the Critical Path and share their response to the above two questions.

6. Take a few minutes after each team has presented for questions, comments and discussion.

Activity Three: Using competencies to support our work (20 min)

1. Regroup participants into functional groups and ask each to prepare a two-minute role play demonstrating how they would use a specific competency in their work.

2. Teams present their role plays to the plenary with time for questions, comments and discussion.

3. While teams are presenting, create an overarching list of ways that the competencies can be used.
SESSION PLAN #2

Introducing the competency development cycle

OBJECTIVES

• To understand the steps involved in the competency development cycle
• To understand how the competency development cycle can support capacity building within programme teams

Overview

This session gives participants an opportunity to understand the steps of the competency development cycle and how it can support the competency development of local level staff in World Vision programmes. This process assists national offices to incorporate and align current national office capacity building approaches and resources with ICD competencies and approaches as needed.

Recommended process

It’s helpful for the group to see the overall rhythm of competency development work. Building the competency development cycle together can help the group visualise the entire process and purpose of each element.

1. Divide the group and give each small group or pair a print out of the competency development cycle.

2. Assign each group one element of the competency development cycle and give them the graphics (element and arrow) for the one they are assigned. Ask them to use the handout to identify the purpose of their assigned element and write the purpose on a card.

3. Ask each of the small groups or pairs to post the graphics and purpose of their assigned element of the competency development cycle on a flip chart or on the wall, while reading the purpose.

4. Facilitate a discussion using the following questions:
   - How will using this cycle help us move through a complex process?
   - How can using this cycle help us merge current capacity building resources with new resources we create or adapt from others?
   - How will this support a process of continuous improvement?