

Sponsorship Specialism Competency Framework

Introduction to the Sponsorship Competency Framework

The Sponsorship Specialism is the specialist group for sponsors of arm's-length bodies (ALBs). Sponsors bring together policy and delivery skills with expertise in sponsorship processes, to support sponsored bodies in being accountable, high-performing organisations, delivering value for money services as outlined in their business plan and supporting the parent department in achieving its objectives.



Like all civil servants, sponsors share a common set of transferable knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the Civil Service Competency Framework (CSCF). The Sponsorship Competency Framework sets out the particular group of competencies required by sponsors to effectively carry out their role – a combination of the three elements in the above diagram.

It is likely that sponsors will arrive in the job with relevant competencies developed in other roles. They are likely to be a member of one of the Civil Service professions, such as the Policy Profession, and many combine sponsorship duties with another role, meaning that they will already be proficient in some of the sponsorship competency areas. This framework should help sponsors identify areas for development – because sponsorship sits at a junction between policy and delivery, it offers a very attractive way to build competencies in different areas at the same time, which can be of considerable benefit to staff in a range of job roles. While many of these competencies are not unique to sponsorship, there is a distinct set of competencies required by sponsors in combination that enable them to be effective at their job and the acquisition of which would enable a sponsor to transfer between sponsor jobs and maintain a high level of performance.

Government departments organise their sponsorship functions quite differently, and sponsors will have different combinations of responsibilities based on the department they work for, the body they are sponsoring and their position in the department. There will also be a different set of department-specific sponsorship processes that sponsors will have to gain familiarity with. Because sponsor roles tend to be organised quite differently, the combination of sponsor competencies required in the role will vary. For example, for those who combine sponsor responsibilities with another job, not all the elements in this framework will be required. Although there is no uniform definition of what is required in a sponsor role, this competency framework sets out the key knowledge, skills and behaviours required across sponsor roles. These have been developed with and agreed by sponsors themselves.

The table below sets out the aims and intended uses of this framework:

Aims for the sponsor competency framework	Intended uses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help sponsors identify development needs • Set clear expectations of performance • Capture what is unique to sponsorship • Improve capability and consistency across and within departments • Help develop/maximise ALB capability and performance • Allow straightforward movement between departments • Provide the basis for developing the sponsorship specialist curriculum • Provide a resource to be used in recruitment and selection, performance and talent management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help individuals working in sponsorship roles develop the skills they need • As part of the performance management process • Inform talent management, career and workforce planning • As a basis for internal and external recruitment • Inform reviews of departmental sponsorship capability

How does this relate to grades?

Because sponsorship varies by department and body, it is difficult to be precise about what is expected at each grade. The sponsorship competencies set out the key knowledge, skills and behaviours required across sponsor roles – there is no expectation that all of these competencies will be required in any given role. An effective sponsor professional, regardless of grade, may be proficient or highly proficient in some areas, but still developing in others. Experienced sponsor professionals, however, may be high-performing across all competency areas.

Typically, the senior sponsor is a senior civil servant, who would be supported in the day-to-day elements of sponsorship by a sponsor or sponsor team. The senior sponsor is the agent for the departmental Accounting Officer and is responsible for ensuring an effective sponsor function is taking place. The role has two primary elements:

- holding an ALB to account, and ensuring good governance structures and processes are in place;
- establishing and maintaining good relationships with the sponsored body, based on open and honest interactions.

Grade	Typical work and expectations
Senior sponsor	<p>Might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being responsible for sponsorship of a range of bodies, and/or one or more large and/or complex bodies Being the first point of contact for senior ALB staff or members of the Board Being responsible for the management and motivation of a sponsor team and for ensuring a range of different sponsor responsibilities are undertaken Being responsible for authorising spending, signing remit letters and annual grant/grant-in-aid letters, and approving ministerial submissions Chairing regular performance review meetings Chairing interview panels for board members and conducting formal appraisal of the ALB chair Being involved in setting and communicating political priorities and the strategic context to sponsor team and ALB

Sponsor team	<p>Including, but not limited to:</p> <p>Managing the day-to-day relationship with the ALB, promoting an open and transparent working relationship and sharing information on matters which may impact the body</p> <p>Involved in agreeing a framework for the strategic performance management of the ALB, particularly by agreeing Framework Documents, Corporate Plans, Annual Business Plans, Memoranda of Understanding, grant-in-aid arrangements or other funding mechanisms</p> <p>Monitoring progress against business plans and providing assurance on ALB governance, use of public money and performance</p> <p>Involved in setting budgets, monitoring performance against this budgeted allocation and administering grant-in-aid payments</p> <p>In partnership with the ALB, ensuring that risks are managed and escalated appropriately</p> <p>Scheduling of, and arranging, the triennial review of the ALB in consultation with the Public Bodies Team, and handling the outcome;</p> <p>Administering the appointments process for public appointees in accordance with the OCPA Code of Practice</p> <p>Dealing with ministerial correspondence, briefings and PQs, in respect of the ALB and selected FoI requests when appropriate</p>
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Application of the Sponsorship Competency Framework

Performance Management

1. Performance objectives should be specific, and include ‘what’ needs to be achieved and also ‘how’. When defining ‘how’ performance objectives are to be achieved, staff should make reference to the CSCF competencies. For those that require sponsor competencies above and beyond the CSCF competencies, sponsors may refer to the relevant sponsor competencies, which are more detailed

and specific to sponsorship. They may find it helpful to explain the level of proficiency expected in a given sponsor competency. With both the CSCF and the sponsor competences, staff should emphasise any specific relevant points from the framework, such as 'successfully achieves common goals with organisations that have different priorities' (CSCF competency) or 'ensures ALB performance targets and plans are aligned with government and/or departmental policy and strategy, and with ministerial priorities' (sponsorship competency).

Development

1. Consider sponsor competencies as required for the current role and for future career development or continuing professional development (CPD) when agreeing development objectives.
2. Assess your strengths and weaknesses using the competency framework, and keep this under review.
3. Find appropriate learning and development opportunities in the work place or on-the-job, use departmental resources, or consult the Sponsorship Specialism learning pathway.

Recruitment

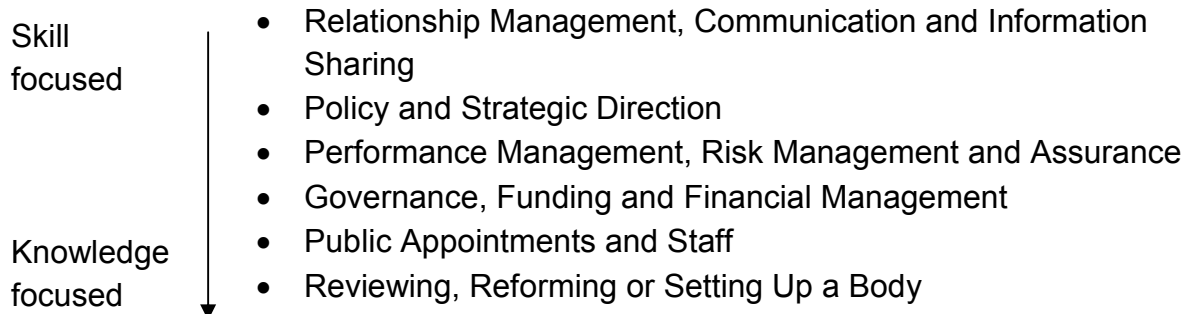
1. Decide to what extent sponsor competencies are important for your vacancy or if you are happy to consider people from any discipline using the CSCF only, perhaps developing sponsor competencies in post.
2. If using the Civil Service Jobs site to advertise your vacancy, select 'sponsorship' as a job category. You are free to select multiple job categories if the role comprises other elements. Selecting sponsorship allows potential applicants to find your advert more easily when they search for jobs or set up job alerts.
3. When writing the job description, select up to six competencies, typically four or five from the CSCF and one that is sponsorship skills and knowledge. You can specify the level of proficiency in sponsorship skills and knowledge, and draw out specific elements of the sponsorship competency framework for emphasis if required, for example 'understands the process for making public appointments'.
4. Sift, interview, appoint and induct as per your departmental guidance. Use the sponsorship competency framework to set out what is expected of them in their new role. If they are new to sponsorship, include a sponsorship induction using the induction materials in the sponsorship learning pathway to structure their learning.

Other

The framework can also be used for talent management, workforce planning, training needs analysis and organisational capability assessments.

The Sponsorship Competency Framework

Competency has different meanings in the professional development literature, but is used here to mean the combination of knowledge, skills and behaviours which allow you to perform your role. There are six competency areas in the sponsorship competency framework:



Some of these competency areas are more skills and behaviour focused, some are more knowledge focused. Those more focused on skills are listed here first, the more knowledge focused areas are listed towards the end.

As discussed in the introduction, the Sponsorship Competency Framework sets out the particular group of competencies required by sponsors to effectively carry out their role, although it is not expected that sponsors would be competent in all of these areas at any one time, as this varies according to role. The sponsorship competencies utilise five main competencies in the Civil Service Competency Framework:

- Collaborating and Partnering
- Achieving Commercial Outcomes
- Delivering Value For Money
- Seeing the Big Picture
- Changing and Improving

If you work in a sponsor role anywhere in the Civil Service, these are likely to be the five main competencies you will refer to in performance appraisals and recruitment selection. Using five common competencies will make it simpler for you to move across departments and demonstrate your transferable skills.

The sponsorship competencies do not replace the civil service competencies, but describe, in more detail, the specific set of competencies associated with sponsorship. They are intended to be used alongside the CSCF – the previous section explains how this should work in practice.

For each of the sponsor competencies in the framework below it is indicated which CSCF competencies are most closely associated. In practice, what this means for your performance assessment is that, when referring to a sponsor competency, you will most likely also be referring to the CSCF competency as indicated.

Relationship Management, Communication and Information Sharing

- Builds collaborative, trusting and professional relationships with partners in the sponsored body and colleagues within the department.
- Uses diplomacy, negotiating and influencing skills effectively, to achieve departmental aims and support the sponsored body in becoming a high-performing organisation.
- Engages the right people at the right time, and facilitates relationships between others in the sponsored body and the department, including between ministers and ALB staff/public appointees.
- Establishes clarity of expectation in the sponsor/sponsored body relationship, both in terms of roles and responsibilities and in how they will deal with each other, i.e. open, honest, supportive and challenging.
- Effectively performs the 'critical friend' role to the sponsored body, using evidence to provide effective challenge and support.
- Successfully balances 'independence' and 'control', monitoring information flows and maintaining effective lines of communication between an ALB and the department to enable this, ensuring no surprises.
- Communicates new policy developments, policy or political issues to the sponsored body, and ensures they are aware of information held in the department which is relevant to their operational effectiveness.
- Feeds insight from their sponsored body into policy teams within the department.
- Acts as an advocate for the sponsored body within the department and across Whitehall.
- Shares best practice and facilitates collaborative working between the sponsored body and the department, and with other relevant sponsored bodies.

- Is able to communicate with external and internal stakeholders in a compelling and engaging manner. Describes key arguments clearly both orally and in writing, predicting potential challenge and criticism.

**Related to:
Collaborating and Partnering**

Policy and Strategic Direction

- Understands the ALB's role in supporting government and departmental policy objectives.
- Understands where issues sit within the priorities of the department and government as a whole, considers impact on and implications for other policies, programmes and other government objectives.
- Understands ministerial priorities, and is able to translate these to the sponsored body.
- Ensures ALB performance targets and plans are aligned with government and/or departmental policy and strategy, and with ministerial priorities.
- Provides relevant and reliable advice and evidence to support ministers in making, explaining, defending and implementing decisions.
- Ensures policy teams in the department, and across-government, where necessary, are aware of relevant insight from ALBs.
- Manages policy conflicts effectively, identifying and making links across government.
- Understands the role and responsibilities of the sponsor team and key people within the department and sponsored body, and ensures other stakeholders have clarity regarding this.
- Is aware of, and familiar with, current policy context and government aims and programmes - especially those with particular relevance to sponsorship - and understands how these policies and aims impact on their sponsored body/bodies. This includes*:

- Public Bodies Reform Programme
- Efficiency and Reform agenda, including Cabinet Office Controls
- Civil Service Reform, including Shared Services, Commercial Models and Public Service Mutuals, Digital by Default and Open Public Services
- Management Information
- Procurement and Commissioning
- Estates and Facilities Management

* Key areas for sponsors kept under review

**Related to:
Seeing the Big Picture**

Performance Management, Risk Management and Assurance

- Understands business processes and can support ALBs through business processes and planning.
- Understands performance management principles, and is able to influence performance targets in order to support the sponsored body in being a high performing organisation, and ensure activities are aligned with government and departmental priorities and strategy.
- Effectively monitors performance against targets, ensuring that the department has the level of assurance it needs to satisfy itself of the ALB's performance.
- Puts in place effective risk management processes, and effectively manages and escalates risks.
- Ensures that the sponsored body has effective risk management processes in place, and that risk is escalated to the department appropriately.
- Communicates effectively with the ALB to ensure that both parties are aware of the risks they pose each other.

- Understands audit processes, and ensures adequate internal and external audit arrangements are in place.

**Related to:
Achieving Commercial Outcomes
Delivering Value for Money**

Governance, Funding and Financial Management

- Understands the principles of good corporate governance, and how to apply these to their sponsored body/bodies.
- Ensures appropriate governance structures are in place and clearly set out in key documentation, in line with government and departmental processes, guidance and standards, and compliant with the body's constitution.
- Familiar with the grant and grant-in-aid payment processes, able to ensure they are paid in a timely manner with appropriate signoff, and monitor balance sheets to ensure large cash balances are not built up.
- Understands business processes, planning and financial issues. Effectively forecasts and sets budgets, and monitors performance against budgeted allocation.
- Involves finance specialists when required.
- Provides constructive challenge to sponsored bodies on their plans detailing objectives, activities and underpinning financials.
- Understands the principles governing the management of public money, and ensures that structures and processes are in place to ensure compliance with these principles in their ALB, including maintaining an up-to-date financial delegation and (where appropriate) designating an Accounting Officer.
- Knows how to interpret financial annual reports and accounts, and audit reports, and effectively reviews these to confirm that propriety, regularity and value for money have been achieved and seeks explanations for unusual trends or figures.
- Understands audit principles and processes, and provides information assurance and oversight where required.

**Related to:
Achieving Commercial Outcomes
Delivering Value for Money**

Public Appointments and Staff

- Understands the process for making public appointments, including how to involve the departmental lead on public appointments, Cabinet Office and No.10 as appropriate.
- Actively seeks ministerial views at all stages on reappointments and new recruitment campaigns.
- Organises effective recruitment campaigns for public appointees, including for Non-Executive Directors with specialist and business skills.
- Is able to identify high-performing candidates and panel members, and is skilled in interview techniques and practices.
- Understands the role and responsibilities of individual public appointees, and organises effective induction for new appointees.
- Is familiar with the Commissioner for Public Appointments' Code of Practice, the Cabinet Office's guidance on making public appointments and the guidelines relating to pay remits, remuneration and propriety.
- Administers effective performance assessment programmes for their public appointments.
- Effectively represents the department's interest regarding the Chief Executive's appointment, their terms and conditions and remuneration package, their objectives and whether they have met these targets before a performance bonus is paid.
- Understands government and departmental HR policy and initiatives and how they relate to ALBs, including Cabinet Office recruitment controls, performance management and appraisal systems, grading, equal opportunities, pay and terms and conditions and staff conduct.

**Related to:
Seeing the Big Picture
Building Capability for All**

Reviewing, Reforming or Setting Up a Body

- Understands the Triennial Review process, and effectively administers and participates in Triennial Reviews as required.
- Provides constructive challenge, and is able to identify opportunities for reform or other changes that result in increased value for money or improvements in service delivery.
- Is aware of the issues involved with reforming an ALB, including producing final accounts, records management, pensions transfers, redundancy, staff retention and transfer. Understands how to find out more information on reforming an ALB if required.
- Understands the different classifications of ALB, and is aware of the process concerning how they are classified.
- Understands the issues involved and the process for setting up a new body, and is aware of the government policy on the creation of new NDPBs.

**Related to:
Changing and Improving
Delivering Value for Money**