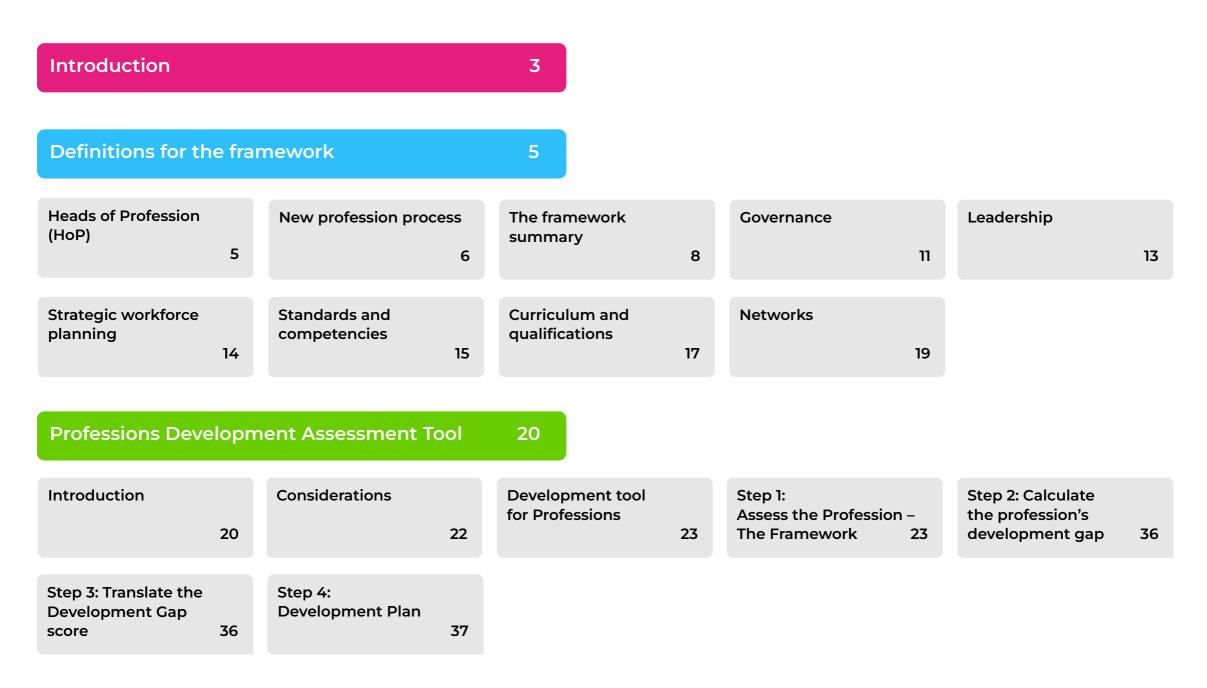


Professions Best Practice Framework

updated June 2023



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Introduction

Welcome to the revised Professions Best Practice Framework. The purpose of this document is to support professions to grow their capability, develop members and those outside of the profession as well as prioritise and focus on where there might be gaps. It also contains guidance on how to establish a new government profession outlining the work and commitment involved. It can be used at a central or department profession level.

How to use this guidance

This document is divided into three parts which can be used separately or together to help professions assess, prioritise and plan how they improve and develop professional capability both for their professionals and non-professionals.

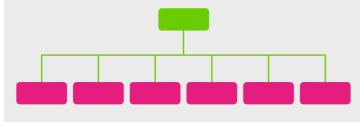
1. Establishing a new cross-government profession.

The new profession process sets out the steps a group needs to go through if they are seriously considering establishing a new government profession. It should be used in conjunction with section 2 (the professions framework).



2. Professions framework

The professions framework sets out the six key areas vital for a successful profession. For existing professions, the framework acts as a benchmark of good practice. For groups wanting to become a formal profession it provides clarity around the extent of commitment required.



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3. Assessment tool

The assessment tool can be used by professions to measure their progress against the framework and to identify and prioritise any actions which need to be taken forward as a result. It can be adapted to suit the context and used by both central and departmental professions.



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A Modern Civil Service

The vision for a Modern Civil Service is for a skilled, innovative and ambitious civil service equipped for the future. Professions play a key role in delivering this through their understanding of the skills required for their professionals as well as those across government, investing in those skills, championing expertise and strengthening leadership. This framework is designed to support professions in this work.

Civil Servic	e A modern Civil Service
Our values	We serve with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.
Our vision	A skilled, innovative and ambitious Civil Service equipped for the future. We will renew the Civil Service together to deliver on our purpose of providing high quality advice to the Government, outstanding services to the public and safeguarding the UK's prosperity and security at home and overseas.
We are Buildi	ng
	Investing in skills, championing expertise and strengthening leadership
A Skilled Civil Service	Reflecting the country we serve and creating opportunities around the UK
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Definitions for the framework

In the Civil Service, the terms 'function' and 'profession' are sometimes used interchangeably, however they have different meanings.

A **function** is a grouping aligned across government that delivers a defined and cross-cutting set of services through roles, standards and processes to a department and the Civil Service as a whole. A function supports improved outcomes across government, defining what needs to be done, and how, for the effective undertaking of work within its scope.

A **profession** is a group of individuals with common professional skills, experience and expertise. They work across government on behalf of departments, agencies and functions. In many cases the profession may be linked to a professional body that regulates membership and governs accreditation. The profession provides a career anchor for individuals, and acts as a body to guide professional development and progression. An individual can belong to more than one government profession.

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Heads of Profession (HoP)

A cross-government Head of Profession (HoP) might also be a Head of Function (HoF) but the roles can be separate. Permanent Secretaries will be exemplar role models of learning and professional development, working in partnership with Heads of Profession to create a positive environment and allocating funding accordingly.

Departmental Heads of Profession sit within departments and tend to have responsibility for the development of the profession within that department although there are some exceptions to this, for example, a HoP that sits in an Arms Length Body (ALB) may also have responsibility for their parent department. Their role, is to support the direction of travel determined by the cross-government Head of Profession and to contextualise necessary for thier department. The HoP role may be a full time one or undertaken alongside an additional role, depending on the size of the department and profession. The organisation and governance will be detailled in the Governance section of this framework.







New profession process

The first step is to determine if the work you are doing already sits (or should sit) within an **existing profession or function**. You should have an initial conversation with your departmental profession team who can provide clarity and advise as to whether setting up a new cross-government profession would in fact cause duplication.

If there is no duplication then you will need to consider whether your group is in a position to move through the new profession process. Consult section 2 of this document, the framework. There are 6 elements that are key to establishing a new cross-government profession and you will need to be able to demonstrate that you have, or are close to having (with a plan) all 6 elements in place.

If after working through the professions framework and the amount of work this will require, you are content to proceed and you feel you have all the elements of a cross-government profession in place, then you will need to go through the formal governance process. This involves completing a full business case, your business case should include proposals for each of the 6 elements out in section 2 of this document. You will then take your proposal to the People Peer Group (PPG) in the first instance. PPG is a monthly meeting for senior capability leads across central professions and functions with a focus on the People Agenda. They will review your business case and provide a steer on whether more work is required or if your application should engage with functional leaders. To discuss taking your proposal to PPG please email gscu.comms@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Once you have engaged with PPG and functional leaders, and they are content for you to proceed, your application will go to the Civil Service Board (CSB) for a final decision. The CSB is responsible for the strategic leadership of the Civil Service, to make sure it works as a coherent and effective whole and has the capability both now, and in the future, to respond to any challenges. It is chaired by the Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service, Alex Chisholm, it is comprised of a cross-section of permanent secretaries from several Civil Service departments.

For groups that may be linked to the policy profession, this will require a conversation with the HoP as well as the head of the Civil Service Policy Profession Unit (PPU).

This could be a lengthy process and you may feel that becoming a profession is more resource intensive than originally anticipated. If this is the case there are other options e.g. linking your group to a job family or establishing a community of practice where members can develop their specialist skills and share best practice in a less formal setting.

Contact the Government Skills and Curriculum Unit

Email

New profession process (contd.)

The process for becoming a profession is a lengthy one and there need to be a number of factors in place before you are able to proceed down this route. **Click on each arrow to discover more.**

Have an initial conversation with your departmental profession team for initial steer



Community of Practice (CoP) Definition

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a professional network who share a common goal or interest or and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals. Communities of practice often focus on sharing best practices and creating new knowledge to advance an area of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this.



Job Family Definition

A Job Family is a name given to a group of jobs that have broadly similar roles in terms of their area or function. Although the level of responsibility, skill or competence will differ, the essential nature of the activities is similar across the Job Family.

The framework summary

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The framework illustrates the six essential foundations of a profession. It supports continuous development and consistency across professions.

In summary the six essential foundations are:



Governance

Any profession working either cross-government or in a single department, will need to identify and/or implement its own governance structure. The governance of some Civil Service professions may be influenced by a related professional body and/or the function where most of the profession's members operate.

Good governance has seven major characteristics, shown in this section. Effective governance should:

- define roles and responsibilities;
- define decision making processes; and
- promote achievement of the profession's objectives.

countable	Responsive	Consensual	Effective and efficient	Equitable and inclusive	Transparent
			decisions and p	uctures should be fully re processes should take acc of the professional comm	ount of the needs
			Professions hav establishing pri within the prof	ve a responsibility in iden orities relating to diversit ession.	tifying and ty and inclusion
				e profession should feel th 1. They should not feel ex	
			I	I	
		Inderpinned by a	code of conduct		

Governance (contd.)



Leadership

Strengthening leadership is key to the success of the Civil Service. The need to lead and collaborate across government departments and agencies is key to the delivery of government priorities. As senior lead for the profession, the cross-government Head of Profession (HoP) is responsible for building leadership capability in the profession. In addition, HoPs need to demonstrate that the following leadership components are in place or must take action to implement and embed them.

Click on each of the components below to discover more.



Strategic workforce planning

SWP uses data to model the future workforce requirements needed to deliver long term business strategies. As this is long term planning, it needs to be flexible and responsive to the changing environment. For more information on SWP and the SWP playbook, **please email us**.

Professions role in strategic workforce planning

Professions should work across departments to assess the current workforce's skills, size and shape and how they will need to change in the future. Professions should then consider what action can be taken to deliver that future excellent and diverse workforce.

Click on the hexagons to find out more about each part of the plan.

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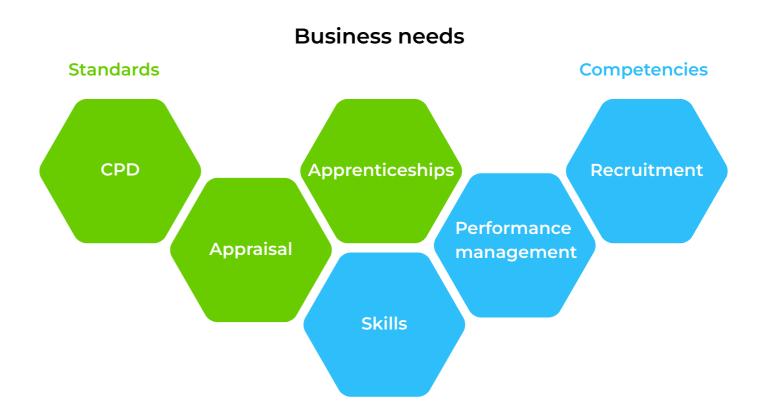
Strategic workforce planning

Standards and competencies

Standards and competencies are used to define the profession and the skills, knowledge and behaviours professionals should be able to demonstrate.

They act as the cornerstone for recruitment, training continuous professional development (CPD), appraisal, capability and apprenticeship planning and as such reinforce consistency and cohesion across the Civil Service.

Professional standards and competencies must be driven by the needs of the business. For certain professions, they may also be dictated by external governing bodies and qualifications such as apprenticeship standards that are approved by the **Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA)**.



Standards

These include codes of conduct and aspects of professional responsibility and are important in shaping the expectations of a profession's membership. They should include how the profession can ensure it is diverse and inclusive by valuing and embedding inclusive behaviours in standards. Standards may also set out how the profession wishes to be perceived by the public, customers, networks and stakeholders. Most regulatory or professional bodies have an existing detailed code of conduct, professional standards, and expected behaviours framework.

Competencies

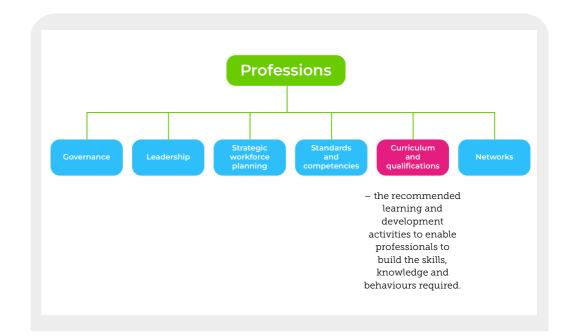
Competency frameworks articulate the capability requirements of a profession, covering all relevant areas of professionalism, including demonstrating inclusive behaviours. A competency framework for a profession is separate from the Success Profiles which set out the behaviours, strengths and technical skills required of all civil servants. Both frameworks should complement each other and professional competency frameworks should be accompanied by clear guidance on how they should be utilised alongside Success Profiles.

Professional development frameworks

These set out professional skills and competencies, defining what capability is required at each level. Effective frameworks support the embedding and driving up of standards across the profession.

Core knowledge

Core knowledge refers to the essential skills and knowledge that all staff need to have in relation to their profession. It is also about developing others outside of the profession to ensure that they have the necessary skills to operate in government. It is the responsibility of professions to articulate what those core skills are and to ensure staff are aware of these. As a department you will need to be aware of the cross-government standards and competencies for your profession and ensure you are utilising these. Departments may also need to consider how the competencies and standards fit with any departmental specific learning.



Curriculum and qualifications

It is best practice for the profession to set out appropriate and recommended learning and development activities as a professional curriculum.

This may include qualifications and apprenticeships from basic competence requirements to an advanced Master's Degree. The scope of the curriculum will be determined by the profession's need and should be structured, setting out learning options for appropriate levels within the profession. It should be regularly reviewed to ensure learning continues to meet the needs of the business.

Click on the boxes to discover more.

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Profession's needs

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Additional information

Professional development frameworks support the facilitation of career development by defining the learning that may be needed in order to move laterally or upwards within the profession. Professional development frameworks should therefore link to the relevant curriculum or qualifications so this information is easily accessible.

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should form part of a profession's curriculum. Professions need to define their expectations for CPD and the activities that may fall within this.

In doing this, you should consider the various ways in which people learn, e.g. on-the-job activities, learning with colleagues or formal learning.

Reviews of the curriculum and gualifications should also be regularly undertaken by the profession to ensure that learning continues to meet business needs. This may involve reviewing data on take-up, evaluation and feedback of particular learning activities. Professions should also ensure that learning activities continue to fit with the wider professional curriculum.



Networks

It is important for professions to collaborate and build networks outside the profession so that they can learn from each other.

Networks promote collaboration and consistency both internal and external to an organisation. They help to share best practice, generate discussion, debate, identify emerging issues, promote consensus and inform future strategies. A strong, proactive network may help a profession to raise its profile, to have a voice across the organisation, exert appropriate influence, and promote the profession's value to the business.

Click on the hexagons to discover more.



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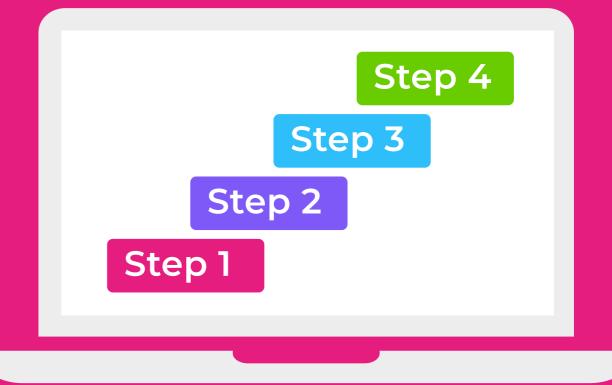
Professional networks can operate at three key levels:



Professions Development Assessment Tool

Introduction

The assessment tool has been put together to help professions identify areas to develop and priorities within this. It is GSCU's hope that professions will move into a regular cycle of assessment to enable them to monitor and acknowledge progress using the assessment tool to support them.



Professions Development Assessment Tool Introduction (contd.)

Contextualisation

Each profession works differently and that differs again between a central and departmental professions therefore we understand the importance of being able to contextualise this assessment tool. It is for professions to decide how to apply the tool in a way which will enable them to understand their current picture against where they want to be in the future. When adapting to suit your profession, please ensure you assess against each of the 6 criteria. Your scores are to help you to focus on priority areas and will not be shared unless you choose to do this as part of the ongoing development of your profession.

There is no set timeline for how often you should undertake an assessment but it might be helpful to repeat between 6-12 months after the initial assessment to monitor progress depending on the extend and ambition of your action plan.

Cross-government professions

The tool can be used in a variety of ways for example, professions may wish to involve the Head of Profession or may wish to use it as a tool within specific teams. Professions may also wish to involve departments in completing the tool to ensure they are getting insight from professions in departments.

Departments

The tool may be used exclusively within departments as a tool for assessing development within the department. Departments may wish to focus on their priority professions and may also wish to involve cross-government professions' teams in the assessment too. We would encourage this as the role of departments is to support the development of cross government professions according to the direction set at cross government Head of Profession level. It may be useful for professions (both cross- government professions' teams as well as those in departments) to use peer reviews when completing the assessment. A peer review is the evaluation of work or performance by a group of people in the same occupation, profession, or industry. Therefore in this context we simply mean that a profession may wish to ask another profession to check their return and actively guestion the conclusions you have come to. The purpose of peer reviews would be to encourage, challenge and test the rationale behind assessment. It is always helpful to understand how other professions are approaching this.

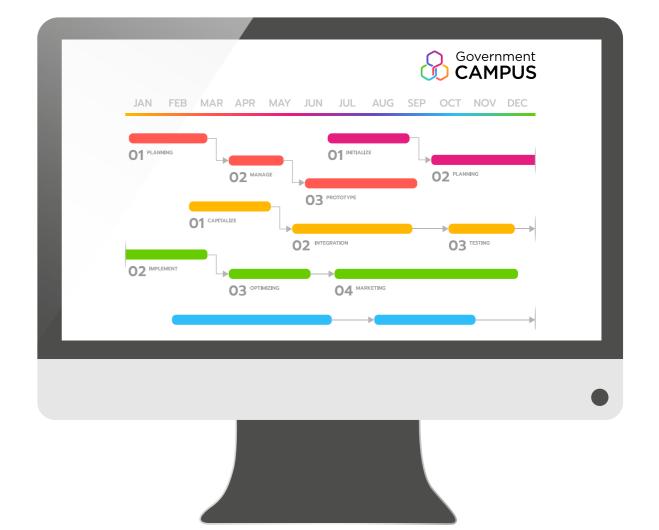
Considerations

The importance of this development tool is the development plan that is reached as a result of reflecting on each element.

How can this assessment support your profession?

If you are in a central cross-government profession team then you will be looking at your activity across-government. If you are in a departmental profession then you will have a different perspective and will be looking at your activity within your specific department.

When thinking about your development, what is the date that you want to work to? i.e by xx date this is where the profession will be. How will you ensure your results are objective? Will you use peer review or some other measure?



Development tool for Professions

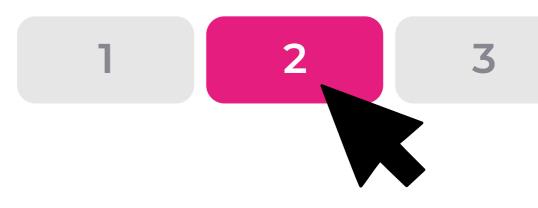


Profession:

Date:

Step 1: Assess the Profession – The Framework

- Consider the profession against the evidence in each of the six essential foundations of professions best practice framework
- For each area, select the development indicators from 1 to 5 which best describes where, realistically, the profession aims to be by the date that you have set
- Provide the rationale for this
- For each area, select the development indicators from 1 to 5 which best describes where the profession is now
- Provide any evidence to support your scores
- Subtract the score of where the profession is now from where the profession aims to be to achieve your development gap score for each essential foundation.



Governance

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Evidence for Governance:

Accountable

Are clear lines of accountability and robust processes in place for holding decision-makers to account?

Responsive

Does the governing body respond in a timely fashion to both emerging and current needs?

Consensual

Does the governing body work collaboratively to address the varying priorities and needs of members across departments?

Effective and efficient

Are objectives set and mechanisms in place to monitor delivery and value?

Equitable and inclusive

Is there a fully inclusive governance structure that engages all members of the profession? Do you have a Diversity and Inclusion plan? If so, is this embedded in all of your governance processes and standards?

Transparent

Is there an effective information dissemination strategy in place?

Underpinned by Code of Conduct

Is the Civil Service Code and any additional professional code of conduct adhered to? Where no profession-specific code already exists, should one be adopted? How will this support diversity and inclusion?



Governance – development indicators

Development indicators

Click on your chosen number, and write your responses in the boxes provided.

Where does the profession aim to be by (add date below):

What is your rationale for this?

Where is the profession now?

What is your evidence?

No clear cross profession governance in place.

No evidence for governance.

Efforts underway within profession to implement initial governance structures.

Profession can demonstrate limited evidence of governance. Some basic elements of governance established across the profession.

Profession can demonstrate some evidence of governance. Profession utilises, as good practice, a wide range of governance measures.

Profession can demonstrate most points of evidence of governance. All governance requirements fully in place, actively adhered to and regularly reviewed.

Profession has substantial evidence of governance.

Development Gap score. Aim score minus now score:

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Leadership

Evidence for Leadership:

Being visible and engaged

Is professional leadership visible and engaged?

Directing business delivery

Do the profession's objectives and performance align to business requirements? Do you have a growth/development plan in place?

Building partnerships

Is there an established influential and penetrating network with both internal and external stakeholders?

Building professional skills

Does the profession have a strategy to develop itself to support the business?

Championing learning and development

Is there a professional curriculum of learning and development that meets business needs?

Cultivating talent management

Does the profession lead its talent management and succession planning to attract, develop and retain high calibre staff? Does the profession have a plan to improve diversity and inclusion in talent management and succession planning?

Acting as senior advisor

Is professional credibility and reputation enhanced so that professional expertise is sought to add value to the organisation?

Sponsorship outside profession

Do you know what the core skills are that all civil servants need to have in relation to your profession? Are you acting as a sponsor for this across government?



Leadership – development indicators

Development indicators

Click on your chosen number, and write your responses in the boxes provided.

Where does the profession aim to be by (add date below):

What is your rationale for this?

Where is the profession now?

What is your evidence?

No clear line of leadership across government.

No evidence for leadership.

HoP is visible and leads by example across a defined professional community.

Profession can demonstrate limited evidence of leadership. HoP establishing strategies to develop leadership requirements.

Profession can demonstrate some evidence of leadership. HoP is developing the profession to support the business.

Profession can demonstrate most points of evidence of leadership. All leadership requirements fully in place and profession's leadership adopts and demonstrates best practice in all areas.

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Development Gap score. Aim score minus now score:

Strategic Workforce Planning

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Evidence for Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP):

Professions role in SWP

Does the profession have a strategic workforce plan? Does the profession have the resource to support and implement effective SWP?

Short term SWP

Does the profession analyse its current workforce?

Long term SWP

Does the profession consider how it will attract and retain staff?

Supply and demand data

Is the profession currently, or in a position to be, able to capture the necessary data for SWP and use it for forecasting? Does the profession collect diversity and inclusion data? To what extent is the profession able to determine or influence the recruitment of their professionals?

Talent management

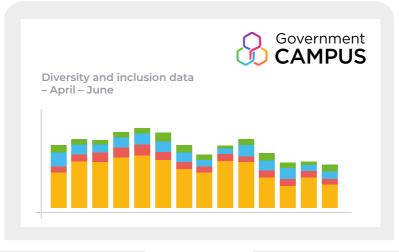
To what extent are the procedures in place for monitoring, developing and retaining internal Talent? Is the impact of professional development frameworks on external attraction being evaluated?

Career pathways (Through professional development frameworks)

Does the profession have a framework that offers accessible career development information and, where needed, clearly signposts additional resources and support?

Employee Offer

Does the profession have an employee offer? Is this communicated?



Strategic Workforce Planning – development indicators

Development indicators

Click on your chosen number, and write your responses in the boxes provided.

Where does the profession aim to be by (add date below):

What is your rationale for this?

Where is the profession now?

What is your evidence?

No clear line of SWP (including talent management and professional development framework). No evidence for SWP. Profession may be developing some elements of their workforce plan.

Profession can demonstrate limited evidence of SWP. Profession is establishing a workforce plan.

Profession can demonstrate some evidence of SWP. Profession is focussing on embedding SWP across the profession.

Profession can demonstrate most points of evidence of SWP. The profession's SWP is up to date and continuously improving across the profession.

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Profession is an exemplar with all the requirements in place.

Development Gap score. Aim score minus now score:

Standards and Competencies

Evidence for Standards and Competencies:

Standards

Does the profession have an established set of professional standards, which include a code of conduct?

Competencies

Is there a Professional Competency Framework aligned to, and supporting, the organisation's core competency requirements?

Career pathways (Through professional development frameworks)

Does the profession have a professional development framework which clearly demonstrates the standards and competencies expected at any given level in the profession to support the driving up of professionalism?

Core knowledge

Can the profession articulate what the core knowledge of their profession is for those outside of the profession?



Standards and Competencies – development indicators

Development indicators

Click on your chosen number, and write your responses in the boxes provided.

Where does the profession aim to be by (add date below):

What is your rationale for this?

Where is the profession now?

What is your evidence?

No professional competencies exist. No professional code of conduct or other standards observed.

No evidence of standards and competencies.

Professional standards and competencies are in development.

Work to meet requirements is at early stage.

Profession can demonstrate limited evidence of standards and competencies. Professional standards and competencies exist but are not used consistently across the profession.

Profession can demonstrate some evidence of standards and competencies. Profession is using professional standards and competencies and making good progress in embedding them across the profession.

Profession can demonstrate most points of evidence of standards and competencies.

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Professional competency framework and other standards embedded across the profession.

Competencies and standards are subject to regular review.

Profession can demonstrate all of the evidence points of standards and competencies.

Development Gap score. Aim score minus now score:

Curriculum and Qualifications

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Evidence for Curriculum and Qualifications:

Curriculum

Is a structured, tiered professional curriculum in place? Is it subject to regular review and evaluation?

Qualifications

Where appropriate, are accredited professional qualifications available? Have you evaluated whether formal qualifications are appropriate and will strengthen your offer? How much do you know about what is externally available?

Apprenticeships

Does the profession have a structured apprenticeship programme in place?

Career pathways (Through professional development frameworks)

Does your professional development framework make clear the learning and development offer available to support someone to develop in their current role or into their next role?

Wider responsibilities

Are there things that civil servants who are not members of your profession need to know about your work and the way you do it?

If so, have you considered whether there are learning products that need to be developed and made available to them? Are these available now?



Curriculum and Qualifications – development indicators

Development indicators

Click on your chosen number, and write your responses in the boxes provided.

Where does the profession aim to be by (add date below): No structured curriculum in place.

Learning qualifications are sourced through a variety of routes.

Limited understanding of what is available externally.

No apprenticeship programme in place.

No evidence of curriculum and qualifications. Professional curriculum in development, including access to relevant qualifications.

Some knowledge of what is available externally.

Considering apprenticeships.

Limited evidence of curriculum and qualifications. Professional curriculum established. Profession working to promote centralised approach to L&D and qualifications.

Considering apprenticeships.

Some evidence of curriculum and qualifications.

Professional curriculum used as primary source of learning across the profession, with appropriate qualification options available.

Apprenticeship programme in place or being developed.

Profession can show most points of evidence of curriculum and qualifications.

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Professional curriculum and relevant qualifications well embedded and continuously improving to meet current and future needs.

Profession demonstrates best practice.

Apprenticeship programme in place.

Profession demonstrates all of the evidence for curriculum and qualifications.

What is your rationale for this?

Where is the profession now?

What is your evidence?

Networks

Evidence for Networks:

Professional body

Is there a visible two-way relationship with the Professional Body or Council, if relevant?

Curriculum and Qualifications

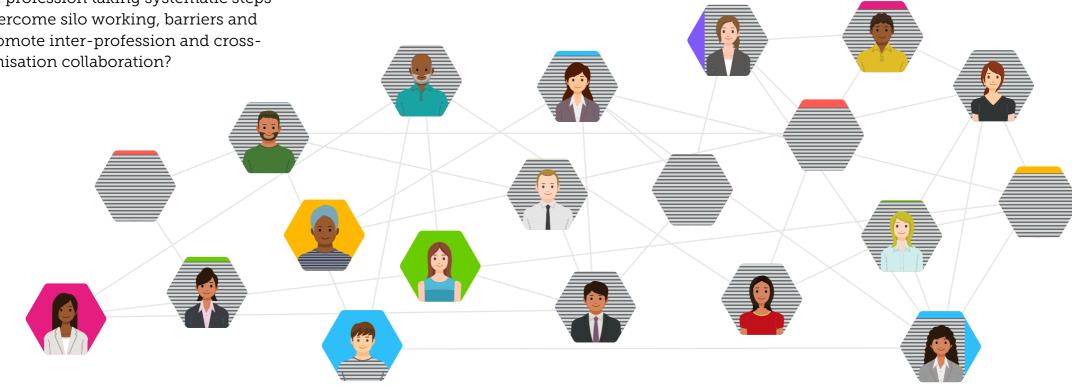
Is the profession taking systematic steps to overcome silo working, barriers and to promote inter-profession and crossorganisation collaboration?

External partnerships

Does the profession have a strategy that targets and cultivates mutually beneficial partnerships with wider public and private organisations, where appropriate?

Other professions

Is the profession actively seeking out opportunities to work with or learn from other cross government professions who are perhaps undertaking similar work?



Networks – development indicators

Development indicators

Click on your chosen number, and write your responses in the boxes provided. No involvement in or development of cross government professional network.

Relationship (where appropriate) with Professional Body is existent. No evidence for networks. Relationship/ networks exist for cross government profession.

Regular communication sharing best practice across the profession is a feature.

Limited evidence of networks.

Profession responds to opportunities to create relationships and links with other professional bodies and organisations.

Some evidence of networks.

A proactive programme established that provides for, and supports, the development of cross government and inter-profession relationships.

Profession can show most points of evidence of networks.

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Active development/ maintenance of deep and penetrating networks and relationships.

Collaboration and consistency internally and externally to the profession is continuously promoted.

Profession demonstrates best practice and all evidence for networks.

Where does the profession aim to be by (add date below):

What is your rationale for this?

Where is the profession now?

What is your evidence?



Total all of the 'Development Gap' scores above for the 6 essential foundations.

Step 3: Translate the Development Gap score

19 – 24 Vast development gap

You are likely to have a wide range of development activities to focus on, however it is likely that the specific requirements have been established.

+

It is important to determine the areas of priority for the profession and the resources required for this.

13 – 18 Wide development gap

You are likely to have a wide range of development activities and certain requirements that need to be embedded.

It is important to focus on the resources that you can draw upon to embed activities and the utilisation and adoption of these across government.

7 – 12 Medium development gap

You are likely to have specific priority areas for the profession and are focused on meeting aspirations within these.

It is important to focus on embedding best practice across all areas and building exemplary models in each activity.

0 – 6 Narrow gap

You are likely to have very specific and limited development areas for the profession and the emphasis is on continuous improvement within these.

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It is important to also give consideration to maintaining and reviewing development in each of these areas as well as sharing best practice with other professions.

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Please use this to outline your improvement actions in each of the best practice areas that apply.

Best practice area	Specific actions	What are your success measures?	Who is accountable?	Timeframe for completion?	Order of priority	What resources will you need?
Governance						
Leadership						
Strategic Workforce Planning						
Standards and Competencies						
Curriculum and qualifications						
Networks						



About the Government Campus

The Government Campus is the home of all government training available centrally, by professions and functions, and within departments. United by a clear, assured curriculum framework, the Government Campus is created for, and owned by all of us in government to provide civil servants and ministers with the necessary skills they need to succeed. The Government Campus is accessible to everyone in England, Scotland and Wales, whatever role in the Civil Service you hold and whatever level you work at.

To find out more about the Government Campus, visit **www.gov.uk/gscu**.

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