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| **Core Competencies for HR Professional Staff**  |
| **Communication** |
| **Definition** | Effectively conveying information and ideas clearly to individuals or groups in an engaging manner that helps them understand and retain the message. Listening actively to others. |
| **Importance** | Clear communications, and the ability to ensure that the exchange of information has been effective, are key to HR consultation. Communication problems can lead to relatively small interpersonal issues, or – at the other end of the spectrum - to failures in staff’s ability to achieve the core work of the agencies for whom we provide services. |
| **How do Washington State Human Resource Professionals Demonstrate This Competency?** |
| **Key Elements** | **Distinguishing Behaviors** |
| **Organizes the communication.**  | * Considers the audience to whom communication is being delivered.
* Considers best means of communication for the given topic and audience.
* Considers the perspective of the anticipated audience.
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| **Maintains attention.**  | * Listens without multitasking, focusing on the communication.
* Assumes that there is something to learn from the communication.
* Maintains a focus on the audience to whom you are communicating.
* Listen without trying to formulate and insert your response or story
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| **Adjusts to the listener.**  | * Takes advantage of the opportunity to exchange different ideas/approaches.
* Incorporate new information into the planned communication as the audience’s issues become better understood.
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| **Ensures Understanding.**  | * Uses open-ended questions.
* Clarifies any ambiguity.
* Considers organizational, cultural, or other barriers potentially present in the communication.
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| **Listens Actively.** | * Ensures that the stakeholder’s concerns are understood and responded to.
* Be aware of cues that the stakeholder may be disengaging from the communication
* Help others to consider or understand different perspectives.
* Employs empathy.
* Demonstrate an understanding of the audience’s perspective.
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| **Conveys a Professional Presence.** | * Represent your employing organization and profession positively and with confidence.
* Utilize templates, feedback and review mechanisms that are designed to meet the needs of your audience.
* Respond promptly, briefly, on point and without pontification.
* Utilizes discretion when delivering confidential or sensitive information.
* Considers the potential perceptions of others for every communication if it obtained as a public record.
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| **Personal Growth Activities** may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, developmental assignments, shadowing, experiential learning, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. Remember that many developmental activities can and will occur outside of work as part of your personal life.**Specific EXAMPLES of developmental opportunities for this competency include:** |
| **EXAMPLES of Developmental Activities*** Offer to assist in formal communications planning with your agency’s communications unit.
* Volunteer to participate on workgroups planning process or strategic changes where you can learn more about communication planning and processes related to impending changes.
* Ask to have trusted co-workers review your planned communications and offer to review their communications as well.
* Volunteer to lead a workgroup or committee where you will be required to effectively communicate with the participants to achieve a specific outcome.
* Participate in formal or informal groups of like-minded individuals where you can discuss, practice and learn about communicating with others. These can include professional organizations, Toastmasters, community based organizations, your PTA, sports organization or church, service clubs, and similar organizations.
* Mentor subordinate staff on communications, or find a mentor for yourself.
* Listen to books or podcasts such as Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras (Harper Audio, 1994) during your commute to and from work.
* Read books such as Managing Disagreement Constructively: Conflict Management in Organizations by Kindler and Keppler (Crisp Publications, 1997)
* Watch a TED TALK, such as “10 ways to have a better conversation” by Celeste Headlee (2015); use the included “reading list” provided with TED TALKs to further explore topics you find interesting.
* Pursue professional certification through IPMA-HR, SHRM, ATD, and/or HRCI.
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| **EXAMPLES of Training*** Formal training on communications, writing and related subjects.
* ATD, SHRM, Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) or IPMA-HR local, regional or national organization-provided webinar, training or conference offering specific sessions or training on communications for Human Resources Professionals.
* Specialized focused meetings and trainings for Washington State human resource employees offered by State HR and the Office of the Attorney General Labor and Personnel section.
* Consider attending programs offered by the Cascade Executive Programs at the University of Washington’s Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs.
* Consider obtaining an advanced degree in your area of specialization.
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| **Recruiting** for candidates who have this competency may include, but is not limited to, providing clear statements about qualifications desired or required in the recruitment announcement, performing specific outreach activities to organizations or groups whose members often possess the desired competency, developing interview questions that assess the candidates competence, and asking reference questions that assess the candidates competence.**Specific EXAMPLES of recruiting activities for this competency include:** |
| **Example of qualification statement:** A highly qualified candidate will demonstrate the knowledge, skills and ability to effectively exchange information with stakeholders; use language effectively to gather information and facilitate the exchange of ideas; ability to express oneself in conversations and when addressing an audience; organization of ideas, including summarizing and explaining them concisely; the use of effectual examples and visual aids that have an impact on the audience; ability to ensure that information is passed on to others who should be kept informed; ability to express oneself clearly in business writing; ability to notice, interpret, and anticipate others’ concerns and feelings, and to communicate this awareness empathetically to others. **Example of outreach activity:** Source the job announcement to the SHRM journal/online career center, or contact known individuals with this skillset asking for names of potential candidates who demonstrate this competency.**Examples of interview questions:** 1. Give an example of how you dealt with a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.
2. Give me an example of how you dealt with a difficult customer at work
3. Tell me about a time when you had to explain an issue or process to a colleague(s) at work.
4. Tell me about a time when you taught someone else something.
5. How do you explain things to other people?
6. What impression do you try to make to your audience when presenting information?
7. Which is more important and why: verbal or nonverbal language?

**Examples of reference check questions:** 1. How did (person) communicate both to managers and subordinates in the workplace?
2. What types of communication did (person) use regularly?
3. What form of communication is (person)’s strength?
4. Can you describe a time when (person) used communication skills to defuse a situation?
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| **Identifying Required Proficiency Levels**While behavioral indicators are used to help in evaluating performance, proficiency levels describe the level of a competency required to perform a specific job successfully. These levels relate to the work required for **a specific job**. Different jobs require different levels of proficiency for successful performance. Not all jobs will require the highest level of proficiency and some may not require specific competencies at all. The proficiency levels outlined below apply to all of the HR Core Competencies. |
| **Proficiency Level** | **Proficiency Description** |
| **Entry** | * Limited or no use of competency required for the job
* Competency has been minimally demonstrated
* May have had limited opportunity to apply the competency
* May have limited understanding of the competency
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| **Developing** | * Basic understanding or knowledge required for the job
* Basic understanding and knowledge sufficient enough to handle routing tasks
* Requires some guidance or supervision when applying the competency
* Understands and can discuss terminology and concepts related to the competency
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| **Independent** | * Detailed knowledge, understanding and application of the competency required to be successful in the job
* Ability to handle non-routine problems and situations
* Requires minimal guidance or supervision/works independently
* Consistently demonstrates success in the competency
* Capable of assisting others in the application of the competency
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| **Advanced** | * Highly developed knowledge, understanding, and application of the competency required to be successful in the job and organization (total mastery)
* Can apply knowledge outside the scope of one’s position
* Is able to coach or teach others on the competency
* Has a long-term perspective
* Helps develop materials and resources in the competency
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| **Expert** | * Specialist/Authority level knowledge, understanding, and application of the competency required to be successful in the job
* Recognized by others as an expert in the competency and is sought out by others throughout the organization (expert in the area)
* Works across team, department, and organizational functions
* Applies skills across multiple projects or functions
* Able to explain issues in relation to broader organizational issues
* Creates new applications or processes
* Has a strategic focus
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