Lesson 4: Career Development for Federal HR Professionals

Lesson Overview

So far, this course has covered the HR Lifecycle, HR functions, an introduction to the legal basis for those HR functions, and an overview of specifics around what implementation of some HR functions looks like in the federal government.

This lesson will introduce you to the various career development tools available to you.

In this lesson, you will learn to:

- Describe the HR Professional Framework
- Identify the HR roles included in the HR Professional Framework
- Describe the HR Competency Model
- Determine your current HR role using the HR Customized Self-Assessment tool
- Discuss the HR Career Path
- Discuss the HR Success Factors

HR Professional Framework

Let's begin by looking at the HR Professional Framework, which identifies the various HR roles in the federal government. The purpose of the framework is to help you think about the direction that you would like to take as you pursue a career within the HR profession.
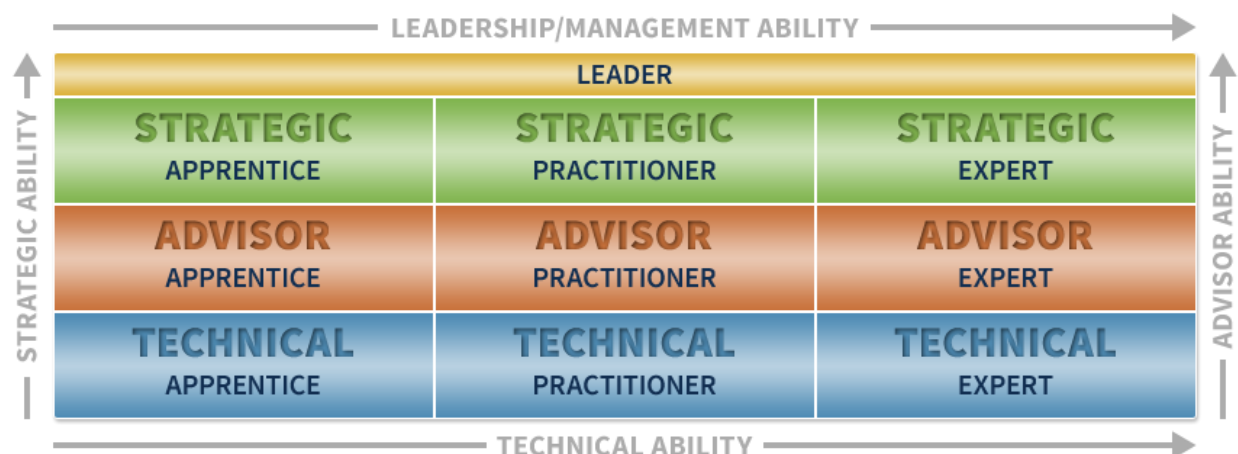
Organization of the HR Professional Framework

On the framework, HR roles are arranged by both technical ability and strategic ability. This framework helps to achieve a key OPM goal of moving HR professionals from "transactional operational" roles to Strategic Business Partners.

Technical Ability

The scale for technical ability includes:

- Apprentice – novice level of technical ability
- Practitioner – moderate level of technical ability
- Expert – high level of technical ability

Technical Apprentice

- Has a novice level of technical and strategic ability

- The HR career path is very open for the Technical Apprentice, looking to gain new skills and advance his or her career

- Is likely new to the HR profession and/or the federal government

Technical Practitioner

- Has a moderate level of technical ability and a limited level of familiarity with strategic HR operations

- The Technical Practitioner can grow both strategically and technically to become a potentially effective advisor to upper management

Technical Expert

- Has a high level of technical ability and a limited familiarity with strategic HR operations

- As the Technical Expert becomes more familiar with strategic approaches to HR, he or she will likely serve as a great subject matter advisor to upper management

- The Technical Expert is likely to be an effective HR leader in an operational or policy setting

Advisor Apprentice

- Has a moderate level of strategic ability and only a limited familiarity with technical HR operations

- Is likely in the beginning stages of a career as an HR leader

- The Advisor Apprentice's skills would be enhanced through partnering with and learning from experts in both technical and strategic HR operations

Advisor Practitioner

- Has a moderate level of both strategic and technical HR ability
- The Advisor Practitioner would serve as an effective advisor for experienced HR leaders

Advisor Expert

- Has a high level of technical ability and a moderate familiarity with strategic HR operations
- Serves as an excellent advisor to experienced and novice HR leaders
- With a little more strategic training, the Advisory Expert can likely be an effective HR leader

Strategic Ability

The scale for strategic ability includes:

- Technical – limited level of familiarity with strategic operations
- Advisor – moderate level of familiarity with strategic operations
- Strategic – high level of strategic ability

Strategic Apprentice

- Has a high level of strategic ability and only a limited familiarity with technical HR operations
- Whereas the Strategic Planner will likely be an effective HR leader, he or she would benefit from partnering with an employee in the "Advisor Expert" role

Strategic Practitioner

- Has a high level of strategic ability and a moderate familiarity with technical HR operations
- The Strategic Practitioner's well-rounded experience will allow him or her to be effective in most HR leadership roles

Strategic Expert

- Has a high level of both technical and strategic HR ability
- The Strategic Expert would be very effective in the senior leadership ranks in any HR organization

The HR Competency Model

The HR Professional Framework is designed around the Human Resources Management (HRM) competencies. A competency is a measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.

There are technical and general competencies, and both are required for each occupation. The HRM competency model is made up of 24 general competencies, which are competencies that cut across occupations. The general competencies are categorized into the three HR professional roles (Technical, Advisor, Strategic), plus the Leader role. Technical competencies are specific to an occupation and/or technical area.

You can use this model to match your personal competencies with the competencies of a position you might be interested in. That is, in order to qualify yourself for the job you may aspire to, you should seek out opportunities to develop your competencies to the levels shown on the model.

HR Specialist Technical Competencies

Technical competencies are specific to an occupation and/or technical area. The following table presents the proficiency levels associated with each competency by grade level. However, required proficiency levels may vary based on an agency's specific needs and position requirements.

Proficiency Level	Technical Competencies
5 = Expert	- Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations - Serves as a key resource and advises others - Demonstrates comprehensive, expert understanding of concepts and processes
4 = Advanced	- Applies the competency in considerably difficult situations - Generally requires little or no guidance - Demonstrates broad understanding of concepts and processes
3 = Intermediate	- Applies the competency in difficult situations - Requires occasional guidance - Demonstrates understanding of concepts and processes

Proficiency Level	Technical Competencies
2 = Basic	• Applies the competency in somewhat difficult situations • Requires frequent guidance • Demonstrates familiarity with concepts and processes
1 = Awareness	• Applies the competency in the simplest situations • Requires close and extensive guidance • Demonstrates awareness of concepts and processes

For more information about the HR Specialist Technical Competencies visit HRU.gov at
https://hru.gov/Career/HR_Competencies.aspx

HR General Competencies

General competencies are competencies that cut across HR occupations. They also include proficiency levels associated with each HRM competency by grade level. Many of these general competencies cut across all occupations. Knowing the general competencies for a given position can be helpful for those looking to transfer their skills from outside an HR-related field to an HR field.

Proficiency Level	General Competencies
5 = Expert	• Applies the competency in exceptionally difficult situations • Serves as a key resource and advises others
4 = Advanced	• Applies the competency in considerably difficult situations • Generally requires little or no guidance
3 = Intermediate	• Applies the competency in difficult situations • Requires occasional guidance
2 = Basic	• Applies the competency in somewhat difficult situations • Requires frequent guidance
1 = Awareness	• Applies the competency in the simplest situations • Requires close and extensive guidance

For more information about the HR General Competencies visit HRU.gov at
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HR Customized Self-Assessment Tool

The HR Customized Self-Assessment Tool 🔗 is a short survey hosted on the HR University website that you can use to obtain a quick assessment of where your experience and knowledge place you in relation to the overarching HR roles (Strategic, Advisor, and Technical).

The survey is intended to stimulate your thinking about your own development and HR career aspirations. It makes no value judgments and is not a performance assessment.

You can use this tool to help you:

- Determine how to use your talent and skills while continuing to grow
- Identify and focus on preparation needed for a successful career
- Identify and close gaps in your training and learning

Assessing Yourself

In a few moments, you'll be asked to take the HR Customized Self-Assessment to preliminarily reflect on how you can use this tool.

When you finish this course, you are encouraged to complete the HR Customized Self-Assessment again. Think about if the results align with your expectations. How do they align with your goals?

Then, spend some time thinking about where you need to focus your energies to improve your knowledge, skills, and abilities to best position yourself as you advance through your career.

HR Career Paths

Within the HR career field, there are several technical areas that one can choose to pursue. Regardless of which technical area you are currently in, there is always an opportunity to learn, understand, and specialize in another area. Read each technical area below to learn more.

HR Specialist (Classification)

A Human Resources Specialist (Classification) is required to have knowledge of the full range of position classification and position management principles, laws, regulations, concepts, practices, and techniques. Classification professionals determine the appropriate pay system, occupational grouping, title and grade of positions, and advise management on position organization design.

HR Specialist (Compensation)

A Human Resources Specialist (Compensation) is required to have knowledge of the full range of pay, premium pay, and leave administration laws, regulations, principles, and practices. A

Compensation Specialist is required to have knowledge of the full range of pay administration policies, principles, and practices under title 5, United States Code, and other statutes and legal authorities as applicable. Compensation professionals analyze, interpret, develop, and/or implement laws, regulations, policies, and/or guidance on pay and/or leave administration. Compensation professionals advise management on the use of compensation flexibilities to help recruit, manage, and retain employees.

HR Specialist (Employee Benefits)

A Human Resources Specialist (Employee Benefits) is required to have knowledge of laws, regulations, policies, and precedents of federal employee retirement, group life insurance, health benefits, and Thrift Savings Plan programs. An Employee Benefits Specialist is required to have knowledge of standardized principles, practices, and procedures of injury compensation, and standardized fact-finding and research techniques. Employee Benefits professionals provide guidance and consultation to agencies, current and former employees, annuitants, survivors, and eligible family members regarding retirement, insurance, health benefits, and injury compensation.

HR Specialist (Employee Relations)

A Human Resources Specialist (Employee Relations) is required to have knowledge of employee relations principles, practices, laws, and regulations. Employee Relations professionals provide advice and assistance to employees and managers on such issues as discipline, misconduct, performance problems, and dispute resolution. Employee Relations professionals research applicable laws, policies, and agency precedents and apply fact-finding techniques to gather clear-cut information and/or evidence specific to the cases.

HR Specialist (Executive Services)

A Human Resources Specialist (Executive Services) is required to have knowledge of laws, regulations, principles, and practices related to staffing, recruitment, compensation, executive development, position management, and performance management related to the Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Leaders (SLs)/Scientific or Professional positions (STs), and political appointees.

HR Specialist (HR Development)

A Human Resources Specialist (Human Resource Development) is required to have knowledge of HRD learning laws, Executive Orders, regulations, policies, theories, principles, and methods, as well as the relationship between agency strategic plans and goals with employee development programs. HR Development professionals plan, develop, administer, and/or evaluate learning and development programs designed to enhance employees' competencies and skills and provide for employee career development in the organization.

HR Specialist (Information Systems)

A Human Resources Specialist (Information Systems) is required to have knowledge of a wide variety of HR concepts, principles, laws, regulations, and practices and the interrelationships of various HR specialties as they relate to system processes/functions/capabilities and the infrastructure supporting the HR information system(s); and information technology concepts, practices, and procedures. Information Systems Specialists are required to have knowledge of local HR information system(s) and the HR transaction system. Information Systems professionals develop, deliver, manage, and maintain HR information systems using human resources management knowledge, rather than information technology.

HR Specialist (Labor Relations)

A Human Resources Specialist (Labor Relations) is required to have knowledge of the full range of labor relations laws, regulations, theories, principles, methods, and techniques sufficient to conduct systematic studies to develop management interests and respond to union interests at the bargaining table. Labor Relations professionals consult with labor organizations, agency managers and labor relations officials in the development of human resource policy and on government rules, regulations and binding directives affecting conditions of employment. Labor Relations professionals represent management in unfair labor practice and representation hearings before the Federal Labor Relations Authority and in impasse proceedings before the Federal Services Impasses Panel.

HR Specialist (Military)

A Human Resources Specialist (Military) is required to have knowledge of practices and procedures involved in reviewing, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing officer/enlisted billet authorizations and assignments. Military Specialists are required to have knowledge of concepts, practices, and techniques relating to a variety of complex analytical HR military personnel functions. Military professionals provide support that affects soldiers' overall welfare and well-being, while assisting leaders with keeping soldiers combat-ready and effective. Military professionals assist staff members on all matters concerning human resource support for all assigned and attached personnel.

HR Specialist (Performance Management)

A Human Resources Specialist (Performance Management) is required to have knowledge of performance management principles, practices, laws, and regulations, as well as deductive reasoning. Performance Management professionals assist managers and supervisors in establishing, maintaining, and monitoring effective performance management programs to plan, monitor, develop, rate, and reward employee performance.

HR Specialist (Policy)

A Human Resources Specialist (Policy) is required to have knowledge of how to develop effective human resource management policies and strategies to ensure the agency is able to recruit, select, develop, train, and manage a high-quality, productive workforce in accordance with merit system principles. Policy Specialists are required to have knowledge of the laws, regulations, principles, and practices of typically more than one technical area.

HR Specialist (Staffing)

A Human Resources Specialist (Staffing) is required to have knowledge of laws, Executive Orders, regulations, policies, concepts, and various HR policies, practices, procedures, and management controls of the staffing functions at a regionalized operations center. Staffing Specialists are required to have knowledge of HR staffing and recruitment principles, concepts, laws, regulations, techniques, and guidelines. Staffing professionals recruit, examine, select, and place employees. Staffing professionals advise management in identifying, attracting, and retaining a high quality and diverse workforce that is capable of accomplishing the organization's mission.

Using the HR Career Paths

The HR Career Paths ⬈ is a tool to help you identify competencies, job tasks, training topics and suggestions for critical developmental activities within each technical area. Let's look now at how to use the HR Career Paths.

Technical Areas

To begin, select a technical area you want to explore. In this example, we will look at the Classification area.

Career Path Overview

This is the Classification Specialist Career Path Overview. As you can see, the overview diagrams the career progression from entry level through managerial. From this overview, you can select any of the career stages to learn more. For the purpose of this example, we will look at the entry-level stage.

Career Stage Path

This diagram illustrates the career path for a Classification Specialist from entry level to full performance, including the path options for making that progression.

Career Stage Progression

Below the diagram are tables that show the expected competency and job task progression at each grade level within the career path. There is also a list of training and critical development activities necessary to progress through the career stage on the path.

Tips For Using the Customized Self-Assessment

Use the Customized Self-Assessment ⤢ to determine where you fall on the HR Professional Framework. Where on the Framework are you currently and where might you want to go? Keep a list of development plans to help you in your career progression.

Note: It is recommended that you bookmark this Career Self-Assessment and the HR Career Paths tool and refer back to them often to help you chart your progress. Remember, these HR career paths are not intended to guarantee promotion or placement into another technical area; however, taking the suggested training courses will ensure that you are prepared technically, analytically, and strategically, which in turn will serve as a bolster as you navigate through your HR Career.

HR Success Factors

HR Success factors provide guidance on how to maximize your performance and career success as you move through career stages in HR. These statements are typically broad in scope and can be viewed as "pieces of advice" from senior employees who have reflected on their experience in the HR field and provided input on how to maximize performance and career advancement. You will notice that many of the success factors are not tied to any particular technical area or career stage. In addition, these statements are not tied to any specific position, qualification competency, or developmental experience.

Career Movement

- Obtain expertise in staffing and classification as this knowledge is foundational; it is also required for success at higher levels of HR.

- Become fully proficient in more than one technical area if you wish to enter positions beyond full performance.

- Develop breadth of experience by working in offices of differing sizes or locations - but gain depth of experience at each position before moving.

- Before specializing in policy work, gain a solid foundation in operations.

Learning the HR Field

- Strive to understand the foundation of the entire HR system and how it ties together, such as:

  - o Policies, rules, and regulations (e.g., gain knowledge of the pertinent chapters of the Code of Federal Regulations related to your technical area)

  - o Recent developments in the HR area (e.g., hiring reform, federal-wide changes, impacts of legislation)

- Pay attention to HR-related news within the federal government.

Skills to Develop Throughout Your Career

- Learn how to clearly define a problem and probe at the root causes.

- Learn how to use technology to your advantage.

- Continually develop your listening and communication skills.

- Learn how to effectively communicate and navigate the virtual world, including the use of social media.

- Research best practices, both internal and external to the federal government, and gain a broad theoretical and practical background in HR.

- Learn how to serve as a business partner and advisor. For example:

  - o Develop effective consulting skills.

  - o Learn the process of data collection and analysis.

  - o Learn how to produce well-written and effective reports that communicate useful information.

  - o Seek opportunities to prove your value to customers.

Ways to Stand Out

- Show a willingness to do independent research when solving problems.

- Adopt a product-focused perspective and learn how to deliver results.

- Seek out a mentor and consider becoming one when you reach a higher level.

- Maintain a high level of attention to detail. Do accurate and thorough research.

- Make a commitment to understand your agency's organizational structure, mission, and culture.

Working with Your Customers Effectively

- Attend customer staff meetings and listen for opportunities to show your value.

- Be resilient and patient when working in the HR field. Avoid taking things personally when solutions are not adopted; many ideas are rejected due to timing.

- Learn how to be ethical and flexible at the same time. Find ways to get to "yes" legally and meet management needs.

- Find ways to relate to your customers and better understand them. Use their terminology and translate what you are doing into their language. When you have gathered data, take the time to interpret the data in ways they can understand.

Lesson Summary

Congratulations, you have completed Lesson 4: Career Development for Federal HR Professionals.

In this lesson, you were introduced to the various career development tools available to you as an HR professional in the federal government.

Now that you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the HR Professional Framework

- Identify the HR roles included in the HR Professional Framework

- Describe the HR Competency Model

- Determine your current HR role using the HR Customized Self-Assessment tool

- Discuss the HR Career Path

- Discuss the HR Success Factors

Course Summary

You have completed the Introduction to HR Management course.

Now that you have completed this course, you should be able to describe the federal HR profession and the context in which HR work is conducted