Manual

for the Use of the Competency Framework
in the Recruitment and Selection for the
Civil Services of Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Content

Introduction

Competencies are attitudes and patterns of behaviour that are at the very core of how people do their jobs. Competencies influence how people apply their knowledge, technical skills and management skills and indicate that success in the civil service is determined not only by "what we do" but also by "how we do it". They are commonly defined as a **set of behaviours required to effectively perform the tasks and functions of the workplace**. In other words, the competency framework describes how we should approach our daily work. As such, it can be a useful management tool to improve employee performance and be fully integrated into a comprehensive human resources management system.

The introduction of the concept of competencies in the civil service of Bosnia and Herzegovina arose primarily from the need to introduce uniform criteria for assessing applicants in the recruitment procedure, which members of commission for the selection of civil servants would take as a basis for assessing applicants at the selection interview.

The purpose of this Manual is to show how the competency framework can help shift the focus of the recruitment procedure towards testing the practical knowledge and demonstrated competencies needed to do the job, and to offer guidelines and advice for professionally conducting competency-based interviews to select applicants for civil service positions.

The application of the competency framework presented in this manual was formalized by the adoption of the "Rulebook on the character and content of the public competition, the manner of conducting interviews and interview forms" in the institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since this is a relatively new concept in the BiH civil service in the part related to the verification of competencies, the application of the Rulebook was not mandatory from its adoption in August 2016 to January 1, 2018, since when it became obligatory to apply competencies in the employment of civil servants in BiH institutions, both for public and internal vacancies.

The practice in the application of the Rulebook on the character and content of the public competition introducing the competency framework in the process of hiring civil servants in BiH institutions represents a significant improvement towards a more professional, structured interview. It provides a "broader picture" of the applicant, but also points out the parts of the methodology for verification of competencies that need some refinement.

Experience in the application of the competency framework in the process of employment of civil servants in BiH institutions is incorporated in this updated edition of the Manual as useful and practical advice for future application.

The amended edition was prepared within the project of the general framework of EU assistance to BiH "Strengthening human resource management in Bosnia and Herzegovina", implemented in the period from January 29, 2020 to January 31, 2022.

We express gratitude for the contribution in the preparation of the amended edition of the Manual:

1. Competency framework as support to human resource management

The Competency framework in the civil service is the basis for the application of the competency management system in all human resource management functions. The introduction of a competency framework increases professionalism in human resource management, ensures a unique methodology for standardized and efficient operation of human resources units, and enables more efficient human resource management practices. Furthermore, the Competency framework allows the application of objective capability criteria in core human resource management functions; selection, training and development of competent civil servants.

1.1 Determining the requirements of individual jobs

The Competency framework is a structure through which an institution can determine which behaviours are relevant to achieving a positive work performance. This is particularly relevant when it comes to identifying priority core competencies for individual jobs. There should be an obvious correlation between the priority competencies required for the job and the main tasks and responsibilities that make up a large part of the overall job. The more time it takes to get a job done, the higher the priority of the competence.

1.2 Recruitment and promotion of employees

The use of the Competency framework in the recruitment and selection process is the focus of this Manual. Members of the civil service selection commissions may ask targeted questions to assess whether it is certain that an applicant for a position in the civil service will show the necessary patterns of behaviour if selected for position. Based on specific past examples, they will look for evidence that indicates the possession of a certain competence. Chapter 4 of this Manual provides guidance on conducting a competency-based interview, and Chapter 5 offers a comprehensive list of possible questions for testing competency-based interviews.

1.3 Planning future skills and knowledge needs

Assessing employees against a set of competencies is a useful way to determine whether there is a risk of a lack of certain skills in the organization in the future, for example as a result of employees retiring or leaving the organization for other reasons. Based on such an assessment, it is possible to seek solutions by training existing or hiring new employees.

2. Competency framework in the civil services of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Competency framework for the Civil Services in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the outcome of the project of the general framework of EU assistance to BiH "Modernisation of Human Resources Management Systems in the Civil Service", implemented in the period from January 27, 2014 to January 26, 2016.

The aim of the Competency framework was to identify competencies that will be relevant to the work of civil service structures in BiH in the next few years and enable the civil service to respond to reform challenges. The Competency framework was developed based on activities related to the analysis of jobs conducted on the same project and activities on the framework of civil service competencies in other countries in the region, as well as on previous technical assistance projects in BiH, especially those implemented by UNDP/DFID in 2009.

Starting from the fact that expectations of managers in the civil service differ to some extent and exceed expectations of civil servants in non-managerial positions, two groups of core competencies have been developed. The first group applies to all civil servants regardless of category, including executives. The second group contains detailed core competencies for senior civil servants.

Core competencies for all civil servants:

1. Professional development and integrity
2. Troubleshooting, initiatives and change
3. Teamwork
4. Communication
5. Personal effectiveness and results orientation

**Core competencies for managers
(and heads of internal organizational units):**

6. Leadership skills (leadership skills)
7. Planning and organization
8. Employee development
9. Strategic guidance

The table below lists all competencies from the Competency framework with a definition and indication of desirable behaviours in the work environment.

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2.1 Core competencies for all civil servants

	1.0 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRITY The continuous acquisition and application of the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve high levels of work performance, including the ability to transfer knowledge and experience to others.
1.1	**Continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the job** Ensures they have the knowledge and skills necessary for the job, takes steps to find out if there are gaps/changes and then addresses them.
1.2	**Commitment to personal and professional development** Takes responsibility for personal and professional development, displaying motivation and a commitment to learning and self-improvement.
1.3	**Knowledge sharing** Shares knowledge and information gained with others so they can learn.
1.4	**Integrity** Engenders the trust and respect of others through consistent honesty, abides by the Civil Service Code of Conduct and challenges rule-breaking by others.

	2.0 PROBLEM SOLVING, INITIATIVE AND CHANGE The ability to act proactively and to respond positively, creatively and constructively to changing situations and new demands.
2.1	**Initiative** Acts with initiative within his/her scope of work.
2.2	**Innovation of new work solutions** Develops and suggests fresh ideas that provide solutions to workplace challenges; encourages new ideas and innovations; open to change.
2.3	**Creativity** Develops creative insights into situations and questions conventional approaches.
2.4	**Problem solving skills** Presents not just problems but proposes solutions to issues.
2.5	**Ability to resolve difficult or complicated challenges** Resolves difficult or complicated challenges.
2.6	**Helping others with change**

3.0 TEAMWORK
The ability to work effectively in groups and teams, to cooperate with other members and to contribute through active participation in order to achieve collective goals.

3.1	**Building constructive working relationships** Builds constructive working relationships through cooperation, acceptance and respect for others.
3.2	**Facilitating teamwork** Promotes cooperation and commitment within a team to achieve goals and deliverables.
3.3	**Helping others to resolve conflicts** Helps others resolve disagreements and conflicts.
3.4	**Respecting different viewpoints, and orientations** Respects different viewpoints and welcomes diversity of cultures and orientation.
3.5	**Ability to cooperate with other teams** Builds and maintains constructive and productive relations with other teams and their members.

4.0 COMMUNICATION
The ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing with managers, colleagues, clients and citizens, conveying information clearly, accurately and in a timely manner to relevant individuals and groups.

4.1	**Tactfulness** Has patience and uses good judgment in communication, keeping polite behaviour in all interactions.
4.2	**Clear conveying of ideas, facts and instructions** Conveys ideas, facts and instructions, - orally or in writing - with clarity, using language the audience will best understand.
4.3	**Active listening** Listens, understands and considers ideas of others.
4.4	**Encouraging feedback from others** Encourages information feedback from others and offers it to other parties.
4.5	**Adaptive communication style** Changes the communication approach and style to meet the preferences and needs of the audience.
4.6	**Effective participation at meetings** Conducts and/or participates in meetings and group discussions efficiently and with structure.

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5.0 PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND RESULTS ORIENTATION
Performing consistently at a high level. Achieving goals and continuously improving the quality of service to citizens, clients and other civil service bodies.

5.1	**Focusing on results and desired outcomes** Focuses on results and desired outcomes and how best to achieve them. Produces good quality outputs with little oversight, on time.
5.2	**Building and maintaining client and citizen satisfaction** Builds and maintains client and citizen satisfaction with the services offered by meeting or exceeding their expectations.
5.3	**Paying attention to detail** Pays attention to detail and produces accurate results.
5.4	**Efficient management of time and resources** Improves productivity by managing time, priorities and resources to achieve goals and secure value for money.
5.5	**Effective decision making** Makes timely, informed decisions that take into account the facts, goals, constraints and risks.
5.6	**Analytical thinking** Applies analytical thinking by breaking a situation into smaller pieces, tracing the implications of a situation in a step-by-step way. Organises the parts of a problem in a systematic way, making comparisons of different aspects and causal relationships.
5.7	**Ability to work under pressure** Keeps composure in stressful or adverse situations.

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2.2 Core competencies for managers (and heads of internal organizational units)

6.0 LEADERSHIP Motivating people to achieve high performance in working towards the team and organization's goals.	
6.1	**Translating strategic goals to everyday work** Links vision, values, goals and strategies to everyday work.
6.2	**Creating positive work environment** Creates a positive work environment where staff are motivated to do their best.
6.3	**Goal setting** Sets clear, meaningful challenging but attainable group goals and expectations.
6.4	**Effective delegation** Manages staff by delegating and entrusting certain tasks and assisting them to succeed in their performance.
6.5	**Staff motivation** Regularly provides both positive and critical feedback to team members to improve motivation and performance.
6.6	**Leading by example** Is an excellent role model – leads by example.

7.0 PLANNING AND ORGANISING The ability to plan, organize, coordinate and monitor activities and work tasks for self and team members.	
7.1	**Effective planning** Plans the best use of available resources – produces good activity and departmental plans that are understood by staff and that identify necessary resources and skills.
7.2	**Team planning** Agrees with individuals on objectives that support team plans and service goal.
7.3	**Holding members to account for their work results** Holds team members to account for achieving the results that have been agreed.
7.4	**Risk management** Evaluates risk and puts realistic plans in place to manage it.
7.5	**Ensuring meeting of deadlines** Takes early action to deal with issues that affect deadlines to ensure delivery on time.

8.0 DEVELOPING PEOPLE
Developing people to improve their performance and fulfil their potential.

8.1	**Identification of team members' training needs** Identifies training needs in employees and takes action to meet them by formal or informal learning and development methods.
8.2	**Talent management** Identifies talent and potential in employees and creates development plans to realize it.
8.3	**Coaching** Personally coaches employees to improve their performance.

9.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTION
Setting the strategic direction of the organization in response to the needs of Government and citizens, and ensuring its delivery.

9.1	**Strategic planning** Develops strategic plans to ensure the organization's future success.
9.2	**Monitoring of strategic plans** Monitors plans to achieve strategic objectives.
9.3	**Strategic resource management** Secures the resources needed to deliver strategic objectives.
9.4	**Taking responsibility for meeting strategic objectives** Takes responsibility for ensuring the strategic objectives are met.
9.5	**Building an effective senior management team** Builds an effective senior management team that pulls the organisation together.

3. Application of Competency framework to individual job positions

Every job requires certain professional knowledge and skills. Knowledge requirements are related to the nature of the job and knowledge of the institution. Skills are required to fulfil a functional role and include technical skills (e.g. project management, time management, process planning, budget management, etc.). It is common for the technical skills and abilities required for a particular job to be listed in the job description in the section describing the professional profile of the executor.

In addition to the necessary knowledge, qualifications, technical skills and experience, professional profile of the executor also identifies competencies needed to perform the job efficiently. The use of competencies clarifies the personal qualities and ways of behaviour in the workplace that are expected from the executor. The core competencies contained within the competency framework are designed to be applicable to all civil service positions. In this sense, all employees are expected to demonstrate all core competencies to some extent.

However, it is important to emphasize that some competencies are particularly important for certain jobs (e.g. excellent communication skills for jobs whose executors work directly with citizens). Thus, a combination of a maximum of 6 'priority' competencies should be compiled from the competency framework for each job, which would be incorporated into individual job descriptions.

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Priority competencies for individual jobs should be briefly described in the text of the vacancy notice. Job applicants (as well as employees) would be expected to demonstrate the possession of these priority competencies in an **exemplary manner, and not just in a satisfactory manner**. In this way, the competency framework could be adapted to each job.

Priority competencies should be identified in the job analysis process, taking into account tasks to which the most time is devoted. As job descriptions contain descriptions of several duties/responsibilities of the executor in a particular job, in the process of identifying priority competencies it is necessary to focus on those duties for which at least 20 percent of total working time is estimated, i.e. to connect such duties with appropriate competencies.

Identification of priority competencies should primarily be the responsibility of the human resources management (HRM) officers in each civil service institution, in consultation with the executor during the job analysis interview and the immediate superior.

Competences can also be identified within focus groups composed of experts in the subject area within civil service institutions (especially in large institutions) or focus groups whose members are civil servants from different institutions.

In addition, it is recommended to define competencies for standard jobs, i.e. jobs that can be found in various civil service bodies (e.g. HRM - human resources management, PR - public relations, IT - information technologies, financial - accounting affairs, etc.). Identification of competencies for standard civil service positions can be carried out within focus groups composed of representatives of different institutions who are experts in the subject area and who will be able to identify the most important competencies for each standard position.

It is recommended that job descriptions, with main duties and identified competencies, be collected and consolidated in a job catalogue that would be available to all civil servants. These standard job descriptions would serve as an example to HRM officers, and facilitate the process of identifying priority competencies for most jobs in their institutions.

4. Guidelines for the use of competencies in the recruitment process

Experience in a large number of organizations shows that, combined with the assessment of knowledge and experience, the use of competencies improves the accuracy of the assessment of individuals for different jobs. The application of competencies prevents a hasty assessment of applicants in the competition procedure or an assessment based on criteria not relevant to the job.

Experience in the application of the Competency framework in the civil service of Bosnia and Herzegovina indicates that for the objective assessment of applicants in the oral part of the exam or interview, competency testing is equally important and in some cases more important than knowledge testing. Therefore, the focus of the interview should be on the examination of competencies, noting that the written part of the exam should be designed in such a way as to allow an objective assessment of the applicant's knowledge.

Once the priority competencies for the job for which the vacancy has been announced have been determined, it is possible to plan a structured interview based on competencies in order to check whether the applicant possesses the necessary competencies to the required appropriate level. The premise for conducting a competency-based interview is that **previous behaviour is the best predictor of future performance**.

Competency-based interviews are interviews in which each question is designed to test one or more specific competencies. Applicants are asked questions related to their behaviour in specific circumstances, which they then need to substantiate with concrete examples. The answer is then compared with the previously determined criteria and evaluated accordingly.

For example, examiners can test an applicant's ability to maintain composure in stressful situations by first asking the applicant how he or she is coping with stress and then asking him or her to give an example of a stressful situation and his or her actions in a particular situation.

Chapter 5 contains an extensive list of sample questions that can be used to test each of the core competencies.

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4.1 Preparing for a selection interview

The composition, appointment and manner of work of the commission for the selection of civil servants is done in accordance with legal regulations, which also prescribe the rights and duties of the members of the selection commission during the professional exam, including the selection interview.

Preparation for a selection interview involving a competency test is specific in that all members of the Civil Servants Selection Committee should be familiar with the concept of the Competency framework, the methods for testing and how to assess competencies.

The recommended way to prepare for a competency-based selection interview is continuous training for all potential members of civil service selection commissions. Institutions for human resources management are responsible for the organization of trainings on the application of the competency framework in the procedure of employment in the civil service, including the content and dynamics of implementation.

The initiative arising from experience in organizing training on the application of competency frameworks in civil service recruitment procedures is the need to organize webinars, both for potential members of civil service selection commissions and for potential applicants for civil service. Such webinars, which would be provided on official websites of institutions in charge of human resources management, would be to provide timely training to the members of the commissions before their involvement in the work of the commission. Potential applicants for civil service jobs would be better prepared for a competency-based selection interview through webinars with useful advice, guidance and examples from the work environment that can be used to prepare them. Proposals for the professionalization of commissions for the selection of civil servants include attending training for the application of the competency framework in recruitment procedures as a prerequisite for inclusion on the list of experts for the selection of civil servants.

Before the beginning of the work of the commission for the selection of civil servants, it is necessary for the members of the commission to get acquainted with the priority competencies for the position for which the competition procedure is conducted.

Priority competencies may be listed in the job description, i.e. the text of the advertisement or determined by a bylaw, according to the categories of non-managerial and managerial civil servants.

Current legal regulation prescribing the application of the framework of competencies in the procedure of employment in the civil service is the Rulebook[1] prescribing priority competencies that are tested in the interview. The communication competence is tested for all applicants applying for the positions of non-managerial civil servants, and another priority competence appropriate to the job description of the vacancy to be filled, selected by the commission.

Communication, leadership skills, planning and organization are tested for all applicants applying for managerial positions in the civil service, including heads of internal organizational units. Another priority competence appropriate to the job description of the vacant position of the manager or head of the internal organizational unit is selected (and tested) by the commission.

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[1]"Rulebook on the character and content of the public competition, the manner of conducting the interview and the forms for conducting the interview","Official Gazette of BiH", no. 63/16 and 21/17

In the current practice, the most commonly chosen competence by the commission is teamwork, which is considered to be, in addition to communication, the most important for the efficient work of civil service bodies. Generally, the additional priority competence is chosen by the logic of the importance of a certain competence in the job being filled, compared to its importance by existing employees. This practice may not be appropriate in every situation, but in the absence of defined priority competencies in the job description of each job, it is currently the best practical solution.

In practice, strategic guidance, employee development and professional development and integrity are most often chosen as additional priority competencies for the positions of managerial civil servants and heads of internal organizational units.

In practice, however, it happens that two different commissions choose different competencies for the same job. Therefore, it is necessary to determine priority competencies in job descriptions for all jobs in order to avoid inconsistencies in selection and verification during the selection interview.

All questions related to the examination of priority competencies should be identified immediately before the interview, **and each applicant should be asked the same questions**.

During the interview, sub-questions are asked to elaborate applicant's answer. Sub-questions cannot be planned in advance as they will depend on the applicant's answer to the previous question.

4.2 Planning time for a selection interview

In theory, the recommended time for conducting a selection interview based on competencies is 60 minutes. 5 minutes should be allocated for introductory remarks and explanation of the course of the interview, 10 minutes for general questions and questions about knowledge and previous experience, 40 minutes for questions for testing competencies, and the final 5 minutes provided for the applicant's questions and the conclusion of the interview.

However, experience in the application of the competency framework in the recruitment procedure so far indicates that a selection interview for applicants for non-managerial civil servants positions requires 30 minutes, while for applicants for managerial positions 45 minutes should be allocated, provided that the members of the commission and applicants are familiar with the concept of competency testing.

Typical situations where 30 minutes for a selection interview are not enough are unnecessarily long introductions by applicants or committee members. Typically, applicants take too long to introduce themselves, it is inconvenient for the members of the commission to interrupt them, applicant is not familiar with the concept of competency testing causing for more sub-questions and similar. Experience shows that for the efficient conduct of a selection interview, the most important is good interview preparation and moderation. Among other things, the introductory address of the commission can point out that the commission is familiar with the work experience of the applicant and that the focus of the interview will be testing competencies, followed by the opportunity of the applicant to present concrete examples from their work experience.

Since the purpose of the interview is to present concrete applicants' examples, applicants should be given sufficient time, they should speak during 75% - 80% of the selection interview time.

4.3 Activities during the interview

It is common practice to welcome the applicant at the beginning of each selection interview, including the behavioural one, to introduce the members of the commission and to briefly describe the content and course of the interview.

Moderation of the interview should be entrusted to the member of the commission most experienced in applying the concept of competency testing. The commission chairman should be familiar with the concept. Available examples of experience show that greater initiative in the consistent application of the competency framework in the recruitment procedure is expected from the members of the commission from the institution for which the applicant is hired in terms of consistent application of the concept of competency testing, especially to select priority competencies to be tested.

4.4 Structure of asking questions

As mentioned in the previous chapter, all questions related to testing priority competencies should be identified immediately before the interview, and each applicant should be asked the same questions. Asking the same competency test questions to each applicant will ensure a fair assessment with respect to the same set of competencies. Commission members should have before them definitions of competencies during the interview.

Competency testing questions, as a rule, ask the applicant to describe the previous specific situation in which the required competence was manifested; what tasks were performed, what activities were undertaken and what were their outcomes.

It is common to ask applicants for examples of behaviour in certain situations in the past. The rationale for looking for past examples lies in the fact that earlier behaviour is a significant predictor of future behaviour in a similar situation. Hypothetical questions (such as "What would you do if…") should be avoided because the information gathered in this way is a poor predictor of future behaviour.

Very often, applicant's answer to the question will provide some but insufficient information for a good assessment of certain competencies. Sub-questions are then needed to assess applicant's answer, and they will depend on the applicant's answer to the previous question. Sub-questions are adapted to the applicant's individual answers and cannot be prepared in advance.

The sketched funnel shows a possible scenario:
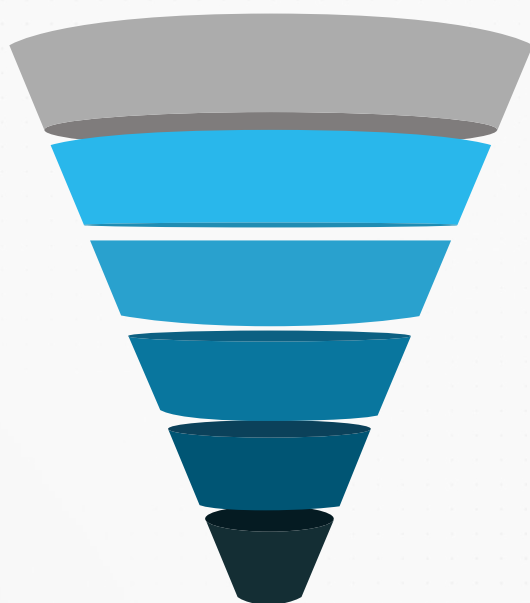
Give us an example of…

Tell us about…

What did you do?

Why?

When?

How?

It is a good practice to explain to the applicant how the interview is structured and that they will be asked for concrete examples of situations in which they have personally demonstrated competencies required for the job (not as a group or team) especially recent examples from their work environment (preferably during the previous 2-3 years).

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In order to ensure a uniform questioning structure and an objective assessment of individual answers, i.e. to adequately evaluate examples given by applicants during the interview, which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on post-interview activities, the "STAR" structure is usually applied as follows:

Situation - What is the example?
Task - Ask them to describe their detailed task
Action - What did they do?
Result - What was the outcome? How did it go?/What would they do differently?

During the interview, each member of the commission can record his/her observations about the applicant in the form of short notes, taking into account the evidence that the evaluation criteria have been met. The notes should contain an accurate record of what the applicant said or did, not the examiner's conclusions and judgments. Conclusions must be based on facts, not assumptions.

The members of the commission can comment on the general impression and state what grades they will give, but only the assessment is done by each member individually. In many cases, the applicant's answer to the question about one competence will also provide insight into their other competences.

4.5 Guidelines and practical advice for conducting good competency-based interviews

The initial step for any good job interview is to allow applicants to relax and help them feel comfortable in a situation that is normally stressful.

Competency testing questions determined by the commission should not be read word for word (from a manual or bylaw). This would give the applicant the impression that there is a correct or incorrect answer. The question should be asked after the applicant has been explained the concept of a behavioural interview in a short introduction, indicated that there are no correct or incorrect answers, and given a few minutes to recall the example with a reminder not to rush.

Since many applicants have never participated in a behavioural interview, they should be encouraged if they have difficulty remembering specific examples - for some applicants it will be difficult to think of specific examples when giving answers.

Applicants who have little or no work experience in public administration and are not familiar with the concept of behavioural interview often do not realize that examples from their work environment are also relevant and representative. For example, applicants for professional associates positions with one year work experience in trade, accounting, or similar non-public administration position, when asked for an example of how to prepare for an important meeting (to check communication competence) will probably state "I do not participate in important meetings" or "I am not invited to meetings". It should be explained to applicants that examples from their work experience are also valid, relevant work-related examples are not necessarily from public administration. Applicants might be reminded of the work experience listed in their CV and encouraged to recall a specific example.

If the applicant seems to be "stuck" on a particular question, he or she may be presented with the next question and offered to return to this particular question later during the interview. In many cases, the examples that appear in later questions evoke some example from an earlier question.

Some applicants tend to generalize by saying: "I never make mistakes", "Without a strong individual there is no strong team" and the like. It is necessary to look for concrete answers, by redirecting the applicants with the remarks: "We are looking for a concrete situation" or "Can you give a concrete example for that?"

Some applicants tend to use the word "we" even when talking about something they have done themselves so they need to be reminded to talk about what they have personally done.

Applicants should focus on facts, not opinions - some applicants formulate their answers in the context of what they believe, not what they have done. If an applicant claims "Clients are always my top priority", he/she should offer a concrete example of this. Even when asked for concrete examples, some applicants will formulate their answers as if asked a hypothetical question. Applicants should be reminded to talk about past behaviour.

If the interview gives the impression of the applicants' negative past behaviour in the workplace, efforts should be made to find evidence of good behaviour or work performance in order to gain a balanced image of the applicant. The same is true when an applicant gives perfect, maybe even too perfect impression.

4.6 Activities after the interview

After each interview, each member of the commission should review their notes taken during the interview, looking for evidence that the criteria are met in the answers to questions and examples provided by applicants and enter grades in the prescribed form.

The members of the commission can comment on their general impressions and grades they would give, but the assessment is done by each commission member individually.

In order to ensure an objective assessment of individual answers, i.e. to adequately evaluate examples given by the applicants during the interview, the "STAR" structure is usually applied, as follows:

The abbreviation STAR is derived from the following words:

STAR

- Situation
- Task
- Action
- Result
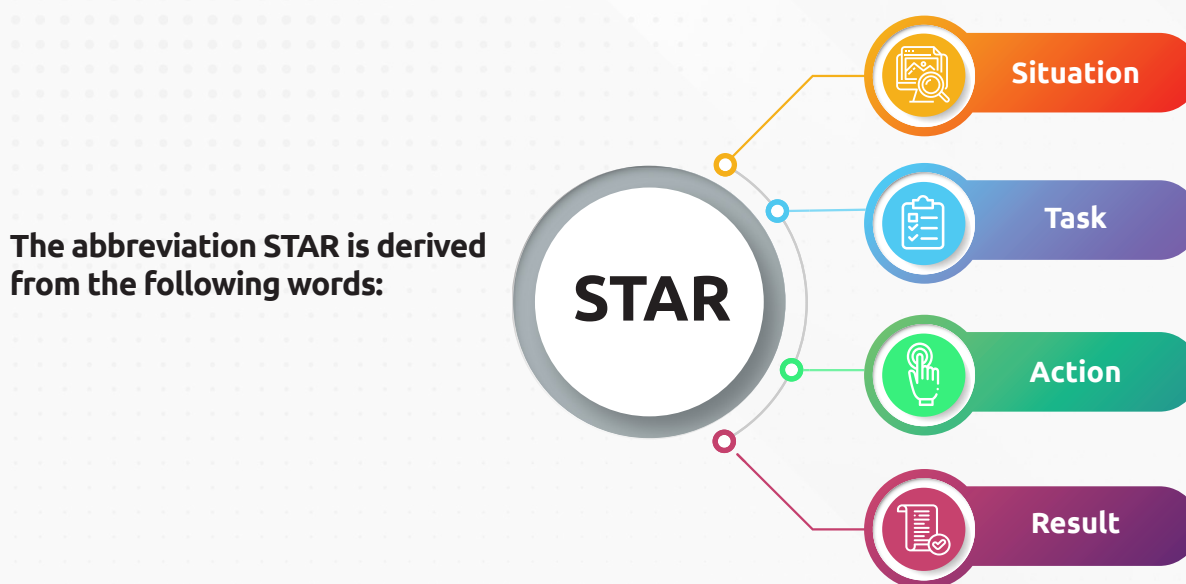
Step 1 - Situation
In answering the question, the applicant must describe the challenge or situation he or she has recently faced, in a context he or she determines, concisely and informatively, concentrating solely on what is useful for example.

Step 2– Task
Applicant should describe the task performed. For example, if the question requires an example of teamwork, applicants should explain the task they had to undertake as a team and their role and responsibilities within that team.

Step 3 – Action
In this part of the STAR structure, applicants must show and emphasize their skills and personal characteristics, i.e. talk about themselves, describe what they did, how and why they did it. For example, when talking about a situation where they had to resolve a conflict, they might say, "I felt something was irritating my colleague and I asked him politely to tell me what the problem was. Allowing him to vent his feelings and anger, I gave him a chance to calm down. Then I explained my point of view on the issue, emphasizing how important it is that we find a solution that suits both of us".

Step 4 – Result
Ideally, applicants will describe what they have achieved and what they have learned in the described situation. They should be able to describe concrete measures they undertook with the purpose of achieving a certain goal, and not leave the impression of results being just a coincidence.

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4.7 Applicant evaluation

Each applicant deserves to be carefully evaluated or scored, using the same criteria for all. Assessment or determination of the level of competencies of applicants for the positions of non-managerial and managerial civil servants, i.e. the method of scoring is determined by a bylaw, taking into account the maximum number of points that can be awarded at the selection interview or the number of priority competencies to be assessed.

The usual categories for assessing competencies in a selection interview, with a prescribed score range are:

a) the applicant demonstrates excellent, i.e. above-average, possession of the required competence
b) the applicant demonstrates very well, i.e. within the upper limits of the average, the possession of the required competence
c) the applicant demonstrates good, i.e. average, possession of the required competence
d) the applicant satisfactorily, i.e. minimally demonstrates the possession of the required competence
e) the applicant does not demonstrate possession of the required competence, i.e.insufficiently demonstrates possession of the required competence

In practice, numerical marks prescribed by the range of points for each assessment category are entered on the prescribed form for each applicant. The most common doubts during the assessment in practice occur in the assessment of the average expression of possession of the required competence and in the upper limits of the average. Although the summary form on the assessment of applicants does not prescribe narrative assessments, i.e. explanations of individual grades, the notes that the members of the commission keep individually during the selection interview are crucial for an objective assessment of the applicants' competencies.

Definitions of competencies that examiners will have in front of them during the scoring process will help in assessing competencies of the applicants. In order to objectively assess the level of competence of the applicant, it is useful to ask yourself the following questions:

• From when (date) is the example described by the applicant?
• How relevant is this example for the job for which the applicant applied?
• How did the applicant behave in the described situation in relation to the expectations of the institution?
• What was the role of the applicant in the described situation?
• Is the outcome described by the applicant desirable given the circumstances?
• For middle and top management positions, what is the impact and reach of the examples given by the applicant?

In addition to the above questions, for the purpose of objective assessment, members of commissions for the selection of civil servants in practice were faced with assessing competencies when there is a suspicion that examples given are not from someone's personal experience. Experiences indicate that applicants are often stressed out and can hardly construct an example that is not from their personal experience. In situations where there is a doubt that the answers are prepared in advance (fabricated), additional questions should help clarify the situation. In most cases, applicants give concrete examples, especially applicants with more work experience.

Competences are sometimes difficult to assess in terms of the applicant's self-confidence, because the applicant's lack of self-confidence may give the impression to the commission that the applicant's role in the described situation is not in line with expectations.

4.8 Assessment errors

In addition to clearly defined objective evaluation criteria, the evaluator's evaluation may be affected by factors other than the established evaluation criteria, which may be subjective and jeopardize the relevance of the evaluation. Some of the common errors in the assessment are listed below.

First impression: Unconsciously, an applicant can be judged positively or negatively from the very beginning of the interview, which results in the assessment of the applicant according to assessor's own beliefs and not according to the qualifications required for the job.

Leniency and stringency: These are general tendencies for applicants to be constantly rated high (mildness effect) or low (austerity effect). Understanding job requirements and assessed qualifications may vary from one assessor to another. The assessment should be fair to all applicants. The result of this error is that the applicant's assessment is unjustifiably high or low.

Central tendency: This is a tendency to use only points on the middle part of the assessment scale, while avoiding the highest and lowest points on the assessment scale, which results in all applicants being assessed as average, without noticing the difference between them.

"Halo" and "horn" effects: These errors imply a tendency for one good (halo) or bad (horn) characteristic or qualification of the applicant to affect the overall grade of the applicant. The members of the commission should take care that, although the applicant is very impressed with regard to one evaluation criterion, they do not attribute positive impressions in the evaluation of other criteria without verification. In contrast, when an applicant disappoints them with regard to an evaluation criterion, he/she should not be evaluated without further evaluation with low marks and according to other criteria that are the subject of evaluation.

Contrast effect: This is a tendency to evaluate the applicant in relation to the evaluation of the previous applicant, who stood out in a positive or negative sense, instead of applying the established criteria.

Fatigue: It is a tendency among commission members to become less consistent or up-to-date in taking notes, listening, or applying assessment criteria due to fatigue during the lengthy interview process.

Stereotypes: This is a mistake that occurs when personal beliefs and notions of what makes a good employee affect the grade. Stereotypes are often based on characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity or age, but may also include other variables such as education level, policy or different interests.

Similar-to-me: This error occurs when an applicant is given more favourable marks than deserved because he or she is in some way similar to the assessor (e.g., in terms of race, gender, age, attitudes, or background). Conversely, a "not like me" error may occur when an applicant is given less favourable grades than he or she deserves due to perceived differences.

4.9 Tips for minimizing assessment errors

As noted in the chapter on interview preparation, the best advice for minimizing assessment errors is continuous training for all potential members of civil service selection commissions.

The evaluation process should be applied consistently and continuously to all applicants. The information obtained from the applicant during the interview should be documented and used as a basis for assessing the applicant.

The grading scale should be used according to the intended purpose, i.e. the whole series on the scale should be used, whereby individual grades should be assigned according to the structure for assessment of competencies, i.e. notes during the interview.

Unnecessary importance should not be given to isolated incidents, whether it is a positive or negative impression of the applicant in terms of some evaluation criteria.

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5. Competency test questions (and examples of answers)

The tables below are examples of questions to check each of the competencies. Selection interviews should focus on checking the **_priority_** competencies for a particular job, bearing in mind that each applicant is expected to possess all competencies to some extent.

Experience to date confirms that commission members usually choose the issues indicated as an example and it is possible to find an issue that corresponds to the job and the chosen competence. If the applicant cannot remember a specific situation, the question can be reformulated, but it is not possible to ask another question because the same questions are asked for all applicants.

An example of a "good" answer is given for each of the competencies. However, there are an unlimited number of ways to satisfactorily answer a behavioural question.

Core competencies for all civil servants

Competency		Example competency-based interview questions
1.0.	**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRITY** _The application and continuous acquisition of the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve high levels of work performance, including the ability to transfer knowledge and experience to others._	How do you keep yourself informed, adopt and apply new knowledge and skills relevant to your professional development?
1.1.	**Continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for the job** Ensures they have the knowledge and skills necessary for the job, takes steps to find out if there are gaps/changes and then addresses them.	Tell me about a time when you realised that you did not have sufficient knowledge or skills to do a part of your job. What did you do? Tell me about a time when you learned something unexpected, which has since proved useful. How do you keep yourself up to date with factors influencing your field of expertise? How do you keep up to date on new developments in your field? What was the last occasion you did this and what was the development? How did this improve the service to your client(s)? How do you keep up-to-date with current legislation and how it impacts on the institution and, more specifically, your job?

Examples of good answers

"I realised when I left university that there was a risk that I could soon become out of touch with new developments so I joined my professional association. I also volunteered to give short talks to new students, so the university keeps me up to date too. Out of all of this I have developed a network of colleagues that are always informally passing on new information. As a result, just last month I was able to give technical advice to a commercial developer on a possible construction project."

"When I was first promoted to my current position I needed to use some database software that I did not know. Without it I could not carry out the analyses for my monthly reports. I talked with my manager about this but the earliest I could get on a course was three months. So instead I contacted a fellow civil servant in another institution who does the same job as me and asked them if they could coach me through the essentials. Within a week I was able to do what was necessary. Since then I've been on a course and now I coach others on the programme."

1.2.	**Commitment to personal and professional development** Takes responsibility for personal and professional development, displaying motivation and a commitment to learning and self-improvement.	In the last year what steps have you taken to develop personally or professionally?

Examples of good answers

"More and more of my dealings are with internationals who do not speak our local language. Although we can use interpreters it is still difficult to establish good working relationships. So six months ago I started to study English online on a free website. I have now also just enrolled on a weekly course that I am paying for myself. Already it is making a real difference in how I am able to collaborate with foreigners. There are lots fewer misunderstandings."

1.3.	**Knowledge sharing** Shares knowledge and information gained with others so they can learn.	When was the last time you shared some new information or learning with any of your colleagues? Tell me how you did this. Give me an example of when someone came to you for help or guidance. Why did they need your support? Tell me of a time when you had to work with someone less experienced than yourself.

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Examples of good answers

"In June I was lucky enough to be selected to participate in a study tour to the Netherlands to find out about how the public expenditure management system works there. Upon my return I suggested to my manager that I could run a short information session for all the others in my department. I did this and as a result we have made some changes in our own administration processes. I worked with one of our junior people to coach them on how to apply the new procedures. I've now been asked to give the same talk to another ministry department."

"I was on a study trip in a neighbouring country, in an institution that deals mainly with jobs that we mostly do. I've seen them use a system that's free, to keep our records and greatly shortens processes and allows for more productive work. I gathered colleagues at the meeting and briefly demonstrated to them how colleagues work in the institution of another state, briefly demonstrated the system to them and we agreed to try to work that way. After some initial difficulties, where I helped colleagues if needed, we now use the system and have a different and more efficient way of working when it comes to keeping records."

1.4.	**Integrity** Engenders the trust and respect of others through consistent honesty. Abides by the Civil Service Code of Conduct.	How do go gain the trust and respect of others? Give me a specific example. Describe a situation where you had to deal with an unpleasant or dissatisfied client. Tell me about a time when you showed integrity and professionalism. Tell us about a time when someone asked you something that you objected to. How did you handle the situation? Have you ever been asked to do something illegal, immoral or against your principles? What did you do? When have you had to lie or withhold the facts to achieve your aims? Why did you do so? How do you feel you could have achieved the same aim in a different way? Give me an example of a time when you had to work hard to build up a good relationship with other people (e.g. colleagues/clients). Tell me about a time when you realised that a fellow employee was breaking the rules of your organisation. What did you do?

Examples of good answers

"There was a time when my boss fell out with her counterpart in another entity. She refused to talk to him, but our two departments still needed to communicate on various project initiatives. I made contact with the Head of Sector and asked her for a coffee to discuss how we could work together. I think she was suspicious at first but I maintained friendly contact and did everything I could to make our joint activities easy for her and her manager. I made sure I did everything I promised. Later on I told my own manager that communication was good. Eventually she started to communicate directly with her opposite number herself again."

"A few years ago I worked in the department that issues business licences. A friend of a friend was planning to start up a business and he was keen to get going. He approached me informally outside of work and asked me to speed up his application and to make it top priority. He offered me €150 if I would do that. I refused and told him that if he asked me again I would have to report him. A few days later his application form passed over my desk. I felt I had to let my boss know that I had a conflict of interest and explained that I knew the applicant and I thought someone else should deal with the application. My boss said that was not possible, but she did agree to check over my assessment to make sure it was fair and justified. The application was eventually passed but no more quickly than otherwise."

"I have never withheld lied to achieve my aims. There was a time when I needed some extra time off work for family reasons and I could have lied and said I was sick. Instead I told my manager the truth. I did not get all the time that I needed, but I did get some. I had to change my plans to deal with things."

	Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
2.0.	**PROBLEM SOLVING, INITIATIVE AND CHANGE** *The ability to act proactively and to respond positively, creatively and constructively to changing situations and new demands.*	Give us an example of when you took the initiative in your field of work.
2.1.	**Initiative** Acts with initiative within his/her scope of work.	Give us an example of a situation where you had to make a decision in the absence of your superiors but knowing you would be judged on your decision. When did you depart from the established policy to accomplish your goal? Which decisions do you feel able to make on your own and which do you require senior support to make? Have you ever gone beyond the limits of your authority in making a decision? If so, please let us about that situation.

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Examples of good answers

"There was an occasion a few months ago when my boss was off sick and the Assistant Minister was travelling abroad. I was asked to make a decision about my department's possible involvement in an EU technical assistance project. The decision could not wait for their return. Although I would usually be consulted about such a matter, it would always be my boss who would make the final decision because it meant allocating resources to the project. In making the decision I considered what we had done in similar situations before. I considered the pros and cons of our involvement including our seasonal workload and the level of resource (time, office space, administration etc.) we would have to provide. I consulted with my work team colleagues and also other possible project beneficiaries in other ministries to ask what they thought. I then decided that we should go ahead. I communicated this to the project originator and made careful notes of all the steps I have taken and then emailed them to the Assistant Minister and boss for them to consider upon their return. As soon as they returned I checked with them. Thankfully, they did indeed agree with my decision and the project went ahead."

| 2.2. | **Innovation of new work solutions**

Develops fresh ideas that provide solutions to workplace challenges; encourages new ideas and innovations; open to change. | Tell us about a situation where you trusted your team to derive a new approach to an old problem. How did you manage the process?

Tell us about a time when you had to convince a senior colleague that change was necessary. What made you think that your new approach would be better suited?

What is the most difficult problem you have had to resolve in the last 12 months? What made it difficult? What processes did you use to resolve the problem? Who else did you involve?

What ideas have you identified to improve the way you work? How were these implemented?

Give me an example of when you instigated a major change What initiated the change? How did you manage the impact on people? How did you communicate the changes?

What methods do you adopt to elicit new ideas from others?

Give me an example of when you changed your working practice to be more efficient. How did you know that an improvement was necessary? What steps did you take?

Tell me about an occasion when you developed and implemented a new approach to organisational practices or processes What research did you undertake to inform your approach? What options did you identify? To what extent were you able to bring about change? |

Examples of good answers

"After re-designing the ministry's website and optimising the homepage for our coreword strategy, the bounce rate for the homepage increased, lowering the numbers of users navigating to other pages, including the enquiries page. This seemed counter intuitive. As the tools available offered no insight into the cause of the increased bounce rate, I was required to think differently when identifying the cause of the problem and therefore, resolve the underlying problem. I decided to approach the issue from the visitor's point of view, qualitatively, rather than the traditional quantitative, data-driven approach. I requested that members of staff from other departments not specialised in IT or web-related work provide feedback on the homepage, providing a better proxy for our client audience. Similarly, I requested the download of a visitor behaviour tool, to allow me to view the actions of visitors when they land on the homepage. Using the information gained from staff feedback, a common theme was the complaint that the website was too promotional and not informative. The coreword strategy had improved the website's ranking in search engines, however qualitatively, it may have been putting off visitors. The data from the visitor behaviour tool also supported this hypothesis. The content on the homepage was restructured in order to keep the optimisation for corewords, while improving the overall informative nature of the page. Subsequently, the website's bounce rate substantially decreased, and the benefits of the coreword optimisation could finally be seen, leading to increased efficiency."

"When addressing improvements for selection and assessment processes at my current organisation, the option of incorporating psychometric testing was raised, and consultants specialising in this field provided a sales pitch, highlighting the benefits and advantages of psychometric testing. Historically, I have been firmly against the use of psychometric testing as a selection process in favour of interviews, being significantly more experienced in conducting interviews. Similarly, I was unconvinced as to the validity of the claims provided by the consultants at the pitch, believing traditional selection procedures to be more effective, cheaper and less stress inducing than psychometric testing. I decided to read the literature regarding the validity of psychometric testing and other selection procedures. The peer reviewed research suggested that psychometric testing was the most valid predictor of job performance, outperforming interviews and other common selection procedures. Similarly, research suggesting the return on investment and cost-saving benefits of psychometric test also increased its appeal. Despite my reservations and my own personal opinion of psychometric tests, I recommended to my superior that psychometric testing be used in our next graduate recruitment scheme. After presenting the peer-reviewed research, and convincing my superiors of the benefits of psychometric testing, psychometrics were added to the graduate recruitment process for that year. Compared to previous years, graduate staff turnover decreased significantly, HR staff spent less time conducting interviews and the overall quality of the graduates was notably improved. Although I still hold reservations regarding psychometric testing, its advantages were clear and my personal biases did not interfere with making the correct decision."

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2.3.	**Creativity** Develops creative insights into situations and questions conventional approaches.	Tell us about a project or situation where you felt that the conventional approach would not be suitable. How did you derive and manage a new approach? Which challenges did you face and how did you address them? Give me an example of when you came up with a novel/different approach to a problem/situation. What suggestions did you make? Which ideas were put into practice? What was the outcome?

Examples of good answers

"When attempting to identify why employee turnover was consistently high in a medium sized client agency, the data could not reveal the cause. Employee satisfaction surveys yielded seemingly positive results, few complaints were raised to managers and the pay levels were consistent with the rest of the civil service. However, a large percentage of staff would leave the organisation, well above bench marked averages for the civil service as a whole.

Although my specialty is handling quantitative data, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews with members of staff outside of normal working hours, and away from the agency's offices. I did not ask the interviewees names, and requested that they remain anonymous to put their minds at ease. The conversations were recorded as to allow qualitative analysis after the interview. This style of research is uncommon at my organisation, and extensive training is provided only in quantitative analysis, and not qualitative analysis. However, since the quantitative data had failed to identify the issue, improvisation was needed.

A common theme in the interviews was that disputes between management and staff were very common. Management would frequently argue or cause disputes with staff, when consultants were not around. They stated that employee satisfaction survey results were exaggerated to avoid conflict with the management, and that employees were too intimidated to raise the issue with the management via complaints. Armed with this knowledge, I was able to facilitate and mediate a meeting between the staff and the management to address this issue. The management team subsequently gave assurances that this behaviour would stop, and began a regular series of meetings in order to foster communication between staff and management. These meetings were a success, and staff turnover rapidly declined, reaching average levels within 12 months."

2.4.	**Problem solving skills** Presents not just problems but proposes solutions to issues	What ideas have you developed and implemented that have impacted on the long-term development of your function? What were the challenges? What was the impact on your function's operation? How did you evaluate the effectiveness of these changes in the long term? What is the most difficult problem you have had to resolve in the last 12 months? What made it difficult? What processes did you use to resolve the problem? Who else did you involve?

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Examples of good answers

"I have just introduced a system of monitoring and assessing electronic client feedback which has reduced the time it takes to deal with client service complaints from 9 days to 48 hours. I saw that we were getting a lot of client communications, feedback and complaints via email, but we had not developed any structured method to handle these. In addition we were not using them as an opportunity to learn about our client or to drive process improvement initiatives. I realised very quickly that not only was this an issue for us that I knew I could solve quickly but also I saw the potential to enhance our relationship with our clients.

I completed a business case clearly outlining the benefits of this action. I then set up a project group with the goal to deliver a system of processing and managing these emails. I recruited internally as I wanted to give my team exposure to working on such a project. I put regular reporting in place, ensured that all stakeholders were involved and communicated with. Three weeks after starting the project I lost two team members due to sickness – we were on a very tight deadline and I knew that the success of this project lay in my ability to motivate and manage the team I had. I identified core replacements and revised the plan accordingly so that work would not fall behind. I ensured the team knew what had to be delivered and by when and I got staff buy-in from very early on. During the course of the project I managed the team, rescheduled tasks as required, communicated regularly with all interested parties and ultimately delivered the project successfully.

In summary, I overcame the challenges that emerged and I delivered the new system on time and within budget. As a result of this system my team can address 100% of client service emails within 48 hours and we have reduced the volume of complaints received by 35%."

2.5.	**Ability to resolve difficult or complicated challenges** Resolves difficult or complicated challenges	When do you feel that it is justified for you to go against accepted principles or policy? Describe a situation when you came up with a solution to a problem. Tell me about a particularly difficult piece of work you have faced. How did you tackle it?

Examples of good answers

"Soon after taking up my last position I discovered that the average time taken to complete a client refund was 14 days. This was unacceptable and was taking up an excessive amount of agent time and resources. I was tasked with reducing this to 2 days with added benefit of saving time and resources. In addition, we were being flooded with a large volume of client calls and negative feedback by email with questions asking why it was taking so long to compete the refund. This was giving the department a bad reputation. The first thing I did was to create a detailed brief that both analysed the problem and outlined the potential benefits of the newly proposed process. I devised a new process for dealing with refunds and I organised a project team whose task was to implement this new system. I set up a system for internal and external feedback and communication, ensuring that everyone involved was on board and up to speed. I hand-picked four software companies who specialise in the system we needed and after having demonstration and on hands testing, selected our preferred supplier. Throughout the project's entirety, I successful managed the team members, updated and revising project milestones as necessary and in the end delivered a system that performed really well. I overcame various obstacles along the way but I was able to improvise when necessary, and successfully implemented the new system on schedule and under budget. This new system now allows my team to respond to and process client refunds within the 2 day deadline."

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2.6.	Helping others with change	Tell us about a time when you had to convince a colleague that change was necessary. What made you think that your new approach would be better suited? Give me an example of when you instigated a major change. How did you achieve that? How did you manage the impact on people? How did you communicate the changes? Tell me how you have accommodated operational change in your unit's activities.

Examples of good answers

"When I was working for a large ministry, we began experiencing difficulties in recruiting adequate numbers of new graduates. The senior officials held particularly traditional mind-sets with regards to attracting and recruiting staff. As a result, they were not readily keen to adopt some of the more innovative methods of employer branding, such as social media. The senior management team has been leading the ministry for a long time, and were very reluctant to make any changes. I needed to highlight the importance of employer branding to the senior officials, as their traditional passive approach was leaving the ministry relatively unknown to graduates. Similarly, I needed to overcome resistance to change from the middle management team, and prevent hard-liners from aggressively preventing the change in status quo.

During a meeting with the senior officials, I explained why employer branding has become a major issue in recent years, and highlighted top examples of organisations turning round due to good employer branding. Similarly, I proposed using innovative new technologies such as social media in order to reach prospective applicants, and express employer branding. I also recommended the development of a specialised, graduate recruitment website, which could serve as a poster for the company's recruitment scheme.

Although initially hesitant and sceptical, the management team eventually admitted that their current, passive approach was likely the cause of the recruitment schemes failings, and agreed with my proposal. The adoption of social media based advertising, a recruitment scheme website and an official employer branding strategy was implemented, providing the ministry with a healthy surplus of graduate applicants to their recruitment scheme, with a ratio of applicants to vacancies of 10:1."

	Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
3.0.	**TEAMWORK** *The ability to work well in groups and teams, to cooperate with other members and to contribute through active participation in order to achieve collective goals.*	Tell me about the last time you worked as part of a team. What did you do? How do you ensure that every member of the team is allowed to participate? Give me an example of how you dealt with a conflict in your team. Do you incline more to individual or team work? Please give us an example.

3.1.	**Building constructive working relationships** Builds constructive working relationships through cooperation, acceptance and respect for others.	Tell me how you went about building an effective working relationship with a colleague/team. What effect did your actions have on the success of the team? How did you know? How do you build relationships with other members of your team? Give me an example of a time when you had to work hard to build up a good relationship with other people (e.g. colleagues/clients).

Examples of good answers

"I was transferred to a new project at my previous job to replace a beloved member of the team. My new team leader exhibited hostility towards me and I found myself left out of vital communications and meetings. After a few weeks, I was able to talk her into a one on one meeting. When laid out all of the core objectives for the team, the previous employee's role in meeting those objectives, and then discussed goals that I could set to make sure I was able to serve as a quality replacement. In our discussion, we also identified a few underlying issues with management that she had been carrying around with her. In uncovering all of these sentiments, she was able to clearly define her situation and achieve an understanding with her supervisors. In the end, the entire team morale improved, I was able to exceed my goals and the department itself became more efficient from our teams increased performance."

3.2.	**Facilitating teamwork** Promotes cooperation and commitment within a team to achieve goals and deliverables.	How did you encourage other team members to co-operate? Give me an example of when you helped improve the performance of your team. What improvement did you identify? How did this improve team performance? How do you ensure that every member of the team is allowed to participate?

Examples of good answers

"We have a monthly departmental planning meeting. After a few meetings I noticed that not everyone was contributing and very often the same people would stay quiet. I spoke to my boss and suggested that the chairmanship of the meeting should rotate so that we all take a turn. She agreed and asked me to propose it at the next meeting. I did this and it was accepted. We also devised some 'meeting standards' to help the chairperson manage the meeting. That was nine months ago and since then we have all chaired at least one meeting. The general level of participation in meetings has improved too."

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| 3.3. | **Helping others resolve conflicts** | Describe a time when you had to win someone over, who was reluctant or unresponsive. |
| | Helps others resolve complex or sensitive disagreements and conflicts. | Give us an example where you worked in a dysfunctional team. Why was it dysfunctional and how did you attempt to change things?
Give an example of a time when you had to deal with a conflict within your team? What did you do to help resolve the situation?
How do you bring difficult colleagues on board? Give us an example where you had to do this.
Give me an example of a difficult people situation that you have had to handle within your team.
Tell me about a time when you found it very difficult to get the agreement of others to an important proposal. How did you tackle this? |

Examples of good answers

"I like to motivate people by complementing their strengths. It really depends on the person and the situation. At a past job, I once worked with a guy who never pulled his own weight. Consequently, he was holding me up because I would have to rely on him to complete certain tasks. So when I needed him to drop everything he was doing and get something done for me, I would stop by his desk, chat about some of his personal interests to break the ice. Then I would talk about the company and drop subtle hints about his abilities and that he was under appreciated and that he was the only one who could help me. It worked every time and he always helped me get my job completed on-time."

"When I was a student I worked part-time in a shop. On one occasion two of my fellow co-workers engaged in a dispute regarding who had been entitled to commission on recently sold items. The commission gained from this sale would have exceeded £150, and the true recipient of the commission was not immediately clear.
Both co-workers claimed that the sale was theirs, and therefore, were solely entitled to the sales commission. In order to prevent this incident escalating into a heated argument, and potentially putting off clients, I needed to intervene. I took the two co-workers off the shop floor in order to prevent putting off clients and listened to each co-worker individually. I then searched for objective evidence to the co-workers claims, including payment details, client records and CCTV footage.
Using this evidence, I had come to the conclusion that both co-workers had participated equally in this sale. I brought this to the attention of our line manager, and I recommended to all parties that the commission be shared equitably. Both co-workers and our line manager agreed to share the sales commission between the two co-workers.
Upon my request, store policy was subsequently changed following my intervention, allowing multiple employees to receive commission for the same sale if multiple individuals participated. This new style of commission has led to decreased conflict within the team, and has encouraged a more collaborative culture in the shop."

3.4.	**Respecting different viewpoints, and orientations** Respects different viewpoints and welcomes diversity.	How do you ensure that every member of the team is allowed to participate? Tell me about a time when you had to work closely with someone from a different social background, race, culture, or belief-system to yours. What were the challenges? How did you deal with them?

Examples of good answers

"I used to work as a liaison officer for NATO. As such I came into regular contact with people from a wide range of people from different European cultures and the USA. They also came from different social backgrounds and sexual orientations. For a period of about six months I worked with a Dutch lady who made no secret of the fact that she was gay. I just made myself focus on the job in hand rather than on her beliefs and orientation. It truly made no difference to the job we had to do together. In fact eventually we became friends. One of the other challenges was that she was extremely direct when she talked with people. I was okay with this but some of my other colleagues considered this as rudeness and became offended, so I explained to them that this was just the Dutch way. I also decided to talk with my Dutch colleague about this. When I did so, she said she had not realised the effect she was having. As a result she tried to soften her approach. This seemed to help build relationships and the team started to work more smoothly together."

3.5.	**Ability to cooperate with other teams** Builds and maintains constructive and productive relations with other teams and their members.	Give me an example of when you have identified an opportunity to enhance a service by collaborating with another team. How did you identify that this was an opportunity? What was your role in developing effective partnership working? Give an example of when you have lead a team on a major project. How did you gain support for this activity beyond your immediate team? Describe a time when you have had to enlist the help of another department or group to complete a piece of work.

Examples of good answers

"My department was the main counterpart in a project to improve aid coordination across all levels of government and with all members of the donor community. There were several other institutions that needed to get involved if it were to succeed. I already knew one of the senior players so I asked her to write an email of introduction to all of the other core stakeholders. I then followed this up with a telephone all and another email explaining the benefits from their point of view, plus the vision and goals of the project. I invited all of them to a meeting where everyone's ideas were requested and recorded. Afterwards we went to a restaurant for a meal. I also arranged for other members of my team to visit their opposite numbers in the other teams. Very soon we had a good formal and informal network of stakeholders set up. We then set up a quarterly Donor Coordination Committee (DCC) to which all of the donor representatives were invited. Although the project has now finished, the DCC is still working well, and donor aid is now being focused more productively."

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Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
4.0. **COMMUNICATION** *The ability to communicate effectively both orally and in writing with managers, colleagues, clients and citizens, conveying information clearly, accurately and in a timely manner to relevant individual and groups.*	Tell us about an occasion when your communication skills made a difference to a situation? What is the worst communication situation that you have experienced? Tell us about a situation when you failed to communicate appropriately. Tell me about a particularly difficult message that you had to communicate to an individual or group. What steps did you take to ensure the message was clear? How did you ensure the message was understood?
4.1. **Tactfulness** Has patience and uses good judgment in communication, keeping polite behaviour in all interactions.	Please describe a situation where you've been tactful. Can you please describe a situation where you've been diplomatic? Describe a situation when someone has irritated you. How did you respond? Tell me about a situation when someone was very slow to respond to a request of yours. How did you deal with it?

Examples of good answers

"In my previous job of carpentry, a lady was delivered a door. Shortly after the delivery, she called, there were a lot of difficult words, in the end she said that she would return the delivered door and asked us to return the money to her. I calmly asked what the problem was, and she replied that the colour shade did not suit her, it was mostly not a defect in the door itself, but the colour in question, the shade. I was kind, calm, I said we would make a deal and asked her to check the colour code. It was the code she chose, it was the same colour as in the catalogue. On a smaller sample the colour was dark brown, when the large door came, on a larger area, it was almost black. She realized it was her fault, we continued the conversation, the lady calmed down."

"I was working as a receptionist at a leisure centre, and I had to deal with a member who was not happy with one of the centre's rules. This rule did not allow children under 10 years to swim without an adult. Yet she wanted to leave her 7-year-old son with us to swim while she went shopping. It was difficult because she became angry when I did not want to sell her a swimming ticket for her son.

I clearly explained the rule regarding children under 10 years requiring adult supervision in the pool. I explained that this rule was there to ensure children's safety, as the centre did not have the facilities to be able to look after young children swimming without an adult. I did suggest that she could leave her son in the centre's supervised play area, and that she could go swimming with her son once she returned. The woman calmed down, and agreed to leave her son in the play area.

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If I had not explained the reason behind the rule, or offered her an alternative, the woman would probably have felt that the centre was unreasonable and not client-friendly. She might have cancelled her membership. She might also have asked to speak to the centre manager. She would no doubt have done so if I had been impatient with her, or changed my tone and become rude."

4.2.	**Clear conveying of ideas, facts and instructions** Conveys ideas, facts and instructions, - orally or in writing - with clarity, using language the audience will best understand.	Describe a situation where you had to explain something complex to a colleague or a client. Which problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them? What type of writing have you done? Give examples please. What makes you think that you are good at it? How do you feel writing a report differs from preparing an oral presentation?

Examples of good answers

"I used to work in the planning department of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. We were intending to authorize the construction of a major industrial park. It was my responsibility to write and present the tender guidelines. We had to make sure that all of the legal and technical requirements were stipulated. The tenders had to consider the geographical, geological, financial, logistical, demographic and economic aspects of the project. I prepared a written guideline document which included indexed section on all these aspects. It provided step-by-step instructions with reference to annexes with core data, tables, diagrams, illustrations and photos. This was supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation that I delivered in person and a seminar and in a slide share version posted online. Finally I set up a telephone enquiry line for potential contractors, to answer and queries. The result was that all of the tenders met the submission criteria and none were rejected on administration grounds. This enabled the selection panel to make a valid judgment based upon the widest range of options. The decision was made speedily as a result, without further investigations being required."

"In my academic career I had to write several research papers. The most recent one I wrote was on whether zero-tolerance policies about drugs in high schools are reasonable. To answer this question, I went to several high schools and interviewed their principals or top-level employees. I also interviewed students and parents. I visited the health department to gather data. Finally, I conducted the remainder of my research on the Internet. As a result, I gained perspective from every group this topic would affect."

4.3.	**Active listening** Listens, understands and learns from what others say.	Give us an example where your listening skills proved crucial to an outcome. Tell us about a time when you were asked to summarise complex points.

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Examples of good answers

"When I presented my senior research in university, I was questioned by the members of my departmental professors as a panel. My grade was determined largely on my ability to answer the questions effectively and smoothly, which depended very much on my ability to listen carefully to what was being asked. I had seen other students slip up when they misunderstood what the panel was asking because they didn't listen well enough. I succeeded in listening carefully and did well on my presentation. I received a very good grade."

| 4.4. | **Encouraging feedback from others**

 Encourages information feedback from others and offers it to other parties. | Describe a situation when you have sought feedback from your clients (internal or external). Why did you seek this feedback? How did you gather the information? How did you use it to improve services?

 Tell me about an occasion when you had to adapt to a major change? Why was it important? How did you adapt? How did you use feedback to improve your work? |

Examples of good answers

"Our institution is responsible for providing training to civil servants. I often have to deliver training courses myself. Although we always ask trainees to fill in post-course evaluations I felt that sometimes there is insufficient information to know how to improve my delivery. So I decided that after every course I ask our administrator to make a telephone call to a random sample of participants to ask them how the training could be improved. On one occasion a number of people said that there had been too much presentation and not enough group activity. I then redesigned the course to increase activity levels. The next time the feedback was much more positive and I even received several complimentary emails from participants."

| 4.5. | **Adaptive communication style**

 Changes the communication approach and style to meet the preferences and needs of the audience. | Demonstrate how you vary your communication approach according to the audience that you are addressing.

 Describe a situation where you had a disagreement or an argument with a superior. How did you handle it?

 Describe an occasion when you needed to adopt a particular approach to get agreement from others.

 Have you ever had to modify your personal communication style to achieve results with a difficult individual or group? Tell me how you did this. |

Examples of good answers

"I used to work as a science teacher at the university. One term I had a class of 30 Korean undergraduate students with advanced to beginner level of English abilities. My challenge was therefore to teach a non-language subject to a wide range of English abilities in a graduate level class. I therefore taught with visual methods using PowerPoint, class presentations, and group work, so that the more proficient students could help the others. All students improved their own language ability and were comfortable communicating to myself along with their peers at the end of the term."

"I do remember a small disagreement. I received an email from my boss telling me that he wanted me to stop the work I was doing on my project and give it to a co-worker. He wanted me to start on a new project immediately. I had spent two and a half weeks on this project and I only had three days left. I really wanted to finish this and it didn't make sense for me to hand this project over to someone else. So I put some thought into it, went over to my boss's office, and asked him why this project couldn't wait three days. He made his argument and I still didn't agree. We discussed this for a while and we compromised by having someone help me finish the project I was working on so I can have some time to kick-start the next project. I learned that it only takes simple dialogue and a little compromise to overcome a disagreement."

4.6.	**Effective participation at meetings** Conducts and/or participates in meetings and group discussions efficiently and with structure.	Tell me about an important meeting you have led or participated in. How did you prepare? What did you do during the meeting? Tell me about the most difficult meeting you have led/ participated in. Why was it difficult? How did you deal with it?

Examples of good answers

"I was asked to chair a strategy review meeting for the agency. First I consulted with the chief about the time and location of the meeting and the discussion topics. Based on this I put together a timed and prioritised agenda. I sent this out two weeks before the meeting with all of the supporting documentation. I thought about the best layout for the room and arranged that. I arranged for a secretary to take the minutes. At the meeting I made my opening remarks, reminding everyone of the purpose of the meeting, and of the ground rules we would work to. I then handed over to the first contributor (I had agreed this with this person beforehand). As well as managing the agenda timing I tried to be conscious of the dynamics of the group, making sure that everyone contributed but that no-one dominated. I remained neutral myself, but tried to help the others to reach conclusions by raising questions and summarising at core stages. I made my own notes of action points as the meeting proceeded and at the end I checked that these were correct and made sure that every action had a named person responsible for it, as well as a timeline. We agreed a date for our next meeting. Afterwards I made sure that the minutes went out within two days. Everyone seemed happy with the result. My boss thank me afterwards for a job well done."

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Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
5.0. **PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND RESULTS ORIENTATION** *Performing consistently at a high level. Achieving goals and continuously improving the quality of service to citizens, clients and other civil service functions and institutions.*	Tell me about a time when you have had to meet challenging client needs. Give me an example of where you found it necessary to change a process to meet client needs. What has been your biggest work achievement this year? How did you make it happen? Tell me about a time when you were able to improve a service to a client or another department.
5.1. **Focusing on results and desired outcomes** Focuses on results and desired outcomes and how best to achieve them. Produces good quality outputs with little oversight, on time.	When did you depart from the established policy to achieve results and the expected outcome? Describe a project or situation where you took a project to completion despite important opposition. Describe an occasion when you have had to deliver a complex project on time and to budget. What were the objectives? What core stages did you work through? How did you get people on board? What were the difficulties you had to overcome? What obstacles do you encounter and how do you overcome them to achieve your objectives? What do you do to deliver your unit's goals? Tell me of a challenging goal you have set yourself. How do you organize your day-to-day workload? What tools or methods do you use? How does this take account of interruptions and changes to your plans? Give an example of when you have set a deadline and were unable to achieve it. What issues did you anticipate? How did you plan for these? What was the result? What if anything would you do differently next time? Tell me about a time in which you were required to produce something to a high standard, within a fixed period of time.

Give me an example of where you found it necessary to change a process to meet client needs.

Tell me about a time when you didn't meet an objective/ deadline.

Examples of good answers

"During my final year of university, I conducted a quantitative research project on consumer brand loyalty and client satisfaction. My project received an undergraduate research grant from the organisation of which I conducted my research in. In order to provide valuable information to the organisation financing my research project, and maintain my grade average of over 70%, I was required to conduct high quality research, within the project deadline of 4 months, and achieve a grade result of 70% or above. Simultaneously, I was required to continue with my part time job, volunteering activities and assignments for other courses. To ensure that a high quality project was produced prior to the deadline, I first attended additional training in quantitative research methodology, I attended a short course in academic writing in business, and I conducted a pilot study prior to my main project in order to gain preliminary data. Despite a heavy workload and significant pressure, my undergraduate project received a grade of 75%, and was published in the journal of consumer marketing. The organisations which provided the research grant incorporated the findings of my project in their overall marketing strategy and offered me a 7 week paid internship at their company."

"During my final year at university I failed to deliver my dissertation on the due date. This was because I was heavily involved in cutting-edge research right up until the end of my course and was waiting for imminent results from surveys being undertaken by researchers at other academic institutions.

Considering this was my final piece of academic work, I wanted to ensure it was based on the most accurate and up-to-date sources of information available, even if this meant a delay in production. To ensure no marks were deducted from my dissertation, I contacted my course director and personal tutor two weeks before my dissertation due date to discuss my particular situation. I argued my case, and was consequently allowed an extra two weeks to produce my work.

Although my work was delayed, I feel that this delay was justified in that the work was of the highest quality it could be. Furthermore, I sufficiently organised myself in relation to my department and tutors, so that all relevant people were aware of a possible delay in the production of my dissertation."

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5.2.	**Building and maintaining client and citizen satisfaction** Builds and maintains client and citizen satisfaction with the services offered by meeting or exceeding their expectations.	Describe a time when you exceeded a client's expectations. How did you know you had exceeded? What did your actions achieve? Describe a situation where you had to deal with a dissatisfied client. How did the client respond to the actions you took? What did you do to ensure that the situation did not occur again with other clients? Give us an example of when you have initiated the development of working relationships with external partners to improve the quality of service. Describe a core client relationship you have built. Describe a time when you were really satisfied with the service you had given to a client. Tell me of an occasion when a client has commented on service you provided.

Examples of good answers

"My role as project manager was to ensure that projects are completed on time and on budget. My last project involved combining three office spaces into one. With a tight deadline of 90 days and dealing with multiple contractors from different companies, I knew it was going to be a struggle to complete the job in time. I set the goal of having everything completed within 80 days to give us 10 days at the end to make final corrections.
By dividing all the different contractors into three main teams and having three project managers controlling the three teams, I was able to create a more efficient and effective work timetable and ensure that downtime was kept to a minimum.
As a result of this more efficient working time we completed the job on time and reduced costs by 15%. This new way of dividing contractors into smaller teams has now been implemented into standard work procedure and seen a reduction in overall costs."

5.3.	**Paying attention to detail** Pays attention to detail and produces accurate results.	Describe a time when you have made a mistake and the subsequent actions that you took. Tell me about a piece of work you produced where accuracy was essential. Give me an example of the ways you check the accuracy of your work. Tell me of a time when you have felt it necessary to consult with others for more detail.

Examples of good answers

"I was involved in the drafting of a new regulation for recruitment and selection in the civil service. I had to incorporate all of the inputs from the legal experts and the human resources specialists into a final document that would then be submitted to the government. Some of the experts were foreign consultants not working in their first language. I therefore double-checked all of the translation. I also asked our own legal specialist to check that all of the terminology was correct. I then asked two of my team members to proof-read the document for typographical errors. The result was that no administrative corrections were required to the draft and it was able to proceed through the ratification process without delay."

| 5.4. | **Efficient management of time and resources**

Improves productivity by managing time, priorities and resources to achieve goals and secure value for money. | Give an example of when you have set a deadline and were unable to achieve it. What issues did you anticipate? How did you plan for these? What was the result?

How do you currently ensure that you manage your resources effectively?

How do you consider costs to the organisation? What environmental factors do you take into account?

What factors do you need to take into account when planning your budgets?

How do you plan your organisation's expenditure?

How do you ensure you keep to your budget?

Is there anything you can do to improve your financial forecasting?

Explain how you have introduced changes to product/processes/services in your team/department.

Tell me about a time when you had to consider existing/conflicting workloads, when planning a task/event/project.

Tell me of a time when you have had to re-prioritise in response to changing requirements/strategic needs.

In your current job, how do you manage your time and workload to achieve your objectives? |

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Examples of good answers

"My work involves a range of admin tasks with different time frames. Management gives us dates for completion. Most tasks are either 48 hours, or a week, for routine matters. The exceptions are urgent jobs, which have to be done ASAP. These timeframes are also the required performance standards. I prioritize my work so that I can keep track of due dates and stay organized. I set my own time of completion 24 hours before the due date, and work systematically. I do urgent matters immediately. I revise schedules if necessary, but I meet the performance standards every time."

"During my internship, two fellow interns suddenly dropped out of the programme without notice. Our task was to conduct challenging client work, helping a major agency form a communications strategy, before the end of the first 4 weeks of the internship. The loss of the two interns put the team in a precarious position, as everyone in the team had already been allotted specific responsibilities. Naturally, my aim was to gain valuable experience from my internship and to highlight my skills and abilities to the institution. Although the institution offered to decrease the group's workload, I convinced the team and our employers to provide us with the responsibilities of the vacated interns. I redesigned the teams' work schedules, allocated new responsibilities evenly across the team while keeping our current responsibilities. Similarly, I personally undertook two extra hours of work per day, unpaid. The team and I contributed significantly to the agency's communication strategy, which has been credited with improving the agencies standing with businesses. Due to our extra effort, the loss of the two interns did not inhibit the team's performance. Following the first 4 weeks of my internship, I was promoted to lead intern, a newly created job title to reward my efforts during the prior 4 weeks".

| 5.5. | **Effective decision making**

Makes timely, informed decisions that take into account the facts, goals, constraints and risks. | What big decision did you make recently? How did you go about it?

What is the decision that you have put off the longest? Why?

When is the last time that you have refused to make a decision? Tell me about it.

Tell us about a situation where you made a decision too quickly and got it wrong. What made you take that decision?

Which constraints are imposed on you in your current job and how do you deal with these?

Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for making a core decision.

What was the decision? How did you defend your decision?

Tell me of a time when you have had to manage a risk.

Tell me of a time when you have felt it appropriate to call on others before making a decision.

Tell me of a time when you have had to justify a decision you have made. |

Examples of good answers

"When recruiting for additional staff I was ultimately responsible for the selection decision. Traditionally, informal interviews have been used to select members of staff, with few other additional selection stages. Naturally, personal biases, opinions and gut feelings cannot be relied upon when selecting future employees and relying on objective selection procedures is essential, which led my decision to adopt a more rigorous selection process for these applicants. This new selection procedure included an assessment centre incorporating numerous exercises, psychometric tests and a structured, competency based interview.

When conducting interviews with applicants, a strictly structured competency based interview format was used to keep the interview processes reliable. Assessment centre exercises were conducted fairly, giving each applicant equal analysis and evaluation. Psychometric testing was used in conjunction with other selection procedures, giving a holistic view of the applicant's. Personal biases were intentionally ignored, and recorded evidence was used to make the final selection decision.

The selected applicant has continued to show exceptional ability and work ethic throughout their employment, with both co-workers and managers are extremely satisfied with my selection decision. Similarly, other departments are following suit, adopting the structured competency based interview format for their selection procedures, along with other objective selection tools. Subsequently, staff turnover markedly decreased and the quality of new hires has universally Improved."

| 5.6. | **Analytical thinking**

Applies analytical thinking by breaking a situation into smaller pieces, tracing the implications of a situation in a step-by-step way. Organises the parts of a problem in a systematic way, making comparisons of different aspects and causal relationships. | Give me an example when you have collected and analysed complex data to inform your decision-making? What approach did you take to analysing the data? What were the core issues you identified? How confident were you with the decisions made?

What management data or information do you collect and monitor to inform your future plans and/or policies. How do you use the data?

Describe an occasion when you have had to deliver a complex project on time and to budget. What were the objectives? What core stages did you work through? How did you get people on board? What were the difficulties you had to overcome?

Tell me how you have handled a large task.

Give an example of a time when you had to gather and interpret information for a particular purpose.

Tell me about a time when you had to analyse some information and how you came to your conclusions. |

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Examples of good answers

"I had to give a marketing presentation while attending university. The project was about Mercator Group. We were assigned to report on core management personnel (CEO, Chairman of the Board, core executives), divisions and subsidiaries, major products/brands/services, core financials for the most recent year (sales revenue, expenses, total income, net income, sales growth or loss for the last year), market share, core competitors, mission statement, product positioning, and number of employees. Among the steps I took were visiting the company's biggest Sarajevo branch to interview employees and gather visual aids for the project. I spent a lot of time organizing and writing the presentation. I compared the company's strategy and results to some other major regional retailers. Then I spent time reviewing my speech over a period of several days. As a result, I was calm while giving the presentation and received an "A" for the project. The one additional step I perhaps wish I'd taken would have been to talk to some consumers and customers about the company's service and products."

5.7.	**Ability to work under pressure** Keeps composure in stressful or adverse situations.	Describe a situation where you had to deal with an angry client. Describe a situation where you had a disagreement or an argument with a superior. How did you handle it? Describe a time when pressures threatened your ability to work effectively. Tell me about an occasion when you felt under pressure. Tell me of a time when interruptions from others have affected your work. Describe when a colleague let you down. How did you respond?

Examples of good answers

"Recently the number of workers in our department was cut and as a result the amount of work I was given nearly doubled. I was asked by my manager to work overtime, and I managed to work efficiently and in a professional manner during a busy and stressful time. I showed efficiency and professionalism in spite of the stress. I manager commended me for coping so well."

"I was working on the protocol. My organization was conducting a public procurement, and an angry party came to me for the protocol and claimed that it had submitted a public procurement bid without any notification of the procedure. In these situations, the most important thing is not to "add fuel to the fire" and it is very important to keep calm. I showed the party the admission book, I calmly showed it to the system as well, and I calmed the tensions all the time. I kindly asked the party to check if the bid had been submitted, if there was evidence that the bid had been submitted, and in the end it turned out that the bid had not even been submitted. Something happened, some omission in their organization, they didn't even submit an offer. The party apologized."

Competency testing questions

Core competencies for senior civil servants and heads of internal organizational units

	Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
6.0.	**LEADERSHIP** *Motivating people to achieve high performance in working towards the team and organisation's goals.*	Tell me how you manage your top team. Tell us about a situation where you had to get a team to improve its performance. What were the problems and how did you address them? Tell me about a time when you were less successful as a leader than you would have wanted to be. Give an example of when you have led a team on a major project. How did you gain support for this activity beyond your immediate team? How did you ensure your people were engaged and motivated to perform? How did you measure success?

Examples of good answers

"When I was at ABC Company, we went through some company-wide lay-offs. The team of five that remained in the department had to absorb the duties of the two that left. As a result, people were overworked and morale suffered. At the same time, more mistakes were being made because attention was so scattered. As the manager, it was my job to get performance back on track.

I scheduled a meeting of the full team to discuss strategies. I communicated my appreciation for all of their hard work during a challenging time for the company. I asked for their assistance in identifying ways for us all to be more efficient –including me.! I made it clear that this was a brainstorming meeting to come up with options — that no idea was stupid and that it was a safe environment for making suggestions. We spent an hour capturing ideas on a white board, then voted on the five with the most potential. I then assigned each person to do more research on how we might implement one of the ideas.

First of all, the team responded very positively to this approach. They loved the idea of being empowered to help find a solution. Instead of complaining, they channelled their energy in a more productive way once they knew that they would be heard. Really quickly we came up with two ideas that could be implemented rapidly and save us a lot of time. One idea was to eliminate a weekly report. This freed up 8 hours each week — including two hours of my time and three hours for my top account manager. Another was to train our administrative assistant, to take on some of the tasks that were burdening our account managers. We also decided to incorporate brainstorming and idea evaluation into our staff meetings each month. We are now more efficient and morale is way up. My boss even asked me to help him roll this process out to the other departments in our division."

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6.1.	**Translating strategic goals to everyday work** Links vision, values, goals and strategies to everyday work.	Describe how you have communicated the vision/goals of the organisation to your team. Give me an example of how you have managed the concerns of your team during times of uncertainty/change. Tell me how your unit's strategy fits with organisational goals and values.

Examples of good answers

"I was a head of department at the city's university.   Our vision was to be a civic university with a reputation for academic excellence. Our goals were to be in the top 10 regional universities for both teaching and research, and to be financially and environmentally sustainable. As a middle ranking manager I reinforced the vision and goals by linking employee appraisals with them, and breaking down the institution's goals to departmental goals and individual targets and core performance indicators. I also continually challenged activities and behaviours that did not contribute to those goals. For example one of my staff members wished to attend a conference in New York. As the subject matter was also going to be freely available in an online video soon afterwards I did not consider the request either financially or environmentally sustainable. I therefore turned it down. In contract I actively publicized positive examples of activities and behaviours that contributed to our goals. As a result all of our departmental targets were met or exceeded."

6.2.	**Creating positive work environment** Creates a positive work environment where staff are motivated to do their best.	Give me an example of how you have used your leadership skills to manage and improve team performance. How did you get team buy in? How did you handle any difficult situations that arose amongst the team? Describe a change where you had to drive a team through change. How did you achieve this?

Examples of good answers

"When I worked with the bank during the recession, redundancies happened often. My team had to absorb the duties of other employees that had been let go, while still facing the possibility of being laid off themselves. Consequently, we were working around the clock and morale was low. Since the members of my team were very busy and working overtime, mistakes were being made. As the team leader, I was responsible for maintaining optimal performance and rebuilding morale during this difficult time.

I held a meeting with my entire team to discuss strategies for dealing with the challenges we faced and let them know that I appreciated the hours of hard work they were performing, despite the stress they were all dealing with? I acknowledged that I didn't have all the answers and was looking to them to identify ways that we could more efficiently deal with the extraordinary workload. Everyone's suggestions would be respected, considered and appreciated. We spent several hours brainstorming ideas on paper, then as a team identified the three ideas with the most potential. Each member of the team was then assigned to do a little bit more research to determine how feasible each idea was.

Involving the entire team in the process of addresses the challenges we faced and finding a solution made them feel empowered. Instead of running around worried, they focused their energies on finding a solution. The ideas shared were immediate, and high quality. The team members worked together, as one, trying to find a solution that would benefit the entire team, and our employer. Within 1 hour we had come up with several very good and original ideas for addressing the problems we faced. Best of all, there was complete buy in from all team members.

One idea that everyone liked was to eliminate several policies that were necessary when the company was larger but were no longer necessary due to employee layoffs. Eliminating these policies increased productivity by at least 30%. Another idea that we implemented was to focus all our energies on our top accounts. While we did lose some smaller accounts, we were able to save most of the company's top accounts, and relationships, whereby ensuring the longer-term viability and financial stability of the firm. Soon productivity was up and the general atmosphere was much improved."

| 6.3. | **Goal setting**

Sets clear, meaningful challenging but attainable group goals and expectations. | Tell us about a situation where you faced reluctance from your team to accept the direction that you were setting.

Give an example of when you have lead a team on a major project. How did you gain support for this activity beyond your immediate team? How did you ensure your people were engaged and motivated to perform? How did you measure success?

Describe how you have established the priorities and activities of a team.

Describe a time when you set goals for an individual or team. What goals were achieved and how did you go about it? Looking back, what would you have done differently?

Tell me how you ensure the quality of your and your unit's work.

How do you set objectives for you team? |

Examples of good answers

"The goal of our institution was to improve its overall efficiency. My department is responsible for administering the payments process. So I considered how my team could contribute. I consulted with some of the senior members of the team and then I held a meeting to discuss the core issues. We agreed the matters we should focus on in principle. After that I gave consideration to the current workload of my team and the timeframe for the improvements. I came up with the following objectives:

- Design, develop, and implement a system for tracking payments that are held for more than a single business day. This system is to be operational by December 31 and, by February should contain one month's data. For a given payment, the tracking system should be able to indicate its date of receipt, its dollar amount, and its date of deposit.

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- By the end of the first reporting period, and by the end of each reporting period thereafter, identify at least two work process improvements having quantifiable operational or financial benefits.
- Within the next six months, reduce the reject rate for registration forms from its present level of six per cent to a maximum of three per cent.

I announced these objectives at a staff meeting and answered all questions. We also agreed how the team would report progress. Everyone accepted these objectives and 95% of the objectives were met by deadline. The reason there was a shortfall was because of staff sickness."

6.4.	**Effective delegation** Manages staff by delegating and entrusting certain tasks and assisting them to succeed in their performance.	Give me an example of how you have used your delegation skills to manage and improve team performance.

Examples of good answers

"I was a supervisor in a customer service call centre. I was responsible for running an internal project to improve the quality and efficiency of my team's work. I then decided that it was an opportunity to delegate responsibility of this initiative to my team. I firstly focused on the strengths of each of my team members. I delegated the tougher IT tasks to Selma because she was more experienced. Sandra had an eye for accuracy, so I had her run all the data checking. I handled the overall QA since I had the most experience with the details of the project. Within three months we had improved our customer service ratings by 19%."

6.5.	**Staff motivation** Regularly provides both positive and critical feedback to team members to improve motivation and performance.	Tell us about a situation where you had to get a team to improve its performance. What were the problems and how did you address them? Give me an example of when you have had to deal with poor performance. How did you approach the problem? What were the political/personal sensitivities you had to deal with? What were the results? With hindsight, would you have approached this any differently? Have you ever discovered you staff/team were not performing to established standards? What did you do about it? How have you motivated slow or difficult team members? Tell me about a time when you have had to deliver feedback to a colleague/subordinate.

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Examples of good answers

"I had a member of my team who I had asked to make a presentation to a donor agency for certain project funds. She worked hard on the presentation, however I was disappointed when she included some out of date information. As a result the donor was not impressed. I talked with her afterwards and said that I had expected better work. She was clearly surprised as she believed she had prepared well. So I offered to go through the presentation with her again and explain exactly what the problems were. I pointed out outdated information and she realised that she had not used the most recent financial information. She then offered to research further and asked if she could rework things and prepare a new proposal for the donor. I agreed. After she had resubmitted the proposal she followed up with the donor representative to ask if he had any queries. Unfortunately we didn't secure that particular contract but the donor did ask us to submit a proposal for some different activities. My team member requested that she should research and present this second proposal and this time we won the funding."

6.6.	**Leading by example** Is an excellent role model – leads by example.	Describe a situation where you needed to inspire a team. What challenges did you meet and how did you achieve your objectives? Describe a situation when you motivated those around you with your own example, to achieve team goals.

Examples of good answers

"When I took over my present role the team were under pressure and demotivated. Results were poor and sickness absence was high. I took the opportunity to get the team all together to explain my goals for the department. If they were achieved it would benefit us all. I asked them to brainstorm with me or team vision, values and standards. After a while they engaged really well. One of our standards was to meet all of our team deadlines. On one project we fell behind due to project partner letting us down. It meant we all had to work late all week. I made sure I was the last to leave the office every evening. We did hit our deadline. I then took everyone out for a meal to celebrate our success. I think I proved to my team that our values and standards applied to me too. Sickness absence over the last 6 months has reduced by 70%."

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	Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
7.0.	**PLANNING AND ORGANISING** *The ability to plan, organise, coordinate and monitor activities and work tasks for self and team members.*	Tell me about a time when you have had to plan a project/task/event that involved other people in the implementation.
7.1.	**Effective planning** Plans the best use of available resources.	Tell me about a time in which you were required to produce something to a high standard, within a fixed period of time. Tell me about a time when you have had to plan a project/ task/ event.

Examples of good answers

"On one occasion I was made responsible for organizing a study tour for a group of fellow civil servants to the UK, focused on public/private finance practice. Firstly I made sure I understood the goals of the visit and how we could evaluate success at the end of it. I was asked to include 15 officials from 6 different institutions. I checked the budget and it was quite tight. This would mean that we would have to find the cheapest flights, reasonable hotels and limit the duration of the tour. Based on these parameters I put a draft plan together including dates, institutions, travel arrangements and venues. I also considered the alternative of going to Hungary, where there are lots of PFI examples too, and because it was cheaper, the duration could be longer. I presented these alternatives to the group. They decided to still go to the UK for a shorter time. I asked for the assistance of two administrators to help me make all of the contacts and arrangements and I gave them a work plan and schedule to work to. We agreed reporting arrangements. In the meantime I organized all the necessary permissions and visas etc. One week before departure we held a group meeting and presented all the details and backed this up with full documentation. The study tour was deemed to be a great success. Afterwards I received a thank you note from my Assistant Minister."

	Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
7.2.	**Team planning** Agrees objectives with individuals that support team plans and service goals.	How do you set objectives for your team members? Give me an example where this did not work well. What was the cause? What did you do about it?

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Examples of good answers

"I set objectives annually with every member of my team, based upon the work plan of my department. I always try to make them specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and time bound. On one occasion, when I reviewed the performance of a team member at the end of the year it was obvious that one objective had not been achieved. (He was tasked to reduce customer complaints by 20%). This was because he had been absent due to long-term sickness and he had assumed that he would no longer be expected to deliver that objective. I realized that we were both at fault. I should not have left it until the end of the year to discuss progress and he should have taken the initiative to inform me of the situation. As a result I began to have one-to-one meetings with all my team on a monthly basis to review their activities and progress towards objectives. This seems to be keeping everyone on track."

7.3.	**Holding members to account for their work results** Holds team members to account for achieving the results that have been agree.	Give me an example of when you have had to deal with poor performance. How did you approach the problem? What were the political/personal sensitivities you had to deal with? What were the results? With hindsight, would you have approached this any differently? Please give me an example of how you monitor and manage employees' performance. What have you done when performance efficiency has not been satisfactory?

Examples of good answers

"When I ran the finance office Sanya was employed as a temporary accountant. She started as an agency worker who came back regularly. During that time she worked hard and was never absent or late to work, and her work was neat and accurate. She was a quiet person, who kept herself to herself. I found out she lives at home in with her elderly parents. She doesn't say much about her personal life.

After a few weeks she was offered a permanent position and things seemed to go well for the first few months. After that however, over a period of weeks her work performance became more erratic. Some days she works well, others she seems to be in some kind of dream land. She started making mistakes and often needs to be prompted to get on with the job. She was also late to work twice a month.

I decided to speak with her one-to-one in private. I explained my concerns and the impact her underperformance was having on the department. She acknowledged the problems but offered no reasons despite me probing repeatedly. She just promised to raise her performance and said that she would not let me down again. I then spelled out my expectations and standards and we agreed to review the situation in a month's time. She did improve, but after two weeks she came to me and explained that her father was seriously ill in hospital. We made arrangements so that she could manage her work around her family commitments. After two months her father recovered. Sanya has been working well ever since."

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7.4.	**Risk management** Evaluates risk and puts realistic plans in place to manage it.	Tell me about a time when you have had to plan a project/task/ event and how did you estimate risk? Tell me about a time when you've had to manage a risk. What' is the biggest risk you have taken at work in the last 2 years? How did it go? How did you manage the risk?

Examples of good answers

"I had to organise a conference for around 100 senior decision makers. I was in charge of the total budget. We wanted a famous international guest speaker to open up the event and to make a corenote speech. I had never heard him speak, but I had talked to a lot of people who highly recommended him. His fees were very high which meant that there would be less money for other presenters, but I decided to take the chance because of his reputation. The risk was whether he would be able to get to the event on time, because his flight would arrive only shortly before the event was due to start. It was winter so the weather could be adverse, or the plane could be delayed. I put in place a contingency plan that included transport from the airport in a fast 4x4 vehicle. I also arranged the possibility that the order of presentations could be changed if he was late arriving. I also asked the guest speaker to make a video of his opening speech that we could still show if he did not make the beginning of the conference. Finally, just in case his plane was severely delayed I negotiated that no payment would be made unless the speech was delivered. The risks were financial, reputational and natural. In the event everything went fine."

7.5.	**Ensuring meeting of deadlines** Takes early action to deal with issues that affect deadlines to ensure delivery on time.	Tell me about a time in which you were required to produce something to a high standard, within a fixed period of time. Tell me about a time when you have had to plan a project/task/event in a given timeframe. Tell me about a time when you had to consider existing/conflicting workloads, when planning a task/event/project. Tell me about a time when you didn't meet an objective/deadline.

Examples of good answers

"My team was working towards a major milestone on a project to build a new water pumping station. Until that milestone was reached the machinery could not be commissioned. A couple of months before the deadline our chief engineer was taken ill. The next day I held discussions with the project Sponsor who said that the original deadline must still be met. I therefore began a search for an interim senior engineer to take over. Within three days I had found a suitable applicant and he joined us the next week. The project team soon caught up on the delayed work and we still delivered on deadline."

Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
8.0. **DEVELOPING PEOPLE** *Developing people to improve their performance and fulfill their potential.*	What strategies to you operate to identify and nurture talent in your organisation? How do you ensure staff with potential are identified and developed? How has this benefited your organisation? Tell me how you manage the development of others.
8.1. **Identification of team members' training needs** Identifies training needs in team members and takes action to meet them by formal or informal learning and development methods.	Tell me how you manage the development of others. Have you ever discovered your staff/team were not performing to your standards? What did you do about it? When? Please give us an example about how you identified employees' training needs. What measures did you take to educate and develop your people?

Examples of good answers

"When I took over my present team we brainstormed and agreed our team standards. It soon became apparent that two members of my team were struggling to meet the requirements of their jobs. I had a one-to-one conversation with each of them. With the first (Aleksandra), the problem seemed to be poor personal planning, self-management and time management. With the second, (Igor) it was to do with a lack of confidence to undertake a particular technical process. I arranged a time management course for Aleksandra. For Igor I did some one-to-one coaching sessions until he felt able to undertake the process without supervision. Both of them now are delivering a very good standard of work."

8.2. **Talent management** Identifies talent and potential in staff members and creates development plans to realise it.	What strategies to you operate to identify and nurture talent in your organisation? How do you ensure staff with potential are identified and developed? How has this benefited your organisation? Tell me how you manage the development of others.

Examples of good answers

"I walk the job regularly to get to know my staff better and see how people are working and to what level. This helped me to notice that one of my team is instinctively good at IT and commuting. I was really impressed with some of the data analysis proposals. At his annual performance review I mentioned this and we discussed how developing his expertise even more could help the department. I have now arranged for him to undertake a post-graduate diploma in computing. His motivation levels have also risen substantially."

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| 8.3. | **Coaching**

Personally coaches team members to improve their performance. | Have you ever experienced a situation when your staff did not perform to your expectations? What did you do about it?

Tell me of a time when you have had to work with someone less experienced than yourself.

Give me an example of how you coached someone to improve their performance. |

Examples of good answers

"When I was Head of Human Resources one of the other heads of department came to me saying she was feeling very stressed because of her workload at this time of year. She asked if she could take on a temporary administrator, but unfortunately there was a ban on recruitment. By asking her questions about what she wanted to achieve, and about the current situation she clarified the situation for me and herself. I then asked her questions about the possible options she had (apart from temporary staff). She said she could ask for an extension of the deadline for the work, or she could ask for the temporary assignment of someone from another department. Another possibility was to agree some overtime payments for her current staff. I asked her which option she preferred and she decided to ask for temporary secondment of someone from another department. I then asked her how she felt she could avoid a similar situation again and she said that she needed to start to organise the end of year work earlier next time and that she would dairies it. The next year she had no problems."

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Competency	Example competency-based interview questions
9.0. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION** *Setting the strategic direction of the organisation in response to the needs of Ministers and citizens, and ensuring its delivery.*	Give me an example of when you have had to gain support from stakeholders to implement a strategic decision that had potential to be controversial. How did you handle any objections? How did you get others on board? What were the political/personal sensitivities you had to deal with? What were the results?
9.1. **Strategic planning** Develops strategic plans to ensure the organisation's future success.	What ideas have you developed and implemented that have impacted on the long term strategic development of your organisation? What were the challenges? What was the impact on your organisational strategies? How did you evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in the long term? Describe an occasion when you have had to develop strategies to implement major organisational change. What were you aiming to achieve? What was your approach to planning? How did you consult and involve relevant people? What were the results? If you were doing it again, what would you do differently? Tell me how you have gone about planning for the future direction of your organisation.

Examples of good answers

"I was the manager in the Investment Promotion Agency (IPA). It was decided by the Minister that we should merge our agency with the Agency for SMEs (SMEA). I was asked to lead the merger process. First I consulted with the head of SMEA and then with all other stakeholders: clients, employees, international donors, plus legal experts, about the impact of this change. Everyone was enthusiastic except the employees who were worried that they may lose their jobs, or at least they might have to change jobs. With the Minister's agreement I reassured them that everyone would remain employed by the civil service and that everyone would receive proper training for any new responsibilities. I then establish a Joint Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the new structure. All stakeholders were represented, with participation of employee representatives from different levels of both agencies. The change to the new structure took 6 months but it went fairly smoothly. The biggest delay was caused by legal issues. If I were to do something like this again I would definitely consult with the legal experts at an earlier stage."

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9.2.	**Monitoring of strategic plans** Monitors plans to achieve strategic objectives.	Tell me how you have gone about planning for the future direction of your organisation/function. How did you monitor its implementation? Describe a strategic change you have recently implemented. How did you monitor its implementation and keep it on track?

Examples of good answers

"On an annual basis I take the senior management team away for a two day retreat to review the strategic position of our agency and to set our future direction for the coming two to three years, based on the overall framework of the government's priorities. For all of our strategic initiatives I ensure that we have an implementation plan and project schedule. Each activity has relevant milestones and KPIs to that we can monitor performance. I have set up a monthly meeting for the senior management team so that we can review progress against the plans and take corrective action if necessary. We have been able to bring in 90% of main initiatives on time."

9.3.	**Strategic resource management** Secures the resources needed to deliver strategic objectives.	How do you currently ensure that you manage your resources effectively? How do you consider costs to the organisation? What environmental factors do you take into account? Describe a strategic change you have recently implemented.

Examples of good answers

"I have established a comprehensive budgeting process. Each of my heads of department has an operational budget and project budgets. They report on these to me on a monthly basis. As and when new strategic priorities and initiatives emerge then a business case is prepared. Resources must then come from a reprioritised internal budget, or I start negotiations with the Minister and Ministry of Finance to secure new funds. I also approach international donors to explore funding possibilities. Usually some combination of all three approaches means that we are able to meet our strategic goals."

9.4.	**Taking responsibility for meeting strategic objectives** Takes responsibility for ensuring the strategic objectives are met.	Describe a strategic change you have recently implemented. Did it achieve its objectives? How did you ensure this?

Examples of good answers

"For all of our strategic initiatives I ensure that we have an implementation plan and project schedule. Each activity has relevant milestones and KPIs to that we can monitor performance. I have set up a monthly meeting for the senior management team so that we can review progress against the plans and take corrective action if necessary. We have been able to bring in 90% of main initiatives on time."

9.5.	**Building an effective senior management team** Builds an effective senior management team that pulls the organisation together.	Tell us about a situation where you faced reluctance from your senior team to accept the direction that you were setting. Give me an example of how you improve the effectiveness of your senior team in leading the organisation.

Examples of good answers

"Once a year I devote one of our Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings to an assessment of how effective we are as the SMT. In turn each of us sits in the 'Hot Seat'. The rest of us then give that person three pieces of feedback: 1. One thing that we would like more of from them (positive contribution). 2. One thing that we would like less of from them (unhelpful or dysfunctional activities/behaviours). 3. One thing that I'd like us to work on together (collaborative working). The Hot Seat incumbent is not allowed to defend themselves. They must just thank their colleagues for the feedback. It is up to them how they act on the feedback. Most respond with corrective and positive actions. At first the SMT members found this approach a little threatening but now it has proved to be really effective, everyone finds it very useful."

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