

Labor – Management Relations Competencies in USDA

(Full Performance Level Positions)

(10-3-01)

A **job competency** is an underlying characteristic of an employee (i.e. a motivation, trait, skill, aspects of one’s self image, social role, or a body of knowledge) which results in effective and/or superior job performance. [from NAPA’s “A Competency Model for Human Resources Professionals”]

It is widely recognized amongst human resource management professionals that occupational **competencies** represent the prescription for successful performance. A standard set of competencies enables an agency to effectively screen job candidates, as well as provide the basis to provide standardized developmental opportunities and performance measures for their employees. From the employees’ perspective, competencies better enable them to know what is expected in order to be successful and progress in their careers.

In an assessment of the Labor Relations workforce in USDA completed in April 2001, it was determined that a standard list of competencies did not exist for Labor Relations professionals. Consequently, the Mission Area Personnel Officers agreed to develop such a list for use within the Department.

The attached list consists of three categories of competencies, each broken into individual components. The first two categories contain “*foundational*” competencies, which are essential to successfully meet the *technical labor relations functions* contained in the third category.

I. Planning, Organization and Problem Solving Skills	
Competency	Description
<i>a. Attention to Detail</i>	<i>Is thorough when performing work and conscientious about attending to details.</i>
<i>b. Business Sense/Organizational Awareness</i>	<i>Knows the organization’s mission and functions, and how its social, political, and technological systems work and operates effectively within them, this includes the key programs, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations of the organization.</i>
<i>c. Creative/Innovative Thinking</i>	<i>Uses imagination to develop new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to problems; designs new methods where established methods and procedures are inapplicable or are unavailable.</i>
<i>d. External Awareness</i>	<i>Identifies and understands economic, political, and social factors that affect the</i>

	<i>organization.</i>
<i>e. Information Management and Research</i>	<i>Identifies a need for and knows where or how to gather information; organizes and maintains information or information management systems. Examples include: using FLRA case law volumes, managing and accessing contract administration tools, and understanding methods of research using the internet and other automated databases.</i>
<i>f. Planning and Implementing Change/Flexibility</i>	<i>Is open to new information; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; effectively deals with ambiguity.</i>
<i>g. Problem Solving/Decision Making</i>	<i>– Identifies problems; determines accuracy and relevance of information; uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives, and to make recommendations or take appropriate action.</i>
<i>h. Reasoning and Logic</i>	<i>Identifies rules, principles, or relationships that explain facts, data, or other information; analyzes information and makes correct inferences or draws accurate conclusions.</i>
II. Interpersonal and Communication Skills	
<i>a. Customer Service</i>	<i>Works with clients and customers (that is, any individuals who use or receive the services that the LR specialist provides) to assess their needs, provide information or assistance, resolve their problems, or satisfy their expectations.</i>
<i>b. Conflict Management</i>	<i>Manages and resolves conflicts, grievances, confrontations, or disagreements in a constructive manner to minimize negative personal and organizational impact. Understands the formal and informal processes of mediation, arbitration, negotiation and use other ADR techniques.</i>
<i>c. Facilitation</i>	<i>Uses established techniques to foster cooperation, trust, and a commitment of others to achieve goals.</i>
<i>d. Integrity/Honesty</i>	<i>Contributes to maintaining the integrity of the organization; displays high standards</i>

	<i>of ethical conduct and understands the impact of violating these standards on relationships; is trustworthy.</i>
<i>e. Interpersonal Skills/ Relationships Building</i>	<i>Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; promotes or contributes to team success.</i>
<i>f. Leadership</i>	<i>Influences, motivates, and challenges others to make positive contributions to program goals; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations. Displays a professional image.</i>
<i>g. Persuasion/Advocacy/Negotiation</i>	<i>Influences others to accept recommendations, cooperate, or change their behavior; works with others towards an agreement; negotiates to find mutually acceptable solutions.</i>
<i>h. Oral Communication/ Effective Listening Skills</i>	<i>Expresses information to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information (for example, technical, sensitive, controversial); makes clear and convincing oral presentations; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues, and responds appropriately.</i>
<i>i. Reading</i>	<i>Understands and interprets written material, including technical material, rules, regulations, instructions, and reports; applies what is learned from written material to specific situations.</i>
<i>j. Stress Tolerance</i>	<i>Deals calmly and effectively with high stress situations such as tight deadlines and hostile individuals and environments.</i>
<i>k. Teaching Others</i>	<i>Helps others learn through formal or informal methods; identifies training needs; provides constructive feedback; coaches others on how to perform tasks; acts as a mentor.</i>
<i>l. Writing</i>	<i>Recognizes and uses correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling; communicates information (e.g. facts, ideas, or messages) in a succinct and organized manner; produces written information, which may include technical material, that is appropriate for the intended audience.</i>

III. Technical Labor Relations Competencies	
<i>a. Advanced knowledge of the Federal Service Labor Management Statute</i>	<i>Includes knowledge of the content, intent and current case law pertinent to application of the FSLMRS.</i>
<i>b. Knowledge of and ability to apply FLRA and FSIP regulations, Statutory processes and guidance</i>	<i>Processes to include: ULPs, representation proceedings, exceptions to arbitration awards, negotiability appeals, impasse proceedings. Guidance to include: scope of bargaining, duty to bargain, information requests and formal discussions.</i>
<i>c. Knowledge of and ability to apply key FLRA case law and FSIP decisions</i>	<i>Includes the ability to use internet search and law library resources.</i>
<i>d. Ability to represent the agency in third party proceedings</i>	<i>Including ULP hearings and grievance arbitrations.</i>
<i>e. Ability to prepare agency statements of position and legal briefs</i>	<i>Including statements/briefs for: representation and unit clarification petitions, exceptions to arbitrator awards, negotiability appeals, FSIP impasses.</i>
<i>f. Ability to conduct negotiations using traditional and interest based techniques and processes.</i>	
<i>g. Ability to develop or facilitate the development of a labor relations strategic plan</i>	<i>Includes the ability to prepare a plan reflective of a compliance or collaborative LR environment.</i>
<i>h. Ability to develop an effective labor-management relationship between labor organizations and agency managers.</i>	

Note: This is to acknowledge that many of the competencies listed in this model, especially the foundational competencies, were used or modified from various reports and presentations on this subject that were reviewed in the preparation of this document. Documents reviewed include:

Knowledge Skills and Abilities of a Federal Sector Labor Relations Professional – FLRA General Counsel – March 1997

Labor-Management Relations – Managing and Developing Practitioners: Skills and Competencies for Success – OPM Labor Management Relations Division – May 2001

A Competency Model for Human Resource Professionals – NAPA – 1998

Organizational Core Competency Model for Attorney and Labor Relations Specialist – FLRA

Human Resources Competency Model Competencies – IPMA – 2000

Bridging the Experience Gap in Labor and Employee Relations – FPMI -2001