



Capability Framework Stocktake Project Report



Public
Service
Commission



NSW Public Sector Capability Framework Stocktake Project

Executive Summary

Purpose

The Capability Framework Stocktake project (the Stocktake) was undertaken to draw on the views and experience of users of the NSW Capability Framework (the Capability Framework) to:

- better understand any user issues
- identify any gaps, overlaps, refinements needed to the Framework, and
- identify any additional tools and guidance needed to support best practice use.

Contributions

Agency-based focus groups are the primary source for the findings and recommendations of this report. Thirteen groups were conducted, (six HR, four Line Manager and three combined HR/Line Manager), with participants from all clusters and departments except the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Special interest/subject matter expert groups (most from the NSW public sector) were consulted to explore emerging capabilities and impacts of changes in priorities and delivery models. Research was also undertaken into emerging capabilities and developments in other jurisdictions.

The Legislative and Policy Context

The *Government Sector Employment Rules (General) 2014* (the GSE Rules) refer to capabilities in general terms. The Capability Framework is not mandatory, but is strongly recommended by the Public Service Commissioner as a resource to be used to support consistency and capability uplift across the sector.

Advice on application of the Capability Framework is incorporated into the role description development, recruitment and mobility guidelines issued by the Public Service Commission. Again, these Guidelines are not mandatory, but any capabilities identified in a role description become pre-established standards for a role, and come under the assessment provisions of the GSE Rules.

Major Insights

What we have discovered, listening to line agencies, is:

- a high level of satisfaction with the Capability Framework in terms of its structure and content and its potential to support workforce management, particularly in the area of setting and managing performance expectations and developing capabilities; but
- a need for the Public Service Commission to adjust the existing guidelines to ensure clarity around how to implement the Capability Framework flexibly to achieve the best outcomes from its use

Key Findings

- Users are consistently very satisfied with the content and structure of the Capability Framework
- Both agency-based users and special interest/subject matter expert groups are committed to maintaining the Capability Framework as a generic resource broadly applicable in the sector
- Gaps in capabilities and changes in public sector work and delivery models can generally be addressed by refining the existing behavioural indicators. The emerging area of Data Capability warrants further exploration and consideration
- The most positive results from use of the Capability Framework are where line managers have a clear understanding of the link between good day-to-day management of their teams and business outcomes
- Confusion and frustration are primarily seen in its use for recruitment, particularly where it is applied in addition to formal accreditation and mandated competency standards or is seen to disadvantage specific cultural groups
- Participants generally welcomed the concept of a minimum requirement to assess only the Focus capabilities and others identified by the line manager
- There is a need to achieve a right balance between capabilities, knowledge and experience in setting the pre-established standards for a role, and a need for better guidance on identification and assessment of technical and professional knowledge and experience requirements
- Mobility and capability development activities require a 'curated' approach consistent with the home agency's strategic workforce plan and organisational needs, to build, manage and maintain expertise and corporate knowledge
- Improved guidance and continuing education is needed to explain how to apply the Capability Framework most effectively

Recommendations

1. Remove unnecessary over-prescription in the suggested guidelines for use of the Capability Framework, particularly in recruitment, and encourage an integrated, common-sense approach to its use
2. Continue to strongly promote the use of the Capability Framework and Occupation Specific Capability Sets to sector agencies, as tools for identifying capabilities to set the pre-established standards for roles, and in other workforce management activities
3. Revise the Role Description Development Guideline and Template and the Recruitment Guidelines to encourage agencies to apply the Capability Framework and/or the Occupation Specific Capability Sets flexibly and appropriately in setting the pre-established standards for the role, and to properly identify the technical knowledge and experience requirements of the role
4. Encourage a focus on broader strategic workforce planning outcomes when undertaking mobility, recruitment and development activities
5. Promote the use of the Capability Framework in performance management and learning and development activities
6. Provide continuing education and support to managers and employees to promote understanding of how the Capability Framework works together with other foundational public sector frameworks and supports all stages of the employment lifecycle
7. Update the Capability Framework and its collateral to reflect changes in public sector work and service delivery models.
8. Provide improved guidance around the development and application of Occupation Specific Capability Sets

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1: Background

Purpose

The Capability Framework Stocktake Project (the Stocktake) was initially undertaken to draw on the views and experience of users of the NSW public sector Capability Framework, to:

- better understand issues experienced by the sector in using the Capability Framework
- refine existing behavioural indicators to address any perceived gaps or overlaps in content, where required
- identify any additional collateral and tools required to guide agencies, managers, employees and jobseekers in best practice use of the Capability Framework.

Recruitment and mobility issues were under separate review, so application issues such as how the capabilities should be assessed in recruitment and throughout the employment lifecycle were out of the scope of the project.

Participants were free to discuss any aspect of their perceptions and experience of the Capability Framework and application issues were inevitably raised..

Approach

The Stocktake involved gathering information through a series of agency-based focus groups, discussions with special interest and subject matter experts and research.

The agency-based focus groups were the primary source of feedback for the recommendations in this report. Participants were from all clusters and departments except the Department of Premier and Cabinet and included HR representatives (at Business Partner, Principal or Manager level or above) and line managers (generally Clerk 11/12 equivalent or above). A list of participant numbers by agency is included at **APPENDIX 1**. Quotes from the discussions are shown in text boxes throughout this report. Feedback from the groups was fairly consistent and lends itself well to generalisation into common themes and issues.

Special interest groups and subject matter experts in a number of specialist areas, mainly from the NSW public sector, were also consulted (see **APPENDIX 1**). Advice from these groups is

included in the discussion on capability content (Section 4).

Finally, research was undertaken on emerging capabilities and interjurisdictional developments, including:

- Current policy on application of the Senior Executive Leadership Capabilities (SELC) and the Integrated Leadership System in the Australian Public Service (APS)
- Research on mastery and mobility conducted by Orima Career Management Pty Ltd for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- The APS Digital Transformation Strategy and associated capability development initiatives
- The World Economic Forum's Global Human Capital Report 2017¹
- Research conducted by the University of Birmingham on "The 21st century public servant"².

¹ The Global Human Capital Report 2017 – Preparing people for the future of work, World Economic Forum, 2017

² The 21st Century Public Servant, Catherine Needham and Catherine Mangan, University of Birmingham, 2014

Legislative and Policy Context

The explanatory foreword to the Capability Framework describes capabilities as “*the knowledge, skills and abilities required by all public sector employees*”. The Capability Framework has been strongly promoted as a sector-wide tool since it was introduced to sector agencies in 2013.

Some appreciation of the legislative and reform context is important to understanding how agencies have applied the Capability Framework and their responses to the Stocktake.

The *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014* and a number of PSC Guidelines relating to the application of the Capability Framework in workforce management activity are summarised as follow, and are covered in greater detail in **APPENDIX 9**.

The Rules

Section 12 of the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (GSE Act) provides for the Public Service Commissioner to make Rules relating to public sector employment. The Rules have the force of law.

The Rules refer to capabilities in general terms, primarily in relation to merit-based employment processes, but do not name the Capability Framework or mandate its use. The key Rules referring to capability are:

- Rule 16 which requires employment decisions to be based on an assessment of candidates’ capabilities, experience and knowledge as they relate to the “*pre-established standards*” of the role (defined as the capability, knowledge and experience standards for the role)
- Rule 17 and Rule 18 which define comparative assessment as requiring at least three capability based assessment methods, and suitability assessment as requiring at least two

- Rules 20, 21, 22 and 22B which specify comparative and suitability assessment requirements for ongoing and temporary or term employment
- Rule 26 which sets out (modified) assessment requirements for employing eligible persons from designated groups
- Rule 35 which includes development of employee capability as a core requirement for performance management systems.

The Guidelines

The PSC has issued a number of Guidelines that require application of the Capability Framework. These are:

- *Role Description Development Guideline and Template*

This prescribes inclusion of all 16 capabilities (20, for people-managers) in the Role Description, plus occupation-specific capabilities and essential requirements where necessary. It introduces the concept of “Focus” capabilities (defined as “*for which an employee assigned to the role must demonstrate immediate competence, that is, from day one of engagement*”, except “*where a person is moved temporarily to a role for a developmental opportunity*”). It also requires at least one Focus capability to be selected from each group (and possibly up to 10, depending on the level of the role).

- *Assignment to Role Guidelines*

Appointment at level and assignment to a role is designed to facilitate employee mobility between roles at the same level. The Guideline states that there is no set assessment process or minimum number of required assessments for a non-executive assignment, but that the manager should be satisfied the employee has demonstrated the focus capabilities at the required level and that the employee should generally not be assigned if more than two of the other capabilities have not been met.

- *Recruitment and Selection Guide (online)*

The Guide provides tools and resources to support each phase of the recruitment process. It advises that

- each focus capability must be assessed using a minimum of two capability-based assessment to ensure that a reasonable amount of information is collected
- all other non-focus and occupation-specific capabilities must be assessed, as these form part of the pre-established standards for the role.
- as a guide, candidates must meet 12-16 of the core capabilities including all the focus capabilities to be considered for employment

This means assessing 16 capabilities (20 for manager roles), plus any occupation-specific capabilities included in the role description. Focus capabilities must be assessed two or three times.

Neither the Capability Framework nor the Role Description Development Guideline are mandatory. However, capabilities included in a Role Description form part of the pre-established standards for the role, and become subject to the legislative requirement to assess candidates against the pre-established standards.

Other Frameworks and Standards

The Capability Framework was not made mandatory for public sector agencies in 2013 because it was recognised that many public sector employees are covered by industrial agreements and awards that specify essential qualifications and competency/skill requirements.

The Capability Framework and other standards can work together. Where possible, where occupation/profession specific capabilities overlap with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework, the public sector capabilities should be used to maximise consistency across the sector.

Some agencies are successfully combining the Capability Framework with other frameworks/standards. However, agencies need to take into consideration the complexities associated with applying multiple frameworks in determining how to apply the Capability Framework to their specialised workforces. In practice, industrial awards must take precedence.



2: Key Findings and Recommendations

Use of the Capability Framework

There is a high level of satisfaction with the structure and content of the Capability Framework, with only minor suggestions for adjustment of the behavioural indicators to address current and emerging capability needs.

Similarly, there is a clear appreciation of the value of the Capability Framework as a workforce management tool, and commitment to its application as a means of creating consistency around behaviours and expectations of employees across the sector.

However, there is also a fairly widespread misconception that the Guidelines for its use are mandatory, and that all the capabilities must be applied to all roles in the sector and subject to comparative or suitability assessment.

This has created challenges in the application of the Capability Framework, particularly in relation to:

- capability expectations for narrow, specialised and low-level roles
- reasonable adjustment for target groups
- disadvantage to potential applicants from outside of the public sector
- overlap with skills/capabilities required by industrial awards or external regulatory bodies
- the burden of assessing all the capabilities two or three times and
- achievement of job fit for roles requiring specific occupational knowledge and experience

Participants in the group discussions recognised the need for consistency and discipline in application of the Capability Framework. They are keen to apply the Capability Framework appropriately to the varied roles in their workforces, but because of uncertainty regarding what is mandatory, need assurance that this is not “against the Rules”. They felt there are gaps and inconsistencies in the advice issued by the PSC.

Recommendation 1

Remove unnecessary over-prescription in the suggested guidelines for use of the Capability Framework, particularly in recruitment, and encourage an integrated, common-sense approach to its use

Recommendation 2

Continue to strongly promote the use of the Capability Framework and Occupation Specific Capability Sets to sector agencies, as tools for identifying capabilities to set the pre-established standards for roles, and in other workforce management activities

Agencies should be selective when deciding which capabilities from the Capability Framework and/or Occupation Specific Capability Sets to include as pre-established standards for the role, in conjunction with identification of technical knowledge and experience requirements. There should be no requirement to select a key or focus capability from each capability group, although agencies should be strongly encouraged to include a “*People Management*” capability for roles involving people management responsibilities.

There is a need to achieve the right balance between generic and technical/professional skills.

The Rules require a decision based on the pre-established standards (i.e. capabilities, knowledge and experience) required by the role, but the current guidelines skew recruitment towards transferable generic capabilities.

Fewer capabilities to be assessed at recruitment would enable better quality and more considered assessments of the capabilities that are most important for effective performance of the role. It would also allow agencies to properly consider technical knowledge and experience as part of the pre-established standards for the role.

On occasion, agencies may need to select only occupation specific competencies or professional

requirements where these are particularly important for technical and professional roles or are prescribed by industrial awards and regulatory frameworks.

There is a perception that the Capability Framework is intimidating and difficult to understand for people outside of the NSW public sector (particularly those in disadvantaged groups) and for some occupational groups within the sector, and that the extensive and complex capability assessment requirements are a significant barrier to employment.

Reducing the number of capabilities included in the Role Description and their associated assessment requirements would have the added benefit of making both the Role Description and the process of applying for work in the public sector less “bureaucratic” and intimidating for potential job applicants from outside the public sector, and particularly for those from different cultural and educational backgrounds.

Recommendation 3

Revise the Role Description Development Guideline and Template and the Recruitment Guidelines to encourage agencies to apply the Capability Framework and/or the Occupation Specific Capability Sets flexibly and appropriately in setting the pre-established standards for the role, and to properly identify the technical knowledge and experience requirements of the role

Workforce Planning

The work futures literature indicates that the core capabilities covered by the Capability Framework will carry the public sector workforce into the future, but the 2016 Agency Survey and the Capability Framework Stocktake indicate that the Capability Framework has been less used in workforce planning than for other workforce management activities.

Users of the Capability Framework need to think broadly about organisational and individual capability needs in making workforce decisions. Capabilities are not applied in isolation on the job, but in concert with knowledge of subject matter and the organisational/stakeholder environment.

Research in the area of capability and mobility undertaken by Orima Career Management Pty Ltd on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) indicates that for broad roles, expert or ‘mastery’ stage is only achieved after about five years in the role. High performing organisations need a mix of these experts and fresh inputs from new staff, for a blend of subject matter knowledge and diversity of thought and sectoral experience.

Agencies should be encouraged to consider capabilities in terms of business outcomes. Also, to take a more ‘curated’ approach to mobility activities and capability development, identifying specialised roles that would benefit from longer appointments to build expertise and corporate knowledge, and developing strategies to manage and maintain knowledge.

Well-defined capability development objectives should be set for any secondment or assignment, consistent with the home agency’s strategic workforce plan and organisational needs.

Recommendation 4

Encourage a focus on broader strategic workforce planning outcomes when undertaking mobility, recruitment and development activities

Performance Management and Learning and Development

People managers are the key influencers in employee engagement and effectiveness, and need to be supported and developed in their role.

Overall, “My Manager” emerged well in the 2018 Public Sector Employee Survey with scores over 70% in such areas as listening, encouraging and valuing, communicating with and involving the employee. However, the aggregate score for Performance Framework and Development was lower at 56%, with clarity of assessment criteria (56%), organisational commitment to developing its employees (50%) and dealing with employees who perform poorly (46%) scoring poorly.

The Capability Framework can help managers and employees to address these areas.

Participants in the Stocktake discussions reported that the greatest satisfaction for line managers in using the Capability Framework was in the day-to-day management of their teams, and in structuring their employees' learning and development activities. They recognised the increased engagement and discretionary efforts of their employees achieved through regular feedback conversations and their visible commitment to their employees' capability development.

The World Economic Forum's Global Human Capital Report 2017 reinforces the importance of on-the-job training and lifelong learning to optimise human capital potential, and the increased importance of behavioural and non-cognitive skills that nurture an individual's capacity to collaborate, innovate, self-direct and problem-solve in an era of constant technological change.

The Capability Framework can help equip managers to structure performance conversations and assist employees to take initiative in their capability development, based on shared principles and common logic.

Recommendation 5

Promote the use of the Capability Framework in performance management and learning and development activities

Promote understanding of the Capability Framework

Corporate Leadership Council research indicates that one of the biggest drivers of employee and organisational performance is an employee's connection to their work and organisation.

Agencies have been challenged by the extent and range of changes required in organisational and workforce management since the introduction of the Government Sector Employment Act in 2013.

The Public Service Commission was not able to provide a full range of guidance and resources to support application of the Capability Framework when it was released in 2013. Initial resources focused on the role description and recruitment (a key focus of reform), and these have been progressively added to. A set of User Guides for

Managers and Employees that cover all stages of the employment lifecycle has now been developed in consultation with sector agencies and will be published shortly.

Better use could also be made of resources like the Workforce Management Conceptual Model and Stakeholder Personas, published in the State of Workforce Reform Report (August 2015), which offer a holistic, visual depiction of ways in which NSW public sector employees can work – drawing on various resources including the Capability Framework – to deliver value for NSW and to feel positive about their work, the team they work in and their work environment.

The need for education and support will be continuing. Agency HR and other users will become more familiar and comfortable with the Capability Framework over time, but agency restructuring, employee mobility and high levels of contingent labour will ensure a continuing flow of new users.

Stocktake participants identified aspects of the design of the Capability Framework that need to be better explained to users, as well as gaps and inconsistencies in the guidance provided to date.

The Capability Framework looks simple, but as it has been designed for flexible application to employees in literally hundreds of job classifications, occupations and agencies it has some inherent complexities:

- it is based on a maturity model, with capability levels to be determined by the accountabilities of the role (not role grade). The overlap of capabilities for executive roles and those below executive level is a strength of the Framework, supporting a pipeline of development, but some agencies are “quarantining” the Advanced and Highly Advanced levels for Senior Executive roles. Users need to be educated not to overstate or to understate capability levels in role descriptions, because these act as a benchmark for all workforce management activity.
- the behaviours are indicators, not a checklist of requirements. Users need to learn to apply the indicators flexibly, selecting those that best apply to the role
- the capabilities need to be interpreted in context to make them meaningful, especially for highly technical/professional roles or employees from different cultural groups.

Consider, for example, what an “Adept” level of Communicate Effectively would mean for a rape counsellor, a policy writer and a contact centre operative. Or what “Commit to Customer Service” means for a corrective services officer, a train driver and an administrative assistant.

Recommendation 6

Provide continuing education and support to managers and employees to promote understanding of how the Capability Framework works together with other foundational public sector frameworks and supports all stages of the employment lifecycle

Update the Capability Framework

There is a high level of satisfaction with the structure and content of the Capability Framework, with only minor suggestions for adjustment of the behavioural indicators to address current and emerging capability needs.

The Capability Framework is a living document and the expectation is that it will need to change and evolve over time. However, it contains only transferable “core” capabilities and has been written in generic terms, and five years after its publication the changes identified as necessary to future-proof it can largely be addressed by “tweaking” behavioural indicators.

One possible exception is Data Capability, which is described as becoming increasingly important in public sector work. The minimum requirement is to include more references to Data in existing capabilities, and to tweak behavioural indicators to distinguish it from Technology. However, the possible need for an additional Data Business Enabler or a Data Professionals Occupation Specific Capability Set, should be explored further with the sector.

Recommendation 7

Update the Capability Framework and its collateral to reflect changes in public sector work and service delivery models.

Occupation Specific Capability Sets

The Stocktake groups identified a pressing need for guidance and resources to support application of the Occupational Specific Capability Sets and assessment of occupational knowledge and experience requirements.

The Occupation Specific Capability Sets and similar resources developed by agencies or external bodies resonate with employees in the occupational groups and allow managers to drill down on skills and knowledge required in the occupation. However, the limited advice issued to date regarding these capability sets was described as “quite different” from advice on the Capability Framework. Their application is being limited by uncertainties regarding the PSC requirements, coupled with the large number of core capabilities to be assessed.

The Occupation Specific Capability Sets are likely to need more frequent and extensive updates because they contain a heavier component of domain knowledge and skills which is subject to technological and structural change. For example, the externally developed Skills for the Information Age (SFIA) framework that has been adopted by the sector for ICT roles is updated every two to three years. The PSC’s sector role descriptions and Career Pathway for ICT roles need to be updated to the recently published SFIA version 7 which includes new digital skills.

The Finance and Procurement Professionals Capability Sets are being informally reviewed in the context of the Finance and Procurement Transformation programs. The HR Professionals Capability Set will be tested to some extent by the planned development of HR sector role descriptions. A 12 months post-implementation evaluation of the Legal Professionals Set has been agreed with the sector’s General Counsel Group.

Recommendation 8

Provide improved guidance around the development and application of Occupation Specific Capability Sets

3: Design of the Capability Framework – Structure, Language and Levels

The Capability Framework was designed for maximum flexibility, given the variety of jobs in the government service. The focus groups addressed a number of questions about the design, including:

- content gaps and areas of overlaps between capabilities
- the language
- the relevance of the behavioural indicators
- the levels

Feedback Summary

Recognised value

The overall response to the structure and content of the Capability Framework was very positive. There was almost universal acceptance of the capability groups, the number of capabilities, inclusion of both executive and non-executive roles, and the number of capability levels.

“It underpins the culture. It’s an aligning tool. It’s a fabulous tool, very comprehensive.”

“I have eight staff and I use it for hiring and the [yearly evaluation]. I feel it is a terrific tool for guiding directions and developing capability.”

“It is complete. It provides a good baseline with no obvious gaps.”

A need to contextualise content

While the content of the Capability Framework was seen to be relevant, it was also seen to be generic and on occasion in need of interpretation in the agency context.

The Department of Industry, as an example, has selected “Commit to Customer Service” as a “focus” capability for all roles in light of their business plan, and has explored what this capability means for different types of roles and different types of services (See presentation delivered by Miranda van der Pol, Manager Customer Experience, NSW Department of Industry at **APPENDIX 7**).

Furthermore, the capabilities and capability levels alone are insufficient to establish fitness for a role. The GSE Act requires that decision to be based on as assessment not only of capabilities, but also of knowledge and experience.

The PSC provides broad advice on suitable assessment methodologies and tools, but providing more definitive advice is not considered a practical proposition given the range of roles and organisational contexts in the sector.

“The Capability Framework has a lot of strengths but because it is meant to apply to the whole sector it is too generic. We bring it alive at agency level.”

“It needs to be contextual – you cannot just pick it up and use it.”

“We need to contextualise the Capability Framework to bring it to life. It’s about how you use the Capability Framework, not just what it is, in all areas of workforce management.”

Recognised potential

Participants recognise that the full potential of the Capability Framework has yet to be realised, but report growing interest and aptitude in its use.

“There is a lag between usage and gaining full value from the Capability Framework”

“What is happening is that people are getting interested, knowing they do need the soft skills for higher roles and mobility.”

“There is a huge gap still between most existing workers’ understanding of their role and how that fits into the Capability Framework.”

“There’s a piece of work educating managers beyond recruitment. The business still sees it as an HR tool!”

The Capability Levels

Capability level and classification of work

A fundamental design principle of the Capability Framework is that there is no direct relationship between capability level and grade or classification. The capability levels for an individual role are determined by considering the work performed by the role, and the levels of the capabilities may vary.

This design feature allows the Capability Framework to be applied to the large variety of jobs in the sector and the many different classification arrangements across the sector.

There is an indirect link between capability levels and grade in that the more demanding accountabilities of more senior roles generally require higher levels of capability.

However, the stocktake discussions identified a fairly widespread misconception that the Advanced and Highly Advanced capability levels are reserved for senior executive roles:

“Levels have been unnecessarily forced down in role descriptions to allow for a spread of grades. We were told we had to do this.”

“It is a real struggle at the frontline to get people to accept the capability levels. For example, the research scientists think they need Highly Advanced capabilities and it is very hard for them to understand that you have to allow for Secretaries in the capabilities”

“The Capability Comparison Guide requires high level jobs to have high level capabilities but “Procurement and Contract Management”, for example, could be a very minor part of the role. If it is possible [to have a low level Business Enablers capability for an otherwise highly capable role you should explain this on the matrix.”

The Capability Comparison Guide was developed to show the likely range of capability levels for roles in bands and grades within the Crown Employees (*Administrative and Clerical Officers – Salaries Award 2007*). It has been of great assistance to agencies, particularly where responsibility for writing role descriptions has been devolved to business unit managers.

However, assigning and interpreting capability levels remains a challenge for some users, and the rigid application of the Capability Comparison Guide when creating role descriptions is having perverse outcomes:

“I like it, it shows a natural progression, but forced compliance with the Comparison Guide compromises some roles. For example...the ‘Value Diversity’ level was forced down for the Diversity Manager role because we had to use the Advanced level for ‘Manage and Develop People.’”

“In our agency, managers develop role descriptions so they are different for similar roles across the agency. We send them back if the capabilities do not comply with the Guide. It is our only way of ensuring some consistency for mobility.”

A Single Framework for Senior Executive and Non-Executive Roles

The Capability Framework was designed to allow for a flexible interface between senior executive and non-executive roles, with the possibility of some cross-over in capability levels. This is a major strength of the Capability Framework, allowing for a continuing pipeline of development and recognising that non-executive professional roles in particular may require high levels of capability.

The *Advanced* and *Highly Advanced* levels of capability are not “reserved” for senior executive roles. Agencies that inappropriately restrict non-executive roles to the lower three capability levels limit the value of the Capability Framework

for recruitment and performance management purposes.

The notion of a “single framework” for both senior executive and non-executive roles was not a focus of discussion in most groups. Participants who did comment generally considered the single framework appropriate:

“The [behavioural] indicators are generalised enough to apply to everyone.”

“From the Learning and Development perspective, a single framework shows the whole career. The hierarchical complexities come through strongly in the Capability Framework – there is too much focus on technical capabilities in the executive, and more need for People Management skills.”

Despite the general acceptance of the single framework structure, user feedback points to a weighting of the behavioural indicators at the higher levels towards organisational seniority rather than expertise:

“‘There is a real schism in the capabilities at ‘Adept’ level. ...at the higher levels the language is more about being able to interact at higher organisational levels. This is self-fulfilling – it doesn’t really tell you what you need to be able to do to be at the level e.g. it starts speaking ‘across government’ rather than about what enables you to do work ‘across government’.”

No concerns were raised about potential discrepancies between the Capability Framework and the Leader Success Profiles used by the Leadership Academy. Participants recognised the value of the Leader Success Profiles as a holistic, aspirational picture of leadership.

The Number of Capabilities

While the number of capabilities required to be assessed in recruitment activities was a major concern for discussion group participants, this was clearly identified as an issue around application rather than the structure of the Capability Framework.

“The number of capabilities is about right. The more you generalise, the more it becomes tick the box and loses value.”

“... need to remember that the capabilities are not just for recruitment.”

There was very little feedback that capabilities overlapped. One written submission suggested that ‘Display Resilience and Courage’, and ‘Manage Self’ could be combined into one stronger capability.

Business Enablers

Recommendations relating to strengthening the sector’s capabilities in strategic financial management, project management and management of third party delivery contracts, contained in the 2012 Commission of Audit report, were a key driver for the decision to include the Business Enablers group of capabilities, as a requirement of all roles in the sector. Other drivers were the Financial Management Transformation program, the Review of Government Procurement initiated in 2011, and the NSW Government ICT Strategy.

Sector representatives who contributed to the development of the Business Enablers group of capabilities in 2013 were divided on whether they should apply to all roles.

Discussion group participants understood the rationale for their inclusion in the Capability Framework, and generally agreed that “Technology” capability will continue to grow in importance and applies – to varying degrees – to an ever-widening range of roles, so was a useful inclusion in the Capability Framework. But there was less agreement on the value of applying the other Business Enablers capabilities to all roles.

Difficulty in assessing these capabilities at recruitment was a major concern, particularly in relation to candidates from outside the public sector.

There was widespread support for the suggestion that there be no requirement to designate a “focus” capability from this group, which would largely resolve the recruitment issue especially if the application guidelines are adjusted to allow assessment of only focus capabilities and any others the manager elects to assess when filling a role.

Participants generally supported a suggestion that the Business Enablers capabilities should apply only when required for the role – like the People Management group of capabilities. However, opinion was divided on whether – if the Business Enablers group of capabilities became optional – they should be “all in or all out” or only a subset could be selected.

“...we understand why the Business Enablers have been included in the Capability Framework, but they do not seem important for some roles..... The result is that managers will “tick and flick” these capabilities during assessment.”

“On the basis of four years’ experience, are the Business Enablers group of capabilities increasing capability across the sector?”

“The Business Enablers are not all applicable to all roles. What is the point of raising the base – Foundational – level of these capabilities?”

“These might be useful for higher level jobs but it is a real struggle to apply them to jobs such as call centre operators. Entry level jobs in particular do not do “Procurement and Contract Management”, “Project Management” and “Finance”.”

“The Business Enablers are a particular problem. They are generally, but not always, superfluous. It comes down to how we weight it – tick a box.”

“All four capabilities are very good for performance development and career planning etc. I wouldn’t like to take them out, although they are awkward in recruitment.”

The Behavioural Indicators

The notion that the behavioural indicators are an indicative, flexible picture of a level of capability was seen as important to allow use and relevance of the Capability Framework for all roles across the sector.

“The behavioural indicators are generally flexible enough to be applied. If it was more rigid you couldn’t use it.”

“The behavioural indicators generally do fit the roles and are useful, but do need to be tailored to the role.”

However, some participants felt that clarification is still required on how the behavioural indicators should be applied to individual roles.

“One pertinent issue I believe remains unclear or needs further refining is clarifying if ALL the behavioural indicators within a Capability level need to be addressed, or whether they are indicative of the types of indicators but candidates don’t need to cover off on ALL of them... It seems unreasonable for some roles that all examples of behavioural indicators be covered off.”

“Need to prepare a guide and put it upfront that the Capability Framework needs to be used holistically not atomistically (i.e. prescriptively)...”

There was some misunderstanding of the cumulative nature of the behavioural indicators.

“The higher up you go in the levels, the more the behavioural indicators become more theoretical/big picture and almost lose the heart of the capability.”

The Language

Feedback on the language of the Capability Framework varied between organisations and depended very much on the composition of their workforces. Agencies with large indigenous workforces or customer groups reported issues with the language of the Capability Framework and the difficulties it poses for many people from indigenous and other cultural backgrounds, particularly in recruitment.

“The language in the Capability Framework is good. Additional technical competencies will always be required, to overlay the behaviours in the Capability Framework.” (Agency with a predominantly “white collar” workforce)

“The good thing is that it does use outcomes-type language”

“The language is okay and mostly appropriate.”

“The key challenge is field staff – they generally come from a low level educational background and find the language of the Capability Framework terribly difficult – it’s intimidating.”

“The Capability Framework is mumbo jumbo for employees from a non-English speaking background, or those with literacy problems.”

4: Content of the Capability Framework – Fine-tuning and Future-proofing

Overall, participants in the agency focus groups and special interest group consultations were satisfied with the content of the Capability Framework.

While there are some suggestions for minor changes to the behavioural indicators, there was also a strong feeling that the Capability Framework should be kept as an accessible, user-friendly resource that describes common transferable skills.

Key suggestions for fine-tuning the existing Capabilities

Key aspects identified as requiring uplift in the Capability Framework are summarised as follows. See **APPENDIX 3** for detailed suggestions on individual capabilities.

“You could include specific behavioural indicators about ‘innovation; design thinking; navigating complexity and ambiguity; human-centred design; connecting and leveraging digital channels’.”

“...there needs to be a greater emphasis on contributing to, and leveraging, data and information systems and processes – for instance, via collaboration and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned.”

“There could be more emphasis on productivity improvement, continuous improvement e.g. watching out for opportunities to do things better, more efficiently.”

“There could be more mention of evidence-based decision-making.”

“Advanced and Highly Advanced level indicators do not reference the collaborative approaches that are required to deliver results in a digital service environment.”

“...this capability conflates technology and data...Furthermore, the behavioural indicators in this capability seem to be focused on compliance rather than building and leveraging the value of data and information in a digital context..”

“Inspire Direction and Purpose is most directly related to leadership. You should have descriptions of what good leadership is, like ‘morale building’, ‘team building’.”

“You could include specific behavioural indicators on ‘strategic/forward thinking and strategic decision making (including leveraging D&I principles).”

“There needs to be reference to remote, intergenerational, geographically dispersed workforces.”

Summary of feedback on areas of special interest

Cultural Competency/Awareness

“Value Diversity” was extensively discussed by Stocktake participants, together with the question of whether cultural competence needs to be added to the Capability Framework, either as a multicultural capability or as one explicitly addressing indigenous culture. Cultural competence is an important issue for the public sector. Two of the 35 recommendations in the NSW government response to the *Reparations for the Stolen Generations in New South Wales: Unfinished Business* report (the NSW Parliament General Purpose Standing Committee No.3’s report on its inquiry into Stolen Generations reparations) were as follows:

- Recommendation 6: *That the NSW Government develop a plan to build a trauma-informed workforce to support Stolen Generation survivors and their families and communities*
- Recommendation 29: *That the NSW Government ensure that all public sector staff undertake Aboriginal cultural awareness training, and that the training include mandatory information about the impacts of past forcible removal policies and practices on Aboriginal communities*

The NSW Government considered both recommendations combined and committed that:

- *The NSW Government will establish a bespoke e-learning training package, including mandatory information about the impacts of past forcible removal policies and practices on Aboriginal communities, to build a trauma informed public sector workforce.*
- *The training package will be developed with Aboriginal people, including Stolen Generations survivors.*

Participants from agencies with large indigenous workforces or customer groups held a strong view that “Value Diversity” is not sufficient for use in relation to Aboriginal cultural competence and

culturally safe behaviours and expressed a need to lift cultural awareness of indigenous groups.

These participants suggested inclusion of an Aboriginal specific capability in the Capability Framework (i.e. required of all employees), listing both desired behavioural indicators and the activities required to support them. An elective capability, to be applied when required by a role (like the People Management group of capabilities), was suggested as an alternative.

There was general agreement by these participants that the primary need for improved indigenous cultural competence was for those in identified roles, and there was fairly strong support for alternatives such as an Occupation Specific Capability Set for those in identified roles dealing extensively with indigenous (or possibly other) cultural groups, and better recruitment advice and resources for hiring managers.

Some discussion group participants expressed a need for the issue of cultural competency to be integrated into all capabilities, particularly at higher levels, although this idea was not widely supported:

Cultural competence should be integrated across the Capability Framework, so that it informs all areas e.g. if a person is in a management position that makes decisions affecting others, they should do so in a culturally capable way..Cultural Competence needs to come out more strongly, especially at Adept, Advanced and Highly Advanced levels.

Overall, however, most discussion group participants questioned whether the Capability Framework is the right place to address the need, and did not agree that Aboriginal cultural awareness should be differentiated from other cultural groups.

The general view was that specific references to Aboriginal culture or Equal Employment Opportunity groups may not align with inclusion initiatives, and that using more inclusive language encourages people to consider the full spectrum of diversity and not focus exclusively on particular aspects of diversity.

Discussion group participants felt that “Value Diversity” should remain focused on recognising the importance of diversity and on creating opportunities to value individual differences in the workplace, by building an environment that both values and utilises the contributions of people from all backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

“Working with a multi-ethnic frontline group recently, we looked at the behavioural indicators for “Value Diversity” in depth, and felt that the word “diverse” covers all and that “Values Diversity” is nice as it is – it covers cultural awareness well.”

“There is a need to embed cultural awareness, but maybe not in the Capability Framework. It is not a gap.”

“We have other programs/ways to encourage diversity – training etc. We need to be clever about how to make diversity relevant to the customer and the role.”

“It should be an occupation-specific capability because many roles will never need it.”

The PSC Aboriginal Workforce Development Team advises that the preferred direction at this point is to develop:

- an indigenous cultural awareness program to be undertaken by all employees (similar to the way in which all employees are required to undertake Code of Conduct training); and
- an Aboriginal Cultural Competence occupation-specific capability, to be applied to “identified” roles i.e. roles where being a member of a particular group is a genuine occupational qualification as set out in section 14 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977* (NSW). This will be workshopped with the Aboriginal Employment Advisory Committee.

Innovation

Development of an “Innovation” capability was extensively researched in 2014 by the PSC. The conclusion reached was that innovativeness is not a discrete capability, but combines facets of many capabilities. “Innovation” is not just an

original idea but also its translation into a new or improved product, process or service: the critical factor is not “innovation” capability as such, but the existence of an organisational environment that nurtures and facilitates this work.

This is consistent with the NSW Innovation Strategy: ‘Bringing Big Ideas to Life’ (2016), which identifies four key areas for action, each supported by a number of headline initiatives.

The qualities that support innovation – adaptability, collaboration, customer-centricity, continual learning and improvement – are included in the Capability Framework.

There are, however, relatively few explicit references to “innovation” in the Capability Framework, and some participants perceived this as a gap:

“Where is innovation factored into the Capability Framework? In “Deliver Results”? It’s not just about “Technology”. The ICT Strategy role descriptions contain language around strategic thinking and innovation that should be incorporated into the Capability Framework e.g. in “Thinks and Solves Problems”. There could be more emphasis on productivity improvement and continuous improvement in “Delivers Results” e.g. watching out for opportunities to do things better, more efficiently.”

The Clinical Excellence Commission, which focuses on clinical quality improvement, recently developed a set of Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Capabilities.

In the process it mapped the Capability Framework against Deming’s (1992) *System of Profound Knowledge*, and came to the conclusion that the Capability Framework “required expansion to capture the technical aspects that are necessary in roles, such as interpreting data, applying quality improvement methodologies, and how to use that information to develop innovative improvement”.

Digital

Digital transformation of government services is occurring world-wide. The need to lift digital capability, and to implement strategies to

achieve this, are common themes. The European Commission, for example, published “DigComp 2.0: The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens” in 2016, updating DigComp which was released in 2013, as a tool to improve citizens’ digital competence.

Closer to home, the Australian Government has established the Digital Transformation Agency to support transformation of Australian government services to be simple, clear and fast. An informal working group has been established to facilitate information sharing between the Digital Transformation Agency, the Australian Public Service Commission, the New South Wales PSC, and the NSW Department of Finance, Services and Innovation (DFSI) digital transformation team.

“Digital” capability, like innovation, is multi-faceted. It requires adaptability, openness to change, continuing learning, customer-centric thinking, problem-solving, and a focus on delivery and results as well as technological skills. Many of these core skills are already covered in the Capability Framework.

Discussion group participants agreed that raising “digital” capability in the NSW public sector will require a range of strategies for talent acquisition and development that are beyond the scope of the Capability Framework.

Marina Chiovetti, Portfolio Director, Digital Capability, ICT and Digital Government NSW, commented on the Capability Framework as follows:

- The “core” capabilities, particularly “Display Resilience and Courage” and “Think and Solve Problems”, adequately reflect what is needed by most employees in the digital environment. Of fundamental importance is a “Growth Mindset”, and creativity. These are soft skills, rather than technical skills.
- The “Technology” capability needs more emphasis on strategic, creative, problem-solving ability at the higher levels. The lower levels, which are more hands-on in nature, are suitable for frontline service roles including clinicians using quite sophisticated tools. However, the higher levels are too compliance/governance-oriented: people in offices, in planning and policy type roles need to be future-oriented and “join the dots” across digital services and solutions.

- It is best to avoid the term “Digital” in the “Technology” capability, as it has a broad definition and different meanings in different contexts.

The Information and Data Policy team, Department of Finance, Services and Innovation, provided a written response to Stocktake questions asked of members of the NSW Digital Government Working Group.

The team suggested amendments to Behavioural Indicators in a number of capabilities, to reinforce the collaborative behaviours and approaches necessary to solve problems and deliver results in a digital service environment.

Data and Information Management

The Information and Data Policy team also identified “data and information governance, management and usage” as a significant gap in the Capability Framework:

“From our perspective, when filling roles we look for skills and abilities that reflect an understanding of the primacy of data and information governance, management and usage in the context of broader legislative, policy and service delivery outcomes of the organisation and sector as a whole. The existing capabilities in the Framework currently do not map to these fundamental requirements which are increasingly relevant across the sector”

Acting Director Kate Cumming commented:

“From my perspective, the current framework prioritises and emphasises technology over information and data. To me technology is an enabler but the emerging necessary competencies across the Sector apply to the strategic management, use and protection of information and data. So I’d like to see the framework updated, particularly in the Technology area, to achieve more of a balance between technology and information capabilities”.

The team made detailed suggestions for amendments to Behavioural Indicators to incorporate/clarify references to information and data management use and management, particularly in Technology Capability which they considered “conceptually conflates technology and data”.

Commissioning and Contestability

The Commissioning and Contestability Unit (CCU) has been established in NSW Treasury as a centre of excellence to implement a whole-of-government approach to commissioning. The CCU supports the Premiers’ priority of improving government services, and is responsible for:

- supporting the development of commissioning capability across the sector alongside the PSC
- reporting to NSW Government on the state of commissioning and contestability activity across the public sector.

The CCU provided feedback on the Capability Framework and commissioning capability:

- Commissioning and contestability are about making informed decisions based on good evidence and the right processes. They embody a customer-centric approach that positively challenges current ways of working and seeks to introduce competition as a lever for improving quality, productivity and access.
- Commissioning is essentially a strategic activity, and ability in activities such as market engagement and sensitivity analysis is not to be expected across all roles, and at lower grades.
- Public sector employees may perform the role of policy-maker, commissioner, regulator and/or provider within future-focused service design and delivery, and key capability requirements – which are not unique to commissioning – include:

- vision and strategy
- system thinking and design
- strategy execution and governance
- change management
- program and project management
- knowledge management
- communications

- Elements of creative thinking and innovation could be strengthened in “*Think and Solve Problems*”, and learning, evaluation and continuous improvement could be strengthened in “*Delivers Results*”
- “*Procurement*” and “*Commissioning*” are separate capabilities, although there are touchpoints: the strategic aspect of the “*Supplier Relationship Management*” capability in the Procurement Professionals Capability Set should be strengthened.

Disability

One in five people in Australia reportedly have some form of disability³. Of the approximately 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability, only 53% are in employment, compared with 83% Australians of working age without disability⁴.

A “disability” is difficult to define, as it includes a broad range of conditions (mental, sensory or mobility), varying in complexity, visibility and degree.

The data on NSW public sector employment of people with disabilities has limitations. Reporting by the Workforce Profile depends on employees voluntarily disclosing a disability and under-reporting is likely for a number of reasons including fear of discrimination.

Nevertheless, the data should be a reasonable indicator of trend, and despite successive strategies and action plans, the percentage of NSW government employees who identify as having a disability has declined from 5.0% in 2006 to 2.7% in 2017.

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2016, 4430.0 – *Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2015*, viewed 24 February 2017

⁴ Ibid

In 2015 Craig Wallace, then President of People with Disability Australia, commented that:

“There is...an increasing tendency for public sector employers to use assessment centres or psychometric testing that tends to screen out people with a disability.

“It is a management problem – they used to recruit for a position, now they recruit for a range of criteria, you have to be good at working in teams, for example, or problem solving, when in fact what they just need is someone to do a specific task that someone on the spectrum could do.”⁵

These comments appear to refer to the capability-based assessment processes introduced by the GSE legislation.

Stocktake participants were similarly concerned that the Capability Framework and associated assessment processes are too complex and intimidating for those in low level roles and with low level literacy skills, and are having a negative impact on those with a disability.

Further, they expressed the view that the current assessment requirements equate a focus capability to an inherent requirement of a role and, as such, may breach anti-discrimination legislation if not all focus capabilities are demonstrably required for performance of the role.

The recommendation to change application guidelines to encourage agencies to select as many or as few capabilities from the Capability Framework or Occupation Specific Capability Sets as deemed appropriate to set the “pre-established” standards for a role would reduce the amount of assessment required and make the process simpler for individuals identifying as having a disability.

Risk Management

Concepts such as ‘risk management’, ‘awareness of responsibility’, ‘reporting’, ‘financial implications of decisions’, and ‘staying within budget’ have been incorporated into several capabilities, including the “Deliver Results”, “Demonstrate Accountability” and “Finance” capabilities.

Risk management is addressed in more contextualised form in the Finance, Procurement and Legal Professionals Capability Sets.

Suncorp and iCare representatives provided feedback on “risk management” capability in the context of the Treasury Managed Fund (TMF) risk management strategy work:

- Sector polls undertaken⁶ identified six existing capabilities as key for risk management capability uplift in risk practitioners:
 - Communicate effectively
 - Demonstrate accountability
 - Manage reform and change
 - Influence and negotiate
 - Deliver results
 - Customer service
- Specific areas for development across the sector, which could be strengthened in the Capability Framework, include:
 - Using information to understand the organisation, culture and stakeholders and align systems and processes
 - Using information and tools to monitor, review and report performance and provide assurance
- The content of the capabilities has been well developed: environmental and cultural factors are needed to drive behaviour changes to build risk management capability across the sector.

⁵ Craig Wallace, President, People With Disability Australia, “Call for quotas as disabled public servant numbers fall by half in NSW”, *Sydney Morning Herald* 29/11/2015

⁶ Suncorp distributed 205 surveys in December 2015 across all clusters; including risk professionals (ERM, WHS, RTW, OR), HR and L&D roles; and operational, management, specialist and executive positions

5: The Capability Framework and Recruitment/Role Design

Agency Practice – Senior Executive Recruitment

Part 4, Division 4 of the GSE Act provides the legal basis for the employment and assignment of Public Service senior executives.

There is acknowledgement of the importance of transferable capabilities or “soft skills” for senior executive roles, and the Stocktake discussions indicate that there is a high level of agency satisfaction with the recruitment process for senior executives given that:

- the recruitment assessment is usually managed by external recruitment consultants
- the information from the assessment process is more thorough and useful than is usually obtained from recruitment of most non-executive roles

There is also recognition that capabilities alone are not enough for effective performance of senior executive roles and that consideration should be given to the extent to which traditional technical subject matter expertise or experience working in a particular environment may be required:

“The issue came up recently with senior executive roles. You can recruit good, experienced people but the question is how long it will take to learn the language. Perhaps there may be paths between branches within specialisations.”

“We need extra guidelines on applying the Capability Framework to executive roles. While mobility is important, recruitment needs to reflect what the role actually needs.”

Recruitment consultants are reportedly taking a holistic picture of candidates, including style and attributes, motivation and leadership enablers and derailers, as reflected in the Leader Success Profiles developed for the Leadership Academy.

Agency Practice – Non-Executive Recruitment

Part 4, Division 5 of the GSE Act provides the legal basis for the employment and assignment of Public Service non-executives.

Stocktake discussions indicates there is consistent dissatisfaction with the process and outcomes of assessment of capabilities in recruitment for non-executive roles.

Assessment process design

Feedback from agencies suggests that in order to assess all 16 or 20 (or more) capabilities, some assessment methods are being favoured simply due to their capacity to assess multiple capabilities (e.g. psychometric testing), and there is often only a superficial level of assessment of capabilities.

Discussion group participants had many criticisms to make of the way an assessment process is designed and how assessment methods are selected, however there was a sense that managers had been overwhelmed by unrealistic and unnecessarily complicated assessment requirements:

“Everyone does cognitive testing and a personality test. Then they decide who they want. It is so costly.”

“The problem is that the hiring manager only does recruitment once per year.”

“People only recruit once a year, and need to refresh [themselves on the process] each time.”

“The quality of advice given to applicants by the hiring manager and others varies. Sometimes it is an external recruitment agency giving the advice.”

Focus Capabilities

Participants in the stocktake discussion groups saw value in identifying focus capabilities of a role, but expressed concern about the impact of requiring focus capabilities to be assessed at least twice:

“The focus capabilities are very good for coaching managers what to look for – but there are too many of them.”

“People want clarification about what “focus” capabilities mean, or more specifically how to address them in applications. We suggest that there should be a more succinct, less weighty document explaining them for lower level staff.”

“We tend to want to limit the number of focus capabilities, to reduce the burden on recruitment”

Participants generally welcomed the proposed adjustment to the GSE Rules to allow assessment of only focus capabilities (and any other capabilities the manager elects to assess) when filling a role through a suitability or comparative assessment, which is being considered by the PSC.

However, a handful of discussion group participants raised concerns that this proposal is somewhat at odds with the synergistic nature of the capabilities:

*“It’s a change process. The capabilities work together – “Commit to Customer Service” refers to showing respect to customers”.
“That’s a problem if you choose to focus on one capability”.*

“The capabilities work together e.g. “Value Diversity” and “Commit to Customer Service” cover internal and external elements. We need to synergise rather than breaking down the capabilities.”

Some agencies reported that they are already assessing only focus capabilities for a role, to reduce the assessment burden:

“What is the point of assessing all the capabilities when the focus capabilities are 80% of the job? You should be able to look at what the role is and focus on that. We feel that at the moment it is a tick box exercise to sign it all off, and that detracts from the focus. It is only done for HR – managers are really interested only in the focus capabilities”.

Impact on people from outside the Public Service and from Diversity Groups

Many participants felt that the Capability Framework creates barriers for people from outside the sector and for people from indigenous or other diversity groups:

“People outside the public service find the Capability Framework very intimidating and don’t bother to apply.”

“We are not attracting externals because they don’t understand how to apply.”

“It is mostly about guidance on the ‘how’. The capabilities are turning off externals. We are primarily getting government applicants who can ‘talk the talk’.”

“Outsiders feel disadvantaged because they are not used to talking/thinking about capabilities.”

“Outsiders are disadvantaged by the need to address the capabilities in their applications. They don’t understand focus capabilities. [It’s] replacing selection criteria with capabilities.”

“We are not getting applications from diversity groups, there are not enough Aboriginal applicants. The Capability Framework and recruitment process are part of [the reason for] that.”

Technical knowledge and subject matter expertise

Agencies reported use of both “generic” and bespoke role descriptions, depending on the nature of the work.

Participants raised concerns about role descriptions being so “bland” that they do not reflect the work performed in the role and deter potential applicants:

“[We] made role descriptions over-generic, because of the ideal of mobility and because we didn’t understand what it meant to embed the Capability Framework. The generic [role descriptions] do not match the roles and ... tell [candidates] nothing about the job. We have tightened up the role descriptions now and made them more descriptive.”

The focus on assessment of capabilities and capability-based assessments means that adequate consideration is not being given to technical and subject matter knowledge requirements to perform a role:

“People tend to see the capabilities as an extra layer in recruitment, rather than as embedded in role accountabilities etc. Is it up to the selection panel to unpack an applicant’s capabilities, or is it up to the applicant?”

Specialised roles and professional standards

Roles that are narrow, specialised and/or in classifications subject to competency or professional standards add complexity to the question of capability assessment for recruitment.

In some cases, it may be possible for the Capability Framework to be used together with competencies or professional requirements. However, frameworks vary in language, construction and intent, and applying a mix of frameworks may create confusion and risk.

Further consideration may be required in relation to whether external competency and professional standards imposed by industrial awards and regulatory bodies should be used in isolation or with the Capability Framework to identify capability requirements for the pre-established standards of a role:

“The Capability Framework gives you a good basis for the more generic roles, but it is more difficult for technical roles. One of the reasons for the Capability Framework is for greater mobility, but mobility is more difficult for a more technical workforce”.

In light of the *Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Act 2016*, frontline service organisations (e.g. in Health and Transport) are seeking more information on how the Capability Framework can be applied in recruitment. This is particularly the case for technical and professional roles where competencies and domain knowledge are important.

Narrow and low-level roles

There are fairly widespread concerns about inclusion of the Capability Framework in the role descriptions of narrow or low-level roles, on the grounds that it is often difficult to demonstrate the relevance of all the capabilities to these roles and the number and language of the capabilities can be intimidating to candidates.

"A waste of money and effort. I can think of something different and more relevant for assessment e.g. when you need to recruit 60 people to come in and answer the phone."

Feedback suggests that adjustment of the GSE Rules to allow for assessment of only focus capabilities and capabilities considered important by the hiring manager at recruitment would address these concerns.

However, consideration should also be given to whether the requirement for a focus capability from the Business Enablers group should be maintained for all roles:

"We have blue collar occupations for which we have to adapt recruitment. It becomes a tick box exercise."

"For [uniformed service officers], the capability is not relevant if it is not there in the Key Accountabilities."

"[The Business Enablers capabilities] might be useful for higher level jobs but it is a real struggle to apply them to jobs such as call centre operators. Entry level jobs in particular do not do "Procurement and Contract Management", "Project Management" and "Finance"."

"It should depend on the role. [Business Enablers capabilities] may be needed for executive roles but it is too much to expect this breadth of capability for low level jobs. "Not applicable" would be a good option: if the Business Enablers are needed for other roles it becomes a matter of development".

Summary

The overwhelming view of discussion group participants was that under the current recruitment guidelines, too many capabilities are being assessed too often, at too great a cost, and with too little demonstrated benefit:

"People are frustrated because there is too much focus on the capabilities in recruitment – what you should actually be assessing for is the key accountabilities of the role."

"We have the problem of getting the wrong person, someone without the necessary technical knowledge and experience."

"The Capability Framework does not work so well for recruitment. We ran a lot of assessment centres – the capability assessments did not relate to performance... There was pushback from hiring managers – the outcomes were wrong".

"We don't want a tick the box approach – there has to be some other way, we want holistic assessment."

"We have great assessment tools, but they are being misused. A general ability test is important. Personality tests can give useful input for managing the person, but not for assessing capabilities."

Some agencies did report positive developments in recruitment practices:

"We have invested very heavily in the recruitment area, and have the appropriate support to assess candidates properly."

"We are trying to draw from candidates more widely, then to do what upskilling is needed to get to the level of competence required for the role."

"Our tools are aligned to the Capability Framework, but managers need to use the tools for performance management and development planning, not just for recruitment. We are moving to alternative assessments that are not just psychometric."

Challenges and Opportunities

Recruitment “accreditation” for HR professionals or specialist masterclasses for hiring managers have been suggested as strategies to improve the quality of recruitment throughout the sector.

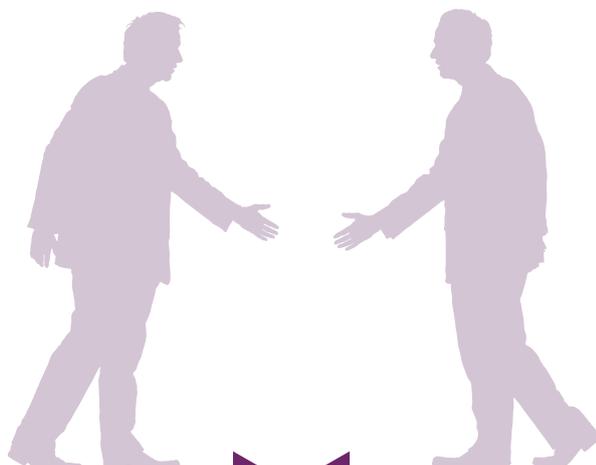
These may go some way to addressing criticisms of recruitment process design. There is a need to translate the strategic picture into something that HR professionals and line managers doing recruitment can understand; focusing more on values and behaviours – how a person has changed a culture, impacted on a policy, introduced a new idea – rather than simply asking knowledge-based questions. Leaders should be encouraged to begin looking at business problems in terms of people: how they can influence behaviours and manage change.

Recruitment to a classification of work (as opposed to a specific role) will remain difficult in the absence of broader strategic workforce planning and generally this is an area where development is needed:

“We are undertaking assessments to meet the [application guidelines and the legislative] obligations, but we don’t really believe we are measuring what is really important. We feel we are fudging things and that is a bad feeling”.

Any specialist accreditation or specialist masterclasses for hiring managers should incorporate training on setting assessment standards and the ratings approach, including workplace adjustments required by candidates. This would address concerns raised with the use of the Capability Framework in recruitment for many people from indigenous and other cultural backgrounds or with learning and other disabilities:

“I really like the Capability Framework and find it very useful. It is flexible and scalable and has the capacity to be used to recruit for almost any job. Staff turnover is high in the area and it allows assessment beyond skills based capabilities. The key challenge is field staff – they generally come from a low level educational background and find the language of the Capability Framework terribly difficult, and intimidating.”



6: The Capability Framework and Performance Management and Learning and Development

Agency Practice

Agencies vary in their uptake of the Capability Framework for performance management and development activities, but feedback is promising:

"We use the Capability Framework for gaps/stretch development, Performance Development Plans, Learning Calendar, discussions with managers regarding transferable skills sets..."

"Some areas [of the organisation] are using the Capability Framework for performance development and in some areas we are talking about succession planning."

"We use it for development angle (what we need to get into particular roles), and put it into performance agreements (what we need in an individual role). The behavioural indicators are generally flexible enough to be applied".

A few participants were of the view that capabilities are not relevant to performance, but attitude shifts were apparent in their organisations:

"It's a bit of an ask to apply it in performance management - most managers track Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) not capabilities. It's the same for development."

"In previous years Performance Development Plans have been KPI driven - big programs, milestones etc. This year the big focus has been on behaviours e.g. enabling collaboration...because of the People Matter Employee Survey results."

Development planning and programs are increasingly being linked to the Capability Framework:

"I hope the Capability Framework is supporting the executive pipeline! We are using it as the foundation for our leadership programs, starting at the executive level then trickling down to 5/6 managers and team leaders."

"[The Agency] has done development guides 70:20:10 for the capabilities. They are still paper-based, but they are something managers and employees can use."

In some cases, agencies have developed their own requirements relating to the Capability Framework, such as agreement on "Commit to Customer Service" as a focus capability for all roles.

This can be an important part of embedding the Capability Framework and making it useful and relevant to the agency and employees, provided there is an appropriate link with work requirements and key accountabilities:

"Some managers cut and paste the capability [behavioural] indicators into the Performance Agreement. This can be traumatic when some [behavioural] indicators do not apply to the job."

"Technical staff are used to ticking boxes. But the Capability Framework becomes a daunting tool if the behavioural indicators are cut and pasted into performance plans, so truck drivers are assessed on writing skills etc."

Line managers are finding the Capability Framework particularly valuable in structuring performance conversations:

"It's a good starting point for difficult discussions... This is a way of setting out expectations and identifying training needs"

"One of the best things has been the conversations- it has opened up discussion not just about current roles but future roles".

"... the behavioural indicators give managers the language to have Performance Development Plan conversations in a non-emotive way."

Development of technical capabilities remains of primary importance for some agencies:

"The Capability Framework is not used for performance development - we need to concentrate on occupation specific capabilities and competency standards."

"Product and domain knowledge are the important thing for performance development - that is the big pain point for the organisation - engineering, service planning, logistics."

Challenges and Opportunities

Stocktake feedback indicates line managers are seeing positive outcomes from using the language of the Capability Framework as a tool for discussing employee performance, recognising employee achievements and clarifying behavioural expectations.

Research undertaken by CEB Inc. has identified holding frequent, informal conversations as one of six imperatives for managers to drive enterprise contribution through performance conversations⁷, and there is considerable untapped potential to use the Capability Framework to encourage these conversations:

"It's timely. Two in three employees expect to learn and develop "just in time," or exactly when they need a particular skill or specific knowledge. Effective coaches quickly diagnose when to intervene for the greatest benefit, from when a project is assigned through to its completion⁸."

Further education is required for managers who currently train staff *"into their role too much"*. Discussion group participants highlighted the scope for learning from other sectors through job shadowing and secondments rather than formal changes of employer.

Similarly, there is a need to reinforce the *"indicative"* nature of the behavioural indicators: it is possible that the misperception that each of the behavioural indicators is a competency that must be achieved has been reinforced by the inclusion of the behavioural indicators for focus capabilities in role descriptions (i.e. the behavioural indicators are interpreted as part of the *pre-established standards* for the role as prescribed by the GSE Rules).

Participants offered positive feedback on the Capability Discovery Tool, and further opportunities for use of the Capability Framework in the performance development space will arise as use of Human Capital Management systems evolves.

⁷ © 2014 CEB Corporate Leadership Council Manager Guide to Conducting Effective Performance Conversations

⁸ How are your coaching conversations really going? © 2017 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates

7: The Capability Framework and Mobility

Part of the vision for the Capability Framework was that it would facilitate at level mobility, and that identical capability configurations may and should be identified between roles to allow employees to be easily deployed where needed across the sector.

To that end, the use of generic, sector role descriptions with fixed capability level configurations, rather than specific individualised role descriptions, has been promoted as a means of maximising sector wide consistency and enabling employee mobility⁹.

However in practical terms, with 16 to 20 capabilities (and, in some cases, occupation specific capabilities), there is no guarantee that an exact capability configuration match will be found between roles at level in different functional areas or in different organisations.

Agencies are also encouraged to review and adjust role descriptions at regular intervals, such as when a vacancy occurs or as part of broader workforce planning, to ensure they are aligned to organisational priorities and to determine whether a different combination of roles at particular classifications is better suited to deliver organisational outputs and outcomes.

Moreover, identical capability levels are no guarantee that an individual's capability is transferable from one role to another. For example, consider what "Communicate effectively" at Adept level would mean for:

- a rape counsellor
- a policy writer
- a contact centre operative

Agency Practice

There is confusion about the mobility legislation and Guidelines, and concerns that requirements to "match" capability configurations or re-assess the capabilities is actually making mobility more difficult:

"There is a big question on capabilities in transfer/mobility. Do the jobs have to match exactly?"

"The capabilities can be a problem for mobility. Business areas are responsible for developing their own role descriptions, and these vary from unit to unit even though they all comply with the Capability Comparison Guide (this is checked by HR for "compliance"). This creates issues for mobility e.g. for excess staff."

"There are mobility issues. The mobility guidelines are contradictory. You need to balance them with making recruitment simpler."

"If a role is Advanced in a capability, does the person have to be re-assessed in the same capability if moving to a job in which the capability level is lower?"

"The capabilities are used for formal recruitment but not for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) which just involve a conversation with the manager. The formal process is avoided because it is too cumbersome".

⁹ PSCC-2014-03 Role Description Development Guideline and Template

Participants were generally more positive about mobility where capabilities were not the key factor in role suitability considerations, but a consideration along with technical knowledge and other attributes such as shared organisational values:

"The capabilities help but are not the key filter for mobility: that is more the roles/accountabilities and the technical requirements."

Mobility for technical and professional roles was considered problematic where specific knowledge requirements were a secondary consideration to capabilities:

"Capabilities are fine for mobility in Senior Executive and support roles, but mobility is a furphy in the technical areas. Even within a technical area like Civil Engineering it takes a long time to build up the significant domain knowledge necessary to do the job."

"The issue came up recently with Senior Executive roles. You can recruit good, experienced people but the question is how long it will take to learn the language. Perhaps there may be paths between branches within specialisations."

"Domain goes beyond education and competencies. Solving problems in Engineering is different from solving problems in Finance."

"For engineers, movement [into leadership roles] means qualifications. The Capability Framework is meaningless for frontline services."

Developing a shared understanding of what the capability levels mean for different organisations across the Public Sector and for different occupational groups is part of the process required to embed the Capability Framework in workforce management activities:

"The language is sometimes meaningless. We specify essentials so that you don't screen people out unnecessarily. We are thinking about how to suggest what is necessary for different levels, agreeing what 'good' means in our organisation."

Recruitment pools are popular and their use is growing, but there is a need to educate staff in their existence and application:

"We use talent pools extensively as the first step before advertising a role. They are fairly successful; there is quite a lot of mobility in that regard. Recruitment sends the Hiring Manager a list of people in the pool...The Hiring manager is responsible for reviewing the list and identifying any they think may be suitable. Recruitment will administer any additional assessments requested by the Hiring Manager..."

"Talent pools only seem to be for your own Department. We don't know how to access other agency talent pools."

"Using talent pools requires a cultural shift. Instead of waiting for a job in which they are interested to come up, employees are encouraged to nominate for a talent pool. [This was a] tough lesson recently for a staff member who was not considered for a long-anticipated vacancy because they were not in the pool."

Challenges and Opportunities

Aside from traditional technical expertise, research undertaken by the University of Birmingham¹⁰ highlights the need for public service employees to also have 'soft skills' or generic skills:

"...Generic skills are becoming as important as professional skills, with 'soft skills' around communication, organisation and caring becoming more highly prized... 'We need people who are really good with people and can form relationships, who are able to learn quickly'."

However, the researchers noted the following caveats:

1. it is unrealistic to expect one individual to be able to span the wide range of skills required:

"...If you try to make everyone good at everything, they end up being bad at everything."

2. embracing soft skills and generic training should not mean that technical knowledge is disregarded. That is, capabilities are not applied in isolation on the job, but in concert with knowledge of subject matter and the organisational/stakeholder environment:

"... 'We discount the importance of experience and professionalism at our peril. It is quite risky to run helter skelter into a view that you can be a generic manager in any service... You need to find a way to reconcile the generic skill base with an understanding of the specific skills of the area you are managing. We have to understand and not undervalue the knowledge base that goes with public sector workers.'

Research in the area of capability and mobility undertaken by Orima Career Management Pty Ltd on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) indicates that expert or 'mastery' stage of broader roles is only achieved after about 4-5 years in a role.

High performing organisations need a mix of these experts and fresh inputs from new staff, for a blend of subject matter knowledge and diversity of thought and sectoral experience.

What is apparent from the Birmingham University research is not so much the distinction between 'hard' specialist knowledge and 'soft' generic skills but the need for multidisciplinary ways of working:

"In the future we won't have structures that are wholly lawyers, HR professionals. People will have to be able to manage across different professional groups..."

I prefer the notion of multi-disciplinarity rather than generic... [When] dealing with someone living in appalling conditions then we take a view about the whole person. But if I am then asked to assess whether the person has capacity under the Mental Health Act that's not something you can just do without having skills, experience or training... The more you can build the workforce around localities then we don't need to necessarily be generic workers but the way our team know our local police team and children's services team that's how we collaboratively solve problems."

Agencies should be encouraged to take a more 'curated' approach to mobility activities, identifying specialised roles that would benefit from longer appointments to build expertise and corporate knowledge, and developing strategies to manage and maintain knowledge.

Well-defined capability development objectives should be set for any secondment or assignment, consistent with the home agency's strategic workforce plan and organisational needs.

¹⁰ *The 21st Century Public Servant*, Catherine Needham and Catherine Mangan, University of Birmingham 2014

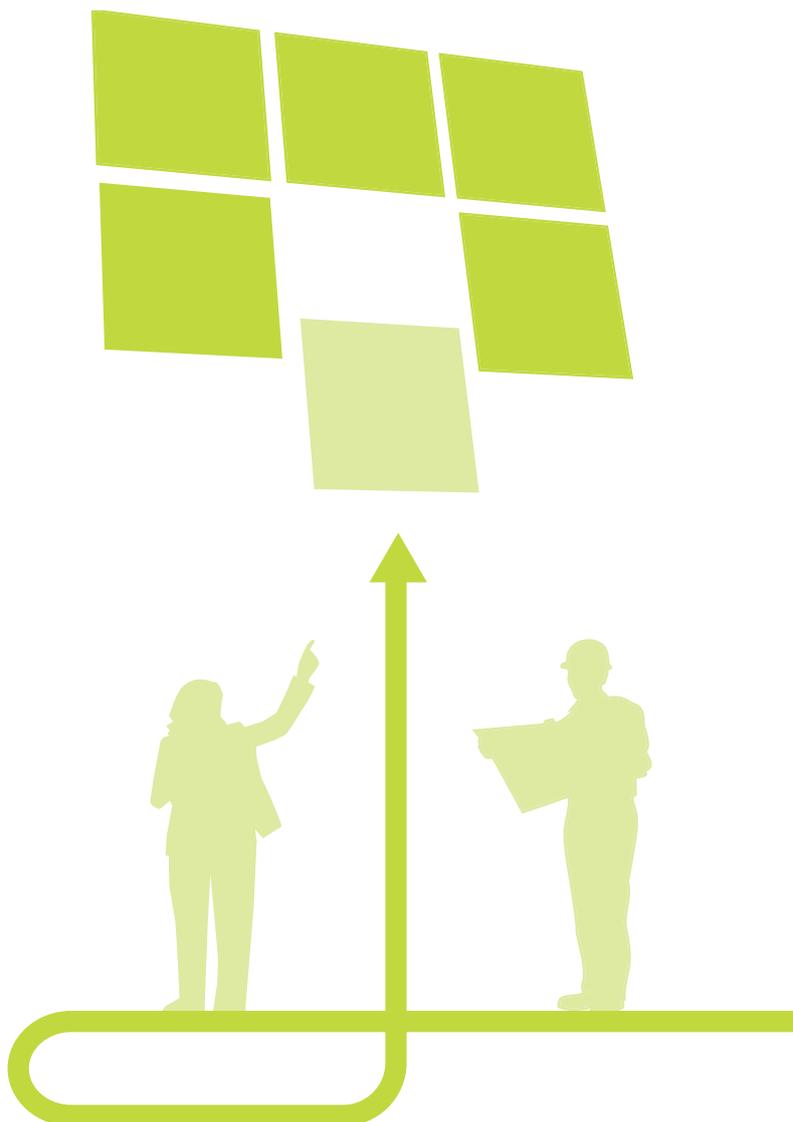
8: The Capability Framework and Workforce Planning

Few agencies appear to be using the Capability Framework in workforce planning, except as required in the operational areas of assignment to role, transfers and secondments.

The PSC's draft Strategic Workforce Planning Framework includes an analysis of current and future organisational and workforce capability needs, in the broader terms of labour types and external market trends. It does not deal with the micro detail of individual employee capability levels.

Going forward, there will be a need for agencies to carefully consider capability requirements of employees in classifications of work broadly: specialised roles that would benefit from longer appointments to build expertise and corporate knowledge should be differentiated from generalist roles where relational skills and more entrepreneurial ways of working will be required.

In some instances, agencies will need to join the dots for their employees as to what they are trying to achieve: more flexible, adaptable – more human – public services.



9: The Occupation Specific Capability Sets

Public Service Commission Guidelines

The Capability Framework was designed to be used in conjunction with more specialised occupation-specific capability sets where required, to provide a holistic picture of the knowledge, skills and abilities required for each role.

The Public Service Commission, in partnership with sector leadership groups and subject matter experts, developed the following occupation specific capability sets in direct response to the recommendations made in the 2012 NSW Government Commission of Audit Interim Report:

- Finance Professionals Capability Set (published 2015)
- Procurement Professionals Capability Set (published 2015)
- Human Resources Professionals Capability Set (published 2016)

In particular, the Schott Interim Report recommended that the Public Service Commissioner:

“develop a program to increase the skills of the professional corporate support groups – people in finance, human resource and asset management throughout the sector”.

The PSC conducted internal, and commissioned external, research to supplement the Schott Interim Report. This research considered best practice approaches in other jurisdictions and formed the basis of the options identified as part of the recommended skills development program.

The PSC involved the public sector in working groups to prioritise these options and develop specific initiatives – including development of occupation specific capability sets – and obtained endorsement from Agency Heads at the Secretaries Board and the former Senior Management Council.

The Schott Interim Report also identified effective use and quality of information and communication technology (ICT) as a key management practice deployed by high performing workplaces. For this reason, and as part of the ICT Strategy launched by the NSW Government in May 2012, the ICT

and Digital Leadership Group selected the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIA), an external framework developed by the UK-based SFIA Foundation, as the occupation specific capability set for NSW public sector ICT professionals.

More recently, in conjunction with the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry into the future of law and innovation in the legal profession by the NSW Law Society, the NSW public sector General Counsel Group partnered with the Public Service Commission to develop a Legal Professionals Capability Set which was published in 2017.

Agencies also use occupation specific capability sets that have been internally developed to meet local needs (such as Health Service Planning, Engineering), or access externally developed frameworks, for example, cross-jurisdictional standards or those offered by professional associations.

In instances where occupation specific capabilities overlap with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework, agencies have been encouraged to prefer the Capability Framework capabilities to maximise consistency across the sector.

The PSC provides some general advice on use of occupation specific capability sets on the PSC website, which differs from the guidelines for application of the Capability Framework in that:

- it is not intended that roles will require all capabilities from an occupation specific capability set: as a general guide, most roles would be expected to require in the range of 3-5 occupation specific capabilities (in addition to the core capabilities from the Capability Framework)
- the person who performs a role may possess other occupation specific capabilities not included in the role description; however, the pre-established standards for the role set out in the role description should include only the occupation specific capabilities that are fundamentally important for effective performance of the role
- it is indicated that the most senior roles will usually not require occupation specific capabilities.

A number of sector role descriptions have been developed and published in the PSC Sector Role Description Library to support application of the occupation specific capability sets, including ICT sector role descriptions incorporating SFIA skills and procurement sector role descriptions incorporating Procurement Professionals Capability Set capabilities.

Agency Practice

The Agency Survey

The 2016 Agency Survey reported the following usage of the Capability Framework and occupation specific capability sets by agencies:

- Capability Framework 87%
- ICT (SFIA) 37%
- Finance Professionals 32%
- Procurement Professionals 18%

The occupation specific capability sets are generally well regarded:

“The occupation specific capability sets are very useful because role descriptions are so generic. It is important to ensure that the specialist areas can recruit, manage performance, etc. The sets reflect their needs.”

“The occupation specific capability sets are useful, as they allow a manager to “drill down” on expertise needed to perform a role.”

“Not enough is made of the occupation specific capability sets– e.g. in the past people had to have a number of vocational qualifications. We need to guard quality in industry specific areas.”

However, the responses to the different occupation specific capability sets vary: SFIA (the ICT set), for example, is regarded as difficult by HR professionals, but is well understood by ICT professionals:

“Finance and Procurement are very popular with the technical groups.”

“The business areas – ICT, finance, procurement – see benefit in using the occupation specific capability sets – HR not so much.”

“The occupation specific capability sets are okay, but SFIA is “too difficult” – we need someone to explain it.”

“We are not using them in our roles, but we are now building an ICT function and finding SFIA very difficult.”

“ICT recently restructured and they are using only the sector role descriptions with minor tweaks. SFIA is overwhelming on first sight, but the technical people got it and had no trouble identifying which role descriptions and capabilities apply. It comes down to the work.”

Adoption of the occupation specific capability sets is inhibited by the already large number of capabilities to be assessed at recruitment and uncertainties regarding the guidelines for application of occupation specific capability sets.

“The only difficulty is assessing such a lot of capabilities – why not assess only the focus capabilities?”

“The occupation specific capability sets are daunting for people in recruitment: they look like another layer to be assessed. They may be more useful in performance management.”

“Occupation specific capability sets not being used for recruitment, because of uncertainty regarding how they should be applied in role descriptions and assessed.”

Participants have some concerns about the occupation specific capability sets limiting mobility. For this reason, many agencies are using the occupation specific capabilities only for roles at grade 7/8 and above.

"We are applying the Finance Occupation Specific Capability Set only to 7/8s and above."

"Roles at 7/8 to 11/12 in Finance need specific occupational capabilities."

"[The agency] does not drop the occupation specific capability sets into role descriptions until the role really requires them usually from 5/6 or 7/8 level. This leaves the lower levels free to migrate."

"There is some concern that the occupation specific capabilities will limit mobility. For example, some people can transfer from quite different fields like nursing into HR. This applies particularly at lower level roles."

A number of agencies are using technical or professional frameworks, and some have developed agency-specific capabilities or competencies.

"The units of competency in the national framework align to the first 12 capabilities in the Capability Framework. These units take you to Certificate 3... So we are already assessing these capabilities."

"We looked at the ASA standards/framework and aligned our [professional skills] framework to it. It has generic statements like the Capability Framework."

"The occupation specific capability sets are not much use – ours will sit under it and be more about our own technical stuff... The Safety Regulator only wants to know that you have a competency framework and assurance. In a safety critical environment, the question is 'are they competent?' not 'are they capable?'"

"We thought we'd develop a Service Planning occupation specific capability set, but have instead developed competency standards for [a specific area]."

Challenges and Opportunities

Both transferable capabilities and technical subject matter knowledge may be required to effectively perform a role. Inconsistencies between occupation specific capability sets means that questions have arisen regarding the "transferability" of occupation specific capabilities and their interplay with technical knowledge requirements.

Technical knowledge requirements may be captured in the "Essential requirements" section of a role description. However, where technical knowledge requirements were not included in a role description and only occupation specific capabilities were used, line managers reported that roles were often too generic and applicants were not appropriately suited to the role.

Discussion group participants asked for further advice on application of the occupation specific capability sets, and particularly about the distinction between "soft" transferable capabilities and "hard" subject matter knowledge:

"The occupation specific capability sets are opposite to the Capability Framework Comparison Guide. The Senior Executive are at the top end of the generic capabilities, but it is not the same for the occupation specific capability sets."

"Are the occupation specific capabilities mandatory? Is a focus capability required?"

10: Appendices

APPENDIX 1

Capability Framework Stocktake discussion groups and participants

Groups

Total Groups	13
HR	6
Line Manager	4
Combined HR & Line Manager (LM)	3

Participants

Agency/Cluster	Total	HR	Line Managers	Type of Group
Justice	10	6	4	Separate groups
Education	6	3	3	Combined
Health (Ministry)	3	3	Nil	Separate
Industry	6	4	2	Combined
OEH	20	10	10	Separate
TAFE	11	11	Nil	HR only - little LM experience as rollout commenced only recently
DFSI	11 (+2 in combined group)	5	6 (+2 in combined group)	Separate
TfNSW	11	5	6	Separate
Mixed agencies group • FACS 1 - HR • DFSI - 2 LMs • Treasury - 1 LM, 1 HR • MOH - 1 LM	6	2	4	Mixed agencies, mixed HR & Line Manager
DPC				Did not participate due to project overload
Total participants	84	49	35	

Written comments were received from some individuals and agency groups.

Structured interviews were held with representatives of specialised agencies/units including:

- ICARE
- Commissioning & Contestability Unit Treasury
- Digital Transformation DFSI
- APSC Digital Transformation (Capability Development)
- The PSC (Leadership and Talent Branch)

APPENDIX 2

Sample Discussion Paper for HR Professionals and Line Managers

Focus questions: What changes are needed? What are some possible solutions?
What tools and resources are needed?

Element	Lead Question	Lines of Enquiry/Indicators
Usage	<p>The Agency Survey indicates that 87% of all public sector agencies are using the Capability Framework, primarily for recruitment (78%) and development planning (66%).</p> <p>Application is lower for the other areas of workforce management, such as employee mobility and succession planning.</p> <p>How do you apply the Capability Framework in your organisation?</p>	<p>Is the Capability Framework being applied to all occupational groups and roles in your organisation?</p> <p>Does the Capability Framework cover all of the (non-specialised) transferable capabilities required across your agency?</p> <p>Is the Capability Framework being used across all workforce management activities?</p> <p>As HR professionals and line managers, have your own perceptions of the Capability Framework changed since its introduction? How would you sum up your perceptions and use of it now?</p>
Usability	<p>How easy is it for employees to understand the Capability Framework?</p>	<p>Is it difficult for you to explain the structure of the Capability Framework and how the capabilities are grouped together to employees?</p> <p>Do you perceive any areas of overlap between the capabilities? What are they?</p> <p>Do you think there is too much content in some of the capabilities, and they should be separated out? If so, which ones?</p> <p>Do agency users understand that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Capability Framework is designed to be used very flexibly to reflect the capability needs of the role? - the levels in the Capability Framework do not relate directly to role classification/grade? <p>How confident are role description writers in assigning capability levels for a role?</p> <p>Does your agency make use of the Capability Comparison Guide in developing role descriptions? If yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how valuable do you find this? - how strictly is it applied - do you allow role description writers to go outside the Guide in assigning capability levels?

Element	Lead Question	Lines of Enquiry/Indicators
	<p>How useful do you find the Capability Framework for assessing, managing and developing the capability of employees in your organisation?</p>	<p>Is the Capability Framework being used as a useful tool in performance discussions?</p> <p>Does the Capability Framework help employees to understand the key accountabilities of their role, and what is expected of them?</p> <p>Does the Capability Framework help employees to create a development plan?</p> <p>Have you used the Capability Framework to consider mobility mechanisms and career pathways for employees in your organisation?</p> <p>Are there any capabilities that you don't think apply to all roles? Why?</p>
<p>Clarity and robustness of the Behavioural Indicators</p>	<p>The capability levels are described by examples of behaviours.</p> <p>Overall, how well do the behavioural indicators express capability requirements?</p> <p>Do the indicative behavioural indicators give you adequate flexibility in describing the capability required to perform individual roles?</p>	<p>Are the behavioural indicators simple and relatable?</p> <p>Is the language appropriate for both public service and frontline service agencies?</p> <p>Do behavioural indicators at each level resonate with the intended audience?</p> <p>Do you find that most of the behaviours apply to roles within your organisation, or are the majority not relevant?</p> <p>The behaviours are meant to become progressively more complex or sophisticated as the levels increase. Are the levels right for roles within your organisation, or do only some of the behaviours "fit"?</p> <p>What behaviours are missing from capabilities, if any?</p> <p>What capabilities need some adjustment to incorporate behaviours that are not currently addressed?</p>
<p>Coverage of Senior Executives and roles below Senior Executive level</p>	<p>The Capability Framework integrates leadership behaviours throughout (in terms such as setting vision, leading, modelling, championing etc.)</p> <p>Does the single Capability Framework work for both Senior Executive and non-executive roles, and support a development pipeline?</p> <p>Does the Capability Framework adequately describe capabilities required of the executive cohort?</p>	<p>The flexible design of the Capability Framework is intended to allow both senior executive and non-executive roles to require capabilities at Advanced and Highly Advanced level. How effective is this design in supporting the development pipeline through the non-executive grades and into executive roles?</p> <p>Is the language of the higher level behavioural indicators right for the executive cohort, as well as non-executive roles?</p>

Element	Lead Question	Lines of Enquiry/Indicators
<p>Future proofing</p>	<p>The current Premier has committed to the former Premier’s 12 key priorities that will make NSW an even better place to live and work for all, grouped into the following areas: strong budget and economy; building infrastructure; protecting the vulnerable; better services; safer communities.</p> <p>Can you think of any trends or developments that may have an impact on employee capability needs over the next three years?</p>	<p>Are there any trends or initiatives (social, political, technological, demographic or workforce), which you believe will impact public sector capability needs over the next 1-3 years?</p> <p>What trends or initiatives may impact the capability needs of your own agency?</p> <p>The NSW public sector needs the right mix of capabilities to achieve policy priorities. Do the behavioural indicators for the capabilities in the Capability Framework currently satisfy this need?</p> <p>Common themes on the future of public sector work include co-design, digitisation and innovation. Are the behaviours required to apply capabilities in these areas adequately captured in the Capability Framework?</p>
<p>Occupation specific capability sets</p>	<p>Specialised capability sets have been developed for employees in Finance, Procurement and HR, and the ICT function has adopted the Skills for the Information Age (SFIA Framework) for ICT roles.</p> <p>A capability set for Legal Professionals is on the way, and agencies are developing capabilities for agency-specific specialist groups. For example, Transport is developing an Engineering Professionals capability set.</p>	<p>What is your agency using occupation specific capability sets for, if anything?</p> <p>How are these capability sets being applied?</p> <p>What is the value of these supplementary capability sets for agencies? How involved are the specific occupational areas in their use?</p> <p>Who determines which of the capabilities apply to a role, and at what level? The line manager? HR? Both?</p> <p>Requests keep coming in for new sets: should the range be allowed to continue to expand, or is this a problem from an agency HR perspective?</p> <p>Has your agency considered developing a capability set or sets for specialised capabilities required by your employees?</p>

Element	Lead Question	Lines of Enquiry/Indicators
<p>Other tools and resources</p>	<p>The PSC has developed a range of tools and resources such as the Role Description Builder, the Sector Role Description Library, and the Capability Discovery Tool.</p> <p>Capability Framework user guides are being developed for employees, managers and jobseekers, to explain - in plain English - that the Capability Framework is not simply an HR tool but a useful resource for everyone and key actions they can take to use it.</p>	<p>Overall, what do you think of the resources developed to date?</p> <p>Can you think of other resources and tools that would assist staff?</p> <p>What other resources would assist you as HR professionals and line managers in using the Capability Framework and promoting its use among line managers, employees and jobseekers?</p> <p>Do HR professionals consider the PSC website the go-to place for resources to support the Capability Framework?</p> <p>Do line managers consider the PSC website the go-to place for resources to support the Capability Framework, or do they expect to find what they need on their agency website/HCM system?</p> <p>Would you expect employees to access the PSC resources for the Capability Framework, or prefer them to use your agency intranet website/HCM system for more contextualised resources?</p>
<p>Other comments/suggestions</p>	<p>Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the Capability Framework?</p>	

APPENDIX 3

Detailed record of feedback on the content of the Capabilities

The group briefly discussed each of the capability groups and key emerging capability needs. Overall, participants were satisfied with the content, and made relatively few recommendations for change. A detailed record of comments/suggestions follows. (Keynotes have been listed in Section 4: Fine-Tuning and Future-Proofing the Content).

Capability Group: Personal Attributes

Significance of the Personal Attributes

The Personal Attributes were generally considered to be very important for the public sector:

“There is an argument that all these capabilities should be focus – they are core to PS work and not role-defined. Tend to pick Manage Self or Resilience as focus capabilities; Value Diversity and Acts with Integrity are probably more value once employed.”

“The Personal Attributes are core-baseline. They could be rolled into one capability.”

“This group is not an issue. The capabilities are broad and you can always pull something in for recruitment. They are built on a holistic view of a person, and it would take us backward if they were omitted from recruitment.”

“Manage Self, Display Resilience etc. – these are huge, with change etc.”

“Values should be front and centre on the PSC website – they used to be, but they are not there now.”

A contrary view

“The Personal Attributes are “nice to haves”. Integrity is really yes or no. At the executive level what really matters is that you meet your KPIs – that also is yes or no.”

Of the capabilities in this group, Manage Self and Display Resilience and Courage appear to be the most commonly selected as focus capabilities, but one Agency requires Acts with Integrity to be a focus for all roles.

Participants responded strongly to suggestions that the capabilities are “soft” or unnecessary.

A Line Manager Exchange

“I think some of the capabilities – the Personal Attributes – are soft.”

“Disagree. These are the expected values and behaviours in the public sector and we’ve put people out the door on the basis of them.”

“You need to have those soft skills e.g. Act with Integrity comes into play when talking to managers about conflict of interest.”

Participants also rejected the suggestion that they could be adequately covered in a Code of Conduct.

“The Personal Attributes would not be adequately covered just in a Code of Conduct. Including them in the CF gives the manager opportunities to reflect on these attributes and assess them.”

“The Code of Conduct does not give you the richness that the capabilities do.”

“We do look for Manage Self etc. at recruitment – not covered by Codes of Conduct.”

Assessment of the Personal Attributes generated some discussion and difference of opinion.

“Some are hard to assess, others not.”

“Need some model advice for managers on assessing personal attributes – they can do it incidentally through other questions.”

“In many cases picked Resilience and Courage as the focus – this is the type of person we wanted. The rest of the Personal Attributes are covered by background checks.”

“Assessment is tricky – how do you prove resilience and courage? Similarly for Act with Integrity – people struggle to formulate a question.”

“Panels should be able to make a judgement on these capabilities without asking explicit questions about them.”

“Assessing these capabilities is not really an issue.”

Fine tuning the content of the Personal Attributes

In discussing these capabilities individually, there were a few minor suggestions for fine-tuning or adding to the behavioural indicators.

The content of Values Diversity was discussed in some depth, particularly in the context of raising cultural competence, but for the most part participants felt that the capability is adequate and should remain broad:

“Working with a multi-ethnic frontline group recently, we looked at the Behavioural Indicators for Diversity in depth, and felt that the word “diverse” covers all. Values Diversity is nice as it is – it covers diversity well.”

“Keep Value Diversity generic – can make it relevant to the role. Easier to manage [than] more specific [indicators]”

“No, cannot call out specific groups.”

“Diversity and Customer service are a huge focus for all ... agencies, with lots of customer/engagement programs – even a qualification in it. Not a gap.”

“You can read the Value Diversity indicators as applying internally or externally.”

“As the capability gets higher it tends to focus on workforce –at the Foundation and Intermediate levels the indicators are very broad. As you are going up you carry that breadth with you. Could amend the definition to read ‘within and outside the organisation’, but I’m surprised it is necessary.”

“We have other programs/ways to encourage diversity – training etc.. Need to be clever about how to make Diversity relevant to the customer and the role.”

A contrary view

“Value Diversity is a bit wet – better at the top end.”

Capability Group: Relationships

Participants generally had little to say about the capabilities in this group, but *Work Collaboratively* and *Commit to Customer Service* generated some discussion and suggestions for fine-tuning.

Communicate Effectively

INS provided a detailed critique with suggested edits for this capability which will be considered in updating the indicators.

Work Collaboratively

“This is a favourite capability. The title says it all. There is no need to bring external collaboration in earlier – it is a theme cutting across the capability.”

“Collaboration is focused on clerical. There needs to be more in it about collaboration with externals, at Foundational and Intermediate level, not just Advanced. For example, our Work Health and Safety people collaborating with fisheries and divers; mine inspectors.”

“Include a specific indicator about ‘leveraging digital channels’”

Customer Service

“Our customer service ratings are astronomical – over 90%. There has been a real cultural shift. But we have a long way to go internally.”

“(The Agency) is very outward-focused on Customer service. However, PMES results show that we are not too kind to our own people.”

“Modify indicators to reinforce human centred design principles in the creation and delivery of services.”

“Customer Service should use the language of customer experience.”

“When we put staff in the position of writing down anything about the user experience we found they froze – they weren’t used to doing that.”

And a contrary view

“No need for ‘customer experience’ language: customer experience isn’t an action. ‘Customer-centric’ covers it.”

Capability Group: Results

There was very little comment on the content of the capabilities in the Results group.

Think and Solve Problems

“This capability is changing so rapidly as we move into the digital and connected age, and competition is fierce! Include specific indicators about ‘innovation/design thinking/navigating complexity & ambiguity/human centred design/connecting & leveraging digital channels’.” (a written comment)

“Where does innovation fit in the Framework? In Results? It’s not just about Technology. The ICT Strategy role descriptions contain language around strategic thinking/innovation that should be incorporated into the Framework e.g. at Thinks and Solves Problems. Incorporating something is a signal to the sector.” (comment in a special-interest group discussion)

Deliver Results

“There could be more emphasis on productivity improvement, continuous improvement in Delivers Results e.g. watching out for opportunities to do things better, more efficiently.”

“Could include references to decision making ... but people look for it anyway when interviewing.”

“There could be small tweaks of evidence-based decision-making”

Capability Group: Business Enablers

The Business Enabler Group consists of:

- Finance
- Technology
- Procurement and Contract Management
- Project Management

The inclusion of this group in the Capability Framework was strongly questioned by Stocktake participants, primarily on the grounds of relevance and equity.

Why the Business Enablers have been included in the Capability Framework

The key drivers for the decision to include the Business Enabler capabilities in the Capability Framework and apply them to all roles in the sector were:

- the 2012 Commission of Audit recommendation that the Public Service Commission should develop specific cross-sector workforce strategies to strengthen the sector's capabilities in strategic financial management, project management and management of third party delivery contracts
- a number of government strategies which were in their early stages, including the
 - Financial Management Transformation, with Treasury keen (in early discussions) to build the finance capability of non-finance professionals
 - Contestability and commissioning of public services, which was subject of various reports
 - The NSW Government ICT Strategy 2012 which identified building agency procurement capability, including contract and supplier management skills, as a key focus and also made a commitment (co-authored by the PSC) to enhance the Capability Framework to incorporate ICT skills and knowledge

Inclusion of the Business Enablers was not without controversy

Sector representatives who contributed to the development of the Business Enabler capabilities were divided on whether they should apply to all roles. Efforts were made to write the behavioural indicators so that at a minimum, the foundational level would apply to all roles.

A behavioural indicator around *seeking out specialised advice* when required was included in each of the Business Enabler capabilities, at Adept and/or Advanced level, to address reported concerns that including this set of four capabilities 'for all' may promote the view that non-subject matter experts can take on specialised roles, resulting in associated risk. These indicators aim to capture the concept of knowing enough about a particular subject area to realise when specialist intervention is needed.

Five years on

Stocktake participants questioned the value of this group of capabilities, not so much because of the content of the individual capabilities but because of the policy requirement to apply them to all roles and to assess them on recruitment.

The rationale for their inclusion was understood, but the tenor of discussions is captured by the following comments:

"...understand why the business enablers have been included in the core Capability Framework, but they do not seem important for some roles e.g. policy roles, and Procurement and Contract Management in particular is difficult to assess. The result is that managers will "tick and flick" these capabilities during assessment."

"On the basis of four years' experience, are the Business Enablers group of capabilities increasing capability across the sector? Now that we have the OSCS, do we need the Business Enablers group of capabilities?"

“The Business Enablers are not all applicable to all roles. What is the point of raising the base – Foundational – level of these capabilities?”

“These might be useful for higher level jobs but it is a real struggle to apply them to jobs such as call centre operators. Entry level jobs in particular do not do Procurement and Contract Management, Project Management and Finance.”

“It should depend on the role. They may be needed for Executive roles but it is too much to expect this breadth of capability for low level jobs. “Not applicable” would be a good option: if the Business Enabler is needed for other roles it becomes a matter of development.”

“The Business Enablers are a particular problem. They are generally, but not always, superfluous. It comes down to how we weight it – tick a box.”

“All four are very good for performance development and career planning etc.. I wouldn't like to take them out although they are awkward in recruitment.”

Participants discussed how these capabilities should be approached in future:

- There was general agreement that Technology will continue to grow in importance and apply to an ever-widening range of roles. For this reason it should remain part of the core Capability Framework.
- There was less agreement on which – if any – of the other Business Enablers should remain part of the core. Some participants felt that the case could be argued for Finance, few would argue for Procurement and Contract Management.
- Opinion was divided on whether the Business Enablers should become optional like the People Management group of capabilities i.e. included at the discretion of the hiring manager if relevant to the role. Further, if the group becomes optional, should it be on

the basis of “all in or all out” or could the capabilities be considered individually.

- The difficulty in assessing these capabilities at recruitment was a major concern, particularly in relation to candidates from outside the public sector. There was widespread support for the suggestion that there be no requirement to designate a “focus” capability for this group. This would resolve the recruitment issue if PSC policy changes to require assessment of focus capabilities only.

Content of the Business Enablers

There were a few comments on the content of these capabilities:

“Disappointed with the Project Management descriptors, which are very vanilla. There has been some talk about the development of a Project Management OCS.”

“Project Management doesn't cover off even ordinary project management roles, let alone specialised Project Managers. It is a whole lot of words that don't speak to project managers – it is not useful for performance development.”

“Technology . When I try to create questions from this capability I cannot. Too basic, too specific, and statements like ‘apply computer applications’ are dated.”

Capability Group: People Management

This group of capabilities appears to be well accepted. There were some suggestions for changes to the capabilities in the group, but the only capability to generate any real discussion was Optimise Business Outcomes.

"The first two [People Management capabilities] are about managing people, the second two about leadership. There are few questions about Manage and Develop People. Cannot see what Optimise Business Outcomes does – it is just about using what you've got."

"No one ever understands what workforce planning is. Hiring managers think it is about process, not organisational leadership."

"Optimise Business Outcomes – include specific indicators about 'strategic/forward thinking and strategic decision making (including leveraging D&A)'"

"Inspire Direction and Purpose is most directly related to leadership. Should have descriptions of what good leadership is, like 'morale building', 'team building'."

"People Management needs to include reference to remote, intergenerational, geographically dispersed workforces."

"There is the broader issue of virtual teams/ remote teams. Adaptation to these needs to be more overt in People Management."

"Should be clarified that only roles that supervise others would then have the People Management capability group. If not, where do others fit in? This needs to be clarified." (Written comment)

"There is no real training for managers – all the training is in leadership, not practical management."

INS Feedback on the Capability Framework – letter from Sophia Symeou, Chief Executive Officer

Over the last 18 months, working with FACS and the sector as a whole, INS have designed and completed over 350 capability assessments, reviewed 2000+ Role Descriptions and supported employees to submit approximately 1000 applications for roles across the NSW Public Sector. Through this experience, INS have gained insight into the practical application of the NSW Capability

Framework and have provided some preliminary feedback for your review.

- The Capabilities are designed to be objective, transferable and fluid. From our experience, it is highly valuable to be able to assess capabilities that are clearly core to the success of the various roles.
- *Definition of capability – Capabilities are the knowledge, skills and abilities required by public sector employees to perform their roles efficiently and effectively.* The capabilities, however, also include qualities, values and attributes such as "take pride in their achievement" as part of Manage Self at the Advanced level.
- The framework is set up as if the capabilities are discrete, but as we know, they naturally overlap. The problem is not with the overlap but the expectation they are mutually exclusive.
- 'Display Resilience and Courage', and 'Manage Self':
 - These capabilities seem to have more than the usual overlap. A suggestion would be to combine them into one, stronger capability.
- 'Communicate Effectively':
 - Communicating effectively is inherent in and foundational to demonstrating all capabilities. However, 'Communicate Effectively' often isn't listed in role descriptions, even where communication is clearly significant to the role. A suggestion is that 'Communicate Effectively' could be included in most roles.
 - In addition, 'Communicate Effectively' does not include any reference to the skill of reading, comprehending and communicating written information (level dependent). Core macro skills in communication are: speaking and writing (productive skills) and listening and reading (receptive skills). Currently, Communicate Effectively is only accommodating 75% of language macro skills.
- The higher up you go in the levels, the more the behavioural indicators become more

theoretical/big picture and almost lose the heart of the capability.

- For instance, in ‘Working Collaboratively’ the higher behavioural indicators seem less about actually collaborating with others and more about getting others to collaborate (e.g., Adept – Encourage a culture of recognising the value of collaboration). There is no clear indication of their personal capacity to perform the core/descriptor of the capability. A suggestion would be to include both.
- ‘Act with Integrity’ is a better example of where there is still an expectation for the employee to master the capability as they progress through the levels in addition to supporting the behaviour/capability in others (e.g. Advanced – Model the highest standards of ethical behaviour and reinforce them in others).
- Some behavioural indicators are more representative and indicative of the levels, and others are poorly differentiated and are pretty much the same at any level:
 - e.g. ‘Manage Self’ Intermediate – Maintain own motivation when tasks become difficult; Adept – Demonstrate a high level of personal motivation; Advanced – Maintain a high level of motivation. They all say the same thing.
 - Another example is ‘Communicating Effectively’ – Foundational – Display active listening; Intermediate – Listen to others when they are speaking and ask appropriate respectful questions; Adept – Actively listen to others and clarify own understanding; Advanced – actively listen and encourage others to contribute inputs; Highly advanced – Actively listen, and identify ways to ensure all have an opportunity to contribute. Active listening is a complex concept and behavioural set and naturally includes all the complexity added at the additional levels. In essence, it is the same at every level.
- ‘Technology’:
 - One of the behavioural indicators for Intermediate: “Apply practical skills in the use of relevant technology” would be

more appropriate at the Foundational level that currently has “Display familiarity and confidence in the use of core office software applications or other technology used in role”.

- Although they are designed to provide uniformity across all grades and levels, the capability levels relate inconsistently to clerk grade levels for agencies across the sector:
 - For instance, some 9/10 roles have an even spread between Intermediate and Adept capabilities and other roles at the same level are more solidly at Adept level and also have some Advanced capabilities.
 - For some capabilities, the levels jump significantly in competency, for instance, ‘Project Management’ – Intermediate to Adept is a significant jump.
- In some role descriptions, the focus capabilities appear to be incompatible with the primary purpose of the role:
 - For instance, for Operations Leader 7/8, the primary purpose includes providing support and real-time management of contact centre staff and handling escalated calls. ‘Communicate Effectively’ is only a non-focus capability and ‘Manage and Develop People’ is not listed at all.
- Some capabilities are ambiguous and difficult to interpret, for instance, ‘Plan and Prioritise’ is quite generic. The occupation/professional specific capability sets are much more specific, and in some ways potentially easier to assess.

We are happy to expand on our insights as required and are keen to be a part of the ongoing conversation around the framework.

INS want to see the successful implementation of the framework, as it was intended, and look forward to supporting PSC and the NSW Public Sector in achieving this.

Sincerely yours



Sophia Symeou
Chief Executive Officer

INS Recommended Amendments to *Communicate Effectively* Capability



COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY

Communicate clearly, actively listen to others and respond with respect

Foundational	Intermediate	Adept	Advanced	Highly Advanced
<p>Speak at the right pace and volume for varied audiences</p> <p>Explain straightforward information clearly</p> <p>Allow others time to speak</p> <p>Listen to comprehend and act on basic information</p> <p>Be aware of and respond appropriately to other people's body language and facial expressions</p> <p>Read to comprehend and act on basic information</p> <p>Write in a way that is logical and easy to follow</p>	<p>Focus on key points and speak in 'Plain English'</p> <p>Clearly explain and present ideas and arguments</p> <p>Communicate routine technical information clearly</p> <p>Listen with interest to understand and value another's perspective</p> <p>Be aware of and respond appropriately to your own and others' body language and facial expressions</p> <p>Read information for the key points and apply understanding</p> <p>Prepare written material that is well structured and easy to follow by the intended audience</p>	<p>Tailor communication to the audience to achieve rapport, mutual understanding and buy-in</p> <p>Clearly explain complex concepts and arguments to individuals and groups</p> <p>State the facts and rationale and explain implications for the organisation and key stakeholders</p> <p>Create opportunities for others to be heard</p> <p>Listen with interest to understand, value and learn from multiple perspectives</p> <p>Ensure congruence between your message, tone of voice and body language</p> <p>Read complex information, identify key points, make</p>	<p>Present with credibility, adjust communication style and test levels of understanding, to optimise outcomes</p> <p>Speak in a highly articulate and influential manner</p> <p>Translate technical, complex and/or sensitive information concisely for diverse audiences</p> <p>Take salient points from complex and diverse informational sources; notice patterns, themes and correlations; draw valid conclusions; and communicate simply</p> <p>Create opportunities for diverse views to be expressed, when there is conflict, uncertainty and pressure</p>	<p>Promote the organisation's position with authority and credibility cross-government, cross-jurisdictionally and outside of government</p> <p>Speak in a highly articulate and influential manner to all levels and types of audiences across and outside government</p> <p>Anticipate and address key areas of interest and adapt style under pressure, with audiences across and outside government</p> <p>Take salient points from complex and diverse informational sources; notice patterns, themes and correlations; draw valid conclusions; and communicate simply across and outside government</p>

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Legend:

Black: Existing text

Blue/Teal: Recommended changes

Capability Framework Stocktake

Questions for discussion by Digital Government Working Group members – Information and Data Policy team response

The NSW Public Sector Capability Framework describes the transferable capabilities required by individuals in every role in the public sector, from manual worker to technical expert, and from entry level worker to Secretary/Agency and Functional head.

With this in mind, please consider the following questions:

Topic	Lead Question
“Commit to Customer Service” (Relationships group)	<p>Does the <i>Commit to Customer Service</i> capability adequately capture the responsive, customer-centric behaviours required across the sector for smart, simple and seamless service delivery in a digital government environment?</p> <p>Yes</p>
“Deliver Results” (Results group)	<p>Does the <i>Deliver Results</i> capability provide an adequate picture of the delivery capability required of all public sector employees to operate in a digital service environment and support agile ways of working?</p> <p>Advanced and Highly Advanced level descriptors do not reference the collaborative approaches that are required to deliver results in a digital service environment.</p> <p>Suggested behavioural indicator addition to Advanced level descriptor: ‘Seek to collaborate with all internal and external stakeholders to develop robust solutions that meet a diversity of needs and deliver quality benefits and outcomes.’</p> <p>Suggested behavioural indicator addition to Highly Advanced level descriptor: ‘Build a culture of collaboration and iterative solution development in the organisation to ensure continual improvement and delivery of quality outcomes.’</p>
“Think and Solve Problems” (Results group)	<p>Does the <i>Think and Solve Problems</i> capability adequately embed the skills and abilities required for a digital by design (“digital by default”) approach to service delivery across the sector?</p> <p>Suggest amending behavioural indicator in Highly Advanced level descriptor: ‘Establish and promote a culture which encourages initiative and emphasises the value of continuous improvement, including through collaboration and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned.’</p> <p>Suggest amending behavioural indicator in Highly Advanced level descriptor: ‘Engage in high-level critical analysis of a wide range of complex information and formulate effective responses to critical policy issues and service design.’</p> <p>Suggest amending behavioural indicator in Highly Advanced level descriptor: ‘Identify and evaluate organisation and sector-wide implications when considering proposed solutions to issues.’</p> <p>Suggest amending behavioural indicator in Highly Advanced level descriptor: ‘Ensure governance systems are in place to guarantee quality data, analysis, research and reform.’</p> <p>Suggest amending behavioural indicator in Advanced level descriptor: ‘Explore a range of possibilities and creative alternatives to contribute to data, systems, process and business improvements.’</p>

Topic	Lead Question
	<p>Suggest amending behavioural indicator in Advanced level descriptor: ‘Implement systems and processes that underpin high quality data, research and analysis.’</p> <p>In particular, does the capability support innovation and experimentation with new digital initiatives that have the potential to drive better service outcomes?</p> <p>To some extent, yes (e.g., emphasis on value of continuous improvement in Highly Advanced level descriptor). However, there needs to be a greater emphasis on contributing to, and leveraging, data and information systems and processes – for instance, via collaboration and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned. The above suggested amendments to the behavioural indicators would go some way to rectifying this gap.</p>
<p>“Technology” (Business Enablers group)</p>	<p>Does this non-specialist <i>Technology</i> capability provide an adequate picture of the technology capability required by all public sector employees and executives to support the digital transformation of NSW government services, including cyber security and risk management behaviours?</p> <p>No – this capability conceptually conflates technology and data. The real value of data is not realised by being tied up with technology, but in the extrapolation of data into information and knowledge which can then be leveraged to provide optimal value to organisations in a business context.</p> <p>Furthermore, the behavioural indicators in this capability seem to be focused on compliance rather than building and leveraging the value of data and information in a digital context.</p> <p>The recommendation is to amend the title of the capability, amend the capability description, and amend behavioural indicators to better reflect the need to design and leverage data and information as an asset providing value to organisations, and not just as compliance measures.</p> <p>For instance, amending the following behavioural indicator in the Advanced level: ‘Ensure that effective governance frameworks are in place to enable efficient and effective application of information and communication technology and use of data and information within the organisation.’</p>
<p>Perceived gaps in the content of the <i>NSW Public Sector Capability Framework</i></p>	<p>Taken as a whole, do the capabilities cover the elements of customer service, responsiveness, agility, collaboration, delivering value for money etc. that are critical to the NSW Digital Government Strategy?</p> <p>Overall, these elements do exist in the capabilities, with the exception of the use of data and information, which currently is only tangentially relevant to the Technology capability. We have recommended that the Technology capability is amended to incorporate more explicitly the key role of information and data as critical government assets which require public sector staff capabilities.</p> <p>What specific digital skills and abilities do you look for when filling roles, that aren’t currently captured in the <i>NSW Public Sector Capability Framework</i>?</p> <p>From our perspective, when filling roles we look for skills and abilities that reflect an understanding of the primacy of data and information governance, management and usage in the context of broader legislative, policy and service delivery outcomes of the organisation and sector as a whole. The existing capabilities in the Framework currently do not map to these fundamental requirements which are increasingly relevant across the sector.</p>
<p>Any other comments/suggestions?</p>	

APPENDIX 4

Capability Comparison Guide



Public
Service
Commission

Grade/Band	Foundational	Intermediate	Adept	Advanced	Highly Advanced	Focus Capabilities <i>(including any occupation specific capabilities)</i>
Secretary	0	0	0	4	16	10
Band 3	0	0	0 - 3	9 - 14	6 - 10	10
Band 2	0	0	1 - 5	8 - 15	2 - 6	9 - 10
Band 1	0	0 - 2	3 - 11	6 - 11	1 - 3	8 - 10
Clerk Grade 11/ 12	0	2 - 6	8 - 14	1 - 6	0	6 - 9
Clerk Grade 9 / 10	0	5 - 11	5 - 10	0 - 2	0	5 - 9
Clerk Grade 7 / 8	2 - 6	8 - 14	1 - 7	0	0	5 - 8
Clerk Grade 5 / 6	5 - 11	6 - 14	0 - 2	0	0	4 - 7
Clerk Grade 3 / 4	7 - 11	5 - 11	0	0	0	4 - 6
Clerk Grade 1 / 2	14 - 16	0 - 2	0	0	0	4
General Scale	16	0	0	0	0	4

Note:

- 1: Clerk Grade 3/4 and 5/6 – a minimum of four Focus Capabilities will **only** apply to those roles that do not manage people. Where the role manages people, a minimum of five Focus Capabilities apply
- 2: As per the *Role Description Development Guideline*, the spread of capability levels selected for a role should not generally exceed three consecutive levels
- 3: Given the diversity of roles at Band 1, it is possible that some roles will have capabilities at Intermediate to Advanced level while the spread of capabilities for other roles will be Adept to Highly Advanced

As at August 2014

APPENDIX 5

Australian Public Service (APS) research into linkages between mastery, engagement and mobility

Record of Discussion with Rodney Latimer, Director, Orima Career Management Pty Ltd.

Background

Rodney Latimer's comments are based on his research of the literature and of primary research conducted by ORIMA for APS agencies, in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Infrastructure. This includes over 200 surveys, mostly in the PMES/ employment-engagement area.

The initiative for the research came from the Secretary of DFAT who observed that while DFAT, as a high profile department, has "the pick" of graduates each year, the work delivered by DFAT in the policy area was good rather than excellent. Where, he asked, was the leakage between recruitment of the "pick of the crop" and, some years down the track, good but not excellent outcomes?

Mastery, engagement and mobility

Phases of mastery

The literature identifies four phases of mastery that all roles – from entry level to Secretary – go through:

1. Apprentice – 6-12 months. This is a period of high job satisfaction and the employee enjoys going to work. The job holds new challenges and excitement and work colleagues make allowances for the mistakes the employee makes as he/she learns the job.
2. Tradesman – up to 2-3 years. Understanding and competence in the job grows. The employee is expected to get on with it independently, and to be a "safe pair of hands". But the employee experiences diminishing returns – job satisfaction falls. Most people change jobs in three years.
3. Artisan – 3 years on. If the employee decides to stick with the job, at 3-4 years he/she may transition to the mastery stage. At this point the employee starts to see what is important and is not distracted by surface appearances. He/she starts to see what is useful, to appreciate quality not quantity. The employee doesn't realise it, but he/she has entered the Artisan phase – same job, same work, but suddenly there are subtle changes: he/she is no longer just a "safe pair of hands" but an innovator, an informed risk-taker, someone recognised by their superiors and asked in to participate and advise. Job satisfaction rises again (J-curve). The soft skills are important.
4. Guru/Visionary. There are not many of these, and they may be ahead of their time. For example, the iPad was first produced as the Apple Newton MessagePad in about 1990, and it didn't take off, people weren't ready for it. But it had profound effects on computing.

Time spent in each phase varies with the type of work – for example, if the work is narrow and mechanical the honeymoon period may be shorter, for broader roles it may be longer.

The relationship between mobility – career – engagement is complex. The conversation about reaching mastery in a role is not appropriate until say the employee's 30's. It is not good to get fixed before exploring what is available out there, but if the employee keeps moving he/she will never get that sense of mastery. Mobility should not be used to continually seek "apprenticeship" happiness.

The APS

Since the late 1980s there has been a shift in the APS from "progression in your career" to "development in your career". The idea has grown that if you stay in one job you become "stale" and will be seen as "unpromotable". This has led to a sense of urgency about changing jobs and chasing opportunities.

The impact of this can be seen in Canberra traffic patterns. Canberra is a planned city, and the planning was based on the assumption that public servants would live near their place of work. Now Canberra is experiencing traffic jams, and a study has shown that public servants are working away from their home areas.

There is a lot of research across the APS that shows employees get promoted at earlier stages. They lose the sense of excitement/risk taking and stick at EL1 where they are rewarded for "not stuffing up".

DFAT

DFAT policy was to move staff to new roles every three years. At the end of a three year posting, the employee would be placed in whatever role was available, and not necessarily in the same area of work. So although DFAT had a high level of staff retention, it also had a high level of internal churn. What was happening was that just as people were getting good at their roles they were moved.

DFAT recognised the importance of developing mastery, but was forcing mobility. It is still hard-wired to rotation, with some 75% of roles subject to 3-year postings, but it has now reshaped its mobility strategy to a "curated" mobility, to the benefit of the organisation.

Roles have been identified that require mastery, some viscosity, and limits have been placed on movement in some roles because of their value to the organisation. There is still an expectation of postings: they haven't been stopped, simply slowed down.

How DFAT determines viscosity/fluidity of roles:

1. Corporate (many identified as specialised/ needing time for mastery)
2. Foreign Policy
3. Aid Policy
4. Trade Policy

DFAT is trying to build innovation and risk management into their thinking, but the practices that are in place tend to support the status quo. This forces employees into a defensive situation. Employees tend to stick at EL1, thinking: "don't rock the boat, don't screw up, that's your career".

DFAT has been slowing down the musical chairs but trying to develop potential. New graduates may wait longer than three years (i.e. the tradesperson phase) for their first overseas posting to represent the interests of Australia. It has been found, for example, that employees who aren't quite ready will tend to copy what their predecessor said in reports.

Over the years, the survey language has changed to "career development" not "career progression", building muscle not just pushing up the ladder. DFAT is just working in the area of innovation and "appropriate risk taking" and getting the right structure for the organisation.

Instead of an inherent requirement for "musical chairs", DFAT is now deliberate in selecting staff pathways. Employees are now given a "core capability" area so that they build on these capabilities in subsequent postings and are not constantly reinventing themselves. With the current DFAT strategy of controlled or "curated" movement, the organisation benefits, the thinking broadens.

Technical specialisations

(Question: How does this apply to technical specialisations?)

The technical "tradesman" needs to develop the soft skills, but the idea that mobility is a solution for technical roles is too easy. The challenge is not necessarily one of ability but one of confidence. For example, the IT person can develop technical muscle by going to course after course, but their people skills may atrophy. They need both IQ and EQ (and if not born with EQ they can grow it).

DFAT's Information Management team always struggled to get good scores in their PMES. Management tends always to play in the short story area of "how to get the most out of the team", but the devotion of the IT specialists was always to their role /work, rather than to their team. Their sense of team was not strong – they would not sacrifice for the team, would get disengaged if their manager changed their role. However, over time the team

has developed commitment and loyalty to the organisation and this allows them to accept/work with changes to their individual roles.

The greater the sense of belonging to the organisation, the greater the personal (discretionary) effort and the greater the success of the organisation

The literature identifies buttons that you can press to develop the sense of belonging to the organisation. But this is not a conversation that is had often.

Department of Infrastructure

The Department of Infrastructure had some issues with employee retention at EL1 level and above: newer employees tended to be the first to leave.

ORIMA has long been involved in PMES work with Infrastructure. They included some questions about the extent to which their team had sat down and considered critical role needs: worked out what skills were needed by the team, what were the gaps, and how to mitigate these (MAP–GAP–Mitigate), thinking this information might be useful for some work related to long term planning.

The process had a transformative effect on the team. Those that had done the MAP–GAP–Mitigate process were found to have half the exit rate and much higher engagement/commitment to the organisation scores than teams that had not. Talking had given the members a sense of their place in the team (*“I finally had a sense of belonging”*), decoded the future and prospects in the organisation. It identified purposeful learning and development and secured supervisor support for this. Some saw more objectively that there wasn’t a future for them in the organisation. Engagement builds resilience and commitment, so you don’t get distracted by small things.

New Blood

Mobility may be the pathway to achieving better delivery (the why of productivity and performance), but it may not be the pathway and may not be the language for some occupations. For example, employees generally stay in technical specialisations, with short excursions outside.

ORIMA is the number one research provider to the APS. 30% of ORIMA employees have been with the organisation for over 10 years. It has grown its

skills, its client relations and interactions, and has business continuity, resiliency and surge capacity. How do you teach these capabilities to newcomers? You need mentors.

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet is focused on innovation and risk management. It is recognising that there are some roles that need continuity, but it also wants to be the nursery of a new generation of leaders. The narrative has changed from a simplistic “bringing in new blood” to a more nuanced discourse that recognises the need to have top guns to mentor the next top guns.

Q&A

Q: When did DFAT’s more “creative moves” policy start?

A: In 2012, when there were a number of changes in APS agencies. DFAT and AusAid were integrated (“python swallowing a donkey”), and engagement and commitment bottomed. These scores have bounced back to pre-2012 levels, while scores in the Department of Human Services have been crawling back up slowly. It is hard to say what has influenced the DFAT result: there has been a deliberate attempt to improve bilateral trade agreements since Trump, and amazing growth.

Q: What about skills transferability, when a good manager in one area is moved to another?

A: It depends on the purpose of the move: a manager sent in with a mission to change the area will have different successes, failures and measures than those sent in for other purposes. Different managers suit different business environments e.g. BAU, build customer relations.

Promotion is usually a stretch, then you build competence in the role. It is better to build competence before promotion, because if dropped unprepared into a role you can get into a siege mentality, with a sense of being an imposter in the role.

Comment: It is important to have the conversations about how to provide support/fill the gaps when moving someone into a new role.

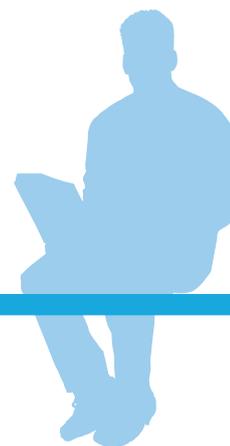
APPENDIX 6

2016 Agency Survey

The 2016 Agency Survey provides a snapshot of application in the NSW public sector towards the end of the three year implementation period. Agencies were asked if they had embedded use of the 2013 Public Sector Capability Framework (as distinct from other capability frameworks) in specific workforce management areas, with the overall response for the sector as follows:

Embedded in at least one of these areas	87%
Recruitment	80%
Performance Management	78%
Development Planning	66%
Workforce Planning	48%
Mobility	44%
Succession Planning	42%

Overall, while the Agency Survey figures may provide a good indication of the spread of Capability Framework usage through the public sector, feedback from the discussion groups indicates that the depth of application varies greatly by agency and workforce management sub-functions.



APPENDIX 7

Presentation – Case Study

Presentation delivered by Miranda van der Pol, Manager Customer Experience, NSW Department of Industry, to the NSW public sector Community of Customer Experience Professionals on 3 August 2016



NSW
MAKING IT HAPPEN

NSW Government | Department of Industry

Case Study 1: Applying the PSC framework in Customer Service at the NSW Department of Industry

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Corporate Strategy branch

NSW Government | Department of Industry

A bit of context...



Department of Industry

Corporate Plan 2015 - 2019

Our vision

NSW - A place where the skills of its people, management of its natural resources and the quality of its government services make it a globally attractive location to live, learn, work, invest and to produce goods and services.

Our purpose

Lead the State government's contribution to making NSW a fertile place for business growth, in order to create jobs and opportunities for citizens.

Our values

Integrity - Trust - Service - Accountability.

Strategic Priorities	Act to enable job creation and opportunities for economic growth	Transform the delivery of vocational education and training services	Create a positive business environment	Engage and collaborate, facilitating mutually beneficial relationships	Foster an innovative, commercially focused and collaborative department
Goals	Facilitate the creation of at least 150,000 new jobs by 2019, including 30,000 in regional NSW.	Maximise the return from investment in skills, focusing on efficiency of delivery and alignment to labour demand.	Support government decision-making for infrastructure, regulation and priorities with information about economic opportunities and challenges.	Reach out to industry, the community and other parts of government, to deepen understanding and strengthen collaboration.	Be a responsive and engaged department driven by a culture of innovation and collaboration.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic growth through innovation that improves resilience and boosts productivity Incentives and support provided for new and expanding businesses to create jobs in NSW Increased industry capabilities to reach new markets and support regional development Diverse, reliable and sustainable energy sources are secured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A diverse and skilled workforce, meeting immediate and future industry demands Improved efficiency of skills delivery, supporting global competitiveness Improved community access to quality vocational education and training, to support people in gaining the required skills to find jobs and advance their careers A VET sector capable of delivering domestic needs and exporting its services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic growth by ensuring sustainable use of and access to natural resources Quality regulatory and operational frameworks including robust compliance and enforcement, delivering greater certainty for business, industry and the community Risks to community and industry confidence mitigated and managed Government decision-making that is evidence based, timely and targeted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productive partnerships with business, industry, research institutions and the community to accelerate opportunities and maximise benefits Strengthen collaboration across government to build effective partnerships that enhance business and community value Greater understanding of business, industry and community needs, to facilitate communication and collaboration, delivering improved outcomes Enhanced customer experience achieved through digital innovation and improved delivery of services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspirational leadership championing change, diversity and inclusion Individuals are capable, engaged and accountable, empowered to collaborate, innovate and embrace change Business outcomes underpinned by employee information and insights, informing current and future workforce trends Improved strategic decision-making and business performance through insights and data analysis Everyone exemplifying professional standards and efficient use of resources
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of 150,000 new jobs, including 30,000 in regional NSW Increased value of gross state product for key industry sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the proportion of people completing apprenticeships to 65% Increased enrolments in vocational education and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased employee engagement

Guiding principles
NSW Economic Development Framework

 1. DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP
  2. MAKE IT EASIER TO DO BUSINESS
  3. COLLABORATE TO DRIVE INNOVATION AND COMPETITIVENESS
  4. INVEST IN CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE
  5. RAISE THE GLOBAL PROFILE OF NSW



Department of Industry

NSW Industry Community of Practice

- Share ideas and experiences
- Share best practice
- Inspire to think outside the box
- Format changes
- Theme based approach
- Topical



Translating “commit to customer service”



Commit to Customer Service

Provide customer centric services in line with public service and organisational objectives



Why?



- Focus capability
- Broad remit
- Different types of roles
- Different types of services
- Better understanding
- Mine the collective knowledge



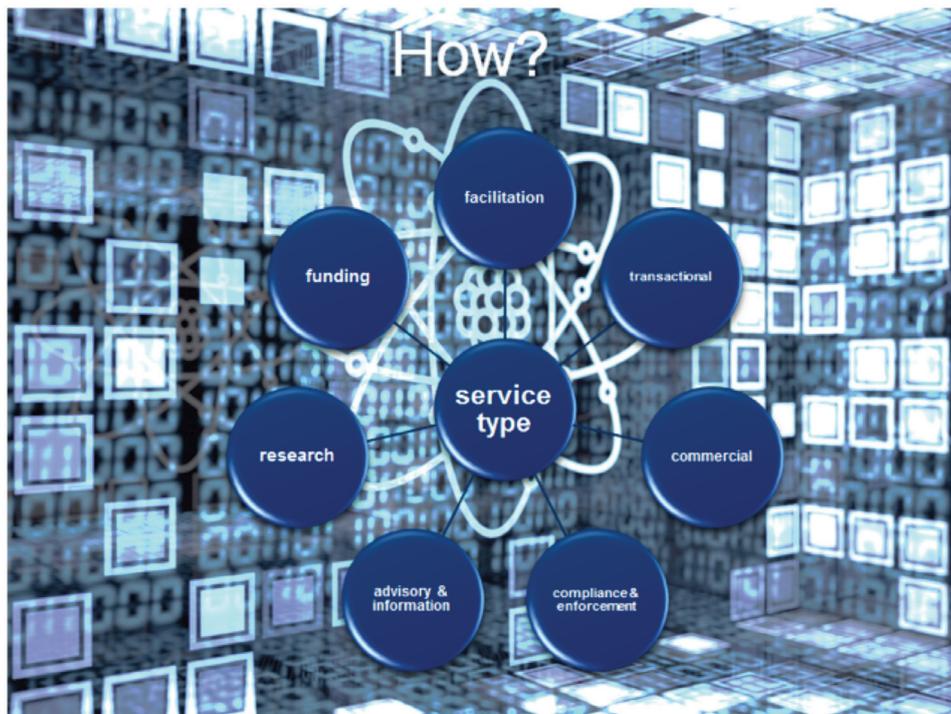
How?

1. Setting the context

- Guest Speaker Graeme Head, NSW Public Service Commissioner
- People, Learning and Culture team

2. What does “commit to customer service” look like within NSW Industry

- Facilitated session 2x



How?

Brainstorm

attributes & behaviours

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The image shows a group of people in a meeting. A diagram in the foreground consists of a circle of colorful buttons (red, blue, white) on the left, a red and white double arrow pointing right in the center, and a white circle on the right containing the text 'attributes & behaviours'. The background is a blurred photo of people in a meeting.

Outcomes

what's next?

- Applied the capability to each of the department's service types
- Prepared descriptions of behaviours for each of the services types
- Identified best practice examples from across the department

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The image features three lit lightbulbs hanging from cords against a light green background. Below them, the text 'what's next?' is written in a large, bold, black, hand-drawn font. To the right of the lightbulbs is a list of three bullet points. The NSW Government logo and 'Department of Industry' are at the bottom right.

Please get in touch!

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Department
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APPENDIX 8

A Comparison of the APS Integrated Leadership Scheme and the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework

The Australian Public Service (APS) provided a model for some of the reforms associated with the GSE Act, such as appointment to level, broad banding of Senior Executive roles and the introduction of the Senior Executive Work Level Standards.

However, the APS was also embarking on a series of reforms based on the Blueprint For The Reform Of Australian Government Administration 2010 and subsequent, subsidiary reviews, and its experience provides a useful point of comparison in reviewing the Capability Framework and its application to workforce management activities.

The APS capability framework was introduced in 1999 as the Senior Executive Leadership Capabilities (SELC), a single-level leadership development framework for SES Bands 1-3. It was expanded in

2004 into the APS Integrated Leadership Scheme (ILS), which provides leadership development indicators for all APS roles from APS 1 to SES3 (11 levels).

The APS SELC/ILS is highly regarded and forms the basis for the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian Capability Frameworks. The NSW Capability Framework covers broadly the same capabilities as the APS model, but in different configurations and with different emphases.

Design Comparison

The SELC/ILS framework sets out the core capabilities for APS staff and the skills and behavioural requirements at each classification level, and shares many features with the Capability Framework:

	APS SELC/ILS	NSW Capability Framework
Breadth/Coverage	SELC: Senior Executive Service (1 level) ILS: all APS roles (11 levels, APS 1-SES3)	All public sector roles including Secretaries and Agency heads
Capability Groups	5 core capability "criteria"	5 core capability groups
Number of capabilities	20 capabilities	16 capabilities plus 4 capabilities required by people managers only
Basis for Levels	Behavioural Indicators	Behavioural Indicators
Number of Levels	SELC - a single-level set for all SES roles ILS - 10 levels tied to APS grade including SES1-3, (but to be applied flexibly)	Five levels not tied to grade. Roles are expected to require a mix of capability levels (usually spread over 2-3 levels)
Business Enablers	Not addressed as separate capabilities: a few behavioural indicators relate to these functional areas	A distinct group of four separate capabilities for all employees: Finance, Technology, Procurement & Contract Management, Project Management
Pathway	Cumulative model: behaviours at one level are the 'floor level' for the levels above	Cumulative model: behaviours at one level are the 'floor level' for the levels above
Professional capability requirements/ technical knowledge	"Applies and builds professional expertise" "Technical Domain" - the "sixth domain" - to be defined and added by the agency to meet specific needs	Agencies to add if needed from occupation specific capability sets (whether published on the PSC website, internally developed, or external competency standards)

Application comparison

When the NSW Capability Framework was introduced in 2013, the APS was using the SELC/ILS framework for a range of workforce management activities, including as selection criteria for SES roles, but this is no longer the case.

Jason Preece, A/Director APS Workforce Reform Group advises that:

“... there are no current APSC guidelines on the application of the ILS in recruitment or performance management. [We] found that, as it was primarily designed for leadership and capability development, it could be a bit difficult and complex for agencies to try to apply to the recruitment process...Here in the Reform space we’ve been looking at how we can make recruitment and performance more simple and effective.”

Nonetheless, some APS agencies continue to base selection criteria on the capabilities set out in the SELC/ILS framework while they transition to the current APSC guidelines, and to instruct candidates to prepare their application *“by drawing on [their] experiences, skills and abilities, select[ing] examples that best relate to the duties and level of the job”*.

Support tools developed to accompany the SELC/ILS are focused on development and career planning, and encourage employees to self-assess whether each of the capabilities is *“essential”, “significant”* or *“less significant”* for effective performance of their role.

The APS guidance on use of the Work Level Standards suggests that both the WLS and the ILS can help to inform understanding of expectations at each classification level.



APPENDIX 9

The Public Sector Legislation and the Public Service Commission Guidelines

Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014 and a number of PSC Guidelines relating to the application of the Capability Framework in workforce management activity form the basis for the use of the Capability Framework by public sector agencies.

The Legislation and Guidelines are outlined below:

The Circular

The NSW Public Sector Capability Framework was issued in August 2013 as a Guideline attached to Public Service Commissioner Circular PSCC2013-09. The Circular took a strong line on the application of the Capability Framework by all public sector agencies except State Owned Corporations:

PSCC2013-09 NSW Public Sector Capability Framework:

“The Capability Framework is intended to apply across the entire sector, across all occupational groups, and is designed to work with occupation/profession specific capability sets ...

Agencies are expected to embed the Capability Framework in workforce management practices as soon as possible and no later than the end of the three year period beginning 9 August 2013 ...”

In the explanatory foreword to the Capability Framework, capabilities are described as “*the knowledge, skills and abilities required by all public sector employees*”.

The Rules

Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014 refer in general terms to capabilities, but do not include a requirement to use the Capability Framework. Key Rules relating to capabilities follow:

Part 3 Merit-based Employment

- Rule 16 of the *Government Sector Employment (General) Rules 2014* (GSE Rules) sets out the merit principles to be applied in employment decisions in the Public Service, and requires employment decisions to be based on an assessment of candidates’ capabilities, experience and knowledge as they relate to the “*pre-established standards*” of the role.
- The *pre-established standards* for a role are defined as the capability, knowledge and experience standards for the role.
- Rule 16(2) requires that any employment decision relating to a role in the Public Service is to be based on an assessment of the capabilities, experience and knowledge of the person concerned against the *pre-established standards* for the role to determine the person best suited to the requirements of the role and the needs of the relevant Public Service agency.
- Rule 17 defines *comparative assessment* including assessment against the *pre-established standards* for the role using at least three capability-based assessment methods.
- Rule 18 defines *suitability assessment* including assessment against the *pre-established standards* for the role using at least two capability-based assessment methods.
- The type of assessment required depends on the kind of employment:
 - Rule 20 sets out the assessment requirements for ongoing employment, including a comparative assessment after external advertisement

- Rule 21, Rule 22 and Rule 22B set out the assessment requirements for temporary or term employment, including suitability or comparative assessment for terms up to 12 months, and a comparative assessment for terms over 12 months

Part 5 Workforce diversity

- Rule 26 sets out the assessment requirements for employing eligible persons from designated groups, including modification of the assessment requirements as set out in Part 3.

There is no requirement in the Rules to use the Capability Framework to set the *pre-established standards* of a role. However, when capabilities – such as those from the Capability Framework – are identified in a role description as a requirement to perform a role, they become part of the *pre-established standards* for the role and must be assessed.

Feedback from discussion groups indicates that this fact is not widely known, and many believe that use of the Capability Framework is “*mandated*”.

Part 7 Performance management

Section 67 of the GSE Act attributes government sector agency heads with responsibility for developing and implementing a performance management system for employees of the agency.

Rule 35 Core requirements of performance management systems:

- to set and clarify expectations for employees
- to guide and review employee performance
- to develop employee capability
- to recognise employee achievements
- to improve employee performance
- to resolve unsatisfactory employee performance
- to evaluate and strengthen practices

NSW Performance Development Framework – second edition

The Performance Development Framework sets out 19 essential elements corresponding to the core requirements. Compliance with the Framework is mandatory.

The essential elements describe behaviours and organisational approaches necessary for achieving outcomes. They articulate expectations of employees, people managers and the organisation, recognising there is shared responsibility for driving high performance.

The essential elements identified for developing employee capability are:

- Employees work collaboratively with people managers to identify development goals and targeted capability development options for both current and future roles.
- Employees are encouraged to work proactively with people managers to plan for their own development, assess progress and maximise opportunities to develop capability strengths and close gaps.

“Open, constructive conversations between employees and their managers are key to effective performance.”

The Performance Development Framework recommends the use of the Capability Framework:

“The capabilities allow people managers and employees to have a clear, shared understanding of role expectations and provide a starting point for constructive feedback and development discussions.”

The Guidelines

In addition to Circular PSCC2013-09 accompanying the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework (G2013-006), the PSC has issued a number of Guidelines that include advice on how the Capability Framework is to be applied to various aspects of workforce management. These are:

PSCC-2014-03 Role Description Development Guideline and Template

PSCC2014-03 Role Description Development Guideline and Template:

“A Role Description Development Guideline and macro-enabled Role Description template have been developed to support implementation of key aspects of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013, in particular the creation of roles based on the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework...”

This Guideline was for some time incorrectly identified as “mandatory” on the Administrative Requirements Portal maintained by NSW Treasury, which may have contributed to confusion regarding the compliance status of both the Role Description Template and the Capability Framework

The Role Description Development Guideline requires all capabilities to be included in the role description for every role. This has resulted in a requirement for all 16 or 20 capabilities (or more where occupation specific capability sets are used) needing to be assessed to comply with the Rules.

The Guideline also introduced the concept of Focus Capabilities, defined as “those [capabilities] for which an employee assigned to the role must demonstrate immediate competence, that is, from day one of engagement”, except “where a person is moved temporarily to a role for a developmental opportunity”.

At least one focus capability must be selected from each of the capability groups in the Capability Framework, and the total number of focus capabilities recommended (as reflected in the

Capability Comparison Guide) varies from four to 10, depending on the level of the role.

Recruitment guidelines currently require focus capabilities to be evaluated using at least two capability-based assessments, to ensure that a reasonable amount of information is collected.

PSCC-2015-02 Assignment to Role Guidelines

Appointment at level and assignment to a role is designed to facilitate employee mobility between roles at the same level in the public sector.

Sections 38 and 46 of the GSE Act relate to assignments of senior executives to roles within a band and assignments of non-executives to roles within a classification of work respectively.

Rule 11 of the GSE Rules relates to temporary assignments.

The PSC Assignment to Role Guideline provides the following advice on the use of the assignment to role provisions in the Act and the Rules, non-executive mobility within Public Service agencies and Public Service senior executive mobility within and between Public Service agencies.

Assessment requirements for subsequent assignment

...There is no set assessment process or minimum number of required assessments for a non-executive assignment as employees have already been assessed through comparative or suitability assessment for their initial assignment¹¹”.

However, a delegate or manager:

- “...should be satisfied that the employee has demonstrated the focus capabilities of the role at the required level, unless the assignment is for development purposes...[and]
- ...it would generally not be advisable to assign an employee to a role if they have not met the required capability levels for more than two of the non-focus capabilities required for the role.”

¹¹ Page 11 Assignment to Role Guideline

PSCC-2016-07-Transfer and Secondment Guidelines

These Guidelines initially required comparative or suitability assessment for transfers and secondments into and between public service agencies. However, the Rules and Guidelines were changed from 31 August 2018 to provide for a consistent approach to mobility advertising and assessment across the sector. All government sector agency heads can now determine the appropriate advertising and assessment requirements for filling a role in their agency through transfer or secondment.

Recruitment and Selection Guide (online)

The Recruitment and Selection Guide was initially published as single document, but subsequently subsumed into a webpage that provides guidance and resources to support each phase of the recruitment process. The Guide includes the advice that:

- each focus capability must be assessed using a minimum of two capability-based assessment to ensure that a reasonable amount of information is collected
- all other non-focus and occupation-specific capabilities must be assessed, as these form part of the pre-established standards for the role.
- as a guide, candidates must meet 12-16 of the core capabilities including all the focus capabilities to be considered for employment.

Other Frameworks and Standards

The NSW public sector employs many technical and professional specialists, particularly in the frontline service agencies like Education, Health, Transport and Planning & Environment. The Capability Framework was designed to be used in conjunction with specialised capability/competency frameworks or standards that might be required by such roles.

The PSC website advises that:

“Where occupation/profession specific capabilities overlap with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework, the Public Sector capabilities should be used to maximise consistency across the sector.

Clusters/agencies may use occupation/profession specific capability sets that have been internally

developed to meet local needs, or access externally developed frameworks, for example, cross-jurisdictional standards or those offered by professional associations in conjunction with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework.

Where professional standards or local frameworks are already in existence for various occupations, the Public Service Commission will work with the relevant clusters to develop a practical approach to utilising these in conjunction with the NSW Public Sector Capability Framework.”

The PSC occasionally consults with agencies to assist them in development of capability resources for their specialised needs.

In addition to the occupation/profession specific capabilities developed or adopted by agencies, some occupational groups in the public sector are subject to capability/competency standards incorporated into industrial awards and agreements, agreed at a national level by the Australian, State and Territory Governments, or imposed by professional or government accreditation or regulatory bodies.

For example:

- the *Competency Criteria for Skilled Trades* included in the *Crown Employees (Office of Environment and Heritage – National Parks and Wildlife Service) Field Officers and Skilled Trades Salaries and Conditions 2015 Award*
- the *Core Knowledge and Skills for Nurse/Midwife Managers* included in the *Public Health System Nurses’ and Midwives’ (State) Award 2018*
- the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and accreditation requirements applied to NSW teachers

Some agencies are successfully combining the Capability Framework with other frameworks/standards. However, agencies need to take into consideration the complexities associated with applying multiple frameworks in determining how to apply the Capability Framework to their specialised workforces. In practice, industrial awards must take precedence.

These considerations contributed to the Public Service Commissioner’s decision in 2013 to issue the Capability Framework as a Guideline with a Strongly Encouraged compliance level, rather than to make it mandatory for public sector agencies.

