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# Human Resources Career Field Competency Gap Analysis Study

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Research Methodology Report

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## Acknowledgements

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# INTRODUCTION

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Several years ago a segment of the National Park Service (NPS) Human Resources career field took a needs assessment offered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This needs assessment is only offered every other year, and once Human Resources management decided they wanted to do a needs assessment in 2012, it was already closed. Instead a gap analysis was proposed.

The Human Resources career field recently updated the competencies for the various levels of employees in the career. The HR Gap Analysis methodology will utilize a five-stage approach to determine gaps in these competencies. The five stages include determination of the research methodology; development of survey instrument; collection of data; analysis of data; and reporting of findings. The results from the surveys will be used by the NPS to prioritize and design training events to meet the needs of the human resource professional in the NPS.

## Approach

The Eppley Institute proposes using a Work Breakdown Structure based on the following for this gap analysis study. It is understood that minor changes may be made during the course of this project.

### **1.0 Project Initiation**

- 1.1 Project Budget Form
- 1.2 Project Plan
- 1.3 Internal Initiation Meeting
- 1.4 Project Team Meeting
- 1.5 External Initiation Meeting
- 1.6 WBS Published

### **2.0 Analysis and Research**

- 2.1 Summary of Research Needs
- 2.2 Draft Research Protocol
- 2.3 Preliminary Literature Review
- 2.4 Stakeholder Interviews
- 2.5 Synthesis
- 2.6 Final Research Framework Report

### **3.0 Instrument Development**

- 3.1 Formal Literature Review
- 3.2 Draft Instrument
- 3.3 Pilot test/beta
- 3.4 Instrument Revision/Approval

### **4.0 Implementation**

- 4.1 Population Determined
- 4.2 Dissemination
- 4.3 Reminders

### **5.0 Collection and Analysis**

- 5.1 Data Input/Monitoring
- 5.2 Data Collection Ends

5.3 Preliminary Analysis

5.4 Draft Report

5.5 Review Meeting

5.6 Meeting Notes Published

**6.0 Final Report Phase**

6.1 Technical Draft Report

6.2 Presentation and/or Partner Review

6.3 Final Draft Report

6.4 Report Edited

6.5 Report Published

6.6 Portfolio Sheet Completed

6.7 Closeout Meeting

6.8 Closeout Report

6.9 Portfolio Sheet Completed

Many of these tasks will be completed simultaneously with others.

### Competencies

There are a total of 33 competencies. These include: Attention to Detail; Creative Thinking; Client Engagement/Change Management; Customer Service; Decision Making; Flexibility; Influencing/Negotiating; Information Management/Systems; Integrity/Honesty; Interpersonal Skills; Oral Communication; Organizational Awareness; Planning and Evaluating; Problem Solving; Project Management; Reading; Reasoning; Self-Management; Stress Tolerance; Teamwork; Technical Competence; Writing; Workforce Planning; Classification; Compensation; Employee Benefits; Employee Relations; Employee Development; HR Information Systems; Labor Relations; Legal, Government, and Jurisprudence; Performance Management; and Recruitment and Placement. The definitions for each competency are listed below.

Competency	Definition	Competency Type
Attention to Detail	Is thorough when performing work and conscientious about attending to detail	General
Creative Thinking	Uses imagination to develop new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to problems; designs new methods where established methods and procedures are inapplicable or are unavailable	General
Client Engagement/ Change Management	Knowledge of impact of change on people, processes, procedures, leadership, and organizational culture; knowledge of change management principles, strategies, and techniques required for effectively planning, implementing, and evaluating change in the organization	General



Customer Service	Works with clients and customers (that is, any individual who uses or receives the services or products that their work unit produces, including the general public, who work in the agency, other agencies, or organizations outside the Government) to assess their needs, provide information and assistance, resolve their problems, or satisfy their expectations; knows about available products and services; and is committed to providing quality products and services.	General
Decision Making	Makes sound, well-informed, and objective decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; commits to action, even in uncertain situations, to accomplish organizational goals; causes change.	General
Flexibility	Is open to change and new information; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; effectively deals with ambiguity.	General
Influencing/Negotiating	Persuades others to accept recommendations, cooperate, or change their behavior; works with others towards an agreement; negotiates to find mutually acceptable solutions	General
Information Management/ Systems	Identifies a need for and knows where or how to gather information; organizes and maintains information or information management systems.	Technical
Integrity/Honesty	Contributes to maintaining the integrity of the organization; displays high standards or ethical conduct, and understands the impact of violating these standards on an organization, self, and others; is trustworthy	General
Interpersonal Skills	Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people with varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race,	General



	gender, disabilities, and other individual differences	
Legal Government and Jurisprudence	Knowledge of laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, legal practices and documents, government regulations, executive orders, agency roles, government organization and functions, and the democratic political process	Technical
Oral Communication	Expresses information (for example, ideas and facts) to individuals or groups effectively, taking into account the audience and nature of the information (for example, technical, sensitive, controversial); makes clear and convincing presentations; listens to others, attends to nonverbal cues and responds appropriately	General
Organizational Awareness	Knows the organization's mission and functions, and how its social, political, and technological systems work and operates effectively within them; this includes the programs, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations of the organization	General
Planning and Evaluating	Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resource requirements; determines short- or long-term goals and strategies to achieve them; coordinates with other organizations or parts of the organization to accomplish goals; monitors progress and evaluates outcomes	Technical
Problem Solving	Identifies problems; determines accuracy and relevance of information; uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives and to make recommendations	General
Project Management	Knowledge of the principles, methods or tools for developing, scheduling, coordinating, and managing projects and resources, including monitoring and inspecting costs, work and contractor performance	General
Reading	Understands and interprets written material, including technical material, rules, regulations, instructions, reports, charts, graphs, or tables; applies what is learned from written material to specific situations	General
Reasoning	Identifies rules, principles, or	General



	relationships that explain facts, data or other information; analyzes information and makes correct inferences or draws accurate conclusions	
Self-Management	Sets well-defined and realistic personal goals; displays a high level of initiative, effort, and commitment towards completing assignments in a timely manner; works with minimal supervision; is motivated to achieve; demonstrates responsible behavior	General
Stress Tolerance	Deals calmly and effectively with high stress situations (for example, tight deadlines, hostile individuals, emergency situations, dangerous situations)	General
Teamwork	Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust and group identify, fosters commitment and team spirit; works with others to achieve goals	General
Technical Competence	Uses knowledge that is acquired through formal training or extensive on-the-job experience to perform one's job; works with, understands, and evaluates technical information related to the job, advises others on technical issues	Technical
Writing	Recognizes or uses correct English grammar, punctuations, and spelling; communicates information (for example, facts, ideas, or messages) in a succinct and organized manner; produces written information; which may include technical material that is appropriate for the intended audience	General
Workforce Planning	Knowledge of HR concepts, principles, and practices related to determining workload projections and current and future competency gaps to align human resources with organizational goals	Technical
Classification	Knowledge of classification concepts, principles, and practices related to structuring organizations and positions and determining the appropriate pay systems, occupational grouping, title, and pay level of positions.	Technical
Compensation	Knowledge of compensation concepts, principles, and practices,	Technical

	including pay and leave administration and compensation flexibilities	
Employee Benefits	Knowledge of HR concepts, principles and practices related to retirement, insurance, injury compensation, and other employee benefits programs	Technical
Employee Development	Knowledge of employee development concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, evaluating and administering training, organizational development and career development initiatives	Technical
Employee Relations	Knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, case law, principles, and practices related to employee conduct, performance and dispute resolution	Technical
HR Information Systems	Knowledge of HR management concepts, principles and practices related to identifying and analyzing HR processes, translating functional requirements into technical requirements, and delivering and maintain HR information systems	Technical
Labor Relations	Knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, case law, principles and practices related to negotiating and administering labor agreements.	Technical
Performance Management	Knowledge of performance management concepts, principles, and practices related to planning, monitoring, rating and rewarding employee performance	Technical
Recruitment/Placement	Knowledge of HR concepts, principles, and practices related to identifying, attracting, and selecting individuals and placing them into positions to address changing organizational needs	Technical

Figure 1: Competency Definitions

### Survey Development

Three groups of employees will be surveyed as part of this study: employees, supervisors, and stakeholders. The groups will be surveyed to determine the level of employee proficiency in technical and general competencies defined by OPM.

The survey questions will be developed by the Eppley Institute with input from the NPS Chief, WASO HR Operations Division, the NPS Chief, Office of Human Resources, and the Administration and Business Practices, Commercial Services, and Specialty Fields Training Manager, as well as additional Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).

### *Employee Survey*

This survey will be distributed to human resources employees, specifically those who provide human resource services directly to field area and including employees who general work in the Servicing Human Resource Offices (SHRO) or Regional or Washington Area Support Office (WASO) Human Resource equivalent offices. Those employees whose collateral duties may include human resource job functions will not be included in the employee survey population.

The employee survey will be a self-reporting opportunity for employees to rate themselves as in specific competencies using the statements listed below.

- I can apply this competency in the simplest situations.
- I can apply this competency in somewhat difficult situations.
- I can apply this competency in difficult situations.
- I can apply this competency in considerably difficult situations.
- I can apply this competency in exceptionally difficult situations.

Employees will also be asked about the importance of each competency to their job performance, attendance at training and importance of training for each competency, and frequency of performance using each competency.

### *Supervisor Survey*

The supervisor survey will be distributed to employees who supervise Human Resource employees who provide human resource services directly to field areas. Supervisors will be asked to rate the level of proficiency their employees demonstrate in the technical competencies. They will also be asked about the importance of each competency in employee job performance, importance of training, and frequency of performance using each competency.

### *Stakeholder Survey*

The stakeholder survey will be distributed to NPS employees who are not employed in the Human Resources series, but who may use human resource services or require the assistance of a human resource employee. These stakeholders will be asked to rate their experiences with human resource employees based on the technical competencies.

### Survey Deployment

Invitations to participate in the survey will be sent via email to NPS employees by the Epley Institute Project Manager. An announcement will be sent in the week prior to the survey deployment to each survey population. This announcement will be sent by the NPS and will feature a memorandum from David Vela, Associate Director for Workforce Management, to encourage participation. An article will also be published on Inside NPS, which will be accessible to all NPS employees. NPS Chief, Office of Human Resources, Angela Hargrove, will also alert Human Resource Council members to ensure that HR employees and stakeholders are aware of the survey.

Email invitations will ask employees to click on a link to access the survey. The following text will be used for the stakeholder survey:

Good morning,

On February 14, Associate Director for Workforce Management, David Vela, issued a memorandum announcing a stakeholder survey that would be issued today, February 18, 2013. You have been randomly selected to participate. Your participation in this survey is critical and will assist the National Park Service in assessing the current skill sets of human resources practitioners that provide services to your organization. It will also assist the Service in planning and realizing an HR Bootcamp employment development program that will be designed to build entry through expert levels of human resources skills within the human resources community. This will further enhance the NPS HR community's ability to provide the best possible services to you, their customers.

The survey will take you approximately 15-20 minutes to complete, and you can save and return to the survey later if you are unable to complete it in one sitting. All of your responses are confidential and anonymous. To access the survey, click this link: [https://iuhealth.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_5beVAgGFh8KIAWV](https://iuhealth.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_5beVAgGFh8KIAWV). Please complete the survey by midnight on March 4, 2013. If you have any technical issues with the survey, please contact Eppley Institute Project Manager Nona Capps at [nfcapps@indiana.edu](mailto:nfcapps@indiana.edu) or 812-855-0864.

Thank you so much for your time and participation.

The following text will be used for the HR employee survey:

Good morning,

As a human resources practitioner within a National Park Service Servicing Human Resources Office or other office primarily focused on human resources programs, you have been chosen to participate in the Human Resources Gap Analysis survey for practitioners. Your input is critical to helping the NPS HR community strategically plan employee development offerings and to develop the HR Bootcamp. The HR Bootcamp will provide a structured, professional employee development program for HR practitioners from the entry to expert level of skills.

The survey will take you approximately 25-30 minutes to complete, and you can save and return to the survey later if you are unable to complete it in one sitting. All of your responses are confidential and anonymous. To access the survey, click this link: [https://iuhealth.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_eDrhHU5RzaXSTSB](https://iuhealth.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_eDrhHU5RzaXSTSB). Please complete the survey by midnight on March 4, 2013. If you have any technical issues with the survey, please contact Eppley Institute Project Manager Nona Capps at [nfcapps@indiana.edu](mailto:nfcapps@indiana.edu) or 812-855-0864.

Thank you so much for your time and participation.



The following text will be used for the HR supervisor survey:

Good morning,

As a supervisor of a human resources practitioner within a National Park Service Servicing Human Resources Office or other office primarily focused on human resources programs, you have been chosen to participate in the Human Resources Gap Analysis survey for supervisors. Your input regarding the performance of your employee(s) is critical in helping the NPS HR community strategically plan employee development offerings and to develop the HR Bootcamp. The HR Bootcamp will provide a structured, professional employee development program for HR practitioners from entry level to expert level of skills.

The survey will take you approximately 20-25 minutes to complete, and you can save and return to the survey later if you are unable to complete it in one sitting. All of your responses are confidential and anonymous. To access the survey, click this link: [https://iuhealth.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_8ji1M4lB9Ue1261](https://iuhealth.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_8ji1M4lB9Ue1261). Please complete the survey by midnight on March 4, 2013. If you have any technical issues with the survey, please contact Epley Institute Project Manager Nona Capps at [nfcapps@indiana.edu](mailto:nfcapps@indiana.edu) or 812-855-0864.

Thank you so much for your time and participation.

A two-week response period for data collection will be monitored by the Epley Institute. A reminder email will be sent by the Epley Institute five days prior to the due date. An additional reminder will be sent the day before the survey closes, and a final reminder will be sent the day the survey closes. Data analysis will be an iterative process with a review and feedback loop initiated by the Epley Institute and shared with the NPS. A draft report with preliminary findings will be completed for review and comment. A final report will then be presented to the NPS. Specific dates are published on the Epley Institute project management site, Basecamp. All dates are contingent on NPS approval and participation in a timely fashion. Any delays on the part of the NPS will impact the overall schedule.

### Data Collection

The surveys will be published online using the Epley Institute and Indiana University online survey tool, Qualtrics. All data will be collected automatically through the online survey system. The Epley Institute will monitor, maintain, and back-up the data as necessary to ensure confidentiality and security. The survey will be disseminated to 352 NPS employees, 55 supervisors, and 459 stakeholders.

# SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

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The ultimate goal of this study is to determine any gaps in the human resource technical competencies and provide the training manager and Human Resources leadership with an outline of the competencies that require training or developmental events to improve efficiency.

## Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study will be based on modified Importance-Performance Analysis (IP). IP can best be described as an easily-applied technique for measuring attribute importance and performance<sup>1</sup>; and in this case, competency importance and performance. Organizations adapt the IP methodology to measure and compare the importance of specific job competencies with the degree of preparedness. The current study will collect data from NPS employees, supervisors, and a stakeholder group (NPS employees who are not HR) in order to assess the degree of competency and preparedness of NPS Human Resources employees. The Importance-Performance analysis approach was chosen as it provides a simple and convenient form of measurement and data is presented in an easily interpreted, two-dimensional grid that suggests possible courses of action. In addition, this data analysis methodology is extremely practical, and data can be acted upon quickly.

Importance-Performance comparison results are generally translated into a priority action grid as shown in Figure 1 below. In this case, the vertical axis of the grid indicates the importance of the Human Resource competencies, while the horizontal axis of the grid indicates employees' and supervisors' perceived proficiency in the specified competency. Additionally, stakeholder comments regarding each competency will be documented and incorporated off to the side of the priority action grid to supplement the data derived from employees and supervisors. The grand mean values for each importance and preparation competency are calculated, and then plotted on the IP grid. The grand mean is selected as our measurement statistic, because our analysis requires the viewpoints of both employees and supervisors. The grand mean will allow a holistic approach to determining competency gaps and potential training areas. In addition, competency gaps will be delineated by GS level. Once plotted, these values can be interpreted according to their location on the grid as described below.

- *Formalized Knowledge Training Required* – Respondents believe that competencies located in this area are very important; however they perceive themselves as being not well prepared to complete competency-related tasks. Training curriculum and resources should focus on items found in this quadrant.
- *On the Job Training Required* – Respondents rank competencies located in this area as high in importance and likewise feel well prepared to perform. NPS training should attempt to maintain current effort and performance through field experiences and onsite training.

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<sup>1</sup> Martilla, J.A., and James, J.C., 1997. Importance-Performance Analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, 41(1), pp. 77-79.



- *No Training Required* – This area characterizes competencies that the respondents believe are low in importance and for which they are also not very well prepared. No action is suggested for competencies located in this quadrant since both ratings are low.
- *Training Unwise* – Respondents judged competencies located in this quadrant to be less important to their overall duties, but high in perceived preparation. Training resources committed to competencies in this quadrant should possibly be reallocated to competencies located in the “Formalized Knowledge Training Required” quadrant.



Figure 2: IP Grid

An additional analysis using IP is also provided which is a gap analysis. Utilizing the various mean scores for each item from supervisors and employees, numeric gaps can be calculated between:

- Perceived HR competency and preparedness by employee including further analysis by years in field, years worked in NPS, and region
- HR employee and supervisor by HR competency, as well as perceived ability of HR employees by stakeholders

These gaps will be calculated using the IP grid responses in each of the quadrants so they can be compared and prioritized for consideration by NPS HR Leaders.



# APPENDIX A

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Inside NPS article announcing survey, available via <http://inside.nps.gov/index.cfm?handler=viewnpsnewsarticle&type=Announcements&id=13411>

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
Human Resources Skill Gap Analysis Underway

Six years ago, the National Park Service began a concerted effort to transform its human resources programs and services. The Service's 74 human resources offices have now been consolidated to 23 Servicing Human Resources Offices (SHROs) and a significant amount of work has been done –and continues - on process and procedure enhancements, including streamlining and consistency in the way human resources services are delivered.

In August 2011, the "Call to Action" was released. Under item 30, "Tools of the Trade," it calls for "enhancing professional and organizational excellence" and directs the Service to "provide employees the tools, training and development opportunities to reach their full career potential..."

In support of the Human Resources Transformation and this "Call to Action" item, the National Park Service HR community has identified the need to assess and identify gaps in proficiency within its existing workforce and to strategically plan a structured training and development program for the human resources staff of the future.

As a first step in this process, the National Park Service Office of Human Resources, in partnership with the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University and the Office of Learning and Development, have developed three assessment survey tools (stakeholders, human resource practitioners, and supervisors of human resources practitioners) that will be issued electronically on February 18th. These surveys will be sent to a group of 450 stakeholders and all human resources practitioners and their supervisors.

Participation is integral to gaining a valid assessment and we ask that selectees join us by completing the survey within the established timelines. All participants will be notified directly via electronic mail from the Eppley Institute ([nfcapps@indiana.edu](mailto:nfcapps@indiana.edu)) of their selection and how to participate. Please do not delete this email!

The results of this survey will be used to identify current skill gaps that will enable us to strategically plan the use of funds to focus on areas where the greatest need exists. It will also be used to develop a human resources bootcamp that will provide a structured, professional employee development program for HR practitioners that will enhance our abilities to better meet the needs of our customers throughout the National Park Service.

The results will also further enhance the human resources community's ability to become a strategic partner in meeting the needs of our other customers throughout the National Park Service.

Questions regarding the survey may be directed to Nancy Wilson, Chief WASO Human Resources Operations Division at 202-354-1963 or [nancy\\_wilson@nps.gov](mailto:nancy_wilson@nps.gov).

The past three years have been difficult for all those in the HR community and our customers. There is still much work to be done to create a 21st Century HR organization. We will be looking to you, our stakeholders, to evaluate ideas and suggestions and to collaborate with us in building this organization.

#### Contact Information

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