



SENIOR EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK – SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

LEADERSHIP AND PERFORMANCE

Senior Executive leaders in the Australian Public Service (APS) play a key role in the delivery of the core functions of the Service. They provide high quality policy advice to governments and implement government programs, including delivering services to the community. They have a particular accountability to ensure the delivery of outputs, which contribute to the achievement of outcomes as determined by government. They must be able to focus on the outputs specific to their agency, and the links between these outputs and broader government goals. This requires them to create a shared vision and sense of purpose for their organisations, and to enable and motivate their staff to achieve high performance.

WHAT IS THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK?

This Framework seeks to establish a shared understanding of the critical success factors for performance in APS leadership roles.

The Framework identifies the five core criteria for high performance by Senior Executives. Each of the criteria heads a group of inter-related capabilities. The Framework does not describe the functions or responsibilities of particular senior executive roles.

The capabilities are based on the requirements of the APS now and into the future. They have been identified through extensive and validated research and consultation with a wide range of leaders and potential leaders in the APS.

The capabilities will be reviewed after three years to ensure currency and ongoing relevance within the APS environment.

A FLEXIBLE TOOL

The balance between and within the five criteria will depend critically on the work of the particular agency, the demands and levels of individual jobs, and the mix of skills required in the Senior Executive Team.

It is envisaged that agency-specific criteria, such as particular qualifications or mobility requirements, will be added to the Framework to meet agency requirements.

LEADERSHIP AND THE APS VALUES

This Framework embodies the APS Values. In particular, leadership of the highest quality is one of the APS values, and is essential to the achievement of high performance within an environment of change.



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The Framework has many potential applications, including:

- selection;
- leadership development;
- performance management;
- short- and long-term planning for the Senior Executive Service; and
- broader organisational development initiatives.

The applications of the Framework to APS-wide and agency-specific initiatives will contribute to the achievement of high quality leadership.

APS VALUES

The Australian Public Service:

- is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner;
- is a public service in which employment decisions are based on merit;
- provides a workplace that is free from discrimination and recognises and utilises the diversity of the Australian community it serves;
- has the highest ethical standards;
- is openly accountable for its actions, within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to the Government, the Parliament and the Australian Public;
- is responsive to the Government in providing frank, honest, comprehensive, accurate and timely advice and in implementing the Government's policies and programs;
- delivers services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public and is sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public;
- has leadership of the highest quality;
- establishes workplace relations that value communication, consultation, co-operation and input from employees on matters that affect their workplace;
- provides a fair, flexible, safe and rewarding workplace;
- focuses on achieving results and managing performance;
- promotes equity in employment;
- provides a reasonable opportunity to all eligible members of the community to apply for APS employment;
- is a career-based service to enhance the effectiveness and cohesion of Australia's democratic system of government; and



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- provides a fair system of review of decisions taken in respect of APS employees.

Agency Heads are bound by the Code of Conduct in the same way as APS employees and have an additional duty to promote the APS Values.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The attached information provides supplementary material to the Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework. It was developed as part of the research into the factors for high performance in APS leadership roles and reflects the language used by participants to describe what senior executive leaders do when they are effective in their roles.

SHAPES STRATEGIC THINKING

inspires a sense of purpose and direction

DESCRIPTION

Personally contributes to, shapes and champions the organisation's vision and goals, relating these to government requirements. Translates broad strategy into practical terms for others, and creates a shared understanding of what has to be achieved. Within the overall strategic context, presents others with an integrated picture of the actions and priorities that will be required. Provides them with a clear sense of direction and endeavours to unite understanding among all levels within the organisation.

INDICATORS

- Drives the organisation's vision, goals and objectives, ensuring alignment with required government outcomes and with the operating environment.
- Promotes clearly the broad future vision of the organisation.
- Translates and aligns the vision and objectives of the organisation into options for implementation.
- Builds a common sense of purpose and shared direction; draws a picture of where various contributions fit in, and establishes clear messages about what needs to be achieved.



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focuses strategically

DESCRIPTION

Develops advice to government on potential outcomes, and develops a long term perspective on organisational success. Integrates a ‘big picture’ view of goals with how to achieve them. Operates on the basis of a ‘whole of government’ framework and takes the broader context into account. Ensures portfolio effort contributes to cross-government priorities. Envisages what *might* be and how future possibilities balance with the ‘here and now’.

INDICATORS

- Takes a broad view across government outcomes which goes beyond agency boundaries.
- Thinks about the longer term based on an anticipation of what is likely to occur and what *might* be around the next corner.
- Envisages future trends and their impact on current strategy.
- Recognises how the broader strategy and context will be advanced or hindered by a particular course of action.
- Evaluates the extent to which potential outputs will satisfy required government outcomes.

harnesses information and opportunities

DESCRIPTION

Seeks to acquire knowledge, and is open to new information and different perspectives. Values finding out about Australian and global best practice (public and private sector) and considers the workings of the organisation within this context. Demonstrates business acumen by thoroughly researching the market that the organisation operates in (and opportunities offered and constraints imposed) to yield greater efficiencies and improve quality of service. Keeps abreast of major technological changes and their impacts.

INDICATORS

- Finds out about contemporary best practice in both private and public sector organisations, nationally and internationally.
- Searches for, and extracts a range of new information and different viewpoints; demonstrates curiosity and keeps an open mind.
- Is attuned to Australia’s complex cross-cultural diversity, incorporates this into advice and develops proposals accordingly.



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- Strives to keep abreast of shifts in the environment; demonstrates a comprehensive appreciation of broad world issues, and how these potentially impact upon the organisation.
- Scans the external and internal environments; looks for opportunities in technological developments and globalisation.
- Is sensitive and responsive to changes in the environment; takes these into account when establishing plans.
- Brings a business-like orientation into the organisation by focusing on efficient use of resources.

shows judgement, intelligence and commonsense

DESCRIPTION

Grasps complexity and identifies issues that tend to be overlooked by others. Thinks through problems from various angles, and analyses them dispassionately and objectively. Probes and critically evaluates information before applying both intellect and experience to final judgement. Is willing and able to question traditional assumptions and practices rather than taking things as given. Has the capacity to provide originality of thought and develop innovative solutions.

INDICATORS

- Evaluates information quickly, critically and accurately; grasps the core of complex problems, analyses and summarises key issues and makes sense of them.
- Is able to work with ambiguity and with issues which cannot be immediately resolved.
- Distils underlying problems and reasons for problems by asking targeted questions to expose key issues.
- Addresses problems from the perspective of what the government actually requires.
- Builds on past experience appropriately while avoiding over-reliance on precedent.
- Assesses a range of potential solutions rather than choosing the easiest option.
- Shows imagination and demonstrates a preparedness to look at original solutions which are ‘outside the square’.



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ACHIEVES RESULTS

builds organisational capability and responsiveness

DESCRIPTION

Initiates fluid and flexible resourcing options based on an appreciation of emerging requirements in a constantly changing environment. Looks outside of organisational ‘silos’ to identify what resourcing combination will deliver the best results, rather than being bound by existing organisational structures and processes. Responds flexibly to various stakeholder requirements and changing circumstances as they arise, varying deployment of resources within imposed constraints. Exploits the advantages offered by information technology. Takes action to ensure sustainability.

INDICATORS

- Anticipates future resourcing challenges, recognises where gaps exist in current organisational capability, and addresses accordingly.
- Treats organisational structures as being fluid not fixed; creates mobility of talent within and across different areas.
- Creates an environment which flexibly enables the right people to move on and off projects, to get the best possible outputs.
- Demonstrates a preparedness to review and modify plans and adjust resources to support priorities.
- Is able to change focus quickly and move on to another project.

marshals professional expertise

DESCRIPTION

Values specialist expertise and places emphasis upon creating an environment which facilitates the sharing and effective utilisation of professional knowledge and skills. Ensures relevant professional input from others is obtained.

INDICATORS

- Demonstrates the ability to tap into and use the professional expertise and experiences of others.



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- Consults and seeks advice from technical experts and specialists to supplement own knowledge.
- Delegates and is prepared to call upon the technical expertise of individuals who are specialists.
- Knows enough about systems, processes and technical issues to be able to understand where the weaknesses are and how to take corrective action; understands what the right approach is and appreciates what will be possible in the circumstances.

steers and implements change and deals with uncertainty

DESCRIPTION

Develops and oversees the implementation of change initiatives in a sometimes uncertain environment. Defines high level objectives and ensures translation into practical implementation strategies. Undertakes both long and short term planning phases and sets timescales for completion.

INDICATORS

- Charts a course which cuts through any uncertainty and an evolving context, to keep focused on what has to be done.
- Adopts a planned approach to the management of major projects; develops project plans, establishes the end point of the project and sets timeframes.
- Translates project objectives into ‘on the ground’ activities which can be implemented, and breaks down projects into manageable chunks.

ensures closure and delivers on intended results

DESCRIPTION

Engenders a culture of achievement, by ensuring ideas and intended actions become reality and that planned projects actually result in expected outputs. Puts systems in place to establish and measure accountabilities.

INDICATORS

- Ensures projects are seen through to completion.
- Schedules and structures regular review meetings to check substantial headway is being made.
- Builds in checkpoints and systemic controls to monitor timeliness and quality of intended outputs.



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- Systematically tracks progress, pursues desired outputs and ensures projects do reach conclusion.
- Intervenes when necessary to re-focus people and help them get back on track.



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CULTIVATES PRODUCTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

nurtures internal and external relationships

DESCRIPTION

Builds relationships with Ministers, within the organisation and with key people in external organisations. Proactively creates a professional network and develops mutually beneficial relationships based on respect. Shows commitment to customer service.

INDICATORS

- Nurtures a wide range of contacts within the APS as well as within the private sector, and liaises with key figures in consumer groups, peak bodies and industry forums.
- Builds a diverse range of mutually beneficial contacts and is deliberate in building up professional networks (both formally and informally).
- Finds shared agendas to facilitate contact with others.
- Gains respect by ensuring personal and organisational demonstration of prompt, efficient and responsive service to customers.

facilitates cooperation and partnerships

DESCRIPTION

Puts effort into developing a work environment where people pull together and value collaboration and teamwork. Creates a sense of ‘interconnectedness’ with other departments and agencies, ensuring opportunities to share views and ideas. Personally manifests strong interpersonal relations by role-modelling ‘team-player’ behaviour, including a willingness to consult and listen.

INDICATORS

- Encourages and demonstrates cooperation and exchange of views with a broad cross-section of people.
- Facilitates a cooperative and collegiate approach, encouraging team based approaches within the agency and across the APS.
- Facilitates individuals working together by identifying common goals, encouraging cooperation and joint ownership of ideas and approaches.
- Consults and encourages sharing of expertise and participation in decisions where appropriate.



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- Demonstrates interpersonal skills by taking the time to talk (& listen) to others and establish rapport.

values individual differences and diversity

DESCRIPTION

Supports and respects the individuality of others and recognises the benefits of diversity of ideas and approaches. Recognises different skill areas and levels of expertise. Understands others and responds to them in an appropriate way.

INDICATORS

- Is able to discern differences between people; and tries to see things from the other person's perspective.
- Recognises that people don't all think and operate in the same way and gives priority to maximising their contribution.
- Works to understand the personalities, motivations and other diverse qualities of people and uses these to enhance interactions.
- Respects individual diversity and embraces it, recognising benefits for the organisation.
- Is sensitive to other people's life experiences.

guides, mentors and develops people

DESCRIPTION

Inspires ongoing learning in others. Gives timely recognition for good performance. Motivates others with an enthusiasm to 'give their all' by setting challenging goals, as well as supporting and encouraging them when they need assistance to overcome problems. Helps others to address areas of weakness by encouraging them to take an active role in their own development, and creating a climate with right opportunities to do so. Understands when it is appropriate to confront issues and takes action to deal with difficult performance situations.

INDICATORS

- Actively seeks out, identifies, encourages and develops talent.
- Lets colleagues know they are valued and makes a point of acknowledging good performance.
- Sets high expectations and is prepared to invest in getting people up to speed.
- Sets and monitors clear performance standards.
- Offers full support in overcoming 'road blocks'.



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- Addresses under-performance constructively; achieves turnaround or other resolution.
- Delivers negative feedback in a way that neither demoralises nor dilutes the message; is open in discussion, gives coaching, provides guidance, arranges training as appropriate and follows up to monitor progress.

EXEMPLIFIES PERSONAL DRIVE AND INTEGRITY

demonstrates public service professionalism and probity

DESCRIPTION

Adheres to and promotes the APS Values and ethical framework as set out in the APS Code of Conduct. Serves the government of the day irrespective of personal preferences. Implements policies and programs based on corporate decisions rather than personal views.

INDICATORS

- Embodies the APS Values and Code of Conduct and consistently behaves in an honest, ethical and professional way; expects these standards from staff.
- Places government and organisational goals above either personal preferences or individually motivated ambitions.
- Shows personal commitment to the organisation.
- Presents a united leadership voice; supports other leaders and shows loyalty to the organisation.
- Reinforces ethical conduct in dealings with people; is consistently genuine in interactions with others; does not show favouritism or bias.

engages with risk and shows personal courage

DESCRIPTION

Is prepared to be forthright and ‘tell it like it is’ (and not how people might like it to be). Is independently minded and willing to challenge ideas and confront issues. Is prepared to acknowledge when in the wrong, and learns from mistakes. Is also prepared to ask for help and values advice from others.

INDICATORS



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- Makes tough corporate decisions which are in the best interests of the government (even in cases where these may not be the most popular).
- Delivers bad news and provides impartial advice; and does this constructively, with the aim of achieving a successful outcome for the government.
- Demonstrates a preparedness to challenge the ideas of others and to have own ideas challenged.
- Takes ownership for decisions rather than saying they are directives from above.
- Sticks up for self and colleagues in the face of criticism.
- Admits openly to not knowing the answer to a question, and asks for help, clarification or input.
- Is honest about mistakes and accepts responsibility for these where appropriate.

commits to action

DESCRIPTION

Is determined, highly motivated and action-oriented. Takes personal responsibility for getting things done, and for the success of the organisation. Handles issues proactively and tries to shape events. Doesn't procrastinate. Readily invests energy and initiative into progressing work.

INDICATORS

- Galvanises others to act.
- Attempts to overcome barriers which other people view as too difficult.
- Gets on with the job with a minimum of fuss.
- Takes the initiative, makes a decision and moves things forward.

displays resilience

DESCRIPTION

Remains focused on the objectives even in difficult circumstances. Bounces back after setbacks and remains positive. Maintains energy and willingly invests extra effort when required.

INDICATORS

- Demonstrates tenacity and persistence and is prepared to work hard to achieve objectives.
- Recognises and accepts the need to operate within constraints which are beyond own control.



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- Remains enthusiastic and optimistic about the outcomes even when facing setbacks.
- Is able to withstand criticism and get on with the job.
- Is patient and able to stick with a task for the ‘long haul’.
- Shows consistency in behaviour; stays controlled in a crisis.

demonstrates self awareness and a commitment to personal development

DESCRIPTION

Shows strong commitment to continued learning. Actively seeks feedback from a wide range of sources. Takes responsibility for own development and for managing self in a way which enables sustained performance. Looks for opportunities to enhance own skills. Values continuing development.

INDICATORS

- Critically self-evaluates performance and identifies learning opportunities from these experiences.
- Avoids becoming complacent; thinks of new approaches to stretch skills, knowledge and experiences.
- Pushes self out of ‘comfort zone’.
- Learns from own and other people’s experiences; seeks out learning opportunities.
- Seeks feedback from peers, staff, managers and customers.
- Translates negative feedback into actions for improvement.

COMMUNICATES WITH INFLUENCE

communicates clearly

DESCRIPTION

Produces user-friendly verbal and written communication that is clear and concise. Ensures unambiguous delivery of the message, and checks that it has been understood as intended. Keeps people up to date and fully informed of any changes to the original communication.

INDICATORS

- Presents effectively to groups and individuals in meetings, seminars and other forums.



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- Provides structured and succinct written communication, with clear rationale and conclusions.
- Ensures that the main messages are delivered and key points are covered.

listens, understands and adapts to audience

DESCRIPTION

Listens actively to ensure views and information are properly exchanged. Checks with others to ensure their views have been accurately understood. Uses and adapts style as necessary to meet the requirements of the audience. Creates opportunities to listen to those whose input can add value.

INDICATORS

- Chooses the right language to articulate nuances and draw distinctions, with the audience's needs in mind.
- Considers the sophistication and information needs of others; matches the level and complexity of communications to the skills, knowledge and experience of the audience.
- Knows strengths of personal communication style and plays to these; is aware of shortcomings and adapts approach to compensate.
- Checks own understanding of the expressed views of others.

negotiates persuasively

DESCRIPTION

Establishes credibility and approaches negotiations persuasively. Offers a convincing rationale which has been thought through in advance and carefully positioned with reference to desired organisational outcomes. Allows for a genuine contest of ideas and pulls disparate views into a coherent position, and finds common ground to facilitate agreement and acceptance of mutually beneficial solutions. Reaches negotiated positions, through compromise, which lead to the achievement of the required outcomes.

INDICATORS

- Positions case in a balanced manner; avoids over-selling by acknowledging risks and potential disadvantages.



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- Anticipates other people’s likely expectations and concerns; anticipates extent of potential compromise for all parties.
- Encourages debate over viability of own proposal and ensures objections are understood and addressed.
- Acknowledges the disagreements and arguments of others and addresses differences of opinion objectively; knows when not to press too hard.
- Ensures that negotiations remain focused on the important issues, and does not allow them to stray on to other issues; ensures negotiations do not collapse unnecessarily.
- Makes a strong case but does so without getting personal and aggressive.
- Is prepared to compromise and ‘give in gracefully’ in the light of new information.