

**Report of the  
Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation  
Occupational Safety and Health Committee (CAALL-OSH)**

**To the  
Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation  
(CAALL)**

**Regarding  
Behavioural Core Competency Profile for OHS Inspectors,  
Investigators and Compliance Officers in Canada**

**August 2004**

# Behavioural Core Competency Profile

## For OHS Inspectors, Investigators and Compliance Officers in Canada

### Contents

|                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <i>Executive Summary</i> ..... | 3 |
|--------------------------------|---|

### Identified Behavioural Competencies

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>Commitment to Organizational Learning</i> ..... | 4  |
| <i>Communicating Effectively</i> .....             | 5  |
| <i>Concern for Image Impact</i> .....              | 6  |
| <i>Client Service</i> .....                        | 8  |
| <i>Flexibility</i> .....                           | 9  |
| <i>Information Seeking</i> .....                   | 10 |
| <i>Networking</i> .....                            | 11 |
| <i>Problem Solving</i> .....                       | 12 |
| <i>Self-confidence</i> .....                       | 14 |
| <i>Self-control</i> .....                          | 15 |

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At their September 2002 meeting, CAALL mandated a sub-group of the OSH Committee to explore best practices for training and building capacity of compliance staff and to review possible opportunities for joint activities.

A CAALL OSH Working Group was established and included Ontario (as Chair), HRDC, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, British Columbia and the Yukon. The Working Group subsequently identified a focus for collaboration; the Occupational Health and Safety Inspector core competencies and how they relate to training.

Although definitions vary, core competencies generally involve the knowledge, skills and attributes that are critical to effective or successful performance of a job. Where job descriptions specify the duties, responsibilities and qualifications, core competencies enrich this information by describing the “how” of the work. Core competencies are generally used to enhance recruiting and succession planning and for the design of appropriate training and staff development initiatives.

The following report integrates the behavioural core competencies identified by the various provincial and territorial governments in Canada. Behavioural or “soft” competencies refer to motives, traits and attributes that shape behaviour and reflect “how” you apply your knowledge and skills to achieve results.

It should be noted that these competencies have not been presented in any particular order in this document as each jurisdiction may place a different value on each competency.

The document is structured in such a way that the behavioural core competency is defined and then the competency is described in levels of how someone would demonstrate the competency. The levels for each competency have been arranged in ascending order, increasing in intensity, sophistication or completeness. For the most part, competencies are cumulative, which implies that an individual will demonstrate the behaviours of the lower levels within a competency before he/she can be effective at the higher levels.

The behavioural core competencies described in this report include Commitment to Organizational Learning, Communicating Effectively, Concern for Image Impact, Client Service, Flexibility, Information Seeking, Networking, Problem Solving, Self-confidence and Self-control. Together, these behavioural competencies form a Behavioural Core Competency Profile for Occupational Health and Safety Inspectors, Investigators and Compliance Officers in Canada.

# **COMMITMENT to ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING**

**Commitment to Organizational Learning** is driven by a desire to increase personal mastery of a subject, ability, or of an environment in order to improve personal and/or professional effectiveness. It is driven by a desire to increase the value of, and access to, knowledge and, at best, is intended to be of service to others in resolving issues or problems.

1. **Values knowledge:** Values previously acquired knowledge as it applies to current situations. Answers questions when asked. Expresses confidence in knowledge and acts decisively in situations requiring existing knowledge. Is generally aware of the different kinds of knowledge that peers and others have. Overall, speaks positively of having and sharing knowledge in work situations.
2. **Seeks to add/share knowledge:** Asks questions of available resources/sources in response to new problems or situations. Shows curiosity and interest in new approaches, tools and methods in own areas of expertise by seeking out others, reading, researching or attending workshops, etc. Recognizes educational opportunities and, using available resources and methods, develops materials and provides education within the scope of his/her duties. Is open to learning and continued development; actively seeks out opportunities to add to others' knowledge and share new knowledge with others. Possesses leadership skills to take control and provide direction to colleagues; is interested in developing others and seeks to orient and mentor new trainees.
3. **Establishes and is constantly renewing an expert level of knowledge:** Is motivated by business/public service objectives to continuously increase the scope and depth of knowledge acquired and shared. Constantly monitors both external and internal sources. Participates in communities of practice. Seeks out opportunities to address complex and/or ambiguous situations in which to apply current knowledge as a means of constantly updating and expanding expertise. Critically appraises own performance in the context of the current situation and seeks out ways to develop skills and competencies to meet current demands. Demonstrates initiative in judiciously and generously sharing information across a wide network of peers, clients, and others for the benefit of the organization. Has the capability to identify educational opportunities and to deliver effective educational interventions.
4. **Creates systemic processes for constantly improving knowledge:** Seeks opportunities to expand the boundaries of accepted practices and ways of doing business. Works to get new approaches/knowledge accepted to benefit business. Establishes systems for collecting and evaluating new information (whether research and/or experienced based). Is disciplined and goal-oriented when sharing knowledge with others and uses a variety of means to do so (e.g. shared electronic folders, meetings/conferences, coaching, etc.).

# COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

**Communicating Effectively** is the ability to send and receive information effectively. As the sender, it means speaking and writing clearly and expressing yourself well in groups and in one-on-one conversations, so that information is understood by the receiver(s) in the way it was intended. As the receiver, effective communicators demonstrate a respectful understanding of the others' position, listen actively and ask questions to seek a comprehensive understanding. Using verbal and non-verbal techniques, effective communicators also seek to deliver clear messages, intending that their messages be understood and that they serve as the basis for any mutual agreement or action that is subsequently undertaken.

1. **Communication and interpersonal skills:** Communicates clearly, concisely, consistently and respectfully. Actively listens to understand the information communicated by others and responds accordingly. Has the ability to interact in various situations. Possesses advanced listening skills; listens deeply and effectively in order to understand, and responds to things that appear important to others. Has interpersonal awareness; is receptive and pays attention to the emotion in body language, facial expression and tone of voice. Shows respect by giving attention to the speaker. Uses a respectful tone when speaking to others.
2. **Seeks to further understand:** Uses active listening and evaluation skills to collect information. Asks open ended questions and/or paraphrases to draw out the concern and thoughts of others in an effort to better understand them. Responds to questions by providing clear, concise and accurate information. Voluntarily supplies information that may not have been requested in order to provide the listener with relevant information related to the topic/issue.
3. **Understands the impact of messages on others:** Uses professional judgement and carefully crafts his/her message by taking the listener's perspective into consideration and by focussing on the goal of establishing a clear understanding/agreement. Responds to the speaker's ideas rather than the speaker's communication style. May pause briefly in order to plan an appropriate and effective response. Uses language as a tool for communication rather than a vehicle to display education, insider knowledge or status.
4. **Promotes clear, open communication:** Possesses excellent verbal and written communication skills. Delivers structured, easy to understand presentations; adapts presentations to the interest level of others and uses facilitation skills to address the needs of clients. Communicates information that sets new corporate and political direction and has a large public impact, provincially, nationally and/or globally. Understands that communication (achieving an understanding of your point) is the responsibility of the speaker. Is aware of how a poor choice of time, place, environment or lack of privacy can inhibit communication. Recognizes that achieving understanding is not the same thing as agreement. Seeks confirmation that agreements are based on shared understanding of the points of views present, and clarity about what decisions have been made. Writes in a manner which will impact the intended audience; creating or developing clearly and correctly written complex documents synthesizing a variety of ideas, views and issues into a fluid and cohesive fashion and articles of thoughts, processes and information in a profound and persuasive way to provoke the audience to thought or action.

# **CONCERN for IMAGE IMPACT**

**Concern for Image Impact** is an awareness of how oneself, one's role and the organization are seen by others. It is also the awareness of the need to act in a professional manner and to enhance public relations on behalf of the organization. Integral to this competency is integrity, which is based on a willingness to hold oneself accountable for acting in a manner consistent with stated values, principles, and/or professional standards. The highest level of this competency involves an awareness of, and a preference for, respect for the organization by the community. Concern for Image Impact is particularly appropriate for senior management positions (where personnel are seen as "the face of government").

1. **Expresses concern about image of role:** Acts with integrity ("walks the talk") and is committed to public service values, the principles of professionalism and has a professional approach to one's demeanour. Expresses concern about how one is perceived within one's own role and acts to clarify duties, accountabilities and importance of role when the role is misunderstood or discounted.
2. **Sets boundaries of role:** Acts methodically and explicitly defines what the role is, and how others may or may not interact with him or her. Describes behaviour that is and is not appropriate for that role and acts accordingly.
3. **Recognizes impact of role:** Demonstrates understanding of the way in which acting in own role has an effect on a broad audience. Considers the implications for public image of role before acting. Also recognizes the impact of internal and external events on the perception of the role.
4. **Teamwork and cooperation:** Understands the different components of teamwork and the benefits of working with others in a cooperative manner to achieve a desired result. Able to work cooperatively and collaboratively as opposed to competitively within the team / work group. Willingly participates as a team member, contributes positively and constructively, does his/her share of the work, shares all relevant and useful information and supports team decisions. Interacts with colleagues in a considerate and helpful manner, working toward consensus and contributing to mutually acceptable solutions. Builds team spirit by acting to promote a friendly climate, good morale and cooperation. Organization supports the concept of teamwork and may provide team training to new staff.
5. **Organizational awareness:** Describes public impact of the organization, recognizes and uses the formal structure or hierarchy of an organization ("chain of command") and recognizes organizational limitations. Possesses an understanding of the public service and is organizationally aware. Recognizes and articulates the role of the organization and the effects of this on the public in general. Considers the implications of this relationship when deciding on a course of action. Sees self as a representation of the organization, and acts in a way which maintains a positive public image for the organization. Also recognizes the impact of internal and external events on the perception of the organization.

6. **Works to promote organizational image:** Understands and acts to support and promote the government's mission and goals. Makes choices and sets priorities to meet the organization's needs and fit with the organization's mission. Cooperates with others to achieve organizational objectives. Acts to create a positive image for the organization, or a positive impact on the community (e.g. selects well-known, high-profile individuals for publicly visible positions to improve image, credibility, and/or prestige of the organization). Promotes positive relations between the organization and external clients, recognizing and acting upon opportunities to meet organizational objectives through partnerships. Ensures that public processes are transparent and accountability is clear when dealing with controversial issues.

# CLIENT SERVICE

**Client Service** implies a desire to identify and serve clients who may include the public (e.g. workers, employers, suppliers, family members of injured workers, etc.), colleagues, partners, peers and branches. It means possessing a client service orientation; focussing one's efforts on discovering and meeting the needs of clients in a prompt and professional manner.

1. **Follows up:** Follows through on client inquiries, requests and complaints. Keeps the client up-to-date about the progress of projects.
2. **Maintains clear communication:** Maintains clear communication with the client regarding mutual expectations. Monitors client satisfaction. Distributes helpful information to clients. Ensures courteous and professional service.
3. **Takes personal responsibility:** Takes personal responsibility for correcting client-service problems. Corrects problems promptly and undefensively.
4. **Takes action for the client:** Makes every reasonable effort to meet internal and external client needs. Makes self fully available, especially when the client is going through a critical period. For example, takes actions beyond normal expectations, or may change the process to ensure accessibility to information or assistance.
5. **Addresses underlying customer needs:** Understands the importance of good client relations. Knows the clients' issues and/or seeks information about the real underlying needs of the client beyond those expressed initially. Matches these to available (or customized) services.
6. **Uses a long-term perspective:** Addresses the problems of clients by using a long-term perspective. Looks to identify long-term benefits to the client. Acts as a trusted advisor; becomes involved in the client's decision-making process. Builds an independent opinion on client's needs, problems, or opportunities and possibilities for implementation. Acts on this opinion (e.g. recommends approaches that are new and different from those requested by the client).

# ***FLEXIBILITY***

**Flexibility** is the ability and willingness to adapt to and work effectively within a variety of situations, and with various individuals or groups. Flexibility means understanding and appreciating different and opposing perspectives on an issue, adapting one's approach as situations change and accepting changes within the organization or in one's own job. It also means adapting to new, different or changing situations, circumstances, requirements and priorities.

1. **Values need for flexibility:** Accepts that other people's points of view are reasonable or valid. Acknowledges that people are entitled to their opinions, and accepts that they are different. Steps in to assume co-workers' tasks when needed or required.
2. **Demonstrates flexibility:** Works creatively and cooperatively within standard procedures to fit a specific situation (e.g. has the ability to enforce, consult and educate in a flexible, effective manner). Understands policies and can work within them to meet the branch, work group, team or individual goals. Adapts to fit the situation or the person faced and decides what to do based on the situation.
3. **Values diversity:** Values the diverse nature of society in general, acknowledges cultural differences and seeks out opportunities to gain new knowledge and understanding of individuals/groups through education and interaction with others. Possesses personal skills (e.g. sensitivity, tact) suitable to interactions with a wide range of personalities in varying situations. Monitors and evaluates own beliefs and behaviours with respect to personal bias/preferences and practices new behaviours as appropriate.
4. **Adapts approach:** Is a strategic thinker and has the ability to think outside the box, changing one's approach as required in order to achieve intended outcomes. Alters normal procedures or ways of working to fit a specific situation to get the job done and/or meet the government's goals. Adapts to change by effectively responding to numerous and diverse challenges and demands and is able to place actions in priority sequence.
5. **Adapts strategy:** Recognizes when the basic business plan / business assumptions need to be fundamentally altered, and proceeds with making the case for change. Is responsive and creative when faced with evidence that a fundamental change is required, or when an external/internal event indicates that a review or direction change is necessary and/or desirable. Responds quickly to define new approaches and implement new practices that will support overall goals as required.

# **INFORMATION SEEKING**

**Information Seeking** is driven by a desire to know more about things, people or issues. It implies going beyond the questions that are routine or required in the job. It may include “digging” or pressing for exact information; resolution of discrepancies by asking a series of questions; or less-focussed environmental “scanning” for potential opportunities or miscellaneous information that may be of future use.

1. **Asks questions:** Asks direct questions of the people who are there, or who are supposed to answer questions about the situation, such as people who are directly involved even if not physically present. Uses visible information, or consults other available resources. Actively solicits feedback on personal performance from others and seeks suggestions for possible self-development actions to meet current demands.
2. **Personally investigates:** Gets out to personally investigate the problem or situation, even when not normally required to do so. Finds and questions those closest to the problem and asks questions such as “What happened?”
3. **Digs deeper:** Uses investigative skills, asking a series of probing questions to get at the root of a situation, problem, or potential opportunity below the surface of the issues presented. Calls on others who are not personally involved with a situation to lend their experience, gain their perspective, acquire background information, etc. Shows persistence and pursues all avenues to determine why something happened and does not stop with the first answer given or when things do not go smoothly.
4. **Does research:** Makes a systematic effort over a limited period of time to obtain needed data or feedback, or in-depth investigation from unusual sources. Identifies, clarifies and researches problems/issues. Does formal research through newspapers, magazines, computer search systems, or other resources as appropriate. This may include legal, financial or community research. Evaluates and synthesizes the information gathered.
5. **Uses own ongoing systems:** Has personally established ongoing systems or practices to get information (“management by walking around,” informal meetings, or the scanning of certain publications, etc.), and regularly has other people conduct information gathering on their behalf. Makes specific changes in the system or in own work methods to improve performance.

# NETWORKING

**Networking** is the process of building and maintaining effective and trusting relationships or networks of contacts with people who are, or may potentially be, helpful in the achievement of work-related goals and establishing advantages. A network is, by definition, a group of people who exchange information, contacts, and experience for professional (or social) purposes. Networking involves actively seeking opportunities to work horizontally across traditional branch, division and/or ministry boundaries and with external partners.

1. **Builds rapport:** Possesses networking skills; that is, personal skills suitable to interactions with a wide range of personality types. Is interested in relationship building; makes a conscious effort to establish and build rapport and trust with partners/customers/counterparts including discussion about common interests. Inspires respect and trust with internal and external clients, fostering a culture with high standards. Identifies and refers to areas of mutual interest as a means of establishing an effective working relationship.
2. **Develops longer-term relationships:** Regularly meets and/or speaks with the partners/customers/counterparts without specific objectives in order to maintain a network. May initiate business gatherings for the purpose of relationship building; that is, meetings designed to improve the longer-term working relationship with partners / customers / counterparts. Anticipates and meets internal and external needs where possible.
3. **Builds a broad network internal to the Public Service:** Builds and maintains a large network across the Public Service in their own jurisdiction. Identifies key contacts, both within and external to their own organization (i.e. Ministry) and finds ways to make connections. Takes full advantage of memberships(s) in occupational groups, cross-Ministry committees and communities of practice in order to build networks. Nurtures the relationship over time to build rapport and trust and to develop a basis for future interactions.
4. **Builds a broad network external to the Public Service:** Builds and maintains a large network across the broader public sector (municipal, federal, regional), the private sector and geographic boundaries. Identifies key contacts both within and external to the organization and finds ways to make connections. Takes full advantage of membership(s) in business/professional associations to build networks. Nurtures the relationship over time to build rapport and trust and to develop a basis for future interactions.
5. **Strategic networking:** Uses the established network to identify opportunities that will influence the strategic direction of the Public Service in their jurisdiction. Calls upon established relationships to gain entry to higher levels and strategic decision-makers or to achieve an important goal. Maintains relationships on an ongoing basis to ensure alignment with and efficiency of effort and approach. Uses the established network to identify opportunities, gather information and seek input to the resolution of problems, all with a view to sustaining Public Service excellence.

# **PROBLEM SOLVING**

**Problem Solving:** Understanding a situation by breaking it apart into smaller pieces, or tracing the implications in a step-by-step way. Problem solving includes the ability to think analytically, to identify patterns or connections between situations that are not obviously related, and to identify key or underlying issues in complex situations. It also involves translating complex or creative plans into workable solutions.

1. **Recognizes a problem:** Is able to think conceptually and uses knowledge of theory or of past trends to identify situations and acknowledge client concerns/complaints. Monitors the environment to identify gaps between what should be and what is. Able to recognize and describe the characteristics of a problem. As this stage involves problem recognition only, at this point, one would refrain from taking any action to address or further understand the problem.
2. **Breaks down problems:** Breaks problems down into simple lists of tasks or activities, without assigning values or priorities. Uses common sense and past experiences to identify and approach problems or issues. Recognizes and acts upon opportunities, overcomes minor obstacles to address present problems.
3. **Sees patterns, basic relationships or connections:** Makes single links between pieces of a problem; A leads to B; defines pros and cons. Places tasks into priority by order of importance. Identifies potential alternative approaches or actions. Has internalized routine or usual actions/procedures and uses them quickly and decisively in a crisis situation.
4. **Sees multiple relationships:** Able to make multiple causal links: identifies several potential causes of events, several consequences of actions, or multiple-part chains of events (i.e. A leads to B leads to C leads to D). Has the ability to analyze the relationships among several parts of a problem or situation. Anticipates any obstacles and thinks about next steps. Recommends an appropriate course of action.
5. **Makes complex plans or analyses:** Thinks analytically and uses several analytic or creative reasoning techniques to dissect complex problems into component problems or issues. Makes plans/solutions in which there are multiple-part relationships within sections. Uses conflict resolution skills to identify a problem and negotiate/mediate a solution. Makes decisions based on evaluation of risk and the understanding of the business context of the decision. Thinks strategically, linking long-range visions and concepts to daily work.

6. **Creates new concepts to explain situations:** Is innovative and takes new approaches, beyond conventional means, to find better ways of managing business processes and service delivery. Innovation involves a deliberate intention to seek creative ideas and then develop and implement these ideas so that they provide maximum value. Invents new ways to explain multi-dimensional problems, situations or opportunities. Creates and communicates a single picture that explains many parts OR creates multiple new concepts to describe a given situation. Uses own specific methods of measuring outcomes against a standard of excellence beyond that set by management.

# **SELF-CONFIDENCE**

**Self-confidence** is defined as self-assurance or a confidence/belief in one's own capability to accomplish a task and select an effective approach to a task or problem. This includes confidence in one's ability as expressed in increasingly challenging circumstances and confidence in one's decision or opinions.

1. **Presents self in a confident manner:** Ability to work independently and to meet deadlines without requiring direct supervision. Appears to others to be confident in person and presents self strongly. Takes control as appropriate in a leadership capacity. Makes presentations in a relaxed, self-confident style and seeks opportunities as a specialist to assist clients with problems.
2. **Demonstrates autonomy:** Takes initiative and independently solves problems in a proactive manner as they arise; takes appropriate action without having to first consult with others. Makes decisions and takes appropriate action as required.
3. **Has confidence in own ability:** Willing to voice an opinion and take a stand on critical issues. Explicitly states confidence in one's own judgement and ability. Capable of defending one's own decisions if challenged. Willingness to admit mistakes when identified.
4. **Chooses challenges:** Thrives on challenging assignments and is excited by the prospect of a challenge. Looks for and receives new responsibilities from management and takes on extra tasks not in the formal job description. Not averse to speaking up when in disagreement with management or others in power, but disagrees in a polite manner, stating own view clearly and confidently, even when in a conflict situation.
5. **Resolves conflicts and remains confident in difficult situations:** Possesses excellent conflict resolution skills. Recognizes the signs of conflict and manages confrontational situations while allowing others to challenge existing ideas and to express their opinions and ideas. Positively handles situations that could be seen as stressful or threatening. Has the ability to maintain confidence and positive self-image in the face of stress or difficulty. Seldom gives up before finishing the task at hand, especially when faced with resistance or setbacks.

## **SELF-CONTROL**

**Self-control** is the ability to keep one's external reactions or emotions under control and to restrain negative actions when provoked, faced with opposition or hostility from others, or when working under stress. It also includes the ability to maintain stamina under continuing stress and the ability to put people at ease.

1. **Restrains emotional impulses:** May feel an impulse to do something inappropriate and is capable of resisting it. Resists the temptation to act immediately without thinking about the consequences of one's actions OR feels strong/negative emotions (e.g. anger, extreme frustration, or high stress) and is able to hold them back. May leave the room or remove self from the source of the emotions.
2. **Responds calmly:** Feels strong emotions in the course of a conversation or other task, such as anger, extreme frustration, or high stress, but is able to restrain the emotions and continues to speak or act calmly. Has the ability to ignore angering actions and continues the conversation or task. May leave temporarily to withhold emotions, then return immediately to continue.
3. **Calms others:** Is skilled at resolving conflicts among individuals in a productive manner. Has the ability to control one's own emotions, but also acts to defuse the situation and calm others. May remove others from a stressful situation on a temporary basis to allow them to regain their composure before continuing.
4. **Manages stress effectively:** Withholds the effects of strong/negative emotions or stress over time; continues to function or to respond constructively despite ongoing stress. Applies special techniques or plans activities ahead of time to manage emotions or stress.