



Australian Government
Australian Public Service
Commission

SENIOR EXECUTIVE

Leadership Capability Framework



Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework



Shapes Strategic Thinking

Inspires a sense of purpose and direction

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.

Focuses Strategically

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'.

Harnesses Information and Opportunities

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.

Shows Judgement, Intelligence and Commonsense

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.

Achieves Results

Builds Organisational Capability and Responsiveness

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.

Marshals Professional Expertise

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.

Steers and Implements Change and Deals with Uncertainty

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.

Ensures Closure and Delivers on Intended Results

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.

Cultivates productive working relationships

Nurtures Internal and External Relationships

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.

Facilitates Cooperation and Partnerships


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.

Values Individual Differences and Diversity

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.

Guides, Mentors and Develops People

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.



Exemplifies personal drive and integrity

Demonstrates Public Service Professionalism and Probity

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.

Engages with Risk and Shows Personal Courage

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.

Commits to Action

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.

Displays Resilience

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.

Demonstrates Self Awareness and a Commitment to Personal Development

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.

Communicates with influence

Communicates Clearly

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.

Listens, Understands and Adapts to Audience

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.

Negotiates Persuasively

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.

The Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework is an initiative of the Australian Public Service Commission, developed in collaboration with APS agencies.

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 Government and implement Government programs, including delivering services to the community. They have a particular accountability to ensure the delivery of outputs that 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, 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.

In 2001 the SELC Framework was unanimously endorsed by Portfolio Secretaries as relevant and valid for the SES.

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

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.

The Framework has many potential applications including:

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

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

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.

A flexible tool

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

The balance between and within the five criteria is dependent 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.



Further Information

Supplementary material to the Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework was developed as part of the research into the factors for high performance in APS leadership roles.

In 2003 this material expanded to describe the Capabilities in terms of what executive and senior executives from EL1 to SES Band 3 levels do when they are effective in their roles.

This documentation, in addition to further information regarding practical applications of the Framework, is available by contacting:

APSC Helpline 02 6272 3609

APSC website www.apsc.gov.au

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, cooperation 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 equality 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
- 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.