Next Generation Skillset

Case Study: Willowfork Fire Dept. Fort Bend ESD #2

Building a Structured Competency & Assessment Program for Next Generation Firefighters

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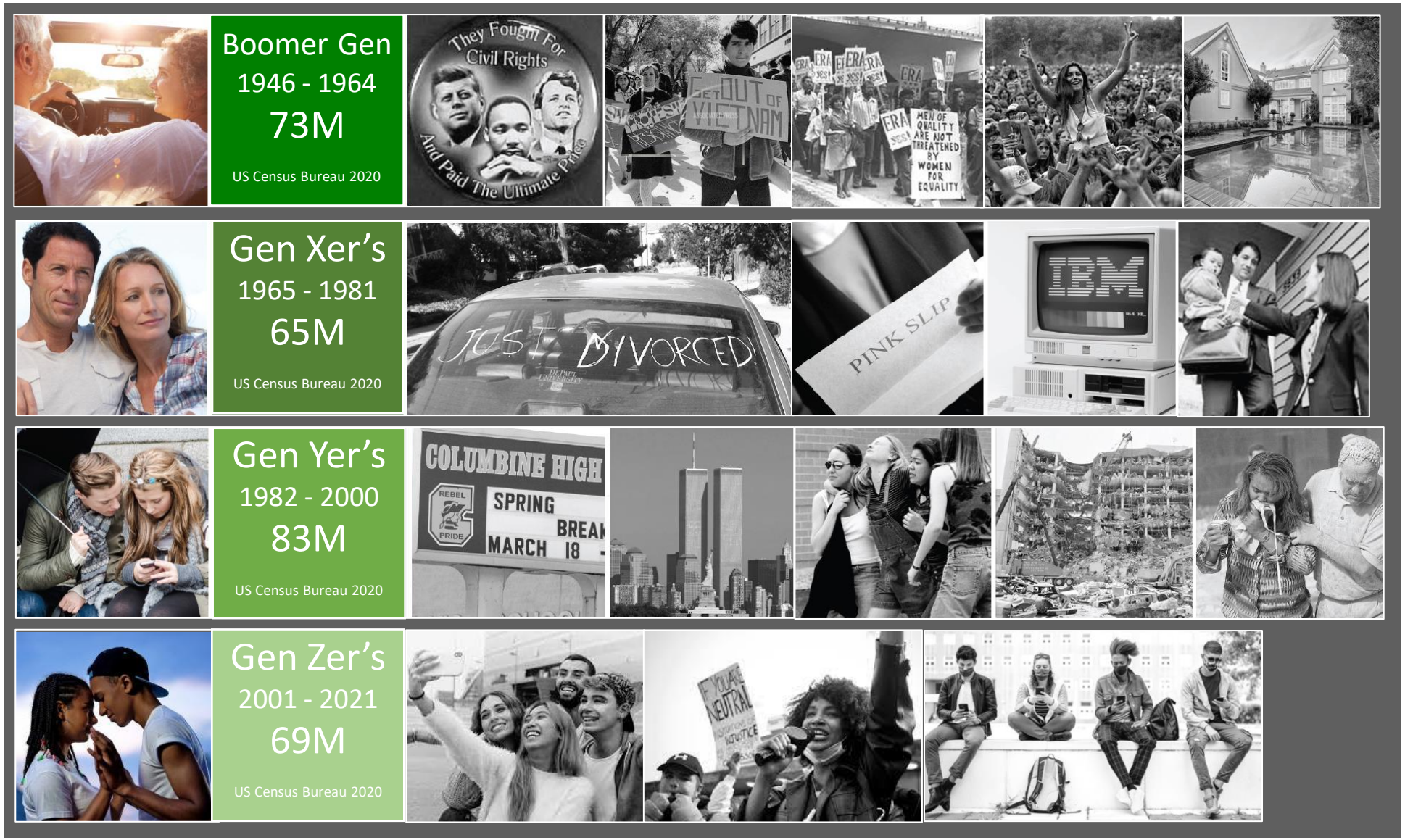
Background of the US Workplace

4 Generations in the US Workplace



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Toto – We're not in Kansas any more

Understanding our Next Generation Behaviors:

- Fastest quit rate of any generation 18–24-month avg.
  - #1 reason for quitting? "I hate my boss!"
- Need for affirmation in their work
  - #2 reason they leave? "No one is helping me learn & develop"
- Lack of patience to put in the 'sweat equity'
  - #3 reason you struggle to keep them? "I'll never get promoted here"

Deloitte Survey

Understanding our Next Generations Mindset:

- Technology savviness
  - Both Gen Y & Z have developed great skills with technology more than any other generation
- Short-term focus
  - Both Generations are focused on the here & now, vs looking longer term. They prefer being more agile
- Prioritizing Diversity and Inclusion
  - Both Generations more diverse and inclusive than pervious generations

Deskera Survey

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What Happens when all the “Boomers” are gone?

- For the first time in US history, our frontline workplace is in crisis
- Legal Jobs group, suggest that roughly 10,000 boomers are retiring each DAY.
- Forbes shows that Gen Y & Zer’s have been taught all their lives that “College” is the way for career success, which is why so many are not seeking “blue collar” jobs, even though many pay 6 figures

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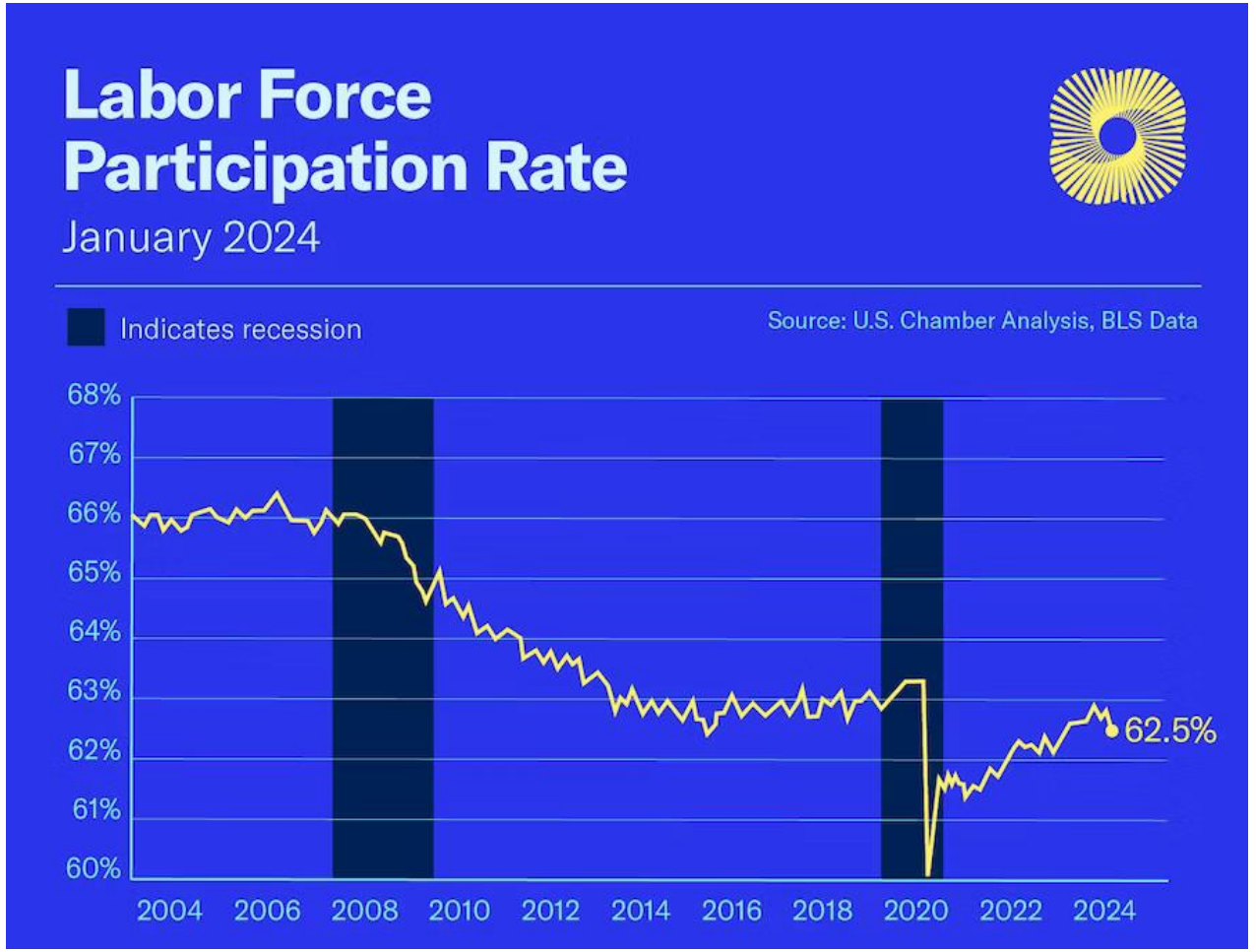
Next Gen Job Seekers are down



Understanding Why Developing Competency Matters

What do the Experts say Competency Is?

Competence means the ability to undertake responsibilities and to perform activities to a recognized standard on a regular basis. Competence is a combination of practical and thinking skills, knowledge, understanding and experience, and may include a willingness to undertake work activities in accordance with agreed standards, rules and procedures.

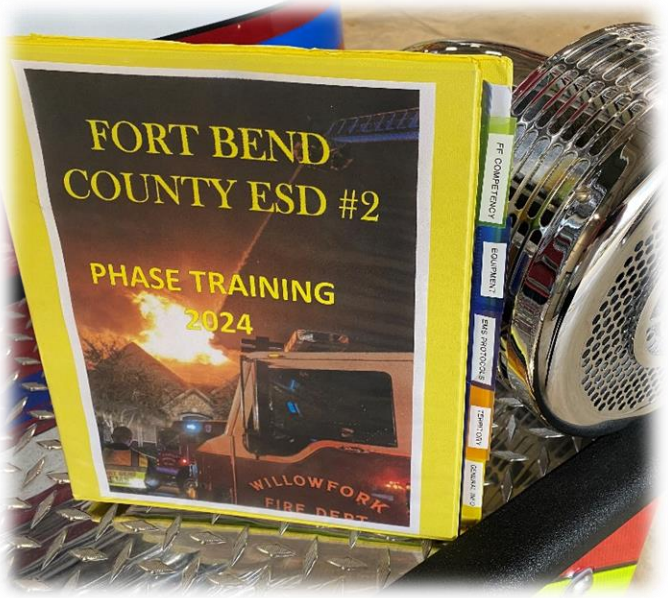
Competence depends on the context and the environment in which the activity is performed, and also on the working culture of the organization. In the work environment the standard of competence is the standard of work expected to satisfy a number of requirements, including business objectives as well as health and safety requirements.

The context, environment and culture are particularly relevant during a person's development program before their first competence assessment, and when seeking to address any subsequent sub-standard performance. Developing competence will not in itself guarantee safety, but it will improve the predictability of good performance.

The Office of Rail Regulation

Building a Competency Management Program

- Recognition of firemen aging out of the department
- Structured way to capture their “tribal knowledge” and document it
- Define the Knowledge & Performance requirements for each competency and list “Types” of Evidence a fireman can present to help prove competency – “The Standard”
- Create personalized binders for each fireman as a tool to learn and understand what they are rated against – “The Standard”



FORT BEND COUNTY
WILLOWFORK
FIRE DEPT
ESD #2

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Firemen's Learning & Development – Building Skillset

- As the new rookie or a seasoned firefighter who is promoting up to EO are ready, then Knowledge testing takes place
- If a knowledge test is failed, then additional training and retesting
- If a knowledge test is passed, then focus is on questions that were missed
- All this leads up to performance assessments by the trained assessor, against the position competency standard

FORT BEND COUNTY WILLOWFORK FIRE DEPT ESD #2

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ESD#2 Fireman's Competency Profile

Learning Units	Core Competency Elements		
Safety	Understanding Hazard ID – Energy Sources	Applying Controls to Mitigate Risk	Safe Work Practices & PPE
Tools	Use of Power Tools	Use of Hand Tools	
Critical Thinking	Reacting vs Thinking	Analyzing & Evaluating	Making a Decision

FORT BEND COUNTY WILLOWFORK FIRE DEPT ESD #2

Phase 1 – Probationary Fireman Essential Competency Elements

Fire Fighter	Fire Hydrant Operation	Turnout Evolution	RIT Pack	Saw Start & Ladder Climb	Crosslay Deployment	Apartment Lay Dep'mt	16' Ladder Deployment	Eng.81 Tools & Equipment	Tower 81 Tools & Equipment	Battalion 80 Tools & Equipment	Booster 82 Tools & Equipment	
EMT	Acute Coronary Syndrome	Allergic Reaction	Asthma	CHF	Epinephrine Administration	Intramuscular Subcutaneous Medicine	Nitroglycerin Administration	Pulmonary Edema				
Territory	Station 1 Area	Station 2 Area	Station 3 Area	Target Hazards								

Phase 2 – Engineer/Operator Essential Competency Elements

Pumper	Drivers License	Behind the Wheel Engine	Emer. Ops Drivers Course	TCFP EO Pumper Certificate	Pumper Operations	CASF Operations	Relay Pumping	Foam Eductor Operations	Drafting	Turbo Drafting Operations	Heavy Truck Check
Aerial	Behind the Wheel Tower	TCFP EO Aerial Certificate	Stokes Basket Rope Ops	Stokes Basket Operations	Aerial Waterway Operations	Heavy Truck Check					

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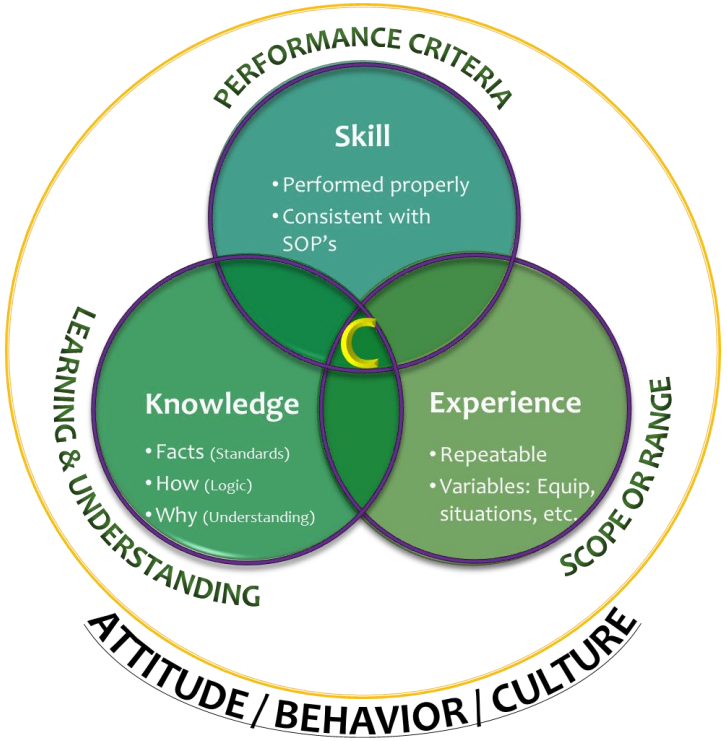
Rolling out the Program

- Our initial rollout was started in 2023 with hiring of 6 new full-time rookies
- They received their personalized Phase Grade binders as part of the onboarding process
- Our rookie training (online, classroom, hands-on, OJT) was linked to the required competencies listed in their competency binder
- After initial training was completed they stood for knowledge & performance assessments by trained competency assessors – measured against the department competency standard



Understanding Workplace Assessment

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Is an Assessment Just a Written Exam?

- **YES** & **NO** – An exam only shows level of Knowledge, where Performance shows they can apply the knowledge to actual work
- In the field of Occupational Competence, a trained & qualified assessor looks at both the **knowledge** and **performance** of an individual
- It's very important to understand "Supervisor Bias" when conducting any type of an assessment on direct reports
- Experts tell us, to gain the most accurate results of an individual's level of competence, assessment should be conducted by an independent assessor

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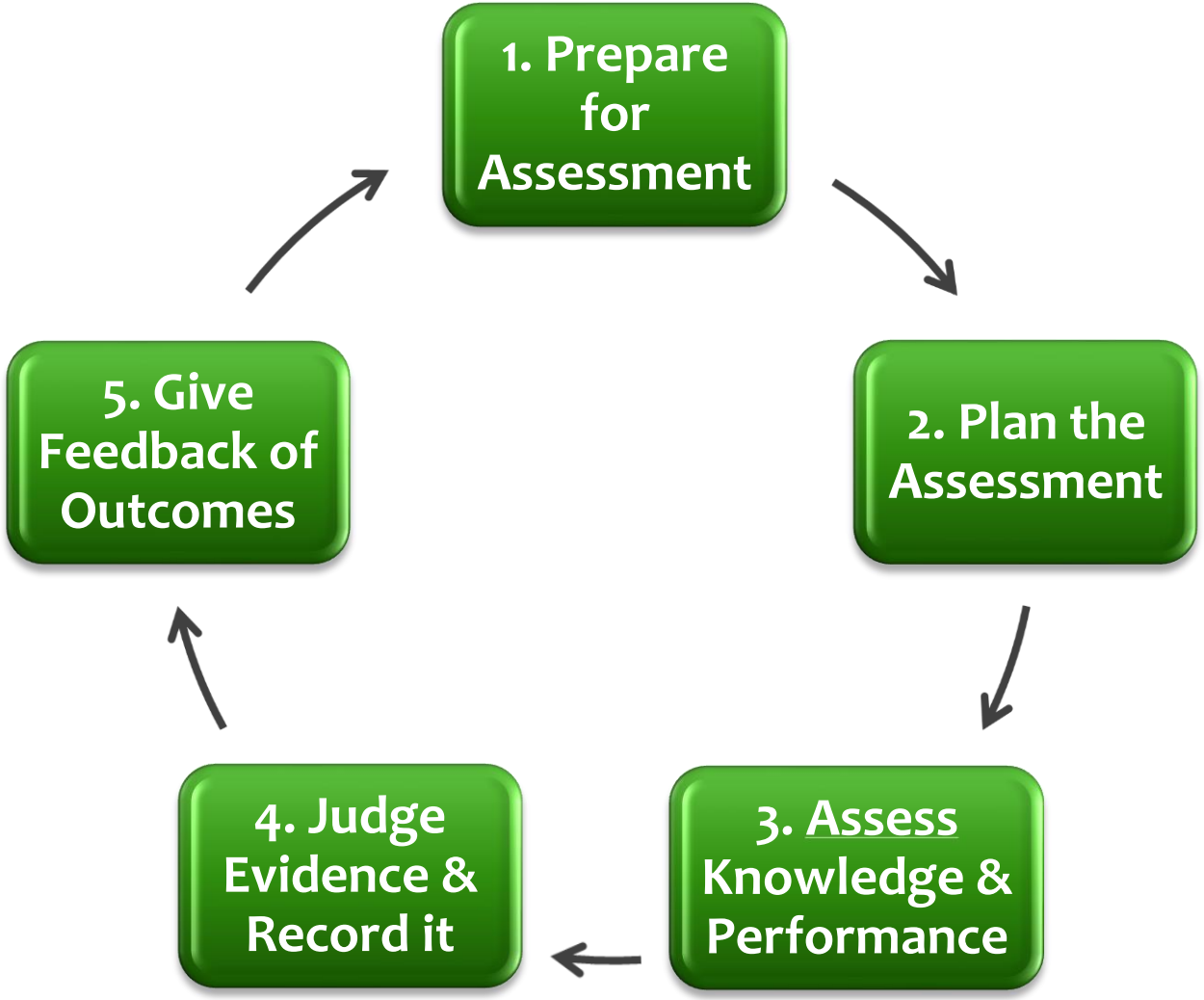
Assessor Training for the WFFD

- Decision was made by the WFFD senior leadership to train all their captains as assessors in the program
- We ran our 1 Day training course on how to conduct a workplace assessment
- Going forward, captains will be responsible to conducting assessments based on the WFFD Competency Standard

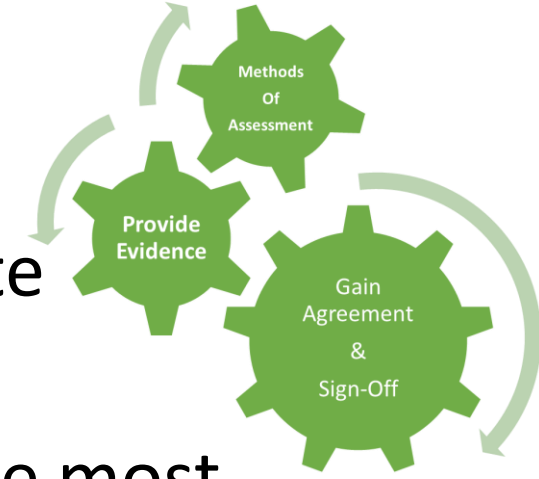
How the Assessment Cycle Works



Preparing for the Assessment

- Is the candidate ready for the assessment?
- What information does the candidate need?
  - Concepts and principles of assessment
  - Competency Standard to be assessed against
  - Evidence requirements
  - Department requirements
- Understand how the candidate's job role and work environment can influence the assessment

Planning the Assessment



- Identify evidence that is valid and authentic for candidate
- Plan to use reliable assessment methods that provide the most evidence:
  - Questioning, Observation, Demonstration, Simulation, Work Products, Testimony, Recognized Prior Learning (Certificates)
- Assure the candidate is informed & understands how the assessment will be measured against the “Standard” and not your “personal opinion”

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Assessing Knowledge & Performance

- Identify & gather knowledge evidence:
  - Questions based on “Standard” to meet the requirements
  - Ask questions face-to-face or with written exams
  - Ensure all questions and answers are based on standard, auditable and recorded properly

- Identify & gather performance evidence:
  - Observe work open-mindedly, without interrupting (defer judgment)
  - Assure that work observations and products are authentic and valid
  - Obtain testimony from reliable witnesses if necessary
  - Consider other evidence where appropriate
  - Ensure all evidence is auditable and recorded

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Judging Evidence & Recording Outcomes

When judging evidence:

- Does it meet some part of the standard (VALID)?
- Does the work product belong to the individual (AUTHENTIC)?
- Is the evidence capable of producing consistent results (RELIABLE)?
- Does the evidence reflect the work environment (CURRENT)?
- Can it meet all the requirements of the standard over time (SUFFICIENT)?

Recording Assessment Outcome – IS IT:

- Factual?
- Objective & Against the Standard?
- Auditable?

NEVER USE "I" IN YOUR ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

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Providing Feedback of Outcomes

- Constructive feedback is information-specific, issue-focused, & based on observations
- When giving constructive feedback, don't fall into the trap of using praise or criticism
- Be direct when delivering your message - Get to the point & avoid beating around the bush
- Both negative & positive feedback should be given in a straightforward neutral manner
- Give the feedback person-to-person, not through messengers of technology
- State observations, not interpretations

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO FOLLOW UP BY EMAIL OR PHONE:

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