

Competency Set – Soils and Environment Advisor

Task-Focused Competencies

Technical Knowledge

Definition: The dissemination and application of expert knowledge to enhance farm and enterprise performance is the core purpose of the adviser role. He/she must stay abreast of current best practises and research. He/she must be able to identify and shape the best practical applications of this knowledge in order to enhance the capabilities of farms & other enterprises. He/she must act as an effective conduit to the latest thinking and methods that may give farmers a competitive edge or sustain their viability

Elements:

- Demonstrates up to date knowledge of relevant advisory areas.
- Is able to demonstrate how to apply this knowledge to enhance farming techniques and commercial return to the farm.
- Ability to focus on adding the most value through the advisory process.

Work and Project Organisation

Definition: The adviser must be able to plan and organises events, projects, work – plans and other logistical activities. He /she must be able to match resources to needs and to schedule effectively. This involves being well organised at a personal and professional level, demonstrating strong prioritising skills and working in a way that produces best value for the resources expended.

Elements:

- Planning and organizing work schedules, activities and events.
- Making efficient use of time and prioritising key value adding activities.
- Tracking and monitoring progress against personal and programme targets.

Quality and Customer Service Focus

Definition: Puts a high importance and focus on responding to customer needs and providing a reliable and high quality service; Works to a high standard of accuracy, precision, attention to detail and follow through; Ensures that recording and administrative aspects of the role are done to a high level of compliance.

Elements:

- Responding to and prioritising customer issues.
- Adhering to high standards.
- Monitoring own customer responsiveness and compliance with standards.

Analysis, Problem Solving and Decision Support

Definition: The adviser must be able to apply analytical tools and methods and other structured templates to help farmers to identify the current performance status, the critical areas for development and the potential options going forward. He/she must be able to observe and interpret performance data and trends and model a range of possible scenarios for the future.

Examines a range of opportunities and potential solutions. Looks elsewhere for models and new ways of doing things. Encourages lateral thinking among his/her clients and models this on occasions. Challenges the client to identify and implement the most appropriate solution.

Elements:

- Collecting, analysing and interpreting information.
- Judging performance objectively to identify critical issues.
- Analysing the root causes of problems.
- Developing solution options using lateral thinking.
- Constantly aware of 'what if' scenarios and the range of potential opportunities in the environment.
- Ensuring identified solutions are compatible with the client's objectives and resources.

Empathy and Client Understanding

Definition: The adviser must develop a strong and empathic understanding with the farmer; He/she needs to spend time exploring the issues and farming context in order to fully understand the farmer's situation; He/she should be cogniscent of and sensitive to the impact that farming practice decisions will have on the broader lifestyle of farmers and their families

Elements:

- Spends time developing engagement and becoming familiar with the farm situation.
- Looks at things from farmer's perspective and shows good empathy skills.
- Explores the wider context of the farmer's situation.
- Is aware of the wider impact that decisions on farming practice will have on the lifestyle and circumstances of the farm family.

Interactional Competencies

Negotiation, Facilitation and Influencing through Group Activities

Definition: Puts across advice and guidance in a way that effectively influences the thinking of others; Facilitates groups to work productively and maximise learning. Instills a sense of confidence and positive thinking in clients and colleagues. Uses group dynamics to maximise learning and engender change.

Elements:

- Persuades and influences others in productive directions.
- Facilitates and enhances group discussion and learning.
- Instills a sense of positivity and a “can do” attitude in others.
- Constructively challenges participants to enhance their performance and hence provide the basis for development.
- Official mechanism for technology transfer.
- Uses group dynamics to a positive effect.

Collaboration and Teamwork

Definition: Works cooperatively with others to achieve shared objectives; Shares skills and work collaboratively with colleagues from other disciplines; Provides support and advice to others.

Elements:

- Working in an open and collaborative way with colleagues.
- Proactively fostering opportunities to work with colleagues from other disciplines.

Relationship Building and Engagement Skills

Definition: Develops rapport and understanding with clients; Builds and sustains positive working relationships.

Elements:

- Builds rapport and engagement with clients/customers to develop trust.
- Respects others and treats them with dignity.

Communication, Education, and Knowledge Transfer

Definition: Provides an information transmission, advisory and educational contribution to clients and colleagues that is informative, relevant, up to date and timely in its delivery. Provides advice in a manner that is specific and value-adding to the particular context. Develops tools and templates to enhance the practical application of concepts and new knowledge; Proactively looks for opportunities to share knowledge, critical processes, and skills with colleagues.

Elements:

- Providing information and advice using a variety of methods and tools.
- Passing on knowledge and expertise to colleagues.
- Effective and authoritative communication of relatively complex information.
- Effective use of a variety of media to get messages across effectively.
- Effective facilitation of groups to maximise their productivity.

Personal Qualities Competencies

Proactivity and Drive

Definition: Takes a lot of personal responsibility at work and uses own initiative to address issues, resolve problems or come up with improved ways of working; Is quick to respond to customer or other issues that arise and yet also knows when to look for extra assistance or guidance.

Elements:

- Takes a lot of personal ownership and responsibility in the job.
- Takes the initiative on emerging issues.
- Suggests improved ways of working.

Flexibility and Openness to Change

Definition: Adopts an open – minded and flexible approach to the work; accepts and even welcomes change and new service initiatives; adapts quickly to changing circumstances.

Elements:

- Openness to new ways of working and encourages the same in others.
- Is flexible and adaptable as the situation requires it.
- Responds quickly as issues arise.

Continuous Professional Development

Definition: Keeping abreast of current and leading edge trends and thinking is critical to the credibility and value adding contribution of the adviser; Keeps abreast of the technical literature and developments; Uses technology to aid the acquisition of new knowledge, Attends learning events, seminars etc on a regular basis.

Elements:

- Updating knowledge and skills regularly.
- Networking to learn from others.
- Avails of coaching and learning resources from others.
- Actively participates in the PMDS process.

Positive Work Approach

Definition: Is able to sustain work effort and composure when working in a context of heavy demands; Develops positive ways of coping with pressure; Finds ways to work smarter rather than longer.

Elements:

- Works to a consistent standard and pace.
- Calmness under pressure or critique from others.
- Sticks to deadlines and maintains standards.

