

Competency Set – Specialist Advisor

Task-Focused Competencies
Technical Knowledge
<p><u>Definition:</u> The Specialist advisor needs to demonstrate both a deep level of specialist expertise and also a broad level of industry awareness. He must transform this expert knowledge into Intervention and development propositions that add value to the advisory service and enterprises. He/She must also be able to identify the potential for technological development and work through others in promoting an uptake of developments.</p>
<p><u>Elements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depth of expertise in a particular sector.• Breadth of industry awareness.• Development of added value intervention propositions.
<p><u>Behavioural Anchors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates a high level of specialist knowledge and expertise in a number of core areas.• Develops a highly effective advisory proposition based on this expertise and knowledge.• Uses expertise to make a distinctive contribution to the enhancement of enterprises.• Keeps abreast of the emerging and leading edge research.• Keeps abreast of market trends and the wider environmental issues that may impact on customers and the industry.

Work and Project Organisation

Definition: The specialist must be able to effectively plan and manage both short term projects and longer term development programs. He/she must be able to organise and delegate initiatives so that they can be delivered effectively by others.

Elements:

- Effective management of projects and organisation of program delivery.
- Delegation, coordination and liaison to facilitate program delivery.
- Organisation of own work to add most value.
- In-service training.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Effectively organises a range of projects and events to disseminate knowledge and advice to farmers and other clients and suppliers.
- Plans ahead effectively in order to organise longer term programs and projects that add value.
- Delegates project activities and enlists support from others in a systematic way.
- Sets out and prioritises work plans to maximise the impact of the role.
- Organises and accesses the necessary resources and support to sustain new programs and initiatives.
- Shows very effective coordination skills so that programs and projects are run effectively at one remove.
- Maximises opportunities to work through others in ways that enhance impact, productivity and collaboration (internally and inter-agency).

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.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Responds to client issues in a timely and positive manner.
- Puts time into fully exploring and understanding client issues and requirements.
- Applies a high level of attention to detail in his/her work.
- Checks compliance with regulations, criteria or standards in a precise and meticulous way.
- Double-checks the accuracy of information or advice that he/she gives to others.
- Takes personal responsibility for following through in a thorough and reliable way on client issues.
- Sets high standards for the quality of his/her own work.
- Carries out recording and administrative work in a timely, detailed and accurate manner.
- Demonstrates a high level of awareness and compliance in terms of the legal, ethical and safety standards in carrying out the role.

Analysis, Problem Solving and Decision Support

Definition: The specialist advisor must take a bigger picture view when developing interventions and development propositions. He/she must understand how the different aspects of the industry interact and work to enhance linkages and make a more systemic impact.

Elements:

- Seeing how the bigger picture operates and understanding the linkages.
- Develops programs and interventions that have a broader or more systemic impact.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Demonstrates sound on-site observational skills.
- Collects, processes and accurately evaluates data and information on current status and performance of the enterprise.
- Accurately interprets reports and technical information.
- Uses analytical and evaluation templates to objectively establish status and viability.
- Makes comparisons using benchmarks and measures.
- Makes well informed judgments about fitness for purpose or compliance with scheme criteria.
- Extrapolates the level of income and income support required to sustain economic viability.
- Identifies and models key trends & extrapolates from them.
- Quickly identifies the critical issues or elements in a situation or problem.
- Makes connections and sees the link between different issues.

Creativity and Innovation

Definition: The specialist advisor needs to be innovation and opportunity focussed so that customers and colleagues get the benefit of a fresh or new perspective on key issues. He/she should be evaluating, adapting and promoting best practice approaches from elsewhere.

Elements:

- Evaluation, adaptation and promotion of best development practice internationally.
- Scenario building and opportunity finding.
- Lateral and creative problem solving approaches.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Looks out for and applies good practices and models from elsewhere.
- Scans the environment for new opportunities.
- Thinks laterally, brings original and innovative ideas and frameworks to bear on issues.
- Develops scenarios and models options to evaluate possibilities.
- Identifies new areas of opportunity for clients and other stakeholders.
- Maps the root causes and consequences behind complex problems.
- Questions the status quo and asks how things can be done differently and better.
- Critically evaluates the current service to identify gaps and come up with improved processes.

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.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Challenges individuals in order to clarify “needs versus wants”.
- Helps others to recognise their areas of strength and weakness in a constructive and developmental way.
- Makes a well – argued case by providing evidential arguments & data.
- Puts forward well developed proposals and deals skilfully with objections.
- Creates an environment where others feel comfortable making a full contribution.
- Facilitates groups in a way that shows sensitivity to and understanding of feelings and emotions.
- Respects and explores differences of opinion, using skilful questioning to elicit views and clarify issues.
- Comes across as knowledgeable, authoritative and credible and is assertive and confident enough to express unpopular views.
- Speaks with confidence and conviction no matter who the audience is and is comfortable handling questions and thinking on his/her feet.
- Demonstrates confidence and ease when interacting with others at all levels.

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.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Works with colleagues and management in an open and transparent manner.
- Shares knowledge, information and data with colleagues.
- Proactively builds opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from other disciplines on projects & activities.
- Shows genuine respect and values the contribution of others.
- Provides technical or other support to colleagues.
- Involves colleagues proactively in issues and activities, introducing them or referring them on to clients.
- Suggests opportunities for cross-discipline working.
- Looks for opportunities to learn from colleagues from different disciplines.

Networking and Alliance Building

Definition: Develops rapport and understanding with advisors/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.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Identifies the needs and motives of other parties and plays into these.
- Builds relationships and breaks down barriers across the organisation to deliver a more integrated and comprehensive service to clients.
- Builds strong internal alliances with research colleagues and develops joint initiatives and approaches.
- Identifies and approaches other parties where there is potential for synergy and mutually beneficial collaboration.
- Proactively identifies industry partners to build alliances with.
- Identifies areas of common ground with external stakeholders and builds a common front on issues.
- Develops and sustains a wide network of colleagues within and outside the organisation.

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. Provides support to others in communications skills and techniques.

Elements:

- Providing information and advice using a variety of group methods (e.g. publications, written/electronic communications).
- 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.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Communicates with a high level of authority and credibility.
- Gets complex information across in a clear and concise way.
- Gives talks and presentations that make a memorable impact on their audience.
- Is comfortable and skilful in managing an audience (e.g. answering questions on his/her feet, changing approach or tack to match the audience response).
- Chairs and facilitates group meetings in a structured and authoritative manner.
- Uses a variety of media to get a message across effectively.
- Designs and presents media campaigns that have an effective impact on their audience.
- Coaches and supports advisers and other colleagues in how to present specialist content effectively.

Giving Guidance and Leadership

Definition: The specialist advisor must have a clear view on how the advisory service can add most value and be able to get this across clearly to others. He/she should work in an assertive and focussed way that gives a clear example to advisory colleagues.

Elements:

- Clarity of view [vision] for how advisory input can add real value.
- Clear focus on critical added value activities.
- Assertive presence and example to others.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Develops a clear and coherent view for how the advisory service can make the most impact & add most value in the specialist area(s).
- Identifies the current critical and priority development issues.
- Gives colleagues in the field a clear perspective on the critical issues to be addressed and the ways/tools to go about this.
- Communicates a clear and compelling view of how the advisory service can add value in the specialist area.
- Champions the applications of emerging research in a way that elicits support and buy-in from others.
- Gives a clear example in how he/she prioritises and focuses his/her contribution areas.
- Maximises his/her availability to support advisers in the field.
- Represents the organisation authoritatively and credibly with outside organisations.

Personal Qualities Competencies

Proactivity and Drive

Definition: The specialist must take a lot of ownership and initiative to maximise the contribution of the role. They must be prepared to respond incisively to issues and take assertive positions at times.

Elements:

- Takes a lot of initiatives to develop the service contribution.
- Responds incisively to issues.
- Takes and assertively holds strong positive views even when these are less popular or well supported.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Takes the initiative to identify new ways of providing support and intervention services.
- Anticipates issues and takes pre-emptive action.
- Responds incisively to critical issues as they arise.
- Is single minded and persistent in addressing objectives.
- Is willing to promote and champion new initiatives that have effects outside his/her own role.
- Takes calculated risks to promote a new initiative or development opportunity.
- Is forthright in expressing own opinion or unpopular views even in the face of challenges and opposition.

Leading and Driving Change

Definition: The specialist advisor must anticipate and positively embrace change as a constant in the work. He/she must cooperate and assist others to make changes happen on the ground.

Elements:

- Adoption of a positive outlook on change.
- Anticipation of the impact of changes on the service.
- Collaborates with colleagues to effectively implement change.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Presents ideas and views to management as to how the service should develop and change.
- Anticipates and tries to understand how the ongoing changes in Teagasc may impact on their area.
- Adopts a realistic but positive view of change.
- Promotes and encourages positive attitude towards change by highlighting the opportunities and potential benefits.
- Keeps colleagues and other stakeholders informed about change issues.
- Works collaboratively with colleagues to make change work.
- Ensures that agreed changes are implemented in an orderly and timely way.

Continuous Professional Development

Definition: The specialist advisor must update and train in their specialist areas on an on-going basis. He/she must maximise development opportunities and be open to mutual informal learning methods.

Elements:

- Putting time into ongoing professional development and updating in the specialist area(s).
- Maximisation of the development potential of PMDS.
- Effective informal learning style.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Puts time into updating his/her technical knowledge and skills.
- Updates knowledge and skills on a regular basis.
- Ensures that his/her Personal Development Plan from PMDS is relevant, specific and implemented.
- Puts time into environmental scanning to keep abreast of new developments and trends.
- Attends learning & networking events.
- Learns from colleagues and acts as an effective learning resource for others.
- Avails of informal coaching or mentoring opportunities.

Positive Work Approach

Definition: The specialist advisor must be able to work at a consistent and productive level in order to cope with the wide range of demands in the role. He/she must be resilient and determined in the face of obstacles or setbacks and persevere with efforts.

Elements:

- Adoption of a positive attitude at work.
- Consistency and productivity under pressure.
- Flexibility to adapt as the circumstances require it.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Is able to work at a steady pace even when the demand level is high.
- Responds calmly when in difficult interpersonal situations
- Accepts feedback and criticism in an objective and positive manner.
- Finds ways to deal with pressure from work demands.
- Delivers a substantial quantity of work within the required timeframe.
- Delivers most work within the expected timeframe.
- Delivers priority work to time and quality standards.