Competency Set – Research Officer

Task-Focused Competencies

Technical and Expert Knowledge

Definition: The core purpose of the Research officer role is to conduct field or laboratory based research and to report its findings to other colleagues and/or clients in industry. They must display a good knowledge in their subject area along with an understanding of the context within which the research could be applied.

Elements:

- Competent knowledge around subject matter.
- Competent knowledge of research methodologies.
- Knowledge of technologies available to support research.
- Understanding the context for their research.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Demonstrates a robust understanding of a range of research methodologies.
- Uses IT and Computer Applications effectively to support the research process.
- Knows the industry and the sector that they are working in.
- Demonstrates clear understanding of regulatory and legislative environment.
- Is a recognised expert in their specific subject matter.

Quality in Experimental Work

Definition: It is critical that the research officer's work is of the highest quality in terms of precision, accuracy and verifiability. The researcher needs to consistently apply a systematic and disciplined approach to the research process. The research officer must possess the intellectual capacity to analyse complex information and demonstrate robust scientific judgement in reaching conclusions

Elements:

- Conducting thorough background literature reviews and formulating hypotheses.
- Applying rigour in the research design and being conscientious and disciplined in adherence to research protocols and the recording of work.
- The ability to analyse complex scientific data and use deductive reasoning to form accurate conclusions.
- Being and showing a high level of accuracy and precision.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Demonstrates consistent and reliable attention to detail.
- Is conscientious and precise.
- Takes appropriate action in dealing with anomalies.
- Maintains accurate records.
- Keeps relevant documentation up to date.
- Complies with health and safety regulations and other relevant procedures.
- Monitors the quality of their work consistently.

Writing Skills

Definition: Researchers need to get written information across in a manner that is concise and clear. They need to report the results of their research in an informative and comprehensible way.

Elements:

- Writes clearly and concisely.
- Produces well structured and comprehensible reports.
- Keeping up to date in their subject areas.
- Tracking current and emerging trends in the market and the wider environment.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Compiles clear and succinct reports and proposals.
- Compose structured and well-argued proposals for funding.
- Constructs informative articles taking the needs of the audience into account.
- Adapts their writing style effectively for different audiences.
- Sets out compelling applications for funding/tenders that emphasise the value-add argument and address the specific award criteria.

Enabling Knowledge and Technology Transfer

Definition: Researchers need to ensure that they convey the research findings and their applications using a broad range of channels and formats. They must also use tools and templates to enhance the practical application of their research

Elements:

- Communicating research findings and their benefits across a broad front.
- Taking initiatives to present and promote research findings.
- Using tools and templates that support research dissemination in a practical and effective way.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Invests time in actively disseminating research findings in an effective manner.
- Takes the initiative to transfer knowledge to other groups.
- Shapes technical information into practical and useable formats.
- Ensures effective knowledge management around their own particular research area.
- Designs innovative programmes and workshops to disseminate knowledge and applications to others.
- Educates others on the practical applications and opportunities that may arise from research.
- Makes a clear benefits case for the application of research findings.
- Uses models and templates to enhance the applications of research.

Interactional Competencies

Effective Communication

Definition: Researchers need to ensure that they convey complex scientific information and its practical application in a clear and accessible way for a wide range of audiences.

Elements:

- Clear and concise two-way communication.
- Getting complex technical issues across in simple terms.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Explains research findings and scientific concepts in a clear and informative way.
- Gets complex or detailed information across in a simple and effective manner.
- Communicates in an accurate and timely way.
- Communicates succinctly.
- Finds the right level with diverse audiences.
- Presents in a clear and effective manner.
- Listens and clarifies well.
- Checks understanding.

Collaboration and Co-operation

Definition: The research officer should adopt a positive and cooperative approach to working within teams. Locally they must adopt a flexible and accommodating approach to working with others

Elements:

- Adopting an open approach to others.
- Providing support and assistance to others.
- Working in a cooperative way with others.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Consults others and seeks their views and input.
- Is willing to share information and data with others.
- Provides assistance, support or advice to others.
- Supports less experienced research officers and students in developing their skills and knowledge.
- Looks to involve other disciplines in the broader research process.
- Seeks to build relationships with other centres.
- Develops and sustains collaborative working relationships with internal and external partners.
- Negotiates skilfully around involvement or resources.
- Is prepared to compromise to achieve ‘win-win’ solutions.

Relationship Building and Engagement Skills

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

Elements:

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

Behavioural Anchors:

- Builds a network of contacts across all relevant stakeholder groups.
- Promotes a collaborative research agenda with industry.
- Initiates research collaboration with colleagues from other areas or disciplines.
- Works in a collaborative way with colleagues from other areas or disciplines.
- Builds alliances and synergies with other researchers.
- Networks with a wide range of professional colleagues.
- Promotes collaboration and learning communities.

Personal Qualities Competencies

Integrity and Resilience

Definition: Researchers musts operate with integrity in all aspects of their work – from reporting on research findings to delivering on commitments

Elements:

- Accepting ownership and responsibility for their work.
- Being honest in all aspects of their work.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Takes personal responsibility for his/her work.
- Admits mistakes and looks to learn from them.
- Is open and honest in communication with others.
- Meets the commitments that he/she makes.
- Demonstrates integrity in reporting research findings.
- Operates in the best interest of Teagasc.

Continuous Professional Development

Definition: It is important that researchers stay abreast of current thinking in order to maintain the relevance and value of their research. They should also invest time in further developing their skills by participating in ongoing professional development.

Elements:

- Pursuing professional development.
- Investing time in the Personal Development Plan process.
- Responds quickly as issues arise.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Is disciplined and methodical in pursuing professional development.
- Keeps up to date on developments in the field.
- Actively engages in the peer review process and treats feedback as a learning opportunity.
- Ensures that his/her Personal Development Plan (PDP) from PMDS is relevant and specific.
- Puts into effect PDP aspects of his/her PMDS plan.
- Avails of informal coaching or mentoring opportunities.

Flexibility and Openness to Change

Definition: On a day-to-day basis researchers need to be adaptable in dealing with changing requirements and shifting priorities. In addition they need to be open to new service initiatives, the introduction of new systems and processes or other organisation changes.

Elements:

- Openness to change and new thinking.
- Adapting positively to change.
- Providing suggestions for improvement in structures and methods.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Open to new ways of doing things.
- Willing to adapt to changing business requirements.
- Adapts to changing requirements/demands flexibly.
- Shifts focus between requirements as needed.
- Helps others to adapt to change and new challenges.
- Sees change as a opportunity to develop new skills.
- Actively provides suggestions for improvements in processes.