



**DIRECTIVE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY BASED ASSESSMENTS  
FOR MEMBERS OF THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT SERVICE (SMS) IN THE PUBLIC  
SERVICE**

**ISSUED BY THE MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In July 2006, Cabinet approved the implementation of competency based assessments for members of the Senior Management Service (the “SMS”) on a compulsory basis. In light of the approval there was a need to review the current practice of competency assessments.
- 1.2 A project was initiated in 2007 to develop new tools to accommodate different levels of management and to improve the current competency framework. The review of the 2001 competency framework and the assessment battery were undertaken with existing users to understand whether they are still relevant to the managerial work of the SMS members. This review was also used to identify areas of change in management since the establishment of the SMS initiative in 2001.
- 1.3 Consequently the newly developed tools and Competency Framework have emerged from an exhaustive process of interviews, desktop studies, surveys, focus group sessions and analysis. The data gathering exercise spanned across the SMS and culminated in a wealth of data on behaviours. In the process a wide range of stakeholders, subject matter experts and senior managers were consulted.
- 1.4 At the January 2010 Cabinet Lekgotla, Cabinet adopted 12 outcomes. In relation to this Directive, outcome 12 forms the basis as it focuses on “an efficient, effective and development orientated public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship.”
- 1.5 The core intention of competency based assessments is to identify skills gaps of members of the SMS and ensure continuous development through targeted training and development. It also assists in providing an independent, scientific analysis of a senior manager’s skills profile so departments are guided in the direction of continuous learning and development.

## **2. AUTHORISATION**

This Directive is issued by the Minister for Public Service and Administration in terms of Chapter 4, Part II (D) and Chapter 4, Part VI of the Public Service Regulations, 2001.

## **3. COMMENCEMENT**

This Directive takes effect on 1 April 2011.

#### 4. IMPLEMENTATION AND USE OF THE COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

##### 4.1 Implementation of competency based assessments as part of the recruitment process and to identify developmental gaps for new SMS members

- (1) It should be noted that departments must not send all short listed candidates for the competency assessment as part of the recruitment process as it is not to the benefit of the public service due to the cost of the assessment.
- (2) Following the interview process, the two most suitable candidates must be invited for the competency assessment.
- (3) Departments must utilize the results of the competency assessment in conjunction with the other processes associated with recruitment which include interviewing, reference checking etc. The result of the competency assessment must not be used under any circumstance as a single decider on whom to appoint to the post.
- (4) To avoid delays in the recruitment process, departments are advised to determine the method of communicating the results of the competency assessments to the selection panel in order for the selection panel to take an informed decision in recommending a suitable candidate (considering all aspects of the recruitment process).
- (5) The recruitment process must be looked at holistically, with competency assessments being one component of it. The performance/quality of the candidate throughout the process of recruitment must be considered before a final decision on appointment is taken.
- (6) Developmental gaps should be identified during the competency assessment process.
- (7) The identified developmental gaps must be incorporated into the personal development plan (PDP) of the candidate who is appointed.
- (8) Training must be prioritized to remedy the identified gaps and managed through the performance management and development system for the SMS via the PDP.

##### 4.2 Implementation of competency assessments for development of existing SMS members

- (1) Existing SMS members are subjected to assessments for purposes of identifying skills/developmental gaps.
- (2) The identified developmental gaps must be incorporated into the personal development plan of the existing SMS member.

- (3) Training must be prioritized to remedy the identified gaps and managed/monitored through the performance management and development system for the SMS via the PDP.

#### 4.3 Use of the competency assessment results by departments

- (1) Competency based assessments are aimed at primarily identifying developmental gaps of individuals.
- (2) It should be stressed that the intention of competency based assessments as part of the recruitment process is to determine developmental gaps of potential candidates to be appointed into the SMS. The aim of the assessment is to provide the department with a detailed report capturing areas of development. Competency assessments also form a component in the recruitment process which assists a selection panel in understanding the abilities of the candidate from an independent perspective. The competency assessment however should not be considered in isolation from other processes of recruitment as stipulated above.
- (3) The decision on whom to appoint to the post is the prerogative of the Executive Authority having regard to all aspects of the recruitment process.
- (4) The results of the competency assessments are valid for a period of one year (12 months) from the date of the last assessment. It is important for departments to re-assess SMS members after 12 months to ascertain the impact of developmental initiatives.

## 5. REPORTING

An Executive Authority shall submit a six monthly report on the implementation of the competency assessments on or before 30 September of every year and thereafter submit an annual report on or before 31 March of every year to the Minister for the Public Service and Administration.

## 6. STANDARDISATION

For purposes of standardization, the Department of Public Service and Administration (the "DPSA") conducts a national tender to determine a panel of service providers to perform competency assessments in the public service. The service providers have been trained and accredited independently. In addition the cost of the service is standardized and fixed among all approved service providers. Departments shall receive regular communication from the DPSA with regard to changes to the process, which include standardized pricing, list and contact details of approved and accredited service providers.

