



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

**ISSUED BY THE MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION IN TERMS OF CHAPTER 4, PART II (D)  
AND CHAPTER 4, PART VI OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE REGULATIONS, 2001**

## **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. In developing the SMS Competency Framework focus was placed on critical generic competencies, which senior managers are expected to possess, rather than functional/technical competencies, which are essential to a specific department or a specific job. This Directive must also be read in conjunction with Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook which focuses on Competency Framework for SMS.

## **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. The Directive applies to all SMS members who are expected to elicit generic managerial competencies as determined by their job profiles, and not pure technical specialists remunerated at the level of SMS who are not expected to perform managerial duties.

## **3. COMMENCEMENT**

This Directive took effect on 1 April 2011 and amended with effect from 1 April 2015.

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

##### **4.1 Implementation of competency based assessments and mandatory technical exercise as part of the recruitment process and identification of 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) Based on the recommendation of the panel, following the interview process and technical exercise, a maximum of four suitable candidates must be invited for the competency assessment. The top four candidates are determined by using the combined scores that each candidate achieved from the interview and the technical exercise as determined by the relevant department. A technical exercise must be determined by:
  - a. the Programme Manager for recruitment of SMS at level 13 and 14
  - b. the Head of Department for recruitment of Deputy Director-Generals
  - c. the relevant Executive Authority for the recruitment of Heads of Department
- (3) The technical exercise may take the form of either a written response to a technical question or a presentation on a topical issue relevant to the technical functions of the post. The respective technical exercise must be done prior to the interview. It is imperative that departments include in the advert for SMS posts, the following:
  - a. "All shortlisted candidates will be subjected to a technical exercise that intends to test relevant technical elements of the job, the logistics of which will be communicated by the department. Following the interview and technical exercise, the selection panel will recommend candidates to attend a generic managerial competency assessment (in compliance with the DPSA Directive on the implementation of competency based assessments). The competency assessment will be testing generic managerial competencies using the mandated DPSA SMS competency assessment tools."
- (4) Examples of how technical exercises may be crafted may be found in Chapter 5 of the SMS Handbook.
- (5) Departments must utilize the results of the competency assessment in conjunction with other processes associated with recruitment which include technical competency testing, 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.
- (6) 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 make an informed decision when recommending a suitable candidate (considering all aspects of the recruitment process).
- (7) The performance/quality of the candidate throughout the process of recruitment must be considered before a final decision on appointment is made. The decision on whom to appoint to the post is the prerogative of the

Executive Authority or delegated authority taking note of the recommendation made by the selection panel. It is also imperative to note that decisions are made with due consideration to the approved Employment Equity Plan and Human Resource Plan of the relevant department.

- (8) The results of the competency assessments are valid for a period of 18 months from the date of the last assessment so as to allow an individual ample opportunity to respond to developmental gaps.
- (9) Developmental gaps should be identified during the competency assessment process.
- (10) The identified developmental gaps must be incorporated into the personal development plan (PDP) of the candidate who is appointed.
- (11) 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 may be 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.

**5. MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING.**

- 5.1 DPSA shall monitor the implementation of this Directive through the annual reporting processes.
- 5.2 A Template for reporting on the implementation of this Directive will be provided to Departments.

**6. COMPLIANCE**

6.1 This Directive is issued in terms of the Public Service Act and as such an Executive Authority shall immediately take appropriate disciplinary steps against a Head of Department who does not comply with the provisions of this Directive and report to the Minister for Public Service and Administration the particulars of the disciplinary steps taken.

6.2 A Head of Department shall:-

- 6.2.1 Immediately take appropriate disciplinary steps against an employee of the department who does not comply with the provisions of this Directive;
- 6.2.2 immediately report to the Director General: Department of Public Service and Administration the particulars of such non-compliance; and
- 6.2.3 as soon as possible report to the Director General: Department of Public Service and Administration the particulars of the disciplinary steps taken.

**7. 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 as well as amendments to this Directive.

**8. GENERAL**

Request for deviation in respect to any part of this Directive may only be considered by the Minister for Public Service and Administration provided that such a request, citing the reasons therein, is in writing and signed by the relevant Executive Authority.