

COMMON SECTOR COMPETENCIES

FOR THE *Kansas City* REGION

A blueprint for workplace competencies addressing multiple industry sectors, customized to the needs of the Greater Kansas City region.



RISING

OUR SHARED VISION
FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY

KC Rising is a long-term vision for the greater Kansas City region to build capacity, bring existing businesses to scale and fully realize the Kansas City region's economic potential. KC Rising is regional in focus, but global in perspective. Launched in late 2014 by the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, the Kansas City Area Development Council and the Mid-America Regional Council, KC Rising focuses on three key drivers of the regional economy — trade, people and ideas.



THE CIVIC COUNCIL OF
GREATER KANSAS CITY



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Common Sector Competencies

An Educator's Introduction

By Dr. Doug Elmer, Vice President, PREP-KC

Regardless of where, what or how educators teach, we all have the same mission — to prepare our students for the future. A key part of how we envision our students' future success revolves around their ability to support both themselves and their families. However, significant shifts in the global economy, the prevalence and sophistication of technology and the impact of both of these dynamics on the national and regional workforce have generated uncertainty about the skills and knowledge students need in order to be successful in tomorrow's economy. KC Rising's Common Sector Competencies clarify the skills that are valued by employers and help teachers, schools and school districts align teaching and learning to the demands of the workplace.

The competencies provide educators with a clear set of skills, mindsets and knowledge that students need in order to compete for jobs in the regional workforce. In many cases, these skills are highly aligned with academic skills that state and local standards already prioritize. For other competencies, especially those that focus on workplace processes, educators will have access to activities, problems and assessments based on these Common Sector Competencies to guide teaching and monitor progress. Other competencies will complement students' academic learning by increasing their potential to compete and succeed in the region's workforce in the future.

Blending academic standards with Common Sector Competencies not only better prepares students for the workforce, it also provides the opportunity for deeper learning and mastery of academic skills and content. By integrating academic standards with workplace competencies, educators have the opportunity to create authentic assessments of student knowledge that require the creative, complex thinking that next-generation learning standards and evaluations require. At the same time, teaching and learning that blends real workplace competencies with academic standards can generate increased interest and engagement from students. This

increased relevance invites engagement that results in students retaining knowledge and skills beyond a single lesson, unit or grade level.

When educators integrate the competencies into traditional teaching and learning, the entire bistate region benefits from the investment. Businesses across the region are eager to collaborate with school districts to bring the Common Sector Competencies into the region's classrooms, and educators who are seeking partnerships with business and industry will find that projects incorporating the competencies are likely to attract the most interest and support from the region's employers. Students who are able to demonstrate these competencies will be more competitive when applying to community-based internships, summer programs and other extended learning opportunities. Additionally, the community as a whole will benefit from students, teachers and schools that apply the Common Sector Competencies to service projects and other hands-on learning opportunities that seek to address a need within the community.

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While we hope to see evidence of the competencies grow across every school district in the region, we know that each classroom, school and district is at a different place with this work. Many educators already emphasize some of these competencies with their students, and have a variety of instructional tools and methods to support integrating them into their teaching. Other educators are excited by the opportunity for integration, but are unsure of the best way to get started. Others may still need to be convinced that schools can or should take this step. The model described on the following pages gives us a baseline to begin this important work to move our region forward.

Common Sector Competencies

A competency is the combination of observable and measurable knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes required to successfully perform tasks in a defined work setting. Common Sector Competencies are the key strengths and essential qualifications for employee performance across key industries and sectors in the Kansas City region. The incremental cultivation of these skills and abilities in employees will reap exponential results.

To create this list, the KC Rising Human Capital Common Sectors Competencies Task Force surveyed established collections of competencies, identifying those which are readily taught and would have a significant impact on the workforce. The team also assessed job postings, looking for skills frequently requested by hiring managers, and consulted industry leaders about their competency needs.

FUNDAMENTAL CORE

PRICE OF ADMISSION

1

- Focus on the customer
- Drive results
- Collaborate
- Instill trust
- Plan and align
- Read for information
- Use basic applied mathematics

COMPETITIVE EDGE

3

- Manage complexity
- Value differences
- Think critically
- Listen actively
- Write effectively
- Be flexible and adaptable



ADVANCED LEADER

- Display courage
- Manage ambiguity
- Solve complex problems
- Speak influentially
- Self-develop
- Manage projects
- Attract and develop talent

2

- Demonstrate business insight
- Cultivate innovation
- Build effective teams
- Interpret and apply data

4

DEFINITIONS

The Common Sector Competencies model groups competencies based on needs identified across all sectors of the workforce.

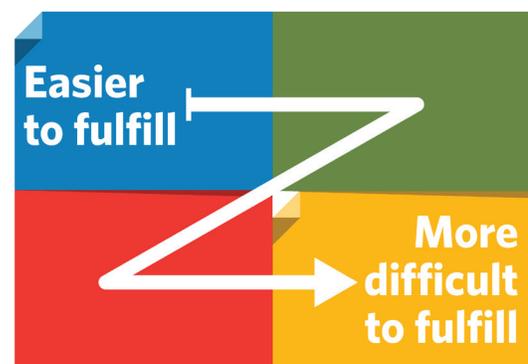
Fundamental core competencies are basic, entry-level skills candidates must have for hiring consideration.

Advanced leader competencies are necessary for advancement or management consideration.

Competencies considered **price of admission** are skills important across all areas and are easier to develop through training.

Competencies in the **competitive edge** group are less intuitive, more difficult to develop and are in short supply.

As a result, competencies in quadrant **1** are easier to fulfill, while those in quadrant **4** are more difficult.



FUNDAMENTAL CORE ■ PRICE OF ADMISSION

At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

Focus on the customer

Builds strong customer relationships and delivers customer-centric solutions.

What does it look like?

- Gains insight into customer needs.
- Identifies opportunities that benefit the customer.
- Builds and delivers solutions that meet customer expectations.
- Establishes and maintains effective customer relationships.

Drive results

Ensures accountability and consistently achieves results, even under tough circumstances.

What does it look like?

- Acts with a clear sense of ownership.
- Takes personal responsibility for decisions, actions and failures.
- Has a strong bottom-line orientation.
- Persists in accomplishing objectives despite obstacles and setbacks.
- Establishes a track record of achieving goals successfully.
- Pushes self and helps others achieve results.

Collaborate

Builds partnerships and works collaboratively with others to meet shared objectives.

What does it look like?

- Works cooperatively with others across the organization to achieve shared objectives.
- Represents own interests while being fair to others and their areas.
- Partners with others to get work done.
- Credits others for their contributions and accomplishments.
- Gains trust and support of others.

Instill trust

Gains the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity and authenticity.

What does it look like?

- Follows through on commitments.
- Seen as direct and truthful.
- Keeps confidences.
- Practices what he/she preaches.
- Shows consistency between work and actions.

Plan and align

Plans and prioritizes work to meet commitments aligned with organizational goals.

What does it look like?

- Sets objectives to align with broader organizational goals.
- Breaks down objectives into appropriate initiatives and actions.
- Stages activities with relevant milestones and schedules.
- Anticipates and adjusts effective contingency plans.

Read for information

Understands work-related reading materials such as memos, directions, policies and regulations to do a job.

What does it look like?

- Learns from text by determining the main idea or essential message.
- Summarizes ideas in his/her own words.
- Identifies relevant details, facts and specifications.
- Uses features of printed materials such as table of contents, introduction, summary, glossary and appendix.

Use basic applied mathematics

Uses basic mathematical ideas and techniques to solve practical, work-related problems.

What does it look like?

- Makes reasonable estimates and approximations without a calculator.
- Uses basic numerical concepts such as whole numbers, fractions and decimals in practical situations.
- Uses tables, graphs, diagrams and charts to obtain and convey quantitative information.
- Understands and uses appropriate techniques of probability and statistics such as ratio, percentage, mean, median, etc.
- Selects the appropriate arithmetic operation for the task.

ADVANCED LEADER • PRICE OF ADMISSION

At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

Display courage

Steps up to address difficult issues, saying what needs to be said.

What does it look like?

- Readily tackles tough assignments.
- Faces difficult issues and supports others who do the same.
- Provides direct and actionable feedback.
- Is willing to champion an idea or position despite dissent or political risk.

Manage ambiguity

Operates effectively, even when things are not certain or the way is not clear.

What does it look like?

- Deals comfortably with the uncertainty of change.
- Effectively handles risk.
- Decides and acts without the total picture.
- Is calm and productive, even when things are up in the air.
- Deals constructively with problems that do not have clear solutions or outcomes.

Solve complex problems

Identifies complex problems and reviews related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.

What does it look like?

- Identifies many possible causes of a problem.
- Approaches a complex task or problem by breaking it down into its component parts, considering each part in detail.
- Identifies a set of features, parameters or considerations to take into account in making a decision.

Speak influentially

Talks to others to convey information effectively and persuade them to change their minds or behavior.

What does it look like?

- Organizes and expresses ideas clearly and concisely in oral speech.
- Tailors content of speech to the level and experience of the audience, presenting information that will have a strong impact on the audience.
- Uses appropriate examples and reasoning to substantiate a point of view.
- Selects stories, analogies and examples to illustrate a point.

Self-develop

Self-identifies the need to improve knowledge or skills and systematically acquires new attitudes, concepts, knowledge or skills that result in improved performance at work.

What does it look like?

- Assesses own knowledge, skills and abilities accurately, identifying opportunities for personal growth.
- Sets well-defined and realistic personal goals and is motivated to learn.
- Monitors progress toward goal attainment and motivates self through goal achievement.
- Exhibits self-control and responds to feedback unemotionally and non-defensively.

Manage projects

Manages financial, material and personnel resources, as well as one's own time and the time of others, to get the work done.

What does it look like?

- Determines how money will be spent and accounts for those expenditures.
- Obtains and sees to the appropriate use of equipment, facilities and materials needed.
- Motivates, develops and directs people as they work, identifying the best people for the job.

Attract and develop talent

Attracts and develops talents to meet both his or her career goals and current and future business needs.

What does it look like?

- Attracts and selects diverse and high-caliber talent.
- Is a good judge of talent.
- Places a high priority on developing others.
- Develops others through coaching, feedback, exposure and stretch assignments.
- Aligns employee career development goals with organizational objectives.
- Encourages people to accept development moves.

FUNDAMENTAL CORE ▪ COMPETITIVE EDGE

At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

Manage complexity

Makes sense of complex, high quantity and sometimes contradictory information to effectively solve problems.

What does it look like?

- Asks the right questions to accurately analyze situations.
- Acquires data from multiple and diverse sources when solving problems.
- Uncovers root causes to difficult problems.
- Evaluates pros and cons, risks and benefits of different solutions.

Value differences

Recognizes the value different perspectives and cultures bring to an organization.

What does it look like?

- Seeks to understand different perspectives and cultures.
- Contributes to a work climate where differences are valued and supported.
- Applies others' diverse experiences, styles, backgrounds and perspectives to get results.
- Is sensitive to cultural norms, expectations and ways of communicating.

Think critically

Uses logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.

What does it look like?

- Makes systematic comparisons of two or more alternatives.
- Notices inconsistencies in available information.
- Weighs costs, benefits, risks and chances for success in making a decision.
- Determines the priority of things to be done.



3

Listen actively

Mindfully hears and comprehends the meaning of words spoken by another person.

What does it look like?

- Gives full attention to what other people are saying.
- Takes time to understand the points being made, asks questions as appropriate.
- Does not interrupt at inappropriate times.

Write effectively

Communicates effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.

What does it look like?

- Organizes and expresses ideas clearly in written communication.
- Tailors written communication to effectively reach an audience.
- Uses graphics or other aids to clarify complex or technical information.
- Uses appropriate arguments, examples and citations to support a point of view.

Be flexible and adaptable

Open to change (positive or negative) and able to adapt to considerable variety in the workplace.

Possesses the maturity, poise and restraint to cope with pressure, stress, criticism, setbacks, personal and work-related problems.

What does it look like?

- Demonstrates openness to new organizational structures, procedures and technology.
- Able to see the merits of other perspectives.
- Willing to modify a strongly held position in the face of contrary evidence.
- Switches to a different strategy when an initially selected one is unsuccessful.

ADVANCED LEADER • COMPETITIVE EDGE



At this level of the Common Sector Competencies model, an individual is able to:

Demonstrate business insight

Applies knowledge of business and the marketplace to advance the organization's goals.

What does it look like?

- Knows how businesses work and how organizations make money.
- Keeps up with current and possible future policies, practices and trends in the organization, with the competition and in the marketplace.
- Uses knowledge of business drivers and how strategies and tactics play out in the market to guide actions.

Cultivate innovation

Creates new and better ways for the organization to be successful.

What does it look like?

- Comes up with useful ideas that are new, better or unique.
- Introduces new ways of looking at problems.
- Takes a creative idea and puts it into practice.
- Encourages diverse thinking to promote and nurture innovation.

Build effective teams

Builds teams with strong identity who apply diverse skills and perspectives to achieve common goals.

What does it look like?

- Forms teams with appropriate and diverse mix of styles, perspectives and experience.
- Establishes common objectives and a shared mindset.
- Creates a feeling of belonging and strong team morale.
- Shares wins and rewards team efforts.
- Fosters open dialogue and collaboration among the team.

Interpret and apply data

Identifies underlying principles, reasons or facts of information by breaking down data into separate parts, and evaluates information to determine compliance with standards.

What does it look like?

- Summarizes and organizes information for analysis and evaluates its relevance.
- Determines the best information to be communicated and the best methods for presenting it.
- Analyzes information across multiple sources.
- Constructs trends from raw data, tables or charts and summarizes.
- Extrapolates information when not immediately obvious or known.

Starting points

Integrating Common Sector Competencies into the classroom

For many educators, the biggest questions about the idea of integrating the competencies into classroom instruction may be “How do I do this?” and “Where do I start?” The following four instructional approaches and mindsets are suggested starting points to explore integrating the Common Sector Competencies into the learning process in classrooms, schools or school districts.

SIMULATION



Research tells us that students learn in deeper, more meaningful ways when presented with authentic problems, activities and assessments. Opportunities for authentic learning provide a powerful intersection of academic skills and Common Sector Competencies. As a starting point for integration, educators should consider how to create simulations, projects, role-play activities and other authentic learning and assessment methods that require students to demonstrate both course content and standards and Common Sector Competencies in order to master the task.

COLLABORATION



Because so many of the competencies have an interpersonal dynamic, students must engage one another to learn, practice and demonstrate their mastery of these skills. This makes collaborative learning an excellent instructional practice for the integration of academic and workplace-based competencies. By asking students to work together to create solutions to complex problems, develop and exhibit projects and engage one another in creative endeavors, educators have the opportunity to provide authentic settings for students to develop interpersonal skills that are critical to the workplace.

At the same time, simulations and other authentic learning activities require more of a teacher’s time and attention when it comes to both planning and assessment. By asking students to work in teams, teachers not only facilitate the development of critical Common Sector Competencies, but also create time and bandwidth by reducing the number of student products or performances teachers need to evaluate.

EXHIBITION

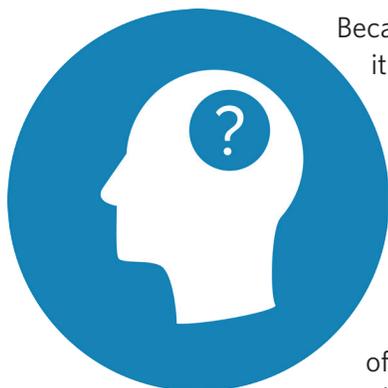


For learning activities to be fully authentic, students must have the opportunity to exhibit, publish or produce their work.

Student exhibition also requires students to demonstrate the competencies associated with delivering a final product to a client or customer, speaking in public and engaging in quality assurance. A myriad opportunities for student exhibition exist — from science fairs, debates and other competitive activities, to service activities, presentations to government officials and other community- and civic-oriented exhibitions.

Many members of the business, civic and non-profit communities, as well as parents, are eager to support, attend and participate in student exhibitions of authentic learning. These events also provide an excellent opportunity for educators to forge stronger relationships with students' families. Most importantly, when educators give students the opportunity to exhibit their work and be recognized for their accomplishments, we increase student motivation, engagement and ownership in academic work.

REFLECTION



Because so many Common Sector Competencies are process-driven, it's difficult for students and teachers to accurately assess student learning solely by evaluating the product that's created as part of the learning process. In addition, teachers and students need to engage in regular reflection focused on what students have learned through the successes — and failures — that occur as they work on a particular project, activity or assignment. By building reflection into the teaching and learning process, teachers give students the opportunity to engage in the culture of planning and reflection that many businesses expect their employees to adopt on the job. They also provide the opportunity for students to become more self-aware of their own strengths and needs, and to become better advocates for themselves in the process. At the same time, educators will find that engaging in reflection with students provides deeper insights into:

- What students have or have not learned.
- How students' attitudes and mindsets have shifted.
- Where opportunities to both support and challenge student learning may occur in the next project.



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