

COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

United Nations Resident Coordinator

Prepared for United Nations Resident Coordinator Issues Group

by

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Introduction

The following Competency Framework has been adopted for use in the evaluation of candidates for the role of Resident Coordinator within the UN system, and as a basis for evaluating ongoing Resident Coordinator effectiveness and Competency development.

The Competency Framework has four domains, each of which contains two Competencies:

Domain	Competencies
Leadership	Formulating Strategies
	Deciding and Initiating Action
Managing Relationships	Relating and Networking
	Presenting and Communicating Information
Managing Complexity	Analyzing
	Planning and Organizing
Adapting and Coping	Coping with Pressure and Setbacks
	Adapting and Responding to Change

Each of these Competencies is defined in detail on the following pages.

Leadership: Formulating Strategies

Summary

Works strategically to realize United Nations vision and goals; Sets and develops strategies; Identifies and develops positive and compelling visions of the UN programme's future potential; Takes account of a wide range of issues across, and related to, the organization.

Context

The Resident Coordinator operates in an environment where a strategic perspective is essential. Development programmes can last from one to ten or even more years, and relationships within Government or civil society can take similar lengths of time to build. Implementing the UN and country vision in this environment requires the ability to consider situations that are in the medium or longer-term future and that involve a large number of interacting variables, issues and stakeholder interests. Using this long-term perspective, (s)he must be able to develop strategic plans to implement the UN vision, taking into account future possibilities. (S)he must be able to develop or evaluate a long-term plan for the achievement of the vision, building in appropriate contingencies. (S)he must be able to anticipate and address underlying complex issues that have the potential to impact the implementation of the vision.

A Resident Coordinator may be seen to lack a strategic perspective when his/her preference is to focus on the immediate future or a narrow range of factors. This may result from a failure to see the connections between organizations and the environment, or a preoccupation with the detail or minutia of one aspect. (S)he may find it difficult to imagine possibilities of which (s)he has had no direct experience and hence, may not be able to consider contingencies.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Adopts a long term perspective on achievement of UN goals
2. Takes account of a wide range of country circumstances when formulating strategic plans, including (but not limited to) economic, social and political factors
3. Takes account of UN system capabilities when formulating strategic plans, including (but not limited to) availability of resources and technical capacity
4. Develops and communicates a strategic vision for the work of the UN system within own country of operation
5. In addressing humanitarian or other crises, considers long-term implications as well as immediate needs
6. Revises organizational and country strategy in light of changing circumstances

Leadership: Deciding and Initiating Action

Summary

Makes prompt, clear decisions which may involve tough choices or considered risks; Takes responsibility for actions, projects and people; Takes initiative, acts with confidence and works under own direction; Initiates and generates activity; Provides others with clear direction; Modifies decisions when necessary, in light of new information.

Context

The Resident Coordinator operates in a complex and shifting political environment and must therefore be comfortable using a wide range of decision making styles. His or her work with the country team must reflect an understanding of when it is appropriate to use consultative, participative or negotiative styles, and when it is necessary to take a more active and directive approach. Regardless of the decision making approach used, he or she must be willing to assess the risks, commit to a course of action, and take full responsibility for the outcome. He or she must establish a clear and compelling rationale for decisions taken, developing criteria which consider many factors such as country team approach, cost, benefits, risk, timing and buy in. Under conditions of urgency, decisions may have to be taken quickly based on limited available information and incomplete analysis.

The Resident Coordinator who is weak in this area may have difficulty using a range of decision making styles, preferring to rely on the style with which (s)he is most comfortable, even when outcomes suggest this is not appropriate. He or she may fail to take into account available information, or may inappropriately avoid making urgent decisions pending arrival of more information. Other Resident Coordinators may reach hasty or less cautious decisions, tending to see the majority of decisions as urgent. The Resident Coordinator who is uncomfortable with the responsibility of making decisions may feel afraid to take decisions in line with his/her own perceptions of the priorities.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Identifies urgent decisions, and makes decisions quickly when necessary
2. Makes necessary difficult decisions under pressure, even in the absence of complete information
3. Accepts responsibility for own decisions and actions
4. Acts on own initiative with confidence and without prompting
5. Accepts appropriate responsibility for staff within organizational parameters, including (but not limited to) security and workplace climate
6. Takes action quickly when appropriate
7. Takes calculated risks on the basis of adequate information and analysis
8. Modifies decisions when necessary, in light of new information

Managing Relationships: Relating and Networking

Summary

Establishes good relationships with stakeholders and staff; Builds wide and effective networks of contacts inside and outside the organization; Relates well to people at all levels; Manages conflict; Makes effective use of political processes to influence and persuade others.

Context

The Resident Coordinator needs to appreciate the importance of actively pursuing positive strategic relationships with a wide range of people (e.g. Government, NGOs multilateral organizations, bilateral/donor organizations, the private sector and the public). He or she must be able to identify relationships which can be initiated or improved for the attainment of common goals, and be willing to exchange information. The RC must actively engage with others to build and grow the relationship. (S)he must work to understand the priorities, needs, concerns and differences of others and relate to others in ways that are mutually rewarding and respectful. The RC needs to demonstrate tolerance and sensitivity to others to build and maintain meaningful relationships. (S)he must also be open, honest and trustworthy in his/her words and actions.

A weakness is indicated where the Resident Coordinator fails to establish networks within the host country, or once established, does not take the necessary steps to maintain the relationship(s). This can result from a lack of focus on shared interests; a preference for operating for the benefit of him or herself or their organization alone; the lack of confidence to seek out and initiate relationships with others; a lack of tolerance or sensitivity to the opinions, politics, gender or culture of others; and the failure to offer the support that the relationship requires. The Resident Coordinator may also be prone to making judgements about others on the basis of little information or superficial differences, allowing these judgements to influence their interactions with others.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Actively and successfully attempts to build rapport with people on a personal level during one-to-one contact
2. Uses an understanding of the broader organizational and/or country context to build rapport and understanding with staff, members of the UN country team and national stakeholders
3. Relates effectively with staff at all levels of the organization
4. Systematically and effectively builds networks of contacts inside the UN system and with appropriate stakeholders in the country of operation
5. Systematically builds support for own initiatives or plans within the UN system and with key country stakeholders
6. Facilitates the resolution of conflict between others
7. Uses tact and diplomacy to manage disagreements

Managing Relationships: Presenting and Communicating Information

Summary

Speaks clearly and fluently; Expresses opinions, information and key points of an argument clearly; Makes presentations and undertakes public speaking with skill and confidence; Identifies information needs of a target audience or population, and works systematically to address the needs; Projects credibility.

Context

A Resident Coordinator will be viewed as a good communicator when (s)he is able to identify the information needs of an audience or population, and frame a written or verbal message, regardless of the complexity, in line with the audience experience, background and expectations. Using terms, examples and analogies that are meaningful and politically or culturally sensitive can also assist his/her ability to gain and maintain the attention of the audience. The Resident Coordinator must feel comfortable communicating in a variety of mediums whether face to face or via technology (e.g., presentations, press, media, reports, telephone, e-mail and fax), to individual or groups, in formal or informal situations. (S)he can use a variety of techniques to ensure that the intended message was received, and will be most effective when (s)he picks up on the verbal and non-verbal cues of the audience.

Resident Coordinators may not be effective communicators if they do not accurately identify the information needs of an audience and work to address these. They may also be weak in this area if the relayed message is misunderstood, ambiguous or has little impact on the intended recipient. This may be caused by a tendency to rely on one communication style with which (s)he is comfortable, without appreciating the benefits of other styles. Alternatively, (s)he may simply not be aware of, or understand, the cues being given by the audience, making it difficult to adapt his/her style appropriately. Some individuals may experience difficulty communicating in high-pressure situations; they may place less emphasis on listening to the questions or the information in other's messages, leading to the use of analogies or illustrations which are not appropriate for the recipients' background, experience or expectations. Others may not actively think about the best way to structure the message and this may result in poor articulation of the key aspects of the message.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Speaks clearly, audibly and fluently in both individual and group communications
2. Expresses opinions and arguments in an uncomplicated way and without jargon
3. Effectively and quickly presents the key points of an argument, focussing on important rather than trivial elements
4. Presents effectively during formal public speaking, adopting an engaging manner and appropriate aids in order to capture and hold audience attention
5. Speaks with authority and conviction, projecting personal credibility and expertise
6. Identifies the information needs of a target audience and crafts communications to address the identified needs

Managing Complexity: Analyzing

Summary

Analyzes numerical data, verbal data and all other sources of information; Breaks information into component parts, patterns and relationships; Probes for further information or greater understanding of a problem; Makes rational judgments from the available information and analysis; Produces workable solutions to a range of problems; Demonstrates an understanding of how one issue may be a part of a much larger system.

Context

The Resident Coordinator must be able to organize information and data to identify or explain trends, problems and causes. He or she must be able to gather information from a range of different sources, pose the right questions and critically evaluate all the data to discover where there are gaps. He or she must integrate the information from various sources to recognize links (underlying issues), contradictions or inconsistencies. The Resident Coordinator must work with complex issues by breaking them down into their component parts to make systematic and rational judgements.

A Resident Coordinator may display a weakness in this area if he or she has difficulty tracking issues that are contained in a large amount of information or from a broad number of sources. Some may find it difficult to recognize the underlying issues or links, tending to see the information at hand as unrelated. Others may only look at the information from one perspective, thereby failing to gather the correct information or to recognize inconsistencies and paradoxes.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Makes use of all available data when conducting analyses, including but not limited to numerical and verbal information
2. Accurately identifies patterns and relationships in available information, including causes and effects, and draws appropriate inferences
3. Identifies information gaps and seeks further information when necessary, in order to obtain a greater understanding of a problem
4. Arrives at rational judgments from the available information and analysis
5. Produces a range of workable solutions to problems that meet the demands of the whole situation
6. Demonstrates an understanding of complex inter-relationships in the overall country situation and in the UN system

Managing Complexity: Planning and Organizing

Summary

Sets clearly defined objectives; Plans activities and projects well in advance and takes account of possible changing circumstances; Manages time effectively; Identifies and organizes resources needed to accomplish tasks; Monitors performance against deadlines and milestones.

Context

The successful and timely completion of UN activities may be crucial to the social and economic development of the host country. The Resident Coordinator contributes to this process by playing an active role in organizing the work of the UN system, and by working collaboratively with the country team and the host country to determine priorities and how to achieve these. This will include the development of timelines and milestones against which progress can be measured. Plans and strategies are more likely to be successful if there are contingencies prepared for changing events.

The Resident Coordinator may display a weakness in coordinating if (s)he does not place sufficient emphasis on planning and completion of tasks, and fails to appropriately consult with or otherwise include stakeholders in the process. Failure to achieve desired results in a timely manner may be caused by a failure to recognize the importance of using his/her time effectively; a preference to plan with minimal detail; or a tendency to deviate from the agreed plan. This can also result from a lack of understanding about the time, support and resources required to complete a task. Hence, while (s)he follows the implementation plan, the plan in itself may be inaccurate. This may also be evidenced by conflicting schedules for tasks and activities for individuals and organizations.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Identifies priorities and sets clearly defined and challenging objectives and action steps
2. Plans activities and projects well in advance when this is possible and appropriate
3. Responds effectively to crises and emergencies by quickly developing appropriate action plans
4. Develops action plans that take account of potential changing circumstances and difficulties
5. Allocates appropriate timescales for activities and sets achievable target dates for task or project completion
6. Establishes milestones or other metrics for measuring progress against established plans, and monitors progress systematically
7. Identifies and organizes the resources needed to accomplish identified tasks
8. Manages own time effectively

Adapting and Coping: Coping with Pressures and Setbacks

Summary

Works productively in a high pressure environment; Keeps emotions under control during difficult situations; Balances the demands of work and personal life; Maintains a positive outlook at work; Handles criticism well and learns from it

Context

The operating environment of a Resident Coordinator will often include conditions with potential for emotional stress (e.g. political conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, antagonistic interpersonal situations, deadlines, staffing issues, etc.). Managing these situations effectively requires a Resident Coordinator both to remain externally composed and also to deal with his/her internal feelings of anxiety / stress. He or she must remain calm and deliberate to assess the situation, seek solutions and carry them out when confronted by emergencies, work-related stress, opposition from others and conflict. An optimistic outlook can help the Resident Coordinator to view issues as challenges rather than difficulties. He or she is more likely to persevere in the face of adversity if he or she has a realistic understanding of his/her strengths and limitations, knowing what is achievable and where support will be needed. An effective Resident Coordinator will use criticism as an opportunity to develop greater effectiveness.

Weaknesses in managing pressure may result from a Resident Coordinator having an unrealistic view of his/her strengths and limitations. He or she could fail to seek support when it is necessary due to an unrealistically optimistic view of a situation, or the belief that a 'successful' Resident Coordinator should not openly admit to needing support. Some individuals may have a predilection to view situations pessimistically or become very anxious when an important event occurs. A less effective Resident Coordinator may respond to criticism defensively.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Works productively while under pressure from superiors, colleagues in the UN system, country stakeholders or the demands of day to day work (tight deadlines, difficult staffing situations, etc.)
2. Continues to work productively in the midst of crises flowing from natural events, political ferment or military action
3. Avoids emotional displays that may exacerbate difficult situations or interfere with effective working relationships
4. Maintains optimism at work, and recovers quickly from setbacks
5. Accepts criticism as an opportunity for development and increased effectiveness, and moves forward effectively
6. Effectively manages conflicts between personal life and work-related goals or responsibilities

Adapting and Coping: Adapting and Responding to Change

Summary

Adapts to changing circumstances; Accepts new ideas and change initiatives; Adapts interpersonal style to suit different people or situations; Shows respect and sensitivity towards cultural and religious differences; Deals with ambiguity, making positive use of the opportunities it presents.

Context

A Resident Coordinator will be confronted with changing country and organizational situations on a regular basis. In order to be successful, he or she must adapt quickly to changing political environments and to changed country priorities. In an environment with many legitimate stakeholders, the Resident Coordinator must be open to the opinions and perspectives of others, and must be prepared to adapt his or her own style to suit the situation. This is particularly important when confronted by cultural and religious differences. A successful Resident Coordinator is prepared to act in the absence of specific direction, and will use ambiguity in order to achieve objectives.

A Resident Coordinator may be unsuccessful when he or she sticks with an existing program or plan, even though circumstances have changed. Similarly, an unsuccessful Resident Coordinator may resist change, and may not be open to new ideas or perspectives presented by others. A Resident Coordinator who delays urgent actions or decisions in order to obtain concrete direction or approval is also at risk of failure.

Behavioural Indicators

1. Adapts approach to work in response to changing circumstances
2. Open to new ideas and change initiatives with respect to the UN system, delivery of country programs or other elements of the job
3. Identifies and adopts the most appropriate interpersonal style for different circumstances
4. Show respect for cultural and religious differences, and demonstrates an ability to see issues from the point of view of others
5. Works comfortably in an environment where definite information or direction is not available
6. Takes advantage of opportunities offered by ambiguity