

Competency Set – Business and Technology Advisor

Task-Focused Competencies

Technical Knowledge

Definition: The dissemination and application of expert knowledge to enhance farm and enterprise performance is the core purpose of the adviser role. He/she must stay abreast of current best practises and research. He/she must be able to identify and shape the best practical applications of this knowledge in order to enhance the capabilities of farms & other enterprises. He/she must act as an effective conduit to the latest thinking and methods that may give farmers a competitive edge or sustain their viability

Elements:

- Demonstrates up to date knowledge of relevant advisory areas.
- Is able to demonstrate how to apply this knowledge to enhance farming techniques and commercial return to the farm.
- Ability to focus on adding the most value through the advisory process.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of a core advisory domain.
- Demonstrates a broad knowledge across advisory areas.
- Keeps up to date with the trends, leading edge applications, practises and research in the core advisory area.
- Demonstrates in a practical way how this expert knowledge can be applied to enhance farming practices.
- Identifies and focuses on applying the knowledge areas and advice that will bring the greatest added value.
- Disseminates this expert knowledge in a systematic way using diverse communication channels.
- Develops a good understanding of current market forces and trends.
- Brings a practical perspective, application knowledge and new learning back from the enterprise and contributes in this way to the accumulation of expert and applied knowledge & concepts.

Work and Project Organisation

Definition: The adviser must be able to plan and organises events, projects, work – plans and other logistical activities. He /she must be able to match resources to needs and to schedule effectively. This involves being well organised at a personal and professional level, demonstrating strong prioritising skills and working in a way that produces best value for the resources expended.

Elements:

- Planning and organizing work schedules, activities and events.
- Making efficient use of time and prioritising key value adding activities.
- Tracking and monitoring progress against personal and programme targets.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Produces specific work plans and schedules (for self and to assist clients).
- Demonstrates well judged prioritising within plans and activity areas.
- Allocates protected (dedicated) time to the activities that add most value within the role.
- Organises events in a thorough and comprehensive manner.
- Plans projects and associated activity schedules in a systematic manner.
- Delegates tasks to others in a specific and clear manner.
- Regularly tracks and checks that work in progress in on schedule.
- Manages own time efficiently by multi-tasking effectively.
- Uses technology to best effect to make work organisation and delivery more efficient.
- Keeps administrative records in an accurate and timely manner.

Quality and Customer Service Focus

Definition: Puts a high importance and focus on responding to customer needs and providing a reliable and high quality service; Works to a high standard of accuracy, precision, attention to detail and follow through; Ensures that recording and administrative aspects of the role are done to a high level of compliance.

Elements:

- Responding to and prioritising customer issues.
- Adhering to high standards.
- Monitoring own customer responsiveness and compliance with standards.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Responds to client issues in a timely and positive manner.
- Puts time into fully exploring and understanding client issues and requirements.
- Applies a high level of attention to detail in his/her work.
- Checks compliance with regulations, criteria or standards in a precise and meticulous way.
- Double-checks the accuracy of information or advice that he/she gives to others.
- Takes personal responsibility for following through in a thorough and reliable way on client issues.
- Sets high standards for the quality of his/her own work.
- Carries out recording and administrative work in a timely, detailed and accurate manner.
- Demonstrates a high level of awareness and compliance in terms of the legal, ethical and safety standards in carrying out the role.

Analysis, Problem Solving and Decision Support

Definition: The adviser must be able to apply analytical tools and methods and other structured templates to help farmers to identify the current performance status, the critical areas for development and the potential options going forward. He/she must be able to observe and interpret performance data and trends and model a range of possible scenarios for the future.

Examines a range of opportunities and potential solutions. Looks elsewhere for models and new ways of doing things. Encourages lateral thinking among his/her clients and models this on occasions. Challenges the client to identify and implement the most appropriate solution.

Elements:

- Collecting, analysing and interpreting information.
- Judging performance objectively to identify critical issues.
- Analysing the root causes of problems.
- Developing solution options using lateral thinking.
- Constantly aware of 'what if' scenarios and the range of potential opportunities in the environment.
- Ensuring identified solutions are compatible with the client's objectives and resources.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Demonstrates sound on-site observational skills.
- Collects, processes and accurately evaluates data and information on current status and performance of the enterprise.
- Accurately interprets reports and technical information.
- Uses analytical and evaluation templates to objectively establish status and viability.
- Makes comparisons using benchmarks and measures.
- Makes well informed judgments about fitness for purpose or compliance with scheme criteria.
- Extrapolates the level of income and income support required to sustain economic viability.
- Identifies and models key trends & extrapolates from them.
- Quickly identifies the critical issues or elements in a situation or problem.
- Makes connections and sees the link between different issues.

Commercial Orientation

Definition: The adviser must have a well developed commercial awareness and understand the factors that contribute to a commercially successful enterprise. He/she should be able to identify and evaluate the commercial potential of various development options and advise the farmer accordingly. He must be able to share and impart this commercial viewpoint and thinking with the farmer. He/she must be able to achieve an appropriate commercial return from the delivery of advisory services to clients.

Elements:

- Helping farmers to make realistic and sound commercial decisions.
- Emphasis on added value.
- Improving farmer's business and entrepreneurial skills.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Shows a thorough, practical appreciation of the elements that determine commercial viability.
- Provides a commercial "map" and templates to assist the farmer to work out commercial and financial issues.
- Accurately deploys commercial analysis and evaluation methods.
- Identifies the critical factors that will maximise the commercial viability of the farm and enterprise.
- Identifies growth opportunities and new markets by tracking market opportunities & trends.
- Is realistic and pragmatic in estimating the return from an enterprise.
- Assists the farmer to be objective and thorough in risk assessment.
- Targets his contribution on areas that will bring the best commercial return to the farmer and/ or to the organisation.

Interactional Competencies

Negotiation, Facilitation and Influencing through Group Activities

Definition: Puts across advice and guidance in a way that effectively influences the thinking of others; Facilitates groups to work productively and maximise learning. Instills a sense of confidence and positive thinking in clients and colleagues. Uses group dynamics to maximise learning and engender change.

Elements:

- Persuades and influences others in productive directions.
- Facilitates and enhances group discussion and learning.
- Instills a sense of positivity and a “can do” attitude in others.
- Constructively challenges participants to enhance their performance and hence provide the basis for development.
- Official mechanism for technology transfer.
- Uses group dynamics to a positive effect.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Challenges individuals in order to clarify “needs versus wants”.
- Helps others to recognise their areas of strength and weakness in a constructive and developmental way.
- Makes a well – argued case by providing evidential arguments & data.
- Puts forward well developed proposals and deals skilfully with objections.
- Creates an environment where others feel comfortable making a full contribution.
- Facilitates groups in a way that shows sensitivity to and understanding of feelings and emotions.
- Respects and explores differences of opinion, using skilful questioning to elicit views and clarify issues.
- Comes across as knowledgeable, authoritative and credible and is assertive and confident enough to express unpopular views.
- Speaks with confidence and conviction no matter who the audience is and is comfortable handling questions and thinking on his/her feet.
- Demonstrates confidence and ease when interacting with others at all levels.

Collaboration and Teamwork

Definition: Works cooperatively with others to achieve shared objectives; Shares skills and work collaboratively with colleagues from other disciplines; Provides support and advice to others.

Elements:

- Working in an open and collaborative way with colleagues.
- Proactively fostering opportunities to work with colleagues from other disciplines.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Works with colleagues and management in an open and transparent manner.
- Shares knowledge, information and data with colleagues.
- Proactively builds opportunities to collaborate with colleagues from other disciplines on projects & activities.
- Shows genuine respect and values the contribution of others.
- Provides technical or other support to colleagues.
- Involves colleagues proactively in issues and activities, introducing them or referring them on to clients.
- Suggests opportunities for cross-discipline working.
- Looks for opportunities to learn from colleagues from different disciplines.

Relationship Building and Engagement Skills

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

Elements:

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

Behavioural Anchors:

- Builds positive engagement by showing empathy and developing rapport.
- Makes a good connection by listening to others and sharing own experiences.
- Treats people individually by adapting his/her style to suit them.
- Is sensitive to the impact of his/her behaviour and views on others.
- Develops a good understanding with individuals and provides positive affirmation and emotional support.
- Resolves conflict in a diplomatic and skilful way.
- Finds the right level & tone in communication with different individuals or groups.
- Anticipates individual or group issues and proactively provides support.

Communication, Education, and Knowledge Transfer

Definition: Provides an information transmission, advisory and educational contribution to clients and colleagues that is informative, relevant, up to date and timely in its delivery. Provides advice in a manner that is specific and value-adding to the particular context. Develops tools and templates to enhance the practical application of concepts and new knowledge; Proactively looks for opportunities to share knowledge, critical processes, and skills with colleagues.

Elements:

- Providing information and advice using a variety of methods and tools.
- Passing on knowledge and expertise to colleagues.
- Effective and authoritative communication of relatively complex information.
- Effective use of a variety of media to get messages across effectively.
- Effective facilitation of groups to maximise their productivity.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Provides information orally, electronically and in writing to individuals and groups in an accurate, concise, clear and timely manner.
- Provides a new or different perspective on an issue.
- Designs and formats practical and effective information guides, templates, tools, records and core process guidelines.
- Gives expert assistance with the completion of proposals, applications etc.
- Uses the media to effectively promote issues and events.
- Gets concepts across in a way that develops client thinking (eliciting thinking and views).
- Gives effective group talks and lectures, farm walks etc.
- Works closely with research staff and other disciplines to share and enhance each other's knowledge (provides educational sessions and support for colleagues).
- Writes up field notes, case studies and archives specialist knowledge to enhance dissemination to colleagues.

Personal Qualities Competencies

Proactivity and Drive

Definition: Takes a lot of personal responsibility at work and uses own initiative to address issues, resolve problems or come up with improved ways of working; Is quick to respond to customer or other issues that arise and yet also knows when to look for extra assistance or guidance.

Elements:

- Takes a lot of personal ownership and responsibility in the job.
- Takes the initiative on emerging issues.
- Suggests improved ways of working.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Takes the initiative when he/she sees that an issue needs to be addressed.
- Takes full ownership of all role relevant tasks and drives issues through to completion.
- Takes personal responsibility for solving client issues and other problems.
- Makes improvements to work practices and procedures and comes up with suggestions for how work activities can be done better.
- Acts quickly when a problem arises and doesn't let it fester or grow.
- Uses knowledge and experience to help others solve problems.
- Enjoys taking a lot of responsibility and aiming for challenging goals and targets.
- Is comfortable consulting or involving others to help solve a problem.
- Knows when to seek assistance or to refer an issue to a supervisory level.

Flexibility and Openness to Change

Definition: Adopts an open – minded and flexible approach to the work; accepts and even welcomes change and new service initiatives; Adapts quickly to changing circumstances.

Elements:

- Openness to new ways of working and encourages the same in others.
- Is flexible and adaptable as the situation requires it.
- Responds quickly as issues arise.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Is open to change and new thinking.
- Will try out new ways of working with an open mind.
- Helps others to adapt to changing realities.
- Adapts work priorities to meet changing demands.
- Adapts work style & activity pattern to fit with new priorities.
- Adapts work style to fit in with the needs of others.
- Shifts quickly from one task or activity to another.
- Responds quickly to an urgent demand or request.

Continuous Professional Development

Definition: Keeping abreast of current and leading edge trends and thinking is critical to the credibility and value adding contribution of the adviser; Keeps abreast of the technical literature and developments; Uses technology to aid the acquisition of new knowledge, Attends learning events, seminars etc on a regular basis.

Elements:

- Updating knowledge and skills regularly
- Networking to learn from others
- Avails of coaching and learning resources from others
- Actively participates in the PMDS process.

Behavioural Anchors:

- Puts time into updating his/her technical knowledge and skills.
- Updates knowledge and skills on a regular basis.
- Ensures that his/her Personal Development Plan (PDP) from PMDS is relevant and specific.
- Puts effect into PDP aspects of his/her PMDS plan.
- Puts time into environmental scanning to keep abreast of new developments and trends.
- Attends learning & networking events.
- Learns from colleagues.
- Acts as an effective learning resource for others.
- Avails of informal coaching or mentoring opportunities.

Positive Work Approach

Definition: Is able to sustain work effort and composure when working in s context of heavy demands; Develops positive ways of coping with pressure; Finds ways to work smarter rather than longer.

Elements:

- Works to a consistent standard and pace
- Calmness under pressure or critique from others
- Sticks to deadlines and maintains standards

Behavioural Anchors:

- Is able to work at a steady pace even when the demand level is high.
- Responds calmly when in difficult interpersonal situations
- Accepts feedback and criticism in an objective and positive manner.
- Finds ways to deal with pressure from work demands.
- Delivers a substantial quantity of work within the required timeframe.
- Delivers most work within the expected timeframe.
- Delivers priority work to time and quality standards.