



Scottish Government
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Scottish Government Communications

Competency Framework



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How to use this framework

The document is for all specialist communicators in the Scottish Government up to, and including, band C and is designed to broaden skills and encourage cross-discipline integrated working.

It should be used in conjunction with the Scottish Government Skills for Success Competency Framework (SfS)

The competencies in the framework will be used for:

Recruitment and Selection

To help determine the job/person specification for roles when recruiting. Applicants will be measured against the competencies – together with relevant Skills for Success – at interview and assessment.

Performance Management

To define standards of performance and skill levels required for different roles.

Personal Development Plans

To help plan development and identify training needs.

Career Development

To inform the skills and knowledge communicators will need in progressing to their next role.

Communications Pay Supplement

To define the skills and knowledge required by individuals to be eligible for consideration for the Communications Recruitment and Retention Supplement.

The competencies are structured around the four stages of a strategic communication planning process – **Insight, Ideas, Implementation and Impact**.

Each section starts with a reference to the Scottish Government's Skills for Success competencies most relevant to communicators with examples of appropriate behaviours. There may be others, depending upon the role.



Competencies are cumulative – for example, band C staff will be expected to demonstrate competencies at their own level as well as those below.

For each competency we have identified core skills and knowledge applicable to all communicators, including digital skills.

The framework details the specialist skills and knowledge specific to four disciplines:

-  Marketing
-  News and Media
-  Internal Communications
-  Digital Communications

The Skills for Success for Band B and Band C on **Managing and Leading** are all relevant to communications specialists.

The framework is designed to be flexible and the competencies are not exhaustive. For some roles the competencies may need to be supplemented with other specific skills and knowledge.

Competency 1: Insight

Gain an accurate and deep understanding of the issue(s). Use insight to identify target audiences and partners and to inform communications objectives, messages and solutions.



Skills for Success

Below are Skills for Success competencies relevant to the Insight stage of planning communication.

Band B	Band C
Communications and Engagement Considers and communicates the impact of decisions on wider policies and programmes.	Communications and Engagement Considers the impact on wider policies and programmes across the Scottish Government and wider system.
Analysis and Use of Evidence Engages with analytical specialists at appropriate stages of policy and programme development. Interrogates analytical and management information to draw out key messages and findings to support decisions. Organises and collates robust information from a variety of sources in decision-making, sharing knowledge and information across the wider system.	Analysis and Use of Evidence Develops policy options and decisions using a range of evidence and research, to ensure that policies are aligned to outcomes.
Financial Management Uses accurate and relevant financial data to create objectives and targets relevant to budget responsibilities.	Financial Management Interprets and uses accurate financial data to inform decision-making, investment appraisals and risk management implications.



Core

Core communication skills and knowledge applicable to all disciplines

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Review existing sources of insight (including previous communications activity) to understand the overall context for communication and audience influences/ influencers.	Work with policy colleagues in a timely way to examine and define policy issues to be supported. Commission additional research to gain insight into issues, where required.	Provide robust and deliverable communication advice to ministers and policy colleagues.
Use insight to identify target audiences and partners, support decision-making and help inform the overall communications approach.	Develop measurable communication objectives to support the delivery of policy.	Promote and encourage the early integration of strategic communication and policy development.
Demonstrate an understanding of the communication objectives and how these support the overall policy objective.	Use segmentation and mapping techniques to identify target audiences and potential partners.	Examine ministerial priorities to identify the role for communication and translate those priorities into measurable communication objectives.
Build audience insight using appropriate tools to monitor content and listen to conversations on key external digital channels, including social media.	Use analytical tools and techniques to identify key online influencers and links between partner groups to better target digital communication.	Build on-going relationships with key stakeholders/ advocates/partners, to gather intelligence and build awareness of the overall context for communication.
Provide advice on appropriate digital channels to reach target audiences. Research where target audiences are active, including online partnership networks.	Ensure strategies take into account the recommendations and lessons learnt from evaluations of previous campaigns.	Demonstrate an understanding of the digital landscape and emerging trends. Apply this knowledge to identify and develop digital channels.



Communication disciplines

Additional skills and knowledge applicable to a specific communication discipline



Marketing

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Develop an understanding of audience insight and how this delivers effective marketing outputs.	Understand all research techniques and how and when each should be used in the development of marketing activity.	Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of all research techniques and direct the use of them in effective marketing planning.
	Interpret quantitative and qualitative data to identify audience insight and deliver robust marketing strategy.	Draw on behavioural insights to develop robust marketing strategy and provide strategic advice to ministers and policy colleagues about the effective use of marketing to deliver Scottish Government objectives.
		Understand the extent of the role marketing can play in engaging with key audiences and the benefits/risks of alternative approaches (such as legislation).



News and Media

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Maintain an awareness of the news agenda and emerging news events.	Review communication and media plans to ensure activities reflect policy developments and the emerging news agenda.	Understand and interpret the emerging news agenda and factors which will affect this agenda.
Understand how to optimise audience reach through a mix of media channels.		



Internal Communication

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Understand the range of employee insight sources (both quantitative and qualitative) available within the organisation.	Analyse and segment internal audiences to target communication effectively.	Draw on organisational insight to advise leaders on targeted employee communication strategies and actions to improve employee engagement.
Gather insight on staff communication usage, needs and preferences. Use these data to inform selection of internal communication channels.	Develop a strong understanding of different internal audiences. Use this knowledge to ensure the tone, language and format of internal communication is easily accessible to and read by a range of staff groups.	



Digital

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Gather and analyse evidence to understand user needs and appetite for digital products and activity.	Develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the capacity of digital communications to integrate with other channels.	Demonstrate a deep understanding of the digital landscape and emerging trends. Apply this knowledge to lead content development strategy and to identify and develop digital channels.
Adapt digital channels to promote and extend the broader communications and news agenda.		Reflect user needs back to the organisation to ensure content and services are designed with a user and citizen focus.
Interpret quantitative and qualitative data to identify stakeholder and audience insights for digital communications.		Draw on behavioural insights to provide strategic advice to ministers and policy colleagues on digital communications.
		Understand and interpret the advantages and disadvantages of emerging digital technologies and be able to advise on potential impact on working practices.



Competency 2: Ideas

Develop the communication strategy and plan. Select channels and develop key messages and content for target audiences. Identify evaluation criteria.



Skills for Success

Below are Skills for Success competencies relevant to the Ideas stage of planning communication.

Band B	Band C
<p>Communications and Engagement Communicates clear and creative ideas that meet the needs of a range of audiences, ensuring objectives and outcomes are achieved. Produces concise, clear, well structured written work using SG guidance. Considers and communicates the impact of decisions on wider policies and programmes.</p>	<p>Communications and Engagement Contributes to and develops clear, creative and detailed policy communication strategies to achieve SG outcomes. Manages internal and external relationships, creating positive networks and maintaining trust and credibility. Communicates complex information clearly, presenting strategic ideas in a clear and positive way.</p>
<p>Improving Performance Demonstrates ongoing use of relevant performance improvement tools and techniques including skills development. Applies risk management principles to decision-making and controls opportunities and threats to achieving objectives.</p>	<p>Improving Performance Uses relevant tools, techniques and skills development to facilitate continuous improvement. Maintains and promotes risk management processes to improve strategic planning and resource allocation.</p>
<p>Analysis and Use of Evidence Engages with analytical specialists at appropriate stages of policy and programme development.</p>	<p>Analysis and Use of Evidence Uses relevant evidence, recognising validity and limitations, in evaluations and assessment of risks against desired outcomes, engaging analytical specialists appropriately.</p>
<p>Financial Management Understand and apply the principles of Budgeting, Financial Management and Resource Accounting outlined in the Scottish Public Finance Manual. Maintains regular contact with relevant finance staff, and knows when to seek advice from audit, risk, procurement and finance professionals.</p>	<p>Financial Management Understands the wider public expenditure and financial decision-making environment as outlined in the policies of the Scottish Public Finance Manual.</p>



Core

Core communication skills and knowledge applicable to all disciplines

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Develop outline communication plans, identifying the most effective channels and tools to engage audiences and maximise reach.	Demonstrate flexible, creative thinking. Test and refine ideas to develop innovative solutions.	Lead the development and implementation of innovative communication strategies that meet objectives.
Design and develop engaging, targeted content and messages suitable for use across a range of channels.	Use segmentation to ensure audiences are targeted effectively.	Review communications strategies to ensure integration across communication channels and identify any gaps.
Demonstrate an awareness of how channels work together and complement each other.	Design integrated communication strategies and examine fit with existing plans.	Integrate digital and social media to engage and involve citizens, staff and all other partners to encourage community participation.
Explore opportunities to use low/no cost channels, including earned, owned and paid for channels.	Ensure the most appropriate and cost effective channels mix, and maximise the potential of digital channels.	Review communication strategies for overall context and register, to protect the SG's reputation and to establish fit with the SG's communication priorities.
Actively engage with partners in online networks.	Develop plans, considering resources and budgets. Identify risks and plan mitigating actions.	
	Embed evaluation and tracking into communications strategies. Determine evaluation criteria and consider how to assess the impact of communication.	
	Draw on knowledge of emerging trends in digital services and social media and apply this knowledge when developing content and channels.	



Communication disciplines

Additional skills and knowledge applicable to a specific communication discipline



Marketing

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Advise on appropriate use of different channels for marketing activity, ensuring an integrated approach is deployed using digital technologies to full potential.	Develop an integrated marketing communications approach, ensuring owned/earned/bought channels work together to achieve communication objectives in the most cost effective way.	Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of all marketing communications channels and how they work together for best use. Draw on this expertise to develop innovative and effective marketing strategy ensuring a 360 degree approach and the most cost effective solutions are recommended to ministers and policy colleagues.
	Construct marketing brief and tender documents to an agreed standard.	Direct the construction of all marketing briefs and tenders, ensuring objectives are SMART and rooted in Scottish Government priorities, understanding that this is the foundation for any effective marketing activity.
	Demonstrate rigorous and robust financial management.	Demonstrate excellent financial planning ability.



News and Media

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Demonstrate a practical understanding of how print, broadcast and digital media work, including the media cycle, circulation and deadlines.	Initiate and lead the development of both reactive and proactive, integrated media campaigns that build on insight and tracking data.	Demonstrate a robust knowledge of the media landscape. Draw on this expertise to develop innovative, proactive news media strategies. Advise on news media actions at a senior level and support teams to develop campaigns.
Work up ideas for stories and case studies that support communication and business/policy objectives.	Work constructively with policy colleagues and partners to gain expert opinions.	Influence the media agenda through proactive forward planning. Develop strategies to protect and improve corporate Scottish Government reputation.



Internal Communication

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Demonstrate a practical understanding of organisational functions, roles and communication requirements, to enable the design of contextualised and tailored content for internal audiences.	Draw on audience insight to develop innovative internal communication strategies, selecting the most appropriate channel mix and ensuring content is both topical and timely.	Demonstrate a robust knowledge of internal communication best practice. Draw on this expertise to provide recommendations to organisational/business leaders on communicating the business/change agenda.
	Establish two-way and face-to-face communication channels to build employee engagement and facilitate dialogue. Reinforce these channels during organisational change.	Ensure the organisational infrastructure (tools, channels and processes) is in place to deliver high-quality and creative internal communication.



Digital

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Demonstrate a practical understanding of emerging digital services, tools and trends, including techniques for optimising digital content.	Develop innovative digital communications strategies.	Lead on the use of digital and social media to engage and involve citizens, staff and all other partners to encourage community participation.
Advise on the scope for using or adapting digital tools to improve and enhance communications.		Develop a strategic approach to deployment and integration of digital technologies and channels.

Competency 3: Implementation

Develop and implement effective communication strategies and plans. Work with stakeholders and partners to deliver communication.



Skills for Success

Below are Skills for Success competencies relevant when implementing communication strategies.

Band B	Band C
<p>Communications and Engagement Engages and is credible with stakeholders and is connected to a range of internal and external networks. Communicates clear and creative ideas that meet the needs of a range of audiences, ensuring objectives and outcomes are achieved. Produces concise, clear, well-structured written work using SG guidance. Considers and communicates the impact of decisions on wider policies and programmes.</p>	<p>Communications and Engagement Communicates complex information clearly, presenting strategic ideas in a clear and positive way.</p>
<p>Improving Performance Demonstrates ongoing use of relevant performance improvement tools and techniques including skills development. Uses SG Programme and Project management Principles effectively and proportionately. Adapts quickly to fit skills and resources to changing circumstances and expectations. Applies risk management principles to decision-making and controls opportunities and threats to achieving objectives.</p>	<p>Improving Performance Uses relevant tools, techniques and skills development to facilitate continuous improvement. Understands SG Programme and Project Management Principles and uses them effectively and proportionately Adapts quickly to fit skills and resources to changing circumstances and expectations. Maintains and promotes risk management processes to improve strategic planning and resource allocation.</p>
<p>Financial Management Takes responsibility for the monitoring and controlling of expenditure. Maintains regular contact with relevant finance staff, and knows when to seek advice from audit, risk, procurement and finance professionals.</p>	<p>Financial Management Delivers objectives within budget, applying procurement policies and procedures and knows when to seek advice from audit, risk, procurement and finance specialists.</p>



Core

Core communication skills and knowledge applicable to all disciplines

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Adhere to all relevant policies, legislation and guidance for delivery of communication (including for example propriety, diversity, language, social media, and corporate branding guidelines and requirements)	Gather evidence to assess impact and effectiveness throughout the delivery of communications.	Take overall responsibility for developing and implementing communication/media strategies and campaigns from the strategic planning stage onwards.
Demonstrate good written and oral communication skills. Write clearly, concisely and accurately.	Demonstrate strong written and communication skills. Provide advice and guidance to colleagues on writing clearly for target audiences.	Develop strong relationships with ministers, policy colleagues and key stakeholders. Build influential networks to enable communication teams to deliver quality solutions.
Select appropriate visuals to improve the impact of communication (for example, photography and infographics).	Ensure communication products are cost effective and delivered to a high quality, representing value for money. Ensure supplier relationships are cost effective.	Demonstrate excellent written communication skills and set standards for communication. Provide overall editorial control to ensure appropriate content, messaging, tone and consistency in all communication.
Monitor plans and provide status updates to ensure communication plans are delivered on time and to budget.	Manage online events including podcasts, live chats, broadcasts, blogs and Tweets.	Continuously review and provide quality assurance for communication and media campaigns. Ensure communication strategies represent value for money. Identify and act on opportunities for improvements to current activity.

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of value for money in communication delivery. Ensure that suppliers are delivering quality communication products.		Be an advocate for digital engagement and social media, and share expertise to build capability across communication teams and the wider Scottish Government.
Support the delivery of online events including podcasts, blogs and Tweets.		

Communication disciplines

Additional skills and knowledge applicable to a specific communication discipline

Marketing

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Manage the logistics and support delivery of marketing implementation.	Manage the delivery of marketing plans demonstrating effective time and budget management.	Successfully direct and oversee implementation of high profile marketing activity to meet organisational objectives.
	Demonstrate strong presentation skills to successfully communicate marketing plans and results.	Effectively present marketing plans and results to ministers, policy, stakeholders and industry peers.



Marketing

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
	Demonstrate strong understanding of the agency creative process, how to judge the work and feed back in an effective way.	Demonstrate effective judgement of all creative work with the ability to direct agencies and team members to ensure robust solutions.
	Manage the creative testing process, understanding how the results should be used to best effect with policy and ministers.	Direct relationships with agencies ensuring effective working partnerships are achieved, taking action when issues arise.
	Manage relationships with agencies ensuring effective working partnerships are achieved, dealing with any issues as they arise.	Lead on advice relating to all marketing aspects of the policy area(s) for which you are responsible.

News and Media

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Develop and nurture excellent relationships with journalists, bloggers and contacts in all forms of media, to improve story placement and check progress.	Handle high-profile and sensitive media issues. Adhere to confidentiality and provide a clear, trusted brief to media and other partners.	Display clear, authoritative and sensitive spokespersonship.
Demonstrate techniques and strategies for handling journalists. Respond quickly to media requests and agree points of escalation.	Demonstrate strong editing skills to ensure quality and timely news releases, rebuttals and media briefing lines in response to developing stories.	Actively oversee high-profile, sensitive, high-risk subjects and manage contacts with lead journalists.
Draft quality news releases media packs, media briefing lines, and issue within agreed protocols.		Lead the media planning and advise in crisis scenarios and manage the media team in developing the crisis response strategy.



Internal Communication

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Support the delivery of internal communication content and staff events, ensuring products are delivered to a high quality.	Manage and co-ordinate all activity in internal and corporate communication plans, including deploying resources and managing risks.	Provide support and guidance to Scottish Government leadership in the delivery of internal and corporate communication.
Align internal communication to key change programme delivery milestones.	Provide support and clarification to managers to ensure they are confident in delivering key messages and to strengthen the internal communication cascade.	Coach leaders on their communication style and on how to engage and build dialogue with staff.
		Ensure consistency of voice and message across all internal and corporate channels.
		Lead internal and corporate communication planning and provide timely advice to ministers and leaders in response to crisis scenarios.

Digital

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Demonstrate a good understanding of accessibility and usability issues. Create digital content that meets accessibility requirements.	Edit, revise and optimise copy and content according to latest search engine optimisation best practice, for use/re-use in digital channels.	Lead the development and implementation of digital content management strategy.
Demonstrate understanding of writing for the web principles	Create and review appropriate content plans for digital channels and advise of ways to maximise online audiences.	Interpret the emerging news agenda in a digital context and develop an appreciation of the factors that will affect that agenda.
Develop understanding of the role of digital content in delivering news and information in an open and accessible way.	Be an advocate of the writing for the web principles.	Project-manage digital development programmes.

Competency 4: Impact

Assess the impact and effectiveness of communication. Review achievement of objectives. Identify lessons learned and share feedback.



Skills for Success

Below are Skills for Success competencies relevant when assessing the impact of communication strategies.

Band B	Band C
<p>Communications and Engagement Considers and communicates the impact of decisions on wider policies and programmes.</p>	<p>Analysis and Use of Evidence Uses relevant evidence, recognising validity and limitations, in evaluations and assessment of risks against desired outcomes, engaging analytical specialists appropriately.</p>
<p>Analysis and Use of Evidence Use evidence to assess, measure and evaluate projects and policies, considering the impact on other policies and government outcomes. Interrogate analytical and management information to draw out key messages and findings to support decisions Organises and collates robust information from a variety of sources in decision-making, sharing knowledge and information across the wider system.</p>	<p>Captures and securely organises knowledge and information for wider use across the organisation. Shares knowledge and information across the wider system, to obtain best value from it across the wider public service.</p>
<p>Financial Management Uses accurate and relevant financial data to create objectives and targets relevant to budget responsibilities. Takes responsibility for the monitoring and controlling of expenditure.</p>	<p>Financial Management Set targets to improve the value achieved from resources, utilising financial data in business cases for change and monitors outcomes using performance measures.</p>



Core

Core communication skills and knowledge applicable to all disciplines

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Support the design and delivery of techniques to access the effectiveness and impact of communication.	Develop and deliver the overall evaluation approach for communication, using relevant tools and industry guidance.	Lead on identifying evaluation criteria.
Advise on and provide analysis of effectiveness indicators for digital communication.	Develop appropriate dashboards to support timely, effective evaluation.	Evaluate the effectiveness of communication against objectives. Review lessons learnt and compare with industry best practice to identify areas for improvement for future communication strategies.
	Analyse evidence to assess effectiveness of communication, including digital, and identify lessons learned.	Report on evaluation of communication strategies to ministers and policy teams, including digital activity. Make recommendations and share learning for future communication activity.
		Ensure digital and social media expertise and skills are shared across the communications team to build capability.



Communication disciplines

Additional skills and knowledge applicable to a specific communication discipline

Marketing

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Monitor marketing activity whilst live, providing up-to-the minute advice and maintenance as required.	Manage and deliver the evaluation of all marketing activity with the ability to analyse and present results.	Define clear metrics to measure the effectiveness of all marketing activity against marketing, original policy and business objectives.
Summarise results and provide on-going reports as required to all partners.		Robustly evaluate all marketing activity, using research techniques where appropriate, analysing all data and demonstrating clear impact and identify recommendations for future activity.

News and Media

B1 and B2	B3	Band C
Conduct media monitoring to assess reach to target audiences and delivery of key messages	Analyse media monitoring results to assess the effectiveness of media strategies and inform future proactive and reactive media campaigns.	Evaluate impact to shape direction of future media campaigns and lead on the implementation of best practice across the communications office.

