

## Competency Set – Specialist Advisor

Task-Focused Competencies
<b>Technical Knowledge</b>
<p><u>Definition:</u> The Specialist advisor needs to demonstrate both a deep level of specialist expertise and also a broad level of industry awareness. He must transform this expert knowledge into Intervention and development propositions that add value to the advisory service and enterprises. He/She must also be able to identify the potential for technological development and work through others in promoting an uptake of developments.</p> <p><u>Elements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Depth of expertise in a particular sector.</li><li>• Breadth of industry awareness.</li><li>• Development of added value intervention propositions.</li></ul> <p><u>Behavioural Anchors:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrates a high level of specialist knowledge and expertise in a number of core areas.</li><li>• Develops a highly effective advisory proposition based on this expertise and knowledge.</li><li>• Uses expertise to make a distinctive contribution to the enhancement of enterprises.</li><li>• Keeps abreast of the emerging and leading edge research.</li><li>• Keeps abreast of market trends and the wider environmental issues that may impact on customers and the industry.</li></ul>

## **Work and Project Organisation**

Definition: The specialist must be able to effectively plan and manage both short term projects and longer term development programs. He/she must be able to organise and delegate initiatives so that they can be delivered effectively by others.

### Elements:

- Effective management of projects and organisation of program delivery.
- Delegation, coordination and liaison to facilitate program delivery.
- Organisation of own work to add most value.
- In-service training.

### Behavioural Anchors:

- Effectively organises a range of projects and events to disseminate knowledge and advice to farmers and other clients and suppliers.
- Plans ahead effectively in order to organise longer term programs and projects that add value.
- Delegates project activities and enlists support from others in a systematic way.
- Sets out and prioritises work plans to maximise the impact of the role.
- Organises and accesses the necessary resources and support to sustain new programs and initiatives.
- Shows very effective coordination skills so that programs and projects are run effectively at one remove.
- Maximises opportunities to work through others in ways that enhance impact, productivity and collaboration (internally and inter-agency).

### **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 specialist advisor must take a bigger picture view when developing interventions and development propositions. He/she must understand how the different aspects of the industry interact and work to enhance linkages and make a more systemic impact.

Elements:

- Seeing how the bigger picture operates and understanding the linkages.
- Develops programs and interventions that have a broader or more systemic impact.

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.

## **Creativity and Innovation**

Definition: The specialist advisor needs to be innovation and opportunity focussed so that customers and colleagues get the benefit of a fresh or new perspective on key issues. He/she should be evaluating, adapting and promoting best practice approaches from elsewhere.

### Elements:

- Evaluation, adaptation and promotion of best development practice internationally.
- Scenario building and opportunity finding.
- Lateral and creative problem solving approaches.

### Behavioural Anchors:

- Looks out for and applies good practices and models from elsewhere.
- Scans the environment for new opportunities.
- Thinks laterally, brings original and innovative ideas and frameworks to bear on issues.
- Develops scenarios and models options to evaluate possibilities.
- Identifies new areas of opportunity for clients and other stakeholders.
- Maps the root causes and consequences behind complex problems.
- Questions the status quo and asks how things can be done differently and better.
- Critically evaluates the current service to identify gaps and come up with improved processes.

## **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.

## **Networking and Alliance Building**

Definition: Develops rapport and understanding with advisors/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:

- Identifies the needs and motives of other parties and plays into these.
- Builds relationships and breaks down barriers across the organisation to deliver a more integrated and comprehensive service to clients.
- Builds strong internal alliances with research colleagues and develops joint initiatives and approaches.
- Identifies and approaches other parties where there is potential for synergy and mutually beneficial collaboration.
- Proactively identifies industry partners to build alliances with.
- Identifies areas of common ground with external stakeholders and builds a common front on issues.
- Develops and sustains a wide network of colleagues within and outside the organisation.

## **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. Provides support to others in communications skills and techniques.

### Elements:

- Providing information and advice using a variety of group methods (e.g. publications, written/electronic communications).
- 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:

- Communicates with a high level of authority and credibility.
- Gets complex information across in a clear and concise way.
- Gives talks and presentations that make a memorable impact on their audience.
- Is comfortable and skilful in managing an audience (e.g. answering questions on his/her feet, changing approach or tack to match the audience response).
- Chairs and facilitates group meetings in a structured and authoritative manner.
- Uses a variety of media to get a message across effectively.
- Designs and presents media campaigns that have an effective impact on their audience.
- Coaches and supports advisers and other colleagues in how to present specialist content effectively.



### **Giving Guidance and Leadership**

Definition: The specialist advisor must have a clear view on how the advisory service can add most value and be able to get this across clearly to others. He/she should work in an assertive and focussed way that gives a clear example to advisory colleagues.

#### Elements:

- Clarity of view [vision] for how advisory input can add real value.
- Clear focus on critical added value activities.
- Assertive presence and example to others.

#### Behavioural Anchors:

- Develops a clear and coherent view for how the advisory service can make the most impact & add most value in the specialist area(s).
- Identifies the current critical and priority development issues.
- Gives colleagues in the field a clear perspective on the critical issues to be addressed and the ways/tools to go about this.
- Communicates a clear and compelling view of how the advisory service can add value in the specialist area.
- Champions the applications of emerging research in a way that elicits support and buy-in from others.
- Gives a clear example in how he/she prioritises and focuses his/her contribution areas.
- Maximises his/her availability to support advisers in the field.
- Represents the organisation authoritatively and credibly with outside organisations.

<b>Personal Qualities Competencies</b>
<b>Proactivity and Drive</b> <u>Definition:</u> The specialist must take a lot of ownership and initiative to maximise the contribution of the role. They must be prepared to respond incisively to issues and take assertive positions at times.  <u>Elements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes a lot of initiatives to develop the service contribution.</li> <li>• Responds incisively to issues.</li> <li>• Takes and assertively holds strong positive views even when these are less popular or well supported.</li> </ul> <u>Behavioural Anchors:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes the initiative to identify new ways of providing support and intervention services.</li> <li>• Anticipates issues and takes pre-emptive action.</li> <li>• Responds incisively to critical issues as they arise.</li> <li>• Is single minded and persistent in addressing objectives.</li> <li>• Is willing to promote and champion new initiatives that have effects outside his/her own role.</li> <li>• Takes calculated risks to promote a new initiative or development opportunity.</li> <li>• Is forthright in expressing own opinion or unpopular views even in the face of challenges and opposition.</li> </ul>

<b>Leading and Driving Change</b>
<u>Definition:</u> The specialist advisor must anticipate and positively embrace change as a constant in the work. He/she must cooperate and assist others to make changes happen on the ground.  <u>Elements:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adoption of a positive outlook on change.</li> <li>• Anticipation of the impact of changes on the service.</li> <li>• Collaborates with colleagues to effectively implement change.</li> </ul> <u>Behavioural Anchors:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents ideas and views to management as to how the service should develop and change.</li> <li>• Anticipates and tries to understand how the ongoing changes in Teagasc may impact on their area.</li> <li>• Adopts a realistic but positive view of change.</li> <li>• Promotes and encourages positive attitude towards change by highlighting the opportunities and potential benefits.</li> <li>• Keeps colleagues and other stakeholders informed about change issues.</li> <li>• Works collaboratively with colleagues to make change work.</li> <li>• Ensures that agreed changes are implemented in an orderly and timely way.</li> </ul>

### **Continuous Professional Development**

Definition: The specialist advisor must update and train in their specialist areas on an on-going basis. He/she must maximise development opportunities and be open to mutual informal learning methods.

Elements:

- Putting time into ongoing professional development and updating in the specialist area(s).
- Maximisation of the development potential of PMDS.
- Effective informal learning style.

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 from PMDS is relevant, specific and implemented.
- Puts time into environmental scanning to keep abreast of new developments and trends.
- Attends learning & networking events.
- Learns from colleagues and acts as an effective learning resource for others.
- Avails of informal coaching or mentoring opportunities.

### **Positive Work Approach**

Definition: The specialist advisor must be able to work at a consistent and productive level in order to cope with the wide range of demands in the role. He/she must be resilient and determined in the face of obstacles or setbacks and persevere with efforts.

Elements:

- Adoption of a positive attitude at work.
- Consistency and productivity under pressure.
- Flexibility to adapt as the circumstances require it.

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.