

5.3: Assessing Current Human Resources

Learning Outcomes

- Describe how to assess current human resources

Why Assess Your Current Human Resources?



Assessing current human resources involves developing a profile of the workforce that includes staff levels, demographics, and competencies (aka KSA or knowledge, skills, and abilities). CalHR recommends developing a profile of the current workforce, including an evaluation of key competencies based on an assessment process and using trends and other relevant data to make projections about this workforce, including the impact of separations and changes in demographics.^[1]

In order to compile and analyze human resource data, you must first understand the why you're doing the work, what your deliverable should be, and what steps you should take:

- **Purpose.** Provides the data for the workforce plan, using systematic analysis to reveal the department's workforce gaps.
- **Deliverable.** A comprehensive analysis of the department's staffing and competency gaps and a list of the department's classifications in order of risk level.
- **Primary Steps.** There are four primary steps, as follows:
 1. Develop a profile of your current workforce that includes both staffing (composition such as number of staff and demographics) and competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities).
 2. Use the results from the strategic planning phase to project future human resource needs.
 3. Perform a gap analysis to identify current and future staff and competency needs.
 4. Develop and prioritize a list of human resource risks to inform the workforce action planning.

Learn More

For further details on how to compile and analyze human resource data, refer to CalHR's Gather and Analyze Human Resource Data tutorial.

For perspective on evaluating human resource risks, refer to [CalHR's Risk Assessment flowchart](#).

What is Assessment?




The concept of assessment may seem obvious, but given the potential for failure, it's worth drilling down further. The U.S. Department of Labor defines personnel assessment as “a systematic approach to gathering information about individuals used to make employment or career-related decisions.”^[2] The agency describes an assessment as “any test or procedure used to measure an individual’s employment or career-related qualifications and interests”—for example, knowledge and ability tests or work simulations. The crux of the matter is designing and implementing an effective assessment and testing method. An improperly designed assessment may introduce bias and undermine diversification and equity efforts. A related challenge is lack of job relevance and/or outdated job criteria. Assessments that fail to measure job-related skills or capabilities may constitute a basis for a claim of discrimination. For perspective, OPM notes that an assessment that is perceived to be unfair or invalid is more likely to prompt a claim of discrimination. Finally, an irrelevant assessment generates irrelevant results—garbage in, garbage out—and undermines the assessment and broader planning process.

Assessing Your Human Resources

OPM explains there are two key elements to an assessment: reliability and validity. Reliability is “the extent to which an assessment tool is consistent or free from random error in measurement.” Validity is “the extent to which an assessment tool measures what it is intended to measure.” Note that an assessment can be reliable and yet not valid. That is, it is a necessary but insufficient condition for validity.

The OPM recommends a 3-step process to developing valid assessments:

1. **Identify job-relevant  competencies.** Based on a job analysis, discussed below
2. **Design the assessment strategy.** Develop one or more assessments to determine a person’s ability to successfully perform a job
3. **Identify assessment tools.** Identify and evaluate assessment tools such as cognitive ability and job knowledge tests, work samples and structured interviews.

OPM’s training presentation concludes with the caution that “to use assessment tools properly, you must be aware of both the benefits and limitations of any assessment strategy.”^[3]

? PPractice Question

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1. "Phase 2 – Gather and Analyze Departmental Data for the Workforce Plan." California Department of Human Resources. Accessed September 10, 2019. ↩
2. "[Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices](#)." U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. Accessed September 10, 2019. ↩
3. "OPM's Workforce Planning Model." opm.gov. Accessed September 10, 2019. ↩

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