

# EXAMPLE SELF STUDY/ PREWORK

## Step 2. Learn about competencies

Each organization has its own mission and culture that requires a distinctive set of skills, knowledge, and capabilities—known as competencies—to do its most effective work.

In this milestone, you and your team will define a starter set of competencies (e.g. strategic thinking, communication, etc.) you feel are most essential for your organization’s success. If you already have some competencies you are using as an organization, this milestone will be an opportunity to reflect upon and strengthen what you have. This new shared language will guide your development planning and conversations with direct reports later in the program (Milestones 3-5).

This process of defining competencies has value for two main reasons: establishing defined criteria for development and building shared expectations for success.

First, it’s part of a manager’s job to help staff continually develop and improve; however, it can be challenging for everyone—staff and managers alike—to judge what “improvement” looks like. A list of agreed-upon competencies helps to address this problem by making it clear what knowledge, skills and capabilities are required, both for the individual and across the organization.

A shared understanding of competencies can also enable conversations about performance and growth that were previously a challenge. When you can clearly communicate your organization’s competencies and the rationale for each of them, you build shared expectations among your staff for success, reinforcing the idea that development isn’t arbitrary but is tailored to the needs of the organization and individual.

### Core and Leadership Competencies

It’s important to note that when we talk about developing competencies, we are not just referring to individuals at the very top of an organization. Every employee requires certain knowledge, skills and capabilities to succeed in the organization.

But it’s also true that those with more responsibility need additional competencies to carry out those responsibilities. That’s why we will ask you to identify and define two different types of competencies in your organization: core competencies and leadership competencies.

Please take a moment to review the differences between these:



	Core Competencies	Leadership Competencies
Definition	The skills, knowledge and capabilities needed to fulfill <b>everyday job functions</b> .	The skills, knowledge, and capabilities that help prepare a team member to take on <b>greater levels of responsibility</b> in your organization.
Application	These competencies apply to <b>most staff</b> within the organization.	These competencies apply to <b>staff seeking a broader scope of work such as leading a department or complex initiative</b> .
Selected Examples	Adaptability, collaboration, communication	Decision-making, change management, external relationship-building

## Sub-Competencies

Some competencies, such as communication, may be quite broad in their scope. To help us talk about these broader competency areas, we often define relevant sub-competencies.

**Sub-competencies** are more detailed elements within core or leadership competencies that drive organizational success.

For example, a sub-competency within “adaptability” might be “openness,” the ability to consider and embrace different ideas and perspectives.

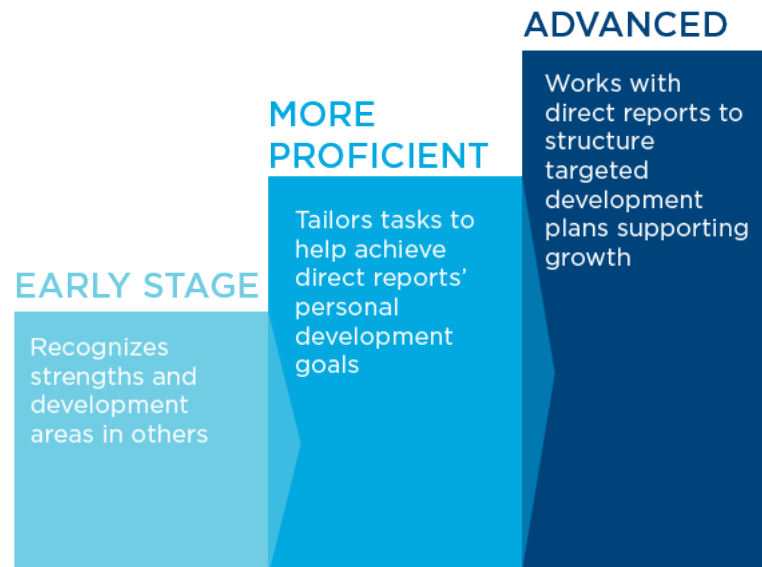
### Before you keep reading, please do two things:

1. See if you can articulate the difference between core and leadership competencies. If you are unsure, take another look at the chart above.
2. Identify one or two core and leadership competencies that you might nominate for your organization. While you will be able to refine this thinking later, this can serve as a helpful starting point.

## Competency Scaled Definitions

In addition to deciding on your organization’s core and leadership competencies, you’re going to need to define what it means to be performing at an early stage, a more proficient stage, and an advanced stage for each competency.

For example, let’s consider the competency of “developing and motivating others.” What might this competency look like at different levels of proficiency?



We call this creating a **scaled definition**. Having a scaled definition will help staff and managers clearly envision what it looks like to grow capabilities over time—and will help determine when a person is ready to take on a responsibility that requires a specific competency at a certain stage of development.

Bear in mind that the specifics at each stage may vary across organizations depending on distinct needs, culture, and practices. Even if your organization has “developing and motivating others” as a necessary competency, the scaled definition might be different for you.

This is why this milestone asks you to go through the process of developing your own list of core and leadership competencies and scaled definitions for each.

The reward in this process is a common language for talking about individual performance and growth. You are creating the foundation for better leadership development planning in your organization.