



About the GCSAA Competencies

What are competencies?

Competencies are the knowledge, skills and abilities (competencies) superintendents need to perform successfully in their jobs.

How were these competencies developed?

Over 10 years ago, GCSAA conducted an initial Job Task Analysis (JTA) to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a golf course superintendent. Based on the findings from that project, a comprehensive list of competencies was identified.

In the summer of 2008, GCSAA began a process to review and update this compilation of competencies to ensure they were still relevant to the industry, as well as to identify new pertinent areas of expertise. This process was necessary because of the advances in agronomic practices and technologies, as well as the increased emphasis on environmental management that have taken place since the initial project.

In addition, GCSAA needed to ensure that environmental components were integrated within the revised competencies, while taking into account the relevance of these statements in five or more years. Many professionals, including superintendents, employers, scientists and others were engaged in this review process.

How are the competencies organized?

The competencies identified through the JTA are presented all fall under five separate domains, which are, in essence, high-level groupings. Each domain contains several categories of competencies.

The five domains and their general categories are as follows:

Agronomy: This domain includes the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to manage turfgrass cultural practices and golf course landscapes; understand and incorporate pest management; manage equipment and apply the rules of golf to golf course maintenance practices and course setup.

Business Management: This domain includes categories necessary in managing business, regulatory and programmatic systems at a facility. These competencies include project management and human resource functions.

Communication: This domain covers communication in relation to facilitating the flow of information at the facility, building relationships, establishing public relations activities, and networking with others in the golf profession.

Environmental Management: This domain includes the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for environmental management and stewardship responsibilities and for working with natural systems at a golf facility.

Leadership: To be successful, a superintendent must have a strong background in leadership, which includes having effective personal and professional leadership skills, developing strategic plans, motivating and retaining employees, and promoting ethics and values.

How do superintendents assess themselves against the competencies?

“Performance statements” were developed that provide specific, detailed information on what is required for each competency. In the self-assessment tool, you simply answer “yes” or “no” on whether you have mastered the knowledge or skill in the statement.

Are there different levels of performance, for beginning superintendents vs. those who have many years of experience?

Yes. Each performance statement is assigned to one of the three levels shown below, based on the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for a superintendent to fulfill that performance statement.

Those levels are:

Level 1: Foundational Level - These performance statements reflect the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of a superintendent at the beginning of their career.

Level 2: Experienced Level of Proficiency - These performance statements suggest the knowledge and abilities of a superintendent who is proficient in the skills required to perform their job.

Level 3: Expert and Mentor - These performance statements reflect the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of a superintendent who can assume the role of an expert and act as a mentor to other superintendents.

Every competency has performance statements at each of the three levels. The levels build upon each other so that a superintendent who is at a Level 2 for the performance statements in a given competency should already have the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet the Level 1 performance statements. Also, a superintendent may have the knowledge, skill and ability to complete a specific task, but may not utilize these skills at his/her current facility.

How does GCSAA use the competencies?

GCSAA uses these competencies in a variety of ways. All GCSAA and External Education content is mapped to the competencies, and with this information, gaps can be identified in the curriculum and education can be developed accordingly. Another use is to help superintendents individually identify areas in which they need to increase their knowledge, skills and abilities. Finally, the competencies are used to drive certification by determining what is measured by the multiple-choice test, portfolio and on-site attesting visits.

How does a superintendent use the competencies and the self-assessment?

The competencies can be used as a benchmark for career planning. Any golf industry professional can use the online self-assessment tool to gauge their level of knowledge, skills and abilities, and to identify the competencies in which they personally want to seek improvement. Based on this assessment, the online tool will provide them with learning resources in all competency areas. When pursuing certification, the competencies and the self-assessment tool become a study guide to aid in preparation for the entire process.