

E-Learning Competencies

By [Ethan S. Sanders](#)

A competency, as defined by famed author of *Models for HRD Practices* Patricia McLagan, is an area of knowledge or skill that is critical for producing key outputs. McLagan points out that outputs describe the work of HRD professionals by answering the question, *What do HRD professionals provide?* Competencies, on the other hand, answer the question, *What knowledge and skills will enable people to do HRD work?*

The following list of 31 competencies uses that same rationale, but adds a more specific question: *What knowledge and skills will enable people to select, manage, and use learning technologies for HRD work?*

The competencies have been grouped into generic categories--[general](#), [management](#), distribution method, and presentation method--which helps illustrate the relationship among certain competencies.

GENERAL COMPETENCIES

Adult learning: Understanding how adults learn and how they use knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- understanding of [learning styles](#)
- understanding of how the end user will solve problems
- ability to facilitate self-directed learning
- appreciation of the diverse experiences of adult learners.

Instructional design: Using the ISD model (analysis, design, development, delivery, and evaluation) to create [adult education](#) classes that fulfill organizational goals. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- understanding of the six phases of the ISD model
- understanding of the part that each role plays in the ISD model
- understanding of learning styles
- gap analysis skills
- evaluation skills
- design skills
- material development skills
- implementation and support skills.

Performance gap analysis: Performing front-end analysis by comparing actual and ideal performance levels in the workplace. Identifying opportunities and strategies for improving performance. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- gap analysis skills
- intervention selection skills
- ability to assess the reasonableness of desired performance levels
- ability to present findings of analysis
- [interviewing skills](#)
- focus group facilitation skills
- statistical analysis skills
- ability to write a valid data collection instrument

- ability to analyze historical documentation.

Change management: Helping people adapt to the changes brought on by new technologies and helping them to see the value and benefits of new technologies. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- understanding of organizational goals
- understanding of organizational culture
- ability to assess human behavior objectively in the workplace
- interviewing skills
- focus group facilitation skills
- ability to analyze historical documentation
- understanding of factors of human motivation
- ability to discover the root cause of human behavior.

Leadership: Leading, influencing, and coaching others to help them achieve desired results. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- ability to see the big picture
- ability to inspire and motivate others
- organizational skills
- delegation skills
- ability to monitor progress toward organizational goals
- understanding of the benefits and risks associated with empowering workers
- ability to see one's own behavior as an example for others
- ability to maintain a clear vision for the organization's future.

Industry awareness: Understanding the current and future climate of the company's industry and formulating strategies that respond to that climate. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of the company's position within the industry
- knowledge of competition's position within the industry
- understanding of future forces affecting the industry
- understanding of competition that exists outside the normal bounds of one's industry
- ability to create strategies and contingency plans that allow the organization to have a competitive advantage in this environment.

Buy-in/Advocacy: Building ownership and support for workplace initiatives. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- negotiation skills
- verbal, written, and nonverbal communication skills
- ability to understand clearly the subject that's being advocated.

Interpersonal relationship building and collaboration: Effectively interacting with others in order to produce meaningful outcomes. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- ability to assess accurately other people's need
- understanding of other people's goals and objectives

- understanding of the informal structure of an organization and the demands that it places on individuals
- ability to respect other people's values
- verbal, nonverbal, and written communication skills.

Consulting: Helping clients and stakeholders to question their assumptions, determine their needs, and plan implementation strategies for achieving their goals. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- listening skills
- understanding of stakeholder concerns
- analytical skills
- ability to maintain confidentiality
- presentation skills.

Business knowledge: Demonstrating awareness of business functions and how business decisions affect financial and nonfinancial work results. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- ability to see the big picture
- understanding of how each section of the business interrelates with others
- understanding of the corporation's financial resources and limitations
- understanding of the various processes that drive the business
- understanding of the types of individuals who work within the business
- understanding of the history of the business
- understanding of the likely future of the business.

Systems thinking: Recognizing the interrelationship among the driving forces that connect seemingly isolated incidents within the organization. Taking a holistic view of performance problems in order to find the root causes. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- ability to organize patterns among events
- ability to analyze cause-and-effect relationships accurately
- research skills.

Contracting: Negotiating, organizing, preparing, monitoring, and evaluating work performed by vendors and consultants. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- consensus-building skills
- compromising skills
- communication skills
- ability to write contracts and requests for proposals
- ability to analyze and assess vendor proposals
- ability to maintain accurate records
- ability to monitor compliance to contract specifications.

Project management: Assessing, planning, negotiating, organizing, monitoring, and evaluating the delivery process. Effectively managing human, capital, and financial resources. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- budgeting skills

- organizational skills
- ROI skills
- scheduling skills
- planning skills
- consensus-building skills
- ability to work on a team
- verbal, nonverbal, and written communication skills
- research skills
- ability to assess ideas objectively and determine their relevance to the project .

Awareness of e-learning industry: Having a general understanding of trends within e-learning and knowing the existing and emerging technologies. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- understanding the history of the industry
- knowledge of the current and emerging trends
- knowledge of the current limitations of certain types of technology
- cost/benefit analysis skills
- networking skills
- knowledge of vendors and their standing in the industry
- ability to understand the practical applications of each technology's features.

Communication: Applying effective verbal, nonverbal, and written communication methods to achieve desired results. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- writing skills
- knowledge of proper grammar
- listening skills
- speaking skills
- nonverbal skills
- knowledge of different communication styles
- understanding of the barriers to effective communication.

Program evaluation: Measuring the success of learning interventions. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of statistics
- survey instrument design skills
- understanding of the four levels of evaluation
- knowledge of the various types of measurement
- ability to determine what is or isn't important to measure
- ability to evaluate the program within the broader context of the organizational goals.

Design and development: Deciding what combination of instructional methods, presentation methods, and distribution methods will best deliver the final program to the learner. Outlining and creating instructional materials that are suitable for electronic dissemination. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- ability to create a design document
- ability to create electronic materials
- ability to select instructional, presentation, and distribution methods
- ability to understand distribution methods

- graphic design skills
- HTML design skills
- knowledge of performance objectives
- programming and authoring skills
- resource identification skills
- storyboarding skills.

Implementation and support: Coordinating the installation and maintenance of learning technologies. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- presentation skills
- ability to understand distribution methods
- ability to set up and use electronic software and hardware
- ability to diagnose problems that learners experience with the technologies
- ability to coordinate assignments with the technical staff
- understanding the design specifications of the hardware and software
- ability to monitor effectiveness of the hardware and software.

MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

Management of learning technology selection: Supervising the selection of learning technologies and assuring that those selections meet organizational needs. Determining when, how, and where learning technologies should be used and monitoring the progress of all the other roles in the delivery process. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- budgeting skills
- needs assessment skills
- knowledge of instructional design
- knowledge of programming and authoring tools
- resource identification skills
- technology evaluation skills
- benchmarking skills
- ability to balance electronic and nonelectronic instructional methodologies
- knowledge of learner's needs
- knowledge of organizational needs
- knowledge of instructor's needs.

Management of learning technology design and development: Supervising and assuring the integration of performance objectives, course materials, and learning technologies in a design document that fulfills the organization's goals. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of graphic design
- knowledge of HTML design skills
- knowledge of programming and authoring tools
- resource identification skills
- benchmarking skills
- knowledge of storyboarding.

Management of learning technology implementation, support, and evaluation: Supervising the installation and maintenance of learning technologies and assuring that all systems

continuously meet company specifications. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of learner's needs
- knowledge of organizational needs
- knowledge of instructor's needs
- ROI analysis skills.

DISTRIBUTION METHOD COMPETENCIES

Cost analysis and ROI of distribution methods: Understanding the relative costs of each distribution method or combination of methods, and assuring that the organization is receiving a good value for the dollars spent. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- analysis skills
- ability to compare features of various products and evaluate them against organizational needs
- understanding of how learners interact with the distribution methods
- knowledge of the organization's existing technology infrastructure
- knowledge of the current cost for delivering training via various media.

Limitations and benefits of the distribution method: Knowing the true capabilities of each distribution method or combination of methods, and tying those capabilities in with the needs of the organization. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- technology evaluation skills
- ability to understand distribution methods
- understanding the total cost of implementing new technologies, including salaries, lost productivity, rework, and so forth
- ability to compare actual performance of the technologies to the design specifications
- knowledge of the organization's infrastructure
- understanding of the compatibility issues with existing technology.

Effect of distribution method on learners: Assessing how various distribution methods or combination of methods will cater to individual learning styles. Balancing learner needs against organizational needs. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of adult learning styles
- knowledge of learner needs
- knowledge of organizational needs.

Integration of distribution methods: Mixing distribution methods in an effective and efficient manner to facilitate learning. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of how various technologies can be combined to deliver training
- knowledge of adult learning styles
- knowledge of learner needs
- knowledge of organizational needs
- understanding of the costs associated with each technology
- knowledge of the technical abilities of each technology.

Remote site coordination: Coordinating the installation and maintenance of distribution technologies at a remote site and assuring that all systems continuously meet design specification. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- understanding of the logistics involved in setting up and supporting the remote site
- understanding of the costs involved in operating the remote site
- knowledge of adult learning styles
- knowledge of learner needs
- knowledge of organizational needs
- understanding the design specification of each technology being used.

Technology evaluation: Assuring that all component technologies continuously meet technical design and performance specifications. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- technology evaluation skills
- understanding of distribution methods
- knowledge of adult learning styles
- knowledge of learner needs
- knowledge of organizational needs
- understanding the design specification of each technology being used.

PRESENTATION METHOD COMPETENCIES

Cost analysis and ROI of the presentation methods: Understanding the relative cost of each presentation method or combination of methods and assuring that the organization is receiving a good value for the dollars spent. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- analysis skills
- ability to compare features of various products and evaluate them against organizational needs
- understanding of how learners interact with the various presentation methods
- knowledge of which distribution methods can deliver which presentation formats
- knowledge of current costs for delivering training via various media.

Limitations and benefits of the presentation method: Knowing the true capabilities of each presentation method, or combination of methods, and tying those capabilities in with the needs of the organization. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- understanding the costs associated with each technology
- ability to assess the relevance of design specifications towards meeting organizational goals
- ability to compare features and limitations among various technologies
- knowledge of the organization's technology infrastructure
- understanding of compatibility issues with existing technology
- knowledge of adult learning styles
- knowledge of learner needs
- knowledge of organizational needs.

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- knowledge of adult learning styles
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- knowledge of organizational needs.

Integration of presentation methods: Mixing presentation methods in an effective and efficient manner to facilitate learning. Skills and knowledge that make up the competency include

- knowledge of how various presentation methods can be combined to enhance the learning experience
- knowledge of adult learning styles
- knowledge of learner needs
- knowledge of organizational needs
- understanding of the costs associated with each presentation method
- understanding of which distribution methods can be used to deliver the various presentation methods
- knowledge of how various technologies can be combined to deliver training
- knowledge of the organization's technology infrastructure
- knowledge of learner access to the various distribution methods.
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Adapted from ASTD Models for Learning Technologies. For information on this book, visit [ASTD's Online Store](#), or contact ASTD Customer Care at 800.628.2783 or 703.683.8100.

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