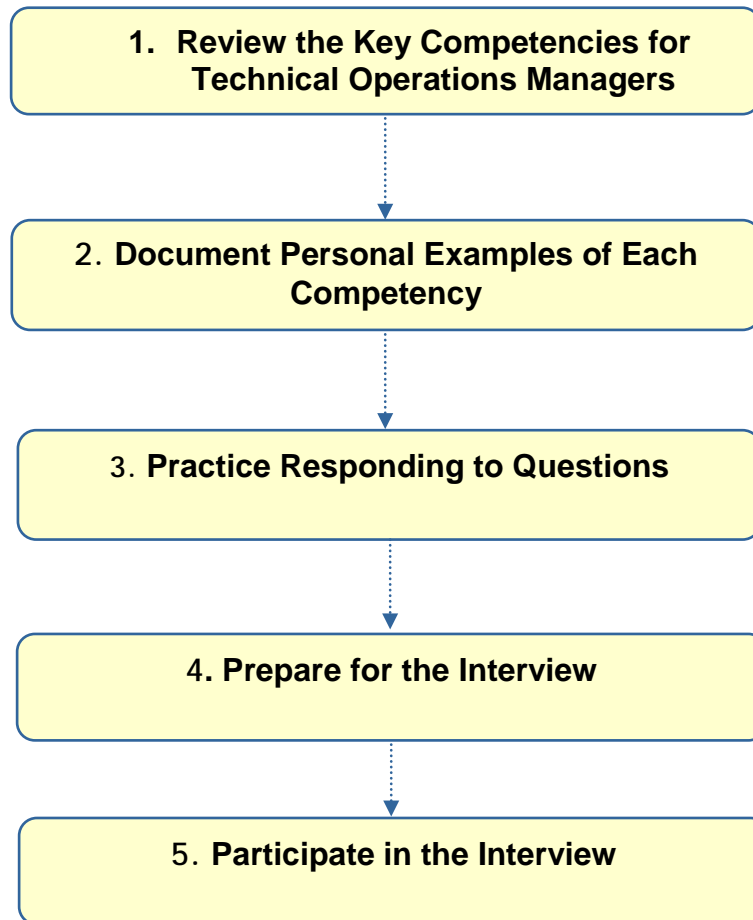


Preparing for Your Structured Competency Assessment for Technical Operations Manager Talent Pool Applicants

Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to walk you through the process of preparing for and participating in a Structured Competency Assessment interview.



Structured Competency Assessment

Introduction

A Structured Competency Assessment (SCA) is one of the elements of the Succession Planning Program talent pool application process. The SCA is a behavioral interview conducted by two panel members via telephone. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the applicants who demonstrate strong potential for success in the talent pool target job.

The goal of the SCA is to understand how an applicant has behaved in the past as an indicator of how he or she is likely to behave in the future. Past performance is typically a good predictor of future performance. Each interview question focuses on one competency and asks for specific examples of how the applicant has demonstrated the competency. You will be asked to clearly and succinctly explain situations or problems you have experienced, the challenging tasks involved, the actions you took, and the positive outcomes achieved as a result of your actions. Each question may be followed by probing questions as needed to gather more details about your experience.

This guide includes the following information:

- The competencies to be assessed in the interviews
- An explanation of behavioral interview questions
- The recommended STAR structure for responding to interview questions
- How to prepare examples for each competency
- Suggestions for preparing for the interview

Competencies

Key competencies for each talent pool's target position have been identified based on an analysis of the job tasks and the knowledge, skills, abilities, personal characteristics, experience, and training needed to effectively perform the tasks. Six key competencies will be assessed through the behavioral interviews for the Technical Operations Manager (TOM) talent pool applicants. The remaining competencies will be assessed through the application you submitted, your manager's input, or after entrance into the talent pool. You will notice that many of the competencies are included in the FAA Leadership Profile but how these are defined is tailored to the Technical Operations Manager role.

The competencies that will be assessed in the interview for TOM talent pool applicants are listed in the table below with a description of the components of each competency. All TOM key competencies are listed in Appendix A of this guide.

Competencies Assessed in the Behavioral Interview

Competency	Components
Building Teamwork and Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides clear direction • Seeks and executes opportunities to pull employees together as a team at the SSC and District levels • Provides training and/or coaching in team collaboration • Develops strong personal and working relationships with SSC Managers based on understanding each other's values and establishing trust • Works with managers and employees to establish SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time bound) group goals • Communicates group goals to all group members, linking group goals to each person's job • Ensures each group member can explain the line of sight from their individual performance expectations to the group goals to organizational goals
Developing Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops SSC Managers for enhanced job performance and career growth • Provides development opportunities both within and outside the group • Matches work assignments to development needs as possible • Proactively coaches SSC Managers to prepare them for coming challenges • Coaches SSC Managers through people and technical situations including grievances and EEO matters • Solicits and applies feedback on own performance • Identifies own development needs; creates and implements a personal development plan

Competency	Components
Interpersonal Relations and Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a vision and engages and inspires others • Builds rapport easily with others • Influences and motivates others • Leverages strong collaborative relationships to accomplish work effectively and efficiently • Manages conflict effectively • Negotiates for win-win solutions • Demonstrates empathy and support for others • Tactful and diplomatic • Confident and assertive but not aggressive • Optimistic and enthusiastic
Leading People through Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates self on upcoming changes, how they help achieve organizational goals, and associated language • Proactively recognizes needed changes and takes the initiative to advocate for and plan for change • Communicates upcoming changes in advance to managers and employees. • Creatively frames change messages to be relevant to the group and their needs • Anticipates and overcomes barriers to change. • Presents information about organizational initiatives positively regardless of personal feelings. Links the initiative to organizational goals and individual employee jobs. Engages employees in open conversation about the initiative. • Disseminates information about identified issues and lessons learned to stimulate change.

Competency	Components
Business Acumen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collects data on current and future needs from multiple stakeholders before establishing priorities. • Prioritizes competing resource requirements • Advocates for established priorities by fully representing the issues, the impact on one’s group, and the wider impact on the organization • Recognizes when to communicate events upward and identifies the appropriate information to be relayed. • Presents alternative strategies for addressing events and issues when reporting these upward. Provides recommendations for the best approach to minimize negative impact of events and continue operations.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates orally in clear and concise language • Actively listens including identifying important elements of what is being communicated • Recognizes the audience’s level of understanding • Is aware of one’s own tone and attitude and reception by others • Tailors messages to the audience in terms of both relevant content and approach. • Prepares and delivers effective presentations in person and remotely • Uses multiple media to convey messages. • Writes clear, concise, and meaningful memos, directives, performance evaluations, recognition letters, and other communications • Leads meetings effectively and efficiently. • Thinks on one’s feet – can respond spontaneously to questions and challenges

Note: Oral communication will be assessed in the interviews through your responses to the questions about the other five competencies. You will not be asked to provide examples of how you have communicated in a separate question. Written communication will be assessed in your written application.

Behavioral Interview Questions

The types of questions you will encounter in the interview will ask you to provide an example of a situation you experienced related to a specific competency and describe the challenges you faced, the actions you took, and the results of your actions. For example, some questions for the competency of *Integrity and Courage* could be:

- Tell me about a time when you stood up for a principle you believed in despite opposition from others.
- Describe a situation that required you to address and resolve a contentious or politically charged issue.
- Think about a time when you made a serious error. Explain the situation and how you handled it.
- Most managers have to make decisions that are unpopular with their employees or their senior managers or make a tough choice between two or more options. Please describe a situation in which you had to make an unpopular or difficult decision?

Responses to Questions

We recommend that you use the STAR (Situation, Task, Actions, Results) structure to respond to each question you are asked. Describe the situation, the tasks or challenges you faced, the actions you took, and the results of your actions. The STAR framework will help you organize your thoughts and provide a clear, concise response to each question while highlighting your proficiency in the competency. The table below explains how to use the STAR structure in formulating your response to the interview questions.

Situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. • Choose a situation in which you played a leading role. • Describe the background of the situation, or problem that you faced. • Provide enough detail on location, cost, size, number of participants, etc., for the interviewers to understand the situation.
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tasks did you need to accomplish to resolve the problem or deal with the situation? • What challenges did you face? • Describe the obstacles that needed to be overcome
Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the actions you took in response to the problem or situation. • Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe your role and what you personally did. • Describe what you actually did rather than what you could have or should have done.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the outcomes of your actions? • What were the benefits to the organization or people involved? • Describe the results in terms of specific benefits such as increased productivity, improved performance, reduced costs, improved safety, enhanced communication, better team work, etc. • What did you learn from the experience and how would you apply this learning to other experiences?

Example of a Behavioral Interview Question and Response

Competency: Problem Solving

Question: Describe a challenging situation in which you were able to clearly frame a problem, identify and collect the necessary data, and solve the problem.

Response:

<p>Situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last year, I volunteered to assist the District Manager in bringing our District into compliance on the national mandate for reducing government vehicle fuel consumption. The District Manager asked me to lead a workgroup whose mission was to recommend approaches to reducing fuel consumption. • The District is comprised of 12 Service Support Centers with over 100 vehicles. The vehicle fleet is shared by 180 technicians who work over an area of 2,000 square miles. Many of the SSC locations experience substantial amounts of snow fall that require vehicles with four wheel capabilities throughout the winter months.
<p>Task</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workgroup's challenge was to analyze current fuel usage in all District vehicles and identify several options for reducing fuel consumption within a tight timeframe of two months. My challenge as workgroup leader was to guide a large team of people with very different perspectives and personalities to achieve consensus to develop recommendations.
<p>Action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I formed a work group comprised of labor representatives, my peers at each SSC, and local GSA representatives. We met weekly. Keeping the group on task at the meetings was difficult at first but I found that having a clear agenda with specific timeframes was very helpful. I made sure that everyone at each meeting had the opportunity to provide input and voice their concerns by using a round robin approach in which everyone had three minutes to speak after we discussed the day's issues as a group. • After the team agreed on our method to accomplish our mission, I created a project plan with tasks and timelines and assigned tasks to each workgroup member with due dates. • We analyzed vehicle reports from the past five years. We examined mileage and fuel consumption averages, and considered the intended purpose of each SSC vehicle. Working with the GSA representatives on our team, we reviewed the availability of different vehicle types and fuel alternatives, and gained their buy-in for changing the dates for vehicle replacement periods. • I led the workgroup in identifying alternatives to reducing fuel consumption. We then met with all the District Stakeholders including SSC Managers, Air Traffic Managers, and Labor Representatives to discuss our proposed alternatives to reducing our fuel consumption. • After the stakeholder meeting, I developed a comprehensive report of findings for presentation to the District Manager and the District Level Labor Representative with several options for meeting our goals.
<p>Results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report was enthusiastically received by the District Manager and Labor Representative who chose to implement Option C. This option enabled the District to reduce fuel consumption by 20 percent over the following two years by reducing the number of individual trips, increasing the use of multipurpose vehicles, and, when vehicles needed to be replaced, acquiring vehicles that use less fuel.

Probing Questions

After you have provided an example in response to an interview question, the interviewer may ask you one or more follow-up probing questions to gain more clarity and detail about your example. Probing questions are open-ended and usually begin with words such as who, what, when, why, and how. Examples of probing questions include:

- Describe the specific issue or problem.
- Discuss the individuals and groups you worked with, and the environment in which you worked.
- What options did you consider?
- What were the specific actions you took to address the challenges?
- Describe the results of your actions. What difference did these actions make?
- What did you learn from this situation?
- Describe what you would do differently next time you are faced with a similar situation.
- Who was involved in the situation?
- Why did you handle the situation that way?
- How did you react to the obstacles you faced?
- What happened as a result?
- How did you know the result was successful?

Preparing Examples for Your Interview

Consider potential questions you may be asked for each competency. Create a list of several questions for each competency that you would ask if you were the interviewer. A sample question for each of the TOM competencies that will be assessed in the interview is listed in Appendix B.

Once you have a list of questions, write responses to the questions using actual examples of your own personal experiences. These examples should be focused on your thoughts and actions, even if you are describing a team accomplishment. Note that most situations will involve multiple competencies but when you prepare examples for each competency, choose examples that most strongly demonstrate that competency.

Practice worksheets are included in Appendix C to use for preparing your examples. Make copies of these worksheets as needed to prepare example responses for several potential questions for each competency that will be assessed in the interview.

Practice Presenting Your Examples

Practicing presenting your examples will help you remember them during the interview and also increase your confidence. You can practice by yourself, or even better, you can ask a friend or family member to play the role of the interviewer and ask you some of the questions you developed, then listen to your responses and give you feedback. The time you invest in practicing will pay off in better performance during the interviews.

The Interview Schedule

You will be called by the organization who will be conducting the interviews to schedule a one-hour appointment for your telephone interview. Be sure that you arrange for a quiet, private place for the interview at home or at your workplace. Allow 15 to 30 minutes of quiet time before the interview begins to mentally prepare yourself. You need to be sharp and focused to do your best.

During the Interview

Here are some tips to help you excel in your interview.

- Bring your prepared examples with you. You may use your notes if you wish.
- Listen carefully to the questions. If needed, ask the interviewer to repeat the question.
- Take your time and pause for thought before responding.
- Use the STAR technique when you respond to each question
- Use your tone of voice to convey your interest, confidence, and professionalism.

Appendix A: Key Competencies for Technical Operations Managers

Competency	Components
Technical Knowledge	Knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Air Space operations and safety protocols • Organizational big picture and the potential impact of the group's work on the larger organization, e.g., runway incursions. • Technical Operations services and equipment sufficient to ask the right questions, identify the correct resources, and identify and resolve potential or actual problems
Organizational Knowledge	Knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational mission and structure • Organizational programs, processes, and procedures • Current organizational goals (FAA, ATO, Tech Ops, and District) • Orders and guidelines that define how to operate, report on activities, maintain equipment, avert risk and ensure safety • Chain of command and protocol • Reporting formats • Organizational online systems and tools, technical resources, and people available to provide information or assist in resolving problems and how to access them • Organizational priorities and understanding that they shift over time • Organizational environment and culture
Administrative Knowledge	Knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines • Bargaining unit contracts • Grievance policies and procedures • Finance and budgeting principles and processes • Staffing principles • Administrative requirements • Accountability Board policies and procedures
Managing Organizational Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of group member job structure, functions, duties, and linkages • Manages a team of SSC Managers to achieve group, district, and agency goals • Establishes individual performance expectations with each direct report and holds them accountable for meeting them • Delegates work based on organizational needs and individual capabilities and development needs • Provides timely, valuable feedback to direct reports • Promptly addresses performance issues among direct reports • Accurately evaluates the performance of direct reports • Supports SSC Managers when they address performance issues among their employees • Recognizes and rewards good performance • Ensures SSC Managers are managing the performance of their team members

Competency	Components
Building Teamwork and Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides clear direction • Seeks and executes opportunities to pull employees together as a team at the SSC and District levels • Provides training and/or coaching in team collaboration • Develops strong personal and working relationships with SSC Managers based on understanding each other's values and establishing trust • Works with managers and employees to establish SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time bound) group goals • Communicates group goals to all group members, linking group goals to each person's job • Ensures each group member can explain the line of sight from their individual performance expectations to the group goals to organizational goals
Developing Talent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops SSC Managers for enhanced job performance and career growth • Provides development opportunities both within and outside the group • Matches work assignments to development needs as possible • Proactively coaches SSC Managers to prepare them for coming challenges • Coaches SSC Managers through people and technical situations including grievances and EEO matters • Solicits and applies feedback on own performance • Identifies own development needs; creates and implements a personal development plan
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language • Actively listens including identifying important elements of what is being communicated • Recognizes the audience's level of understanding • Is aware of one's own tone and attitude and reception by others • Tailors messages to the audience in terms of both relevant content and approach. • Prepares and delivers effective presentations in person and remotely • Uses multiple media to convey messages. • Writes clear, concise, and meaningful memos, directives, performance evaluations, recognition letters, and other communications • Leads meetings effectively and efficiently. • Thinks on one's feet – can respond spontaneously to questions and challenges • Communicates orally in clear and concise

Competency	Components
Interpersonal Relations and Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a vision and engages and inspires others • Builds rapport easily with others • Influences and motivates others • Leverages strong collaborative relationships to accomplish work effectively and efficiently • Manages conflict effectively • Negotiates for win-win solutions • Demonstrates empathy and support for others • Tactful and diplomatic • Confident and assertive but not aggressive • Optimistic and enthusiastic
Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analytical reasoning including assessing and understanding events; anticipating questions and potential impact • Integrating information from several sources to understand an issue • Strategic thinking and planning • Troubleshooting (identifying the source of problems) • Solving problems • Creativity in identifying and developing unique, customized solutions • Draws upon the expertise of others to assist in addressing issues or solving problems • Takes prudent risks • Makes thoughtful decisions based on sound rationale •
Integrity and Courage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes a stand on important issues despite opposition • Makes and supports difficult or unpopular decisions when needed • Consistently fulfills commitments • Demonstrates high standards of ethical behavior and inspires trust • Admits to errors or lack of knowledge • Addresses difficult or uncomfortable issues • Is open and honest •

Competency	Components
Agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts easily to new situations and demands • Independence • Positive attitude • Deals well with ambiguity • Patience in trying circumstances • Composure under pressure • Sees new possibilities • Willingness to learn • Creativity • Visionary – sees the possibilities • Multi-tasking
Customer Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the functions and responsibilities of stakeholders and how they use your group’s equipment and services • Works with stakeholders to establish mutual and reciprocal expectations and roles • Develops strong, long-term working relationships with internal and external stakeholders • Anticipates the needs of stakeholders, confirms the needs with stakeholders, then acts to find solutions • Collaborates with stakeholders to solve problems and issues.
Building Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes effective working relationships with people in the organization who can provide information or assist in resolving problems before their help is needed • Continually works to establish and maintain strong collaborative working relationships with colleagues across the organization, especially in Air Traffic • Develops a network of both formal and informal contacts
Accountability and Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes responsibility for achieving group goals • Establishes and uses metrics to measure accomplishment of group goals and makes adjustments in work as needed • Uses metrics and other resources to identify and resolve systemic issues. • Takes personal accountability for own actions and errors
Leading People through Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educates self on upcoming changes, how they help achieve organizational goals, and associated language • Proactively recognizes needed changes and takes the initiative to advocate for and plan for change • Communicates upcoming changes in advance to managers and employees. • Creatively frames change messages to be relevant to the group and their needs • Anticipates and overcomes barriers to change. • Presents information about organizational initiatives positively regardless of personal feelings. Links the initiative to organizational goals and individual employee jobs. Engages employees in open conversation about the initiative. • Disseminates information about identified issues and lessons learned to stimulate change.

Competency	Components
Business Acumen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collects data on current and future needs from multiple stakeholders before establishing priorities. • Prioritizes competing resource requirements • Advocates for established priorities by fully representing the issues, the impact on one's group, and the wider impact on the organization • Recognizes when to communicate events upward and identifies the appropriate information to be relayed. • Presents alternative strategies for addressing events and issues when reporting these upward. Provides recommendations for the best approach to minimize negative impact of events and continue operations.

Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions for TOM Competencies

Building Teamwork and Cooperation: Tell us about your most successful attempt to encourage others to take action and work toward a common goal to meet a commitment to an internal or external customer

Developing Talent: Describe a situation in which you coached an employee to prepare him or her for an upcoming challenge.

Interpersonal Relations and Influence: Please share with us a specific example of how you resolved a conflict on your team or a conflict that you were experiencing in your facility.

Leading People through Change: Tell us about a time when you led the implementation of a new or revised process, system, technology, or other organizational change. How did you communicate the change and influence people to adopt it?

Business Acumen: Please give us an example of a time when a problem or issue arose that warranted you reporting it to your manager. What did you do to prepare for reporting the problem and how did you report it?

Appendix C: Worksheets for Writing STAR Examples

Competency:

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Results	

Competency:

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Results	

Competency:

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Results	

Competency:

<p>Situation</p>	
<p>Task</p>	
<p>Action</p>	
<p>Results</p>	

Competency:

Situation	
Task	
Action	
Results	