

Competency profiling in Iceland

The Education and Training Service Centre (ETSC) has developed a method for identifying the competences required to successfully perform a job. Clearly defined competences criteria are used for identifying the skills required to perform the essential functions of a particular job, in close cooperation with stakeholders. Job competences can be used in the design of preparatory courses for participation in the labour market, as a benchmark in validation of prior learning, or as guiding principles in career development and recruitment. The method is a practical, efficient way of identifying the necessary job competences, including personal competences, which for an effective employee is an essential set of skills. The ETSC oversees the process as well as related tools and trains designated profiling specialists for the profiling work. The process is used within adult learning and serves as a foundation for 43 curricula and VPL pathways.

How is the competency profiling done?

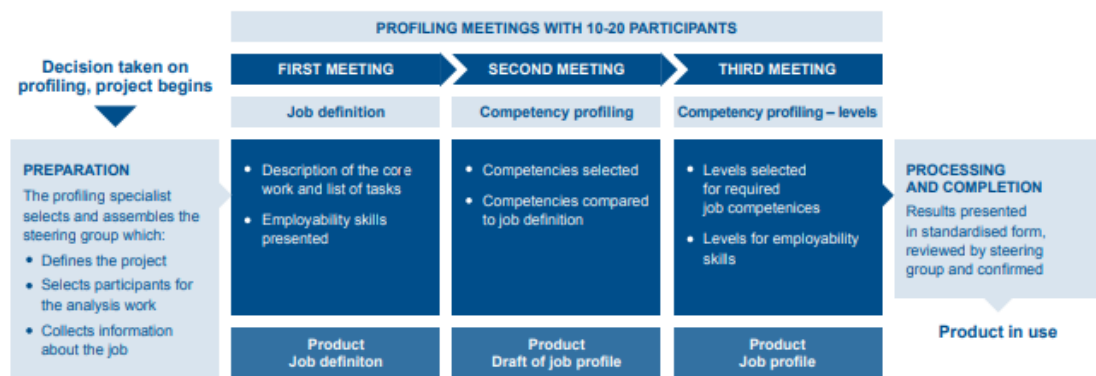
Competency profiling is a pre-determined process. The analysis is conducted throughout 3 structured meetings. A profiling specialist prepares and organises the analysis meetings together with a **steering group** consisting of 5-6 key members from the profession. The steering group includes representatives from the entity requesting the profiling project, employees and managerial representatives from the profession, along with other stakeholders. Their role is to define the project and involve participants in the analysis meetings who have knowledge of the profession. The steering group reviews and confirms the results of competency profiling.

A larger group is invited to participate in the **analysis meetings (3x3 hours)**, consisting of 10-20 individuals who carry out the job in question, managers in the profession, and other parties who possess a broad understanding of the job. The aim is to have the widest representation possible within the profession. No preparation is required for the meetings.

During the meetings, specific units of competences (learning outcomes) are presented to identify the main competences and build up the job-profile. Part of these units are objectively described as essential or general competences for the labour market. In accordance with the Icelandic Qualification Framework, the competences are presented in incremental steps, focusing on the responsibility, independence and complexity of the work. Competency descriptions are presented on cards, given due consideration, and sorted in a simple process. The result of competency profiling is a job profile, containing the job definition, which is a brief description of the job, a list of core tasks and a description of the competences needed to perform the job successfully. The competences (learning outcomes) are placed on NQF levels.

The competency descriptions used by ETSC come from the Canadian consulting firm HRSG, which has been developing competence descriptions for over 30 years. ETSC has translated and adapted the material to the Icelandic environment.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPETENCY PROFILING PROCESS



Benefits, sustainability and challenges

The process provides structure and coherence in competence profiling and provides a foundation for the development of competence standards and curricula. Through close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, consensus can be reached regarding learning outcomes and NQF levels. Defining an overall NQF level can be a challenge.

The process includes a toolbox consisting of guidelines and a suite of competency cards. Methodological coherency is achieved as ETSC coordinates training for profiling specialists who can coordinate the process based on requests from working life or other stakeholders.

The profiling process relies on the interest and goodwill of the labour market actors to draw conclusions that are in line with their needs. It can be a challenge to recruit company representatives for the work as well as gathering all the stakeholders (especially from rural areas) for each meeting since the work is not paid for. Some stakeholders find the work too time consuming.

Possible further development of the process

The process is well functioning and in continuous development based on labour market needs. The process and tools are currently being developed to be available as an online process, which hopefully facilitates recruitment of stakeholders. The work can also be blended as IRL and online meetings.

The method could be introduced to a larger extent, especially within companies and sectors in cooperation with social partners. Competency profiling can support job development, provide information for salary frameworks and increase overall competence development in the labour market.

Cooperation with labour market partners on further developments could strengthen the tool. Securing financing of the process and general coordination of distribution of competence profiling for the labour market can facilitate the use of the tool.

More information

[Brochures on competency profiling](#)