USA Staffing®

Competency Network
User Guide

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Overview

This document serves as a reference for creating and maintaining competency networks in USA Staffing. A USA Staffing competency network is a collection of competencies and assessment content (i.e., rating items and/or screen-out items) for a position or group of positions supported by job analysis.

A competency network can be conceptualized as a book in a library. Each book represents an occupational series and grade(s). To write each book, competency network administrators compile competencies, rating items and screen-out items pertinent to the certain position or group of positions covered by that book. By developing these books in advance and placing them into a common library, users who have been given the appropriate permissions are then able to access the book(s) to easily find and select from high-quality competencies, rating items and screen-out items when preparing an assessment questionnaire.

Competency Network Sources

A competency library may consist of any number of competency networks. Certain system-level competency networks, such as the OPM HR Manager[1] competency networks, are already loaded into USA Staffing and are available to all customer agencies. These system-level networks and associated competencies cannot be removed. Agencies are also encouraged to supplement the system-level data by creating their own agency-specific competency networks.

Agency-developed competency networks can be placed into the USA Staffing competency library from three different sources:

➔ **Library:** Within the Administration area, under the Manage Competency Networks section
➔ **Template**: Within the Administration area, under the Manage Assessment Package Templates section
➔ **Vacancy**: Within an individual Vacancy, under the Assessment Package major tab

> ℹ️ By developing competency networks, users can benefit from the efficiencies of having a library of networks from which to pull assessment content. Additionally, agency administrators benefit by being able to control the quality of assessment content made available to users.

Permissions

To maintain the quality of assessment content made available to all users, only certain individuals can build or promote or edit competency networks. This capability is granted through permission profiles in the *Competency/Item Library* section of the *Human Resources* permission profiles. The default *system* permission profiles assign the competency network capabilities as follows:

Permission	Networks		Documents			Competencies			Items		
	View	Create/Edit	View	Upload	Delete	View	Create/Edit	Delete	View	Create/Edit	Delete
Office Administrator	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Standard HR User	x		x			x	x	x	x		
HR Assistant	x		x			x			x		
HR View Only	x		x			x			x		

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[1] The OPM HR Manager competency networks are populated with job analysis (competency) information collected by OPM through government-wide surveys, referred to as the MOSAIC (Multipurpose Occupational Systems Analysis Inventory – Closed Ended) surveys. Although HR Manager, the original Internet-based tool designed to make the MOSAIC data available, was decommissioned in 2020, MOSAIC competency data are still available through USA Staffing (the OPM HR Manager competency networks).

It is important that agencies ensure only designated individuals can create a competency network. Once built, a competency network **cannot** be deleted. Agencies can create *custom* permission profiles if the above system profiles are insufficient.

Designing a Competency Network

A competency network generally consists of competencies, screen-out items and rating items for a position or group of positions. Many agencies may want to leverage previously developed assessment content to create their competency networks in USA Staffing. Some agencies may use this opportunity to develop new assessment content or refresh existing assessment content when creating their competency networks. Other agencies may seek to transition from knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to competencies. To accommodate the needs of various audiences, a variety of appendices are provided with this guide. Please refer to these appendices as desired.

➔ **Appendix A:** An Introduction to Competencies
➔ **Appendix B:** Writing Competencies
➔ **Appendix C:** Transitioning from KSAs to Competencies
➔ **Appendix D:** Writing Rating or Screen-Out Items

Before creating competency networks in USA Staffing, agencies should consider the following in consultation with their USA Staffing Account Manager.

Competency Network Strategy Checklist

- ☑ What objective is the library designed to meet for your organization and/or office?
- ☑ Who will have ownership of and accountability for the library and competency networks?
- ☑ Will there be centralized or decentralized authority to add data? Can HR Specialists add data?
- ☑ How will standard operating procedures for creation and use of library content be established?
- ☑ How will library content be maintained on an ongoing basis to ensure quality?
- ☑ How will new library content be developed to meet the changing needs of the organization?
- ☑ What training will be needed by HR Specialists for implementation and on an ongoing basis?
- ☑ How will library permissions be established?

Establishing a business process for structuring competency networks can help to ensure a clean, well-organized competency network library. The most common way to organize competency networks is by series (e.g., 0201). Agencies can create a competency network that includes all of the grades that exist in the organization (e.g., GS-0201-5/7/9/11/12/13/14), or they can break up grade levels into several competency networks based on career phases (e.g., Developmental GS-0201-5/7/9, Full-Performance GS-0201-11/12, and Lead/Supervisory GS-0201-13/14). These are two common examples, but USA Staffing's flexibility allows agencies to adopt the structure that works best for them.

Creating a New Competency Network

Competency networks are managed in the Admin area of USA Staffing. Agencies will need to individually create and populate each competency network. However, the process of adding multiple competencies and items into a competency network can be accomplished using a spreadsheet import process. Contact your USA Staffing Account Manager for more information and to obtain the most current copy of the Competency Network Import Spreadsheet.

Step 1: Creating a New Competency Network

A competency network must first be created before any competency or item data can be added. Once a competency network is created, it ***cannot be deleted or retired***. Therefore, it is important for agencies to determine the desired structure for competency networks before completing this step. To create a competency network:

1. Within USA Staffing, in the top header bar, navigate to the **Admin** context**.**
2. Under the **Libraries** section, select the **Manage Competency Networks** option.
3. Navigate to the **Network Information** sub-tab.
4. Click the **Create Competency Network** button.
5. Complete the following **Network Information** fields:

Name (required)	Assigns the name of the competency network (Character Limit: 100)
Description (optional)	Assigns a brief description of the competency network (Character Limit: 1,000)
Owning Office (required)	Assigns the office responsible for the competency network
Customers (optional)	Currently, this field is informational only. Future enhancements may utilize this field to link competency networks with the hiring manager interface.
Tags (optional)	Assigns tags for classification and searching of the competency network, such as Occupational Family, Appointing Authority or Office
Create PD Record (optional)	Allows a competency network to be tagged to position description(s) (see below)

6. Complete the **Position Description** fields if the agency desires to link one or more position descriptions to the competency network. Linking one or more position descriptions allows users to add competencies and/or items using the **Add From Library** option while creating position descriptions, assessment questionnaires or announcement questionnaires.

> ℹ️ Fields on the **Network Information** page can be edited if a user wants to limit or expand the use of a competency network. For example, users can add another grade(s), or add/remove tags to control sharing of content.

Step 2: Adding Competencies

Competencies can be added into the network individually or in mass using the import functionality. The process below explains how to individually add an existing competency from the library or create a new competency. For more information on completing this step through a mass import process, see **Appendix E**.

> ℹ️ **A library search is recommended prior to adding any competencies**. USA Staffing does not prevent creation of duplicate competencies, so it is important for business processes to be established to prevent duplication from occurring.

Adding an Existing Competency

1. While in a **Competency Network**, navigate to the **Competencies** sub-tab
2. Hover the cursor over **Add Competencies** and select **Add From Library**
3. Use the **Competency Library** prompt fields to search and add competencies as follows:

Series:	Allows filter of competencies by series
Grades:	Allows filter of competencies by grade
Source:	Allows filter by competency network origin: ▪ **Library:** Displays competencies added to networks from Admin ▪ **Template:** Displays competencies added to networks from Assessment Package Templates ▪ **Vacancy:** Displays competencies added to networks from Assessment Packages located in Vacancies ▪ **Any Level:** Displays competencies saved to any network, regardless of the level/source
Type:	Allows filter by General, Technical, Miscellaneous, or Supervisory competencies
Tags	Allows filter by tag such as appointing authority, miscellaneous information, occupational family, office or organization. Tags are used for sharing content and/or reporting
Competency Title or Definition:	Allows search by competency title or definition
PD#:	Allows search by position description number
Competency ID:	Allows search by competency ID
Show Only Critical Competencies:	Allows search by if competency is identified as critical or not. OPM HR Manager competencies displayed as 'critical' met grade-specific criteria for importance and required at entry based on the government-wide MOSAIC surveys.
Exclude HR Manager Competencies:	Allows filter of results to exclude OPM HR Manager competencies

Creating a New Competency

1. While in a **Competency Network**, navigate to the **Competencies** sub-tab
2. Hover the cursor over **Add Competencies** and select **Create New Competency**
3. Complete the Create Competency prompt fields as follows (all fields are required):

Title:	Assigns the name of the competency (Character Limit: 300)
Definition:	Assigns the definition of the competency (Character Limit: 1,000)
Type:	Classifies the competency by type. This value can be used to filter search results, or for reporting purposes. ▪ **General** – Competencies applicable to many different jobs – for example, Customer Service, Oral Communication, Reasoning, and Self-Management ▪ **Technical** – Competencies specific to a job or series and often acquired through specialized training or education – for example, Fish Biology, Requirements Analysis, Statistics, and Web Technology ▪ **Supervisory** – Competencies needed for and defined in terms of supervisory, management, or other leadership positions – for example, Decisiveness, Developing Others, and Vision ▪ **Miscellaneous** – Agencies can use the 'Miscellaneous' option as needed for competency types that fall outside the 'General', 'Technical' or 'Supervisory' categories
Source:	Identifies the source of the competency. This value can be used for reporting.
Owning Office:	Assigns the office responsible for the competency network. This value determines permission to edit competencies.
Tags:	Allows filter by tags such as appointing authority, miscellaneous information, occupational family, office or organization. Tags are used for sharing content or for reporting.

> ℹ Reference Appendixes A, B and C for more information about competencies, writing competencies and best practices for converting KSAs to competencies.

Editing an Existing Competency

USA Staffing allows users with the proper permissions to edit competencies, until they are used, at which point only part of the competency is editable. To edit a competency, a user must have a **Human Resources User** permission profile type which grants the **[Competency/Item Library] > [Create/Edit Competencies]** permission. Without this permission, a user cannot edit any part of a competency.

If a user has this permission, a **new** competency can be created either in a competency Network, in an assessment package template, or in a vacancy assessment package. After this point, it becomes an **existing** competency.

Once a competency exists, if it only exists once in the competency network, assessment package template, or vacancy in which it was created, then a user with the permission to **Create/Edit Competencies** enabled for the competency's owning office will be able edit/change the newly created competency title or description. However, once the competency exists and is added, or used in one or more competency networks, assessment package templates, vacancies or a combination of any of these sources, then the competency title is no longer editable. After this point, only the competency description is editable by a user with the **Create/Edit Competencies permission** enabled for the owning office of the competency.

> ℹ️ Although a competency description can be changed, keep in mind that changing it will change not only the definition prospectively for every new vacancy which *will* use it, but also retroactively for every vacancy which *has* used it.

Step 3: Adding Items

Items can be added into the network individually or in mass using the import functionality. The process below explains how to individually add an existing item from the library or create a new item. For more information on completing this step through a mass import process, see **Appendix E**.

Adding an Existing Item

1. While in a **Competency Network**, navigate to the **Items** sub-tab
2. Hover the cursor over **Add Item** and select **Add From Library**
3. Use the **Competency Library** prompt fields to search and add items as follows:

Series:	Allows filter of items by series
Grades:	Allows filter of items by grade
Source:	Allows filter by competency network origin: ▪ **Library:** Displays items added to networks from Admin ▪ **Template:** Displays items added to networks from Assessment Package Templates ▪ **Vacancy:** Displays items added to networks from Assessment Packages located in Vacancies ▪ **Any Level:** Displays items saved to any network, regardless of the level/source
Response Type:	Allows filter by answer response type
Item Text:	Allows filter by keywords contained within the item text
Item ID:	Allows filter by item ID
Show Only Screen-Out Items:	Allows filter by only items which are designated as used for screen out
Competency:	Allows filter by competencies contained within the competency network
Competency Title:	Allows filter by keywords contained within the competency title
Competency ID:	Allows filter by linked competency ID

Creating a New Item

1. While in a **Competency Network**, navigate to the **Items** sub-tab
2. Hover the cursor over **Add Item** and select **Create New Item**
3. Complete the **Create Competency** prompt fields as follows (all fields are required):

Link To: (required)	Assigns competency to which item is linked. Screen-out items are not required to be linked to a competency
Screen-out: (optional)	Determines if item will be used to screen-out applicants upon application submission
Item Stem: (required)	Determines the item text displayed to applicants (Character Limit: 10,000)
Response Type: (required)	Determines the response type provided to applicants: • **Calendar:** Applicants can choose from a calendar response field • **Multiple Choice-Multiple Select:** Applicants may select one or more response options (all that apply) • **Multiple Choice-Single Select:** Applicants may select only one of several response options • **Narrative Textbox:** Applicants are provided a large free-form textbox to provide a narrative response • **Short Answer Textbox:** Applicants are provided a small free-form textbox to provide a short response
Scale: (varies)	This drop-down appears and is required if using a multiple-choice response type. If using single-select, choose from a list of potential rating scales. For more information see Appendix D of this guide.
Source:	Allows classification of the item source

Alternative Methods of Creating a Competency Network

Creating competency networks within the **Manage Competency Networks** section is recommended. However, agencies that have existing quality content available within an Assessment Package Template or a Vacancy Assessment Package can elevate this content from the template or vacancy level into a competency network so that it's accessible to other agency users.

Creating a Competency Network from an Assessment Package Template in Admin

1. While in **Admin**, navigate to **Manage Assessment Package Templates**
2. After the Assessment Package Template is in a **Complete/Published** status, click the **Gear Icon** and select **Create Competency Network**
3. The associated position description(s), competencies and items from this template can now be found in the Admin **Manage Competency Networks** section with the Assessment Package Template Name as the network title. Additionally, once created as a network, the associated competencies and items will now be searchable in the **Add From Library** search functionality when the user includes the competency source of **Template** in the filter criteria.

Creating a Competency Network from a Completed Assessment Package in a Vacancy

1. While in a **Vacancy**, navigate to **Assessment Package**
2. After the Assessment Package is in a **Complete** status, click the **Gear Icon** and select **Create Competency Network**
3. The associated position description(s), competencies, and items from this vacancy can now be found in the Admin **Manage Competency Networks** section with the Vacancy ID as the network title. Additionally, once created as a network, the associated competencies and items will now be searchable in the **Add From Library** search functionality when the user includes the competency source of **Vacancy** in the filter criteria.

Appendix A: An Introduction to Competencies

This appendix is intended to assist agencies who are unfamiliar with competencies.

Competency Definition

OPM defines a competency as a measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual requires in order to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.

Generally, competencies housed in USA Staffing will be used in the selection process. As a result, they should:

➔ Be important
➔ Be required at entry
➔ Be useful in distinguishing between marginal and successful performers

Competencies vs. KSAs

Many agencies are accustomed to using KSAs, or knowledge, skills and abilities vs. competencies. From an assessment perspective, the terms can be used interchangeably. However, competencies are generally written at a broader level of specificity than KSAs as reflected in our definition of a competency above. Competencies can be considered higher level aggregates of KSAs. In other words, KSAs are generally narrower in scope than competencies, which are defined as a measurable pattern of KSAs and other personal characteristics. Competencies have gained in popularity over time as they tend to allow for greater flexibility in work roles, serve as a manageable taxonomy, provide a consistent message to employees across the HR lifecycle, and serve as the basis for unifying HR functions. For these reasons, we encourage agencies to consider using competencies.

HR Manager Competencies

USA Staffing is pre-populated with competencies from HR Manager. Agencies are encouraged to use HR Manager competencies where possible as they were developed based on sound assessment principles, are supported by government-wide job analysis, and have been reviewed by a broad spectrum of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and other stakeholders. Although technical competencies may need to be identified and defined, and agency-specific and position-specific competencies may need to be added, there are significant benefits associated with use of a common language, and there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

If your agency has developed, or is looking to develop, its own competency language based on your own job analysis information, certainly use your agency's competencies. However, we strongly encourage you to use a consistent set of agency-wide (or office-wide) competencies and definitions. Your agency can create competencies to share across your organizations/offices. Whereas HR Manager competencies are built into the system and accessible to all users, office-level competencies can be accessed only by those with appropriate permissions. We encourage you to have strategic conversations within your agency prior to establishing your Competency Network Library so that you can be thoughtful and consistent about your use of competencies across the organization. For example, it may be appropriate to use the HR Manager competencies in combination with those developed internally by your agency.

Appendix B: Writing Competencies

This appendix is intended to assist agencies who are seeking to create new competencies or seeking guidance and best practices on assessing their current competencies before importing them into a competency network.

Writing Competencies

When writing a competency, agencies should strive toward one standardized/universal definition of each competency. In other words, for a competency that is shared across series and/or occupational families, the definition should be written such that it is appropriate across all the positions. These may be general competencies that are typically shared broadly across many/most occupational families, or technical competencies that are more often specific to an occupational series or family. Additionally, competencies should be measurable, clear and concise, unidimensional (measure one characteristic), and independent (non-redundant). Some of the most common pitfalls in defining competencies include:

➔ Too specific or too general
➔ Use of unnecessary qualifiers and subjective terms (e.g., efficient, effective, complex)
➔ Incorporating proficiency level into the competency definition (e.g., a high level of knowledge)
➔ Redundancy or overlap with other competencies
➔ Use of acronyms or agency-specific jargon

Here are several examples of well-written competencies:

Writing (general competency) - Recognizes or uses correct English grammar, punctuation, and spelling; communicates information (for example, facts, ideas, or messages) in a succinct and organized manner; produces written information, which may include technical material, that is appropriate for the intended audience.

Information Management (general competency) - Identifies a need for and knows where or how to gather information; organizes and maintains information or information management systems.

Data Management (technical competency) - Knowledge of the principles, procedures, and tools of data management, such as modeling techniques, data backup, data recovery, data dictionaries, data warehousing, data mining, data disposal, and data standardization processes.

Classification (technical competency) - Knowledge of classification concepts, principles, and practices related to structuring organizations and positions and determining the appropriate pay system, occupational grouping, title, and pay level of positions.

Appendix C: Transitioning from KSAs to Competencies

This appendix is intended to assist agencies currently utilizing KSAs or seeking to transition from KSAs to competencies in order to create a USA Staffing competency network.

KSAs vs. Competencies

When using a well-developed Knowledge, Skill and Ability (KSA) framework and well-written KSAs that measure one, unique knowledge, skill, or ability, and this method is working, you can continue to use KSAs. When setting up your Library, the title and definition would simply be the same.

However, KSAs that read more like task statements or are written in a way that encompasses multiple KSAs/competencies are not measurable and are unlikely to be useful from an assessment perspective. Remember, whatever competency or KSA you are aiming to measure with your items should be:

- ➔ Specific
- ➔ Measurable
- ➔ Unidimensional (measures one characteristic)
- ➔ Independent

Writing Competencies from KSAs

Agencies using KSAs may wish to consider converting to competencies. OPM recommends following these steps to convert KSAs to competencies:

Separate each KSA into specific elements. For example, if your KSA is "Synthesizing research information and findings to write major reports, and prepare and deliver formal oral presentations," separate them into specific elements so that only one unique KSA is listed in each statement, such as the following competencies:

- ▪ Skill in synthesizing research information and findings
- ▪ Skill in writing reports
- ▪ Skill in preparing formal oral presentations
- ▪ Skills in delivering formal oral presentations

Group similar KSAs/KSA elements into unidimensional competencies. For example, the first two KSAs could be grouped under the competency, "Writing," as defined on the previous page.

Check for existing competencies. Be sure you are not adding a competency to the library if it already exists.

Write quality competencies. Write new competencies as needed to reflect critical competencies to be assessed using the competency writing tips found in Appendix B of this guide.

Appendix D: Writing Rating or Screen-Out Items

This appendix is intended as a quick reference for agencies seeking to create new rating or screen-out items or seeking guidance on assessing their current items before importing them into a competency network. For a more comprehensive review of best practices around item writing, see the Best Practices in Assessment Questionnaire Development course on the Online Training Courses Portal for USA Staffing (https://usastaffing.golearnportal.org/portal.php). Contact your Account Manager for more information and access.

Item Definition

For the purposes of item development in USA Staffing, an item is defined as either a rating item or a screen-out item. Rating items are used to measure target competencies for the purpose of ranking eligible applicants. Screen-out items are used to measure eligibility for a position.

Rating Items

Rating items are used for employee selection and promotion to rank eligible applicants. Although there are a variety of item types, assessment questionnaire rating items generally measure the extent to which an applicant possesses the training and experience required for the job. Most competencies can be measured with 3 to 8 quality items. Well written items are based on specific, observable and verifiable behaviors supported by job analysis. When writing rating items:

Focus on measuring the target competency. Develop items that collectively serve as the best and most appropriate measure of the competency you are trying to assess for the target position.

Consider level and nature of experience required. Write each item in a way that is specific enough to measure the behavior or competency as needed for the position at the time of hire but general enough so that qualified applicants, particularly external applicants, are not excluded based on information that is overly and unnecessarily specific to the context.

Focus on making meaningful distinctions among applicants. For example, consider whether the item will help to differentiate among applicants, or will all applicants be able to rate the item high? Consider writing items at varying levels of proficiency, particularly if they are being used for more than one grade.

Use observable (verifiable) terms. Consider whether the behavior and associated response can be verified based on the applicant's resume or by an applicant's previous supervisor, teacher, or colleague. Applicants are less prone to response inflation when their response can be verified.

Avoid ambiguous terms. Be as precise as possible. If the wording of the item is too broad or ambiguous, applicants may misinterpret it, interpret it differently, or interpret it to their advantage.
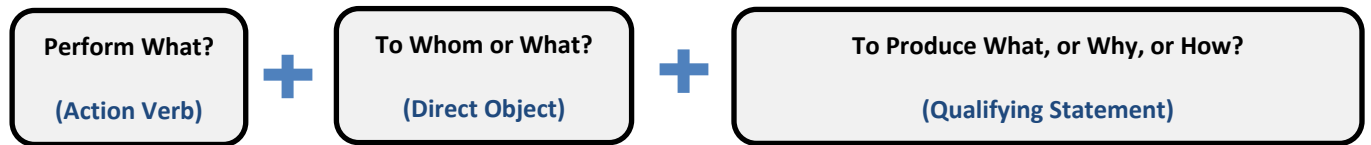
Write clearly and succinctly. For example, "Audits employee time reports to ensure proper payment" is more effective than "Audits employee time reports of persons under own supervision by checking for errors in addition and hours claimed". Also, the verb must be selected carefully. For example, "Write a report" is very different than "Compile a report" as a measure for Written Communication. Make sure the applicant will be able to read the item only once and respond accurately.

Consider the rating scale. For example, when you read the item, does it make sense with regard to the rating scale being used?
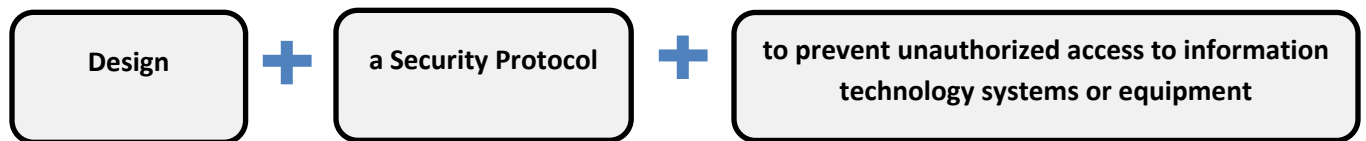
Avoid subjective language. For example, the item should be free of subjective terms or adjectives (e.g., effective, adequate, complex, all, some) or adverbs (e.g., accurately, highly, timely)? If a subjective term (e.g., complex) must be used, use qualifying examples.

Avoid acronyms and government jargon. For example, RPA may mean 'Request for Personnel Action' to some but may mean 'Robotic Process Automation' to others. Acronyms are re-used throughout multiple contexts, agencies, organizations and industries, and mean different things to different people. Furthermore, using government jargon limits applicants with relevant private sector experience from understanding the item.

The general formula for writing a questionnaire item is:

| Perform What? (Action Verb) | ➕ | To Whom or What? (Direct Object) | ➕ | To Produce What, or Why, or How? (Qualifying Statement) |

Example:

| Design | ➕ | a Security Protocol | ➕ | to prevent unauthorized access to information technology systems or equipment |

Screen-Out Items

Screen-out items are used for assessing minimum qualifications of applicants, selective placement factors, and conditions of employment. When creating screen-out questions, the following are recommended best practices:

➔ Use Yes/No or multiple-choice questions
➔ Use clear, unambiguous language that any applicant (including from private sector) can understand
➔ Include response options for both qualified and unqualified applicants
➔ Describe experience requirements at each grade level identified, such that distinctions between grade levels are clear
➔ Describe educational requirements, including references as appropriate

Rating Scales

- **System Rating Scale:** Rating items can be used in conjunction with a generic rating scale already loaded into USA Staffing to measure the level of independence in carrying out specific work behaviors, specific knowledge areas, technical competencies, and demonstrated ability to perform the work. Use of system rating scales allows the agency to build items more quickly and efficiently and does not require measurement expertise. System rating scales, which can be used across a variety of positions, include:

  o General Schedule (Default rating scale in USA Staffing for general schedule positions) – for differentiating among applicants based on the level of independence with which they have performed a task.
  o Experience/ Demonstrated Capability (Entry-Level) – for differentiating among applicants based on experience and/or demonstrated capability to perform a task.
  o Experience/ Demonstrated Capability (Higher Complexity) – for differentiating among applicants based on experience and/or demonstrated capability across varying situations and level of supervision required to perform a task. Appropriate for use with higher-level positions for which applicants and incumbents are likely to have more extensive experience.

- o Level of Knowledge Scale – for differentiating among applicants based on their knowledge of an area of expertise.
- o Level of Knowledge Scale (Higher Complexity) – for differentiating among applicants based on their knowledge of an area of expertise. Appropriate for use with highly complex or highly technical positions where applicants and incumbents are subject matter experts or technical experts.
- o Technical Competence – for differentiating among applicants based on ability to demonstrate understanding of a specific technical area.
- o Yes/No (Default)
- o Job Element (Default rating scale in USA Staffing for Wage Grade positions only) – for differentiating among applicants based on demonstrated ability to perform the work of the position.

- **Custom Rating Scale:** Rating items may include a rating scale customized to an item, competency, occupation or series. Items with custom rating scales also may use an alternative item format (e.g., multiple-choice multiple-select). Customized rating items are always accompanied by a specific rating scale in the library. Agencies may develop and load their own generic and customized rating scales/items into their competency library. For more information regarding creating custom rating scales and scoring methods, please refer to the USA Staffing User Guide: *Assessment Scoring and Weighting Decision Guide.*

Linking Rating Items to Competencies

Rating items should always be linked to the competency they are designed to measure and be tailored to the position as appropriate. Each item in the competency library should serve as a quality measure of the given competency for the given position or group of positions. When linking your items to competencies, ask yourself and/or your subject matter expert (SMEs): Does the item clearly measure the competency it is intended to measure?

Appendix E: Competency Network Import Functionality

This appendix is intended to assist agencies seeking to utilize the mass competency network import functionality. Updates or maintenance to competencies or items which already exist in a network need to be worked individually.

Import Spreadsheet

Competencies, items, or both can be imported using an approved spreadsheet. Agencies can obtain this spreadsheet from their USA Staffing Account Manager. The spreadsheet will contain four tabs. Do not re-name any of the tabs.

➔ **Data Elements (not editable):** Defines the data elements contained in the competencies and items tabs
➔ **Competencies (editable):** Provides the capability to mass import competencies
➔ **Items (editable):** Provides the capability to mass import items
➔ **Validations (not editable):** Provides system validations for data elements contained in other tabs

Import Competencies

Using the import spreadsheet, new competencies can be created, or existing competencies can be populated as part the competency network import functionality.

Step 1: Completing the **Competencies** tab of the spreadsheet:

Creating New Competencies: To create a new competency, leave the Competency ID column blank. A Competency ID is system assigned so that it cannot be duplicated; therefore, it cannot be determined by an agency. Complete the Competency Name, Competency Definition, Competency Source, Competency Tags and Competency Owning Office fields.

Adding Existing Competencies: To add an existing competency, first determine if it is a system competency (Source is HR Manager) or an agency-developed competency (Source is not HR Manager). For a system competency, only the Competency ID column needs to be completed. The remaining data elements will pre-populate after import. For an agency-developed competency, complete the Competency ID and Competency Tags sections. The import will automatically pull over the tags of the existing competency. If the competency network is being shared to other specific tags, those tags will need to be added as part of the import.

> ℹ️ Agencies can create new competencies and add existing competencies within the same spreadsheet; however, completing these imports separately will ensure a simpler and more user-friendly import verification experience.

Step 2: Importing the completed spreadsheet:

1. While in a **Competency Network**, navigate to any sub-tab
2. In the toolbar, to the left of Documents, click **Import**
3. Click **Choose File** and select the competency import spreadsheet
4. Click **Import**
5. Within the **Import Competencies** prompt, select **Continue Importing Competencies**
6. Within the **Review Import Competencies** prompt, verify the data imported correctly
7. If the data imported correctly, click **Continue Import**. If the data imported incorrectly, click **Cancel Import** and update the spreadsheet as appropriate.

> **i** At this point you are asked to decide if a competency is deemed 'critical' or not for the grades in the competency network. Critical competencies generally meet pre-determined criteria for importance (important for success in the position) and required at entry (extent to which it is necessary that an individual possess the competency upon entry into the position) based on a job analysis. Check the critical box for any grades for which a competency is deemed critical.

8. Within the **Import Items** prompt, select **Skip Item Import**

> **i** You can import both competencies and items at the same time during an import; however, it is recommended to perform these steps separately to verify competencies were added correctly before attempting to add items potentially linked to them.

Step 3: While in the **Competency Network**, navigate to the **Competencies** sub-tab and verify the competencies successfully uploaded and display within the competency network. If new competencies were created as part of the import, document the system generated Competency IDs so they can be used in the item import process.

Import Items

It is recommended agencies import competencies first before importing items so that Competency IDs can be assigned to new competencies. Then, items can be created and linked to the competencies using the ID numbers. Only new items can be created and linked to a competency using the competency network import process.

Step 1: Completing the **Items** tab of the spreadsheet:

1. Navigate to the **Items** tab of the spreadsheet
2. Annotate the Competency ID which the item will be tied to in the **Linked Competency ID** column. Keep in mind that screen-out items do not need to link to a competency.
3. In **Item Source**, select **Item**. Currently no functionality exists around the Task Item Source.
4. Complete the **Item Stem**, **Screen-out**, **Response Type** questions.
5. Complete the **Scale, Response Text** and **Response Type** columns using the table below:

Response Type	Scale	Response Text	Response Value
Calendar	Leave blank	Leave blank	Leave blank
Multiple Choice- Multiple Select	Select Item-specific Response Options	Input custom response for each response option	Input custom score value for each response option
Multiple Choice – Single Select	Select applicable choice	Leave blank unless scale selected is Item-specific Response Options	Leave blank unless scale selected is Item-specific Response Options
Narrative Textbox	Leave blank	Leave blank	Leave blank
Short Answer Textbox	Leave blank	Leave blank	Leave blank

> **i** If you're completing the response text and response value columns, it is only necessary to complete as many as needed until you've covered all your response options. After this, you can keep the remaining text/value columns blank.

Step 2: Importing the completed spreadsheet:

1. While in a **Competency Network**, navigate to any sub-tab
2. In the toolbar, to the left of Documents, click **Import**
3. Click **Choose File** and select the competency import spreadsheet

4. Click **Import**
5. Within the **Import Competencies** prompt, select **Skip to Item Import**
6. Within the **Review Import Items** prompt, verify the data imported correctly
7. If the data imported correctly, click **Continue Import**. If the data imported incorrectly, click **Cancel Import** and update the spreadsheet as appropriate.

Step 3: While in the **Competency Network**, navigate to the **Items** sub-tab and verify items successfully uploaded and display within the competency network.