



# How to help leaders develop their competencies

This guide focuses on developing competencies from Tier 2 to 3, as it was developed for the Preparatory Track to the Developing Heads of Operations Programme. The same principles can and should be applied in developing staff's competencies at tier 2 and above.

## What are Tiers 2 and 3

In the IFRC Core Competency Framework for Surge Personnel the tiers are described as below:

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
INDICATIVE ROLE	<b>Implementation (Officer level)</b> Sanitation Officer, Procurement Officer, Medical Doctor	<b>Coordination (Coordinator level)</b> WaSH Coordinator, Logistics Coordinator, Medical Coordinator	<b>Leadership (Leadership level)</b> Head of Emergency Operations, Operations Manager
INDICATIVE FUNCTION	Purely technical function within a team. Technical expert, someone involved directly in implementation.	Manages a team within a single geographical or sectoral scope. Coordination and strategic responsibilities.	Leadership surge role in a large or complex operation; works at the strategic level with National Societies, external partners and affected communities.
INDICATIVE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE	Field experience; technical expertise, implementing level of skills and knowledge.	Field experience; managerial experience; coordination skills.	Field experience; extensive managerial experience, experience of capacity building and coaching.

In the Preparatory Track to the DHEOPS programme, one of the competencies to be developed from Tier 2 to Tier 3 is Interpersonal communication. We will use it to illustrate a potential learning strategy.

## 15. Interpersonal Communication

*Ability to actively listen and clearly convey ideas and information in an engaging manner*

Identifies relevant methods and channels of communication based on the purpose, message content, urgency and sensitivity/confidentiality of message.	Delivers accurate, clear and concise messages, orally and in writing, to inform a range of audiences.		
Explains the concept and importance of active listening and how it can influence decisions.	Actively listens to and encourages feedback from peers, communities, volunteers and other stakeholders.		
Gives examples of different communication styles for different audiences.	Communicates persuasively to build rapport and gain support.	Conveys complex ideas and plans based on inputs from different audiences in an engaging, appropriate and clear manner.	Influences others through skilful negotiation at the strategic level.

## Key guiding principles

### 70-20-10:

Competency development is mainly happening on the job. IFRC recognizes the 70-20-10 Model for Staff Development. It is as a commonly used formula for adult learning at the workplace. It holds that staff obtain 70% of their knowledge from job-related experiences, 20% from interactions with others, and 10% from formal educational activities. When building your strategy to develop your competencies, please note that 70% and 20% elements are important for all the workflow but especially for Tier 2 and 3.

### Many ways to develop a competency:

For developing a competency consider broadening your approach to learning and include the following tools: books, videos, podcasts, journals, online communities of practice, coaching, mentoring, internship, job-swaps, developing missions and virtual developing missions, etc.

## Why consider tiers when choosing learning modalities

For different tiers different modalities work the best. For example, you will not significantly improve negotiation skills of an experienced leader with a self-paced online course, and you will not use a mentoring programme to simply introduce learners to a new topic.

As a rule of a thumb, for Tiers 2 and 3 this works the best (there might be exceptions to this, based on the needs of the intended target audience):

### Tier 2:

- Scenario based face to face training: A face-to-face training that is focusing on scenarios and activities and gives a chance to people to try out and learn the skills they need for successful deployment.
- Mentoring, coaching initiatives.

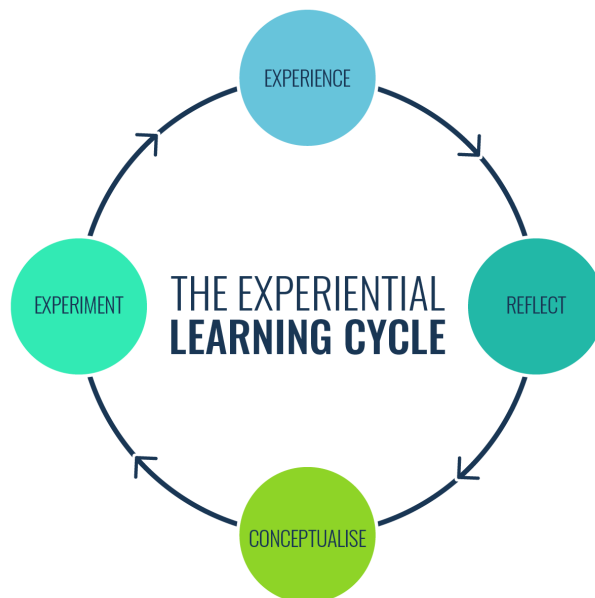
- A developing mission - someone deploys in tandem with a more experienced person and gets mentoring from this person while on deployment.

### Tier 3:

Comprehensive learning programmes including:

- Mentoring and coaching
- Developing missions
- Personal development plans

## How to put it all together



Consider applying the Kolb cycle, an experiential model that recognizes that people learn from experience, and describes learning as following a cycle of stages:

1. Concrete experience
2. Observation and reflection
3. Abstract conceptualization
4. Experimenting and testing concepts in new situations

### IMPORTANT:

- Learners can enter this cycle at any point
- Feedback at all steps is key
- The role of the mentor is to encourage the learner to go through all the stages of the learning cycle and help them discover what works for them.



## Example

Let's say, you want to be able to better influence others through skillful negotiation at the strategic level (Interpersonal Communication competency, Tier 3):

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- **CONCEPTUALIZE:** do a self-assessment and request feedback on your current tier of this competency. Develop a personal development plan and discuss it with your mentor. Use recommended learning resources (see our [Competency Development Guide](#)), For example, read a book on negotiation strategies and discuss it with your mentor.
- **EXPERIMENT and EXPERIENCE:** Experiment in a safe environment and get concrete new experience. For example, prepare with your mentor for an important meeting that will require negotiation. Plan how you will apply new concepts from the book you have read at that upcoming meeting. Practice a new behavior alone, with your mentor, with your family member or your cat. Go and apply it. Be ready it might not work from the first time.
- **REFLECT:** Think about how it went. Write a short reflection paper (more on it below). Discuss with your mentor. If possible, observe a more experienced person doing similar job and reflect on how it is different from what you have done.
- **CONCEPTUALIZE AGAIN:** wrap up, form abstract concepts, see how and if your initial concepts changed, plan next steps. Repeat the cycle.

**In short: do something, think about it,  
pull out key points and apply them. Repeat.**



## How to track progress

There is no universal model that would work for everybody, the choice will heavily depend on the resources, size of the group, timeline, etc.

### A few potential solutions:

#### For a small group:

- Have your learners conduct self-assessment against required competencies at specific milestones.
- Request feedback from their mentor or even consider running 360.
- Request learners to write reflection papers at specific milestones on what they think they improved and how. What did they learn, what would they do differently, what they are proud of and what they would need to improve next time? Ask them to link evidence of their behavior to academic learning, for example, how they read a book about a specific method and then applied it and what happened. Do not just summarize the knowledge but demonstrate how it was applied.

#### For bigger groups with more resources:

Points-based system to acquire and maintain certification.

- Put together a list of learning options and divide them into 2 categories:
  - o develop my own competence: courses, reading, learning at work, events, deployment, a new project, etc
  - o give back to the profession: be a mentor/coach, give a talk/webinar, be shadowed, write a paper, facilitate a training, do a research, etc., etc.
- Have each activity count for certain number of points and set a minimum amount of points to be collected in a specific period of time.

This tends to create a sense of community and helps to keep knowledge up to date.

**Remember, good competency evidence is not evidence of perfection,  
but of progression.**

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## Other relevant resources:

[Developing missions](#)

[Core competency development guide](#)

[How to write good learning objectives](#)

[Personal development plan template](#)

[Competency-based self-assessment templates](#)