

# Overview of the HLA Competency Directory

## The HLA Directory

The Healthcare Leadership Alliance (HLA) has created the HLA Competency Directory, an interactive tool to ensure that current and future healthcare leaders have the training and expertise they need to meet the challenges of managing the nation's healthcare organizations. The HLA is comprised of the nation's premier professional organizations that together represent more than 140,000 members across the major healthcare management sectors.

The Healthcare Leadership Alliance is comprised of the following organizations:

- American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)
- American College of Physician Executives (ACPE)
- American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE)
- Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA)
- Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS)
- Medical Group Management Association (MGMA) and its certifying body, the American College of Medical Practice Executives (ACMPE)

When it was first published in 2005<sup>\*</sup>, the HLA Competency Directory was a landmark effort to identify the competencies that were important across diverse professional roles within healthcare management. It contained 232 competencies that were common to all the professions participating in its development as well as another 68 competencies that were specific to certain disciplines within healthcare management. The emergence of so many common competencies was a reflection of the extensive body of knowledge that is shared by healthcare managers across many disciplines.

The competency statements were based on extensive psychometric research, including job analysis studies, by each of the associations. These competencies were categorized under five domains:

- Communication and Relationship Management
- Leadership
- Professionalism
- Knowledge of the Healthcare Environment
- Business Skills and Knowledge

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<sup>\*</sup> The American College of Physician Executives did not participate in the development of the HLA Competency Directory.

## Using the Directory

The first version of the directory was used by HLA member organizations to enhance their certification and continuing education programs. A number of specific uses of the directory were also identified:

1. Self Assessment

The HLA organizations have applied 5-point rating scales to their competency statements and urged individual members to conduct a self-assessment. Rather than focusing on overall scores, individuals should identify patterns of strength and needs for improvement. They can use the results of the self assessment to target their professional development and continuing education pursuits.

2. Team Assessment

Leadership teams (members of the C-suite) and other work teams can conduct assessments to identify complementary strengths and areas for team development. A team competency profile and assessment can play a strong role in enhancing the effectiveness of the team's efforts.

3. Human Resource Departments

The Directory can be used by Human Resource Departments to create job descriptions that capture the key competencies for specific functional positions within the healthcare environment. Job descriptions for more senior, generalist managers can consider the major competency domains and clusters of competencies (described later).

4. Curriculum Development

Academic programs in health services administration have utilized the competency directory in assessing and adjusting their curriculum and its component courses in order to best serve the needs of future healthcare managers and leaders.

## The Architecture of the Directory

The current version of the directory incorporates findings and updates from the HLA member associations' recent job analysis studies and research. Its architecture differs from the original directory. Rather than identifying competencies that are common across all the participating associations, it incorporates all of the competencies that were developed by each of the five associations. They are organized into clusters of

competencies under each of the five competency domains noted above. These clusters were judged to be common across all of the associations.

**Table 1** lists and describes the competency domains and clusters. Together, the domains and clusters encompass the range of competencies that all types of healthcare managers should possess. All of the competencies identified by the individual associations could be classified under these clusters within the domains.

**Table 2** shows how the individual competency statements from each association are distributed across the competency domains and clusters.

The current version of the HLA Competency Directory contains a total of 802 competency statements. In almost every instance, each of the five associations' competencies addresses the areas of managerial expertise represented by the domains and clusters. The differing patterns of emphasis (e.g. relatively fewer Business Skills and Knowledge competencies for AONE) reflect the differing areas of expertise represented by the various associations.

## Working with the Directory

The HLA Directory is a searchable reference tool that allows users to filter and sort information by domain, cluster, management specialty and key word. It is a relational database that allows the user to look at a complex array of information in meaningful ways.

The Excel-based directory allows users to filter information by one or more classification variables. These are the titles of the columns on the directory itself.

### Domain

The domains are listed above and definitions appear in **Table 1**.

### Cluster

Within each domain, 3-4 clusters of competencies are noted. These clusters are also defined in **Table 1**.

### Association

This column lists the association that identified the competency statement as part of its recent job skill analysis. In some cases, competency statements from more than one organization are identical or very similar, but no attempt has been made in this version of the directory to identify these commonalities.

## Keywords

This column provides 42 keywords that describe both the knowledge and skills contained in the directory. Keywords summarize the topic areas covered in the competency statements, and may cross domains and clusters as well as association. They allow the user to view the competencies from the perspective of topics covered in the directory. The keywords contained in the directory are:

|                         |                          |                     |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Accountability          | Governance               | Physicians          |
| Advocate                | Healthcare Professionals | Planning            |
| Analysis                | Healthcare System        | Quality Improvement |
| Assessment              | Information Systems      | Regulations         |
| Budgets                 | Implementation           | Reimbursement       |
| Change Management       | Interpersonal Relations  | Risk                |
| Collaborate             | Leadership               | Self Awareness      |
| Communication           | Lifelong Learning        | Staff               |
| Community               | Management               | Standards           |
| Culture                 | Mentoring                | Strategy            |
| Decision-Making         | Negotiation              | Systems Thinking    |
| Diversity               | Nursing                  | Teamwork            |
| Ethics                  | Patient Safety           | Technology          |
| Evidence-Based Practice | Patients & Families      | Theory              |
| External Relations      |                          |                     |

## Competency Statement

The competency statements are the core of the directory. Competencies are the skills, knowledge and abilities that effective healthcare managers need to master. They are generic and transcend organizational settings.

The competency statements included in this directory are based on job analysis studies by the participating associations. They have been psychometrically validated.

## Using the Directory's Excel Filtering Tool

The Excel filtering tool has been applied to the first four columns. This tool provides a quick and simple way to find and work with a subset of data in a list. When the filtering tool is applied, only those rows that meet the specified criteria in a given column are displayed. Because the directory has filters on multiple columns, a variety of very specific and complex searches can be performed.

| HLA Competency Directory                            |                         |            |                     |   |
|---|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|---|
| Domain  | Cluster                 | Associatio | Keyword             | Competency  |
| Domain 1: Communication and Relationship Management | Relationship Management | ACHE       | Healthcare System   | Organizational structure and relationships        |
| Domain 1: Communication and Relationship Management | Relationship Management | ACHE       | Collaborate         | Build collaborative relationships                 |
| Domain 1: Communication and Relationship Management | Relationship Management | ACHE       | Interpersonal Relat | Demonstrate effective interpersonal relations     |
| Domain 1: Communication and Relationship Management | Relationship Management | ACHE       | Physicians          | Develop and maintain medical staff relationships  |
| Domain 1: Communication and Relationship Management | Relationship Management | ACHE       | External Relations  | Develop and maintain relationships with suppliers |

When you click on the autofilter button with the arrow (bottom right-hand corner of the first four columns in row 2), you see a list of all items, including blank spaces, in a column. For example, clicking on the arrow in the Domain column shows all five competency domains as well as any blank spaces. There is also a box labeled "select all".

When you begin to work with the directory, make sure that the "select all" box is checked in each of the autofilter columns. When these boxes are checked, all 802 competency statements will be visible in the directory.

You can tell if a filter has been applied by looking at the autofilter button. When a filter is applied, the arrow shown in the above diagram is replaced by an icon showing a funnel or filter.

## Filtering

Filtering is accomplished by removing the check from the "select all" column. For example, to view only those competencies developed by the Health Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) only the box next to HIMSS would be checked in the Association column.

To view all competency statements related to the Health Care Personnel cluster, the check would be removed from "select all" in the Cluster column and the box next to Health Care Personnel would be checked. It is important to remember to reset all other columns that have the filter tool. Resetting means checking the "select all" box.

When a filter is applied, the arrow is the filter button is suppressed and replaced with an icon showing a filter.

## Using Multiple Filters

A number of more complicated questions can be answered by using multiple filters. For example, to identify the American College of Medical Practice Executives (ACMPE) competencies dealing with governance, the user would select ACMPE in the Association column and "Governance" in the Keyword column. This search would reveal four competency statements that met these criteria.

More than one item within each column can also be selected. To find competencies related to both “quality improvement” and “patient safety”, both of these keywords would be selected *after* the filters in the other three columns were reset by checking “select all”. This search would yield 28 competency statements. To view only the quality improvement and patient safety competencies generated by the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE), the ACHE filter should be applied in the Association column. This search yields a total of seven competency statements.

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## **Table 1: HLA Common Competency Domains and Clusters**

### ***Communication and Relationship Management***

The ability to communicate clearly and concisely with internal and external customers, establish and maintain relationships, and facilitate constructive interactions with individuals and groups.

#### **Relationship Management**

The ability to build and maintain relationships with internal as well as external stakeholders that are anchored in trust and where decision-making is shared.

#### **Communication Skills**

Be able to utilize verbal, written and presentation skills to communicate an organization's mission, vision, values and priorities to diverse audiences.

#### **Facilitation and Negotiation**

The ability to move a group toward a conclusion, guiding the group collectively through substantive discussion, compromise and consensus.

### ***Leadership***

The ability to inspire individual and organizational excellence, create and attain a shared vision and successfully manage change to attain the organization's strategic ends and successful performance.

#### **Leadership Skills and Behavior**

The ability to exercise appropriate leadership styles and behavior, employ critical thinking skills, and advocate for the organization and its values in the community and public policy arena.

#### **Organizational Climate and Culture**

Foster a culture that values diversity, promotes teamwork, and engenders a commitment to the purpose and values of the organization.

#### **Communicating Vision**

Establish and communicate a compelling vision for the organization that guides strategy formulation and direction.

#### **Managing Change**

Be able to promote organizational development and continuous improvement, and use systems thinking to enact change in complex organizations.

## ***Professionalism***

The ability to align personal and organizational conduct with ethical and professional standards that include a responsibility to the patient and community, a service orientation, and a commitment to lifelong learning and improvement.

### **Personal and Professional Accountability**

Practice and advocate ethical decision-making and actions, promote patients' rights and responsibilities, effectively manage stress and personal resources, and act in accord with professional roles and norms.

### **Professional Development and Lifelong Learning**

Participate in proactive career planning and continually update professional knowledge.

### **Contributions to the Community and Profession**

Mentor or coach others in the workplace, provide service to the community that improves community health status and standards of care, and adds to the professional body of knowledge by teaching, research or other means.

## ***Knowledge of the Health Care Environment***

The understanding of the health care system and the environment in which health care managers and providers function.

### **Health Care Systems and Organizations**

Demonstrate an understanding of how the various components of the health care system are organized and financed, and how they interact to deliver medical and health care.

### **Health Care Personnel**

Understand the professional roles, responsibilities, and values of the range of health care professionals in order to foster effective relationships and promote an optimal care environment.

### **The Patient's Perspective**

Understand the patient experience, demonstrate a commitment to patients' rights and responsibilities, and ensure that the organization provides a safe environment for patients and their families.

### **The Community and the Environment**

Monitor trends in the local and national environment to the delivery of care, demonstrate a familiarity with the regulations impacting health care delivery, and understand the impact of public policy decisions on cost, quality and access to care.

## ***Business Skills and Knowledge***

The ability to apply business principles, including systems thinking, to the health care environment.

### **General Management**

Demonstrate analytic and problem solving skills, and understand the impact of individual decisions on other parts of the organization and the environment.

### **Financial management**

Understanding of financial analysis, reimbursement techniques and strategies, and financial outcome measures. Application of financial analysis and planning to achieve organizational objectives.

### **Human resource management**

Understanding of the rights and protection of employees, effective workforce planning, and performance management.

### **Organizational dynamics and governance**

An understanding of governance structures and the ability to foster trust and effectively support governance systems and achieve organizational goals.

### **Strategic planning and marketing**

Setting organizational direction and strategies based on an understanding of the market and market forces, and communicating an organization's capabilities and strengths to consumers.

### **Information management**

An understanding of how technology can be used to promote managerial and clinical efficiency and improve health care delivery. The ability to effectively manage information resources and plan for future needs.

### **Risk management**

Knowledge of liability and compliance regulation, the ability to employ strategies to mitigate risk, avoid malpractice and plan for disasters.

### **Quality improvement**

Application of techniques that continually improve the quality of care provided, patient safety, organizational performance, and the financial health of the organization.

**Table 2: Competency Domains and Clusters for Each Association**

|  | ACHE       |               | ACMPE     |               | AONE       |               | HFMA       |               | HIMSS      |               | Total      |       |
|--|------------|---------------|-----------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|---------------|------------|-------|
| <b>COMMUNICATION &amp; RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT</b> |            |               |           |               |            |               |            |               |            |               |            |       |
| Relationship Mgt.                                  | 8          | 2.7%          | 3         | 3.7%          | 7          | 3.5%          | 9          | 7.8%          | 2          | 1.8%          | 29         |       |
| Communication Skills                               | 10         | 3.4%          | 4         | 4.9%          | 2          | 1.0%          | 8          | 6.9%          | 3          | 2.7%          | 27         |       |
| Facilitation and Negotiation                       | 7          | 2.4%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 3          | 1.5%          | 5          | 4.3%          | 3          | 2.7%          | 20         |       |
|  | 25         | 8.5%          | 9         | 11.1%         | 12         | 6.0%          | 22         | 19.0%         | 8          | 7.1%          | 76         | 9.5%  |
| <b>LEADERSHIP</b>                                  |            |               |           |               |            |               |            |               |            |               |            |       |
| Leadership Skills & Behavior                       | 10         | 3.4%          | 5         | 6.2%          | 9          | 4.5%          | 9          | 7.8%          | 3          | 2.7%          | 36         |       |
| Org. Climate & Culture                             | 3          | 1.0%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 15         | 7.5%          | 2          | 1.7%          | 2          | 1.8%          | 24         |       |
| Communicating Vision                               | 5          | 1.7%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 2          | 1.0%          | 7          | 6.0%          | 1          | 0.9%          | 17         |       |
| Managing Change                                    | 6          | 2.0%          | 1         | 1.2%          | 6          | 3.0%          | 3          | 2.6%          | 2          | 1.8%          | 18         |       |
|  | 24         | 8.2%          | 10        | 12.3%         | 32         | 16.0%         | 21         | 18.1%         | 8          | 7.1%          | 95         | 11.8% |
| <b>PROFESSIONALISM</b>                             |            |               |           |               |            |               |            |               |            |               |            |       |
| Personal & Prof. Accountability                    | 12         | 4.1%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 14         | 7.0%          | 7          | 6.0%          | 4          | 3.6%          | 39         |       |
| Development/Lifelong Learning                      | 8          | 2.7%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 6          | 3.0%          | 3          | 2.6%          | 2          | 1.8%          | 21         |       |
| Contribution to Community & Profession             | 7          | 2.4%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 25         | 12.5%         | 1          | 0.9%          | 0          | 0.0%          | 35         |       |
|  | 27         | 9.2%          | 6         | 7.4%          | 45         | 22.5%         | 11         | 9.5%          | 6          | 5.4%          | 95         | 11.8% |
| <b>KNOWLEDGE OF THE HEALTHCARE ENVIRONMENT</b>     |            |               |           |               |            |               |            |               |            |               |            |       |
| Healthcare Systems & Organizations                 | 8          | 2.7%          | 1         | 1.2%          | 0          | 0.0%          | 3          | 2.6%          | 2          | 1.8%          | 14         |       |
| Health Care Personnel                              | 9          | 3.1%          | 5         | 6.2%          | 9          | 4.5%          | 1          | 0.9%          | 1          | 0.9%          | 25         |       |
| Patient's Perspective                              | 1          | 0.3%          | 3         | 3.7%          | 14         | 7.0%          | 2          | 1.7%          | 0          | 0.0%          | 20         |       |
| Community and the Environment                      | 10         | 3.4%          | 2         | 2.5%          | 6          | 3.0%          | 2          | 1.7%          | 2          | 1.8%          | 22         |       |
|  | 28         | 9.6%          | 11        | 13.6%         | 29         | 14.5%         | 8          | 6.9%          | 5          | 4.5%          | 81         | 10.1% |
| <b>BUSINESS SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE</b>               |            |               |           |               |            |               |            |               |            |               |            |       |
| General Management                                 | 39         | 13.3%         | 8         | 9.9%          | 4          | 2.0%          | 7          | 6.0%          | 15         | 13.4%         | 73         |       |
| Financial Management                               | 26         | 8.9%          | 9         | 11.1%         | 9          | 4.5%          | 17         | 14.7%         | 9          | 8.0%          | 70         |       |
| Human Resource Management                          | 24         | 8.2%          | 7         | 8.6%          | 17         | 8.5%          | 9          | 7.8%          | 9          | 8.0%          | 66         |       |
| Organization Dynamics & Governance                 | 15         | 5.1%          | 3         | 3.7%          | 5          | 2.5%          | 4          | 3.4%          | 6          | 5.4%          | 33         |       |
| Strategic Planning & Marketing                     | 20         | 6.8%          | 3         | 3.7%          | 10         | 5.0%          | 4          | 3.4%          | 11         | 9.8%          | 48         |       |
| Information Management                             | 27         | 9.2%          | 4         | 4.9%          | 13         | 6.5%          | 5          | 4.3%          | 15         | 13.4%         | 64         |       |
| Risk Management                                    | 20         | 6.8%          | 7         | 8.6%          | 5          | 2.5%          | 4          | 3.4%          | 14         | 12.5%         | 50         |       |
| Quality Improvement                                | 18         | 6.1%          | 4         | 4.9%          | 19         | 9.5%          | 4          | 3.4%          | 6          | 5.4%          | 51         |       |
|  | 189        | 64.5%         | 45        | 55.6%         | 82         | 41.0%         | 54         | 46.6%         | 85         | 75.9%         | 455        | 56.7% |
| <b>Total Competencies</b>                          | <b>293</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>81</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>200</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>116</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>112</b> | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>802</b> |       |