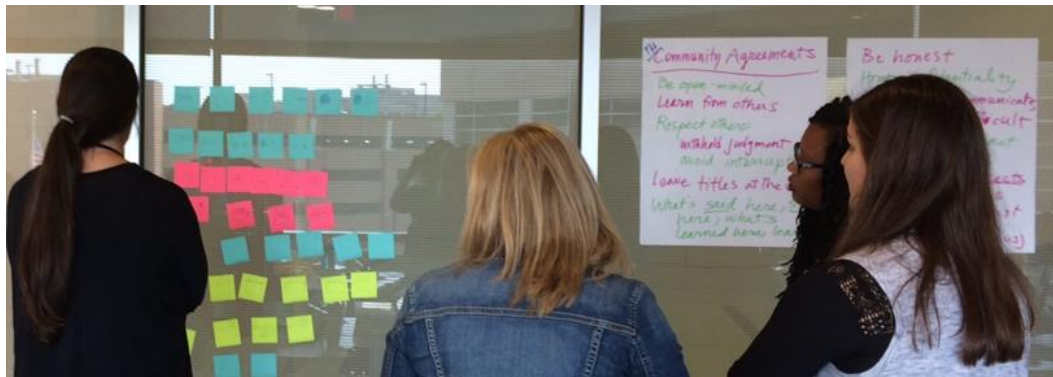




# HR Competencies Program

**Note: The program is on hold until 2026, pending Workday implementation.**

The HR Competency Program at UW–Madison is intended for UW–Madison employees with HR job titles, as well as Administrative Specialists, Department Administrators, and other employees whose positions include responsibility for HR functions.



## Mission

The program supports a shift among UW–Madison HR professionals to an increasingly consultative way of working with others. Functional HR competencies are absolutely critical, but when the focus is *solely* on the functional, HR in practice can become overwhelmingly task focused.

To work in consultative partnership requires that we increase our ability to engage, fully include, and honor differences among people whom we serve and with whom we work—and to ensure that the impacts of our work are equitable. We need to center our relationships and relational skills—ensuring the ‘human’ in human resources.

There are seven competencies.

1. **Equity, Inclusion & Diversity (EID)** is the foundational competency: the “WHY.”
2. **HR Functional Knowledge & Expertise** reflects “WHAT” we do.

“HOW” we do what we do is reflected in the following competencies:

3. **Change Management**
4. **Collaboration**
5. **Ethics & Integrity**
6. **Execution**
7. **Problem-Solving**

## Vision

The vision is for HR professionals at UW–Madison to increase competency over time from the level of self to others to system:

- (1) **Developing self** involves exposure to relational competency concepts and opportunities to cultivate the habits of self-assessment and reflection. These habits are essential to being able to work as consultative partners with colleagues and customers.
- (2) **Cultivating fluency with others** requires an attentional shift from self-assessment to how you influence others—as well as allow yourself, with discernment, to be influenced *by* others. At this level, you model consultative partnership behaviors in the process of innovating and solving tough HR problems.
- (3) **Mastering the system** is envisioned as an optional focus for those who accept responsibility for and influence HR systems on campus. \*Certification requirements are still being developed.

“Developing,” “Cultivating,” and “Mastering” is a deliberate language choice to emphasize an ongoing evolution in competency development versus one which has an end point.

The overarching vision is to ensure that all UW–Madison HR professionals consistently demonstrate ever-increasing consultative partnership behaviors at the level of Cultivating Fluency.

## Certificates of Completion

### **Certificate of Development:**

This certificate celebrates the HR professional who successfully demonstrates an initial level of competence of the seven competencies through commitment to learn and practice *in one’s own work*. This is achieved with successful completion of the cohort.

### **Certificate of Fluency:**

This certificate celebrates the HR professional who demonstrates the standard of competence in HR at UW–Madison, across the seven competencies, through the influencing of attitudes, knowledge, skill and work of *others*, and through commitment to learn, practice, and model the competencies in collaboration with others. This is achieved by creating a portfolio and gaining an assessment panel’s recommendation.

### **Certificate of Mastery:**

This certificate celebrates the HR professional who demonstrates competence of the seven competencies in a visible leadership capacity. This certificate signifies a leader who influences the *system* of HR at UW–Madison while modeling the seven HR Competencies.

The program is designed to be highly personalized and individualized, while simultaneously being accessible, easily administered, and at low- to zero-cost.

# Certificate of Development: Cohort Program

The first certification involves participation in the cohort, a trusted community for learning and reflecting over time, through synchronous sessions and asynchronous online discussions. Cohorts are capped at 18 participants.

**Note:** The cohort is not an HR functional knowledge training program. You must have obtained the initial training needed to perform in your role prior to participating in the cohort. Completion of initial probation or your first six months in HR at UW–Madison (whichever comes first) is required to join the cohort.

There are six elements:

- 1. 360-Degree Competencies Inventory (360).** Pre-cohort, you'll assess yourself in relation to the seven competencies, and invite your supervisor and up to six others (e.g., colleagues, customers, employees whom you manage (if applicable), and collaborators) to do the same on your behalf. You'll receive a report that compares self-assessment with feedback from chosen "others." This can help you see how well self-perception aligns with how others see you. You might identify a specific competency that you'd like to focus on during the cohort.
- 2. Cohort Sessions.** Each cohort will meet over eight months, organized by module:
  - a. Welcome & Orientation
  - b. Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
  - c. Collaboration
  - d. Ethics & Integrity
  - e. Change Management
  - f. Problem Solving
  - g. Execution
  - h. Integration & Celebration
- 3. Readings.** Each module will include required reading. You are *not* expected to read every page in great detail nor to memorize content, but to scan for understanding.
- 4. Discussions.** Each module will be accompanied by an online discussion. This is an opportunity to synthesize thinking and to share your learning and insights related to the readings and your day-to-day work experiences. It's also an opportunity to build on the thinking of others.
- 5. Small Group Presentation.** In orientation, you'll sign up to lead an informal presentation on one of the competencies with one or two other cohort members. These presentations are opportunities to take risks and learn versus operate from already established strengths. While many former cohort participants have said they were most nervous about this, it has also been one of the things that many cohort members ultimately value.
- 6. Certification.** Assuming satisfactory participation (80%), you'll achieve a Certificate of Development.

**Reminder:** The cohort is not an HR Functional Knowledge training program. Although we use HR scenarios and discuss day-to-day HR work, the learning focus is on building relational skills through self-examination and reflective practice.

## Expectations of Cohort Participants

The program is rigorous, and requires 6 hours every four weeks. You'll need to be able to commit to:

1. **Attending all sessions (3.5 hours/every four weeks) – 2023 dates:**

Jan 12	8:30am – 12:00pm	Welcome & Orientation
Feb 9	8:30am – 12:00pm	Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
Mar 9	8:30am – 12:00pm	Collaboration
Apr 6	8:30am – 12:00pm	Ethics & Integrity
May 4	8:30am – 12:00pm	Change Management
Jun 1	8:30am – 12:00pm	Problem Solving
Jun 29	8:30am – 12:00pm	Execution
Jul 27	8:30am – 12:00pm	Integration and Celebration

2. **Doing assigned reading related to each module (1.5 hours/every four weeks)**

3. **Participating in online discussions (1 hour/every four weeks)**

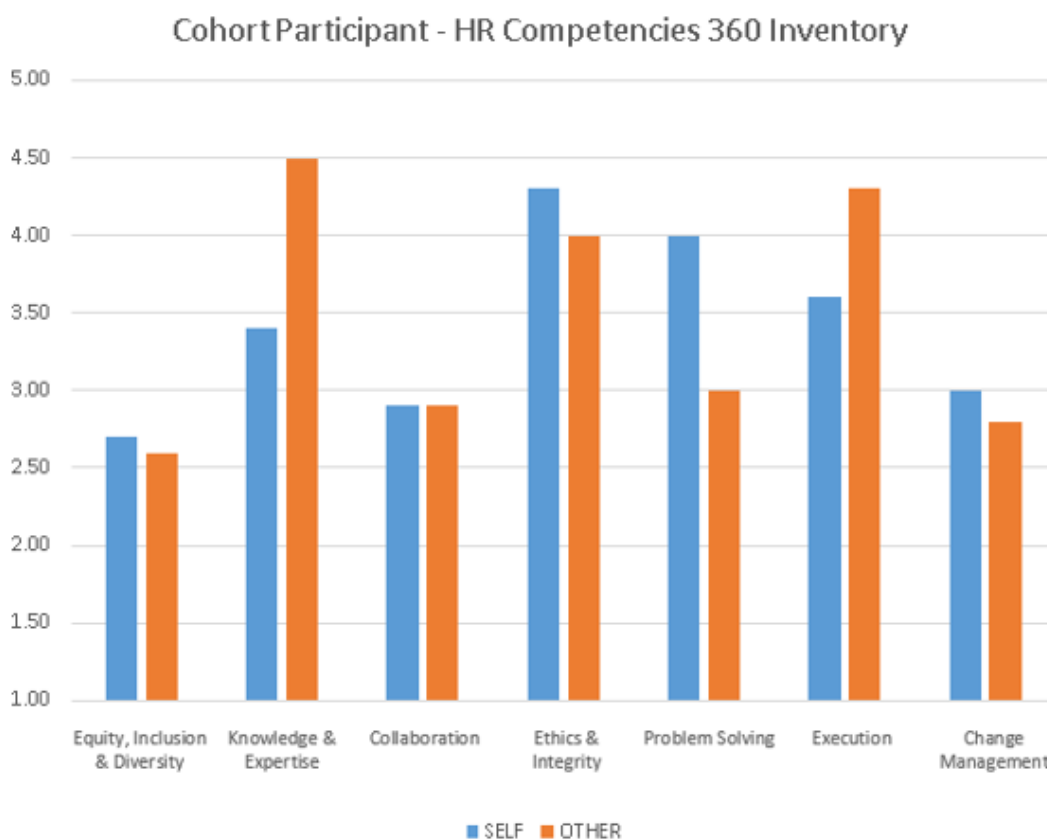
4. **Creating and delivering a small group presentation:** You'll work with 1-2 colleagues to develop a one-time presentation for the cohort. You'll be expected to take initiative/ownership of the presentation process, but will have access to program support and coaching as needed.

## How to Participate

1. **Apply.** If you have successfully completed your initial probationary period or your first six months on the job (whichever comes first), discuss your interest with your supervisor/manager. If they are supportive and agree to the time commitment, complete the "[Declaration of Interest.](#)" Your supervisor/manager will be asked to confirm support for your participation given the time commitment.

The interest form enables program organizers learn more about who is joining the cohort. Participants are accepted on a first come, first served basis until the maximum capacity of eighteen (18) has been reached. Cohorts are limited in size to enable meaningful engagement, interaction, and reflection with individualized attention available to members, as well as opportunities for you to cultivate a wider HR network.

2. **Complete a 360-Degree Competencies Inventory.** You'll provide names and email addresses for a minimum of four (maximum of seven) references, including your supervisor, and colleagues, customers, employees whom you supervise (if applicable), and collaborators. Once admitted, you and your references will be given a link to complete the electronic 360. The responses of others will be presented in anonymous, aggregate form ("Others") for purposes of comparing with one's own assessment ("Self"). See image next page.



1=not competent (yet)	2=somewhat competent	3=mostly competent	4=highly competent	5=role model
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## Certificate of Fluency: Post-Cohort

**Cultivating Fluency with Others:** Following completion of the cohort, you’ll shift your focus to modeling the competencies in day-to-day work. In support of this process, you’ll write a development plan and have access to coaching support from the HR Communities of Practice Team, along with optional participation in affinity groups to support your practice.

There are four elements:

1. **Professional Development Plan (PDP).** You’ll articulate goals for continued development in areas you need to strengthen. This is a customized plan for “building the muscle” of consultative partnership behaviors in your everyday work life, using the [rubrics](#) as guides. (Ideally, your PDP goals will also be incorporated into or aligned with your annual performance management goals.)
2. **Post-360 Degree Competencies Inventory.** After a period of practice, you’ll have an opportunity to repeat the 360 assessment to discern progress.
3. **A Portfolio.** Unlike the HR Cohort, which was geared mainly toward self-reflection with the support of the cohort space, demonstration of competency at the “cultivating fluency” level requires evidence or testimony from others. The portfolio is a way of “showing your work” and getting feedback. The goal is to communicate the positive impact you’ve had on others in both output (service or product) and in your way of working (process).

Your portfolio should demonstrate the seven HR Competencies in a way that shares what you’ve learned and practiced, and now model for others. It might include a combination of the following:

- i. A project you’ve led or worked on
- ii. A service that you provide
- iii. A resource you’ve built for employees, with a report of how you developed it and data about how it is used, and maintained
- iv. An HR course you’ve taught or conference presentation you’ve facilitated, with feedback from participants
- v. An award you’ve won for HR service
- vi. Feedback from others (e.g., through PMDP, testimonies, survey results)
- vii. Examples of contributions to discussions and small group presentations during the HR cohort, in which you model competence for others

7. **Assessment Panel.** You’ll propose the make-up of your panel of assessors, who may include departmental/divisional/OHR leadership, colleagues, and the HR Competencies Program team.

<b>Guidelines for thinking about PDP and Portfolio:</b>		
<b>Equity, Inclusion &amp; Diversity (EID)</b>	<b>Approach:</b> Present analysis of an HR technical problem/ issue/challenge through the lens of EID, and reflect on your EID learning process, practice with others, and your impacts.	<b>Assessment:</b> How successfully have you fostered a healthy, inclusive, and engaging work environment in the course of performing your work?
<b>HR Functional Knowledge &amp; Expertise</b>	<b>Approach:</b> From your day-to-day work experience, choose a program/process improvement project, consultation process, or similar project or collection of tasks as the context.	<b>Assessment:</b> How well do you understand the problems/ issues that you face?
<b>Collaboration, Ethics &amp; Integrity, Change Management, Problem Solving, and Execution</b>	<b>Approach:</b> Demonstrate competence in these relational competencies through the substance of your portfolio.	<b>Assessment:</b> How successfully have you interacted and worked with others; earned the trust and respect of others; facilitated change; resolved complex problems; and approached getting things done?

Opportunities to demonstrate what you’ve learned and routinely practice may include:

- Starting a new Community of Practice (“CoP”) or helping to lead an existing CoP
- Presenting at HR meetings
- Presenting as part of the [HR@UW Learning Series](#) or [HR@UW Conference](#)
- Showcasing your work at the annual UW [Showcase](#)

If you progress through this part of the program with others (e.g., in a small group), you’ll also be able to demonstrate collaboration explicitly via your group’s work processes.

## Testimony: Why this is Worthwhile

Here's sample feedback from cohort participants—from the initial 2017 cohort pilot through 2023. The cohort doesn't ignore the transactional challenges of day-to-day HR—but uses these challenges to transform ways of being and thinking, so that we might innovate and solve problems in new ways.

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"The cohort helped me see areas in which I need to grow [and] also reinforced for me areas where I feel confident—and gave me tools to understand both how to improve and grow no matter where I find myself. I have already found myself being more aware when in a conflict or difficult situation of taking a breath and really listening to hear, not just to respond. I also find that I try to implement humble inquiry more in my every day work and relationships. The cohort ended up exceeding my expectations. I feel very fortunate to have been able to be a part of it." – Caitlin Staley

"I have always valued learning and growth in my work, yet have not always been kind to myself in the process of getting there. Taking on [a] new role this year has thrown me into the deep end of learning, testing my strength and resolve with not being the one with the answers. To me, this new position and the inter-connection with this cohort has been a critical learning moment in time for me. Being vulnerable, giving myself grace, recognizing the growth, albeit however small, is a gift I have been given (and given myself to some degree as well). The entire experience has ultimately solidified how much I do value learning and growth." – Dani Joens-Tuttle

"I want to continue to grow into a values-based leader and deconstruct all those antiquated notions of power and influence and professionalism.... It's all about building better work environments so people can thrive. I think I really started that journey here and am excited to keep growing in that direction." – Erika Bailey

"This cohort has been an excellent exercise [in] shifting my perspective to a more HR-specific lens. Thank you for a wonderful learning experience!" – Gabby Fisk

"I find myself more thoughtful with my actions and perspectives in my work as a direct result of this cohort." – Laurie Robertson

"I have enjoyed this so much. It has been nothing like I thought it would be—in a good way! I feel like what I learned in the class goes way beyond HR work." – Megan Swodzinski

"Over the course of the past 8 months, I have come to understand more fully the cycle of communication, listening, and feedback both in my work and in my personal life. As a result, I think that I am experiencing more happiness in both areas of my life." – Melanie Stege

"I will admit the most challenging aspect of this class was the self-reflection part. I know the benefits of self-reflection include increased self-awareness, a greater sense of control, improved communication skills, deeper alignment with core values, better decision-making skills, and greater accountability. Because the greatest growth a person can make is out of struggle, I want to continue to push for self-reflection and look for [continued] professional development opportunities that include self-reflection as a part of the journey." – Wanda Manning

"One thing that I've learned most—where I've grown most—is to start with care by putting the people before the problem/issue/task. [Hard] work was instilled in me from a young age and so I often don't find any room for 'play' in the workplace. By slowing down and being more conscious of those around me, I think I can start putting more focus on relationships with others, and creating that space for connection, empathy, and care." – Emma Sippel



“[When applying to participate. I saw] an opportunity to improve the service and support I’m providing to students, staff, and faculty. [In] order to do so I [knew that I needed] to step outside of my comfort zone and reflect on the work that I’m doing well and what I have the power to improve. [As I progressed through the cohort], I noticed I became more tuned into my identities and their implications (both for me and for others) over the course of the cohort.” – Erin Wall

“I am more aware of how my actions, comments, and even body language affect and influence my team. I started out pretty self-aware, but not as aware as my effect on others or aware on my influence.”  
– Katrina Olson

“I’ve enjoyed not only learning [in the cohort] but gaining perspective. Discussing strategies for how to handle and interpret certain situations was good for my own personal development. I feel like [the cohort has] given me more tools to choose from when I encounter challenging situations. This cohort has ultimately enabled me to take a hard look at a lot of the assumptions I bring to work every day. I’m still working on coming up with creative ways of trying to shape the things that need to change. The work I’ve started with this cohort will continue.” – Anonymous

“What I have learned most: [how to break] down [barriers to] collaboration and [how to have] difficult conversations. These two subject areas will follow me for the rest of my life, no matter what type of work I pursue. Getting to study and practice these was of great value to me. I also learned more about diversity and equity. I believe this is a crucial subject for anyone; it [certainly] applies to my current line of work. There is still a lot of growth to do—I doubt I will ever stop growing.” – Austin Tamayo

“The most important change I see in myself is how quickly I realize and implement in my thinking that others that I am working with have different backgrounds, relationships and histories and that I cannot assume [that] anything about my own experience is a default for anyone else. I have to be curious about everyone and be open to learning and making mistakes in my interactions with others.” – David Barger

“I am much more able to translate my DEI skills into HR, which is a great step forward, as I do not want those skills to go unused. I have [also] learned that, in busy times, I do not always take the time to see situations from another perspective. My next step is to incorporate into my work goals/[performance reviews] a way to hold myself accountable for doing this.” – Kate Young

“I remember how much I enjoyed the problem-solving module and how troubleshooting really is fun for me. Also realizing that there is not a good deal of troubleshooting in my current position—perhaps a sign [that] it is time to find a role where I might better be able to use a broader range of my experience and skills and what generally inspires me.” – Anonymous

“I especially appreciated my time on the HR Cohort. That experience led me to ask myself a lot of hard questions about where I wanted to go with my career.” – Anonymous

“I particularly appreciated the focus on *Essentialism*. There is no way that you can be everything to everyone; have crazy high expectations of yourself all the time and live up to them; be an expert/the best in everything you want to be; make time for everything and everyone; [and] get everything done that you want to. I am strategically working towards selectively pruning areas of my life that I cannot physically or mentally sustain. There might be some things that I revisit later in life, but right now the goal is to claw back some of my own capacity at work, reduce my own personal goals so that I can feel like I am progressing over time, and have more time for my family outside of work.” – Nathaniel Shay

“I feel a sense of growth in acknowledging who I am as an individual and acknowledging people around me and beyond. I’ve learned about different systems for change and how individuals can function within a system. I feel inspired to think my work is not just a job but rather a community in which I have purpose.” – Stella Luong



"I [did] a lot of self-reflection during this course and I am very grateful for that! I am very excited to see how much I grow in the next year." – Maddie Walsh

"Diversity means so much, and I mean that in the physical, emotional, mental, and social sense. How people respond to any situation is based on their training, background, and experiences. And yet, how we respond to situations, as an individual and within society, is (many times) based on a power/(dominant) hierarchy structure. We need to be cognizant of this as we work, and work to change this mindset to better all."  
– Kristin Carroll

"First let me just say self-reflection is hard. It is not always about getting the work done but also how it gets done. I have really appreciated the support and insight from others in the HR field—and am so happy to have made some connections across the university that can personally relate to the issues we as HR professionals face." – Lisa Wesley

"I have learned...to revisit my past experiences in a way that allows me to reflect on [them] and make changes, instead of dwelling [on] and reliving [them] in a negative way. Change is a continuous process and essential for growth." – Anonymous

"What's been most meaningful so far includes "the space for engaging in self-reflection, both collectively and individually, and focusing on those [Stephen Covey] Quadrant II things." – Anonymous

"Old dogs can definitely learn new tricks! Even if you've been around the block a time or two, you will learn a lot about yourself and build new relationships from which you will continue to learn. Lifelong learning, people!" – Bethany Pluymers

"The cohort has provided great connections with colleagues and an incredible breadth of learning opportunities that are impactful in my role. I have absolutely no regrets about my choice to participate and feel that I will benefit from the experience for years to come!" – Todd Schry

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