



Competency framework for public sector economists



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See the GEN website at gen.org.nz



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About GEN Professionalisation Committee

Established in 2011, GEN envisions excellent government policy for Aotearoa New Zealand. As a charitable organisation, GEN provides a professional forum for learning, development, and networking. Throughout the year, we organise seminars, training sessions, conferences, and social events to promote the use of economics in public policy decision-making and foster discussions on economic and public policy research.

Our activities include:

- **supporting economics training:** we facilitate professional development in economics for both economists and non-economists within the public sector
- **building connections:** we create linkages between economists across private, public, and academic sectors
- **enhancing economic advice:** we work to strengthen economic advice provided to the government.

GEN's Professionalisation Committee focuses on improving recruitment, development, retention, and utilisation of economists and individuals with economics skills in government. Our work aims to assist the public sector in establishing consistent economist roles, ensuring that agencies can find candidates with relevant experience to enhance evidence-based policy.

Purpose of the competency framework

Our aims are to:

- highlight the key technical standards expected from economists within the public sector at each role or level
- provide all public sector organisations the key competencies for developing job descriptions, recruiting, promotion and performance management purposes
- provide GEN members a clearer picture of skills, knowledge and development needs to progress their career.

Public sector economists

Public sector economists are those who bring economic principles, theories, and insights to help answer public sector operational, policy and investment questions, irrespective of whether their job title explicitly mentions economics or not.

Different roles and levels of economists contribute to public policy decision-making in a similar fashion. They:

- analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making
- contribute to the development of economic strategies and play a key role in guiding decision-making
- provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions and research agenda
- apply critical thinking to dissect issues and identify underlying causes to think beyond conventional wisdom, challenge assumptions to support better systems and strategic planning.

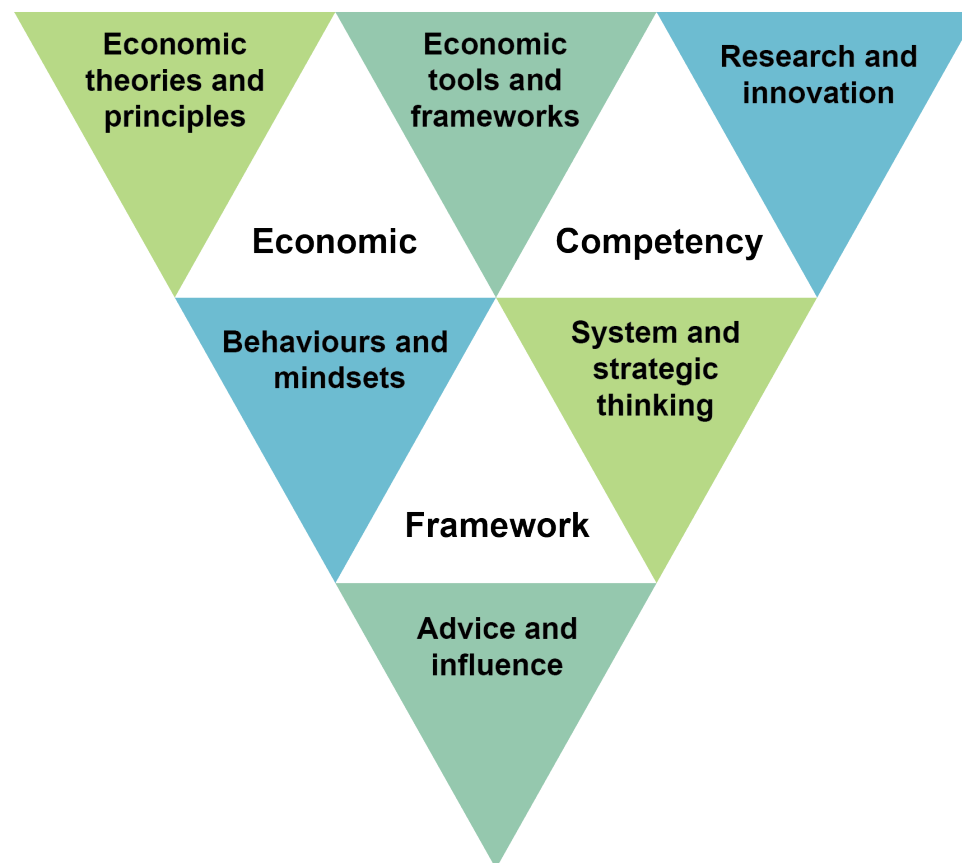
GEN competency framework

The GEN competency framework is broken down into six key areas:



For each competency area, the framework covers both competencies that are shared across roles (i.e. not dependent on seniority) and those that are role specific.

The framework has been specifically designed at a high-level as the nature of economics as a subject and profession varies widely across subject matters and government departments. In applying the framework, readers should exercise their own judgement to consider whether all or a sub-set of the competencies would be applicable to their unique situations. Individuals are not in general expected to demonstrate skills or experience of all the competencies listed. On the other hand, other important competencies that apply to specific sectors or jobs might need to be added, where appropriate.



1. Economic theories and principles

Role and level	Foundational and developing At this level, economists analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making.	Intermediate and practising At this level, economists take on key projects, demonstrate solid experience, and take on key responsibilities including mentoring or leading junior economists.	Advanced and leading At this level, economists are senior-level professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the overall economic strategy of an organisation. They provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions.
Shared competencies	<p>Applies and explains a variety of economic tools, techniques, and methods to a range of work/policy areas, making use of relevant economic theory.</p> <p>Applies microeconomic and macroeconomic theories, principles and knowledge of economic regulations and their impact on markets and society to pinpoint policy issues and understand the reasons for government intervention.</p> <p>Finding effective and efficient interventions that take into consideration existing regulatory environments and constraints.</p> <p>Employs economic theories to establish potential counterfactuals, such as scenarios without policy intervention and to assess and evaluate the effectiveness and economic costs and benefits of public policies and programs.</p> <p>Uses insights from behavioural economics to predict how individuals, households and businesses react to market signals, aiding in policy formulation and determining the necessary data to gather for both qualitative and quantitative analysis.</p> <p>Navigates the complexities of multifaceted impact on society and economy to develop comprehensive solutions based on analysis of economic trends and outcomes and a nuanced understanding of economic dynamics.</p>		
Role specific competencies	<p>Demonstrates the ability to use economics to navigate and solve economic problems.</p> <p>Able to interpret and carry out economic and statistical analysis to support evidence-based advice.</p>	<p>Challenges, as appropriate, inputs and assumptions and the application of economic theories, techniques, and methods to a range of policy areas.</p> <p>Able to scope, plan and lead complex economic analysis and identify analytical methods, resources required and potential delivery risks.</p>	<p>Ensures key economic insights are distilled for senior audiences without loss of rigour.</p> <p>Uses economic insights to shape high-level policy and strategic decisions.</p> <p>Shapes the overall economic strategy by integrating economic theories and principles into high-level decision-making.</p> <p>Leads experts to deliver high-quality economic analysis, critically appraising methods in line with best practice.</p>

2. Economic tools and frameworks

Role and level	Foundational and developing At this level, economists analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making.	Intermediate and practising At this level, economists take on advanced and leadership responsibilities, often overseeing junior economists. They contribute to the development of economic strategies and play a key role in guiding decision-makers.	Advanced and leading At this level, economists are senior-level professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the overall economic strategy of an organisation. They provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions.
Shared competencies	Applies economic analytical skills to dissect policy issues, and identify and solve economic problems using established methods. Employs suitable tools and frameworks, and synthesises relevant data and performs rigorous economic analysis to inform policy decisions. Employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to predict policy outcomes, assess and evaluate the potential impact on economic, social, and environmental factors. Utilises suitable resources to discern a wide array of quantified and non-quantified effects on various users. Analyses economic challenges and applies appropriate problem-solving skills.		
Role specific competencies	Familiar with and applies appropriate economic techniques or tools to support policy development and can explain the choice of method. Develops and runs economic models using established methods under supervision and communicates results effectively.	Leads and supervises analysis informed by economic models, assuring all parts of the process (inputs, assumptions, outputs, quality assurance and communication). Makes the case to non-technical stakeholders for how economic analysis or modelling support better decision-making. Adopts a wider perspective with regards to modelling best practice, enables high-quality data and systems to perform best-practice analyses.	Leads the development of new tools or frameworks to support evidence building. Ensures economic analysis and modelling stands up to external scrutiny. Influences decisions to mitigate key risks, understands sensitivities in advice given.

3. Research and innovation

Role and level	Foundational and developing At this level, economists analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making.	Intermediate and practising At this level, economists take on advanced and leadership responsibilities, often overseeing junior economists. They contribute to the development of economic strategies and play a key role in guiding decision-makers.	Advanced and leading At this level, economists are senior-level professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the overall economic strategy of an organisation. They provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions.
Shared competencies	Able to identify and interrogate the critical inputs and assumptions to understand the strengths and weaknesses of research and analysis and the implications for policy. Uses evidence and innovation to identify policy problems or opportunities and to support assessment and evaluation of interventions. Uses evidence to assess and predict market responses (including factors affecting supply and demand) and system dynamics. Adapts to new methods and technologies and embraces innovative approaches to enhance routine economic analyses. Employs established economic research methodologies and contributes to research projects by collecting and analysing relevant data. Develops, applies, and combines ideas and economic frameworks to develop new insights.		
Role specific competencies	Undertakes analysis to fill evidence gaps identified. Builds knowledge of data and research available in own work area and familiarises with their limitations. Takes initiatives to collaborate and share knowledge in the areas of economic research, analysis, and evaluation.	Advises others on the most appropriate data and research to support evidence-based policy development. Able to steer and challenge, where appropriate, the use of evidence and results produced to advice decision-makers.	Influences development of new ideas, data sources and evidence to maintain or improve analytical capabilities. Leads the development of economic research agendas to support evidence building.

4. System and strategic thinking

Role and level	Foundational and developing At this level, economists analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making.	Intermediate and practising At this level, economists take on advanced and leadership responsibilities, often overseeing junior economists. They contribute to the development of economic strategies and play a key role in guiding decision-makers.	Advanced and leading At this level, economists are senior-level professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the overall economic strategy of an organisation. They provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions.
Shared competencies	<p>Applies critical thinking to dissect issues and identify underlying causes to think beyond conventional wisdom, challenge assumptions to support better system and strategic planning.</p> <p>Stays attuned to macroeconomics and global trends and drivers like interest rates, inflation, and government policies to understand the wider impacts of interventions and identify risks associated with external factors.</p> <p>Develops policy analysis and evaluation approaches considering system dynamics and strategic impacts.</p> <p>Able to articulate system dynamics and strategic impacts on policy effects and outcomes.</p>		
Role specific competencies	<p>Communicates policy implications of microeconomics and macroeconomics patterns and drivers to policy teams.</p> <p>Synthesises information from various sources to formulate coherent economic assessment and evaluation frameworks or approaches.</p>	<p>Able to synthesise, combine and integrate qualitative and quantitative, individual, organisational and national levels evidence to develop new insights.</p> <p>Able to evaluate and guide others in applying critical thinking.</p>	<p>Leads the development of policy analysis and evaluation approaches to better reflect system dynamics and strategic impacts.</p> <p>Leads the development of system and strategic level economic assessment and evaluation approaches to policy issues.</p> <p>Provides strategic leadership in shaping the organisation's ability to apply evidence in shaping policy analysis, research and evaluation.</p>

5. Advice and influence

Role and level	Foundational and developing At this level, economists analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making.	Intermediate and practising At this level, economists take on advanced and leadership responsibilities, often overseeing junior economists. They contribute to the development of economic strategies and play a key role in guiding decision-makers.	Advance and leading At this level, economists are senior-level professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the overall economic strategy of an organisation. They provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions.
Shared competencies	<p>Conveys complex ideas clearly and persuasively to a diverse range of stakeholders by tailoring messages for different audiences. Effectively collaborates with others, navigates political dynamics, builds consensus, and manages relationships to achieve common policy goals through evidence-based advice.</p> <p>Presents findings to various audiences, including team members and department heads, showcasing the ability to convey complex economic concepts to a wide range of audience.</p> <p>Develops compelling reports and presentations for internal stakeholders.</p> <p>Anticipates and addresses challenges and alternative views, using evidence-based reasoning to strengthen arguments and persuade stakeholders.</p>		
Role specific competencies	<p>Communicates economic insights effectively to technical and policy teams, and demonstrates clear written and verbal communication skills.</p> <p>Collaborates with others to build consensus using economic analysis, research, and evaluation evidence.</p> <p>Contributes to the development of reports and presentations, focusing on clarity and accuracy in presenting basic data and findings.</p>	<p>Communicates complex ideas and economic concepts clearly to a diverse range of stakeholders.</p> <p>Effectively collaborates with others to achieve common policy goals through evidence-based advice.</p> <p>Balances autonomy with collaboration to contribute effectively to team goals.</p> <p>Leads the creation of detailed reports and presentations, tailoring the content to effectively communicate complex economic insights to internal stakeholders.</p>	<p>Fosters collaboration amongst team and key stakeholders.</p> <p>Communicates credibility, conveying relevance and impact of presented evidence without overuse of jargons and terminologies.</p> <p>Able to distil and convey the key insights from economic analysis to convince key stakeholders on policy and economic implications of analysis.</p> <p>Shapes and oversees the strategic development of high-impact reports and presentations, ensuring they influence key decisions and align with broader policy objectives.</p> <p>Fosters strong relationships that enhance the reach and effectiveness of economic advice.</p>

6. Behaviours and mindsets

Role and level	Foundational and developing At this level, economists analyse and interpret data to provide insights into economic trends, assess the impact of policies, and offer recommendations to support decision-making.	Intermediate and practising At this level, economists take on advanced and leadership responsibilities, often overseeing junior economists. They contribute to the development of economic strategies and play a key role in guiding decision-makers.	Advanced and leading At this level, economists are senior-level professionals who play a crucial role in shaping the overall economic strategy of an organisation. They provide high-level expertise, guide complex projects, and influence key decisions.
Shared competencies	Integrates economic insights into policy analysis, research and evaluation. Collaborates across departments, co-ordinating with team members as needed, ensuring the integration of economic insights into cross-functional projects. Independently manages own economic analysis, research and evaluation projects and tasks. Actively seeks opportunities to expand economic knowledge and skills through continuous learning and professional development. Shows resilience and adaptability in the face of evolving economic challenges and shifting priorities.		
Role specific competencies	Learns from fellow economists within and across sectors to apply economic skills and knowledge to problem solving. Participates in team discussions, offering input based on economic analysis. Seeks feedback and guidance on economic analysis, research and evaluation tasks. Builds effective working relationships with other economists and policy teams.	Demonstrates a high level of autonomy and self-direction in overseeing major economic analysis, research and evaluation projects. Builds relationships with senior colleagues to understand evidence needs, and with the analytical community to gather input and feedback on analysis and evidence development. Guides junior team members, fostering a collaborative and knowledge-sharing culture.	Leads interdisciplinary project teams, collaborates across departments, and influences strategic direction considering economic evidence, theories, and strategies. Sets the direction for economic analysis, research, and evaluation, and guides others to achieve common goals and visions. Represents the economic perspective in high-level decision-making forums Leads by example, fosters an inclusive work environment, encourages diverse perspectives and values contributions from all team members.

How you can use this framework

Economists

As you go through this document, we encourage you to reflect on your current responsibilities and consider where you wish to focus your growth. The competency descriptions that follow are not really definitive but are there as a guide.

How can you use the framework?

- **Self-assessment**
Evaluate your current skills and knowledge against the framework. By identifying strengths and areas for improvement, you can create a plan to bridge any gaps, and enhance your overall performance and progress.
- **Goal setting**
You can set specific goals to advance your skills. These goals can be integrated into your performance review process.
- **Training and development**
Concentrate on specific areas identified in the framework to align your development efforts with your organisation's expectations and key technical standards.
- **Feedback and coaching**
Seek feedback from your leader, colleagues, and stakeholders, based on the framework. By discussing your strengths and areas for growth, you can receive guidance and support to reach your full potential.

Leaders

- **Professional management development**
Utilise the framework to manage the professional development of your team members, identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. This ensures that feedback is constructive and aligned with key technical standards.
- **Talent identification and succession planning**
Leverage the framework to identify high-potential team members who demonstrate proficiency in key competencies. This will help in promotion decisions, planning for future leadership roles, and ensuring a strong talent pipeline.
- **Coaching and mentorship**
Use the framework as a foundation for providing targeted coaching and mentorship. By focusing on the competencies, you can offer relevant guidance that helps team members enhance their skills and advance in their careers.
- **Job descriptions**
Integrate the competencies into job descriptions to clearly outline the skills and behaviours expected in each role. This ensures that new and existing roles are aligned with organisational needs and competency expectations.
- **Recruitment**
Use the framework to guide the recruitment process, ensuring that candidates are evaluated based on the competencies relevant to the role. This helps in selecting individuals who are not only technically qualified but also demonstrate the behaviours and mindsets aligned with framework.