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Partnership Competency Framework

A Report on the Skills and Competencies Required for Effective Labor-Management Partnerships

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By

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Introduction

The field of Federal labor-management relations has undergone a major culture change over the last six years. A new program began in 1993 that changed the nature of Federal labor relations, affected virtually every Federal agency, and empowered more than one million Federal employees. The program is called “labor-management partnership.”

The Federal labor-management relations program was statutorily established under Title VII of the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA). CSRA provided Federal employees the statutory right to unionize, bargain collectively, and participate with agency management in making decisions affecting working conditions. (FLRA, 1988) Today there are over 125 Federal unions representing 60 percent of the Federal workforce. That equates to 1.3 million civilian, non-postal employees, or 80 percent of the workforce that is eligible to participate in Federal unions. (OPM, 1997)

The technical minutiae of the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute and the judicial process that grew after 1978 resulted in a situation characterized by excessive red tape, escalating costs, and an ineffective, adversarial bargaining process. The U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) reported in 1991 that the Federal labor-management relations program was not working well. GAO characterized Federal bargaining processes as, “too adversarial, bogged down by litigation over minute details, plagued by slow and lengthy dispute resolution, and weakened by poor management.” (GAO, 1991)

Labor-management partnership had its genesis in the work of the Clinton Administration’s National Performance Review (NPR). NPR began on March 3, 1993, when President Clinton announced a review of the Federal government that examined both agencies and cross-cutting systems such as budgeting, procurement and personnel. The NPR’s goal was to “move the Federal government from red tape to results to create a government that works better and costs less.” NPR concluded that the Federal government must, “overcome the barrier of adversarial relationships that bind labor and management to non-cooperation.” (NPR, 1993)

NPR noted that four key principles commonly characterize high-performing organizations and that they should be applied to the Federal government. Those principles included cutting red tape, putting customers first, empowering employees to get results, and getting back to basics. Partnership sprang forth from the third principle, empowering employees to get results. The NPR found that:

- employees want to participate in decisions that affect their work;
- quality organizations require full and equal worker and union participation; and
- the current collective bargaining program promotes and maintains adversarial relationships. (NPR, 1993)

It was within this system of slow, lengthy, adversarial and costly Federal bargaining and dispute resolution that NPR recommended to the President that he establish labor-management partnerships as an Administration goal and create the National Partnership Council to champion this goal. President Clinton issued Executive Order 12871, Labor-Management Partnerships on
October 1, 1993 (Appendix A). The Order called for the establishment of a new form of labor-management relations to promote partnership principles in order to change from an adversarial to a collaborative relationship between the parties. Under the Executive Order, agency heads are required to:

- create labor-management partnerships at appropriate levels;
- involve employees and their union representatives as full partners in accomplishing their mission;
- provide training in consensual methods of dispute resolution;
- bargain over work methods, technology, and organizational staffing patterns; and
- evaluate progress and improvements in organizational performance resulting from partnership activities.

The Executive Order created the National Partnership Council (NPC) to advise the President on labor relations matters; support labor-management partnerships; propose legislative changes in various human resource management programs; and work to implement the NPR's recommendations. (E.O. 12871)

The thirteen-member National Partnership Council is comprised of representatives from management, unions, and "neutral" agencies. Management representatives include Deputy Secretary-level leaders from the Department of the Treasury, the Department of Defense, the Department of Labor, and the Office of Management and Budget. The Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management chairs the Council. Union leaders on the NPC include the Presidents of the three largest Federal labor unions: the American Federation of Government Employees, the National Federation of Federal Employees, and the National Treasury Employees Union, as well as a representative from the AFL-CIO Public Employee Department. Neutral representatives include the Chair of the Federal Labor Relations Authority and the Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service. Also on the Council are the Presidents of the Federal Managers Association and the Senior Executives Association.

The NPC's goal is to institutionalize labor-management partnerships in Federal agencies for the purpose of creating a government that "works better and costs less." (NPC, 1994) Each year the Council develops a Strategic Action Plan to move closer to accomplishing this goal. Among the Council's strategic and ongoing activities are:

1. The collection, communication and utilization of data and information illustrating the successes of labor and management working in partnership to improve efficiency, effectiveness, and customer service.

2. The development of programs to explore barriers and impediments to the formation and success of partnerships, and the development of training activities and incentives to overcome barriers.

**Partnership Competency Study**

**Background**

The National Partnership Council's role from 1993 to 1997 could be described as that of a "cheerleader" for partnership. The Council conducted research on Federal labor relations, sponsored an annual government-wide award for outstanding partnerships, and hosted monthly meetings across the country in which successful regional partnership activities were highlighted. These efforts were necessary leadership functions to bring about the culture change that was needed at that time.

The Council's focus began to shift in late 1997. Union leaders from the three largest Federal unions and the AFL-CIO Public Employee Department became more publicly vocal and critical about the number of agencies where partnership was not taking root. Many union leaders believed agencies were giving "lip service" to partnership with no intention of actively partnering with their unions. These complaints became more and more frequent in the press and government trade publications. By late 1997, the unions formally called for the NPC to provide more leadership, and direct intervention if necessary, to make partnership a reality everywhere.

Responding swiftly to the demands for more leadership, the Council's 1998 Strategic Action Plan (Appendix B) reflected a shift in the Council's role. The NPC went from being a "cheerleader" to providing direct resources and assistance to labor-management partners. For the first time, the Council defined for itself a more hands-on approach to establishing effective partnerships throughout the Federal government. One of the Council's strategic objectives was to "promote nuts-and-bolts skills-building among labor-management partners." (NPC 1998 Strategic Action Plan) This objective was implemented through a series of skills-building workshops conducted in May, June and July 1998 in Baltimore, Maryland, Atlanta, Georgia, and Denver, Colorado. More than two hundred labor and management representatives attended the sessions.

The workshops were well received, and appeared to fill a skills-building "void" that had existed since 1993. For the first time, senior administration and union officials had developed and delivered a partnership curriculum for targeted labor-management groups. The NPC members themselves attended the workshops, and personally conducted debriefs and town hall meetings to provide feedback to working groups. From the enthusiasm and positive feedback of attendees, there evolved a desire on the part of the NPC to provide even more information and assistance to labor-management partners.

In addition to providing skills-building to create effective partnerships, the Council wanted to expand its reach and educate the wider Federal audience about partnership. If the Council was to be truly successful in fulfilling its objectives, then it needed to capture vital skills information and communicate that information to more than just two hundred people. Therefore, in late 1998 the Council developed a plan for a "Skills-Building Handbook" to build upon the skills-building workshops and incorporate practical information for partners to use in their day-to-day partnership work. The purpose of this study is to define a partnership competency framework that may serve as the basis for a skills-building publication or series of training workshops.
Significance of the Study

It is well known among labor, management and neutral practitioners that the key to success in labor-management relations is a commitment to cooperation, and that partnership and teamwork are necessary to achieve that commitment. However, adequate attention has not been paid to the overall competencies required for truly effective partnerships. The partnership process involves joint education, shared objectives, skill determination, and skill development of the people involved in the relationship. This study will focus on skill determination, and will follow the basic premise that interaction, innovation, teamwork, and issue resolution competencies are among the most vital.

Although much anecdotal information about partnership exists, the Federal government is in need of a systematic approach to partnership skill determination. First, the skills and competencies necessary for effective partnership must be identified. Only then may those competencies be linked to training objectives and ultimately translated into a format that the National Partnership Council can deliver to the entire Federal community.

This study will identify the competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) required for effective partnerships. It will use structured interviews, as outlined in the methodology section, to develop a Partnership Competency Framework. The framework will reflect the content or nature of labor-management partnership (responsibilities, roles, and functions of the parties). On its own, the framework may serve as a practical guideline for agencies or individuals to identify training objectives that must be met in their own organizations. Once labor and management representatives have identified skill gaps and obtained partnership training, they will be better able to institutionalize partnership to improve agency operations and employee quality of work life. Furthermore, the findings may be used to develop a handbook or guide to skills-building that could be published by groups such as the National Partnership Council.
**Literature Review**

There is a rich amount of literature in the field of labor-management relations, in the elements that constitute effective work groups and employee involvement programs, and in the benefits of labor-management cooperation. There is not, however, a vast amount of literature on the competencies and skills necessary to sustain effective labor-management cooperation. A review of the literature will help to build on existing labor relations and group process research to develop a better understanding of the role that skill and competency development play in successful partnership endeavors.

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management, the Federal government's human resource agency, defines "competency" as "the knowledge and skills, usually grouped by content category, that enable individuals to do certain types of work." (OPM, 1992) Because labor-management partnership is a relationship among individuals who represent a variety of labor and management interests, this section begins with a literature review of the basic components of effective group process. It then explores the emergence of various participative programs and their components. From this research, one may gain a better understanding of the underlying competencies and skills that are required to sustain effective labor-management partnerships.

**Effective work groups in organizations**

Labor-management partnerships are relationships in which the parties communicate and make decisions. The partnership arrangement in the Federal government has manifest itself in working groups, partnership councils, labor-management committees, and other such groups. The common variable is that at some level, the partnership relationship is enacted through joint labor-management work groups. Therefore, research on effective work groups is a useful starting point from which to explore labor-management partnership skills and competencies, because it highlights the determinants of effective group decision-making. There are abundant theoretical perspectives on understanding and designing effective groups. This section will provide an overview of the most useful findings.

A review of the literature indicates that task accomplishment (outputs) and quality of social interaction (members' interpersonal relations) are both used to define group effectiveness. (Gladstein, 1984) Because of the interactive and strong communications aspect of labor-management partnership, this is a useful model for Federal sector labor-management groups.

**Four phases of group decision-making**

Guzzo reviewed a number of research models to show that: (a) the properties of the task confronting a group play an important role in determining the group's effectiveness, and (b) the resources embedded in the group indisputably determine effectiveness. The nature of the task dictates the appropriateness of various performance strategies used by the group. Depending on the task, certain performance strategies will be more effective than others. The task is important also because of its motivational properties. This means that motivation will be high when important issues are addressed. Resources are important because insufficient skill, expertise, or strength for a task could lead to failure. (Guzzo, 1986)
Guzzo writes that there are four phases of group decision-making: intelligence, design, choice, and review. The phases are a useful lens with which to view labor-management group process, because they allow for consideration of various performance strategies and decision-making tools. Furthermore, the decision-making tools are a basis for synthesizing partnership skills and competencies. Table 1 provides an overview of the four phases of group decision-making and the tools or techniques that may be used during each phase:

Table 1  
Group Process and Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision-Making Phase</th>
<th>Decision-Making Technique</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Force-Field Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nominal Group Technique</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest-Based Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td>Decision Matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest-Based Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>Post-choice rationalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Guzzo, 1986

The first step in the decision-making process is the Intelligence phase. Intelligence is concerned with identifying the circumstances calling for a decision (e.g., crises, problem resolution, or opportunity for new and innovative actions). Strategies for identifying problems lie in the basic principle of determining the difference between “what is” and “what should be.”

Force Field Analysis. One technique commonly used for organizing information about a problem is force field analysis. This technique requires groups to define as precisely as possible the discrepancy between present and desired conditions. The members must specify “driving” and “restraining” forces as they pertain to desired outcomes, and assess the relative strengths of each.

Brainstorming. This technique can be used in the intelligence phase of decision-making to identify problems and in the design phase to identify opportunities to solve problems. Brainstorming allows the parties to generate alternative courses of action. It relies on four essential rules: (1) no criticism; (2) freewheeling is welcomed; (3) generate as many ideas as possible; and (4) combining and improving already-stated ideas is desired.

The next step in the decision-making process is the Design phase. It deals with creating, developing, and assessing possible courses of action. Design activities provide alternatives, and can take brief or extensive periods of time, depending on the scope and familiarity with the problem.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT). NGT may be applicable when alternative courses of action are desirable. NGT imposes a sequence of steps that control interaction among
group members during decision-making. First, members work silently in generating their own lists of alternative solutions. Then they report in round-robin fashion the alternative they generated individually. These are recorded publicly, and talking is not permitted. Then group members seek clarification from one another on the alternatives on the master list. The last step is members select a single alternative by voting. NGT imposes structure and allows effective decision-making by limiting discussion.

Interest-Based Problem Solving (IBPS). IBPS is a six-step problem solving model that centers on the following principles: a) separate the people from the problem; b) focus on interests, not positions; c) develop options for mutual gain; and d) use objective criteria to judge options. (Fisher and Ury, 1991) IBPS has application during the choice phase of decision-making.

The third step in the decision-making process is Choice. Choice involves selecting one course of action from the range of possibilities generated during the design phase. There are many ideas for managing group interaction during the choice phase to enhance effectiveness. One of the most popular is the decision matrix:

Decision Matrix. The decision matrix is a means of systematically arraying alternatives under consideration and the attributes, positive and negative, of the alternatives. This process allows comparisons among the alternatives and helps facilitate decision-making.

Review is the fourth and final phase of decision-making in which group members monitor past choices both to see if chosen courses of action were properly implemented and to determine if new decisions must be made.

Post-choice rationalization. Research has shown that groups spend considerable energy justifying a choice once it has been made. Post-choice rationalization can be useful in that it can build commitment to the decision and may sustain efforts to implement it. However, the negative aspects are that objectivity may be lost and the need for new decision making may be missed.

Group tasks and performance

In looking at group activities, McGrath also developed a model of activities or tasks that is relevant to labor-management partnership groups. This model is similar to Guzzo’s in that it looks at the various tasks performed by groups:

1. Generating plans (planning tasks)
2. Generating ideas (creativity tasks)
3. Choosing correct answers (problem-solving or intellectual tasks)
4. Choosing preferred answers (decision-making tasks)
5. Resolving conflicts of viewpoint (cognitive conflict tasks)
6. Resolving conflicts of interest (mixed-motive or negotiating tasks)
7. Executing tasks (performance)
McGrath's model incorporates four related task performance processes: to generate, to choose, to resolve and to execute. (McGrath, 1984) This model is also valuable in looking at the processes that labor-management partners undertake in a partnership relationship.

Emergence of need for new competencies under partnership

Kochan et al explored changing workplace industrial relations in unionized settings and union involvement in strategic business decisions. The authors showed evidence that labor relations are strained in many workplaces as a result of workplace and market changes, innovation, and competition. They found that unions and companies respond to these pressures through changes at the level of contract negotiations. (Kochan, 1986) The lesson from their research is that changes in collective bargaining often have a close tie to changes underway at the workplace level. They offer a useful model for effective labor-management programs.

Kochan et al found that change is introduced jointly by labor and management as they respond to workplace pressures. They found that workplace changes introduced jointly have two objectives:

- to increase the participation and involvement of individuals and informal work groups so as to overcome adversarial relations and increase employee motivation, commitment, and problem-solving potential; and

- to alter the organization of work so as to simplify work rules, lower costs, and increase flexibility in the management of human resources.

This model, in which change is introduced jointly by labor and management to respond to a changing workplace, applies directly to the Federal government. Agencies are currently faced with shrinking budgets and resources, and must work with their union partners to find innovative ways to save money and better serve their customers.

Research shows that workplace innovations and participative programs in the private sector have had a variety of labels such as “quality of working life,” quality circles, employee involvement, labor-management participation teams, and operating teams. (Kochan, 1986) These very same programs have existed in the Federal government. No matter what they are called, they vary in scope and success. The range of programs can be described as follows:

1. they focus primarily on workplace issues;

2. they go beyond workplace issues to address work-organization issues and are linked to collective bargaining issues; and

3. they go on to an even broader agenda and are linked to strategic issues.

This framework is useful for determining the variety of skills necessary for partnership, because partnership arches across all the entire range of possibilities. As shown in Table 2, Kochan's
framework can be applied to Federal labor-management partnerships. The components of each of the three approaches are a starting point for determining partnership competencies.

Table 2
Types of Partnership Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Components</th>
<th>Limited Focus</th>
<th>Linked to Collective Bargaining</th>
<th>Linked to Strategic Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Components focused on the workplace</td>
<td>Quality circles</td>
<td>Functional Business Teams</td>
<td>Performance management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhanced employee-supervisor communication</td>
<td>Workforce restructuring</td>
<td>Business process-reengineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worker attitude surveys</td>
<td>Compensation issues</td>
<td>Union participation in executive planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Components focused on collective bargaining</td>
<td>Quality circles</td>
<td>Functional Business Teams</td>
<td>Performance management</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Worker attitude surveys</td>
<td>Compensation issues</td>
<td>Union participation in executive planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Kochan, et al., 1986)

Based on the research of Kochan et al., workplace-level partnerships, standing alone, do not achieve high performance and improved customer service. Innovations at all three levels: workplace-level processes, changes in the process and outcomes of collective bargaining, and worker participation in strategic management decision making, must be integrated to achieve high performance.

Developing and delivering training for labor-management groups

Two well-known experts in labor-management cooperation, Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, write that effective labor-management joint efforts demand new understanding of content areas and cooperative processes. (Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, 1993) Training is necessary, they write, because it builds skills in the specific areas necessary to meet the goals and objectives of cooperation. The authors maintain that different kinds of union-management programs require different kinds of skill training, as outlined in Figure I:
If the focus is on labor-management committees for joint problem-solving

Training is required in:
- Union-management cooperation processes;
- Joint problem-solving; and
- Meeting management.

If the focus is on creative ways to undertake collective bargaining

Training is required in:
- Statutory framework; and
- Generating and costing out alternatives.

If the focus is on product quality

Training is required in:
- Various analysis techniques; and
- Improving and monitoring quality.

(Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, 1993)

This approach is congruous to Kochan et al in that it explores the range of topics or tasks that labor-management groups may focus on, from problem-solving to collective bargaining matters, and ultimately to the very quality of the product or service produced.

Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton also offer a useful model of skills-building based on the notion that it is the audience that determines the training. Table 3 outlines their model of partnership, which is broad because it encompasses all stakeholders in the organization.
Table 3
Who Receives What Kind of Skills-Building?¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor-management governing bodies</td>
<td>Labor-management cooperation processes: problem-solving; program governance; management processes/skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key union, supervisory, and management personnel</td>
<td>General orientation to the program; background on employee participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-section of employees at all levels</td>
<td>General orientation to the program; background on employee participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor and management coordinators/facilitators</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities of facilitators; how groups work; problem-solving techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor and management group leaders</td>
<td>Leadership skills; how groups work; problem-solving techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program participants</td>
<td>Group decision-making; problem solving techniques; orientation to cooperation and what it means.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹(Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, 1993)

The particular skill set needed by a group is a function of the gap between what the group needs to know or be able to do and what each of them already knows or can do. Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton write that training and skills-development goals should be made jointly by the union-management partners. This approach maximizes understanding of, support for, and commitment to cooperation. (Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, 1993)

The general goals and objectives of skills-building should parallel the goals and objectives of the overall program. The parties should think in terms of what they should be able to do and what kinds of attitudes they should exhibit. As the group develops learning objectives, specific sublearning objectives begin to take shape. For example, consider the following objective and subobjectives:
Objective

- Function as an effective steering committee

Subobjectives

- Conducting effective meetings
- Identifying roles and responsibilities of group members
- Planning, monitoring and evaluating activities
- Working well together
- Collective bargaining vs. cooperation

Emergence of increased demand for union skills

This approach has been studied and embraced by a number of researchers. Barry and Irving Bluestone write extensively on a model of labor-management partnership in which labor and management take joint action on all decisions of the organization, both workplace and strategic (Bluestone, 1992). In their model, this relationship is captured and communicated in an "Enterprise Contract," a formal, legally binding, negotiated contract between labor and management. The authors show that a growing number of studies conclude that participative systems are more efficient than authoritarian ones. Unions, they say, could be the key to expanding worker responsibilities and increasing business's competitive advantage.

The Bluestones' model calls for input from labor in the core functions of the organization: finance (control over money), personnel (control over workers), procurement (control over materials), production of products and services, distribution of products and services, and leadership/planning. While this model does not easily apply to the Federal sector because of the legal framework for collective bargaining in which the subjects of bargaining are clearly laid out, it does offer insight into the competencies that would be necessary for effective partnership.

The authors raise the issue of expertise in terms of putting the "Enterprise Contract" into practice. They discuss the notion of worker and union expertise necessary to deal with such complex issues as pricing policy, finance, or the introduction of new technology. They note that workers and union representatives possess a great deal of knowldege about production methods, quality improvement, and needed innovation. They also note that strategic involvement of union partners may require "retooling" of union officials, for example, to be "multicrafted" in both the grievance process and the "fundamentals of double-entry accounting." (Bluestone, 1992) They write that in a relatively brief period of time, a combination of internal training, outside classroom experience, and the hiring of consultants could bring a union up to speed in many of the intricacies of strategic decision-making.

Management skills defined

If one were to adopt the Bluestone's model for partnership, then research into management development and training may yield a useful competency framework for labor-management groups. Researchers note that effective management is rooted in knowledge, attitudes and skills.
Hawrylyshyn defines knowledge as retained observations, facts, and interrelationships. He defines attitudes as predispositions to act and react in predictable ways. Finally, he defines skills as “the ability to do things, to use knowledge, to mobilize resources in order to carry out certain activities and accomplish specific tasks” (Hawrylyshyn, 1993)

These three factors are interrelated and influence one another. However, the process by which individuals acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills varies significantly. Knowledge is acquired through a cognitive, intellectual process. Attitudes are acquired through experiential conditioning and an affective, emotional process. Skills are acquired through practice. For each of these learning processes, there are unique learning methods that should be followed.

To decide what skills are required for effective management, Hawrylyshyn writes, one must analyze the content of managers' work and the activities they have to carry out. Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between activities and key skills of managers.

Figure 2
Relationship Between Managerial Activities and Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceiving problems or opportunities</td>
<td>Sensitive perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering data</td>
<td>Sense of relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing problems or opportunities</td>
<td>Diagnostic (analytical) skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating alternatives</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding (choosing among) alternatives</td>
<td>Decisiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing decisions</td>
<td>Leadership skills (communicating, motivating)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Hawrylyshyn, 1993)
Hawrylyshyn’s model reinforces the findings of Guzzo, McGrath and Kochan, who found that skills flow from tasks or activities performed by groups. Because the model looks at management skills, it is useful also in comparison to Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton’s, as well as the Bluestones’, notion that union expertise in traditional management areas is necessary for effective workplace partnership.

**OPM’s Management Excellence Framework**

Focusing on the notion that truly effective labor-management cooperative efforts require all participants to become competent in traditional “management” areas, the next challenge is to determine what those competencies might encompass. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) developed a set of management competencies needed by Federal executives, managers, and supervisors to effectively perform the requirements of their government positions. (U.S. OPM, 1990) The U.S. government applies these competencies to employees in senior positions across the government. When viewed in context with the research on labor-management relations (i.e., management skills and competencies are necessary for everyone involved in partnership activities), they provide yet another lens with which to view partnership requirements.

The OPM competencies were developed to describe the human qualities or characteristics associated with the effective performance of managerial tasks. This framework defines Federal managerial excellence and leadership in terms of 22 competencies in four levels:

**Table 4**

**OPM Management Competencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Basic Competencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>written communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>oral communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpersonal skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decisiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-direction</td>
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<td>technical competence (procedures, regulations, etc)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Level 2: Supervisory Competencies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>managing diverse workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>conflict management</td>
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<tr>
<td>influencing/negotiating</td>
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<td>human resource management</td>
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<td>team building</td>
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Level 3: Managerial Competencies
creative thinking
planning and evaluating
financial development
client orientation
technology management
management controls/integrity

Level 4: Executive Competencies
vision
external awareness

(U.S. OPM, 1990)

Summary of the Literature

Although not specifically focused on Federal labor-management partnership skills and competencies, the literature provides valuable insights and a general direction for research into the partnership arena. The research highlighted in this section may be summarized into two broad statements:

- Group tasks dictate the tools or strategies used by a group. Depending on the task, certain performance strategies will be more effective than others.

- Labor-management groups address a variety of issues that fall along a wide spectrum. Depending on the sophistication of the organization and its members, the group may address immediate workplace/worker (traditional “union”) issues, or it may address an array of bottom-line and mission-critical (traditional “management”) issues. When the group focuses on the latter, each member must be prepared to use classic “management” skills and competencies to be an effective participant in the process.

The vital backdrop to these conclusions is what is occurring in the Federal sector. The National Partnership Council has conducted research on the types of issues addressed by labor-management partnerships and found that labor-management partnerships are, indeed, discussing issues that can be described as traditional “management” subjects. Figures 3 and 4 provide an overview of the “traditional” and “non-traditional” issues handled by partnership councils:
Figure 3

"Traditional" Issues Handled by Partnerships

Figure 4

"Non-Traditional" Issues Handled by Partnerships

Methodology

I. Overview of Analytical Approach

In choosing a methodology to determine the competencies necessary for effective partnerships, it is helpful to focus the analysis to determine the most appropriate data and information collection methods. Because there are a number of questions that might be asked relative to partnership skills and competencies, the analytical approach used for this study will be based on the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) training needs assessment model. The analytical approach for this study is outlined in Table 5 below.

Table 5
Analytical Approach for This Study

| Step 1. | Determine the focus of the competency assessment. |

(Adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1995)

Step 1—Determine the focus of the competency assessment.

One cannot begin to address the skills and competencies necessary for effective partnerships without first determining the focus of the assessment. What is the scope of the study? What groups are responsible for implementing partnership? What are the qualities of those groups that lead to "effective" partnerships? Depending on the answers to these questions and the scope of partnership under consideration, appropriate methods of analysis and data collection methods may be determined.

According to Cohen-Rosenthal and Burton, a variety of groups are responsible for effective partnership in the workplace (see page 10). Under the model offered by these experts, the focus of a skills or competency assessment may be on identifying the potential learning needs of all employees within an organization; on all employees who fall within an organizational unit; or on all individuals who fall within one or more specific job categories (e.g., labor relations specialists, managers, or union representatives).

The scope of this study is narrowly defined based on the Federal experience. Executive Order 12871 directs agencies to form partnership bodies whose responsibility it is to promote partnership and make it a viable part of each agency's operations. The National Partnership Council, the leadership group at the top of the government's partnership efforts, provided the following guidance to agencies in 1994 shortly after the issuance of the Executive Order:

Partnership councils should be established at appropriate levels, which generally would include offices and installations that have the authority to deal with one or more
They may also be established at the national level or major sub-component of an agency. Partnership councils can be based on existing councils or committees. Depending on the workload of an organization, councils may have planning and working groups and subgroups, based on the needs or desires of the council. (NPC, July 1994)

Partnership bodies have surfaced in the Federal sector in the form of partnership councils at virtually all levels of agencies. They exist at the headquarters, regional, local and other levels, depending on the needs of the parties. Almost 78% of respondents to the Council's 1997 labor-management relations climate survey indicated that a partnership council or agreement had been established for the bargaining unit for which they were responsible (based on a 668 person sample). (NPC, December 1997)

To remain within the framework of partnership as outlined by the Executive Order and subsequent NPC guidance, this study will focus on labor and management representatives who participate in partnership councils or committees. While the theoretical application of partnership requires a broad focus (organization-wide implementation including top leadership and work unit levels), this study will analyze partnership skills and competencies within the context of the Federal experience—partnership councils and committees.

**Step 2.** Select a method of analysis for determining partnership competencies.

The information obtained in Step 1 helps point to the appropriate method of analysis to use in Step 2. Several methods of conducting skill needs assessments could be considered for Step 2:

An **organizational survey** is a general, periodic needs assessment that answers the question: What kinds of organizational events and conditions will have implications for partnership? A questionnaire instrument could be used to gather this information.

A **work group assessment** is a method that addresses the needs of a specific group of labor-management partners. It generally requires the analysis, or development and analysis, of data relating to the performance levels of members of the target group.

An **assessment committee** that consists of labor, management and neutral representatives can serve as a conduit for information regarding partnership skills needs.
A task analysis can be performed in order to define learning needs within specific member roles. This generally involves analyzing the tasks that constitute a job, examples of correct and incorrect performance, and problems individuals encounter in performing their jobs.

A knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) model is an assessment tool that uses a list of knowledge, skills, and abilities to determine the learning needs of an individual or group of individuals.

An individual needs approach is a variation of the KSA approach that is tailored to measure the competency levels of individual employees.

Because participants in partnership councils/committees are the focus of this study, the task analysis method will be used. Several other factors add to the overall value of this approach:

1. Although task analysis generally applies to specific groups and individuals, there are commonalities among all partnership councils vis-à-vis their structures and membership;
2. The National Partnership Council has already conducted research on the types of tasks performed by labor-management councils, which can be used further analyze this study’s findings;
3. Direct researcher experience facilitating partnership councils provides yet another layer of analysis to further analyze findings; and
4. The desired result of this study is a body of work that communicates specific competencies required for effective partnerships. Task analysis will yield specific information about partnership competencies.

**Step 3 - Select a data collection method.**

The method of assessment selected helps determine how data might be collected. The method used to collect competency data also depends on such factors as the information needed, the accessibility of participants/subjects, the attitudes of participants/subjects toward assessment, and the type of data acceptable. Common data collection methods include:

- **Interviews** can be structured or unstructured. Structured interviews use pre-established questions, and are read to the interviewees or provided to them. Unstructured interviews often have some guiding questions, but depend on the interviewer to probe and follow up.
More data may be obtained from these types of interviews, although combining information from individuals is difficult. Interviews may be a mixture of both structured and unstructured formats. They can be conducted face-to-face or by telephone, at the work site or away from it. The subject of interviews may be a sample of a target group, or may include everyone concerned.

Focus group discussions can focus on role analysis, group problem analysis, group goal-setting, or any number of tasks or themes (e.g., “needs of middle management for partnership skills”).

Questionnaires can be surveys or polls of a random or stratified sample of respondents, or an entire population. They can use a variety of question formats (e.g., open-ended, forced-choice, and priority ranking).

Expert consultations involve obtaining information from individuals who, by virtue of their formal or informal standing, are in a good position to know the learning needs of a given group (e.g., management, unions, neutrals). Once identified, such consultants can provide information by means of interviews, questionnaires, or group discussions.

Observation may be as technical as conducting a time-motion study or as function- or behavior-specific as observing an individual interacting with partners at a meeting. It can be used to distinguish between effective and ineffective forms of behavior, organizational structures, and/or processes.

Written materials such as training curricula already in existence or other competency models (e.g., OPM’s Management Excellence Framework) can be used to gather information on labor-management partnership competencies.

For this study, structured interviews will be used to collect competency data for the following reasons:

1. The information needed is specific to the critical tasks and functions of labor-management partnership groups (councils and committees);
2. The information needed is most accessible by hearing from individuals who are members of specific groups;
3. Mailing lists of these groups are difficult to come by, as opposed to mailing lists of union representatives, labor relations specialists, or senior executives at large; and
4. The attitudes of labor and management partners are easier to assess in person through direct observation.

In addition, historical survey data from the National Partnership Council will be used as a basis for comparison of interview data and to add another level of analysis to the research.
II. Methodology

This section will outline the methodology that was used for the partnership competency study, including participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis issues. The study design utilized structured interviews of a sample of labor-management partnership participants to assess the competencies required for effective partnerships. Because of the qualitative design of the study, the interview data are compared to quantitative survey data compiled by the NPC to add another level of analysis and to better understand the reliability/validity of interview data.

Because of the partnership framework outlined by Executive Order 12871 and the subsequent guidance disseminated by the NPC, this study specifically focuses on labor-management partnership council/committee activities. As outlined in the preceding section, the study explores the tasks and functions performed by members of councils or committees, and draws conclusions about partnership skills and competencies based on those tasks and functions.

So that the results of this study may be used as the basis for development of skills-building guidance, the methodology is complimentary to current NPC direction and focus. The Council has expressed a desire to use the contacts made at its Skills-Building Workshops to the maximum extent possible to expand the set of tools available to labor-management partners. Therefore, the target population was a subset from a group of 200 individuals who attended the Council’s partnership workshops in 1998.

Participants

Defining a limited target population based on NPC workshop participants not only satisfies the NPC’s desires, but it also resolves a greater recruitment challenge. Individual partnership participants are difficult to identify because they are nominated or appointed by agencies and unions to serve on councils and committees at all levels of government. Due to the sheer size of the government and most individual departments, as well as high turnover rates among partnership council members, there is no database, list, or single source of information containing the names of individual partners. The only means of contacting partnership participants would be to contact the appropriate representative within each agency and ask for a list names and phone numbers of participants. Agencies may not be willing to release individual names, and each agency manages its partnership differently, so the process could take considerable time.

Therefore, because of the decentralized nature of partnerships and the desire of the NPC to continue to partner with workshop attendees, study participants consisted of a selected group of individuals recruited from the 200 representatives who attended the workshops. Rudestam and Newton refer to this type of sample as a “convenience” sample, and one that is appropriate for qualitative research. (Rudestam and Newton, 1992)

Individual participants were selected from the overall population of 200 based on a predetermined set of criteria, as outlined in the following section. The total target population consisted of ten individuals in order to maximize opportunities for important issues to be raised and meaningful conclusions to be drawn, while minimizing unnecessary duplication of efforts.
A sample of ten participants was systematically drawn from a list of 200 individuals who attended the three National Partnership Council Skills-Building Workshops in 1998. The researcher grouped the list of 200 potential participants into categories that fulfilled each of the criteria below, and then randomly selected participants from each category. Breaking down the list of 200 into demographic groups and randomly selecting participants from within those groups helped prevent researcher subjectivity from affecting the selection process, and ensured that balance was achieved in terms of labor and management participation, agency size and location, etc. The specific steps used to identify and recruit participants are outlined in the procedures section below.

**Selection Criteria / Demographic Targets**

The target population for this study included current participants in labor-management partnerships in executive branch agencies. The following definition of partnership participants was used:

Participants in partnership activities who are members of labor-management partnership councils or committees, members of sub-councils and sub-committees, or members of similar groups sponsored by a partnership council or committee.

Initial participant recruiting and screening was done by telephone using a script (Appendix C). Interview participants were selected to ensure that they came from differing backgrounds. Both the telephone recruiting script and an interview questioning route (Appendix D) included background or demographic questions. The following criteria were applied during the screening process to determine suitability of the participant:

1. Participants must be active partners in partnership councils/committees, and must have been active for at least the past year.
2. No two interview participants can come from the same department/agency/activity/union.
3. Participants must be willing to openly discuss partnership processes and issues occurring at their location.

Screening also ensured balance in representation between labor and management. Five participants were chosen from each category. Results of the interviews were not compared among the two groups due to the small number of participants. However, results from National Partnership Council survey research were used as a background for the analysis of the interview data (see Data Analysis section on page 26).

**Instrumentation: Structured Interviews**

The structured interview method is an in-depth data gathering method that allows large amounts of qualitative data to be gathered from a relatively small target population. It was attractive for the purposes of this study because it is ideal for exploring actual experiences in partnership, and is a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts.

The structured interview has a relatively high degree of reliability in terms of producing consistent results as long as the researcher is able to construct questions that elicit open and
honest responses. This researcher has had considerable experience conducting interviews, focus groups, and in facilitating labor-management discussions and work groups. Additionally, the researcher pilot-tested the interview questions on one labor and one management partner to ensure that the questions were clear, easy to understand, and not misleading in any way.

Thirteen interview questions were applied to each interview participant in order to yield answers that could then be translated into the critical tasks and functions performed by partnership councils. These tasks and functions were then translated into a partnership competency framework. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

The interview questioning route included questions on the structure and characteristics of the partnership, as well as questions regarding the participant's role and experience. It also included questions on keys to success, barriers to partnership, lessons learned, communication and group process issues, and partnership evaluation.

The structured interview yielded qualitative information, based on the perceptions of labor-management partners, about:

- participants' personal experience with partnership and the type and level of their partnership;
- the elements of success related to the participants' partnership efforts;
- the operational aspects and critical tasks of partnership from each individual's own experience;
- problems experienced by partnerships, and possible skill gaps relating to those barriers; and
- training advice on areas that need more attention.

Procedures
After grouping the list of 200 potential participants into categories based on the criteria above, the researcher randomly chose potential participants from among the categories. The potential participants were initially contacted by telephone to determine their willingness and interest in participating in the study, as well as to ensure that they were still active participants in labor-management partnerships. The telephone script was not only used to recruit participants, but also to help create a positive rapport with participants so they felt free to share their personal thoughts and views.

During the initial phone call, the researcher introduced herself and the research project, asked several screening questions, and scheduled a date and time for an interview.

During both the screening call and the interview itself, the researcher ensured the participants that confidentiality would be ensured, and that no results would be attributed to individuals or organizations. Rather, they would be analyzed and presented in the aggregate.
Because the participants were federal employees, their only incentive was the opportunity to share their personal experiences and views and to participate in a project that would help determine the competencies necessary for effective partnerships. The telephone script clarified that participation was voluntary and that there was no monetary or other tangible incentive.

The interviewer conducted the same structured interview with each participant to ensure a common basis for analysis of the results.

Data Analysis
Primary and secondary sources of information employed in this study included both qualitative and quantitative data. They are:

- Primary data from interviews with labor-management partners.
- Secondary data from the National Partnership Council’s annual Report to the President.

Qualitative analysis of the interviews consisted of data appearing in words rather than numbers. The data was processed before being ready for use, but remained words. The researcher attempted to analyze the data by reducing findings, displaying results, and drawing conclusions based on those results.

The qualitative data analysis approach outlined by Rudestam and Newton was used in that the researcher used inductive reasoning to compare, “unitize” and “categorize” units of information from the interviews. (Rudestam and Newton, 1992) Results are reported by providing a conceptual definition of the meaning of a category, followed by relevant quotes from the interviews that illustrate the definition.

The quantitative NPC data consist of responses to government wide surveys issued during 1996 and 1997. These data are used as a background for the analysis of the interview data, and provide a basis for comparison of interview findings.
Interview Results

This section provides an overview of the results of the interviews, highlighting whenever possible the differences and similarities between responses of labor and management participants. The interview results described in this chapter will be compared to National Partnership Council survey research findings and used to define a partnership competency framework in the following chapter, Conclusions and Recommendations.

Five union and five management representatives were interviewed over a two-week time period. A total of thirteen questions were asked in a structured interview format. The interviewer used an interview questioning route (Appendix D). Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour.

Overall, interview participants were extremely enthusiastic and eager to share their experiences about partnership. A number of participants asked whether the National Partnership Council would host additional skills-building workshops in the future, stating that they were greatly needed. A number of interviewees said that they would offer any help they could to identify skills and training needs.

This chapter is organized according to the categories of questions that were asked of the participants. The questions and corresponding categories are as follows:

- Questions 1-7: Brief background questions that yielded information on the participants' personal experience with partnership and the type and level of their partnership;
- Questions 8-9: Outcome-related questions that yielded information on the elements of success related to the participants' partnership efforts;
- Question 10: A process question that was used to fully explore the operational aspects of partnership from each individual's own experience;
- Questions 11-12: Questions that related to problems experienced by partnerships, and which were intended to elicit possible skill gaps; and
- Question 13: A question that asked for training advice from participants to identify skill gaps or competency areas that need more attention.

Responses to Interview Questions – By Category

I. Participant Background

Questions 1-7: Questions one through seven elicited background information on the participants' partnerships and their own experience/involvement in those partnerships.
Brief Summary/Key Points

All interviewees were active participants in labor-management partnership activities. Individuals not meeting this profile were screened out during the participant recruiting process to ensure that participants could speak from their own direct experience. Most interview subjects were members of partnership councils or committees at the local or bargaining unit level, although some served on both agency level councils and local level working groups.

The partnerships with which the interviewees are associated have been in existence for varying lengths of time. Most participants reported that their partnership efforts were begun in 1994, shortly after the issuance of Executive Order 12871, Labor-Management Partnerships. One participant reported that his agency’s labor-management partnership had been in existence prior to the Executive Order, and two reported that their partnerships did not begin until 1995. The length of time the participants’ partnerships have been in existence is significant because it assures that all interviewees are involved in partnership councils/committees that are at least somewhat well established. It does not imply that the partnerships are effective or even functional. It indicates that, at least from an organizational standpoint, the institutional relationships have been explored and initiated. It is likely, therefore, that partnership is not a brand new concept to the participants and their colleagues in their agencies or unions.

Participants reported that their partnership councils ranged in size from six to twenty individuals. There were two participants whose partnership councils were larger (more than twelve participants) than the others. They noted that their councils existed at the agency level while a committee or working group structure existed beneath the agency level. One individual commented that this structure works well because more activity takes place within lower level councils, and that the agency partnership councils are mainly leadership bodies.

Most of the participants’ councils meet on a regular basis, with regularly scheduled monthly meetings being the most common. There were some interviewees who said that their councils meet on an as-needed basis, and that many issues are worked out on an informal basis, thus lessening the need for regular meetings. The types of issues discussed by the participants’ partnerships ranged from traditional collective bargaining issues already outlined in their collective bargaining agreements, to “management” issues such as customer service and quality.

II. Outcome-Related Questions

Questions eight and nine focused on outcomes attributable to partnership. These questions yielded information on the elements of success related to the participants’ partnership efforts, as summarized in the following two sections.

Question 8: Though there is no one definition of the ideal partnership that is sure to work in every organization, how would you describe a highly successful partnership?
**Brief Summary/Key Points**

The responses to question eight revealed a common theme—that partnership’s goal is not partnership for the sake of partnership, or even being able to say you are in compliance with the Executive Order. On the contrary, partnership is a process that is focused on outcomes—both for the union and the agency. The partnership relationship is ongoing (i.e., it is never fully “achieved” but must constantly be worked at) and challenging at times, but is one in which labor and management openly discuss issues, engage in pre-decisional information sharing, understand each others’ interests, and manage conflict. The latter inevitably arises, and several individuals noted that partnership is not always “rosy.”

According to both labor and management, the key requirements of a highly successful partnership are commitment to the process; a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities of the parties; defining the partnership’s purpose; open and honest sharing of information; and effective communication. Although not a tangible “skill” or “competency,” many of the interviewees noted that trust is a key ingredient of successful partnerships.

A number of participants stated that highly successful partnerships do not result from simply drafting a partnership agreement or forming a partnership council. Rather, partnership results when those who have a stake in improving the labor-management relationship join forces to mutually determine processes for addressing issues. Participants said that as they began the partnership process, there was a substantial change in the way the dialogue between labor and management was occurring. In the past they had approached one another only if there was a problem, usually in the form of an unfair labor practice or a grievance. As labor and management began stepping out of their traditional roles, according to one participant, the change became a very personal experience: “I started to find out that the people on the other side are human beings.”

It is clear from the interviews that a highly successful partnership ensures that early on in the process, clarity is achieved in goals and objectives that are arrived at through joint exploration and consensus. These areas are discussed further under Question 10, below. While several interviewees said that common goals were essential to successful partnerships, others reiterated that it is how the parties manage their differences that determines whether there is a true partnership. As one participant put it, “Sometimes you don’t have common goals, but how you manage those differences determines whether you have a true partnership.”

One union participant felt that buy-in at all levels was a requirement for the success of partnerships. A management representative noted that the parties need to take ownership of their decisions, that the sharing of information leads to trust, and that partnership is successful only when both sides believe in it and when they have a clear purpose for engaging in the process. Another key point raised was that the day-to-day operational characteristics that the parties live under determine whether the partnership is a success, not the by-laws or the wording of the partnership agreement.

Union representatives noted that partnership failed where it was “imposed,” and that a sort of stigma was attached to partnership as a formal program or formal council. The key is having
partnership integrated into the activity rather than segmented on its own. For example, one agency started out with an umbrella concept for their partnership council. When it became apparent that this model was unworkable, they broke the partnership into smaller groups or units, where each group answers directly to headquarters and has representation on the agency council. This ensured that the partnership reached all levels of the agency and remained close to the employees, their union stewards, and the work processes. Another person also gave an example of a subgroup system that accomplishes tasks between formal partnership council meetings.

One management participant responded that a highly successful partnership is one where line employees and line supervisors understand what partnership is, noting that in highly successful partnerships there is a balance of resources between union and management with regard to the process.

**Question 9:** How do you think an organization should go about forging a highly successful partnership? What elements of success can you identify, and what are the steps you have to take to get there?

**Brief Summary/Key Points**

Several common themes came from question nine, including an open attitude or desire to do partnership on the part of all parties concerned, especially top level managers and union elected officials. Open communication and information sharing (“both in between meetings and during meetings”), pre-decisional involvement of the union in management decisions, and joint training of the parties early on were other themes that emerged.

Virtually everyone interviewed recognized one element of success as concentrating on the interpersonal relationships within the partnership. Participants said that it has to be known by everyone in the group that it is acceptable to take risks. Some noted that it is critical to have the stakeholders, the “right people,” in the room to build these relationships. When it comes to partnership, not only top-level managers but line managers and program managers have to take charge of the labor-management relationship.

Although the majority of interviewees felt that in order to forge a successful partnership there must be support and buy-in from the principle partners, there were a few participants who did not feel upper level support was a necessary ingredient for success. They said that successful partnership comes about through the education process. It helps to have top down commitment, but it is impossible to force an attitude or force people to be partners. One participant noted that partnership has to come from the grass roots level rather than from on top, and another participant felt that the people at the table have to possess the authority and clout to make it an effective partnership. This brings with it the authority for the partnership council to make decisions.

Several interviewees reported that their partnerships had brought in a facilitator to help them clarify goals and work on interpersonal skills. One gentleman said that it is impossible to make people “do” partnership. People have to buy in to the concept. He noted that neutrals are helpful because they introduce the parties to concepts such as “What’s in it for me?” and “What benefits
are there for the agency?" Another person felt that third party neutrals are influential in getting the right people in the room.

Another key element of success identified by the participants was communication on several levels, including communication with front line employees and increasing levels of communication and understanding between labor and management. One notion that surfaced was that communication should be formal. Partnerships should find ways of directly sharing points of view and information rather than relying solely on informal channels. Participants noted that formal communication expands views and increases trust within the organization.

A number of union participants alluded to the notion that it is vital not to get "too far out in front" of the workers without continuous explanation of what is going on in partnership. They noted the importance of meeting frequently to discuss issues and publicizing achievements. One participant said that her partnership council uses internet technology to allow wide access to information and to allow employees to communicate directly with management or the union to get information or give ideas.

Several participants discussed challenges related to communication. Some, particularly union representatives, felt that part of the success of partnership is in the process itself and in breaking the work down to get people involved. In other words, the real measure of partnership is what gets accomplished in the workplace. They gave examples of ad hoc teams that make decisions about workplace processes and issues. A "catch-22" situation results, however, when councils try to get people involved so they can get results. Employees may not buy in and become involved until they see tangible results from the partnership. One participant summarized this notion in the statement, "You have to learn what your partner needs to stay alive. Management needs to know that unions are political organizations and they get elected every year. The union needs to realize what management's needs are."

The necessity of open information sharing among the parties was a theme that ran through all of the interviews. One issue that arose was at what point management should share information. A number of union participants asked whether information is truly pre-decisional or whether it is presented to the union only after management has "ironed out all the wrinkles." Union participants felt that management should inform them right away when changes come up, even if no formal meeting is scheduled. If information is shared early and up front, impact and implementation bargaining may be avoided down the road. The early sharing of information among the parties creates the trust and respect necessary for partnership.

III. Question Related to Partnership Operations

**Question 10:** Describe a typical partnership council meeting. What are the critical tasks and functions that the group performs or that you perform?

**Brief Summary/Key Points**

Participants offered a rich amount of information on the tasks and functions performed by their partnership councils. Many focused on the "startup" processes that partnership councils go
through. They noted that assessing readiness for partnership is a key process in which the parties address questions such as: Who should be involved in a labor-management partnership's strategic planning process? The partnership council? Representatives or designees of the council? Or both? Where and how often will they meet? How will agendas be set? What groundrules will the group abide by? How will buy-in and commitment to the partnership be secured from the parties' constituencies? These questions are ones frequently confronted by partners in the beginning stages of partnership, and they must be resolved up front and early in the process.

The tasks associated with the startup phase revolve around defining the group's mission. Labor and management representatives' tasks center on developing a partnership agreement that addresses who the group is (membership issues), what the group's reason for existence is (guiding principles or vision), and what issues the group will address (defining issues and interests). Interviewees noted that they spend time discussing the group's values, and actually documenting the core principles and precepts that they, as partners, will work under. Several people noted that developing goals and objectives and managing the partnership process were the most difficult tasks. These tasks often culminate in a partnership agreement or similar document.

One participant told of the tasks that his partnership goes through, especially as new members or new leadership come on board. The members ensure that in meetings all viewpoints, conflicts, and concerns that hinder and help a productive relationship are identified. The members identify ways to address these viewpoints, concerns, and conflicts. They develop an action plan to implement solutions. All the time the goal is to build a mutually beneficial working relationship.

Participants mentioned a number of tools used by their groups during the partnership process. Nearly all interviewees said that they have used brainstorming in partnership meetings. Consensus decision making was also noted as a means of achieving shared vision and commitment. Several individuals noted that consensus decision making was challenging because it is often difficult to get consensus agreement on a difficult issue.

Again, good communication skills were highlighted as essential partnership skills. Feedback is used by labor-management partners to clarify, re-focus the group, and facilitate the overall process. Two other areas that were noted in the interviews were the use of groundrules and interest-based problem solving. Groundrules are used by partners because they serve the functions of equalizing the power and status of members, helping the group reach outcomes more efficiently; helping achieve effective interpersonal dynamics; and enhancing self awareness.

Interest-based problem solving, referred to by interviewees by a variety of titles such as interest-based bargaining (IBB), interest-based negotiations, and win-win bargaining. A common task or function performed by labor-management partnership councils. The steps involved in this process are:

1. Select an issue
2. Identify interests
3. Generate options
4. Establish criteria to evaluate options
5. Evaluate options against the criteria
6. Develop solutions

Several participants alluded to common problems with using IIB, and one said that it had hindered progress. Managers may feel they have to take an unyielding approach to using IIB to demonstrate “good faith” or good intentions because they fear being judged by the union as a non-partner. Interviewees also mentioned that lack of skill in this area is often a problem when there are unclear interests and the process turns into “block voting” or vetoing; when issues are reintroduced because a party “didn’t really get what they wanted” (thereby eroding trust); and when the parties have difficulty with the mechanics of completing each step in the process.

IV. Questions Related to Problems Experienced by Partnerships

Questions eleven and twelve related to problems experienced by partnerships, and focused on challenges and skill gaps that may lead to those problems. These two questions are analyzed together because question twelve is a followup to question eleven.

**Question 11:** Think back to the most challenging times you’ve had in partnership. What were the barriers to partnership you experienced?

**Question 12:** In retrospect, how could you have overcome each of the barriers you just mentioned?

**Brief Summary/Key Points**

Common responses to the question of what barriers there are to partnership included overcoming traditional attitudes, lack of commitment from the top, lack of inclusion of middle managers, and resistance to sharing power.

Several management representatives had unique perspectives on barriers to partnership. They outlined a number of issues, and again communication was a main theme. One of the major partnership challenges is geography. Pre-decisional involvement is difficult in a practical sense for both management and the union because getting local input into headquarters decisions can be a logistical challenge.

Participants also pointed out that finding a role for a national headquarters level partnership council in local issues, and knowing at what point local issues become national issues, are problems they grapple with. Perceptions at the local level may be that authority is being usurped and national decisions will be binding for local organizations. One participant said that headquarters probably cannot define a common role for partnership, but that it has to be done by each local and at lower organizational levels. The key for the parties is to try to find ways to communicate without adding layers and bureaucracy. For example, one union interviewee said that a barrier, especially at higher levels of government, has been determining the role of non-unit employees in partnership.
Another overarching theme was that trust in itself is a big roadblock, and that the best way to approach partnership is "take baby steps" and "take the long view" because results will take time. Participants emphasized that much of their role is guiding rather than mandating. One person said his partnership is "the cheerleader" and champions issues, and that a big part of their effort focuses on publicizing successes.

One theme that ran throughout the interviews was that many of the problems experienced by the parties derived from the fact that they were unable to come up with a mutual definition of partnership. Many groups said they spent a lot of time and energy focusing on what "partnership" means, whether it meant true equality or equal accountability. Participants said that the concept of "equal partnership" can be a roadblock when the parties do not clearly define the parameters of partnership and the roles of labor and management.

A union representative succinctly verbalized a concern that is shared among her colleagues. When agencies began partnering, she said, union members felt on one extreme that co-management would exist, and on the other extreme that they would lose their ability to file complaints. Another union representative noted that often times employees feel that they will have a chance to make decisions about how the organization will operate, and it does not always happen. Other participants said that management, particularly middle and lower management, may feel they are losing control and that upper management "is giving the shop away to the union."

Rising expectations often lead to problems in partnership as employees' needs are not met. One person noted that his agency had done a number of surveys for the partnership effort. The partnership council did not follow up or give feedback to the employees, nor did it respond to complaints.

Participants said that some of these problems can be alleviated through good communication and up front consensus on what the scope of the partnership will be. One participant felt that sometimes it is better not to tackle the issue of "Are we decision-making or are we advisory?" right up front. He said that if partnerships come up with quality recommendations and work hard, they will begin to solve this "chicken & egg" issue, and that it will essentially become a non-issue. Other suggestions were the use of facilitation within the process, listening with an open mind to one another, and "putting away the words and working through the process."

There was much discussion centering on the relationship between partnership and traditional labor relations and collective bargaining. It was voiced very strongly in some interviews that there are statutory problems in that the current labor relations statute does not support partnership and is "set up to be adversarial and litigious." There was also commentary that the wording of the Executive Order vis-a-vis bargaining is vague and that in some cases parties have been spending most of their time arguing over whether topics fall under the permissive subjects that agencies must partner on under the Executive Order.

Two participants said that if the parties could not agree through consensus on an issue then they would fall back on traditional position-based bargaining. One participant explained that in his partnership council if decisions cannot be made through consensus, then the group moves on to
other issues or holds discussions off line. He said this prevents the parties from being put into a position where they could be coerced into making a decision. Often times, if a decision is made at a partnership meeting, the decision on how to implement will be put off until a subsequent meeting so that the union has time to take the issue back to their membership.

Many participants spoke of failure of partnerships to get buy-in and trust from middle managers. They said that as councils have formed, they have for the most part been made up of senior level management, political appointees and union leaders. Mid-level managers have been left out of the process.

Another recurring challenge was when new members, particularly management members, come into the partnership. Several interviewees said that changing personalities is a constant barrier. Turnover is a barrier because partnerships are faced with starting over in building trust and relationships. Two managers indicated that the unions need to talk to their members to educate them along the way and that headquarters level partnerships have a role in providing continual training, especially for top and middle level managers.

Overall in terms of dealing with these issues, participants felt that improved communication, training in and use of the interest-based process, and getting the parties to buy in before they enter the process have been useful.

V. Question Related to Training

Question 13: Based on your experience, what is the best advice you could offer about training in partnership?

Brief Summary/Key Points

Overwhelmingly, participants felt that some form of partnership training is essential for a successful partnership. Although strategies for training differed among partnerships, there was widespread consensus that interest-based bargaining (IBB) is a key component of partnership training and provides parties the necessary tools to do partnership.

The participants felt that joint partnership training is essential, and that joint planning for training yields the best results. Some said training should be done up front—before the partnership begins drafting a charter, that it should be mandatory, and that it should be intense and formal. Others reported success with no formal training at all. One person stated that rigid agendas for partnership training restrict creativity.

Repeated or refresher training and a model called "just-in-time" training, where the parties receive training only in those areas that are necessary to meet their specific needs at a given time, were among the models used by the participants' partnerships. According to one individual, training can be used to deal with turnover and bring new members "up to snuff."

Three interviewees said that there is no one model of training that fits every partnership because expectations and people are different. Before planning training, the parties must ask themselves,
“Where are we going?” One interviewee felt that partnership “training” is a misnomer; that it is more a process of facilitation, a process of advocacy and education, rather than skills training.

Participants noted that the emphasis on training has been more on relationship building instead of on the process, and that interest-based and other skills must go along with relationship building. They are equally important. One area of training that was specifically mentioned was budget and the factors that drive the budget process.

Participants raised the issue of who should be trained. Mid-level managers, they noted, are a critical group that is normally overlooked in partnership training. Often times only the union and upper management are trained.

One person told how his agency has changed the delivery of labor relations training for supervisors and managers. Training has gone from delivery by labor relations personnel to joint delivery by labor relations staff and the union chapter presidents. “Rather than differentiating between management and barring the unit, we’re lumping them together now and we together give all of our training—even to the extent that we’ll work on our scripts beforehand. We work as one body, two voices.”
Conclusions and Recommendations

Although it is well known among labor relations professionals that the key to success in labor-management relations is a commitment to cooperation, and that partnership and teamwork are necessary to achieve that commitment, adequate attention has not been paid to the overall competencies required for truly effective partnerships. This study has attempted to define a partnership competency framework that may serve as the basis for a skills-building publication or partnership training curriculum. It may also serve on its own as a practical guideline for agencies or individuals to identify training objectives that must be met in their own organizations. This section provides conclusions based on the interview results, and provides recommendations for next steps that may be taken to further define and reinforce partnership competencies across the government.

Conclusions

It is clear from both the literature review and the interviews that group tasks dictate the tools and strategies used by a group. Because a variety of tasks face labor-management partners, certain performance strategies are required for effective labor-management partnerships. Labor-management groups address a variety of issues that fall along a wide spectrum. According to scholars, depending on the sophistication of the organization and its members, labor-management groups may address immediate work/worker (traditional "union") issues, or they may address an array of bottom-line and mission-critical (traditional "management") issues. When groups focus on the latter, each member of the group must be prepared to use classic "management" skills and competencies to be an effective participant in the process. This conclusion expressed in the scholarly literature is reinforced by the results of this study.

As shown in the table on page 17, federal labor-management partners address a variety of non-traditional issues such as procurement, privatization, budget issues, and downsizing. It is because of these tasks that labor-management partners must have technical competence in a wide variety of areas. Using the OPM model of management competencies, it becomes clear that several competencies within the framework may be juxtaposed onto labor-management groups to define the competencies required by both labor and management for partnership success.

Selected OPM Management Competencies (OPM, 1990)

Level 1: Basic Competencies
- technical competence (procedures, regulations, etc.)

Level 2: Supervisory Competencies
- managing diverse workforce
- human resource management

Level 3: Managerial Competencies
- financial development
- client orientation
- technology management
To the above list, one might add competence in the statutory framework for labor relations and collective bargaining. Interview participants noted that the relationship between partnership and traditional collective bargaining must be addressed early on in the parties' relationship. What if the parties cannot agree through consensus on an issue? Do they fall back on traditional position-based bargaining? There is evidence that the parties still need to know their rights and responsibilities under the law in order to have a successful partnership.

In addition to technical competence in traditional "management" areas and areas linked to strategic agency issues, there is clear indication from the interviews that effective group dynamics and group processes are required for successful partnerships. For partnerships to operate successfully, there are a number of skills that are important for individual members, and the overall group, to develop. These skills center on tasks that the group must perform to get the job done. They also center on individual members' ability to maintain effective communications and interaction.

For the purposes of this study, a task analysis approach using structured interviews as a data collection instrument was used. The task analysis approach was used because: there are commonalities among all partnership councils vis-à-vis their structures and membership; because the NPC has conducted research on the types of tasks performed and the types of training needed and utilized by partnership councils; and because the desired result of this study is a body of work that communicates specific competencies required for effective partnerships. Historical survey data from the NPC is used as a basis for comparison of interview data and to add another level of analysis to the research.

Through the interviews, several themes emerged that reflect the critical tasks and functions performed by partnership councils and committees. From these categories, it is possible to determine the specific skills and competencies that members must have in order to be effective partners:

**Partnership Council Tasks and Functions:**

- Effective Planning
- Effective Meetings
- Group Problem-Solving
- Effective Decision-Making
- Communicating with Individuals and Groups Outside the Council
- Interpersonal Skills
- Partnership Evaluation
Survey research conducted by the National Partnership Council reinforces several of these themes. Labor-management partners surveyed in 1995 responded that group processes such as interest-based bargaining, team-building, conflict management, group facilitation, and eliciting employee involvement are among the top types of training received by labor-management partners.

Training Received for Labor-Management Partnership
Rank-Ordered by Frequency

(Source: National Partnership Council 1995 Partnership Study)
Of the types of training received by labor-management partners, interest-based bargaining, group facilitation, and conflict management were ranked as the most useful.

Usefulness of Partnership Training Received
Rank-Ordered by Frequency of "Very Useful" Responses

(Source: National Partnership Council 1995 Partnership Study)
Respondents to the NPC survey indicated that the most needed type of training was training on the roles and responsibilities of partnership council members, a finding that was strongly supported by the interviews. Participants in the interviews pointed out that finding a role for a national headquarters level partnership council in local issues, and knowing at what point local issues become national issues, are problems they grapple with. Another challenge discussed in the interviews was determining the role of middle managers and non-bargaining unit employees in the partnership.

Training for Labor-Management Partnership:
Received vs. Needed
Rank-Ordered by Need

(Source: National Partnership Council 1995 Partnership Study)
The NPC data reflect the types of training that are needed for effective labor-management partnerships, according to those who are directly involved in the process. If training is a reflection of knowledge, skills and abilities required of partnership participants, then the survey data are an indication that the interview results, at least in terms of the broad themes that emerged, are at least somewhat reliable. From the interviews however, a detailed partnership competency framework emerges that addresses the critical tasks and functions performed by partnership councils. The framework serves as a sort of "menu" of the areas that labor and management should focus on as they enter into a partnership relationship, as well as during the life of the partnership:

### PARTNERSHIP COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Tasks and Functions Performed by Partnership Councils</th>
<th>Related Council Member Competencies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Planning</strong></td>
<td>a. Understanding roles and responsibilities of members of the group.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b. Discussing the expectations of the partnership.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Creating a vision for the partnership.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d. Clarifying the purpose and mission of the partnership.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Setting group goals and objectives.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f. Developing action plans and designating who will be responsible for implementing parts of the plan.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>g. Establishing evaluation measures to measure progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h. Clarifying structure and relationship with other organizational entities and constituents.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Managing organizational change.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Meetings</strong></td>
<td>a. Setting agendas and clarifying meeting objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Setting groundrules.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c. Motivating others inside and outside the group.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d. Preparing for meeting subject matter in advance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>e. Eliciting viewpoints and information, and giving feedback during meetings.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>f. Implementing decisions and following up.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>g. Making use of facilitators.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Group Problem-Solving
- Applying interest-based and other group problem solving models.
- Weighing all the issues and listening/understanding others' interests behind the issues.
- Considering all viewpoints and developing options.
- Using problem-solving tools:
  - Brainstorming
  - Force-field analysis
  - Cause-and-effect analysis
  - Nominal group technique

### Effective Decision-Making
- Developing a definition and a process for pre-decisional involvement.
- Applying consensus decision-making techniques.
- Negotiating.
- Using everyone's information and viewpoint.

### Communicating with Individuals and Groups Outside the Council
- Keeping all employees in the organization informed about the partnership's progress.
- Developing two-way communication strategies.
- Using effective communication strategies (e.g., the Internet).

### Interpersonal Skills
- Effective articulation of constituency's needs.
- Participating fully in discussions.
- Effective listening.
- Giving and receiving feedback.
- Working with resistance and managing conflict.
- Assisting others in contributing/elicitating ideas.
- Operating as a team member.
- Understanding differences in personal style.

### Partnership Evaluation
- Continually assessing and maintaining member skills.
- Jointly developing an evaluation model for partnership efforts.
- Developing performance measures.
- Assessing and reporting partnership's effect on improving organizational performance (increased productivity, improved customer service, cost savings, better relations among management and workers, etc.).

### Recommendations
Although much anecdotal information about partnership exists, the Federal government is still in need of a systematic approach to partnership skill determination. This study was intended to be a first step in that direction. It has attempted to identify the competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) required for effective partnerships. It used structured interviews to develop a Partnership Competency Framework. The framework reflects the critical tasks and functions of
labor-management partnership councils, as well as the content or nature of labor-management partnership (responsibilities, roles, and functions of the parties).

Although many of the skills and competencies necessary for effective partnership have now been identified, additional research into this area should be conducted. A mere ten interviews cannot capture or validate all the labor-management partnership competencies that exist. The framework simply exists as a practical guideline for agencies or individuals to identify training objectives that must be met in their own organizations. Once labor and management representatives have identified skill gaps and obtained partnership training, they will be better able to institutionalize partnership to improve agency operations and employee quality of work life. Furthermore, the findings may be used to develop a handbook or guide to skills-building that could be published by groups such as the National Partnership Council or agency partnership councils to support and promote competency development among labor-management partners.
Bibliography


Executive Order 12871 of October 1, 1993

Labor-Management Partnerships

The involvement of Federal Government employees and their union representatives is essential to achieving the National Performance Review's Government reform objectives. Only by changing the nature of Federal labor-management relations so that managers, employees, and employees' elected union representatives serve as partners will it be possible to design and implement comprehensive changes necessary to reform Government. Labor-management partnerships will champion change in Federal Government agencies to transform them into organizations capable of delivering the highest quality services to the American people.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, and in order to establish a new form of labor-management relations throughout the executive branch to promote the principles and recommendations adopted as a result of the National Performance Review, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP COUNCIL.
(a) Establishment and Membership. There is established the National Partnership Council ("Council"). The Council shall comprise the following members appointed by the President:

(1) Director of the Office of Personnel Management ("OPM");
(2) Deputy Secretary of Labor;
(3) Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget;
(4) Chair, Federal Labor Relations Authority;
(5) Federal Mediation and Conciliation Director;
(6) President, American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO;
(7) President, National Federation of Federal Employees;
(8) President, National Treasury Employees Union;

(9) Secretary-Treasurer of the Public Employees Department, AFL-CIO; and

(10) A deputy Secretary or other officer with department or agencywide authority from two executive departments or agencies (hereafter collectively “agency”), not otherwise represented on the Council.

Members shall have 2-year terms on the Council, which may be extended by the President.

(b) Responsibilities and Functions. The Council shall advise the President on matters involving labor-management relations in the executive branch. Its activities shall include:

1. Supporting the creation of labor-management partnerships and promoting partnership efforts in the executive branch, to the extent permitted by law;

2. Proposing to the President by January 1994 statutory changes necessary to achieve the objectives of this order, including legislation consistent with the National Performance Review’s recommendations for the creation of a flexible and responsive hiring system and the reform of the General Schedule classification system;

3. Collecting and disseminating information about, and providing guidance on, partnership efforts in the executive branch, including results achieved, to the extent permitted by law;

4. Utilizing the expertise of individuals both within and outside the Federal Government to foster partnership arrangements; and

5. Working with the President’s Management Council toward reform consistent with the National Performance Review’s recommendations throughout the executive branch.

(c) Administration. (1) The President shall designate a member of the Council who is a full-time Federal employee to serve as Chairperson. The responsibilities of the Chairperson shall include scheduling meetings of the Council.

(2) Council shall seek input from nonmember Federal agencies, particularly smaller agencies. It also may, from time to time, invite experts from the private and public sectors to submit information. The Council shall also seek input from companies, nonprofit organizations, State and local governments, Federal Government employees, and customers of Federal Government services, as needed.

(3) To the extent permitted by law and subject to the availability of appropriations, OPM shall provide such facilities, support, and administrative services to the Council as the Director of OPM deems appropriate.

(4) Members of the Council shall serve without compensation for their work on the Council, but shall be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, as authorized by law, for persons seeing intermittently in Government service.
(5) All agencies shall, to the extent permitted by law, provide to the Council such assistance, information, and advice as the Council may request.

(d) General. (1) I have determined that the Council shall be established in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended (5 U.S.C. App. 2).

(2) Notwithstanding any other executive order, the functions of the President under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended, except that of reporting to the Congress, that are applicable to the Council, shall be performed by the Director of OPM, in accordance with guidelines and procedures issued by the Administrator of General Services.

(3) The Council shall exist for a period of 2 years from the date of this order unless extended.

(4) Members of the Council who are not otherwise officers or employees of the Federal Government shall serve in a representative capacity and shall not be considered special Government employees for any purpose.

Sec. 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF LABOR-MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS THROUGHTOUT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH. The head of each agency subject to the provisions of chapter 71 of title 5, United States Code shall:

(a) create labor-management partnerships by forming labor-management committees or councils at appropriate levels, or adapting existing councils or committees if such groups exist, to help reform Government;

(b) involve employees and their union representatives as full partners with management representatives to identify problems and craft solutions to better serve the agency's customers and mission;

(c) provide systematic training of appropriate agency employees (including line managers, first line supervisors, and union representatives who are Federal employees) in consensual methods of dispute resolution, such as alternative dispute resolution techniques and interest-based bargaining approaches;

(d) negotiate over the subjects set forth in 5 U.S.C. 7106(b)(1), and instruct subordinate officials to do the same; and

(e) evaluate progress and improvements in organizational performance resulting from the labor-management partnerships.

Sec. 3. NO ADMINISTRATIVE OR JUDICIAL REVIEW. This order is intended only to improve the internal management of the executive branch and is not intended to, and does not, create any right to administrative or judicial review, or any other right, substantive or procedural, enforceable by a party against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

/s/William J. Clinton
THE WHITE HOUSE. October 1, 1993
### Appendix B
National Partnership Council
1998 Strategic Action Plan

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategic Objectives</th>
<th>Actions/Activities</th>
<th>Planning Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Objective #1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bring high-level attention to partnership issues to ensure that partnerships are being established and working effectively throughout the Federal government.</td>
<td>A. Advise the Director of OPM on revising guidance for implementing EO 12871.</td>
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<td>B. Gather and evaluate data, and make recommendations to ensure further compliance with Section 2(a-e) of EO 12871.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. Work with the National Performance Review and the Reinvention Impact Centers to ensure that partnership efforts are integral to reinvention.</td>
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<td><strong>Strategic Objective #2</strong></td>
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<td>The Council will continue to use the IAG Network as a vehicle to recruit non-member agencies. It will provide a forum in which the Council can regularly communicate partnership issues and will also broaden the range of agencies the Council hears from.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify partnership issues through task groups, and find ways to involve labor and management from agencies not represented on the Council.</td>
<td>A. Continue collaboration with the Interagency Advisory Group (IAG) Network on Partnership and Labor-Management Relations, and recruitment of agency representatives from the Network to participate in NPC task groups.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. Continue to coordinate with the Federal Executive Boards and the Federal Executive Associations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. Explore collaborative regional involvement with various groups.</td>
<td>The Council could encourage the FEBs to include partnership as an initiative in their strategic plans. The FEBs may be utilized as an information-sharing forum for NPC to keep field activities informed. The Council could continue to solicit support from the FEBs for NPC meetings. For example, they may identify local partnerships that may be interested in attending meetings and also provide ideas for topics and speakers for meetings.</td>
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</table>
| Strategic Objective #3 | Continue to focus on partnerships experiencing difficulty and help them overcome barriers. | Continue the Facilitation Project and develop a proactive action plan to systematically evaluate interventions of current participants in the Facilitation Project and assess suitability of new participants. | 1. Develop intake, response, and referral processes to work with partnerships facing challenges, including letters, emails, phone calls, etc.  
2. Develop a referral process including third-party/neutral resources, “mentor” partnerships, and universities; invite groups to participate in NPC-sponsored meetings/workshops/etc.; and update resource materials to provide to participants.  
3. Develop a structured process for follow up and evaluation of 1997 and 1998 participants such as periodic self-assessments to find out if NPC-related or other sources of assistance were used and whether they had a positive effect on the relationship.  
4. Members will receive two briefings. Dates in April and August TBD. |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Objective #4 | Promote nuts-and-bolts skills-building among labor-management partners. | A. Provide opportunities for skills-building by sponsoring workshops on a variety of topics. | 1. Provide skills building session(s) that allow enough time for full exploration of partnership issues. Sessions could include half-day or full day workshops in Washington, DC or another region. Out-of-town meetings should be overnight in order to provide a full day for onsite workshop. Plenary sessions should be expanded to allow time to address issues raised. Participants in such workshops should be limited to intact labor-management groups, and not one labor or one management representative.  
2. Continue to collaborate with academia to provide skills-building. (Note: Serves dual objective of providing expert assistance to Federal partners and stimulating research in Federal labor-management relations.) Call upon the FLRA and the FMCS as resources for providing partnership skills-building. |
|                        | B. Evaluate the effectiveness of NPC workshops and assistance. | C. Find ways to share information on nuts-and-bolts skills-building with those who may not be able to attend NPC meetings/workshops/etc. | 1. Develop products/fact sheet materials and information from Council events by sponsoring themed meetings that would become the basis for brief Council publications. Some possible themes:  
a. A demonstration project group could discuss labor-management relations issues as they pertain to developing new performance systems  
b. National Partnership Award winners  
c. New Performance Systems  
d. Partnership strategies for the GPRA  
e. Workplace Security (1997 activity)  
f. Telecommuting/Flexplace (1997 activity)  
2. Find ways to capture NPC workshops and share them with labor-management groups that cannot attend |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective #5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage partnerships to address major NPR objectives, such as increasing efficiency, improving service and reducing cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Criteria for the 1998 National Partnership Award</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish the 1998 John N. Sturdivant National Partnership Award.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Provide partnerships with information on means of measurement and assessment.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>C. Strengthen the link between partnership and agencies' implementation of the Results Act.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Strategic Objective #6</th>
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<tr>
<td>Promote partnership through information-sharing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. Gather information and prepare a report to the President on progress in labor-management partnerships by December 1998.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Research methods may include a 1998 partnership survey, an update on the number of partnership councils/agreements, and qualitative research through a variety of methods such as interviews or focus groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. The 1998 Report could reflect a more broad-based research effort than in 1997. In addition to conducting a survey, the NPC could gather qualitative data about partnerships in order to:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. compare and contrast organizational approaches to partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. explore variances in attitudes toward partnership (Why it isn't working in some agencies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. analyze the factors that lead to the relative success or failure of partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. determine levels of compliance with regard to Section 2 of EO 12871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. The NPC could continue to work with academia to develop and administer a statistically valid survey and other research methodologies. (Note: Collaboration with academia is an overarching NPC goal in order to promote ongoing research into Federal labor-management relations.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Objective #6, Continued</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Host out-of-town workshops or meetings to amplify partnership messages outside of Washington.</strong></td>
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| 1. Maintain ongoing relationship with participants in meetings/workshops and develop a method for systematic follow up with participants (both Facilitation Project and non-Facilitation Project).
2. Co-host meetings/workshops with universities in order to promote academic research into Federal labor-management relations and in order to obtain expert assistance for developing and delivering skills-building workshops.
   a. Cornell University
   b. University of Michigan
   c. Others?
3. Find ways to share information on nuts-and-bolts skills-building with those who may not be able to attend NPC meetings/workshops/etc. (Strategic Objective #4C).
4. Extend length of meetings to full-day (overnight travel). NPC Members could build other business around meetings. |
| **C. Provide information to Federal agencies, unions, employees, and the public on Council activities, research, resources, and other general information on partnership.** |
| 1. NPC web page.
2. NPC Clearinghouse distribution of materials |
| **D. Enhance written communication about partnership and disseminate it through all available media.** |
| Develop additional “How-To” books or publications:
1. Handbook/Toolkit/Bulletins
2. Update Partnership Handbook
3. Update resources list (training/facilitation/intervention)
4. Develop products from Council meetings and place greater emphasis on developing themed meetings that would become the basis for brief Council publications (see strategic objective #5). |
Appendix C

Telephone Recruiting Script

Hello _______. My name is Jean Strasser and I'm calling on behalf of the National Partnership Council as a follow-up to the skills-building workshop you attended last _______. I am conducting interviews with selected labor and management representatives who are active members of partnership councils to determine the skills and competencies necessary for effective partnerships. The Council may use the information from these interviews to develop a partnership competency framework that will be the basis for a skills-building handbook. The interviews are also part of a study I am conducting as a graduate student at the Center for Public Service, Seton Hall University.

I am calling to see if you would be interested in participating in this project. The interview focuses on your experience, and the current state of partnership efforts in your organization. The interview takes about 45 minutes to an hour. The information I gather will not be shared with anyone, but will be combined with other interviews I am conducting and analyzing in the aggregate to look for common themes and trends. Your confidentiality would be ensured.

If person is interested, move to next section.
   If not, thank them and move on to next call.

Great. As I stated, I got your name from the registration list from the National Partnership skills-building workshop you attended in ______, but first I have a preliminary question before we move on.

Q: Are you currently involved in your agency/organization's partnership council? Have you been involved at least one year? [A negative answer disqualifies them.]

If person does not meet the above criterion, explain why he/she does not meet the criteria and thank him/her for his/her willingness to participate.

Let me tell you a little bit more about the interview. The purpose of the interviews is to find out your thoughts about what makes partnership work, and what skills and competencies labor and management representatives need for effective partnerships. I will be interviewing five labor and five management representatives, and use their input to develop an inventory of partnership competencies.

Although the interview results will be used to develop a skills-building handbook and in a masters-level research project, I ensure strict confidentiality so none of your comments will be associated with your name or organization in any reports or papers.

You need not prepare anything in advance. I just want to hear your personal views (with my assurance of confidentiality, of course).

When will you be available to schedule an interview? Date ____________ Time _______. 
# Appendix D

## Interview Questioning Route

### Partnership Effectiveness Interview:
Skills and Competencies Necessary for Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date of Interview:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone number:</td>
<td>[From Telephone Script/First Call:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union (if applicable):</td>
<td>At least one year experience w/partnership? Y / N]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location:</td>
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</tbody>
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### Background / Demographic Questions:
1. Are you currently a member of a partnership council/committee/other body? (Please describe the scope of the activity).
2. When were your partnership efforts started?
3. What level of the organization does the partnership represent? (Headquarters, field, etc.?)

### Partnership Description:
4. Who are the key players in your partnership?  
   [Prompts: Union Management Neutral/Facilitator]
5. How large is your partnership council/committee?
6. How frequently do you meet?
7. What types of issues does your partnership council/committee discuss?

### Skills and Competencies:
8. Though there is no one definition of the ideal partnership that is sure to work in every organization, how would you describe a highly successful partnership?
9. How do you think an organization should go about forging a highly successful partnership? (What elements of success can you identify, and what are the steps you have to take to get there?)
10. Describe a typical partnership council meeting. What are the critical tasks and functions that the group performs or that you perform?
11. Think back to the most challenging times you’ve had in partnership. What were the barriers to partnership you experienced?  
   [Prompt: Were there skill deficiencies in the group that you think led to the roadblock(s)?]
12. In retrospect, how could you have overcome each of the barriers you just mentioned?
13. Based on your experience, what is the best advice you could offer about training in partnership?