# Report on Phase II:
Developing Policy Competencies – Facilitating the transition from academic to professional

TBS-CAPPA policy competencies project
February 24, 2010
RDIMS 931868

Canada

Objective

- **To facilitate the development of work-ready policy competencies by bridging academic and professional spheres**
    - Allowing TBS to effectively identify skills needed for the knowledge based workplace
    - Improving the capacity of universities to train and develop the resources needed for federal employment

Knowledge (academic)

Skills (professional)
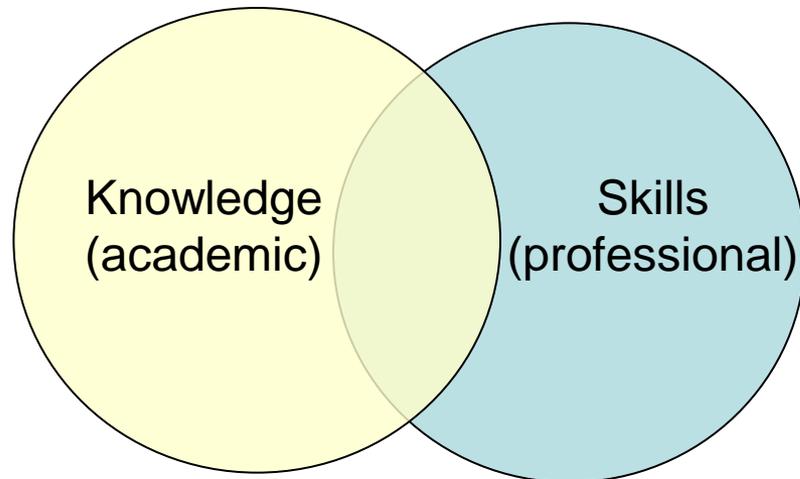
Developing skills that effectively translate knowledge - for best application in the workplace.

Context

- The federal government is committed to supporting the renewal of the Public Service during a period of fiscal restraint.

- Efficient and effective means of ensuring a skilled workforce for a knowledge based workplace is a key focus.

- Public Administration graduates increasingly represent an important source of policy recruits for the federal public service.

Years	Number of MPA Graduates Recruited	Number of People Recruited
2007-08	122	21,838
2008-09	170	23,744
2009-10	201	21,906

Source: Public Service Commission
No data is available for public policy graduates only MPA graduates.
There are high rates of unmatched cases which could mean that a larger number of MPA graduates are hired.

Progress to Date

Phase I:

- May, 2010 – TBS and CAPPA agree to work collaboratively on the examinable competencies project.

- October 25, 2010 – CAPPA, University-Public Service Roundtable
  - Focus was placed on entry level policy competencies within government. In particular, competency gaps for entry level policy analysts and the implications of these gaps. Questions were raised as to whether MPA's suffer the same gaps or issues.*

*The term MPA graduates will be used to refer to graduates of public policy and administration programs.

Examinable Competencies: Frame of Reference

Competencies are defined as any skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, personal attributes or distinguishing qualities and motives (or intent) as demonstrated through behaviours which contribute to successful performance of work.*

Advantages of Competency-Based Approaches:

- Competencies assess what skills a potential employee has.
- Competencies provide a standard that is understood by all parties – students, programs, and governments.

Examinable Competencies: Considerations

- Competencies assessed should be both observable and measurable with established relevance to the work and work description.
- Care should be taken to ensure that competencies are not excessively restrictive in order to avoid over-professionalization and cultural bias.
- Degree to which core knowledge competencies are addressed.

*Interdepartmental Committee on Competency-Based Management (Government of Canada)

Diverse Range of Policy Competencies

Policy Community is less defined across government. There is no enterprise-wide coordinated functional community.

| General Public Service Competencies	Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (DRAFT) Policy Analyst Toolkit: April, 2007	Treasury Board Secretariat – Core Competencies	Public Health Agency of Canada – Competency Profile, 2008
• **Values and Ethics** • **Thinking Things Through** • **Engagement** • **Management Excellence**	• *Decision Making* (creative, persuasive, synthesize information) • *Leadership & Operational Management* (goal and team oriented) • *Interaction* (strong written and oral communication skills) • *Knowledge* (functional, strategic and analytical thinking, strong research skills)	• *Engagement* (teamwork, relationship building, client focus) • *Strategic Thinking* (knowledge, analytical thinking, communication) • *Results Oriented* (goal oriented, reliability, adaptability and flexibility) • *Management Excellence*	• *Knowledge* (context, subject matter, methodologies, foundational) • *Intellectual* (analytical, problem solving) • *Communication* • *Organizational* (planning, time management, use) • *Personal* (judgement, values & ethics, responsibility & productivity, interpersonal relationships, respect for diversity, creativity,

Policy Competencies Aligned with General PS Competencies

Through consultations with a group of senior managers from pilot departments (INAC, Canadian Heritage, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada), initial competencies for policy professionals were identified. These are compared with the General Public Service Competencies.

General Public Service Competencies (TBS)	Policy Competency Profile
Values and Ethics – Serving through integrity and respect →	**Values and Ethics**
Thinking Things Through – Innovating through analysis and ideas →	**Research and Analytical Skills**- Synthesis, management of information **Thinking** – Analytical, critical, long-term, strategic **Judgement** – Manage priorities, planning **Knowledge** – Functional, key issues, public service
Engagement – Working effectively with people, organizations and people →	**Engagement**- Positive Attitude, collaboration, willingness to learn, flexibility **Initiative** – Creative, organized, versatile **Communication and Language Skills** – Oral and written skills in both official languages, presentation skills, strategic advice, guidance
Management Excellence – Delivering results through action, people and financial management →	**Information and Time Management** – Synthesize information, ability to work under pressure.

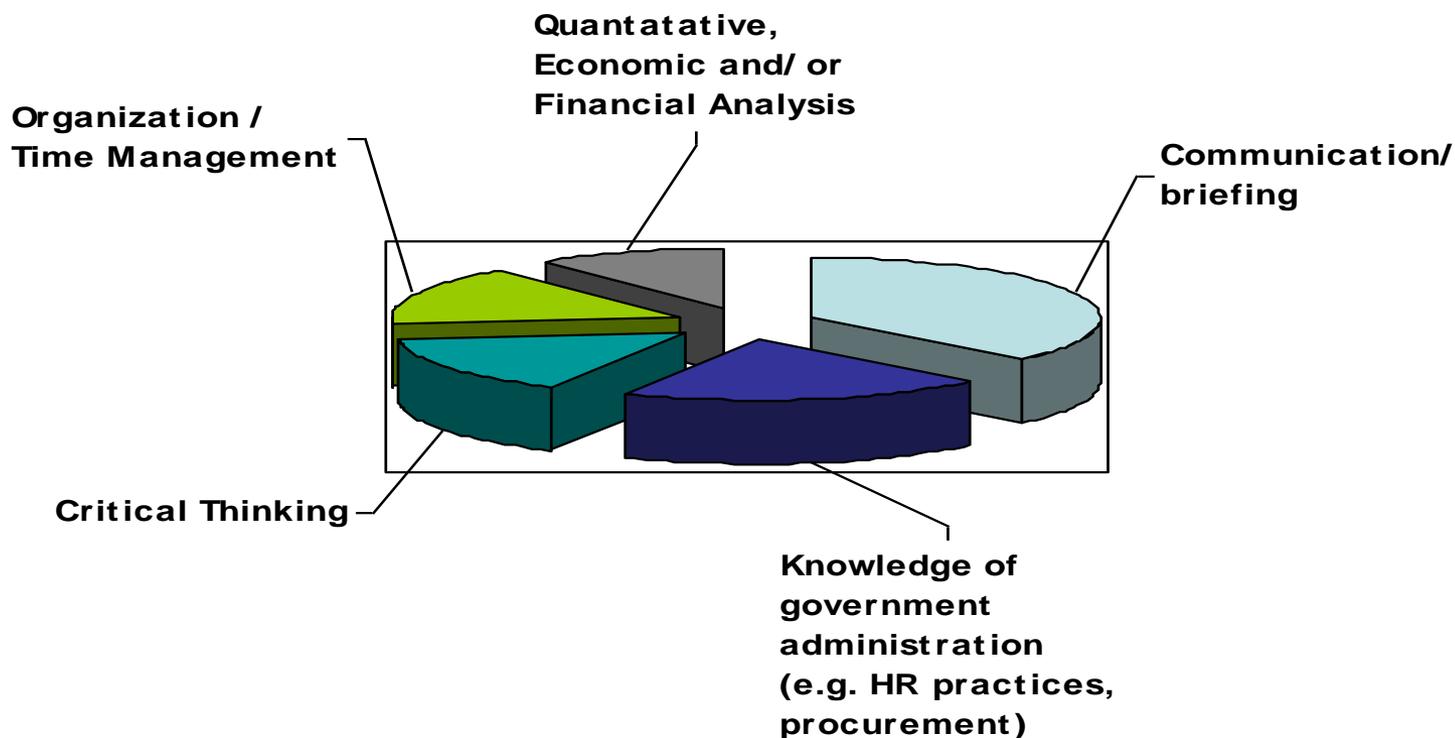# Occupational Group Data from Managers: Policy Stream

- **The majority of hiring managers from the pilot departments are hiring their entry-level policy analysts under the EC classification.**
  - At the EC-02, EC-03 or EC-04 level.

- **Some managers hiring under other categories (i.e. CO and PM) are considering conversion to EC in the future.**

- **Some entry-level analysts are hired under different groups (i.e. PC) because of subject matter expertise.**

Legend: EC, CO, PM, Other
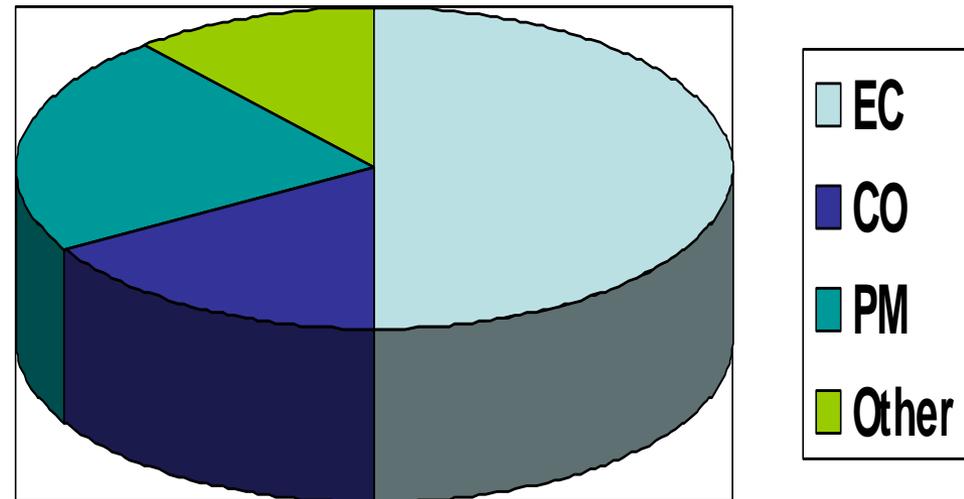
The largest Occupational Groups: Economics and Social Science Services (EC) 64%; Programme Administration (PM) 29%; and Commerce (CO) 21%.

Summary of Gaps Identified by Policy Managers

Relative shortcomings in the competencies of entry-level recruits identified by hiring managers include:

Organization / Time Management

Quantatative, Economic and/ or Financial Analysis

Communication/ briefing

Critical Thinking

Knowledge of government administration (e.g. HR practices, procurement)

French language skills are lacking

Phase II

- **Focus placed specifically on the skills of MPA graduates**

- **AAFC Dalhousie Graduate Event hosted by John Knubley**

- **Consultations held with hiring managers of MPA graduates and pilot department hiring managers** (AAFC, INAC, Canadian Heritage)

- **Consultations held with Recent Graduates of CAPPA programs working in the federal public service** (Carleton, Concordia, Dalhousie & Johnson-Shoyama, and Queen's)

- **Meetings held with EC Development Programs** (HRSDC, DND and Transport)

Policy Hiring Managers

- Follow-up with policy hiring managers focused on strengths identified in MPA graduates:
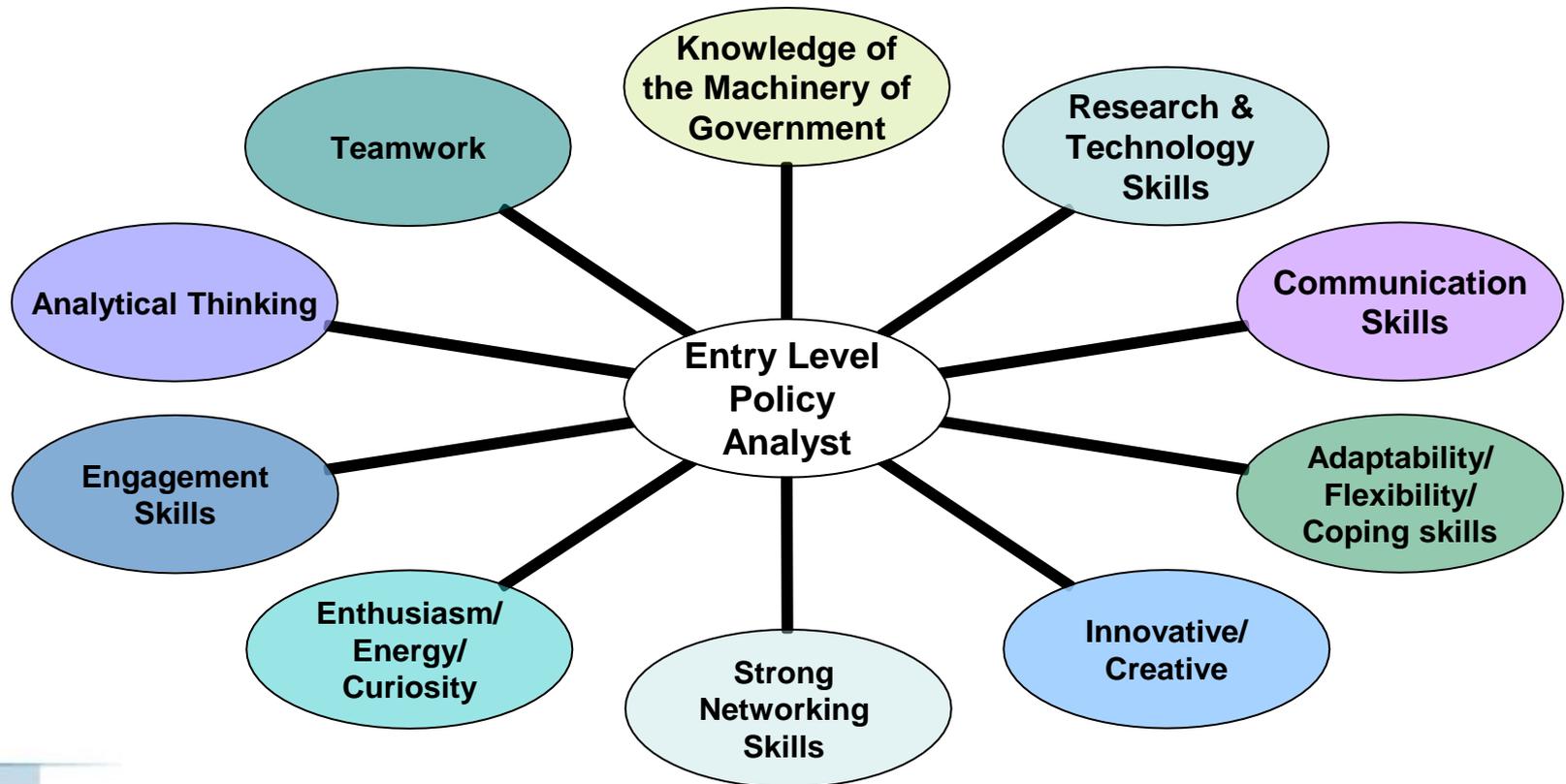
MPA Graduates
Perspectives & Experience in Government

- There is a culture of risk aversion that recent graduates find difficult to overcome.

- Some perceive low levels of responsibility, ownership and collaboration within and outside of their department.

- There is confusion over roles and the role of others within government, regarding value, contribution and skills.

- Feedback above director level is limited which is difficult for recent graduates –hierarchy aversion.

- The programs are providing and preparing students for high level work in the federal public service but there is some evidence of underemployment.

- Entry into the public service is too difficult. Most found their position as a result of their co-op positions and were then bridgeable.

MPA Graduates
Perspectives and Experience in Graduate Programs

- A number of participants identified former public servants as their best teachers, as they provided real experience, useful assignments, networks within government and demanded the most of their students.

- Co-ops, internships, and work experiences were crucial. These gave students practical skills, contacts within government, and easier entry into the federal public service via the student bridging option.

- Teamwork was emphasized in all programs but to a greater degree in some. Through group assignments (presentations, papers, role playing, etc) skills were developed.

- Communication skills (oral and written) were seen as important. In particular, learning various communication styles appropriate for the workplace, e.g. writing emails.

- Participants generally agreed that the importance of learning French should be communicated to students

13

Quantitative Analysis - P.O.V's from Grads

I find the two most important courses in the MPA program were statistics and economics.

The true value of my experience in these subject areas comes in my ability to interpret and understand what is found in reports or analysis I use in my work.

The most useful skill from my statistical training is the familiarity it gave me with Microsoft excel.

The interpretive and analytical skills that I was able to develop have been indispensable to me.

I do not use what I have learned in stats (at least in my current position) and I think it should be optional

14

Cool for School Initiatives

Extra-curricular

Co-op's, Internships, SPARK:
- Programs that did not provide or promote these programs were viewed as doing the students a disservice as they allow students to gain practical work experience.

Mentorship Programs:
- Partners students with public servants

Consultation Projects:
- Students are given the opportunity to work as consultants and give advice to government or NGO's.

Sessionals/Workshops:
- Provides an opportunity for learning skills important to the workplace like how to network, how to write a briefing note, how to interview.

Study abroad opportunities:
- Students learned about the political systems of other countries and gain work experience abroad, useful within federal government.

Actions for Consideration:
- Schools can become security officers and reduce the wait-times for graduate security clearances.
- Explain Government resourcing and systems so students have reasonable expectations (procurement, hiring, etc.).

Cool for School – Part II

| Curricular |
|:---:|
| **Assignments that Relate to Work Experiences:**

• Briefing Notes, presentations, role playing, and projects that require working with external organizations

Teamwork:

• Group projects like MC exercises, papers, and assignments

Communication:

• Achieved through debates, role playing, seminar presentations

Ethics and Accountability:

• Case Studies and debates were used

Behavioural Economics and Negotiation:

• Courses provided skills important for the workplace e.g. how to read people, how to get things done, and how to negotiate

Cross Disciplinary Courses:

• Courses that create interdisciplinary teams that work with an external organization providing advice. |
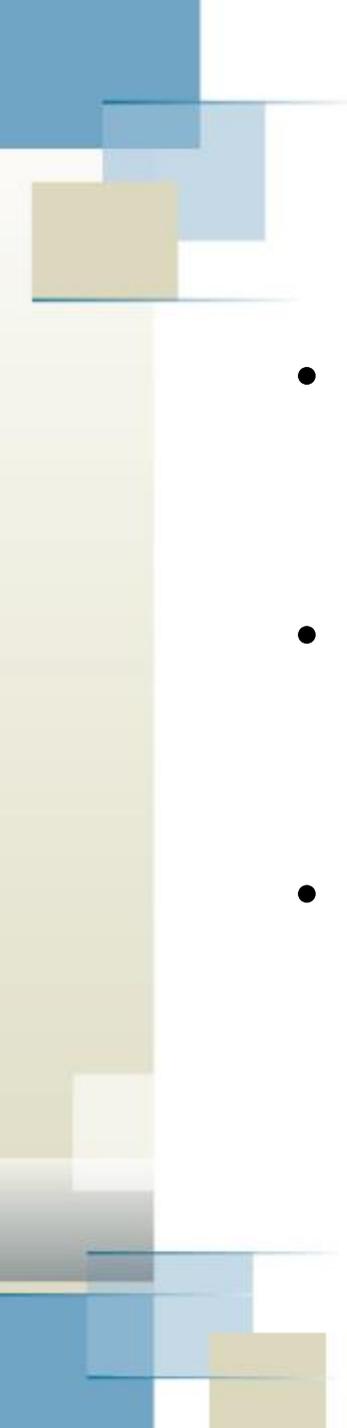
Moving Forward

- Whether and how to make this initiative useful for CAPPA members and government stakeholders?

- Whether and how to sustain and build on this initiative?

- New directions?