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NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS

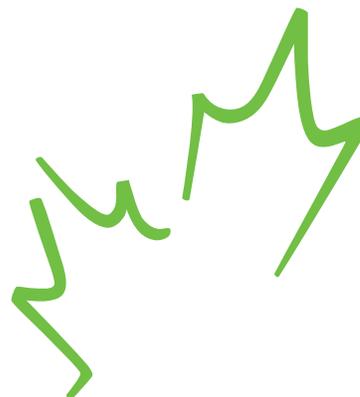
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# Competency Profile for Impact Assessment Management Professionals

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## About ECO Canada

ECO Canada is the steward for the Canadian environmental workforce across all industries. From job creation and wage funding, to training and labour market research – we champion the end-to-end career of an environmental professional.

Our efforts promote and drive responsible, sustainable, economic growth to ensure that environmental care and best practice are a priority.

### Competency Standards

We maintain comprehensive standards that outline the competencies various professionals need to succeed in the Canadian environmental sector. They are the foundation of our [EP@ designation](#) and [accreditation](#) programs.

We also maintain national occupational standards for eight entry-level environmental occupations. These standards guide our [BEAHR training](#) program to provide culturally relevant courses to Indigenous learners.

Visit [www.eco.ca/research/national-occupational-standards/](http://www.eco.ca/research/national-occupational-standards/) to browse our library of competency standards.

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## Canada

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## Preface

Impact assessment (IA) is increasingly important and continues to grow in scope and complexity in both Canadian and global contexts. In response to these trends, ECO Canada undertook two projects to describe the IA sector and to detail the competencies of an IA management professional.

Both initiatives spanned many months through 2018 and 2019. We consulted organizations and individuals from across Canada, particularly representatives from environmental consulting firms, project proponents, regulatory bodies, advocacy groups and Indigenous groups. We also conducted secondary research to understand IA practice domestically and internationally.

The IA management professional role is highly integral to the IA process. These professionals integrate relevant stakeholder interests with technical and scientific data to ensure the proper completion of an IA. They often begin their careers as subject matter experts in specialized areas related to IA and expand their competencies through work experience.

ECO Canada's overall mandate is to enhance human capital within the Canadian environmental workforce. This first edition of the *Competency Profile for Impact Assessment Management Professionals* supports our initiative to develop competency standards for a variety of environmental roles and specializations.

The impetus for establishing and maintaining this competency profile is to recognize the evolving and heightened expectations associated with IA practice. This competency profile could serve as a valuable resource for various career and workforce development initiatives, including the potential to recognize and further elevate this profession to formalized standards of practice.

Our work does not end here. ECO Canada is working towards building public awareness and recognition about IA, defining core competencies for IA practice, and developing training for IA management professionals. In a world where responsible, sustainable, economic development is of growing importance, the IA practice and its workforce are more important than ever before.

## Introduction

Competencies are the application of knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs), in the context of role-specific tasks and processes, to produce an intended result. In other words, competency statements express what needs to be done consistently to achieve desired outcomes.

A competency profile is a document that identifies and clearly defines the competencies desired for a job, role, shared function or occupation.

Competency profiles, often referred to in Canada as “National Occupational Standards”, inform a variety of human capital management activities to:

- understand job requirements and create job descriptions for recruitment and selection,
- benchmark individual performance and determine areas for improvement,
- assess a worker’s current skills and develop plans for reaching a desired position or level,
- guide the development of curricula and syllabi for new training courses or programs,
- assess and validate current academic programs,
- determine knowledge or skills requirements for those who want to become involved in a sector, occupation or functional area,
- recognize professionals, for example by acknowledging skills and experience, and awarding credentials, and
- inform labour market research, for example by defining and comparing sectoral, occupational or functional classifications, or by conducting trend analysis.

The *Competency Profile for Impact Assessment Management Professionals* specifies clusters of KSAs that an individual should demonstrate in practice to successfully manage the complexity of an IA. It is important to note that although this is not a recognized profession in the same sense as regulated occupations (i.e., doctors, lawyers, engineers, architects, etc.), competencies of practitioners are underpinned by a code of conduct and professional ethics that exists intrinsically. IA management professionals demonstrate the types of behaviour characteristic of formal professions, and the use of the term “professional” in this document is thus intended to convey that underlying professional ethos.

This profile sets a reference standard that ECO Canada believes is equally relevant for sole practitioners and consultants, employees of larger environmental consultancies, regulatory bodies, and project proponents. It can be used as a benchmark by stakeholders to develop expectations for IA management professionals, as well as by academic bodies and training providers to align their offerings with the requirements of IA practice.

# Impact Assessment and Impact Assessment Management Professionals Overview

## Defining Impact Assessment

Impact assessment (IA) is a process that evaluates environmental, economic and social conditions to predict the potential effects of a proposed development project. It can include information across a spectrum of areas, such as:



**Human health, social,  
and cultural factors**



**Air, land, and water  
ecology**



**Flora and fauna**



**Economic outcomes and  
Indigenous rights**

The aim of IA is to understand the consequences of a proposed development, in order to avoid, prevent or minimize residual effects of a project.

A professionally executed IA presents decision-makers with:

1. an objective, clear analysis of potential positive and negative consequences of a development, and
2. an understanding of required management and monitoring actions.

With this information, decision-makers are able to determine whether the development should proceed, and if so, under which conditions.

### A Good IA is:

- Strategic
- Rational
- Expansive
- Interdisciplinary
- Communicative
- Consultative
- Integrative
- Defensible

## The Process of Impact Assessment

Regardless of the jurisdiction or legislation regulating the conduct of an IA, there are a number of basic stages to the process.

- 1. IA Planning and Design, which includes:**
  - › Project description or definition
  - › Feasibility or necessity evaluation
  - › Project proposal
  - › Terms of reference (or guidelines) for the IA
  - › Research (baseline studies, similar studies, review of alternatives)
- 2. IA Execution, which includes:**
  - › Ongoing analysis (to predict and assess impacts)
  - › Mitigation strategy development
  - › IA report production
  - › Report review
- 3. Reporting or Regulatory Stage, which may include:**
  - › Presentation and defense of the IA report at the regulatory level
  - › Production of other technical and non-technical reports for diverse audiences
  - › Participation in the regulatory process (as needed)
- 4. Follow-up, which may include:**
  - › Activity hand-off to other agencies or relevant stakeholders as the project moves from planning and approvals to execution and operation
  - › Construction and related effects monitoring
  - › Operations and related effects monitoring
  - › Accuracy assessment of an IA (to improve the knowledge base or best practices)

Note that public, stakeholder and Indigenous consultations and engagements are integral to the process and should occur at all stages of an IA.



## Impact Assessment Management Professional

IA management professionals coordinate many complex activities and work with teams of subject matter experts who follow a process for:

- gathering and analyzing data,
- consulting and engaging with stakeholders, communities, Indigenous groups and others,
- predicting and quantifying effects of a proposed project,
- developing recommendations for measures to mitigate predicted cumulative effects,
- designing monitoring and follow-up programs, and
- participating in regulatory steps as mandated by the jurisdiction.

These professionals, who may work as the lead or as part of a team, must coordinate and review:

1. the information and efforts of numerous subject matter experts, and
2. the input from Indigenous groups, other impacted communities, governments and other relevant stakeholders.

IA management professionals deliver comprehensive reports, which include recommendations that are compliant with the applicable regulatory and legislative requirements for the development. They are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the information presented is **impartial, complete, valid and scientifically accurate**. The information must be documented in a **legally and publicly defensible report** that is used for decision-making including project permitting and approvals, and investment decisions.

The specific duties and responsibilities of IA management professionals may vary depending on whether they are employed by industry or government. These professional may also be tasked with reviewing and evaluating an IA conducted by other bodies as part of an overall regulatory process. Regardless of their employer, all IA management professionals work within the parameters of an IA and require specific competencies outlined later in this report.

**Special Note:** This definition of the IA management professional excludes other professionals who contribute to the subject matter of an IA but do not perform the integrative functions and are not necessarily responsible for the legal defensibility of the report in its entirety. This would include biologists who study flora and fauna, economists who forecast labour force impacts of developments, or engineers who assess the extent of possible land disturbance for road or bridge construction. These individuals may contribute significantly to an IA but do not normally assimilate information across all involved disciplines. They may be consummate “professionals” within their own disciplines, but they are not considered IA management professionals within this definition.

### *An Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Occupation*

Traditional occupations are often bound by a limited scope of practice and a limited underlying body of knowledge. **The IA management professional role differs in that it is truly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature.** IA management professionals benefit the IA practice by understanding the interrelatedness of all disciplines.

IA management professionals typically emerge from a career path that began in one of the scientific disciplines included in an IA. They may also come from other backgrounds involved in IA such as urban planning, law, social responsibility, government policy/regulatory sectors, among others.

Through experience, these professionals develop a breadth of knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) that allow them to effectively manage an encompassing impact assessment.



**IA Management Professional Profile Overview:  
An interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary role**

IA management professionals coordinate subject matter experts from multiple backgrounds to complete an IA.



Source: Delphi Group with modifications from ECO Canada

*Trends in Impact Assessment and the Impact Assessment Management Professional Role*

The development of international environmental guidelines and protocols have highlighted the significance of human impacts and the vulnerability of marginalized communities. These initiatives reinforce cross-collaboration between the public, Indigenous communities, NGOs, industry and governments, bringing environmental issues to the forefront of discussion within Canada and around the world.

As interest in and awareness of global environmental affairs intensify, the visibility and importance of IA activities increase. The necessity to generate public trust in the recommendations of impact assessments, the reality of the 24/7 news cycle, the power of social media to galvanize opinions while disseminating information and clarifying misinformation, and the importance of political and cultural sensitivity have added to the complexity of the IA management professional role. As a result, the breadth and the depth of competencies that IA management professionals require in order to be effective have expanded.



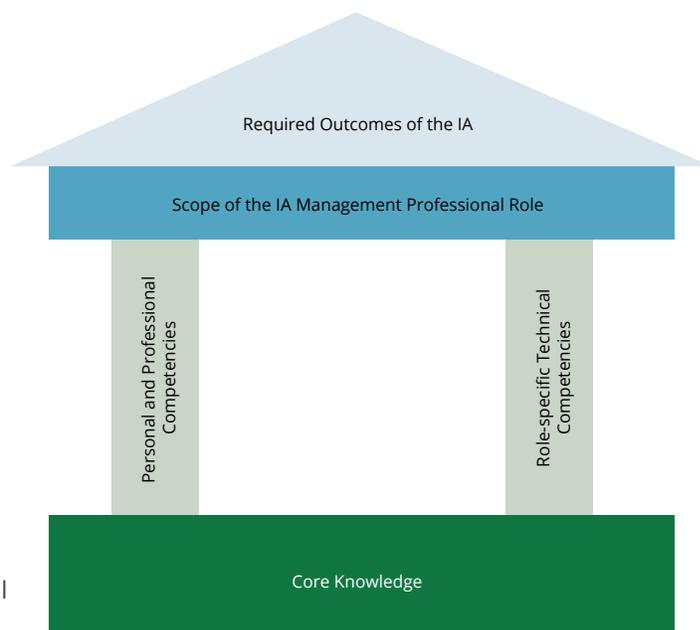
# Impact Assessment Management Professional Competency Profile

The IA management professional competencies are built on a foundation of knowledge, and support the practice of impact assessment, and the professional outcomes thereof.

1. **Core knowledge** broadly describes the proficiency that an IA management professional would need to function successfully in the workplace. These foundations combine with personal and professional competencies and role-specific technical competencies to build a complete profile.

2. **Personal and professional competencies** are personal, interpersonal and professional aptitudes that make it possible to achieve the role-specific technical competencies. They address skills and abilities that are desirable in many professional and managerial occupations but are especially important for IA management professionals who manage interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams and conduct stakeholder consultations in an increasingly complex political, environmental, social and regulatory environment.

3. **Role-specific technical competencies** are demonstrated abilities that are applied in a manner that is unique to the IA management professional role to complete the IA process and achieve the intended outcomes of an IA.



This profile reflects a comprehensive range of competencies. Depending on their role or employer, some IA management professionals may not require all of the competencies listed in this profile. However, an IA management professional should possess many of these, while recognizing areas of relative strengths and weaknesses so that additional resources can be added to their teams as needed to ensure all relevant competencies are represented fully.

Detailed competencies of the aforementioned categories are outlined in the next sections.

## Core Knowledge

Three kinds of core knowledge underlie the IA management professional competency profile:

1. Knowledge of IA-involved disciplines
2. Situation-specific knowledge of the IA regulatory application
3. Knowledge of IA methodology and practice

### Knowledge of IA-involved disciplines

Broad knowledge of all of the discrete disciplines involved in an IA is a foundation for the IA management professional role. These include:

- **Scientific disciplines** related to land/soil, air, water, plant and animal chemistry, biology, and ecology
- **Engineering disciplines** related to infrastructure, construction, and environmental management
- **Land use planning and the built environment disciplines** in both urban and rural settings
- **Public policy disciplines** related to government policy, regulation, and legislation interpretation and analysis
- **Legal disciplines**
- **Economic disciplines** related to the micro and macroeconomic effects of development
- **Social and cultural disciplines** involved in assessing impacts on communities
- **Indigenous relations and Traditional Knowledge**
- **Health disciplines** associated with understanding impacts on human health

While not essential to the role, many IA management professionals also possess deep and detailed knowledge of one or more of these same disciplines.

### Situation-specific knowledge of the IA regulatory application

The second foundational knowledge for the IA management professional role is the subject matter of the specific project regulatory application, for example pipelines, hydro dams and roadways.

### Knowledge of IA methodology and practice

The third foundational knowledge for the IA management professional role is IA methodology and practice, for example – measurement techniques, data analysis, key steps, project alternatives and cumulative effects assessment.

As previously noted, the critical consideration for the IA management professional is the integration of contributions made by subject matter experts into a comprehensive and legally defensible report that is compliant with the applicable regulatory approvals process. It is the deep knowledge of the relevant legal and regulatory framework that influences all decision-making throughout the process.

## Personal and Professional Competencies

The following table describes 53 such competencies classified within ten (10) clusters:

A1: Professional Conduct and Ethics	A6: Decision-making
A2: Continuous Learning	A7: Digital Skills
A3: Critical Thinking	A8: Leadership
A4: Problem-solving	A9: Collaboration
A5: Analysis	A10: Communication

*Note.* IA management professionals should demonstrate all personal and professional competencies. Professionals should endeavour to acquire those that have not been sufficiently met to ensure the success of an IA.

### A1: Professional Conduct and Ethics

#### A1.1

Demonstrates objectivity, integrity, transparency and independence in the gathering, interpretation and reporting of information

#### A1.2

Maintains a good standing in professional associations; practices professional ethics, standards of practice, and remains current in practice requirements

#### A1.3

Demonstrates dependability; consistently following through to meet commitments

#### A1.4

Demonstrates self-reliance, motivation, commitment and a strong work ethic in the conduct of day-to-day activities

#### A1.5

Demonstrates respect for differences in approach and values

#### A1.6

Respects others' rights to participate in decisions that affect them

#### A1.7

Facilitates the provision of information that supports decisions within the applicable regulatory process

#### A1.8

Demonstrates professional, ethical conduct, such as trust, integrity, confidentiality and discretion during the conduct of all work activities

#### A1.9

Demonstrates the ability to apply ethical standards within the context of this profession

### A2: Continuous Learning

#### A2.1

Stays current on the theory and practice pertinent to one's roles and responsibilities

#### A2.2

Develops and follows a personal learning or growth plan

### A3: Critical Thinking

**A3.1**

Demonstrates insightfulness into the implications of new information

**A3.2**

Processes information logically and effectively

**A3.3**

Applies disciplined systems thinking processes to ensure all factors are considered

**A3.4**

Employs professional scrutiny to assess the objectivity and reliability of assumptions and evidence asserted by a responsible party or client

**A3.5**

Applies structured reasoning to synthesize information into meaningful patterns

**A3.6**

Demonstrates awareness of sources and impacts of cognitive bias

### A4: Problem-solving

**A4.1**

Generates innovative approaches to solving problems

**A4.2**

Demonstrates the ability to effectively solve strategic-level problems

**A4.3**

Uses adaptive management principles and processes in problem-solving

### A5: Analysis

**A5.1**

Performs an objective and thorough analysis of information and data from multiple sources

**A5.2**

Distinguishes between underlying causes and symptoms, and identifies root causes of problems

**A5.3**

Effectively extracts key information relevant to the intended purpose

**A5.4**

Investigates and reconciles conflicting information

**A5.5**

Ensures use of most recent, geographically relevant models for analysis

**A5.6**

Evaluates the outcomes of problems and solutions to identify lessons learned and to redirect future efforts

## A6: Decision-making

### A6.1

Deals effectively with a wide range of inputs to generate decisions

### A6.2

Maintains an awareness of the context and implications of decisions

### A6.3

Utilizes an evidence and risk-based decision-making process

### A6.4

Maintains an awareness of the impact of potential decision-making bias

### A6.5

Demonstrates the ability to make effective decisions in an environment of uncertainty

## A7: Digital Skills

### A7.1

Uses information technologies as appropriate to manage work effectively and increase efficiency

### A7.2

Makes effective use of available communication and collaboration technology

## A8: Leadership

### A8.1

Mentors others to facilitate the development and application of new knowledge for conducting impact assessments

### A8.2

Manages and directs the work of others, including project teams, working groups and contractors

### A8.3

Builds consensus and commitment to the team mandate, vision, goals, roles, responsibilities and processes

### A8.4

Identifies the individual or team competencies that are required to accomplish work or project objectives and deliverables

### A8.5

Creates a smooth interface, workflow and synergy within the team

### A8.6

Creates an environment for continuous team learning and improvement

### A8.7

Employs reflective analysis to assess own performance and limitations

## **A9: Collaboration**

### **A9.1**

Cooperates willingly with others in dealing with changing situations, conditions and expectations

### **A9.2**

Collaborates effectively with others in groups and teams to achieve the desired results

### **A9.3**

Works cooperatively with multiple stakeholders, demonstrating willingness to consider alternative approaches or ideas

### **A9.4**

Demonstrates diplomacy, humility, tact, respect and consideration for differing points of view

### **A9.5**

Works effectively within and across internal and external organizational structures and processes

## **A10: Communication**

### **A10.1**

Presents information in a logical and structured fashion to ensure understanding

### **A10.2**

Conveys complex technical information accurately, clearly and effectively in writing

### **A10.3**

Verbally conveys complex technical information accurately, clearly and effectively

### **A10.4**

Employs effective listening techniques

### **A10.5**

Effectively employs appropriate verbal and non-verbal techniques

### **A10.6**

Prepares comprehensive reports that clearly identify project objectives, scope, research/data findings, alternatives and recommendations to create a defensible impact statement

### **A10.7**

Weaves the contribution of multiple disciplines into an integrated and cohesive “story” that stakeholders can readily grasp

### **A10.8**

Manages all media interactions professionally and effectively

## Role-specific Technical Competencies

The following table contains 40 such competencies classified within eight (8) clusters:

B1: Legal/Policy/Regulatory Competencies	B5: Quality Management
B2: Project Planning	B6: Stakeholder Relationship Management
B3: Impact Assessment Execution	B7: Indigenous Relations
B4: Managing Project Risk	B8: Regulatory Outreach

*Note.* IA management professionals should demonstrate all role-specific technical competencies. Professionals should endeavour to acquire those that have not been sufficiently met to ensure the success of an IA.

### B1: Legal/Policy/ Regulatory Competencies

#### B1.1

Analyzes relevant policies, legislation and standards to guide the identification of information requirements for the impact assessment

#### B1.2

Ensures compliance with applicable regulations, legislation, policy and standards in the conduct of the assessment

#### B1.3

Participates in the development of internal policy and procedures to ensure assessments are conducted in accordance with all legal requirements

#### B1.4

Identifies the risks associated with the regulatory application in order to aid mitigation actions

#### B1.5

Provides expert advice to senior management or to other relevant stakeholders on risks, specifications and responsibilities related to current and emerging regulatory requirements

### B2: Project Planning

#### B2.1

Develops work or project plans to identify the work to be accomplished, the risk or contingencies that may arise, and how they will be addressed

#### B2.2

Plans activities (e.g. contracting, procurement, provisions of services) related to the IA process

#### B2.3

Ensures that the impact assessment scope, criteria and conditions (geographic, environmental, economic, social, and cultural) are defined adequately and effectively

#### B2.4

Develops a project management plan for the impact assessment study

#### B2.5

Coordinates resources (including financial, logistical, supplies, etc.) needed to implement work or project plans and achieve desired results

#### B2.6

Staffs IA projects appropriately to meet requirements and achieve desired results

#### B2.7

Demonstrates the ability to identify potential additional measures by which a project can be designed and executed in a manner that more closely aligns with the “public good”

### B3: Impact Assessment Execution

**B3.1**

Manages the development of regulatory applications in accordance with regulations through discussion with regulators, including managing the process to meet specifications and guidelines

**B3.2**

Contributes to the development of terms and conditions for approvals of compliance procedures and permits

**B3.3**

Rigorously follows a clear and defensible process to facilitate credibility of the impact assessment

**B3.4**

Facilitates a team-based process in an iterative, transparent and defensible manner to produce an integrated, cohesive quality product

**B3.5**

Facilitates access to subject matter experts and information (including testimony) regarding compliance with environmental standards, regulations, legislation and sustainability standards

### B4: Managing Project Risk

**B4.1**

Contributes to the development of IA project risk management strategy

**B4.2**

Ensures effective execution of IA project risk management strategy

**B4.3**

Provides advice to the proponent to identify and determine the extent to which environmental risk and uncertainty are being managed appropriately

**B4.4**

Undertakes the assessment of risk to identify the direct and indirect consequences of environmental impacts

### B5: Quality Management

**B5.1**

Develops a quality management plan to ensure deliverables meet requirements

**B5.2**

Shares information to participate appropriately in a continuous improvement feedback loop

**B5.3**

Implements quality management processes to ensure appropriate attention to detail and accuracy

**B5.4**

Applies principles of quality assurance and scientific rigour in all work activities

**B5.5**

Strives to produce outputs that pass the scrutiny of independent checks and verification

**B5.6**

Promotes the use of the best available information and technologies in the execution of the IA project

## B6: Stakeholder Relationship Management

### B6.1

Ensures the execution of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan that addresses all legal and regulatory requirements

### B6.2

Identifies criteria, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, for evaluating proposals and land-use plans to determine impacts of changes in use of land resources

### B6.3

Ensures that information solicited from technical specialists and relevant stakeholders is considered with respect to resource management, habitat protection, and the identification of “valued components”

### B6.4

Seeks to identify common ground among interested or affected parties

### B6.5

Demonstrates understanding of stakeholder dynamics (i.e. relationships between stakeholder groups, their degree of influence, the risk to them or their reputation, etc.) in managing the stakeholder engagement process

### B6.6

Provides expert information in key meetings held to identify community and relevant stakeholder priorities on environmental issues and concerns

## B7: Indigenous Relations

### B7.1

Ensures the requirements for effective Indigenous consultation are incorporated throughout the IA process

### B7.2

Demonstrates the ability to integrate Traditional Knowledge, belief systems, and Indigenous rights (land claims and treaties) with western scientific practices, and within the legal or regulatory framework

### B7.3

Demonstrates a commitment to open, honest and ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples

### B7.4

Demonstrates the ability to work respectfully, knowledgeably and effectively with Indigenous people

### B7.5

Reaches outcomes that gain the acceptance of all parties

## B8: Regulatory Outreach

### B8.1

Facilitates the engagement with regulatory bodies on proposed legislative or regulatory changes

### B8.2

Interprets proposed regulatory changes with respect to their potential impacts on current business practices and processes

## Appendix: Glossary

**Competency:** a demonstrated behaviour originating from the application of one's knowledge, skills, and attributes (KSAs) to the task at hand; expresses what must be done consistently to produce the intended results.

**Competency Profile:** a document that identifies and clearly defines the competencies desired for a job, role, shared function or occupation.

**Core Knowledge:** broadly describes the proficiency that a professional would need to function successfully in the workplace.

**Effect:** positive and negative consequences of a proposed development.

**Impact Assessment:** the process to evaluate environmental, economic and social conditions to predict the potential effects of a proposed development project.

**KSA:** : knowledge, skills and attributes; a combination of qualities that demonstrate competencies.

**National Occupational Standards for Environmental Employment, or NOS:** a set of standards tailored specifically to professionals in the Canadian environmental workforce so they can achieve excellence in performing tasks or delivering expected outcomes or results.

**Personal and Professional Competency:** describes the behaviours or soft skills that contribute to the successful performance of various technical tasks; relate to how the job is accomplished and can be applied in many unrelated roles.

**Regulatory Application:** the document filed before a regulatory body that meets information requirements that are subject to statutory provision regarding a proposed project.

**Role-specific Technical Competency:** describes the demonstrated ability to perform a task or series of tasks to the satisfaction of the employer or otherwise established norms.

**Task:** an activity that produces a measurable result.



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