

# Barr Environmental Limited - Cascading the Competence Framework tool

**Barr is committed to driving health & safety standards alongside its industry peers, and is an active supporter and member of the SWITCH forum.**

Barr Environmental Limited is one of the largest waste and resource management companies in the west of Scotland. Operating for over two decades, much has changed in that time. Along with others in the waste and resources industry, the company has seen significant changes to the way the sector has to work, from the introduction of landfill tax, to national recycling targets and landfill bans for specific materials.

Historically, the waste sector has had a poor health and safety record, however with organisations such as the UK wide Waste Industry Safety & Health (WISH) group and the associated SWITCH forum in Scotland, industry is striving to improve that record.

Alongside its industry peers, Barr is committed to driving H&S standards and plays an active role in the SWITCH forum. By leading from the front, and working collaboratively with industry to raise not only health & safety standards, but also those of training, learning and technical competence, they are playing a role in promoting the Scottish resource management industry as an attractive career choice.

Barr views its membership and active participation in SWITCH as an integral part of its ongoing education and development, both for staff and the business as a whole. As such, when Senior Operations Manager Gordon Whiteford, proposed that the company introduced the SWITCH Competence Framework across the organisation it was looked upon positively.

## The Competence Framework

The framework was created by, and for, the waste and resource industry. The overall ambition was to raise the standards and performance of the industry, and by using the framework, to do so in a consistent manner with everyone following, and being measured against the same standards. The SWITCH forum worked with a multi-disciplinary reference group from across the private, public and third sectors to develop the framework.

The aims of the Framework are to:

- Help improve health & safety
- Identify areas for staff development
- Inform and assess training programmes
- Assist with career planning

This helped Gordon to gain approval from senior management by being able to demonstrate how the Competence Framework directly relates to Barr's existing staffing structure, and how it complements their vision for ensuring their staff are supported in their roles through the provision of adequate and relevant training.

The six key roles/areas the framework focuses on are:

- Materials recovery facility staff
- Household waste recycling centres
- Drivers
- Manual street cleaning
- Collection crews
- Plant and machinery operators

## Key stages to buy - in of the Competence Framework Tool

The roll out of the framework across the organisation has been supported by the entire senior management team. To reach this stage, Gordon had to first gain approval from them; this took a series of integral steps including:

- Present concept of Framework to senior management team
- Gain support from line managers, supervisors and team leaders
- Gain support from HR and H&S personnel
- Reviewing the tool and 'tweaking' to fit for Barr
- Final review
- Managers, team leaders and supervisors completed the self-assessment tool
- Initiate company wide roll out



## Introducing the Framework

The Competence Framework consists of a suite of resources, one of which acts as an assessment tool. The resources were designed to help managers, supervisors and team leaders to assess teams against a range of competencies and skills relevant to their job roles. Information can then be easily transferred across onto an easy to read dashboard, helping to highlight specific areas where further learning and/or development is required either for the whole team, or for a specific individual(s).

For Barr, after agreement with the Directors and HR that the framework met their needs, a series of toolbox talks were conducted with all site staff to explain the rationale behind the framework being rolled out. This was followed by all managers and team leaders completing the self-assessment tool; this helped both with buy-in from staff and also helped managers gain a full understanding of the tool in use, prior to a company wide roll-out.

With a few areas of improvement identified from those initial assessments, and the ongoing roll-out across the organisation, the findings from all of the self-assessments are being logged in the relevant tracker spreadsheet. On completion of all of the self-assessments, a gap analysis of requirements by senior management will be carried out to identify learning needs, and take forward personal development plans for all staff.

The company has also taken the decision to incorporate the Competence Framework self-assessment results into its annual appraisals system. This HR method is used for the ongoing and pro-active planning for staff personal development; and is the process whereby discussions between staff and managers around training needs occur and are agreed on an annual basis.

Career advancement within Barr is encouraged, and by utilising the framework these career paths can be clearly identified, along with the learning and development needs that are required to allow the individual(s) to progress. The tool allows for this to be an easy, intuitive and streamlined process.

“ *The implementation of the Competence Framework has so far been really well received by all staff, and applauded by Senior Management as a fully structured and pivotal tool to assist with both personal development, and succession planning within the company.* ”

**Gordon Whiteford, Senior Operations Manager  
Barr Environmental Limited**

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