

The AICPA® Foundational Competencies Framework for Aspiring CPAs

Educators and accounting professionals developed the framework to define a set of skills-based competencies students entering the accounting profession need, regardless of their chosen career path (public, industry, government or not-for-profit), or for the specific accounting services they'll eventually perform. Because of the rapidly changing accounting profession, the framework focuses on critical skills instead of traditional subject-content areas or accounting services. Although knowledge requirements will change with time, the foundational competencies the framework identifies will have long-term value and will support a variety of career opportunities for future CPAs.

The competencies are arranged under the following three pillars:

Technical competencies

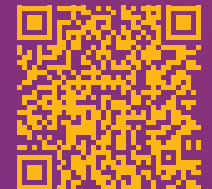
Competencies specific to the accounting profession that add value to business and contribute to a prosperous society

Organizational competencies

Broad, cross-disciplinary integration competencies that relate to the environment in which accounting professionals work

Leadership competencies

Skills, attitudes and behaviors of accounting professionals



How this guide can help you

Faculty

Incorporate these competencies into your curriculum to prepare your students for a career as a CPA. Find additional resources using the QR code below.

Students

Acquire the areas of knowledge through your accounting coursework that will prepare you for the accounting profession.

Employers

Gain insight into how we're preparing the next generation of accounting professionals based on your feedback.

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Technical competencies

Risk assessment, analysis and management

- Assess risks by applying professional skepticism and using appropriate risk-assessment frameworks.
- Describe necessary controls to mitigate risks.
- Evaluate controls to verify effectiveness.
- Develop potential response plans to mitigate losses, including reassessing controls.

Analysis and decision-making

- Identify relevant and reliable financial and nonfinancial data to analyze.
- Analyze information, including statements, tax returns and other relevant data.
- Make strategic decisions by applying professional judgment to analyses.

Measurement and reporting

- Identify relevant information to measure.
- Measure relevant data for financial, taxation, compliance and other reporting needs.
- Report appropriate content as required by professional standards, law, industry standards and voluntary reporting initiatives.
- Communicate reports clearly and objectively to intended audiences.

Research

- Identify research question(s).
- Conduct research using primary sources, authoritative literature, standards, laws and organization-specific practices.
- Use research findings to make informed decisions.
- Communicate research-based decisions to stakeholders.
- Evaluate research-based decisions for effectiveness.

Technology, systems and process management

- Compare technological tools to recommend best option(s) given time and cost constraints and job specifications.
- Leverage relevant technologies to facilitate data analyses that supports organizational goals.
- Evaluate frameworks to design systems of controls that facilitate efficient and effective operations.
- Design systems to perform processes for reliable and verifiable analyses and reporting.

Organizational competencies

Strategic management

- Identify risks and opportunities arising from industry and global environments.
- Explain organizations' strategic management processes.
- Identify information requirements for organizational strategies, goals and objectives.
- Provide strategic insights for managers and other organizational stakeholders.

Performance management

- Coordinate with stakeholders to identify key performance indicators and measures to evaluate success.
- Identify sources of data for performance analysis and consider alternative measures.
- Evaluate the impact of decisions on planning and managing performance.

Resource management

- Assess organizational resource management practices.
- Explain the impact of trends, emerging issues, technologies and the legal environment on resource management.
- Collaborate with organizational stakeholders to improve resource management, including implementation of effective controls.

Environment, social and governance management

- Evaluate the impact of organizational activities on the environment, society and governance.
- Explain the effect legal and regulatory global environments have on organizations.
- Describe how operating units prioritize environmental, societal and governance initiatives into operational plans.
- Explain the relevant reporting frameworks for environmental, societal and governance initiatives.
- Identify information system requirements to evaluate strategies to enhance environmental, societal and governance practices.
- Leverage relevant technologies to facilitate data analyses that support diversity, equity and inclusion.

Leadership competencies

Ethical behavior

- Adhere to the AICPA Code of Professional Conduct and other professional codes of ethics.
- Demonstrate unwavering ethical business practices.
- Explain the importance of ethical principles for the protection of society.

Critical thinking

- Accurately articulate organizational issues/problems/questions.
- Evaluate available quantitative and qualitative data relevant to issues/problems/questions.
- Apply a critical thinking framework to the decision-making process.
- Evaluate alternative answers/decisions to issues/problems/questions.
- State informed decisions supported by critical thinking processes.

Collaboration

- Engage with diverse stakeholders who have common objectives to reach innovative outcomes.
- Serve as both a leader and follower as appropriate for specific circumstances, including working with diverse global teams.
- Constructively negotiate an acceptable agreement between two or more parties.
- Promote diversity, equity and inclusion in collaborative organizational activities.

Self-management

- Maintain self-awareness to be cognizant of how your behaviors impact others.
- Develop social awareness to respond to the needs of others.
- Build relationships to achieve common goals.

Communication

- Practice active listening to verify understanding of information provided.
- Adapt communication to specific audiences.
- Communicate clearly using accounting terminology and plain language as appropriate.



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