



COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

Compiling Your Competency Evidence



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You may find completing your competency evidence difficult at first. Don't be dis-heartened; it is a skill in itself to think carefully about what you do, how you do it, what the result of your actions are and how you might improve what you do or how you do it.

It can also feel very unnatural to talk about yourself, rather than the 'team'. It is inherently part of how we work in this profession, that we are all usually part of 'teams' one way or another. We work in partnership with others; we undertake much of our work jointly, collectively and collaboratively with colleagues, partner organisations, the community, landowners, volunteers and more besides. To gain accreditation however, the assessor needs to read and understand about you, as an individual.

The CMA aims to assist you in successfully compiling and submitting your competency evidence through offering some brief guidance below.

Always write your evidence in the first person ie 'I prepared'....'I undertook' not 'we prepared'....or 'the team undertook'.

Draft, and re-draft if necessary, your evidence to ensure you have covered the five elements of **STARE**:

- S** – describe the **Situation**, provide the background; where and/or when did it take place?
- T** – explain the **Task** you undertook; what was the objective of the task?
- A** – what **Action** did you take; what did you do?
- R** – explain the **Result** of your action; what happened; what was the end result?
- E** – **Evaluation** is important; what might you change or do differently another time or why; or what have you learned?

The **word limits** for each competency are 100 – 300 words. You will find that it is quite difficult to cover all these elements in 100 words, although it is just possible for particular competencies at perhaps the Entry level. However, the assessor may feel you have not given a truly comprehensive picture of how you work, if you complete evidence for competencies with only 100 words each.

The CMA's advice is to use as close to the 300 word limit as is necessary to give as complete a picture as possible. You will undoubtedly start by going over the limit. That's fine; draft, read it over, then re-draft, several times if necessary. You will find there is little room for lengthy descriptions; adverbs and adjectives will frequently have to go. Keep referring back to the STARE elements. Once you have covered the five elements of STARE in 300 words, you will see it is not as difficult as it first appears. Once you have 'trained your brain' to be concise yet fulfilling the STARE elements, completing the required number of competencies will not be the uphill task it might initially appear.

Read through all the competencies at the level you feel is right for you. You cannot complete evidence for competencies at different levels. Choose the Entry, Skilled or Accomplished level once you have read through the descriptions for knowledge and skills for each and are content that you can provide appropriate evidence.

Some of the descriptions for each competency are wide ranging. You are not expected to be able to necessarily cover everything in the description; try to ensure your evidence relates to, or covers a good proportion of the description for each.

It is not advisable to use the same task or case study to evidence many different competencies. You want the assessor to see the wide range of work that you do and how you use your competencies in different circumstances.

There is no need to state your place of work for each competency at the beginning ie there is no need to state you work at xx Country Park for every competency. Just include work location in the first competency evidence you write, unless the specific location is relevant to the competency evidence being given eg. The evidence may relate specifically to a particular farm you visited, or Health and Safety evidence may relate to an occasion at a particular river, quarry or event.

Please do not just list the projects or tasks you have undertaken. It will say nothing about your competence. Pick the most appropriate task, piece of work or project to illustrate your competence. As a general rule, you can use two tasks to illustrate one competence but more often just the one will be perfectly sufficient.

You are highly unlikely to cover both the knowledge and skills descriptions for a competence, especially within the word limit. Concentrate primarily on the skills elements. Your knowledge should become obvious from the evidence of your skills. In the discussion with the assessor, they may chat with you, informally, about some of the knowledge behind your skills, so it is unnecessary to set out everything you know.

Remember that qualifications or length of service will not count towards the assessment of your competence, so do not include them. 'I've been doing this for 8 years...' will not be taken into account. Vocational certificates or 'tickets' however, may well be relevant to some skills you are evidencing so do feel free to mention if directly relevant to your evidence although the assessor will have seen them listed in your application form.

Do not use acronyms, technical terms or jargon in your evidence. Write the name in full the first time with the acronym afterwards in brackets and then use the acronym eg Dartmoor National Park (DNP).

Make it easy for the assessor; hone your skills in compiling your STARE evidence so that the assessor can very easily and clearly see you have covered all the required elements. You do not necessarily have to cover them in order, but it is often easier to do so; 'practice makes perfect'.

Check your typing, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Don't spoil great evidence with spelling mistakes or typing errors.

Finally, however daunting it may seem, consider asking a trusted family member, friend or even colleague to read your evidence. Obviously you will need to explain what you are trying to achieve (eg **STARE**) but a fresh eye will often help improve what you have written.

The examples given overleaf attempt to give you an idea of what is appropriate evidence and what is not.

The text in red IS NOT NECESSARY when compiling your evidence. It is merely there to show you what the assessor will be looking for in your evidence

Examples of Appropriate Evidence (Entry)

The additional text on the right is purely added here to assist you in seeing how the evidence relates to the competency in question

Competency	Competence level ENTRY
Transferable (mandatory)	TR7 - People Management
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	Working as an Assistant Gardener at xxxxx Park I am tasked with volunteer work.
	I regularly lead tasks in the gardens, supervising the weeding of flower beds, pruning shrubbery and/or spreading mulch. If it is a task I have not undertaken before, I ask the gardener.
	I ensure volunteers wear Personal Protective Equipment relevant to the task, such as gloves and sometimes overalls. I complete a basic Risk Assessment for each task and explain the task and RA to the volunteers. I also set goals. With xx volunteers I suggest that a tea break is taken once xx metres of flower bed are weeded. I ensure that weeds are taken to the composting site; any plastic to the recycling bins. I ensure the volunteers understand why the flower beds need weeding, or failed plants removed. I am always open to questions. There are occasionally niggles that some volunteers work faster than others but I understand they offer their time for different reasons. Some love gardening, some want to keep fit and others relish the chance to meet other people and chat. I often split the volunteers into two teams of similarly motivated groups to diffuse any possible conflict.
	The gardens are well tended each spring, ready to bloom and look very attractive. There is a plant sales area so I make sure the task is completed before it closes, so volunteers can visit there. I enjoy working within a team as it generates a feeling of camaraderie when several people have completed a job well together.
	Volunteers tell me they enjoy the work, learning about different plants and bring their families to see 'their' gardens. Volunteer numbers are steadily rising so I am starting to offer extra sessions.

This is purely to illustrate how the evidence meets **STARE** requirements. This is not part of the application form for you to complete

- **Situation** – works with volunteers in a semi-urban park.
- **Task** – organising regular practical tasks in the garden for volunteers
- **Action** – understands the need for risk assessments, PPE. Sets effective goals for volunteers; understands motivations of different volunteers; aims to reduce tensions
- **Result** – well tended gardens as a result; motivated and satisfied volunteers that are obviously proud of their work
- **Evaluation** – realises need to organise more tasks

Your knowledge gives you the skills to:

- Work effectively in a team environment
- Motivate yourself and others to achieve goals
- Understand that problems or issues may arise and that these need to be addressed

(288 words)

Examples of Appropriate Evidence (Skilled)

The additional text on the right is purely added here to assist you in seeing how the evidence relates to the competency in question

Competency	Competence level SKILLED
Transferable	TR7 - People Management
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	<p>As Senior Ranger, I have three Rangers in my team and I am responsible for the conservation management of three local nature reserves. I am responsible for the management of the reserves including visitor management, through organising and supervising the work of the team. My role also involves recruitment and management of team members.</p>
	<p>I prepare the job descriptions for the Ranger posts using my employer's template, and alongside the Head Ranger, shortlist preferred candidates for interview using 'essential' and 'desirable' criteria. I regularly include a practical task as part of the interview which is very effective in assessing the most suitable candidates.</p>
	<p>Once in post, I conducted a six week induction process, with staged introductions to in-house procurement rules, reporting procedures and day to day operational routines they should adhere to. I prepare work programmes with the team on a weekly basis alongside planning the work rota.</p>
	<p>I undertake annual appraisals for all rangers including a training assessment. The rangers recently required NPTC 201 and 202 course refreshers (chainsaw maintenance and cross cutting) in line with my employers risk assessment policies. I lead most site conservation tasks to ensure all relevant health and safety practices are followed. I prefer to coach the team rather than mentor them which is more instructive. My site work programmes are completed on time and to a high standard. Bad weather or equipment failure sometimes requires re-programming of tasks.</p>
	<p>I receive good feedback about the team's site work, knowledge and enthusiasm. My rangers are confident in practical conservation skills and taking guided walks but are keen to expand volunteering. I am considering a Train the Trainer course so I can more effectively pass on my volunteer management skills to the team.</p>

(287 words)

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- **Situation** – wide ranging role on 3 reserves
- **Task** – recruiting and managing a team
- **Action** – recruitment, interviews, induction, appraisals, work programmes, training appraisals; leads tasks and coaches team towards results
- **Result** – receives good feedback on quality of work and team effectiveness; adept at re-programming work if needed
- **Evaluation** – wants to improve skills to assist team to offer enhanced service

Your knowledge gives you the skills to:

- Effectively contribute to successful recruitment of team members
- Manage the day to day requirements for a team
- Mentor and coach others
- Demonstrate problem solving skills
- Lead by example, deliver high work standards
- Train/instruct team members and others
- Supervise others and ensure team members adhere to best practice

Examples of Appropriate Evidence (Accomplished)

The additional text on the right is purely added here to assist you in seeing how the evidence relates to the competency in question

Competency	Competence level ACCOMPLISHED
Transferable	TR7 - People Management
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	<p><i>I am a Head of Countryside Services with xxxx. I lead and am responsible for 23 members of staff, including rangers, assistant rangers, visitor centre and administration staff.</i></p>
	<p><i>During the last 12+ months, most of my team have been furloughed and not able to work. Due to restrictions the remainder worked from home with no access to office or IT equipment.</i></p> <p><i>I have been tasked with keeping a skeletal countryside service operating during this period. I ensured furloughed staff were aware of Human Resources assistance. I agreed regular contact through personal emails with each and encouraged reading, webinar and online training relevant to their roles.</i></p>
	<p><i>I managed those working from home through one to one discussions, akin to mini-appraisals and team updates via online platforms. Acutely aware that individuals react to isolation and reduced team collaboration differently, I coached each according to their personal situation and needs. I spent time online with each, listening to their concerns, encouraging a positive outlook and assessing their mental health. On their request, I diverted site CCTV footage to some home PCs and devised new site visit protocols and risk assessments if necessary for emergencies.</i></p>
	<p><i>I liaised with my employer and external grant funders to re-allocate resources and to draft re-profiled future work programmes. I revised the whole service risk register, re-assessed team work priorities and prepared new Business Continuity Plans for all service activities, should the pandemic continue.</i></p> <p><i>As lockdown eased, I initiated patrols to clear litter from soaring visitor numbers. I mentored staff on dealing with anti-social behaviour and I need to organise team training on conflict resolution and dealing with stress. My own appraisal feedback suggests staff appreciated my personal support.</i></p>
	<p><i>I now believe some outputs are achievable from home and through flexible working hours/ arrangements.</i></p>

(294 words)

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Situation – manages large team and countryside service; guided team and work programme through the Covid pandemic

Task – to keep countryside services operating/ functioning as best as possible through pandemic with limited resources

Action – understands rules of furlough; treats members of team individually and with respect for well-being; pro-active in planning for the future after pandemic; looking for solutions to problems brought on by pandemic; leads by example

Result – service prepared for end of pandemic; encouraging adaptation to changing circumstances

Evaluation – identified future training needs for team to cope with different public behaviour and conflicts; appreciates different working arrangements can provide same results in future

Your knowledge gives you the skills to:

- Lead by example, providing clear, respected and effective leadership to a team
- Motivate and inspire others to be high achievers
- Attract and recruit effective team members
- Plan and undertake regular appraisals to improve team performance
- Lead as a solution orientated thinker with excellent problem-solving skills
- Devise and deliver varied training programmes to ensure ongoing individual and team professional development
- Competently offer expert mentoring and coaching opportunities
- Manage any organisational changes through preparing, supporting and assisting individuals and teams to adapt effectively to changes

Examples of Appropriate Evidence (Entry)

The additional text on the right is purely added here to assist you in seeing how the evidence relates to the competency in question

Competency	Competence level ENTRY
Technical	TEC21 Recreation and Visitor Management
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	Part of my role is to welcome and talk to visitors.
	I have wide ranging duties but the most important is to encourage visitors to understand more about the wildlife they might see, raise awareness of the history of the site and explain that there is a visitor centre and cafe that they can explore too.
	I strike up a conversations with visitors, explaining that the park was designed and created over 30 years ago, to provide green space for the people living in a new housing development. I undertake new tree or bulb planting somewhere in the Park most winters and encourage visitors to volunteer to help. Each day I patrol the park on foot in the morning to note the birds that can be seen or heard that day and add those to a blackboard by the entrance by 10.30 am, for example swallows arriving in April/May. I also warn to keep dogs on lead in spring and litter pick daily to clear any rubbish left behind.
	I also check for any possible damage to boardwalks, signs or play equipment. I undertake a play equipment check weekly in winter and more often in summer when it is used frequently. I check and report on the wooden structures and fixings for wear and tear. I am also responsible for raking the play bark daily to ensure even coverage. If any park furniture is damaged I secure a temporary warning sign, until it can be repaired.
	Many visitors know me now and enjoy my daily nature notes. I enjoy helping children to identify the birds and would like to devise a nature trail for them. I also want training to lead guided walks as I enjoy sharing my knowledge with all ages.

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- **Situation** – employed to work in urban park
- **Task** – to communicate with visitors regarding what is available to do and see; raise awareness of what the Park has to offer
- **Action** – provides daily updates on wildlife/bird sightings for the visitors; encourages volunteering to enhance the park; checks infrastructure regularly and reports any repairs that are necessary; maintains play equipment; litter picks daily
- **Result** – visitors appreciate the daily updates/information; children enjoy learning from him/her
- **Evaluation** – would like more training to improve his service to the public

Your knowledge gives you the skills to:

- Welcome and communicate clearly and effectively with visitors regarding the site/planned works/what to see
- Effectively maintain facilities aimed at visitors e.g. play areas, hire equipment
- Proactively engage with visitors to further enhance their experience of the natural/historic environment
- Provide clear messages around safety and caring for the site/area

(292 words)

Examples of Appropriate Evidence (Skilled)

The additional text on the right is purely added here to assist you in seeing how the evidence relates to the competency in question

Competency		Competence level SKILLED
Technical	TEC22 Rights of Way and Access	
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	One of my main responsibilities is to encourage responsible use of Rights of Way (RoW) through liaison with and listening to the public and stakeholders through the Local Access Forum.	<p><i>This is purely to illustrate how the evidence meets STARE requirements. This is not part of the application form for you to complete</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Situation – developing responsible use of RoW through stakeholder input ● Task – develop all aspects of a major multi-user route ● Action – understands and leads/liaises on all relevant aspects of acquiring/developing the route; funding bid success allowed planning/organising/supervision of different surfacing methods required; plans regular maintenance required to infrastructure ● Result – user numbers high; good feedback; conflicts exist and works with users to determine solutions ● Evaluation – wants to involve youngsters more in future and offer enhanced enjoyment of the route through improved facilities and interpretation
	I led on planning for, and implementation of, a multi-user 'Trailway' for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders; 25miles across the County.	
	I led project development, working with planners and highways officers when permission and a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment were necessary. Some sections were created through Public Path Creation Orders (Highways Act 1980, S 25); others through 'express dedication in common law', an option developed by the Trails Trust. These are legal events and added to the Definitive Map. I developed detailed plans for securing the entire route in law, signage, fencing, seating, interpretation, maintenance and promotion. Funding was secured through my submitting successful funding bids to the xxx. I let the surfacing contract through Council procurement systems, preparing the brief specifying a 10-14 feet width, segregating walkers from cyclists and horse-riders, separated by a raised grass bank. Different surfacing choices related to frequency of primary users (feet, wheel or hoof) resulting in grass and tamped local hoggin options, respectively. In steeper, wetter areas, I used a soil inversion technique, with the help of volunteers.	
	Trail counters track the 140,000 people using the Trailway per year improving health and wellbeing locally. I ensure regular maintenance and repair work to the surfaces, fencing and signage annually. User feedback is 90% positive; some conflicts between cyclists and walkers. I chair a 'Trailway Steering Group' which is vital to elicit user initiatives to reduce conflicts.	
	I aim to gain more youngsters views on the Trailway through local Youth Clubs and will install more interpretative panels and a raised viewpoint boardwalk to enhance enjoyment and improve the overall Trailway experience.	
(295 words)		Your knowledge gives you the skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage responsible use of Rights of Way • Plan, schedule, prioritise and organise asset and infrastructure construction, maintenance including supervision of contracts • Oversee/undertake construction and maintenance of a range of public rights of way / permissive paths / open access, boundaries and infrastructure • Liaison with user groups and user conflict resolution

Examples of Appropriate Evidence (Accomplished)

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Competency	Competence level ACCOMPLISHED
Technical	TEC12 Threatened Species Conservation
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	Populations of the Turtle dove (<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>) have declined by 94% in 15 years. They are globally threatened and on the IUCN Red List. Spending our winter in West Africa they arrive mainly to south and east England to breed in April.
	I am Senior Conservation Officer with a primary role to lead the Turtle Dove Conservation Project through collaboration over twelve private farms.
	My task is farmer advice on take up of Countryside Stewardship (CS) options that favour their feeding, drinking and nesting requirements on a landscape scale. The birds require, within 300m of each other, thorny hedges/scrub for nesting (3mx4m), shallow ponds for water and seed on open/patchy ground. CS options exist for seeding with a birdsfoot trefoil, fumitory, white / red clover and black medick mix; creating or managing successional areas of bare ground; creating ponds and thorny hedges.
	Supplementary feeding helps with oil seed rape, millet, sunflower hearts and 10% wheat. I consult with Natural England to adapt CS options to benefit the doves. Trail cameras capture their presence encouraging farmers to do more. Footage is used in regular lectures at xxx Agricultural College and xxx University 2nd year Ecology and Conservation undergraduates. I work with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) on Turtle dove seed preference research through survey of dove supplementary feed seed choices, which has translated into bespoke mixes being prepared.
	I advised on inclusion of a reverse auction as part of the new Environmental Land Management scheme in East Anglia, a stronghold for the bird. In my area, over six years, 5 pairs have risen to 21 breeding pairs in 2020. There are insufficient shallow water bodies however; I need to re-evaluate my farmer advice and/or explore external funding to enable more ponds to be provided.

(295 words)

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- **Situation** – decline of Turtle dove continues
- **Task** – leads work with partners on landscape scale to provide improved habitat for Turtle doves;
- **Action** - collaborates with many farmers to achieve benefit for Turtle dove through incorporation of CS option into farm plans; expert on conservation measures required to support the birds; advises on improved CS options; works with research partner and lectures students on Turtle dove requirements
- **Result** –bespoke seed mixes now available; advised on new component for ELM scheme; breeding pairs numbers increased
- **Evaluation** – improved advice and funding needed to increase water bodies for the birds

Your knowledge gives you the skills to:

- Lead the development and implementation of appropriate measures for in situ conservation of threatened species
- Incorporate those conservation measures into an overall management plan
- Offer expert advice on the protection and conservation of threatened species
- Develop partnerships with research institutions
- Provide guidance and input to development of policy for improving protection and management of threatened species

Examples of Insufficient/Inappropriate Evidence (Entry)

The additional text on the right is purely added here to assist you in seeing how the evidence relates to the competency in question

Competency		Competence level ENTRY
Technical	TEC21 Recreation and Visitor Management	
Your evidence: (min 100 - max 300 words)	The team has a wide range of tasks to complete each week. We've all been here 2 years now and know what we're doing.	
	We are given a work programme to follow which is mainly maintenance and repair type work and we sometimes need to chat to passing visitors who come here to walk and watch ducks on the lake. The public often stop and ask where the visitor centre is and we give them directions. If they get lost they find us to ask us again; this happens quite a lot as it is a big park.	
	There is a large play area for children that we are told to check for damage along with 23 seats, 6 display boards and lots of fencing.	
	Sometimes people ask what there is to see so we send them to the Visitor Centre while we carry on litter picking.	
	The duty ranger often asks us how many people we have spoken to and whether they were enjoying themselves. After 9 months here, people don't often ask me very much anymore.	

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- **Situation** – part of a team employed at xxx Park. Time served irrelevant.
- **Task** – variety of tasks; does not highlight need to communicate with and welcome visitors. Nothing in the first person to indicate their understanding of their role
- **Action** – directs people if asked; no apparent desire to engage with visitors about what the park has to offer; checks a range of infrastructure as a team (number of seats etc irrelevant to this competency); nothing about his/her individual commitment to the job or desire/need to help visitors as part of the job
- **Result** – perhaps visitors do not feel able/comfortable approaching with questions
- **Evaluation** – no opinion given as to how they might improve their communications or work with visitors.

(178 words)

Your knowledge gives you the skills to:

- Insufficient/inappropriate evidence