

Middle Manager Excellence

Key Messages and Questions and Answers

Key Messages

- Middle managers play a critical role in the employee engagement and culture of our organization.
- Managers play a key role in helping ministries achieve their strategic goals.
- The purpose of Middle Manager Excellence is to help middle managers develop, grow and excel in their roles to support a high-performing organization.
- Understanding the role of the middle manager allows the Government of Saskatchewan to develop consistent tools and resources and create a supportive culture to help middle managers be successful in their roles.
- The Middle Manager Excellence project outlines clear, corporate-wide expectations about the role of the middle manager.
- This project will also help support the recruitment and retention of middle managers and employees.

Questions and Answers

1. What is the Middle Manager Excellence Project?

The Middle Manager Excellence (MME) project identifies the five ideal roles of middle managers. Best practice research show that these roles contribute to the overall effectiveness of middle managers. This helps the Government of Saskatchewan to better identify and develop tools, supports and resources that will help middle managers excel in their roles.

2. Who is a Middle Manager?

For the purpose of Middle Manager Excellence, a middle manager is defined as the following:

- Out-of-scope
- Direct supervisory responsibilities
- Reports (typically) to an Executive Director (or Director or ADM depending on ministry structure)
- Participates in Manager's Forum

3. What are the Middle Manager Excellence ideal roles

There are five ideal roles that contribute to the overall effectiveness of middle managers. Refer to the [ideal roles document](#) for more information.

Middle Manager Excellence

Key Messages and Questions and Answers

4. How were the ideal roles of middle managers determined?

Various forms of data collection were used, including:

- research studies;
- focus groups (middle managers, middle manager direct managers);
- inter-jurisdictional scans;
- consultations (Managers Forum, EDGE, PSC senior leadership);
- external consultations (Korn Ferry Hay Group, Johnson Shoyama School of Graduate Studies);
- questionnaire to middle manager direct reports;
- engagement and culture survey results; and
- project team input.

Through research, the [five ideal roles](#) emerged as an integral part in supporting middle managers in any organization. Consultations with middle managers and their direct managers validated an ideal set of expectations that should be common and consistent within Executive Government.

5. Aren't middle managers already performing these roles?

Focus group data suggests that pockets exist within the organization (approximately 5-10 per cent of focus group members) where a middle manager's position mirrors the ideal roles. For a large percentage of middle managers, however, day-to-day operational/technical work and non-managerial administrative work were identified as key barriers to performing the ideal roles.

6. How will this project consider a middle manager's current work?

As part of implementation, ministries will examine the current state of the work middle managers are doing and how it aligns to the ideal roles. From there, ministries will look at what are the capabilities within those roles. This will be followed by prioritization and action planning.

7. What does it mean to align a middle manager position to the five ideal roles?

Aligning middle manager positions means:

- A middle manager's primary function is to perform only the five ideal roles.

OR

- Intentional trade-offs have been made (e.g., smaller span of control, no budget responsibility, etc.) to a middle manager's position to make space for the five ideal roles, plus a technical or individual contributor role.

8. Who will lead MME Implementation?

Ministries will lead implementation with support from the Public Service Commission (PSC). The PSC has also committed to various initiatives related to staffing, managing performance, identifying common delegations of authorities, and better managing information – all in support of Middle Manager Excellence.

Middle Manager Excellence

Key Messages and Questions and Answers

9. What if we need managers to maintain a technical expert role?

Some ministries may find this is the case. Ministries will have to identify intentional trade-offs that can be made (e.g., smaller span of control, no budget responsibility, etc.) to a middle manager's position to make space for the five ideal roles, plus a technical or individual contributor role.

10. Will MME result in reclassification? All managerial job assignments are inherently responsible for the MME ideal roles. In this regard, fully stepping into the MME roles does not warrant job evaluation.

11. My current job assignment includes performing technical work. How will my classification level be impacted if I no longer perform technical work? The extent to which managers perform technical work depends on the program and does not impact on the position's current classification level. Reclassification is only required in situations where the assigned duties alter sufficiently which is determined on a case-by-case basis. For example, a manager that oversaw a functional area and supervised staff no longer manages staff and now works independently as a program consultant.

12. What if my ministry is not ready to start implementation?

Middle Manager Excellence launched in November 2020. Ministries are encouraged to begin the implementation process; however, implementation will remain optional in the 2020-21 fiscal year. Ministries will be required to begin MME implementation in the 2021-22 year and have an action plan in place by March 31, 2022. Ministries may choose to initiate implementation at any point within this time period.

13. Why are we doing this project?

The Government of Saskatchewan has worked to build a consistent foundation of leadership capacity at the executive level. Research identifies an employee's relationship with their manager as one of the strongest drivers of employee engagement. To further support culture and engagement within the organization, and as a natural progression of executive leadership, focus expanded to include the role of middle managers.

Given the interest and engagement of middle managers and senior leaders throughout this project, the organization has a unique opportunity to capitalize on current momentum and take action that could influence the performance curve of the whole organization and position us well, as we prepare for:

- retirements of senior leaders;
- our ability to identify and retain new high potential leaders moving forward; and,
- address other risk factors identified through environmental scans.

Middle Manager Excellence

Key Messages and Questions and Answers

14. Can the MME 5 Ideal Roles be applied to out of scope manager positions who have no direct reports?

The MME 5 Ideal Roles were defined based on original research articles, review articles, case studies and consultations focused on the type of work done by middle managers in public and private sectors. More specifically, it focused on the type of work done by middle managers who were considered to be successful within their organization. By definition, middle managers reside in the middle of an organization and have at least one layer of individuals reporting directly to them. Although components of the MME 5 Ideal Roles may be applicable to other positions within an organization, it should not be assumed that the MME 5 Ideal Roles apply to GoS out of scope managers who do not have direct reports, as this cannot be substantiated by MME research.