This Guide supports targeted and structured training and development of public servants to produce a competent and motivated workforce. Preference will be given to training Cook Islanders to ensure the long-term retention of skills and knowledge.

Exclusions

This Policy does not apply to the following:

- Independent Contractors.
- Ministers and Members of Parliament.
- Island Mayors and Councilors.
- Ministerial Support Office staff.

EMPLOYERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers must:

- Administer this Policy and relevant policies applicable and ensure employees have access to the Policy.
- Ensure there are transparent systems and processes in the implementation of the Policy, in the fair and proper treatment of employees and the building of a culture of excellence.
- The Agency Workforce Plan should be in place and:
    - Support the achievement of Agency strategic, business plan goals and national priorities.
    - Implemented to link to impacts on pay and training.
    - Covered by Agency budgets.
    - Is agreed upon by both parties, the training impacts are regularly discussed and is relevant to the employee's performance and professional development.
    - Is evaluated and/or reviewed as needed as an outcome of the evaluation of the Professional Development Plan, that it meets the Agencies business goals and/or the employee objectives and to assess the impact of the professional development of the employee's performance during informal and formal performance.
- All new employees complete the Agency induction programme and the Public Service Orientation.
- Prior to any training approval, the following should be considered in relation to the employee:
    - Position, performance and commitment to improve their performance.
    - Demonstrate proficiency/pre-requisite requirements stipulated by the training provider/s meeting the training costs.
    - Are performing in their job, unless the training is part of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
    - Overseas employment conditions, duration and travel arrangements.
    - Impact on service delivery and ability of the Agency to maintain business continuity.
    - Contingency plans in the event that the employee does not return to work for the Agency or coverage of the delivery of the service.
    - Job descriptions (JDs) are up to date, clearly outline the key results to be achieved by the job (KRAs) competencies, the professional standards required are reflected in the performance agreements.
- Coordinate, oversee the implementation, monitor**,** and evaluate the Professional Development Plans and the Workforces Plans.
- Planning is in place and resourcing is available to ensure that employees can participate in the training.
- To identify training providers and there are cost agreed training options.
- There are coaching and mentoring opportunities for staff.
- Monitor the usage of the training budget and propose alternative training if budgets are modified.
- Ensure cancellations due to a change in strategic focus, employee's work allocation or development or the employee's inability to attend must be made at least five working days prior to the training commencing.
- Ensure non-attendance and/or unauthorised absence to scheduled training, without prior approval is recorded and future opportunities to be considered.
- Record in the employee/s personnel record any paid study leave.
- Ensure trainee completes a BTOR.

EMPLOYEES RESPONIBILITIES

Employees are responsible for:

- Ensuring that they read, understand**,** and adhere to the Training & Development Policy and any relevant Government policies.
- Their own personal and career development.
- Seeking feedback on performance to identify skill gaps and future development needs.
- Holding discussions with their Direct Report to discuss and identify training needs or opportunities.
- Committing to attending agreed training and development activities and opportunities.
- Submitting a Back to the Office Training Report to their Direct Report within five days of completing the training.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Training and development activities are integral to improving and/or developing key competencies as part of the structured performance management process.
- Skills and professional development activities enable employees to effectively perform, prepare and assume responsibilities, perform new tasks, develop in line with their personal and career aspirations and contribute to national priorities.
- Training and development expected outcomes include but not limited to having a committed, skilled workforce meeting current and future Agency goals, and improving employee productivity, contributing to Agency commitments.
- The Performance Management is the process where Agency and National goals are achieved through the employee responsibility identified in the Job description who performs against set targets and measures are performance appraised to measure achieved targets, where the training and development activities develop the competency and improve performance.
- Professional development activities include for:
    - Current employees a knowledge and skills development to perform better, for career progression and to maintain technical and/or professional standards.
    - Employers/Managers/Supervisors to develop leadership, management skills to manage staff performance, preserve institutional knowledge, maintaining experience and knowledge through mentoring, coaching, development and sharing of knowledge, job shadowing where transition of retiring incumbent's institutional knowledge is and/or skills is transferred (can occur 3-6months period), secondment and mobility.
    - All Employers/Managers/Employees to:
        - Maintain current knowledge and legislative changes.
        - Develop human relations skills to support professional and respectful conduct.
        - Continue to develop the individual's potential.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CYCLE

There are four cycles:

- Stage 1 : Defining Training and Development Needs.
- Stage 2: Planning Training and Development Activities.
- Stage 3: Implementing and Monitoring the Plan.
- Stage 4: Evaluating and Reviewing Training Outcomes.

STAGE 1: DEFINE: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Workforce Plans should be reviewed at a minimum annually and Training & Development Plans, Business Plans Strategic Plans should be reflected in the Plan whilst considering budgetary requirements and effectiveness of previous plans. Head of Agencies report on Training & Development Plans and Workforce Plans in the annual Business Plan Performance Review.

Training and development requirements and needs for employees are done at an:

a) Agency Level (CIGOV Organisational Fit for Purpose Standard)

i. Workforce Plan (refer to Workforce Plan Guide) Annex 04):

- Assesses workforce requirements by linking short and long term goals (business and strategic plans) to the skills and knowledge needed to achieve these.
- Evaluates existing skill levels and leadership in each division in comparison to current and future competency requirements.
- Identifies critical positions in each division and the required skills or knowledge that are needed to fill these for business continuity.

ii. Professional Development Plan. (Refer to the CIGOV Performance Management Policy)
- Improves Agency performance by strategically managing employee productivity and performance.
- Empowers employees to perform through clear expectations on the job, performance and conduct.
- Identifies and documents the skills, talents, experiences, learnings, developments, transformations**,** and growth in the employee.

iii. Talent and Leadership Development
- Supports organisational transformation and change, by developing the skills, attitudes, talents, capabilities**,** and behaviours necessary to identify strategic goals or objectives and initiatives and to lead others effectively.
- Promotes accountability and transparency in human-centric decision-making, helping leaders create a culture of engagement and purpose.
- Provides effective leadership team development help senior leaders create a positive employee experience, enhanced organisational health, cultivate a culture of continuous learning, innovation and adaptability and increased employee retention.

b) Employee level
- Training needs identified in the individual professional development plans including any training required to address performance gaps.
- Evaluate development needs as part of talent and leadership development or as part of a succession plan.
- Participation in activities that grows the individual's talent, leadership and skills to perform physically and mentally in a diverse, challenging and constantly evolving environment.
- Evaluate development needs as part of future workforce requirements of the Agency (forecast Agency needs).

STAGE 2: PLAN: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Professional Development Activities are prioritised needs identified as Agency requirements collated into a Workforce plan outlining:

a) Current knowledge/talents, experience and skill gaps of employees.
b) Forecast of current and anticipating future needs.
c) Type of training, modality and timing of the training.
d) The provider of the training.
e) Number of people requiring the training.
f) Cost associated with the training.
g) Prioritising of training in line with Agency requirements and available budget.
h) Succession principles based on merit, best fit – knowledge, skills, attributes, performance and the recruitment and selection process.
i) Any approved change in the organisation.

A Combination of Professional development activities Employers need to consider are outlined below:

a) Training Options:
- Competency training: to address skills and knowledge gaps.
- Proficiency training: to address performance/behavioural gaps identified during the performance appraisal process.
- Developmental Training: to acquire knowledge or skills to enhance specialist or professional capabilities, career progression or leadership prospects.

b) Types of training is dependent on the requirement of the job being performed, subject to available budget, and subject to the provider of the training (refer to Training Examples below):
- National - in country or within the Agency, includes, e-learning and/or with registered tertiary education providers and accredited organisations.

- Overseas – E-learning and/or registered tertiary education providers and accredited organisations outside the country.
- On-the-job training.

c) Training Duration is dependent on the type of training, and it can be either:
   - Training undertaken while remaining in full-time employment, or
   - Training taken outside of full-time employment where the employee works part-time or takes study leave.
   - Approved work-related studies identified in the employee's PDP as per the conditions set out in the CIGOV Leave policy and within the following parameters:
     i. The costs, risks and benefits of the training to both the Agency and employee are discussed and agreed.
     ii. Impact of the employee's absence on Agency outputs and service delivery.
     iii. Employee work performance.
     iv. What role the employee will return to upon completion of their study.
   - Training for professional development where leave is applied, the HoA approval must be obtained and the training and development considerations and/or activities in the CIGOV Training & Development Policy and CIGOV Leave Policy must be complied.

d) Training Budget are where the Employers and Managers are responsible for prioritising and sourcing resources to support training and development activities identified in the Workforce Plan and Agency training budgets (where applicable) for:
   - Domestic training programmes - materials, trainer fees, facilities (i.e. venue, catering and equipment), including travel, accommodation, meals, transport, insurance and per diem allowances where applicable.
   - Overseas training and professional development programmes including travel, accommodation, meals, transport, insurance and per diem allowances.
   - Secondments or work attachments.

e) Bonding
   - Students awarded a scholarship are encouraged to return and work in the Cook Islands for the period stated if stipulated in their contract on completion of their training or make arrangements of repayment to the relevant funding entity if stipulated.
   - Employees who have study leave approved not under a Government scholarship scheme are required to return and work in the Cook Islands for a period equal to the time they were away on study or as mutually agreed with their employer.
   - Agencies should develop specific bond terms and conditions for employees who wish to study under Government, Non-Government (e.g. privately funded, some form of corporate scholarship).
   - Approved tertiary study may be partly or fully funded by the Cook Islands Government, a development partner/sponsor or is funded privately. Agencies should identify and approach strategic partners for appropriate support and identify it in their training plans where this is provided.

TRAINING EXAMPLES

Training can include but not limited to the following:

a) Induction programmes

Every new employee must receive Agency induction training relating to their job and Agency from their first day of employment. Every new employee must also complete the Public Sector Orientation Programme within 12 months of joining the public service.

b) Mentoring & Coaching

Mentoring is a relationship between a more experienced and a less experienced employee. The experienced person offers support, advice and assistance to the less experienced staff member and enables them to share their professional and personal skills and experiences. This relationship is based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and a willingness to learn and share.

c) Succession Planning

The purpose of a succession plan is to ensure continuity of business and level of service by way of maintaining your talent and institutional knowledge. It is identifying the skill gaps of an employee or group of employees by the manager/s that should be addressed to allow that employee/s career progression.

d) On-the-job-training/Work attachments

Employees can gain knowledge and skills through On-the-job-training, which can include:

- Job rotation: where employees move from one area of work to another to learn the role or skill.
- Special projects: where employees learn new skills beyond their current competency level.
- Coaching and mentoring.
- E learning.
- Attendance or participation in conferences, workshops, analyse, review and/or drafting of documents.

e) Secondments (refer to Secondment Policy)

Employees can be seconded to other Agencies or to a different division within their Agency for training and development purposes. Secondment (Job mobility) makes a significant contribution towards 'growing our own' by building the skills, knowledge and experience of the Cook Islands Government talent pool and is a key component of building workforce capability; especially in driving professional development, reducing 'silo thinking', and boosting cross-agency problem solving ability.

Secondment arrangements provide opportunities through which employees in one agency can accept placements in another agency, thereby promoting the sharing of knowledge, business practices and processes across the sector and encouraging the professional and personal development of the employee.

f) Professional and/or Accredited Seminars/ Conferences and Training Courses

Employees may be required to attend meetings, conferences or training courses where the content, experience, skills learnt with the interaction at different levels and with the culture is deemed relevant to the employee's development plan.

g) Leadership and Talent Planning, Development and/or Promotion

In recognising excellent performance, employees may be provided with leadership or talent development opportunities. The building of a leadership pipeline/talent pool is also an important aspect of succession planning where Agencies can plan, develop and provide targeted training for key roles, which can lead to promotion or encourage leadership.

STAGE 3: IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING THE PLAN

The implementation and monitoring of all Agency workforce plan and personnel training and development plans is necessary to support the accomplishment of Agency strategic objectives, business plan targets, and national priorities. Establish plans that are adaptable, closely overseen, and incorporate the goals and objectives of the Agency. The Workforce Plan and the Professional Development Plan are two examples of plans which supports the delivery of the Agency goals and objectives.

Employers must consider the following activities when identifying training and development for employees:

a) Demonstrate proficiency/pre-requisite requirements stipulated by the training provider or the institution meeting the training costs.
b) Are performing in their job, unless the training is part of a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
c) Monitor the usage of the training budget and propose alternative training if budgets are modified.
d) Cancellations due to a change in strategic focus, employee's work allocation or development or the employee's inability to attend must be made at least five working days prior to the training commencing.
e) Non-attendance to scheduled training, without prior approval is treated as unauthorised absence and disciplinary measures may be taken.
f) Employees who have received paid study leave and do not complete the programme must be noted in their personnel record and may be required to refund the associated costs.

EVALUATING AND REVIEWING TRAINING OUTCOMES

The impact of the Agency training and development plans and/or professional development of employees when assessed and/or measured demonstrates the success, sustainability on employee and Agency performance, that training is embedded in the Agency and the Agency implements training & development programmes.

- Evaluating and reviewing professional development include and must carry out the following activities:
  - Complete the BTOR within five days of finishing the training and development.
  - Evaluate the Professional Development and Workforce Plan against the Agency goals or employees objectives.

- Update the Agency Workforce Plan as required as an outcome of the evaluation of employees Professional Development Plan, strategic goals and business needs.
- Evaluate the impact of professional development on an employee's performance during informal and formal performance.

- Back to the Office Report (BTOR)
  - To be completed by representatives/officials attending a training/conference/workshop in an official capacity as a representative of the Cook Islands Government at a national, regional or international level.
  - Is to inform the reader/s of the training/conference/workshop objectives and outcomes, including specific benefits to the country/government/agency/attendee, and future actions required.
  - Is to evaluate and is intended to help assess the usefulness of the training/conference/workshop attended.
  - This report must be submitted to your Direct Report for routing to the designated personnel for Human Resources.
  - Any professional development must be linked to Table 2 Professional Development Plan in the Performance Appraisal Form.

- Completing the BTOR
  - Complete the Table 1. Representative details. Record your name, Agency name where you work, the position you are currently in and the name of your sponsor or donor.
  - Complete Table 2. Meeting/Conference/Workshop details. Record the title of the training or development, where it is being held, the date, the organisation hosting the event, participants of the event, the theme or key topic and key objective/s. Attendees are to write new/key learnings that will beneficial to the attendee and/or the organisations, write recommendations that may contribute to the performance of the individual and/organisation or support the delivery of the organisations business. Benefits to the Cook Islands should be recorded. Future actions required or follow up should be recorded to inform the HoM for planning and implementation purposes.
  - Complete the Evaluation form for the meeting/conference/workshop which measures:
    i. The success and relevance.
    ii. The content, materials and delivery.
    iii. Your participation and learning.
- Sign and date the report.

OTHER PROVISIONS

All documentation relating to changes to the training and development of an employee must be retained for audit purposes for at least seven years and only accessible by the employer and/or authorised staff**.**

This Guide, associated documents and templates can be found on the Public Service Shared Drive and on the OPSC website www.psc.gov.ck.

For Policy queries or issues in the administration of this Policy, contact the Office of the Public Service Commissioner on phone (682) 29 421 or email: opsc.policy@cookislands.gov.ck