MS 664 In-Service Staff Training

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Responsible Office: Office of Management/Office of Staff Learning and Development
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1.0 Authority

The Peace Corps Act and Sections 503 and 704(b) of the Foreign Service Act.
2.0 Purpose

This Manual Section sets out the policies for staff training and development. It also establishes the process by which training requirements for staff are identified, communicated, and documented when accomplished, as well as the advising of the relevance and importance of training to the achievement of the Peace Corps mission. Peace Corps staff are required to complete task-specific training, Agency Required Training, and Federally Mandated Training requirements necessary to perform their jobs.

3.0 Policy

(a) Peace Corps promotes a strategically trained and professionally developed workforce that will further the agency’s capabilities towards becoming a high performing learning organization.

(b) The immediate supervisor must approve in advance the proposed training and the amount of time the training will entail.

(c) In addition to paying the normal compensation and benefits to staff, the Peace Corps may agree to pay additional expenses, including:

   (1) Registration fees;

   (2) Library or laboratory services;

   (3) Reproduction of documents;

   (4) The purchase or rental of books;

   (5) Travel and transportation expenses directly related to the training assignment for the staff member; and

   (6) The cost of other related services.

4.0 Applicability

This policy is applicable to all Peace Corps Staff as defined in section 5.0(m) under Definitions.

5.0 Definitions

(a) **Agency Required Training** is required Agency or Office-specific training of Peace Corps staff in order to achieve agency goals and objectives.

(b) **Annual Needs Assessment** is a systematic, planned process to identify existing and foreseeable organizational training needs.
(c) **Conference** is a formal gathering of professionals on a given subject, topic, or profession whose primary intent is to discuss work information, negotiate solutions to work problems and make decisions dealing with organizational matter, concerns or the status of the profession, and scientific or technical developments.

(d) **Continued Service Agreement (CSA)** is a formal agreement between the Peace Corps and the staff member that, as a condition of approval for development activities, requires the staff member to remain with the Peace Corps for a specified length of time.

(e) **Designated Training Officer** is an office representative, designated by an Office Director, who coordinates the development, delivery, and reporting of learning activities, within their office, in partnership with the Office of Staff Learning and Development.

(f) **Development** is a longer-term process designed to prepare staff to gain key professional competencies that may or may not be needed for their present career field. Development activities may include any combination of training, structured on-the-job learning experiences, coaching, mentoring, rotations, and/or participation in work assignments that expose the staff member to new situations and responsibilities.

(g) **Federally Mandated Training** is required government-wide training for all staff members. These types of trainings are mandated through Executive Orders, Government-wide Directives, and Federal statute or regulation, in areas including, but not limited to:

1. computer security awareness;
2. government ethics;
3. whistleblower protection;
4. Equal Employment Opportunity; or
5. Executive, managerial, and supervisory training.

As such, in some cases the Office of Staff Learning and Development may have minimal authority in determining course content, structure, or completion timeframes.

(h) **Functional/Content Owner** is an individual with programmatic responsibility for particular required and/or mandatory training instances (e.g. the Office of General Counsel is the Functional/Content Owner of the agency’s Ethics Program and its training requirements).

(i) **Learning** is the act or process of acquiring knowledge, skills, or competencies.

(j) **Learning Council** is a panel of Office Directors, established through the Learning Council Charter, that set forth to determine and evaluate the Peace Corps learning strategy which is tied to the agency’s strategic objectives. The Learning Council’s activities include, but are not limited to:
(1) establishing and monitoring of a centralized learning budget;

(2) conducting an annual needs assessment; and

(3) reviewing of elevated learning and development requests and program initiatives.

(k) **Learning Strategy** uses information from the Annual Needs Assessment to document how Peace Corps will address identified training needs and priorities for staff development. The Learning Strategy is set forth to support agency goals by improving organizational performance at any level in the agency.

(l) **Office Director** is, for the purposes of this Manual Section, the head of an office, Country Director, or designee.

(m) **Peace Corps Staff** includes all US Direct Hires, Personal Services Contractors (PSCs), Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs), and Presidential Appointees.

(n) **SF-182** is the Request, Authorization, Agreement, and Certification for Training Form which is used to document instances of staff training and development. It is used to obtain information related to training such as costs and accounts as well as approvals.

(o) **Skill** is the developed capacity to perform complex tasks related to work performance.

(p) **Task-Specific Training** is all training needed to acquire or enhance skills and competencies necessary to perform the tasks of a position currently filled. Task-specific training supplements education and experience already possessed by the staff member that meets personnel qualifications requirements for the position and is necessary to enable performance of specific tasks at the staff member’s current grade level or assignment.

(q) **Training** is a planned and coordinated program of instruction in professional, technical, or other fields that is or will be related to a staff member’s job responsibilities. Training can be accomplished through a variety of approaches including, but not limited to:

(1) traditional classroom training;

(2) online learning;

(3) cross training;

(4) professional conferences;

(5) seminars; and

(6) workshops that are educational or instructional in nature.

(r) **Waiver** is an exemption from completing assigned training and/or repaying related costs.
6.0 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Office of Staff Learning and Development

The Office of Staff Learning and Development (OSLD) is responsible for the coordination of workforce learning and development, including budgetary needs as it relates to centralized planning, funding, and training delivery. OSLD functions as a consultative partner for all Peace Corps offices and overseas posts in the area of staff professional development. OSLD shall, among other things:

(a) Develop and oversee policies and procedures related to the implementation, administration, and monitoring of staff training and development programs.

(b) Maintain a list and provide oversight of all Agency Required Training and Federally Mandated Training requirements.

(c) Coordinate an annual Agency-wide Training Needs Assessment and Learning Strategy for Peace Corps Staff; and reviewing and evaluating staff training and development programs to determine effectiveness and the extent to which training and development goals are being met.

(d) Maintain an overall budget for centralized training efforts and coordinate with each office on their individual training and development budget(s) in accordance with agreed upon training priorities. Work with other entities whenever appropriate to share and thereby conserve training resources.

(e) Provide support and guidance to offices in the areas of staff training, development, and related best practices.

(f) Develop a system for tracking, record keeping, and reporting staff training. (See MS 664 Procedures for additional guidance.)

(g) Consult with Office Directors, supervisors, managers, and staff to continuously improve Peace Corps sponsored staff training and development programs.

6.2 Office Directors

The Directors of Offices within the agency have a responsibility for establishing goals, setting priorities, and identifying the training needs of staff in their Office. Directors shall, among other things:

(a) Ensure staff are provided equal opportunities for training consistent with their potential and office needs.

(b) Designate Administrative Officers (AOs), Directors of Management and Operations (DMOs), or other designated officials, to process SF-182 ‘Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training’ requests for training and monitor the allocation of funds and training received by their staff in accordance with identified training needs and priorities,
and reprogramming funds when their training budget is depleted. (See MS 664 Procedures regarding Training Administration.)

(c) Participate in the planning and execution of training by making subject matter experts available.

(d) Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness and relevancy of the Staff training provided, and communicate evaluation feedback to the OSLD.

(e) Ensure Federally-mandated and Peace Corps-required training is completed by their staff to comply with standards set forth by each mandate or requirement.

6.3 Administrative Officer, or Other Designated Official

The AO, or other designated official, is the liaison between the various offices to process training requests. Specifically, AOs shall oversee, review, and processing of SF-182s. (See MS 664 Procedures for additional guidance.)

6.4 Supervisors

The immediate supervisor has the primary responsibility for ensuring staff are trained. This may require on-the-job training, formal course work, or a combination of the two. Specifically, Supervisors shall, among other things:

(a) Stay informed of industry standards;

(b) Identify the training needs of their current staff; and

(c) Authorize staff for in-house, interagency or non-government training courses as appropriate.

6.5 Peace Corps Staff

All eligible Peace Corps staff are encouraged to participate in learning activities to enhance performance of their official duties while developing their potential for advancement in subject matter areas related to their Office goals and objectives. Individual Peace Corps Staff shall, among other things:

(a) Determine, in consultation with their supervisor, training needs and certifications, including relevant technical, program, policy and procedural instructions.

(b) Complete all Federally-mandated and Agency-required training. Staff are responsible for notifying the supervisor if they are unable to complete the training within the specified timeframe.
6.6 **Training Functional/Content Owners**

Functional/Content Owners of training in respective Offices shall:

(a) Provide programmatic responsibility for Federally-mandated and Agency-required training for Peace Corps.

(b) Ensure, in coordination with OSLD, the course content meets mandatory and/or required training policy, statute, or regulation.

6.7 **Designated Training Officers**

As representatives of respective offices, the Designated Training Officer shall, among other things:

(a) Coordinate with OSLD and Functional/Content Owners, as applicable, in the following areas:

   (1) Planning and development;

   (2) Scheduling, notifying, monitoring, verifying, and reporting training data for their office; and

(b) Review and provide input into training requests.

(c) Ensure that all task-specific training requirements for staff are documented.

7.0 **Continued Service Requirements**

7.1 **Continued Service Agreement Requirement**

A staff member approved for training, excluding Federally-mandated and/or Agency-required training, will be required to sign a “Continued Service Agreement” (CSA) as set out in Attachment A prior to attending the training. The staff member’s direct supervisor is responsible for developing the CSA in accordance with this Manual Section and accompanying procedures. The supervisor may consult with OSLD in developing the staff member’s CSA. (See MS 664 Procedures for additional guidance on CSAs.)

Under the CSA, except as provided under section 7.3 and 7.4, a staff member approved for a training, agrees to continue in the service of or provide services to the Peace Corps for a period:

(a) Equal to three times the length of the training.

The computation of the length of the training shall be based on the number of hours spent in class or with the instructor.
7.2 Reimbursement Amounts

(a) When a staff member does not complete the continued service requirement, the staff member shall reimburse the Peace Corps for:

(1) Travel and per diem associated with the attendance at the training, not to exceed $2,500 per training; and

(2) Conference or similar fees paid by the Peace Corps to a third party.

(b) Such reimbursement amount will be pro-rated based on the percentage of the continued service period described in the CSA that the staff member has not completed.

7.3 Exceptions to the Reimbursement Requirement

A staff member will not be required to reimburse the Peace Corps:

(a) Where the staff member is involuntarily terminated during the continued service period;

(b) A staff member resigns to transfer to another government agency, including the armed forces;

(c) When the staff member’s tour of duty ends during the continued service period; or

(d) To the extent that a waiver is granted pursuant to 7.5 below.

7.4 Waivers

The Director of OSLD, in consultation with the Associate Director under whom the staff member is managed or with the Chief of Staff, may waive the obligation of a staff member to reimburse the Peace Corps in whole or in part whenever a waiver would be in the Peace Corps’ interests, such as (but not limited to) when:

(a) A staff member resigns because of personal illness or serious illness of a member of his or her immediate family;

(b) A staff member is financially unable to make the required payments because of financial hardship; or

(c) Requiring payment would be against equity or good conscience.

7.5 Payment

The Peace Corps may withhold monies otherwise due to the staff member to cover the cost of reimbursement to the Peace Corps for training as described above in the event that the staff member fails to fulfill their continued service or to reimburse the Peace Corps for the costs set out in the CSA.
8.0 Procedures

Procedures implementing this Manual Section will be set forth in the MS 664 In-Service Staff Training Procedures, which will be developed by OSLD in consultation with OGC and must be approved by the Learning Council.

The Senior Policy Committee of the Peace Corps has chartered the Learning Council to serve as a forum for decisions and discussion of learning strategy applicable to all Peace Corps staff as well as approval of certain related procedures. (See Learning Council Charter and By-Laws).

9.0 Effective Date

The effective date is the date of issuance.