MS 664 Staff Learning and Development Procedures

Effective Date: September 30, 2022
Responsible Office: Office of Management/Office of Staff Learning and Development
Supersedes: 03/29/19; 03/23/17

1.0 Planning and Evaluating Learning and Development

1.1 Agency-wide Training Needs Assessment

(a) The OSLD, in coordination with the Agency Strategic Plan and in cooperation with the Agency Directors, will conduct an Agency-wide Learning Needs Assessment for Peace Corps Staff to identify existing and foreseeable staff and organizational formal training and learning and professional development needs.

(b) Based on this assessment, the OSLD, will develop and recommend the Learning Strategy to the Learning Council for endorsement.

1.2 Staff Learning Strategy

In developing the Staff Learning Strategy, the following priorities will be considered:

(a) Learning and development activities that are needed as a result of changes in the Peace Corps mission, program, workforce, new technology or new work assignments;

(b) Learning and development activities include training that is needed to correct deficiencies in the knowledge, skills, or abilities necessary to satisfactorily perform current job tasks; or

(c) Activities that would enhance performance or meet future staffing needs and develop skills currently lacking.

1.3 Evaluation of Learning and Development Activities

The OSLD will use the results of the Employee Viewpoint Survey and other Agency data sources as a basis for an evaluation of staff training and learning and development initiatives. The OSLD will analyze survey responses to questions on the topic of staff learning needs and will present the analysis to the Learning Council to determine how well current staff learning and development programs contribute to mission accomplishment and meet organizational performance goals.

1.4 Options for Developing Staff

OSLD will explore a full range of options to meet mission-related organizational and staff learning and professional development needs. The options include, but are not limited to,

classroom training, on-the-job training, eLearning, webinars, virtual teleconferences, employee self-development activities, coaching, mentoring, career development counseling, details, rotational assignments, cross training, and other learning and development activities at retreats and conferences.

1.5   Interagency Training

Peace Corps may share training and development programs with other agencies when this would result in better training, improved services, or savings to the Government.

2.0   Selecting Staff for Learning and Development Activities

2.1   Consideration for Selection of Staff

When selecting staff for learning and development activities, the following should be considered:

   (a) Availability of staff who are already trained but not being utilized.

   (b) Degree of an individual's need for training to acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform his or her current job or qualify for another position at an accelerated rate.

   (c) Individual's need to complete mandatory/required training.

   (d) Potential of the individual for advancement, including his or her capability to learn skills and acquire knowledge and abilities needed in a new position.

   (e) Extent to which the individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities are likely to be improved by learning and development activities.

   (f) Length of time and degree to which the organization expects to benefit from the learning and development activities.

   (g) Learning and development opportunities previously afforded the individual.

   (h) The individual's own interest in and efforts to improve his or her work.

3.0   Supervisory, Management, and Executive Development

3.1   Management Succession

The Office of Staff Learning and Development provides for the development of individuals in supervisory, managerial, and Senior Foreign Service (SFS) positions, as well as individuals identified as potential candidates for those positions based on the Peace Corps integrated workforce planning efforts. Programs focused on continuity of leadership development, starting with supervisory positions and proceeding through management and executive positions, are part of the OSLD effort in this regard. Such programs are provided when individuals make critical

career transitions, for instance from a non-supervisory to a supervisory position, or from a managerial to an executive role. This training will be consistent with assessments of the Agency's and the individual's needs.

    (a) In conjunction with offices, OSLD will make available supervisory, managerial, and executive employee development and training programs including evaluation of such programs in order to:

        (1) Develop strong managers to bolster organizational capability;

        (2) Ensure adequate numbers of well-prepared and well-qualified candidates to fill leadership positions based on the Agency's integrated workforce planning efforts;

        (3) Provide opportunities for continuous learning experiences such as details, mentoring, coaching, learning groups, and special projects;

        (4) Correlate programs to OPM's Federal leadership competencies and Peace Corps identified competencies (future) needed by supervisors, managers, and executives.

    (b) OSLD provides training within one year of an employee's initial appointment to a supervisory position and thereafter, but at least once every three years, by providing each supervisor and manager additional training on the use of appropriate actions, options, and strategies to:

        (1) Mentor staff;

        (2) Improve staff performance and productivity;

        (3) Conduct performance appraisals; and

        (4) Identify, assist, and manage unacceptable performance.

3.2   Executive Development

OSLD will provide guidelines to each senior executive to prepare, implement, and update regularly an Executive Development Plan (EDP) which will:

    (a) Function as a guide to help SFS members meet Agency and office needs for leadership, managerial improvement, and organizational results;

    (b) Enhance an executive's existing competencies to strengthen the executive's performance;

    (c) Provide opportunities and assignments to develop a broader perspective in the agency as well as Government-wide;

    (d) Be reviewed annually and revised appropriately by OSLD and designated Senior Staff;

    (e) Be subject to approval by designated Senior Staff; and

(f) Provide for sabbatical or other long-term assignments outside the Federal sector.

4.0 External Training Administration

4.1 Training Requests

(a) Unless otherwise specified, all external training requests, except requests for in-house training, will be initiated and approved via a completed SF-182.

(b) Any individual on staff who attends external training without getting prior approval may be held liable for all costs associated with that training unless administrative error can be clearly demonstrated.

(c) Administrative Officers (AO) are responsible for the following:

(1) Ensuring that all SF-182 training requests are accurate and complete; and

(2) Processing a signed, electronic copy of each approved SF-182.

4.2 Registration

The AO, or other designated official (e.g. Office purchase card holder) is responsible to contact the vendor and reserve space, making sure that any necessary registration materials or forms have been completed and forwarded to the vendor.

4.3 Payment of Expenses

The Peace Corps has the authority, contingent upon training needs and available funding, to pay all or any part of the expenses associated with approved external training. The training must be related to current or anticipated future work assignments. Costs associated with travel and per diem to attend a course will be paid from an Office's travel funds unless they are included as part of the course fee.

4.4 Retroactive Authorization of Payment for Training Expenses

Training expenses must be authorized before an individual attends an external training activity. In rare circumstances, authorization to pay for training expenses may be approved retroactively as follows: when no continued service agreement is necessary and the approval process was not completed prior to the assignment of the employee to training because of administrative error.

4.5 Authorized Conferences

Only conferences that are deemed to be job-related and necessary may be approved for payment via submission of the SF-182. Attendance at a conference for training purposes may be sponsored by the agency if the conference is on an approved SF-182 by the individual's manager or supervisor prior to attendance, and:

(a) The announced purpose of the conference is educational or instructional;

(b) The content of the conference is relevant to improving individual or organizational performance;

(c) The individual will derive developmental benefits from attending; and

(d) The individual will share knowledge obtained from the conference with others upon return to the job.

4.6   Training to Obtain Degree

No staff member may be selected or assigned to training through an accredited academic institution if such training is solely for the purpose of providing an opportunity to the individual to obtain one or more academic degrees. The payment or reimbursement of the cost of such training under these circumstances is prohibited.

5.0   Reporting and Recordkeeping

All staff must be entered into the Personnel Tracking System (or equivalent) to create an email address, which is a requirement for accurate tracking of staff learning and development priorities (Federally mandated and Peace Corps mandated) in the LMS LearningSpace.

Each office is responsible for entering all staff (PSCs and United States citizen direct hire employees (USDHs)) into the Personnel Tracking System (or equivalent). It is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure completion of Mandatory Training and support staff learning and development.

Alternative methods of completion, e.g. group sessions, remain available to meet some staff learning and development needs.