



Development planning

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

Planning for and investing in the development of employees is essential in order to support effective performance of individuals, teams and whole organisations. It enables us to build the capabilities that we will need in the future and promote an agile public sector which can respond to changing demands. Our commitment to the learning and development of our people creates a mutual benefit: supporting career resilience and the realisation of employee potential, while ensuring sustainable public sector performance through an engaged and skilled workforce.

BENEFITS OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

- Promotes a targeted approach to learning and development activities, so they add the best value for the organisation and the individual
- Supports continuous improvement and enhanced performance from individuals in their current job
- It can be more effective to develop the skills and knowledge of existing employees than to continually bring in new people from outside the organisation
- Helps provide more flexibility for managing workload in your team, through cross-skilling and providing broader exposure to different responsibilities
- Can assist individuals in preparing for their next job or progressing their career goals, helping them realise their potential, increasing the chance of retaining talent in the public sector.

WHEN TO DO DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

- When someone new joins your team, to help structure their induction and support their transition towards becoming fully productive and effective in their role
- At least twice a year as part of formal performance management and development reviews, to identify relevant support that needs to be in place in order to achieve certain objectives or standards
- In response to changes in your work area – these could be legislative changes e.g. new training in response to compliance standards, or operational changes e.g. learning how to use a new system
- To address gaps in knowledge or skills that become apparent through monitoring and feedback conversations
- To support career goals that emerge through good quality performance management and development conversations during the course of the year.

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QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

HOW TO IDENTIFY RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

There are a number different reference points that are useful to help identify relevant development activities for individual employees in your team:

- Organisational needs – there may be specific activities that are mandated by your agency or business area in order to maintain compliant operations (e.g. health and safety, changes in regulations or legislation). There may also be specific capabilities that are needed in the future e.g. such as key areas identified in a strategic plan or workforce development plan.
- Job specific needs – these are specific activities that relate to being able to perform effectively in a specific job role. They can include defined technical/ professional knowledge and skills that need to be maintained to a certain standard or level of accreditation. They may also include personal effectiveness knowledge and skills such as working with customers, leading a team, or influencing key stakeholders. The role description and any competency frameworks used in your agency or a particular technical discipline will be important points of reference to identify job-specific needs.
- Individual needs – there may also be specific development activities that are linked to an individual employee's strengths, experience, personal interests and career goals. It is important to ask what kind of development they see as important to help support their performance in their current role and also to potentially prepare them for other positions in the future.

PRIORITISING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The reality is that while there may be a wide range of development activities that someone might be interested in, we all have limited time and resources and need to prioritise around what matters most. One way to do this is to discuss with each employee in your team which are activities are:

- Must do – because they are required to maintain compliance standards for the organisation and/ or legislation
- Should do – because they directly support the person's performance in their current role and the specific goals/objectives or standards that have been agreed
- Could do – because they link to broader aims of the organisation such as strategic capabilities, workforce plans, succession plans or the employee's career goals.

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNING

There are a number of different ways that employees can develop at work, and using a combination of different approaches may be necessary to get the best outcomes. There has been a tendency in the past for people to assume that all development takes place through formal training or education, but studies into adult learning in the workplace shows a different pattern.



On the job experiences

About 70% of learning at work takes place on the job through solving problems, project work, secondments and other day-to-day activities. This is about learning from experience, from the challenges, problems and opportunities that the work of everyday brings. In other words, learning by trying things out for yourself and seeing what works in real situations.



Relationships and feedback

Another 20% is self-directed learning and could include drawing on the knowledge of others in the workplace, e.g. work-shadowing, informal learning, communities of practice, personal reading, internal coaching and mentoring, and support and direction from managers and colleagues. In other words, learning vicariously from observing other people or drawing down on their experience.



10% formal training

Only about 10 % of learning occurs through formal learning, whether a face-to-face workshop or online course.

The implication of this is that there are likely to be a wide range of development activities that can be identified within the scope of an employee's current role, contacts, and resources in your organisation before needing to formal training. These are also more likely to lead to practical transfer of learning which enhances job performance.

LEARNING STYLES

Not everyone will take in new information and learn in the same way you do. Some people find that having visual cues, diagrams, or pictures to be the best way to grasp new concepts and how they fit together. Others prefer to talk through new approaches with other people who have experience in using them. Some like to read about the theory and summarise the key points for themselves before putting things into practice. Others prefer to be "hands on" and jumping straight in to try things out for themselves so they can learn by trial and error. It is useful to ask employees in your team what they find the most effective style of learning for them, so that you can help them incorporate this into their development plan.



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Where possible, it is better to have at least some activities that correspond to an employee's learning style so they are energised and motivated to take these forward. Otherwise, they may tend to look at their development plan as a series of chores rather than stimulating activities. There are a number of structured questionnaires and profiling tools available that can help draw out someone's learning style if they are having trouble pin-pointing what works best for them. Ask your Human Resources team for advice as to how you can do this.

KEY POINTS

- Development planning is important for enabling performance, both for individual employees and the organisation
- Triggers for development activities can come from a range of different sources and it is important to reference what is needed for the organisation, for the specific job, and the individual employee
- Prioritise activities which will add the most value and provide mutual benefit for the organisation and individual employees
- It is important to think laterally about the range of activities at your disposal to support employee development, not just relying on formal training courses
- You may need to consider the different learning styles that individual employees have to help them tailor their development plan to their preferred approach where possible