Professional Development Policy



Providing employees with training and development opportunities not only contributes to the quality and effectiveness of your organization it also serves to motivate and retain employees. Professional development should address both organizational needs (the competencies required to achieve organizational goals and objectives) and individual needs (the competencies employees require to do their job), and reflect the organization's overall philosophy on learning. Furthermore, when establishing an employee development policy you need to consider both the financial and human resource capacity of your organization to support employee training and development.

Financial capacity
It's important to ensure that available funding is set aside for training. It should also be considered how the funds will be allocated, whether on a first-come first-serve basis, with a set amount per employee, training in line with organizational priorities, or a combination thereof.

In an organization where training and development is being used as a key motivation and retention tool, transparency of approval process and distribution of funds is critical. Organizations should ensure that the process prevents funds from being exhausted early in the year, and thus penalizing employees who want access to training and development programs that are not available until the latter half of the year.

HR capacity
Will the organization be able to cover all operational needs of the organization while employees are involved in training and development activities?

- The number of training days a year an employee may take
- The positions that must be covered off during regular business hours (therefore, which, and how many, employees may be on training at any one time)

Training and development options
Organizations should also determine the types of training and development they are willing to support. Types of training and development include:

- Job specific training – training and development that increases employee skills and abilities to meet the requirements of the current position
- Career development – training and development that build employee competencies to prepare them for future positions
- Educational development – courses through a credited educational institution

(often a separate policy is established to deal with educational leave and tuition)

Furthermore, training and development can be on-the-job (informal) or formal training programs. On-the-job training and development includes activities such as:

- Peer or supervisor coaching on particular job-related skills
- Mentoring, with an internal or external mentor on job and career related skills and abilities
- Job rotation
- Job shadowing
- Cross training
- “Acting” responsibilities when superiors are away

Formal training includes professional development programs, such as:

- Classroom training
- Online training
- Video training
- Conferences and seminars