

SECTION 8

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

8.06 CORPORATE LEARNING

AUTHORITY: CIVIL SERVICE ACT

ADMINISTRATION: PEI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

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1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 The Prince Edward Island Public Service Commission has developed a Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure for the promotion and support of employee learning to:
- a) Align learning at the individual level, small group level, department level and corporate level with that of the strategic direction of the organization;
 - b) Align learning at the individual level with that of the individual performance management plan;
 - c) Provide accessible learning opportunities both internal and external to the organization addressing the needs of the individual, small group, department, and corporation;
 - d) Provide a balance of relevant formal, informal, synchronous, asynchronous and collaborative opportunities for learning;
 - e) Develop internal programs and engage external providers which gives due consideration to learning styles and delivery methods; and
 - f) Provide direction on the transformation to a learning organization.

2. APPLICATION:

- 2.1 All employees of the provincial civil service (as outlined in 6.9).

3. POLICY STATEMENT:

- 3.1 The Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure establishes the government's position on learning and development. Government recognizes and values the significant contributions of its employees to the provision of quality programs and services. Government is committed to the continuous learning and professional development of all employees.

A learning organization allows for continual improvement in efficiency, effectiveness, and capacity to meet the needs of the public; attraction and retention of employees; innovation in a knowledge based, global economy; and improvement in employee engagement. This policy/procedure is closely tied to the Performance Management Planning Policy (Policy 8.02). The procedure establishes the processes to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities as well as a means to provide

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financial support and time away from work for eligible employees wishing to improve their skills and knowledge.

4. DEFINITIONS:

- a) **Asynchronous Learning** is the idea that individuals learn the same material at different times and locations.
- b) **Collaborative Learning** can be either formal or informal and involves learning through interactions with others.
- c) **Communities of Practice** are informal, self-organized networks of peers with diverse skills and experience in an area of practice or profession. Such groups are held together by the members' desire to share their skills and advance their own knowledge by learning from others and mentoring.
- d) **Delivery Methods** consist of the techniques and materials used by learning providers to structure learning experiences.
- e) **Formal Learning** involves curriculum designed and delivered to learners, and includes classroom instruction, e-learning, mentoring, coaching, secondments, and courses offered by government learning facilitators or by external service providers.
- f) **Informal Learning** is learning that usually occurs spontaneously and outside of formal, designed activities. It is usually initiated by learners and can involve everything from asking co-workers for help to seeking out expert knowledge on the internet.
- g) **Learning Organization** can assume many definitions but for the purpose of this document we will use the following definition from Peter Senge's The Fifth Discipline. "*Organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create results, they truly desire ... and where people are continually learning how to learn together*" (Senge, 2006).¹
- h) **Learning Styles** can be described as a set of factors, behaviours, and attitudes that facilitate learning for an individual in a given situation. Styles influence how learners learn, how instructors teach, and how the two interact.

¹ Senge, P. M. (2006). The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. Broadway Business.

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- i) **Performance Management Plans** are the result of the performance management process. The plan is a document which results from the opportunity supervisors and employees have to formally discuss and document performance that occurred during the planning period and to jointly set goals/objectives for future development and performance.
- j) **Strategic Direction** is a course of action that leads an organization to accomplish their goals and objectives.
- k) **Synchronous Learning** refers to a learning event in which a group of learners are engaging in learning at the same time.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

5.1 General

- a) Learning is a shared responsibility between the individual and the employer. There is a mutual obligation in which is an obligation on the part of employees to take charge of their own professional development and training and an obligation on the part of the employer to offer an environment that is conducive to learning.
- b) Government supports a distributed approach to leadership and expects that all employees, regardless of position or title, will demonstrate and develop their leadership capabilities.

5.2 Public Service Commission

- a) Responsible to provide leadership in the area of employee development.
- b) Provides government-wide communication of the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure and assists departments with developing their approach to implementing it. Assistance may include consultation, training, and facilitation.
- c) Advises departments on SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) practices for implementing the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure.
- d) Monitors the overall implementation of the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure, identifies and responds to issues as they arise, assists in identifying metrics to determine the effectiveness of the

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policy, and prepares progress reports for the Learning and Development Advisory Committee and the Public Service Commission Annual Report.

5.3 Employees

- a) Accept responsibility for their own learning throughout their career with the provincial civil service.
- b) Invest time and energy in learning and in integrating learning into their everyday approach to work.
- c) Engage in the performance management planning process and take responsibility for their professional and career development which is beneficial to their own professional growth and to the employer.
- d) Employees holding positions that require professional designation or license must maintain their professional body's registration requirements.
- e) Employees are asked to identify specific learning and development opportunities which may include conferences, leadership training, as well as special projects or temporary assignments. The discussion may also include associated funding requirements which may include financial support (see 6.11) or course subsidization (see 6.12).
- f) Employees will access the most appropriate funding source to assist them in achieving the learning and development goals that have been identified in their performance management plan. Access to financial support and time away from work for employee development opportunities is subject to discussions between the supervisor and employee in consideration of principles listed in section 6.0.
- g) Employees will ensure that they have received approval from their supervisor for all formal learning activities.
- h) Employees at all levels of the organization are expected to learn from past and current experience and incorporate best practices and lessons learned into their day-to-day work.
- i) Employees at all levels of the organization are expected to learn in a cross-cultural environment where diversity (culture, background, age, ideas, etc...) is respected and valued.

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- j) When the learning and performance goals within the performance management plan have been attained, the plan should be updated to ensure development is continuous, planned and focused.

5.4 Deputy Ministers

- a) Oversee, promote and guide the process of implementing the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure.
- b) Ensure that the introduction and implementation of the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure is incorporated into the human resource planning process.
- c) Ensure that management has the necessary tools and support to implement the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure.
- d) All Deputy Ministers are expected to demonstrate their commitment to ongoing and advanced professional development through the pursuit of appropriate learning opportunities.
- e) Deputy Ministers should encourage senior leaders, managers, teams, and individuals to participate in “communities of practice” to share best practices across departmental boundaries.

5.5 Directors/Managers/Supervisors

- a) Monitor department and workplace priorities, and identify the talent needed to meet those priorities.
- b) Contribute to the ongoing development of a workplace environment that welcomes learning by showing respect for different experience, perspectives, and opinions, and encouraging the transference of learning to the job.
- c) Encourage and support continuous learning by providing opportunities for employees to participate in relevant department activities, apply new learning in the workplace and share their new knowledge and skills with co-workers.
- d) Help employees by reviewing their annual performance management plans through scheduled and informal conversations, reviewing progress and removing barriers to learning.

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- e) Supervisors will outline professional development needs in accordance with current and future organizational requirements and the employee's ongoing development and/or performance. These needs arise as a result of succession planning and ongoing performance management discussions.
- f) All Directors/Managers/Supervisors are expected to demonstrate their commitment to ongoing professional development through the annual preparation and completion of their own performance management plans and through the pursuit of appropriate learning opportunities in leadership.

5.6 Human Resource Managers

- a) Provide expert support and advice to management and employees in relation to the performance management process and identification of appropriate department learning opportunities.
- b) Ensure that employees receive information on current and upcoming development opportunities (informal and formal) that support the goals and activities outlined in their performance management plans and that support the organizations strategic direction.
- c) When required, prepare reports describing the department's ongoing progress with regard to implementing the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure. The reports may be used by departments to assess the effectiveness of performance management plans and to map out future development activities within the department.
- d) Recommend and support the implementation of learning strategies that reinforce the department's learning climate.

6. PROCEDURES:

- 6.1 A learning and development discussion will occur between employee and immediate supervisor, at a minimum, on a yearly basis as part of the performance management process (see Policy 8.02 – Performance Management Planning in the Public Service Commission Human Resource Manual).
- 6.2 Performance management plans should support department priorities and goals and should form the basis of training and development approved for

an employee. Plans may also form the basis for determining future requirements for training and development.

- 6.3 Learning is a shared responsibility between departments and their employees. There is a mutual obligation. The department is obligated to provide an environment that encourages the acquisition and application of learning. The employee is obligated to take charge of their own growth and development.
- 6.4 Informal and formal learning activities should be included in performance management plans with priority given to the informal learning that occurs when employees have the chance to learn from work experience and from relationships or connections with others. Generally, about 70%-80% of the development activities in a learning plan should be informal and may include, for example, special projects/assignments, participation on working committees, and networking. Formal learning activities such as workshops, secondments, mentoring, coaching, courses, and e-learning are important, too, and may comprise about 10%-20% of the activities in a learning plan.
- 6.5 Learning opportunities across divisions and across departments are encouraged. Departmental leadership teams may initiate these opportunities as required.
- 6.6 Implementation should reflect the principles of adult development which includes recognizing prior knowledge and experience, setting learning objectives, selecting the most effective means to meet those objectives and treating the learner with respect.
- 6.7 Each department should implement the Corporate Learning Policy/Procedure in a manner that best suits their operational objectives, while remaining consistent with the purpose, goals and responsibilities outlined in the policy.
- 6.8 Each department should consider knowledge and skill transfer as critical for performance management and succession planning throughout an employee's career (see Policy 2.04 – Knowledge Transfer in the Public Service Commission Human Resource Policy and Procedures Manual).
- 6.9 Eligibility Criteria:
 - a) Access to training and development programs is available to full-time and part-time classified employees, temporary employees appointed

through competition by the Public Service Commission for a minimum of a one-year term, and contract employees hired for a minimum of a one-year term.

- b) At the discretion of the employing department, and/or upon recommendation from the Public Service Commission, interns and students may participate in corporately sponsored learning opportunities which do not result in any additional expense to a department or to the Public Service Commission.

6.10 Accessing Training and Development Opportunities:

- a) Training and development should directly support overall strategic direction of the department or organization, be job-related and/or support career planning as identified in the employee's performance management plan.
- b) Instances may occur when a learning opportunity arises that is not anticipated or documented in the current performance management plan. In this situation, the employer and employee may determine eligibility for financial support and time away from work. The performance management plan should then be updated appropriately.
- c) Government recognizes the benefits of employees obtaining and maintaining professional designations, certifications, and memberships. The fees associated with obtaining and maintaining these professional designations, certifications, and memberships are the responsibility of the employee.
- d) Where specific courses are required to maintain a designation, certification or membership, and is a requirement for the employee's position, the employee may be considered for support under the financial support guidelines (see 6.11) and/or course subsidization (see 6.12).
- e) All formal training must be approved by the employee's supervisor.

6.11 Financial Support Guidelines

- i. Access to financial support and/or time away from work for employee development opportunities are subject to discussions between the supervisor and employee with consideration given to the following:
 - a) The employee's documented performance management plan;

- b) The relevance and timing of the development opportunity;
 - c) Organizational values;
 - d) Operational requirements;
 - e) Recruitment and retention inducements;
 - f) The total expected costs weighed against the total expected benefits; and
 - g) Alignment among the employee's, divisional, and broader organizational objectives.
- ii. Employees seeking financial assistance should first apply to their departmental training fund, where available, before applying to one of the corporate Development and Training funds for Unionized or Excluded employees. Employees who apply to the Development and Training Fund are required to provide the funding amounts committed from other sources.
 - iii. Access to various training and development funds is guided by those funds respective terms and conditions of eligibility which should be guided by the Financial Support Guidelines outlined in section 6.11. i.

6.12 Course Subsidization

Course subsidization refers to employer mandated, or organized seminars, workshops and e-learning courses typically offered by organizations outside of government. This type of training is often identified through the employee's performance management plan. The employer pays the registration costs and provides the employee the time off to attend. Where travel is required the cost of travel is arranged through the normal travel policies.

6.13 Repayment of Assistance

Except for extenuating circumstances, employees who fail to successfully complete learning opportunities will forfeit any outstanding amount owed to them and may be required to repay any fees paid by the employer.