



*Promoting good practice  
in the management and  
support of aid personnel*

## Policy Guide and Template

### Learning, Training and Development

Created 2005, Revised in 2008

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## Foreword by People In Aid

*Effective delivery of organisational objectives is contingent upon staff having the right skills and experience in the short, medium and longer term. As labour markets get ever tighter, well targeted and focused opportunities for staff learning and development therefore, not only ensure high quality programme delivery today, but are a key strand in any organisational strategy to ensure continued development and desired impact going forward. Good quality professional development opportunities linked to career planning are one of the most valued elements of your employment proposition by staff and organisations which neglect this area risk experiencing unnecessarily high rates of staff turnover. Organisations that have an effective learning and development strategy and policy stand a far better chance of enjoying a continued supply of talented and motivated people to take up the challenges of the future. Those that neglect the effective learning and development of their staff through an appropriately thought through policy, however tight budgets may be, do so at their peril.*

### Introduction to the Policy Guides

Since its inception, People In Aid has been bringing together agencies working in the aid and development sector, to enhance the impact they make through better management and support of staff and volunteers.

This document is part of a People In Aid initiative, the 'Policy Guidelines', whereby agencies share their knowledge and experience of a particular issue in order to increase the quality of people management generally within the sector. It forms part of a bank of reference material on a range of people management themes. The material is categorised in three levels:

- Resource Sheets – one or two pages of references and sources of information
- Information Notes – slightly more detailed overview of a specific area of interest
- Policy Guidelines – more detailed documents offering guidelines on policy development

For those agencies which have no established policy we hope this document both prompts and assists you. For those agencies which already have a policy, perhaps the document will encourage a re-think in one or two areas, or a complete revision.

The following notes are not intended to give you an 'off the shelf' policy which you can immediately use within your own organisation. They do, however, offer you the thinking and experiences of other agencies in our sector and prompt you to assess how your own organisation, with its unique mission, values and resources, can best respond to your organisational and staff needs in this important policy area.

The People In Aid Code of Good Practice suggests that human resource policies benefit the organisation most when staff have been involved in their creation and are briefed on their use. In addition, effective policies require managers to implement them and monitor their effects.

We hope to be continually updating our policy guide documents. This relies on new knowledge and experience being relayed to us by you. Please e-mail us on [info@peopleinaid.org](mailto:info@peopleinaid.org) with your contributions and comments.

## Acknowledgements

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## Learning, Training and Development: Introduction

Quality and impact of aid and development work depends on the knowledge, skill and effort of humanitarian personnel. Organisations striving to achieve and maintain high levels of programme impact recognise that it is necessary to support their efforts by investing in the knowledge and capabilities of their staff.

Operating in a fast-changing environment organisations need to adapt in order to stay at the forefront – this means their people have to learn or extend their knowledge and skills, and master new ways of doing things in order to continue to provide a high standard of delivery.

Organisations also have legal responsibilities concerning certain aspects of training, as well as a general duty of care with respect to the roles and situations in which their staff operate.

The overall approach to staff development has historically been very training-focused, with organisations tending to adopt what could best be described as a paternalistic approach to deciding what training should be provided, for whom, and when. The current trend is towards encouraging individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, with organisations offering a range of opportunities and providing support within parameters which fit with organisational strategy and duty to the employee. Critical factors which can facilitate or hinder this shift towards a partnership approach are organisational culture, local custom and practice, staff expectations, allocation of resources, procedures underpinning the learning process, attitudes towards learning, and perceptions of rewards/benefits.

Linked to this is the concept of the psychological contract between the organisation and the individual: a range of surveys reveal that staff find opportunities for personal and professional development highly motivational and such opportunities are greatly valued. In a sector where resources available to dedicate to pay and benefits packages are limited, opportunities to develop both personally and professionally are a valuable element of the employment proposition and total reward for staff. Indeed, studies indicate a growing trend of expectation among employees that their employer will provide learning and development opportunities, both to develop their skills within a role and to facilitate their transition through or out of the organisation.

The existence of suitable learning and development opportunities, with appropriate support, has been demonstrated as one of the indicators of high-performing organisations, where staff engagement, satisfaction and effort are closely correlated with organisational effectiveness. There are also direct impacts on recruitment and retention. An effective learning and development policy should therefore be viewed as a core strand of any HR strategy.

The purpose of a Learning, Training and Development policy is to:

- Clarify the organisation's values and beliefs in regard to developing staff

- Describe the main aspects of the organisation's provision for Learning, Training and Development activities
- Articulate the focus of Learning, Training and Development activities
- Inform staff about opportunities and how to access
- Provide a framework within which the particular Learning, Training and Development activities may vary but the overall approach, skills, and behaviours required to be developed remains consistent
- Set a benchmark for auditing purposes

Policy closely aligns with strategy and helps to define the conditions in which strategic decisions may successfully be implemented. But the policy will probably not contain specifics regarding those decisions, which are likely to vary over time with changes in organisational priorities or direction, whilst the general approach to learning and development remains the same. However, it may be helpful to indicate in general terms how the organisation arrives at its staff development strategy and how this reflects organisational values/beliefs. There may also be an indication as to how the planning stage is managed, and how this is linked to the broader planning cycle. A transparent approach to the processes of assessing training/learning needs at individual and organisational levels; planning; implementation; and evaluation supports the effective implementation of the training strategy.

Policy also guides procedure and practice, and while these may not be contained in detail within the policy, any procedures placing expectations on staff in terms of involvement – for example, personal development planning, evaluation of learning – can be communicated in an appropriate format with signposting from the main policy document.

An effective policy on Learning, Training and Development only has real value when it is part of an integrated approach to people management.

Staff development provision will also interact with other people management practices, for example:

- recruitment/selection – affects induction and required levels of ongoing skills and professional development; regular turnover requires replacement of capabilities and knowledge and raises issues around bringing skills in or “growing your own”
- succession planning – an approach which identifies individuals for specific roles implies the need to develop individuals ahead of time. An alternative approach is to develop a pool of talent within the organisation from which to draw for senior and leadership roles: this entails identifying individuals with potential and preparing them for these roles. In addition, questions arise as to what advice/support will be given to enable people to move into future openings; policy on internal vs. external recruitment; and to what extent promotion/transfer is seen as an integral part of developing current staff
- exit – this may include preparation for retirement; exit interviews which will feed back into needs analysis and planning; will also take into account ongoing professional development which may lead to the individual leaving the organisation because there are no future suitable roles
- performance management – the extent to which performance management is embedded in the organisation will have an impact on staff development activity. Objective feedback based on performance objectives or competencies provides valuable information to both the individual and the organisation as regards needs, and effectiveness of staff development

- recognition and reward – the way in which staff are rewarded and/or recognised for effort in specific areas will affect the importance given to development activities by individuals
- talent management – how does the organisation seek to retain talent, how does it facilitate progression in the organisation, what support is provided for exceptionally talented individuals, how are line managers (especially the senior team) equipped to manage them?
- career development – what information is available about progression, opportunities, what does the organisation tell people and how? What other guidance or advice about their careers do they have access to? Are people given feedback that enables them to make choices, supported in their professional development so they don't become “trapped” in the organisation, supported in moving on/out? To what extent are individuals' career goals linked into organisational succession planning?

### **Link to People In Aid Code Principles and Indicators**

Staff development policies underpin **Principle 6** of the People In Aid Code of Good Practice and are mentioned as one of the key indicators:

***Learning, training and staff development are promoted throughout the organisation.***

*We recognise the importance of relevant training, development and learning opportunities, both personal and professional, to help staff work effectively and professionally. We aim to instil a culture of learning in the organisation so that we and the staff can share our learning and develop together.*

#### **Indicators**

- 1 Adequate induction, and briefing specific to each role, is given to all staff.
- 2 Written policies outline the training, development and learning opportunities staff can expect from the organisation.
- 3 Plans and budgets are explicit about training provision. Relevant training is provided to all staff.
- 4 Managers know how to assess the learning needs of staff so they can facilitate individual development. Where appropriate training and development will be linked to external qualifications.
- 5 The methods we have in place to monitor learning and training ensure that the organisation also learns. They also monitor the effectiveness of learning and training in meeting organisational and programme aims as well as staff expectations of fairness and transparency.

There is also a direct connection with **Principle 3**:

***Good support, management and leadership of our staff is key to our effectiveness.***

*Our staff have a right to expect management which prepares them to do their job so we can, together, achieve our mission. Our management policies, procedures and training equip our managers to prepare and support staff in carrying out their role effectively, to develop their potential and to encourage and recognise good performance.*

And with **Principle 7**:

***The security, good health and safety of our staff are a prime responsibility of our organisation.***

*We recognise that the work of relief and development agencies often places great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk. We have a duty of care to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of our staff before, during and on completion of their period of work with us.*

Learning, Training and Development also come into play when considering Human resources strategy (Principle 1) and Staff policies and practices (Principle 2).

## **Definitions**

### ***Learning***

An ongoing process by which an individual (or organisation) may acquire knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes and behaviours. It can include both formal and informal methods and can be initiated and led by the individual.

Effective work-based learning may be linked to the action learning cycle, which is based on trying new approaches, receiving feedback, reflecting and modifying the approach.

Individual learning may come together as organisational learning. Some organisations put processes or structures in place to facilitate this. Those which successfully support the acquisition by individuals or teams of new knowledge or wisdom and support them in making this knowledge available for others to use in responding to their changing environment, may be regarded as learning organisations.

### ***Development***

Acquisition of skills, abilities, knowledge and behaviours which develop the individual's potential. It is less concerned with immediate job role and more future-focused, and takes the view that employees are capable of growing and adapting. It may incorporate or arise from training, education, and learning.

### ***Training***

Usually instructor-led, often a specific or finite intervention based on an identified need.

## **Developing a Learning, Training and Development policy**

Some of the key issues to consider when setting out to develop or update a policy are:

- Securing the commitment of the leadership team
- Alignment with organisational values and mission/vision
- Involvement of line managers – much of the implementation is likely to rest with them and it needs to be practicable
- Stakeholder mapping: who's involved, whose interests need to be taken into account, how will their support be gained?
- The overarching purpose of the policy and its ability to promote the right environment for implementing people development strategy
- The current and/or desired culture of the organisation
- How frequently the policy will be reviewed.

The policy will also be affected by, and itself affect, other HR processes, as discussed above (see Introduction).

## **Core Elements of a Learning & Development Policy**

The format of a Learning, Training and Development policy may vary according to the approach, culture and particular needs of an organisation, but typically the elements listed below are those that underpin the process of formulating policy. Each of the elements will interact with the culture of the organisation.

### **Vision/approach**

It is helpful to describe the organisation's view as to where staff development fits within the overall context of organisational mission, and to make linkages with the core values or guiding principles which underpin this.

In addition, identifying the organisation's approach in terms of the main focus of development activity, principal objectives, and assumptions relating to employee involvement, also help to clarify direction and set realistic expectations.

Questions it's useful to ask here are:

- How does learning, training and development support the organisation's overall purpose?
- What organisational values are embodied in our approach to staff development?
- What does the policy aim to achieve?
- What is the general approach – are individuals encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning?

Many organisations find that viewing staff development as a shared responsibility between the employer and the employee has the effect of building commitment and also encourages the development of a culture that supports learning across a wide range of methodologies.

- Is the focus more on acquisition of knowledge and skills, or on holistic development, or encouraging particular behaviours that reflect and promote the desired organisational culture?
- Where are the connections between building individual and organisational capacity?
- Do we have external stakeholders whose input on these issues would be valuable?

- If the organisation uses competency-based frameworks, what are the implications?

*For more information on competencies, please refer to People In Aid Information Notes on Developing Managerial Competencies, and Basic Training for NGO Workers <http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/publications.aspx>.*

## **Scope of Learning & Development Policy**

The policy may cover a wide range of staff or specific groups. Some international organisations include both paid staff and volunteers. Some have one policy covering both international and national staff while others have separate policies.

It's therefore helpful to define who is covered by the policy and who is not.

- If groups are excluded, is there any provision for them and how is this communicated?

There are specific issues around volunteers in the UK, who need to be treated differently from employees because training/education is regarded as a component in the employer/employee relationship. They should only receive training essential for the work assigned to them as volunteers in order to avoid this difficulty.

So the key question is:

- Who does the policy apply to?

Issues underlying this are:

- Do specific groups/roles have greater priority in terms of depth/range/urgency of development need?
- Are there particular challenges relating to specific groups e.g. International staff in remote locations, short-term contract staff?
- Are there elements that apply to everyone (e.g. induction) and elements that are targeted at certain groups only (e.g. management or field specific training)?

## **Responsibilities**

Responsibility for implementing specific aspects of the policy is likely to be assigned to individuals, groups or departments. It may be helpful to do some stakeholder mapping around this, identifying who is key to programme delivery, who enables, and who participates. This will typically include the senior leadership team, operational heads, line managers, HRD, staff; it may also include cross-functional groups, external consultants, donors, trade union or staff representatives.

Responsibilities may then be articulated, and this may include reference to specific processes, for example, needs assessment, planning of development activities, implementation, evaluation and continuous improvement of training standards (*for more information on these elements, please refer to Enhancing Quality in HR Management Handbook 2, People In Aid*). In many organisations these activities reside principally with HR or a Staff Development team, but others have found it helpful to draw together cross-functional teams including operational staff to assess

needs, for example. Responsibility for budget preparation and management also needs to be considered and again this may involve a number of key stakeholders.

Alternatively the policy may list each of the groups or individuals involved and set out their respective responsibilities. Policies often highlight here the vital role which line managers play in supporting staff development: most organisations expect their managers to set objectives with their staff, review performance, identify learning needs, provide feedback, ongoing support, facilitating learning opportunities, agree action plans and follow-up reviews, and possibly to act as coach to their staff. Some organisations assess line managers' performance in the area of staff development, by building this into their own performance objectives and ensuring adequate time is allocated to this activity and training provided to managers to feel competent and confident to undertake it. This may also be directly linked to specific management competencies.

It is also helpful to identify the responsibilities of the individual in terms of their engagement with learning activity and input to personal development planning, implementation of learning and evaluation, for example.

The list may also include external suppliers such as trainers, consultants or coaches.

- Who plays a part in implementing the policy?
- What is their specific contribution?
- What accountability exists?
- What arrangements are there for equipping line managers to support staff development?
- To what extent does the organisation recognise these responsibilities?

## **Mandatory training**

Some elements of an organisation's development activities are likely to be mandatory for all, or certain groups of staff. This could include training imposed by legal requirements, such as health and safety or first aid. Or it may be dictated by the employer's duty of care; for example, security training, briefing prior to international assignment, or instruction on specific equipment or techniques. Sometimes risks to the organisation or organisational priorities may highlight the need for training in particular topics or processes e.g. financial management and some aspects of people management.

Other elements of mandatory training will reflect the organisation's values or areas of work. For example:

- child-focused agencies may include child rights and/or child protection training;
- faith-based organisations may include training on faith-related aspects of their work, or personal spiritual development
- organisations specialising in gender may include training on gender issues for all staff.

Most organisations provide mandatory induction for all their staff. *For more information on induction, please refer to People In Aid Policy Guideline on Induction.*

- What training will be regarded as mandatory?
- How are decisions made about this?

- Are there legal requirements relating to specific topics or groups of staff?
- What are the optimum timescales for delivering the training?

### **Opportunities available**

Organisations may want to consider offering a menu of learning opportunities which staff may reasonably expect to experience in their “organisational lifetime”. Some organisations include induction as the starting point here, although others refer to separate documents on the topic.

The menu might include a range of methodologies, which might be characterised as **formal learning experiences**, for example:

- Team learning reviews
- E-learning
- On the job training
- Professional study
- Training courses
- Computer-based training
- Personal reading
- Traineeships
- Day release to attend college to study for formal qualifications or undertake a distance learning programme

or **informal work-based learning**, e.g.:

- Work projects
- Job rotation
- Secondments
- Shadowing
- Membership of task force
- ‘Acting up’

or a blend of both:

- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Action learning
- Planned visits
- Attendance at conferences
- Facilitated meetings with experts
- Access to materials/publications

The issues behind decisions around these approaches include cost, time required, timing, learning style preference, objectives, appropriacy to individual/situation, fit with organisational values.

Other questions that agencies have found it helpful to consider are:

- How do these various approaches complement one another?
- To what extent do they reflect or build the culture?
- Do they support the overall learning/development philosophy?

- What's the organisational commitment to some/any/all?
- What facilities/resources will be provided to support these opportunities, for example, time for learning, desks and space for computer based training (CBT), reading, action learning...?
- What provision will be made for staff who do not have ready access to learning events or materials – for example, staff on short-term contracts, in remote locations or in situations where there is limited budget? How will this be integrated into the overall approach?

There is a growing trend towards using coaching and mentoring and some organisations have initiated programmes using internal or external coaches/mentors. When using internal coaches some of the key issues here focus around equipping and support for the role of coach/mentor and recognition of their input, as well as allocation of time. Where external providers are used there is often concern about fit with culture, values and organisational direction. In both cases, it may be helpful to consider:

- What are the reasons for selecting this over other approaches?
- What is the purpose both at individual and organisational level?
- What boundaries and expectations need to be articulated?
- How does it fit with other work and learning activities?
- How do we disengage if necessary?
- How will we evaluate the impact?

*For more information on methodologies, please refer to People In Aid Information Note on Learning Styles and Methodologies.*

## **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

Some professionally qualified staff will be required to provide evidence of continuing professional development (CPD) in order to maintain their qualified status. Accredited training often plays a role here. Organisations may wish to take this into account when planning and budgeting.

## **Accessing training**

Transparent processes for individuals to access training or development opportunities are important for supporting effective implementation of development plans, and for ensuring equal opportunities. If the organisation is promoting a self-directed approach to learning, this aspect becomes particularly important.

Some organisations offer a menu of possible activities with information on how to access them. Normally this is via consultation with their line manager, who may then be able to authorise training, or refer the request on with their approval; sometimes requests are reviewed by a cross-functional group or by a staff development unit or HR.

In many cases the primary route is via Personal Development Plans (PDPs), which are often linked to the annual performance review process. This requires that the information in PDPs is comprehensively reviewed, either by line managers or HR, to ensure that the activities identified within them are implemented.

Where organisations have mandatory or routine training programmes in place, there are generally automatic processes for ensuring that individuals are picked up at the appropriate time. However, information about these programmes is available and staff are made aware of its mandatory nature.

Learner-centred organisations also find it useful to signpost sources of advice and guidance, so that individuals can discuss their own development needs confidentially and be assisted in obtaining relevant information. This could be with their line manager, a member of HR, a mentor, or other relevant person associated with the organisation, via a dedicated learning and development site on the organisation's intranet, or regular circulars and bulletins.

- How do we enable individuals to communicate their development needs?
- How do we collate and manage this information?
- What is the process for responding?
- Are our processes clearly understood by all staff?

### **Equal opportunities**

One of the basic underlying principles for all organisations is that staff will be treated equitably when it comes to eligibility for training and development. The ability of staff to access training affects not only their current performance in the job role, but also their long-term career development. Individuals who are excluded from training opportunities may be prevented from contributing fully to the organisation both now and in the future, and may legitimately claim that they have been disadvantaged by their employer as regards their current performance and their long-term career prospects. One of the most common complaints about learning and development among staff is perceived inequality when it comes to access to opportunities.

The way in which development activities are made available can sometimes disadvantage staff working part-time or flexible hours; it is also important to consider arrangements for people on leave (sick, annual, maternity) to ensure they don't miss out on critical training, especially that identified as mandatory. This may reflect on the employer's duty of care to ensure competency especially where it affects safety/wellbeing.

- How do we ensure equality of opportunity?
- Are there specific areas/groups which require a different approach?

A robust process for assessing and prioritising learning/training needs plays an important role in reducing the risk of discrimination claims. A transparent, equitable approach is also more likely to secure employees' commitment. A number of organisations include in their policies specific criteria by which requests for training are assessed; the criteria are generally linked to organisational benefits and resources. In some cases learning activities that are more related to personal or career development are assessed on the basis of open competition.

- What systems are in place for prioritising training needs?
- Do we use fair and equitable criteria?
- How do we ensure consistency?
- Are staff aware how training needs are assessed?

In addition managers must be equipped to help identify learning needs, make consistent decisions about appropriate provision of training opportunities to their staff, and support them in the transfer of learning back into the workplace to maximise the return on investment for all concerned. This in itself may represent a management training need.

### **Level of investment**

There are a range of different approaches to financial investment in staff development. Some organisations have a central budget, usually overseen by HRD; others devolve this to departments.

Budgets may be determined by carrying out a detailed costing of training plans. Some organisations make a broad comparison of the training plan with the previous year and adjust the budget accordingly. Others use an alternative method of setting a target percentage of the total staffing costs; typically this is 1 – 3 %. Budgets are normally reviewed annually. According to the PeopleCount Voluntary Sector 2006 survey of human resource activity in the UK voluntary and community sector, the median spend per head on training ranged from £200 - £705 per annum. The median was £279. The median number of off-the-job training days was 3.5 per employee.

In some cases, it has been possible to acquire funding from institutional donors for programme-related elements of training, and this forms an integral part of the programme budget. One agency has also acquired trust funding to support management development.

Where costing takes place it usually includes direct costs, including trainer/consultant fees, venue charges, accommodation/hospitality, travel and materials. Indirect costs are less frequently taken into account, and these might include: time spent on development activities by internal learning facilitators and by learners, support personnel; provision and maintenance of equipment; or general overheads. The overall cost of the HRD function is generally treated separately to the budget for development activities.

Out of the total budget, some agencies allocate a specific percentage for personal/career development as opposed to job-related training. This percentage is made available on a case-by-case basis.

Long-term professional study raises questions around the type and amount of support an organisation can offer. This could include time off, fees, books and materials. There may be a stepped approach offering different levels of support depending on perceived benefit to the organisation. An alternative is to set upper limits with regard to financial cost and/or time periods. Some agencies set eligibility criteria, e.g. length of service, satisfactory performance evaluations. Clawback agreements regarding repayment of fees etc in the event of giving up the course or leaving the organisation within a specified timeframe after completing a course are commonly used.

Some organisations also have arrangements for sabbatical leave associated with personal development purposes, for which a proportion of the development budget is set aside to be allocated on the basis of applications, which are reviewed by a specially convened panel.

- What methods of budgeting are most appropriate for our situation?

- Who controls the budget?
- What is included in the budget?

### **Repayment of training costs**

Some organisations require that staff undertaking training programmes continue to work for them for an agreed period after the training in order to reap the return on investment. If an employee leaves during this period they may be required to repay some or all of the training cost to their employer on a sliding scale depending on how long after the training they leave the organisation.

This approach has both pros and cons in that it could make some staff think twice about signing up for learning opportunities if they are on a fixed term contract or if they think they may need to leave for their next career move within the defined repayment period. This could have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of the overall learning and development strategy. It may also be perceived as unfair if an employer chooses to “clawback” the costs of mandatory training or some types of in-house learning.

Where it is applied this approach often focuses on support for professional qualifications, further education qualifications or significant external training where the organisation’s investment could be substantial and longer term. An example of a repayment schedule can be found below. It is not applied where the employee leaves due to redundancy.

Within 6 months 100% repayable  
6-12 months 90% repayable  
12-18 months 75% repayable  
18 months – 2 years 50% repayable

### **Development reviews and Personal Development Plans**

Most organisations promote regular performance and/or development reviews by line managers with individual staff members. They include a discussion regarding future development needs. Plans may then be drawn up which identify learning goals and suitable activities to achieve them. Both short and long-term development goals may be included. This then forms the basis of the planning stage of the learning, training and development cycle. Such discussions may also take place with regard to team and departmental level training needs.

Staff often need support and guidance in assessing and framing their development needs. Tools may be offered, either in written form or through workshops. One organisation provides self-help materials on its intranet, for individuals and managers to use.

If implementing PDPs, organisations also need to consider how the information is to be reviewed and processed. If by HR or a staff development unit, there are issues around volume and line manager involvement; if responsibility rests with the line manager there will be a need for clarity on organisational priorities and equitable treatment between employees. In order to handle a large volume of PDP feedback one possibility may be use of online surveys which also offer analysis.

Another challenge can be how to capture the information in the first place, especially if there are literacy or language issues, or line managers are unsure about the tools

that have been provided. While staff generally – across different cultures – demonstrate enthusiasm for development opportunities, the discussions need to take place in appropriate, enabling language (“What do you want to be able to do that you cannot do now, and what do you need in order to get there?”). This depends on the skill of the line manager in using the tools to support the process of discussion, and in feeding back appropriately.

Performance and personal development reviews generally take place at a specific point during the year. However, most organisations find that development plans retain an element of fluidity as circumstances change: ongoing discussion between the individual and the line manager reflects this and development activities flex accordingly.

- How are people helped to assess their own development needs?
- How is the information from PDPs reviewed and processed?
- What provision is there for adapting plans – and development activities - as situations change?

PDPs form one element of the planning process and are complemented by the top-down approach, which takes into account organisational direction and priorities. The two elements are inextricably linked. The organisational view may focus on, for example, compliance requirements, development of specific competencies, or knowledge, skills and attitudes required to embed process or culture changes. Analysis of organisational needs flows from review of organisational plans and may be achieved through direct briefing of HRD and also through close liaison with operational units and partner organisations. Questionnaires and interviews may also be used to obtain a picture of needs across the organisation as a whole.

In one organisation, teams and sections develop a learning plan which is linked to review of the operational plan. Individual development plans then connect with the team plan.

- What competencies are required to support achievement of the organisational plan?
- What direction are we moving and what skills are required for the future?
- Are there external factors dictating specific training/development needs?
- If the emphasis is on self-directed learning, how does the culture encourage the commitment and linkage of personal learning with organisational goals?

## **Record-keeping and information management**

Although training policies rarely address this topic specifically there is an underlying assumption that information of various types is required, and organisations will find themselves considering what their information needs are. Within Europe, data protection legislation applies to information about individuals.

Records of development activities are essential for any training imposed by legislation, for example, Health and Safety training. They also provide evidence for equal opportunities purposes. In addition, they support planning and management, including budgeting, and the evaluation process.

Some organisations have found it helpful to develop a database of skills held by staff which may be used to create special project teams or to assist in succession planning. It can inform strategic planning by indicating whether the organisation has

the capacity to achieve objectives within a specific timeframe. Carrying out a skills audit also provides a base point for assessment of needs across the organisation.

- What information is required and why?
- How is the information to be kept?
- Who is responsible for storing, managing and using the information?
- Who has access?
- How frequently will we review our information needs and uses?
- Are staff aware what information is kept?
- Have we taken account of Data Protection legislation?

## Evaluation

Policies normally highlight the organisation's requirement for learning activities to be evaluated. Generally the approach is qualitative and involves completion of questionnaires after the learning event, or alternatively a report or presentation. Evaluation is normally made against learning objectives identified in PDPs or prior to the learning event. Learners may be expected to use their acquired knowledge/skills to make suggestions for changes to working practices, thus linking into continuous improvement processes. In some cases there is further follow-up after a few weeks or months to assess impact on work performance by checking whether action plans resulting from the learning have been implemented. Annual reviews provide a further opportunity to evaluate long-term impact on personal, team and organisational objectives.

These evaluation mechanisms also allow for assessing inputs:

- quality of training delivery
- the process e.g. for action learning, project teams, mentoring
- materials e.g. for self-directed learning
- relevance of content

External accreditation of training can also provide a method of evaluating both inputs and learning outcomes.

- What is the purpose of evaluation?
- How and when will learning be evaluated?
- At what levels – individual, team, organisation? Immediate learning or long-term impact?
- Who will be involved in evaluation?
- How will feedback be handled?

Organisations may also want to consider return on investment approaches, whereby quantitative indicators may be produced. Assessing relative costs and benefits can allow comparison of different learning activities which might otherwise be difficult to measure against each other. Costs normally include both direct and indirect (see Level of investment, page 12), while benefits could include money saved (the cost of not doing it), increased income, efficiency savings, or wider impact.

- What measures are relevant for this learning activity and for our organisation?

*For more information on evaluation please refer to People In Aid Information Note on Training and Development.*

## Implementation

The way in which you implement and publicise your policy will depend on the culture and communication norms of your organisation. We have therefore not attempted to offer a “one size fits all” good practice implementation guide, suffice to say that clear communication and the opportunity to ask questions or involve staff in a discussion around the subject and its application within their operational context, as well as in the development of the policy itself, will help to raise awareness and understanding of the issues.

## References and Resources

CIPD Factsheet: Costing your spend on training, October 2004

Discussion paper: Helping People Learn: Aligning Individual and Organisational Learning, CIPD November 2003

Helping People Learn: strategies for moving from training to learning, CIPD 2005

Research Report: How do People Learn? CIPD, March 2002

HR Buyers Guide to Coaching, CIPD ([www.cipd.co.uk/guides](http://www.cipd.co.uk/guides))

Mentoring. People In Aid 2004.

For more information on organisational learning see website [www.bond.org.uk](http://www.bond.org.uk)

For more information on coaching and mentoring see [www.coachingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk)

For more information on Return on Investment, see [www.learnativity.com/roi-learning.html](http://www.learnativity.com/roi-learning.html)

For information on needs analysis survey tools see [www.surveystack.com](http://www.surveystack.com)

For benchmark information on learning and development and other human resources activity in the UK Voluntary & Community Sector see PeopleCount Voluntary Sector, 2006 published by Agenda Consulting in collaboration with People In Aid and the NCVO.

## Appendix 1: Sample Learning and Development policy

**NB:** *There are many different approaches to the format and content of a Learning, Training and Development policy, and the following is provided simply as one example, using a fictitious organisation. Some organisations provide a learning and development handbook which aims to cover every aspect of policy and practice. Others prefer an overarching policy document with supporting material such as managers guides, specific advice on applying for learning opportunities, etc. This sample policy is based on the latter.*

### RELIEF AID\* – Learning and Development Policy

**Date of Policy Issue:**

**Issue Number:**

**Date of Policy Review:**

#### Introduction

Relief Aid carry out a range of jobs worldwide using diverse and complex skills and experience. The Board and the leadership team recognises and values these skills and are committed to ensuring that all members of staff are in possession of the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their jobs to a satisfactory standard and to develop them to meet the future requirements of the organisation.

Relief Aid is also committed to supporting all staff members to achieve their potential, and therefore, aims to encourage relevant personal development for every individual. We seek to cultivate a learning organisation which will foster ongoing learning and development through both training and experience.

Staff at all levels will be equipped with the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to enable them to contribute to:

- the achievement of the strategic aims of the organisation
- their own continuous development towards career goals and in the interests of the future of Relief Aid

An internal training program is offered on a cyclical basis to deal with organisational needs. These needs are identified through performance appraisals, learning needs analysis and one-off incidents and activities. Training is provided by approved providers and in-house. Some training is mandatory for all staff such as Relief Aid's induction programme, some for certain jobs only, whilst other learning opportunities are offered based on individual need.

This policy aims to outline Relief Aid's overall approach to learning and development. Supplementary management guidelines and information on specific training programmes and learning opportunities and how to access them can be obtained from the Staff Development Unit.

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\* Fictitious agency

## Scope of the policy

The Learning and Development policy applies to all national and international staff of Relief Aid. It does not apply to volunteers based in national offices, for whom separate provisions apply: these may be found in the Volunteer Policy.

## Responsibilities

### *Management Responsibilities*

Relief Aid believes that the role of the manager is critical in encouraging and developing staff to become more qualified and competent to carry out their present or likely future responsibilities. Accordingly learning and development decisions will be made essentially on the grounds of the perceived needs of staff relative to their current or future role at Relief Aid to provide the opportunity for a career development.

It is the responsibility of all managers and supervisors to:

- identify learning needs with their staff through the performance appraisal process
- recommend requests for training and other learning and development opportunities before they are sent to the Human Resources Section for budgetary approval and enrolment

### *Employee Responsibilities*

Relief Aid has adopted the principle of self managed learning. While line managers are responsible for guiding the development of their staff and ensuring they have the skills and knowledge required to perform their jobs, each individual is expected and encouraged to take an active role in managing their own learning and development.

Relief Aid's staff development policy intends to balance its needs as an employer with the needs and aspirations of staff. We are developing a range of procedures and guidelines which will give all staff guidance as to how they can:

- improve their existing skills, and gain new ones, so that their performance and satisfaction is enhanced in their current jobs;
- gain experience and abilities so that they can take opportunities to apply successfully for other jobs;
- remain working within Relief Aid, but still maintain a fresh and flexible approach to their work.

## Types of Learning and Development opportunities

It is understood that not all learning objectives can be met by attendance at courses and other options will also be sponsored and supported by Relief Aid including, though not exclusively:

- on the job training
- staff interchange and secondment
- visiting other work sites/shadowing individual staff members
- project work
- mentoring and coaching
- literature and file review
- job redesign and multi-skilling
- lunchtime talks
- attendance at conferences
- action learning

Applications for sponsorship for formal educational programmes of study will be considered on a case by case basis based on the relevance to the current or potential future job, e.g. professional qualifications and accreditations. Relief Aid may offer some financial assistance or time off to study or a combination of both.

In order to apply for training (both internal and external) staff must complete a training request and approval form.

## **General provisions**

In order to secure the highest possible level of performance, Relief Aid leadership and managers aim to encourage the pursuit of continuous personal and professional development for all staff as follows:

- staff development will form key elements in departmental management plans and budgetary provision
- line managers will be made aware of their responsibilities to identify the development needs of their staff, to evaluate learning, and of their role as coaches and developers of the people they manage
- individuals will be encouraged to become committed to their own learning and personal development, seeking opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge
- the development of skills and knowledge will be promoted across the organisation
- priorities for training will be determined by organisational priorities and resources within the appropriate training budget
- training needs will be identified according to the corporate, functional and developmental skills required to achieve planned objectives
- training needs will be met by the most appropriate method, using internal and external providers, and making most effective use of resources
- the Staff Development Unit will promote, advise, monitor and coordinate evaluation of development activity
- all new staff will receive induction and other relevant mandatory training
- all staff will receive basic health and safety training, with more specialised training where relevant to a particular post
- where appropriate, staff will be supported in gaining professional or accredited qualifications if this assists attainment of organisational goals

## **Access to development opportunities**

- Line managers and staff will formally review development needs as part of the performance appraisal process. Personal development plans specifying development activities for the coming year will be produced by all staff and this information will feed into the training plans for each department.
- Information regarding learning opportunities is available on the Relief Aid intranet, and general enquiries about this should be directed to the Staff Development Unit, who can also help and advise on personal development issues.
- Staff are encouraged to discuss informally their development needs and progress with their line manager at regular intervals. Any areas not already included in the Personal development plan will be addressed as they arise.
- Decisions regarding development activities will be made on the basis of:
  1. organisational needs/priorities
  2. direct benefit to the organisation
  3. indirect benefit to the organisation
  4. cost/availability of resources

- Requests for assistance in gaining professional or academic qualifications should be made to the line manager who will pass them to the Staff Development Unit with his/her recommendations. A proportion of the staff development budget is held by the Staff Development Unit for this purpose. The level of support provided will depend upon the extent to which the proposed course meets the criteria above. Support can include study leave, fees, cost of materials.

## **Equal opportunities**

Relief Aid is committed to full equality of opportunity, both in terms of access to training and the development of individual potential. Decisions about training and development will be made without regard to race, gender, disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation and religion, and irrespective of working patterns.

## **Resources**

- A staff development budget of 3% of total staff costs
- A Training Panel has been established with management representation from operational units and the Staff Development Unit, to ensure training needs are defined and meet organisational priorities
- The Staff Development Unit provides coordination of learning activities, advice and guidance to managers and staff, training delivery and facilitation
- A Coaching Support Network offers support for line managers in coaching their staff.
- Country Managers also hold a small local training budget which can be used to meet local learning needs.

Relief Aid aims to provide learning opportunities in the most timely and cost effective manner. Most learning will therefore be provided within the operating base or as close as possible. There may be occasions, however, where staff will be required to travel to take part in a training course. Normal travel policy will apply in these circumstances.

## **Evaluation**

All development activities will be evaluated in terms of learning and impact. Prior to undertaking an activity, learning objectives will be set and after the activity learning will be evaluated in the light of these objectives. This will be recorded on evaluation forms and also discussed with the line manager. The longer-term impact will be evaluated at performance review, in relation to attainment of performance objectives and contribution to organisational goals.

In addition, evaluation will take place in order to assess the value of Relief Aid's investment in development activities. Feedback on the quality and content of training will be reviewed by the Staff Development Unit and, where relevant, internal trainers and designers.

## **Review**

The Learning and Development Policy will be reviewed by the Head of Staff Development on a 3-yearly basis, or earlier if required.

## Appendix 2: Personal Development Plan Proforma

### Relief Aid Personal Development Plan

*To be completed and discussed with your Line Manager*

<b>Name:</b> <b>Job title:</b> <b>Programme:</b> <b>Appraisal Period (dates):</b>
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<b>Development areas to be addressed</b> <i>(development needs)</i>	<b>Action plan to address these areas</b> <i>(development options)</i>	<b>Dates and responsibilities</b>

## Appendix 3: Learning Evaluation Form

### Relief Aid Learning Event Evaluation Form

<i><b>Personal Details</b></i>	<i><b>Learning Event</b></i>
Name	Title/topic
Job Title	Date
Team	Trainer/facilitator
	Location
Line Manager	Duration

Please take the time to answer the following questions. Some questions may require an answer as a rating from 1 to 5 and others a Yes/No response. Where the question dictates, or where you feel appropriate, please give your honest opinions and comments.

Please mark the following question with:

1 = Unsatisfactory    2 = Fair    3 = Good    4 = Very Good    5 = Excellent

	Rating	Comments
<b>The Event</b>		
Overall impression of this event		
The skills and concepts presented were relevant to the job role I will be doing		
Pitched at the right level		
Structure		
Balance (theory versus practical sessions)		
Quality of supporting documentation – will you refer to them		
<b>The Trainer/facilitator</b>		
Demonstrated a thorough understanding of the content		
Knowledge of the subject		
Maintained an appropriate pace for learning		
Presentation Skills		
Created a comfortable environment in which to ask questions and express concerns		
<b>The Booking</b>		
How did you find the booking procedure?		

## Learning Event Evaluation Form continued

- Did the event meet your objectives as defined in the pre-event questionnaire?  
Yes / No

If not, please comment:

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- What areas of the event did you find the most useful?  
Please comment:

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- What areas of the event did you find the least useful?  
Please comment:

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- Are there additional subjects, which should be included? Yes / No  
If yes, please comment:

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- How did you find the duration of the event?  
Too long / Just Right / Too short  
Please comment:

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- What did you learn which you can apply within your own job immediately?  
Please comment:

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- Would you recommend this course to someone else in your field? Yes / No  
Please comment:

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Do you have any additional comments?

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**Thank you for taking time to fill out the evaluation form.**

## Appendix 4: Relief Aid Training Costs Pay-back Agreement

*(Some organizations operate a pay-back system where staff who leave the organization within a given period after receiving training and development are required to pay-back a percentage of the cost. An example of such a policy follows)*

### UNDERTAKING TO REPAY COSTS INCURRED DURING EXTERNAL TRAINING COURSES

This agreement is dated **INSERT DATE**.

And is made between

..... (Employee) and

..... (Employer)

whereas

The Employee is employed by the Employer as a **INSERT JOB TITLE**.

The Employee has obtained a place in relation to a course of study leading to the award of **INSERT QUALIFICATION** in **INSERT SUBJECT** at **INSERT NAME OF INSTITUTE/COLLEGE** [“the Course”].

It is hereby agreed and declared that

In consideration of the Employer agreeing to meet the costs of the Course which are set out in the schedule to this agreement (the “Costs”), the Employee undertakes to reimburse to the Employer the Costs if:

The Employee voluntarily withdraws from or terminates the course early without the Employer’s prior written consent;

The Employee is dismissed or otherwise compulsorily discharged from the Course, unless the dismissal or discharge arises out of the discontinuance generally of the Course;

The Employee’s employment is terminated for any reason (other than redundancy) prior to the completion of the Course; or

The Employee resigns from the employment of the Employer either prior to the completion of the Course, or within 12 months after the end of the Course, except that in the latter case, the amount which would otherwise be due to the employer shall be reduced by a percentage, according to the following scale:

- If the employee leaves within 3 calendar months of having completed the training, then 75% of the costs should be re-paid.
- If the employee leaves within 6 calendar months of having completed the training, then 50% of the costs should be re-paid.
- If the employee leaves within 12 calendar months of having completed the Course, then 25% of the costs should be re-paid.

To the extent permitted by law, the Employee hereby agrees that the Employer may deduct a sum equal to the whole or part of the Costs due under the terms of this Agreement from their wages, or from any other allowances, expenses or other payments due to the Employee.

The amount due to the Employer under the terms of this Agreement is a genuine attempt by the Employer to assess its loss as a result of the termination of the

Employee's employment and takes into account the derived benefit to the Employer. The Agreement is not intended to act as a penalty on the Employee upon the termination of their employment.

#### SIGNED

..... (Employee's Signature)

..... (Employee's Name)

..... (Manager's Signature, for and on behalf of Relief Aid)

..... (Manager's Name)

NB This Agreement must be signed by both parties prior to the commencement of the Course.

#### SCHEDULE OF COSTS

**INSERT DETAILS OF COSTS TO BE INCURRED BY EMPLOYER IN RELATION TO THE COURSE**

Visit the online People In Aid member resource site for examples of current INGO L&D policies. **The People In Aid Policy Bank:**

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/resources/policybank.aspx>

The Training & Development Sources of Information **Resource Sheet** can be found on <http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/publications/training-development-sources-resource-sheet-final.pdf>

Other Learning **Information Notes** can be found on

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/publications/basic-training-for-ngo-workers-inote-final.doc>

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/publications/learning-styles-inote.pdf>

<http://www.peopleinaid.org/pool/files/publications/learning-methodologies-inotes-final.pdf>