

*INTERIM*

EMPLOYEE  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
TRAINING POLICY

**Corporate and Strategic Human Capital Initiatives  
NOAA - Workforce Management Office  
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## **INTERIM EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING POLICY**

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### **SECTION 1. PURPOSE.**

This Order provides policy and guidelines for implementing training and development programs for employees of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). It supplements instructions and guidelines found in the Government Employees Training Act (5 U.S. Code 4101-4119) and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 5 CFR Part 410 and is consistent with the new Department of Commerce DAO 202-410 currently in draft form.

### **SECTION 2. COVERAGE.**

The Order applies to all employees in NOAA covered by 5 CFR Part 410. It supplements policies governing the development of supervisors and managers (NOAA Administrative Order 202-411) and policies governing the development of individuals in and for the Senior Executive Service.

### **SECTION 3. LEGAL AUTHORITY AND DEFINITIONS.**

#### .01 Authority

Chapter 41 of Title 5, U.S. Code, authorizes government employee training. Authorities granted by the law include training that supports the agency's strategic plan and performance objectives, improves an employee's current job performance, supports the expansion or enhancement of an employee's current job, enables an employee to perform needed or potentially needed duties outside the current job at the same level of responsibility, or meets organizational needs in response to human resource plans and re-engineering, downsizing, restructuring, or program changes.

#### .02 Definitions

Chief Learning Officer. A person given primary responsibility for assuring that an organization's learning needs are met through appropriate training and development or other activities. The traditional title is Training Officer.

Competency. A measurable pattern of knowledge, skill, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to excel in work roles or occupational functions.

Continuous learning. The act or process of acquiring knowledge, skill, or competencies over the course of a lifetime or career.

Development. Development is generally considered to include training, structured on-the-job learning experiences, and education. Developmental programs can include experiences such as coaching, mentoring, or rotational assignment.

Developmental assignment. An assignment designed to meet the participant's and NOAA's learning objectives. Developmental assignments are distinct from details. Details are normally used to help the receiving organization accomplish its mission. Developmental assignments are documented on an Individual Development Plan. Details are documented using a Standard Form 52, Request for Personnel Action.

Individual Development Plan. A written plan agreed to by an employee and his/her manager that lays out the employee's learning needs and how those needs will be met.

Knowledge. An organized set of facts, principles, and strategies that are needed to perform a job.

Learning. The act or process of acquiring knowledge, skills, or competencies.

Long-term training. Any training assignment in a government or non-government facility on either a full-time or part-time basis that requires absence from assigned duties without charge to leave for more than 80 training hours.

Skill. The developed capacity to perform complex tasks related to work performance.

Training. Planned and coordinated programs of instruction in professional, technical, or other fields that are or will be related to an employee's job responsibilities. Training can be accomplished through a variety of approaches such as traditional classroom training, correspondence courses or self-study, university courses, e-learning, and professional conferences, seminars, and workshops that are educational or instructional in nature.

#### **SECTION 4. POLICY**

NOAA's strategic workforce management goals include (1) recruiting, hiring, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce with the competencies necessary to accomplish the Agency mission; (2) creating a responsive, high-performance culture; and (3) promoting knowledge-sharing, continuous learning and improvement, and a climate of open communications. In order to accomplish these goals, it is NOAA policy to make learning opportunities widely available to employees to enhance individual capabilities and competencies; build and retain a diverse, skilled and effective workforce; increase opportunities for inclusion; improve organizational performance; and maintain scientific, professional, technical, and

management proficiency.

## **SECTION 5. DETERMINING NEEDS AND ESTABLISHING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROGRAMS**

The essential aim of training and development is to assist NOAA in achieving its mission and goals by improving individual, and ultimately, organizational performance. More specifically, NOAA will:

.01 Identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to accomplish its mission both now and in the future.

.02 At least annually, conduct learning needs assessments to determine organizational and individual training and development needs. Assessments should be based on the required knowledge, skills, and competencies and should be linked to NOAA's strategic plan, Line Office (LO) and Corporate Office (CO) Operating Plans, and individual performance plans. Assessments may be conducted at any level of the organization using any appropriate methodology.

.03 Develop strategies and plans to address the identified learning needs and to focus resources on the highest priority needs. Line and Corporate Offices will focus on LO/CO-specific technical learning needs. NOAA corporate learning needs (e.g., general management and leadership development) will be addressed centrally.

.04 Ensure training and development programs build needed knowledge, skills, and competencies and include more effective incorporation of knowledge sharing, mentoring, and distance learning in the development of employees.

.05 Use on-the-job training through selected work experiences as a primary method of developing the job-related knowledge, skills, and competencies of employees.

.06 Use formal training and educational experiences to complement work experiences and to enhance organizational and individual performance.

.07 Encourage use of e-learning programs prior to seeking classroom instruction when distance learning has been determined to be effective and appropriate for the knowledge, skills, or competencies being developed.

.08 Encourage the development and use of Individual Development Plans to guide employee learning activities.

.09 Evaluate training and development provided to employees to determine whether the training and development is contributing effectively to NOAA's mission and strategic goals and to the attainment of required knowledge, skills, and competencies.

.10 Monitor and report metrics on training and development activities that contribute to the achievement of NOAA's workforce management goals as described in NOAA's Strategic Human Capital Management Plan and, wherever possible, assess and report linkages between training and development and productivity improvement/cost savings.

.11 Ensure that all employees have access to the training and development required to help NOAA

accomplish its mission and goals.

## **SECTION 6. RESOURCES.**

Each LO/CO will secure and allocate resources to meet training and development needs.

.01 Staffing. Assistant Administrators and Corporate Office Directors must designate a qualified person to be the Chief Learning Officer responsible for managing training and development in the LO/CO.

.02 Funding. NOAA's goal is to devote a sum equal to at least 1.5 percent of its total annual salary and benefits budget to training and development activities. Registration fees, required study materials, travel costs and per-diem expenses incurred for the specific purpose of training count toward this total. Salary paid to employees while in training does not count toward this 1.5% goal, because participation in approved training is a work assignment.

## **SECTION 7. SELECTION AND ASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEES FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT.**

NOAA will ensure fair and equitable treatment in the selection and assignment of employees for training and development.

.01 Selection of employees for training will be made without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicapping condition, political preference, marital status, and with proper regard for employee privacy and constitutional rights as provided by merit system principles set forth in 5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(2).

.02 Merit promotion procedures must be followed in selecting career, career conditional, or term employees for training: (1) given primarily to prepare for advancement and required for promotion (e.g., college or university courses which meet minimum education requirements set by OPM for the position to which the trainee would be promoted) and (2) training which helps employees meet minimum educational requirements for reassignment to a position in a different field of work with known promotion potential at the time of selection for training.

.03 When selecting employees for training, the following should be considered:

- a. Availability of employees who are already trained but not utilized.
- b. Relative degree of employee's need for training.
- c. Relative potential of employees for advancement.
- d. Relative extent to which the employee's knowledge, skill, competencies, or performance are likely to be improved by training.
- e. Relative ability of employees to pass the training on to others upon return to the job.
- f. Relative length of time and degree to which the organization expects to benefit from the training.
- g. Training opportunities previously afforded employees.

h. Employees' own interest in and efforts to improve their work.

i. Extent to which employees are eligible for outplacement training under the reduction in force procedures.

.04 Contractor employees are generally not eligible to attend training paid for using appropriated funds. Since contractors are selected for their expertise in a subject area, contractors may only be trained in skills they are not required to bring to the job. Contractors may be trained in rules, practices, procedures and/or systems that are unique to the employing agency and essential to the performance of the contractor's assigned duties. However, a contractor may attend training sessions if there is an available slot in a procured training session that could not be filled by a Federal employee.

### **SECTION 8. INTERAGENCY TRAINING.**

NOAA may provide or share its training and development programs with other agencies when this would result in better training, improved service, or savings to the Government.

### **SECTION 9. PAYMENT OF TRAINING EXPENSES.**

Federal law and regulations provide many ways to support employees' training and development. NOAA encourages the use of these flexibilities to meet needs and to support employee self-development and continuous learning.

.01 Job Related Training. LOs/COs determine which expenses constitute necessary training expenses. Offices may pay or reimburse an employee for necessary expenses incurred in connection with approved training such as payment of travel and per diem as provided in 5 U.S.C. 4109(a)(2).

.02 Approval of Training and Development. Before approving training and development requests, LOs/COs must assure that: (1) the knowledge, skills, and competencies to be gained from the training or development are necessary to meet identified needs; (2) the proposed training is the most economical and effective means of developing the required knowledge, skills, and competencies; and (3) the proposed training is consistent with current policy, legal requirements, and NOAA and LO/CO priority learning needs.

.03 Conferences/Meetings. LOs/COs may sponsor an employee's attendance at a conference or meeting as a developmental assignment under 5 U.S.C. 4110 when the following four conditions are met:

a. The announced purpose of the conference is educational or instructional.

b. More than half of the time is scheduled for a planned, organized exchange of information between presenters and audience which meets the definition of training in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 4101.

c. The content of the conference is germane to improving individual or organizational performance.

d. Developmental benefits will be derived through the employee's attendance [5CFR 251.202 (a)(2) and 410.404(d)].

.04 Guidance on Payment of Expenses to Obtain Professional Credentials and Organizational

Membership. 5 U.S.C. 5757 allows agencies to pay for expenses related to professional credentials. However, agencies are not required to use this authority. This authority may not be used to qualify an applicant for a position. In implementing this authority, LOs/COs must ensure that the funding of these expenses directly supports identified strategic interests of NOAA and the Department of Commerce (DOC). LOs/COs using this authority will establish, and coordinate with NOAA Workforce Management Office, a policy and process for determining which functions or occupations that professional credentials will be paid and if continued service obligations will be required. Appropriated funds can be used to pay for:

- a. Expenses for employees to obtain professional credentials, including expenses for professional accreditation, State-imposed and professional licenses, and professional certification.
- b. Examinations to obtain such credentials.
- c. Organizational membership in the association or society.
- d. Membership for a specific agency position that the incumbent uses to improve the conduct, supervision, or management of his/her function.

.05 Academic Degrees.

- a. LOs/COs may pay for education that leads to an academic degree at an accredited college or university when it will aid in the recruitment or retention of employees in shortage or critical skill occupations. Merit system principles apply to announcing academic degree programs and selecting candidates for them [5 U.S.C. 4107(b)].
- b. LOs/COs may not authorize the selection and assignment of an employee for training or the payment or reimbursement of the costs of training when:
  1. The purpose is to provide an opportunity to an employee to obtain an academic degree in order to qualify for an appointment to a particular position for which the academic degree is a basic requirement.
  2. The sole purpose of providing an opportunity to an employee is to obtain one or more academic degrees.
  3. The institution is not accredited as defined by the Office of Personnel Management.

.06 Guidance on Training Restriction Contained in Public Law 105-277; 106-58. Section 635 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act of 2000 prohibits use of appropriated funds for inappropriate training. Funds should not be obligated or expended for any employee training that:

- a. Does not meet identified needs for knowledge, skills and competencies bearing directly upon the performance of official duties.
- b. Contains elements likely to induce high levels of emotional response or psychological stress in some participants.
- c. Does not require prior employee notification of the content and methods to be used in training.

d. Contains any methods or content associated with religious or quasi-religious belief systems or Anew age@ belief systems as defined in Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Notice B195.022 dated September 2, 1988.

e. Is offensive to, or designed to change, participants' personal values or lifestyles outside the workplace.

.07 Protection of Government Interest. To protect the Government's interest, employees may be held financially responsible for training and development expenses paid by the agency [5 CFR 410.405] if:

a. The employee does not satisfactorily complete the training.

b. Training is not canceled in time and payment is due.

c. Partial payment for training is requested by the vendor as a result of the cancellation.

d. The employee receives a course grade of less than 2.0 on a 4.0 scale.

#### **SECTION 10. LONG-TERM TRAINING.**

.01 The allocation and approval of long-term training is a line management responsibility involving the commitment of substantial resources. Assistant Administrators and Corporate Office Directors are delegated the authority to approve long-term training. This authority may be redelegated to heads of Financial Management Centers (FMC). Any redelegation of this authority must be made in writing with a copy provided to the Director, NOAA Workforce Management Office. Requests should be approved at a high enough level that they are considered in light of overall priority training and development needs.

.02 The Director, NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations, is responsible for approving long-term training for NOAA Corps Officers.

.03 Employees selected for long-term training will be required to sign a continued service agreement.

a. An employee selected for training subject to a continued service agreement must sign the agreement prior to starting the training or development program. The period of service will equal at least three times the length of the program.

b. With a signed agreement, NOAA has a right to recover training and development costs, except pay or other compensation, if the employee voluntarily separates from Government service. The employee may request a reconsideration of the recovery amount or appeal for a waiver of the recovery. Such requests must be approved by both the Assistant Administrator/Corporate Office Director or a designee and by the Director, NOAA Workforce Management Office.

#### **SECTION 11. TRAINING OF PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEES.**

The Government Employees Training Act does not cover Presidential appointees. The Secretary of Commerce authorizes training for officials appointed by the President. The training must be in compliance with Chapter 41 of Title 5, United States Code. This authority may not be delegated to a subordinate [5 CFR 410.302(b)(1)].

#### **SECTION 12. ACCEPTANCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS, AWARDS, AND PAYMENT FROM**

## **NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

.01 The head of an agency may authorize, in writing, an agency employee to accept a contribution or award (in cash or in kind) incident to training or to accept payment of travel, subsistence, and other expenses (in cash or in kind) incident to attendance at meetings if the following conditions are met:

- a. The organization making the payment is tax exempt as determined by the Secretary of the Treasury.
- b. An appropriate reduction is made from the payment by the Government to the employee.
- c. In the judgment of the agency head, the following two conditions are met:

1. The contribution, award, or payment is not a reward for services to the organization prior to the training or meeting; and

2. Acceptance of the contribution, award, or payment:

- o Would not reflect unfavorably on the employee's ability to carry out official duties in a fair and objective manner;
- o Would not compromise the honesty and integrity of Government programs or of Government employees and their official actions or decisions;
- o Would be compatible with the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, as amended; and
- o Would otherwise be proper and ethical for the employee concerned given the circumstances of the particular case.

.02 The following records must be maintained in connection with each contribution, award, or payment made and accepted under authority of this section: The recipient's name; the organization's name; the amount and nature of the contribution, award, or payment and the purpose for which it is to be used; and a copy of the written authorization required by .01 of this section.

## **SECTION 13. REPORTS AND RECORDKEEPING.**

.01 Each LO/CO shall maintain records of its training plans, expenditures, and activities in an electronic system so as to be able to transmit required training data pursuant to 5 CFR 410.701(b). Each LO/SO will report this training data to the NOAA Workforce Management Office, DOC, and OPM at such times and in such form as prescribed in 5 CFR 410. Minimal data elements that must be kept and recorded for every instance of training and development are: (1) trainee and organizational identifier information, (2), training and development course/event information, (3) training cost information, and (4) length of service agreement (if applicable).

.02 Individual training and development records must be retained for five years.

## **SECTION 14. RESPONSIBILITIES.**

.01 Under delegations from the Department of Commerce, the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator is responsible for:

- a. Assuring that employee development and training is consistent with the requirements of law, regulation, and policy.

- b. Providing resources to meet NOAA's training needs.
- c. Designating a qualified person in the NOAA Workforce Management Office as NOAA Training Officer or Chief Learning Officer to manage and support training and developmental activities.

.02 Delegations from the Department of Commerce give the Director, NOAA Workforce Management Office responsibility for providing overall executive leadership and strategic policy direction for NOAA employee development and training as delegated by DAO 202-410 and aligning employee development and training with other human resources programs and policies, including establishing systems and processes for:

- a. Issuing appropriate policy, administrative instructions and guidance.
- b. Determining training needs and resources, and establishing training programs.
- c. Counseling managers and employees on training and development matters.
- d. Preparing a NOAA training plan, evaluating, and reporting on the results of the training.
- e. Recommending methods of funding training programs and other training costs.
- f. Establishing interagency training facilities in areas of substantive competence and extending NOAA training programs to employees of other governmental units when appropriate.
- g. Establishing appropriate administrative controls to review and approve training requests and ensure that NOAA training policies and procedures comply with regulations of the Department of Commerce and OPM.
- h. Monitoring training data, as described in Section 5.10; retaining records of authorized training events for five years; and reporting to the Department and OPM on training activities.
- i. Encouraging employee self-development and training, and promoting on-the-job training at all levels in NOAA.
- j. Conducting research related to NOAA training needs and cooperating with Department-wide training research and program efforts.
- k. Evaluating and reporting in-house and external training courses to determine whether the training is contributing effectively to NOAA's mission and attainment of strategic goals.

.03 The Director, Learning Resources Division, Office of Corporate and Strategic Human Capital Initiatives in the NOAA Workforce Management Office is designated as the NOAA Chief Learning Officer (Training Officer) responsible for:

- a. Working with the NOAA Workforce Management Committee to develop and maintain NOAA training and development policy.
- b. Providing leadership to and managing NOAA corporate learning activities.
- c. Serving as the functional program lead for training and development across NOAA.

- d. Overseeing the implementation of Section 5 above.
- e. Representing NOAA training and development with DOC and other external organizations.
- f. Reviewing mandatory NOAA-wide training and development programs prior to implementation to ensure they are consistent with appropriate learning methodologies and are cost-effective.

.04 The NOAA Workforce Management Committee, a standing committee of the NOAA Human Capital Council, is composed of representatives from NOAA LOs/COs. Responsibilities include:

- a. Championing excellence in the training and development of an effective workforce.
- b. Enhancing the execution of training and development initiatives across line organizations and NOAA.
- c. Recommending resources to implement training and development programs.
- d. Recommending tools to develop the knowledge and skills of NOAA supervisors, managers, and employees.
- e. Representing LO/CO views, concerns, and interests regarding workforce training and development issues.
- f. Serving as an advocate to advance people issues and workforce training and development solutions.
- g. Focusing training to bring about strategic organizational change.
- h. Advocating for NOAA training and employee development.
- i. Serving as a focal point for the Workforce Program Manager under the Program Support sub-goal in the NOAA Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES) process.

.05 Assistant Administrators and NOAA Corporate Office Directors are responsible for:

- a. Providing resources, including a qualified Chief Learning Officer, to meet LO/CO-specific technical training and development needs.
- b. Collaborating with other LOs/COs to share technical training and development programs required by more than one organization.
- c. Providing resources to meet NOAA-wide training and development needs such as executive and management development.
- d. Assuring that the use of long-term training assignments is considered as an option to enhance the knowledge and skill level of employees.
- e. Establishing internal procedures for review of long-term training and other development requests.

.06 The LO/CO Chief Learning Officer is responsible for:

- a. Consulting with LO/CO managers and executives in headquarters and the field to assure that organizational learning needs are met.

- b. Implementing the policy described in Section 5 above for the LO/CO.
- c. Working with the NOAA Chief Learning Officer to assure that NOAA-wide learning needs are met.
- d. Serving on the NOAA Workforce Management Committee.

.07 Supervisors and managers are responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that selected training and development is mission-oriented, appropriate, and cost-effective.
- b. Systematically determining, at least annually, training needs of their employees.
- c. Providing resources to meet training needs of their employees.
- d. Planning for employee training.
- e. Nominating employees for training.
- f. Communicating with employees prior to and after training and development about the anticipated outcomes and whether learning objectives were met.
- g. Providing input on the effectiveness of employee training and development.
- h. Maintaining data on individual training for their employees.

.08 Employees are responsible for:

- a. Assessing their individual development needs, with their supervisor, in relation to the organization's mission, goals, and required knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- b. Identifying and requesting approval for training and development through appropriate management channels in a timely manner.
- c. Registering their individual training with the vendor.
- d. Completing all training and development and providing to the supervisor the grade received or pass/fail results of completing the training.
- e. Providing an evaluation of training and development activities.

#### **SECTION 15. EFFECT ON OTHER ORDERS.**

This Order supersedes NOAA Administrative Order 202-410A, dated 12/11/91.