

5.1 Employee Development Policy

Policy Statement

The Province of Nova Scotia is committed to the continuous learning and development of its employees. Recognizing the value of employee development helps build and maintain a competent and professional public service.

Learning is a shared responsibility between the individual and the employer. As an employer, the Province of Nova Scotia strives to provide all employees with development opportunities that support their ability to effectively and efficiently deliver departmental mandates, to innovate, and to grow in their careers. Continuous employee learning and development is an investment in both the employee and the organization, as it supports employee engagement, attraction and retention, and encourages innovation and knowledge transfer in an increasingly global economy and workforce.

Employee development occurs at all stages of an employee's career, from orientation to retirement planning. Development can be for different purposes and can also take many forms, such as training, mentoring, webinars, educational programs, or temporary work assignments. These experiences help employees develop skills and knowledge for their current role or future opportunities within the organization.

Note: This policy is further supported by the corporate Performance Management Policy.

Definitions

DEPARTMENT

Any department, office or public service entity established by the Government of Nova Scotia, as identified under Category I in Appendix I-A of the Corporate Administrative Policy Manuals Policy.

DEPUTY HEAD

The deputy of the member of the Executive Council presiding over a department and all others whom the Governor in Council from time to time designates as having the status of deputy head.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A type of employee development that is organized and guided by formal curriculum and leads to a formally recognized credential or designation, such as a diploma or degree. An educational program is offered by formal educational institutions such as schools, colleges, or universities.

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Opportunities for employees to acquire new or advanced skills, competencies, knowledge, and/or perspectives to perform in their current jobs and grow in their public service careers (e.g., classroom instruction, conferences, e-learning, project work, temporary work assignments, committees, or mentoring etc.).

EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION PROGRAM

Process used to welcome, support and recognize a new employee when they join an organization. This process is comprised of corporate, department, and job-specific employee orientation.

FUNDING

Money paid to or on behalf of an employee to cover costs associated with participating in employee development. This could include tuition, course or registration fees, travel expenses, books, required materials, etc.

JOB-SPECIFIC TRAINING

A type of employee development that an employee's manager/supervisor has deemed as necessary for an employee to be able to undertake their current job assignments and/or to enhance their job performance.

LEAVE

An approved absence from work on a part-time or full-time basis for employee development purposes.

MANDATORY TRAINING

A type of employee development that is required by legislation, regulations, policy or collective agreements.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

A document to help an employee identify their strengths and areas for development related to their overall development goals, while mapping out an action plan to reach those goals.

RETURN OF SERVICE AGREEMENT

A signed agreement between the employee and the employer indicating that the employee will continue to work for the employer for a specified period of time in return for funding provided by the Province of Nova Scotia.

Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Promote and support development opportunities for all employees that are intended to improve the employee's capabilities and benefit the organization.
- Provide a framework to permit employees, managers, and departments to engage in or provide employee development.
- Connect learning to department goals and employee career goals, thereby ensuring alignment, continuous service improvement and ongoing professional excellence as public servants.
- Consistently and effectively support, recognize and welcome employees as they start new roles/appointments by informing them of government's goals, structure, programs, and policies.

Application

This policy applies to all civil servants and other direct employees of the provincial government.

Policy Directives

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

- All employees must have access to employee development opportunities that support or improve their capability to effectively and efficiently deliver departmental mandates, to innovate, and to grow in their public service careers.
- Requests to participate in employee development opportunities may be employee or manager-initiated. Employee requests to participate in employee development opportunities are subject to prior approval by an employee's manager. Approvals may consider factors such as: budget, operational needs, departmental HR planning, employment equity, or employee performance and goals in accordance with Employee Development Guidelines developed by the Public Service Commission (PSC).
- All reasonable requests by employees for employee development must be considered fairly and equitably by managers/supervisors and departments.

EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION

- Employee orientation programs must reflect three components: job-specific, department, and corporate information.
- New and existing employees starting a new position with the Province of Nova Scotia must receive appropriate employee orientation in a timely manner. Departmental and job-related orientation should start on the employee's first day in a new position.
- Departments are responsible for their departmental employee orientation programs. Costs related to department and job-specific employee orientation programs will be managed from departmental budgets.
- The PSC is responsible for the corporate employee orientation program.
- Participation in employee orientation is part of an employee's work responsibility. Employees will not be deducted for time taken to attend, or travel to, an orientation event held during their regularly scheduled hours of work. Time taken from regular work hours to attend, or travel to, an orientation event is treated as time worked in straight time hours. Employees who travel to attend an orientation event will be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with the corporate Travel Policy.

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT FOR CURRENT OR FUTURE ROLES

- Managers are encouraged to work with employees to proactively identify employee development needs and opportunities. Managers may initiate requests for employees to participate in employee development opportunities. These discussions may be for development in their current role or to support future career goals using tools such as human resource planning processes and/or employee planning and development discussions or forms.
- Employees may specifically request funding and/or leave to support their current and future employee development goals. Employees seeking support for opportunities that are focused on future career goals should have their development goals outlined in an Employee Planning and Development Form and/or a Professional Development Plan.
- Funding for employee development is managed from departmental budgets. Requests for employee development may be paid in full by the department, cost-shared with the employee, or granted with no funding, unless otherwise specified in this policy.

- The amount and type of support for employee development opportunities granted by departments should be proportional to the benefit that the organization can reasonably expect to receive from the investment in the employee, as per the Employee Development Guidelines.
- Departments are not obligated to pay for employee development-related expenses incurred without approval from an employee's manager/supervisor.

Mandatory and Job-Specific Training

- Mandatory training and job-specific training required for an employee's current role should be conducted during regular working hours and be treated as regularly worked hours. Employees do not need to request leave for mandatory training or training deemed to be job-specific. Manager approval to attend training is still required. If training needs to take place outside of regular working hours, employees are compensated based on the terms and conditions of their contracts of employment.
- All mandatory and job-specific training costs will be either paid by the organization or reimbursed to employees.
- Discretion of whether a development opportunity is job-specific lies with the employee's manager/supervisor.

Educational Programs

- Educational programs often represent a significant cost and commitment for the employee and the organization. To support this type of development, employees may request funding and/or leave to participate (full-time, part-time, or online) in educational programs that are in line with their employee development goals.
- Funding for employee participation in educational programs may be granted over multiple fiscal years; however, the total amount of the investment and whether a Return of Service Agreement is required should be considered early in the request process. Please see Return of Service agreement directives under this policy for more information.
- Leave to participate in educational programs may be granted with or without pay by the Deputy Head, in accordance with the General Civil Service Regulations and applicable collective agreements. Leave to participate in educational programs may also be granted on requests where no funding is granted or required.
- Employees must submit proof of successful completion of the educational program to their manager/supervisor. Proof of successful completion of an educational program is required before the employee is reimbursed or to

continue to qualify for funding or leave. Employees who do not successfully fulfil the requirements of a course or fail to complete their program of study may no longer be eligible for funding. Employees will still be obligated to fulfil the Return of Service agreement on a proportional basis as per the Return of Service Guidelines.

- Employees who are enrolled in educational programs outside of working hours or whose studies do not require leave and are not financially funded by the organization do not require approval from the organization.

RETURN OF SERVICE AGREEMENTS

- An employee who receives funding of \$6,000 or more to participate in an educational program will need to sign a Return of Service agreement, up to a maximum of two years, with the Province of Nova Scotia. Return of Service Agreements created under this directive are to be administered in accordance with this policy and the Return of Service Guidelines developed by the PSC. A template for a Return of Service Agreement is provided in the Return of Service Guidelines.
- An employee who has a Return of Service Agreement but does not remain in the continuous employ of the Province of Nova Scotia for the duration of the Return of Service agreement is responsible for repaying the Province of Nova Scotia the proportion of the funding that has not been repaid by service. A recommended calculation is provided in the Return of Service Guidelines. Payment must be received prior to the employee's departure. This requirement shall not apply to any employee whose employment is terminated through no fault of the employee, subject to the approval of the Deputy Head of the employing or appointing department. Repayment can be waived at the discretion of the Deputy Head.
- For Return of Service agreements related to employee development purposes, the return of service starts when the benefit is received for the organization, as described in the Return of Service Guidelines.
- No Return of Service agreement is required on non-financially funded development.
- Departments may consider using a Return of Service agreement for other types of development that are a significant cost to the organization.

FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES

- If an employee receives funding or reimbursement outside this policy for a requested development opportunity, the employee is obliged to inform the granting department and the amount of funding requested from the department will be reduced by the total amount received from other sources.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- Employee benefits and entitlements while on leave for employee development will follow the appropriate leave provisions set out in the General Civil Service Regulations or applicable collective agreement(s).

Guidelines

This policy is supported by Employee Development Guidelines and Return of Service Guidelines that have been developed by the PSC to assist with best practices and procedures for employee development.

These guidelines are available on MyHR and will be reviewed and updated by the PSC as needed.

Accountability

DEPUTY HEADS

Deputy Heads are responsible to:

- Ensure that employees have access to development opportunities;
- Ensure reasonable requests by employees for employee development opportunities are considered fairly and equitably;
- Authorize leave and funding requests for staff to participate in employee development opportunities, including Return of Service agreements, when applicable;
- Support managers to implement and abide by the Employee Development Policy;
- Embed employee development in the human resource planning process;
- Develop, implement, and review department employee orientation programs, which take into consideration the individual needs of the department and new employees;
- Communicate department values, goals and objectives when engaging in employee orientation activities; and
- Authorize and monitor expenditures related to department and job-specific employee orientation.

MANAGERS

Managers are responsible to:

- Encourage and support staff in employee development process by providing opportunities to prepare professional development plans, to participate in relevant development activities, apply new learning in the workplace, and share their new knowledge and skills with colleagues;

- Use human resource planning processes and ongoing employee planning and development discussions to identify professional development needs for staff in accordance with current and future organizational requirements and ongoing employee development and/or performance;
- Contribute to the ongoing culture of development that encourages employee learning;
- Fairly and equitably consider all employee requests for development and approve as appropriate;
- Facilitate the employee development approval process for their staff within the department;
- Ensure employees' participation in employee orientation programs that include corporate, department and job-specific employee orientation content; and
- Develop and implement job-specific employee orientation programs that are unique to the department.

EMPLOYEES

Employees are responsible to:

- Acquire and maintain the knowledge, skills, and competencies related to their job level and functions by identifying, in consultation with their managers, their desired or required development needs;
- Participate fully in the employee planning and development process and employee development opportunities, including mandatory and job-specific training;
- Take responsibility for professional development that is beneficial to their own professional growth and to the employer;
- Participate in employee orientation activities when starting a new role;
- Welcome and support new employees to the department or the organization;
- Seek out opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills to their jobs as well as share learning with their colleagues;
- Request employee development funding and report expenses in a responsible manner; and
- Fulfill requirements of any Return of Service agreement.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The PSC is responsible to:

- Provide advice and consulting services to departments in the identification of needs and selection, design, conduct, and evaluation of employee development programs;

- Develop and deliver corporate employee development programs (e.g., corporate employee orientation, leadership development) that address the broader human resource needs of the Province of Nova Scotia;
- Assist managers and employees in identifying suitable development to meet individual and organizational needs;
- Provide support and advice to employees in the development of their careers in government;
- Provide tools to departments to support their employee orientation programs; and
- Develop, maintain, and review Employee Development Guidelines and Return of Service Guidelines that support this policy.

Monitoring

The PSC is responsible for implementation of this policy and ensuring the policy is up to date with respect to employee development practices.

References

- *Civil Service Act*
- General Civil Service Regulations
- Collective agreements between the Public Service Commission and the NSGEU; the Department of Transportation and Public Works and CUPE; PSC and Crown Attorney Association.
- Performance Management Policy
- Temporary Assignment Policy
- Secondment Policy
- Travel Policy
- Employee Development Guidelines
- Return of Service Guidelines

Enquiries

For further information or questions about this policy, please contact:

Public Service Commission
Organizational Development
Telephone: (902) 424-8384

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