



Treasury Board of Canada
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du Canada

A Policy for Continuous Learning in the Public Service of Canada



Canada

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*Une politique pour l'apprentissage continu
dans la fonction publique du Canada*)

Table of Contents

- Introduction 1
- Context 1
- Policy objective 2
- Policy application 2
- Effective date 2
- Terminology 3
- Roles and responsibilities 4
- Policy commitments 5
- References 8
- Enquiries 8

Introduction

This policy provides a framework to build a learning culture in the Public Service. It represents a broad-based consensus across the federal government of what is currently needed to build a learning organization and contributes to the agenda of Skills and Learning for Canadians.

Context

The world is in the midst of an unprecedented transformation from an industrial-based economy and society to a knowledge-based economy and society. Just as this transition is changing the way we work, the way we communicate and the way we live, so too, it is changing the way modern societies are governed and the way the Public Service will be called upon to serve Canada and Canadians.

The Government of Canada has recognized that in the knowledge age, the most important investment a country can make is in its people – human capital (the skills and capabilities of people) is to the knowledge age what physical capital was to the industrial age. The industrial age learned the importance of investing in the upkeep, improvement and modernization of physical capital in order to maintain its productivity and avoid rust-out and obsolescence.

Similarly, the knowledge age has discovered the importance of people and needs to learn how to invest in people to support creativity and innovation. Living off the existing skills and capabilities of people is no more sustainable in the knowledge age than allowing rust-out and obsolescence of physical assets would have been in the industrial age.

As an organization dedicated to serving the needs of Canadians and their government, the Public Service of Canada must remain worthy and deserving of the trust of those it serves. It must be at the leading edge of public sector management and administration. As an institution, the Public Service must be able to attract and retain its fair share of talent, in an increasingly competitive and highly mobile labour market. To do this, it must be recognized for its sustained commitment to employees – their knowledge, know-how, creativity, diversity and linguistic duality.

As a first step in strengthening this commitment to people, this document sets out a learning policy for the Public Service of Canada. It addresses the importance of training, development and learning in ensuring that public servants of the 21st century are knowledgeable, effective and creative in fulfilling their mission to serve Canadians.

Policy objective

The objective of this learning policy is to build a learning culture in the Public Service and stimulate, guide and promote the development of the Public Service as a learning organization committed to the lifelong learning of its people. The Public Service of Canada recognizes that this is critical to fulfill its mission as a national institution in the knowledge age, to maintain the trust of those it serves, to support the career goals of its employees, and to achieve results for Canadians.

Policy application

This policy applies to Departments and other portions of the Public Service of Canada listed at Part 1, Schedule 1 of the *Public Service Staff Relations Act*.

Effective date

This policy is effective May 1, 2002. It replaces the following policies:

- *Training and Development Policy* with the companion *Training Guide* (1994)
- *Development of Supervisors, Managers and Executives* (1994)

Due to specific deadlines of some commitments in this policy, a review of this policy will be initiated in 2005.

Terminology

To begin, a common understanding of terminology is important. Within any learning lexicon, there are many terms that are often used interchangeably and yet may have quite different interpretations. The definitions that follow are provided for the purposes of this learning policy:

Learning definitions

Training (*formation*) – represents an organized, disciplined way to transfer the knowledge and know-how that is required for successful performance in a job, occupation or profession. It is ongoing, adaptive learning, not an isolated exercise.

Development (*perfectionnement*) – refers to all means intended for developing employees' skills and abilities, as well as their careers, through the practical application of knowledge and know-how. It requires an exposure to diversity of ideas and diversity of experience, through many means such as training, formalized activities of mentoring and coaching, and exchanges.

Learning (*apprentissage*) – at the individual level is the acquisition and the creation of new knowledge and ideas that changes the way an individual perceives, understands or acts. It is enhanced by the freedom to think creatively and leads to innovation.

Organizational learning (*apprentissage organisationnel*) – occurs through a collective process of creating and capturing new ideas, knowledge and insights. As a product, organizational learning is the outcome of the collective learning that takes place in finding new and better ways of achieving the mission of the organization.

Continuous learning (*apprentissage continu*) – is a lifelong process comprised of the sum of training, development, and learning. Once individuals work in an environment where these three activities are present, and actively participate in each, lifelong learning becomes a reality.

Learning organization (*organisation apprenante*) – is a collective undertaking rooted in action. It is built around people, their knowledge, know-how and ability to innovate. It is characterized by continual improvement through new ideas, knowledge and insights which it uses to constantly anticipate, innovate and find new and better ways to fulfill its mission. A learning organization cannot exist without a commitment to lifelong learning for its people, so that the linkages between training and development and learning are sustained.

Personal learning plan (*plan d'apprentissage personnel*) – is a method of focusing future learning efforts to better reflect an individual's learning needs, interests, and style.

Other definitions

Employer (*employeur*) – is the Treasury Board and its Secretariat.

Corporate (*collectif*) – is public-service wide.

Individual (*individu*) – is an employee, a manager, or a person occupying a confidential position in an organization to which this policy applies.

Organization (*organisation*) – is a department or other portion of the public service as listed at Part 1, Schedule 1 of the *Public Service Staff Relations Act* for which a deputy head is responsible.

Roles and responsibilities

Learning is a shared responsibility between the individual and the organization. There is a mutual obligation – an obligation on the part of employees to take charge of their own professional development and an obligation on the part of the organization to offer an environment that is conducive to learning. This includes providing access to training, learning and development opportunities in the official language of choice, where applicable, and respecting the diversity needs of employees. In the Public Service of Canada, the following responsibilities form the basis of a learning policy:

- **Individuals** must commit to lifelong learning by being:
 - *willing to learn*, to continually upgrade and improve their capabilities;
 - *willing to invest* time and energy in learning and in integrating learning into their everyday approach to work; and
 - *committed to applying* their learning and sharing it with others.
- **Organizations** (Deputy Heads) must ensure that:
 - *employees are provided* with the training, development and learning opportunities to fulfil the organization's mission and job requirements, within the wider context of Public Service values while ensuring responsible spending; and
 - *managers have access* to the training, development and learning needed to fulfil their responsibility to manage in accordance with Public Service-wide values, principles and best practices.
- The **Employer** (Treasury Board Secretariat) must:
 - identify *fundamental corporate requirements* and common knowledge needs for managers and employees irrespective of department or job and to make available training, development and learning opportunities through which they can achieve the necessary proficiency;

- identify the *common knowledge* needs of Public Service managers where there is a corporate duty of care by the employer to ensure a common knowledge among all managers or a common need of managers to act in a similar or concerted way and to make available necessary training, development and learning opportunities; and
- establish *learning goals*, monitor and report findings.
- **Collectively**, all parties are responsible:
 - to develop and nurture a *Public Service-wide learning culture* that promotes and encourages investments in learning. A coordinated, employer-led approach is needed to ensure that training, development, learning, and career development efforts of individuals and organizations add up to a significant, cohesive result that serves the interest of the Public Service of Canada and, therefore, Canadians.

Policy commitments

The Commitments in this policy represents a broad consensus within the federal government of the principles and the actions required to build the foundation of a learning culture. Organizations may undertake initiatives that go beyond these specific commitments.

Commitment 1

The Public Service of Canada is committed to fostering a learning culture in the Public Service that is essential to fulfilling its mission as a national institution in the knowledge age.

Building a Public Service-wide learning culture requires a broad-level commitment. It is a shared responsibility that requires commitment on the part of employees, managers and organizations, as a whole. The commitment by all to building a learning culture will be essential for the Public Service to fulfill its mission as a national institution in the knowledge age, to remain worthy and deserving of the trust of those it serves, and to achieve results for Canadians.

Commitment 2

The Public Service of Canada is committed to becoming a learning organization that invests in the lifelong learning of its employees.

To help foster a learning culture, the Public Service of Canada is committed to becoming a learning organization, committed to lifelong learning. It recognizes that learning occurs all the time, everywhere. It supports both individual and organizational learning and encourages all types of learning. Building a learning organization, committed to lifelong learning will ensure that the Public Service: is able to attract and retain its fair share of talent in an increasingly competitive and mobile labour market; enables its employees to meet the challenges they face in serving Canada and Canadians in the knowledge age; and, provides employees with the environment to achieve their personal career goals.

Commitment 3

Building upon this public service-wide policy, all organizations will have their own training, development and learning policies and action plans as soon as possible – and no later than March 31, 2004 – with a clear commitment of time and resources.

Organizations supporting individuals in their learning plans will also need to establish commitments of their undertakings and expectations, which recognize the unique aspects of their operations, and these may well go beyond the basic commitments set out in this Public Service-wide policy.

Commitment 4

The Public Service of Canada is committed to ensuring that, as a minimum, all permanent employees who wish to have a personal learning plan will have an opportunity to have one by March 31, 2004.

Personal learning plans for employees will serve to make the commitment to increased training and development in the Public Service of Canada more explicit and to enhance accountability for that commitment. While this is an ambitious goal, it is achievable.

Commitment 5

The Public Service of Canada is committed to identifying the fundamental corporate requirements and common knowledge needs of public service managers, to making available training, learning and development opportunities to address those needs and to fulfilling its obligations as employer with respect to training and development.

The employer has the responsibility to establish the framework to promote the desired cultural change and ensure that individual and organizational efforts results in a cohesive and effective Public Service that provides quality service to Canadians. To this end, the employer's role is to identify the common knowledge needs and to ensure that those needs are addressed through a coordinated approach.

Commitment 6

The Public Service of Canada is committed to encouraging and supporting the efforts of employees to improve and enhance their professional qualifications and accreditation through formal education, subject to the mission and operational requirements of their organization.

In keeping with the need to nurture a learning culture, employees should be supported in their efforts to enhance their academic or professional qualifications or credentials. Encouraging employees to develop and enhance their professional qualifications and abilities, or pursue further accreditation in their field, will require a practical approach. It may involve partnering with recognized universities or colleges in specialized areas of study, or an expansion of the types of accreditation that are recognized as professional qualifications. However this commitment is approached, it must be supportive of training, development and learning in individual areas of specialization, while also respecting the requirements of the organization in fulfilling its mission.

Commitment 7

The Public Service of Canada is committed to measurable targets against which to mark progress toward becoming a learning organization, committed to lifelong learning. As an initial step in this direction, it is committed to year-over-year increases in training and development expenditures as measured in time and money over the three years after the coming into force of this policy, not including expenditures required for statutory official language training.

Systems to capture learning activities and expenditures and methods of evaluating outcomes are not well developed. However, one measure of whether an organization is making progress is its investments in training and development. Achieving improved levels of training and development over the next three years would establish one of the essential building blocks toward becoming a learning organization. With training and development firmly established in the work environment of individuals, other learning activities will be more easily pursued.

Commitment 8

The Public Service of Canada is committed to annual, public reporting by organizations on their training, development and learning activities as a means to measure and recognize progress.

To make the implementation of this policy successful, it must be possible to measure and mark progress. While organizations will use their own reporting vehicles, it is recognized that, initially, measuring and reporting on training, development and learning will require extra effort in some departments and agencies in gathering information. However, in the knowledge age, where investments in people are critical to an organization's success, this information will be needed for organizational business planning and priority-setting, in any case. It will also be important to link the measurement of progress with performance reporting, to ensure accountability of managers and management teams in implementing policies and practices conducive to building a learning organization.

A key step in the evolution of effective measurement of training, development and learning will be the creation of a common methodology. Consistent data is necessary for the year-over-year comparisons needed to measure progress at the organizational and corporate levels.

Evaluating the impact of investments in training, development and learning will be a process that develops over time. This policy will be evaluated after three years of implementation. As this policy is intended to stimulate the development of a learning organization, updates may be required as the Public Service of Canada moves closer to this goal.

References

Authority: *Financial Administration Act, Section 11(2)(b)*

Legislation: *Public Service Staff Relations Act*

Official Languages Act

Employment Equity Act

Enquiries

Clarification and assistance may be obtained from your departmental human resources people or from:

Human Resources Strategies
Strategic Planning and Analysis Division
Human Resources Branch
Treasury Board Secretariat