



Policy Statement

This Policy supports targeted and structured training and development of public servants to produce a competent and motivated workforce. Preference will be given to training Cook Islanders to ensure the long term retention of skills and knowledge.

Scope

This policy applies to all public sector employees

This policy does not apply to the following:

- Independent Contractors
- Ministers and Members of Parliament
- Island Mayors and Councillors
- Ministerial Support Office staff

Principles

The Public Service Act 2009 identifies the following values for public servants to adhere to:

Honesty	acting honestly, being truthful, and abiding by the laws of the Cook Islands
Impartiality	providing impartial advice, acting without fear or favour, and making decisions on their merits
Service	serving the people well through faithful service to the Government of the Cook Islands
Respect	treating the people, the Government of the Cook Islands and colleagues with courtesy and respect
Transparency	taking actions and making decisions in an open and transparent manner
Accountability	being able to explain the reason for actions taken and taking responsibility for those actions
Efficiency and Effectiveness	achieving good results for the Cook Islands in an economical way

We are committed to building a culture of 'excellence' across the public sector through structured training and development of employees to build a knowledgeable, skilled and professional workforce.

Legislation and Regulations

Public Service Act 2009, Employment Relations Act 2012 and other relevant legislation.

Definitions

Agency means any Public Service Department, instrument, or agent of the Government and includes a body corporate or organisation that is wholly owned or controlled by the Crown

Agency Training and Development Plan contains specific training and development activities planned to occur in the Agency over the year. It consolidates all the training and development requirements for employees into one plan

Coach is a person who actively supports the employee perform well in their job

Conduct is the way in which an individual behaves and adheres to public service and Agency values

Competencies are a combination of knowledge, skills and attributes directly related to the job

Development Plan outlines the competency improvements required by an individual employee to support achievement of agreed targets and/or as part of professional development in line with the Agency goals

Employee means any person who is an employee of the Public Sector

Employer means the Public Service Commissioner and Heads of Public Sector Agencies or their delegated authority

Independent Contractor means an individual or firm engaged to provide services to an Agency within the Public Sector. The contractor is not a contracted employee

Job description is the document used to describe the job content, organisational context and specific competencies required to perform the job well

Key Results Areas (KRAs) in job descriptions are used to determine performance targets, linked to the Agency's Annual Business Plan

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are qualitative or quantitative measures, directly linked to performance targets, to assess performance

Leadership Development involves providing employees with knowledge, skills, mentoring and coaching to attain key competencies for leadership roles

Managers/Supervisors are those with responsibility for managing employees

Mentors support an employee's personal or professional development regardless of the role or position they hold. **Performance Appraisal** refers to a formal process of assessing or evaluating performance

Performance Agreement documents performance targets and measures agreed between the employer and employee. These are derived from the KRAs and KPIs noted in job descriptions and the relevant professional standards required

Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) has specific development activities to improve key areas of an employee's performance in their job and aims to improve poor performance

Performance Management is a continuous process of identifying, evaluating and developing the work performance of employees to enable overall achievement of Agency goals and targets

Performance Targets are outputs or goals to be achieved

Proficiency is how the employee behaves and uses their competencies to perform in the job

Professional Development involves the provision of targeted training and experience to support employees to gain increased competencies in their current role or future roles as identified in their career pathway

Public Service Commissioner means the Public Service Commissioner appointed under Article 73 of the Constitution and Section 5 of the Public Service Act

Section 31 employees are those with specialist skills employed at a market premium to work within the Public Service

Training is a structured learning process to enable employees to achieve the level of competence needed for their current job or future career development

Training Needs Analysis is the process of identifying and reporting on which employees need training and the type of training required to meet current and future needs of the Agency

Procedures

Employers are responsible for administering this policy and ensuring all policies are easily accessible for employees. Employees must read, understand and adhere to this policy. Breaches of the policy may be considered misconduct and be subject to disciplinary action.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner (OPSC)

OPSC supports implementation of this policy by:

- Assisting Agencies develop links between goals, performance and employee development
- Coordinating Public Service wide training initiatives. For example, Public Service Induction and Leadership Development programmes
- Monitoring Agency compliance with this policy
- Investigating unresolved employment disputes that may arise from this policy

Employer Obligations

Employers must encourage training and development as an ongoing part of human resource management to support the achievement of Agency goals and targets.

Employers must ensure:

- An Agency Strategic Plan and Business Plan exists
- An Agency Training and Development Plan is in place
- All employees complete the Agency induction programme
- All new employees complete the Public Service Induction programme
- Performance Management is implemented within the Agency
- Managers should seek development opportunities for employees
- Agency budgets accommodate employee training and development
- Prior to approving any training, consideration has been given to:
 - The employee's position and performance
 - How the study commitments may impact on employee performance - positive or negative
 - Overseas employment conditions, duration and travel arrangements
 - Impact on service delivery and ability of the Agency to maintain business continuity
 - Contingency plans in the event that the employee does not return to work on the island

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

- Ensuring job descriptions (JDs) are up to date, clearly outline the key results to be achieved by the job (KRAs) and the required competencies and professional standards required
- Discussing and confirming employee training and development needs and ensuring:
 - Training is relevant to the employee's performance and professional development
 - Regular discussions are held on how the training impacts on development
- Coordinating and overseeing the implementation of Performance and Development Plans
- Planning resourcing to ensure that employees can participate in training
- Identifying training providers and costing agreed training options
- Providing coaching and mentoring opportunities for staff

Employee Obligations

Employees are responsible for their own personal and career development and should:

- Seek feedback on performance in order to identify skill gaps and future development needs
- Discuss how to address their training needs with their manager/supervisor
- Actively search for training opportunities
- Commit to attending agreed training and development activities and apply this to performance

Training activities must support the achievement of Agency strategic and business plan goals.

There is no expectation that employees who participate in training and development activities will receive additional remuneration.

Training and Development

Training and development activities are integral to improving and/or developing key competencies as part of a structured performance management process. The activities comprise skills and professional development to enable employees to:

- a) Effectively perform their current job
- b) Prepare and assume further responsibilities and perform new tasks
- c) Develop in line with their personal and career aspirations

The expected outcomes from training and development include, but are not limited to:

- Having a committed and skilled workforce capable of meeting current and future Agency goals
- Improving employee productivity and contribution to Agency wide service commitments

Linkages to Performance Management

The link between training and development to performance management is shown below:



Training and Development Activities

Training and development for the following groups will target:

- a) New Employees
 - Orientation/induction into the Agency and public sector
 - Provision of knowledge and skills to perform well in their new job
- b) Current Employees
 - Provision of knowledge and skills to enable better performance, career progression and maintenance of technical or professional standards
- c) Employers/Managers/Supervisors
 - Provision of leadership and management skills to manage staff to achieve Agency goals
- d) All Employers/Managers/Employees
 - Maintaining current knowledge on policy and legislation changes
 - Provision of human relations skills to support professional and respectful conduct
 - Enabling the development of individual potential

Training and Development Cycle

Training and Development is carried out in four stages as shown in the diagram below and described in ensuing sections



Stage 1: Defining Training and Development Needs

In order for Agencies to define relevant training and development interventions, an assessment of training needs must be done at:

- a) Agency level
 - Assessing workforce requirements by linking short and long term goals (business and strategic plans) to the skills and knowledge needed to achieve these
 - Evaluating existing skill levels in each division in comparison to current and future competency requirements
 - Identifying critical positions in each division and the required skills or knowledge that are needed to fill these
- b) Employee level
 - Training needs identified in the individual development plans including any training required to address performance gaps
 - Evaluating development needs as part of talent and leadership development or as part of a succession plan
 - Evaluating development needs as part of future workforce requirements of the Agency

Stage 2: Planning Training and Development Activities

Agency Training and Development Plan

The training needs identified will be prioritised in relation to Agency requirements and collated into an Agency wide Training and Development Plan. This plan will outline:

- Current knowledge/skill gaps of employees
- Type of training, modality and timing of the training
- The provider of the training
- Number of people requiring the training
- Cost associated with the training
- Prioritisation of training in line with Agency requirements and available budget

Plans should be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect the dynamic strategic and operating environment of the Agency, including budgetary requirements and the effectiveness of previous training. Refer to the Government Leave Policy for guidance on study leave linked to professional development.

Agency Training and Development Plans should be submitted to OPSC to compile a Public Sector-wide training and development needs and to enable better coordination of training and development initiatives across the sector.

a) Training Options

Training can be provided through a combination of:

- Competency training: to address skills and knowledge gaps
- Proficiency training: to address performance/behavioural gaps identified during the performance appraisal process
- Developmental Training: to acquire knowledge or skills to enhance specialist or professional capabilities, career progression or leadership prospects

b) Types of Training

Depending on the training needs identified, the requirements of the job being performed, and subject to available budget, employee training may be provided:

- National - in country or within the Agency, includes on-line courses, e-learning or through classroom settings with registered tertiary education providers
- Overseas – outside the country

Training examples:

Induction programmes

Every new employee must receive Agency induction training relating to their job and Agency from their first day of employment. Every new employee must also complete the Public Service Induction Programme.

On-the-job-training/Work attachments

Employees can gain knowledge and skills by doing the work or having someone coach/mentor them. On-the-job-training can include:

- Job rotation: where employees move from one area of work to another for a reasonable period
- Special projects: where employees learn new skills beyond their current competency level
- Coaching and mentoring

Secondments

Employees can be seconded to other Agencies or to a different division within their Agency for training and development purposes – refer to the Secondment Policy.

Seminars and conferences

Employees may be required to attend meetings or conferences where the content is deemed relevant to the employee's development plan.

Leadership and Talent Development

In recognising excellent performance, employees may be provided with leadership or talent development opportunities. The building of a leadership pipeline/talent pool is also an important aspect of succession planning where Agencies can provide targeted training for key roles.

Pa Enea Development

Pa Enea employees can apply for leave at any one time, on a biannual basis - to enable employees to gain skills away from their home island to improve their performance. Refer to the Government's Leave Policy.

c) Training Duration

Training duration will depend on the type of training and modality and it can be either:

- a) Training undertaken while remaining in full-time employment, or
- b) Training taken outside of full time employment where the employee works part-time or takes study leave

Employers may approve study leave for work related studies identified in the employee's training and development plan as per the conditions set out in the Leave policy and within the following parameters:

- The costs and benefits of the training to both the Agency and employee
- Impact of the employee's absence on Agency outputs and service delivery
- Employee work performance
- What role the employee will return to upon completion of their study

d) Training Budget

Employers and Managers are responsible for prioritising and sourcing resources to support training and development activities identified in the Agency Training and Development Plan.

Agency training budgets should include costs for:

- Internal training programmes - materials, trainer fees, facilities (i.e. venue, catering and equipment)
- Overseas training and professional development programmes including travel, accommodation and per diem allowances
- Secondments or work attachments

Approved tertiary study may be partly or fully funded by the Cook Islands Government, a development partner/sponsor or funded privately. Agencies should identify and approach strategic partners for appropriate support and identify in their training plans where this is provided.

e) Bonding

Those awarded a government scholarship are required to return and work in the Cook Islands for at least two years on completion of their training.

Employees who have study leave approved (that is not under government scholarship scheme) are required to return and work in the Cook Islands for a period equal to the time they were away on study or as mutually agreed with their employer. Agencies can develop specific bond terms and conditions for such cases.

Stage 3: Implementing and Monitoring the Plan

Employers must oversee all Agency training and development activities and ensure employees identified for training:

- Demonstrate proficiency/prerequisite requirements stipulated by the training provider or the institution meeting the training costs
- Are performing in their job, unless the training is part of a performance improvement plan (PIP)

Employers should monitor usage of the training budget and propose alternative training if budgets are modified. Employers should ensure that:

- Cancellations due to a changes in strategic focus, employee's work allocation or development or the employee's inability to attend must be made at least five working days prior to the training commencing
- Non-attendance to scheduled training, without prior approval, will be treated as unauthorised absence and disciplinary measures may be taken
- Employees who have received paid study leave and do not complete the programme will have the fact noted in their personnel record and may be required to refund the associated costs

Stage 4: Evaluating and Reviewing Training Outcomes

Employers must encourage changes in the Agency recommended as a result of the training and development undertaken by employees to improve performance.

Evaluations must be done in the following way:

- a) Short term evaluation – assesses whether the training has met the employee development objectives:
 - Within five days of completion of the training
 - Through an evaluation form submitted to the Manager detailing: the type of training, the provider, cost, an overview of the objectives and recommendations including future actions as a result of the training
- b) Long term evaluation – assesses the impact of the training on the performance of the employee as observed and recorded during the annual performance appraisal

Employers and Managers are expected to maintain an up to date training and development profile of their employees (gaps identified, courses taken, dates and results), and update their Agency Training and Development Plan. This Plan must be submitted to OPSC annually.

Other provisions

All documentation relating to the implementation of this Policy must be retained for audit purposes. All records must be kept for at least seven years and only accessible by the employer and/or authorised staff. After the seven year period, the agency may destroy the documentation in adherence with government official information management policies.

The Office of the Public Service Commissioner is responsible for reviewing and updating this policy after a year of implementation.

Associated Documents

Code of Conduct Policy
Employment Disputes Policy
Leave Policy
Performance Management Policy
Remuneration Policy
Secondment Policy
Representative Feedback form

Other information

For policy queries contact the Office of the Public Service Commissioner on phone (682) 29421 or email: opscinfo@cookislands.gov.ck