**Promoting Employee Personal and Professional Development**

According to the BLS, most people stay on one job for about 4.1 years. This means that Encouraging staff development both personally and professionally can enhance your agency in many ways. And while four years isn’t a long time, it’s better than trying to hire new talent every six months or so.

One way to keep good people for four years or longer is to offer personal and professional development opportunities. While some options exist at price points outside of the agency’s budget (attending state and national conferences, pursuing advanced degrees or professional certificates), many more cost-effective alternatives exist (books, free/low-cost trainings offered by state and national coalitions).

Here are some things to consider when offering personal and professional development resources at your agency:

**It makes the agency a more attractive workplace.**

* Many people are looking for opportunities to grow when they apply for jobs. No one (particularly entry level employees fresh out of college) wants to stay in the same position for 10 years, or even four.
* When people like where they work, they tell others that. This makes people more likely to recommend the agency to friends and others in their network. It also gives them positive things to say to people when asked what it’s like to work there.
* It increases the probability of current and former employees giving good online reviews.

**It enhances the agencies competencies and capabilities**

* The more training your staff has, the more knowledge, skills, and abilities they have, the more your agency can accomplish. Example, if your agency is looking to start or enhance their volunteer program, it’s helpful to get certain staff trained in leading volunteers and managing a volunteer program. (There are numerous agencies and programs that can help staff obtain the training needed.)

**Helps provide internal resources to help overcome challenges**

* The more educated and trained your staff is in various areas and settings, the more your agency can solve its own problems without having to seek outside help, or at least be better equipped to select the appropriate outside help. For instance, if your agency is confused about which CRM or project management software platforms to choose to make work more efficient, having someone who is familiar with the different platforms will help you make a better selection vs. having multiple people looking at different platforms or going with the best sales pitch.

**It gives employees a reason to want to stay at the company longer.**

* According to Indeed, one of the main reasons good employees leave jobs is due to lack of career growth and advancement. [1](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/reasons-employees-leave) Again, no one wants to stay in the same position for long periods of time. Helping employees learn new skills and allowing position changes that correlate to the new skills (new title, promotion, new responsibilities) allows for movement within the company, which decreases a person’s desire to exit the organization.

**It can provide internal options when succession planning.**

* Succession planning: Prepare employees to take on more challenging roles if needed. Personal and professional development help create adept employees who can be promoted when that you can promote when people in advanced roles, including and up to, the ED leave.

Considerations when promoting personal and professional development opportunities:

* Organizational needs: Consider the organization's strengths, weaknesses, and what skills and technology it needs to stay competitive.
* Employee competence: Identify the employee's strengths and how they can use their skills to benefit the organization and their career.
* Employee passion: Consider what the employee enjoys doing and finds fulfilling.
* Mentorship programs: Mentors can help create a positive workplace culture and foster new leaders.
* Align with company goals: Make sure the employee's goals are connected to the company's goals.

**How to offer personal and professional development**

* Agency transparency: Be transparent with agency status/needs in order to give employees an opportunity to take the initiative to learn and grow.
* Encourage curiosity, creativity, and cross-training.
* Agency training: Provide formal training to help employees perform their roles. (internal trainings by the organization and trainings from other partner agencies)
  + How often does your agency provide internal trainings to staff?
  + Do you create your own training? (Advocate refresher, self-care, agency policies)
    - Invite other agencies to provide training on their agency’s services, population, etc. (community partners and allied agencies, i.e. homeless services, CSB, food pantries, police)
* Action plans: Create group action plans to identify organizational goals and team member responsibilities.

[Sample Action Plan Template](https://creately.com/diagram/example/JFlIbePjxBV/action-plan-template)

* Employee development templates: Use a standardized framework to assess an employee's strengths and weaknesses, and determine their career direction. (template in separate doc)

**Resources:**

* Books: purchase books for your agency. While it may not be cost-effective to purchase a book for everyone on the team, you can purchase one and keep it in the agency library. You can also make reading referrals and have the advocates pick up books as they are interested from a bookstore or library.
* Trainings from other local, state, and national coalitions and agencies: These trainings are often free/low-cost. Most only take 1-2 hours to complete. Many come with certificates of completion and/or CEUs.

<https://www.ovcttac.gov/>

<https://www.thenacp.org/>

https://www.nrcdv.org/trainings

* YouTube
* Online educational platforms (Udemy, Coursera)