Creating an Action Plan for Your Agency's Skills Gaps

Times change, and agencies cannot predict when their employees will need new skills. Triggers such as new hiring mandates can leave agencies painfully aware of the abilities their workforces lack.

The good news is many strategies exist for closing these skills gaps. Whether it is recruitment, reskilling or upskilling, agencies have multiple paths to mission success.

GovLoop and Cornerstone OnDemand put together this worksheet to help you and your agency develop an action plan for effectively filling its skills gaps. The worksheet is based on the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Reskilling Toolkit and on best practices from the public and private sectors for addressing skills gaps.

DESCRIBE YOUR AGENCY'S TRIGGER(S)

Explain the driver behind your agency's push to fix its skills gaps. Are one of the common examples below prompting your agency's latest efforts? **Fill in the blank(s) near the appropriate problem to describe your agency's trigger(s).**

AUTOMATION: Agencies that adopt automation may need to address skills gaps it creates in their workforces. Does your agency have any skills gaps to examine after embracing automation?

EMPLOYEE NEEDS: At any moment, employees may want the opportunity to learn new skills. Workers with broader skill sets may have more career mobility and earning power, so addressing skills gaps can help agencies retain them. Does your agency have varied options for employees to pick up new skills?

MISSION CHANGES: Agencies with wide-ranging missions may find they need different skills for changing demands. Has your agency's mission changed recently in a way that would impact its workforce?

OTHER TRIGGER(S): Agencies can have multiple reasons for closing their skills gaps. What trigger is exposing your agency's skills gaps?

PICK YOUR AGENCY'S BIGGEST PROBLEM

Select what skills gaps your agency has and why they exist. Here are some typical challenges that agencies encounter:

ADDING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

New technology can transform agencies, but it can also complicate their employees' work. Teaching employees how to use fresh equipment can gradually save energy, money and time.

AGING WORKFORCES

Many agencies' workforces are aging. Over time, older employees may not learn about newer tactics and tools their younger counterparts use. In turn, agencies might miss opportunities for cheaper and more efficient work.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Each generation has unique traits influencing how it works. Take millennials, who are often more comfortable with smartphones than older generations. Understanding how every generation approaches their work can help agencies recruit and retain them easier.

SET YOUR AGENCY'S GOALS

Establish what your agency hopes to accomplish with its skills by answering the questions below and filling in the blanks.

What overall outcome is your agency hoping for with its skills gaps?

What is the timeline for accomplishing this purpose?

Where will the budget for this project come from?

CLOSE YOUR AGENCY'S SKILLS GAPS

Generally, agencies have **three options** for eliminating their skills gaps: **Recruitment**, **reskilling** and **upskilling**. Recruitment involves hiring new employees, while reskilling teaching current employees skills they previously lacked. Upskilling involves existing employees upgrading their skills due to changing processes or technologies.

Your agency will benefit the most from the approach that best fits its skills gaps. **Which approach best meets your agency's needs?**

UPSKILLING

COACHING: Coaching centers on partnering employees with coaches in a creative, thought-provoking process. Coaches ultimately teach the employees how to maximize their personal and professional potential. Often, the employees also learn how to apply their skills in new ways.

MENTORING: Mentoring provides guidance, direction and career advice to employees. Besides aiding them with refining their skills, mentoring also helps workers develop formal or informal relationships with co-workers. Typically, mentors are senior employees outside their protégé's chain of supervision. Protégés, for their part, are often younger, less experienced workers.

ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: Rotational assignments offer employees development away from their current occupations. During these assignments, public servants can learn to adapt and successfully lead on new responsibilities. By the rotation's conclusion, they've often learned how to apply old skills in innovative ways.

BLENDING TRAINING requires two or more training methods to be completed to satisfy the educational requirements. This approach utilizes reskilling, upskilling or both as needed for eliminating skills gaps.

RESKILLING

DETAILS: Details temporarily assign employees to different positions for specific time periods. At the end of their assignments, these employees return to their typical positions with more experience and skills. Many details additionally imply that a vacancy may open for employees filled with proper documentation and preparation.

ON THE JOB TRAINING: On the job training consists of formal activities and methods planned and structured to promote learning by doing. Although on the job training can include details, it can include over training such as seminars. The hands-on experience on the job training provides teaches new skills while growing institutional knowledge.

SHADOWING: Shadowing assignments focus on employees observing another employee's daily activities for a set time. Gradually, the people on assignment learn about their peers' approaches, duties and responsibilities. By seeing how concepts are applied in various real-world situations, they can acquire new skills for their own routines.

THE LAST WORD: Erasing skills gaps requires strong talent management. Whether they recruit, reskill, upskill, or all the above, agencies need to consider how they manage reforming their talent. Not only do learning and development keep agencies' workforces healthy, they also keep individual employees excited about their work.

Cornerstone OnDemand is a cloud-based learning, talent management and talent experience solutions provider. Its software enables agencies to recruit, train and manage their people for better mission results.

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