



How Agencies Are Stepping Up External Training Initiatives

MARKET TRENDS REPORT



Executive Summary

Government agencies have long provided training to employees, but more recently, they have begun offering online courses to external constituents or stakeholders who interact with agencies. For example, they may train volunteers to help with COVID-19 vaccine distribution or liquor store owners to comply with laws. Benefits of such efforts include reduced operational costs for agencies and an expanded private marketplace – two advantages that are especially important now as the public feels the effects of the pandemic-related economic downturn.

The pandemic forced many changes, including government reconsidering the way it handles training. For one, in-person training quickly shifted online. This includes not only virtual instructor-led training, but the addition of more on-demand resources, such as pre-recorded or text-based courses. The ability to offer – and manage – options for students and teachers alike became more important than ever.

Still, engagement is hard. Communicating with constituents, volunteers and the public at large can be fragmented. Several factors make reaching these audiences difficult, including language barriers, inequality in internet access and competition with other distractions in general. **But the effort agencies make to provide training to external learners is worthwhile, generating goodwill, social impact and mission awareness.**

To understand the challenges with external training and how to overcome them, GovLoop partnered with Cornerstone, a learning management system (LMS) provider, on this report. We also highlight best practices for making such programs more effective.

By The Numbers

900%

The e-learning market's growth rate since 2000

497

The number of volunteer COVID-19 contact tracers who have provided nearly 15,000 hours of support, for a monetary value of more than \$400,000

\$21.64 billion

The amount the e-learning market could grow between 2020 and 2024

8.1 million

The number of job openings in the United States as of May 11, 2021

40% to 60%

The time students can save when studying through e-learning versus a classroom setting

39,000

The number of jobs that state and local governments added in April 2021

The power of learning for external audiences was recently confirmed in a study from the Brandon Hall Group. The study showed that 53% of organizations said that extended learning helped increase the awareness of services among their external users. The study noted other benefits: 49% said that it improved relationships, and 44% said it reduced their training costs.

Working Together to Better the Community

Challenge: Diverse Audiences, Diverse Needs

“I think agencies underestimate the ability to engage external stakeholders and organizations with training,” said Ike Bennion, Director of Product Marketing at Cornerstone.

From government contractors and volunteers to scores of unemployed workers, government-provided training offers a way forward, he said. Workers can earn new skills, the local economy benefits and agencies can hire newly trained workers.

This doesn’t mean external training is easy. Overarching challenges include the difficulty in tracking people who take courses, the sustainability of offerings in a fast-evolving environment and a lack of scalability. Additionally, many agencies use ad hoc solutions to manage training – an approach that only adds to the complication of tracking, sustaining and scaling, and leaves a host of disconnected courses behind.

There are four primary areas in which agencies need to offer external training, and each comes with its own challenges.

1. Getting the unemployed public ready to re-enter the workforce:

Government can provide training that

prepares the unemployed population to meet the needs of a new company moving to the area – or even of agencies in search of specific skillsets.

2. Streamlining the certification process for training that results in accreditation: For instance, a regulating body needs to be able to track city residents who run businesses requiring licenses and alert them to new requirements and related training opportunities, reducing the number of incorrect applications or lapsed licenses they must deal with.

3. Delivering and tracking training for volunteers:

During the pandemic, this was particularly crucial as health professionals volunteered for COVID-19 test and vaccination distribution.

4. Delivering compliance-related training: One example of this is agencies that require contractors to have completed courses through the National Institute of Standards and Technology’s National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education.

Solution: A Learning Management Solution

The pandemic has been a force multiplier in terms of agencies’ demand for using an LMS to train external audiences. Cornerstone [defines an LMS](#) as a “software application for administering, delivering and tracking e-learning or training programs.”

Advantages of using an enterprise LMS include:

- Capturing compliance training – and storing the compliance information to alert users to renewals in the future
- Reducing the amount of time and effort it takes to train a large group on organizational processes or needs
- Reducing skills gaps
- Increasing the visibility into learning effectiveness to optimize programs

Initially, the appeal of an LMS during COVID was the ease of use for creating online content, but now Bennion predicts a lot of blended training in which people take some courses

online, then meet for an in-person session and follow up online through communities for information-sharing.

People are also increasingly comfortable conducting payment transactions online, which facilitates signup for courses. A full-service platform can handle this, along with attendee management. For instance, agencies can upload a CSV file of the names of attendees who completed a course. This streamlines follow-up, too, making it easier for agencies to alert past attendees when regulations are updated or new material becomes available.

Additionally, external organizations can use the system to check whether certifications are still valid. For example, if liquor store regulations change, agencies can quickly follow up with people who received ownership licenses in the past to let them know what new things they’ll need to do to renew their license.

Best Practices in Managing External Training

To make the most of trainings for external customers, agencies should keep five things in mind.



Streamline compliance-based certification programs. Using an online learning portal to build certification programs for contractors, businesses that require licensing, volunteers and others results in a more streamlined and efficient process. Leverage a tool that allows for delivery of your training content and third-party training content, and tracking of course completions and analytics to help your agency stay in continual alignment with changing regulations.



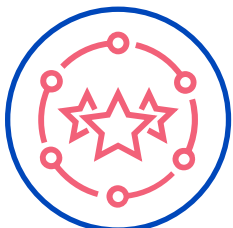
Offer scalable, sustainable personalized training. Rather than delivering courses in person, requiring folks to travel across potentially large geographic areas, reduce barriers for learners and save your agency money with virtual training, both asynchronous and live instructor-led. “It’s important to have agile tools in your pocket,” Bennion said. “It’s easy to be agile for a defined process, but it’s not easy for the humans that surround it.”



Contain costs. An online learning platform gives your agency the ability to recoup training and travel costs, and gives you the opportunity to break even on training and development. It can give your agency a secure payment gateway where constituents can pay for training as needed, allowing for payment tracking and recordkeeping.



Provide a personalized learning experience. Sure, customers can seek out new training, but marketing to a core group who could benefit is also important. Enable administrators to configure one-time or recurring training assignments that are most relevant to them. These can be based on specific criteria, such as the person’s role, location or actions they’ve taken within the portal. Ensure that the right people have seamless access to the right training when they need it. “The primary research you can do with an audience helps a great deal,” Bennion said.



Focus on customer experience. People are used to navigating online to shop or find information, so make sure your online learning portal is easy to use and has self-service options for registering and paying. No longer is a training administrator required to manually set up an account and assign courses. Training can be sold either through the member learning portal and e-commerce sites or delivered for free based on your agency’s needs. “You have things in an email service, you have attendance in specific meetings, you have trainings that you’re doing in person, and it’s hard to get a view of the success or failure or how you need to pivot,” Bennion said. “We alleviate that by putting it all in one system.”

Case Studies: Education in Action



Here are several case studies that illustrate how educating external stakeholders can pay off for them and agencies alike.

- Early in the pandemic, the number of elective surgeries plummeted. One Cornerstone customer decided to put the medical staff from those procedures to use in overwhelmed intensive care units. To do that, the staff needed to be trained and certified for new responsibilities, including how to treat patients sick with COVID-19. “The only way they could do that was by knowing who already has the licensure to be able to go do something somewhere else” – a capability Cornerstone’s tracking provided, Bennion said. “Because there was that fine acuity into what people were capable of, it made transitioning people really easy.”
- Long before COVID-19, the Census Bureau was working to get volunteer and paid workforces up and running for the 2020 count. Cornerstone helped the agency with intake and to prepare and manage content and processes. “You can expand your volunteer and temporary paid workforce quickly, and Census is a great example of the possibility of scale there,” Bennion said.
- Team Rubicon, a nonprofit that uses the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams nationwide, uses Cornerstone to ensure that when cities, counties or states need assistance, they can quickly find the right people with the right credentials to help.

HOW CORNERSTONE HELPS

Cornerstone is a premier people development company that offers organizations the technology, content, expertise and specialized focus to help them realize the potential of all stakeholders. Cornerstone assists with comprehensive recruiting; personalized, targeted and modern learning content; development-driven performance management and holistic data management.

The company provides:

- Multiple formats for engagement, including desktop and mobile access
- Quick authoring and adjustment that lets agencies change things on the fly to provide new information

- Security through its compliance with the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program and SOC 2 Type 2
- Scalability because it is hosted globally on Amazon Web Services
- A rich set of content types, including traditional online courses, virtual instructor-led training, in-person instructor-led training and communities for socialization and collaboration

“We can conform to whatever you’re trying to do and then execute against it in a set-it-and-forget-it way,” Bennion said.

For more information, please visit www.cornerstoneondemand.com/.

Conclusion

Whether it's business owners who need to stay up-to-date on licensure, volunteers who require specific skills or unemployed residents who want to learn new ones to make themselves more marketable, technology can help agencies provide assistance.

The pandemic was a catalyst for showing agencies and constituents alike just how important it is for them to work together. The government relies on volunteers and workers with specific skills, while the public relies on the government to supply opportunities to learn and work. This mutually beneficial relationship is poised to only grow stronger moving forward.

The pandemic also was a catalyst for helping agencies craft a new vision for training programs, demonstrating not just the viability but the value of online training. To make that vision a reality, agencies require an LMS that's scalable, secure and flexible enough to serve their diverse external communities.



ABOUT CORNERSTONE

Cornerstone OnDemand® (NASDAQ: CSOD) helps organizations to recruit, train, and manage their people. We work with hundreds of the world's largest companies—from Walgreens and Starwood Hotels & Resorts to Deutsche Post DHL and Western Union—and thousands of smaller ones to help them engage their workforces and empower their people. Our computer software impacts every aspect of the employee experience, helping people to make their best work even better – which ultimately translates into greater business results.

For more information, please visit www.cornerstoneondemand.com/.



ABOUT GOVLOOP

GovLoop's mission is to “connect government to improve government.” We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 300,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

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