



Increase Bench Strength

Employees Engaged in Professional Development Plans

Purpose:

A key outcome of workforce planning and development is to increase “bench strength” within the organization. Bench strength refers to the capabilities and readiness of potential successors to move into vacated positions. The term comes from baseball, where it refers to a team’s lineup of highly skilled players who can step in when a player is hurt or needs to be replaced. In the business setting, bench strength is critically important because organizations continuously experience staffing turnover, restructuring and changes in business strategy. When an organization has a replacement from within the workforce equipped and readily available when a position is vacated, it avoids business interruption.

One approach to building the Department’s “bench strength” is to develop existing employees through the use of Professional Development Plans (PDPs). A PDP is a formal plan jointly agreed to by an employee and a supervisor. It identifies training and other developmental experiences needed to enhance skills, knowledge and abilities in areas of under-representation within the existing or future workforce and which relate to identified organizational needs and goals.

By creating an organization focused on individual development consistent with organizational goals, the NHDOT is consistently building its bench strength and ensuring continuity of its business processes.

Improvement Status

Efforts to increase bench strength through this method were first introduced in 2011, named “Individual Development Plan” (IDP), and introduced as part of the annual performance evaluation form. The expected participation rate for individuals engaged in IDP’s in 2012 was 10%. Actual percent of participation for 2012 was 5%. This was a lower participation rate than expected. In reviewing the reasons for the lower rates, it appeared that the name and location of this initiative may have created confusion between corrective action plans and annual performance goals normally associated with the annual performance evaluation process. Moving forward, the name of the form will be modified to “Professional Development Plan” to more accurately reflect development in needed skill, knowledge and ability areas identified in workforce planning and development exercises. It will be introduced as a workforce development initiative rather than as part of the annual performance evaluation process. A second effort moving forward will be to support development of the workforce as an asset to be monitored, maintained and developed much the same as other transportation assets are monitored, maintained and developed. Increased emphasis, based upon urgent workforce needs, will encourage greater participation.

Future

Given the current demographics compared to the future needs of the workforce in knowledge, skill and abilities areas, the Department’s goal is to develop specific bench strength through PDP’s with 17% of the workforce by 2017. NHDOT expects 7% participation by the end of calendar year 2013; projecting realistic growth in 2015 to 10%, with a goal of 12%. The Department projects 15% of the workforce will be engaged in PDP’s in 2017 with a goal to aspire to 17%.

Data:

As Professional Development Plans are created and signed by an employee and supervisor, a copy will be forwarded to the Bureau of Human Resources to be placed in the employee's personnel file. The Bureau of Human Resources, Training and Development Section, will be responsible to document the PDP and monitor implementation in order to report on this measure. Information will be reported on a calendar year basis. The number of PDPs implemented will be converted into a percent of the total filled positions at the end of each calendar year as a percent of the total workforce.

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