

PDP Communiqué

The Learning Imperative: No Time to Retreat

Eugene J. Monaco,
Director, Professional Development Program

A skilled and knowledgeable workforce is central to organizational performance or, to put it more directly, getting the right job done well. We all know that. We also know that an unwavering commitment to workforce and professional development is essential to maintaining proficiency and competence — in the best of times and the worst of times. In this issue we are joined by four guest contributors — valued partners with whom we have enjoyed close working relationships for over 20 years. Their perspectives which, though differing, are united on one critical point — we must neither waver in nor retreat from a steadfast commitment to education and training.

Collectively representing a broad range of public service experience, our colleagues examine the learning imperative from several viewpoints. Kathy Napoli emphasizes the importance of succession planning for state agencies; Cliff Merchant underscores the particular necessity of sustaining training and professional development during lean times; Onnolee Smith provides an analysis of why management needs to make a proactive investment in learner-centered, competency-based training; and Karen Galarneau makes a convincing argument for collaboratively leveraging resources in responding to the training and staff development needs of the state workforce.

My colleagues are certainly on point with their comments. As practiced training and development professionals, we are of one mind as to the critical nature of the work we do. In this shared conviction — this matter of faith — we travel in good company. But faith alone is insufficient. We must be willing to ask hard questions and to remain open to what we find. This is the foundation for making sure we are not only doing the right things, but more importantly, that we are doing the right things well. The American Society of Training and Development (ASTD), in its *2003 State of the Industry Report*, provides us with some benchmarks to see how we measure up. Questions such as: “How much is the public sector in New York spending on training as a percentage of payroll; How much are we spending per employee; How many hours of training are employees receiving; and, What are we spending on learning technologies?” are essential. They are also necessarily difficult. We know what needs to be done and have demonstrated the resourcefulness and creativity that gets us there.

In this time of fiscal pressure, emerging technologies, organizational challenge, and global uncertainty, let us reaffirm not only our commitment to knowledge, excellence, and performance, but also our willingness to invest in doing the necessary work. This is no time to retreat from supporting and delivering the education and training needed to move good government forward.

A Newsletter from the
Professional
Development Program,
Rockefeller College



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State University of New York



Eugene J. Monaco
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***The Upside of Fiscal Crisis
Training Needed Most in Lean Times
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A Commitment to Resource Sharing***

***Onnolee Smith
Clifford Merchant
Katherine Napoli
Karen Galarneau***

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The Upside of Fiscal Crisis

Onnolee Smith, Assistant Director for Workforce and Organizational Development,
NYS Governor's Office of Employee Relations

New York State government, like the health sector, the education field, and virtually every part of our economy, is facing a real crisis. The state is estimated to lose as many as 45,000 employees to retirement in the next four years with the likelihood of continuing fiscal constraints. At the same time, state agencies are bombarded with new information, new approaches, new technologies, higher expectations for customer service, and heightened concerns for security and personal privacy.

Training and professional development are logical remedies to help State agencies address these challenges, but only if we, as a profession, reassess how we deliver services in the current environment.

Over the last decade, NYS has made shifts in how we approach training. We have made tentative steps in building a learner-centered, competency-based environment. We have espoused collaborative partnerships and, when it was convenient, entered into them and reaped positive results.

We have made progress with the use of online learning, teleconferencing, and videoconferencing. However, the economic shifts that have occurred in the last few years and the prospective loss of critical staff through retirements have tipped the scale so far that we no longer can afford to gradually implement change. We are at a point where wholesale redefinitions must occur if the training function in NYS is to continue to be robust and meaningful.

The future of the training function is dependent on:

- Building strong partnerships between and amongst agencies and with academic partners;
- Viewing state government as a single employer rather than 60 autonomous agencies;
- Using a statewide learning management system that links competencies required for a job to relevant learning opportunities;
- Making decisions on investments only after calculating risk and benefit; and,
- Broadening our definitions of learning.

This is not new. The fiscal crisis has simply compelled us to rethink the ways in which we deliver services. It is up to us to view this as an opportunity and to work together. Collaborations such as the State Training and Resource Sharing (STARS) initiative, discussed in the adjoining article, are essential. The Governor's Office of Employee Relations is committed to working with our partners in the training community, which includes the unions, to ensure the viability of professional development in State government.

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A Commitment to Resource Sharing

Karen Galarneau, Chair, NYS Training Council

The profession of training and development currently finds itself in very dynamic times. We are in the midst of exciting technological changes and are facing the challenge of training a workforce that is struggling with numerous retirements and reduced hiring. The New York State Training Council is addressing these issues through a new project called STARS.

In November 2002, discussions began at a NYS Training Council (NYSTC) Training Directors' Roundtable meeting concerning the impact of the state's budget crisis on training and development opportunities. It became apparent that the appropriate way to address the issue was to share training resources.

As a result of that meeting, the training community now finds itself on the threshold of the STARS program, a program devoted to State Training And Resource Sharing. STARS is focused on increasing training and development opportunities for all State employees through the effective sharing of information and resources.

The first component of the STARS program is the Agency Resource List hosted on the NYSTC web page (www.nystc.org). It can be accessed

“STARS is focused on increasing training and development opportunities for all State employees through the effective sharing of information and resources.”

from the home page by clicking on the link labeled “Reach for the STARS.” Nearly thirty State agencies have identified resources and training programs which they are willing to share.

In addition, as of February 2004, the Office for Technology will make its web-based Government Learning Center (GLC) available as an interagency training communications mechanism. The Learning Center will function as an online statewide training catalog and registration service. Agencies can post and update their training information in the Learning Center.

The Government Learning Center will be flexible, easy to use and no cost will be incurred by the agencies and employees who use it. Each agency retains control over its own postings as well as over the level of access its employees will have to this

program. Most importantly, the Learning Center will provide staff with more training and development opportunities through a collaboration of resources and information.

The final component of the STARS initiative will include an Instructor Development Program. This program will feature skill development opportunities for new trainers as well as coaching and skill enhancement for experienced trainers.

With the collaboration of NYS training offices, the state workforce has the opportunity to participate in both successful and resourceful training programs. For those training offices that have not yet joined the STARS initiative, now is the time to do so — all state agencies are welcome. The STARS Participation Form is available at www.nystc.org, under the “Reach for the STARS” link.

From the ASTD 2003 State of the Industry Report Executive Summary

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- Expenditure as a percentage of payroll was up in Benchmarking Service organizations (from 1.9 percent in 2001 to 2.2 percent in 2002) and Training Investment Leaders (from 3.6 percent in 2001 to 4.1 percent in 2002), but was down in Benchmarking Forum organizations (from 2.8 percent in 2001 to 1.8 percent in 2002).
- Spending per employee was up in Benchmarking Service organizations (from \$734 in 2001 to \$826 in 2002), but was down in Training Investment Leaders and Benchmarking Forum organizations.
- Training hours per employee increased in all three groups of organizations (from 24 in 2001 to 28 in 2002 in Benchmarking Service organizations, and from 57 to 62 in Training Investment Leaders).
- Delivery via learning technologies increased in all organizations in 2002 (to 15 percent for Benchmarking Service organizations, 29 percent for Training Investment Leaders, and 25 percent for Benchmarking Forum organizations), and is projected to increase more in 2003 (to 19 percent for Benchmarking Service organizations, 31 percent for Training Investment Leaders, and 28 percent for Benchmarking Forum organizations).
- The employee groups receiving the largest percentage of training expenditure in 2002 were customer service and production employees, with 17 percent of spending in both Benchmarking Service organizations and Training Investment Leaders going to customer service employees.

Training and Professional Development are Needed Most When the Organization is Lean

Clifford Merchant, Director of Human Resources and Education,
NYS Public Employees Federation, AFL-CIO

A large negative force — a weak economy — is influencing and re-defining training and professional development. Looming budget deficits ranging from five billion to twelve billion dollars over the next several years, an intentional reduction in the state workforce due to the early retirement of over 5,700 employees in 2003, and the reductions in state agency budgets have made the state view training and professional development differently.

This is typified by the recent announcement by the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) of their plans to close a youth facility and reduce staff at other facilities. These staff reductions have career public employees facing the possibility of layoffs. In the past, career mobility was a term used when we talked about promotions or the ability to change careers as a result of successful completion of training and professional development opportunities. Today, for those people working at OCFS youth facilities, career mobility means continued employment in a

different title or agency, based on their the knowledge, skills and abilities.

In these bleak economic times, the Public Employees Federation believes the continued professional development of public service employees is one critical component to accomplishing the core mission of the various state agencies. No longer are the remaining public employees “doing more with less.” Instead, fewer dedicated public employees are attempting to ensure that the core mission of their agencies is achieved. But the effectiveness of the employees in these already short staffed agencies will be significantly hampered without the necessary training and professional development.

Ironically, the first area that gets cut in a deficit budget is funding for

training and professional development. Agencies are unable to make the nominal financial investment to train their existing employees because of budget constraints. Ultimately they are forced to contract out at a higher cost to accomplish their mission because funding does exist on that budget line. We must learn that training and professional development are not luxuries. Training and professional development is needed most when the organization is lean, when the recruitment options are restricted and when our resources are diminished. If agencies must deliver the public services associated with their core mission by using fewer staff, the staff must be better prepared through training and professional development to deliver those vital services.

“No longer are the remaining public employees ‘doing more with less.’ Instead, fewer dedicated public employees are attempting to ensure that the core mission of their agencies is achieved.”

The State of Succession Planning

Katherine Napoli, Director of Training,
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

As the public sector sets out ambitious plans to improve services, it faces enormous challenges in recruiting and retaining the staff to make it all happen.

- The workforce is aging. Retirements will increase over the next few years. How will the knowledge, experience, and institutional memory that will walk out the door with these retirees be passed on? Where will the right staff be ‘found’ to get the work done?
- Fewer candidates are in the “pipeline,” due to downsizing over

the past decade. Thus, there are fewer candidates to choose from and many of them may be eligible to retire.

- Finding qualified candidates may be difficult in a wide range of occupations, including information technology, accounting/auditing, nursing, other health professions, teaching, and engineering, to name a few. Statewide and nationwide, the number of workers in the 25-44 year old range has declined.
- Retention of remaining employees may be difficult as increased pro-

motional opportunities become available and agencies compete for a limited pool of experienced staff.

Challenges present difficulties and opportunities. We may have difficulty recruiting the people we need but will also have the opportunity to think, work, and organize in new ways. We should use this opportunity for creative problem solving and innovation.

It has been called workforce planning, succession planning, strategic staffing, and other things. Regard-

Continued on page 5

less of the name, the steps are pretty much the same. It doesn't matter what you call it — just do it. The main point is to get the right people in the right jobs at the right time. In September of 2001, the Governor's Office of Employee Relations partnered with the NYS Department of Civil Service to collaborate on the design and development of a guide to workforce succession planning for New York State agencies. The guide, *Our Workforce Matters*, is offered to help agencies get started or, if already underway, to help evaluate what is being done and consider other possibilities.

The guide, which can be found on line at www.cs.state.ny.us/workforce, provides a framework to help you think through what you need to do to anticipate and meet your staffing needs in the short, mid, and long term. The benefits of investing the time and effort to develop and implement a succession planning strategy include:

- Making sure that employees are prepared for the jobs and responsibilities of the future.
- Having enough qualified people for that strategic initiative the Commissioner told everyone about.
- Making sure employees with obsolete skills get needed training so that they can continue to contribute.
- Having people who can develop and use that great new technology you need.
- Providing a workplace and work opportunities that make employees actually want to stay in your agency.
- Not wasting valuable time and money on developing skills that don't support the agencies' strategic direction.

Within the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Division of Program Support and Quality Improvement (PSQI) has piloted a succession planning effort that identifies key positions for which competency based training is offered to cultivate a pool of qualified candidates with the knowledge, skills and abilities neces-

sary to perform identified essential functions.

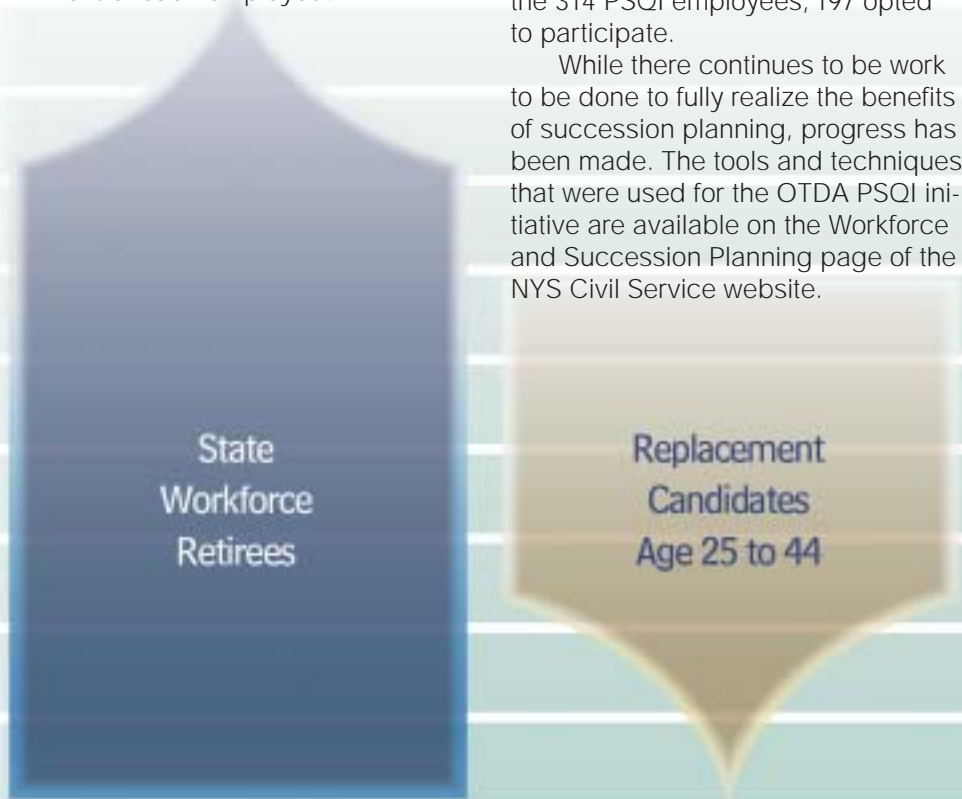
When considering staff development strategies, OTDA found the following questions key to designing training interventions:

- What positions/titles should be the focus of development efforts? Which will have the most impact on service delivery?
- Which of the candidate fields already identified should be the focus of development efforts?
- What KSAs/competencies should be the focus of the development effort?
- Will competency assessment of the candidate fields be worth the resource investment?
- Will you have individual development plans for each employee?
- How will you monitor the development of each employee?

- Are managers and supervisors aware of their role in developing staff?
- Do managers and supervisors have the tools (coaching and mentoring skills, information, and other resources) to ensure staff is developed?
- What training is available, including the Clerical and Secretarial Employee Advancement Program (CSEAP), NYS Technology Training Academy, GOER Workforce Development Opportunities, etc.?
- What gaps exist between developmental products and services and what is needed? Are adequate resources available to meet the needs?

These issues were taken into consideration when creating the PSQI Succession Planning Pilot. Participation in the pilot was voluntary, and of the 314 PSQI employees, 197 opted to participate.

While there continues to be work to be done to fully realize the benefits of succession planning, progress has been made. The tools and techniques that were used for the OTDA PSQI initiative are available on the Workforce and Succession Planning page of the NYS Civil Service website.



“Retention of remaining employees may be difficult as increased promotional opportunities become available and agencies compete for a limited pool of experienced staff.”

Abe Bolgatz Retires



GEORGE DOWSE

Following a long and distinguished career in public service and education, capped by over 15 years with PDP, Abe Bolgatz retired on January 23, 2004. Known for his wisdom and calm, Abe was honored at a luncheon attended by over 100 of his colleagues who celebrated his accomplishments. A social worker and lawyer, Abe's career spans a half-century of commitment to helping others. From his early days as a public assistance caseworker in New York City, through the first steps in the War on Poverty with the Office of Economic Opportunity, to serving as Dean of Community Services at Hudson Valley Community College, and as President of the Board for United Way, Abe has enjoyed a remarkable working life that has touched us all. He will be greatly missed by his colleagues and friends at PDP.

Sydney Cresswell Receives PDP's Extended Learning Leadership Award of Excellence



SUZANNE KAWOLA

Pictured here with PDP Director and Public Service Professor, Eugene J. Monaco, Sydney Cresswell, Director of the Rockefeller College Intergovernmental Solutions Program, received the 2003 PDP Distinguished Extended Learning Leadership Award of Excellence. Made annually, the award recognizes outstanding contributions and sustained commitment to excellence and public engagement in the field of continuing professional education.

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