

Developing a training plan

This is a simple 6-stage approach to developing and implementing a training plan. There is no set format or template for such a plan as each organisation will need to find an approach that works for them. The degree of structure or formality required will vary across organisations; smaller organisations where informal communication is easier, may need to adopt a less formal approach than larger organisations where the challenge of communicating across departments or regional offices may require a more structured plan. Whether formal or informal, the process and the training plan should be documented to enable it to be shared across the organisation and to facilitate review and evaluation. Communication is key to the success of the training plan: the process of developing it should be transparent and all staff should have the opportunity to feed into discussions about skills needs and priorities (see case study).

1. Identify what skills your organisation has access to (in-house and bought-in)
2. Identify the skills it needs now and is likely to need in the near future
3. Identify the gaps. Consider which areas are vulnerable if staff move on or retire or if you are no longer able to buy them in
4. Develop a training plan to address the gaps. Identify priority areas and consider how you will address them: can you pass on expertise in-house or will you have to buy in training? What's your budget for training?
5. Implement the plan, aligning it with staff appraisals where possible
6. Review and evaluate. Is the training meeting the needs of individuals and the organisation?

The first stage in developing a training plan is to identify the skills already present in the organisation and those that are in need of development. These should be addressed as the first priority. The best way to do this is to conduct a skills audit. This need not be a complicated, time-consuming operation but must be carried out in consultation with, and with the full co-operation of, staff. Where Union Learning Reps are in place, they should be fully involved in the process. A template for conducting a skills audit against the National Occupational Standards in Archaeological Practice is available on the CIfA website at http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/ifa_nos_foundations.pdf

Once skills needs have been identified, the most effective ways of addressing them can be considered. This should include the best ways of maximising resources in terms of cost, time and the benefit to individuals and the organisation as a whole. Buying in expensive, external training is not always the best option: think about what skills could be taught in-house either formally or informally, on the job. Make use of local learning centres such as further education colleges, community facilities and e-learning resources.

Training plans are not static documents to be completed and then shelved. Their ongoing revision should be informed by the results of staff appraisals or development reviews, business plans or future organisational development strategies and by evaluating the training provided.

Remember to consider all staff when developing your training plan. Under the Fixed-Term (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002, staff employed on a fixed-term basis must have the same access to training and career development opportunities as comparable staff on permanent contracts. In preparing your training plan, you should also consider how you will identify barriers to learning and provide additional support to your staff if required. There are a range of national organisations such as the Disability Rights Commission, the RNIB and the British Dyslexia Association who can provide advice to employers.