

10 Steps

To Creating a Successful Employee Cross-Training Program

Cynthia Berry, owner of Berry Organizational and Learning Development, provides us with tips for creating a cross-training program that accomplishes your organization's goals.

For more information, watch the GFOA Small Government Forum's presentation, "Cross-Training in Small Governments: How to Do It Well?"

gfoa.org/10steps2-21



1

Draw up a list of the specific critical tasks for which cross-training is needed, by department and by task and/or position.

2

Identify the people who will be capable of performing the cross-training tasks. Select criteria for trainers and trainees based on motivation, personality, and preferences.

3

Establish some formal expectations, making it clear that cross-training is mandatory in that the organization requires at least one person to be able to take over crucial tasks at short notice. Create clear guidelines and targets.

4

Make sure employees understand the purpose, objectives, and benefits of the program. Understand that some employees will see this as just an addition to their workload and devise a considerate approach for employees who are resistant. Others will assume that their jobs are in danger. Address these concerns upfront. Communicate!

5

Gain as much support as possible, from both trainees and top management. Make sure members of management are on board and prepared to help coach and train their staff and other managers' staff if needed.

6

Allocate adequate funds, time, training materials, and training facilities. Keep in mind that someone who is just learning a task will need more time than someone who's been doing the job for years.

7

Use direct, practical, on-the-job training and practice sessions, which make training more effective and allow the organization to closely evaluate the progress being made.

8

Manage workloads accordingly so employees can participate without added stress. Consider offering short-term compensation packages and special incentives.

9

Develop a feedback mechanism that allows employees to comment both on the training and its effect on them. Use this information to continuously improve your efforts.

10

Show employees that cross-training is an integral part of their overall development plan.