Article 16

Training and Career Development

Section 1. General Provisions

The Agency and the Union agree that the training and development of employees is important in carrying out the mission of the Agency. The Agency is responsible for ensuring that all employees receive the training necessary for the performance of their assigned duties.

Section 2. Non-Discrimination

The parties agree that nomination and/or selection of employees to participate in training and career development programs and courses shall be nondiscriminatory and made without regard to sex, race, color, gender identity, genetic information, religion, age, marital status, ethnic group, handicap, sexual orientation, parental status and Union membership or activity, and shall be in accordance with equal employment opportunity guidelines, and consistent with other applicable laws.

Section 3. Training – Job Related (Technical and General)

A. Employees will not incur costs for agency required training necessary for the performance of their assigned duties.

B. When training is required as part of a career ladder plan, the agency is responsible for ensuring that it is provided.

C. Employees may initiate discussions regarding individual training needs. Such discussions may or may not be directly linked to an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

D. At the conclusion of formal, long-term training sessions, participants will be offered the opportunity to evaluate the training based on a survey prepared by the Agency.

Section 4. Career Development

Career development for individual employees shall be encouraged through establishment of an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

A. The administration agrees, on an annual basis, normally the first quarter of the calendar year, to provide information and assistance, if necessary, to employees for the purpose and means of establishing IDPs. The approving management official will also be identified.

B. Because of the nature of their appointments, IDPs are not appropriate for term or temporary employees.

1. Employees may initiate IDPs through their designated management official. The designated management official will, if requested, assist the employee in the preparation of the IDP and will review it with the employee to assure conformance with organizational needs and individual career needs. The plan will be referred to the designated approving official and the employee will be notified of approval/disapproval or the need for modification.
2. IDP information will be available to employees on an agency website.

Section 5. Training Programs

1. The Administration will remind employees, at least annually, of the availability of Government-sponsored training programs, the general scope of training, the criteria for approval of training, and the nomination procedures. The Administration agrees to advise individual employees, upon request, of currently available Government-sponsored training courses so as to provide the employee the opportunity to express timely interest. The Agency will provide information via the intranet concerning SSA-sponsored training and educational programs.
2. Training nominations and/or approval will be based on the potential use of the training in the employee’s current position, or IDP if any, and other criteria established by applicable law, rule or regulation. Nominating and approving officials will apply such criteria equitably.

C. When an employee is nominated for training, a copy of the employee’s IDP, if any, will be attached to the nomination and will be considered in the process. Employees will be notified in writing of the approval or disapproval of their nominations and the reason for disapproval. To the extent feasible, employees will be notified of the approval or disapproval prior to the starting date of the training. Should an employee’s nomination for training, including training courses contained in an IDP, be disapproved for lack of resources, the employee may be renominated as funds later become available, and the nomination will be given first consideration.

Section 6. National Training Committee

A. The Agency and the Union have agreed to continue the National Training Committee (NTC). The purpose of the NTC is to review agency training and career development programs and make necessary recommendations. It shall meet to discuss: training methodologies, training and career development needs, education and communication, efficacy of training initiatives; and other related issues. It will be a focal point for sharing information on agency-wide training and career development.

B. The NTC is a recommending body that use consensual decision making to address issues. It will meet two (2) times per year and submit joint recommendations to the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, with a copy provided the General Committee Spokesperson.

C. The NTC will be composed of twelve (12) members. Six (6) will be appointed by the Union and six (6) by the Agency. The NTC will meet during the first and third quarters of the calendar year. Dates for these meetings will be set by mutual consent of the parties. The meetings will be face-to-face. Additional meetings may be jointly agreed to. The meeting(s) will be for three days, but may be extended by mutual consent. ~~The Agency will pay for all meeting-related travel expenses as well as per diem for five (5) American Federation of Government Employees travelers.~~ The meetings will be held in Central Office; however, the committee may jointly recommend that the meeting be held elsewhere. ~~Official time~~ **Taxpayer-funded union time** authorized for NTC meetings will be handled in accordance with Article 30.

D. This committee is not a waiver of Union statutory rights to information, consultation or negotiations. The Union reserves the right to request negotiations on issues impacting conditions of employment.

E. This national committee does not preclude any local arrangements that may exist. Training may be an appropriate subject for Component (Deputy Commissioner Level), Regional or lower level meetings subject to the mutual consent of the parties.

Section 7. IVT

IVT consists of a one-way, point-to-multi point satellite video network and interactive distance learning response system that creates a virtual classroom which allows instructors at one site to simultaneously train hundreds of trainees elsewhere. The agency is committed to ongoing evaluation and improvement so that all participants receive effective training. Neither party waives its statutory rights regarding IVT.

Management will ensure that employee questions arising from an IVT broadcast will be answered in a timely manner.

Section 8. Technical Mentoring

A. Technical Skills Mentoring is defined as providing appropriate on the job assistance to employees new to particular jobs.

B. Mentors should be highly motivated, knowledgeable employees with good interpersonal skills.

C. Management will make every reasonable effort to:

1. Allow interested employees who are qualified to volunteer in the mentoring process. Where management believes an employee is not qualified to mentor or decides not to utilize the employee in the mentoring process, they will discuss the reasons with the employee, if requested.

2. Accommodate employees with special needs or special equipment by obtaining mentors who are familiar with special equipment or accommodations used by individuals.

3. Consider an employee’s request to freely withdraw from mentoring, and if denied provide a written explanation.

D. Management recognizes that mentoring may consume a portion of the mentor’s time and consideration will be given to adjusting workloads as deemed necessary.

E. The mentoring phase of training is a learning period that enables employees to become familiar with their new assignments. Management realizes that there is a learning curve in the mentoring process. The mentoring process should ideally involve three way ongoing communication among the technical mentor, the employee and management.

F. Management recognizes the importance of continuity and will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the mentoring process is completed without interruption.

G. Trainees who believe they need additional assistance or training at the conclusion of their mentoring period may make a request for management’s consideration.

Section 9. Training Expenses

When training is approved, the Administration will pay costs of tuition, required textbooks and other expenses as appropriate, and may pay travel costs, subject to travel regulations and fiscal considerations. If travel funds are not authorized and the training would otherwise be approved, the employee will be notified and given the option of attending the training without travel reimbursement. Duty time will be approved for training, when it is scheduled during the employee’s basic workweek, unless the training is deferred or cancelled.

Section 10. Administrative Leave for Certification

Employees, (i.e., attorneys who are members of the bar (state, territory or District of Columbia), nurses, and physicians) who are required to earn continuing education credits to maintain certification and/or licensure related to the employee’s job serieswill be granted up to 40 hours administrative leave through the life of the contract, not to exceed 16 hours in any one calendar year to maintain such certification or licensure. The agency will not incur any costs for such training. Administrative leave for continuing education training must be requested by the employee and approved in advance by Management, subject to workload considerations.