United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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Washington, D.C. 20240

Director's Order #33: Learning and Development

Approved: Mary A. Bomar
Director

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This Director's Order (with its accompanying reference manual) supplements section 1.9.1 of National Park Service *Management Policies 2006*.

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I. Background

The National Park Service (NPS) has an obligation to its workforce to provide a first-rate, effective employee learning and development program in order to recruit and retain quality employees and meet its mission goals. The Director and National Leadership Council (NLC) have called for a transparent, measurable human resources development strategy that links organizational goals to succession planning and employee development. A key objective of this strategy is to achieve a culture shift within the NPS that focuses on the employee and the relationship between employee and line supervisor. Development of the next generation of leaders must emphasize supervisory accountability for providing an organizational environment that emphasizes lifelong learning and uses good performance systems and communication to identify the individual development needs of employees.

This Director's Order is one component of the NPS Workforce Management Plan (2008). The plan is intended to be a comprehensive response to NPS workforce challenges for the next five years and beyond, and establishes the framework to build the workforce and achieve the Service's workforce management vision, mission and goals. Beyond learning and development, the plan covers human resources competitive sourcing review, diversity recruitment, and efforts such as the Federal Human Capital Survey. The Workforce Plan will help ensure the NPS has a workforce in the right place, at the right time with the right skills.

To succeed in attracting and retaining talent for the future, NPS leaders must create and maintain a comprehensive learning environment that demonstrates that—

(1) Our leaders value employees and their contributions; and

(2) The NPS assures, through meaningful Individual Development Plans (IDPs), opportunities for employees to grow and develop to meet both the needs of the Service and their own personal career goals.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Director's Order is to supplement the *Management Policies 2006* paragraphs on career development and training and on succession planning (MP 1.9.1.1. and 1.9.1.2) and to develop operating policies necessary to implement the scope and overarching intent of the *Learning and Development Report to the National Leadership Council* [March 3, 2008] That Report and this order together update the Service's response to provisions of the National Parks Omnibus Management Act of 1998 which require the Service to—

(1) Develop a comprehensive training program for employees in all professional careers in the work force for the purpose of assuring that the work force has available the best, up-to-date knowledge, skills and abilities with which to manage, interpret and protect the resources of the national park system. (16 USC 5912)

(2) Develop a clear plan for management training and development whereby career professional employees from any academic field may obtain sufficient training, experience, and advancement opportunity to enable those qualified to move into park management positions, including the position of park superintendent. (16 USC 5913)

This Director's Order will help us ensure that, in the future, a cohesive, integrated, comprehensive and content-driven curriculum will be available to all employees in all disciplines via a wide range of delivery systems. It will also reflect our support for employee career development, as evidenced in the allocation of NPS resources, and will empower employees to look for leadership opportunities at all levels.

III. Authority to Issue this Director's Order

The authority to issue this order is found in the 1916 National Park Service Organic Act (16 USC 1-4), and delegations of authority found in Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual.

This Director's Order is intended only to improve the internal management of the NPS and is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

IV. Program Vision and Strategies

The NPS Learning and Development vision positions our agency to be a leader within the Federal government and the global conservation community in workforce management and development throughout the entire career lifecycle. To move forward in this endeavor, NPS Learning and Development programs and initiatives will seek to instill in every employee the NPS Core Values, best practices, and cultural strengths to sustain our agency through changing times. By doing this we will ensure that the Service thrives and grows with each future generation.

Specific strategies to achieve this desired future will be developed and updated over time by the Learning and Development community within the NPS, in concert with NPS senior leadership. However, several key strategies are enduring. In particular, the Service will

(1) Develop and deliver a cohesive, integrated, and comprehensive curriculum available to all employees Servicewide.

(2) Support employee development, as evidenced by regular needs assessments, IDPs, access to mentoring, and other progressive actions.

(3) Develop processes to ensure visibility, accessibility, and continued support for training.

(4) Allocate NPS resources to reflect a strong organizational commitment to employee development. Leveraging of special emphasis programs (e.g., Centennial Initiative) and non-Federal sources will be a standard practice.

V. Implementation Actions

A. New Program Components

To achieve our vision, the Service will designate or establish necessary new program components, including

(1) A National Leadership Development Program that is funded nationally and delivered, to the maximum extent possible, consistently and equitably to employees across all regions and parks. The aim will be to develop comprehensive supervision, management and leadership competencies to meet the leadership succession needs of the entire NPS. All NPS- sponsored leadership development programs (including those offered by NPS regions, WASO program managers, other bureaus and agencies, or universities) will be coordinated as a National Leadership Development Program. All programs will meet required curriculum components and competencies based on the Senior Executive Service Executive Core

Qualifications and will emphasize development of leaders who take an active role in assuring the success of their employees. The WASO Learning and Development Division is assigned lead responsibility for this nationwide program.

(2) A Leadership Development Advisory Council to ensure that the content remains relevant to the field and continues to be supported by the leadership across the NPS. The Council will advise the WASO Learning and Development Division on the development and operation of the National Leadership Development effort and approve the launch of new elements. The council will include, but not be limited to, deputy regional directors, deputy associate directors, a representative associate regional director for administration, a senior park manager, and the Chief, Learning and Development Division.

(3) A Career Field Foundations Academy with program elements to include seven overarching career field tracks: Natural Resource; Cultural Resource; Protection Ranger; Interpretation and Education; Administration and Business Practices; Facility Manager; and a suite of Specialty Professions. This will help ensure that employees in a specific career field acquire the basic competencies required for performance in that career field. The WASO Learning and Development Division is assigned lead responsibility for this program.

(4) A Training and Development Workgroup to coordinate and advise the WASO Learning and Development Division and the regions on development and delivery of training, share best practices, address Servicewide issues and strengthen communication across the Learning and Development Community and the Service as a whole. This workgroup will be composed of all the learning and development officers (both WASO and the regions). They will coordinate with and advise the NPS WASO Learning and Development Division on the development of training in both career fields training and other employee development programs.

(5) Expanded distance learning capabilities for on-line and other types of distance learning programs, centered at the Stephen T. Mather Training Center. Mather Training Center staff will work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center to increase NPS capacity to broadcast Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) programs.

(6) An expanded NPS Organizational Development Program to assist NPS managers to address challenges and issues such as improving organizational culture, change management and conflict management.

(7) A functional Servicewide learning management system to document and track all training, compile needs assessments, and meet all OPM and Departmental training management reporting requirements.

B. Learning Enhancements

(1) Provide a career guidance and opportunity handbook for every career field to help guide employee development and career planning.

(2) Facilitate the formal development of Communities of Practice among the disciplines and program areas, including dedicated web pages or on-line chat rooms for specific communities.

(3) Maintain a web-based flexible training "e-catalog" that can be revised and updated continually with course offerings from the WASO Learning and Development Division, regions and program areas.

(4) Maintain a repository of curriculum elements and a suggested roster of trainers so that regions, parks and programs can develop and offer courses that are of consistent content and quality and recommended by the WASO Learning and Development Division.

(5) Provide standardized elements to park areas to be included in an orientation package for new employees, partners, concessionaires, and volunteers. The WASO Learning and Development Division will provide downloadable information on the NPS that can be combined with local park or office data.

(6) Register all new permanent, employees into the NPS Fundamentals Program within the first two years of appointment. Term employees and experienced employees who have been in permanent positions for more than two years will be accepted if space is available. NPS Fundamentals encompasses a broad understanding of the mission and goals of the NPS designed to sustain a workforce committed to achieving the NPS mission.

C. Partnerships and Outreach

The Learning and Development Program will expand its capacity and relevancy through partnerships and outreach by acting to:

(1) Coordinate development and management of agreements with allied universities. These agreements and outreach will promote NPS research and learning programs that will provide employees with the progressive thinking, scientific management background necessary for current and emerging challenges on a global scale.

(2) Continue to expand access to the NPS-developed learning programs for partners, cooperators, and the general public through www.parktraining.org and other similar programs.

(3) Establish an interdisciplinary strategy to capture "lessons learned" from key or long-term outgoing employees through exit interviews and oral histories as appropriate.

D. Evaluation and Accountability

Evaluation and accountability will be assured by acting to:

(1) Employ a full-time professional (GS-13 target) learning and development officer in WASO and each region to coordinate the training provided in their area with the WASO Learning and Development Division.

(2) Measure and report "Return on Investment" of selected NPS-sponsored training through developing benchmarking standards, best practices, on-going evaluations of performance change, training events, curriculum and competencies.

(3) Provide regional directors, managers and supervisors with language for performance standards that demonstrates "accountability" in the training and development aspect of their position. Regional directors, managers and supervisors at all levels of the NPS organization will be responsible for having IDPs for their employees that are relevant to their professional development and serve organizational goals.

(4) Develop, coordinate and deliver "Trainer Development Program" courses (both on-line and classroom) to ensure that field training is presented in a professional manner and held to a high standard. The WASO Learning and Development Division will administer standards and criteria for a "tiered" NPS instructor development program.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

The Assistant Director, Workforce Management, is delegated responsibility and authority for the NPS Learning and Development Division, including oversight for the implementation of all policies and procedures related to training and development. This includes taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure that the strategies and implementation actions listed in this order are undertaken and accomplished, and our program vision is achieved. Within the Workforce Management directorate, this responsibility is principally carried out by the Chief, Learning and Development Division.

(1) WASO, regions and parks will develop target benchmark funding levels for learning and development as a percentage of their base/project funded FTEs (example: 1% of ONPS and project personal services budgets).

(2) Associate Directors and their program managers will exercise lead responsibility to manage and fund the design and development of required training or training identified through needs assessments for their respective programs in collaboration with WASO Learning and Development Division and regions.

(3) The WASO Learning and Development Division will exercise lead responsibility to develop, acquire, manage, coordinate and fund Servicewide training, including new employee orientation; universal competencies; career field basic competencies; Trainer Development Program; and a variety of leadership, supervision, and management programs in collaboration with regions, parks and programs through a wide range of delivery systems.

(4) Regional Directors are responsible for ensuring the clear assignment of regional learning and development responsibilities to their Regional Employee Development Officer (EDO). In addition, regional directors will assign responsibility to line supervisors throughout their region to identify and support individual development needs of employees.

(5) Regional Offices will exercise lead responsibility to manage and fund region-specific training needs through their EDOs in collaboration with WASO Learning and Development Division and park areas.

(6) Superintendents and their subordinate supervisors are responsible for identifying and supporting the individual development needs of employees and ensuring each employee has an IDP. Superintendents are also responsible for assigning clear responsibility for the park (from within their own staff or arranging for collaborative support from another park or the region) to manage and fund park learning and development needs in collaboration with the WASO Learning and Development Division and the regional offices.

(7) Employees are responsible for being aware of the competencies that are associated with their position in the workforce and for working closely with their supervisors to develop an IDP that will meet both the needs of the Service and their own personal career goals.

----------*End of Director's Order*----------