

DOCUMENT RESUME

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The Use of Training Provided through Formal Courses to Employees of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. October 22, 1976. 3 pp. + enclosure (3 pp.).

Report to: SAC E. Davis, Director, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; by Thomas R. Colan, Assistant Director, General Government Div.

Issue Area: Personnel Management and Compensation (300).

Contact: General Government Div.

Budget Function: General Government: Central Personnel Management (805).

Organization Concerned: Civil Service Commission.

Authority: Government Employees Training Act (5 U.S.C. 4101(4)).

Although most employees of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) who received training during calendar year 1975 use part of their training on the job, there were instances of little or no utilization. A selected sample of 27 employees was interviewed to determine the extent to which training is or may be used on the job and to identify the cause and effect of substantial nonutilization. Findings/Conclusions: The average utilization rate, defined as the percent of training received in selected courses used on the job as estimated by the employees interviewed, was 59% at ATF headquarters compared to an overall average of 56% for the five agencies studied. Reasons cited for not using the training included the failure of the training to apply to the job and the use of course material that required too much time for practical use. Nonutilization of training resulted in inefficient use of training funds and salary costs for the time the employees were away from the job and a potential decrease in the morale of employees who cannot use their training. Although most employees use some of their training, there is a need for improvement. Training officials might be encouraged to spend more time evaluating the relevance of training courses to the needs of ATF and its employees for improving performance of official duties, training of employees who need it most to perform their duties, and the application and effectiveness of the training provided. (SC)

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GENERAL GOVERNMENT
DIVISION

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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

OCT 22 1976

Mr. Rex E. Davis, Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco
and Firearms
Department of the Treasury

Dear Mr. Davis:

Our Federal Personnel and Compensation Division made a limited study of the use of training, including specialized training, provided through formal courses to employees of headquarters and the Washington field office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). We performed similar studies at four other Government agencies in the Washington, D.C., area.

We interviewed a selected sample of 27 employees who received training during calendar year 1975 to determine the extent training is or may be used on the job, and to identify the cause and effect of substantial nonutilization. The sample selected was deemed by an ATF training official to be representative of the training activity at ATF headquarters. We also interviewed training officials and obtained data from them regarding procedures for insuring utilization of training.

Although most ATF employees use part of their training on the job, there were instances of little or no utilization. ATF training officials indicated additional efforts will be made to follow up on training. The following information may be of value to you in considering the need for more emphasis on use of training.

BACKGROUND

The Government Employees Training Act (5 U.S.C. 4101(4)) and the Federal Personnel Manual require that training directly relate to performance of official duties. The manual states that each agency must establish administrative controls to insure training improves performance and contributes to economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of operations. It also urges agencies to follow up on training to insure that knowledge and skills gained are effectively utilized.

ATF reported 4,217 employees spent 138,200 hours in training at a cost of \$753,000, excluding salaries, in fiscal year 1975.

UTILIZATION OF TRAINING

The average utilization rate--the percent of training received in selected courses used on the job as estimated by employees interviewed--is 59 percent at ATF headquarters compared to the overall average of 56 percent for the five agencies studied. Two ATF employees said they had not used any of the training on the job and six used only 10 to 20 percent. Only two of these eight employees said they may use more of the training in the future.

Reasons cited for not using the training included:

--Training does not apply to job.

--The course material requires too much time for practical use.

When asked why they took a course not used, the responses indicated that courses as described in the pamphlets or brochures appeared to be useful to the employee's job when in actuality they were not. One experienced person mentioned that the course was taken only because it was a requirement.

FOLLOWUP EVALUATION

ATF's instructions for training include that an evaluation form be completed by the employee and sent to the training office within 2 weeks after completion of training.

Completion and analysis of these forms could provide information on training utilization; 13 of the 27 employees interviewed said that agency personnel made no followup on the application or usefulness of training received. Seven of the 13 believed this followup should be made. The training office needs to be aware of the course's usefulness and the value of sending others to the course.

The need to evaluate the application and usefulness of training was discussed with the Chief, Training Division; the Acting Branch Chief for Employee Development; and the Assistant Director of Personnel (Training), Department of the Treasury. These officials said that although course evaluation forms are supposed to be returned to the training office, they occasionally are not returned. They said additional efforts will be made to insure evaluations are returned, and to improve course descriptions.

CONCLUSIONS

To conform with the Government Employees Training Act and the Federal Personnel Manual, all training should relate to official duties. Nonutilization of training results in inefficient use of training funds

and salary costs for the time employees are away from the job, and potential decrease in morale of employees who cannot use their training.

Although our study showed that most employees use some of their training, there is need for improvement. To insure better use of training provided at Government expense, you may wish to require training officials to spend more time evaluating

- relevance of training courses to the needs of ATF and its employees for improving performance of official duties,
- training of employees who need it most to perform their official duties, and
- application and effectiveness of training provided.

We appreciate the cooperation shown to us by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms headquarters' officials during this study. We would appreciate being advised of any action you plan to take.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the Secretary of Treasury; and the Chairman, United States Civil Service Commission.

Sincerely yours,



Thomas R. Colan
Assistant Director