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Building High Performing Teams to Facilitate  
Leadership Development in Organizations

Mrs. Dianne V. Smith

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USAG Fort A.P. Hill

Plans, Analysis and Integration Office (IMPH-PIP)

14135 Montague Road

Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia 22427

Tel: 804-633-8828, DSN 578-8828

## Abstract / Summary

This paper offers an approach to develop tomorrow's Army Civilian leaders by providing them with opportunity to solve the complex challenges of today. The High Performing Team (HPT) Process Model for Leadership Development is presented as a framework to solve an organization's challenges through the use of cross-functional teams, while building leadership competencies of team members. The model contains a vision path and a values path, which are worked in conjunction through the four phases of the model: critical thinking, planning, tactical operation, and monitoring. High performance is obtained when superior results and a shared culture coincide. An example of a project planning workbook used at USAG Fort A.P. Hill for the development of its Civilian Training and Leadership Council (CTLD) initiatives is also presented. Results of efforts championed by the CTLD were recognized as an Installation Management Command (IMCOM) Best Practice in October 2013.

## Building High Performing Teams to Facilitate Leadership Development in Organizations

No definitive Army Civilian model exists to address fundamental elements to develop and maintain High Performing Teams (HPT) within the organization. High Performing Teams are formed by leadership to address a variety of issues, including problem solving, efficiency improvement and the development of new initiatives. However the formation of HPTs offers a secondary yet equally important benefit by creating an environment that facilitates leadership development within the organization. This paper offers a modeled approach to developing tomorrow's Army Civilian leaders by providing them with the opportunity to solve the complex challenges of today.

Recent articles such as *Accepting Austerity* (2013) describe challenges related to government cutbacks due to fiscal uncertainty. A rebalancing of resources to include force structure reshape of the civilian workforce is underway. Hiring freezes and cross-leveling of civilian authorizations throughout the enterprise has created environment challenges that must be overcome to accomplish work that directly supports mission readiness. These challenges not only include the reduction of manpower, but more importantly the reduction of specific skill-sets and institutional knowledge required for organizational proficiency in mission execution. With critical positions vacant and others "one deep," a creative approach is needed to sustain current operations to standard, as well as facilitate the development of solutions to challenges of the future.

Conditions of austerity force the hand of leadership to construct strategies to sustain high performing operations within the organization. As we continue to operate in a fiscally constrained reality, new measures must be developed and implemented to safeguard mission success. This success hinges on leadership's vision and the

competency of the workforce to execute tasks that result in the successful delivery of products and services to Soldiers. In challenging times, the investment into the workforce must be made for continued growth of organizational leaders.

High Performing Teams are stood up by leadership to solve problems that are typically complex and cross-functional in nature. In the book, *CCL Guide to Leadership in Action: How Managers and Organizations Can Improve the Practice of Leadership*, Michael E. Kossler and Kim Kanaga describe why teams are important to organizations. Teams are replacing “the top-down approach to addressing business challenges and to supplant individual effort with group strength.” Kossler and Kanaga go on to say that teams enable organizations to “take giant leaps forward in such areas as timeliness, innovation, customer service, and quality of goods and services” (Wilcox, Martin, Rush & Stephen, 2004, page 235). Cross-functional teams can also help address controversial change within an organization. A grass roots effort for change emerges as team members begin informally communicating with co-workers in their functional areas. This informal communication breaks down the “us-versus-them” mentality and garners workforce acceptance of the prescribed organizational change.

The High Performing Team Process Model for Leadership Development presented in this paper (Figure 1, page 16) capitalizes on the existing skill-sets of individuals within the team to build leaders. Team members have a tendency to gravitate to what they know, taking the lead on those elements of complex issues. Conversely, differing points of view gained through discussion enrich the team’s learning experience and offers team members the opportunity to build additional skill-sets and leadership competencies.

Mentorship is a widely recognized approach to building an individual's leadership competencies through the transfer of knowledge that occurs when the experienced mentor is placed with mentee. While traditional mentoring methodology fosters the building a specific skill-set within an individual, the HPT Process Model for Leadership Development fosters the development of participative leadership competencies within the team. High Performing Team members are dedicated to other members' professional growth and success. Participative mentorship between team members will naturally occur due to trust established through team member relationships. This synergy between team members creates an environment that maximizes learning and team performance, which produce superior results for the organization.

The HPT Process Model for Leadership Development is comprised of a vision path and a values path. The vision path is given by leadership within an organization. It is the task or the content leadership presents to an HPT for the purpose of solving a problem, or for the development of a new endeavor to move the organization forward. The vision path is comprised of elements required to carry out the task of obtaining leadership's vision. These elements include the mission or problem charge; setting direction; operationalizing the plan, and assessment and corrective action. High Performing Teams follow the vision path to achieve superior results.

On the opposite side of the model, the values path focuses on the people and the process that enable the accomplishment of leadership's vision. Elements located within the values path are designed to define the process that team members use to execute the task work. The values path relies heavily on the team's ability to establish its operating system and develop and implement team conduct guidelines, as this defines

the framework of the process used to execute the task. Interpersonal in nature, these guidelines place shared team expectations on how team members relate to one another and how the team's work is accomplished. The guidelines are collectively developed by team members to define expected desirable actions and behaviors that the team members have agreed to follow; as well as the undesirable actions and behaviors that will not be tolerated. Expectations of how individual members of the team complete work are established by the assignment of individual team member roles and responsibilities. A framework for the resolution process is also located within the values path.

In Process Reviews (IPR) and After Action Review (AAR) are found on the values path as well. Although validated data and task results to goal are considered in these reviews, it is actually the people and the process within the values path that are driving task completion. Following the elements given in the values path will lead to a shared culture.

High performance is obtained when the vision and values paths are worked in conjunction by HPTs. To facilitate this process, the model presented in this paper is further divided into four phases; critical thinking, planning, tactical operation, and monitoring, which are found at the center of the HPT process model. Each of these phases has a related element on both the vision path and value path. Recognizing the relationship between the vision and values path elements generates the potential for high performance, enabling a shared culture and superior results to occur.

Shared culture (values path) and superior results (vision path) are interdependent. It could be argued that a shared culture is not necessary, and superior

results may be achieved by team members simply accomplishing the given task. However, the shared culture is comprised of the people and processes that perform the work required to accomplish the task. If a shared culture is not present or begins to erode, process efficiency will suffer as team member communication breaks down, ultimately degrading mission results.

In contrast, a shared culture will suffer if superior results cannot be realized. Team members may conclude that the given task or content is not relevant, or deem it unattainable due to too large of a problem scope, lack of resources, or perhaps an unrealistic given timeline for executing the task. This problem relates directly back to leadership's vision. Perhaps leadership's vision has not been effectively communicated, or something prevented workforce buy-in causing it to be rejected. In this case, the inability to achieve superior results begins to erode morale, affecting the people and processes within the shared culture. Both scenarios negatively impact organizational effectiveness and mission readiness. For these reasons, a high performance approach to vision and values should be adopted by all organizations.

It should be noted that The HPT Process Model for Leadership Development is customizable and scalable. The model is designed to establish processes necessary for work accomplishment with the understanding that individuals within the team possess diverse skill-sets. Therefore, the model requires teams to collectively establish common operating systems to facilitate efficient task completion. In addition, the model will obtain results in varying problem scopes regardless of the complexity level. Whether the vision is given from the organization's senior leadership, middle management leaders, or unit level leaders, the model may be scaled to the appropriate

level needed to obtain high performance results. In the following pages, an overview of The HPT Process Model for Leadership Development is presented according to its four phases that enable high performance.

### Critical Thinking Phase

The HPT's purpose and vision is set by leadership. Leaders in organizations launch HPTs to solve an existing problem, improve an existing product or service, or build a new product or service to meet a newly identified customer need. From leadership's vision, the team conducts research and analysis and utilizes critical thinking to prepare its problem statement. This along with process guidelines based on leadership expectations, such as meeting frequency and project timelines, are developed into a team project charter. Once the team has completed its charter, it is presented to leadership during the critical thinking phase In Process Review (IPR). Once approved, the charter is formally adopted by leadership and by extension, the entire organization.

### Planning Phase

Clear rules of direction, communication and process engagement are established in the planning phase. High Performing Teams begin by establishing a framework of team operating systems. These systems address how team members are expected to relate to one another by establishing team conduct guidelines, and are as specific as defining desirable and undesirable actions and behaviors. These rules of team engagement typically include desirable behaviors such as exercising professionalism,

respect and consideration for fellow team members. Undesirable, prohibited behaviors may include behaviors such as angry outbursts or information hoarding. An example of an undesirable action is publishing project documents without team review and consensus; as opposed to the desirable action of working through the team's process to gain team consensus. It is critical that all team members participate in defining and establishing the team's operating systems. Team member buy-in is necessary as team operating systems form the process that enables mission success of the leadership's vision.

Mission direction is also set during the planning phase. Setting direction includes defining the project scope. Careful consideration of research and analysis conducted during the critical thinking phase is required to properly scope a project. Through this analysis a project scope is developed that identifies specific elements to be addressed in planning a solution. In addition, a good problem scope will define areas that are deemed as being outside of the project scope. Excluding elements should also be carefully considered in order to avoid loss of focus on obtaining leadership's primary vision. It is not uncommon to rework a problem scope several times within the planning stage. Finding the right balance in a project scope is somewhat of an art that is improved with practice. A project with too large of a scope is often unattainable; while too small of a scope will not yield the required results.

Identifying requirements and developing a plan to address are essential to the sustained success of the envisioned solution. Capacity building is considered during the planning phase to support the development of newly identified requirements. This includes an assessment of current organizational knowledge, workforce skills, and

output rate to establish a baseline of the required capabilities within the organization related to the problem scope. In addition, other necessary resources, such as funding, technology and training requirements must be identified.

Once this baseline picture is created, gaps between current day operations and leadership's vision become more apparent. From this gap analysis, a comprehensive plan is formed. Goals and objectives are developed, along with the supporting action plans to bridge these gaps, which will carry the organization forward in its endeavor.

In preparing the plan, each goal, objective, and supporting action plan is captured on a project planning workbook. Please see Figure 2 (pages 16-17) for an example of a project planning workbook used at USAG Fort A.P. Hill for the development of its Civilian Training and Leadership (CTLD) Council initiatives. Results of efforts championed by the CTLD were recognized as an Installation Management Command (IMCOM) Best Practice in October 2013. The over-arching project goal is listed at the top of the workbook. Supporting objectives and action plans needed to accomplish the goal are listed in the columns below the goal statement. This information includes the assigned metric number, name of the objective or supporting action and its owner. For instance, the Directorate of Human Resources is the owner of a workforce development objective. It is important for cross-functional team members to know who owns an objective as team members must communicate and work in cooperation with these stakeholders in all phases of planning and execution. The description column describes the objective or action; in terms of what the objective is and why it is important. Again, because HPTs are often comprised of cross-functional team members, the description column plays a vital role in team understanding of

objectives, as team members skill-sets vary in these types of teams. Additionally, in projects of technical nature, operational definitions may be required to ensure common understanding between team members. Teams who take time to develop descriptions and operational definitions experience less confusion in executing project tasks. The last two columns of the planning workbook are the metric formula and the metric milestone, and are discussed in the tactical operation phase.

It is also in the planning phase that a comprehensive communication plan is developed to communicate leadership's vision. Communication must be thoughtful and specific for the purpose of informing stakeholders of new product or service offerings, the expected timeline of availability and avenues of delivery. These messages must be designed to engage stakeholders in a compelling manner. Messages must effectively describe leadership's vision, as well as its features and benefits, which make it a valuable new endeavor for the organization. Depending on the project's complexity and categories of stakeholders, the crafting of messages for unique audiences should be considered to address specific stakeholder groups. Providing Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) to stakeholders also may be particularly helpful to communicate complex initiatives.

Messaging frequency, methods and modes must be considered, planned and executed in order to maximize stakeholder adoption of the new product, service or program. A communication plan should include a timeline for planned messages, as well as detail how the message will be delivered. Determining methods of delivery are based on the needs of the audience that is being addressed. Modes of communication delivery include press releases, articles in publications, face to face communication,

mailings, web postings and other announcements on social media. When using various methods and modes, it is important to ensure a clear and consistent communication in a unified voice.

### Tactical Operation Phase

The first step in executing the plan in the tactical operational phase is to assign team member roles and responsibilities. Establishing individual team member responsibility for specific components within the plan is necessary for successful plan execution. Team consensus should be employed in establishing roles and responsibilities, followed by the documentation of team member assignments for record and shared understanding. Team IPRs ensure that project work is progressing as scheduled, and offer the opportunity for team members to assist and mentor others who are struggling in their assigned roles.

The last two columns of the planning workbook (Figure 2, page 17) contain the metric formula and the metric milestone columns. The metric formula is simply how to measure the success of the objective or action. For instance, if the objective is to provide Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) training to 100 percent of the workforce, the metric formula would be the number of employees who received SHARP training divided by number of employees, multiplied by 100. This metric provides the objective's percentage of completion to the goal of 100 percent. Metrics provide team members with a clear measurement of success in achieving the established goal, as well as provide a reporting mechanism for leadership to gauge team progress in accomplishing its vision.

The objective's date of expected completion is listed in the milestone column. Setting realistic dates for completion of objectives is a simple, yet effective project management tool to keep a project on track. Committed HPT members strive to meet milestone dates and develop plans of recourse when unexpected challenges arise affecting milestone completion. Percentage of completion to milestone date can also be used to manage a project timeline.

The metric and milestone columns are best addressed as the plan is being operationalized, after team member roles and responsibilities are assigned. A team member who is assigned an objective or action will have a more critical approach to building the associated performance metrics and milestones, as he or she will have a vested interest in overseeing the completion of that specific task. Accountability is tied to an individual's sense of task ownership, which enables the participative leadership environment of an HPT. The team member assigned to the objective or action leads team discussion to determine its appropriate metric, as well as the milestone completion date. The opportunity to facilitate this discussion builds leadership skills. It also affords the team member the opportunity to benefit from cross-functional team member knowledge, consider and weigh varying views on approach, as well as develop skills of influence and negotiation needed to gain group consensus. Reaching an agreement can be difficult when views of team members greatly vary; however, HPTs who follow their established processes concerning operating systems and team conduct guidelines will reach consensus.

Once metrics and milestones are established within the planning workbook, the finalized plan is presented to leadership during the tactical operation phase IPR. The

approved plan is executed by the HPT members. Frequent communication is essential to enable stakeholder awareness, which is necessary to produce desired results. Communication must occur through multiple modes; however the messages must be timely and consistent throughout all communications.

### Monitoring Phase

Within the monitoring phase, results of both the vision path and values path are examined. On the vision path, an assessment of the project task is conducted for the purpose of validating results. Determinations are made as to whether the results solve the issues described in the problem statement and if desirable results have been obtained. If results did not meet expectations of leadership's vision, corrective action is prepared and implemented. After corrective action implementation, the results will be re-validated for assessment against goal.

Monitoring on the values path is directed towards the people and the process. This includes the resolution process for HPT members when problems arise related to the established operating systems of the team. Examples include violation of the HPT's team conduct guidelines, or failure of an individual team member to complete assigned roles and responsibilities. Corrective actions include feedback and coaching by fellow team members, which can occur informally throughout the process. However, a formal 360 feedback should be conducted for each team member during the monitoring phase. In a 360 review, a team member receives the combined perspective of other members of the team concerning their professional skills and team impact. This feedback provides team members the opportunity to identify problem areas for the purpose of

seeking out development resources needed to hone their professional and leadership skills.

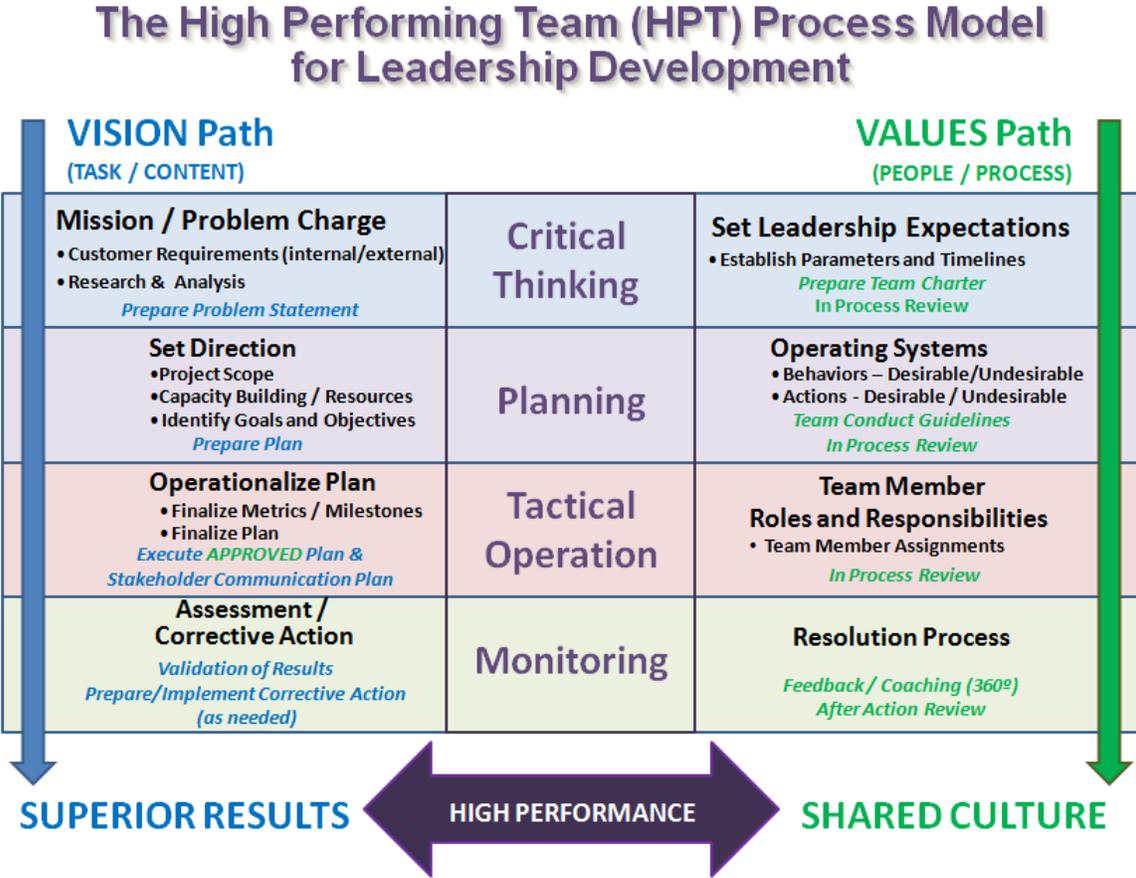
Finally, using information gathered from the assessment of results, an After Action Review (AAR) is conducted with leadership, team members and key stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of the process. The information gleaned from the AAR is compiled and documented into report. As new HPTs are formed, previous applicable HPT AARs should be reviewed prior to beginning a project in order for new team members to benefit from lessons learned.

### Fundamental Elements of HPTs

High Performing Team members are goal oriented and collectively possess the synergy required for building innovative solutions, often exceeding performance expectations. Initially, not all teams are high performing. However, teams that establish norms and expectations by developing team operating systems promote a shared understanding of processes and build trust between team members. Mutual trust between team members allows for candid, honest communication. Team members learn to both give and receive feedback, which is of the utmost importance for efficient and effective task execution. Feedback aids individual team members in their development of skills by providing positive feedback as well as identifying areas that need improvement. Through this feedback, emotional intelligence is developed as individuals experience components such as self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation. Utilizing leadership competencies developed through the HPT model,

members go on to establish new HPTs and become effective leaders in the organization.

Figure 1: The High Performing Team (HPT) Process Model for Leadership Development



On the following page, Figure 2 provides an example of a project planning workbook used at USAG Fort A.P. Hill for the development of its Civilian Training and Leadership (CTLD) Council. Results of efforts championed by the CTLD were recognized as an Installation Management Command (IMCOM) Best Practice in October 2013.

LOE 1: Soldier, Family and Civilian Readiness (SR) - A Force that possesses the capability and capacity to successfully accomplish any challenge					
Aligns with Leader/Workforce Development (Inspiring Leaders, Customer Focused Workforce / Installation Management Profession / Strategic Talent Management)					
FAPH GOAL SR 1.3 Build and sustain a high performing diverse workforce					
METRIC #	OBJECTIVE / SUPPORTING ACTION(S)	OWNER	DESCRIPTION WHAT / WHY	METRIC FORMULA HOW TO MEASURE	METRIC MILESTONE WHEN (Month/Year)
SR 1.3.3	Develop Multi-Skilled, Adaptive Leaders				
1.3.3.1	Improve installation management of training requirements by creating a Civilian Training and Leadership Development Council (CTLD)	DPTMS/ Cross-Functional Team (comprised of team members from each directorate)	Establish chartered Civilian Training and Development Council (CTLD) to facilitate & promote cross-directorate cooperation in communicating Mandatory, Required and Functional training, as well as Workforce Development opportunities. Council will identify and develop processes to track training for supervisor/Command visibility to ensure employees are trained to standards. CTLD will identify resources for Workforce/Professional Development, IDPs and ACT.	CTLD established? Y	Jun-13
1.3.3.2	Establish Mandatory Training tracking program	CTLD	Establish on FAPH intranet a training and tracking program that tracks employee completion of mandatory (per IMCOM 350-1) training.	As a percentage: Number of garrison employees who have completed their mandatory training / Number of garrison employees	Ongoing - FY 13 to start, and reoccurring each subsequent year.
1.3.3.2.1	Supervisor Development Course (SDC) oversight and reporting	CTLD / DHR	To ensure accountability, Utilize tracking system developed by CTLD to track completion of Supervisory Development Course (SDC), mandatory for all supervisors. Determine who has not completed SDC and task; Report enterprise level metric in SMS quarterly.	As a percentage: Number of supervisors who have completed SDC / Number of supervisors	Ongoing and reporting via OPORD
1.3.3.2.2	Improve Civilian Education System (CES) oversight and reporting	CTLD / DHR	To ensure accountability, use CTLD-developed tracking system to monitor employee completion of CES courses, as per requirements based on hire date and position. Task accordingly. Report enterprise level metric in SMS quarterly.	As a percentage: Number of garrison employees who have completed CES Foundation and Basic Courses / Number of garrison employees	Completed and ongoing
1.3.3.3	Establish Required Training tracking program	CTLD	Establish FAPH intranet training and tracking program to monitor whether garrison employees are receiving training required to fulfill specialized duties within their position.	As a percentage: number of garrison employees who have completed specialized training / Number of garrison employees needing specialized duty driven training	Completed and ongoing
1.3.3.4	Establish a Functional Training tracking program	CTLD	Establish FAPH intranet training and tracking program that documents employee attainment of certifications required by position descriptions.	As a percentage: Number of garrison employees in compliance with their certification / Number of garrison employees requiring certifications to operate within their position descriptions	Completed and ongoing
1.3.3.5	Create Workforce Development online career counseling site	CTLD	Using FAPH Intranet, develop an online career counseling site, listed by career program; with assistance of career program mentors.	Building of the CTLD site to effectively communicating options to the garrison employees complete? Y/N	Mid-FY 14.
1.3.3.6	Conduct Individual Development Plan (IDP) training for employees	CTLD	Develop concise training sessions on various leadership development websites (skillport, CHARTAS) so garrison employees are better able to submit thorough IDP's that align employees with promotion opportunities.	As a percentage: Number of garrison employees who have completed IDP training session / Number of garrison employees	Training sessions ready by FY 14 rating period.
1.3.3.6.1	Develop centralized Individual Development Plan oversight and reporting program	DHR	To ensure accountability, create tracking system for IDPs. Use current Performance Evaluation Tasker	Number of garrison employees with completed IDPs, in association with current rating period / Number of garrison employees	Requirement implemented. During rating cycle, tasker to provide IDP for next rating year
1.3.3.7	Conduct Army Career Tracker (ACT) training for employees	CTLD	Develop mini-training sessions on ACT capabilities. Assist garrison employees with enrollment and initial website set-up.	As a percentage: Number of employees enrolled in and utilizing ACT / Number of garrison employees	100% ACT enrollment by FY14.
1.3.3.8	Develop New Employee In-Process Checklist of required tasks and training	CTLD	Develop and implement a new employee in-processing check-list to help ensure new employees receive training as mandated or needed. Work with all directorates to ensure workforce development discussions begin at the onset of employment.	As a percentage: Number of new employees with functional IDPs, knowledge of their career path, and the number of new employees who completed mandatory, required and functional training, as required at date of hire / the number of new employees in a year	Policy implemented April 2013 and operational in FY 14.

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