**Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)**

**Guidelines for the creation of Recruitment, Development, and Retention Programs (RDRPs)**

**April 2018**

**Workforce Management Directorate, Workforce Strategies –**

**Human Resources Services Branch**

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# EFFECTIVE DATE

These guidelines are effective as of April 1, 2018.

# INTRODUCTION

As part of the 2015-2020 ESDC Workforce Strategy, through the use of Recruitment, Development and Retention Programs (RDRPs), the Department intends to attract and retain qualified internal and external candidates from across Canada. The goal is to ensure that they have the competencies to function effectively in positions of increasing complexity and to provide for the training and development that is needed to equip trainees for future placement within ESDC. The use of these programs can also be used to support managers in meeting the objectives outlined in the Department’s [2017-2020 Diversity and Employment Equity Action Plan (DEEAP)](http://iservice.prv/eng/hr/employment_equity/tools_and_resources/action_plan/docs/deaap_2017_2020_final_distribution.pdf).

The departmental Professional Development Framework also outlines key guiding principles and conditions for success of an RDRP, underscores the importance of employee mobility, assignments and ongoing diversified learning, and promotes a different way of thinking around developing employees.

The ESDC Learning Policy explains that learning is a shared responsibility of employees and managers at all levels. ESDC supports a culture where continuous learning, both formal and informal, is encouraged, rewarded and recognized as a sound business investment that facilitates the recruitment, engagement and retention of the best available talent and enhances results for Canadians.

Employee learning can be managed on an individual basis through employee performance and talent management. However, in some situations, a Recruitment, Development and Retention program may be the best option, such as:

* to develop specialized skills in-house when these are not sufficiently available in the labor market;
* to meet future needs when there is a need for community development in a professional area;
* to offer career advancement opportunities when there is recurring difficulty in recruiting fully skilled individuals to fill positions or when there is high turnover in a particular group;
* to address chronic workforce shortages; and
* to contribute to succession planning, by improving retention and career development.

# OBJECTIVE

These guidelines establish mandatory parameters within which all RDRPs must be developed in order to ensure consistency on a departmental level.

# SCOPE

These guidelines are applicable for the development of RDRPs for all groups and levels within ESDC, excluding the Executive Group (EX).

# WHAT IS A RDRP?

RDRPs consist of a series of supervised activities, in line with departmental priorities, that enables employees to develop their expertise in a particular field and progress in their careers. RDRPs are helping organizations to provide trainees, in an efficient, fair and transparent way, with the learning and experience they need in order to attain the working level of their occupational group.

The intent of a RDRP is typically to develop employees from an entry level to the working level of an occupational group. However, a RDRP could also be used to develop up to the management level. In these circumstances the entry level could be the working level of an occupational group up the management level. RDRP’s start and end with an appointment process and involve formal and informal training, coaching, mentoring and/or developmental assignments within a structured learning framework.

# HOW IT WORKS?

Individuals appointed to a RDRP will be assigned work and activities that will expand their competencies in order to move them through the various levels of competency required by the program. At the same time, they will receive the training, learning, support, assessment, feedback and/or coaching needed to achieve their goals.

Once they have completed the learning program for their current level and meet the RDRP merit criteria for the next working level, individuals appointed to a RDRP advance to the next stage in their development, following the completion of a merit-based assessment of their competencies.

This process continues until the employee is assessed and meets all the requirements of the graduating level.

# AUTHORITIES AND DELEGATION

The Public Service Commission (PSC) delegates to deputy heads the authority to make appointments, and the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA) gives deputy heads direct authority to determine merit criteria within a RDRP.

The approval of a RDRP must be exercised by the governance representative or committee (i.e.; one or more functional Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs)) upon recommendation of the DG, Workforce Management Directorate, HRSB. The subsequent authority to proceed with appointments, to and within the program, must be exercised in accordance with [EDSC's Table of Human Resources Authorities](http://iservice.prv/eng/hr/staffing/managers_corner/delegation_accountability/docs/hr_authorities.doc).

It is important that RDRPs within ESDC respect the core appointment values (merit and non-partisanship), the guiding values (fairness, access, transparency and representativeness) and adhere to the requirements of the PSEA, the *Public Service Employment Regulations* (PSER), the ESDC Code of Conduct and any other statutory instruments as they pertain to the integrity of appointments and these values.

# PROGRAM PLANNING

Integrated workforce and business planning is the key building block for developing a staffing strategy that supports the creation and use of a RDRP.

The option of establishing a RDRP should be considered if it appears that recruitment or learning mechanisms within or outside the department, or the external labour market, are not generating individuals with the competencies and qualifications required to perform particular or specialized kinds of work. Branches are expected to review their recruitment and staffing needs, their budget allocations, and leverage the lessons learned from past recruitment and staffing efforts to assist them in determining whether the establishment of a RDRP is necessary. This information is to be included in the rationale to be provided to the functional ADM for approval of the program.

In consultation with a Classification Advisor, the design of a RDRP begins with the identification of the graduating level and its preceding levels. An analysis of the work to be performed and the identification of the gaps then follow. Finally, the identification of the qualifications or the competencies required to perform that work takes place. Once these initial steps are completed, the job descriptions for all levels of the program should be reviewed to ensure that they are relevant, up-to-date, and properly classified. The nature and magnitude of the gap between the expected candidate profile and the merit criteria established for the position will help determine how to structure the program.

# PROGRAM DESIGN

The design of a RDRP must be done in consultation with the Human Resources Services Branch to ensure its compliance with the appointment policies and regulations. A RDRP can be developed in partnership between many branches that have the same required competencies or at a departmental level upon recommendation of DG, Workforce Management Directorate, HRSB.

In consultation with the College@ESDC, decisions must be made concerning the different elements of the program in order to obtain the proper mix of in-class, online and on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring and developmental assignments. It will also be necessary to determine how many steps will be needed in the progression between program entry and graduation to the targeted level. Each step or promotion should be based on competencies acquired or required at each level. Promotional steps in the program will coincide with the job classification requirements for each level.

The consultation of unions allows for discussion/information exchange with respect to business needs, human resources management objectives and, to the extent possible, the career aspirations of employees.

Any policies or guidelines from central agencies and ESDC such as the establishment of the statement of merit criteria, the assessment, the selection and appointment, the notifications, the area of selection, accommodations measures, employment equity, official languages, probation period and required staffing documentation will apply for the creation and the administration of a RDRP.

Careful consideration must be given to the language requirements and linguistic profile of a bilingual position and must be identified at the onset of the development of the RDRP. This should be done in accordance with ESDC’s [Guideline on Identifying Language Requirements of Positions](http://iservice.prv/eng/official_languages/managers_corner/docs/guideline_language_requirements_positions.pdf) and in accordance with Treasury Board Secretariat’s [Qualification Standards in Relation to Official Languages](https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/staffing/qualification-standards/relation-official-languages.html).

# PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The following components must be integrated in all RDRP’s.

# Effective Date

The program must have an effective date. Usually, the effective date is the date it has been approved.

# Application

The program must indicate who the program applies to from entry level to targeted graduating level. For example, “this program applies to all substantive indeterminate and term PEs from 01 to 03 within Employment and Social Development Canada”.

# Objectives

Objectives must be stated clearly to ensure participants know why they are in the program.

# Governance

To establish an ESDC RDRP, the approval of the functional ADM, upon recommendation by the DG, Workforce Management Directorate, is required. (Note: reviewing table of HR Authorities to reflect the functional ADM.)

The governance of the program is key to its design. A governance representative or committee comprised of senior management (i.e.; one or more functional ADMs) must be established at the outset. This representative or committee will provide direction and make final decisions on all phases of the program, and will be responsible for the periodic monitoring, evaluation, and review and update of the RDRP.

A working group must be established for the creation of a program, with members from different divisions, including, but not limited to, the managers from the field and specialists from classification, staffing, and the College@ESDC. This group is to be led by the Program Manager (i.e. the person responsible for designing the RDRP within a Branch or at the departmental level.).

An assessment board is required to ensure an objective, effective, and consistent approach in conducting assessments.

Finally, an evaluation committee must be created to conduct formal reviews of recommended promotions, and in granting or rejecting promotions, based on pre-established merit criteria and program requirements.

# Duration of the Program

Programs are usually for a period from two (2) to five (5) years but it may vary. Leave without pay, full-time language training and leave with pay of more than 30 consecutive days are not considered part of the program period.

The length of time trainees may take for each level may vary and will depend on individual learning capabilities as well as their experience, knowledge and abilities.

# Required Qualifications and Assessment

The components of standards of competence comprise the statement of merit criteria and an assessment plan. These components must be developed for each level of promotion within the program.

Statement of Merit Criteria

Merit criteria must be established for each level including the graduating level and must be linked to the requirements from the job description and a competency profile. Once established, the merit criteria should normally not be changed, unless done through a comprehensive review of the RDRP.

Employment equity (EE) can be part of the merit criteria. If there are current or anticipated representation gaps in the organization, increasing representation of EE groups can be identified as a current or future need of the organization.

Assessment plan  
An assessment plan establishes a link between each merit criterion and the assessment methods that will be used. The plan must outline:

* The merit criteria being assessed and how they have been defined;
* The tools used to assess each of the merit criteria, (e.g., interview, standardized test, reference checks, etc.);
* Identification of cut-off scores/pass marks for each qualification or competency being assessed.

# Priority Clearance

In accordance with the PSC’s [Guide on Priority Entitlements](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/services/information-priority-administration/public-service-commission-guide-priority-administration.html), a priority clearance is only required for the initial appointment to a RDRP. If a priority is referred and found qualified on the essential qualifications only, he must be appointed to the position. Priority clearance is not required for movement within the program, including the final appointment.

# Entry requirements to a RDRP

The program should specify the eligibility requirements for application based on the Statement of Merit Criteria. The program should also specify if entrance above the entry level is allowed and the program requirements in those circumstances (e.g. deployment).

It should be noted that all appointments or deployments to a RDRP are made on an indeterminate basis. No term appointments can be made in a RDRP.

Appointments into a RDRP are usually made via advertised processes. In the case of deployments or non-advertised processes, the program must ensure candidates possess the required qualifications for entry into the program.

# Promotions of Participants within a RDRP

The program should specify the entire process for promotions, starting from when the participant is eligible for a promotion until the appointment at the graduation level.

Promotions within the program are based on the Statement of Merit Criteria established for each level. The appointment is either made through an internal advertised process or through an internal non-advertised process based on how the participant entered the program. Pre-identified positions as being part of the RDRP will be used for promotion purposes (positions will not be reclassified).

The participant must be promoted once it has been determined that all requirements for the next level have been attained (e.g. required training, required assignments, duration in the program, assessment, satisfactory performance, meet the merit criteria, etc.).

# Graduation from the program

**Appointment at the graduation level**

The RDRP must indicate what happens to the participants upon graduation. The norm is that participants be promoted to the highest group and level provided for by the program.

**Creation of a pool of qualified candidates**

In exceptional cases (e.g.: high turnover, etc.) programs may be designed in a way that successful trainees are put in a pool of qualified candidates and appointed as positions become vacant. Such programs require good HR planning in order to ensure that each successful participant will be appointed within a reasonable period following completion of the program. Clear communication of the intent of the program must be communicated to candidates during the recruitment phase. The RDRP must detail how the pool will be managed.

# Recourse

The normal recourse mechanisms apply at the time of entry when individuals are appointed to a RDRP and any subsequent appointment within the program. If the appointment is the result of an internal process, notification, informal discussion and the right to recourse to the Federal Public Service Labour Relations and Employment Board (FPSLREB), or internal investigation will apply.

If the appointment results from an external process, an unsuccessful candidate may request that the PSC conduct an investigation since the Commission is the only entity who can investigate on staffing situations relating to an external advertised or non-advertised appointment process.

# Performance Management

Performance management is an essential component of the program and managers must adhere to the [Directive on Performance Management](https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pol/doc-eng.aspx?id=27146) as directed by the Treasury Board Secretariat. Performance management encompasses a set of activities that clarifies what employees are expected to achieve at work. These activities include defining performance expectations in terms of work objectives and expected behaviours (ex. generic competencies), setting goals, providing feedback, supporting employee learning and development, and documenting performance in the employee’s performance agreement.

The Learning and Development Plan from the Public Service Performance Management must be linked to the requirements of the program, such as the learning objectives.

A Performance Action Plan (PAP) will be developed for participants who fail to meet their performance objectives. Managers are encouraged to consult a Labour Relations Advisor for advice and guidance on implementing a PAP.

Should the employee’s performance not improve to a satisfactory level, the program should specify the parameters for the movement of an unsuccessful participant within the organizational structure. (e.g.: deploy to an equivalent group and level to their substantive position or remain in the same position.) The delegated authority who is considering such measures is advised to consult with the Labour Relations.

# Probation period

As per the [*Regulations Establishing Periods of Probation and Periods of Notice of Termination of Employment during Probation*](https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/hrh/prob-eng.asp)*,* participants recruited from **outside the public service** will be on probation for the entire duration of the program or 12 months, whichever is longer. Participants appointed from **within the public service** are not subject to a new or extended probationary period. If they are on probation at the time of the appointment to the program, their probationary period will continue until the period specified in the original letter of offer for appointment into the Public Service has been served – normally 12 consecutive months of service. Letters of offer should clearly articulate the probationary period.  
  
Managers must ensure an active monitoring of probationary periods and attest whether employees have successfully completed their probation through the Performance Management Program.  
  
A PAP will be implemented for participants who do not meet their performance objectives. Managers are advised to consult the Labour Relations for guidance. Failure to meet performance objectives could lead to administrative measures being imposed, up to and including rejection on probation. All documentation pertaining to the employee’s performance must be captured in the Performance Management Program.

Leave without pay, full-time language training and leave with pay of more than 30 consecutive days do not count towards the probationary period.

# Temporary Interruptions or Exit

All expected departures must be reported to the appropriate Human Resources Advisor and the Program Manager, for example: the graduation from a RDRP, rejection on probation, or removal from a RDRP as a result of unsatisfactory performance.

RDRPs should also indicate whether re-entry into the program at a future date is possible and, if so, the parameters around the re-entry process. Consideration should be given as to whether previous time under the RDRP counts toward future promotion upon re-entry. If and when a participant returns from a temporary interruption, the manager is responsible for preparing a reintegration plan.

**Voluntary Departure - Exit**

Participants may decide to voluntarily leave a RDRP at any time; if they do, it is their responsibility to seek alternate employment. Participants who choose this option are encouraged to provide their reason for departure, as this information can serve to improve the management and quality of the RDRP.

# Leave and extended leave

Request for vacation, sick and other short-term and long-term leave shall be approved by the hiring manager in accordance with the applicable collective agreement.

Time spent on extended leave must be made up before a participant can finish the program. Promotion eligibility dates may therefore be impacted. Before a participant takes extended leave, a re-integration plan must be prepared by the hiring manager. Reintegration will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis with the assistance of an HR specialist.

# Position Management and Funding

Managers must ensure that positions will be available to successful trainees when they are promoted. Too many participants for the number of positions creates unrealistic expectations and undermines retention. Human Resources planning becomes crucial to identify the right number of positions and participants.

Each group is to develop their own funding model for RDRPs. All training and development costs are usually covered by the hiring manager unless central funds have been allocated.

# Cancellation of a RDRP

The program should specify the parameters for the movement of participants should the RDRP need to be cancelled for operational or organizational reasons.

# Roles and responsibilities

Stakeholder’s roles and responsibilities may differ from one program to another. Roles and responsibilities could include, but are not limited to the following:

**Functional ADM upon recommendation of DG, Workforce Management Directorate, HRSB:**   
*(reviewing table of HR Authorities to reflect only functional ADM)*

* Approves initiating the development of a RDRP.
* Approves the RDRP.

**Human Resources Services Branch:**

Senior HR Advisor, Workforce Strategies (Corporate), Workforce Management Directorate:

* ensuring that RDRP working groups receive the appropriate human resource advice regarding all components of their Program during the design phase and are aware of all relevant Acts, Regulations, Directives, policies, etc.;
* providing human resources advice as required for subsequent revision of a Program;
* providing recommendation to ADMs for approval of RDRP; and
* providing an oversight role to ensure adherence to the RDRP Guidelines and consistency between RDRPs for similar occupational groups.

**HR Advisor Operations, Workforce Management Directorate:**

* providing human resources advice and guidance on the implementation of the program (e.g. participant assessment and appointment process at each level in the Program; and
* participating on the evaluation board in an advisory capacity.

**College@ESDC (when applicable):**

* Advise or responsible for the learning component of the program based on the size and impact of the program; and
* In the case of departmental programs, reviews courses periodically to ensure that they continue to meet the objectives of the program.

**Classification:**

* Provide advice and guidance on the identification of the groups and levels; and
* review or develop job descriptions to ensure they are up-to-date, relevant and properly classified.

**Governance Representative or Committee:**

* provides decision/direction on all phases of the program;
* reviews/monitors the program to ensure that the program meets its aim in developing employees; and
* provides oversight in the number of intakes for the program.

**Working Group (led by a Program Manager or Coordinator):**

* designs and develops the RDRP;
* provides information on the program to participants and managers;
* ensures that the program remains relevant and current;
* documents participant’s progress while in the program and ensures that participants who meet the criteria for promotion are assessed;
* provides required staffing information to staffing operations;
* provides reports and information to senior management;
* evaluates the program, in collaboration with a learning specialist and stakeholders (review of the program should be conducted at predetermined intervals);
* coordinates the analysis of business and work requirements to design program tools; and
* provides information as required for oversight of the program.

**Assessment Board:**

* assesses persons against the merit criteria and provides the information required to make an appointment decision (document decisions);
* ensures an objective, effective, and consistent approach in conducting assessments; and
* recommends appointments to the evaluation board.

**Evaluation Board:**

* reviews on a cyclical basis promotions recommended by the assessment board; and
* grants or rejects promotions, based on pre-established merit criteria and program requirements.

**Participant:**

* assumes responsibility for the management of his/her career and successful progression through the RDRP;
* participates proactively in all aspects of the learning and development activities;
* completes the learning plan in consultation with his/her supervisor;
* registers for approved courses;
* maintains relevant supporting documentation to demonstrate required competencies for review and evaluation; and
* actively requests feedback on his/her performance and addresses any identified learning and/or performance gaps.

**Participant’s Manager/Supervisor:**

* sets work objectives;
* facilitates the employee’s participation in required learning activities; and
* completes performance reviews and/or assessments when requested.

# Communication

A RDRP should be indicated in job advertisements, notifications and letters of offer. Participants should be provided with a description of the program along with an orientation session.

# REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION FOR RDRP APPROVAL

* Rationale for the establishment of the RDRP (link with Workforce Plan) and a summary of the proposed program, including results of consultation with stakeholders;
* A copy of the program with the following annexes: Learning Objectives for each level, Statements of Merit Criteria for each level, Competency Profile (definition by level), Assessment Plan.
* Resources required (finance and human resources)
* Job descriptions for each level of the program.

The documentation must be submitted to the Workforce Management Directorate to ensure all mandatory components are covered by the program prior to obtain final approval by the Assistant Deputy Minister.

# ENQUIRIES

Contact Workforce Strategies, Workforce Management Directorate within the Human Resources Services Branch for further information pertaining to these guidelines.

**Annex A: Steps for the creation of a Recruitment, Development and Retention Program (RDRP)**

1. Need Analysis (e.g. shortage, common training) and link with HR Plan.
2. Functional ADM approval to start working on the project.
3. Creation of a working group and project plan (working group to include different stakeholders such as managers and specialists from the field and specialists from classification, staffing, and learning).
4. Research Analysis (existing programs, statistics such as number of positions and employees).
5. Preparation of options on program’s elements.
6. Presentation of options to management and decision on main proposed program’s elements and required resources (e.g. training cost, program coordinator).
7. Preparation of draft proposed program and annexes: Learning Objectives for each level, Statements of Merit Criteria for each level, Competency Profile (definition by level), and Assessment Plan.
8. Consultation with stakeholders including Union.
9. Recommended approval of program documentation by Senior HR Advisor, Workforce Strategies, Workforce Management Directorate.
10. Approval of program documentation by the functional Assistant Deputy Minister upon recommendation of DG, Workforce Management Directorate, HRSB.
11. Implementation and Communication.