

## **COMMITMENT TO CONTINUOUS LEARNING (CCL)**

**Commitment to Continuous Learning** involves a commitment to think about the ongoing and evolving needs of the organization and to learn how new and different solutions can be utilized to ensure success and move the organization forward.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being thoroughly knowledgeable of the Organization's products and services as they may be appropriate to different customer situations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positioning the same products and services to your customers year after year</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• working to improve your knowledge and skill by seeking developmental projects and tasks and keeping current in your field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being content with what you already know and sticking to projects and tasks similar to ones you have done before</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying new tools, methods and concepts that will impact the way the organization does business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assuming that others will tell you about a new approach when you need to know</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being aware of different technical and business methods, and integrating and applying different ideas and approaches to accomplish a goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performing the same processes year after year, in the same situations or trying to force-fit previously applied an approach without considering alternatives</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understanding how organizational issues, processes and outcomes effect the organization's strategic direction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• meeting short-term objectives without considering long-term opportunities for the governmental departments</li> </ul>

**Developmental  
Activities**

### **Level 1-2 Activities**

**Find effective ways of building your development needs into the work you do.**

- Think of an area you consider being "leading edge" in the field.
- Identify a project in that area in which you could increase your knowledge.
- Identify what you will need to do in order to be assigned to a project in that field.
- Make a list of potential learning opportunities and discuss these with your manager.
- Apply to work on this project. This may be a temporary assignment or in addition to regular duties.

- Maintain log of personal progress in growth areas.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Be clear about how these learning opportunities will develop your performance on the job.

**Take an external course to improve your performance on the job.**

- If possible, arrange to take a community college or university course either in your own or related area of expertise.
- Identify programs that have a practical component where you can apply your learnings to your work.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Discuss with other students how they are applying their learning from the program.

**Keep your manager informed of new creative ideas you are pursuing.**

- Be proactive in making sure your manager is fully aware of new concepts and initiatives.
- Solicit his/her support and advice in getting things done, removing roadblocks and contacting others.

**Engage in benchmarking activities.**

- Collect information about best practices and key success factors in your industry/service area.
- Share these benchmarks with your manager.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* How did you identify your benchmarks?

**Meet with colleagues whose area of expertise differs from yours.**

- Think of a colleague who you consider to be a “leading edge” expert in their field of expertise.
- Arrange a meeting with your colleague.
- Prepare a list of questions that you would like your colleague to address.
- Ask them for suggestions on how to increase your own ability in this field.

**Reflection Tip:**

\* How can you integrate this new knowledge into your own area of expertise?

## **Level 3-4 Activities**

**Purposely seek out opportunities to strengthen your own abilities.**

- Read the latest pertinent journals, books and articles which will extend your knowledge.
- Attend pertinent seminars, workshops, information meetings and/or courses regularly.
- Keep a New Idea file.
- File any new ideas and key learning points you come across in readings, meetings, presentations, courses, conversations etc.
- Review your New Idea file periodically.
- Choose ideas that you will take action on and develop a plan for learning more to execute the idea.
- Join a Professional Association.
- Join an association outside of the government that consists of participants from all areas in your field of expertise/service.
- Try to “learn” one new approach or idea from each session that you attend.
- Consider how that new approach or idea could impact the work that you already do. Include the approach or idea into your work.

### **Reflection Tip:**

\* Stand back and consider where your strengths and development areas lie to better target your efforts.

**Keep abreast of trends in your field both within and outside of the organization.**

- At a departmental level, find out what people’s priorities are and keep yourself up-to-date on what committees are doing.
- Research the issues affecting government policy and how your department is directly affected; ask yourself how you can impact these. Read and search out areas to read about that will benefit the organization.
- Participate on boards outside of work and work related associations to share with others and learn from others.
- Look for opportunities to talk to people in “the field” to touch upon the questions that are “out there” relative to the services your department provides.

- Self-direct your own learning and don't discount everyday informal type of learning (i.e., reading a committee's meeting minutes).

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Log key learnings and themes.

**Identify individuals whose area of expertise you need to explore.**

- Think of individuals who you consider to be a "leading edge" expert in their field of expertise.
- Participate in assignments or projects in which you will be working with others who have different skills, knowledge or expertise from your own.
- Schedule interviews with the individuals you have identified.
- Prepare some questions beforehand such as "How do you stay current in your field of expertise? What methods do you use to integrate your knowledge to practical business solutions?"
- Use these opportunities to learn from others and apply new techniques and technologies to first-time problems.
- Ask them for suggestions on how to increase your own ability in this field.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Share your learnings with others in your team/branch/Organization.

**Develop an exchange forum of experts.**

- Invite a number of experts and interested parties to participate in an ongoing exchange forum of ideas and learning.
- Include people from different ministries or even different industries outside of the government.
- Ask for their input on discussion topics and hot issues.

**Get feedback from your manager on your commitment to continuous learning.**

- Solicit feedback and perceptions on your ability to recognize new and emerging ideas and apply them to the business.
- Ask others to provide you with feedback in this area. Are you perceived as a leader or champion in applying new tools and methods?
- Observe others whom you consider outstanding in their commitment to personal development and what they do to learn about and apply new areas of expertise.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Was the feedback in line with your expectation?

**Ask your mentor and/or a person who holds a job similar to the one you aspire to identify key learning experiences in his or her career.**

- Discuss the formal and on-the-job experiences that led to new knowledge, skills, or insights.
- Relate these experiences to your own areas of interest.
- With their input, identify similar opportunities to develop your own expertise.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Discuss your plan with your manager and peers. How can they help to open opportunities?

**Develop a personal learning agenda.**

- Refer to your long-term (e.g. 3-5 years) career goal (s).
- Keeping your career goal(s) in mind, prepare a list of all the knowledge and skill areas you will need to acquire. Be as specific and detailed as you can for each area.
- For each development area you identified, write the steps you will need to take to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill (e.g. formal educational programs, job experiences, etc.).
- Assign a target completion date for each step. Commit to taking the first step.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Share your learning plan with your manager and ask for the support you will need.

**Use brainstorming and other techniques.**

- Avoid the temptation to go with the first ideas or solution for an issue or opportunity that comes to mind.
- Spend some time brainstorming to generate a number of ideas or solutions. Involve others in the brainstorming activities.
- Generate a long list of ideas or solutions first. Don't evaluate their merit until you've generated multiple ideas.

**Apply new techniques and technologies into your work.**

- Choose a topic area that is outside your profession and is of personal interest to you. For example, walk through a bookstore or library and browse through the different sections (e.g., politics, psychology, etc.).
- Develop an understanding of the key ideas or approaches in the area. Read books and articles; attend lectures by leaders in the field. Write down, in bullet point form, a summary of the main concepts to consolidate your learning.
- Use the theory you summarized and apply it to first time problems.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Share your findings with your colleagues.

**Call or meet with current potential stakeholders on a regular basis to stay abreast of their business issues and challenges.**

- Talk to stakeholders on a regular basis about issues facing them, trends affecting them, and concerns they have about the future.
- Ask stakeholders to share their strategic plans and assumptions on which their plans are based.

**Look for opportunities in your community to network and develop your business expertise.**

- Take advantage of any opportunities for networking to gain insight to relevant industry-related issues.
- Volunteer to serve on the board of a local organization to get a better sense of how businesses run and to expand your contacts within the community.
- Volunteer to be a business advisor to a small independent business.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Keep track of how your business expertise develops over time.

**Participate in strategic planning meetings for your Organization.**

- Ask your manager to identify opportunities to include you in strategic business discussions.
- Consider how your operational role fits strategically.

**Complete an executive program focused on developing business expertise.**

- With your manager, discuss key areas for your development.
- Identify an appropriate external program for you to complete.
- Plan in advance how you will integrate your learning with your work.

**Reflection Tip:**

\* Do you have the pre-requisite experience for the program?

## **Level 5-6 Activities**

**Test a new idea or concept with others that would be unique or different in your branch relative to the rest of government.**

- Develop a new concept or transform an idea that would significantly impact the industry/service area.
- Determine its application within your branch or division by following the steps below:  
Develop a plan for its implementation, even if you believe the idea may not be supported.  
Test the plan with your manager and trusted colleagues and get their feedback.  
Identify key learnings from the exercise.  
What changes are necessary to your plan to make it viable?  
Assess the feasibility of the plan and determine if there is merit to proceeding further.
- Investigate and develop different approaches for developing the concept or idea.
- Develop a business case that supports a change including such things as strategic repositioning and leverage, resource utilization, cost/benefit impact and so on.
- Examine the pros and cons from the perspective of each stakeholder group.
- Create a draft implementation plan. Include a transition plan for migration or conversion to the new approach, a communication plan for positioning the project and updates to stakeholder groups.
- Present your ideas and case to the appropriate groups.

**Reflection Tip:**

\* Who do you need to have on board to make this work?

**Contribute to building a climate for learning.**

- Demonstrate a commitment to learning through working with the people you lead. Develop learning plans with members of your team.
- Set expectations for knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- Challenge your team to set stretch goals.
- Recognize secondment opportunities when brought forth by employees and look to “make them happen” when people express an interest.
- Encourage sharing of ideas in your meetings; help people feel safe in making novel suggestions to improve the department practices.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Make note of “success stories” and share them with the team.

**Facilitate a meeting with colleagues to develop strategies and share information on issues relevant to your business goals.**

- Select an initiative that both benefits you and will benefit the government.
- Develop a business plan and presentation to explain and promote your ideas to others.

**Identify a new or emerging trend that will have a future impact on your Organization.**

- Continually scan the popular media for interesting or unusual trends in technology, demographics, innovative business education, politics, lifestyles.
- Read books written by futurists (e.g., Faith Popcorn)
- Identify one or two trends that could enhance or potentially threaten current products and services your Organization offers.
- Identify one or two actions that could be taken immediately to exploit your research.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Share your findings with your colleagues.



**Volunteer for projects and new initiatives that involve topics that are new and different from your normal mandate, or represent “ground-breaking” areas for your area of responsibility, where existing policies and practices do not apply.**

- Take advantage of this opportunity to experiment with doing things a in a new way and exploring opportunities from a broad perspective.
- Integrate new trends to first time business issues. Make a conscious effort not to impose the old, comfortable way of doing things on this new initiative.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* What is the impact or outcome of this new way or working?

**Identify innovative approaches for learning and development from other departments or industries.**

- Look for new advances in learning in other sectors as well as schools, colleges, and universities.
- Consider how these approaches could work in your Organization's environment.
- Build these ideas into your approaches for working with others.

**Do something dramatically different to improve your ability to think about learning from a broad perspective.**

- Three or four times a year read something that is dramatically different from the material you normally read or participate in an activity that you normally don't do.
- Make a conscious effort to broaden your perspective or thinking.
- Think of ideas, approaches or contacts that might be useful to you or your Organization, to help develop business opportunities.

**Reflection Tip:**

- \* Discuss what you've read with a peer and brainstorm implications.

**Seek out creative thinkers.**

- Identify people that are considered highly creative within your Organization, outside your Organization and beyond.
- Arrange a meeting (s) to discuss how they approach issues and identify new ideas. Incorporate some of their ideas into your business plans.
- Read about creative thinkers from the past and present, e.g. Einstein, Galileo, Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, etc.

**Develop your knowledge of foreign business practices across broad governmental sectors.**

- Identify government industry leaders in other countries and arrange discussions regarding business strategy and the unique implications of their culture/stakeholder groups.
- Consider what drivers influence approaches that differ from yours.