Institutional training policies based on a development programme: Mechanisms for innovation and continuous improvement

A case of the Social Insurance Bank

Social Insurance Bank
Uruguay
Summary

This good practice presents the training programmes implemented by the Uruguayan social security institute, which have been deemed a substantial qualitative step forward. The strategic plan for 2011–2015 included in its lines of action “the development of modern human resource management policies, honing staff members’ skills and improving the working environment and occupational health in the organization”. With this in mind, on 11 September 2013, the Board approved the Institutional Training Plan (Plan de Formación Institucional – PFI), in which it laid out the programme of courses for 2014–2015.

The training mechanisms established previously were limited to vocational training in the strictest sense, and did not look towards staff members’ broader development or take account of their development-related preferences. The new training policy deals directly with this aspect, making room for staff members’ preferences and decisions and adopting a new development-based approach. Three programmes have been implemented: regular, vertical and horizontal. The second and third of these directly accommodate staff members’ preferences in terms of the courses and career paths they mean to pursue.

The issue or challenge

What was the issue or challenge addressed by your good practice? Please provide a short description.

The challenge was to design and implement an institutional-level programme that went beyond operational training and encouraged the overall development of the Uruguayan social security institute’s staff. The plan encourages individuals’ interests and objectives to be aligned with those of the institution by building an organizational culture that maximizes synergies between the institution and its staff, as well as their ongoing upskilling and development, in order to offer an effective and efficient service. The plan covers suggested course programmes, as well as the equipment and methods required to achieve the primary objective.

The following guidelines are also included:

- Building the knowledge and skills that staff members require to fulfil their roles and/or functions as well as furnishing them with broader knowledge and thus preparing them to take on more complex responsibilities and enabling professional development;
- Taking account of staff members’ individual preferences and decision-making capacity, enabling them to steer their own development.

To these ends, the PFI comprises the following programmes:

1. **Regular training programme**: aims to provide, maintain and update general and specific skills with a view to developing functions pivotal to the institution’s core services.
2. **Training programme for horizontal career paths**: aims to offer training activities for staff development with a view to horizontal career moves, in accordance with individual decision-making.
3. **Training programme for vertical career paths**: aims to prepare staff members aspiring to access more senior positions, in accordance with individual decision-making.
Addressing the challenge

*What were the main objectives of the plan or strategy to resolve the issue or challenge? List and briefly describe the main elements of the plan or strategy, focusing especially on their innovative feature(s) and expected or intended effects.*

The project is clearly based on a political and institutional philosophy and concept of the importance of staff members and their development. Its expected effects are the development, engagement and voluntary enrolment of staff. Beyond the impetus and legitimacy conferred by the origin of the plan (that is, its contribution to the strategic plan), the programme presented a number of major challenges:

- Establishing fully innovative practice in terms of development;
- Identifying means, methods and channels that would allow development;
- How the target audience would react to the opportunity to bring their preferences to bear, make decisions and adopt or engage with the proposal;
- The risk involved in not being able to meet a demand that went beyond the scope of the training resources available;
- Adapting and transposing cross-cutting proposals into courses targeting groups with very disparate levels of education;
- Making the programme available to all staff members, regardless of their department and geographical location;
- Aligning the proposed optional training with institutional values.
Targets to be achieved

*What were the quantitative and/or qualitative targets or key performance indicators that were set for the plan or strategy? Please describe briefly.*

In general terms, the aim was to design and implement an institutional plan based on three pillars, one mandatory and the other two optional and subject to individual decisions.

The target was to implement the programme at all levels and in all departments of the institution during the financial year 2014.

The initial expectation was that 40 per cent of the eligible population would enrol on the optional programmes.

Mechanisms were suggested for carrying out and responding to organizational impact assessments, implementing a series of indicators and analyzing indirectly correlating variables to evaluate engagement with and outcomes of the programme at the institutional, sectoral and individual levels.

Evaluating the results

*Has there been an evaluation of the good practice? Please provide data on the impact and outcomes of the good practice by comparing targets vs actual performance, before-and-after indicators, and/or other types of statistics or measurements.*

A quantitative assessment for the period 2014–2016 and a qualitative and impact analysis for 2015 were carried out using predetermined indicators and specially devised assessment-response processes. A correlation was found between performance assessments and the results obtained by course participants.

Detailed scenario analysis by programme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year and programme</th>
<th>Contact hours</th>
<th>Number of staff completing training</th>
<th>Average hours score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2014</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal career paths</td>
<td>125,450</td>
<td>3,584</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical career paths</td>
<td>31,640</td>
<td>1,582</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular external</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular internal</td>
<td>7,112</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular internal</td>
<td>85,438</td>
<td>3,550</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2015</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal career paths</td>
<td>78,389</td>
<td>3,528</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical career paths</td>
<td>27,480</td>
<td>1,248</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular external</td>
<td>1,260</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular internal</td>
<td>41,971</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2016</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal career paths</td>
<td>120,700</td>
<td>3,166</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical career paths</td>
<td>30,120</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical career paths</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Lessons learned

*Based on the organization’s experience, name up to three factors which you consider as indispensable to replicate this good practice. Name up to three risks that arose/could arise in implementing this good practice. Please explain these factors and/or risks briefly.*

The good practice was evaluated based on a study of the entire sample frame of staff members involved.

The study proved extremely relevant and revealing. The main findings were:

- Firm engagement from staff members with proposals for their development where there is a tangible or potentially tangible career benefit;
- Clear correlation between engagement and performance assessment (+, +);
- Clear correlation between training outcomes and staff performance assessment;
- No significant variation by category (gender, grade, region, age);
- Same trend for optional programmes;
- Clear and explicit demonstration of bringing preferences to bear regarding development options, which shows that this is a key aspect of organizational behaviour.

**Future opportunities identified through findings and now under development:**

- Developing a career shaped by individual effort and commitment and based on a system of individual merit and collaborative contribution;
- Strategic orientation of medium- and long-term opportunities in line with institutional needs (engineering);
- Programme involving credits awarded based on individual effort and collaborative work;
- Permanent inventory of skills gained;
- Identifying staff members’ development potential, commitment, dedication and results.

Based on the above, the aim is to make qualitative improvements to the programmes, focusing on:

- In basic terms, decision-making, effort and individual interests as the guiding focus;
- Remaining oriented towards the organization’s needs;
- Establishing collaborative fora as an overtly valued mechanism;
- Developing organizational knowledge management (information, links, benchmarks);
- High-impact selection processes (process-based approach);
- Structuring around credits and ongoing development;
- A range of mechanisms (courses, internships, projects).
Figures in original language