



Examiners in the Bank's Supervision, Regulation and Credit Department use a most unusual tool — Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program.

Training Employees For the 21st Century

Training employees is also an important aspect of sharing our knowledge. A well-trained staff makes the Philadelphia Fed better able to serve both its external and internal customers. The Organizational Learning & Development unit has primary responsibility for this task.



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The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia carries out its mission to educate the public in many ways. But members of the public are not the only ones who benefit from Fed education and training. The Bank also trains employees at every level and in a variety of ways to help them become even more effective at their jobs.

Organizational Learning and Development (OL&D), which is part of the Bank's Human Resources Department, has two primary training units. One group concentrates on training within the Bank, and the other, called the Electronic Professional Education Program (ePEP), concentrates on training System-wide.

Both units share three primary objectives: match employees' skills to the Bank's or System's strategic focus, be performance driven and results oriented, and have a technological bias.

To meet these objectives, OL&D staff, under the direction of Assistant Vice President Steve Hart, offer a variety of training programs for employees. A quick look at just a few of the items on OL&D's training calendar demonstrates this. For example, last year, OL&D offered courses on building collaborative relationships, learning leadership at work, establishing good client/consultant relationships, and preventing workplace violence.

Active Training

Also this past year, OL&D made a concerted effort to move from passive to active training. Instead of waiting for people to come to them, staff members visited departments to identify training needs. In this new role, the trainers not only customize training to meet departmental needs, but they also expand their roles as organizational development consultants. This new model offers opportunities for the trainers to help managers and officers look at skill development as well as ways to improve a process, develop team effectiveness, or explore the use of alternative management styles.

In addition, the Bank's trainers were busy last year in operations areas, helping employees adjust to the new check processing platform and implementing Check 21. OL&D also got involved in cross-training Check employees. Some OL&D staff members ventured into a new area: developing training materials for special projects. In particular, they worked with a vendor on technical support for the Treasury Check Information System (TCIS) project, a new web-based system for reconciliation and claims processing of Treasury Checks.

ePEP and Blended Learning

The Bank's trainers also oversaw several ePEP programs. Originally, the Professional Education Program involved a full week of training in Federal Reserve System accounting functions. Then the System expanded that model to include Fed employees who work in Cash departments.

But it quickly became evident that one week of training, once a year, wasn't enough. Nor did such a schedule meet the training needs of the various Federal Reserve Banks. So a blended learning model was developed.

To further facilitate the System's training needs, the Philadelphia Fed proposed the idea of continuous learning: No matter what month new employees are

hired, they do not have to wait to learn FRS accounting methods. To implement this idea, online models were created. Furthermore, subject matter experts round out these online sessions by sharing their experience via Sametime, a web-based tool that allows employees to attend live virtual training sessions from their desktops.

Another component of blended learning is virtual learning. The Philadelphia Fed and Banks around the System can use video conferencing to "attend" training sessions.

While this technology can be used for information sharing, it also allows Fed trainers to hold interactive, collaborative sessions.

A particularly successful ePEP program in 2004 involved training the examiners in Supervision, Regulation and Credit using a most unusual tool—Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program. As part of this course, 60 examiners went through various exercises, all designed to stress the importance of good communication, collaboration, and teamwork. One "experiential exercise" had participants visit some of Center City Philadelphia's murals and reflect on the facts, emotions, and symbols contained in these works of art.

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An exercise of this type is particularly useful because examiners are collaborating more in their work. For example, safety and soundness examiners may have to work more closely with community affairs examiners. Thus, it's crucial for them to be able to communicate more effectively.

Bachelor's Degree Program

Perhaps the most exciting training news in 2004 was the announcement that in 2005 the Bank will offer an on-site bachelor's degree completion program in conjunction with Philadelphia University. This opportunity, which will allow employees to obtain an undergraduate degree in Finance or Management, follows close on the heels of the Bank's very successful and well-received associate's degree program, which was offered through the Community College of Philadelphia. Early indications are that this program will prove to be popular with employees.

As the Bank rises to meet the challenges of the 21st century workplace, OL&D will continue to play a major role in ensuring that Bank employees have the skills they need to carry out the Bank's and the System's strategic goals.

Training the Examiners



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Some Philadelphia Fed employees need highly specialized training. One example is bank examiners.

What goes into the making of a commissioned bank examiner?

Training takes approximately three years to complete. A quick listing of what assistant examiners undergo includes:

- An orientation program that teaches everything from basics of banking and bank examinations to administrative details.
- An introduction to common operational, analytical, and supervisory techniques for banks, bank and financial holding companies, and foreign banking organizations, focusing on credit, market, liquidity, operational, legal, and reputational risks.
- A 115-hour self-study program in three segments.
- A report writing course and sessions on conducting meetings with management.
- A management skills course that teaches critical thinking, teamwork, negotiation, and listening techniques.
- Courses on fundamentals of interest rate risk management, bank management, and examination management.

Successful completion of training, coupled with demonstrated skills on-the-job, allows an assistant examiner to earn the designation of commissioned examiner. At this stage, in addition to their technical skills, examiners demonstrate analytical rigor, are effective communicators, and possess strong leadership skills.

But it doesn't end there. Federal Reserve examiners' learning continues throughout their careers, as they hone their technical and supervisory skills through on-the-job training and continuing professional development, ensuring that they possess a deeper understanding of the broader financial system.