

Learning & Development Framework for the Civil Service

2011-2014



CIVIL SERVICE
TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT
CENTRE

LÁRIONAD
OILÚNA & FORBARTHA
NA STÁTSEIRBHÍSE

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1. Introduction & Background

This Framework follows on from the Framework for Civil Service Training and Development 2004-2008. It is a strategic document designed to give direction and support and to make recommendations to Departments¹ in a time of accelerated change. It covers the period up to and including 2014 when, as a result of early and other retirements, implementation of recommendations in various reports, proposals for mobility and an integrated Public Service, substantial change will occur. It emphasises “*value for money*”, the necessity of sharing of resources and the critical relationship between learning and business requirements.

The Framework is strategic in its outlook and, accordingly, is aimed mainly at those ultimately responsible for Human Resource Management (HRM) Units, Learning and Development Units, Strategic Planning Units and Personnel Officers.

A Steering Group was established to develop this Framework. It comprised a number of Personnel Officers, a representative from the Local Government Management Services Board (LGMSB) and representatives from the Civil Service Training and Development Centre (CSTDC).

The Steering Group was influenced by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Review of the Irish Public Service², Transforming Public Services (TPS) – Report of the Taskforce on the Public Service³, Towards 2016⁴, the Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014⁵ and the Organisational Review Programme⁶ (ORP) Reports. The Group consulted with and received input and assistance from the Personnel Officer Network and staff in the CSTDC.

The Government is committed to the ongoing training, up-skilling and development of the staff of the Public Service to ensure that the changes envisaged by the Public Service Agreement are implemented. This commitment is part of its long term policy of supporting the development of staff across the Public Service thereby enhancing the overall level of core workplace skills and in turn the performance of organisations.

Achieving improved performance of individuals across the Public Service through appropriate and relevant Learning and Development⁷ (L&D) has always been, and will continue to be, an integral element of ensuring the effectiveness and ongoing improvement of the delivery of services to the citizen.

In defining the role and purpose of the Performance Management and Development System in the Irish Civil Service, General Council Report Number 1368 stated amongst other things that: “*The goal of performance management and development is to contribute to continuous improvement in performance across the Civil Service by aligning individual and team performance with the goals of the organisation, through greater clarity in setting objectives and related performance targets for individuals and*

teams, and monitoring progress in their achievement. It also provides a context in which the development needs of job holders can be addressed. It allows organisations to manage their resources within a strategic framework and achieve more effective performance.”

Human performance is a considerable element of the total value delivered by the Public Service and is a critical success factor in the provision of quality services to the citizen. Human resource (HR) costs represent a high percentage of the total costs involved in service delivery. Therefore, public sector performance, and its ability to deliver quality services to all stakeholders depends to a large extent on the knowledge, skills and behaviours of its people. Research highlights the importance of continued investment in L&D during economic downturns. Notwithstanding budgetary constraints, Departments should seek innovative and cost effective approaches to developing staff and also to maximise in-house learning capability. L&D interventions chosen need to demonstrate how they are adding value to the business of organisations. The Framework reflects this context in a number of ways:

- It focuses on and is aligned with the recommendations of the OECD/Public Service Agreement and ORP Reports designed to transform public services.
- It proposes a cross-sectoral approach to common issues; flexibility, mobility and sharing of resources.
- It focuses on the necessary changes for the system-wide career of individuals in the context of increasing mobility.
- Through evaluation, it focuses on ways of providing evidence of an increase in the level of performance of the Public Service.

2. Key Objectives & Actions arising

This Framework is a high level document focusing on the key Learning and Development objectives that should be pursued by the Civil Service within the next 4 years. It is anticipated that this will be a period of considerable change and challenge for all Departments. Due to the divergent nature of the organisations that make up the Civil Service not every organisation can implement this Framework at the same pace. This Framework is designed to reflect the key L&D objectives that arise for the various organisations over the lifetime of the Framework, as set out below:

1. Prioritise business needs & align Business, HR and Learning Strategies.
2. Analyse L&D needs.
3. Develop strategies for addressing L&D needs.
4. Evaluate L&D.
5. Strengthen Ethics and Governance.
6. Promote strong Financial Management.

The stages of the Training Cycle are reflected in the objectives outlined above. They are also referenced in Section 4 and illustrated in detail at Appendix A.

During the period of this Framework, the focus of Departments should include those actions outlined under each of the specified objectives included in Section 3.

3. Framework Objectives

Objective

3.1 Prioritise Business Needs & Align Business, HR and Learning Strategies

Prioritise business needs

In these challenging times, there are many competing objectives for resources. The overriding context for personal development is the requirement to meet business objectives.

Actions

- Build organisational capability to meet national and international requirements.
- Address capacity deficits relevant to Departments core business needs including HR, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Finance and Procurement.
- Ensure value for money.
- Account for expenditure and business outcomes.
- Retain corporate memory through systematic knowledge management.
- Provide Quality Customer Service through continuous improvement.
- Achieve efficiencies through business process improvement (BPI) initiatives, innovation and ensuring that the necessary skills are in place to advance those activities.
- Implement mobility/re-deployment.
- Achieve higher levels of performance by ensuring change management and planning for change is incorporated into prioritising business needs within each department.

Align Business, HR and Learning Strategies

Best practice recognises that Learning, HR and wider business strategies should be aligned. Departments will demonstrate their commitment to the implementation of best practice by creating a learning agenda that is linked to the HR and Business Strategy. Departments need to ensure that the development of people is focused on the overall strategy. The following should form part of the guiding principles:

Actions

- Create a HR Strategy in line with the organisation's Statement of Strategy.
- Ensure that employees are strategically focused by aligning the L&D Strategy to the HR Strategy.
- Create an L&D strategy that reflects and supports HR changes being implemented in the context of Public Service reform such as using work metrics, improved performance management capacity, workforce planning, identification of future skills needs and targeted mobility.
- Establish objectives for L&D programmes that reflect the Department's key business objectives.

Objective

3.2 Analyse L&D Needs

Analyse L&D Needs

Departments should conduct rigorous analysis to identify the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes that are needed to deliver on business objectives for their organisation. In particular, Departments will seek to ensure that managers have the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes to manage and support staff development. A meaningful approach to analysis should incorporate a range of actions as follows:

Actions

- Use the business planning process to identify L&D needs that are aligned with the overall business needs and future development of the Department.
- Use the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) to align staff members' learning needs with business needs, to ensure high performance and to address performance issues or under-performance in a timely manner.
- Use the analysis of needs to explore the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attributes required to support business performance improvements. (leadership, developing employees through mobility, sharing performance data and training staff, developing performance metrics that are meaningful to citizens, increasing organisational and individual accountability for achieving performance targets, undertaking longer term planning, promoting innovation, shared governance, networking and collaborative working, sharing infrastructure and new technologies)
- Consult with senior managers/leaders in defining needs and getting support for implementation of priorities.

Objective

3.3 Develop strategies for addressing L&D needs

Develop strategies for addressing L&D needs

In consultation with their staff, Departments will develop efficient and cost-effective L&D strategies based on the objectives set out in this Framework. Departments will insofar as their resources permit, promote the benefits of Networks for sharing of learning; the application of knowledge and experiences gained, as for example, in the Project Management and BPI programmes. In accordance with Ireland's innovation policy, L&D strategies will support innovation through the development of new ideas, services, business models, organisational structures and work practices. Departments will make staff aware that innovation is always possible, even in challenging times, and is often initiated by front line staff and middle managers. Many innovations may be relatively small but crucial to improving public services and to delivering better value for money. As recommended in Building Ireland's Smart Economy⁸, Departments will pursue or develop further, as appropriate, the opportunities for collaboration and co-operation with the Northern Ireland Civil Service in the areas of training and development. Finally, Department's L&D strategies will recognise that L&D is multi-faceted and pursue the following actions:

Actions

- Departments will, in the first instance, identify an on-the-job learning policy for individual staff.
- Develop in-house coaching⁹ and mentoring¹⁰ to foster staff development, contribute to positive change and to maximise skills transfer.
- Use staff manuals, templates, checklists and emerging technologies to support this approach.
- Use alternative and supplementary approaches to learning delivery e.g. shorter more condensed learning sessions. Explore options for blended learning i.e. where E-Learning¹¹ is blended with classroom learning or where participants are allowed to interact in a stimulating way with tutors and other students.
- Pursue the possibilities around on-line platforms (E-Learning) that are capable of running in an on-line environment or via DVD as a cost effective means of delivery of some training, while also catering for those staff in all locations.
- Identify where training courses addressing needs common to staff in a Department or cross-Departmentally can appropriately be used to facilitate knowledge and skills transfer.
- Exploit the opportunities for sharing of resources including facilities, trainers and learning itself across the Civil and Public Service.
- Pursue strategic procurement mechanisms where appropriate to achieve value for money in the provision of training.

Objective

3.4 Evaluate L&D

Develop an effective evaluation framework to help focus on value for money and on delivering the most relevant, efficient and effective programmes

Actions

- Align the learning objectives with the business needs.
- Set out in advance clear objectives/expectations for learning outcomes.
- Evaluate learning rigorously.
- Benchmark performance levels before and after L&D interventions.
- Strive to gather more information on the business impact of learning interventions.
- Explore the accreditation of trainers.
- Consider the accreditation of some formal programmes, where appropriate and in accordance with the OECD Review of the Irish Public Service and the Organisational Review Programmes.

Objective

3.5 Strengthen Ethics, and Governance

Strengthen Ethics and Governance

Traditionally, the Civil Service approach to service delivery embodies a number of principles including honesty, integrity, probity and impartiality. These principles ensure that ethics, and good governance underpin and inform the achievement of organisational objectives. Departments' L&D policy should demonstrate commitment to these principles through a range of actions:

Actions

- Incorporate ethics as an integral part of Leadership L&D programmes.
- Identify training to meet current or emerging statutory obligations e.g. child protection.
- Ensure that the values of The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour are included in Induction and other training programmes.

Objective

3.6 Promote Strong Financial Management

Promote Strong Financial Management

In order to safeguard public funds and to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources by Departments, it is important that staff understand the various structures and procedures that are in place to achieve this objective. Staff should be made aware of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders who manage the public finances including the Accounting Officer, Comptroller and Auditor General, Central Bank, Minister for Finance, Legislature, Executive and the Public Accounts Committee. Staff must also be advised of their own responsibility in assisting the various stakeholders. Departments should seek to develop the financial management capacity in the organisation through a range of actions:

Actions

Departments should focus on L&D programmes that will enhance the Financial Management capacity across the Public Service in the following ways :

- Ensure familiarity with the policy cycle.
- Promote awareness of Public Financial Management.
- Disseminate and demonstrate the value for money (VFM) framework.
- Develop greater skills in policy analysis capability and determining costs generally.
- Develop a focus on outcomes through L&D programmes that concentrate on performance data, performance metrics and improved performance management capacity.
- Ensure that staff become familiar with financial procedures and practices.
- Raise awareness of the role and responsibilities of the key stakeholders and individual staff.

4. Implementation including Responsibilities

While implementation rates for this Framework are expected to vary because of differences arising out of various factors, including resource levels, mobility etc., the expectation is that all recommendations in the Framework will be implemented within the lifetime of the document. Responsibility for the implementation of this Framework falls into four key areas as follows:

4.1 Responsibilities of Staff

Individual staff should participate in discussion relating to the identification of learning and development needs insofar as they relate to and support the key business objectives. They should actively engage in self development through on-the-job learning and self managed learning and avail of learning and development opportunities provided.

On-the-job Learning

It is generally agreed that the most effective learning for the workplace takes place on-the-job through coaching, mentoring and other supported on-the-job initiatives. Skills and behaviours are learned through observation and practice. Learning can be accelerated by allowing staff to observe the skills they must acquire. Departments and Offices should continue to promote on-the-job learning by:

- Ensuring that self-managed and on-the-job learning are fully discussed and planned in a structured manner as part of the PMDS process and in a way which reflects the relevant Training Needs Analysis (TNA) findings.
- Educating managers on the time required to engage in and to drive staff development.
- Ensuring that learning is fostered through appropriate delegation and feedback, and through involvement of staff in meetings and other day-to-day events which provide opportunities for learning.
- Ensuring that arrangements are made to facilitate coaching of staff.
- Considering the potential for development of staff through structured mentoring arrangements.

The principles and practices involved in informal learning are set out in The Guide to Competency Development¹².

Self Managed Learning

- Assisting staff in acquiring self-managed knowledge through direction and guidance on reading/research material, i.e. relevant files, rules and legislation, publications, periodicals and procedural manuals where appropriate.

4.2 Responsibilities of the CSTDC

The CSTDC has responsibility for learning and development policy for the Civil Service. During the period covered by this Framework the focus of the CSTDC should include:

- Continuing to develop E-learning facilities. This will contribute to OECD requirements that all staff should have access to training irrespective of location.
- Providing development programmes for a range of managerial grades.
- Providing facilitation, consultancy and advice to departments.
- Researching and disseminating toolkits reflecting best practice in relation to each of the stages of the Training Cycle; Analysis, Design, Develop, Implement, Evaluate.(ADDIE)
- Liaising with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) on grade based competency development to meet business needs and for career development.
- Providing Procurement Framework(s) to obtain high quality training at the most economical cost to departments.
- Promoting and facilitating the sharing of all training resources and facilities across departments.
- Delivering training specific to the EU Presidency 2013.
- Transferring skills to training officers in departments.
- Delivering a range of training programmes designed to support the achievement of Public Service reform.
- Researching where a process of accreditation might add strategic value.
- Evaluation of programmes that the CSTDC either provides for or delivers.

4.3 Responsibilities of the Department

The delivery of core business objectives to the highest possible customer service levels, over the critical period covered by this Framework, will be a priority of departments. It will be the responsibility of departments to ensure appropriate training is delivered to staff to secure this outcome.

It is important for Departments to pursue a systematic, proactive approach to L&D. One such approach that is often used by organisations is the Training Cycle. It advocates a scientific approach to the analysis of L&D needs. The Training Cycle helps organisations to prioritise those needs and to express them in measurable terms that are linked to the organisational objectives. It promotes the consideration and implementation of a range of flexible solutions. It requires an approach whereby Departments incorporate formal training needs analysis into their HR strategy and business plans and evaluate the impact of the chosen interventions on performance. A more detailed explanation of the Training Cycle is outlined at Appendix A.

During the period of this Framework the focus of departments should include:

- Identifying capacity deficits.
- Implementing a systematic approach to L&D to build capacity and organisational capability.
- Addressing the specific training requirements related to the EU Presidency in 2013.
- Demonstrating the primacy of value for money on all expenditure, including training.
- Delivering quality customer service to all stakeholders.
- Delivering efficiencies through improvement and innovation.
- Leveraging knowledge by encouraging channels of knowledge transfer and developing communities of practice¹³.
- Safeguarding corporate memory, through judicious succession planning and knowledge management.
- Demonstrating an appreciation that in the current climate, expenditure on learning is an investment rather than an expense.
- Developing a specific plan to deal with the implications of mobility and re-deployment.
- Championing culture change through a range of mechanisms including appropriate L&D interventions.
- Support a learning culture and focus on continuous learning and development.
- Support the application of skills in the workplace.

A popular mantra is *doing more with less* but this may not be the answer to diminishing resources; it may be doing less with less but more of the right things. Departments must encourage and motivate staff, foster creativity and productivity for the benefit of colleagues and customers alike.

An annual questionnaire will issue to Departments in conjunction with the existing template for reporting on learning and development expenditure. The CSTDC will collate this information annually for all Departments and report centrally at the beginning of the following year.

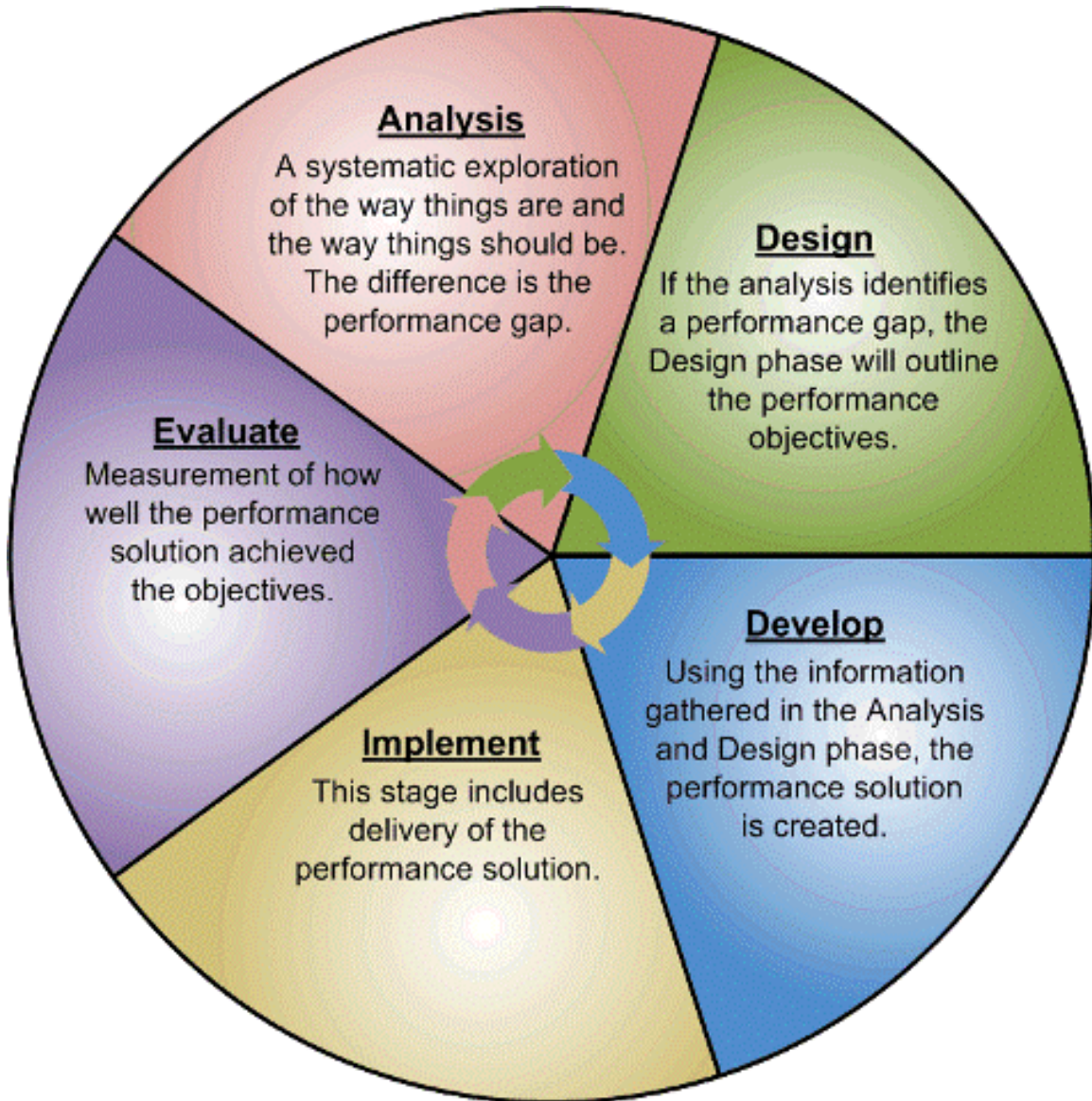
4.4 Responsibilities of HR/Learning and Development Units

HR and Learning and Development Units have a key role to play at each stage of the Training cycle from analysis, through to the design, development and implementation of programmes and the ongoing evaluation of the chosen interventions. Their focus should include:

- Creating a Learning and Development Strategy
- Aligning Business, HR and L&D Strategies.
- Identifying roles and assigning responsibilities for implementation of the L&D Strategy.
- Ensuring that TNA is carried out to identify capacity deficits for their Department.
- Ongoing communications and consultation with senior managers to agree the priority order in which the capacity deficits will be addressed; the desired approach to determining baseline data; the desired performance objectives and business impact of the L&D interventions selected to address the deficits; determining follow-up actions required in connection with programme evaluations.
- Developing and resourcing optimum and cost-effective strategies for addressing L&D needs including E-Learning and on-the-job learning.
- Where the need for procurement of training arises, ensuring that it is strategic.
- Ensuring appropriate follow up on the evaluation of programmes/interventions.
- Ensuring that lessons learned through BPI and other such initiatives are disseminated.
- Supporting and promoting innovation.
- Highlighting the need for improved governance through the incorporation of relevant information in L&D interventions and through on-the-job learning; the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, Ethics, Public Financial Management and the Policy Cycle.

Appendix A

Figure 1: Training Cycle



(a) Analysis Stage

In this regard, a comprehensive analysis of training needs is the first stage in the systematic cycle of training. Organisations who carry out needs analysis are reflecting best practice as they are putting in place the bedrock for evaluating training interventions. The Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in various reports indicated the need for a more comprehensive approach to the analysis stage. The CSTDC have produced two publications to assist Departments in this regard. The first of these is the

“Training Needs Analysis – Toolkit”; it’s a practical guide on conducting training needs analysis (TNA). It should be read in conjunction with the CSTDC’s White Paper setting out more background to the rationale for TNA entitled “Training Needs Analysis – Mind the Gap”. Copies of both of these documents are available on the CSTDC’s website at www.training.gov.ie. or by following the links below:

http://www.cstdc.gov.ie/file.php/5/TNA_Toolkit_-_Official_Print.pdf

http://www.cstdc.gov.ie/file.php/5/Mind_the_Gap_-_Official_Print.pdf

(b) Design Stage

It is important when designing L&D interventions to ensure that they meet previously identified performance gaps in order to be cost-effective. If an initial assessment using the correct assumptions is made about who needs to learn what, then it is more likely to result in effective L&D. It is also important to develop a clear idea of what needs to be learned and to agree the performance objectives expected so as to provide a solid foundation for the evaluation of the L&D interventions. It is important to recognise that L&D is not always the most appropriate solution to the problems identified at the Analysis Stage of the Training Cycle, for example, inefficient work processes and Departments should ensure that such issues are dealt with appropriately.

(c) Develop Stage

Where L&D is indicated as the most appropriate solution then the organisation should develop a solution that meets those needs identified in the Analysis Stage of the Cycle. The solution developed should also be based on the performance objectives deemed necessary to meet the business needs. The full range of on-the-job and off-the-job solutions should be considered taking into account factors such as resources, availability of staff and the geographical spread of target audience. Not all solutions are classroom based or on-the-job. Alternative solutions may for example include case study analysis, networking, coaching or delegation.

(d) Implement Stage

Essentially, this stage is about the delivery of the preferred performance solution. Whichever delivery option is chosen, it is important to ensure it is in line with the findings from the Analysis Stage. The approach to implementation should support the Evaluate Stage of the L&D intervention.

(e) Evaluate Stage

The C&AG¹⁴ (Report No. 38 – 2000) in the course of their value for money reporting, advised Departments to “*establish proper evaluation systems*” to determine whether their L&D programmes are meeting the objectives set for them notwithstanding that “*the importance of evaluation needs to be balanced against the cost*”. A recent report published by the Committee of Public Accounts highlights the need for Departments to have systems, procedures and practices in place to evaluate effectiveness; a general finding that all spending needs to be evaluated to establish that a desired outcome is on target. Spending on L&D is substantial and it is important that the recommendations in this document are adopted towards efficient and effective delivery of L&D.

References

- 1 It can be taken throughout this document that Department refers to Department, Office or Agency.
- 2 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Review of the Irish Public Service (2008) is the first of a series of country reviews undertaken by the OECD to analyse the success and challenges of Public Service reform from a comprehensive perspective, taking into account the array of public service reforms conducted in Ireland since the mid-1990s.
http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Ireland_-_Towards_an_Integrated_Public_Service.pdf
- 3 Transforming Public Services (TPS) – Report of the Taskforce on the Public Service (2008) was issued in response to the OECD's Review of the Irish Public Service. It recommends a range of initiatives for implementation over the three years following the review.
http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_2008/Transforming_Public_Services1.pdf
- 4 Towards 2016 is a ten year Framework agreement negotiated through Social Partnership covering the period up to and including 2015. www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/Towards2016PartnershipAgreement.pdf
- 5 Public Service Agreement 2010 – 2014
<http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/publications/other/2010/payagree/payagree1014final.pdf>
- 6 The Organisational Review Programme (ORP) was established in 2007 to review the capabilities of all Government Departments and major Offices to deliver citizen focused public services into the future. For information on ORP reports and publications to date, see: <http://www.orp.ie/eng/Publications/>
- 7 A definition of learning and development from Building Capability - A framework for managing learning and development in the Australian Public Service (April 2003) is "*Learning and development encompasses a wide range of activities designed to improve the capabilities of people. Capabilities comprise not only the technical skills and knowledge people have, but also their attributes, attitudes and behaviours. Learning and development activities can be designed to deliver specific skills in a short period of time to meet an immediate need, or designed to achieve broader requirements over a longer period. Activities to enable people to acquire new capabilities can include on the job training, development opportunities such as special projects, conferences, secondments and mentoring, as well as formal class room and e-learning.*" <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications03/capability.pdf>
- 8 Building Ireland's Smart Economy (2008) sets out a Framework of actions to reorganise the economy over the next five years in order to address the severe short-term economic challenges and focusing on how we can return to sustainable growth in the medium-term.
http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Building_Ireland's_Smart_Economy/Building_Ireland's_Smart_Economy_.pdf
- 9 Coaching is usually concerned with improving job performance and relates to developing the skills and behaviours that are needed to discharge a particular role or set of tasks. It is generally short-term and structured in nature.
- 10 Mentoring has a broader perspective and might focus on personal development and assisting individuals to assess their choices and career decisions. It is typically more informal in nature and looks at the future rather than the immediate task on hand. The agenda is set by the individual rather than the mentor.
- 11 E-Learning (on-line learning) as defined by the CIPD is "*learning that is delivered, enabled or mediated using electronic technology for the explicit purpose of training in organisations*". They go on to distinguish between three types of learning: "*supported online learning which incorporates course content, instructor interaction and inter-student dialogue online; informal E-learning which supports informal workplace learning; and also web-based training whereby content is delivered to the end user without significant interaction or support from training professionals, peers or managers.*"
- 12 The Guide to Competency Development is a learning and development support published by the Centre for Management and Organisation Development. http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/smi/cmod_report.pdf
- 13 A community of practice (COP) is an informal network that emerges from a common desire to work more effectively or to deepen understanding among members of a particular speciality or work group. COP's are held together by the members' desire to share work-related information and to the need to advance their own knowledge by learning from others.
- 14 Comptroller and Auditor General Report on Value for Money Examination (Report No. 38 – 2000)
<http://audgen.gov.ie/documents/vfmreports/TrainDev.pdf>

