

**Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrations
2017 Technical Conference**

Background paper: The Canada Revenue Agency's Approach for Equipping Staff with Skills to Deliver in an Increasingly Digital Environment

The more than 40,000 individuals employed by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) comprise a diverse, experienced, and highly qualified workforce that administers Canada's tax and benefit programs with proficiency and integrity. In an era of rapid technological change, the CRA, like many tax administrations, needs to ensure that its most valuable asset - its employees - have the tools and skills to deliver in an increasingly digital economy. The CRA continues to develop and implement strategies to ensure employees are equipped to deliver on Government of Canada priorities, meet current and future business needs, and strive at providing the best possible service to all Canadians.

As part of this, the CRA actively considers the impact of technological changes and trends on its business, and consequently, how its workforce needs to adapt in response. For instance, innovations such as cloud technology or block chain, present new compliance challenges, but increasing digitization also gives tax administrations greater - and faster - access to data that can be used to meet these challenges. While it has always been important to have the right people with the right skills sets, the type of skill sets needed by tax administrations - including the CRA - is changing.

The CRA's Approach

It is within the context of changing business priorities and risks that the CRA has developed an Agency Workforce Plan (AWP). The AWP is a national-level plan that gives direction to how the CRA recruits, develops and supports its workforce. Leadership development and enhancing the workplace environment are enduring aspects of the AWP and are essential to maintaining the Agency's success now and in the future.

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At the same time, the CRA is taking concrete steps to ready itself in the face of imminent challenges and opportunities, with the aim of ensuring that:

- existing and emerging skills gaps are addressed for the current and future workforce;
- specialized business requirements are met; and
- CRA employees have the technical knowledge and skills to keep pace with evolving business methods.

To this end, the CRA's approach focuses on two key elements:

- strategic recruitment; and
- responsive training.

Strategic Recruitment

By the year 2020, the CRA has committed to improve its service delivery - including through digital means; use more innovative ways to address willful non-compliance; drive the evolution of cybersecurity and privacy by design; and to conduct more advanced research, trend analysis, and compliance-risk analysis. To achieve this result, the CRA has developed the following workforce-related initiatives for specialized professionals:

- concentrating recruitment efforts focus on building an audit community that has the technical knowledge and capability to keep pace with evolving business methods;
- obtaining data analytics capacity for risk assessment and workload development functions; and
- replenishing the workforce with the talent needed in the future, instead of replacing departures on a one-to-one ratio.

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In terms of recruitment strategies, the CRA has modernized its online presence and expanded its use of social media for recruitment purposes. The CRA's recruitment strategy focuses external recruitment initiatives on the specialized professions of behavioural economist, data analysts, forensic accountants, project managers and tech-savvy auditors. As an example, the CRA leveraged social media and launched the successful 2016-2017 "Cracking Down" campaign which generated over 1,100 applicants for specialized auditor and business intelligence positions. This resulted in a pool of qualified candidates for the purpose of auditing promoters of aggressive tax planning schemes with the aim of protecting Canadian taxpayers. The CRA will continue to staff from this pool. In the meantime, it will continue to focus on recruiting auditors through various initiatives such as its Auditor Development Program, increased use of social media, and by participating in government-wide recruitment initiatives.

Responsive Training

Technology is at the heart of the CRA's efforts to ensure that employees continue to develop and learn. It can also be leveraged to enable employees to address their own knowledge gaps and to take an active role in developing their skills sets, and ultimately, their career paths.

To this end, the CRA has become more responsive to the growing demand for innovative learning solutions within the Agency, and as such, is taking the following steps:

- using technology to reduce the risks and inefficiencies of trying to find answers to job-related questions through informal means (e.g., electronic performance support tools to enable learning at the time of need);
- fostering collaboration, because the greater the collective knowledge of the Agency is distributed across more employees, the greater need is to work and

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learn collaboratively (e.g., the Agency Knowledge Management Framework ensures learning is transferred to the right people at the right time);

- exploring mobile learning options, to enable mobile workers (like auditors) to access learning when and where they need it; and
- using online learning tools to optimize the time to productivity for new recruits and for employees moving between jobs within the CRA (onboarding and off boarding tools to guide employees and managers, ensuring coaching, mentoring and formal learning take place).

In addition, the CRA is exploring and adopting measures to make learning accessible across different platforms, on a just-in-time basis, and seamlessly as part of Agency workflow processes. This is intended to help employees obtain a level of proficiency faster than traditional or conventional methods.

Specifically, the CRA is using emerging technologies to disseminate training quickly, consistently and efficiently, for instance by:

- providing self-directed online learning events;
- making learning paths readily available online;
- developing shorter learning events that teach how to problem solve on the job;
- instituting individual self-paced eLearning;
- establishing facilitator-led virtual classrooms (webinars);
- creating learning communities for specialized areas (e.g., managers);
- developing electronic performance support systems for instant access to job procedures and tools e.g., NRA Help (Non Resident Audit); and
- using short (two minute or less) videos.