Experiential Development Opportunities (EDO) - For Managers

EDOs are a win-win-win for employees, departments, and managers!

What is an EDO?

“For a manager, helping someone reach their professional goals is an extraordinary opportunity to make a positive impact on someone’s life.”

-- Tami Payne
Administrative Manager, CALS

Experiential Development Opportunities (EDO) are basically "hands-on" training experiences. They are generally short-term or project-based assignments that fall under two categories:

- **Skill Development**: where staff learn new skills to enhance work similar to current level of responsibility.
- **Leadership Development**: where staff can gain experience in a role with advanced or broader responsibilities compared to current position.

EDOs are posted in Workday similar to internal job availabilities. This enables managers to efficiently tap a university-wide talent pool of proven and motivated staff; while providing an innovative way for employees to pursue practical career and skills development.

Start with the EDO Agreement.

The [EDO Agreement](#) provides a structure to define concrete expectations and evaluation. Use this as the first step in planning an EDO and as a discussion tool with interested employees.

*Related: Visit the [EDO page for Employees](#) for information tailored to staff participants.*

How does an EDO benefit managers?

- **SKILLS**: Participants expand and gain new skills that can benefit your team.
- **FLEXIBILITY**: Increase staffing levels during peak times or for special projects.
- **EFFICIENCY**: Tap into an already proven university talent pool.
- **STRATEGIC**: Develop current staff to meet future department goals.
Engagement: Provide job variety for staff to increase engagement and productivity.
Reward: Recognize valued staff by supporting their career development ambitions.
Network: Build bridges to other departments to create and reinforce interdepartmental collaboration.

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EDO Examples

Below are examples of ways an EDO can take shape. See the Experiential Development Opportunity Descriptions for more details.

Job Swap: Temporarily exchange roles with another employee who has a similar skillset, often within the same team or department.
Example: Two administrative assistants with different responsibilities learn to perform each other’s roles over a certain period of time.

- Expands staff skillset for an entire role or position
- Builds capability within your workgroup to manage staffing shortfalls or unexpected challenges

Responsibility Swap: Learn a specific skill or a portion of a job without a full job swap by trading parts of job responsibilities.
Example: Two administrative assistants exchange only certain responsibilities over a defined period of time.

- Expands staff skillset for a particular task
- Builds capability within your workgroup to manage staffing shortfalls or unexpected challenges

Rotation: A temporary assignment to another department or group.
Example: A staff member has scheduled a parental leave of absence. Create a job rotation opening for an employee who wants to learn about this role while they’re away.

- Your team works with a proven Cornell employee, rather than a potentially inexperienced temp
- A Cornell staff member learns new skills and networking among new colleagues

Shadowing: Follow another employee during part or all of work day.
Example: A staff member wants to learn about another role or department. Or set up a shadowing assignment in preparation for a job rotation to ensure a smooth transition.

- Your staff member brings new skills or approaches to their current role
- Staff increases engagement through pursuing career development in an area that interests them
- Build networking relationships across departments or groups

Stretch Assignments: A staff member takes on new or different responsibilities for a defined period of time.
Example: A staff member fills in for a manager on vacation; or takes a lead on a particular project not within the scope of their normal job description.

- Support high-performing staff with opportunities to prove or challenge their skills in a safe way
- Prepare for future succession or strategic planning

Funding

Generally, a skills development EDO within the same college or unit does not incur any costs.

However, funding models are different across the university, making the funding for each assignment different. The funding for each assignment needs to be discussed with the current and host supervisor. See your HR manager or supervisors who have participated in previous skill development assignments for models that have been used.

Individuals supported by sponsored funds may be required to seek department/college support if they wish to participate in Experiential Development Opportunities (EDO). The individual should reach out to their Department Administrator to discuss requirements for maintaining project support. This may include a requirement to back-fill the position to ensure that the project is not adversely affected and only effort associated with conducting project activities is charged accordingly.
Bargaining Unit Staff

Staff covered by a collective bargaining agreement are eligible to participate in an EDO. However, advanced approval is needed from college/unit HR prior to finalizing any arrangements. In these cases, supervisors must contact their college/unit HR rep who, in turn, will partner with Workforce Policy and Labor Relations and the appropriate union leadership to finalize the terms of the EDO.

Expectations of Supervisors

EDO assignments are intended for high-performing, high-potential staff. It is critical that supervisors have open and honest discussions so that employees know where they stand and what they need to do in order to be considered for an EDO assignment.

These discussions should happen throughout the year and also during the ongoing creation of goals for the employee’s Individual Development Plan (IDP).

Cornell encourages you to find creative ways to meet Experiential Development Opportunity requests.

If you have an employee who requests a placement outside of your department, you are encouraged to refer them to explore EDOs housed in Workday. Your goal is to encourage on-the-job and hands-on learning opportunities that support the needs of your department as well as areas your staff are interested in exploring.

Expectations of Participants

EDO Participants are expected to exhibit:

- Cornell University’s values of collegiality, stewardship, initiative, civility, integrity, and excellence. See "Skills for Success."
- A desire to develop skills and knowledge base.
- The ability to work well with others.
- Dependability and a strong work ethic.

Should you participate in an EDO?

Consider the following when planning to offer an experiential development opportunity:

- Do you have seasonal work cycles when you could use additional help?
- In slower periods, could you productively release a staff person to work in another position in order for this employee to learn new skills?
- Do you have or know of an especially valued employee you hope will be retained, either in your department or by another department at Cornell?
- Would your staff member feel re-energized and rewarded through learning a new job or skill?
- Do you have a special project that needs to be completed and a staff member who could learn the needed skills to complete it?

As you consider which requests to approve, keep in mind that experiential development opportunities are ways to recognize and reward employees you value and want to retain. Your serious consideration and approval will encourage staff productivity and increase engagement.

Where do I start?

Begin with the EDO Agreement to help define parameters of what sort of opportunity length, responsibilities, expectations, and measurements of success should be included.

HR is here to help! HR can help supervisors identify, create and describe opportunities. The Staff Position Description (SPD) format can be utilized to outline the rotational assignment. The length of the assignment and expected outcomes should be specified. The length of most experiential learning should be under one year. Supervisors are encouraged to work with each other to develop skill development rotational assignment opportunities.

To post a position, fill out this description of the opportunity and needs, and send the completed form to your college/unit.
talent lead.

Tools and Resources

New EDO Summary

Agreement Form

Experiential Development Opportunity Descriptions

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