

## Training on a budget

**Charity Jobs have recently published a useful article on how small groups might consider creative and affordable ways to ensure training and development is provided for their staff and volunteers**

We're currently facing a huge cost of living crisis and, according to some sources, also on the brink of another devastating recession, so it's hardly surprising that VCS organisations are feeling the pinch!

According to [the Status of UK fundraising Report](#), 32% of non-profit organisations saw a decrease in their income in the last twelve months. And when times are tough, the training budget is usually one of the first things to be cut. So how do you manage training your staff on a budget?

Providing learning and development programmes can cost money that small organisations simply don't have available – after all, funding training for staff means there's less money for supporting clients. However, as well as training on new systems, initiatives, policies or services, the loss of one member of staff (or volunteer) can result in a huge loss of skills, knowledge and abilities that we then have to urgently try and provide training to someone to take on that role.

**If we skimp on learning and development – we're at risk of losing our best people**

Good people don't stay in jobs as long as they once did. Staff who feel that their skills are not being put to good use in their current job are 10 times more likely to be looking for a new job than those who feel that their skills are being put to good use. If workers feel like they've plateaued, they can grow bored with the role and lack of training and development feeds into this. On top of all this, the cost of living crisis is hitting our own staff and volunteers just as much as its affecting the residents we support – so our own staff may need to search for new opportunities to better manage their own finances.

This is a particular problem for charities as they're unlikely to pay as much as the private (or public) sectors and really can't afford to lose people. Whilst we may not be able to offer private sector salaries, we all know that job satisfaction, job vocation as well as feeling supported, valued and have the opportunity to grow, are what helps us to retain our valued staff and volunteers.

So, to put bluntly, if your organisation fails to invest in people who show enterprise and a desire to learn, you risk losing the good ones and only holding on to less able staff.

But how do you train your staff on a budget? How do you make sure you accrue all the benefits that come from developing your teams—like the acquisition of important new skills, improved performance, staff morale and retention—while not putting the urgent work of the organisation at risk?

**Prioritise and build a long-term plan**

Slashing a percentage off your training budget without scrutinising how you're allocating spend and what you'll lose can create a false economy. Instead, build a longer-term plan that establishes priorities over time; one based on what's essential versus what's desirable. To do this, you need to understand the business case for specific training so that you can then make informed decisions about what to keep, cut or postpone for another year.

### **Involve your staff in creating personalised training plans/wish lists**

This is another way to make sure training is prioritised. And it stops you wasting money with a one-size-fits-all approach that allocates the same training for all job functions/teams.

Kick it off by asking your staff to complete a training request form in which they outline what they think they'd gain from specific training, how they'd use it to improve their work and how, in turn, this could benefit the charity.

Since this is about budget-cutting, everyone should be encouraged to think of it as a live document; so that it's a flexible plan to include not only paid-for courses but other options like work shadowing, mentoring, job rotations, online training, etc.

It can then be reviewed at regular, diarised, meetings and should form part of the appraisal process.

### **So, what are the options for training your staff on a budget?**

1. Mentoring or job shadowing
2. Use your existing staff and share knowledge
3. Job rotation
4. Training courses
5. Online training and webinars
6. Utilise charity sector organisations such as Sobus and NCVO
7. Volunteering

### **So, don't panic. Training your staff on a budget is possible.**

There are so many ways in which people can acquire and develop skills—from time given over to e-learning, to job rotations, to mentoring, to traditional paid-for courses.

The most important thing is that managers create personalised training plans in collaboration with each member of staff; bespoke plans that prioritise what's most useful for their current role and for their future development at the charity.

Do this and you can retain and develop your most precious resource: talented, loyal staff—while also up-skilling those who may be struggling.

For further information and links, please visit:

<https://www.charityjob.co.uk/recruiterinsights/training-staff-on-tight-budget>