

Local 79 Members' Survey on Training Needs



Executive Summary

When Local 79 talks about good jobs and the important protections contained in our Collective Agreements, we tend to focus on things like employment security, predictability, and living wages. However, access to quality training is an equally important part of a good job. Training helps workers adapt to changing circumstances. It helps them work more efficiently, increasing their sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction. It turns obstacles into challenges that can be overcome. Most importantly, it ensures workers don't just have a job... they have a career path.

Local 79 asked members to tell us about their training needs. We used an online survey, conducted in April and May 2015. Members were notified of the survey through e-mail and had approximately four weeks to participate.

The survey consisted of 24 questions. Questions were both open-ended and closed to provide a balance of qualitative and quantitative information. Through the survey, members provided important insights into what their work is like right now, how they see it changing and the training they need to meet current and future challenges alike.

Across workplaces, two factors are clearly causing members' jobs to become more difficult: increased workload and staffing issues. Obviously, the two are related. The first section of the report, "Setting the Context, Part 1: What is our work like right now?", looks at the factors creating ever-increasing demands on City of Toronto workers.

Divisions with the highest number of responses	
Division	% of Total Respondents
Economic Development and Culture	19.7%
Parks, Forestry & Recreation	18.1%
Long-Term Care Homes and Services	9.2%
Public Health	7.6%
Information and Technology	5.2%

Increased Complexity. Given the increasing complexity of the issues facing the people we serve – from people experiencing poverty to residents of Long-Term Care Homes – it's no surprise that members told us they need new supports to meet increasingly complex demands.

Staffing and Resources. Sometimes new training opportunities are what members need, but when they think about how their work will look in the next few years, members also say that in the next few years they will need the same kinds of supports they need *right now*: adequate staffing levels, good communication with supervisors, and reliable equipment and infrastructure.

The second section, "Setting the Context, Part 2: What will our work be like in a few years?", examines how workplace needs will change over the next several years.

Technology. Members anticipate that technological innovations will speed up the pace of their work. Members are open to the opportunities that new technologies create, but are also uncertain about whether they will receive the training they need to keep up-to-date. They also worry about whether complex work for which they have specialized will be downgraded to data entry.

Workload. Members worry that the public will have increasingly complex needs, but there will be fewer opportunities to provide services on a one-on-one basis and less time to complete tasks.

Career. Members are eager to make sure that their roles change as technology changes. They want training to ensure continued success in their current positions (even as the demands of those positions evolve), as well as training that provides career-advancing opportunities. Both types of training are essential for preventing burn-out and low morale.

“It’s hard to evolve in a job when there are so many restrictions about what training is made available to you. The training generally will only be approved if it has something to do with the CURRENT job function you hold. It is not offered to you even though it could be useful for the next step in your individual job direction.”

The final two sections of the report, “Training, Part 1: Taking Care of Toronto” and “Training Part 2: How Does Successful Training Look?”, examine training directly, with particular attention to what kinds of training members need and want, what styles of training are most effective, the barriers that prevent people from receiving training, and whether training is supporting career advancement.

Infrequent Training. Although 76% of members believe they would be able to provide better services to Torontonians if they received more training, 70% report that they only receive training once per year or less.

Barriers to Training. More than a third of respondents indicated that overwork, lack of shift coverage, gapping, or staff vacancies presented a major barrier to training. In fact, this problem was noted in the Auditor General’s February 7, 2014 *Review of Training, Conference and Related Travel Expenses*. Members also indicated that lack of budget, lack of time allocation and preferential treatment presented obstacles to receiving training.

Elements of Successful Training. Members know that their time is valuable, so they want training to be delivered effectively. Training needs to be relevant, delivered by highly qualified instructors, and be accompanied by opportunities to put training immediately into practice.

Diverse Learning Styles. The survey showed that opinion is split in terms of the value of technology in learning. Some prefer the flexibility that on-line learning offers, while others prefer the opportunity for discussion and follow-up questions that classroom-based learning provides. There was a consensus that post-training support, in the form of additional materials and knowledgeable supervisors, is as essential as the training itself.

The insights members shared through this survey are important. Local 79 will be presenting them to management in several forums over the upcoming months. We are committed to fighting for good jobs and that includes fighting for the training opportunities that turn a job into a career.

Setting the Context, Part 1: What is our work like right now?

The members who told us their work is more difficult now than it was a few years ago mainly pointed to two reasons: increased demand from residents and higher expectations from management. 75% of respondents reported that new duties have been added to their jobs, but only 27% report receiving adequate training on these new duties. Members are experiencing a push to do more with diminished resources. Increased workloads and staff shortages are made worse by lack of training and faulty equipment.

What is making our work harder?

<u>Work-related factors</u>	<u># of mentions</u>
Higher expectations (i.e., from management; larger workload)	39
Increased demand (i.e., from residents)	35
More documentation required	20
Increased complexity of services and service requirements	10
More services are being offered/requested	9
Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act (AODA) compliance	5
Provincial Ministries have implemented higher standards requirements	2

<u>Staffing-related factors</u>	<u># of mentions</u>
Lack of staff	64
Scheduling	22
Lack of supervisor/management support	13
Fewer/insufficient hours available	7
Lack of sick days/ ill dependent	1

<u>Infrastructure-related factors</u>	<u># of mentions</u>
Lack of technology and technology that does not function properly (i.e., not enough computers, technical problems with SAMS, faulty software)	24
Broken equipment	2

<u>Training-related factors</u>	<u># of mentions</u>
Under-trained on new services and technology	22
Lack of opportunity to put training into practice	13
Inconsistent training across team members	10
Lack of time allotted for training	7

It is worth noting that although concerns specifically related to training were reported about half as often as workload and staff shortages, two training-related themes became immediately obvious. First, members feel that they and their teammates have insufficient training generally. Second, there are not enough opportunities to put training into practice. Members indicate that they often receive training but because they are not able to put it to practical use, they quickly forget new skills. This means training does not reduce work stress or support career progression.

“There is no consistency of training due to reduced staffing and scheduling changes. There has to be follow-through in terms of training. I am not given ample shift hours to enable me to apply the training given to me.”

The result is fairly predictable. When asked about the challenges members face in their job, members report the following:

- Pressure to meet ever-increasing expectations;
- Insufficient time to complete tasks;
- Lack of support from management;
- Conflicting, unclear, and uncommunicated directions and expectations;
- Lack of career progression; and
- Technological problems.

In addition to these challenges, the nature of the services many Torontonians require is becoming more complex. People experiencing poverty or housing crises often face multiple, inter-related obstacles. Residents in Long-Term Care Homes are presenting with multiple symptoms, often related to both mental health and physical well-being. Increased complexity requires not only increased access to resources, infrastructure, and programming; it also demands greater physical and mental exertion on the part of service providers.

Setting the Context, Part 2: What will our work be like in a few years?

When asked to think about how their job will look in a few years, members focused their comments mainly around changes to technology and workload. They expressed particular concerns about how changing workplaces would impact their careers.

In terms of **technology**, members anticipated the following.

- Technology will increase management's demand for faster response times. For example, residents will expect an immediate response to e-mails, regardless of how many e-mails workers receive in a day.
- Technology will be increasingly central to how tasks are completed. This creates an opportunity, but also comes with risks if training or the technology itself are inadequate.
- Technology might reduce complex jobs to less-satisfying data-entry positions.
- They also expressed a general anxiety about their ability to keep up technologically because how technology will change working conditions remains highly uncertain.

In terms of **workload**, members anticipated the following.

- City services will not be able to meet demands in a high-speed, timely fashion, without additional staff.
- Services will become less personalized and less focused. There will be increased administration and fewer opportunities to provide services on a one-on-one basis.
- Members also expect that there will be less time to complete tasks, but more harassment for not getting their work done.

In terms of their **career**, members anticipated the following.

- Workload pressures will result in higher rates of burn-out.
- Jobs will not evolve; they will become dead-end positions.
- As technology changes, existing roles will become obsolete or redundant, leaving workers uncertain as to where they fit in.
- Privatization and contracting out will put good jobs in jeopardy.
- The City will have difficulty recruiting because there are higher wages to be found in the private sector.

What skills do you think you will need as technology, workplace demands, and your career goals evolve?

Job-specific skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Educator training • Teaching clients job search skills (resume prep; interview coaching) • Counselling and related strategies (play therapy; group therapy; crisis intervention; addictions; trauma) • Nursing skills in-service • Case management • Environmental Resource Management – issues and theory • Shiatsu, yoga, etc. • Developing service plans • Building maintenance • Palliative care-giving • Customer Service • Blueprint reading • First-aid 	Personal Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative thinking • Public speaking • Adaptability • Patience • Tenacity • Time Management • Stress Management • Teamwork
Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tactical/strategic communications • Stakeholder communications • Negotiations • Social media • Grant writing 	Business Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Payroll management
Desktop Computing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Keyboarding • Cloud computing 	Technology (general) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping up with current requirements • SAMS training • Training on new technology
Legal Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment rights • Interpreting and applying zoning bylaws • Reading/understanding building codes • City procedures and bylaws 	Information and Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating system script-writing • Web development • SAP • Networking and server management • Foundational knowledge/basics
Analytic Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic analysis • Policy analysis 	Interpersonal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict de-escalation • Working with challenging clients
Management Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLASS system • Food system supervision • Budgeting 	Project Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process management • Issue identification • Stakeholder consultations

Leadership skills

- Train the trainer
- Insight
- Team-building and support
- Conflict resolution
- Meeting facilitation

Professional best practices

- Nursing
- CSIA instructor methodology
- Conference participation
- Occupational health and safety

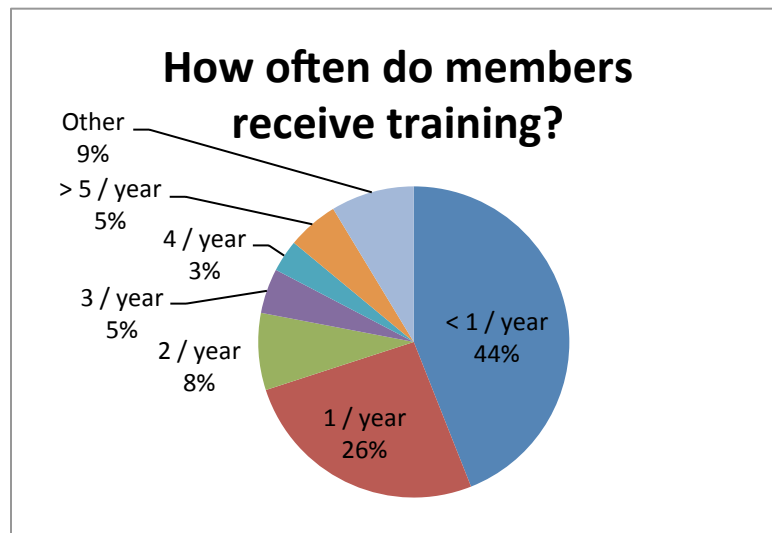
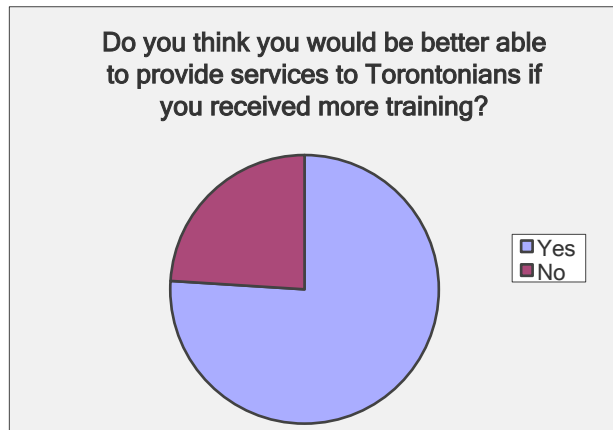
Disability/Medical

- Disability accommodations
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliance
- Medical condition-specific service provision
- Working with clients who have behavioral problems
- Working with children with autism
- Traumatic effects of poverty and homelessness
- Understanding mental illness

Training Part 1: Taking Care of Toronto

Three quarters (76%) of members who responded to the survey agreed that training makes them better able to provide services to Torontonians. Yet, 44% of members receive training less than once per year.

Another 26% reported that they receive training once per year, meaning **70% of people who responded to the survey receive training once per year or less**. That is clearly not enough to keep up to changing demands and to provide opportunities for career advancement. **In fact, when asked specifically about how often members receive training that will lead to promotion or advancement, almost 90% reported that they receive career-related training rarely or never.**



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Additionally, management support for training is essential. It makes members feel more comfortable requesting the time away and sends the message that the City values staff's efforts to improve how well they provide services. Members are evenly split on whether their supervisor or manager advises them about training opportunities. 48%

agreed or strongly agreed that supervisors provide information about opportunities, while 52% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This is very similar to the proportion of members who feel that supervisors and managers encourage them to take advantage of opportunities.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that members face a number of barriers when trying to take advantage of training opportunities.



More than a third of respondents (41%) told us that lack of shift coverage prevented them from obtaining training. Even when vacancies did not prevent training, members reported additional stress and overwork. One member in Long-Term Care Homes and Services told us, “Management expects you to attend mandatory in-services without being replaced. No allocated time, meaning you will be asking your co-worker to cover your duties, giving them double the work. This now becomes a hazard because there is an insufficient amount of staff to care for the residents on the unit.”

What barriers to getting training have you experienced?	
Type of Barrier	# of mentions
Training requests are not approved	38
No Budget	30
Scheduling/ No Time Allocated ("Operational Needs")	21
Preferential treatment/favoritism	21
No one to cover shift/duties	18
Courses are full	12
Cost to worker (including location as barrier)	7
Opportunities are not communicated	6
No barriers	19

Training requests not being approved is the barrier members cited most often. Members felt that training is only available for other classifications than their own, or is restricted to management. They reported that management does not consider the training that members request as supporting current operational requirements. This means management is not investing in either the skill demands that many workers see as already on the horizon or in the overall skills of workers themselves.

Many members also noted that training is only available for full-time employees. This leaves many part-time staff feeling like second-class employees. Some reported feeling trapped in their current positions because they can't access the training needed to be competitive for full-time jobs.

Not surprisingly, almost two-thirds of the members who said they faced barriers to receiving training also found that the same barriers prevented them from receiving promotions and new work opportunities within the Toronto Public Service.

Training Part 2: How does successful training look?

Local 79's survey asked members several questions about what makes training successful.

First and foremost, members told us that the training needs to be relevant. It needs to be directly applicable to current needs, but also needs to address emerging concerns and open doors to future opportunities. Here, it appears that members are in agreement with management as to the importance of relevance to current operational requirements, but also value a forward-looking approach to training.

In addition, there needs to be adequate time after the training for workers to practice the skills they have learned. Many respondents noted that new skills are quickly forgotten because they are not given the opportunity to practice them. Others noted that the difference between the learning environment and the live environment (including the software or equipment being used) undermines their ability to put theory into practice.

During training itself, members value highly qualified instructors who are familiar with the learners' day-to-day work environments. Training should also allow for adequate time to understand and review new material.

Members stressed that the City's understanding of 'training' should not end with the workshop or seminar. After the formal training is completed, managers and supervisors need to provide a supportive, knowledgeable post-training environment so that if a learner has questions, they can get clear, correct answers from their supervisors. This also means that post-learning materials should be readily available to allow staff to refer back to what they have been taught and to review the material as new situations and questions arise.

Members also identified a number of principles for effective teaching and learning.

- There should be a minimal time-gap between training and application (i.e., don't train weeks before new software becomes available).

Advantages of Technology for Learners

- Accessible at home
- Provides flexibility for different learners' paces
- Saves losing an entire day away from the office
- Greater potential for customization and personalization
- Can be completed in one's own district, rather than spending time travelling downtown

Disadvantages of Technology for Learners

- It is easier to learn in a classroom setting with an instructor present.
- The learning technology often fails
- It is difficult to maintain concentration/focus during webinars
- Need basic computer literacy for computer-based learning to be effective
- Current lack of (learning) infrastructure makes online learning impractical

Concerns regarding both technology-based and traditional instruction

- There is not enough time to practice skills
- Not enough time is allocated for learning (either in classrooms or 'down time' to do online courses)
- Technology should support traditional learning, not hinder it.
- Management also needs the training in order to answer follow-up questions
- Training needs to be adequately aligned with job demands and career advancement

- Trainers need to recognize and respond to diverse learning styles.
- There should be numerous feedback mechanisms to ensure training remains responsive to learners' needs.

In terms of diverse learning styles, members indicated that they prefer full-day classroom training the most, but about half also respond well to training that includes multiple formats. See the chart below for a breakdown of learning format preferences.

Please select your top 3 learning format preferences from the list below:		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Classroom training - full day	63.0%	97
Multiple formats (option to choose eLearning, webinar or classroom format for a particular session)	51.3%	79
Blended - a combination of any of the above (e.g. covering theory and terminology through reading or eLearning prior to a live session focused on discussion, application and practice of learning principles)	46.1%	71
Classroom training - half day	44.2%	68
eLearning (self-paced, online)	39.0%	60
Webinar (live, facilitated online training)	16.9%	26
Webcast (recorded online broadcast)	8.4%	13

Conclusion

Overall, members emphasized that training needs to be relevant, timely, and meet both current workplace demands and future career goals. Further information about training priorities, course preferences, and how members hear about training opportunities can be found in the Appendices.

To be successful, training needs to be progressive (i.e., build on previous training), adequate, ongoing (with plenty of refreshers), and sensitive to the learners' level of experience (i.e., recent hires, versus more senior workers).

Divisions need to ensure there is sufficient staff to allow people to take training (and be able to get shifts covered, work covered, etc.). At the same time, members want training to be streamlined. They want training but don't want to waste time (through repetition, travel, slow pacing, etc.) because they are sensitive to the pressures their absences place on co-workers as well as their own workload.

Appendix 1: Training and Career Progression

What training do you consider necessary for advancement in your current career path?

Accounting	Equity (diversity, human rights)	Office administration
Addictions	Experiential learning (cross training, shadowing other areas)	Procurement
Architectural technology	External Training	Project management
Business (analytics, process improvement)	Grant writing	Relationship management
Case management	Health and Safety	Research analysis
CLASS system	Management (budgeting, human resources, supervision, building management, corporate leadership, leadership development)	SAP
Clinical training		Software (digitization, web archiving)
Communications (verbal, written)		Software (Office suite)
Counselling		Train the trainer
Customer service		VISIO
Disability accommodation (AODA)		
Don't Know/Uncertain		

The City's *Courses for the Toronto Public Services* program offers a variety of courses from several different areas of study. Please help prioritize course offerings by selecting the 3 skill areas in which you would like to focus your learning initiatives.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Business Analytics	17.2%	25
Business Process Improvement	24.1%	35
Change Management	21.4%	31
Verbal Communication	30.3%	44
Written Communication	21.4%	31
Conflict Resolution	35.2%	51
Customer Service	29.0%	42
IT Applications Training (please specify applications)	33.8%	49
Project Management	32.4%	47
Training Facilitation & Design	24.1%	35
Equity, Diversity and Human Rights	29.7%	43

Appendix 2: How do you find out about training opportunities?

How do you find out about training opportunities?	
Source	# of responses
Inside TO/ Monday Morning News/ ELI/ Intranet	45
Supervisor	32
City E-mails	26
None/Never hear	25
Personal Research	24
Colleagues	16
Flyers/Memos/Posters	10
E-mail from external groups/professional associations	9
At other training	4
Regular mail	3