

UNFPA

Policy Title	Policy and Procedures for Developmental Assignments
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Previous title (if any)	Detail Assignments
Policy objective	The purpose of this policy is to set out the conditions and procedures under which a staff member may undertake a temporary assignment within the organization for their professional development.
Target audience	Staff members with permanent or fixed-term appointments
Risk control matrix	Control activities that are part of the process are detailed in the Risk Control Matrix
Checklist	N/A
Effective date	21 May 2024
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Developmental Assignments

I. Purpose

1. The purpose of this policy is to set out the conditions and procedures for arranging for a staff member to undertake a developmental assignment¹, and to outline the roles and responsibilities for arranging and approving such assignments.
2. Developmental assignments provide an opportunity for on-the-job learning in a different function or context, provide value to the organization in terms of the sharing of experiences, and foster team-building within the organization.

II. Policy

3. UNFPA is committed to enhancing learning and development opportunities in support of accelerating delivery and building new skills. On-the-job learning enables UNFPA teams to cultivate, develop, and strengthen existing talent and develop leaders and technical experts of the future while learning and sharing expertise and knowledge across teams.
4. Developmental assignments are designed to primarily provide support to offices as may be needed as a result of gaps in capacity due to unfilled vacancies or unanticipated absences including absence on parental leave, special leave without pay, and extended sick leave.
5. Developmental assignments may not be used to temporarily replace staff who are on mission (official business travel) or annual leave. Under no circumstances will a developmental assignment be approved to fill a vacant post that has been frozen as part of an austerity plan or lack of funding.
6. A developmental assignment is not the appropriate mechanism to use for short-term missions including those approved for emergency or humanitarian situations which should be managed as regular missions (duty travel on official business).
7. A developmental assignment may be virtual, or a combination of virtual and in person, if the responsibilities of the assignment and the intended learning can be achieved through remote work. For virtual developmental assignments, the releasing and receiving offices should clarify how much of the assignee's time will be dedicated to the assignment, and

¹ Developmental assignments are replacing what was previously considered a “detail assignment” at UNFPA.

ensure that the assignee receives adequate relief from their current duties to enable them to partake in the developmental assignment.

8. A staff member does not have an entitlement to be released on a developmental assignment. A staff member selected for a developmental assignment may assume the functions of a new post as a developmental assignment only when the supervisor agrees to the temporary release of a staff member, with specific return rights to the post they otherwise encumber.
9. The supervisor's decision to release a staff member on a developmental assignment must be based on the ability of the staff member's office to spare the services of the staff member without major detriment to the work of the office, and in support of the staff member's professional development. A releasing office may not advertise its own developmental assignment or temporary job opening to backfill a position that is unencumbered due to the release of a staff member.
10. Due to financial implications, developmental assignments should support organizational imperatives. They should provide value-added for the organization in terms of staff mobility between different units and substantive improvement of work. The developmental assignment must have terms of reference and demonstratively support the selected staff member's learning and career development planning and objectives.

Eligibility

11. Staff in the international professional, national officer, and general service categories serving on permanent and fixed-term appointments may avail of the opportunity of a developmental assignment subject to the conditions established in this policy.
12. Staff members must have two (2) or more years of continuous service with UNFPA to be eligible for release on a developmental assignment, subject to:
 - a. satisfactory record of performance in the latest completed performance cycle;
 - b. satisfactory conduct understood as no administrative or disciplinary measures taken against the staff member over the past two (2) years;
 - c. completion of one (1) year of service following reassignment to a new position and/or duty station; and
 - d. an appointment end date that covers the entire period of the developmental assignment.
13. Developmental assignments are not available to staff serving on temporary appointments, or affiliate personnel with non-staff status (including but not limited to persons engaged

as interns, United Nations volunteers, service contract holders, individual consultants, and procurement contract holders).

14. Perceived discrimination (any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on, including but not limited to, a person's race, sex, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, language, social origin or other status) in the selection of candidates for a developmental assignment could be considered to be prohibited conduct as per the [Policy for the Prohibition of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Abuse of Authority and Discrimination](#). A formal complaint of prohibited conduct should be reported to the Director, Office of Audit and Investigation Services.

Duration

15. Developmental assignments are primarily intended to be of temporary duration. The total duration of a developmental assignment should be for a minimum of four (4) weeks and may not exceed a maximum of six (6) months.
16. When a need for service for more than six (6) months but less than one year is anticipated, a temporary job opening must be issued by the Head of Unit².

Terms and Conditions

17. The terms of reference for a developmental assignment must include:
 - a. the duration of the assignment;
 - b. the location of the assignment (which may be virtual);
 - c. the competencies, technical expertise and language skills required of the selected staff member;
 - d. the work plan goals and objectives;
 - e. the first reporting officer;
 - f. the benefits provided to the staff member in addition to their current compensation.
18. A developmental assignment may be used to provide coverage for international professional, national officer, and general service posts.
19. The total cost of a developmental assignment should not exceed the equivalent cost of a position it seeks to cover for the same time period. Funds saved from a previous period in

² Head of unit refers to the representative, division director, regional or sub regional director, country representative or director, or head of office in countries without a UNFPA representative. This task can be undertaken by the delegated officer as appropriate.

which a position was vacant cannot be used to fund future developmental assignments. If the developmental assignment is to temporarily cover a vacant position, that position must remain vacant for the duration of the developmental assignment.

20. The travel and related costs for the developmental assignment (such as flights and daily subsistence allowance, as well as danger pay if applicable) should normally be met by the receiving office. The salary and related costs (such as pension, medical insurance) for the staff member on a developmental assignment will normally continue to be covered by the releasing office.
21. Except in cases in which the developmental assignment is in the same duty station, a staff member will not normally be granted annual leave during developmental assignments of six week duration or less. An individual on developmental assignment will not receive daily subsistence allowance during the period spent on annual leave. A staff member is entitled to sick leave under the same terms and conditions as for other duty travel.
22. Except where the developmental assignment is in the same duty station, during the period of the assignment, staff members' travel related entitlements will accordingly be covered by the terms of [UNFPA's Travel Policy](#).
 - a. During the period of the developmental assignment the staff member retains their personal grade, and all the entitlements of the staff member's parent duty station, including medical and life insurance coverage.
 - b. According to UNFPA's Travel Policy, staff members who travel for purposes of learning and personal development are provided an economy class ticket regardless of the duration of flying time to their destination.
 - c. Daily subsistence allowance when applicable, will be paid to the staff member at the prevailing rate at the time of the developmental assignment.
23. A special post allowance (SPA) is not payable to staff members who temporarily assume functions of a vacant post under a developmental assignment. A developmental assignment provides a learning opportunity for staff members whereas a SPA is paid to compensate staff members who effectively perform the full functions and responsibilities of higher-level posts.
24. A staff member will not receive compensatory days off in respect of any travel on developmental assignment. Staff members with a flight of a duration that would otherwise qualify them for travel on business class should be provided with a rest day prior to commencing the assignment.
25. The organization will not travel eligible family members to the place of temporary duty.

26. By applying to a developmental assignment, staff members are indicating their willingness and readiness to be temporarily relocated to another office or duty station for a period up to six (6) months. Staff members should consider the implications of this on their personal and professional lives before applying.
27. The staff member will be entitled to official holidays at the location of the receiving office rather than the location of the releasing office during the duration of the assignment.
28. Upon completion of a developmental assignment, staff members must return to their position and functions in the releasing office.

Selection of candidate for developmental assignment

29. Developmental assignments will normally be filled through a competitive process. Staffing principles such as competitive, fair, non-discriminatory and transparent recruitment; geographical distribution, equal opportunities, gender mainstreaming, and confidentiality should be adhered to at all times.
30. Candidates are requested to send their developmental assignment application directly to the receiving office.
31. Every application for a developmental assignment will be evaluated by the head of unit or designated supervisor in the receiving office, on a case-by-case basis and selection of a candidate will be determined primarily based on organizational needs and staff members' merits and specific developmental requirements.
32. When selecting a suitable candidate, the receiving office should consider:
 - a. technical expertise in one or more of the functional areas needed;
 - b. fluency in the working language of the duty station;
 - c. transferable skills and competencies; and
 - d. benefits of exposure to headquarters, regional office, or field office as applicable.
33. Every effort should be made to make the benefits of the developmental opportunities offered by a developmental assignment available to staff on as wide a basis as possible. Therefore, the request for approval of a candidate for a developmental assignment must include information on any previous assignments already undertaken by the staff member during their period of service with UNFPA. In general, the organization does not encourage multiple developmental assignments by the same staff member in the same

grade level or within four years of concluding a previous developmental assignment, or loan or secondment under the UNFPA [Policy for Inter-organization Mobility](#).

34. The Director, Division for Human Resources (DHR) can approve exceptions in appropriate cases and allow identification of a candidate without advertising the assignment.

III. Procedures

Request and approval process

35. Before commencing with the developmental assignment process, heads of units should assess whether coverage is possible within the office.
36. The head of the potential receiving office interested in hosting a developmental assignment should first complete [Part I of the Request for Developmental Assignment](#) form for approval from the applicable headquarters or regional office.
37. The information to be provided in the request includes:
- a. purpose of/justification for the developmental assignment, and if covering a vacant post the action taken towards filling the post and expected date of finalization of the recruitment process;
 - b. the terms of reference including key expected results;
 - c. proposed dates;
 - d. estimated costs and source of funding for the assignment; and
 - e. if covering a vacant post, confirmation that the cost of the developmental assignment will not exceed the standard cost of the vacant post, prorated for the duration of the assignment (a post's cost by location, grade and cost classification can be determined using the Standard Post Cost tool) available on the Strategic Resource Planning Branch Community site.
38. The request should be submitted to the applicable headquarters or regional director responsible for the receiving office to check whether the cost of the developmental assignment:
- a. can be met from the standard post costs for the vacant post it is being funded from, prorated for the duration of the assignment. If so, the director will
 - i. confirm that the request meets the related human resources requirements,
 - ii. arrange for the applicable vacant post to be frozen,

- iii. provide approval for the developmental assignment in Part I of the form, and
 - iv. send it to the receiving office.
- b. will exceed the standard cost for the vacant post. If so, before providing approval, the director will first confirm that there is sufficient funding available to cover the costs of the developmental assignment.
 - c. If the cost of the developmental assignment will exceed the standard cost for the vacant post, and the cost will be funded from the Institutional Budget, then the respective director must send the request form for clearance to the Strategic Resource Planning Branch, Division of Management Services (SRPB/DMS).
39. For initial requests, offices should ideally try to obtain approval at least two (2) months before the proposed start date of the assignment to allow sufficient time for processing.

Advertisement

40. DHR will arrange internal dissemination of a developmental assignment announcement advertising the opportunity.
41. Temporary assignments of staff which take place within the same country office, regional office, or same office or division at headquarters do not need to be advertised globally or managed as developmental assignments.

Agreement and extensions

42. After identifying the candidate, the receiving office will contact the releasing office to finalize agreement on the arrangements for the developmental assignment and to request the releasing office to initiate completion of [Part II of the Request for Developmental Assignment](#) form. However, if the proposed source of funding changes or if the expected costs will exceed five percent of the original estimated costs, Part I of the form must be resubmitted before proceeding with the assignment.
43. Part II (together with Part I) of the form should be sent to the relevant headquarters or regional director responsible for the releasing office for approval. The information to be provided in the request includes details about the candidate and a description of how the assignment will support the candidate's learning and career development.
44. A developmental assignment must be based on mutual agreement between the staff member, releasing office and receiving office. A developmental assignment may not

begin until the release of the selected staff member is approved by the relevant headquarters or regional director responsible for the releasing office. Approval will not be given until all supporting documentation is submitted and necessary clearances are completed.

45. After approval is received, the receiving office will finalize the travel arrangements, and if applicable DHR will address issues related to coverage under the medical insurance policy for developmental assignments based in New York.
46. Extensions of existing assignments should be obtained through the same request and approval process as the initial request. Parts I and II of the form need to be completed to request the extension. The request should contain the justification for the extension, including the status of the recruitment process if covering a vacant post. For extensions, approval must be obtained at least two (2) weeks before the end date of the ongoing assignment. Clearance must be obtained from SRPB/DMS for extensions which result in higher costs than the cost of filling the post, when the costs are funded by the institutional budget. Prior to making a request for extension, the receiving office must ensure that it has the agreement of the releasing office for the continued release of the staff member. A request to extend an assignment beyond the maximum six (6) month duration shall not be approved.

Roles and Responsibilities

47. Receiving office is responsible for:
 - a. Developing the terms of reference for a developmental assignment;
 - b. Identifying resources to fund the assignment.
 - c. Confirming whether the assignment costs are met from or exceed the standard post cost prorated for the duration of the assignment, if funded from a vacant post;
 - d. Obtaining clearance from SRPB/DMS when necessary;
 - e. Selecting a suitable candidate, normally as a result of a competitive process;
 - f. Contacting the releasing office to arrange for the staff member's release and finalize agreement;
 - g. Finalizing travel arrangements for the selected candidate;
 - h. Arranging DSA payment at prevailing rate of DSA;
 - i. Providing input to staff member's performance document.
48. Releasing office is responsible for:
 - a. Providing a response (approval or denial) to the request from a receiving office for the release of a candidate to go on a developmental assignment;

- b. Ensuring salary costs are cross charged as appropriate, including additional costs related to the assignment;
 - c. Ensuring input is received on staff member's performance during the assignment, and that the staff member submits a report summarizing their experience including the skills or knowledge gained that can be shared with their colleagues.
 - d. Ensuring the staff member has a position to return to after the completion of a developmental assignment
49. The respective director at headquarters or regional office of the receiving office is responsible for:
- a. Checking whether the releasing office has confirmed that the cost of the assignment can be met from standard post costs and prorated for the duration of the assignment when funded from vacant post. Where costs will exceed the standard cost for the vacant post and will be funded by the institutional budget, forwards the request to SRPB/DMS for clearance;
 - b. Decides to approve or not to approve the request for the developmental assignment and sends the receiving office Part I of the Request for Developmental Assignment form confirming the decision;
 - c. Provides approval for the identified candidate on Part II of the Request for Developmental Assignment form.
50. DHR is responsible for:
- a. Advising managers, supervisors and staff members of the conditions and requirements under which developmental assignments are made;
 - b. Advertising the developmental assignment opportunity on the basis of information provided by the receiving office;
 - c. Ensuring compliance with all policy requirements applicable to developmental assignments for staff members;
 - d. Ensuring that the selected staff member is briefed on all benefits, allowances and entitlements associated with the developmental assignment;
 - e. Contributing to the quarterly reporting of staff members serving on developmental assignments.
51. DMS is responsible for:
- a. Reviewing and considering clearance of requests funded from vacant positions where costs of developmental assignment exceed the vacant post standard cost, and the costs will be funded by the institutional budget.
52. Staff members are responsible for:
- a. Applying to developmental assignment vacancy;

- b. Identifying how the knowledge acquired from a developmental assignment can best be used on their return to the releasing office;
- c. Obtaining approval of supervisor and head of unit to undertake the assignment if selected;
- d. Following the workplan as agreed with the receiving office;
- e. Preparing a report after concluding the developmental assignment, and ideally sharing the learning with colleagues and peers.

IV. Other

Termination of a developmental assignment

53. A developmental assignment may be foreshortened at any time by the receiving office. A written 15-day notice, which includes the reason(s) for the termination must be given to all parties involved.
54. A staff member who wishes to terminate their developmental assignment should discuss this with their direct supervisor in the receiving office, to enable the handover of any pending assignments.

Reporting and evaluation

55. At the conclusion of the developmental assignment, the staff member must prepare an end-of-assignment report with a copy to all the offices concerned. Ideally, to enhance knowledge sharing across the organization, this should be complemented by the staff member offering a brown bag lunch or learning session. The staff member's supervisor in the receiving office should provide input to the staff member's performance report.

Definitions

56. The following definitions apply for the purpose of the present policy:
 - a. *developmental assignment*: the temporary assignment of a staff member to a different position or to a different set of duties for a specified period, at the conclusion of which the staff member is expected to return to the staff member's regular duties.
 - b. *designated position*: a budgeted position that has been advertised for functions to be undertaken on a temporary basis.

- c. *eligible staff member*: a staff member who has been serving for a continuous period of at least two years under a permanent, continuing and/or fixed-term appointment.
- d. *temporary job opening*: a job vacancy for which the selected candidate is assigned to the post for a maximum duration of 364 days or less.
- e. *receiving office*: the office that will prepare the terms of reference for the developmental assignment and will receive a staff member to temporarily encumber a position.
- f. *releasing office*: the office that will release the staff member to undertake new duties temporarily.
- g. *specific return right*: the right of a staff member to be employed by the organization whereby the staff member returns to a specified post at the end of the developmental assignment.

V. Risk Control Matrix

Figure 1: Risk Control Matrix Format

Risk Description	First Line of Defense Controls			Second Line of Defense Controls		
	Control Activity Description	Reference (Policy section, paragraph or Control #)	Who performs	Control Activity Description	Reference (Policy section, paragraph or Control #)	Who performs
Approval for release on developmental assignments is arbitrary	The policy defines eligibility criteria for the release of a staff member	10 - 12	Hiring manager in the receiving office	The policy provides consideration for a release including the releasing office’s ability to spare the services of the staff member.	8	Hiring manager in the releasing office

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The hiring office does not utilize the correct modality for temporary staffing needs	The policy requires advertising a temporary job opening for any staffing need greater than 6 months	15	Hiring manager in receiving office	Compliance with all policy requirements are monitored by the Division for Human Resources	48	Human Resources Business Partner
Managers generate inequity in the workplace by directly appointing staff members to developmental assignments	Developmental assignments normally require a competitive selection process that adheres to staffing principles Compliance with all policy requirements are monitored by the Division for Human Resource	26, 45, 48	Human Resources Business Partner	Only the Director DHR can approve the identification of a candidate without advertising a developmental assignment	31	Director, DHR

Annex I: Request for Developmental Assignment Forms

[Part I of the Request for Developmental Assignment form](#)

[Part II of the Request for Developmental Assignment form](#)