Trainee deployments - Agency and Partner Guidance

A trainee deployment occurs when a trainee is deployed through Standby Arrangements for the primary purpose of learning and professional growth, as well as building the capacity of Standby Arrangements. The trainee is deployed alongside an experienced mentor, who may be themselves a standby deployee or a UN staff member.

The aims of trainee deployments are multiple:

* **For the trainee** – to improve professional competencies, to build understanding of the functioning of the agency and humanitarian architecture, to gain working experience in his/her functional area, and gain working experience in an emergency setting.
* **For the mentor** – to pass on their knowledge and experience and build future emergency response capacity to enhance coaching and leadership skills, and to demonstrate skills in management of others.
* **For the standby partner** – to build the capacity of an individual to complete future deployments, to build the capacity of the roster as a whole, to achieve the outcomes of the mentor’s ToR (if the mentor is a deployee), to provide opportunities for junior/new roster members for career development and to senior roster members to be involved in the capacity building of others.
* **For the UN agency** – to build the capacity of an individual to complete future deployments, to achieve the outcomes of the mentor’s ToR (if the mentor is a deployee), to provide opportunities to the partners for career development of roster members, to expand roster capacity in a functional area/language/nationality with identified gaps.

# Identifying trainees

Standby partners should establish their own criteria for selecting trainees, either for a specific deployment or to join a trainee program to actively look for trainee opportunities. However the following criteria should be considered:

* For a technical functional area, the trainee should be able to operate at a P2 level, either:
  + with some international NGO experience either in development or emergency settings but needing UN experience;
  + with national UN experience in development or emergency settings but needing international experience;
* For a coordination/cluster area, the trainee should be able to operate at a P3 level, and have sufficient technical international NGO/UN experience in their functional area;
* The trainee should be from a functional area with identified gaps, in order to provide the best opportunity for future deployments (see below);
* The candidate must be available for a six month deployment in the following twelve months from the trainee deployment; and
* The candidate must demonstrate strong motivation, development and engagement with the functional area.

Additional consideration may be given to trainees with skills in existing gap languages (French and Arabic in particular) or from global south nationalities.

In addition, trainees should demonstrate the following competencies[[1]](#footnote-1):

* Establishes good relationships with stakeholders and staff;
* Remains constructive and positive under stress and is able to tolerate difficult and challenging environments;
* Demonstrates a broad-based understanding of the growing complexities of humanitarian issues and activities;
* Demonstrates the values of the United Nations, including impartiality, fairness, honesty and truthfulness, in daily activities and behaviours;
* Is conscientious and efficient in meeting commitments, observing deadlines and achieving results;
* Actively seeks to develop oneself professionally and personally;
* Solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise;
* Actively participates in networks to access and contribute to good practice; and
* Shows awareness of own strengths and limitations and learns from others.

# Identifying mentors

Trainee deployments success often lays in finding a suitable mentor for the trainee’s deployment. The mentor should be able to allocate suitable time to dedicate to the mentoring program, understand the tasks and interactions required, be able to identify methods within their functional area for capacity building, and be committed to the principles of mentorship.

Mentors can be either proposed by the standby partner who is also proposing the trainee (also called “twinning”) or identified by the UN agency.

Mentors should have significant proven experience in the functional area and demonstrate the following competencies[[2]](#footnote-2) in particular:

* Works effectively with people from all backgrounds;
* Promotes a climate of teamwork and harmony and facilitates a team approach;
* Encourages clear, open and respectful dialogue;
* Helps others to recognize and manage their own stress by modelling appropriate self-care;
* Allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work;
* Communicates humanitarian values and encourages others to share them;
* Champions the importance of safety and keeps safety in mind at all times;
* Supports subordinates, provides oversight and takes responsibility for delegated assignments;
* Contributes to the learning of colleagues and subordinates; and
* Inspires confidence in others.

# Identifying suitable locations and functional areas

The success of trainee deployments is also based on the location and functional area of the trainee deployment.

Depending on the mandate of the UN agency, criteria for suitable locations will differ, however suggested factors to consider are:

* The stage of the emergency;
* The proposed duty station;
* Security restrictions such as required compound accommodation or staff ceilings;
* The capacity of the Country Office to integrate an additional deployee; and
* Numbers and success of previous standby deployments to the Country Office.

In addition, UN agency mandates and history of standby requests will determine the most useful functional areas to facilitate trainee deployments. However given that one of the aims is to redeploy the trainee, it is suggested to give preference to the following:

* A functional area of significant gap, measured by the number of roles unfilled/abandoned in previous years;
* A functional area that is emerging or growing;
* A functional area that is covered by few of the UN agency’s standby partners;
* A functional area that is deployed by more than one UN agency; and
* Giving extra consideration to proposed trainees in other functional areas who have additional profile aspects such as language skills or who are from global south nationalities.

In the case where both a mentor and trainee are proposed by a standby partner, the UN agency should then consider if the location and functional area would meet their criteria for a trainee deployment.

# Duration and commencement

Due to the need to build a mentor/trainee relationship and the additional time commitment required in a trainee deployment, it is recommended that a mentor/trainee deployment should be not less than 3 months, and ideally 6 months. Should a standby partner be proposing the trainee deployment, they may also propose to increase the deployment time by an additional month to allow for the extra time required in mentoring.

As one of the aims is to prepare the trainee for their own deployment and to give them first hand experience in an emergency deployment setting, it is recommended that should the mentor be a standby deployee, that the trainee is deployed on the same day to allow them to experience and learn about the initial weeks on mission and establishing yourself in a role.

# Agency identified trainee deployments

The UN agency should attempt to facilitate two to five appropriate trainee deployment opportunities per year in line with the mentor, location and functional area criteria appropriate as discussed above. Opportunities where the UN agency identifies the mentor and location should be offered transparently to all standby partners whose roster contains the functional area or who may be expanding to that functional area.

# Agency responsibilities

In addition to the normal Standby Agreement provisions, in a trainee deployment the UN agency should also:

* Ensure the Country Office understands and is committed to the principles of the trainee deployment;
* Ensure that the mentor and trainee can remain located at the same duty station;
* Ensure that a ToR is developed for the trainee at an appropriate level, which allows for specific duties as well as sufficient time for mentoring;
* Where possible to reserve a place for any trainee deployee in a training offered in the relevant functional area within the deployment of following six months.

# Standby partner responsibilities

In addition to the normal Standby Agreement provisions, in a trainee deployment the standby partner should also:

* Ensure the trainee deployee is eligible for deployment following their trainee deployment;
* Assign the same deployment officer/staff member to both the trainee and mentor (where the mentor is also a deployee);
* Facilitate an initial meeting/call prior to the deployment between the mentor and trainee;
* Monitor the mentor and trainee relationship and learning outcome tracker;
* Where possible to nominate and fund the trainee to attend at least one training opportunity offered by the agency in their functional area, within the deployment or following six months.

# Monitoring the effectiveness of trainee deployments

The following indicators are suggested to monitor the degree of success of a trainee deployment:

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| **Indicator** | **Target** |
| Trainee PER | The trainee achieves Very Good or above for Work relations/Interpersonal skills, Communication skills and Commitment/Attitude, and Satisfactory or above for Technical competencies. |
| Mentor PER (for standby deployee mentors) | The mentor achieves Very Good or above rating for all Professional Competencies. |
| Mentor PER (for standby deployee mentors) | No unintended negative impacts are noted. |
| Learning Outcome Tracker | The tracker is completed and initial agreed learning outcomes met. |
| Debrief with Standby Partner | The trainee and standby partner’s assessment is that the trainee is able to be nominated for deployment in this functional area. |
| Re deployment | The trainee is re deployed to a UN agency through Standby Arrangements in the following 12 months. |

1. Drawn from the Standby Partner Competency Matrix, Standby Partner Training Secretariat [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Drawn from the Standby Partner Competency Matrix, Standby Partner Training Secretariat [↑](#footnote-ref-2)