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ABSTRACT

A national survey was conducted to identify the needs of state and local government personnel for training in technical areas of personnel selection. Additionally, information about the adequacy of existing training resources was obtained. A checklist sent to 884 large and medium state and local jurisdictions requested information concerning the proportion of staff needing training, the level of training required, the adequacy of training now available, and the priority of training needs in each of 25 subject areas. A total of 453 (51.2%) usable returns were received. The data showed that relatively few jurisdictions consider their present training resources adequate in any of the subject areas. Many reported that most or all of their examination staff require training in areas of medium or high priority. When these factors were considered in combination, the greatest needs for training were in the areas of rating training and experience, legal regulations for selection, oral examining, and job-element examining. The distribution of training needs among the twenty-five subject areas did not vary much between large and medium jurisdictions. While more jurisdictions reported a greater need for basic than for refresher training, still more perceived a need for both. (Author/EM)

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A SURVEY OF STATE AND LOCAL TRAINING NEEDS IN
TECHNICAL AREAS OF PERSONNEL SELECTION

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
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Personnel Research and Development Center
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A SURVEY OF STATE AND LOCAL TRAINING NEEDS IN TECHNICAL AREAS OF PERSONNEL SELECTION

ABSTRACT

This survey was designed to identify the needs of State and local government personnel for training in technical areas of personnel selection. Additionally, information about the adequacy of existing training resources was obtained. A checklist sent to a sample comprising 884 large and medium State and local jurisdictions requested information concerning the proportion of staff needing training, the level of training required, the adequacy of training now available, and the priority of training needs -- in each of 25 subject areas. A total of 453, or 51.2%, useable returns were received. The data show that relatively few jurisdictions consider their present training resources adequate in any of the subject areas. Many report that "most" or "all" of their examination staff require training in areas of "medium" or "high" priority. When these factors are considered in combination, the greatest needs for training are regarded to be in the areas of rating training and experience, legal regulations for selection, oral examining, and job-element examining. The distribution of training needs among the 25 subject areas does not differ significantly between large and medium jurisdictions. While more jurisdictions report a need for basic than for refresher training, still more perceive a need for both.

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A SURVEY OF STATE AND LOCAL TRAINING NEEDS IN TECHNICAL AREAS OF PERSONNEL SELECTION

Background

This survey was undertaken to obtain a picture of training needs in technical areas of personnel selection as perceived by State and local authorities. A major purpose was to help in setting priorities for the development of instructional materials for the benefit of State and local jurisdictions. In assessing needs and planning training activities, the survey information should be useful to not only the U. S. Civil Service Commission (USCSC) but also other interested groups; for example, consortia of State and local jurisdictions, professional associations, and universities and colleges (particularly psychology departments and schools of public administration).

At the same time, it was anticipated that the survey might uncover leads to suitable training resources already in existence. This might be done by following up with jurisdictions reporting "generally adequate" training available in a particular subject area.

Method

The Personnel Research and Development Center (PRDC), in consultation with representatives of the Bureau of Intergovernmental Personnel Programs and the Bureau of Training, developed a checklist of training needs and adequacy of training resources. Following a tryout with some member jurisdictions of the Mid-Atlantic

Personnel Assessment Consortium, the checklist (Appendix A) was sent, during February and March 1976, through the USCSC regional offices to potential respondents in:

- all State central personnel agencies
- all counties and municipalities with population of 500,000 or more
- a random 35% sample of counties and municipalities with population between 25,000 and 500,000

Where appropriate, school and other special districts were included in the sample. In each case an effort was made to reach the person having primary responsibility for examining in the jurisdiction.

A total of 884 questionnaires were sent out to 131 large State and local jurisdictions (population over 500,000), and 753 medium-sized jurisdictions (25,000 to 500,000 population). Nonrespondents received one follow-up letter. In all, 453 usable returns were received; thus the response rate was 51.2%. The rate was considerably higher for large than for medium jurisdictions: 86.3% as against 45.2%. The breakdown of responses by USCSC region is given in Appendix B.

Results

Table 1 shows the number of respondents in each USCSC region and in the total sample who characterized their present training resources in each subject area as "Generally Adequate." The corresponding percentages for the total sample are shown. The latter, it will be

Table 1

Jurisdictions Reporting "Generally Adequate" Training Available

N = 453

Subject Area	Regions										TOTAL	%
	BN	NY	PH	AT	CH	SL	DA	DE	SF	SE		
1. Job analysis for selection	4	2	5	10	8	8	6	3	10	5	61	13.5
2. Job-element examining	3	2	4	8	5	5	6	4	12	3	52	11.5
3. Test construction	4	2	3	6	8	2	3	1	7	0	36	7.9
4. Criterion development	2	0	3	7	4	3	2	3	6	2	32	7.1
5. Item analysis	4	1	5	7	12	6	7	3	9	3	57	12.6
6. Weighting and combining scores	3	0	3	5	9	4	4	1	6	1	36	7.9
7. Content validation	3	1	2	7	6	7	3	2	12	3	46	10.2
8. Construct validation	2	0	2	5	4	3	3	1	5	1	26	5.7
9. Criterion-related validation	2	1	2	6	7	2	3	2	6	2	33	7.3
10. Performance tests	2	2	3	10	9	0	4	5	11	1	47	10.4
11. Work samples	1	1	2	6	9	0	3	3	8	2	35	7.7
12. Physical standards	1	3	2	8	8	0	5	5	6	3	41	9.1
13. Training and experience ratings	0	1	2	10	8	4	5	5	8	1	44	9.7
14. Interest and personality inventories	2	1	3	7	6	2	2	3	5	3	34	7.5
15. Biographical data	3	0	3	10	7	1	4	2	6	2	38	8.4
16. Reference checks	3	1	2	13	11	4	7	6	9	2	58	12.8
17. Assessment centers	1	0	3	4	6	2	1	1	5	1	24	5.3
18. Oral examining	4	1	3	6	11	1	4	4	14	2	50	11.4
19. Setting passing scores	3	2	2	9	8	1	3	3	11	1	43	9.5
20. Examination planning	1	2	2	10	8	2	4	3	13	1	46	10.2
21. Test fairness	3	1	3	7	7	0	7	2	8	2	40	8.8
22. Certification	2	3	4	11	11	5	7	3	12	2	60	13.3
23. Test portability and cooperative testing	2	0	3	4	6	1	2	1	10	1	30	6.6
24. Promotional exams	3	2	3	11	9	3	4	2	10	2	49	10.8
25. Legal regulations for selection	2	1	4	8	8	1	3	3	11	6	47	10.4

Note. Abbreviations:

BN - Boston PH - Philadelphia CH - Chicago DA - Dallas SF - San Francisco
 NY - New York AT - Atlanta SL - St. Louis DE - Denver SE - Seattle

observed, range from 13.5% for item no. 1 (job analysis for selection) to 5.3% for item no. 17 (assessment centers). Clearly, few jurisdictions perceive their present resources as adequate.

Table 2 shows the data for those reporting their needs in each area as being of "medium" or "high" priority. Here the percentages range from 57.8 for item 1 (job analysis for selection) to 24.9 for item no. 16 (reference checks).

Table 3 shows the number of jurisdictions reporting that "most" or "all" of their examination staff need training in subject areas which those jurisdictions rated as being of "medium" or "high" priority. For the total sample, the percentages so reporting range from 38.0% for item no. 25 (legal regulations for selection) to 15.2% for item no. 16 (reference checks).

For priority-setting purposes, the data shown in Table 4 are the most significant. This table shows, by regions and for the total group, the frequencies with which jurisdictions reported "none" or "partially adequate" training available, in "medium" or "high" priority areas, where "most" or "all" personnel need such training. The table also shows the rank order of the percentages for the total group. These percentages range from 31.3 for item no. 13 (training and experience ratings) to 11.7 for item no. 16 (reference checks). Also relatively high were 30.9% for item no. 25 (legal regulations for selection), and 29.1% for item no. 18 (oral examining).

Table 2

Jurisdictions Reporting "Medium" or "High" Priority Needs

N = 453

Subject Area	Regions										TOTAL	%
	BN	NY	PH	AT	CH	SL	DA	DE	SF	SE		
1. Job analysis for selection	18	15	26	44	36	17	22	18	38	28	262	57.8
2. Job-element examining	16	13	23	34	39	15	15	17	32	24	228	50.3
3. Test construction	19	10	26	35	29	20	21	18	40	22	240	53.0
4. Criterion development	19	11	26	36	30	16	22	16	34	20	230	50.8
5. Item analysis	15	11	20	32	20	10	13	12	28	15	176	38.9
6. Weighting and combining scores	12	7	20	32	22	14	13	15	32	17	184	40.6
7. Content validation	18	12	26	36	36	20	23	16	39	24	250	55.2
8. Construct validation	18	8	23	30	31	12	20	14	24	20	200	44.1
9. Criterion-related validation	19	10	24	36	33	16	19	15	29	19	220	48.6
10. Performance tests	16	10	26	32	29	21	18	23	38	22	235	51.9
11. Work samples	12	8	21	26	23	15	15	12	21	12	165	36.4
12. Physical standards	18	8	21	29	29	17	17	12	28	14	193	42.6
13. Training and experience ratings	21	12	25	42	30	19	21	21	36	19	246	54.3
14. Interest and personality inventories	13	7	10	19	18	4	11	7	15	10	114	25.2
15. Biographical data	11	4	15	21	17	7	11	8	19	6	119	26.3
16. Reference checks	9	6	14	21	17	7	11	8	15	5	113	24.9
17. Assessment centers	12	4	15	21	17	11	11	8	27	9	135	29.8
18. Oral examining	18	9	26	37	23	22	20	21	44	27	247	54.5
19. Setting passing scores	14	8	25	31	26	14	19	14	33	15	199	43.9
20. Examination planning	13	10	24	31	21	13	17	17	28	17	171	37.7
21. Test fairness	18	10	25	34	21	20	20	17	34	19	218	48.1
22. Certification	7	3	16	23	33	9	16	15	19	11	152	33.6
23. Test portability and cooperative testing	9	1	19	21	13	11	11	13	21	11	130	28.7
24. Promotional exams	19	9	21	38	31	18	15	20	29	24	224	49.5
25. Legal regulations for selection	20	11	23	44	40	19	21	23	36	24	261	57.6

Note. Abbreviations:

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DE - Denver

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Table 3

Jurisdictions Reporting "Most" or "All" Staff Need Training in "Medium" or "High" Priority Areas

N = 453

Subject Area	Regions											TOTAL	X
	BN	NY	PH	AT	CH	SL	DA	DE	SF	SE			
1. Job analysis for selection	9	11	15	26	19	7	10	9	9	17	132	29.1	
2. Job-element examining	6	9	15	26	19	8	6	10	14	13	126	27.8	
3. Test construction	10	6	18	27	14	9	11	12	15	14	136	30.0	
4. Criterion development	10	10	21	28	17	10	13	10	14	13	146	32.2	
5. Item analysis	8	5	15	22	12	8	6	7	12	9	104	23.0	
6. Weighting and combining scores	9	6	16	25	10	9	3	9	16	9	120	26.5	
7. Content validation	10	7	20	30	22	7	12	9	13	13	112	24.7	
8. Construct validation	11	4	18	31	23	4	11	9	13	12	136	30.0	
9. Criterion-related validation	11	5	18	31	18	8	10	9	14	11	135	29.8	
10. Performance tests	10	6	21	26	16	11	8	17	20	13	148	32.7	
11. Work samples	7	5	17	24	14	9	8	18	10	6	118	26.0	
12. Physical standards	8	4	16	25	16	11	10	9	14	8	121	26.7	
13. Training and experience ratings	13	9	19	35	19	11	13	16	20	13	168	37.1	
14. Interest and personality inventories	8	2	7	21	9	4	8	7	6	6	78	17.2	
15. Biographical data	7	2	10	18	9	5	7	7	6	2	73	16.1	
16. Reference checks	5	3	8	20	7	2	8	8	4	4	69	15.2	
17. Assessment centers	7	3	10	23	17	7	4	18	14	7	110	24.3	
18. Oral examining	10	4	19	28	18	10	13	8	19	20	149	32.9	
19. Setting passing scores	9	6	14	20	7	6	9	9	17	7	104	23.0	
20. Examination planning	8	7	19	23	6	8	9	11	14	6	111	24.5	
21. Test fairness	11	8	19	26	20	10	10	11	16	7	138	30.5	
22. Certification	4	2	11	20	6	5	9	11	7	5	86	19.0	
23. Test portability and cooperative testing	5	1	14	20	10	6	6	9	8	7	86	19.0	
24. Promotional exams	13	5	16	34	21	9	8	14	10	13	143	31.6	
25. Legal regulations for selection	15	7	18	40	27	13	5	17	16	14	172	38.0	

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DE - DenverSF - San Francisco
SE - Seattle

Table 4

Jurisdictions Reporting No or "Partially Adequate" Training in "Medium" or "High" Priority Areas Where "Most" or "All" Need Training

N = 453

Rank Order	Subject Area	Regions										TOTAL	Z
		BN	NY	PH	AT	CH	SL	DA	DE	SF	SE		
11	1. Job analysis for selection	8	8	12	19	19	7	7	8	11	16	115	25.4
4	2. Job-element examining	6	7	15	19	19	8	6	8	14	11	130	28.7
8	3. Test construction	8	4	16	18	14	9	11	11	14	13	118	26.0
7	4. Criterion development	8	9	19	18	17	8	11	9	15	10	124	27.4
19	5. Item analysis	6	5	13	16	10	8	6	6	12	7	89	19.6
17	6. Weighting and combining scores	6	6	11	17	10	9	3	9	16	7	94	20.8
5	7. Content validation	6	7	20	21	20	7	11	9	14	11	126	27.8
9	8. Construct validation	9	5	18	18	19	5	11	9	13	10	117	25.8
13	9. Criterion-related validation	9	5	18	18	16	6	10	9	14	9	114	25.2
6	10. Performance tests	9	6	17	18	14	9	8	16	16	12	125	27.6
16	11. Work samples	7	5	16	17	14	8	6	7	10	5	95	21.0
14	12. Physical standards	9	4	14	15	13	11	6	7	13	7	99	21.9
1	13. Training and experience ratings	13	8	18	22	16	12	8	15	18	12	142	31.3
23	14. Interest and personality inventories	8	2	6	12	10	4	7	6	6	6	67	14.8
24	15. Biographical data	6	2	10	9	8	7	6	7	5	2	62	13.7
25	16. Reference checks	5	3	8	11	5	2	7	5	3	4	53	11.7
20	17. Assessment centers	7	3	10	13	15	7	4	8	14	6	87	19.2
3	18. Oral examining	9	4	17	17	14	10	13	16	13	19	132	29.1
15	19. Setting passing scores	8	5	14	14	8	9	9	10	13	6	96	21.2
18	20. Examination planning	7	5	18	14	4	7	9	9	12	6	91	20.1
11	21. Test fairness	8	7	18	17	13	10	10	10	15	7	115	25.4
22	22. Certification	5	2	11	10	6	5	9	10	6	4	68	15.0
21	23. Test portability and cooperative testing	4	1	15	13	8	5	6	10	7	7	76	16.8
11	24. Promotional exams	10	4	15	22	17	9	8	8	10	12	115	25.4
2	25. Legal regulations for selection	11	6	16	25	22	12	12	12	14	10	140	30.9

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Even among the survey sample, these percentages typically represent several hundred potential trainees. Adding the two-thirds of medium-sized jurisdictions not included in the sample, and keeping in mind the extent of personnel turnover characteristic of many examining staffs, the trainee population could substantially exceed 1,000 for many, if not most, subject areas.

For jurisdictions reporting any training needs, Table 5 shows the type of training indicated. It is clear that more jurisdictions perceive themselves in need of basic than of refresher training, while still more see a need for both kinds.

Table 6 shows the breakdown between large and medium-sized jurisdictions in respect to "medium" and "high" priority needs in the 25 subject areas. With few exceptions, medium-sized jurisdictions report such needs less frequently than do larger jurisdictions. The main reason for this seems to be that many of the smaller jurisdictions reported no training needs at all because, as they explained, they have so few employees. Yet, even among the medium-sized jurisdictions, at least a third rate their training needs as of "medium" or "high" priority for 20 of the 25 subject areas. Moreover, the relative importance of training needs among the subject areas differs little between large and medium jurisdictions.

Table 5

Type of Training Needed by Jurisdictions Reporting Training Needs

Subject Area	Refresher %	Basic %	Both %
1. Job analysis for selection	18.2	39.2	55.0
2. Job-element examining	11.8	44.4	56.2
3. Test construction	16.9	47.8	59.0
4. Criterion development	13.4	50.9	48.1
5. Item analysis	18.8	41.2	52.5
6. Weighting and combining scores	22.5	39.4	50.6
7. Content validation	10.8	53.5	48.1
8. Construct validation	3.1	57.9	51.4
9. Criterion-related validation	6.2	47.5	57.7
10. Performance tests	5.6	47.8	59.0
11. Work samples	9.9	49.6	53.0
12. Physical standards	12.1	42.5	57.8
13. Training and experience ratings	18.8	40.1	53.5
14. Interest and personality inventories	17.1	44.3	51.1
15. Biographical data	34.1	27.2	51.2
16. Reference checks	28.1	35.1	49.3
17. Assessment centers	21.0	35.2	56.2
18. Oral examining	23.7	32.5	56.2
19. Setting passing scores	28.1	34.4	49.9
20. Examination planning	16.5	46.2	49.7
21. Test fairness	5.8	47.5	59.1
22. Certification	15.5	58.2	38.7
23. Test portability and cooperative testing	11.8	46.4	54.2
24. Promotional exams	15.3	45.5	51.6
25. Legal regulations for selection	8.4	50.6	53.4

Table 6

Percent of Large and Medium Jurisdictions Reporting "Medium" or "High"
Priority Training Needs

Subject Area	Jurisdictions	
	Large (N = 113)	Medium (N = 340)
1. Job analysis for selection	65.4	62.0
2. Job-element examining	58.4	53.4
3. Test construction	65.4	54.6
4. Criterion development	64.5	51.7
5. Item analysis	46.8	40.5
6. Weighting and combining scores	49.5	42.2
7. Content validation	62.8	59.0
8. Construct validation	53.1	46.1
9. Criterion-related validation	58.4	50.8
10. Performance tests	45.9	60.2
11. Work samples	45.9	37.2
12. Physical standards	47.7	45.8
13. Training and experience ratings	63.7	57.3
14. Interest and personality inventories	16.7	31.3
15. Biographical data	27.4	29.0
16. Reference checks	15.9	31.3
17. Assessment centers	38.9	30.0
18. Oral examining	57.4	60.0
19. Setting passing scores	55.7	44.8
20. Examination planning	53.9	42.9
21. Test fairness	62.8	48.5
22. Certification	23.8	41.2
23. Test portability and cooperative testing	31.8	30.9
24. Promotional exams	50.4	54.9
25. Legal regulations for selection	52.2	66.6

Limitations of the Survey

In evaluating the results of this survey, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of the procedure.

- Aside from jurisdiction size, we have no information about the characteristics of nonrespondents and their reasons for silence. Failure to return the questionnaire may have been due to many causes; e. g., lack of interest, the absence of perceived training needs due to the small size of the jurisdiction's selection operation, or the feeling that adequate training is already available. Some jurisdictions did return unanswered questionnaires with explanatory statements; these were treated as respondents in the tabulations of the data.
- Since none of the subject-matter areas were defined, some jurisdictions may not have understood the meaning or the significance of many areas. This would most likely have been true of very small jurisdictions, especially in the case of more highly technical subject areas. Problems of this kind did not show up in the tryout which preceded the full-scale survey.
- Some jurisdictions reporting "no need" may simply have failed to perceive their deficiencies in certain areas.
- Although the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the size of their examining staffs, many appear to have misinterpreted this item, chiefly by reporting the size of their entire personnel staff.

As a result, it was impossible to take account of this factor in analyzing the data. Instead, we have been able to consider only the size of the jurisdiction in compiling Table 6.

Summary

Within these limitations, several conclusions stand out clearly.

- Comparatively few of the responding jurisdictions perceive their training as "generally adequate" in any subject area. The highest percentage so reporting was only 13.5.
- In all but one of the subject areas, more than 25% of the jurisdictions rated their training needs as of "medium" or "high" priority.
- In 15 of these "medium" or "high" priority areas, more than 25% of the responding jurisdictions reported that most or all of their personnel need training.
- The greatest need can be defined as those "medium" to "high" priority areas where most or all staff need training and where no training or only partially adequate training is available. Thirteen such areas were reported by more than 25% of the respondents. Across the 25 subject areas, the potential number of trainees ranges from several hundred to well over a thousand.

- More jurisdictions perceive themselves in need of basic than of refresher training, while still more see a need for both kinds.
- With few exceptions, medium-sized jurisdictions report training needs less frequently than large jurisdictions. However, relative priority of needs among the 25 subject areas varies negligibly with size of jurisdiction.

SURVEY OF TRAINING NEEDS IN SELECTION

INSTRUCTIONS

For each subject area on the reverse side, please indicate by checking in the appropriate column the training situation as it pertains to your staff. You should have four check marks for each subject area.

In indicating training needs and priorities, consider your situation as you foresee it during the next couple of years. Consider your present staff as well as probable additions due to turnover or expansion.

As regards "kind" of training: refresher training, as its name implies, means a review of some area in which there is a need to renew or update knowledges and skills. Basic is intended for those who have had little or no training or experience in a subject area.

In weighing the adequacy of training now available to your jurisdiction, please take into account not only its suitability to your needs, but also its accessibility from the standpoint of cost, distance and other such considerations.

Please add any other subject areas in which you think training is needed for you: _____ and indicate the present situation by checking the appropriate columns.

Any comments you care to make will be appreciated. Use the space below and additional sheets if needed.

Thank you for your cooperation.

OVER

Name: _____

Jurisdiction: _____

Position: _____

SURVEY OF TRAINING NEEDS IN SELECTION

Examination Staff Size: _____

Date: _____

Subject Area	Proportion of Staff Needing Training:				Priority:				Kind of Training:				Training now Available to Jurisdiction:		
	None of Staff	Some of Staff	Most of Staff	All of Staff	Zero	Low	Medium	High	Refrainer	Basic	Both	Not Applicable	None Available	Partially Adequate	Generally Adequate
1. Job Analysis for Selection															
2. Job-Element Examining															
3. Test Construction															
4. Criterion Development															
5. Item Analysis															
6. Weighting & Combining Scores															
7. Content Validation															
8. Construct Validation															
9. Criterion-related Validation															
10. Performance Tests															
11. Work Samples															
12. Physical Standards															
13. Training & Experience Ratings															
14. Interest & Personality Inventories															
15. Biographical Data															
16. Reference Checks															
17. Assessment Centers															
18. Oral Examining															
19. Setting Passing Scores															
20. Examination Planning															
21. Test Fairness															
22. Certification															
23. Test Portability & Cooperative Testing															
24. Promotional Exams															
25. Legal Regulations for Selection															
26.															
27.															



APPENDIX B

Number of Jurisdictions Responding in Each USCSG Region

	Large	Small	Total
Atlanta (KY, TN, NC, SC, MS, AL, GA, FL)	18	51	69
Boston (ME, MA, CT, NH, RI, VT)	6	39	45
Chicago (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI)	15	52	67
Dallas (AR, LA, NM, OK, TX)	8	20	28
Denver (CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY)	7	28	35
New York (NJ, NY, PR, VT)	12	16	28
Philadelphia (DE, MD, PA, VA, WV)	16	25	41
Saint Louis (IA, KS, MO, NB)	8	27	35
San Francisco (AZ, CA, HI, NV, GU)	14	44	58
Seattle (AK, ID, OR, WA)	9	38	47
Total	113	340	453