

Resource 3-2. Creating Lessons Learned – Guidance from VDOT

How to Produce a Lesson Learned: Pointers and Tips to Make the Process Work

Creating a Lesson

- First of all remember, you are the expert! You do the work. Your knowledge and experience are valuable assets to VDOT, particularly if you are good at your job and can share ways to do what you do better.
- In choosing a lesson, pick a topic that is worthwhile to be shared with people who work in your area of expertise. The lesson can be a description of a more efficient way to accomplish a job, can be shared information about a new process, standard, or specification that is required, or even can be in the form of a warning of how best to avoid a common mistake.
- Whatever the topic, stay focused on the lesson and how it can benefit those to whom it is directed. You want to convey the information in the quickest, simplest, and most direct manner.

Using the Process

- Form a peer group to discuss lessons. Get feedback from the people with whom you work to bring forth and validate lesson ideas. Get their input. Your peers can help you keep focus and can and will contribute ideas and resources to improve your lesson, but only if you ask for their assistance. Include colleagues from other divisions or work units with whom you interact in the work on the lesson topic.
- A big part of the lesson is the process used to create it. By involving others with whom you work to get their input and feedback and have them validate that the lesson is accurate and worthwhile, the lesson is reinforced within that peer group of experts and vetted for sharing with others. If you are not sure about something, ask the colleague(s) whom you recognize as the expert(s) on the topic of your question.
- Avoid policy, human resources, or legal issues unless you set policy, work in HR, or provide legal advice to VDOT. Lessons are not forums for discussion of issues beyond your control. Stick with what you know in the field in which you work.

The Lesson Document

- Write clearly and get to the point quickly. Explain as best you can as if you were telling someone the lesson. Have others read and review it to make sure what you write is accurate and understandable. Limit how much you write. More than two pages may be too many.
- If a diagram or photo can improve the lesson, use it. Use of photos or illustrations as examples can save a lot of writing.
- Use hyperlinks in the lesson so readers can go to sources that are cited and get more information from the source material immediately with a click.
- Create a template. If developing a group of lessons, create a template similar to the one used here (see Resource 3-3). The template helps provide focus and space for each element necessary to write a complete lesson; provides a framework for familiarity by readers; helps to limit lesson size; and includes repetitive elements like the title header at the top of page 2 and the disclaimer in the footer.
- List the lesson contributors so they may be contacted for questions regarding the lesson topic.