COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING MODEL

For Honest Ally Food International (HAFI)

08/15/2017

Team: IRSEC

Proposal Sites:
HAFI Academy Site: www.irseccompetition.wordpress.com
HAFI Academy Moodle Course Site (to access, click on Log in as a Guest): www.irsec.moodlecloud.com
Proposal Summary

Food insecurity is a global issue that has a bigger impact on developing countries, particularly among African nations (Smith, Obeid, & Jensen, 2000). It is also a complex, multi-faceted and systemic challenge (e.g., see Fig 1) that cannot be resolved by a simple one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, it requires a concerted effort that includes not only the provision of food sources or a switch to sustainable resources, but also well trained and competent staff capable of analyzing and acting on situations and helping those in need without bias or prejudice to build the capacity within communities (Elvidge, 2017).

An international NGO Honest Ally Food International (HAFI) expressed the need for training new and current employees, volunteers, and the community to fight food insecurity. To
continually support staff and help them develop the capacity to assist communities, we introduce the HAFI Academy, a competency-based training and staff development program. The following goal has been identified and expanded:

1. Promotes and aligns with HAFI mission and vision
2. Consistent, culturally sensitive and meets the diverse needs of new and current employees, volunteers, community, and organization
3. Scalable from one location (Nigeria) to 200 partner organizations across the globe
4. Accessible online
5. Maintained locally by HAFI employees
6. The staff will work with the talent coaches to identify the needs and gaps using Prior Learning Assessment, and determine the pathways to bridge these gaps. Once established, the HAFI Academy will be sustainable and run by the local trainers and coaches.

Overview

Key Terms

Competency-Based Training (CBT): CBT is outcome-based and assesses learners’ attainment of competencies determining whether learners demonstrate their ability to do something (Cleary, 2015).

Competency: Competency refers to the description of measurable knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes (KSAAs) that could be attained by learners (Koenen, Dochy, & Berghmans, 2015).
**Digital Badge:** “A digital badge is a representation of an accomplishment, interest or affiliation that is visual, available online, and contains metadata including links that help explain the context, meaning, process and result of an activity” (Gibson et al., 2015, p.405).

**Prior Learning Assessment (PLA):** PLA is a flexible way of identifying, documenting, and gaining recognition for the prior learning (Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment, n.d.). The learning may occur in either formal or informal settings. In this proposed training, PLA will be used (1) to identify the training needs for each individual and (2) to validate trainee’s previous learning occurred either in the workplace or formal education.

**Why the HAFI Academy?**

Talent is the key asset of an organization and should be part of the organizational business strategy. We recommend a stronger focus on talent development through an internal group - the HAFI Academy - that would allow for a single access to training and talent development services that can help employees and volunteers achieve their potential and help those in need around the globe.

The HAFI Academy will empower HAFI employees, volunteers, and the community in the following ways:

- A comprehensive online training and evaluation program using the competency framework to meet the needs of the organization and its talent;
- Building community capacity to share more opportunities and access to food;
- Increasing in the level of knowledge and skills, and improve abilities and attitudes to continue advancing HAFI services worldwide;
- Support the mission and vision of the organization through ongoing training and professional development.
We have developed a sample HAFI Academy website to illustrate PR and work with future learners. Additionally, a sample logo was created to unite all the materials under the HAFI Academy umbrella.

**Competency-Based Online Training Model**

To meet the goal, we propose to develop and implement a CBT model. CBT is a systematic approach that

- Focuses on the *competencies* (i.e., knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes - KSAAs) essential for specific job titles,
- Requires trainees to demonstrate mastery of competencies,
- Monitors trainees’ progress and allows adjustments based on individual trainee’s needs (e.g. additional time, different competencies to be attained; Blank, 1982).

The CBT model is performance-based with specific and measurable standards, yet it is also learner-driven, which means employees who demonstrate competency in one area do not need to complete training module in that area in order to demonstrate their proficiency.

CBT will be more effective to meet the goal, set out by HAFI, than traditional training programs, because it allows to:

- Make *job-related competencies* a focal point of learning.
- Distinguish and learn from top performers within the organization to reflect explicit and tacit knowledge base.
- **Track** employee and volunteer progress.
- Embed organizational objectives and strategies into the learning experiences (Campion et al., 2011).
● Achieve **mastery of learning** via **robust assessment** and **badges**. This will ensure the specified proficiency that goes beyond limited retention of knowledge after a traditional training.

● Make the learning process more **personalized and/or individualized** while providing the flexibility of learning and competency achievement paths

● Create a **flexible and scalable model** to support trainee proficiency across organizations (Koenen et al., 2015).

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 2. Advantages of CBT*

**CBT Model Design:**

In the model, **competencies** will serve as building blocks of professional growth, rooted in the needs of the organization’s mission and vision. We envision three types of competencies (see Fig. 3):
● **Core competencies:** the upper level competencies that are applicable and key for new and current employees, as well as volunteers. They will ensure a common understanding and development of the knowledge and skills that can help with the promotion of the mission and vision of the organization.

● **Job-specific competencies:** to help new employees, current employees, and volunteers be prepared for their job. In addition, they can be used by those willing to gain new knowledge and skills outside of their current position.

● **Community-specific competencies:** These are basic competencies to support community development targeted at understanding the organization and to attain skills aligned with the mission and vision of the organization.

**Competency attainment:** All employees and volunteers are to attain these competencies either by taking online training, engaging in an apprenticeship, or completing PLA to confirm equivalent proficiency. Those who show proficiency per the competency definition will be granted a digital badge with embedded metadata that would reflect the competency and rubric with comments and feedback. Successful completion of training modules by the community will allow them to gain an award badge (equivalent to a certificate of completion).
Competency-Based Training Model

Core Competencies

- **Competencies:**
  Cross-job competencies (e.g., communication, cultural sensitivity/knowledge, cross-cultural collaboration)

- **Training:**
  Online training, apprenticeship

- **Assessment:**
  Prior learning assessment, online assessment, onsite observations

- **Competency credentialing:**
  Badges

Job-Specific Competencies

- **Competencies:**
  Job-specific competencies for staff and volunteers

- **Training:**
  Online training, apprenticeship

- **Assessment:**
  Prior learning assessment, online assessment, onsite observations

- **Competency credentialing:**
  Badges

Community-Specific Competencies

- **Competencies:**
  Competencies specific to communities that would help them collaborate with HAFL

- **Training:**
  Online/mobile learning; correspondence

- **Assessment:**
  Prior learning assessment, assessment (online/paper)

- **Competency credentialing:**
  Award badges

Figure 3. Competency-based training model
Development of the CBT Model and Online Training (Input and Output Phases):

Adult Learning Principles: Andragogy, developed by Knowles (1968), is defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43). In the proposed training, we will cover six conditions for learning proposed by Knowles (1980). Additional information on the application will also be provided in Section III Design Phase:

1. Principle: Using learner’s experience as a resource

Description: Adults can bring different life situations and perspectives which are rich for learning. Adults also need to connect their learning with their current knowledge and previous experiences. Thus, these authentic learning activities should be relevant to them.

Application: In our training, trainees will reflect on their learning in their current practices (work and community application). Trainees will be encouraged to discuss how the new knowledge fits into what they already know, as well as what is new and how they can adapt the new knowledge into their existing knowledge.

2. Create climate that encourages and supports learning:

Description: Trustworthiness and mutual respect are the key principles of adult learning environments. To create a positive atmosphere to encourage learners to interact with each other. However, it does not mean that there should not be any conflict; it means even though there is a conflict, facilitators need to help learners acquire different perspectives and support them in their efforts to do so.

Application: In our training, learners will be asked to actively participate in discussions on topics that may be sensitive to some (e.g., juxtaposition of own culture with the culture of others in the Intercultural and Global Competency). Healthy debate on each topic will be encouraged through
the use of group emails and feedback from trainers. Learners will be also provided with the netiquette rules (e.g., see the Moodle course). In addition, we want local trainers to be trained in order help develop trust within the organization and training itself.

3. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before learning it.

Description: Adults are motivated to learn by the need to solve problems. In order to engage learners, it is important to address how given learning activities address the individual's and organization’s goals, and assist trainees to fulfill their job responsibilities.

Application: In the proposed training, in each module, an introduction video or case will be provided explaining the importance of the given competency. Furthermore, across the training offerings, bringing up alignment with their current positions will be encouraged.

4. Learners’ involvement in planning and implementation of learning activities

Description: Adult education is most effective when it is experience-oriented and relevant to the learners’ needs. The learners accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating a learning experience, and therefore have a feeling of commitment toward it. Involving learners from planning to evaluation of the adult education program is also critical to motivate adult learners and increase the relevance of training.

Application: In the proposed training, learners’ involvement will start with gap analysis and continue through evaluation. On an individual training level, satisfaction instruments will be in place to continue with the training improvement efforts.

5. Interaction and Collaboration

Description: Learners can construct their own knowledge in interaction and collaboration with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Additional emphasis will be on the roles of culture in the learning
process, where cultural context impacts individual knowledge construction. Individuals will also learn and change their behavior as a result of observing what others are doing (Bandura, 1986).

*Application:* In the proposed training, trainees will construct their own knowledge through the collaboration, interaction with others, and experiencing others’ points of view (e.g., discussions, Wiki, and peer feedback).

### 6. Cultivate self-direction

*Description:* Adults are self-directed learners. However, it is important to consider adult’s previous experience, prior knowledge, and readiness.

*Application:* In the proposed training, learners’ will provide their perceptions about a given topic in discussion forums, which will also allow them to seek input from other participants. In addition to the core modules, supplementary self-paced modules will be available based on a trainees’ interest and needs. Furthermore, self-reflections will be a part of the assessment to allow learners to reflect their own learning and help them diagnose the gap between their goals and their present level of performance.

In addition to the adult learning principles, the following considerations are embedded into the training based on Arousal, Expectancy-Value, Self-Determination, Goal-Setting, Flow, Social Cognitive and Constructivist theories:

1. **Provision of clear and constructive feedback** at each junction of the module and exercises, learners will be informed on how they are doing and whether they are on task, additional points to consider, as well as the level of their collaboration with others and how they can improve it. Additionally, the feedback opportunities will be used to provide positive reinforcement (e.g., praise) to learners by highlighting strong areas of their discussion.
2. **Tasks, activities, and materials are designed to raise curiosity, be challenging, but yet be attainable**, which is achieved both with the design of tasks themselves and questions asked, as well as due to the individualization of tasks and asking learners to explore their own interests.

3. **Goals are clear and specific**, which is achieved by a clear introduction to the module, learning objectives, as well as competency alignment embedded into the training.

4. **Transition of choice and control over the individual activities and overall learning pathways to learners**, which is achieved by allowing a degree of choice of the portion of the activities to complete without losing the overall focus or value of the training.

5. **Focus on individual improvement, progress, and mastery of skills**, which is achieved through the competency mapping and badges. Additionally, they can select learning pathways that are related to their jobs.

6. **Provision of supports/scaffolding as necessary**: Since the needs in scaffolding depend on each learner, the scaffolding is available in the training in terms of resources, office hours, and opportunities to ask questions of the trainers and peers. However, the training is flexible enough that if a need arises, additional resources can be pulled in.

**Development of the CBT Model and Online Training (Input and Output Phases):**

The development of the CBT model and online training to support employee and volunteer learning is represented in the [Logic Model](http://www.irsec.moodlecloud.com) (available on the HAFI Academy Website). The initial model (see Fig 4) will be to meet the needs of the Nigerian branch and will be scaled up to meet needs of other offices and partner organizations across the globe.
The **general description of the population** and **technological environment** to support the training design are included in the **logic model**.

*Figure. 4. Project Logic Model*

## Timeline Milestones

### I. Project Kick-Off (Prior to Project Start)

Presentation of the project to upper management to ensure buy-in and identify a champion, who will help remove any roadblocks during project implementation.

### II. Exploration Phase (January -March 2018)

This phase focuses on determining the characteristics of learners, identifying and determining competencies through job analysis, determining the learning goals for the training through gap analysis and PLA.
In-Depth Learner Analysis:
Implementation and analysis of the following data: focus group and survey with top performers and administrators, document review including employee’s job satisfaction and feedback results from previous clients and stakeholder.

Job Analysis:
Information collection about the job and organization’s situation to determine the behavioral dimensions (i.e. competency proficiency) to be improved (International Taskforce on Assessment Center Guidelines, 2015; Thornton & Rupp, 2005). Job descriptions and interviews with top performers and supervisors will be used for data collection.

Competency Identification and Definition:
Based on the data above, competencies for each group of trainees will be identified and defined. These competencies will include both core that are mandatory for all trainees (e.g. communication, problem solving, cultural sensitivity) and job-specific competencies specific to the job context. Next, competency statements/behavioral indicators for each competency will be defined.

Gap Analysis:
To determine the learning goals for the training, gap analysis will be conducted. Table 1 below provides a structure to gain more information about organizational (HAFI) goals and needs in order to identity to direct learning and non-learning interventions.
Table 1.

*Gap Analysis Structure*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Desired</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior / Ability</td>
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Prior Learning Assessment:

We will utilize a PLA to (1) identify the training needs for each individual and (2) validate trainee’s previous learning occurred either in the workplace or formal education.

Reviewing Existing Training:

Since there is existing training available for the current employees, we plan to review existing training to determine its strengths, challenges, and potential adaptations needed (if any). This will also inform design considerations.

**III. Design Phase and User Testing (April-November 2018)**

The training design and apprenticeship considerations will be aligned with competency behavioral indicators. The training (including activities, assessment, and badge design) will be developed and deployed by phases:

- **Phase I:** Core competencies (up to 6 +/-1)
- **Phase II:** Job-specific competencies. The priority will be given to those that have more job coverage across positions (up to 10 +/-2). Additional competencies will be discussed as needed.
- **Phase III:** Community-specific competencies.
Considering the scope of the project, the principles of rapid prototyping will be utilized to ensure timely completion of the project, e.g., Phase II will be designed and developed while Phase I undergoes user testing and modifications.

**Design Aspects of the Proposed Training**

Each online module will cover a competency. Each module begins with an “*Introduction and Learning Objectives*” which will provide an overview of expectations for a particular module. Each module includes video and reading resources, active learning activities (i.e., discussions, exploratory activities), and assessment (i.e., discussion, reflection, and case studies). Many of the activities ask learners to consider and/or reflect on their own personal experiences and how new learning could apply to them.

Aspects of proposed training are derived from the adult learning principles and motivational considerations presented in the “Development of the CBT Model and Online Training” section.

Social interaction aspects are for the collaborative modules, where knowledge co-construction is dependent on social learning (e.g., Intercultural and Global Competency). For the self-paced modules, there will not be interaction aspect.

**Introduction**

Introduction includes definition of the given competency and learning objectives aligning with competency indicators and descriptions (see Figure 5 for an example module introduction. [Click here to visit the Moodle course site](www.irsec.moodlecloud.com).
Figure 5. Example module introduction

Module Resources

Each module will include video and reading resources aligning with the objectives that are aimed to raise awareness and help acquire the needed knowledge, as well as initiate a critical review of the information and own understanding and biases that will be further delved into in active learning activities.

Video Resources: Video resources will cover the importance of a given competency and explain the subject related to the competency. The video lectures will include closed caption to improve accessibility. In addition, video lectures will be broken into several parts (microlearning) to allow for better focus and retention as well as to fit into the busy schedule of employees, who may not otherwise have large time periods to focus on the training. Additionally, to avoid passive intake of materials, the lecture will incorporate interactive activities, e.g., built-in questions that need to be answered before proceeding.
to the next section that will help learners check their understanding and engage in critical thinking about the materials.

For example, in the intercultural and global communication module, we will create a video lecture similar to the Intercultural Communication presentation (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkBXaKfxl7Y). This video lecture will cover the definition of culture, words representing culture, and visible and invisible elements of culture.

**Reading Resources:** Related readings about a given competency will be provided.

**Active Learning Activities**

Learning activities will be learner-centered and help learners master each task. Learners will construct their own knowledge through the collaboration, interaction with others, and experiencing others’ points of view (e.g., discussions, Wiki, and peer feedback). Main learning activities will include:

**Discussions:** Throughout the training, learners will be encouraged to participate in topical discussions aligned with the goal and objectives of the module and the competency description. Participants will be asked not only to post their initial thoughts and respond to at least two other learners, but to maintain the spirit of ongoing discussion, they will also be asked to respond to comments left to their original post.

For example, as seen in the Figure 6 (see the Moodle course site), intercultural and global communication competency module will include two main discussions: icebreaker activity and definition of culture discussion forum.
Figure 6. Example module discussion

**Exploratory activities:** These self-reflective activities will include job-related ill-structured simulation exercises (e.g., leaderless group discussions, role playing activities) and ask learners to consider their personal experiences to solve ill-structured problems. Then learners will reflect on their personal experiences and how new learning could apply to them.

For example, in the intercultural and global communication module, learners will be provided multiple parts (i.e., religion, education, marital status, etc.) of a culture and will be asked to identify the parts of who they are. Reflection questions may include how did you learned about cultural rules of these parts, which of these parts do you consider the most important, why, and which ones do you perceive to have an impact in your social/educational/work environment in your country of origin (see the Moodle site).

**Assessment**

The focus will be on assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning. Different assessment methods, including self-assessment, peer assessment, and performance-based assessment will be used.
Assessments will include case studies, peer evaluation through discussion forums and group activities, and self-evaluation through self-reflection.

**Discussions:** For each discussion, learners will be requested to post an initial post and respond to at least two of the peers. The posts will be evaluated on their integration of the course materials and own experiences, as well as engagement with their peers.

**Case studies:** Throughout the training, trainees will be exposed to real-life case studies to allow them to explore what they have learned, analyze situations, and offer solutions that take into considerations the intercultural and global competency principles. Some of the case studies will be in print, while others may be video. Additionally, learners may be asked to use media platforms (e.g., YouTube or other ones available locally) to find videos that represent the topic.

For example, as seen in Figure 7 (see the Moodle course site), one such case study may require trainees to use their cultural KSAAs to analyze cultural clues and use empathy to view a dialogue between two people from the point of view of different cultures and potential biases and misunderstanding. Finally, they will be asked to interpret their experiences with others from a different culture.

![Looking for Cultural Clues](image)

*Figure 7. Example case study*
Reflections: This type of assessment asks learners to reflect on their own learning to help them diagnose the gap between their goals and their present level of performance.

For example, as seen in the Figure 8, in the intercultural and global communication module, cultural identity assessment aims to increase awareness of a learners’ own and others’ cultural values and orientations. Trainees will be provided a number of questions related to various elements of culture. They will be asked to answer those questions, and ask those questions to another person from a different background (e.g., sub-cultures, ethnicity, religion, etc.). Then they will write reflection about what did they learn, if there is any “aha” moments, how they could be apply their learning to their workplace, and the perceived challenges.

Figure 8. Example reflection assessment

Assessment Tools

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS): BARS are a type of performance rating scale that features performance measurement based on specific behavioral indicators at anchored scale points (Smith & Kendall, 1963). In the proposed training, BARS will be used to measure observed trainee practices during training to evaluate and provide feedback about their performance, facilitate decisions concerning what needs to be improved, and determine individual trainee’s needs for further support. BARS will be developed based on the competencies and behavioral indicators. A BARS example for
intercultural and global communication competency is available on the HAFI Academy site.

**Digital Badges:** A digital badge is a representation of an accomplishment, interest or affiliation that is visual, available online, and contains metadata including links that help explain the context, meaning, process and result of an activity” (Gibson et al., 2015, p.405). Digital badges will be used for micro-credentialing, which indicates capturing, showcasing, and legitimizing competencies within individualized learning paths, and validating experiences, KSAAs, and achievements.

**Feedback**

Feedback will be provided through three channels: facilitator/subject matter expert, peer, and self. Trainees will receive both just-in-time and detailed feedback on their performance to inform them “*How did they do?*” “*Where are they?*” and “*How to move forward?*”

**Accessibility**

The following considerations will be given in terms of the training accessibility to ensure an equal access to all the HAFI staff, volunteers, and community (Accessibility Oz, n.d.; VITA), including but not limited to:

- Modules do not rely on a single sense or ability (e.g., only visual)
- Navigation is accessible, consistent, and does not rely on color (e.g., click on arrow vs. click green arrow)
- Online help or instructions available
- Module map (or sitemap) is available
- Closed-captioning for video/audio is available
- Interactive elements are accessible
Colors and contrast are appropriate

Collaboration with an LMS programmer may be needed to ensure the full accessibility of the training.

IV. Implementation

This phase focuses on the implementation of the training. Section III explains the design aspects by providing examples from the intercultural and global communication competency module. This section will be further detailed depending on the gap analysis results and HAFI’s preferences.

Before the implementation training, facilitator(s) will be selected and trained according to key aspects of the facilitation process. Facilitators will be knowledgeable and credible about the competencies to be developed.

V. Evaluation

Kirkpatrick’s model will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of training. Table 2 summarizes the levels and data sources.

Table 2: Four levels of evaluation of the training effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Sample Instruments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant’s reaction</strong> focuses on trainee satisfaction with the training and training aspects.</td>
<td>• Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeline:</strong> immediately upon completion of each set of modules</td>
<td>• Participants’ evaluations of training (click <a href="www.irseccompetition.wordpress.com">here</a> for an example on the site)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants’ learning focuses on measuring the extent to which trainee changed attitudes, improved knowledge, and gained skills as a result of participating in the training.

**Timeline:** Before and after the module sets.

**Behavior criteria** includes measures of whether trainees used their new knowledge and skills on the job.

**Timeline:** Three to eight months after the training.

**Results / Organizational impact and change** addresses whether or not change was aligned with the organization’s mission, individuals were supported and engaged at all levels of the training, the training or activities impacted the organizational climate, and sufficient resources were made available.

**Timeline:** At least six months after the training.

**Technology Considerations**

Moodle is an open source Learning Management System widely utilized across the globe. Moodle is already used in Nigeria with market share of 45.45% (Datanyze, 2017). Moodle is a modular flexible and user friendly system. Currently, a free version of MoodleCloud is used that may differ from a server-run option. Moodle also allows for the incorporation of competencies and badges.

Furthermore, considering the rapid growth of cellphones in many developing countries, mobile learning considerations will also be implemented with limitations. Considering the sensitivity of
some potential trainings, the majority of the course will stay within the borders of the LMS. However, social media will be incorporated in the overall marketing and promotion of the work done by the HAFI Academy and students who are interested in sharing limited personal information.

**Individualization based on HAFI Needs**

The design of individual elements can be modified based on the HAFI needs and existing branding.

**Project Budget**

Project budget is available at [www.irseccompetition.wordpress.com/course-site/](http://www.irseccompetition.wordpress.com/course-site/)

**Adjustments and Rationale**

Based on the feedback on the initial proposal, the following adjustments have been made along with the rationale for them:

- As our learners are adults, it is important to consider adult learning principles. Furthermore, addressing the reviewers’ comment on difficulties to apply attitudinal learning in computer-based trainings, we have used adult learning principles.

- As reviewers mentioned the importance of avoiding jargon and there was confusion about whether CBT stands for computer-based training or competency-based training, we have added “Key Terms” section to define the terms we used early in the proposal.

- To address the reviewers’ comments on how we will apply the theories in our practice, we have added description for each adult learning principle and application explaining how we will apply these principles in our training. We have also added design...
considerations section to provide details about type of activities and resources we will use.

- As reviewer suggested providing more information about gap in actual and desired performance, we have added more detail about gap analysis, including a structure of gap analysis to gain more information about HAFI’s goals and needs related to KSAs in order to identify direct learning and non-learning interventions.
- We have added “Proposal Summary” and “Why HAFI Academy?” sections to provide more detailed explanation of the training and branding.
- We have added accessibility as a design element to provide equal access and equal opportunity to people with disabilities.

References


