

**2004 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM  
Application Form**

1. Program Name: Self-Directed Work Teams
2. Administering Agency: Florida Board of Nursing
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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Florida Board of Nursing implemented self-directed work teams (SDWT) to review licensure processing procedures, organization of work, assignment of responsibilities among team members, problem solving and decentralized decision-making, problem escalation strategies, communications systems, and performance measures. Results of the SDWT in the board offices include a reduction of processing time from over 33 days in January 2002 to a current average of 14.2 days, cost savings in personnel of over \$18,000, reduction in customer complaints, an increase to the supply of nurses in Florida during a critical shortage, and an estimated value of \$11.6 million in added wages for licensees (due to the ability to start work earlier), and an economic impact of over \$28 million in Florida communities.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? **Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on May 1, 2004 to be considered.**

The SDWT program began in October 2002 and continues expanding at the present time.

11. Why was the program created? (What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?)

In January 2002, the Florida Board of Nursing relocated from Jacksonville to Tallahassee, a distance of 166 miles. Only 5 former employees made the transition and 3 left within a few months. The other 36 employees were new hires or transfers

from within the Department of Health in Tallahassee. A management audit revealed that the board office staff was not satisfying customers due to delays in processing applications, difficulties in communication systems, and poor use of computer information systems. The management team revamped the telephone system, extended office hours on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, provided additional staff training on the computer system, and set targeted performance measures. The number of unanswered voice mail messages each morning averaged 42 per employee or a total of 546 for the office staff.

12. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.

In January 2002 the Board of Nursing offices relocated from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. A "SWAT" team was assembled from the 300 staff members in Medical Quality Assurance, an umbrella agency in which the Board of Nursing was located, and assisted the staff in processing applications. Within 6 weeks, over 6,000 licenses or exam applicants were approved, compared to the previous monthly average of 1200. Meanwhile, new staff were hired and trained. The SWAT team was disbanded on March 17, 2002 and the new Board of Nursing staff assumed full responsibility to operations.

In April 2002 a management audit was completed to review application processing. Suggestions included changing the application forms, eliminating redundancy in processing and reworking, reducing the levels of supervision and review from 5 to 2, increasing utilization and enhancing the licensing computer system, and fostering a quality working environment. Three teams were established: process management, human resources, and education/training. Each team was composed of a manager and volunteer staff. Each team provided valuable insights and suggestions, many of which were implemented.

In September 2002, the management team reviewed progress, concluded that additional strategies should focus on self-directed work teams, and initiated a pilot team of 4 persons. The SDWT would be responsible and accountable for the licensure process, but also would be empowered to make decisions about the work organization and processing. The pilot team started in October 2002, reviewed all licensure processes for elimination of redundancy, created detailed task inventories for training and documentation purposes, reorganized the work area for efficiencies in processing and communication, revamped the telephone system by establishing a single "team" phone line, and assumed responsibility for one-third of the application files in the office. Within 6 weeks, the number of voice mail messages was reduced from 42 per person to 4 for the team. The processing of new applications was reduced from 36 days to less than 10 days. Application forms were revised and piloted with nursing students to obtain feedback on directions and ease of use. Customer satisfaction increased and positive comments were received about the pilot team members. Office hours were extended on Tuesday and Thursday evenings until 7:45 pm to accommodate nurses working 12 hours shifts. Decentralized decision-

making was introduced and the pilot team assumed background-screening procedures formerly performed by supervisors. The pilot team won a Department of Health Team Award for its achievement.

In December 2002 through February 2003, the other two SDWT licensing teams were organized based upon the principles developed by the pilot team. All licensure files were organized into three alphabetical groups. Thus, applicants could call and choose the correct team from an automated telephone number, resulting in reduction of caller hang-ups and transferring to other extensions. Each team met weekly with the supervisor to develop team relationships, to discuss challenges and communication problems, and to offer additional improvements. A nurse consultant was added to each team to provide support for education questions and for staff development. Additional task inventories and checklists were created to assist in staff training.

Team activities and competitions were introduced to foster a positive work environment. In an effort to prepare 65,000 completed files for scanning, the management team challenged the licensure teams to a contest on preparation and boxing of the files. The estimated 6-month project lasted only 6 weeks as the teams out performed the management team in completing the boxing project.

During summer 2003 an additional supervisor position was obtain so that each team consists of 4 Regulatory Specialists, 1 Regulatory Specialist II, a Nurse Consultant, and a Regulatory Supervisor. Some reconstruction/reconfiguration of the workspace allowed expansion and enhanced services of the Background Screening Unit. Enhancements in the computer system permitted temporary licenses to be issued and to appear on the Internet look-up screens, resulting in a reduction of phone calls for verification of licensure.

In Fall 2003, the SDWT concepts were extended to the Certified Nursing Assistant Registry staff. The integration of that program within the board office teams continued through April 2004. Other support teams with the umbrella agency have also organized into alphabetical work teams, in order to better interface with the nursing SDWTs.

13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

Typically, within state government and other organizations, management sets policy and processes in place for staff to follow to complete the work. In SDWT, the team organizes the work, changes processes to expedite the workflow, assumes accountability for completion of the work, and assigns team member responsibilities. In case of illness or vacations, the SDWT re-organizes the work to be done to cover key tasks and adapts to provide a rapid response to the needs of customers.

Responding to the nursing shortage, to the need to met customers' expectations more expeditiously, and to assist staff in organizing their work, the concept of self-directed work teams was introduced, piloted, and expanded throughout the licensure unit.

Numerous suggestions from staff were implemented to streamline procedures and to enhance the work environments, as well as responses to customer needs.

The SDWT project encompassed the organizational values of the umbrella agency of Medical Quality Assurance and the Department of Health:

1. Excellence

- Achieves and maintains quality results and outcomes through continuous performance improvement and learning.
  - Example: By developing a new team approach to processing applications the team cut the time of application processing down from 30 days to approximately 9. They developed a strategic plan to assign everyday tasks to one of four members of the team on a weekly, rotating basis. They worked through processes to see what works most efficiently for them and best services our customers. They are serving as a model for our other teams and are assisting these teams to reach their highest potential.

2. Commitment to Service

- Provides services unconditionally and without partiality.
  - Example: The team is able to better service the customers by providing them with more timely feedback regarding the application. This also allows phone calls and e-mails to be answered more quickly and allows for more special project and pro-active problem solving activities. Additionally the team members are able to spend more time with customers and use each other as resources to answer difficult questions and solve complex problems.

3. Accountability

- Takes full responsibility for behavior and performance.
  - Example The team is fully responsible for the performance of the team. No individual is singled out for any recognition or problems that arise in the process. They work closely and help each other solve the problems connected with processing the applications and to assure that each team member is doing his or her share.

4. Empowerment

- Encourages people to exercise their judgment and initiative in pursuit of the organizational goals.
  - Example: The team is encouraged to find different ways to problem solve and to use their foresight to see potential obstacles. They use these obstacles to develop strategies for improving how our unit processes applications. The end result for this team is much quicker processing, which means fewer phone calls from applicants. There are checks and balances in

place (self audits) to assure that the highest accuracy is maintained.

5. Integrity

- Acts in the best interest of our customers and employees while incorporating honesty, fairness, loyalty and trustworthiness
  - o Example: The team uses our customers as a guide to which processes need improving. The customer comments and complaints are used to find ways to more efficiently service the applicants. The team also has found a number of ways to improve service to our internal customers. This team was entrusted to find a way to process applications more expediently and has done so with flying colors. They are loyal to their teammates by constantly providing feedback, backup and encouragement to each other and those around them.

Per the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, no other state nursing board office has implemented this strategy of self-directed work teams. In addition, the project has been recognized at national meetings of the NCSBN and the Southern Regional Education Board.

6. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide details about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

Start up costs were minimal. Staff training was already budgeted and was mostly done on the job or by management staff. Some renovation/reconstruction of workspace was approved for about \$6,000. A supervisor position was obtained through reclassification of another position at no additional cost.

7. What are the program's annual operational costs?

No additional costs are associated with SDWTs.

8. How is the program funded?

The Board of Nursing is funded through application and renewal fees on nurses.

9. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.

No legislation was required.

10. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

The Department of Health operates a licensing database and application available through a vendor.

11. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address, telephone number and e-mail address.

No, the use of self-directed work teams arose from the work of Herzberg in the 1960's, and later Demming, and is well publized in the literature.

12. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?

No. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing reports that no other board office is utilizing SDWTs.

13. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?

The Certified Nursing Assistant Registry integration will continue throughout the summer 2004. Support staff may be reorganized this summer as well as part of the continued evolution of the program.

14. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.

The advantage of the SDWT concept is that employees have not only responsibility and accountability for the outcome of their work but also the processes required to perform the work. The teams are able to identify training needs, equipment, supplies, and other materials required to complete the processes. This also relieves the supervisors of doing the actual work and allows them to do more monitoring of the work and outcomes achieved.

The disadvantage is that supervisor must rethink their role and allow the teams to make decisions, change decisions and quickly implement strategies. Supervisors must paint a picture of the desired outcome and loose parameters for getting the job done. Employees must be allowed the flexibility to try new ideas and alter them if necessary.

Performance measures established by the management team have shown steady progress and maintenance of target goals over the last 18 months:

1. Send an incomplete letter within 20 days of the application receipt = 95%
2. Reduce the number of caller hang-ups on the telephone from initial threshold of 1289/month to current level of 99-128/month
3. Maintain the number of emails in queue below 100 by close of business every Friday: last quarter average was 80

4. Either issues a license, exam eligibility or a deficiency letter with 30 days of receipt of application fees: last quarter average was 14.6 days

In addition, the number of written complaints about the board office was reduced from 142 in 2001-2002 to 51 in 2002-2003 and continues to decline. The number of voicemail messages each morning was reduced from an average of 42 per employee (546 total) to 4 per team (12 total). Customer satisfaction surveys showed overall 95% satisfaction rating.

The ability of licensees to start work earlier and resulting additional wages were calculated by subtracting the monthly difference in days processing time from the July 2002 standards of 23 days, multiplying the total number of days of processing time reduction (69) by the number of applicants (14,152), then converting to hours (799,336) times a conservative starting salary of \$15.50 to yield \$11.5 million. Per the federal Department of Labor, the local economic impact is 2.5 times this figure or over \$28 million.

15. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program continually evolves and expands. From the initial pilot team, all licensure teams now are SDWTs, as well as the management team and the nursing education team. The Certified Nursing Assistant team is just entering the process and the Reception and Background Screening teams will be next. Outside the board office, other areas that interface with the board teams have also adapted to the alphabetical clustering method and deal directly with the team members on issues.

16. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?

Self-Directed Work Teams can be implemented in almost any office. Managers will need to “let go” and be willing to implement creative ideas and to tolerate some variances as teams divide jobs and responsibilities to best serve the needs of customers.

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**CSG Innovations Awards 2004**

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DEADLINE: All original applications must be received by April 20, 2004, to be considered for an Innovations Award for 2004.

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