2008 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 08-M-031A

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: IOWA

Assign Program Category (applicant): Health & Human Services - Children & Families

1. Program Name: Succession Planning – Leadership Academy

2. Administering Agency: Iowa Department of Human Services, Child Support Recovery

3. Contact Person (Name & Title): Jeanne Nesbit, Division Administrator

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9. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.

The Leadership Academy is a two-year program designed to help meet the leadership needs of tomorrow by developing and retaining high-potential employees, while preparing them for management-level positions. This Academy was created by management in response to the recognition of national trends leading to a declining and aging workforce; a lack of skilled employees; and a highly competitive job market.

10. How long has this program been operational (month and year)? Note: the program must be between 9 months and 5 years old on March 1, 2008 to be considered.

1 year and 3 months
11. Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?

The purpose of this program is to identify high potential staff and prepare them for senior management positions. The program also serves to transfer knowledge from key managers to potential successors. By operating the program along these fundamental paths, we are able to begin addressing the lack of management-ready personnel and prepare for tomorrow’s leadership needs.

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

The Leadership Academy participants were selected through a competitive process. Once selected, the chosen candidates were given a team assignment to identify key customer service issues and to determine the best course to resolve them. The Academy team was immersed in management-level planning which provided them with the tools to succeed at their tasks. Most recently, the Academy participants are being given the opportunity to branch into management areas according to their preferences and are able to partake in executive management activities such as budget planning, overseeing the execution of customer service strategies, and participating in the legislative process.

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

Until the conception of this program, interested employees had no means available to explore their interest and skills potential in management areas, nor the opportunity to examine the various avenues available at higher management levels. This program acts as a bridge to these motivated staff members in order to cultivate their interest so internal candidates are retained within the agency in key-level positions.

14. 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.)

There were no start-up costs for this program as each candidate was already a staff member of the agency and this Academy was taken on as an extra duty by each person involved.

15. What are the program’s annual operational costs?

The program’s annual operational costs are approximately $5,000.00, which includes travel expenses to conferences and meetings.

16. How is the program funded?

The agency’s operating budget provides the funding for this program.

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

No legislation, executive order or regulations were required.
18. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?

Each participant was provided with a laptop to facilitate communication and project interaction.

19. 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.

Some other states may be running similar programs in their agencies.

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

We do believe other states have taken participants out of their regular job duties to participation in succession planning activities, however we are not certain which of these other states are pursuing this type of program.

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

The program has been fully implemented and a second round of candidate selection will begin later this year. Current candidates are in the process of completing their second year in the program.

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

The goal of the project was to take steps to identify future leadership for the Iowa Child Support program:

- The participants all report now having a view of the organization broader than that of the office they now manage. Prior to their placement in the Academy, participants had not engaged in planning and implementing statewide strategic projects. This gave them an opportunity to try on different roles with higher level managers as coaches.

- Participants raised their sights on the level of management that was available to them in a career path. Most had seen the current boss’ job as the ceiling rather than the Bureau Chief of Division Administrator.

- Participants have an opportunity to interview the organization by measuring commitment to the participants and to the assigned projects. Because the projects were intense, high level, and corporately visible the entire management team had an opportunity to access the growth and strengths of the Academy participants. One participant described the process as a two-way interview.

- There are 3 individuals who have demonstrated and practiced the ability to lead statewide projects and other upper management skills. If we are to meet the management needs of the near future, we need to continue this focus and to add a segment for line staff who aspire to manage local offices no later than 2011.
23. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

The program has greatly evolved since its’ inception with much feedback from the participants. The initial plan of one-on-one mentoring with field administrators quickly changed to involvement in a highly visible bureau issue for the Academy participants to tackle. The Academy team worked very closely with the agency’s Bureau Chief and Division Administrator during its’ first year and by doing so, gained insight in the make-up of the organization and the role of leadership in the delivery of services.

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

- **Time limitations surrounding participants’ regular job duties and academy duties.**
- **Human resource issues: how to fairly select candidates for participation (i.e., competitive process, criteria for selection)**
- **Geographical limitations if participants & mentors are not located closely to each other.**