2009 Innovations Awards Program
APPLICATION

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ID # (assigned by CSG): 09- S-10MS

Please provide the following information, adding space as necessary:

State: Mississippi

Assign Program Category (applicant): Human Resources / Education

1. Program Name

   Mississippi Department of Mental Health
   Focus Program

2. Administering Agency

   Mississippi Department of Mental Health
   Bureau of Workforce Development

3. Contact Person (Name and Title)

   Ann C. Thames, Director
   Bureau of Workforce Development
   Mississippi Department of Mental Health

4. Address

   239 North Lamar
   Suite 1101 Robert E Lee Building
   Jackson, MS 39201

5. Telephone Number

   601-359-1288

6. FAX Number

   601-359-6295

7. E-mail Address

   Ann.thames@dmh.state.ms.us
8. Web site Address

www.dmh.state.ms.us

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

The Focus Program addresses succession planning needs within the Mississippi Department of Mental Health by enhancing leadership skills and transferring institutional knowledge in an accelerated manner. Designed to increase the leadership competencies of middle to upper level managers, the major components of the program are individual assessments, professional feedback coaches, individual accelerated development plans, group classroom training, individual and team projects, community service, formal knowledge transfer, mentoring, and formal access to top departmental leaders.

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 2, 2009 to be considered.

March 12, 2007 (Planning initiated)
September 24, 2007 (Opening Retreat - Focus Pilot)
Operational for 24 months to date

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

In 2006, the Mississippi Department of Mental Health (DMH) performed an analysis of its 8900-plus workforce, revealing an alarming and looming crisis in the retirement eligibility of its management ranks. In a public setting which promotes full retirement after twenty five years’ service, DMH faced retirement eligibility of over 50% of its management in 2006, a number concentrated to over 60% of its entire Central Staff management and almost 90% of its facility directors.

The Department targeted accelerated leadership development and knowledge transfer as tools to address the crisis and moved quickly to create and implement an integrated workforce development project. With the Central Administration housed in the center of the state in Mississippi’s capitol, Jackson, the Department faced additional challenges in the identification of a diverse pool of employees in the outlying field facilities who possessed the skills and ability to “step up” and lead the Department in the coming decade. The agency simply did not have the bench strength necessary to prepare for the upcoming retirement of its leadership.

The DMH was also experiencing a "generation gap" not unlike that plaguing many public sector organizations throughout the country. Retention of younger employees impatient for promotional opportunities and increased income was an identifiable and growing challenge. Tough economic times added to the problem as the DMH was not in a financial position to develop and implement career ladders and offer salary increases as incentives to younger workers to make a career with the agency. In addition, older workers who were retirement eligible or within a few years of eligibility were becoming burned out and/or discouraged that their efforts were not being rewarded. The older, more experienced group of employees was preparing to leave the workforce taking with
them a tremendous body of institutional knowledge which had not been shared with the younger generation.

The Executive Director of the Department of Mental Health targeted a formalized succession planning and accelerated leadership development program to serve as a beacon to the workforce that the DMH was interested in its employees and helping them to achieve their goals. His vision was that an engaged, well developed group of potential leaders would carry the agency forward for years to come, assuring realization of continued high level client service well into the coming decades. He further envisioned a formal mechanism for transmission of the Department’s body of technical in a transferrable format which could be the basis of training potential leaders in the areas of fiscal management, human resources, regulations pertaining to the agency, physical plant oversight and a general overview of the agency operations. This "knowledge transfer" would be a dynamic transmutable body of work updated as changes come and available electronically to any member of the workforce. As employees were promoted to new levels of responsibility, they would have immediate access to knowledge, which under traditional conditions, would take years of experience to acquire.

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

By design the first class was treated as a pilot by the Department of Mental Health. This group was made up of persons who had previously been identified by their supervisors as having potential for upward movement. A pilot of thirty participants launched the program in 2007. Two successive groups of thirty (2 additional classes) were launched in 2008, with both latter groups selected by competitive “blind” nomination and application processes.

Selection and Assessment
Following competitive selection, the group of thirty submitted to three primary assessments: the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, a self/supervisor assessment using the state’s leadership competencies, and a Career Goals Assessment. Assessments were administered by qualified outside professional coaches, who met individually with each participant to provide feedback and initiate orientation toward the later development of an individual accelerated development plan for each person.

Leadership Retreats
Four multi-day offsite leadership retreats occur during the program, presented quarterly. The first focuses on individual assessment and development. Therein, individuals are provided instruction on the components of 21st Century Leadership, and create individual development plans. In addition, panels of agency leadership provide technical information and knowledge relative to the management of the Department. The second retreat focuses on individual excellence and is platformed on Stephen Covey’s 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The third retreat focuses on team excellence. Therein, participants team teach the 5 Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni, receive extensive training on the Crucial Confrontations conflict management techniques as developed by the Harvard Business School, and engage in a variety of hands on team activities. The fourth and final retreat addresses organizational effectiveness. Participants receive instruction on the leader as a change agent, explore the agency’s function within other government processes, and develop action plans for continued development after the conclusion of the program.
**Additional Components**

**Agency Innovation Projects**  
Each class is tasked with identification and planning of an agency innovation initiative, results of which are presented during the retreats. Each project must be designed to address an agency wide need and planned in such a way to promote application and replication in the field.

**Community Service**  
In addition to the phases identified above, Focus participants are required to engage in outside community service activities sufficient to provide each participant with ten hours of service. To date, individuals have performed far beyond the minimum hours, in projects ranging from Relay for Life, to United Way, to Habitat for Humanity, etc. These projects are self selected by the participants and formal reports on the results are presented at the closing retreat.

**Agency Projects**  
Focus groups are utilized throughout the program as think tanks and work teams on specific agency issues. The first Focus group supported the work of the Agency’s Strategic Planning initiative and separate Focus groups are now working on projects such as “methodology for replicating the Focus approach at a facility level”, etc.

**Formal Mentoring Program**  
At the conclusion of the retreat phase, Focus participants engage in a six month formal mentoring program, designed around the goals of the individual development plans. The program is launched with joint mentor-“mentee” training and involves formal goal setting and tracking.

**Knowledge Transfer**  
Interwoven throughout and between the retreats are a number of knowledge transfer sessions. The Knowledge Transfer portion of the Focus program addresses the acquisition of essential knowledge and skills through a formal program of administrative and operational skills that may be encountered in managerial responsibilities. The program includes workshops focusing on six competency areas: administration, fiscal management, human resource management, physical plant management, regulatory oversight and service delivery for mental health and regulatory oversight and service delivery for intellectual and developmental disabilities.

To begin, Focus participants were asked to complete a self assessment for technical competency in each of the curriculum’s six critical management areas. Using each module’s rating form, a participant self-rated professional competencies, choosing a numerical rating from 1 to 5. For example, if a participant has no exposure to the objective “Describe the conflicting principles between the psychiatric treatment model and a hospital administrative model,” the participant selected a competency rating of 1. Participants used the rating scale’s progressive development from 1, a rating of “no exposure” to 5, a rating of “knowledge mastery.”
1 - **No Exposure** (No exposure to described skill)
2 - **Minimal Exposure** (Some exposure but no assigned responsibility for described skill.)
3 - **Working Knowledge** (Has working understanding; but cannot necessarily perform described duties.)
4 - **Technical Competence** (Can perform described skill; can benefit from further training.)
5 - **Knowledge Mastery** (Has mastered described job skill; requires no training.)

Participants then engage in a simulation exercise to introduce the curriculum. The simulation exercise employs scenarios in which Focus teams are presented with hypothetical projects and challenges to successful project completion. Scenarios’ content taps the knowledge interdependencies within knowledge transfer modules. The process focuses participants on their existing knowledge strengths and gaps for such projects and stimulated critical thinking, team building and tactical planning skills.

Participants then move through each module’s format including specific objectives, required readings, research topics and activities. In each module, active learning opportunities are presented with available electronic, hard copy resources and field assignments, partnering Focus participants with Department colleagues.

As an adjunct to its one-day module workshops, participants attend a one-day seminar; Focus on the Future for presentation to all Focus classes. This program presented topics “Leading for the Future,” “Trends Shaping Tomorrow,” and “The Future of Mental Health in Mississippi.”

**Program Name and Mission**
The pilot group was tasked to name the program and through a series of group work sessions, participants came to consensus on the name “**Focus**” for the program. The mission statement as developed by the group is:

“**Dedicated to enhancing the knowledge and skills of Mississippi’s future leaders today**”.

The logo, hand drawn by one of the participants and later electronically reproduced by another is shown below:
13. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?

This program is the first of its kind in Mississippi state government and the first known to the submitters to combine an accelerated leadership component, formal accelerated employee development plans, professional coaching, a formal mentoring program, and a technical knowledge transfer project. While many programs have focused on one of the three, this program combines all key elements. In addition, program participants contribute community service hours throughout the state of Mississippi and work on real, Department projects such as strategic planning.

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.)

$42,840 – curriculum development, program planning
$105,966 annual operating costs across pilot year

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

Annual operating costs involve a combination of contractual and personnel costs. The annual operating cost of the first non-pilot year was $81,214. This total includes the cost of meeting facilities, training materials, instructors, lodging and meals.

16. How is the program funded?

The Focus program is funded through the legislative appropriation to the Mississippi Department of Mental Health.

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

The Focus program did not require passage of legislation. The only requirement was that the contract which was awarded to the Whitten Group, P.A. be bid competitively and approved through the State of Mississippi Contract Review Board.

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

- Equipment: LCD projectors, laptop and desktop computers
- Technology: E-mail, internet-based survey program (www.surveymonkey.com)
- Software: Word processing (Microsoft Word), data processing (Microsoft Excel), electronic presentations (Microsoft PowerPoint), decision making simulation software (MBTI Decisions)

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.
This program originated in Mississippi. The chief innovators within the Department are Edwin C. LeGrand III, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and Ann Coleman Thames, the Director of the Bureau of Workforce Planning and Training. The address is:
Mississippi Department of Mental Health
239 North Lamar Street, Suite 1100
Jackson, MS 39201
telephone – 601-359-1288
e-mail: ed.legrand@dmh.state.ms.us and ann.thames@dmh.state.ms.us,

The consultant, The Whitten Group, P.A. is a Mississippi company. The address is:
The Whitten Group, P.A.
607 Highland Colony Parkway, Suite 100
Ridgeland, MS 39157
e-mail: amy@thewhittengroup.com.

The Knowledge Transfer Committee was chaired by Dr. Pamela C. Baker, FAAMR.

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

This program is the first of its kind in Mississippi state government and the first known to the submitters to combine an accelerated leadership component, formal accelerated employee development plans, professional coaching, a formal mentoring program, and a technical knowledge transfer project. While many programs have focused on one of the three, this program combines all key elements. In addition, program participants contribute community service hours throughout the state of Mississippi and work on Department projects such as strategic planning.

Florida’s Leadership Institute is somewhat akin to Mississippi’s Focus program, however it is targeted toward Children and Youth leadership instead of agency wide inclusion and does not include a knowledge transfer component. Missouri’s DMH Leadership Program is similar in that it develops a pool of potential leaders and has been set as a priority by the executive director but does not include the key components of professional coaching, formal mentoring, and technical knowledge transfer available in Mississippi’s Focus program.

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

The program is fully implemented, however the Department of Mental Health envisions that it will be constantly evolving and changing to meet the needs of the participants and the needs of the agency.

Two groups of thirty people have completed the program with a third group scheduled to complete the program in a few months. A fourth group will be launched sometime after the beginning of the fiscal year in July of 2009. The program continues to be a work in progress as formal feedback and evaluation is performed after every program phase. Participants have consistently rated their experience with the Focus program and Knowledge Transfer as positive and meaningful. However, they provide straightforward feedback as to the segments they have determined to be most and least
valuable. Some portions of the training will be tweaked, added or replaced as recommended by participants. Finalized full integration of the Knowledge Transfer segment of the program is occurring with the third group of participants.

Beginning with the 2010 Fiscal Year, the Department of Mental Health will begin to absorb the program into its internal operation with limited involvement from The Whitten Group, their contractual partner. This has occurred in the third year of the program—a year sooner than originally anticipated. Trainers will be experienced managers within the agency as well as selected former participants of the Focus program. The agency will also revisit the application process to insure that it is truly a "blind" process giving every applicant the best possible opportunity to be selected for 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 program has already identified persons to fill management positions who would not have otherwise received the exposure. The application process has brought participants into the Focus program that were previously unknown to the upper management of the agency. The participants are diverse in culture, age and professional background. Mississippi’s Performance Evaluation and Review Committee (PEER) has reviewed the deliverables for the Focus program and met with agency administrators and proclaimed that every agency in state government should implement a similar program.

Participants of the Focus program have developed a media presentation to present testimonials from participants regarding their Focus experience.

SEE MEDIA ATTACHMENT

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

The Focus program and Knowledge Transfer piece have evolved into a far more valuable experience for participants than was ever anticipated. Agency administrators and their collaborative consultants have come to realize that participants value the ability to interact with experienced administrators and the agency leadership as much if not more than their actual training experiences. Administrators have confirmed through the process of observing the Focus participants that there is a wealth of talented employees eager to step up to management positions and/or recommit to outstanding performance in their current positions. The program has also served to make participants aware that they are a part of the agency mission as a whole rather than just an employee of one of the agency’s twelve facilities. Participants have reported feeling more valued than before their involvement with the program.

Initially, the Focus program and Knowledge Transfer were conceived to be totally separate learning experiences. As the program has developed, the two pieces have merged to make the program uniquely geared to the Department of Mental Health and its mission. Combining the two has made the program more meaningful to its participants. The team building skills learned in Focus translate well to the problem-solving activities presented in the Knowledge Transfer segment.

The program has also evolved in that initially it was thought that the program would be geared to "young" participants, but the nomination and application process has
rendered a very diverse group representing all generations and cultural groups. Participants range from those who are very new to the agency to employees who are near retirement eligible. This unintended consequence has had the effect of sparking interest in participation with all members of the workforce instead of a segregated few allowing for a broader acceptance of the program.

SEE ATTACHED LETTERS OF SUPPORT (4) AND MEDIA ATTACHMENT

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

The primary limitation or obstacle that other states might encounter is the financial obligation. However, once the materials have been developed, the program can be operated in house which will reduce the overall cost.

2009 Innovations Awards Program
Program Categories and Subcategories

Use these as guidelines to determine the appropriate Program Category for your state’s submission and list that program category on page one of this application. Choose only one.

Infrastructure and Economic Development
- Business/Commerce
- Economic Development
- Transportation

Government Operations
- Administration
- Elections
- Public Information
- Revenue

Health & Human Services
- Aging
- Children & Families
- Health Services
- Housing
- Human Services

Human Resources/Education
- Education
- Labor
- Management
- Personnel
- Training and Development
- Workforce Development

Natural Resources
- Agriculture
- Energy
- Environment
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources
- Parks & Recreation
- Water Resources

Public Safety/Corrections
- Corrections
- Courts
- Criminal Justice
- Drugs
- Emergency Management
- Public Safety

Save in .doc or rtf. Return completed application electronically to innovations@csg.org or mail to:

CSG Innovations Awards 2009
The Council of State Governments
2760 Research Park Drive, P.O. Box 11910
Lexington, KY 40578-1910
Contact:

Nancy J. Vickers, National Program Administrator
Phone: 859.244.8105
Fax: 859.244.8001 – Attn: Innovations Awards Program
The Council of State Governments
E-mail: nvickers@csg.org

This application is also available at www.csg.org, in the Programs section.

Deadline: March 2, 2009