

Innovative State Human Resource Management
Training and Development

The Tennessee Government Executive Institute
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SUMMARY

The Tennessee Government Executive Institute ("TGEI") is an innovative and unique state program that prepares leaders for Tennessee's future. Just as in other states, Tennessee's public sector leaders face the challenge of offering a high standard of traditional state services with fewer resources. Leaders must, therefore, be able to plan for and balance the demands for services with the available resources to remain solvent and effective. The Tennessee Department of Personnel is addressing this need by providing education to its leaders in a format that is virtually unparalleled in any other state.

In three intensive residential weeks over a three-month period, a diverse group of 30 state government executives is given the opportunity to expand their perspectives of responsibility by studying, analyzing, and discussing the major global changes that are rapidly occurring in the business and political environment. The three weeks are spent in the classroom where the participants receive both theoretical and practical instruction. The theoretical instruction encompasses topics such as change management theory and systems thinking; the practical training includes topics such as the intricate process of enacting a law, negotiation simulations, how to handle a hostile media interview and even a course on table manners and protocol.

In addition to the benefits of classroom instruction on these topics, TGEI offers a rare opportunity to create and strengthen inter-departmental relationships in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The relationships forged during TGEI increase inter-departmental cooperation in the day-to-day operations of the state. This cooperation, in turn, enhances the quality of services delivered to the public.

NARRATIVE ANSWERS

1. **Please provide a brief description of this program:**

The Tennessee Government Executive Institute (TGEI) is a program providing experiences rich in opportunities for executives to apply existing, as well as newly acquired, leadership skills to the real world opportunities and challenges faced by both citizens and leaders in Tennessee. The program is designed for employees in classifications of commissioner, deputy/assistant commissioner, and director in executive branch agencies and the equivalent levels in other branches of State Government. Department commissioners and agency heads nominate employees for admission to TGEI. Nominees are executives with several years of experience in specialized functional areas. Thirty participants are selected annually.

The Tennessee Department of Personnel partners with the University of Tennessee's Institute for Public Service ("the Institute") on an annual basis to coordinate a three-week intensive and spirited learning experience for each executive leadership class. The Department of Personnel has created this partnership with the Institute for the specific purpose of engaging the best minds in areas such as economic forecasting and business trends to assist the Department of Personnel in identifying and presenting the skills Tennessee's leaders need to improve the lives of Tennesseans. Once the curriculum is set, TGEI uses world class faculty, private consultants, and consulting firms with local, national, and international training experience to deliver the courses.

TGEI also offers tools that are more common in private sector corporate training. For example, participants assess their individual leadership styles as well as explore the impact of style preferences at both a micro (self) and macro (organization) level. Building on past leadership experiences, participants also explore the effects of: (1) strong leadership communication; (2) benefits of positive media relations; (3) ethics as it relates to self and the organization; (4) motivation and how it affects performance and organizational success; (5) change and how leaders can use it to reach their goals; and (6) the impact of stress and how to use stress to improve performance. By combining innovative public sector training with equally innovative private sector concepts, TGEI develops leaders who are accustomed to assessing and re-assessing the business of the State, thus creating continuous improvement in the services offered to Tennessee's citizens.

2. **How long has this program been operational (month and year)?**

The Tennessee Government Executive Institute originated in the summer of 1983. It has continued every year with the exception of 1992 and 1995 when fiscal constraints prohibited TGEI from being held.

3. **Why was this program created? What problem(s) or issues does it address?**

TGEI's varied program is structured to address the central concern in today's public sector, namely, how does the State of Tennessee create, mentor, and nurture leaders with the skill sets and attitudes necessary to improve the level of services offered to the citizens of the State of Tennessee. In the early 1980s, the Director of Training for the Department of Personnel, George Bass, laid out a series of ideas and concepts regarding the need for some type of "super training" for some 6000 managers and supervisors in state government. Mr. Bass was a forward-thinking individual who desired the State of Tennessee to be a learning organization – an organization with the capacity to adapt continuously and to change according to the needs of the citizens of Tennessee. His vision was to create a program that would offer a credential to those who completed the training. With the support of then Governor Lamar Alexander (who later became United States Education Secretary (1991-1993), a faculty member at Harvard's School of Government, and is currently a U. S. Senator for Tennessee) and the Department of Personnel's Commissioner Darrell Akins, the Tennessee Government Executive Institute was born in 1983.

4. **Why is this program a new and creative method? What does it provide?**

The Department of Personnel strives to create a new program every year. This continuous improvement process requires the Department of Personnel to evaluate closely the courses that participants and agencies identify as ones that created improved outcomes and improved management skills. Similarly, because TGEI attempts to introduce new management concepts each year, the Department of Personnel, in conjunction with the Institute, must evaluate the programs that are no longer innovative or have not produced the anticipated positive outcome and/or skill set. Besides monitoring the current field of management theory, the Department of Personnel seeks to enhance the curricula to meet the new challenges that are peculiar to managing state government.

Another unique aspect of TGEI is its on-going efforts to forge relationships and friendships among participants that translate into improved efficiencies and cooperation between state agencies. TGEI addresses this issue by creating a training program that is intentionally off-site. Furthermore, as part of the selection process,

agency heads must commit to allowing participants to focus on the training with minimal demands from their departments. In addition to this focus on classroom interaction, TGEI encourages the development of lasting relationships by providing after-hour bonding activities such as participating in a mid-air refueling mission or taking a ride on a BlackHawk helicopter. While these activities may strike some as unimportant, the Department of Personnel has learned that these sorts of activities force participants to reach out to their classmates in a way that is not possible in a classroom setting or in day-to-day business interactions. To maintain these important network connections, the Department of Personnel works with TGEI alumni/alumnae to publish a quarterly newsletter and to sponsor events such as brown bag lunches and an annual Fall Conference and Holiday Breakfast.

The TGEI three-week course establishes the interdepartmental relationships that are continually nurtured by the on-going TGEI events. By doing so, the Department of Personnel has developed a community whose sole purpose is to provide the best state services to its citizens. As state government faces a shortage of leaders at both the executive and manager level, TGEI has created, nurtured and retained effective forward thinking-leaders. TGEI provides a method of succession management that allows the State of Tennessee to grow our own leaders.

5. **What was the program's start up costs?**

The start up of this program was minimal.

6. **What are the program's operational costs?**

The program's operational costs are fully funded by participant tuition.

7. **How is this program funded:**

The fee for the TGEI is paid by the participants' department or agency. The program has now reached a level of creditability whereby a permanent endowment is being established for funding.

8. **Did this program originate in your state?**

The Tennessee Government Executive Institute was the creation of Department of Personnel executives and was unique to state government at the time of its inception.

9. **Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, how does this program differ?**

There are other leadership programs in other state governments; however, according to the Government Performance Project Grading the States 2005, "Tennessee's executive training program, a three-week, off-site leadership institute is one of the strongest in the country."

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

Success is measured in a number of ways. The Department of Personnel reviews annually participant evaluations that address all program components such as facilitator, content, applicability of content to the job, and makes decisions about curriculum and facilitators based on this feedback. Anecdotal information is continually gleaned from participants and this data is used either to change current programs or in planning for future. The outgrowth and success of the Tennessee Government Management Institute is also a measure of success. (See also Question 11.)

Despite the increasing squeeze on training funds, agencies continue to recommend candidates to the Selection Committee. The return on investment of this program has helped agencies realize that training and development costs are an investment in human resources and are a strategic resource that must be tapped to energize their departments in the future. Promotions within agencies after completion of the program are evident in the statistical information available on past participants: Forty one percent of all current deputy commissioners and 38 percent of current assistant commissioners are TGEI alumni.

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

Because of TGEI's success with high level state officials, the Department of Personnel has created in conjunction with TGEI's Alumni Steering Committee, a similar program for mid-level managers. This program, Tennessee Government Management Institute (TGMI) is designed for the group of managers immediately below those served by TGEI. TGMI provides leadership development, management education and networking opportunities enabling participants to become more effective managers for today's workplace and in preparing participants for promotional and other leadership challenges of the future.

Perhaps one of the most profound changes that is occurring in TGEI is the future of the program funding. In 2003, the Department of Personnel Commissioner Randy Camp established the Tennessee Government Institute Endowment. The Endowment was created to ensure that state leaders will continue to have the

opportunity to participate in TGEI and TGMI programs. It ensures that these programs will not have to depend solely on the state's resources. An advisory committee has been established, state wide meetings have been held and the private sector is embracing this concept as a way for them to assist in the betterment of public service.