

NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award | Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Pennsylvania Emerging Leader Program

James A. Honchar, SPHR, Deputy Secretary for Human Resources Management

Office of Administration | 517 Finance Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120

Ph: 717-787-8191 | Fax 717.783.4429 | jhonchar@pa.gov

Pennsylvania developed the Emerging Leader Program (ELP) in 2010 to identify and develop the next generation of government leaders. At the time, 13% of our workforce was eligible to retire and projected to rise to 30% by 2013. At the same time, 85% of state agencies had no leadership development program and budget and staff reductions made it increasingly difficult to focus on workplace planning and succession issues related to the aging workforce. ELP is unique in that it combines theoretical lecture, mentoring and coaching, practical application and exercises to strengthen curriculum content, assessments, experiential activities, online collaboration, executive interviews, post-session supervisory discussions, and individual development planning into one comprehensive package. Supervisory involvement is also integral to the ELP program; recent studies have indicated that their participation in pre- and post- training activities increases the likelihood of applying the knowledge and skills in the workplace.

Approximately 40 employees participate in ELP each year, at a cost of \$275 per person (approximately \$28 per session). The caliber of the instructors (all seasoned commonwealth professionals skilled in their subject matter) and quality of the program content and structure make this one of the best developmental programs the commonwealth is currently offering and a program that could be replicated by other states facing similar workforce challenges.

1. Brief description of program: ELP is an intensive 10-month program available to mid-level managers who exhibit leadership qualities and demonstrate the potential to assume more significant job responsibilities. The curriculum is based on a servant leadership model and focuses on seven pillars of leadership: character; communication; the ability to put people first; integrity, credibility and professionalism; critical thinking; vision and strategic planning; and collaboration. ELP includes the following components, most of which are viewed as best practices:

- active supervisory involvement through mentoring and ongoing coaching and development
- individual development plan that is jointly created by the supervisor and ELP participant
- scheduled post-session discussions between supervisor and participant
- an experiential, skills-based curriculum focused on developing character; communication; the ability to put people first; integrity; credibility and professionalism; critical thinking; vision and strategic planning; and collaboration
- exposure to core business practice areas: human resources, information technology, budget, policy and procurement
- executive sponsorship from senior leadership

ELP is experientially driven, partnership-oriented, feedback-focused and filled with networking opportunities. All of this takes place in a safe and mutually supportive learning environment.

2. Length of time program has been operational (month and year): ELP was developed in 2010, making the program operational for three years. Three classes, with approximately 40 participants each, have successfully completed the program.

3. Reason program was created; problem or issue to be addressed: ELP was created to address the workforce and succession planning challenges facing Pennsylvania state agencies: a growing population of retirement-eligible employees, as well as a lack of leadership development programs and the budget and staff resources at the agency level to create them. The Human Resources Management depute of

the Office of Administration decided to develop an innovative, cost effective and relevant leadership development program for all state agencies in the executive branch, under the Governor's jurisdiction.

4. Reason why this program is a new and creative method: Leadership programs rarely provide the following components in one comprehensive package: theoretical lecture, mentoring and coaching, practical application and exercises to strengthen curriculum content, assessments, experiential activities, online collaboration, executive interviews, post-session supervisory discussions, and individual development planning. The ELP was strategically and intentionally designed to incorporate all of these components, with a strong emphasis placed on supervisory involvement. We also recognized that the program would need to be cost-effective. We did this by identifying existing commonwealth professionals from different areas of subject matter expertise who met our learning outcomes and were willing to serve as instructors and, where appropriate, leveraging existing materials for these instructors to use. Another creative component of the program is the use of "the challenge envelope." This is an activity where participants' names are randomly drawn and they are asked to practice recently learned behaviors associated with designated leadership pillars being discussed. Overall, this comprehensive program has been packaged in a way that makes it new, different, exciting and fun.

5. Program's start-up costs: The initial start-up costs totaled \$24,665 for the first year and included the partial salary of an HR Analyst, administrative costs, and program expenses. The cost per participant was \$250 during the pilot year for 35 employees. During the first or "pilot" year of the program, the Office of Administration absorbed all program costs.

6. Program's operational costs: The program's operational costs have increased slightly, totaling \$26,915. The partial salary of the HR Analyst who manages the program, referenced in Question #5, has not increased. The per participant costs, however, did increase the following years. For ELP classes 2012 and 2013, agencies were billed \$275 per participant.

7. How program is funded: The program is funded mainly through agency billings. The salary of the HR Analyst is funded through state funds appropriated by the General Assembly.

8. Program origination: The program originated in the state of Pennsylvania.

9. Awareness of similar programs in other states; how program differs: We are not aware of any program that is similar to this one that is being offered in another state.

10. Measures of program success:

Agency interest – Since inception, we have received more program nominations each year than we have been able to accommodate. Available seats are allocated based on agency size, and agencies are continually requesting that more of the available seats be allotted to them.

Participant feedback – Evaluative program feedback solicited from program participants has consistently indicated that core objectives were successfully met on a variety of levels. Common themes included increased self-confidence; a working knowledge of how to communicate strategically with different personalities; enhanced public speaking skills; a greater understanding of personal leadership philosophies; and making professional improvements tailored to build on current strengths.

A 2012 program participant provided the following testimonial: *“With the multitude of responsibilities our upper management faces (doing more with less, cutting costs, decreased workforces, etc.) the core elements of leadership have never been more important. During the Emerging Leader program year, I often thought of how much upper management—such as those who really have the authority to create strategic plans for an entire agency—could benefit from this curriculum and positively impact state government. The lessons learned in this program should be offered to those who have the authority to embrace the seven pillars of leadership and build an agency based on those principles.”* - Amy

Montgomery, 2012 ELP Graduate

Supervisory feedback regarding application of skills taught during the program year – Evaluative program feedback solicited from supervisors indicates that participants are applying what they have learned in ELP to their workplaces.

- 85% reported employees were adapting their leadership styles based on the developmental level of the follower more frequently.

- 77% reported employees were seeking opportunities to apply leadership skills more frequently.
- 77% reported employees were strategically planning more frequently.
- 77% reported employees were promoting the self-confidence of others more frequently.
- 75% reported employees were focusing on situations, issues and outcomes more frequently.
- 69% reported employees were developing and conducting effective presentations more frequently.

Number of Emerging Leaders promoted during/after program participation – Ten employees have been promoted since the inception of the program. (Note: Program participation/completion is not an implicit or explicit guarantee of promotion.)

11. Ways in which program has grown/changed since inception: Based upon participant feedback and program staff observations of the first year’s program (2010), the following changes were made to enhance the learning experience:

- Increased emphasis on developing substantive performance improvement goals
- Established participants’ personal accountability to achieve identified professional goals by requiring them to share progress updates in the classroom setting
- Administered a modified 360-degree performance feedback instrument
- Included StrengthsFinder 2.0 as a core textbook of the program and resource in order to identify current professional strengths that are capable of being enhanced
- Solicited peer nominations for end of year graduation speakers that truly represented the ELP experience through their demonstrated determination, ingenuity, and commitment to personal change
- Encouraged participants to volunteer for “random acts of leadership” within the workplace to allow for practical application of the concepts reviewed in class