

# 2018 NASPE AWARD

## Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination *Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

Nominations from dues-paying states are considered for eligibility. Nominated leaders and programs should have a positive effect on the administration of state human resource programs. A state's central human resource department or line agency human resource operations may administer nominated programs.

Programs and projects must have been operational for at least six months and must be transferable to other states. Selection criteria are based on the questions asked on the award application. Included in this packet are the specific criteria for each award and their categories. Nominations are encouraged in all areas of human resource management administration.

Additionally, please attach a one-page summary of the program and prepare a narrative answer for the questions listed below. Do not send supporting documentation. Provide a narrative answer for each of the following questions.

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## PROGRAM INFORMATION

Program Title: Next Level Leadership Academy

State: TN

Contact Person: Commissioner Rebecca Hunter

Contact's Title: Commissioner

Agency: Department of Human Resources

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### ALL SUBMISSIONS MUST:

Meet all eligibility requirements. • Meet deadline requirements stated on the NASPE website. • Be entered in the correct category and be correctly identified. • Include a complete nomination packet. • Conform to all copyright laws.

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Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination  
*Innovative State Human Resource Management Program*

## NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nominator: Dr. Trish Holliday, SPHR, SHRM-SCP      Title: Assistant Commisisoner and Chief Learning Officer

State: TN                      Agency: Department of Human Resources

Telephone: 615-516-7026      Fax: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

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## DETAILS

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The Next Level Leadership Academy (NLLA) is a competency-based leadership development program for current and emerging leaders working within the Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR). Participants engage in a rigorous, year-long study based on core competencies identified by DOHR's Executive Leadership Team. DOHR Commissioner Rebecca Hunter serves as the Academy's Executive Sponsor.

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

The first Next Level Leadership Academy was launched on May 2, 2012.

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

Although the popularity continued to grow for LEAD Tennessee – the State's premiere award-winning enterprise-wide leadership development program – agencies were restricted to a limited number of seats per class. In response to employee demand (nine applications for two seats), Commissioner Hunter and Chief Learning Officer Dr. Trish Holliday created and developed an in-house version of LEAD TN exclusively designed for DOHR. Based on the LEAD TN template, DOHR launched the first NLLA in 2012 with 12 participants. To date, a total of 57 DOHR employees – approximately one third of the Department – have graduated from DOHR's Next Level Leadership Academy. This is a true representation of Commissioner Hunter's "Grow Our Own" philosophy.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

Prior to NLLA, only statewide leadership development programs existed. NLLA is the first agency specific Commissioner Leadership Academy. Also, the NLLA candidate selection process is competitive. Typically, the NLLA program receives about 18-25 applications per year, from which 12-15 participants

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are chosen. NLLA begins with a half-day Orientation session followed by six one-day Summits spread out over a 12-month period. What is unique to NLLA is that each summit focuses on one or more core competencies chosen by DOHR's Executive Leadership Team who also engage with the participants during each summit. Another distinctive: each class is divided into small groups and assigned to work as a team on a project they formally present to agency leadership prior to their graduation. The project is a unique aspect to the development process as it provides an opportunity for employees to be a part of a project team that is working on department-wide opportunities and needs.

5. What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

The program start up cost was meals and any external speakers that were brought in as subject matter experts on a specific competency. DOHR has the internal expertise to design and implement a leadership development program platform.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

Program costs include: Meals, Facility, AV, any external speakers used for the Summits, and leadership development assessments for personal growth. The per person cost is around \$300.

7. How is this program funded?

Commissioner Hunter and her leadership team believe in a "grow our own" succession planning strategy where leadership development is considered an investment in the agency's future. By investing in the Academy participants, the Department is affirming its confidence in the employees and their future contributions to state government. The NLLA program is included in the Department's annual operating expense budget as it has and continues to be an integral part of creating a learning organization.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?

If yes, how does this program differ?

As far as we know, TN was the first state in the nation to initiate a year-long competency-based Commissioner-sponsored leadership academy within state government that is aligned with an overall talent management strategy. DOHR's Next Level Leadership Academy was the first such Academy and because of its success, other Department Commissioners have become champions of developing their workforce as well. Today, DOHR's Strategic Learning Solutions team facilitates 23 Leadership Academies across two branches of TN State government, all of which are unique, customized to the agency's workforce development needs. With two more departments in the design stage, DOHR will have a total of 25 agency specific leadership academies operating simultaneously over a 12 month period, along with

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five enterprise wide leadership development programs. We are not aware of any other states who have implemented such a leadership development program to this scale.

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

First, the success of the program from a qualitative viewpoint, has participant testimonies, managers of the participants sharing direct ways they have seen their employees grown and improve, as well as the documented fact that it has become increasingly more popular – and thereby more competitive – among DOHR personnel. Second, a number of other State Cabinet Departments have asked to replicate the Leadership Academy program in their agencies. Another important quantitative measurement has been consistent feedback from participant surveys citing improved morale, higher skill development and execution, and improved collaboration between employees throughout the agency that were previously siloed. The survey results show a 93%-96% relevancy score and a 93%-95% overall value add score to the participant. The overall rating of the NLLA summits are important to ensure participants and their managers are finding the highest levels of value from the program and the application of new skills being deployed once participants are back on the job. Finally, data demonstrates that a great majority of the participants have received a promotion since graduation, which supports the department's "grow our own" philosophy.

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

When the program started in 2012, it had 12 participants; this year, there are another 10% of DOHR's total workforce participating. This year marks year number seven and is a strong indicator that employees want to be a part of this cutting edge development experience. One change since 2012 has been the inclusion of book studies of prominent leadership development bestsellers. As an agency, we promote the idea that all leaders are readers. It is important to model that philosophy in our own development program. A unique aspect of the book study is that participants are divided into teams and given a section of the book to teach back to the group using experiences, activities, simulations, and group discussions. Another evolution within the NLLA program structure is the addition of small group project presentations at year-end. This year's projects included: "Relationship and Community Building;" "The Customer Focused Government Mindset;" and "Bridging the Generation Gap: Workforce 2020." Participants are taught Effective Presentation Skills during one of the summits where they develop and present a presentation while the instructor is filming them. When they are finished, each participant meets with the instructor to review what they did well and to identify opportunities for improvement. By the time the class project teams are ready to present their recommendations to the executive team, participants feel they have been equipped to be successful. Many of the project recommendations have already been implemented within the department as a whole, such as Mission, Vision, and Values pocket cards for each employee.

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## Next Level Leadership Academy 2018 Program At-a-Glance

The Next Level Leadership Academy (NLLA) is an innovative approach to succession planning and was designed to address the critical need of developing future leaders and retain top talent within the department. NLLA is a customized competency-based leadership development program for up to 15 current and emerging leaders working within the Department of Human Resources (DOHR). Current and emerging leaders engage in a rigorous, year-long leadership development study that is based on core competencies identified by DOHR's Executive Leadership team.

The ELT sponsors select core competencies and present to the participants their own reflections and specific lessons learned related to the summit study. Involvement in NLLA is a part of participants' full time work assignment. By investing in the Academy participants, the Department is affirming its confidence in the employees and their future contributions to state government.

### **February 16, 2018**

Orientation

### **March 13, 2018**

Summit One: Self-Management

### **April 13, 2018**

Summit Two: Interpersonal Savvy & Approachability

### **May 16, 2018**

Summit Three: Problem Solving & Priority Setting

### **June 22, 2018**

Summit Four: Presentation Skills

### **August 3, 2018**

Summit Five: Comfort around Higher Management

### **September 14, 2018**

Summit Six: Perseverance

### **October 26, 2018 (8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.)**

Executive Presentations on Cohort Projects

### **November 9, 2018**

Graduation – Old Supreme Court Chambers