

Management Preparation Program

The Management Preparation Program of Plano (MP3) in **Plano, Texas** (222,000), offers an intensive mentoring and training experience to supervisor-level city employees. Each year, participants attend seminars, participate in field experiences, work closely with a mentor, and collaboratively complete a special project.

Leadership/staffing

The program was designed by the director of human resources. Originally, all instruction was provided by city staff, but since 2004 the program has drawn on outside experts for certain seminars.

Timeline

The MP3 program, which began in 2003, follows the calendar year. MP3 participants are responsible for completing all of their regular work assignments, so most MP3 activities take place outside the normal work day. The program requires approximately 300–400 hours during the year.

Budget/funding

During the program's first two years, it had no budget and used internal resources for all activities. In 2004, the city provided \$15,000 from its general fund to offer outside speakers and support incidental costs, such as food and special resources.

Program description

In the fall, the city issues a call for applications from interested employees. To qualify, the employees must have at least a bachelor's degree and three years of supervisory experience to match the requirements for positions at the level of department director and executive. The human resources department holds lunch meetings to provide details about the program to those who are interested, stressing the major commitment required to participate. Candidates submit applications along with letters of support from their supervisors. A committee made up of the city manager and executive directors reviews the applications and narrows the field

to approximately 15 candidates (from an initial field of approximately 25). Candidates then go through a day-long assessment that involves evaluation by outside assessors. The final class has no more than six employees.

MP3 currently has four basic components:

- Participants meet regularly for seminars lasting 3–4 hours. These seminars cover contemporary problems faced by managers. Typical sessions include much free-flowing discussion.
- Field assignments include visits to the school district offices, public housing authority, chamber of commerce, and other local institutions. These trips are designed to enhance working relationships with organizations outside the city and break down silos.
- Every participant is assigned to a senior manager. The two spend 8–12 hours together each month and decide jointly how to use this time.
- Participants as a group select a project that will benefit the city. They conduct extensive research and produce a report that they present before the city council, managers, former MP3 participants, and the press. These projects often lead to new city initiatives.

Results

At least one graduate has obtained a more responsible position with the city as a result of the program. All participants see the program as a valuable means of professional development, and the relationships they build among their classmates and mentors typically last well beyond the program's 12 months. MP3 graduates serve as an important talent pool to the city for special projects.

Contact

Lashon Ross
Director of Human Resources

City of Plano
1520 K Avenue
Plano, TX 75074

Phone: 972/941-7115
Fax: 972/941-7610
E-mail: lashonr@plano.gov