



## 2008 TLG Conference Presentation Cover Sheet

<b>Presentation Category:</b>	Organization and Finance
<b>Title of Presentation:</b>	Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan
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## 2008 TLG Conference Presentation Application

**City Name:** City of Colleyville, Texas  
**Population:** 22,394  
**Subject Category of Entry:** Organization and Finance  
**Title of Entry:** Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan

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**Description of Project:** Both public and private sector organizations are feeling the impact of the baby boomer exodus from the workforce. Compounding this is the demand for competitive wages and benefits while also developing employee development programs to retain and grow valued employees. The Council accepted management's holistic approach to effectively address these issues with the initiation of a Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan. The goal of the Plan is to provide a unified course of action by recognizing the interdependency of competitive compensation-benefits, succession planning, and staff development as a unified and integrated work.

**Project Summary:** Colleyville, like most municipal governments, maintains a number of planning documents to help guide its orderly development – Budget Plan, Land Use Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, Thoroughfare Plan, Parks Master Plan, Trail Master Plan, Information Technology Plan, and the like. Compensation for the average municipality comprises over 75% of an annual budget providing for its most critical resource in service delivery – employees. Amazingly, the one core planning element toward the success in developing the city and addressing its main resource of employees, had never been prepared – a Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan.

Management successfully developed a systematic and comprehensive Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan in response to the unprecedented growth of retirement, along with the pending “brain drain” being placed on the City at a critical juncture. The need for experienced and seasoned professional staff members has never been greater. The trend shows these organizational members as the most likely to be departing the organization in the very near future.

Colleyville is an organization comprised of 172 full-time employees whose focus is to provide high quality, cost effective services to its 22,750 residents. Maintaining a ratio of nine employees per 1,000 residents demand employees be responsible for multiple duties as compared to the area benchmark cities.

With 46% of local government employees nationwide 45 years or older, management recognized the need to analyze the current city workforce demographics to determine workforce planning issues for the future. In an effort to examine this issue in further detail, the Council included in their annual work plan, the intent to “Effectively utilize and promote Colleyville’s paid and volunteer human resources by developing a fiscally constrained workforce development plan focusing on a competitive compensation-benefits plan while addressing needs for succession planning...”

The inclusion of this goal by the Council was driven by discussions with management in a need to provide a unified and comprehensive focus to employees – with time being of the essence. Management identified that a large portion of the current city workforce will be eligible to retire in the next ten years, as well as the following:

- The average age of the Colleyville workforce is 43
- Twenty-three employees were eligible to retire in 2006
- An additional fifty-nine employees (36% of workforce) are eligible to retire in less than five years

Compounding these statistics was that the prior year turnover rate was 17% (in previous years, turnover rates were about 7%). While exit interviews indicated that City employees were leaving for more money, industry research revealed that in actuality employees cite money as the cause, but really leave for promotion, job expansion, etc. Desiring to move toward a more high-performance organization, management recognized a need to be a leader in salary-benefits, coupled with staff development, to retain the valued employees who fostered a commitment to being high-performance employees.

To address this challenge, management prepared the Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan to address the impact of a retiring workforce, high turnover rates on an already lean workforce with limited opportunities for career advancement.

**Succession Planning:** More than simply replacing positions that become vacant, Colleyville’s succession management planning is an ongoing process of identifying, assessing, and developing talent to ensure leadership and management continuity throughout the organization. When managed properly, succession planning is simply a way of preparing people for advancement – either vertically (up the chain of command) or horizontally (along a technical career ladder of increasing breadth and depth of knowledge). This type of employee planning also ensures the employee, who chooses to stay in a current position and elects not to pursue promotion, will be skilled and developed for their job in the future, when its demands may very well change.

Through a process of interviewing key employee stakeholders information was gathered on the positions most difficult to replace and the establishment of competencies. Positions identified as most difficult to replace include directors, engineers, firefighters, computer technicians, librarians, park maintenance workers and police officers. Reasons for identifying these key positions include, among others, the time required to fill the position, particular skill sets, salary competition, and vulnerability to the city in positions being held vacant for an extended time.

While the use of competencies is relatively new to the world of government, their use has been in place in the private sector for several years. Management concluded that the historical reliance on job descriptions (based on the technical skills of the job) do not provide the supervisor the broader view of the behaviors and technical job skills. Three groups of city employees representing front line, supervisors and departmental managers convened separately for the purpose of adopting competencies that are essential for employees to perform at a high-level. Interestingly, the three groups independently adopted the same three categories:

- Communication
- Decision Making
- Focus on the Customer

The groups asserted that these three competency areas are fundamental to employees within the organization performing at high-level. The Human Resource Department is currently working with a multi-level and cross departmental employee group to review the current performance evaluation document and consider modification to incorporate these three elements.

The City laid out eight steps in preparing its succession planning. It was important staff avoid the tendency of cherry picking those steps which were most convenient, least expensive or most familiar and instead recognize this is a sequential and cumulative process that at the beginning, lays the infrastructure for the rest to follow.

Our initial implementation phase for the succession planning component included two major and two minor departments to act as “pilot” departments. Because this is a need-based approach, management pre-selected eight key occupations and matched those currently in positions eligible to ascend into the positions being approached to participate. Any employee within the occupations is eligible to participate. The training work load, in addition to regular job duties, will eliminate those whose heart is not really into the process. It is regrettable that there will be some excellent employees who choose to not participate and not all employees choosing to advance their career through the city hierarchy.

It is imperative the City have individuals ready to replace supervisors and managers who retire or depart. It has been communicated that while the

program is not designed as an automatic promotion simply because of job tenure, the program purpose is to develop “bench strength”. The desired participant behaviors include mastering the competencies necessary to be effective should they be selected as a successor. The result is bench strength.

The next step is to help each employee identify their strengths and areas for improvement related to the competencies previously established. Not to be mistaken for simply another type of performance appraisal, this 360-degree assessment is targeted at identifying areas where candidates are struggling so they can begin working in a particular direction. The city selected the SKILLSCOPE instrument developed by the Center for Creative Leadership for use in the 360 degree assessment.

Succession planning can be successful only if candidates are given the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge, and attitudes through an ongoing learning process realized via the implementation of their respective individual training and development plan. The city has identified ten areas of employee development opportunities based on the strengths identified in the 360 degree assessment. These include:

1. Variety of job assignments
2. On the job coaching
3. Understudy work with a supervisor-manager
4. Job shadowing
5. Job enrichment
6. Position rotation and lateral moves
7. Task force assignments
8. Higher level meeting attendance
9. “Acting” or replacement assignments
10. Serving as a conference leader or instructor

**Staff Development:** Leadership development programs are critically important to succession planning. Given this, effective training is an important element in the overall development of employees. Understandably, training is distinct from employee development. For Colleyville’s program, training is viewed as teaching technical skills while employee development provides an environment to grow the person as an effective employee. One of the most effective ways to keep talented people is to provide them with growth opportunities that keep them stretching and finding more promising opportunities, than they might find elsewhere.

The Colleyville College is designed to provide a comprehensive program for all supervisory and management personnel, as well as provide a structure for nurturing and developing the next generation of leaders. It is envisioned that both supervisory and management personnel would go through all courses, to ensure that the entire organization is operating on a consistent frame of reference regarding supervisory and management practices. This approach is

also designed to develop a consistent organizational operating culture, which will lead to more consistent performance evaluation practices and expectations, and ultimately to a higher performance environment.

This structure is designed for a single employee to go through all courses in approximately a two year period. Each course is offered one half day per month. These courses have been carefully designed to offer a building level of sophistication and complexity in a linear fashion. As a result, some managers may feel like the supervisory level classes are not needed for them. However, their participation is an important factor in developing a consistent and dynamically effective organizational culture by creating great consistency across all organizational lines. It is particularly important to note that senior management experience has been that the front line supervisors who take the supervisory courses frequently express how badly they wish their up line reporting structure would take the same class, because these front line supervisors often perceive the organization saying one thing, but doing another. Truly meaningful training demands universal buy-in of concepts and practices.

Participation in the process is designed to meet the developmental needs of rising stars who the organization believes has future potential, but need to be nurtured and matured before they will be ready to take on significant additional responsibilities. Colleyville College is a broad based development plan that recognizes and builds on primary leadership roles complimenting the core competencies of the organization. The College is comprised of several major tracks, and, while it is not essential that an employee take any course prior to taking another one, this overall series has been designed in a linear fashion.

#### **Key Questions:**

- *Who has benefited from the innovation?*  
The City organization itself has benefited greatly, and stands to benefit even more as it is able to retain and promote qualified individuals with a ready-made sense of organizational culture and expectation. In addition, the citizens of Colleyville are positively affected by avoiding the costly processes of conducting searches, interviews, and training for new hires. Seasoned employees also tend to be more efficient with their time.
- *What risks were associated with planning and development?*  
With any new innovation, there is always some kind of risk, be it financial, institutional, or even simply in terms of lost time and productivity should the program fall flat. However, part of the elegance of this plan is the low-risk, high-reward nature of its design. It is not particularly expensive (and can actually end up saving the city money), and does not represent a substantive increase in organizational workload. Yet, in spite of either of these, the program simultaneously offers a coveted boost to both employee retention and morale.



- *What lessons were learned that could be shared?*  
The biggest lesson so far is that it works. Succession planning and workforce development will become more key as the Boomer generation begins to retire, to be replaced by the much smaller Generation X and Millennials. There is already a premium placed on experience and education, and, as there are only so many talented employees to go around, the demand is likely to increase. Planning for and developing tomorrow's leaders today is applicable to every organization, local or state, public or private.
- *Which department and/or individuals championed the innovation?*  
Succession Planning and Workforce Development were, by their very nature, championed by the entire City. It makes sense for everyone, from the front line employees, to the City Council, to the community at large. Employees and managers benefit from development and are motivated by the opportunity to move up, and such a cost effective solution to a key problem reflects very well on the Council, as well as the voters who elect them.

Employee acceptance to the Workforce Development & Sustainability Plan has exceeded expectations. Early feedback from employees is an appreciation by management in developing a comprehensive program of addressing the three components. The Council feels that for the first time there is an integrated broad based approach to addressing employee needs. In fact, the City was asked to serve on a national panel and as a speaker for the Innovations Group last July on its approach in developing the program. Additionally, Texas Municipal League (TML) honored the City at its annual conference for management innovation.