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COVER PAGE

Innovation Study Title: City of Olathe and University of Kansas Leadership Training Partnership

Category Building a Skilled Workforce of the Future

Jurisdiction Name City of Olathe (Alliance Member Jurisdiction)

City/County Manager Michael Wilkes, City Manager
Susan Sherman, Assistant City Manager

Population 125,872

Submit Innovation Study for an Alliance Innovation Award Yes No

Alliance member jurisdictions only. Learn more about the award program at transformgov.org/en/about/innovation_awards

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Alliance for Innovation Transforming Local Government Conference
Imagining Innovations of the Future: Innovation Studies Application

**City of Olathe and University of Kansas
Supervisory Leadership Training Partnership**

Category: Building a Skilled Workforce of the Future

Introduction: Intent and Duration of the Program

The Supervisory Leadership Training Partnership provided customized training specifically for the City of Olathe that illustrated innovative training techniques and evaluation methods. The program's focus was to apply the city's Vision, Values and Mission to the role of the Supervisor to help the City reach its full potential as an organization. Supervisors are leaders, and leaders create and maintain effective relationships to build productive teams. The importance of professional development and public service can hardly be overstated; the challenges are great, but so are the opportunities to make a real difference with employees.

Learning is one of the City of Olathe's core values, and the City acted upon this value by establishing a common learning framework for supervisors. The City formed a partnership with the University of Kansas Public Management Center to bring their award-winning Supervisory Leadership Training program to the City of Olathe. The intent was for all supervisors to have a common language and framework for leading employees in this organization. The City's future success as an organization depends on the current and future leadership of supervisors.

The program was geared toward enhancing supervisor competencies in the areas of leadership, interpersonal skills and the work environment. The leadership component was heavily focused on aligning actions with the City's vision, values and mission, getting to the core of the role of a supervisor, what it means to be a leader in the public sector, and an assessment of leadership styles using the strength deployment inventory (SDI) tool. The program also addressed communication, engagement, stages of team development, collaboration and performance management. The work environment component focused on culture, risk management and employment laws.

The role of the supervisor is critical to ensuring the City's Vision, Values and Mission reach all levels of the organization. The City felt so strongly about the

importance of this training that Department Heads, their Assistants, the City Manager and Assistant City Manager were the first group to complete the training. The duration of the program encompassed nine sessions spread over a 10-month period. Each session was 3-consecutive days long. In total, 201 senior leaders and supervisors attended the program.

Anticipated and Actual Outcomes

The program is intended to improve individual and organizational alignment, encourage networking and collaboration, and develop supervisors' leadership skills. Regarding outcomes of the program, this partnership is innovative in its evaluation approach. While training program evaluations generally center on immediate reactions to the training experience, the City of Olathe committed to a long-term training and evaluation approach in partnership with the University of Kansas' School of Public Affairs and Administration. This approach allows supervisors to participate in a long-term evaluation effort that examines attitude and behavioral change as well as organizational results over time. The final evaluation report will be completed this fall and will identify these long-term results, which will be presented at the conference (if selected).

Costs and/or Savings

The cost to each participant was \$300. This was a shared cost: 50% was paid by the department and 50% paid from the City's training budget. The fact that this program was delivered through a partnership resulted in cost savings for the organization.

Innovative Characteristics

Several innovations were included in the training curriculum design to increase participant engagement and retention as well as to more strongly link classroom learning to improved workplace performance. The instructor utilized a full complement of adult learning technologies including a strengths-based self-assessment inventory, a game show competition testing knowledge of legal issues, and a peer consultation exercise which grouped 4-5 colleagues from different departments together in a structured activity to offer feedback to one another on actual workplace supervisory challenges of their choosing.

Each participant was also tasked with identifying a "leadership app", or a project to apply something the participant learned during the training to a real-world leadership challenge. To increase accountability to one another, each participant was asked to post a brief description of the "leadership app" to their cohort's discussion group on an organizational website. The peer groups were then asked

to meet 2-3 more times as a group during the next 2-3 months to provide updates to one another on their “leadership app” progress. It is also worth noting that several employees elected to choose interdepartmental collaborations as conceived during this training for their leadership apps.

Obstacles and Results Achieved

It was a goal of the City to bring supervisors together from across different parts of the organization to help improve networking and collaboration. While the final results of the training program will not be available until this fall, preliminary data reveals positive impacts on supervisory attitudes toward collaboration, which was a stated goal of the program.

Unintended Consequences

The training was also designed to address a need identified within the City’s Employee Engagement Survey (to improve the annual performance review process by encouraging supervisors to provide more frequent feedback, recognition and coaching to improve performance). This was addressed specifically in the training sessions. One unexpected outcome from this effort was the City’s decision to improve the annual performance rating system by expanding the number of ratings from three to five and providing clear definitions of each rating based on this experience.

Innovation Study Components

Innovation/Creativity: Technologies and Consultants

The City previously attempted to develop a supervisory training program internally, but ultimately determined it would be better to contract with an external provider of public sector leadership training for cost savings and quality. The City’s Employee Development Committee asked the KU Public Management Center to submit a proposal, which was accepted and adapted to meet the unique needs of the City of Olathe.

Outcomes Achieved: Organization/Community

It is expected that the full impact of this partnership will not be realized until the final survey results are analyzed this fall. Preliminary analysis of the evaluation data reveals impacts on several dimensions of interest, including collaboration.

In addition, the training experience brought supervisors and senior leaders together in new ways. For instance, the City provided lunch each

day for all nine cohorts. At each session, two members of the City's Senior Leadership Team joined participants for lunch and were asked to provide a brief overview of their departments and to reflect on something of value they had gained from the class. This served to connect participants with senior leaders and also illustrate their shared commitment to development.

It is anticipated that training program participants will reconvene with their cohort for a one-day refresher course within the next year to discuss the impacts of the training program.

Applicable Results and Real World Practicality

Noting the scarcity of training resources, given today's fiscal challenges, local governments need guidance on how best to invest limited resources. Connected to this, the Olathe/KU partnership example illustrates innovations in evaluation that can help local governments demonstrate impacts of training participation, including individual change and organizational results. In a time when training is critical for helping employees "do more with less," understanding how best to invest in and evaluate training is a timely and relevant endeavor.

Innovation Study Presentation

This session will include PowerPoint, handout materials, participant reactions and survey results spanning one year's time.