



## **Creating a Successful Supervisory Leadership Training Program**

### **International City/County Management Association 2012 Annual Awards Program**

Strategic Leadership & Governance Award Submission

March 16, 2012

### **City of Olathe, Kansas**

City of Olathe  
100 E. Santa Fe  
P.O. Box 768  
Olathe, KS 66051

J. Michael Wilkes  
City Manager



Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

## 2012 Annual Awards Program

### Program Excellence Awards Nomination Form

**Deadline for Nominations: March 16, 2012**

Complete this form (sections 1 and 2) and submit with your descriptive narrative.

#### SECTION 1: Information About the Nominated Program

Program Excellence Award Category (*select only one*):

- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

Name of program being nominated: Supervisory Leadership Training

Jurisdiction(s) where program originated: City of Olathe, Kansas

Jurisdiction population(s): 125,872

Please indicate the month and year in which the program you are nominating was fully implemented. (Note: All Program Excellence Award nominations must have been fully implemented by or before January 31, 2011, to be eligible. The start date should not include the initial planning phase.)

Month: Fall Year: 2010

Name(s) and title(s) of individual(s) who should receive recognition for this award at the ICMA Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, October 2012. (Each individual listed MUST be an ICMA member to be recognized.):

Name: J. Michael Wilkes

Title: City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Olathe

Name: Susan Sherman

Title: Assistant City Manager Jurisdiction: City of Olathe

Name: Jonathan Morris  
Title: Instructor and Program Manager      Jurisdiction: KU Public Management Center

Name: Michele Biddison  
Title: Employee Development Coordinator      Jurisdiction: City of Olathe

## **SECTION 2: Information About the Nominator/Primary Contact**

Name of contact: Amanda Kaufman  
Title: ICMA Management Fellow      Jurisdiction: City of Olathe  
Street address: 100 E. Santa Fe  
City: Olathe      State/Province: KS  
Zip/Postal Code: 66051      Country: US  
Telephone: (913) 971-8913      Fax: (913) 971-8703  
E-mail: ackaufman@olatheks.org

# **Creating a Successful Supervisory Leadership Training Program**

## **City of Olathe, Kansas & KU Public Management Center**

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### **Project Overview**

The City of Olathe's Supervisory Leadership Training program was designed to integrate its Vision, Values, Mission, and organizational performance objectives in to the leadership role of Supervisors at all levels within the organization. In 2010, the City of Olathe partnered with the University Of Kansas Public Management Center (PMC) and the KU School of Public Affairs and Administration, in an initiative to design, deliver, and evaluate a leadership-training program for City supervisors. The KU PMC customized the curriculum to reflect organizational priorities and leverage the organizational scorecard, performance dashboard and the results of both the Employee Engagement survey and the Citizen Satisfaction Survey. Several innovations were included in the training curriculum design to increase participant engagement and retention and to more strongly link classroom learning to improved workplace performance. The instructor utilized adult learning technologies, including a strengths-based self-assessment inventory, a game show competition testing knowledge of legal issues, and a peer consultation exercise. 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 to provide updates to one another on their "leadership app" progress. Several employees chose interdepartmental collaborations as conceived during this training for their leadership apps.

### **Research Methodology**

To evaluate the training, a series of surveys were distributed to examine change over time. Findings were presented in the aggregate to protect employee confidentiality. While training program evaluations typically 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 KU School of Public Affairs and Administration. This approach allowed supervisors to participate in a long-term evaluation effort that examined attitude and behavioral change as well as organizational results over time. The researchers used a pre-test, post-test, then-test, post-test methodology which included surveys before, during and after the training experience. Surveys included questions related to training objectives and broader themes including: individual leadership development, organizational environment for leadership, and overall training experience resulting in quantitative and qualitative data presented in aggregate. The surveys also provided an opportunity to learn what this next generation of City leaders identify as the most pressing leadership challenges for organization. Learning is one of the City's five core values, and it acted upon this value by establishing a common learning framework for supervisors to develop the needed skill sets to lead effectively in the public sector. The City felt so strongly about the importance of this training that all members of the Leadership Team completed the first training session. The program encompassed nine sessions over a 10-month period. In total, 202 senior leaders and supervisors attended the program.

### **Improved Performance of Employees/Leaders**

**87%** of supervisors “have witnessed an improvement in their direct reports’ leadership effectiveness” as a result of having participated in this training.

**65%** of participants “have witnessed an improvement in their supervisor’s leadership

effectiveness” after the supervisor participated in this training.

A key component of the training was a focus on the City’s vision, values, and mission:

- Survey data indicates that stated goals were achieved via the training, including relationship building and collaboration.
- Initial and final measurements illustrate participants developed both their leadership strengths and weaknesses over time.
- Survey findings suggest that employee integration of the organization’s vision, values, and mission into their work is improved.
- Behavioral change is indicated among supervisors and direct reports following the training experience.
- Participants identify key changes and tangible results related to the training that have improved leadership practice, communication, collaboration, and performance management.
- The majority of participants considered the training experience to be effective and worthwhile.

Three key areas of interest: leadership development, alignment with organizational vision/values/mission, and collaboration were measured via a data collection methodology consisting of three, separate web-based participant surveys. Top overall strengths are identified using mean scores (based on a 5-point Likert scale: 1=Ineffective/Needs much improvement; 2=Ineffective/Needs some improvement; 3=Neutral’ 4=Effective/Needs little improvement; 5=Effective/Needs no improvement).

#### Initial Measurements: Top Leadership Strengths

1. Ability to work well with others in organization (mean score: 3.91).
2. Understanding citizen needs (mean score: 3.78).
3. Ability to accept feedback (mean score: 3.71).
4. Collaborating with those outside the organization (mean score: 3.57).
5. Providing direction (mean score: 3.55).
6. Overall supervisory skills (mean score: 3.51).

#### Final Measurements: Leadership Strengths

1. Ability to work well with others in the organization (mean improvement: 4.25).
2. Understanding citizen needs (mean score improvement: 4.08).
3. Collaborating with those outside the org. (mean score improvement: 4.04).
4. Ability to accept feedback (mean score improvement: 4.00).
5. Working through adversity (mean score: 3.94).
6. Providing direction (mean score improvement: 3.93).

### **Time Savings**

An expected outcome of the training was to improve collaborative efforts between City departments. Enrollments were managed through the Olathe University Moodle site to ensure a distribution of participants from each department in each class. Participants were also partnered with employees from other departments in the peer consultation exercises and encouraged to select Leadership Apps, which required interdepartmental collaborations. A number of such projects were initiated as a result of this training including an initiative between two departments to streamline the timesheet process. Subsequent study is needed to capture statistics on time and financial savings realized as a direct result of this training.

### **Measurable Results**

One of the expected outcomes from the training was to address a need identified within the City's annual 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, and resulted in 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. As a direct result of the training the organization:

- Revised the organization's annual performance evaluation rating scale from three ratings to five, as decided by the leadership team following their participation in the first training session.

Also, the City of Olathe Leadership Team initiated an after-action-review for this program. Senior leadership reflected on key outcomes observed from their supervisors who completed this program, and identified what the next phase of supervisor training should entail to continue the great momentum this program brought.

### **Achievement of Organizational Goals**

Survey respondents rated the following as **improved** within the organization: teamwork (59%); collaboration (52%); communication (52%); leadership (48%); organizational performance (43%). Initial and final measurements of leadership effectiveness illustrate leadership development over time. Further, employee integration of vision, values, and mission into their work is improved. The data also indicates behavioral change occurred among supervisors, and direct reports following the training experience. Also, participants identify key changes and tangible results related to the training that have improved leadership practice, communication, collaboration, and performance management. Finally, the majority of participants considered the training experience to be effective and worthwhile. As a result of this training, the organization has also launched a series of quarterly meetings for supervisors to address pertinent leadership topics and maintain momentum established by this initiative. At the most recent meeting in November, senior leaders facilitated break-out sessions with groups of supervisors to capture their input on what worked well, and what the next phase of supervisor training should encompass. The leadership team then took that feedback and developed goals and outcomes for the next phase.