Building the Leadership Pipeline in Local, State, and Federal Government

The Second in a Series of Research Studies on Leading Issues in Public-Sector Human Resource Management

Conducted by Dr. Mary B. Young
Independent Research on Organizations and the Workplace

Sponsored by CPS Human Resource Services and
The International Public Management Association-Human Resources

In partnership with the National Association of State Personnel Executives
and The International City/County Management Association

CPS
Human Resource Services

Published by CPS Human Resource Services, 2005

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 1
Research Results 4
CPS Commentary 13
Overview of the Case Studies 17

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDIES

Cal-ICMA Coaching Program 19
Three Florida Cities 22
City of Plano, Texas 24
City of Roseville, CA 27
City of Anaheim, CA 34
Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department 39
Developing Leaders in Public Safety 44

STATE GOVERNMENT CASE STUDIES

Pennsylvania 46
New York State Office of General Services 49
South Carolina 52
Michigan Department of Human Services 57
The Mississippi Certified Public Manager Program 63
The Hawaii Leadership Academy's Individual Action Plan 66

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDIES

United States Government Accountability Office 69
Choices and Trade-Offs: Developing Candidates for the SES 75
United States Coast Guard 86

Acknowledgements 92
About this Research 95

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe what jurisdictions at the local, state, and federal levels are doing to build their leadership pipeline to ensure an adequate supply of experienced talent for the future.

Research Methods

The study's findings are based on a literature review of leadership development and succession planning in private and public-sector organizations; interviews with expert sources; initial interviews with 35 jurisdictions; and 15 in-depth case studies.

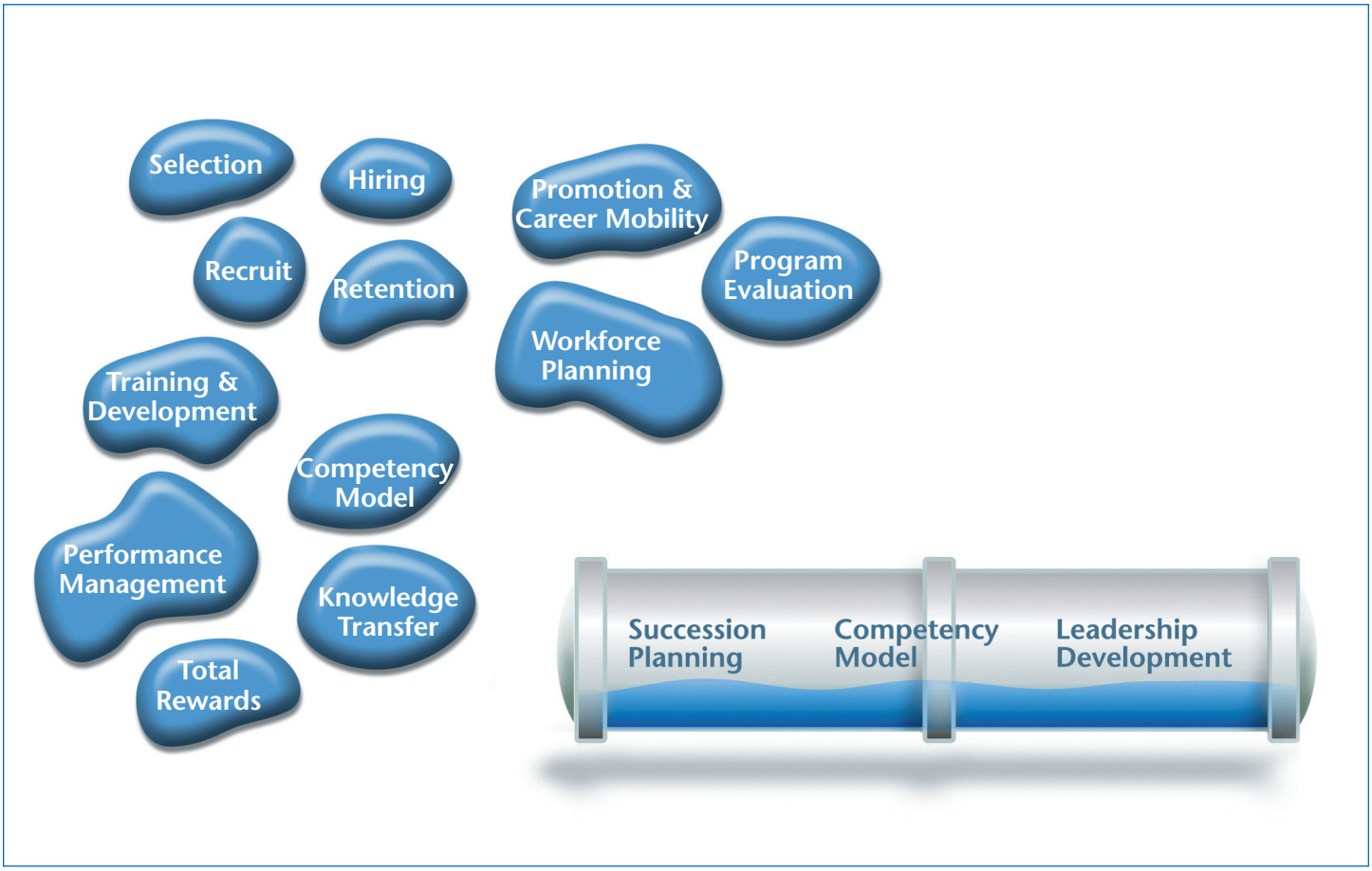
Findings

The research identified two approaches to building the leadership pipeline—the traditional Just-in-Time Approach and the Integrated Approach. These two approaches may be thought of as the opposite ends of a continuum, with most organizations' practices falling somewhere in between.

The Just-in-Time Approach to Building the Leadership Pipeline

In the Just-in-Time (JIT) model, building the leadership pipeline is one of many talent-management practices, but it is disconnected from other efforts such as recruitment for the workforce as a whole, retention, and performance management. Typically, the JIT approach entails one or more formal leadership development programs and sometimes succession planning and a competency model. Such initiatives are targeted toward a narrow segment of the workforce, such as high-potential managers or new leaders. While the Just-in-Time approach to developing leaders may have been adequate in the past, it cannot supply the demand for experienced leaders that organizations anticipate.

The Just-in-Time Approach



The Integrated Approach to Developing the Leadership Pipeline

The Integrated Approach marries efforts to manage the supply, caliber, and competencies of leaders with broader efforts to manage the organization's human capital. It links these efforts to the organization's overall strategy and its short-term and long-term planning.

Any or all of an organization's talent-management activities may serve to build the leadership pipeline. Unlike the JIT model, the Integrated Approach doesn't focus solely on organizational elites; it addresses the long-term developmental needs of workers at many levels and across the employee lifecycle.

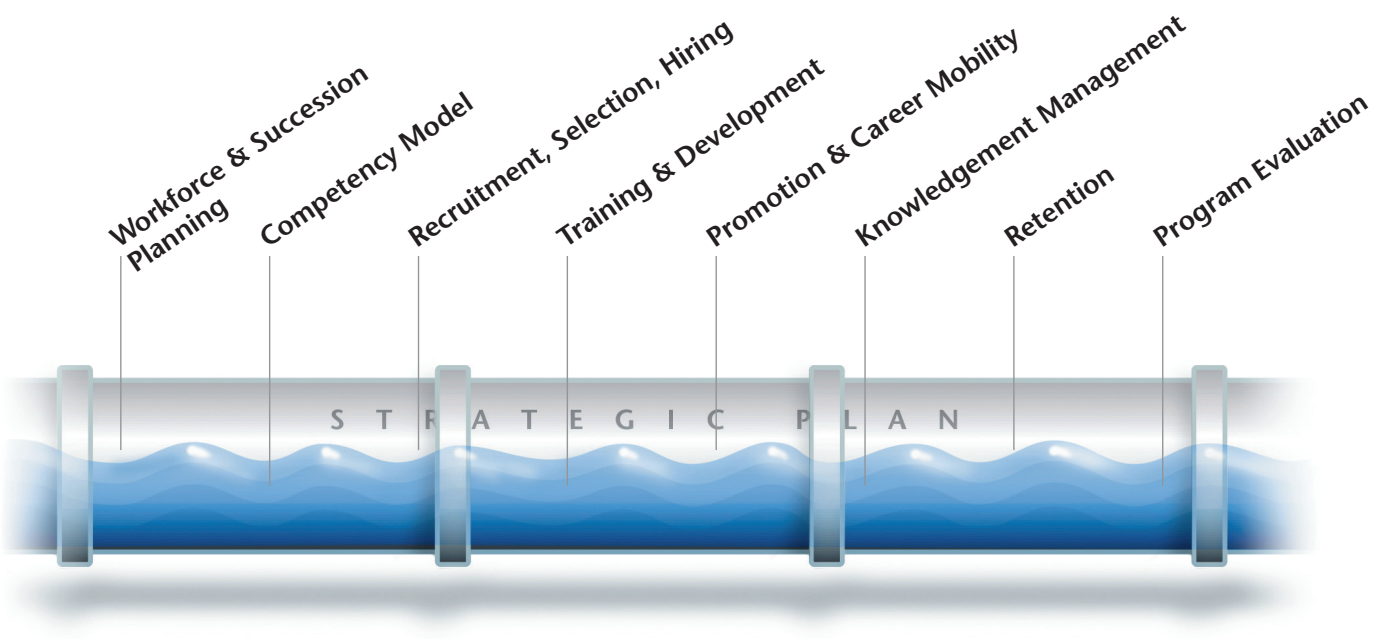
In addition to this high-level overview of current approaches to building the leadership pipeline, the study also examined specific practices.

Who's in the Leadership Pipeline?
Many jurisdictions and agencies initially focused on the talent supply for senior management positions. Their earliest efforts were aimed at grooming or hiring people for the top of the house. However, those initial efforts later expanded for a variety of reasons:

- The cascading impact of leadership succession
- Demonstrated need for development at other levels of the organization
- Employee demand
- Retention
- Defining leadership as a competency that employees at all levels are expected to develop and demonstrate

The Integrated Approach requires a significantly longer and larger pipeline because it has to carry greater capacity, not only in terms of the number of people who must be developed, but also their diversity.

The Integrated Approach



Developmental Needs: What do Leaders Need to Learn?
Across local, state, and federal government, the study identified three consistent priorities in terms of future leaders' developmental needs:

- Knowledge and understanding outside the employee's own department or functional area
- Knowledge and understanding at the enterprise level
- A broad network of relationships

How Are These Developmental Needs Being Met?
The case studies describe a range of practices. In addition to—or as part of—formal leadership development programs, the study identified other common approaches:

- Integrating theory and practice through action learning and other projects
- Use of rotational and/or developmental assignments
- Data-driven development (based on assessments, feedback, and other sources)
- Senior leaders' involvement
- Structured building of relationships

What's the Impact?
In addition to developing future leaders, building the leadership pipeline delivers other organizational benefits:

- Boosts retention
- Builds a common language
- Drives culture change
- Stimulates innovation and enhances organizational effectiveness
- Improves cross-departmental collaboration and sharing

How Are Efforts to Build the Leadership Pipeline Being Evaluated?
Some organizations attempt to quantify the results of their efforts to build the leadership pipeline, for example by collecting and analyzing data:

- End-of-program feedback
- Career progress (promotions, pay increases)
- Behavior change
- Multi-rater feedback
- Formal assessments

However, the study concludes that efforts to evaluate the impact of leadership-pipeline-building fall short of best practices in most of the organizations interviewed.

Practical Implications

CPS Human Resource Services, the study's primary sponsor, offers eight recommendations for jurisdictions, departments, and agencies that want to build their leadership pipeline:

1. Make workforce planning the foundation
2. Engage senior leaders
3. Identify competencies leaders will need
4. Assess developmental needs
5. Create leadership development strategy
6. Institutionalize the process of Individual Development Plans
7. Tap into the talent pool of retirement-eligible employees and retirees
8. Don't let cost concerns keep your organization from building the leadership pipeline

Case Studies

The organizations selected as case studies offer practical, effective, and sometimes innovative solutions that can help jurisdictions and agencies at all levels of government to build the next generation of leaders. Some case studies raise important issues that organizations should consider as they develop their talent-management strategy.

Seven local governments and one joint venture for local governments are featured in the case studies: Anaheim, California; Plano, Texas; Roseville, California; the Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department; three Florida cities involved in a collaborative effort; and a cross-jurisdictional program organized by several city and county government associations in California.

Six case studies highlight initiatives in state government: Hawaii; the Michigan Department of Human Services; Mississippi; the New York Office of General Services; Pennsylvania; South Carolina.

The case studies also include four federal departments: The US Office of Personnel Management, the Department of Labor, the Coast Guard, and the Government Accountability Office.

Short articles accompanying the case studies discuss related topics: action learning; appreciative inquiry; the cultural factors that make public safety's approach to leadership development different from those in other areas of government; using assessment centers as a development tool; and evaluating the impact of leadership-pipeline efforts.

An Analysis of the Study's Findings

Dr. Mary B. Young

What We Set Out to Learn

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe what jurisdictions and agencies at the local, state, and federal level are doing to build their leadership pipeline to ensure an adequate supply of experienced talent for the future.

How We Conducted this Research

As in the first study[1] in this series, we began this research by contacting experts in public-sector human resource management, including associations and organizations, academic researchers, journalists, consultants, prominent practitioners and others. The complete list of sources is provided on page 90. Based on their recommendations, we interviewed approximately 35 jurisdictions to learn about their approach to building the leadership pipeline. We selected 15 to become case studies. Again, further information about our selection criteria and research methods is presented on page 15.

While we delved deepest into the practices of the 15 case-study organizations, the following analysis is grounded in all the data we collected: a literature review of leadership development and succession planning in private and public-sector organizations; the interviews with expert sources; the initial interviews with 35 jurisdictions; and the case studies. This broad survey of current practices allowed us to construct the big picture of leadership-pipeline-building, which we describe in the next section. Following this high-level analysis of the approaches we encountered, we will take a closer look at specific practices and discuss common themes, significant differences, and important issues that the study identified.

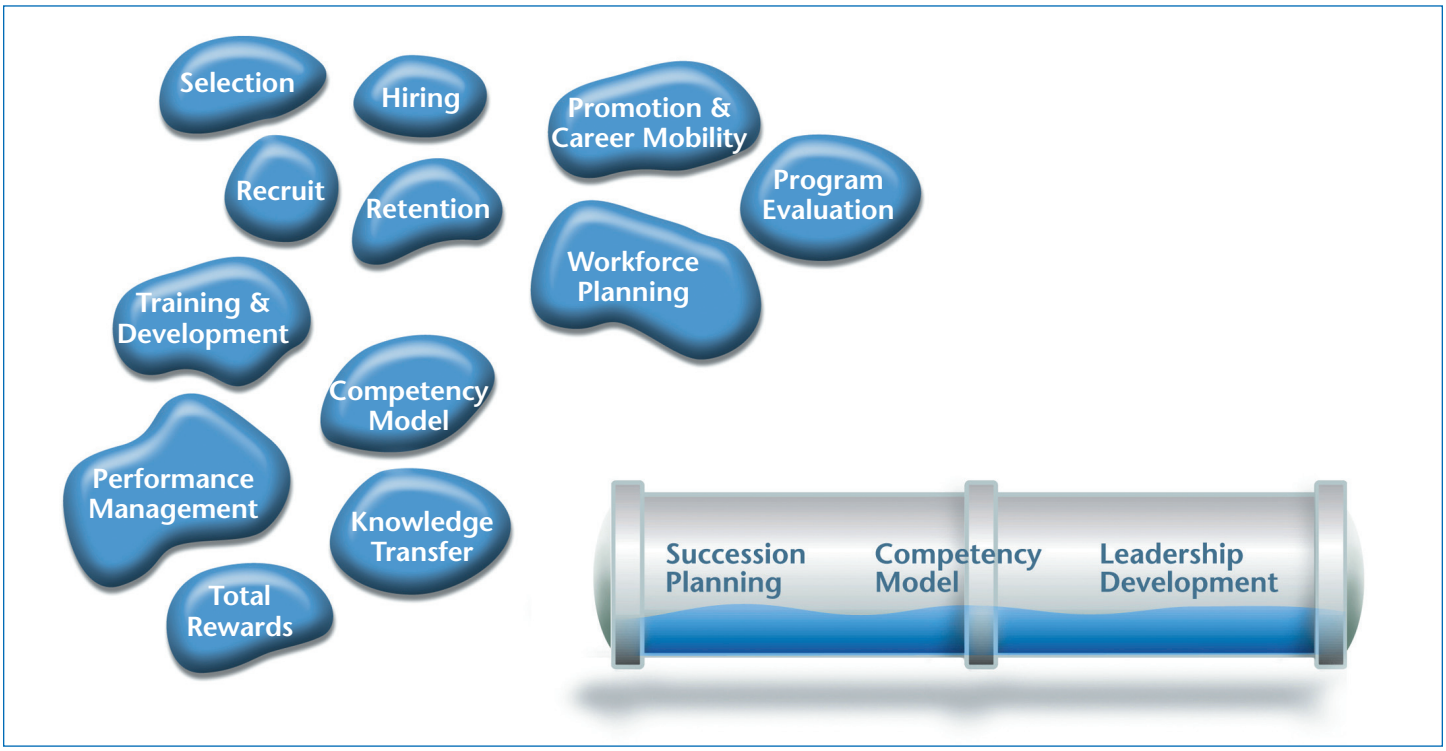
Building the Leadership Pipeline: Two Models

Looking at the data from a high-altitude perspective, two different models emerge. The more traditional and typical one we call the Just-in-Time Approach to building the leadership pipeline. The other we call the Integrated Approach.

The Just-in-Time Approach to Building the Leadership Pipeline

In the Just-in-Time model, building the leadership pipeline is one of many talent-management practices, but it is separate from them. In the exhibit, we show the leadership pipeline is "off to the side." At minimum, building the pipeline may entail a formal leadership development program(s), and possibly succession planning and a competency model. But the pipeline is disconnected from other effort, such as recruitment for the workforce as a whole, retention, and performance management.

The Just-in-Time Approach



[1] Young, Mary (2003) ***The Aging-and-Retiring Government Workforce:* How Serious Is the Challenge? What Are Jurisdictions Doing About It?** ©The Center for Organizational Research, a division of Linkage, Inc. Lexington, MA. Executive Summary and Final Report available at http://www.cps.ca.gov/AboutUs/agebubble.asp

One reason that the leadership pipeline is off on its own in this model is that it focuses on a narrow segment of the workforce, such a middle-managers who might be promoted, high-potential candidates, or new leaders. As a result, the leadership pipeline is short and relatively narrow, since it has been built for limited capacity.

Leaders are developed just-in-time, right before they move into leadership positions or soon afterward. That makes leadership development something like a special inoculation that travelers receive just before they embark for some new, foreign territory, but that the population-at-large will never need.

The Just-in-Time approach to developing leaders may have worked in the past. With limited training budgets, organizations targeted formal leadership development programs to meet their most pressing needs. With baby boomers swelling the workforce, employers could count on a large pool of candidates for future leadership positions and a longer lead time. Natural selection could run its course. Managers typically had fewer direct reports than is true today, which gave them more time to coach and develop their staff. And there was more continuity at the top of the organization, since retirements happened here and there, rather than hitting full-force as a concentrated wave. Knowledge could be passed on in an orderly fashion from one generation to the next, with plenty of seasoned leaders on hand to provide wisdom and preserve institutional memory.

We know that those conditions are rapidly disappearing. In most jurisdictions and agencies, the majority of managers and leaders will be retirement eligible within the next five years, if not already. Their inevitable departure creates a new urgency to develop potential successors, often on a faster track and with a shorter learning curve than ever before. In many organizations, the potential pool will be smaller than in the past. And those who are promoted will themselves create a backwash of replacement needs, as will their successors and their successors' successors.

Under these conditions, the Just-in-Time Approach to building the leadership pipeline will be pitifully inadequate. The very idea of just-in-time will become a recipe for disaster. A short, narrow pipeline, set off to the side, can't possibly meet the new demand.

It's not only the impact of retirements that makes the Just-in-Time approach a dangerous anachronism. As a result of the downsizing that many public-sector organizations undertook in the 1990s and the hiring freezes that many enacted post-9/11, managers now have wider spans-of-control than ever before. They have less time than their predecessors did for developing up-and-comers. And, in some organizations we interviewed, current leaders aren't thinking about succession, or seem unconcerned about who will carry on once they retire.

Through our interviews, we learned about other factors that make Just-in-Time leadership development a losing strategy. As a consequence of outsourcing, some jurisdictions and agencies have seen a hollowing-out of the middle-management tier that has shrunk the potential succession pool. It also reduces the organization's internal store of knowledge and expertise that can be passed down to younger workers.

For all these reasons, the Just-in-Time approach to building the leadership pipeline, while it remains widespread, will not be sufficient to meet the demand for experienced leaders that organizations anticipate.

Fortunately, our research also identified a different model better suited to meeting these leadership challenges.

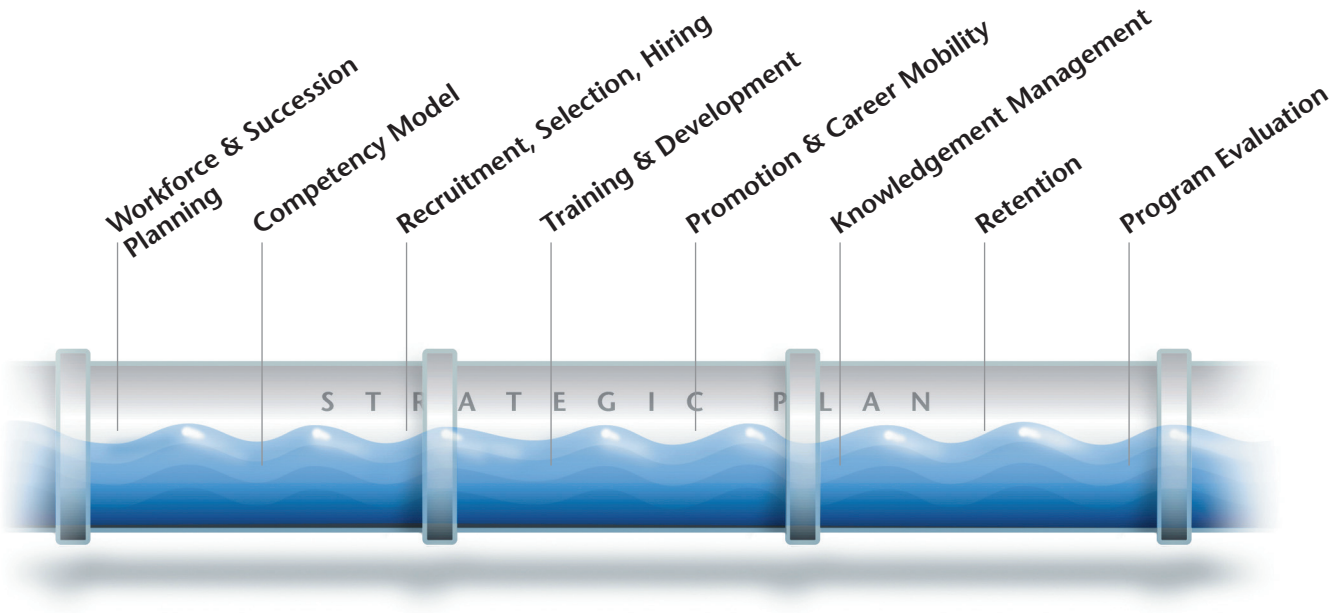
The Integrated Approach to Developing the Leadership Pipeline

In the Integrated Model, any or all of an organization's talent-management activities may serve to build the leadership pipeline. And because these varied activities are all aligned with the strategic plan—and, in many of the jurisdictions and agencies we interviewed, also aligned with workforce planning and a competency model—they are connected to each other. Unlike the Just-in-Time Model, the Integrated Approach doesn't focus solely on organizational elites; it addresses the long-term developmental needs of workers at many levels and across the employee lifecycle (that is, from recruitment through retirement).

The Integrated Approach marries efforts to manage the supply, caliber, and competencies of leaders with broader efforts to manage the organization's human capital. It links these efforts to the organization's overall strategy and its short-term and long-term planning.

The activities listed at the top of the pipeline are actually broad categories. If this model were presented as a web page, you could click on each category and pull down a menu of tactics. For example, subcategories below Recruitment, Selection, and Hiring might include a competency model, interns, fellows, recruiting for entry-level or mid-level positions, internal promotions and external recruiting, on-boarding, and collecting satisfaction data from recent hires through focus groups or surveys. Within the broader category of Training and Development, competency models would appear again, along with assessments, job-rotation, formal leadership development programs, individual development plans, etc. It's important to note that the eight categories listed in the exhibit do not provide an exhaustive list of tactics.

The Integrated Approach



Other Research Findings

The two models described above can be thought of as different ends of a continuum. As is often the case, each end serves as an archetype. The 35 public-sector organizations we interviewed can be placed at different points along this continuum, based on their approach to building the leadership pipeline: Which employee segments do their efforts focus on? What tactics are they using? How aligned are these tactics with each other and with some overarching framework?

Having described the study's findings from this high-level perspective, we now move in for a closer look. Our analysis is organized into five sections:

- Who's in the leadership pipeline?
- What are the most pressing developmental needs?
- How are these needs being met?
- What is the impact?
- How are efforts to build the leadership pipeline being evaluated?

Who's In the Leadership Pipeline?

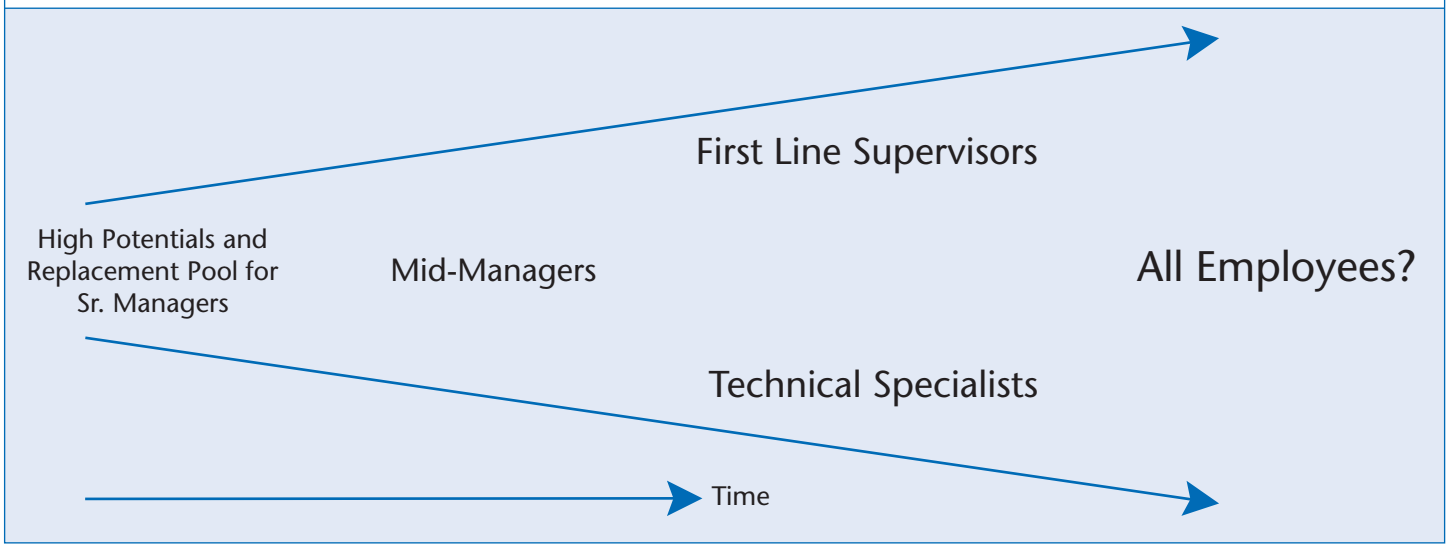
In our 2003 study, *The Aging-and-Retiring Government Workforce: How Serious Is the Challenge? What Are Jurisdictions Doing about It?*, we found that many organizations first woke up to the coming retirement wave by looking at the age profile of their senior leadership team. Planning who would replace that group was their immediate concern.

Eventually, however, succession planning broadened into workforce planning; it came to include critical occupations or hard-to-fill job classifications at all levels of the organization. What had begun at the top, then, moved deeper into the organization and expanded, rooting out vulnerabilities and trouble spots, differentiating them from areas where there was less need for concern.

In our current study, we observed a similar pattern related to the leadership pipeline. Many jurisdictions and agencies initially focused on the talent supply for senior management positions. Their earliest efforts were aimed at grooming or hiring people for the top of the house. But when, as is often the case, an organization foresees churn in a substantial percentage of its senior positions, then the second-order impact is immediately apparent. If the majority of your directors will retire within the next three years, you may plan to replace them with your current deputy or associate directors. But who are you readying to replace *them*? Or what if your deputy directors are also getting ready to retire? In nearly every case study that follows, the approaching retirement of senior leaders was an important driver in the organization's efforts to build its leadership pipeline, but those initial efforts later expanded.

One of the most visible differences between the two approaches to building the leadership pipeline is the size of the pipe. The Integrated Approach requires a significantly longer and larger pipeline because it has to carry greater capacity, not only in terms of the number of people who must be developed, but also their diversity, as shown below.

Who's in the Pipeline?



Organizations that have expanded their leadership pipeline have done so for a variety of reasons:

- **The cascading impact of leadership succession**. The need to fill vacancies at lower levels when incumbents are promoted
- **Demonstrated need.** Assessments may show that the skills and competencies of current supervisors and/or managers fall short.
- **Employee demand.** In many cases, when employees see that more senior people are being developed, they ask for comparable opportunities and the organization implements programs for this next level down.
- **Retention.** Some organizations view career development as a valued component of the "total rewards" employees receive. The opportunity to develop skills and competencies that may lead to future advancement is, for many employees, a motivator and a retention factor.
- **Defining leadership as a competency that employees at all levels are expected to develop and demonstrate.** A number of organizations we interviewed, such as the Coast Guard and the Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department, have decided to ingrain certain elements of leadership development throughout their organization. By providing everyone with common frameworks and language, they hope to make leadership an ongoing topic of conversation among employees at all levels.

Whatever the rationale, it's clear that efforts to build the leadership pipeline are expanding to meet the needs of a larger number of employees at multiple levels of the organization. When that happens, the organization may find it needs an organizing framework to map an increasingly complex strategy, specifying levels of leaders, competencies needed, and tactics for achieving them. Anaheim, the Coast Guard, and NASA have each developed such a framework. Not only does it help human resource staff get their arms around multiple efforts, such a framework can also clarify gaps, redundancies, and priorities for future resources, as the Coast Guard case study illustrates.

Developmental Needs: What Do Leaders Need to Learn?

Because this study used qualitative methods, our analysis identifies common themes that we encountered in the interviews, but it cannot quantify the frequency with which we heard them. Nevertheless, some themes emerged clearly and consistently. When discussing future leaders' most critical developmental needs—that is, the competencies, knowledge and skills that the organization believed are most important to help them acquire—organizations frequently reported three primary needs:

- **Knowledge and understanding outside the employee's own department or functional area**. In many cases, employees' previous career experiences haven't exposed them to other areas of government. As a result, they need to understand what other departments or functions do and how that work is connected to their own.
- **Knowledge and understanding at the enterprise level**. In part, this content area is an aggregation of learning about other departments and functions; it's about how all the pieces fit together. In addition, it's about work at the executive-level: the tasks, functions, and challenges that are important at the levels above departments or agencies, including knowledge and understanding of the organization's relationship to its broader environment.
- **A broad network of relationships**. Knowledge and understanding are important, but they do not assure a leader's effectiveness. The third critical area in which organizations need to help leaders develop is in building a broad network of relationships: across departments and functions; at many levels; and in the organization's wider environment. In studying the components of many formal leadership development programs described in this report, the prominence given to relationship-building and relationship-maintenance is striking.

It's important to note why these developmental needs were thought to be so critical for public-sector organizations to help future leaders develop. It's not simply that they are prerequisites to effective performance; it's that employees may not be able to develop them on their own. The clear message that emerged across all levels of government is that the organization must intervene deliberately to foster development in these areas.

All three of these priorities are related to boundary-spanning: to stretching employees' knowledge, understanding, and working relationships and to exposing them to people and aspects of the organization outside their current sphere. These objectives have important implications for how organizations go about developing leaders, as discussed below.

In addition to these three kinds of knowledge and understanding, many jurisdictions and agencies reported specific skills that leaders or managers typically need to develop:

- Getting things done in government or in this organization/jurisdiction
- Managing change
- Managing conflict
- Managing the public
- Managing the media

To a more limited extent, some jurisdictions and agencies mentioned other, more basic supervisory skills that even some experienced managers need to develop:

- Managing employees, including influencing, motivating, developing, and retaining
- Dealing with civil service and personnel policies

Finally, many formal leadership development programs include short segments designed to enhance professional skills such as making presentations, managing projects, facilitating meetings, and leading teams.

How Are these Developmental Needs Being Met?

The Integrated Model presented earlier shows how every aspect of an organization's talent-management strategy can potentially help build the leadership pipeline. The case studies that follow were selected, in part, to present a range of practices. In most cases, we have highlighted only a few of the initiatives a jurisdiction or agency has implemented, rather than attempting to describe every aspects of its leadership strategy.

Yet despite this diversity of approaches, our research identified fundamental principles for growing leaders that were remarkably consistent across many organizations:

- **Integration of theory and practice.** Rather than just sending employees to a class or recommending classic books on leadership, many organizations we interviewed provide structured opportunities to apply theory on the job. The Hawaii Leadership Academy requires that participants complete a detailed document in which they describe and reflect on an application project. Several organizations (the Michigan Department of Human Services, the Federal SES Candidate Development Program) require team-based action-learning projects. Other programs require individual projects (Mississippi, South Carolina).
- **Use of rotational and/or developmental assignments.** This is a method for broadening participants' knowledge, perspective, and relationships
- **Data-driven development.** Rather than assuming what the developmental needs are for an individual or a cohort, many organizations use self-assessment tools (Michigan DHS, the US Office of Personnel Management) or multi-rater feedback (US Department of Labor, South Carolina, Virginia Beach). Roseville, California illustrates the use of customized assessment centers to evaluate the preparedness and developmental needs of cohorts of employees. The Coast Guard has developed an online tool that enables work groups to assess their overall effectiveness and climate and hopes to launch a similar online tool for individuals.
- **Senior leaders' involvement.** The case studies describe a variety of roles that senior leaders can play in developing the leadership pipeline: selecting candidates for developmental experiences, facilitating rotational job assignments, coaching, mentoring, teaching classes, and meeting with various cohorts within the pipeline. The DOL case study describes this involvement in a large organization; the California affiliate of the International City and County Management Association (Cal-ICMA) Coaching Program illustrates its use in city and county government.
- **Structured relationship-building.** Cited as one of the foremost developmental needs of future leaders, relationships can be built within a leadership development program (South Carolina), across departments (Plano); across levels of management (Anaheim); within a project team (Michigan's DHS); with a mentor and/or coach (Cal-ICMA and Michigan); with more senior management (DOL, Plano, and the three Florida cities), and with important stakeholders in the external environment (Virginia Beach Police Department). As the Anaheim case study illustrates, relationship-building should be structured rather than left to chance.

Most of these approaches can be effective in helping future leaders develop the broader understanding and wider network discussed in the preceding section. Cross-functional action-learning teams, rotational and developmental assignments, exposure to senior leaders, and structured relationship-building can serve this purpose. However, the study found that some organizations are doing a better job than others in designing leadership-development efforts that foster the desired big-picture perspective and broad network. A centralized program that attracts participants from many departments or agencies, for example, is more likely to deliver this desired kind of boundary-spanning than a program that enrolls people from the same department. The case study comparing two federal departments' programs to develop candidates for the Senior Executive Service (see page 73) discusses the relationship between program design and "broadening" at length. The implications are relevant to all levels of government.

The case studies illustrate tactics that fit within the broad categories shown in the Integrated Model. However, there is one tactic that we found underrepresented in the organizations we interviewed. Only the New York State Office of General Services is making active use of retirees to coach and mentor younger employees and to pass along institutional knowledge. As the baby-boomer retirement wave builds force, we expect that more jurisdictions will begin using retirees as an element of their efforts to build the leadership pipeline.

What's the Impact?

The public-sector organizations we interviewed report a variety of benefits from their efforts to build the leadership pipeline, in addition to the obvious outcome of developing future leaders, which is discussed later.

- **Boosting retention.** The US Government Accountability Office's (GAO) program for entry-level analysts is designed, in part, to retain talented, young professionals whom the department works very hard to recruit. The data suggest it's successful. Similarly, Roseville, California intends that development efforts send a message to employees that there's a future for them in city government.
- **Building a common language.** In the past, only the command staff learned the West Point Leadership Model when they were sent to special training. Now the Virginia Beach Police Department uses that model in training for all its officers. The reason? To give everyone a common framework and terminology, so that leadership becomes a regular topic of discussion.
- **Driving culture change.** The Virginia Beach Police Department has also used strategic-issues teams to move away from the command-and-control culture that is typical in law enforcement and to encourage greater employee-involvement.
- **Stimulating innovation and enhancing organizational effectiveness.** Many states we interviewed assign projects as part of formal leadership-development programs, such as the one for Certified Public Managers (CPM). Mississippi publishes a report describing completed projects and their impacts. Action-learning teams tackle real agency challenges at the Michigan DHS. Individuals do so in South Carolina's CPM Program.
- **Improving cross-departmental collaboration and sharing.** This is a goal for many of the organizations we interviewed: to expand people's networks, give them experience working across organizational boundaries, and increase both knowledge and trust. While we did not find any organizations that have measured these outcomes, we did hear anecdotal reports that they occur. For example, graduates of the Pennsylvania Management Associates Program are reported to be much more skilled in completing cross-departmental assignments—and are able to do so much more quickly—than those who were not in this program. The GAO has seen that graduates of its two-year Professional Development Program have broader experience by the end of the program than co-workers who have worked a lot longer for GAO but weren't required to complete job-rotations.

How Are Efforts to Build the Leadership Pipeline Being Evaluated?

The preceding outcomes are largely qualitative. Some of the organizations we interviewed have attempted to quantify the results of their efforts to build the leadership pipeline, as shown below. (The measures listed are illustrative; they may not be the only measures in use.)

Organization	Outcome Measures Used
Roseville, California	■ Tracks career progress of assessment center participants
Anaheim, California	■ Pre- and post-test of program participants' scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory assessment tool
Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department	■ Annual 360-degree assessment of command staff ■ Campbell Organizational Survey to track employees' perception of the organization over time ■ Monitors change in number of citizen complaints and internal inquiries ■ Tracks career progress (promotion, transfers to specialty assignment) of members of strategic issue team ■ "Appreciative Inquiry" process to identify ideal department qualities
Cal-ICMA Coaching Program	■ Compares projected vs. actual program participation ■ Collects qualitative data
New York State Office of General Services	■ Pre- and post- test of program participants' learning
South Carolina	■ End-of-program evaluations ■ Evaluation by participants and their supervisors 6 months after program completed
Michigan Department of Human Services	■ Surveyed participants and their supervisors after program completion ■ Compared results of participants' 360-assessment pre- and post-program ■ Tracks program graduates' promotions, pay increases in comparison to those of non-participants
US Government Accountability Office	■ Survey of program participants and supervisors ■ Retention of Professional Development Program graduates ■ Survey of all new employees; exit survey
US Department of Labor	■ Bench strength (# of SES-certified candidates or current program participants vs. # of anticipated SES vacancies) ■ % of SES Candidate Development Program (CDP) graduates promoted to SES positions within two years ■ Retention of CDP graduates

These examples illustrate some of the ways that organizations are assessing the impact of their efforts to build the leadership pipeline. Others can be found in the resources we included on page 54 ("How Do We Know If What We're Doing Is Effective?").

However, one area in which we found the greatest need for improvement is assessment or evaluation. Again and again, the case study sources acknowledged that their organization "should be doing better" in this area. Many cited limited time, staff, and budgets as the obstacles. One city's HR person offered another explanation: Although her professional knowledge led her to value program evaluation, it wasn't highly valued by the city's senior management team. What mattered to them were not the numbers, but the results they saw first-hand. If they'd seen someone who blossomed or made great strides as the result of a program, that's what counted; if they didn't witness such changes, then all the statistics in the world wouldn't make any difference.

Perhaps personal experience is enough in a comparatively small organization, but it's not sufficient in larger ones. Moreover, when senior managers retire, who will remember those anecdotes? They would be gone. But the data captured through a formal evaluation, if there had been such a thing, would remain.

As the leadership pipeline expands and the need for qualified successors becomes more urgent—as will surely happen in most jurisdictions and agencies—the ability to demonstrate results and determine the most cost-effective methods will become paramount. The case studies present useful models, but our research identified few organizations that we could characterize as best practice in this area.

So What Can We Do? The Study's Implications for Practice

Pamela Stewart, *Director, Partnership and Community*
Bob Lavigna, *Senior Manager, Client Services Group*
CPS Human Resource Services

During the spring and summer of 2005, while this final report was being produced, we had several opportunities to present a preview of the study's findings at public-sector HR conferences. Invariably, at the end of each presentation, audience members asked the following questions:

- So what can we do to build our leadership pipeline?
- How do we convince senior managers that this should be a strategic priority for our organization?
- How can we move away from the just-in-time approach toward a more integrated approach to building the leadership pipeline?

Based on the research findings and our experience working with organizations at all levels of government, we offer eight concrete recommendations that jurisdictions and agencies can implement to build their leadership pipelines.

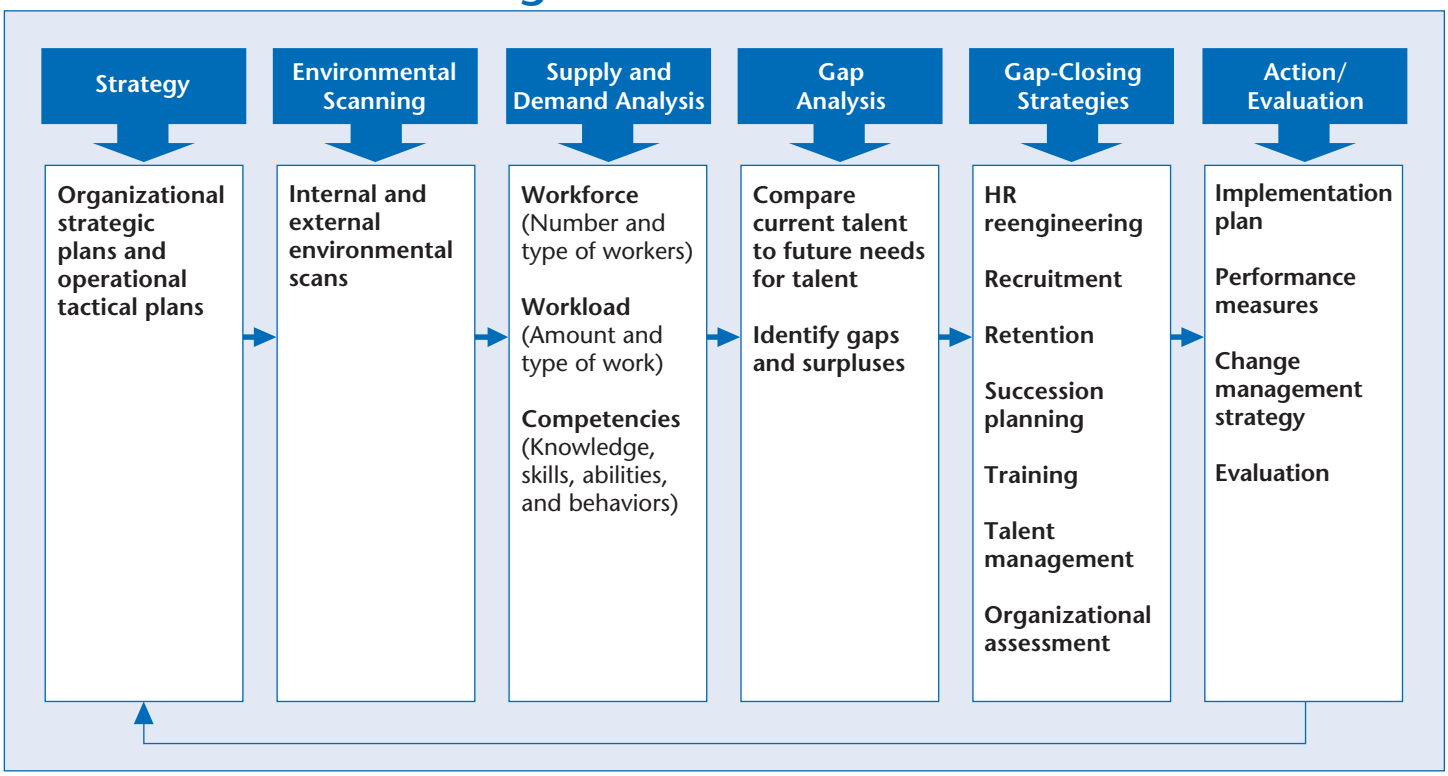
1. Make workforce planning the foundation

Effective and ongoing workforce planning comes first. In fact, *Governing Magazine's* 2005 Grading of the States put strategic workforce planning at the top of its grading criteria. Georgia, the only state to receive straight A's in the "People" category, was lauded for its strategic workforce planning, among other winning practices.

Workforce planning should be the framework – the glue – that integrates all HR practices. While there are many "brands" of workforce planning, all entail essentially the same process:

- Assessing the organization's future workforce needs (the demand for talent) based on the strategic plan and on the skills, knowledge, and competencies that will be needed to carry out that strategy
- Forecasting the supply of the skills, knowledge, and competencies based on the organization's current workforce and projected attrition, including turnover and retirements
- Evaluating the gap between the projected supply of, and demand for, talent, again focusing on specific competencies rather than simply head count
- Developing a plan for closing the gap between supply and demand through a combination of human resource practices, including recruitment, selection, and hiring; training and development; performance management; career movement; retention, etc.

CPS Workforce Planning Model



©2005 CPS Workforce Planning Model

We recommend two excellent resources to readers who want to learn more about workforce planning. The first CPS-sponsored research study[1] presented several in-depth case studies that describe leading-edge practices in workforce planning: The Tennessee Valley Authority, the State of Pennsylvania and the US Army Materiel Command. The study's findings include many recommendations for implementing workforce planning effectively, based on lessons learned by these and other jurisdictions.

In addition, the guide to workforce planning[2] published by IPMA-HR (and written by CPS) is another excellent source. The fact that we continue to get requests from jurisdictions for both of these publications suggests that they remain relevant and useful.

2. Engage senior leaders

Many HR professionals perceive that their organization's senior leadership needs to be persuaded that developing the leadership pipeline should become a priority. They ask about effective tactics to get senior leaders' attention.

Workforce planning is one method since, if it's done right, it produces hard numbers. But we have also seen other tactics that can be very effective. In Anaheim, California, HR Director David Hill drove home the point at a 1997 meeting of the city's senior management team: First, he asked all senior managers to stand. Then he told everyone who was already retirement-eligible to sit down. Then he instructed those who would be eligible in two years, and then in five, to do the same. That left just a few managers still standing. In about two minutes, Hill had dramatized the potential impact of retirements on the city's leadership and created an unforgettable visual image.

Another CPS client, the city of Minneapolis, used a different tactic to get senior managers' attention. The city HR Director showed two organizational charts to managers of one city department. The first showed the department's leaders and their dates-of-hire. Then she showed the same chart looking five years ahead. In this version, retirement-eligible managers were highlighted in red. Most of the boxes were red. Not surprisingly, the department leaders quickly decided to collaborate with HR to develop a workforce-planning process.

When we show these two charts to conference audiences, the second one never fails to draw audible gasps. It's not that the retirement projections are that different from most jurisdictions'; it's that the chart makes such a powerful statement about the need to aggressively build the leadership pipeline.

Such visual tactics for persuading senior managers that leadership issues deserve a prominent place on the agenda are not a substitute for workforce planning. But they can help wake up a complacent leadership team in a hurry.

Creating awareness is just the first step. Organizations also need to engage senior management in developing new leaders. The case studies presented in this report provide many examples of the critical roles that leaders can play in identifying, assessing, developing, hiring, encouraging, and promoting future leaders:

- Succession planning (Roseville, California; Plano, Texas; New York Office of General Services; Michigan Department of Human Services)
- Identifying and validating competencies (Roseville, Plano, South Carolina)
- Nominating and encouraging self-nomination for formal leadership development programs (Plano, Roseville, US Department of Labor)
- Mentoring or coaching (Michigan Department of Human Services, US Government SES Candidate Development Programs)
- Teaching in leadership development programs
- Sponsoring developmental assignments, action learning, job rotations (Pennsylvania Management Associates Program, Plano, US Department of Labor, Michigan Department of Human Services)

3. Identify competencies leaders will need

Having a competency model provides direction — a road map for developing future leaders and a yardstick for assessing them. The Roseville, California and Michigan cases describe several approaches to developing such a model.

It's important to note that at least some of the leadership competencies needed in the future may be different from those that current leaders need and have. For example, there's a growing recognition in federal government that leaders need to be able to manage service contracts, a skill that wasn't important in some agencies five years ago. Similarly, future leaders will need new skills necessitated by technological advances. In human resources, for example, executives will need quantitative and forecasting skills to do strategic workforce planning and analytics, using tools their predecessors never imagined.

[1] Young, Mary (2003) ***The Aging-and-Retiring Government Workforce:* How Serious Is the Challenge? What Are Jurisdictions Doing About It?** ©The Center for Organizational Research, a division of Linkage, Inc. Lexington, MA. Executive Summary and Final Report available at www.cps.ca.gov/AboutUs/agebubble.asp

[2] ***Workforce Planning Resource Guide for Public Sector Human Resource Professionals*** (2002), IPMA-HR.

4. Assess developmental needs

Many of the case-study jurisdictions and agencies stand out from others that we interviewed because their approach to building the leadership pipeline is data-driven. Rather than simply assuming they know the areas where they need to develop their talent pools, they rigorously assess potential leaders. Many jurisdictions use online assessments, multi-rater feedback, or self-assessments: the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program, Virginia Beach, South Carolina, New York State Office of General Services, the federal government's SES Candidate Development Program, and the US Coast Guard.

Two case studies — Roseville and Plano — illustrate how assessment centers can be used as a developmental tool for potential leaders. Those who participate in an assessment center get confidential feedback about their strengths and developmental needs. They can use this information to guide their own career development. That's what Roseville's current Chief of Police did several years ago. Today he credits his experience in Roseville's Management Development Assessment Center as a catalyst for helping him prepare, and compete successfully, for his current position.

The results of an assessment center also give the organization data about the strength of its current replacement pool and the competency gaps that need to be closed to prepare potential candidates for future leadership positions.

5. Create a leadership development strategy

Over time, many of the organizations we interviewed have expanded their efforts to build their leadership pipeline strategically. Initially, they may have focused on creating a formal leadership development program for employees who are next in line. Eventually, many broadened their efforts to include other segments of their workforce and a variety of methods for building the pipeline, such as rotational assignments, action learning teams, mentoring, and 360-degree feedback.

Two case studies illustrate a comprehensive leadership development strategy: the City of Anaheim and the US Coast Guard. These organizations are extremely different in size and mission, yet their leadership development strategies serve a similar purpose. The strategies define:

- Target segments of the workforce, usually based on organizational level (mid-level managers, senior leaders, etc.)
- The competencies and skills that employees at each level need to develop
- The developmental experiences and tools available, either within the organization or elsewhere

When an organization already does workforce planning and already has a competency model, the leadership development strategy should be aligned with both. A clear strategy for building the pipeline helps an organization "get its arms around" an integrated set of practices. It helps to identify gaps, such as a segment or skill area that still needs to be addressed. And it can also help the organization identify potential synergies, such as an event or program targeted to one employee segment that might also benefit another group.

By creating a comprehensive strategy for leadership development, an organization can integrate many different practices and programs into an effective array of approaches to building the leadership pipeline.

6. Institutionalize the process of creating and following-through on Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

In our experience, some organizations have many effective practices for preparing future leaders, but they fall short in follow-through. Why? Because they leave it up to the individual employee and his or her supervisor to create a formal agreement about the areas in which the employee needs to develop, the development process, and the expected outcomes. As a result, they are losing much of their investment in a competency model or employee assessments because they don't hold anyone accountable for what happens next.

Today, there's an urgent need to develop leaders who will be prepared to assume top jobs when current public-sector leaders retire. There's too much at stake to leave it to chance. Making Individual Development Plans a requirement (as the New York Office of General Services and the federal government's SES Candidate Development Programs do, for example) and training people how to use them (if necessary) can enhance an organization's investment in developing its workforce. Not only does such a requirement improve follow-through. By communicating a serious commitment to employee development, it may also help the organization boost retention.

7. Tap into the talent pool of retirement-eligible employees and retirees

The Tennessee Valley Authority, which served as a case study in our previous study, made an interesting discovery when it asked its mature workers to voluntarily tell their supervisors when they were planning to retire. More than 80 percent agreed to do so. And many of these soon-to-retire folks said they were pleased that the organization was concerned about how it would manage without them. They cared about what happened afterward. And they recognized why it was in the organization's best interest to prepare in advance for their departure.

Many managers feel a similar sense of stewardship. Most would rather leave things in good hands than see them fall apart once they retire. This desire to "leave a legacy" is a resource that organizations should tap into. They can identify selected individuals whose skill sets and personalities would make them good coaches or guides. They may even identify recent retirees. The California International City/County Management Association (Cal-ICMA) is using both seasoned managers and recent retirees to coach employees who aspire to city or county management positions. The New York State Office of General Services has piloted a Retiree Service Corps to supplement, or even help develop, current employees' knowledge and skills. Because outsourcing has, in some cases, depleted bench-strength within the department, rehiring retirees is one tactic for bringing their experience back into the organization on a project basis.

8. Don't let cost keep your organization from building the leadership pipeline

The 15 case studies describe a range of approaches to building the leadership pipeline, including many that are not expensive. The Cal-ICMA and Florida cities case studies, for example, describe how local jurisdictions can collaborate to build their pipelines, sharing the cost or, in Cal-ICMA's case, attracting external funding. Such collaborative efforts not only reduce costs, they often serve an important developmental need by exposing participants to other departments and jurisdictions.

The cases also illustrate practices that cost little or nothing: rotational assignments, mentoring, job-shadowing, briefings and site visits, and brown-bag book discussions.

To be sure, some jurisdictions profiled in this report have developed fairly expensive programs for developing leaders. Yet the case studies also illustrate how some costs (that are really investments) can be amortized over time. For example, many start-up costs such as program and curriculum design and creating assessment tools are one-time expenses. The more employees who participate in an assessment center, such as those Roseville, California uses to develop future leaders, the lower the cost-per-employee.

Nevertheless, building the leadership pipeline is an investment, and it cannot be accomplished without some expense. For that reason, we recommend that jurisdictions make some effort to evaluate the impacts of their efforts. The case studies provide many examples of methods and metrics. The US Department of Labor, the State of South Carolina, the Michigan Department of Human Services and the Virginia Beach Police Department are good examples.

There may have been a time when building the leadership pipeline was merely a "nice to have." Today, it's a necessity. Whether you need to persuade senior leaders of this urgent need, or whether your organization is ready to integrate its approach to building the pipeline, the case studies that follow provide inspiring examples and practical suggestions.

OVERVIEW OF THE CASE STUDIES

The 15 case studies that follow, as well as the shorter articles that accompany them, were selected from the 35 public-sector organizations we interviewed. Our initial selection was based on several criteria. We were looking for case studies that would:

- Illustrate a variety of approaches to building the leadership pipeline
- Include examples from local, state, and federal government; from organizations of varying size; and from different parts of the US
- Offer both high-end and low-cost solutions
- Produce demonstrable results[1]

While the selection process was at times difficult, the ultimate deciding factor was that we felt excited about what the agency or jurisdiction was doing. In short, we chose these case studies because **they offer practical, effective and sometimes innovative solutions that can help jurisdictions and agencies at all levels of government to build the next generation of leaders.**

An additional factor in choosing some case studies is that **they raise important issues that organizations should consider as they develop their talent-management strategy**. For example, the case study that compares two approaches to developing candidates for the federal government's Senior Executive Service raises a critical issue that local and state governments must also consider: What are the costs and benefits of an internal program for developing leaders (for example, a department-level program for its own employees) vs. a program offered at a higher level, such as a statewide program that draws participants from many departments?

Organized around the Integrated Approach to Building the Leadership Pipeline—the model that we developed based on our data analysis and that we discussed on page 1 — the following chart will help readers find the cases that will be most useful to them. It indicates which practices (the rows labeled at the left of the chart) are featured in each case study. Thus, a reader interested in finding out more about action learning, assessment centers, or program evaluation can immediately identify the most relevant case studies and sidebars.

One point bears repeating: the chart reflects only the tactics that are described in the case study. When there is no bullet, it doesn't necessarily mean that the organization doesn't use this method or practice, only that it isn't described in the case. A double asterisk (**) indicates a particularly noteworthy example.

[1] This is the one criterion we overruled in two cases—the Florida City-Manager Internship and the US Office of Personnel Management's Candidate Development Program—where a new practice or approach was sufficiently interesting that we decided to include it, even though it had been implemented fairly recently.

	Cal-ICMA	Florida Cities	Plano, Texas	Roseville, California	Anaheim, California	Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department	Pennsylvania Management Associates	New York State Office of General Services	South Carolina CPM	Michigan Department of Human Services	Mississippi CPM Project Publication	Hawaii Individual Action Plan	US Government Accountability Office	Developing SES Candidates	US Coast Guard
Workforce Planning								•							•
Competency Model			•					•	•	•			•	•	•
Succession Planning				•	•			•							
Recruit, Select, Hire, On-Board															
Assessment for selection			•					•		**				•	
External/entry-level		•											•		
External/middle-senior level							**							**	
Interns		•													
On-boarding						•							**		
Train & Develop															
Assessment for Development/Assessment Center	•		•	**		•			•	•				•	**
Individual Development Plans								**		•			•	•	
Formal Leadership Development Program(s)			•			•	•		**		•	•	•	**	•
Training for Managers and Supervisors					•	•		•		•					
Job Rotations/Developmental assistants		**					**			•			•	•	•
Action Learning or other application projects			•			•	•			**	•	•		**	
Coaching	•		**			•				•			•	**	
Mentoring										•				•	
Promotion & Career Mobility	**	•					•	**		•			•	•	•
Relationship-building	**				**										
Retention				•									•		
Knowledge Management								•							
Program Evaluation	•			•	•	**			**	**			•	•	

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDIES

CAL-ICMA COACHING PROGRAM

Synopsis

This case study illustrates what local governments can do to build the leadership pipeline through collaborative efforts. Here, Cal-ICMA (the California affiliate of the International City and County Management Association), the Municipal Management Associations of Southern and Northern California, and the California City Management Foundation partnered to raise city and county managers' awareness of succession needs and to develop the next generation of leaders. Funded by external sources (rather than the cities or counties), this program uses innovative and cost-effective methods to foster career development. Making imaginative use of older and newer technology (the telephone and the Internet) and local gatherings, the program minimizes travel costs while helping to build relationships between current and aspiring local government executives.

Challenges

Concerned about the leadership pipeline in local government, Cal-ICMA has waged a full-scale campaign to raise awareness among its members and mount a state-wide effort to prepare future leaders. The manifesto for this initiative, a substantive guide called *Preparing the Next Generation—A Guide for Current and Future Local Government Managers*[1], begins with a litany of factors that make succession planning an urgent priority:

- **Fewer mid-career professionals to replace retiring baby boomers.** An analysis by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests that the age cohort following the boomer generation is appreciably smaller, creating a gap in the talent supply.
- **An antigovernment bias.** While many baby boomers were drawn to public service in the 1960s and 1970s, values have shifted and government careers are not as attractive, which poses a challenge in recruiting new talent.
- **Different values.** Research suggests that younger employees place value on work/life balance and are less willing to sacrifice personal life for the sake of career advancement. In addition, in focus groups of local government employees, younger workers perceived senior leaders as overworked, stressed, and targets for abuse.
- **Lack of succession planning.** Few local governments have a formal process for succession planning and many managers give little thought to preparing their successors.

Approach

Published in 2002, *Preparing the Next Generation* recommends actions that local jurisdictions can take to address these challenges. Brief case studies describe some jurisdictions' efforts. Other chapters offer career advice for aspiring managers and testimonials from current managers about what makes their jobs rewarding.

Since then, with this publication as the platform, Cal-ICMA has made an aggressive effort to ensure that the next generation of leaders in local government is well prepared. Its centerpiece is the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program.[2] Now finishing its second year, the program offers aspiring managers practical guidance in advancing their careers. It also seeks to nurture an ethos of mentoring and coaching in current local government managers and to give them new opportunities to reflect on and share lessons learned in their careers.

Following the success of its first year, the program expanded to include the following elements:

- **Panel discussions on leadership topics.** It's fairly common at professional conferences to find a panel of successful executives talking about career issues as part of the program. The problem is, many executives are too busy to attend such conferences, even if they're invited to speak, and many organizations have limited travel funds to send their staff.

  The Cal-ICMA Coaching Program has overcome those barriers. It offers panel discussions by telephone on a range of topics relevant to new executives and managers as well as those who aspire to such a positions: "Having It All—Building a Career and a Life." "Interviewing and Getting a Local Public Agency Executive Job." "Working with and for Elected Officials." Other topics focus on specific competencies, such as developing strategic partnerships, leading a team, guiding a project, or communicating effectively.

  The logistics are appealingly simple. Cal-ICMA and its association partners publicize the topics, dates, and times on their respective web sites and through their list-servs. Because each discussion lasts just one hour, "It's very time effective," says Palo Alto City Manager Frank Benest, one of the program's architects. Both current and aspiring senior managers find it much easier to carve out time for a call-in session than a conference trip. Participants can just dial-in; they don't even need to register in advance.

  And while the medium might be less engaging than a face-to-face panel discussion, the speakers and the topics have proven popular. In the first year, each session drew from 40-80 callers. Now the number is about 100-120.

[1] Published by ICMA and available at icma.org/cal-icma/docs/next_generation.cfm?hsid=8&ssid1=2189&t=0

[2] Described in detail at icma.org/main/bc.asp?bcid=351&hsid=8&ssid1=2190&ssid2=2203

There have been unanticipated consequences, as well. "Senior managers love to do this," says Benest. "Our jobs are difficult, sometimes dreary. But for one hour we get to focus on the joys and benefits." It's a message that's too seldom heard, he adds. "City managers have been terrible about promoting their jobs" to younger people.

For callers, the telephone format affords a measure of anonymity, allowing them to lurk if they choose to do so. If not, they can pose a question or join in the discussion period.

Initially funded by the International City and County Management Association, the California City Management Foundation, and the Municipal Management Associations of Southern and Northern California, the program attracted additional sponsors (CPS Human Resource Services[3] and Comcast) for three more years. With this funding, it has added new features: Callers can now e-mail questions to the panel moderator either before or during the discussion. They can also request a discussion guide so they can use the panel as the catalyst for a follow-up discussion in their organization. Panelists' profiles are posted on the web site, along with audio recordings of previous sessions.

- **Small-group coaching.** Like the panel discussions, the small-group coaching takes place by telephone. Callers can choose from two groups: one targeted to city or county managers with less than two years' experience and another for those who are applying, or hope to move into such a position within the next two years. Again, callers simply dial-in at the appointed date and time. But, unlike the panel discussion, these conversations are not taped. Rather, they're designed to encourage more interaction among callers and the panel, which usually includes both current executives and executive recruiters. Callers may remain anonymous or not, but are invited to ask candid questions.
- **One-on-one coaching.** Another new addition is more individualized coaching, offered in response to many requests. Cal-ICMA has recruited senior executives from cities, counties, and special districts who agree to coach a new or aspiring manager. In addition, some retired city managers, called the California Range Riders, also serve as coaches. The coaches' profiles are posted on the web site, along with guidelines for developing an effective coaching relationship, a sample contract, and other materials designed to help make the experience mutually rewarding.
- **Local area networking events.** To provide an opportunity for current and aspiring executives to meet, area-, city- and county-manager groups hosts local networking events. These provide an opportunity to continue conversations, put-faces-to-names and, at the same time, bring people together across jurisdictions.
- **Management style analysis.** This self-assessment tool was made available in the program's first year as an aid to development and career planning.
- **Future city managers workshop.** The capstone experience for this sequence of activities is an intensive, two-day workshop for people who are currently ready for an executive position and who are nominated by their city manager. The event is co-sponsored by the Municipal Management Associations of Southern and Northern California and the California City Management Foundation.

Several aspects of the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program are worth noting:

- **Collaborating across jurisdictions to leverage local resources**. By organizing a program at the association-level, the organizations and the individuals who developed the program have produced a higher-value solution than most cities and counties could do on their own.
- **Broadening experiences.** Because it encompasses many jurisdictions and at least three levels of local government (city, county and special districts), the program offers the kind of broadening experiences that are critical for developing effective leaders.
- **Exposure and relationship-building.** Throughout our research, another of the components we found to be critical in building the leadership pipeline is relationships. The Cal-ICMA program creates opportunities for relationship-building through telephone discussions, one-on-one coaching, and local networking events. The fact that the program secured funding for three additional years ensures that there will be opportunities to expand and deepen these relationships, if participants so choose.

[3] CPS Human Resource Services also sponsored this research.

Cost

The program costs $60,000 per year, which covers the coaching consultant, the Management Style Analysis, and the phone lines used for dial-in sessions.

Evaluation

The first year of the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program met or exceeded all of its goals. The following chart shows the original targets and the actual outcomes for each goal.

Goal	Target Year 1	Actual	Target Year 2	Actual
# of panel discussions	6	6	6	8
# of participants for call-in panel discussions, per panel	15	40-80	50	100-120
# of panelists [total for all panels]	15	20	18	30
# of coaches serving in small groups	3-6	6	6	6
# of participants in small-group coaching	8	9	10	20-30

Qualitative feedback from panelists, coaches, and new or aspiring managers was also very positive. In response to those comments, the program implemented several enhancements in the second year, for example, one-on-one coaching.

THREE FLORIDA CITIES

PORT ORANGE

Population: 50,000
City Workforce: 422 (FTEs)

SOUTH DAYTONA BEACH

Population: 14,000
City Workforce: 136 (FTEs)

DAYTONA BEACH SHORES

Population: 4,300; Seasonal: 20,000
City Workforce: 80 (FTEs)

Synopsis

Concerned about the talent pipeline for future city managers, three Florida cities — Port Orange, South Daytona Beach and Daytona Beach Shores — teamed up to create a two-year city-manager internship. The model program gives a master's-level intern the opportunity to work full-time in jurisdictions of varying size, under different city managers and city councils, while learning the ropes of city management. In short, the intern gains exposure to both the science and art of "surviving the profession." Individually, these cities might not have had the resources to sponsor an intern, but by collaborating they share costs while giving the intern more varied experience.

Challenges

Who will be the next generation of city managers? And where can those who want to become city managers get a foothold in the field? There are no easy answers due to two sets of challenges: the need to learn on the job, and the lack of opportunity to do so.

- **The job of a city manager can only be learned through experience**. An effective city manager needs skills that can't be learned sitting in a classroom: Managing an entire City Council of bosses. Dealing with competing interest groups and ordinary citizens. Surviving changes in administration. As city manager in a small city — traditionally the first rung on the career ladder — "you're in charge of a police department, a fire department, a parks department and perhaps a large utility company. You've got an $11-12 million budget," says William Whitson, assistant city manager for Port Orange. "That's pretty complicated to know how to handle coming straight out school."
- **Career opportunities for younger people are limited**. City Councils, the body that hires a city manager, are often dominated by baby boomers. "Baby boomer councils want to hire baby boomers," says Ken Parker, Port Orange's City Manager. "They're comfortable with people their own age and that puts younger candidates at a disadvantage."
- **Current city managers aren't retiring as soon as they're eligible**. That reduces job vacancies. And because city managers tend to move around, it means that less experienced candidates may compete for the same jobs as those with 30 years of experience.
- **The job also attracts retirees**. Cushioned by a regular pension, a recent, public-sector retiree might be happy to take a city manager job in a small community, even though it pays just $25,000 per year. While such jobs used to be the entree into the profession, today, "the people getting these jobs are not the young people," says Parker. "At some point, that's got to concern you."

  Such generational issues may be more acute in Florida, with its concentration of older adults, than other states. Yet they are not the only factors limiting career opportunities for younger people. The supply of Master's of Public Administration (MPA) graduates has grown significantly. "When most of us went to school, there weren't that many MPAs out there," says Joe Yarborough, city manager of South Daytona Beach. "Now we're inundated with them throughout city government."

Approach

For all of these reasons, the Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA) recognized the need to attract more young people into the profession and agreed to co-sponsor a new city-manager internship proposed by the three cities, a flagship program that other cities and counties might also adopt. The association helped promote the call for applications on its web site and to local colleges and universities. Applicants were required to have completed an MPA degree or its equivalent. The cities' top-choice candidate began her internship in May 2004.

Program Description

Mirroring the career path of a typical city manager, the intern moves from a smaller city (South Daytona, population: 14,000), to a larger one (Daytona Beach Shores, permanent population: 4,300; seasonal: 20,000), to Port Orange, a city of 50,000. The rotation—eight months in each jurisdiction—introduces him or her to a range of municipalities, management styles, political, and organizational issues. "By exposing the intern to a network of managers and cities throughout Florida," says Parker, "we're increasing the likelihood that this person will be hired after completing the internship. We're also giving them a network."

Initially, the three cities considered making the internship just one year, but quickly decided that wasn't long enough. "Things are so complicated in city management," says Whitson. "No one could learn what they needed in one year." Longer rotations also give the intern the chance to get know each community better. Predictably, they'll also encounter different issues as they move from, say, a resort town to a community with more cultural and economic diversity.

What does it take to create such an internship? In short: time and commitment from the city manager and a willingness on the part of city council to take the long view.

"There's not an immediate return," Whitson acknowledges. "You have to have your eye on the bigger picture. We have to start identifying talent and training people now because it takes time to become a city manager. It's a long-term investment we're making."

Cost

The intern's annual salary ($25,000) and benefits ($9,250) are divided equally among the three cities. Additional support from FCCMA ($5,200) is enabling the intern to attend both the Florida and the International City and County Management Association conferences and to participate in other executive-level training for city managers.

Evaluation

Implemented in 2004, the program is too new to have produced any results. After completing the program, an intern should be ready for a job as a city manager of a small community, or an assistant city manager in a medium-sized one. Only by making sure that younger people get such opportunities can cities ensure an experienced pipeline for city managers in the future.

According to Ana Motie, the first intern, the experience is teaching her how to "survive the profession." It's not something she could have picked up during her MPA program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Among her assignments thus far: managing Port Orange's Emergency Operations Center during a three-hurricane season. In Daytona Beach Shores, she helped set up a Community Redevelopment Agency. And when she moves on to South Daytona in October 2005, she will focus on the economic side of city redevelopment.

PLANO, TEXAS

Population: 246,869
City Workforce: 2,500

Synopsis

Plano studied leadership development programs in the private and public sector and then customized its own version. Combining classroom instruction, coaching, and a team project, the 12-month Management Preparation Program of Plano (MP3) targets experienced managers with both the interest and potential to become senior leaders. Drawing participants from many areas of municipal government, the program helps them step outside their own department and function to learn about other areas and to grapple with city-wide issues.

Challenges

Like many jurisdictions, Plano, Texas knew it had to do something to address major challenges in its leadership pipeline:

- **Approaching retirement of top managers.** In 2001, the City recognized that nearly half (46 percent) of its management team would be eligible for retirement within five years.
- **Demographic changes within the city.** Plano's Hispanic and Asian populations are rapidly increasing. While Caucasians make up 70 percent of city inhabitants, that percentage has been steadily dropping. The population is also aging. These changes affect city government's customers, services, and workforce.
- **New competencies required to manage city departments.** It can be a delicate issue to raise with current managers, but the skill-set that has served them well in their own careers may not perfectly match the skills managers will need in the future. It's become increasingly important that supervisors are adroit at managing conflict. They also need to think strategically and avoid getting bogged down in day-to-day issues. And they need to be comfortable and skilled dealing with a variety of diversity issues and demographic changes.
- **Changing revenue base and transition from a growth city to a mature city**. Following 30 years of growth, Plano is looking ahead to a changing fiscal picture. Building and development-related revenues have begun to shrink as the city becomes more "built-out." The taxable value of both new and old property has begun to level off, along with sales tax revenue. At the same time, the city anticipates a rising demand for certain services and growing maintenance needs for its aging infrastructure. According to a 2003 analysis, if current spending were to continue, the General Fund would run a deficit by FY 2005-6. While revenue challenges may continue into the future, Plano will experience lower debt ratios as it maintains and improves its well-planned infrastructure, By anticipating and preparing for these developments, Plano has maintained a reputation for excellence and high performance.

Faced with such challenges — some of which Plano is encountering for the first time — the city decided to make identifying talent and developing leaders a priority.

Approach

To develop current managers and prepare the next generation of leaders, the city launched an intensive new training effort called the Management Preparation Program of Plano (MP3). Adapted from private and public-sector programs, the program was customized to fit Plano's priorities and to complement existing programs. "Leadership for the 21st Century," for example, is a nine-month course for employees who are interested in becoming supervisors and managers and for people already in those roles who want to hone their skills.

Recruitment

The twelve-month MP3 program targets experienced managers who have the potential to move into a senior leadership position. Applicants may self-nominate or be nominated by an executive director or a city manager. "It's important that the selection process be completely transparent to prevent any perception of secrecy or favoritism," says Human Resources Director LaShon Ross. Candidates must have a minimum of three years supervisory or management experience. They must also have a bachelor's degree or demonstrate comparable experience gleaned from work and education. In a written application, candidates indicate the level of position (city manager, executive director, or department head) they're interested in. It need not be a promotion, although in most cases it is.

Selection

The Management Preparation Assessment Team (MPAT) is made up of the city manager, an executive director, two department directors and one MP3 graduate. The Team winnows applications — about 20 per cycle — to a short list of six to ten candidates who will participate in the assessment process.

The assessment consists of three, day-long exercises, one for each level of management. While some basic competencies may be assessed on all three days, the exercises vary based on the management level. For example, the in-box exercise for aspiring city managers might include a citizen request to intervene in a dispute with a city department, public speaking invitations, and requests for financial support. For department heads, the same exercise might include the kinds of issues that are more typical at that level: a salary increase request that exceeds personnel guidelines; a travel reimbursement form that includes extraneous hotel charges such movie rentals; and a budget request. In both cases, the assessors are interested in how astutely the candidate weighs the issues, makes decisions, and prioritizes tasks, but their performance expectations are calibrated differently based on the position level.

Most external assessors work in other city governments, although Plano has added some private-sector managers to the mix, drawn from companies that are well known and respected in the area. External assessors are volunteers. They bring a neutral-party perspective, since they do not know the candidates.

The assessment team receives advance information about the assessment process and their roles, which they review for an hour when they first convene. When the three-day assessment is finished, they pass along their recommendations to MPAT, which selects the next MP3 class. Candidates receive the assessors' written feedback and developmental suggestions. Those who are not selected for the next MP3 class are encouraged to reapply.

Profile of Participants

Of the 16 people who have completed the program or are currently enrolled, nine (56 percent) occupied positions below the middle-manager level. (Plano designates anyone at or above the middle-management level as a member of its "management team.") Participants have come from a cross-section of city departments, including sworn and civilian members of the police department, and have ranged in age from 31- to 54-years-old.

Program Design

- **Class size is kept small (4-6 people per year)**
- **Broadening participants' understanding of city government and the interdependencies among departments.** "We're not preparing people for a certain position, we're preparing them for broad leadership," says HR director LaShon Ross. To gain this broader understanding, the MP3 class visits selected city departments and meets with the mayor and city council.
- **The year-long program**. Fourteen class sessions focus on conflict resolution and mediation (5 sessions), leadership, systems, presentation skills, public relations, pluralism, legal issues, ethics, stress and burnout, budget/ finance, teams, and decision making.
- **One-on-one coaching**. Each MP3 participant is matched with a coach who is a senior manager from a different department. For example, a police lieutenant who graduated from the first MP3 class was matched with the head of the Parks and Recreation Department. Coaches must complete four hours of training to be certified. They receive a summary of the assessor's feedback and, with their coaches, plan activities for the coming year tailored to his or her developmental needs. MP3ers spend a minimum of eight hours per month with their coach, including time spent shadowing him or her on the job.
- **A final project assigned by city managers to address an important strategic challenge**. For example, the 2004 MP3 class was asked to address organizational structure within city government, opportunities to partner with other jurisdictions and community organizations, and the impact on technology. The team's analysis needed to incorporate previous projections about Plano's changing revenue base, demographics, demand for services, and staffing. Over the course of the twelve-month program, members of the MP3 worked individually and as a team to tackle these issues. They investigated innovative solutions that other jurisdictions had implemented. Then they delivered their recommendations both as a written report and as a presentation to senior leaders including the City Manager, Executive Directors, MP3 alumni, and the MP3 teams' supervisors and coaches. Since such meetings are subject to sunshine laws, members of the media may also attend.

Important Considerations

- **Time demands**. MP3 participants are expected to devote a minimum of 300 hours to the program while fulfilling their normal work responsibilities and maintaining service excellence. It's a heavy commitment. Although Ross tries to set realistic expectations by inviting alumni to share their experiences, new MP3ers are still surprised by the workload once the program gets underway.
- **Defining the team project**. Clearly framing the project assignment is critical. The first class felt its assignment was "overwhelming." The second year, the assignment was more focused and the expectations more clearly defined. In addition, teams have asked to receive their project assignment at their first meeting to maximize the length of time they can work on it.
- **Curriculum**. The MP3 curriculum emphasizes professional skills and cross-department exposure. It does not offer rigorous training in public management theory and practices, although participants may explore such topics independently as part of the final project. However, it's important to note that MP3 offers a different sort of developmental experience than, say, a master's-degree program in Public Administration or a CPM certificate program (both of which Plano employees may seek through other programs).

Cost

In its first two years, program costs were absorbed within the city's Human Resources Center budget. In FY 2005, MP3 received its own budget allocation of $15,000. The funds will be used to pay for project supplies, refreshments, and additional speakers.

Evaluation

There is no formal program evaluation. One consequence of the program, says Ross, is that senior management often turn to MP3 alumni for leadership. While it's difficult to prove a cause-and-effect relationship, several MP3 participants have been promoted. (Another retired to take a private-sector job.) Although the program's primary purpose is to prepare leaders to assume greater responsibility in the future, it has also brought immediate benefits. "The good thing about the program is that it makes participants much better at their current position," says Ross.

There's other anecdotal evidence of the program's success. One department director was so impressed with the program's impact on her subordinate that she applied to the program herself and was accepted.

"People come away from MP3 with a renewed sense that they have a career track within city government," says Dr. Tony Picchioni, the Southern Methodist University professor who serves as MP3 program director. "It opens up new avenues and gives them new ideas about where they might like to see themselves in the future."

Next Steps

Half of Plano's current Management Team (the 74 top-level employees) will be eligible to retire by the end of 2008. A whopping 70 percent will be eligible by the end of the decade. That means the challenges of building and maintaining the City's leadership pipeline will be high priorities for years to come. By the end of 2005, the MP3 program will have produced 16 graduates.

Plano is considering adding a mentoring component to its workforce development efforts. MP3 alumni, among others, might serve as "facilitative guides" to small groups of employees interested in meeting regularly to discuss management and career issues in a supportive environment. Discussion topics would be determined by group members.

Plano is also implementing PeopleSoft's succession and competency-based modules. Once these are operational, Ross expects to be able to generate more sophisticated analysis of the city's succession and other workforce needs.

ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA

Population: 100,000
Municipal workforce: 1,000

Synopsis

Roseville, California has extensive experience using assessment centers as a tool for developing groups of employees — in contrast to the more common use of such centers as a candidate-selection method. Initially, the centers were designed for middle-managers who might be in the running to replace department heads as they retired. Since then, Roseville has adapted the process for specific occupational groups (such as police or fire personnel) and for other position levels. The city won the Helen Putnam Award from the League of California Cities for its use of assessment centers to promote employee development. The lessons drawn from Roseville's experience are relevant to organizations at any level of government.

Challenges

- **Retirements.** In 1997, Roseville city leaders looked around and realized that 11 of 15 municipal department heads would be eligible for retirement by 2003. Suddenly, succession planning became a priority.

  Roseville anticipates about 50 retirements in the next five years. That's a small percentage of the municipal workforce, but it's concentrated at the most senior levels of the organization. Looking only at its management and supervisory-level employees, approximately 80 percent will be eligible for retirement by 2007.

- **Growth.** Since 1997, Roseville's population has grown from 63,500 to 100,000 and it's projected to increase by another 30,000 over the next ten years. The need for city services has kept pace with the growth rate. The city anticipates adding 300 new positions in the next three to five years. Another consequence of this growth, notes City Manager Craig Robinson, is that "the complexity of being a department head in city government has grown exponentially." As a result, "Today, people who aspire to promotion need to be better prepared."

- **Competition for talent.** Located 18 miles from Sacramento and 100 miles from San Francisco, Roseville long had an advantage in recruiting and retaining talented city employees: Its housing costs were much lower than surrounding communities. But with Roseville's growth, real estate prices have risen. That's made it increasingly important that both prospective and current city employees view Roseville as offering excellent career opportunities. "We want to promote from within, whenever possible," says Robinson. "We want our employees to see 'there's a future for me here.'"

While Roseville faces a variety of challenges, it was the threat of imminent retirements that first persuaded the city to focus on developing internal talent. "In retrospect, we were just focused on department heads," says Training and Development Manager Lisa Achen. "Since then, we've looked more broadly at our workforce."

Approach

Roseville's integrated strategy for leadership development has many components: a competency model for senior managers, a tool to adapt that model to fit other position levels and specialty fields, a succession plan, assessment centers, a hefty catalog of training and development opportunities, scholarships to university programs, a mentoring program, and individual development plans.

Yet one area of Roseville's experience stands out: That is its broad experience designing and conducting assessment centers in partnership with CPS Human Resource Services. An assessment center is a method in which a group of employees takes part in a series of activities — including written exercises, interviews, and simulations — while being observed by trained assessors. The exercises are designed to mirror the competencies required by a higher-level position for which the participants might be considered in the future. [See sidebar on page 31: "What Is an Assessment Center?"]

Since 1998, the city has used assessment centers as a tool for developing groups of employees, which is different from their more common use as a selection method. Initially, the centers were designed for middle-managers who might be in the running to replace department heads as they retired. Later, the process was adapted for specific occupational groups and for other position levels. The League of California Cities recognized Roseville's efforts with the Helen Putnam Award for Excellence in City Government. Roseville's experience using assessment centers to promote employee development is deeper and broader than any other jurisdiction we interviewed. The lessons drawn from these experiences are relevant to organizations at any level of government.

The Management Development Assessment Center (MDAC)

Like many people who work for the city of Roseville, City Manager Craig Robinson went through an assessment center when he applied for his previous job as administrative services director. "We were very comfortable using assessment centers for recruitment and selection," he says. But when the city realized it needed to begin preparing the next generation of leaders in city government, "we converted the assessment center into a development process."

By sending current managers through such a comprehensive process, the City would get a high-level status report on the cohort that was next-in-line to become department heads. With information about their overall strengths and weaknesses, the City would also gain a clear picture of what was needed to prepare them for possible promotion in the future.

The assessment center would also benefit the individuals who participated. Three or four weeks later, each would have a confidential, face-to-face meeting with a neutral person (sometimes it was Achen, in other cases it was a consultant) to review the assessors' ratings and written comments and to discuss the results of the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. Individual results would be shared with each participant and with HR. Aggregate results would give the City's senior managers a high-level take on the potential succession pool.

Deciding What to Assess

Before launching the assessment center, Roseville first had to determine exactly what skills and capabilities department heads needed. CPS Human Resource Services was hired to develop a competency model based on interviews with city managers. These interviews generated a list of eight clearly defined "management dimensions" that department heads in all areas of city government must master to be effective. The dimensions included: communications, decision making, interpersonal effectiveness, leadership style, administrative effectiveness, flexibility, planning/organization and developmental orientation. Department heads also described what each dimension "looked like" in action and gave examples of actual situations that would require facility in one or more of the eight dimensions.

Once Roseville had decided what to assess, it spent time making sure city employees understood why the city would be offering an assessment center that, unlike previous ones, wasn't intended to select the finalist for a current job vacancy. The initial buy-in process was carefully planned to ensure that both the eight management dimensions and the rationale for creating an MDAC were understood by the target population of middle managers. The first MDAC was conducted in 1998 and repeated in 2000 and 2001.

Components of the MDAC

While the term "Management Development Assessment Center" brings to mind a building or place, it was, in actuality, a process with six components:

- **Background questionnaire.** Participants completed this instrument at least one week before the MDAC. In addition to providing information about their background, they were asked to assess themselves in each of the eight management dimensions. They also had to describe a work experience that illustrated their strength in one dimension and their need to develop in another.
- **Personal interview.** Each employee was interviewed by one of the assessors. Based on the questionnaire, the interviewer asked follow-up questions related to the eight management dimensions.
- **In-basket activity.** An in-basket exercise is a set piece in most assessment centers. Participants had to sort through a pile of documents representing the range of issues Roseville department heads must deal with, making decisions about how to handle each. The in-basket items provided an opportunity to demonstrate skills in six of the management dimensions. Following the exercise, each participant had to explain the rationale for each decision to the three assessors.
- **Group-interaction activity.** Participants role-played a cross-functional task force that had been charged by the city manager to analyze a citywide issue and make recommendations, while the three assessors observed.
- **Team planning activity.** Building on the group-interaction exercise, participants were assigned to two teams that had to develop an implementation plan for their recommendations and prepare a formal presentation to the city manager. One assessor observed each team.
- **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).** Participants completed this written instrument.

At the end of each day, the assessors spent an hour and fifteen minutes preparing their notes on each of the activities they had observed, in relation to the eight management dimensions. These written comments would later be shared with each participant. Then, in the last hour, the assessors met together to reach a consensus rating for each participant on every dimension, using a five-point scale.

The duration of each MDAC depended on the size of the cohort. Department heads could nominate employees to participate; individuals could also self-nominate, so long as they also had their supervisor's support. The first year, 35 employees participated, which required seven, day-long sessions. In 2000, an additional 22 employees took part in the MDAC and in 2001, 19 more.

Developing the Succession Pool's Successors

Once the majority of Roseville's middle managers had participated in an MDAC, the city had a good grasp on the potential succession pool for departing department heads. Since then, it has used a similar model to assess more junior people. It was the next logical move, says Achen. "We've spent a lot of energy developing the top level. We need to spend time developing the levels below, too."

Since 2000, several city departments have conducted assessment centers for their own employees. The Roseville Police Department adapted the MDAC model to assess officers who were eligible to take the promotional exam for sergeant. It offered another assessment center to sergeants who might be moving up to the rank of lieutenant. The fire department has also put its captains through an assessment center. Roseville designed another assessment center for employees from several departments who might be contenders to become the next environmental utilities operations manager.

Last year, there was a citywide assessment center for those in line to become superintendent of a division or section within a department. Unlike the specialized assessment centers for police, fire, and environmental utilities, the one for prospective superintendents drew employees from a range of departments—from the library to the electric department to parks and recreation.

Both the successes and the dilemmas that have resulted from Roseville's assessment centers offer valuable lessons to other jurisdictions.

Insights from Roseville's Assessment Center Experience

Because Roseville has used assessment centers extensively—and has learned from successful as well as less successful experiences—it offers a number of lessons that other jurisdictions can learn from.

Who Gets Assessed

- **Homogeneous vs. heterogeneous groups**. It made perfect sense on paper to create an assessment center for supervisors who might someday be promoted to superintendent. But, as Roseville discovered, it wasn't easy to find a common set of competencies that all superintendents, across all departments, must have. Putting a heterogeneous group through the Management Development Assessment Center had worked because department heads could agree on a common set of management dimensions that should be assessed. But there was no comparable consensus regarding superintendents. "It's very difficult to build a single assessment tool that will give you the pick of people doing very different things," Achen concludes. The experience imparted an important lesson: If you can't measure a cluster of employees against the same yardstick, then they shouldn't be participating in the same assessment center.

What Gets Assessed

- **Developing a model and assessment center exercises**. Before designing an assessment center, incumbents must be interviewed to pin down the knowledge, skills, and attributes their job requires and to collect actual scenarios of the kinds of challenges they need to handle. This research and design work takes time and, when it is outsourced, money. Such costs may outweigh the benefits if only a few employees participate in a highly specialized assessment center. But when an organization wants to assess many people against the same competencies, as Roseville did with its MDAC, that initial investment can be amortized across fiscal years and the number of employees who participate.
- **Technical vs. managerial knowledge and skills**. From Achen's citywide perspective, it's clear that superintendents need to know, and be able to do, similar things, regardless of which department they work in. Yet what department heads said that superintendents needed was highly specialized skills and knowledge. The challenge, then, is to design an assessment center that rates both the competencies that department heads are looking for and the more generic skills that superintendents need to have.
- **Calibrating assessment exercises to the experience-level of candidates.** Roseville ran its MDAC three times so that 75 managers could have the opportunity to participate. Overall, the process was viewed as a success. In retrospect, however, the third cohort was significantly less experienced than the first two. As a result, some MDAC exercises were too much of a stretch for them. While less experienced managers might also benefit from the assessment, it's important to adjust either the activities or the metrics they're assessed by, rather than holding employees with different backgrounds to the same standards.

Who Does the Assessing?
Roseville's experience with assessment centers highlights several important factors that should be considered when choosing assessors. Most of these issues can be addressed by making sure that assessors are adequately trained.

- **Internal vs. external.** Roseville has experimented using internal assessors as well as external ones. There are pros and cons each way. When assessors are recruited from other local governments, participants may view them as more objective and less likely to be influenced by prior impressions. Yet there's also a downside: Outside assessors may not know the local culture or the "Roseville way." If the city's police have been drilled in customer service, will an outside assessor take that into consideration, or will he or she fault the participants for being too soft on the public?

  While there's a potential for internal assessors to be biased by past experience, Achen found that didn't happen. In fact, internal and external assessors made similar observations and gave similar ratings.

  Department heads who served as assessors benefited. They got to watch the employment version of a screen test in which potential candidates tried out a future role. Through the assessment training, they learned transferable skills in coaching and conducting performance evaluations.

- **Technical vs. managerial expertise.** Choosing the right assessors is a decision that often strikes at the heart of a larger issue: Should assessments focus on technical or discipline-specific knowledge, skills, and aptitudes or on broader, managerial competencies? In some occupations such as police and fire, the department's tendency is to insist that only sworn personnel can be assessors. This point of view is deeply rooted in the occupational cultures of these professions (See sidebar: "Developing Leaders in Public Safety" on page 42). In theory, assessors from any discipline should be able to perform the role effectively, so long as the required competencies have been well researched, clearly defined, and agreed upon, and so long as the assessors have been well trained. But the perception that only a professional insider can assess candidates may be the deciding factor. There's no value to be gained from an assessment center if the participants and senior managers don't trust the assessors' judgment.

- **Continuity of assessors.** When Roseville launched its MDAC, the target audience was 110 employees at the level of middle manager and above. Three iterations later, 75 had been through the process — a marathon undertaking that stretched over seven days in 1998, four days in 2000 and four days in 2001. In the first year, public sector managers and administrators were recruited from neighboring communities to serve as assessors, in addition to some City of Roseville department heads. In the second and third year, an effort was made to recruit the same assessors to serve again. These veterans were supplemented, as needed, by additional city department heads.

  All assessors volunteered. It is not surprising, therefore, that some declined to serve again in subsequent years. New assessors were recruited and trained. Although there was continuity across the three MDACs — not only did some assessors return, but so did the CPS consultants who administered the program—there were also inconsistencies. In the first cohort, assessors were seeing the very top tier, the city's crème de la crème. By the third MDAC, not only were participants more junior than in previous groups, the assessors seemed more generous in their ratings.

  Is it realistic to expect the same volunteers to keep coming back? Could more training have eradicated completely any inconsistency between one group of assessors and the next? In both cases, the answer is probably no. The scale of Roseville's MDAC undertaking — assessing a large number of employees over a four-year period using a common set of managerial dimensions — may be unusual. Nevertheless, the city's experiences suggest that continuity and consistency are important considerations when designing assessment centers and choosing who will staff them.

- **Borrowing vs. buying assessors.** Because Roseville has run so many assessment centers, the potential pool of volunteer assessors is thinning out. When it was time to staff the assessment center for superintendents, Achen decided it would be more efficient to hire consultants. "Professional assessors know how to focus on behaviors rather than on specific skills needed in this or that department," she explains. The lesson for other organizations interested in using assessment centers as a development tool: It's important to weigh the costs and benefits of training assessors vs. buying professionals who are already trained and experienced.

- **Training assessors.** Initially, MDAC assessors participated in a full day of training provided by CPS. In subsequent years, training has been reduced to a half-day to reduce the time demands on assessors. The training includes an orientation to management development assessment centers; instruction and practice in observing, classifying, and evaluating behavior; getting familiar with the various activities and rating forms; and practice describing strengths and developmental needs.

Such training not only ensures high quality assessments; it can also be a selling point in recruiting volunteers. Learning the art of giving effective developmental feedback is valuable for any manager, and it is not an area in which many have been trained.

- **Developmental assessment vs. selection assessment**. It is particularly important, says Achen, that assessors understand the difference between making assessments for developmental purposes and making them for candidate selection. Every participant should benefit, even if the simulation exercises led them to conclude that they're not interested in a promotion, as sometimes happens. Unless the assessment center truly is a developmental experience, the pool of willing participants will quickly dry up.

How Assessment Center Results Are Shared

If making good assessments is an art, so is giving feedback. Each MDAC participant received two written reports: The first of these reports was structured around the eight management dimensions. It provided a description of each dimension, the assessors' consensus rating, and the participant's self-rating. It also included specific comments grounded in the behaviors they observed during the MDAC activities. Finally, the report offered a summary of the assessors' comments regarding the individual's overall strengths and developmental needs in relation to the management dimensions. The second written report explained their MBTI results.

Rather than simply sending these reports, Roseville took an extra step to make the feedback process more of a developmental experience. Each participant received the results in a one-hour meeting with an assessment center consultant, who first explained the MBTI results and then used that to frame the assessor's comments. "Because you're an ENTJ," she might say, "you're probably most comfortable doing such and such, but you need to be aware that, as a consequence, others may view you as harshly critical. The assessors observed that, in the group activity, you did X,Y, and Z, which led them to conclude that you can be overly judgmental." It was this one-on-one feedback process that many assessment center participants found to be the most valuable part of the experience.

For many police and fire employees who participated in an assessment center, the feedback process was the best part. It's an experience they don't get from a promotional exam, the normal route to advancement. In fact, when the Police Department ran a second assessment center, Achen encouraged the external assessors to provide the participants with some immediate feedback if there was time.

What Happens Next?

What assessment center participants do with the feedback is up to them. Ideally, they share it with their supervisor and use it to create or update their Individual Development Plan. Achen estimates that that occurs about 30 percent of the time. Roseville contracted with local universities to deliver a leadership-skills course that would address the five competencies—decision making; leadership style; administrative effectiveness; flexibility; and planning/organization— shown by the MDAC as needing the most development. Again, it's up to the individual to decide whether to pursue this developmental opportunity.

At the city-level, what happens next is that the assessment center results for each cohort helped to shape Roseville's training and development agenda by indicating where the biggest gaps were between current competency levels and the levels required to be an effective department head.

Cost

The cost for the MDAC, including the initial development of the assessment center exercises and the three cohorts who participated was $40,128, or about $850 per person. The cost of creating the assessment centers for the police and fire departments and for the superintendents ran from $10,500 to about $14,000. The per-person cost ranged from $477 to $2,000, since the number of participants for each center varied.

Evaluation

Roseville analyzed 67 participants' career progress after they completed the MDAC. Seven retired and six left city government for reasons other than retirement. Of the remaining 54, 30 (55 percent) have been promoted since the MDAC and 24 (45 percent) have not.

Next Steps

- **Can we do it again?** It's been six years since the first group of managers participated in the MDAC. Recently, some alumni have asked whether they could repeat the experience to see how they'd be rated today in the eight management dimensions, in comparison with the assessors' earlier rating. While Roseville is still weighing the possibility, Achen anticipates the city will implement the suggestion. It's further evidence of how valuable participants found the assessment experience to be.

- **In-house training vs. external programs.** The city's training catalog is bursting with courses, including coaching skills, a Supervisory Skills course developed by the International City and County Management Association, Steven Covey's "4 Roles of Leadership," "Why People Follow the Leader," and DISC Training, based on William Moulton Marston's model of behavioral styles. With departmental approval (and a $4,800 program fee), employees may also attend "Leadership for the New Millennium," an intensive program offered through the Executive Leadership Development program at California State University, Sacramento. Its curriculum includes 360-degree feedback, marquee-name speakers, experiential exercises, an action learning project to apply course material at home, and a network of other program alumni.

  While Roseville offers a rich assortment of classroom learning opportunities, in-house training is not always the best preparation. Currently, the city allocates $28,000 per year for scholarships to prestigious leadership-development programs at places like Harvard and the Center for Creative Leadership. Robinson, the City Manager, would like to increase the pot. "I've seen tremendous growth when individuals improve their formal education and are exposed to new ideas and best practices," he says. Getting the opportunity to attend a nationally known program can also lead to "phenomenal confidence-building."

- **Building managers' awareness of the bigger picture.** Roseville has made a significant commitment to developing future leaders, but it still hasn't closed one troubling gap: "Many managers are so focused on their department that they don't see its connection to the city as a whole," says Achen. To ensure that the next generation of department heads can rise to the task, Roseville will need to determine, "What are we not doing to stimulate managers' awareness of cross-departmental issues?"

  It's a challenge that many jurisdictions express. In Roseville's case, assessment centers have vividly demonstrated the gap in managers' awareness of the interconnections among departments. In the future, the city may use additional assessment centers to monitor its progress in closing that gap.

What Is an Assessment Center?

Assessment centers enable an organization to gather relevant information, under standardized conditions, about an individual's ability to perform a supervisory or management job. Organizations in the public and private sector are using assessment centers to serve many purposes: to select and promote supervisors and managers and for promotion and for succession planning, career development and training needs-assessment. In essence, the assessment center method gives candidates an opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in a variety of situations that might be outside the scope of their current, day-to-day job activities. In addition, the assessors who evaluate candidates' behavior can observe and compare all the members of a specific cohort (for example, supervisors with at least three years' experience) at the same time, as they perform the assessment activities. Not only do these procedures help reduce many forms of rater bias; they also help senior managers accurately predict candidates' career potential and development needs.

What is Assessed?

The design of the assessment center activities is based on an analysis of the target position or job for which assessment center participants might be future candidates. Both what is assessed and how it is assessed are determined by the behaviors required to perform the target job successfully. These "job performance dimensions" often include communicating, planning and organizing information, solving problems and making decisions, delegating work, directing and guiding subordinates, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and so on.

Who Does the Assessing?

Assessors are typically experienced and successful managers (at least one or two levels above the target position) who have a thorough understanding of the target position's requirements and demands. Assessors receive advance training in how to observe and evaluate behavior associated with the job performance dimensions.

Why Are Assessment Centers Effective?

Simulation exercises minimize evaluation errors because they elicit behaviors very similar those required in the target position. Appraising an individual by having him/her perform simulated supervisory/management tasks is similar to appraising typists by actually having them type.

Typically, the setting for an assessment center is relatively isolated, enabling assessors to give their full attention to observation. Present behavior is used to predict future behavior. By observing performance across a variety of assessment exercises, assessors get a broad base of information with which they can accurately predict future behavior.

A growing number of organizations are utilizing assessment centers because:

1. Research has found that assessment centers can predict successful performance more accurately than alternative methods.
2. Participation in assessment centers is a valuable career development experience for both assessors and assessees.
3. Managers accept the results of an assessment center due to its rational, organized approach and the way the assessment exercises simulate supervisory and management challenges within the organization.
4. Participants accept the results of assessment centers because of their "face validity" and the fair manner in which they are given the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities.
5. Assessment centers can be used for developmental purposes as well as for selection. They can be used to analyze current abilities and make individualized and organizational-wide recommendations for specialized training.
6. Assessment centers concentrate on the evaluation of observed behavior. Managers who serve as assessors often report an increased ability to assess the performance of their own subordinates and peers.
7. Assessment centers have been shown to be equally fair and accurate in the prediction of supervisory and management potential for EEO "protected" group members.
8. Employers have successfully defended the use of assessment centers in a number of district court challenges. In fact, assessment centers have been mandated in some consent decrees to overcome the effects of past discriminatory practices.

Source: Jack Clancy and Matt Gruver, CPS Human Resource Services (www.cps.ca.gov)

CITY OF ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA

Population: 337,000
Workforce: 4,000 (full- and part-time)

Synopsis

Anaheim has developed a coordinated strategy for developing both current and aspiring leaders. This strategy is clearly and succinctly mapped out in a leadership framework. It includes an array of pipeline-building initiatives, from formal development programs to a year-round calendar of events designed to nurture relationships among leaders from different departments and levels of management.

Challenges

- **Retirements within the top tiers**. As early as 1997, Anaheim analyzed its workforce demographics and recognized that many of its leaders would be eligible for retirement within a few years, leaving the city vulnerable to a mass exodus of its leaders.

  Connie Phillips, Senior HR Development Specialist, vividly recalls Anaheim's wake-up call back in 1997. Phillips stood before a meeting of the city's 73 department and division heads and asked them all to stand up. Then she asked everyone who was currently eligible to retire to sit down. Next she told those who'd become eligible within five years to be seated, and finally, anyone who could retire within 10 years. How many were left standing? Just nine people. Nearly 90 percent could be gone. Today, the numbers are still striking: 73 percent of the top three tiers (executive managers, administrative managers, and middle managers) will be able to retire by 2010.

- **Making up for the past**. In the early 1990s, Anaheim went through a period of drastic budget cuts and downsizing. Fewer employees left voluntarily and, as a result, fewer saw any opportunity for promotion. Career expectations plummeted, as did interest in further education. Ever since then, Anaheim, like other jurisdictions that have experienced periods of retrenchment, has been playing catch-up.

- **Accelerated promotions create a need for accelerated development**. In public safety, most positions at the command- and captain-level are filled by internal candidates. Traditionally, a sergeant would have ten years' experience before promotion. Today, because of the number of more senior positions that must be filled, some candidates may be promoted after just five years of service — sometimes sooner. "It's a period of great opportunity for individual employees," says HR director David Hill, "but they need to be prepared to assume more responsibility faster than in the 1990s." Some who have been promoted have turned out not to have the kind of judgment and skills that may come from more experience. In a field such as police work where human errors can be costly, the city must prepare newly promoted officers to a degree they didn't need to before.

- **Declining interest in executive positions**. As attractive as Anaheim is as an employer, the candidate pool for promotion to senior positions has become smaller. "People just aren't expressing as much energy and excitement about moving into executive or operations-level management jobs," says Phillips. That's particularly true in the fire department. Once promoted to the command staff, Division Chiefs may never fight another fire. But if that's what drew them to the field in the first place, a desk job holds no great allure.

Approach

Such challenges are not unique to Anaheim. Yet the city's approach to addressing them is notable. What makes Anaheim stand out is the way it has integrated many elements into a comprehensive strategy for building the leadership pipeline. It's not uncommon for federal agencies to have such a strategy, driven by their need to develop many segments of their workforce, often requiring many different leadership programs. It's far less prevalent at the local and state level.

First Steps

Anaheim ramped up its leadership development efforts in 1997-8 with a program called Building the Bench. Three components of this effort are briefly summarized below:

- **Scholarship program.** Enables selected individuals to attend a leadership development program at one of the country's premier institutions. Since 1997, 15 people have attended programs at Harvard, Columbia, and the Center for Creative Leadership. As part of the agreement, each agreed to present some aspect of what they'd learned at a luncheon for city managers.

- **Onsite degree programs.** The program is taught by local university faculty and leads to a master's or a certificate in organizational leadership, a master's in public administration, or a bachelor's in organizational management. Thirty-five employees have completed one of these programs and 15 are currently enrolled.

- **Anaheim LEADS**. This seven-month program was developed and delivered by Chapman University. The program included 48 hours of classroom instruction based on the university's master's degree in organizational leadership. Participants also completed a 360-degree feedback tool [James Kouzes and Barry Posner's Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)] before and after the program. LEADS received high marks from participants, but was discontinued after two classes because it had achieved its objective. "Our original intent was to develop people to move into administrative-manager and executive-level positions," explains Phillips. "With 130 graduates, we'd hit that target."

(For a more detailed description of these programs and Anaheim's Building the Bench Program, download our 2003 study, *The Aging and Retiring Government Workforce*, at www.cps.ca.gov/AboutUs/agebubble.asp)

New Additions
Because Anaheim has been building its bench since 1997, "we've now got people in the pipeline for the top two levels in our organization," says Hill. "But at the operating level — the third level — managers have never been trained to plan, organize, control, and lead. That's become our focus in management development."

Anaheim has implemented two new programs to meet that need.

- **"The Extraordinary Leader."** Based on a book by the same name (John Zenger and Joseph Folkman, *The Extraordinary Leader: Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders*. McGraw-Hill, 2002), this program is designed to prepare high-potential managers for executive and administrative manager positions.
- **Louis Allen Management Development workshop**. Adapted for the public sector from Allen's book, *The Management Profession* (McGraw-Hill 1964), and related courseware. Participants learn to:

  Understand management as an interrelated system for planning, organizing, controlling and leading to achieve optimal results

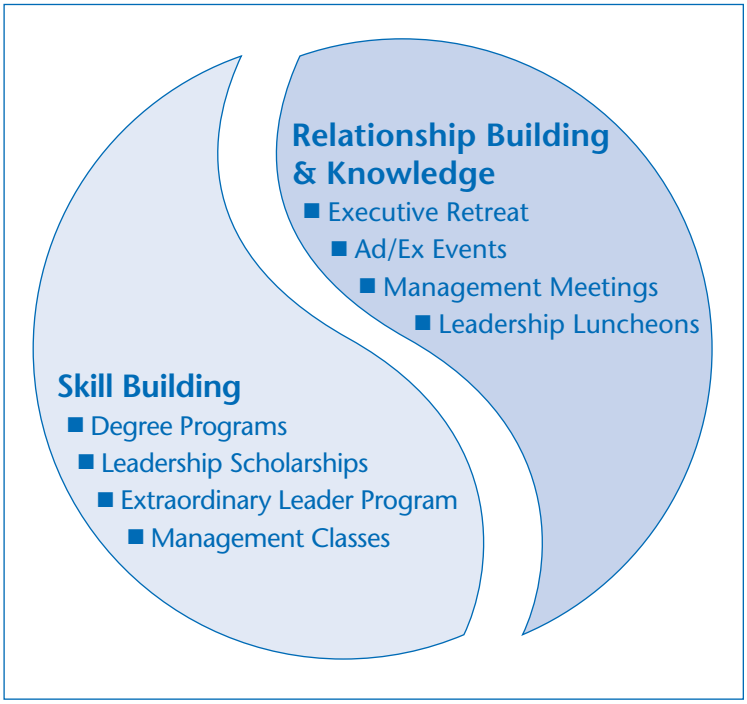
  Strengthen leadership skills so managers can execute more effectively

  Establish strategic and tactical plans to enhance unit performance, structures to carry out those plans, and standards for measuring performance outcomes

Bringing it All Together
What distinguishes Anaheim's approach to building the leadership pipeline is not simply its varied menu of training and development opportunities. They are impressive—and expensive. When Hill became HR director in 1994, he pledged to increase the budget for organizational and employee development to match the budget for recruitment. He's held to that commitment in the decade since then. It helps that Anaheim operates lucrative enterprises like the Convention Center and the city-owned electric utility that have helped the city weather years when other revenue streams have ebbed. It also helps that training is not a separate line item in the general fund budget. Rather, like other benefits, it's folded into employee overhead costs. Such diverse revenue streams may be envied by other jurisdictions, and would be difficult to replicate. But what also stands out about Anaheim's approach to developing its leadership pipeline are some underlying principles that any organization could adopt.

Leadership Model

Anaheim's leadership model has three components: skill-building, relationship-building, and knowledge.



Leadership Development Strategy

How does Anaheim help leaders develop in these three areas? The Leadership Development Strategy (shown below) presents developmental tactics — ranging from university degree programs to management development programs to social events — for each area of the leadership model. The top row indicates the target audience for each tactic.

Leadership Development Strategy FY2004-05

	Executive Managers	Admin. Managers	Middle Managers	Professional Technical
Skill Building				
Extraordinary Leader	⊕	⊕		
Scholarships	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Degree Programs	X	⊕	⊕	⊕
Management Development		X	⊕	⊕
Knowledge & Relationship Building				
Executive Retreat	⊕			
Executive & Events	⊕			
Ad/Ex Events	X	⊕		
Management Meetings	X	X	⊕	⊕
Leadership Luncheons	X	X	⊕	⊕

⊕ Target audience X Also invited

On paper, Anaheim's Leadership Strategy maps out a cohesive plan for developing leadership skills and knowledge. Many tactics are targeted to a specific level of the organization: executive managers, administrative managers, middle managers or seasoned employees in the professional/technical classification. In practice, however, the model needs to be flexible. "We assumed that everyone who had reached the level of administrative manager had already mastered the fundamental management skills— plan, organize, control, and lead" say Phillips, "We found out that's not always the case." In fact, some senior people may need to develop simultaneously as managers as well as leaders.

Relationship-building is an important element of Anaheim's leadership model. City employees get to meet and work with colleagues from other departments through the various leadership development programs. They also interact in an ongoing series of meetings, luncheons, and social events that are designed to multiply and deepen those relationships. Little is left to chance—or to individual employees' networking skills. Instead, Phillips has devised a carefully orchestrated, year-round calendar of events designed to bring people together, again and again, to interact.

Knowledge-and Relationship Building Events

Audience	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Event Description
Executive	September				Annual Retreat: 1 to 1.5 days
Executive + Spouses		November			Social Event Holiday Party
Executive + Spouses				April/May	Social Event– Casual Setting
Administrative Manager/Executive	August				Social Event Picnic at City Facility
Administrative Manager/Executive			January		Fiscal Update–Small Groups
Administrative Manager/Executive				May	Luncheon with Speaker
General Management	July				Focus on Citywide Initiatives (Service Initiative)
General Management		October			Citywide Meeting; Outside Speaker (Meg Wheatley)
General Management			February		State of the City

Executive (15) Administrative Manager/Executive (80) General Management (400)

Once a year, 400 people are invited to the city-wide management meeting, which features a nationally recognized speaker such as Meg Weatley or other marquee names like the Seattle Fish Market video. Afterwards, people are asked to discuss the program with others at their table. It's here than Phillips is proactive to ensure that relationship-building really happens.

Early on, she noticed that engineers always looked for other engineers to sit with, while police sought fellow police. Since the whole purpose was to cross departmental boundaries, she's made two changes. She assigns people to specific tables. And each table has its own facilitator, who has attended a two-hour training session to prepare for the discussion. At first, the protests were terrible. "You'd have thought we were announcing a 10% pay cut," Phillips recalls. But after a few times, assigned seating has become a routine.

What managers like best about these sessions, they say, is getting to meet people they knew only as names or voices on the phone. The discussion questions are designed to draw out different perspectives and experiences. After the Fish video, for example, the facilitator asked people to share personal experiences related to the practices shown in video. "Tell us about the best customer services you've ever seen in city government," they were asked. "Talk about a place in city government where you've seen a really positive working environment."

Executives and administrative managers are invited to additional events as well. While most have a serious program or agenda, some are unashamedly social, like the picnic last summer at a city park. At this senior level, managers already know each other, yet it still pays to orchestrate some mingling. They played a form of bingo where participants had to find the person who matched a particular biographical detail—played in a garage band; former Girl Scout; owns a pet reptile, and so on—to fill in each square. Then they competed in a spirited bocci-ball tournament. "They loved it!" she says. Even if the games sometimes feel silly, people at this level understand the value of occasional play. "To have a strong team, you need to get together in your free time and socialize."

The real value of this events calendar, Phillips concludes, is that "people have multiple opportunities to get together and lots of reinforcement." What Anaheim wanted to avoid was sending them to a one-time leadership academy, "and then it's over. We expect people to work cross-functionally. To do that, they have to have ongoing relationships."

Cost

The Anaheim LEADS program cost $46,500, for 130 to complete. For 13 employees to earn a masters degree in organizational leadership, the cost was $107,640, or $8,280 per person. In addition, the city also awards two scholarships ($5,000-7,000 each) per year for employees to attend a top-tier leadership development program, for example at Harvard or the Center for Creative Leadership.

The per-person cost of the Louis Allen Management Development workshop is $250; the Extraordinary Leader program is $225. These courses are taught by Anaheim staff who have been certified to deliver the courses.

Evaluation

Anaheim formally assessed its LEADS program by comparing participants' scores on the LPI before the program began and three months after its completion. The LPI is designed to assess leadership practices in five areas related to the Kouzes and Posner model: challenging the processing, sharing inspiring shared vision, enabling others to act, acting as a role model, and encouraging the heart. Both the pre-assessment and post-assessment have two components: a self-rating and a rating by five other people, including subordinates, superior, and peers.

Based on informal feedback, some elements of the LEADS curriculum were modified after the first group completed the program. For example, the module on managing change was expanded and more effort was made to connect required readings to the program. The ongoing challenge, says Phillips, is to marry the outside perspective that university faculty members bring with the knowledge of city government that only insiders can provide.

Thus far, LEADS is the only component of Anaheim's leadership development strategy that has been formally evaluated. While Philips plans to do more, she's also a pragmatist. "Training professionals know the importance of evaluation," she notes, "but my organization doesn't really care. What they care about is perceived value"—or how participants feel about the program and what they tell others. The second time LEADS was offered, enrollment grew. Department heads signed up, including some who'd never before volunteered for training. "That's perceived value," she says. And it's that sort of response that Anaheim's city managers pay attention to.

Next Steps

Compared to many jurisdictions, Anaheim has a well-crafted strategy for developing the next generation of leaders. Phillips sees two elements that are still missing. The first is a systematic assessment of what has and hasn't worked thus far. The second is a competency model for senior-level managers in city government.

"Everybody talks about the need to develop leaders, but we don't have a clear set of competencies that define what we uniformly require of department heads in city government." Is it different from what's required in the private sector? Or in state or federal government?

Phillips has begun interviewing the city's senior leaders, especially those who've completed more than one of Anaheim's leadership development programs. She asks them about their own path to the top: Which experiences helped and which didn't? And what have they observed about other people's paths to leadership? "Tell me about how someone has developed as a leader," she asks. "Tell me about someone who went through one of the Anaheim leadership development programs and how they changed."

Based on these interviews, Anaheim is building a new competency model for leadership in local government. Once the model has been approved by the department heads and the City Manager's Office, Anaheim will adjust its Leadership Development Strategy to make sure it lines up with the new competencies.

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Population: 430,000 residents and 3 million visitors annually

Police Department workforce: 817 sworn officers (authorized); 162 civilians

Synopsis

The Virginia Beach, Virginia Police Department (VBPD) is notable among the public safety organizations we interviewed. It has replaced traditional learning-by-the-seat-of-your-pants with programs that prepare officers for promotion and ease them into supervisory roles through job shadowing, field training, and coaching. Officers chosen to serve on a strategic-issue team get the opportunity to analyze a department challenge, gather input from their peers, and present recommended solutions to the chief. Employees at all levels learn the basic elements of the West Point Leadership Course, which gives everyone a common language and makes leadership a frequent topic of conversation. The department uses surveys to track its organizational climate and 360 feedback to monitor the performance of command staff. While many police departments send top candidates to an outside academy for leadership development, Virginia Beach has used two externally funded grants to create a culture of leadership throughout its ranks.

Challenges

- **Retirements.** The City of Virginia Beach was incorporated in 1963 through a merger of two communities: the town of Virginia Beach and Princess Anne County. In the 1970s and early 1980s, as the population grew, the police department also expanded. The fact that so many new officers were hired within that period explains why so many are now eligible to retire. Of the 114 people with the rank of sergeant (equivalent to first-line supervisor) or above, 36 (32 percent) are already retirement eligible; 45 (39 percent) will be by 2007.

Approach

Our research found few examples of exemplary approaches to building the leadership pipeline in local fire and police departments. (See sidebar, "What Makes Public Safety Different?") Yet the Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD) has implemented a remarkable array of practices including courses for new supervisors, managers and leaders; coaching; team assignments; 360-degree feedback and an organizational survey. Elsewhere in city government, these might not seem remarkable. In law enforcement, they are.

How did Virginia Beach become an innovator among police departments in developing the next generation of leaders?

It began in 1999 as an effort to create ownership within the department by creating strategic-issue teams. Since then, aided by two grants from Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), it has mushroomed into a full complement of leadership-building initiatives that penetrate every level of the department. Some even reach outside to bring in community members and neighboring law enforcement agencies. As part of the second grant, VBPD has hired a team from George Washington University (GWU) to evaluate those initiatives. Through a process known as "appreciative inquiry," GWU's approach combines organizational development with assessment, community input with internal self-scrutiny.

First Steps

When Chief A. M. Jacocks, Jr. was promoted from Deputy Chief in 1999, he wanted the department to focus on basic issues like its values, mission, and ethics. To do so, he created a team of 16 people drawn from a cross-section of the workforce: from very junior to very senior officers as well as civilian employees. Their assignment was to come up with a mission statement and a vision for the VBPD. "Our department has always had a mission," he explains. "But our core values were all over the board. Nobody could tell us what they were."

The Chief spoke with the team about his own aspirations for the department, but he left it up to them to build the platform. To do so, they gathered input from throughout the department by conducting focus groups. Then they drafted the mission and vision statements and delivered them to the chief, who circulated the documents to the department for comment. With minor wordsmithing, the mission and vision developed by the first strategic-issue team was adopted. Today, it stands as the department's foundation.

Since then, similar teams have been created to tackle other topics. In fact, at any given time, about 10-15 percent of the department's workforce is serving on a strategic issue team. Regardless of the assignment—topics have included increasing diversity through recruitment, creating an incident command system as part of Homeland Security, and designing some of the department's new leadership courses — the team's assignment is to gather information and input from within the department and then deliver its recommendations. "It gives them ownership of whatever product they end up with," explains Jacocks. And it creates internal champions when the team's recommendations are carried out.

Teams aren't part of any formal approach to leadership development. Yet serving on a successful team lets employees stretch beyond their normal sphere of influence to grapple with larger, department-wide issues. It gives them the chance to demonstrate their capabilities. It also gives them a deeper understanding of the organization and its environment — exactly what many leadership programs try to do.

Team members are appointed by senior command staff. "They're not selected because we saw their names on a promotional list," says Jacocks. "They're chosen because they're valued members of our organization and are known by other members of our organization."

Using strategic-issue teams has helped to bring about a larger culture change, explains Deputy Chief Greg Mullen. VBPD has become less of a traditionally run, top-down organization. "We have a chain of command that we can implement when necessary, such as a hostage situation or a riot breaking out. Otherwise, we really try to give people an opportunity to be involved."

Building Leadership

Since 2002, the VBPD has rolled out a menu of leadership development initiatives that touch many levels of the organization. "We recognized that we weren't doing a very good job preparing people to move into leadership positions," explains Mullen. "We weren't socializing them very well into their new roles." To address that need and, at the same time, backfill some of the training that current command staff had never received, the department launched several new programs in 2003.

- **West Point Leadership Course** The VBPD brought the West Point Military Academy's leadership course to Virginia Beach but modified it to meet its own needs. The course meets one day per week for sixteen weeks. Participants learn leadership theory and then apply it to law enforcement case studies. Initially, the course was targeted for current sergeants and lieutenants, most of whom had been promoted into those positions without any formal preparation. In the future, the course will be opened up to master police officers to prepare them for advancement opportunities. To date, four cohorts—totaling 64 command staff members—have completed the course. The department also created a shorter in-service training in which officers of any level can learn some of the basic leadership theory taught in the West Point course.

- **Sergeants' Prep Course.** As VBPD was rejiggering the West Point Leadership Course, "we started asking ourselves, what are we doing to help people move from officer rank to supervisor?" says Mullen. "That's the most difficult career transition for most people."

  So, as has become the norm in VBPD's new culture, the department put together a small group of lieutenants, sergeants, captains and one deputy chief. Some had just become supervisors; others had been promoted years ago. Participants were asked: What didn't you have or know when you made sergeant, what would have made you more effective sooner?

  Based on this feedback, the department developed a Sergeants' Prep Course. The top 30 candidates who are eligible for that promotion are invited to attend the initial 40 hours of classroom training followed by 40 hours shadowing a tenured sergeant. Once they're promoted, they spend 80 hours with a field training sergeant before setting out on their own.

- **Leadership Practices Inventory**. With new training programs in place, the department looked for ways to make development continuous — for both individual and the organization. All 64 graduates of the West Point Leadership Course have completed a 360-degree assessment, which will be repeated annually. In the future, everyone at the sergeant-level and above will do a 360.

- **Campbell Organizational Survey.** The 360-degree process enables command staff to learn how they're viewed by others. To learn how employees view the organization, VBPD launched a self-assessment using the Campbell Organizational Survey (COS). This standardized instrument measures employees' attitudes and feelings about 17 aspects of the workplace, including work conditions, stress, the work itself, job security, coworkers, supervisor, training, promotion, communication, planning, pay, and benefits. The results, which highlight strengths and areas for improvement, can be aggregated to reflect the whole organization or segmented for specific units.

  Most of the organizations that have used the survey and serve as a comparison group are from the private sector. Only a handful are law enforcement agencies. That was good, in the department's view. "We know that private sector organizations do things differently and can offer rewards and other incentives we can't," Mullen says. "But if our organization can measure up, then we'll know we have something."

  In fact, on every dimension but pay and benefits, the VBPD scored above the mid-point for the comparison group of organizations. It was a promising start that the Department hopes to improve upon. To get there, the chief assigned members of the command staff to create four new teams, each focused on one area that the department considered important for improvement: leadership, quality, planning, and employee development and support. The teams are conducting focus groups to identify specific problem areas and ideas for how the department can improve. Eventually, at least some of those they recommend will be implemented. Then in 2005, the COS will be repeated to get another reading on employees' view of their organization and to compare the new results with the early ones.

  Setting priorities to be accomplished within a one-year time frame has advantages, says Mullen. "When you do strategic planning, it takes a long time to see results. By identifying things that could be completed in 12 months, we can show that we're accomplishing things."

- **Coaching.** It's one thing to solicit feedback about individual leaders or about the organization overall. It's quite another for leaders to do something with that data. To improve the chances of that happening, VBPD partnered with George Mason University to develop a Leadership Coaching Certificate Program. Fifteen members of the command staff — either volunteers or those nominated by their superiors — have enrolled in the course. The

curriculum focuses on organizational leadership and development. The class carries four master's-level credits and meets for two days every six weeks, with additional assignments online. It also includes four hours of work with an executive coach to develop coaching skills. By the end of the course, participants will be trained to help VBPD supervisory employees interpret their 360-degree feedback results and create their own development plan. Initially, coaches will work with employees recently promoted to supervisory positions. "Having a coach provides someone they can talk to and ask questions of, without fear of sounding like a dummy," explains Mullen. With the addition of coaches, he hopes the learning curve for new sergeants will drop from 12 months down to six.

- **Leadership Speaker Series.** The department created a speaker series to bring in leadership experts from outside the department six times per year. "That gives us an external perspective, instead of just looking internally," says Mullen. The audience is also mixed: In addition to its own supervisors and field training officers, Virginia Beach invites other local police departments to attend. Topics range from "soft" areas such as emotional survival in law enforcement and developing productive relationships to more technical subjects such as employee discipline and managing workplace bias and harassment.
- **Management Skills Course.** In 2005, the department is launching a new, six-day Management Skills course that will teach practical skills and knowledge in four areas: finance (How does the city's budget process work? What's the difference between a capital expenditure and an operating cost?); customer service; employee development and support (mediation skills, employee assistance programs) and internal processes (for example, using department's database for analysis and report-generation). The West Point Leadership Course introduces people to theories they can apply to challenges they're facing. The Management Skills course gives them the wherewithal to be able to implement an action plan.

Putting It All Together

Instead of just piling on new leadership programs, the department also thinks about how these efforts all fit together. "Historically, we put this or that program together, but we never connected the dots," says Mullen. But if the goal is to make everyone in the department a leader, the elements need to be part of the whole. To accomplish that, VBPD has made the West Point Leadership Course the nucleus for leadership development at all levels. The basic models and language have been incorporated into other courses — from the academy for new recruits to in-service training for other officers. Creating a common core that cuts across the department's training is "a big change," says Mullen.

Impacts

The impact of these programs shows up in lots of small ways, says Mullen. "What jumps out for me is the commonality of language people now use," based on their exposure to the West Point leadership theory. It shows up, too, in the number of supervisors he's noticed putting that theory into practice—creating development plans for subordinates who are having performance problems, or managing equity issues in a manner that won't fan the flames of employee misperceptions. Not only have leaders learned new skills, he adds, "I see leaders starting to impart that knowledge to others."

These are encouraging signs, but anecdotal. To generate more rigorous data, VBPD engaged a team from George Washington University to evaluate its COPS-funded programs. GWU's methodology is not the usual survey-and-numbers-crunching, although number-crunching is one component. Rather, GWU is conducting a three-step process built on a radical premise: that the measures of success used in the evaluation shouldn't be imposed by an external entity, such as a university evaluation team. Rather, they should be grounded in the organization being evaluated and its environment. That is why it is called "participatory evaluation."

"Anybody could have come in and looked at our numbers," says Mullen. "We felt we'd get more benefit out of this type of evaluation."

Cost

In 2002, the Department was awarded an $118,000, "Creating a Culture of Integrity" grant from COPS. This funding enabled VBPD to expand its leadership development program by adding the Campbell Organizational Survey, the Leadership Speaker Series, and the Leadership Practices Inventory. The grant also funded initial research for an Early Intervention Program that identifies employees with performance problems and provide immediate support and development.

In 2003, a team of department members applied for a larger, more competitive COPS grant called "Enhancing a Culture of Integrity." Four US cities were chosen: Boston, San Diego, Sacramento, and Virginia Beach. The $442,900 grant is enabling VBPD to continue or expand existing programs and introduce new ones, such as the coaching program, the management skills course, the early intervention program, and the program evaluation.

How much will it cost to continue the new training programs? VBPD currently spends about $3,000 annually on its 360-degree feedback process. The only cost for the new courses is in instructors' time.

Evaluation

Phase I of the process brought together 75 of the VBPD's internal and external stakeholders for a day-long Community Summit on November, 12, 2004. Through a process known as "Appreciative Inquiry" (see sidebar on page 41, "What

Is Appreciative Inquiry?"), the assembled group would, by the end of the day, create a model for the ideal police department.

Deputy Chief Mullen admits he felt nervous as a Noah's Ark of Virginia Beach residents and police officers streamed into the department's training center for the day-long Summit. Would the 26 police officers and 49 community members actually participate in the exercises the facilitators had planned? Or would their eyes glaze over like deer caught in the headlights?

A cross-section of city residents and police officers had been scrambled into diverse groups and assigned to sit together at one of 12 tables. A police captain might find a high school teacher to his right and a minister to his left and, across the table, a rookie cop and a public defender. Together, each table would have to discuss their ideas about what an ideal police department would look like. Then they would have to take out their colored markers and draw a picture of it, not using any words. It was the drawing part than had him worried.

"People really got into it," says Mullen, still sounding surprised. Each table presented its drawing to the large group and described the values and attributes that it embodied, using single words or short phrases. After lunch, each person was asked to select a single value that was most important to achieving the ideal police department, in their view, and to write that value on a "sticky." Then they were set free to mill around the room in search of others who had chosen the same value or one close to it.

It could have been mayhem. But, much as the facilitators had predicted, the field soon narrowed to six themes or clusters of values: more community involvement, better pay and benefits, more minority recruitment and retention, diversity, building community trust, and greater accountability. Finally, the new groups that had formed around each theme were asked to come up with four or five priorities. These were specific tactics VBPD could initiate to move closer toward each value. To become a more diverse police force, for example, the group suggested not only sending recruiters to more job fairs but also bringing the local NAACP president with them to talk with potential recruits.

Phase II (April-May 2005) brought a smaller version of the Community Summit back to the table. Out of the original 75 participants, 15 stakeholders—both external and internal—were chosen, based on their potential impact on the department. They reviewed the information generated in Phase I and weighed which priorities were most feasible and most important for the department to act on. From this distillation process came the yardsticks for program evaluation in Phase III.

Phase III (September 2005). The GWU consultants will perform a more typical program evaluation, although it will combine qualitative data (interview and focus group) and quantitative. By mining data that the department has already collected as part of its normal tracking process, the evaluation team will produce a snapshot of where the VBPD is today. Have there been any changes in the number of citizen complaints? Or the number of internal inquiries that were initiated to investigate personnel matters? What's happened to people who served on a strategic-issue team? Have they been promoted or transferred to a specialty assignment?

Then the evaluators will line up that snapshot against the ideal police department envisioned at the Community Summit and do a gap analysis: What impact have the new programs had? In which areas has the department made progress? Where's it falling short? Chief Jacocks plans to invite the entire Community Summit back to hear this final report.

But that may not be the last invitation they receive from the Police Department. "The Summit had a lot of unintended consequences," says Mullen, "and they were all good." Some community participants arrived poised for battle, they admitted later. But many softened as the day wore on. "I've never had the chance to sit down and talk with a police officer," said one community member. Remarked an officer, "That was the first time I'd heard things from the NAACP president's perspective."

In fact, many asked if there would be another Summit. That gave Mullen an idea for the coming year. Rather than continuing to bring in speakers for the Leadership Lecture Series, why not hold more of these summits, focusing on specific community issues?

When the VBPD selected GWU as its program evaluator for the large COPS grant, "we were taking a leap of faith," Mullen admits. "I can't find you anybody who's done anything like this before."

The traditional approach is to assess a program against its original goals, using external experts, wielding "objective" standards. But GWU's participatory evaluation process serves an additional purpose. It is itself an organizational development intervention. It aims not only to assess the COPS grant's impact but, perhaps more importantly, to help the department recognize its organizational strengths as well as shortcomings. Then it is designed to help the organization move closer to the ideal model of a police department that internal and external stakeholders have defined together.

Next Steps

- By the end of the grant period (August 2006), VBPD will produce a technical manual describing the programs it initiated through the grant and the lessons learned. Copies will be available through COPS.
- VBPD is considering hiring a consultant to develop a 360-degree feedback tool that would more closely reflect the department's culture and core competencies.

What Is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of thinking, seeing, and acting for powerful, purposeful change in organizations. Appreciative Inquiry works on the assumption that whatever you want more of, already exists in all organizations. While traditional problem-solving processes separate and dissect pieces of a system, Appreciative Inquiry generates images that affirm the forces that give life and energy to a system. David Cooperrider, Suresh Srivastva, Frank Barrett, John Carter and others developed the theory at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio in the 1970s.

This table illustrates the differences between the traditional diagnostic model used in Organization Development and the Appreciative Inquiry model.

TRADITIONAL OD PROCESS	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY
Define the problem	Search for solutions that already exist
Fix what's broken	Amplify what is working
Focus on decay	Focus on life giving forces
What problems are you having?	**What is working well around here?**

Appreciative Inquiry is a complex philosophy that engages the entire system in an inquiry about what works. The inquiry discovers data that is then analyzed for common themes. The group articulates the themes and dreams of "what could be" and "what will be." What will be is the future envisioned through an analysis of the past.

The entire system maintains the best of the past by discovering what it is and starching it into future possibilities. This differs from other visioning work because the envisioned future is grounded in the reality of the actual past.

Resources:

The Appreciative Inquiry Commons, Case Western Reserve University, is the Internet homeland of AI. The site offers both theoretical papers and practical applications of AI, including case studies and tools. ai.cwru.edu/

Joe Hall and Sue Hammond. "What Is Appreciative Inquiry?" For the complete article from which the above segment is reprinted (with permission), go to lib1.store.vip.sc5.yahoo.com/lib/thinbook/whatisai.pdf

Sue Annis Hammond (1998) *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing.

Can a bright, talented, middle-aged career-changer find a new calling as a police captain?

Almost certainly not. In fact, the career ladders within police and fire departments, like those in the military organizations they're modeled after, are strikingly different from career paths in most other areas of local government.

Most often, there is a single entry point in these occupations, and it is at the bottom. Police and fire departments take on fresh recruits to keep a steady flow of officers coursing through their ranks. The department, itself, trains each new class of recruits. And for the next 25 years, that cohort inches its way up the ranks, a winnowing process in which some leave, some stay put, and others move ahead at varying speeds until, just possibly, one or two may reach the top. But from rookie all the way up through deputy chief, it's a closed system. Traditionally, there's little to no lateral hiring[1]. A department may bring in fresh talent at the chief's level. But even there, external hiring is the exception.

That leaves police and fire departments with limited options for insuring they will have talented leaders in the future. One way is to attract and select the very best candidates—an option that, in many jurisdictions, the civil service board has more control over than the fire or police department, or by setting high entrance requirements, such as a bachelors degree. A second option is to make unerring decisions about promotions. That, too, may be outside the department's control if promotions are based, as sometimes are, solely on examination scores. That leaves a third way: to provide sworn staff with excellent training and development.

With that in mind, we began interviewing public safety experts to explore what seemed like a reasonable research hypothesis: Since police and fire departments rely almost exclusively on growing their own talent for leadership, they might serve as models for other areas of government.

Instead, after interviewing both senior command staff around the country and the heads of international associations of public safety professionals, we reached some very different conclusions.

What Makes Public Safety Different?

- **Distinctive cultures drive different approaches to developing leaders**. The occupational cultures of police and fire professionals are so distinctive from other occupations that their leadership-pipeline-building practices are not transferable to other areas of local government. In fact, many of the approaches we encountered in fire and police departments go against the grain of what our study identified as "best practices" in other areas of government. For example:

  Virtually all of the formal leadership-development programs described in this report aim to expose participants to departments and functions outside their own. One way to do this is to ensure that the participants themselves represent a diverse mix. Yet the predominant model for developing leaders in public safety is to develop them with others like themselves. Participants who are sent to an academy or another external program may meet peers from other jurisdictions, but not from other areas of government.

  Instructors at these programs are also typically sworn personnel from public safety. Civilian instructors don't have much credibility, according to the police and fire departments we interviewed. Outside speakers who are not sworn officers usually need some other credentials related to public safety.

The homogeneity of leadership-development programs in public safety is consistent with the occupational culture, which maintains clear boundaries between insiders (sworn officers or firefighters, who usually spend their entire career within a single department) and outsiders (everyone who's not a sworn officer or firefighter). However, this approach runs contrary to the intentionally heterogeneous cohorts we found in formal leadership-development elsewhere.

- **Leadership development is not a recognized, core competency for most departments**. Virtually none of our public safety sources could recommend local departments that excel in the area of leadership development. Our data suggest several reasons this is so:

[1] Recent evidence suggests that some jurisdictions have begun to implement lateral hiring to offset the large number of retirements, but this practice is still unusual.

The first reason is that learning-on-the job, seat-of-your-pants-style, is the norm, rather than training officers either before they're promoted or immediately afterward. Even the 238-officer Lakewood, Colorado Police Department, which has produced a staggering 57 officers who have gone on to become police chiefs or sheriffs in other departments, has no formalized leadership training within the department. Although some aspects of leadership are incorporated into field training, Division Chief Clarene Shelley says that the department's steep entrance standards (including a college degree) are a major factor in Lakewood officers' career success. "We look for people who have some innate leadership skills," she says. "They are encouraged to develop and use those skills in all situations." In addition, the department evaluates leadership skills in annual performance evaluations and in its promotional processes.

The second reason that there's no recognized short-list of departments that excel at leadership development is that most jurisdictions send top candidates away for such training. They send their best and brightest to a national or regional academy (such as the FBI Academy or the California Police Officers Standards and Training Command College) or to a university- or college-based program such as the Police Evaluation Research Foundation's summer program, the Senior Management Institute for police.

There is also a third reason that may help explain why best practices in developing the leadership pipeline appear to be off the radar screen in public safety: In many departments, the senior person responsible for human resources is a member of the command staff, such as a deputy chief, rather than an HR professional. Because it is a rotational assignment, there is turnover every few years. While the incumbent is supported by permanent HR staff members, housed either within the department or at the jurisdiction level, they are civilians. Being civilians automatically places them outside the formal leadership structure, since it is composed exclusively of sworn personnel. This combination of factors, we conclude, could contribute to a de-professionalization of human resource management within police and fire departments. That would help explain the absence of any professional body or informal community of practice for public-safety HR. It would also help explain why our research was unable to identify any collective knowledge of best practices in leadership development in public safety.

Tentative Conclusions

Leadership development in law enforcement and the fire service is not the focus of this research. Rather, our study included an abbreviated, somewhat tangential inquiry into leadership-pipeline-building within public safety. Its purpose was to explore a working hypothesis that law enforcement and the fire service might offer valuable leadership-development models for other public-sector organizations. On the basis of our interviews with police and fire departments and professional associations, we reject our initial hypothesis. There may be some police and fire departments that have exemplary internal practices for developing leaders. But if that's the case, their efforts are not well known.

That conclusion makes all the more remarkable the few exceptions we found to the prevalent practices described above. The Virginia Beach Police Department is the most striking example. Another can be found in the Plano, Texas case study. Plano's MP3 program enrolls a small cohort of city managers and department heads in a year-long program designed to broaden their perspective on city government and how all the pieces fit together. Two members of the police department — a lieutenant and a legal counsel — have completed the MP3 program. Each MP3 participant also worked closely with a manager from a different city department who served as his or her coach. As unremarkable as this pairing might seem in other occupations or departments, it's a radical departure from the norms we found elsewhere in public safety.

A third example that departs from traditional practice is Roseville, California's use of assessment centers to develop future leaders. Both the Police and Fire Departments have used assessment centers to prepare potential candidates for possible advancement—before they take the promotion exam. The assessment center lets officers preview the kinds of challenges they'd encounter in a more senior role. They also get detailed feedback about how they performed in the simulations, compared to the competencies needed at a higher level. Such an assessment process lays the groundwork for training and development—although, in Roseville's case, it's up to employees to take that step.

Such practices appear to be relatively rare in public safety. Yet Virginia Beach, Plano, and Roseville provide evidence that departments have benefited when they lower, ever so slightly, the boundaries that have traditionally separated them from other areas of local government, if only to borrow a few ideas.

STATE GOVERNMENT CASE STUDIES

PENNSYLVANIA

Workforce: 85,468

Synopsis

Since 1981, the Pennsylvania Management Associate (PMA) Program has recruited master's-level professionals to work in state government. It has produced more than 400 graduates, approximately half of whom now serve 26 state agencies in senior leadership and other roles. The one-year program includes many components that research has found are effective for building the leadership pipeline: rotational job assignments across agencies; a cross-functional team project; and formal training. Recent changes to the program have accelerated the recruitment process and broadened the prerequisites to attract candidates with more diverse areas of expertise.

Challenges

- **Declining applications**. Although the PMA has an excellent track record, applications had fallen off. Relying primarily on campus recruitment, the program attracted just 60 applicants for the class of 2001.
- **Projected retirement and attrition**. Through workforce planning — conducted statewide and at the agency level — the state has identified where it is likely to lose employees in coming years and which positions would be most difficult to fill or train for. These projections point to the need to attract new talent with credentials in a variety of disciplines.

Approach

Since 1981, Pennsylvania's Management Associate Program (PMAP) has recruited state residents with a master's degree to participate in a developmental program that grooms them to become candidates for mid- and upper-level management jobs in state government. Each Associate is sponsored by a state agency, who pays his or her first-year salary.

Faced with declining applications and a growing need to attract new talent, the state made several important changes to the PMA Program in 2002. These changes, their impact, and the design of the Program are discussed below.

Recruitment

Historically, the state has worked closely with Pennsylvania universities to recruit recent MPA- or MBA-graduates to the program. To combat a decline in applicants, two changes were made that have since dramatically reversed that trend. The first was the decision to broaden the degree requirement. The state no longer requires that the master's degree must have been earned within the past two years, nor does it limit the field of study. Any master's-level degree is accepted. As the state's workforce planning efforts made clear, "We weren't going to be losing just people with an MPA, but people with master's degrees in many fields," says Kathy Kieffer, Chief of the Office of Administration's Human Resource Development Division. "We needed to expand our recruitment base to reflect the types of degrees that would be successful in state government."

The second change was the move to an online application, which accelerated the process. As a result of these changes, the number of applications jumped from 60 to over 400. Applications are now limited to the first 300 received, to make selection more manageable.

Selection

Civil service conducts an initial review of applicants to screen out any who don't meet the basic requirements, including state residency. Those who do are invited to Harrisburg for a written and oral Civil Service exam. Typically, 50-70 percent of eligible applicants take this next step. Civil Service identifies the top candidates based on the exam scores and Civil Service rules. In recent years, the pool has ranged from 25-80.

Following the oral and written examination, applicants have the chance to meet with current and graduate PMAs to learn about the PMAP experience. During this period, applicants are asked how they heard about the program and what attracted them to apply. They can also provide information on their career interests. That information, combined with the test scores and the initial applications, enables the Human Resource Development Division within the Bureau of Workforce Planning and Development (which oversees the program) to select finalists and match them with a sponsoring agency. Typically, the PMAP class ranges from 15-20 participants. Most are in their thirties; however, there has been at least one person age 60 or older in both the 2003 and 2004 classes.

[1] Pennsylvania's approach to workforce planning was described in detail in the previous study, *The Aging and Retiring Government Workforce*, available at www.cps.ca.gov/AboutUs/agebubble.asp

Program Design
The twelve-month program begins in July and has several components:

- **Orientation**. During the first weeks of the program, the new PMA class gets a basic grounding in state government, the Civil Service system and the PMA Program history and its network of graduates.
- **State agency briefings.** These sessions inform Associates about major state agencies, including those with which they may be involved either through a rotational assignment or team-project.
- **Rotational job assignments**. The first of six rotational assignments is spent at the funding agency working in one of the four, core rotations that all Associates are required to complete: policy; budget; enterprise management (at one of three offices reporting to the Office of Administration); and HR. The remaining two rotations can be chosen by the Associate and related to his or her career interests.
- **Management Development Training.** These sessions are scheduled throughout the year and focus on topics such as presentation skills, facilitation, conflict management, team-building, group problem-solving, and leadership.
- **Management-Issue Team Project.** Working in teams of four or five, Associates take on a real (as opposed to simulated) inter-agency project that must be completed within eight months. The teams deliver progress reports to an advisory group of senior managers, as well as a final report with recommended actions.

Team Project Examples

Prison Overcrowding and Incarceration Alternatives
Review of Commonwealth Revenue Collection and Utilization Progress
What is the Interest Level on the Part of State Political Subdivisions in Joining a Commonwealth Radio Network?
Impact of the Existing Transportation System on Economic Development
The Fraudulent Uses of Commonwealth Driver's Licenses
Design and Implementation of an Employee Exchange Program for the Office of Income Maintenance, Department of Public Welfare
Universal Access—An Alternative to Pennsylvania's Health Care Delivery System

Job Placement
Each February, all state agencies (even those that haven't sponsored a PMA) are invited to submit position vacancies appropriate for the PMAs. In some cases, an agency may be interested in a specific Associate, based on her or his performance on a rotational assignment or team project. In other cases, an Associate may approach an agency about a specific job opportunity. Agencies and candidates interview each other and, by June, Associates have a new job. After a six-month probation, they become permanent, full-time employees.

Although the initial position posting is targeted solely to PMAs, an agency that fails to fill a position through this process may then pursue other recruitment avenues.

Outcomes

One of the program's benefits, says Kieffer, is that the Associates and the agencies gain broad exposure. The agency briefings, rotational assignments and team project give program participants a much wider network than if they had entered state government on their own. They also gain a deeper understanding of the organizational and programmatic intersection points within state government. Anecdotally, this experience pays off once they've completed the program. Agency leaders report that PMAP graduates are much better equipped than those who haven't had the program to work across agencies boundaries. They're also able to accomplish such tasks more quickly.

While some of Pennsylvania's state agencies have formal leadership development programs, "they tend to be more targeted," says Kieffer. Because the PMA Program provides a broader kind of preparation, its graduates "can serve a number of different functions in different agencies."

Evaluation

- **Performance evaluations.** The PMAs are evaluated by their rotational supervisors, team project advisors, and advisory team members. The program director completes a final performance evaluation based on this input plus their own observations and experiences.
- **Evaluation of the application and examination process**. The selection panelists, representatives of the State Civil Service Commission, and the HRD Division evaluate the application and examination process. The applicants also have the opportunity to provide input during the post-examination period.
- **Feedback on the program design and components.** This is collected from Program participants, final placement supervisors, Agency PMAP Coordinators, facilitators, and others.

Some recent changes as a result of this feedback:

- A written test was added to the examination process based on feedback from the PMAs' final placement supervisors.
- Mid-rotation evaluations were added based on feedback from both the rotational supervisor and the PMAs.
- Reference checks are now made for just the top candidates and are conducted by the HRD Division, rather than the selection panel.
- As a result of feedback from Agency PMAP Coordinators, the program's intranet site has been changed to give the Coordinators and others better access to information.

PMA mobility, promotion, and retention rates are regularly tracked. While the state hopes to compare these outcomes for PMAs who participated in the Program before and after various changes were made, it is still too early to draw definitive conclusions about the impacts of these changes, says Kieffer.

Cost

A state agency funds each Associate's salary ($36,499 plus benefits) during the Program year. The only additional costs are incidental, such as for travel during a rotational assignment.

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF GENERAL SERVICES

Workforce: 1,900 employees including full-time and hourly

Synopsis

The New York State Office of General Services' (OGS) approach to building the leadership pipeline is part of its overall Succession Management Program, which encompasses the entire workforce. Initially focused on replacement strategies for mission-critical positions, OGS's approach has broadened to include strategies for replenishing the talent pool. By institutionalizing Individual Development Plans (IDPs), defining career paths, analyzing existing job titles and promotion criteria, closing skills gaps, and facilitating knowledge transfer, OGS has implemented a comprehensive and aggressive strategy to replenish its talent pool, while also feeding its leadership pipeline.

Challenges

The New York State Office of General Services (OGS) faces a number of challenges that, if unchecked, could severely impact the quality and depth of its talent pool.

- **Retirements.** Like other agencies at every level of government, OGS faces staffing challenges due to a maturing workforce. Overall, 24 percent of the agency's existing workforce will be eligible to retire between 2004-2008 — in addition to the 12 percent of the workforce that took advantage of a 2003 Early Retirement Incentive. The agency forecasts potential separations by job title to identify those that are most vulnerable. In some job titles, at least 35 percent of incumbents could leave.
- **Hiring freeze.** Exacerbating the dearth of younger state employees is a hiring freeze that has remained in place, with limited exceptions, since 2001. By limiting entry-level hires, the state has slowed the infusion of younger workers to a trickle. In addition, the hiring freeze has increased internal competition for talent; as a result, it has also increased the movement of current state employees' both within and across departments.
- **Outsourcing.** Because of existing skill gaps within the organization and the relatively "closed hiring environment" created by a prolonged hiring freeze, OGS has resorted to a greater use of outside consultants/contractors. In addition, outsourcing may also lead to attrition, if employees who manage consulting contracts are recruited by a contractor.
- **Gaps in supervisory and management skills.** Although OGS has taken steps to enhance these skills within its workforce, business units continue to report that the current promotional pool is not adequately prepared.
- **Gaps in technical skills.** Several business units within OGS face a serious gap between the technical skills needed in their workforce and the skills currently available in the candidate pool. The replacement curve—or the time it takes for current employees to develop those skills or (absent the hiring freeze) to bring in new people who already have them—takes time. Contracting-out is a short-term solution. Yet it reduces the pool of seasoned workers who can pass along their skills to those who are more junior.
- **Lack of employee development planning.** Historically, when managers promoted employees or hired new ones, most didn't create a formal plan for their development or assess their promotional potential.
- **Organizational structures that limit employee career opportunities.** Although some sequences of job titles suggest a career path, many did not. In addition, some prerequisites for promotions were too narrowly defined.

Approach

OGS has two huge advantages in dealing with these challenges: It got started early—in fact, as early as 2000—thinking about succession. And, since then, it has expanded the scope of its succession-management efforts and implemented an array of hard-hitting strategies to meet future workforce needs. The agency has gone beyond the usual let's-add-a-program response, such as piling on some management courses or mentors. While such tactics can be effective, they may have limited impact if organizational factors are holding people back. OGS's succession management plan intervenes at the structural level—for example, by revising organizational and title structures to create flexibility and better promotional opportunities—and at the policy level—for example, by requiring that every new personnel appointment must include an Individual Development Plan. As a result, OGS's effort to address multiple factors that affect its talent supply, including systemic issues, can serve as a model to other jurisdictions.

How OGS Got Started

Human Resources Director Dan Cunningham prefers the term succession management to succession plan, since it implies taking action to meet future workforce needs. "Rather than just identifying mission-critical positions, competencies and skills" needed in the future, he says, succession management includes "having a plan of action to get there."

Back in 2000, OGS's first Succession Management Program focused on replacement strategies to fill specific, mission-critical positions, such as a department head who was preparing to retire. The plan identified areas where the agency was most vulnerable and then outlined replacement strategies for filling anticipated gaps.

That plan, coupled with the agency's strategic plan, prepared OGS for an unanticipated challenge: In late 2002, the state announced an early retirement incentive plan. As a result, OGS was likely to lose up to 19 percent of its workforce by March 2003. While other agencies scrambled to come up with a realignment and restructuring plan to absorb this sudden spike in retirements, OGS had, in effect, already collected the necessary data and crunched the numbers. In January 2003, it presented the State's Division of the Budget (DOB) and Civil Service with a plan for filling mission-critical positions through a combination of recruiting, position reclassifications, and temporarily doubling-up in some positions. The plan won rapid approval, setting the standard with DOB. By the time the early retirements went into effect, OGS had filled 60 percent of the mission-critical positions that were being vacated.

Since its first Succession Management Plan, OGS has moved from looking at specific, mission-critical positions to focusing on broader personnel issues: replenishing the talent pool, promoting employee development, defining career paths, and facilitating knowledge transfer. However, the lever for moving the agency wasn't some exotic, new solution. It was a simple tool that was already available, though little used.

Building the Pipeline — One Individual Development Plan at a Time

In the past, says Cunningham, "we hired or promoted people without any structured development plan or an assessment of their promotional potential." No more. As of February 2003, OGS no longer signs off on any promotions, new hires, or internal transfers unless they are accompanied by an Individual Development Plan (IDP). And not just any pie-in-the-sky kind of development plan; it must include specific commitments and a timeline for meeting them. To complete the mandatory probationary period, for example, new hires must have taken whatever courses were listed for that period in their initial IDP. Following probation, they must meet with their supervisor or an Employee Development Associate from Human Resources to map out their future career opportunities within OGS and what they will need to do to move ahead.

Since OGS first mandated IDPs for new appointments, it has expanded their use to all employees. In theory, creating an IDP was always part of the state's performance evaluation process, says Cunningham, "People just hadn't done it." Making the process universal "creates an environment that's conducive to continuous learning," he says. "That's how the next generation of leaders will get what it needs to support the organization's strategic business priorities."

Addressing Structural Factors

"We're now taking succession management to new level," says Cunningham. The agency's *Succession Management Plan for 2004 and Beyond* lays out an agenda for removing many of the structural barriers that may have blocked employees' paths to career advancement or, at the very least, obscured the way. The following are selected tactics outlined in the plan:

- **Defined career paths.** Some job titles made the advancement ladder obvious, but many others did not. Working with employee bargaining units, OGS's Employee Development staff is designing generic career paths related to the job titles and mapping out the experience and development that are required for promotion.
- **Diversifying minimum qualifications for promotion.** Current prerequisites for promotion may be too narrowly defined. To increase the potential candidate pool and provide employees with better career opportunities, the 2004 plan calls for broadening minimum qualifications for appointment to include service in a related job title.
- **Career counseling.** OGS is launching a career planning service for employees in partnership with another state agency, to encourage employees to consider and prepare for future opportunities.
- **Developing supervisory and managerial expertise.** The plan calls for overhauling current training and establishing requirements as part of the IDP process. It also recommends instituting a role-mentoring program pairing veterans with less experienced supervisors and managers. Finally, it recommends using job rotations and formalized management traineeships to better prepare leaders.
- **Instituting alternative examination strategies.** Web-based exams: OGS is partnering with the Department of Civil Service to pilot web-based examinations for selected positions. Doing so will change recruitment from a fixed period to an ongoing process. Those who take a test can get immediate feedback on their score. Candidate lists will be continuously updated as potential candidates take the exams.

  Portfolio/competency exams: OGS is working with Civil Service to broaden current selection criteria to include not just examination scores but also work experience, project-management skills, licensing requirements and other credentials that are commonly used in the private sector.

Bridge/transition exams: This tactic would provide OGS with a mechanism to expand its candidate pool, streamlining recruitment of high school students into entry-level positions. It would also create enhanced traineeships to facilitate promotional opportunities for existing staff. To earn promotion, they would complete a skill-development program and demonstrate competencies by successfully completing a real-time project (not a simulation). Similar transition exams might also be developed for hourly employees.

- **Expanding OGS's candidate sourcing.** The plan outlines new talent-sourcing strategies, which are now in varying stages of implementation:

  Public Management Internships: Administered by Civil Service, this option provides a mechanism to hire individuals with graduate degrees through two-year professional traineeships for entry-level professional administrative positions.

  Retiree Service Corps: By rehiring its own retirees, OGS can tap into their skills and experience to complete projects and to supplement, or even help develop, current employees' knowledge and skills. Retiree Service Corps members can also serve as mentors. OGS has piloted such a group and plans to expand it. OGS now provides every employee, upon retirement, with an information packet describing the opportunities for project work and other assignments, as well as the relevant pension restrictions.

  Interagency transfers: OGS is working with Civil Service's Career Mobility Office to facilitate the transfer of employees interested in moving to other state agencies.

- **Promoting knowledge transfer from soon-to-retire employees to their successors**:

  Job-shadowing and "Temporary Duplicate Items": By employing both the incumbent and his or her successor for a limited time period (up to two years), the agency facilitates the transfer of institutional knowledge in mission-critical positions.

  Mentoring by members of the Retiree Service Corps

  The Commissioner's Management Institute: A collection of classroom and online learning opportunities designed to develop the competencies that OGS supervisors and managers will need in the future.

Cost

Using a combination of agency funds and grant funds from outside resources, the agency has made a significant investment to support its Succession Management strategies. For example:

- Development and implementation of the Applied Skilled Trades Development Program, a comprehensive skills and career-development program for the agency's operations and maintenance workforce : $100,000
- Development and implementation of a "Performance Evaluation for Managers and Supervisors" program that focuses on conducting a performance appraisal, developing an Individual Development Plan: $30,000
- OGS Virtual University, the agency's online employee-development component: $50,000
- Updating the Commissioner's Management Institute: $45,000

Outcomes

As part of its Succession Management effort, the Division will begin tracking several metrics related to its leadership pipeline including the percentage of supervisors and managers who complete various formal development programs and what they learn and retain from these programs (measured by a pre-test and post-test).

OGS has recently developed a competency model for managers, which will be incorporated into the annual performance review. In the future, HR plans to develop some "dashboard" indicators related to these competencies, so it can track current competency levels across its leadership pipeline in relation to future needs. The data to feed this ongoing evaluation will come from performance reviews and perhaps a competency assessment of future leaders.

SOUTH CAROLINA

Executive Branch workforce: 62,609

Synopsis

South Carolina (SC) is one of 26 jurisdictions that participate in the National Certified Public Manager Consortium. Since 1996, the state has offered an 18-month program leading to CPM certification. SC's approach stands out for several reasons: It redesigned the program in 2001 so that participants would proceed through the program as part of a defined cohort, rather than at their own pace. This change is just one of the ways the program seeks to build strong relationships across departments. In addition, the state has evaluated the program based on Level III of the Kirkpatrick model (see page 54), which evaluates longer-term outcomes from training. The case describes SC's assessment efforts to date and the challenges to implementing more rigorous program-evaluation.

Challenges

- **Retirements.** At the end of 2004, 32 percent of SC's Executive Branch workforce were within five years of retirement-eligibility. In January 2000, the state introduced an incentive program that allows state employees and teachers to retire, continue to work, and receive their salary over a five year period (during which time their retirement distribution is held in escrow). About 5,500 executive branch employees are currently participating in the program. In the short term, the incentive should forestall retirements, buying SC additional time to prepare. Yet eventually, SC's mature workforce will retire in record numbers. It's that inevitability that the Budget and Control Board's Office of Human Resources (OHR) has been trying to drive home to agency heads through an intensive education effort.

  OHR staff are showing agencies how to mine their workforce data to identify which employees are approaching retirement eligibility and to develop succession plans. Rather than a one-for-one replacement pool, where a single candidate is earmarked for a specific promotional opportunity, agencies are encouraged to develop a pool of leaders they can pick from, explains OHR Director Sam Wilkins. They're also encouraged to integrate succession planning with other tactics such as recruitment and retention to create a broader workforce planning strategy.

- **Upgrading the Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program.** Recognizing that it would be losing many managers, SC launched a statewide leadership-development program. In 1996, the program became accredited by the National Certified Public Manager Consortium (http://www.cpmconsortium.org). Five years later, the state rounded up agency leaders and asked for feedback on the CPM program. While the program had been effective, strategic changes were proposed to better address shortages in the state's leadership pipeline.

In the initial stage of our research, we interviewed a number of states that have CPM programs and that participate in the National Certified Public Manager Consortium. Among these, South Carolina stood out for three reasons:

First, the state has produced a lot of CPM graduates: 265, including the class that's about to finish the program. Second, SC has radically redesigned its CPM program since 2001. Many of the problems that needed fixing are ones that other jurisdictions face, which makes SC's experiences relevant to agencies at all levels of government.

Another deciding factor in choosing South Carolina is that the state has a plan, now partially implemented, to systematically evaluate its CPM program using what has become the gold standard in the field of training and development: the Kirkpatrick Model of Evaluation. (See sidebar on page 54 "What Is the Kirkpatrick Evaluation Model?"). While SC is still working toward the fourth, and most challenging, level of Kirkpatrick's model, its effort to bring more rigor to the evaluation process puts its ahead of many other jurisdictions.

These three factors make the state's CPM program distinctive; the coup de grâce is that the state was one of three, top-ranked states in the 2005 Government Performance Project's "People" category. South Carolina earned an A-, bested only by Georgia and tied with Virginia.

Approach

The National CPM Consortium specifies certain components that every CPM program must include. Beyond these, there's room for variation. So when SC asked for feedback on its CPM program, it was looking for things it could improve upon and still meet the National Consortium's accreditation standards. As it turned out, there were several important aspects of the program that needed fixing.

- **Self-selection.** Any state employee could sign up to take the courses that, at the time, made up SC's CPM curriculum. As a result, says Laurette Burdyl, State Training Director, "the people in the program weren't necessarily part of an agency succession planning initiative."

- **Low agency commitment.** Because the agencies weren't nominating participants, their commitment to the program was very low. When their workload increased or their budget was cut, they might not be invested in making sure their employees finished the program.
- **Open enrollment.** Employees could register for individual courses within the CPM program in whatever order, and at whatever time, suited their schedule. That meant they might have different classmates from course to course. People moved through the program at different rates. As a result, in the eyes of both agency leaders and prospective participants, the program seemed to take "forever" to complete.

Acting on this feedback, South Carolina made significant changes in 2001.

- **Agency nomination.** Every spring, OHR asks agencies to nominate one or more employees for the next CPM program, which begins every fall. It reviews applications to make sure candidates have had enough supervisory experience that they're ready for the next challenge. They must also have completed one basic supervisory course offered through the state.
- **Program cohorts.** Rather than signing up for courses à la carte, participants now take a series of courses that have been carefully sequenced. As a result, they move through the program from start to finish as a group.

Program Design

The CPM program takes 18 months to complete. Participants typically meet for two consecutive days per month and complete homework assignments and projects outside of class. They must attend 90 percent of class sessions to qualify for certification, although there's some flexibility to allow participants to take make-up classes the following year.

- **CPM Competency Clusters.** SC's CPM program components are clustered into four areas and sequenced to build from the specific needs of individuals and groups and to general trends in government.

1. **Self-management and personal development**: Participants complete the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory and a 360-degree feedback process in advance. The program begins with a "Developmental Retreat" designed to kick-start individual development and build a cohesive cohort. The two-day event combines experiential learning using a ropes course, results of the MBTI, writing an Individual Development Plan based on the 360-degree feedback, and forming small groups with other participants who are working on similar issues. The groups are structured so that, over the first six months of the program, members are coaching each other in setting behavioral goals and trying to meet them.
2. **Leading individuals and groups**: Sessions of varying length focus on generational differences, diversity, communication, conflict, performance management, team leadership, and effective presentations.
3. **Understanding organizational systems and cultures**: Topics include systems and process improvement, agency accountability reports, performance measures, strategic planning, workforce planning, Franklin Covey's 4 Roles of Leadership, organizational culture, and effective presentations.
4. **Knowledge of state government and trends**: Administrators and program experts from the Budget and Control Board, the University of South Carolina and other areas of state government lead sessions on an overview of state government, the legislative and budgetary process, ethics, human resource management, procurement, auditing, and the impact of technology. In addition, each class member makes a presentation to the class about his or her agency—not just what it does, but what its top issues and challenges are. Through these presentations, people begin to see the connection between their own agency and others. They discover that many departments are struggling with the same problems. Getting the bigger picture can be a major ah-ha moment — a developmental leap that many jurisdictions and agencies find lacking when they look at their succession pool.

- **Emphasis on practical application.** Rather than simply presenting theory and best practices, the program emphasizes what Burdyl calls the so-what factor: What can you take from this course content and apply back at your agency? What issues or problems might this help you address?

  Participants are constantly challenged to use what they learn in class in various application activities. In the sessions that focus on performance management, for example, they learn delegation, situational leadership, and other skills. First, they practice them with each other in class. Then they have to try them out for real, with their own subordinates and co-workers, and report back on their experiences. What worked? What bombed? What would you do differently next time?

- **Final examination.** To be accredited, all CPM programs must include a final examination. South Carolina's is an open-book and take-home exam. Rather than testing mastery of facts, the exam emphasizes application. "We don't want them to regurgitate Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," explains Burdyl. "We want them to bring together all the course material and describe how they would apply it." Typically, the exam includes a number of scenarios that any agency leader confronts. In explaining how they would respond, participants must demonstrate what they've learned about themselves and about teams, organizations, systems, state government, and larger, environmental trends.

- **CPM project.** As required for CPM certification, each candidate in SC's program completes a project designed to improve services, processes, or products within an agency. Coached by consultants with problem-solving and research expertise, candidates hone their skills while developing new ideas for improving agency services or reducing costs. One project analyzed clinician productivity to improve billing systems for the Department of Mental Health. Another investigated the impact of work centers on response time to wildfires for the Forestry Commission. A third designed an assessment program for the Department of Transportation to improve the maintenance of highways.

Cost

Agencies pay $1,850 per participant, which can be spread over two fiscal years.

Evaluation

At the final Capstone Retreat, OHR staff engage each CPM cohort in a "SWOT" analysis, identifying the program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This feedback is used to adjust the program, as needed. For example, SC will drop an off-the-shelf leadership course and replace it with something more easily customized to state government. Participants have also suggested adding a project-management session and another on values-based decision making.

Such feedback is a good example of a Level I evaluation in Kirkpatrick's model: a measure of customer satisfaction, or what trainers sometimes refer to disparagingly as "smile sheets." While Level I feedback is useful for refining the program, it doesn't tell OHR about actual outcomes. "We try to go as bottom-line as we can," says Burdyl. "We try to show how the individual was impacted, but also how their agency was."

Toward that end, South Carolina has developed a more extensive, quantitative evaluation for the CPM program. It's an added bonus that this instrument was researched, designed, and piloted by OHR staffer Katherine Fanning as her final application project in the CPM program. Its intent is to measure Level III learning, which Kirkpatrick defines as actual behavior change resulting from the learning experience. The evaluation is distributed to program participants and their supervisors six months after the end of the program. It was administered for the first time to evaluate the program that finished in May 2003 and again to assess the 2004 class.

- **Graduates' Evaluation of the CPM Program**. Graduates are asked whether their management responsibility has increased since completing the program; how much their approach to management has changed; and the extent to which their skills have improved in areas such as performance management, process improvement, and knowledge of state government environment and trends.
- **Supervisors' Evaluation of the CPM Program**. Supervisors are asked to evaluate improvements in the CPM graduate's skills, knowledge, and performance. They also rate specific areas in which the agency has benefited both from the employee's experience in the program and from his or her final CPM application project.

Feedback from these surveys has been positive. The majority of graduates and supervisors responded with a rating of 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale to the question "How much did the CPM Program help you develop professionally?" Most supervisors rated the extent to which their employee's approach to management had changed since completing the CPM program as four or above on a five-point scale. The majority of supervisors also indicated that their employee's management responsibilities have increased since attending the CPM Program.

Yet SC has also encountered some challenges in tying to implement this evaluation. The primary obstacle has been getting supervisors to complete the survey. Whether they have left state government, moved to another position, or simply forgotten, the response rate for supervisors has been too low to produce representative data. Thus, while South Carolina has advanced ahead of many jurisdictions by creating an evaluation instrument that goes beyond "Did they like it?" to investigate "So what difference did it make?"— it must still find the right carrot or stick to boost a critical stakeholder group's participation.

Until then, it may have to look at other outcomes: Since the program was redesigned in 2001, enrollment has doubled, suggesting that OHR's campaign to promote succession planning and to overhaul the CPM program have hit the mark.

An additional impact is that the number of CPM graduates is becoming a critical mass. They have created their own membership association, the Society of Certified Public Managers of South Carolina. While independently incorporated and separate from state government, the society has partnered with OHR in sponsoring leadership development events for its members and other state employees.

Burdyl foresees the day when candidates and alumni collaborate on problem-solving teams to deal with issues across state government. Not only would such assignments stretch people beyond their own department and comfort zone; they would also deepen the network of connections that the program is building across state government.

Next Steps

Many state agencies offer internal programs for developing leaders within their organization. The statewide CPM program is different, however. "We try to get people to move beyond their agency issues," says Burdyl. "We're developing leaders not only for agencies but for all of state government. Eventually, we will have people who can move more easily from one agency to another because they will have developed a common language."

If that happens, SC will have overcome significant odds. Even when organizations train a cadre of elite leaders with the intention of moving them around, few leaders actually achieve such mobility, research has found. Departments or agencies persist in choosing leaders from within or hiring leaders who have grown up in the same technical area. Human nature can be obdurate. Yet as baby boomers retire, leaving a smaller pool of younger workers to replace them, talent wars will heat up. Such shortages, Burdyl thinks, might increase the competition for talent among agencies. If that happens, South Carolina will have a network of managers groomed to think beyond their own agencies and to understand the bigger picture of state government.

How Do We Know if What We're Doing Is Effective?

In our discussion of the research findings, we noted a major shortcoming of many organizations' efforts to build the leadership outline: the lack of systematic evaluation to assess the outcomes. The chart on page 9 points to a variety of evaluation methods described in the case studies. Nevertheless, one of this study's strongest conclusions is that organizations could be doing more in this area—a point that many of the jurisdictions we interviewed were quick to acknowledge.

For readers who may be wondering what they can do to improve in this area, we recommend the following resources:

- Kirkpatrick, Donald (1998) *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development.

  Kirkpatrick is to training and development what Dr. Deming was to TQM and Norton and Kaplan are to the Balanced Scorecard. Since it was first published in 1975, the "Kirkpatrick Model" has become the gold standard for analyzing training outcomes. Most corporate trainers and Chief Learning Officers know his four levels backwards and forwards, but very few can claim to have reached the pinnacle.

  Level I evaluates participants' "reaction and planned action" following training—that is, what they liked and didn't like. Basically, it's an exit poll.

  Level II measures self-reported learning, or the skills, knowledge, and attitude changes they say they learned from the training

  Level III is where the rubber meets the road. It measures actual behavior, or how the participant applied the learning on the job. Here, there may be multiple sources of data: not only the participant but also his or her supervisor, peers, and subordinates.

  Level IV asks the "so what?" question. What difference did it make to the organization? It assesses business results, such as the change in customer satisfaction, productivity, morale, quality, etc.

  These four are the essentials, although Kirkpatrick has also described a Level V evaluation that calculates actual financial returns.

- Jennifer Martineau and Kelly Hannum, *Evaluating the Impact of Leadership Development*, Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 2004.

  The Center for Creative Leadership is one of the foremost institutions in the field of leadership development. Not only does it offer four-star executive development programs; CCL also conducts research, publishes articles and books, and generally keeps the field on its toes and moving forward.

  This slim book is a gem. Offering clear, step-by-step instructions for designing effective evaluations, it's an ideal guide for the professional who is new to program evaluation. It's a pleasure to find solid methods and intelligent advice combined with friendly, non-technical writing.

- Eric Shepherd and Janet Goodwin, *Assessments Through the Learning Process*, Questionmark Corporation White Paper, 2004. www.questionmark.com/us/whitepapers

  You'll have to register to download this white paper from Questionmark.com's website, but it's painless and quick. This 30-page document provides a basic primer on learning assessments. It defines different types and describes how to develop effective instruments and analyze their results. Not surprisingly, the authors are especially enthusiastic about computer-based assessments (this company's product).

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

(formerly the Family Independence Agency)

Workforce: 10,300

Synopsis

Several features set the Department of Human Services' Leadership Academy apart from other leadership development programs we studied:

- A selection process that combines self-nomination with rigorous assessments
- A formal leadership development program with strong components
- A variety of metrics for evaluating the program's impacts

In addition, the Michigan DHS case study raises several important issues related to building the leadership pipeline that are relevant to jurisdictions and agencies at all levels:

- The challenges of attracting top candidates to leadership development programs that require a significant time investment above and beyond the regular job
- The trade-offs between self-nomination for leadership programs and nomination by others

Challenges

- **Retirements.** In 2000, the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) realized that 25 percent of its workforce was currently eligible for retirement and 75 percent of senior staff would be eligible to retire within five years.
- **Leadership pipeline.** The agency realized that current staff weren't prepared to move into senior leadership jobs when incumbents retired. In the past, the agency had promoted people and expected them to learn from a short training program and on the job. Faced with the prospect of so many leadership vacancies, the agency decided to become proactive. "Rather than a sink-or-swim approach," says Bill Patrick, director of DHS' Office of Professional Development, "we wanted to prepare people before the opportunity."

Approach

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is Michigan's public assistance, child, and family welfare agency. DHS directs the operations of public assistance and service programs through a network of over 100 county and district offices around the state. Prior to March 15, 2005, the department was known as the Michigan Family Independence Agency.

The Michigan DHS chose to adopt the "Grow Your Own" strategy championed by Development Dimensions International (DDI) consultants William Byham, Audrey Smith and Matthew Paese[1]. DDI advocates creating an "acceleration pool" of potential leaders. Employees who are placed in an acceleration pool are assessed and coached and trained and stretched and given feedback and then assessed some more—not in preparation for a specific promotional opportunity, but as part of a talent pool that the organization is grooming for one or another executive roles.

DHS's Leadership Academy marries the concept of an acceleration pool with the realities of public-sector personnel practices. Since 2001, two classes have completed the two-year Academy. A third class began the program in December 2004 and a fourth class is planned. The Academy has not only exposed a growing number of future leaders to the theory and practice of leadership. It received an Excellence in Practice Citation from the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and won praises in a 2003 study of best practices in human resources, funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.[2]

Selection

Many private-sector organizations handpick an elite cadre of high-potential candidates (called "hi-pos") to meet future succession needs. Hi-pos may or may not be told that they're in this succession pool[3], but the list is groomed and updated at talent review meetings every year or, in some companies, every quarter. Hi-pos are given special development opportunities, their progress is reviewed and their developmental needs charted with a level of scrutiny befitting a thoroughbred training farm—which is, in fact, a reasonable metaphor for the corporate approach to succession management.

But that approach would be a bad fit in state government. "We wanted an open nomination process," explains Patrick. "Civil Service guidelines require that any selection process for state employees be objective, open, and fair."

[1] Byham, William; Smith, Audrey and Paese, Matthew (2004) *Grow Your Own Leaders*. CITE

[2] Robert J. Lavigna, *Human Resource Management Best Practices in Human Services*, Final Report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CPS Human Resource Services, April 21, 2003.

[3] Young, Mary (2001) "Coming Clean to Higher Performers: Should You Tell Them of Their Potential?" *Workforce Online.* www.workforce.com/section/00/article/23/19/69.html

As a result, DHS invited all 2,600 employees who met the initial criteria to consider applying to the program. To be eligible, they had to be a supervisor or a fairly highly placed specialist in Michigan's job classification system[4]. That put them at roughly the mid-level to top of their organization.

Although the size of the pool has changed from year to year, the application process has remained the same. Before submitting their nomination, qualified applicants are encouraged to review two online tools:

- **A Realistic Job Profile.** describes what executive–level jobs are like in the agency, based on details and examples provided by current senior managers.
- **The Ideal Job Inventory**. This DDI self-assessment tool was developed by surveying the agency's senior staff about their jobs. To complete the assessment, an employee indicates his or her preferences on 100 job dimensions. In return, each person receives a report that, for each dimension, compares his or her ideal job to high-level jobs at DHS. No one sees these results except the employee.

These two tools serve as the initial screen in a multi-stage process designed to winnow the pool of potential candidates from the universe of eligible employees (2,000-2,600) to the top candidates for the next Leadership Academy class (approximately 20 people). The selection process is illustrated below. The numbers used to illustrate the process are based on the first year's Academy.

Those who nominate themselves complete a brief, online application. Then they attend a two-hour orientation program led by Patrick. Once he has described the Leadership Academy and selection process, attendees complete two more exercises:

- **The Situational Judgment Inventory.** This exercise presents 32 situations that leaders might be expected to handle and four response options. The instrument assesses candidates' ability to recognize the most appropriate response.
- **The Experience Profile.** This is a written, take-home exercise that takes about eight hours to complete. For each of the seven competencies that DHS has identified as critical for senior managers, the candidate must describe an experience in which she or he demonstrated that competency using the DDI "STAR" format: the situation or task, the action he or she took, and the results. Later, volunteers who've been trained in behavioral interviewing spend three days evaluating the Experience Profiles in a blind-rating process.

Selecting Leadership Academy Participants

1st screen: Review Realistic Job Preview; Complete Ideal Job Inventory

2nd screen: Orientation, Situational Judgment Inventory, Experience Profile

3rd screen: Selection for interview and reference check

4th screen: Executive staff review rankings and select next Leadership Academy class

[4] In 2005, DHS will change the Academy's eligibility criteria and invite all first-line professional staff to apply.

Completing the Experience Profile is demanding enough that many who attend the orientation opt out at that point. The Experience Profiles are rated, further narrowing the pool to 40-60 candidates. Even those who are dropped from the list at any point receive written feedback and the opportunity for an interview to receive more detailed feedback. In this way, the selection process does more than shorten the list. For those who don't make the cut, it provides specific feedback about strengths and areas in which they need to develop further. They can reapply another year.

Four or five panels operating in different areas of the state conduct 75-minute, behavior-based interviews with individual candidates. They use structured interview questions based on six of the fifteen LA competencies. Next, Patrick and his staff contact each candidate's current supervisor and ask him or her to evaluate the candidate against the same list of competencies. If the supervisor gives a negative reference, Patrick will contact two other references for further input.

The final step in the selection process is the Executive Staff Review. Senior managers receive a list of everyone who was interviewed. The candidates are presented in rank order, based on their interview score (A through D) and their combined scores on the Situational Judgment Inventory and the Experience Profile.

Diversity is also a factor. Patrick and his staff review the initial candidate pool to make sure it meets the agency's diversity goals. At the final stage, they check to make sure that the class mirrors the diversity of the original candidates and that the number of field-office and central-office employees is balanced. From start to finish, the selection process takes about four months.

Leadership Academy Program

The second noteworthy aspect of DHS's approach to building its leadership pipeline is the Leadership Academy program, which, like the selection process, is robust. Its elements are depicted in the model below.

- **The Supervisor's Role.** Patrick meets with supervisors even before he gets together with the new Academy to make sure they're supportive of the program. "LA members can't work on their Leadership Academy assignments at the expense of their supervisor and staff," he says. Having that conversation with the supervisor before the program begins sets clear expectations that the LA participant will be expected to participate in all LA events and also complete their work to the supervisor's satisfaction. LA members get this same message.
- **Individual Development Plan.** Academy participants take part in a 360-degree assessment process that provides data about their strengths and developmental needs, as viewed by their manager, peers, and subordinates. They then meet with a coach—initially a DDI consultant but now Patrick or one of his colleagues—to discuss which competencies they want to focus on in the coming year. LA participants create an Individual Development Plan (IDP). IDPs are tied to the agency's competency model, which is based on the model used throughout MI state government.
- **The mentor.** Each LA participant is matched with a more senior manager within DHS. Mentors receive formal training and are expected to meet with their mentee on a regular basis. Patrick and his staff monitor the matches and can offer coaching if needed. A Mentor Support Network provides additional training and meetings.
- **Developmental assignments.** Academy participants have the option of choosing a developmental assignment outside their current responsibilities. For example, one manager chose to shadow a district manager for one week. In another case, a county program manager wanted experience in human resources, so he arranged a six-week leave to work on special projects at the agency's central HR office. By luck, a first-line supervisor who was in the Academy wanted experience as a second-line manager, so she filled in for the county program manager. Still other Academy members who were promoted while in the Academy opted to meet in a support group with classmates who were at a similar career stage.
- **Learning forums.** These training sessions are designed to address competency gaps identified through the selection process and 360-degree feedback process. Each LA class participates as a cohort. Forums are held one day each month and their format — outside speaker, formal curriculum, or roundtable discussion — is driven by the content, for example, becoming an influential leader, building trust, strategic planning, and facilitating change.

- **Action learning.** The LA incorporates action learning, a method for developing leaders that is well established in many corporations. (See sidebar on page 60: What Makes It Action Learning?) About 10 months into the program, the LA class is presented with four project assignments crafted by DHS's executive staff. These projects are strategic challenges the agency is facing, rather than simulations or case studies. For example, one team studied the processing of applications for various human service programs and developed recommendations for reducing cycle time to free up staff to work directly with clients. Another team investigated what it would take to extend a successful pilot program for foster care to other urban counties. A third team identified inconsistent eligibility rules for family assistance programs and developed a prioritized action plan to make the rules consistent.

  Class members can indicate which project they'd like to work on, although the final assignment is made by Academy staff. Each project has a high-level sponsor who has ownership for its outcome. The sponsor provides access, guidance, and periodic reality checks to make sure the team is still on track.

- **Coaching.** To ensure that action learning does, in fact, lead to learning, each team meets with a coach monthly for approximately six months. (DDI consultants served as coaches the first year; now Patrick and his staff do.) Part of each half-day session is spent in a "project action review," in which the coach asks questions that help the team reflect on its learning. How's the work going? What have you learned? What's next on your agenda? The coach also helps the group connect the material presented in the learning forums to the challenges they're grappling with in their project. In doing so, he explains, "we really reinforce the concepts that we're teaching."

  The second part of every monthly team meeting focuses on individual members. Each is asked to present a specific leadership challenge that she or he currently faces or anticipates in the month ahead. Then the rest of the team asks reflective questions such as: What do you want to be different? What solutions have you already tried and how did they turn out?

  "They can only ask questions," says Patrick. "They're not allowed to give advice." Once the coach has given everyone a list of open-ended questions and modeled reflective questioning, the team takes over. By the second or third meeting, they're actively coaching each other. In fact, "networking during the action learning meeting" was the highest rated aspect of action learning.

  Mentors and the action learning project make the biggest impact on Academy participants, says Patrick. "You can't learn how to lead by sitting in a classroom. Learning is about taking action." The action learning project is the most challenging part of the Academy, but it's also the most valuable. For some participants, "it's like working on a dream team where everyone is motivated, everyone carries their weight, and everyone is a leader."

At the end of six months, each team makes a formal presentation to the agency's senior leadership, reporting their findings, recommendations, and what they learned from the project. Ideally, the teams' ideas will be implemented at the end of the project, although few produce immediate change. "Many of the challenges that the action learning teams deal with are very complex issues," says Patrick. "It takes time for the recommendations to be implemented." Nevertheless, the sponsors and the senior management team have been pleased with the recommendations. Teams come away with "a great sense of accomplishment," he says. "They take a difficult issue and they come up with a great solution."

Cost

The total program cost for one Academy is about $38,000 per year. This breaks down to about $13,000 for DDI training materials and another $11,000 for travel to team meetings and Learning Forums. The remainder ($14,000/year) pays for assessment tools such as the Ideal Job Inventory and Situational Judgment Inventory. When two Academies are running at the same time, the cost is approximately $62,000 each year.

Evaluation

The third area in which DHS's Leadership Academy excels is program evaluation. Not only has it taken the time to compare outcomes for program participants and a control group of non-participants. It has wrestled with one of the most vexing evaluation dilemmas in leadership development: how do you prove that positive outcomes are due to your leadership development program rather than to the fact that program participants were already the cream of the crop?

Comparing Outcomes for LA Participants and Non-participants

To assess the impact of training and development, many organizations track participants' career progress. Within a specified time period after completing the program, what percentage of participants has been promoted? And how does their promotion rate compare to that of a similar group (defined as the same pay band, classification level, years of experience, etc.) who did not participate in the program?

When DHS compared promotions for employees who had completed the LA and for a similar group of employees (matched with the Academy participants on the basis of age, race, gender, tenure, and job level) who had applied but not been chosen, it found a dramatic difference: 58 percent of LA alumni had been promoted, compared to just 8 percent of the other group. Pay increases received by Academy members were double that of non-members.

While such dramatic differences could suggest that the leadership development program made a difference, they do not prove it. "The Academy may have made a difference," says Patrick, "or we could have really done a good job selecting high potentials who would have gotten promoted even without the Academy."

That's about as far as evaluation goes in most of the leadership development programs we studied. But DHS goes further. When they asked LA alumni who had been promoted whether the program had been helpful in preparing them for their new job, 80 percent felt it had been "highly helpful" and the remainder said "moderately helpful." That finding seems to support the conclusion that the LA makes a difference, but it still doesn't prove it. A contrarian could just as easily argue that the Academy participants who had been promoted were predisposed to feel good about the program. That is, the very fact that they'd been rewarded with a promotion may have inflated their positive feelings looking back on the program.

Yet DHS has further evaluation data to subdue, if not to permanently silence, such a contrarian. The agency also compared results of two 360-degree assessments of its first LA class. The first assessment was conducted at the beginning of the program; the second at the end. The assessment used a five-point scale, and the average proficiency level for overall skills increased from 3.94 to 4.25.

A truly curmudgeonly evaluation researcher could still challenge these outcomes. It could be argued that the Academy participants' competency levels would have improved anyway, even without the Academy, simply by acquiring two more years of experience—what researchers call a "maturation effect." But that viewpoint seems less than persuasive. The passage of time could have brought improvement in some competencies that the LA is designed to address. Yet even a curmudgeon would have to admit that it's less likely that time, alone, would produce an across-the-board improvement independent of the program.

Perhaps the most helpful insight comes from what participants' supervisors said. Sixty percent reported that the Academy participant's performance improved to a high or very high extent in the areas targeted in his or her development plan. That's moderately positive. But the results were a lot stronger when a second factor was incorporated into the analysis: the extent to which the participants said they were able to use the newly learned behaviors in their current job. For the 67 percent who reported that, to a high or very high extent, they could apply what they'd learned in the Academy back home on the job, their supervisors all reported a high or very high performance improvement.

Of all the agencies and jurisdictions we studied, Michigan's DHS uses the most robust program evaluation. The metrics that it tracks over time — career progress (measured by promotion and increase in pay) and 360-degree assessment ratings — are ones that other organizations could also use. They don't entail any special analytic capabilities, although the decision to ensure the confidentiality of 360-degree assessments by outsourcing can be costly. DHS demonstrates the benefits of using a combination of metrics, rather than a single outcome measure. It also demonstrates that corporate approaches to succession management can be adapted to the public sector.

Next Steps

While DHS's Leadership Academy has gotten many important things right, there are challenges it still needs to address:

- **Pushing leadership development down deeper into the organization.** Another mark of the program's success is that employees who are not yet supervisors—and therefore not eligible for the Leadership Academy—have complained that they're not getting developed. To meet their needs, DHS has made two changes: Beginning with the fourth Leadership Academy, applications will be accepted from employees at lower levels, that is, non-supervisors who are first-line professionals. The second new initiative is a leadership development program that will be open to all staff. Its purpose will be to prepare employees for supervisory roles and to develop leadership skills. While the first course in the program will be taught face-to-face, others will be offered online, a low-cost solution that fits within tighter state budgets. Participants will be able to choose a mentor from a list of DHS managers who have been trained for the role.
- **Attracting applicants to the Leadership Academy.** Each year, the number of Academy applicants has dropped.

Entering Class	Eligible	Applicants	Selected	Completed Program	Still employed by DHS
2001	2000	250	22	19	19
2002	2600	160	20	19	17
2004	1800	112	24	(in progress)	

When asked why they haven't applied, some members of the program's target audience have said they couldn't handle the time commitment. Because the state had just offered an early retirement incentive, they had already taken on extra duties to cover for vacant positions. "Employees who are already working extended hours and who are also juggling personal commitments may already feel overwhelmed," says Patrick. There's a delicate balance that employers must strike between forewarning would-be participants about the program's demands—which are significant—but not scaring them off. There are also limits on how rigorous a program can be when it is added "on top of" the routine workload.

What Makes It Action Learning?

The term "action learning" isn't entirely self-explanatory. It's often used to refer to work-based experiences that combine learning and doing. In some organizations, programs may be called action learning simply because that sounds more engaging than ordinary training.

In fact, action learning is a well-defined methodology with essential characteristics that distinguish it from other approaches. Like task forces and problem-solving teams, an action-learning team tackles a strategic business issue and makes recommendations to more senior decision-makers. But that is only one objective. Action learning is also a process for selecting, assessing, and developing top performers to achieve new levels of knowledge, skills, and experience.

Four characteristics set action learning apart from other kinds of training and development:

- **Teams.** Typically, action learning is a team-based approach to learning. Teams are carefully selected based on individual members' skills and potential and on the desired mix of the group, for example, cross-functional, cross-level, cross-geography, and/or culture.
- **Real-world business challenges.** Action learning stands in dramatic contrast to other approaches to learning — for example, classroom instruction, case-study discussion, or simulations — because participants are given real problems or business challenges to work on. In most cases, these issues have significant impact on the organization, making the assignment high-stakes for the company and consequently for the team, which is challenged to identify the best options for moving forward.
- **Structured learning.** To meet the goal of individual and team development, action learning programs often include training (for example, in team functioning, problem-solving, questioning, and reflection), coaching, and structured feedback.
- **Stretch assignments.** Because teams are given stretch assignments that extend beyond members' normal responsibilities or past experience, action learning simultaneously provides both:

  Extraordinary challenge, serving as a test whose results will be carefully scrutinized by superiors

  A hothouse environment where participants receive extraordinary opportunities, tools and, hopefully, support

Why Action Learning?

Many organizations recognize the imperative to develop leaders. Action learning is an attractive solution. Since the mid-1990s, it has become an established and effective process for developing leaders while, at the same time, addressing critical business challenges—for example, new product development, expanding business operations into new geographies, post-merger integration, supply-chain management, and organizational restructuring.

Adapted from Mary B. Young, Action Learning Today: *How Five Leading Companies Use Action Learning to Tackle Business Challenges and Develop Leaders* © 2002. The Center For Organizational Research, A Division of Linkage, Inc., Lexington, MA.

Promoting the Program's Contributions to the State

Like South Carolina and 24 other jurisdictions, Mississippi offers a Certified Public Manager program to develop qualified employees for future leadership opportunities. The state's program is not unlike many others we looked at within the National Certified Public Manager Consortium and elsewhere.

However, Mississippi has done at least one thing better than any of the 35 organizations we interviewed: It has collected descriptions of every project completed by CPM program participants, selected some as "model projects" and published a 50-page report describing exactly what each project's impacts were.

A small sample of the completed projects described in the 2004 edition of *A Profile of Excellence in Public Service* (an earlier version was published in 2001) is shown below.

Nowhere have we seen a more concerted effort made to demonstrate how a state agency and citizens benefit from an investment in leadership development. While the publication doesn't address the program's impacts on individual participants — such as the subsequent promotions or performance of those who earn the CPM — it clearly demonstrates outcomes that may be even more important to a wider audience. This approach to publicizing how state government and its citizens benefit directly from a program aimed at developing leaders is one that other jurisdictions, departments, and agencies could adopt — or even improve upon.

The following pages present a sample description of one model project.

A *Profile of Excellence in Public Service* is available at www.spb.state.ms.us/training/modp204.pdf

State or Local Agency	Model CPM Project
City of Columbus Fire Department	■ Developing Quality Improvement Within the Columbus Fire Department
City of Columbus Police Department	■ Orientation for Investigator Candidates
MS Department of Environmental Quality	■ Quality Improvement Plan for Enhancing Customer Service
MS Department of Information Technology Services	■ Domino.doc Storage Structure Design and Implementation Plan ■ Marketing Plan for On-Line Training ■ Motivation Training for ISS Staff
MS Department of Mental Health - Mississippi State Hospital	■ Process Guidelines for Environment of Care (EOC) Inspections
MS Department of Transportation	■ MDOT Permits Database Availability and Access
MS Development Authority (MDA)	■ Proposal to Develop a Community Contact Program ■ Proposal to Develop a Tourism Division Group Tour Incentive
MS Secretary of State's Office	■ Pilot Project for a Multi-Source Assessment
MS Public Employees' Retirement System	■ Internal Audit Department Manual

MODEL PROJECTS FROM THE MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Mr. Leland Speed, Executive Director

Benefit to the Agency

"MDA is committed to improving our economy and promoting quality of life for every citizen in our state. Our partnership with the Certified Public Manager Program equips MDA managers and supervisors to better serve their customers by promoting professionalism, excellence, and quality principles in public management."

Leland Speed,
Executive Director, MS Development Authority

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY COMMUNITY CONTACT PROGRAM

Author: Steven C. Hardin

Project Synopsis:
In the spring of 2003, MDA implemented an agency reorganization plan prepared by a third-party consultant. The reorganization included the formation of a new division (Regional Services). Consolidating twenty-five staff persons and their respective budgets from four previously existing programmatic divisions created the new division. Each of these four divisions had different managerial and programmatic accountability processes. The newly created Regional Services Division has a need for a formalized contact program for the many local and regional community development organizations served by the division. This proposal, if implemented, will provide greater accountability for respective staff members' performance and greater accountability for agency programs and services provided to the community organizations. As the division director (MDA-Associate Director), I am responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of programs and services provided by the twenty-five employees within the division. This proposal reflects my recommendations for accountability and enhanced service delivery for these programs and services.

Author's Perspective:
"I earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and have years of experience in private sector management. I was pleasantly surprised to have benefited as much as I have from the Mississippi Certified Public Manager Program. Further education is beneficial in all professions, but the CPM program provides much needed exposure and practical application to the many unique aspects of public management."

Steven C. Hardin, MS Development Authority

PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY TOURISM DIVISION

GROUP TOUR INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Author: Rhonda Williams

Project Synopsis:
The Mississippi Development Authority, Tourism Division does not have an accurate way to measure, on a statewide basis, the increase and/or decrease of group tours coming to Mississippi annually. Obtaining this information is critical in determining the annual success of the Tourism Division's sales and marketing efforts for the group tour market. My project proposes the creation and implementation of a group tour incentive partnership program with selected group tour companies who are currently bringing multiple tours to Mississippi. From the selected tour companies, an advisory council has been established consisting of four tour company representatives who provide guidance and feedback for the development of the Mississippi Group Tour Incentive Program. This partnership program has a two-fold purpose. First and foremost, the group tour incentive partnership program would increase the number of existing group tours to Mississippi by providing both monetary and marketing incentives directly to the tour companies to promote their Mississippi products. Secondly, the program would provide a consistent way for the MDA Tourism Division to receive vital tracking information from participating tour companies. This information can be utilized to track and establish benchmarks for the number of group tours coming to Mississippi each year.

Author's Perspective:
"As a program manager, the Mississippi Certified Public Manager Program has provided me with a rewarding avenue for professional growth and development. By participating in the program, I have been given innovative and practical methods to approach everyday challenges found in the workplace. The networking opportunities are invaluable and the sense of accomplishment makes the program well worth the time and effort."

Rhonda Williams, MS Development Authority

Mission:
The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) is the state's premier economic development organization. More than a government agency, MDA strives to increase Mississippians' economic opportunities serving a wide range of customers including workers, communities, existing businesses, corporate prospects, investors, and tourists.

Driven by a new way of thinking about economic development, MDA is committed to helping communities increase livability, promoting a healthy business climate, ensuring quality infrastructure, providing workforce development, promoting tourism, assisting both existing businesses and new companies. Our work impacts nearly every segment of the community and every region of the state.

At MDA, we are committed to providing the highest quality of services while remaining fiscally responsible with the funds allocated to the agency.

THE HAWAII LEADERSHIP ACADEMY'S INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN

When the State of Hawaii decided to institute a formal leadership development program, it chose a route unique among the local and state-government organizations we interviewed: It hired the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop and help deliver an eight-month program. The Hawaii Leadership Academy's curriculum has four components, each taught as a one- or two-week seminar: Front-line Leadership; Leading People; Leading Organizations; and Moving the Organization Forward. Each seminar focuses on selected competencies from Hawaii's competency model. Class size is limited to 30.

Academy participants complete the same three-part process for each program component: Phase I is the time spent in the classroom. In Phase II, each person must apply the concepts and theory learned in the classroom on the job. In Phase III, his or her manager evaluates the success of this application process.

To ensure the process was rigorous and not simply an empty exercise, the Leadership Academy received help from the Hawaii Department of Education in designing an Individual Action Plan (IAP) that is the centerpiece of Phases II and III. The IAP is reproduced on in the pages that follow. Sample responses are provided.

The IAP not only helps participants make an explicit connection between classroom learning and learning on the job. It also requires that they reflect on what they are learning, or have learned, at several points in the project. Such reflection is a critical factor in successful action learning projects, yet it is often sacrificed for lack of time. By providing a formal structure for reflection and making it a program requirement, the Hawaii Leadership Academy has gone further than many programs to ensure that reflection isn't just a nice-to-have. The Academy's IAP is a tool that other organizations should consider using.

To date, the Hawaii Leadership Academy has produced 136 graduates, primarily state employees, but 25 from the City and County of Honolulu.

SAMPLE

State of Hawaii
Hawaii Leadership Academy
Individual Action Plan

"Leading Organizations" Seminar

A. **Competencies**: Leading Organizational Change, Problem Solving, Creativity and Innovation, and Accountability.

Leading Organizational Change

- Determines short- and long-term objectives and strategies.
- Develops realistic plans to accomplish goals and objectives.
- Coordinates with other parts of the organization to accomplish goals.
- Identifies and integrates key issues and needed changes affecting the organization.
- Adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
- Adjusts rapidly to new situations warranting attention and resolution.

Problem Solving

- Identifies and analyzes problems.
- Distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions.
- Provides solutions to individual and organizational problems.

Creativity and Innovation

- Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements.
- Creates a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation.
- Designs and implements new or cutting-edge programs/processes.
- Develops and uses measures and rewards to hold self and others accountable for achieving results that embody the principles of diversity.

Accountability

- Assures that effective controls are developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization.
- Holds self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities.
- Can be relied upon to ensure that projects within areas of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget.
- Monitors and evaluates plans.
- Focuses on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

B. **How IAPs will be evaluated**: The Individual Action Plan (IAP) will be evaluated according to the table below.

EVALUATION CRITERIA	
Pass	Shows a solid understanding of the relevant ideas or processes. The concepts, evidence, and methods used are appropriate for addressing the issues/problems. There are no misunderstandings of key ideas or overly-simplistic approaches.
Fail	Shows little apparent understanding of the relevant ideas and issues. The concepts, evidence, and methods used are inadequate for addressing the issues/ problems. Response reveals major misunderstandings of key ideas or methods.

C. Planning Phase

1. **Describe the situation (what and why)**:

Our division is reorganizing so that many of the division level activities will be passed on to the branches thereby enabling a broader scope for the division. Recently, an affected branch chief retired and, consequently, senior branch staff must increase the scope of their authority and responsibility in anticipation of a new branch chief. This is a good opportunity to incorporate new changes without resistance from an incumbent. Further, this will allow employees to get involved in the reorganization and, hopefully, result in "buy-in."

2. **What is your objective(s)?**

To create a smooth transition as senior branch staff (and the branch chief) move into a new role. The branch chief will be expected to manage more of the external environment, while senior branch staff will increase the scope of their responsibilities.

3. **Develop an action plan (what, with whom, when, where, how) for a 30-day period and describe how these actions would demonstrate at least two (2) of the competencies listed above.**

a. I will assess what our long-term goals and objectives should be. This will give me a framework to work from when I meet with the staff later. I will also review the current and projected workload and needs of the branch senior staff in order to plan for the succession of a new branch chief, and to move the senior branch staff to a higher level of authority and responsibility.

b. I will meet with senior staff to:

i. Share my thoughts about the branch's long-term goals and objectives and roles;

ii. Solicit their comments and suggestions and brainstorm for creative solutions;

iii. Clearly define expectations and accountability.

iv. Facilitate process related exercises with the group to orient the change in a positive direction.

v. Develop plans in collaboration with branch staff.

Actions will demonstrate:
Leading Organizational Change by determining short term objectives and strategies; working in a collaborative fashion; and developing realistic plans to accomplish goals and objectives

Problem Solving by identifying and analyzing problems, finding alternative solutions to complex problems, and distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical judgments.

Targeted start date: 1-27-02
Submit to HLA date: 2-27-02

NOTE: If you are unable to obtain your supervisor's signature before the submittal date (for example, your supervisor is out of state), please FAX (587-1107) OR e-mail to BOTH Jane (jane.c.uyetake@hawaii.gov) AND Steve (steve.s.kamaura@hawaii.gov) your completed IAP. The signed original can be submitted later, but we need to review what you have completed by the due date.

D. Evaluation

1. **What happened when you implemented your action plan?**

I met with senior branch staff. We reviewed current roles, short-term and long-term goals and objectives and how they needed to change for the future. I solicited their ideas and listened to their concerns. This generated a lot of discussion as people took this opportunity to get some things off their chest about their past responsibilities, which was okay with me (better than letting it simmer). New ideas came forth during the brainstorming session and we incorporated them in our new operational plans.

I met with other division staff later to ascertain support and help for the affected senior branch staff. This meeting went more smoothly since the senior staff was privy to more information.

2. **What went well?**

Staff was able to do problem solving, plan for a role change, and evaluate their anticipated needs. Other division staff was able to respond by thinking creatively in ways to assist, and thus build better teamwork. Although things were a little shaky in the beginning, people warmed up to the possibilities since they were now involved with the process. Communication between members has noticeably improved. Previously, management would make all these decisions and inform employees what was decided for them.

3. **In retrospect, would you have done anything differently? If yes, what would that be?**

If only I had some control of the hiring freeze and the pace demanded during the legislative session, I could have been more successful. More time was necessary on my part and, unfortunately, some of the work had to be put off until a later time. We are under a court agreement to almost double the size of our system, and yet we had to endure the slow down of the hiring freeze. Consequently, non-essential work had to take a back seat, while those of us have had to work in high priority mode.

E. **Reflection** (Use the following questions to help GUIDE your reflection of the situation/project.)

1. **What concepts, principles, and/or approaches have you learned from this project?**
2. **What new information did you acquire that changed your knowledge and understanding of the project/situation?**
3. **What have you learned about yourself in terms of leadership that might be useful to you in the future?**

I could not undertake this task alone. With the involvement of the senior branch team, we were able to collectively plan for the succession of a new branch chief as well as new roles. As a team (utilizing other division staff), we used our "creative thinking" process to assist the branch through the transition. The time factor is difficult to manage because of the involvement of the court. I would like to involve my staff more, but quick decisions are required or we end up in violation of the court. This has been explained to the staff and I continue to remind them. Something that I promised to them was that when the court order is removed we will have more collaborative decision making.

In the not too distant past, we would not have involved the staff so much about filling the branch chief's position. However, times have changed and employee expectations are higher about being involved in decisions affecting them. If we, as leaders, ignore their concerns and anxieties then everybody loses. I have to be more sensitive about the decisions I make, especially how it impacts the employees even peripherally because it can otherwise send the wrong message that I am not concerned about their welfare.

F. **Supervisor's comments**

She has demonstrated excellent management skills in very trying times. The knowledge and skills acquired in class were significantly demonstrated and applied during this difficult time. I have asked her to share her knowledge and experience with other staff members. I am also learning from her. It is uplifting to watch her grow as a manager and leader and the impact it is having on the organization.

G. **IAP reviewed and discussed**

HLA Participant's signature and date

HLA Participant's Printed Name

Supervisor's signature and date

Supervisor's Printed Name

For Department of Human Resources Development Use

Certification Section

The Department of Human Resources Development certifies that this employee has satisfactorily demonstrated the competencies of the Leading Organizations Seminar.

HLA Program Manager

Date

Reviewing Official and Title

Date

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDIES

Workforce: 3,200

Synopsis

The Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Professional Development Program (PDP) is designed to bring new, entry-level analysts on board, get them up to speed and make them fully productive as quickly as possible. The program also serves to help retain these new hires and prepare them for diverse assignments. By carefully choreographing the first two years of a new analyst's career, GAO is executing a methodical, long-range strategy for developing future leaders. Many components of the program could be adopted by agencies of any size.

Challenges

- **Retirements.** The profile of GAO's workforce, like that of many federal agencies, was radically reshaped by the human capital practices of the 1990s. In response to significant budget cuts from FY 1992 through 1997, GAO shrunk its field offices from 30 in FY 1992 down to 11. It reduced its workforce by 39 percent and instituted a hiring freeze for entry-level positions. The net effect of these measures was to drive up the average age of GAO's workforce and, with that, the percentage of employees approaching retirement eligibility. Looking ahead, GAO could see that 34 percent of its employees would be eligible for retirement by the end of 2004. The proportion was even higher for senior staff: 48 percent of all Band III managers (the second highest tier) and 55 percent of all Senior Executive Service members.
- **Eliminating silos.** GAO undertook a huge reorganization in 2000 so that its organizational structure would be better aligned with the agency's strategic plan. Thirty-five "issue areas"—akin to practice areas within a consulting firm—were reconfigured into thirteen teams. In the past, a GAO staffer might spend an entire career working in a narrow subject area. But in the wake of 9/11, Comptroller General David Walker felt GAO needed the flexibility to send people to where the work was. Giving new employees a variety of assignments, GAO reasoned, "would enlighten people at entry-level and break down the stovepipes" the old structure had created, explains Mark Gebicke, Managing Director of GAO's Professional Development Program.

  GAO's thirteen teams include ten teams which have direct contact with the federal programs and agencies that GAO evaluates. Most PDP staff in these ten teams are called "amongs" since they will rotate to various engagements among these teams. The other three teams also work with all federal agencies and are composed of staff who have functional expertise in accounting, information technology, and research and methodology. PDP staff in these three teams are called "withins" because they will rotate to various engagements within their respective teams. An IT professional, for example, might consult with a team that's evaluating the security of the Federal Aviation Administration's system and facilities. Later, she might be assigned to a project that will assess printing and information dissemination in the federal government.
- **Refilling the leadership pipeline** As a result of these two challenges — the urgent need to prepare for retirements and the need to develop employees with the breadth of experience to handle more varied assignments — GAO began an intensive effort in 2001 to recruit new entry-level analysts and to develop them into the skilled workforce the agency will need in the future. In 2002, it hired 328 entry-level employees; 175 in 2003, 200 in 2004, and about the same number is anticipated in 2005. GAO is currently limited to roughly a one-for-one replacement policy: it hires one new person for each one who leaves the workforce.

GAO's Human Capital Strategic Plan for FY 2004-2006 (available at www.gao.gov/new.items/d041063sp.pdf) describes a long list of actions GAO has taken and the metrics it is using to assess those actions' outcomes. For a case study describing GAO's strategy for attracting the cream of the crop from top programs in public policy and public administration, go to the Partnership for Public Service's Solutions Center: www.ourpublicservice.org/solutions/solutions_show.htm?doc_id=197634

Approach

GAO is often referred to as the investigative arm of Congress or the congressional watchdog. Independent and nonpartisan, GAO studies programs and expenditures of the federal government. GAO advises Congress and the heads of executive agencies (such as Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], Department of Defense [DOD], and Health and Human Services [HHS]) about ways to make government more effective and responsive. GAO evaluates federal programs, audits federal expenditures, and issues legal opinions. When GAO reports its findings to Congress, it recommends actions. Its work leads to laws and acts that improve government operations and save billions of dollars.

Under recently passed legislation, GAO changed its name from the General Accounting Office to the Government Accountability Office.

Having written about GAO in our first study, *The Aging-and-Retiring Government Workforce: How Serious Is the Challenge? What Are Jurisdictions Doing About it?*, we would not have considered a second GAO case study—even one that focused on a different set of practices. Two things changed our mind. Asked to identify which federal agencies excel at building the next generation of leaders, most experts mentioned GAO, usually near the top of the list. And once we looked into GAO's master plan for bringing entry-level analysts on board and rapidly developing them through rotational job assignments, we felt that a GAO case study could illustrate tactics that no other case study could.

GAO's Professional Development Program

GAO's Professional Development Program (PDP) is designed "to maximize the orientation and education of new hires so they can operate at full capacity as quickly as possible," says Sally Jaggar, managing director, Recruitment and Employment Services. To achieve this goal, GAO has listened well and paid close attention to the myriad small details that influence how new employees feel about their employer. They've also gotten the big things right. By carefully choreographing the first two years of a new analyst's career, GAO is executing a methodical, long-range strategy for developing future leaders. Many components of the PDP could be adopted by agencies of any size.

The Professional Development Program is designed to make the entry process for newly hired analysts smooth, welcoming, and effective. By immersing PDP participants in a series of GAO teams and practice areas, the program aims to turn them into productive analysts as quickly as possible and to retain these new employees despite growing competition for their skills. "PDP is designed to make sure new analysts have tools, knowledge, information, and opportunities," says Jaggar, "to apply those things in situations that will stretch them."

The description that follows focuses on the PDP program at GAO's main facility in Washington, DC. New analysts who are assigned to one of GAO's 11 field offices also participate in the PDP program, which is designed to provide a consistent, one-GAO experience across locations.

The First Day of the Rest of Your Life

"Today is the first day of the rest of your life," is a hackneyed phrase, but GAO has taken the idea to heart. The agency had two compelling reasons to think through every aspect of the entry process: It needed to recruit substantial numbers of entry-level employees over a period of several years. And it hoped to develop and retain those new entrants long after they had learned the ropes. With that in mind, GAO designed the first days on the job the way a four-star hotel might plan the amenities for its guest rooms. Combining thoughtful touches, impeccable quality, sleek processes, and real work, the PDP aims "to maximize the orientation and education of new hires so they can operate at full capacity as quickly as possible," says Jaggar.

In part, that's accomplished by "making sure they're not sitting around twiddling their thumbs," she explains, as so often happens with a new job. "The worst thing is when people come to work the first day and their desk isn't ready. They find other people's candy wrappers in the drawers and their computer doesn't arrive for a week. Our goal is to make their experience at GAO the opposite."

To eliminate such bumps in the road, the process for bringing in new hires has been engineered to deliver a smooth and comfortable ride. It begins well before the first day of work, as soon as the new employee accepts a job offer. Once that information is entered into a computer database, it sets in motion a whole process to make sure every i is dotted and every t is crossed. The desk is cleaned, the computer readied, the payroll system primed to deliver the first paycheck on time. There is even a box, printed with the employee's name and chock full of fresh office supplies, prepared for his or her arrival. "First impressions matter," says Jaggar. "In those first few days on the job, new people form a lasting opinion, so it's important that everything is ready the day you come in."

Their first morning at GAO, new employees are met at the door by the New Hire Champion, someone who's waiting to welcome them and to introduce them to others who are also starting that day. Even the security staff is prepped to welcome the newcomers by name. The New Hire Champion shepherds them to an orientation session, where they're greeted by a senior GAO staff person, briefed on the usual first-day topics such as GAO's goals, core values, relationship to the Congress, and standards of performance. In addition, new staff are taken on a tour of the building. At the end of the morning, a member of their new team appears to take them to lunch.

But the entry process isn't just about warm welcomes and new staplers. It's also about rolling up your sleeves and getting to work. In many organizations, newcomers find there's not very much for them to do right away. That's another pitfall the PDP is designed to avoid. New recruits are trained on the telephone system and the IT infrastructure. They get started on a set of e-learning assignments that must be completed before classroom-based case study training begins. And by the end of the second day at the latest, each PDPer is already working on a client engagement.

Learning the "GAO Way"

New recruits need to learn GAO's methodology, which is based on "generally accepted government auditing standards" laid out in the official Yellow Book. That translates, says Gebicke, to mean "the stuff you absolutely have to be familiar with to work here." It used to be that new analysts spent three weeks in the classroom to get this training. Now, they pick up the basics online, at their own pace. Then they meet for a one-week class to hash out a case study that simulates an actual GAO engagement from start to finish. They develop a work plan based on the Request Letter sent by Congress, collect and analyze data, manage prickly or uncooperative informants, conduct meetings with the target agency, present recommendations, and write the final report. They even have to submit to "indexing and referencing," the quality control process that all GAO reports undergo to make certain every sentence is verifiable by facts.

Building Broad Competencies through Job Rotations

Another process that's set into motion each time a new entry-level analyst is hired is the PDP advising system. A GAO Advisor immediately contacts the new recruit to discuss which of GAO's practice areas might make the most interesting assignments. Perhaps she completed a paper in graduate school on counter-terrorism and would like to spend some time working on the GAO team that's studying gun control, critical infrastructure protection, or port security. Maybe he has a master's degree in public health and was hoping to be assigned to a team studying Medicare or local and state preparedness to respond to bioterrorism or other, major public-health epidemics. Over the two-year PDP program, every participant will have three team assignments, each lasting from seven-to-nine months.

Ten of GAO's 13 teams take part in the PDP job rotations. That means that PDPers will have experience working in almost a third of them by the end of the program. "That's more teams than most senior people have worked in," notes Gebicke. "They may also have better networks."

They've worked under three different managing directors and three different supervisors in three different subject areas. When they finish the program, PDPers prioritize which team they'd like to be placed in initially, while the managing directors identify which PDPers they'd like to have back. Nearly 90 percent of each class is placed in their first-choice team. But they might not stay there forever. They still could move into other areas in future years, or be tapped by a managing director whose eye they caught during a PDP rotation.

"Flexibility works for most people," says Gebicke. "Entry-level analysts usually aren't subject-matter experts, so they don't know yet which area would be most interesting." Not only do job rotations help PDPers determine their interests, they ensure that new analysts aren't "pigeon-holed the first day they start."

Advisors

Ten PDP Advisors, chosen from among GAO's best managers, serve in the role full-time for two to three years. Their primary responsibility is to work closely with about 25 new analysts, their supervisors, and the managing directors. "It's akin to an executive coach," explains Gebicke. But unlike an executive coach, "advisors are organizational insiders. They're very experienced in the work we do and they really know their way around the organization."

Advisors manage the PDPers' job rotations, which requires year-round prospecting for potential team assignments, close communication with team leaders and supervisors, and regular meetings with each advisee. GAO calls this "progress monitoring." It's not as formal as performance management (which comes later); it's more ongoing and real-time. Advisors and each advisee discuss what new skills he or she is developing, how the current team assignment is going and how he or she is adjusting to GAO. The Advisor also looks for issues that need to be addressed with the supervisor.

Advisors meet regularly with each PDPer's supervisor for much the same conversation, ferreting out issues or problems that should be discussed and making sure the new analyst is being challenged, developing new skills, and performing well.

The Advisor, the PDPer and the team manager share joint responsibility for making sure the new analyst grows in six clearly defined areas:

- Achieving results
- Maintaining client and customer focus
- Thinking critically
- Collaborating with others
- Presenting information orally
- Presenting information in writing

In addition, new staff are briefed on the standards used to assess job performance and the opportunities for development, advancement, and recognition.

For Advisors, it's a delicate balance serving as both an advocate for the individual PDPer and a steward of GAO's long-term interests, says Gebicke.

Managing—and Paying for— Performance

In most organizations, "performance management" is HR-speak for annual job reviews. At GAO, it's built into the PDP to be an ongoing process. The Advisors meet with team management to assess the PDP participant's progress and performance. The Advisor also helps make certain that the new analyst receives feedback from team management soon after.

Every six months, the managing or regional directors, the PDP Advisor, and team management conduct a formal performance review for each PDP participant. They discuss the participant's progress over the past six months in developing the critical skills (listed above). They also rate his or her progress on a scale of one to four. This rating determines the level of pay increase the employee receives. The highest rating earns an increase of up to a 7 percent of the base salary.

In addition, once a year PDPers are eligible for a merit based student-loan repayment of up to $6,000.

Building a Support Network

The on-boarding process, job rotations, Advisors, progress monitoring, and performance reviews all serve, as Jaggar puts it, to "maximize your growth and advance your career as fast as possible." But PDPers also need a life outside of work. Even that has been factored into GAO's plan for helping new analysts make a successful, long-term match.

Each PDPer gets an officially designated "Buddy." Buddies are different than advisors. They're coworkers and peers who may themselves be relatively new to GAO, but who've been around long enough to know the ropes. A Buddy is the person who can answer all those practical questions that a new employee—especially one who's just out of school—needs answered. Where is the nearest drug store? How do I find a permanent apartment? Even, can I wear my sandals to work?

"Buddies are there to help them acclimate to our environment and to the DC area," explains Jaggar. "They're also there to help them get socially connected." When the GAO hires new employees at a more senior level, chances are they already live in the area and have a family or other support network. But the PDPers are likely to be transplants and starting from scratch. Making sure they're not isolated is "just plain human courtesy," says Jaggar. Yet it is also a smart retention tactic, one of many small touches to which GAO pays attention.

This Job Is about Retention

Since 2000, Jaggar has headed up GAO's' recruitment effort, which is one component of a much broader campaign. "This isn't just about recruitment," she says. "It's about retention. You can do the best job in the universe getting people in the door. But the rubber hits the road when they put their toe across the threshold. Once we've made the investment to get them here, we need to maximize the chance they'll be effective."

Using Research to Design and Refine a Program

GAO's strategy to recruit, develop, and retain new analysts shows passionate commitment to getting both the big and the little things right. Yet it's a commitment that goes beyond virtuous practices; it's deeply grounded in hard data.

Jaggar and her staff have mined relevant data wherever they could find it to understand which factors are most influential when new graduates decide where they'll work. They've looked at survey data from the National Association of Colleges and Employers, the Brookings Institution, and the Partnership for Public Service. GAO also conducts its own research. The results have shaped the agency's recruitment, retention, and development strategy for entry-level analysts and have helped to refine it.

- **Follow-up Survey for New Staff.** GAO surveys all new employees after their first week on the job. The anonymous online survey queries them about their experiences as prospective job applicants: How useful was agency's web site? What led them to consider a job at GAO? How did they feel about specific aspects of the recruiting and hiring process? Which factors influenced their decision to accept GAO's job offer? And how satisfied were they with the orientation and the nuts-and-bolts of their new workspace and equipment?

- **Exit Survey.** All employees are asked to complete an anonymous online survey when they leave GAO. The survey queries them about what they will be doing once they leave. They're asked to rate which factors influenced their decision to leave and to answer specific question about the work environment; supervisor and recognition they experienced at GAO; opportunities and benefits available at other organizations; and personal factors that may have influenced their departure. The survey asks how they would rate GAO as an employer. Finally, in a section of the survey called "Parting Words," they have the opportunity to write open-ended comments about GAO's products and services and its management.

  As with the new staff survey, the exit survey's results can be segmented to identify factors that contribute to turnover within specific groups of employees, including analysts who have been at the agency for only a few years.

- **Annual Employee Feedback Survey**. GAO surveys all employees every year to assess their satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs at GAO and to measure the agency's progress in areas that have been targeted for improvement. Although most of the survey questions are closed-ended, there is space for narrative comments. Each comment is read personally by the Comptroller General.

That's not the extent of GAO's employee research. The agency also maintains a knowledge-and-skills inventory that each employee updates biannually to assist in workforce planning and engagement staffing. On alternate years, employees can voluntarily complete a "preference survey" that gives them the opportunity to be considered for a new team should they wish to change teams. And, like all federal agencies, GAO can compare its responses to OPM's biannual federal employee survey for 2002 and 2004, and to responses from other agencies' employees.

GAO's ambitious level of employee research, its analysis of workforce data (such as attrition, performance, and career progress), and its evaluation of developmental programs such as PDP set the standard for data-driven human capital strategy. GAO hasn't just aped the tactics of other agencies simply because they've been designated as "best practice." It has defined its most critical target groups—prospective job applicants and current employees whom it needs to groom for future leadership. It has carefully investigated which factors can have the greatest impact on GAO's ability to execute its human capital strategy. And then, grounded in that empirical data, it has developed approaches such as the PDP and evaluated their impacts. It's the rigor of GAO's methods combined with the thoughtfulness of its practices that make it standout.

GAO's active program of employee research, its analysis of workforce data, and its evaluation of programs such as the PDP set the standard for data-driven human capital strategy.

Cost

The primary cost to GAO is the ten Advisors' annual salaries, which can range from $70-110,000 each. That makes the program "not inexpensive," says Jaggar "but we think it is a good investment." The pay-off must be measured against GAO's bottom-line needs: "We have to have the right people to do GAO work. We have to get them up to speed as quickly as possible. And this has to be a good work environment so they want to stay."

The PDP program is staffed by Gebicke, three regional directors, and the Advisors. The PDP is a collateral responsibility for the regional directors. However, the backbone of the program is the many first-line supervisors who provide the critical on-the-job training day in and day out.

Evaluation

Since GAO implemented the PDP in 2001, nearly 900 GAO staff have completed the program or are currently enrolled.

GAO evaluates the PDP program several ways.

- **Survey of PDP Participants and their Supervisors.** GAO surveyed employees who participated in the PDP between September 1, 2003 and September 1, 2004. Current and previous supervisors of PDPers and the Managing Directors of GAO's 13 teams were also surveyed. (See sidebar on next page for selected results of this survey.)

- **Retention of PDPers during and after the program**. The annual attrition rate for GAO's workforce is 8 percent, including retirements. Like other organizations, GAO sees slightly higher turnover rates among recent hires than among employees with longer tenure. Yet GAO's annual attrition rate is about 10 percent for Band I (entry-level) staff, which compares favorably to an annual rate of about 17 percent for new federal employees. Since the PDP's inception in 2001, 84 percent of former and current participants are still at GAO.

While it's too soon to know about the program's long-term impacts, 70 percent of PDPers surveyed in 2004 plan to remain at GAO for more than three years. There's anecdotal evidence, says Gebicke, that "quite a few are moving up very quickly" in the organization, although GAO has not formally analyzed their career progress.

Future Challenges

Responsible for closely monitoring the PDP's design and outcomes, Gebicke notes several issues that have recently emerged:

- **Recognizing previous job experience**. From 60 to 65 percent of entry-level hires already have professional work experience. Their supervisor needs to adjust his or her expectations accordingly. That's exactly the sort of issue Advisors can pay attention to when they talk to PDP participants and their managers.
- **The optimum length for a rotational assignment.** The original concept was for rotational assignments to last approximately six months. In practice, they are more likely to last two-to-three months longer. If the PDPer can contribute to a project's final product—drafting testimony that will be delivered to Congress, for example, or helping to write a report—they should get that opportunity, says Gebicke, rather than being redeployed to another project team.
- **Adjusting the performance management cycle.** Because job rotations last longer, GAO may need to adjust the timing of performance reviews so they're in sync with the rotations.

Selected Results from 2004 Survey of PDP Graduates and Their Supervisors

82 percent of PDP staff indicated that they would probably or definitely accept employment at GAO if they had to do it again.

- 13 percent were uncertain.
- 5 percent would probably or definitely not accept employment.

A majority of respondents indicated that they plan to stay at GAO more than 3 years.

- 70 percent plan to stay more than 3 years.
- 26 percent plan to stay between 1 and 3 years.
- 4 percent plan to stay less than 1 year.

A higher percentage of field respondents plan to stay more than 3 years.

- Among field respondents, 83 percent plan to stay more than 3 years.
- Among HQ respondents, 64 percent plan to stay more than 3 years.

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the progress of the Band I employee you supervise in meeting each of the following expectations of new employees?

Developing Candidates for the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service

Synopsis

One of the foremost issues identified in this research concerns the organizational level at which a formal leadership development program is housed. Should such a program be internal to a single department or agency? Should it be offered centrally—for example, federal-government-wide—to participants from many departments? Or should it be located somewhere in between? And what are the consequences of each option for the leadership pipeline?

Closely related to this issue is another, equally important one: the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the group of people who go through a formal leadership development program together, as a cohort. This issue is often connected to the first one, since the organizational level at which such a program is initiated may determine the diversity within each class.

The following case study provides an object lesson. It briefly describes two different approaches to developing candidates for the federal government's Senior Executive Service (SES). The SES is the highest echelon of federal jobs that are not filled by presidential appointment with Senate confirmation.[1] One approach—represented in this case study by the Department of Labor's SES Candidate Development Program (CDP)—is to field a formal leadership-development program at the department level. The new alternative is the federal-wide program sponsored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and designed to prepare candidates from a cross-section of departments.

The 2005 launch of OPM's new "Fed CDP" provides a remarkable opportunity to compare the costs and benefits of CDPs offered at the department and the jurisdiction level. What does the organization gain from each kind of program? What are the limitations? And how does the program's organizational location impact participants' development and subsequent career path? Until the OPM program produces some graduates, these questions cannot be answered. What *is* possible, however, is to examine how the organizational location and design of two CDPs influence the developmental experiences they deliver.

Challenges

Federal agencies have an urgent need to build their leadership pipeline and to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of their methods due to two factors:

- **Retirements**. The federal government must prepare for a significant number of retirements, particularly among managers. Among current SES members, more than half will be eligible to retire in two years.
- **President's Management Agenda**. Evaluating the costs and benefits of different approaches to developing people for the SES has become increasingly important at a time of heightened accountability in federal government. As part of the President's Management Agenda, agencies must report their progress every quarter in strategically managing human capital — including leadership development and succession planning.

What Is the SES?

Operating as a distinct, merit-based personnel system with its own rules, the SES includes most managerial, supervisory and policy positions above the GS-15 level. Established in 1978, the SES serves to:

- Improve the executive management of government
- Select and develop a cadre of highly competent senior executives with leadership and managerial expertise
- Hold executives accountable for individual and organizational performance
- Set pay based on performance
- Provide for an executive system that is guided by the public interest and free from improper political interference

The law stipulates a minimum number of SES positions (3,571), although the actual number is significantly larger. Currently, there are 7,868 permanent SES positions, which are allocated to departments and agencies by OPM, in consultation with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Eligibility for the SES

The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) shown below are required for competitive entry into the SES. Each ECQ has a corresponding list of competencies.

[1] Some agencies and their components are excluded by law, such as independent government corporations and the intelligence agencies. Some positions are excluded by law, such as Foreign Service and Administrative Law Judges.

Executive Core Qualifications

Leadership Competencies

Executive Core Qualifications	Competencies
ECQ 1 – Leading Change This core qualification encompasses the ability to develop and implement an organizational vision that integrates key national and program goals, priorities, values, and other factors. Inherent to this ECQ is the ability to balance change and continuity; to continually strive to improve customer service and program performance within the basic government framework; to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking; and to maintain focus, intensity, and persistence, even under adversity.	Continual Learning Creativity/Innovation External Awareness Flexibility Resilience Service Motivation Strategic Thinking Vision
ECQ 2 – Leading People This core qualification involves the ability to design and implement strategies that maximize employee potential and foster high ethical standards in meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals.	Conflict Management Leveraging Diversity Integrity/Honesty Team Building
ECQ 3 – Results-Driven This core qualification stresses accountability and continuous improvement. It includes the ability to make timely and effective decisions and produce results through strategic planning and the implementation and evaluation of programs and policies.	Accountability Customer Service Decisiveness Entrepreneurship Problem Solving Technical Credibility
ECQ 4 – Business Acumen This core qualification involves the ability to acquire and administer human, financial, material, and information resources in a manner that instills public trust and accomplishes the organization's mission, and the ability to use new technology to enhance decision making.	Financial Management Human Resources Management Technology Management
ECQ 5 – Building Coalitions/Communications This core qualification involves the ability to explain, advocate, and express facts and ideas in a convincing manner and to negotiate with individuals and groups internally and externally. It also involves the ability to develop an expansive professional network with other organizations and to identify the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization.	Influencing/Negotiating Interpersonal Skills Oral Communication Partnering Political Savvy Written Communication

Source: http://www.opm.gov/ses/competencies.asp

Preparation for the SES

There's more than one route to preparing for the SES. OPM offers courses and workshops through the Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers to help federal employees develop the ECQs and competencies.

But by far the most targeted approach to preparing talented employees to compete successfully for SES positions is the SES Candidate Development Program (CDP). "At its inception, the architects of the SES focused on the need to develop a pool of candidates," notes Doris Hausser, Senior Policy Advisor to the OPM Director. "Even in the late 1970s, leaders like Alan K. Campbell recognized the government's need to anticipate the retirement wave we face today." As a result, the same law that established the SES also stipulated that there be formal programs to systematically develop candidates for the SES.

Twenty-eight federal agencies and bureaus operate their own CDPs. While some may advertise the program externally—that is, government-wide as well as outside federal government—they have designed their program to meet an internal need: developing leaders who can successfully fill SES positions within that department or agency. However, completing such a program does not guarantee placement in an SES position. In fact, less than half of those who've graduated from an agency- or department-level CDP have secured an SES position — at least so far.

But now, for the first time, there's another route to SES candidacy: an OPM-sponsored CDP, designed to serve the needs of federal agencies government-wide. For this debut offering, ten agencies signed on to sponsor one or more candidates, equivalent to the number of SES positions they hope to fill with a graduate or graduates of the entering CDP class. The process works like this: OPM solicits applicants on behalf of sponsoring agencies. The agencies select their candidates, with OPM oversight. The agencies pay $25,000-per head for the program. While enrolled in the CDP, each candidate works for the agency in his or her existing position or, in the case of an externally recruited candidate, a temporary developmental position. At the end of the program, the agency gets a certifiable SES-er who's just completed the Cadillac of federal executive-development programs, and has the chops—and cross-government contacts—to prove it.

OPM's recruitment efforts drew a staggering 7,800 applications for just 18 positions in the first class. Of those applicants, 64 percent came from outside federal government — another surprise. Final selection was completed in May 2005 and the program began in June.

Program Requirements for All CDPs

OPM certifies all SES Candidate Development Programs, regardless of where they're housed. All programs must include the following elements:

- An Individual Development Plan, based on individual needs and competencies
- At least 80 hours of training that address the ECQs and include individuals from outside the candidate's agency
- At least 4 months of developmental assignments outside the candidate's position of record
- An SES mentor
- Periodic performance evaluation
- A documented starting and finishing date

Even with these requirements, there's room for substantial variability among programs. The next section describes two CDPs.

The Department of Labor's SES Candidate Development Program

There are several reasons we selected DOL from among the 28 federal agencies and bureaus that have developed their own CDP: DOL excels at human capital management overall, as evidenced by its performance on the President's Management Agenda. DOL was the second out of 26 federal agencies to receive the top rating for its strategic management of human capital from OPM, as ratified by OMB. A second reason is that DOL has conducted three iterations of its CDP program, so it has a depth of experience about the effectiveness of its approach. The third reason is that DOL has clear metrics for evaluating the CDP's impacts using a variety of outcome measures. They demonstrate, for example, that a significant number of graduates from DOL's program have been selected for permanent SES positions within the department.

In 2004, as OPM was drumming up interest among federal agencies for its new Fed CDP, Labor was already several years into its own proprietary version. It had good reason to get a jumpstart. Sixty-eight percent of its SES incumbents will be eligible to retire within the next two years—and still others could opt for early retirement under a special, time-limited offer in 2005.

Launched in FY 1999, DOL's CDP program was designed to prepare candidates within federal government to assume SES positions. The first class had 23 participants, 96 percent of whom received SES certification upon completion. Fifteen were selected for SES positions and four are eligible for appointment. (The remaining four retired, left government, or did not complete the program.) The second class, which started in September 2002, had 27 candidates. A third class will most likely be offered in FY 2006. Two members of the first class came from outside DOL and four members of the second class came from outside federal government.

In addition to developing the ECQs, Labor's program—whose elements are outlined in the chart that follows—seeks to broaden participants' exposure to other areas of government. It does this partly by requiring that they complete at least two developmental assignments outside their current responsibilities. At least one of these assignments must be outside the participant's current DOL agency. In some cases, the assignment might be working for a different federal agency. In addition, participants must get at least 80 hours of interagency training, for example, through one of the federal government training institutes or a university-based program. Both the classroom training and the developmental assignments are tailored to the individual's developmental needs, as identified in his or her Executive Development Plan.

DOL—which includes 25 Program Areas and 52 State Labor Offices (including Guam and Puerto Rico)—looks at its CDP as a corporate program, since it serves the entire department. That eliminates the need for agencies within the Department, such as OSHA, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Veterans' Employments and Training Service, to create their own CDP. It also ensures that senior executives focus on the program. As a result, they help select each class, mentor CDP candidates, and make sure the candidates get choice, executive-level rotational assignments. By involving current executives in these ways, the department hopes to increase the likelihood that its CDP graduates are chosen to fill internal SES vacancies.

DOL filled 26 SES vacancies in FY 2004, five (19 percent) of them with its CDP graduates.

DOL's Human Capital Metrics include two measures for evaluating the program:

- **Bench strength**. This is defined as the number who are currently enrolled in the program or have already graduated. The goal is for bench strength to equal at least 70 percent of the projected gap (or projected vacancies) in SES positions. At present, DOL's bench strength for SES positions is 70 percent.
- **Placement rates for SES program.** The goal is for 80 percent of program graduates to be placed or promoted within two years. Of the first class, 83 percent have met this goal. Of the second class, which finished in August 2003, 66 percent have.

By these measures, DOL's candidate development program is meeting its bench strength goal and has not yet met its placement goal.

The Fed CDP

The stakes are high for OPM's new Fed CDP: The agency first announced plans to create a government-wide program in 2003, but implementation was delayed by an internal reorganization within OPM and a policy debate over the planned program's design and selection process.

Following a one-year hiatus, OPM posted the call for applications on its web site in November 2004. And immediately, government-watchers began tracking the response rate like racing fans follow the Triple Crown. There were weekly updates in the media: 3,200 applications by the first week of December and more than double that one week later. The total (7,800) was beyond anyone's wildest dreams. But how good were these applicants? Where did they come from? And how would they be received by the ten agencies that had signed on to sponsor one or more candidates in the Fed CDP? The results are still coming in, even as the first class begins its 14-month program. The final score will not be known for several years, at least, until one or more cohorts of program graduates have settled into SES positions and their preparedness and performance can be assessed.

Although it's too soon to evaluate the program's impacts, we looked closely at OPM's processes for attracting and selecting final candidates and at the design of the program itself. All three have been carefully thought out.

Recruitment

Although the application period was limited to three weeks, OPM used its website to advertise the program and the imminent call for applications several weeks ahead of time. That gave serious applicants more time to gather up their materials. In addition, OPM partnered with a network of membership associations such as the National Association of Hispanic Federal Hispanic Executives, Blacks in Government, the League of United Latin American Citizens, Asian-Pacific Americans and veterans' organizations to reach specific demographic groups. The astonishing number of applicants and the proportion (64 percent) that came from outside federal government suggest that OPM's aggressive recruitment strategy worked. The mere fact that the program was first announced in 2003 and then took a year to develop may have helped build interest, suggests Ileen Rogers, manager of OPM's Leadership Development Group. Media coverage of the federal government's approaching retirement wave may have also raised interest in federal career opportunities.

More importantly, OPM's recruitment efforts paid off in the caliber of applicants. "The pool is better than in the homegrown approach" in which an agency does its own recruitment, says Rogers. "With the number of applications we received, agencies got to see real quality."

The downside was sifting through that many applications proved overwhelming for some agencies. That makes it critical, Rogers says, that OPM oversees the selection process to make sure it's careful, thorough, and consistent across agencies.

Selection

The selection process entailed six steps:

- An initial screening by OPM to make sure the applicants met the basic requirements
- Sorting applicants by the SES positions they were interested in. The call for applications specified which federal agencies were seeking SES candidates and for which positions. Applicants indicated agency position(s) they wanted to be considered for.
- A panel from each agency evaluated its applicant pool against the ECQs and arrived at a consensus rating for each candidate.
- OPM provided each agency with a day-long training in structured interviewing techniques. Leaders from each agency conducted structured interviews with the top candidates. From these, approximately 150 semi-finalists were selected, or from five to twenty per agency, depending on how many SES positions it was trying to fill.
- Each semi-finalist participated in a virtual assessment center and a telephone interview, both conducted by Development Dimensions International.
- Before the final selection was made, OPM certified that the process had been followed consistently across the participating agencies.

Winnowing the pool from nearly 8,000 applicants down to 18 finalists took six months. And though most of the selection process took place at the agency level, OPM played an active role. Some agencies were so swamped by applicants that careful screening became a challenge; a few even considered withdrawing from the program because they were unprepared for so many applicants. In agencies that couldn't free up sufficient staff for the structured interviews, OPM pitched in. OPM also coached agencies in how to conduct a selection process that didn't automatically favor candidates from inside the department.

Program Design

The elements of the Fed CDP are outlined in the chart that follows. Several notable features are worth highlighting: The initial week of the program is structured to "engage participants in an active and supportive learning community," in part, by forming Executive Learning Teams composed of five to seven candidates and an executive coach. Over the life of the program, they will develop their skills in coaching each other and will undertake an action learning project. This Team Leadership Project will be a demanding, real-world (as opposed to simulated) assignment. (For more information about action learning, see page 60.) An Executive Coach will work with each team to facilitate group development and functioning while, at the same time, offering feedback to the group and to individuals. Coaches will be chosen from outside the agency. "It's important that they be independent," says Rogers, so they can establish a trusting relationship with the candidate but also give impartial performance feedback.

Agency-level vs. the Fed CDP

The chart that begins on the next page is meant to facilitate comparison between the Department of Labor's (DOL) CDP and the Fed CDP.

The final section of the case study that follows the chart explores how these structural and programmatic differences might impact executive development.

Developing Candidates for the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service

	DOL's CDP	Fed CDP
Program Goals	To provide career enhancement and develop the executive skills of employees with high potential for SES ranks	"Train outstanding future federal government leaders who will guide us through the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century"
Eligibility	GS/GM-15 level or GS-14 level for one year	1+ years leadership experience at GS-14 (or comparable) level
Recruitment	Recruitment strategy based on projected needs (skills, functional area, attrition rate, etc.). The first class was recruited within Federal government; for the second class, DOL also recruited externally.	Recruits from within and outside federal government
Selection	Criteria: ■ Potential for achieving 5 ECQs ■ Current performance appraisal ■ Two assessments by supervisors ■ Candidate statements related to the applicant's competencies in the 5 ECQs Process: ■ HR staff review for minimum qualifications ■ ERB or DOL Management Review Board interviews candidates and recommends to Secretary of Labor	■ OPM does initial screening to make sure applications meet minimum requirements ■ Applications sorted by agency ■ A panel within each agency reviews applications and, based on the ECQs, selects candidates to interview ■ Each agency interviews candidates using structured interview process ■ Finalists participate in a virtual assessment process coupled with a telephone interview by DDI ■ OPM certifies the list of finalists
Cohort Size	20-25	18
Length of Program	12-18 months	14-month program
Time Commitment	Program participants who are current DOL employees spend approximately 50% of their time on SES CDP activities.Participants from other federal agencies will be detailed from their agency and spend approximately 50% of their time on the CDP. Participants from outside federal government will be offered a temporary DOL position (GS-15) for the program's duration.	The CDP is completed in addition to full-time job. Candidates from outside the agency are given an "appointment for developmental purposes," scheduled around the CDP and chosen to provide significant developmental experience. Program participants from within the agency need to negotiate their work duties. In either case, the agency has a vested interest in the CDP-er completing the program requirements and the IDP. Only by doing so can she or he be certified to fill the agency's permanent SES position.
Assessment	360-degree assessment of current competencies related to ECQs, which is used to create Executive Development Plan	Skills assessments completed prior to and during first week; feedback on leadership skills

	DOL's CDP	Fed CDP
Executive Development Plan	Executive Development Plan to master ECQs, prepared with mentor, supervisor, and DOL's Office of Continuous Learning and Career Management	Executive Development Plan created with mentor
Formal Training Requirements	■ Orientation ■ Core Training: Varies according to candidates' assessed needs ■ Interagency training Not less than 80 hours interagency, executive-level training that addresses ECQs	Three non-consecutive weeks of residential training ■ Executive Leadership Assessment Experience (1 week) ■ Strategic Leadership Seminar (1 week) ■ Focused Skills Seminar (1 week) Several 1-day workshops and sessions Skill-building in areas of values-based leadership, emotional intelligence, and team development Small budget (based on individual needs) for each participant to acquire specific skills related to EDP
Rotational Assignment	At least two developmental assignments of not less than 90 days, one of which must be outside the candidate's own DOL agency.	At least 4 months of developmental assignment(s) involving challenging operational responsibilities outside current position, as suggested by EDP. Goal: "to expand understanding about the functions of government, its operations, and the role of senior executives in public policy formation and administration and to build executive skills."
Team Project	None	Executive Learning Teams undertake group project at the agency/department level. Goals: ■ Explore an important leadership issue ■ Practice giving and receiving feedback and coaching on individual and team skills ■ Deliver useful product
Mentor	Current member of DOL SES	Participants select a mentor from established pool of SES-ers
Performance Evaluation	At the beginning of each developmental assignment, participant and supervisor agree on objectives and standards to be used in evaluating performance; halfway through the assignment, there's a performance discussion. At the end of the assignment, the supervisor completes a written evaluation, as does the participant. The Department's Human Resource Center reviews progress midway through the CDP.	Agencies will conduct performance evaluation at or before program midpoint. The process will include the participant's supervisor, the CDP mentor, the faculty, and the supervisor for any developmental assignment the employee has undertaken for the CDP.
Other Program Components	■ Invited to attend annual, all-day event with DOL SES-ers and DOL Secretary	■ Executive coach assigned to each team; facilitates/teaches/coaches team and individuals; meets with individuals at least quarterly ■ Administration Speakers and Policy Leaders ■ Leadership Forums: Issues Forums; Leadership Visits ■ Reading groups ■ Web-based learning

	DOL's CDP	Fed CDP
Certification	ERB reviews each candidate's record at end of program and completion of EDP; Sec of Labor approves; record sent to OPM's Qualifications Review Board for certification. Certification will permit noncompetitive placement in any SES position for which graduate is technically qualified, but it will not guarantee SES placement.	OPM's Qualifications Review Board will certify candidates once they have completed the CDP and their IDP for the program.
# enrolled	Cohort 1: 23 Cohort 2: 27	18 in first CDP class
% graduates in SES positions	28 of the CDP's 49 graduates have been placed in SES positions within DOL	TBA
% retained	57%	TBA
Cost	Varies depending on size of program. For Class 1: Each of the participating DOL agencies funded its participant. For class 2: The program was centrally funded for the core training, interagency training, and travel for rotational assignments; total cost about $338, 000. (For more details, see body of case study.)	$25,000 paid by sponsoring agency, plus additional costs borne by OPM (For more details, see body of case study.)

Comparing CDPs

The two CDPs outlined in the preceding chart present some interesting differences. Before exploring those differences and their potential consequences, it's important to add two notes of caution.

The Fed CDP is just starting up. It was clear in our interviews with OPM staff that some aspects of the program are still being fine-tuned. Just as the idealized pictures in a college view book should be tested against the reality of a campus visit, it should be acknowledged that, at the time of our data collection, the Fed CDP was still at the view-book stage. Therefore, our observations are tentative.

A second cautionary note is that this study looked at just one department-focused CDP. Without investigating the other 27 department-sponsored CDPs, the observations about DOL's program cannot be generalized to other CDPs, although the broad principles discussed below are likely to be applicable.

With those caveats, we offer some preliminary observations about the two CDPs and how important differences between them—such as the organizational level at which they're offered, the heterogeneity of participants, and the strength of the cohort—affect the developmental experiences they deliver. The analysis raises questions about future efforts to develop senior executives in federal government. While many of these questions are unanswerable until more outcome data become available, they suggest fruitful topics for future research.

1. Program Purpose: What are candidates being prepared for?

Department-level CDPs such as the one DOL has implemented clearly focus on preparing candidates for senior leadership positions within that department. Similarly, departments that sponsor a candidate in the Fed CDP do so with the expectation of promoting that person to fill an internal SES vacancy.

But longer term, will these SES-ers stay put? Or will they exercise the option that's built-into the SES personnel system: that once an employee has been certified for the SES by OPM's Qualifications Review Board, she or he is eligible to apply for an SES position in any department. (See sidebar on page 83: "Mobility within the SES — Vision vs. Track Record.")

Time will tell: Will Fed CDP graduates, in fact, demonstrate greater career mobility than SES-ers who have not participated in that program? Will such career moves work out, both for them and for the agencies?

What *is* clear is that the Fed CDP comes closer than any other initiative to preparing senior leaders who might be capable of such mobility. The fact that 90 percent of the first class was hired from outside the agency that is sponsoring them, and 38 percent came from outside federal government, suggests that OPM's concerted effort to cast a broad net succeeded, at least in the short term.

2. Program Design: Promoting Cross-Department Exposure

One of the common themes our research identified among jurisdictions at all levels of government is that future leaders need to learn more about other departments and to develop a broader understanding of government as a system. The two CDPs described above are both designed to address that need; however, the OPM program has several advantages.

The DOL program seeks to broaden participants' experiences through developmental assignments, the diversity of the CDP cohort, and the 80 hours of inter-agency, executive-level training that each candidate must complete. In addition, the program includes a four-to-five day Seminar for Executives on Legislative Operations, which includes spending time on Capitol Hill.

The Fed CDP has the potential to provide candidates with even broader, cross-government exposure than the DOL program. First, by bringing together candidates from many federal departments, the Fed CDP integrates diverse organizational perspectives within the cohort. Second, the program fosters significant interaction among participants, particularly through the learning teams and action learning project, and this intensive collaboration should further enhance participants' cross-government exposure. Third, OPM's responsibility for government-wide human capital management gives it a web of organizational and interpersonal connections—in other words, a social network—that would be difficult for other departments that do not serve such a pan-government function to match. These connections should help OPM engage people from a broad cross-section of federal government as candidates as well as speakers, mentors, and other resources to the program. Once the Fed CDP produces graduates, that cross-agency network should grow even stronger.

On face value, the Fed CDP has the potential to foster stronger bonds within each cohort than the DOL program attempts to do. The initial week is structured to "engage participants in an active and supportive learning community," in part, by forming Executive Learning Teams and giving each team a coach. Team members learn coaching and feedback skills and support each other's development. The teams also complete a Team Leadership Project. Because action learning projects typically require intensive team work, members get to know each while striving to complete a challenging assignment. Together, these program elements are designed to build cohesiveness within the cohort.

While DOL's program brings its CDP cohort together for an orientation and two, week-long, core training programs, the overall program design emphasizes what it calls "individually planned developmental experiences" rather than team- or cohort-based experiences. Both the rotational job assignments and the 80 hours of interagency training, for example, are individualized to each person's needs, according to his or her Executive Development Plan.

Is the strength of the cohort important? It is when the program aims to build knowledge and relationships across the federal government. Research suggests that relationship-building should be a priority area in executive development.[4] Other jurisdictions interviewed for this study emphasized the value of a strong cohort in formal leadership-development programs. South Carolina redesigned its Certified Public Manager program to emphasize the group experience, in part because building cross-department understanding was so important. The Michigan Department of Human Services invests considerable resources (monthly team meetings, a coach and an action learning project) to make teams a centerpiece of its Leadership Academy. Graduates rate the action learning project as the program's most valuable component.

The purpose of this discussion is not to argue that all leadership development programs must emphasize the group or cohort experience. Rather, it's to highlight the impact of program design on the kinds of development they produce. In this case, DOL's emphasis on individualized experiences is likely to generate different kinds of learning than the Fed CDP's stronger emphasis on team and cohort. Moreover, the relationships participants develop through the program may also be different, based on the amount and intensity of collaborative work that must be completed.

3. Outcomes

DOL's CDP has produced admirable results in terms of the promotions and SES appointments its graduates have received. Twenty-eight (57 percent) of the program's 49 graduates now have SES appointments. Fed-wide, less than half of the candidates who have completed department-level CDP programs have achieved an SES appointment.

Barring the discovery of some unexpected career "derailer," candidates who complete the Fed CDP are eligible to move directly into a permanent SES position upon OPM certification. "For every candidate selected" for the fed-wide CDP, says Rogers, "there's an SES position" available at his or her sponsoring department or agency. The one-for-one ratio greatly increases the likelihood that graduates will be promoted. While this is not the only metric for measuring a CDP's impact, it's a success rate that agency-level CDPs are unlikely to match as long as they accept more candidates into their CDPs than they have SES vacancies.

[4] Ray Blunt (2001) *Organizations Growing Leaders: Best Practices and Principles in the Public Service*. The PriceWaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Business of Government, December 2001. Reissued in 2003 as *Growing Leaders for Public Service* (The IBM Center for the Business of Government). Available at www.businessofgovernment.org

4. Cost of training

Federal agencies pay $25,000 per candidate enrolled in the Fed CDP, or $450,000 in total. While the actual program costs are estimated at $1.4 million, OPM says that's not out of line with what many agency-based CDPs cost. With a larger class size in the future, the per-person costs will go down. Some start-up costs such as developing the assessments and the curriculum will no longer be necessary. In effect, OPM is initially subsidizing what it hopes may become the gold standard in preparing senior leaders in federal government. In doing so, explains Robert Danbeck, OPM's new Chief Human Capital Officer, it is actually giving away products and services that it would normally expect the agencies it serves to pay for. Such a subsidy cannot continue indefinitely, however, under the rules that control how OPM may offer reimbursable services to agencies.

Can other departments aspire to the same standard? DOL, the only agency-level program we studied, says its program costs vary depending on program size. For its first CDP class, participating DOL agencies funded their participant; those costs are not available. The second class was centrally funded. The core training, interagency training, and travel costs for rotational assignments totaled approximately $338,000.

OPM believes that the Fed CDP could ultimately be more cost-effective than agency-based programs, offering economies of scale while, at the same time, leveraging its greater resources and access to key players to deliver a superior program. That assumes that all CDP programs have the same program objectives. It is unclear whether that is the case. The Fed CDP would seem to have a greater interest in promoting SES-ers' ability to move from one agency to another, for example, than do the agencies themselves. (See sidebar on next page: "Mobility within the SES: Vision vs. Track Record")

5. Ability to meet the demand for SES-certified candidates

The demand for SES candidates is expected to increase and remain strong. In addition to determining which methods of preparing senior leaders are most cost-effective, federal agencies must also grapple with the issue of scalability: Even if the OPM program were to prove superior to department-based programs in every way—attracting applicants who are higher-caliber and more diverse, developing a higher level of ECQs, providing them with broader exposure across federal government, and equipping them to move successfully from agency to agency—is it a practical model for developing the thousands of SES-ers who will be needed over the next five-to-ten years? Alternatively, should OPM's CDP become a sort of West Point or Harvard for the super elite? Or should it serve as a demonstration project to generate program models and tools as a seedbed for agencies' CDPs?

6. Sustainability

Closely related to the question of scalability is the question of sustainability. The true cost of the OPM program can't be determined until the first cohort completes the program, but OPM acknowledges that it is subsidizing the sponsoring agencies' contribution. Are these primarily start-up costs, or will the program always need supplemental funding? Is the high-caliber CDP that OPM has designed affordable long-term? Will it be necessary to scale back certain elements to lower costs? Or does it make more sense to move in the opposite direction: Would it be more cost-effective to leverage the economies of scale that an OPM-based program can offer as a replacement for department-based programs?

These are questions that individual departments and OPM, as the federal agency responsible for overseeing government-wide, strategic human capital management, will have to answer as the need for succession planning becomes more urgent. These questions are also highly researchable. Once the Fed CDP has graduated its first cohort, it would be useful to conduct a more extensive analysis of costs and outcomes for a variety of SES CDPs, supplemented by interview data from program participants and the sponsoring departments.

The issues raised in this discussion—such as the impact of where a leadership development program is housed, how it is designed, and who participates in the program—are ones that local and state governments must also address.

Although the preceding discussion focuses on federal CDPs, the fundamental issues about where and how leaders are developed are equally applicable to other levels of government. Many of the cities, counties, and towns we interviewed must also weigh the costs and benefits of departmental vs. cross-departmental—or even cross-jurisdictional—approaches to building the leadership pipeline.

Mobility Within the SES—Vision vs. Track Record

Established in 1978, the Senior Executive Service (SES) was created as a "senior executive corps with solid executive experience, public service values, and a broad perspective on government." Among the challenges it was designed to address was that "Many of the top career positions were held by individuals who entered the government at junior levels and spent their entire careers in the federal service, many in the same agency or agency component." It was felt that, "Executives needed to broaden their perspectives and view their responsibilities in the context of the larger corporate and public policy interests of the government."[1]

Thus, the SES Candidate Development Program (CDP) was born. Its purpose: to "advance the goal of a 'corporate SES,' a diverse corps of career executives who share a government-wide perspective. These executives share values and a common identity that reach beyond their individual professions or agencies. They are well positioned to lead change both within their agencies and throughout Government."[2]

This vision of a corporate SES—a sort of Ivy League of top executives trained to think bigger than the federal-agency level and groomed to share a common culture, enabling them to move from one agency to another—may be more of an ideal than a reality. There is evidence that this aspect of the SES vision has never been realized. And there is debate about whether it ever can be.

Is SES Mobility a Workable Idea?

Until she moved to the Department of Labor as Director of Human Resources, Daliza Salas was Director of the Office of Personnel Management's SES Staffing Center. In 2002, while she was still at OPM, Salas analyzed the actual career paths of SES-ers who had been certified within the previous three years. Here's what she found: Just 6 percent had been hired from outside federal government and only 7 percent had worked for more than one federal department. That left a whopping 87 percent who had moved into an SES position within their own agency.

Has mobility increased since then? OPM recently analyzed SES appointments made between January 1, 2004 and January 1, 2005 and found that 19.6 percent of these senior leaders came from outside the agency — an almost 7 percent increase over the three-year period analyzed earlier.

It's important to note, however, that both the 2000 analysis and the more recent one focus on newly certified members of the SES. Looking at all SES members between January 2000 and April 2005, just 3.87 percent had interagency experience.

That's a rather dismal performance compared to the SES's original vision. What's the problem?

Theoretically, says Salas, a senior leader who is SES-certified "should be able to lead anywhere. The Executive Core Qualifications (ECQs) were designed to be generic to leadership positions." But even if an outside candidate has the ECQs, the hiring agency may still want someone who has the technical background that only an insider would have. Despite the ECQs, some agencies may emphasize technical knowledge over leadership competencies, even when they hire for senior positions. And human nature may lead decision-makers to give preference to candidates they've known and worked with.

Can SES Mobility Be Realized?

"We're looking at how we can encourage more mobility," says OPM's Ileen Rogers, but the challenge is two-sided: "People are comfortable staying where they are. And agencies are comfortable with the people they know."

Based on his 2000 study of six SES executives who had moved among federal agencies, researcher Michael Serlin offered ten recommendations for increasing such career mobility. Among them: Agencies should "broaden the criteria for selection to attract applicants from outside the agency, and include an individual from outside the agency on the selection panel."[3]

It's a recommendation that OPM has acted on in its oversight of the Fed CDP selection process. OPM coached sponsoring agencies in ways to create a level playing field for all applicants, whether or not they worked for the agency. That meant making sure the SES position announcement didn't require arcane experience that only an agency insider would have. And it meant coaching the interview panel to stick with the structured interview guide, rather than schmoozing with inside candidates about people or experiences they had in common. These tactics seemed to have worked: An astonishing 90 percent of the first Fed CDP class came from outside the agency that sponsored them, and 38 percent came from outside federal government.

"The Fed CDP is an opportunity to break the old frame of how we see things," says Rogers. "We can develop a workforce of executives who could go anywhere, who could do the job and do it well." But mobility isn't an end in itself. Giving leaders the chance to step outside their agency and build relationships across departments will result in greater collaboration and partnering among agencies, says Rogers.

[1] SES Guide, US Office of Personnel Management, page 1.

[2] US Office of Personnel Management, www.opm.gov/ses/candevprg.asp

[3] Michael Serlin, 2000, *Reflections on Mobility: Case Studies of Six Federal Executives*. The PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for The Business of Government.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Workforce: 46,200 on Active Duty (6,150 Officers; 1,470 Warrants; 31,580 Enlisted; 7,000 Civilians)

Synopsis

The Coast Guard's approach to building its leadership pipeline includes several elements that our study did not find anywhere else:

- A leadership framework that helps HQ get its arms around an extensive menu of formal leadership development programs and, among those offerings, define priorities and unmet needs
- A broad definition of leadership development that includes four categories of learning activities: leadership training; learning from experts; external activities; and job assignments
- An integrated information system and a catalog of competencies that will enable the Coast Guard to manage the supply of, and demand for, competencies across the workforce
- Online tools for assessing and developing leadership competencies at both the individual- and the unit-level

Challenges

- **Four distinct workforces**. The Coast Guard has four major workforce components: Active Military, Reserve Military, Civilian, and a volunteer force of Auxiliarists. The military components are further divided into commissioned officers, commissioned warrant officers, and enlisted members. The Officer Corps has a general, institutional, focus, while the enlisted workforce is the technical and mission-specialist force. Warrant officers are in between, usually highly skilled enlisted specialists who compete to assume greater management responsibilities. Since every person affiliated with the Coast Guard (military or civilian) is expected to have certain leadership competencies, the four workforce components are often considered jointly for development purposes.
- **Separate information systems for various aspects of talent management.** The Coast Guard had separate information systems for each of four major aspects of human capital management—accession (recruiting and initial entry), training, assessment and advancement. Each system also used the concept of competency in a unique way, resulting in wildly different kinds of data. This made it difficult to integrate information, and to manage supply and demand for the workforce as a whole.

Approach

In his 2001 study of best practices in public-sector leadership development, management scholar Ray Blunt lauded several aspects of the Coast Guard's approach to developing leadership talent:[1]

- A central Leadership Development Center (LDC), akin to a corporate education center in the public sector, located on the grounds of the Coast Guard Academy.
- The Commandant's Leadership Advisory Council (LAC), a guidance group composed of individuals from all levels and workforces, epitomizing the concept that line managers must own leadership development.
- An emphasis on self-development—that is, individuals' personal responsibility for honing their leadership skills and knowledge.

The following case study tracks more recent developments and investigates why the Coast Guard continues to be regarded as one of the best agencies in federal government in terms of leadership development. It focuses on three elements of the Coast Guard's approach:

- The Leadership Development Framework
- Competency Management
- Online tools for Leadership Competency Development

The Leadership Development Framework

The Leadership Development Framework provides a high-level overview of leadership development activities for the four workforces — enlisted, warrant, officers, and civilians (shown in the top row of the exhibit on the next page). While each of these has a unique hierarchy of positions, they can be distilled into five "responsibility levels" — Executive, Senior Manager, Middle-level Supervisor, First-line Supervisor, and Worker (shown in first column). For each level and each workforce, the Framework specifies which formal training program will prepare employees to move successfully to the next level.

[1] Ray Blunt, 2003, *Growing Leaders For Public Service*. IBM Center for the Business of Government.

A Sample of Formal Programs Targeted to Specific Segments of the Workforce

	Enlisted (31,581)	Warrant (1,473)	Officer (6,155)	Civilian (7,000)
Executive			Executive Development Capstone	Executive Development
Senior Manager	CMC Capstone	None	Senior Service School; Senior Leadership Principles and Skills	Senior Schools
Mid-level Supervisor	Chief Petty Officer Academy	Commissioned Warrant Officer Professional Development	Senior Leadership Principles and Skills; Leadership and Management School (LAMS)	Senior Leadership Principles and Skills
First-line Supervisor	Leadership and Management School (LAMS)		Leadership and Management School (LAMS)	Leadership and Management School (LAMS)
Worker	A-School		Coast Guard Academy/Officer Candidate School/ Direct Commission Officer School	Leadership and Management School (LAMS)

The Leadership Development Framework's primary purpose is to help the Coast Guard's Office of Leadership and Professional Development manage formal programs for developing leaders, explains the Office Chief, Lieutenant Commander Greg Stump, Ed.D. It shows how the elements fit together into a system. It highlights gaps, such as the absence of formal programs for certain segments of the workforce, as well as redundancies. And it identifies which programs deserve highest priority, such as the Leadership and Management School, the flagship training program for enlisted personnel, which is not yet fully funded.

Formal training programs are just one category of what the Coast Guard calls "learning activities"— experiences that enhance employees' competencies so they can move to the next level of responsibility. There are also three other kinds of learning activities:

- Learning from experts (mentoring, coaching, networking, 360-degree feedback, individual development plans)
- External activities (professional associations, seminars)
- Job assignments (on-the-job training, details, teams)

All of these learning activities are aligned with the Coast Guard Competency Model shown on the next page. Employees at the "worker" level are expected to acquire the competencies in Quadrant 1. Quadrant 2 is geared to first-line supervisors and mid-level managers, Quadrant 3 to supervisors of supervisors and more senior managers, and Quadrant 4 to executives and those in expert consulting roles. Since the Coast Guard generally hires at the entry level and then promotes from within (rather than making lateral hires), the competencies are cumulative. Those who have achieved a position considered to be in Quadrant 3 are expected to have the competencies in Quadrants 1 and 2.

CG Leadership Competencies

Leading Self Accountability/Responsibility Aligning Values Followership Health & Well-Being Self Awareness & Learning Personal Conduct Technical Proficiency	**Leading Self** Effective Communications Team Building Influencing Others Mentoring Respect for Others & Diversity Management Taking Care of People
Leading Performance/Change Conflict Management Customer Focus Decision Making & Problem Solving Management & Process Improvement Vision Development & Implementation Creativity & Innovation	**Leading the Coast Guard** Financial Management Technology Management Human Resource Management External Awareness Political Savvy Partnering Entrepreneurship Stewardship Strategic Thinking

On its own, this model is not unlike many other government agencies'. It's what the Coast Guard is doing with this model that's most noteworthy. By creating a database that tracks both the demand and the "inventory on hand" for competencies and competency-building experiences, the Coast Guard is moving to what it calls "Competency Management," the equivalent of workforce planning on steroids. It's an enterprise-level process for managing both the supply of talent and the demand-side that goes way beyond the typical focus on head count. What's more, it has the added benefit of helping individual employees manage their own careers.

Competency Management

While the Coast Guard has had a competency model for more than a decade, its deep dive into competencies is more recent. It needed to develop an integrated human resource information system (HRIS) to replace four separate systems that couldn't talk to each other. Each supported one area of human resource management: accession, training, assessment and advancement. Each was managed independently and each was affected by different external forces, such as the budget cycle or the labor market cycle. "They all had their own engines driving them," says Dr. Steve Wehrenberg, head of HR Strategy and Capability Development. "It was like having four different drive shafts

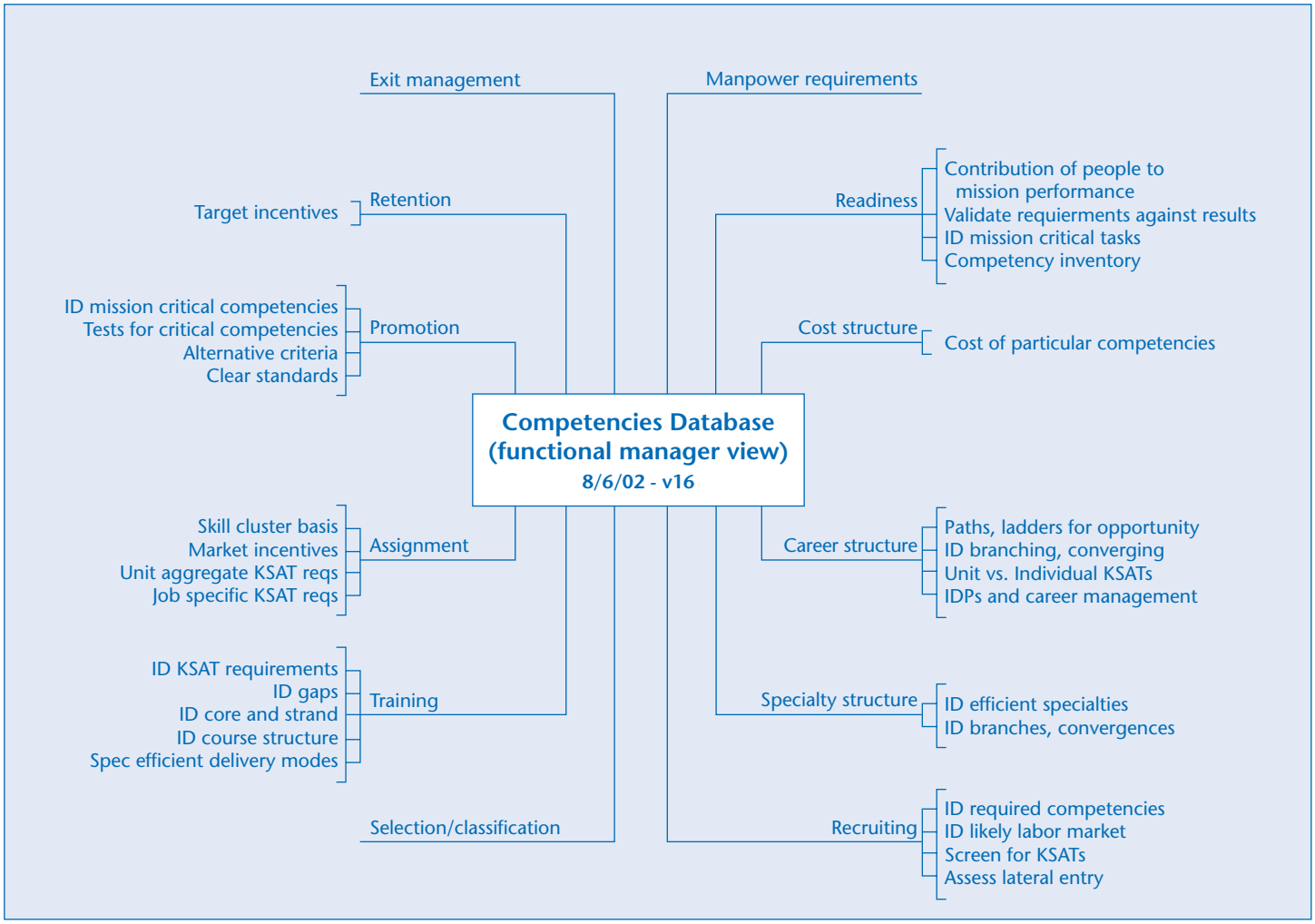
driving four different gears." As a result, "We ended up with lots of gear teeth on the floor." In more literal terms, that translated to "enormous overhead because the systems weren't communicating as they should be," explains Wehrenberg, who also directs Future Force, the Coast Guard office charged with developing systems and processes to understand supply and demand for the workforce of the future (20-30 years out).

The fundamental problem was that each system used information at different levels of abstraction. The training system focused on information about tasks, knowledge, and skills. The accession system tracked aptitude. The assignment system, says Wehrenberg, "tried to take a handful of attributes of people and fit them with a handful of attributes needed for a specific job." And the advancement system needed to know extremely fine-grained details related to any of 20 or so occupational specialties within its staffing model. "They just weren't using the same currency."

Combining these separate databases into a single system would be far more efficient and effective, the Coast Guard realized. "We were looking for the right level of information to meet the needs of all four systems," he says. "We always want the finest detail possible, but that detail comes at great cost. The trick is to find the balance.

"That's when we decided to aggregate things into competencies." In effect, competencies became a kind of Rosetta stone, a common code that could be used across the systems. But first the Coast Guard had to create a precise definition for every competency and a common notation system for recording competency-related data, regardless of whether it was related to recruiting or training or specifying new jobs. Then it had to develop a "language" for specifying those competencies for every position and every person.

The competency catalog is still a work in progress. Because line managers and program directors must determine the requirement for competencies, completing the catalog has been a major effort. Thus far, it's about 80 percent done. The results are as cryptic and jargon-laden as an engineering spec sheet. The catalog includes technical, general, and leadership competencies. But while the particulars may be undecipherable outside the Coast Guard, the organizational impact is quite clear. Instead of four different HRIS, the Coast Guard now has one, and the many uses of the term "competency" (e.g., for special pays or bonuses, qualifications, collateral duties) have been clarified. From here on out, this taxonomy will be used to help manage all of the processes that make up the overall talent-management strategy, as shown below:



By building a unified system that makes competencies one of the basic units of information, the Coast Guard has taken a giant step beyond traditional workforce planning. It has married the quantitative information that's typical of most workforce plans with qualitative data captured in the language of competencies. Together, they deliver a more multidimensional picture of current state and future needs.

It's a point that Wehrenberg drives home to graduate students in his course on Strategic Human Resource Planning at George Washington University. "You're not here to manage inventory," he tells his students. "That's an outdated paradigm. You're here to manage the flows, to give line managers confidence that whatever they need, it will be available." Without that confidence, he adds, "line managers will be timid and invariably sacrifice the long-term for the short-term."

Additional Benefits

The organization is not the only beneficiary. "There are three entities responsible for leadership development in the Coast Guard," says Stump. The first is the Office of Leadership and Professional Development (at Coast Guard headquarters), which Stump oversaw until he moved to a new assignment as Deputy Group Commander, New Orleans. The second is the commanding officer of a unit (or his or her representative), who can suggest specific developmental opportunities to his or her reports. The third is the individual member.

The Coast Guard's focus on competencies serves all three. The preceding section of the case study described competency management at the enterprise level. The final section describes two new, online tools—one just launched and the other still in development—designed to help groups and individuals assess and build their leadership competencies.

New Tools for Developing Leadership Competencies

According to Coast Guard research, says Stump, 70 percent of Coast Guard members who separate (i.e., leave voluntarily prior to retirement) do so because of their first-line supervisor. That's consistent with other studies, such as the Gallup research reported in Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman's popular *First Break all the Rules* (Simon & Schuster, 1999). Too often, formal leadership training for new supervisors or mid-level managers is a one-time event. Participants need the opportunity to practice what they've learned once they're back on the job. They need feedback, an action plan, and ongoing development.

To help meet those needs, the Coast Guard developed the Unit Leader Development Program (ULDP), a web-based resource for commands (Coast Guard parlance for line managers). Its purpose is to improve the climate and overall leadership prowess of entire units, whether that unit is composed of four or 400 members.

Based on the 28 leadership competencies, the ULDP aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice. That's a critical need, since Coast Guard research also found that 30 percent of employees who graduate from a leadership development course say they can't apply what they learned. Why not? One leading reason, says Stump, is "unreceptive attitudes to contemporary leadership principles at their unit." Thus, the audience for ULDP isn't just the unit command. It's a resource for the group and for individual members. It creates a shared expectation about leadership.

Users can access ULDP from the desktop [http://learning.uscg.mil/uldp] When they do, they discover a vast, digital library of training techniques, leadership tools, and proven practices gathered from Coast Guard, Department of Defense, and private-sector organizations. For each competency, the library provides at least five interventions to spark development.

While ULDP puts a world of leadership knowledge just a few clicks away, it's much more than a reference library and tool box. Its real impact as a driver of development comes from a group assessment tool that an organizational unit of any size (commands, staffs, and subcomponents of each) can complete online. Linked to the 28 leadership competencies, the assessment identifies strengths and weaknesses in terms of "command climate," or how well the team works together. The surveys are anonymous. Once at least 50 percent of unit members have completed the assessment, the command receives a confidential report, to which no one else has access. It summarizes the unit's strengths and weaknesses, as they relate to the 28 competencies.

Such an assessment might be a one-time event, if ULDP had no other components. But the command report also includes a list of recommended developmental activities for each area that needs improvement, with links to supporting information on the ULDP site. (For a sample, go to the ULDP website and click on the ULDP Dashboard Summary.) In addition, ULDP links the command to a certified coach who can, upon request, help interpret the results and develop an action plan.

ULDP was recently approved by Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Thomas H. Collins and will become mandatory on July 1, 2005. There are several reasons for making the assessment compulsory, explains Stump. The first has to do with time pressures and the likelihood that individual and team development get bumped by other demands. "Unless we require that people spend time having this leadership dialogue," he says, "they're never going to have it."

But can it work, if the leader really isn't interested? Stump illustrates by conjuring up a Coast Guard archetype: An "old salt" with 25 years of service under his or her belt and an old-school way of operating: high on command-and-control and low on concern for people's feelings. A call goes out for people to attend Leadership and Management School and three of the group's members go. When they return, pumped up with enthusiasm and new ideas, they suggest the unthinkable: Could we sit down for a half-hour once a month and talk about group issues? Needless to say, the old salt is unreceptive.

That's why ULDP is mandatory. "We're trying to force that enlisted member or officer to take the pulse of his command with the ULDP assessment," says Stump.

Rather than simply sending employees to off-site programs, the Coast Guard hopes to make leadership development an ongoing process in the workgroup, and not simply a one-time event. It hopes to reduce the percentage of participants who can't apply what they learn in a leadership course because of unreceptive attitudes in their workplace.

Empowering Individuals

Back when the Coast Guard was figuring out how to manage competencies, it wasn't thinking just about workforce supply and demand. It was also thinking about individuals and how to help them navigate their own course in the Coast Guard. "We want to give people more control over their own destiny," says Wehrenberg. "We want to give them a way to assess their options and make good career decisions. To do that, we have to be able to describe the opportunities that are available."

Empowering employees to manage their careers is fundamental to the Coast Guard's approach. It was one of the distinguishing features Ray Blunt noted in his 2001 study. And it's still explicit.

Now that the Coast Guard is getting a firm grasp on its formal leadership programs (through the Leadership Development Framework) and has developed the basic architecture for managing competencies across its workforce, it's ready to take the next step. With a website called TRISTAR, it hopes to give every one of its members the resources to assess their current leadership competencies and chart their course to further development. Once it's funded, TRISTAR will do for individuals what ULDP will do for units. It will provide a single destination where an individual can find diagnostic tools, get feedback, browse reading material, learn about the competency levels, find out about learning activities that will bridge the gaps or advance strengths—all calibrated to his or her responsibility level.

With TRISTAR, the Coast Guard will reinforce its message that individuals must take responsibility for their own development. "It's a two-way street," says Stump. "We provide the resources and direction, but people need to be deploying this on their own."

While both ULDP and TRISTAR focus on leadership development, they take aim at different levels. For example, the ULDP asks unit members to indicate the extent to which "People at my unit are comfortable bringing up controversial issues." TRISTAR, by contrast, might ask the individual to assess the extent to which she or he "builds consensus through give and take" or "encourages others to express ideas even when these ideas may seem unusual."

Cost

The Coast Guard has an operating budget of $6.8 billion (FY 2005). Of that, it budgets approximately $2.5 million for leadership training. The cost to develop ULDP was less than $100,000. Stump estimates the cost to develop TRISTAR will be $36,000, some portion of which could come from a $200,000 allocation for e-learning.

Evaluation

The Coast Guard plans to evaluate ULDP by tracking usage. Because it can be costly to develop and track measures associated with leadership development, the primary indicator of ULDP success will simply be if Commanding Officers/ Officers in Charge, and their respective units, find the product worth using.

Typically, the Coast Guard asks participants to evaluate formal leadership programs at the end of the course. Like his counterparts in other agencies we interviewed, Stump says it's difficult to implement the more rigorous evaluations described in Kirkpatrick's four-level model (see sidebar on page 54 "How Do We Know If What We're Doing Is Effective?"). When the Coast Guard did use a level-three evaluation (asking supervisors to complete a survey six months after their employee completed a formal training program), the response rate was just 15-20 percent. "We want to get to a level three or four," says Stump, "but we just don't have the resources."

"Of course, the real measure of success will be unit and individual performance and the workplace climate at those units" says Wehrenberg. The Coast Guard uses a biannual Organizational Assessment Survey to measure the latter at both the unit level and aggregated up the chain of command. Like other private and public sector organizations, he says, "we have a lot of people wrestling with performance measures." Coming up with better metrics is "just a matter of time."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Research such as this relies on a very large number of people for information, recommendations, insights, and goodwill. From the study's inception in August 2004 through its completion in June 2005, I talked to more than 90 people. They included academic researchers, journalists, public-sector HR experts, association executives, government-watchers, and many, many professionals who work in local, state, or federal government.

With gratitude, I acknowledge the contributions of the following individuals:

Dan Rosenblatt	International Association of Chiefs of Police
Gary Briese	International Association of Fire Chiefs
Leslie Scott	National Association of State Personnel Executives
Beth Kellar	International City/County Management Association
Neil Reichenberg Judith Brown	International Public Management Association - Human Resources International Public Management Association - Human Resources
Jack Lemons	National Certified Public Manager Consortium
John Palguta Phil Beekman	Partnership for Public Service Partnership for Public Service
Chuck Wexler	Police Executive Research Foundation
David Hill Connie Philips	City of Anaheim, CA City of Anaheim, CA
Mike Booker	City of Daytona Beach Shores, FL
Larry Trujillo	City of Denver, CO
Clarene Shelley	City of Lakewood, CO
Frank Benest	City of Palo Alto, CA
LaShon Ross Bruce Glasscock	City of Plano, TX City of Plano, TX
Ken Parker William Whitson	City of Port Orange, FL City of Port Orange, FL
Lisa Achen Craig Robinson	City of Roseville, CA City of Roseville, CA
Nick Metz	City of Seattle, WA
Joe Yarborough	City of South Daytona, FL
Greg Mullen A.M. Jacocks, Jr. Miriam Manning	City of Virginia Beach, VA Police Department City of Virginia Beach, VA Police Department City of Virginia Beach, VA Police Department
Marie Shook Jake Jacobsen	Mecklenberg County, NC Department of Social Services Mecklenberg County, NC Department of Social Services
Joe Adler Paul Folkers	Montgomery County, MD Montgomery County, MD
Lynne Pierce	San Diego County
Jeff Schutt	State of Colorado
Jane Uyetake	State of Hawaii
Mollie Anderson Nancy Berggren	State of Iowa State of Iowa
Sue Roberson Michelle Fullerton	State of Indiana State of Indiana
Anne Soileau	State of Louisiana
Bill Patrick	State of Michigan Department of Human Services
Robert Bass Lesley Lloyd	State of Mississippi State of Mississippi

Dan Cunningham	State of New York Office of General Services
Nancy Kiyonaga	State of New York
Thomas Wright	State of North Carolina
Oscar Jackson	State of Oklahoma
Kim Helton	State of Pennsylvania
Kathy Kieffer	State of Pennsylvania
Sam Wilkins	State of South Carolina
Laurette Burdyl	State of South Carolina
Greg Stump	US Coast Guard
Steve Wehrenberg	US Coast Guard
Tom Taylor	US Coast Guard
Greg Thomas	US Coast Guard
Daliza Salas	US Department of Labor
Kim Green	US Department of Labor
Chris Mihm	US Government Accountability Office
Mark Gebicke	US Government Accountability Office
Sally Jaggar	US Government Accountability Office
Steve Nelson	US Merit Systems Protection Board
John Crum	US Merit Systems Protection Board
John Ford	US Merit Systems Protection Board
Sherri McGee	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Karen Weaver	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Steve Benowitz	US Office of Personnel Management
Doris Hausser	US Office of Personnel Management
Ileen Rogers	US Office of Personnel Management
Bob Danbeck	US Office of Personnel Management
Bob Paulson	US Office of Personnel Management
Carol Harvey	US Office of Personnel Management
Mark Reinhold	US Office of Personnel Management
Myhre E. Paulson	US Office of Personnel Management
Al Hyde	Brookings Institution
Patricia Ingraham	Syracuse University
Sally Selden	Lynchburg College
Tony Picchioni	Southern Methodist University
Ed Kellough	University of Georgia
John Nalbandian	University of Kansas
Don Kettl	University of Pennsylvania
Steve Hays	University of South Carolina
Marilyn Gowing	Aon Consulting
Jerry Greenwell	CPS Human Resource Services
Matt Gruver	CPS Human Resource Services
Mike Masternak	CPS Human Resource Services
Mary Wamsley	CPS Human Resource Services
Greg Treverton	RAND Corporation

The initial idea for this study was suggested by Frank Benest, City Manager of Palo Alto, CA. Having read the first study in this series (*The Aging and Retiring Government Workforce*), he contacted me in April 2004 to ask whether I might be interested in conducting a new study in cooperation with the International City/County Management Association. The topic he proposed was building the leadership pipeline. That within weeks, our initial conversation expanded to include CPS Human Resource Services (which, having sponsored the first study, decided to fund this one as well), IPMA-HR and NASPE was proof that Frank's proposed topic was an important one for local, state, and federal government.

Most of all, I acknowledge the ongoing contributions of Pam Stewart and Bob Lavigna of CPS Human Resource Services. Having worked with me on the first study, it was—and still is—gratifying that they chose to support a second study. They have been a constant source of contacts, insights, and analytical perspective. They helped ground this research in their extensive experience in public-sector human resource management. And they have persistently made sure that the study focused on practical information and recommendations.

In addition, I appreciate the many contributions to this research report made by Geralyn Gorshing (CPS Human Resource Services) and Michael Alcalay (Alcalay Communications). Although they joined the project at a relatively late stage, they jumped in enthusiastically, bringing with them a new level of creativity, energy, and an unflappable, can-do attitude.

Finally, Paul Coyne of CMB Design took the basic concept of the leadership pipeline and helped us develop it, conceptually and visually, into the Just-in-Time and Integrated models presented on page 1. To our good fortune, given the centrality of the pipeline metaphor, it turned out that he is the son and grandson of plumbers.

As someone whose research interests often zig-zag between public- and private-sector organizations, I conclude this study with a renewed sense that there is much each sector can learn from the other. Yet, in one very important way, the public sector is in the lead. Because the government workforce is older than its private-sector counterpart, and because its employees can often retire sooner than their peers in business, government organizations have an urgent need to build their leadership pipeline. The urgency is still a few years away for the private sector. As a result, the lessons learned by the organizations we interviewed and by other public-sector organizations in the next three-to-five years are likely to be studied by public-sector employers as their own retirement wave grows closer.

Mary B. Young, D.B.A.
Medford, Massachusetts
June 11, 2005

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH

Dr. Mary B. Young

Independent Research on Organizations and the Workplace

Dr. Mary Young's research focuses on the impact of demographic trends in the workplace. In 2002-2003, she completed the first study in what has become an ongoing series funded by CPS Human Resources Services, focusing on critical issues in public-sector human-resource management. Conducted at the Center for Organizational Research, a division of Linkage, Inc. in Lexington, MA, *The Aging-and-Retiring Government Workforce: How Serious Is the Challenge? What Are Jurisdictions Doing About it?* includes twelve, in-depth case studies and an analysis of current practices in local, state, and federal government. With Pamela Stewart of CPS, she presented the study's findings at five national conferences in 2003, including IPMA-HR, the Council of State Governments and the National Association of State Personnel Executives.

Building on that research, she recently began a new study on strategic workforce planning for The Conference Board, a global, independent membership organization that creates and disseminates knowledge about management.

Young's research on human resource issues has been cited in the *New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, USA Today, Time, Business Week,* and *NPR's Morning Edition*. In addition to her work for CPS and The Conference Board, she has conducted research for other public- and private-sector organizations including the Canadian Broadcasting System, National Retired Teachers Association (a component of AARP), the Center for Organizational Research, and Northeastern University School of Nursing.

Young received her doctorate in organizational behavior from Boston University's Graduate School of Management. She earned a M.Ed. in organizational development at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a B.A. in English from Case Western Reserve University. A former journalist and public-speaking coach, she enjoys communicating her research findings nearly as much as designing and conducting the studies. Mary Young can be reached at 781.393.9691 or email marybyoung@aol.com.

About CPS Human Resource Services

As a government agency, CPS is helping to improve human resources in the public sector. CPS provides HR managment and consulting, examination, certification and licensing, and executive search services to more than 2000 local, state, and federal government agencies, public utilities, associations, nonprofits, and other organizations throughout the United States and Canada. CPS has offices in Arizona, California, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Washington, D.C.

The International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR)

IPMA-HR is an organization that represents the interests of over 7,500 human resource professionals at the federal, state, and local levels of government. IPMA-HR members consist of ALL levels of public sector HR professionals. Our goal is to provide information and assistance to help HR professionals increase their job performance and overall agency function by providing cost effective products, services, and educational opportunities.

The mission of IPMA-HR is to optimize organizational and individual performance in public service by providing human resource leadership, professional development, information and services.

The National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE)

The National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE), a non-profit organization, was established in 1977 to enhance communication and the exchange of information among personnel executives. NASPE is an affiliate organization of The Council of State Governments.

Regular membership is composed of the chief personnel executive and their chief deputy or designee from each of the United States, the Territories of Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

ICMA is the professional and educational organization for chief appointed managers, administrators, and assistants in cities, towns, counties, and regional entities throughout the world. Since 1914, ICMA has provided technical and management assistance, training, and information resources to its members and the local government community. The management decisions made by ICMA's nearly 8,000 members affect more than 100 million individuals in thousands of communities — from small towns with populations of a few hundred to metropolitan areas serving several million.

ICMA's mission is to create excellence in local government by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide.

For more information about this research, contact Geralyn Gorshing at CPS Human Resource Services. She can be reached at 916.263.3600 ext. 3373 or email Ggorshing@cps.ca.gov.