

Leadership Development

Context Report

Strategic Priority: Develop and nurture educational leaders.

Introduction

In January 2003, the Executive Team of GWAEA identified four strategic priorities that represented actions that would hold the greatest promise of achieving the agency-wide goals identified as a result of a comprehensive needs assessment. It was determined that a white paper would be developed to provide guidance for the future direction of each priority. Ron Fielder, Chief Administrator, was assigned to assemble a representative group within the agency to develop the white paper focusing on Leadership.

Participants in the process were representative of agency staff. They were: Kim Martin, Board Secretary ; DJ Corson, Planning and Development Specialist; Paul Kiburz, Regional Facilitator; Jackie Schreder, Human Resources Coordinator; Keith Stamp, Regional Facilitator; John Nietupski, Resource Development Specialist; Ann Griffin, Adaptive PE Consultant; Brad Colton, School Improvement Consultant; Emily Thomson, Physical Therapist; Jerry Stevens, Computer Consultant; Jim Henry, Social Worker; Melissa Gilbert, Curriculum Consultant. The Committee met three times: March 6, March 31, and April 16 , 2003.

Research Findings

Definitions:

For our purposes, two terms that reflect the focus of this white paper are defined below:

- **Succession Leadership:** Preparing people within the organization to fill vacancies at management and executive management levels
- **Leadership Capacity:** Enabling and empowering more people to contribute toward desired results

Sources of Information:

A variety of sources were used to identify common attributes of quality leadership development programs that focused on succession leadership and/or programs that focused on increasing the capacity of leadership development throughout the organization. A review of the literature led to this list of three common attributes found in organizations which formalize their approach to developing leadership capacity and/or succession leadership*. Each of these attributes is described below:

Attribute: A Planful Process Exists

- Identifies qualities of leadership for all leaders within the organization. (e.g.: inspire shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, model the way, encourage the heart). (from Kouzes and Posner: [The Leadership Challenge](#)).
- Maintains an on-going process that is known and understood by everyone.
- Creates realistic, pressured situations in which people may take calculated risks for learning, failing, and trying again.
- Offers a variety of training and support experiences:
 1. formal (includes a model, specific training or courses, presentations, project management, cross-training, assignment of mentors/coaches)
 2. informal (readings, collaboration, personal reflections, participation in professional organizations, volunteer work)

Attribute: Ongoing Assessment of People and Programs

- Matches leadership competencies to organizational needs.
- Realizes that leadership needs are context driven (context examples: leadership needed in future vs. today, appropriateness to the level of leadership within the organization, cultural context, geographic context, changing stakeholder needs).
- Utilizes assessments of climate and leadership to determine opportunities for continuous improvement.

Attribute: A climate that supports leadership development

- Upholds congruency between what is said and what is done.
- Empowers people by being explicit about ends, and allowing people to determine means.
- Promotes full involvement by reducing barriers that block the development of individual talent and involvement.
- Encourages risk takers that have a passion to take initiative for getting things done.
- Values diverse leadership styles.

Benchmarks

- **Alliant Energy:** Alliant has identified the qualities it wants in its leadership and has a model for identifying future leaders. Opportunities are offered to these individuals and training is available. Individual Development Plans are created for all employees. Talent Management is used to match employee growth opportunities with organizational opportunities. Diverse styles of leadership are being encouraged. Empowerment is increasing.
- **AON Consulting:** They are quite committed to and strong in the formal area. They occasionally use work assignments as informal leadership development opportunities. All staff record experiences, accomplishments, training and professional/ technical certifications as documentation of growth. A variety of training options are available: on-line, face-to-face, outside training, courses leading to advanced licensure or certifications etc. The company views itself as being on the far end of the continuum on this dimension, having invested much in identifying/refining competencies for key positions, developing systems for assessing competencies and tying training directly to the areas staff wish to improve upon. While many areas are assessed, not all areas are required to be “high” rated—so there is no pressure for all staff to be outstanding in every area. They have created unique salary structures to reward professional growth and have made it possible for staff to participate through giving time, resources, and outsourcing some functions so they could concentrate on key initiatives.

Other organizations have been assessed against the attributes listed above. Some organizations had some of the attributes, but not all three. However, these organizations may also serve to be helpful in future creation of leadership development structures and processes.

Grant Wood Current State

The team identified Grant Wood’s current state as following:

- **Attribute: A planful process.** At this time the agency does not have a systemic, planful process for either succession leadership nor leadership capacity. However, a potential first step in a planful process might be the Contemporary School Leadership (CSL) program. It was discovered that not everyone in the agency knows of the CSL program and it is not perceived to be accessible to all. There is no formal system to identify individuals for leadership positions. In some areas of the agency, people are encouraged to take on leadership roles and invited to participate in leadership learning (such as CSL), however, is not consistent throughout the organization. It is perceived to be more dependent upon relationships than a formalized plan. There are a variety of leadership-related courses offered in addition to CSL—Data-Driven Leadership, Evaluator Approval, What Every Administrator Needs to Know About the IEP Process, Standard Tools and Standard Practices to Improve

Student Achievement, etc. —but they are not tied in a systematic way toward a common goal, mission or philosophy about leadership within the organization.

- **Attribute: Ongoing assessment of people and programs.** Grant Wood has used personal profiles for new applicants and job description profiles since the summer of 2002. These tools have not yet become wide-spread in the agency although there are some plans in place to do so. Currently the tool is not yet used to develop leadership throughout the agency. The agency has done a recent assessment of climate. A consistent explanation of understanding of ongoing assessment throughout the agency was not found.
- **Attribute: Climate that supports leadership development.** Our recent climate survey, completed in November and December 2002, indicates a perception that we do not have a climate that supports internal leadership development. A few statements that may need to be further understood include items #7 “a belief that I can influence the direction of this organization,” #10 “At GWAEA, I experience a culture of open communication,” and #17 “I am encouraged and provided opportunities to be a leader in my work.” Conversely, item #29 on the survey shows strong agreement with the statement, “I feel that I have an opportunity to do meaningful work.”

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CONTACTS

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