

# 2019 TLG Innovation Showcase Applicant

## Washoe Leadership Program - Cultivating employee growth

Washoe County, Nevada

*#Extensive Internal Collaboration*

Population: 430,000

### Innovation

#### Criteria:

- Initiative fundamentally changed a process, product or service (fundamental)

OR

- Initiative builds upon existing knowledge to improve a product, process or service (incremental)
- The initiative substantially stretched the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.

### Describe Your Innovation

*(When and how did this innovation get started? Do also detail how the program or policy innovative, how it has changed previous processes, products, or services, and how it has substantially stretched or improved the boundaries of ordinary governmental operations.)*

The Washoe Leadership Program (WLP) originated from Washoe County's Strategic Planning process. The Strategic Goal of Valued and Engaged Workforce identified the need to focus on simplified workflows to improve service delivery and customer service; with a Board of County Commission's directed objective to develop a culture of Yes".

Launched in December 2016, the WLP is an employee led engagement program that supports leadership, collaboration, service, communication, and appreciation.

The objectives of the program are to:

- Encourage and facilitate professional development;
- Provide opportunity for employees to build relationships and collaboration within and across departments; - Encourage and facilitate a customer service culture;
- Support leadership opportunities; and
- Committee specific outcomes.

Key components of employee engagement are represented by six committees, each with specific missions, goals and objectives. These committees are Giving & Volunteering, Training, Learning and Leadership, Customer Service, Recognition, Events, and Employee Communication. The WLP committees identify, design, coordinate and execute projects across the organization. From the initial program design, through our on-going development significant efforts have been made to ensure that the program is employee led and projects initiated are for and by employees.

In our second year we focused on developing a sustainable program model and strengthening leadership opportunities. This led to shared program management and coordination by the Office of the County Manager, Human Resources, and significant coordination provided by the leadership roles within each committee including the: chair, vice-chair, treasurer, and secretary, webmaster, subject matter expert, and advisor.

By investing in the people who make our programs happen, we created the opportunity to unlock fresh ideas, innovations and efficiencies, and communicated the standard for customer service, all with employees taking the lead. In doing so, a unique culture that attracts the people who are passionate about our impact, was created.

## Collaboration

### Criteria:

- Initiative demonstrated engaging stakeholders both internal and external.
- Initiative demonstrated high performance teaming, breaking down internal silos.
- Strategic partnerships and or community networks were developed as a result of the initiative

**In less than 200 words, what individuals or groups are considered the primary initiators of your program? How does the innovation engage stakeholders or demonstrate high performance teaming? What strategic partnerships and/or community networks, if any, were developed?**

The WLP program was established as an initiative of the county's strategic planning goal team for Valued and Engaged Workforce. The team leader Gabrielle Enfield, and County Manager John Slaughter developed the initial design for the program. The Valued and Engaged Workforce goal team assisted as the framework for the program was defined. The Washoe County Board of Commissioners support and focus on employee engagement was critical to move this initiative forward, as was the strong support from the County Manager.

Support from county leadership encouraged departments to support the involvement of their employees in the new program. Department heads and elected officials were encouraged to support the program by volunteering as committee advisors, and to authorize and encourage their employee's participation. By engaging department heads throughout Washoe County the program was able to develop high performing teams with members and leaders from a broad cross-section of county departments and from all levels of the organization.

Additionally, as communication is vital to the program and its success the County's Communication Director and her team were key stakeholders early on and have contributed significantly as we focus on communication by and with our employees.

**If a private consultant was used please describe in detail their involvement, identify the consultant and/or firm and provide contact information. Maintain a 100 word maximum.**

NA

## Significance

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses an area of concern for the majority of local government organizations.
- Initiative can serve as a model and replicated in other jurisdictions.

Please describe the extent to which you believe your program or policy initiative is potentially replicable within other jurisdictions and why? To your knowledge, have any other jurisdictions or organizations established programs or implemented policies modeled specifically on this project? Please also provide verification of the replication.

The WLP model can be replicated in other jurisdictions throughout the country. The program is specifically designed to be effective and sustainable without a staff of full time program coordination. Although a significant amount of staff time is needed to initiate the program, the sustainability model established by Washoe County leverages the coordination skills and abilities of our program members and leaders with shared program coordination across two key departments: Office of County Manager, and Human Resources. The Office of the County Manager provides staff support from a Management Analyst, who focuses on the program goals, and program sustainability, and the Human Resources Department provides staff support from an HR Analyst that provides coordination of the annual program activities such as recruitment, orientation, reporting outcomes, etc.

The basic program model could be modified to focus on different or fewer committee areas unique to the jurisdiction. The key components needed to replicate the program are strong leadership support and the willingness to develop or strengthen a culture that empowers employees to think and act as innovators.

## Effectiveness

### Criteria:

- Initiative addresses a community or organization need.
- Initiative has achieved tangible results.
- Initiative improved the organizational culture or the traditional approach to problem solving.
- Initiative has received recognition for its achievements, i.e. independent evaluation, national recognition, local press, etc.

Please describe the most significant obstacle(s) encountered thus far by your program. How have they been dealt with? Which ones remain?

The most significant obstacle encountered by the WLP was identifying a sustainable staffing model that did not require the addition of new positions. To deal with the reality that new staff could not be dedicated to the program management we focused on two strategies:

- 1) strengthened the organizational structure within the committees,
- 2) identify the support and program coordination needed and distribute the responsibilities between two existing staff and their supportive departments (HR & OCM).

It is also critical to identify staff with the skills and ability to lead and coordinate the development of an innovative program that will allow for employee direction of their projects while ensuring compliance with county regulations and requirements.

The program continues to work on developing the best model for member's and leader's terms and succession planning

**What outcomes did this program or policy have? Could you share one or two objective measures that demonstrate these outcomes? Ultimately, how did you measure the change based on the intervention, and why do you believe in the credibility of this assessment?**

Engaged employee participation is a fundamental outcome of the WLP. During FY18 the number of employees who participated in a specific event, or training opportunity totaled over 7,800. The membership of the WLP committees included a total of 80+ employees, from 21 different departments. Employees donated over \$16,000 to support community-based programs and projects; and volunteered over 350 hours of personal time.

**Has the program received any press or other media coverage to date? If yes, please list the sources and briefly describe relevant coverage.**

As an internal employee focused program this program has not received any media coverage. Although significant internal communication occurs through our Manager's Monday Memo's, intranet webpage banners, and WLP internal webpages.

## Presentation

### Criteria:

- Presentation will be delivered by a team.
- Presentation will be highly interactive and engaging.

### Example Social Media Post

Customer Service, Communication, Events, Volunteering, Recognition and Training - these are the committee members of today and the leaders of tomorrow #WashoeLeadershipProgram #TLG2019

**Please write an abstract or short description for your innovation that would make conference attendees say "Well, I need to attend this session!"**

Cultivating Employee Growth through an employee led engagement program – Washoe Leadership Program (WLP)  
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Learn how Washoe County developed an employee led engagement program that supports leadership, collaboration, service, communication, and appreciation.

By investing in the people who make our programs happen, we created the opportunity to unlock fresh ideas, innovations and efficiencies, and communicated the standard for customer service, all with employees taking the lead. In doing so, a unique culture that attracts the people who are passionate about our impact, was created.

**How will you make the session creative and unique?- How do you plan to be both entertaining and educational?- Include a description of how your session will facilitate group activities and/or interaction.- What will attendees be able to have as an actionable "takeaway" from the session?**

Since our program is a large collaborative with members from across the county and from all levels of staff positions we will include presentation components from a variety of employees including WLP members and our County Manager. The presentation will provide the opportunity to learn about the impact of the program for individual employees, as well as the organization as a whole. Session will be developed around the theme of growth and agricultural cultivation as we describe the components needed and the resulting outcomes.

Our six WLP committees were identified to support the specific needs of Washoe County, other jurisdictions may need other focus areas. A group activity will encourage attendees to work together to identify committees for a leadership program that would work best in their organizations, with an opportunity to report out and compare similarities as well as new or unique committees.

Takeaways:

- Understand how to leverage cross departmental collaboration.
- Toolbox for developing a sustainable employee led engagement program.

**Anything else you would like to add?**

NA