

NCSHA Awards Entry Description
Management Innovation: Human Resources

Leadership OHCS – Succession Planning and Leadership Training
Oregon Housing and Community Services

While it can be lonely at the top, strong leadership skills and surrounding yourself with good people can make you a success. An African proverb says: *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go with a team.”*

Leadership OHCS was created to help implement Oregon Housing and Community Services’s 2009 Strategic Plan, which states: *“Create an agency culture that enables our staff to deliver the best possible programs and services.”* The executive team has endorsed the program and the inaugural class completed its first 12-month course with success. Leadership OHCS was created to preserve and enhance the agency’s effectiveness in the delivery of services throughout Oregon by increasing its ability to provide a continuity of strong leadership within the agency that will result in a vision for the future and individuals capable of leading OHCS to the realization of that vision. The second class is winding down and will graduate in September 2010. Recruitment for Class III is under way; we have expanded the program agenda and are building on the past two classes in an effort to make Leadership OHCS better.

The goal of the program is to create a stronger agency by developing a “leadership pool.” This is to help achieve succession planning within the agency, while making leadership training fun, innovative and personally rewarding. The classes create an opportunity for employees to develop leadership skills, provide an opportunity for employees to make themselves more competitive in their profession and make our agency more effective in its delivery of services to partners and tenants throughout Oregon.

Leadership OHCS is targeted for non-supervisory staff. (Administrators and managers receive opportunities for training throughout the year.) Leadership OHCS seeks to develop those staff members who have demonstrated qualities valued in leadership roles. Class members are limited to 12. Those interested apply with a simple memo stating their interest and what they hope to get out of, and contribute to, the class. The memo is submitted to their manager and the manager submits the application. This lets the facilitators of the class know that the manager supports the applicant’s decision to join the upcoming class and release the employee for the class meetings.

Our executive team believes that all participants will benefit in their efforts to achieve their professional potential. Each successful applicant will be expected to make a commitment to attend classes. Facilitators for the current class will recruit from class members individuals who will facilitate the next Leadership OHCS class. Each of the three current facilitators recruit one class member based on member performance and participation, and who exhibits an enthusiasm for the goals of the program. Facilitators for the next class year are recruited by May 1st. That gives the next year’s facilitators time to plan the curriculum and agenda, and to get them approved by the executive team.

Members recruited to facilitate the subsequent Leadership OHCS class schedule a series of meetings starting in June to develop the curriculum and agenda for their class. Upon the executive team's announcement of successful candidates, facilitators distribute the agenda for the new Leadership OHCS class year with classes to begin the same day each month, i.e. the fourth Thursday. Each facilitator develops, plans and organizes four classes, including scheduling presenters and arranging locations for each class. Fixed class dates and hours are recommended to encourage maximum class attendance. The agenda is developed to identify at least three of the eleven classes for each Facilitator. Facilitators schedule presenters and locations for each of their classes, introduction of presenter, and facilitation to ensure beginning and ending on time. Facilitators distribute feedback sheets for the sessions and then schedule a class debrief among the facilitators to meet and review member feedback with the objective of finding ways to improve Leadership OHCS training.

Assignments include reading an assigned book, chosen by our director. Last year's class read *Good to Great* by Jim Collins. Starting in September, the class will be delving into John Maxwell's *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*. At the end of the year, each class member will present a predetermined subject to the class using the tools they have learned during the year. Other agenda items from past classes have included:

- Discussions of servant leadership,
- public speaking training,
- round table discussion with OHCS Executives about characteristics of a leader,
- modeling effective leadership by looking at leadership in the movies,
- Myers-Briggs training,
- agency Legislative overview,
- how to track one of our agency's bills,
- homelessness presentation,
- visit Union Gospel Mission,
- team building exercises (including a challenge course with the executive team),
- diversity training,
- state budget overview,
- visiting local agency-funded projects,
- attend a State Housing Council Meeting, and
- attend class graduation.

Some of the graduates of the inaugural class have already demonstrated their new leadership skills. Two graduates lead a special project and initiative with success.

Costs of delivering Leadership OHCS are minimal. Utilizing "homegrown talent" to present Leadership OHCS has allowed the agency to keep costs down. Outside instructors are utilized as needed and the costs of securing those presenters are kept to a minimum. Rental of class space and motor pool vehicle costs are also offered at a discount to state agencies, so costs are able to be maintained at reasonable levels. Any item requiring payment is reviewed and approved by the agency's Executive Team. The benefits to the agency of having 12 employees participate in Leadership OHCS far outweigh any costs associated with the class.