



Entry Form 2018 Annual Awards for Program Excellence

Entry Deadline: Friday, June 15, 2018, Midnight ET

Each entry must include a completed entry form. Please complete a form for each entry your HFA is submitting. The completed entry form will become the first page of your entry.

This form is a fillable PDF. Type your information into the entry form and save it as a PDF. Please do not write on or scan the entry form. **Questions: Call 202-624-7710 or email awards@ncsha.org.**

Entry Title: Enter your entry's title exactly as you wish it to be published on the NCSHA website and in the awards program.

Category:

Subcategory:

Entry Summary: A 15-word (max) summary of the program, project, or practice you are entering.

HFA:

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Phone:

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Visual Aids:

Are you mailing to NCSHA 10 copies of any visual aids that cannot be included in your entry PDF? Yes No

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**Louisiana Housing Corporation
Organizational Competency Model
Management Innovation | Human Resources**

Program Summary

Newly appointed leadership team prevents financial insolvency and 23% employee layoff by investing in human resources strategies with limited resources.

Financial Woes and Poor Organizational Structure Cause Potential Layoff and Low Employee Morale

In March 2016, Louisiana Housing Corporation (LHC) faced many internal challenges including financial insolvency, leadership turnover, and a potential 23% employee reduction, which caused low employee morale. The following month, newly appointed board members selected Executive Counsel Keith Cunningham, Jr. as the Executive Director.

After evaluation of LHC's internal issues, Cunningham realized that a critical management component was missing - Human Resources. Attempting to reduce government spending, government officials centralized all of Louisiana's human resources functions to the Division of Administration, eliminating a critical support need within LHC's organizational structure. After receiving approval from the current Administration, Cunningham hired Kevin Brady as the director of human resources. Cunningham and Brady, along with the Executive Leadership Team strategized on how to address the spiraling morale issues caused the previous administration and absence of onsite Human Resources personnel.

In the endeavor to remain fiscally responsible and effectively use current resources, LHC partnered with Louisiana's Talent Development (TD) Division. As a quasi-state agency, LHC is assessed an annual fee to fund TD's Comprehensive Public Training Program (CPTP). This program is designed to help state employees develop effective team-building, collaboration, decision-making, problem-solving and other complex skills through instructor-led, e-learning, video and micro-learning formats at no additional charge to the Corporation.

In October 2016, TD launched a competency framework to assist state agencies in developing competency models for critical needs positions, career progression groups and overall agency performance. The TD team assisted with implementation by designing custom training, process mapping, and strategic initiatives that support the acquisition and retention of key competencies. In dire need of organizational structure, LHC became one of two early adopters of this newly minted corporate competency model at no additional cost.

Competency Assessment Identifies Strengths and Weaknesses

To better understand which competencies were needed to improve agency performance, LHC completed a competency sort assessment. Eighty-one percent of employees completed the assessment, which asked them to rank the areas that the Corporation excelled. While forty individual competencies were documented, only the 12 highest and lowest competencies were recognized. As a followup to the assessment, the TD team conducted three focus groups consisting of a total of 27 employees from all levels of the Corporation. Employees identified communication, accountability, management, engagement and change management as the weakest areas. As a result, the TD team recommended five strategies to address incompetencies.

COMPETENCY RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	Clearly articulate vision, values, objectives and goals with a comprehensive, communication plan. Develop with employee input, categorized goals/objectives by department, and link department functions to the mission. Frequently communicate plan via multiple channels.
2	Shift organizational culture away from perceived fear by analyzing agency values to determine guiding behaviors. Consistently identify opportunities to demonstrate and reward these behaviors.
3	Invest time and effort in employee development by linking positions to the mission and vision. Create a space and support for employee development.

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COMPETENCY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Build trust and engagement by identifying and completing strategic initiatives that result in "small wins." Publicize and promote these successes and incrementally build on them.

LHC Implements New Organizational Initiatives to Address Weak Competencies

While resources were limited, LHC decided that improving employee morale was more important and beneficial than the costs associated with implementing these initiatives. LHC held numerous strategic planning sessions, committee meetings, team building activities, and professional development training, which encouraged employee involvement at all levels. Using the competency recommendations as its foundation for moving forward, LHC implemented four initiatives: Communications Plan, Strategic Planning, Process Improvement, and Employee Development and Recognition.

INITIATIVE # 1: Communications Plan

LHC developed a Communications Plan that focused on strategies that would improve communication flow downward, upward, laterally, diagonally, and externally in an atmosphere that encouraged open expression of ideas and opinions. LHC adopted strategies that made it easier to obtain and share information and performance feedback, participate in strategic planning and process improvement, as well as contribute to the mission. Since implementation, there has been an uptick in employee interest and engagement. Throughout the fiscal year 2018, LHC implemented the following components of the Communications Plan:

1. **Team Meetings:** Monthly team meetings have proven to be an ideal method of facilitating cross-departmental communication. Employees provide input on department performance, procedures, goals, workload, deadlines as well as strategic initiatives and policy recommendations. Having the opportunity to discuss departmental and organizational issues has helped employees to see how their contributions impact the overall mission of the Corporation.
2. **Performance Evaluations:** Performance evaluation are conducted annually and are based on the expectations communicated at the beginning of the fiscal year. To ensure that supervisors provide feedback more than once per year, supervisors are required to document quarterly discussions with each of their direct reports. The Performance Evaluation Tool includes an assessment of job knowledge, teamwork, professionalism, customer service, proficiency, training and development, and supervisory responsibilities.
3. **Newsletters:** LHC's internal newsletter was disseminated intermittently, contained old content and lacked consistency, resulting in very low readership and open rates. This year, LHC completely revamped its newsletter and adopted it as the official channel for internal communication. It is disseminated the fourth Wednesday of each month, features program successes, personnel activities, important dates, policy notices, training and development achievements, and department spotlights. Readership has increased, and employees have expressed an appreciation for the content and its timeliness.
4. **Committees:** Committees include managerial representation from all 15 departments. Team leaders meet monthly to discuss process improvement, policies, agency successes, budgeting, etc. The LHive-Wire Team meets regularly to coordinate the efforts of the LHC's Intranet (LHive-Wire).

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INITIATIVE # 2: Strategic Planning

Rather than hire an outside entity to develop the strategic plan, LHC decided to tackle this task in-house. This provided an advantageous opportunity to involve the Leadership Team in the planning process. While the mission and vision remain unchanged, six core values, three organizational goals, and 13 objectives were established.

INITIATIVE # 3: Process Improvement

The lack of well-defined and documented processes and procedures diminished the Corporation's ability to perform at optimal levels; therefore LHC invested in process improvement strategies to better meet Corporation goals and objectives. This initiative has addressed the perception that management does not understand or value processes perceived as critical by staff, facilitate employee input, increase employee engagement as well as foster accountability for these roles and procedures. These strategies serve to link individual jobs to the agency mission in concrete ways.

1. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** SOPs identify the role that every employee plays in the distribution of housing services and documents procedures to better manage processes and identify problem areas. All employees were required to take *Managing and Improving Work Processes*, which has helped each department flowchart processes and write standard operating procedures.
2. **Policy Review:** LHC adopted a standardized policy format which includes a cover page indicating the title and date of the current policy, review date, required signature lines, and a synopsis of changes. Standardization of the review process starts with the 'owner' of the policy reviewing it, updating, and recording updates on the cover page. The policy is then sent to the Leadership Team for thirty (30) days, giving them time to discuss the policy changes with their employees in monthly Team Meetings. Comments are collected and reported back to the 'owner' of the policy. The policy is then updated, posted, and notice is provided to employees via multiple communications channels.

INITIATIVE # 4: Employee Development and Recognition

The Leadership Team has identified training and development an integral to the success of the Corporation and has implemented strategists that equips employees with all the necessary tools to be successful while regularly and publicly recognizing their achievements.

1. **Position Development Plan:** Department leaders were tasked with identifying the required knowledge and skills that would optimize employee performance to create a Development Plan for each position. Essentially, when an employee separates, LHC now assess the new employee's talent by reviewing the required training since the training plan is already in place. This enables department managers to budget better for professional development.
2. **Rewards and Recognition:** The State of Louisiana has for the first time allowed lump-sum payments for employees who receive an overall 'exceptional' rating on their annual Performance Evaluation. The Leadership Team has been charged with setting the standard of exceptional performance and behavior by identifying standardized expectations to ensure that performance evaluations are objectively and as evenly rated as possible. As the rating period runs the same as a fiscal year, expectations for FY 2018 were previously set; standardized expectations and pay for exceptional performance will be instituted FY 2019.

Since implementing these four core initiatives, LHC is no longer on the brink of insolvency and has eliminated the threat of layoffs. The financial portfolio is healthy, personnel is up by 29% (41 employees were hired during FY2018), and 17% of vacancies were filled by LHC employees that departed the Corporation under the previous Administration.