

Premiere Issue

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# HR NEWS

IPMA-HR

## Workforce and Succession Planning

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## Two Practical Workforce Development Programs

By Robert Neuber, IPMA-CP

Covina is a small Southern California city that was incorporated in 1901. The city is located in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley and is about 20 miles east of Los Angeles, about 20 miles west of Ontario, and about 20 miles north of Disneyland. The city covers 7.5 square miles and has a population of just fewer than 50,000. Just fewer than 200 employees work full time for the Covina government.

Covina was the small agency recipient of the 2007 IPMA-HR Agency Award for Excellence. Covina's mission is to provide responsive municipal services and manage public resources to enhance the quality of life for our community. One of our most important public resources is our employees.

In order to prepare our employees for their future in public service, Covina has undertaken two practical workforce development programs. The city's Emerging Leadership Team (ELT) was profiled in the California-International City/County Management Association's *Local Governments Preparing the Next Generation 28 Case Studies* ([http://icma.org/main/ns\\_search.asp?nsid=2885](http://icma.org/main/ns_search.asp?nsid=2885)). The other workforce development program Covina uses is the Southern California Local Government Leadership Academy (SCLGLA).

### Covina's Emerging Leadership Team

To help Covina's employees acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities they need to effectively compete for city positions that will be opening up in the coming years, the city established a self-directed multidepartmental team. The ELT is made up of employees who are willing to take on the challenge of completing projects for various departments and to participate in a mentoring program that involves formal and informal meetings with experienced supervisors, department heads and outside experts.

The initial ELT was chosen in the following manner:

- A flyer outlining the opportunity and application process was distributed to all employees.
- A panel made up of the director of human resources, the assistant city manager and the city manager reviewed all the applications received and chose the ELT members.
- Criteria for selection included educational goals, career goals and participation in current and previous training opportunities.
- Because of the number of applications received, two multidepartmental groups of six to eight employees were chosen for the first teams.
- All applicants were invited to participate in the mentoring program.

The ELTs have completed two to three projects each since their inception in May of 2005. The projects afford learning opportunities in all areas of city government. The ELTs set their own meeting schedules and project time lines with the goal of completing each project within four to six months. The HR director and other department heads made themselves available to advise the ELT and facilitated the initial meetings. At the conclusion of each project, executive staff met with ELT members to evaluate their output and the process they used to accomplish the project. Departments provide their employees with the opportunity to participate and complete ELT assignments, but employees' workloads are not reduced.

The mentoring program has included discussions with the city manager, department heads, representatives other local agencies, consultants and recruiters about those individuals' experiences, the job market for public agency managers, and preparing for promotion and the growing professional opportunities in public service.

The projects that have been completed by the ELT include a new employee orientation program, a revenue generation feasibility study, a facility improvement grant, and employee recruitment videos. The video can be viewed online at [www.ci.covina.ca.us/jobs](http://www.ci.covina.ca.us/jobs). Seventy-five percent of the initial sixteen ELT members have successfully competed in recruitments and have been promoted to positions of greater responsibility. Eight of them were promoted to positions within various departments of the city of Covina, and four were promoted to positions in other public agencies.

In order for the ELT program to continue to succeed, support from the city manager and all the department heads is required. As in many organizations, time is at a premium in Covina. Executive staff must allow the employees they supervise to attend meetings or the program cannot succeed. It has also been important to develop a list of challenging projects for the ELTs so their members can stretch their abilities. The budget for the program is approximately \$3,000, and those funds are used for training and training-related costs.

### The Southern California Local Government Leadership Academy

Like many municipal governments, Covina's faces a talent shortage. A majority of the city's most talented and experienced employees will be eligible to retire in the next few years. To prepare current employees to apply for senior positions as they become available, city of Covina staff sent out an inquiry to see what other public agencies were doing in the area of management and leadership training.

Reviewing and discussing the information received with other local city governments and colleges led to the development of a cost-effective joint venture dubbed the SCLGLA. The concepts underlying the academy can be applied by any city or group of cities that is interested in providing leadership training for their employees.

In November 2006, Covina's HR staff sent an inquiry to the League of California Cities' Personnel & Employee Relations Public ListServ asking agencies for information on established management/leadership training programs ([http://lists.cacities.org/pipermail/employee\\_relations/2006-November/001525.html](http://lists.cacities.org/pipermail/employee_relations/2006-November/001525.html)). Thirteen agencies responded to the inquiry, and their replies were organized into a spreadsheet available at [http://lists.cacities.org/pipermail/employee\\_relations/2006-December/001545.html](http://lists.cacities.org/pipermail/employee_relations/2006-December/001545.html). Staff also looked at information on leadership development programs at GovLeaders.org ([www.govleaders.org/training4.htm](http://www.govleaders.org/training4.htm)).

HR staff along with the Covina's ELTs reviewed the various programs and determined that based on the city's available resources, some kind of joint training would be most advantageous. Staff also determined that the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority's Leadership Academy and the Northern California Local Government Leadership Institute's Leadership Institute, which is run through California State University, Chico, would be the model programs. With this in mind, staff initiated discussions with other local cities.

In January 2007, Covina staff contacted several local cities regarding the idea of creating a joint leadership academy. Six local Southern California cities—Arcadia, Baldwin Park, Irwindale, Monrovia, Pomona and West Covina—agreed to work with Covina to develop the training program. The group contacted local colleges to determine if they could provide the type of training we envisioned. California State Polytechnic University, Pomona's College of the Extended University was able to take the best of the leadership training programs that we discussed with them, survey the needs of the participating cities, and develop a cost-effective program to meet our needs. The initial cost would be less than \$110 per student per day of training.

In March 2007, Covina's staff developed a shared training agreement, and Covina entered into a training partnership with Arcadia, Irwindale, Monrovia, Pomona and West Covina, and the university. Each city sponsored five participants in the program, which began last May. The thirty academy participants are learning skills in leadership and managerial effectiveness that will help prepare them compete for higher-level positions in their agencies. The academy is being held during the workday and at the participating cities' council chambers over a seven month period. Holding academy classes on site allows participants to see how other cities function and how city staffing, services and funding can vary. The participating employees from the city hosting the training also make a short presentation on their city to the other academy participants.

When they were asked, "What personal and professional accomplishments have you achieved over the past three months that you believe can be attributed to being part of the SCLGLA Program?"

academy participants' answers included the following:

- "I feel like I'm being generally more aware of my leadership and management style and of those around me."
- "Being more of a leader in my department."
- "I am able to look at my employees and find ways to make them achieve good things without having to change who they are."
- "Taking more initiative and leadership role in my projects at work and at home."
- "I feel I'm more open minded and, hopefully, more approachable to fellow staff."


The SCLGLA comprises seven courses that cover redefining leadership, creativity and innovation, organizational communication, power and influence strategies, strategic thinking and decision making, the leader's role in budget and finance, and leadership ethics. All are one-day, six-hour courses, except for the course covering redefining leadership, which is 12 hours and runs for two days. Several prominent city managers and assistant city managers agreed to become involved in teaching the SCLGLA, including Ray Patchett, city manager of Carlsbad; Rick Cole, city manager of Ventura; Mike Stover, assistant city manager of Lakewood; Bill Kelly, city manager of Arcadia; Scott Ochoa, city manager of Monrovia; Linda Lowry, assistant city manager of Pomona; and Fran Delach, city manager of Azusa.

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, is contracting with several groups of public agencies to provide SCLGLA classes, and the university is offering similar training on its campus that covers general supervisory and leadership topics ([www.ceu.csupomona.edu/courses/busadmin/leadershipacademy.asp](http://www.ceu.csupomona.edu/courses/busadmin/leadershipacademy.asp)).

## Conclusion

By providing the ELT and the SCLGLA for our employees, the city is providing Covina employees with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to effectively compete for and perform well in higher-level positions. C. William Pollard, who joined ServiceMaster in 1977 and served not once but twice as its CEO, including from 1983-1993, a period characterized by major change including the introduction and growth of the company's consumer group, said, "It is the responsibility of leadership to provide opportunity, and the responsibility of individuals to contribute." The practical workforce development programs the city of Covina has developed will allow managers to give motivated employees opportunities to self-select themselves for positions of increased responsibility and allow employees to better prepare for their future in public service.

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