

THE NAVIGATOR

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Forging Ahead:

Common Goals Spur a Southern California Local Government Leadership Academy

Robert Neiuber, Director of Human Resources for the City of Covina, Calif., was planning ahead. Like many public agencies, he knew that a majority of Covina's most talented and experienced employees were eligible to retire in the next five years. Neiuber wanted his up and coming employees to be ready to jump right into these positions. In order to better prepare them, he believed the best approach would be to provide some type of management/leadership training. So last year, the city's human resources personnel began reviewing their options.

Neiuber knew what he wanted for Covina's program. "We envisioned very practical, hands-on training sessions," he said. "We wanted the participants to walk away with something they could use immediately and in their future careers." But he also knew other agencies were facing the same issues. Consequently, after researching other government leadership programs, Neiuber's staff and Covina's Emerging Leadership Team decided to take a joint-training approach. The California cities of Arcadia, Irwindale, Monrovia, Pomona and West Covina agreed to work with Covina to develop the idea. California State Polytechnic University (Cal Poly) Pomona's College of the Extended University then helped build a cost-effective program to meet all the cities' needs.

In May 2007, the Southern California Local Government Leadership Academy (SCLGLA) opened with its first session, "Leadership with a New Perspective." Seasoned city managers from around the area, including Carlsbad, Ventura, Lakewood, Azusa, Monrovia, Arcadia and Pomona shared best practices and new ideas on topics, such as creativity in leadership, strategic thinking and the impact of budget. Each city hosted one of the seven courses. Neiuber believes that rotating the venues was one of the best teaching tools. "This gives the participants a chance to learn how other local governments operate," he said.

Thirty participants – five from each city – completed the eight-day academy. But Neiuber knows he's not finished yet. "It was the intention all along to keep this program going," he said. Rebecca Pang, business development manager for Cal Poly Pomona's College of the Extended University, is currently getting ready for the next SCLGLA, scheduled to begin in January 2008. "Right now, there is some flexibility in the program since we're constantly assessing impact and value," she said, "but we are striving for consistency in the curriculum, making the courses even more valid, perhaps even forming a board of directors for oversight." Employees from the cities of Rancho Cucamonga, Ontario, Bradbury, San Dimas, Azusa and Upland will be participating in the upcoming academy.

By using a collaborative approach, Neiuber and the City of Covina spearheaded development for a cost-effective joint-training venture – the SCLGLA – a concept that can be used not only by the cities who pioneered the program, but any city or group of cities interested in providing leadership training for their employees.

Agencies interested in future SCLGLA sessions can contact Rebecca Pang at 909.869.4495 or at rpang@csupomona.edu.

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