

CATEGORY: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE: PROGRAM NAME: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CENTRE PROGRAM

Problem assessment, the challenge or need that prompted the local government to develop the program:

When the Leadership Development Centre Program was developed there were a number of newly appointed Directors and Managers on the joint Executive Management Team. The Chief Executive Officer recognised that in today's complex local government business environment new and innovative ways to develop leadership and strategic management capabilities needed to be found in order to meet the many challenges faced in local government, and to develop a high performing leadership team. The Leadership Development Centre Program was deliberately designed to be innovative, challenging and confronting. Designed as a three day, 'live-in', development centre style Program, it provided the City's Joint Executive Team comprising of the Chief Executive Officer, four Directors, and ten Managers, an intensive simulation of management problems and situations aimed at developing specific leadership competencies. The objectives identified to inform the development of the Leadership Development Centre Program were to:

- ▶ Develop and deliver a Leadership Program to meet the specific needs of the City of Joondalup;
- ▶ Develop and deliver a Leadership Program that is flexible enough to cater for the individual requirements of the Leadership Team whilst still meeting organisational needs and developing the Leadership Team as a whole; and
- ▶ Develop and deliver a Leadership Development Program that considers potential and aspiring leaders as well as the formal leadership team (including how those potential leaders are identified).

In order to meet those objectives and design a targeted Program it was necessary to ascertain the existing skill base within the Joint Executive Management Team, and to establish future leadership skill requirements.

Program implementation and costs: The Leadership Centre Development Program comprised of the following elements:

- ▶ Completion by each member of the Joint Executive Management Team of a self rating Leadership and Management Profile.
- ▶ Selection of up to 15 other people (a mixture of managers, peers, and direct reports) to rate each participant's leadership and management skills according to the Leadership and Management

Profile including the identification of areas of strength and areas for development. Those selected as raters were required to be people who regularly interacted with the person receiving feedback and who would provide objective, constructive feedback on what they do well in their position and what they can improve upon.

- ▶ All surveys were conducted on line and within 3 weeks a feedback report was compiled (including self ratings and ratings of others). Each report was presented at a coaching session by an experienced coach to provide a debrief on the report.
- ▶ The reports included a *self score* (the ratings that each individual gave themselves), *others score* (the average ratings of those asked to rate each individual on each question), *group maximum* (the highest rating given by a person rating each individual on a particular question), *group minimum* (the lowest rating given by a person rating each individual on a particular question), *organisational average* (a figure comprising the average of a group of others who have completed the same survey to facilitate comparison of individual scores against). The rating provided by the Chief Executive Officer for each individual against each question was also provided, and was the basis for a one on one meeting with the Chief Executive Officer to discuss strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- ▶ Prior to the reports being provided to each participant, the Leadership Development Centre three day 'live-in' component of the Program was delivered. A major portion of the three day Leadership Insight Workshop explored the group's leadership capabilities through a variety of different exercises and interactions, designed to see how well participants performed in pressurised, stressful situations relevant to the City's business activities.
- ▶ An integral part of the Program was that trained observers watched individual participants and recorded and rated the specific skills (or lack of skill) in the different competencies that each exercise required. Time was also dedicated to small group discussions, and one-on-one sessions with coaches where participants were challenged to examine their actions, values, and behaviours at a personal level and to put in place specific actions to improve their leadership and personal effectiveness. This also involved open and honest communication between participants of their own and others' perceptions of their leadership and management skills, which to most was a significantly more powerful assessment of their own abilities.

- ▶ Each participant was required to complete a summary of their personal commitment to the City with regard tangible behaviours/actions to be achieved by the end of the weekend that they had to share with their peers and have endorsement by their coach and the Chief Executive Officer. Those actions were incorporated into Individual Development Action Plans and monitored by direct reports.
- ▶ The cost of the Program was \$70,000 which included the initial leadership and Management Profile Survey and completion of reports for all participants, the three day 'live-in' Leadership Development Program, 4 Coaching Sessions for all participants, and a follow-up mini Leadership and Management Profile Survey three months after the three day session.

Tangible results or measurable outcomes of the Program: All participants of the Leadership Centre Development Program agree that it has been personally and professionally one of the most intense, changing and rewarding experiences of their lives. For the City of Joondalup the investment has had remarkable results and is considered to have demonstrably assisted in the:

- ▶ Development of more effective leaders who contribute to the organisation's culture and strategic direction;
- ▶ Development of leadership and management competencies and skills improving individual and management team effectiveness;
- ▶ Development of specific skills and abilities to deal with managing employees and the accomplishment of strategic goals; and
- ▶ Provision of a powerful and challenging experience for its leaders that has led to the accomplishment of worthwhile professional and personal goals.

Maintaining the momentum was considered an integral part of the Leadership Development Centre Program and no sooner had participants 'recovered' from the personal observations and competency ratings their coaches and peers had made, then they were subject to a detailed analysis of individual 360 degree leadership profiles (undertaken prior to the Insight Workshop); four one-on-one coaching sessions customised to participant's development needs; and establishment of development plans and KPIs configured to fulfil the individual skill gaps identified.

All members of the Joint Executive Management Team committed themselves to deliver on the actions pledged at the 'live-in' component of the Program, to enable the City to become a premiership

management team. As a group, the joint executive also committed to establishing a Leadership Taskforce to take ownership of projects and activities aimed at continuing the development and use of leadership concepts, business processes and management systems, to improve organisational performance. The Leadership Taskforce was established to facilitate the City's continuous improvement program, and progress projects and activities to address key issues arising from the Leadership Development Centre Program. The Objectives/Terms of Reference for the Leadership Taskforce were:

- ▶ To oversee the systems of good governance practices on behalf of the organisation;
- ▶ To facilitate creation of a work environment that promotes visible and effective leadership systems and activity (formal and informal) at all levels within the organisation;
- ▶ To facilitate opportunities to develop people's capabilities and release their skills, resourcefulness and creativity to change and improve the organisation's capability;
- ▶ To ensure that people are engaged and enabled to make a meaningful contribution to organisational improvement, and the organisation's goals and success;
- ▶ To lead the development of the organisation's culture and support behaviours consistent with the City's values;
- ▶ To encourage effective communication that is open, top-down, bottom-up and horizontal;
- ▶ To foster capacity building as a good corporate citizen through society, community and environmental responsibility.

To achieve the objectives above, a number of Project Teams were formed and Project Plans prepared outlining a direction, series of actions, timeframes, and performance indicators, aligned to the City's Corporate Plan, for creation of an organisational culture where leadership and its inherent values are accepted and exercised by all employees.

The Project Teams include employees from across the organisation and have been successful in engaging employees in key organisational initiatives, and in progressing key initiatives to achieve organisational goals. The Joint Executive Management Team also participated in a half-day workshop to explore what a premiership management team would look like, and how members of such a team would behave. A document was developed setting out the purpose, vision, characteristics, and key performance indicators for a premiership management team that has been used to establish expected behaviours, and assess the success of the team in achieving the vision.

Lessons learned during planning, implementation, and analysis of the program: The following are the key lessons learned:

- ▶ The need to clearly identify the objectives and desired outcomes prior to commencing design of a Leadership Program;
- ▶ The need to involve participants in the design of the program to ensure 'buy-in' and maximise the return on investment;
- ▶ The need to include an instrument to assess (self and others) the current perception of the extent to which the leadership team demonstrates leadership roles, skills and qualities and to utilise that information in the design of the Program to target the gap between the desired skills and the status quo;
- ▶ The need to communicate the intent of the program throughout the organisation and to clearly demonstrate how the outcomes of the Program will be enacted by the participants and monitored by direct reports in order to avoid other employees concluding that the Program was a 'waste of time and money' and an elitist activity. This includes all participants sharing the results of their Leadership Management Profile Surveys with their teams, and sharing their development opportunities and what they will be doing to address development needs;
- ▶ The need to establish the program as developmental rather than evaluative (particularly the Leadership Management Profile Survey) – the Program was designed (and communicated) as being about identifying strengths as well as key improvement areas not about how good or bad individuals were relative to others in the team;
- ▶ The need for all participants to set realistic but challenging goals, develop a clear plan of action to develop knowledge and skill, and to take individual responsibility for monitoring progress towards those goals;
- ▶ The need to maintain the momentum through ongoing discussion on progress against individual action plans with direct reports, at regular Joint Executive Management Team sessions, and with the Chief Executive Officer.