

DEVELOPING EMERGING LEADERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CASE STUDY

LEADERGOV



GAINESVILLE



LEADERSHIP PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2019, the City of Gainesville Georgia began planning for additional leadership development focused on its emerging leaders. The north Georgia city is the county seat of Hall County and has a population of roughly 43,000. Gainesville is known as the “poultry capital of the world” and borders Lake Lanier, a large recreational reservoir. The city has an employee base of roughly 645 which includes police and fire and a water utility.

The stated goal of the Gainesville Learning Academy (GLA) was to:



...promote excellence in selecting and managing the City’s diverse workforce”.

The GLA is designed to educate participants about the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to be effective in leading and coaching other employees, while maintaining compliance with federal and state law, and City policies and procedures.

The city’s Human Resources team (led by Administrative Services Director Janeann Allison and Human Resources Manager Vikki Fox-Wilson) researched several training options with the goal to find a resource to lead a comprehensive leadership development program focused on self-awareness, success with results and employee support and teamwork. LeaderGov was asked to respond to the request and was chosen to partner with the city.



OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gainesville's first goal was to improve succession planning through leadership training, but they also wanted to equip their emerging leaders with insights into a range of city operational topics such as:



Budgeting practices & strategies



Public Safety




Utility Operations




Legal Challenges



Human Resources Policies



During the one year program the city added one-hour segments for these key operations topics which served to equip the emerging leaders and broaden their view of the city and its key policies. City department heads and other leaders were asked to speak to the group in their areas of expertise.



EMERGING LEADER SELECTION PROCESS

Every department was allotted a certain number of slots ranging from 1-12 depending on the size of the department in order to fill the group of thirty (30) participants. Department Directors nominated employees and submitted the names for review by the City Manager and Administrative Services Director. Nominees were informed that if they chose to participate they would be allowed to only miss up to two sessions. In cases where employees were unable to attend, Gainesville offered video recorded sessions and downloadable workbooks for employees, so they could stay engaged and continue learning.



Criteria for applicants were:

- 1 Two or more years of work experience with the City, or designated by their director as filling a significant leadership role;
- 2 Demonstrated competence in their area of expertise;
- 3 Demonstrated exceptional management and leadership potential, and;
- 4 A strong commitment to public service and aspirations of greater responsibility in the City.

LEADERSHIP CONTENT & FORMAT



LeaderGov's 12-month leadership development program fit nicely with Gainesville's development needs and included the following topics:

- 1 What is Leadership / Self-Care
- 2 Leadership and Personality
- 3 Leadership Blindspots - 360 Assessment
- 4 Creating High-Impact Goals
- 5 Executing on Goals
- 6 Change Management
- 7 Empowerment and Accountability
- 8 Building Trust
- 9 Healthy Conflict
- 10 Supporting Your Team
(motivation and feedback)

LeaderGov helped each participant understand how their personality affects how they approach each of the workshop topics and how their personality (with its fears and motivations) affects the way they lead, think, support and grow their teams. This emphasis on personality (through a DISC personality assessment) provided an understanding of how people are different and included ways to adapt their personality style to be more effective with others' styles.

LeaderGov modified the delivery of its material to speak to the real-life needs and understanding of leaders at the level of Supervisor and Manager. The workshop format LeaderGov used was interactive facilitation versus a 'teacher-centric' format. Emerging leaders were asked to spend time developing plans for how to implement each of the workshop topics and then were encouraged to share those plans with another workshop participant and then with the larger group. Assignments were given to further encourage participants to implement the concepts in their daily work.

The second year of the Gainesville Leadership Academy has incorporated a full day of public speaking training as well as public speaking exercises during every session.

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Participants were asked to prepare and present a short presentation with two other members in an effort to provide an overview of what they learned and what they applied in their roles as managers. City leadership and department heads (Directors) were present for these presentations. Participants developed their presentations together and presented them together in a team format. This not only allowed them to share the value of what they learned during the program but also allowed them to work with others in a team setting.

EMERGING LEADER PROGRAM RESULTS



Based on a post-workshop survey, participants were quite positive about the leadership development program as it challenged them to incorporate areas of leadership that many had not been formally trained on in the past. The participants consistently stated that the DISC personality development portion of the workshops helped them to better understand how to engage and work with others more effectively.

Participants consistently stated that they are now able to better lead their teams, respond to conflict and support their teams to achieve their major departmental goals.

Another consistent comment from participants was the opportunity to get to know other team members over the 12-month program. This helped build a sense of community and teamwork among the participants across departmental lines.



We are really pleased with how this first academy has prepared many of our participants for next-level roles in the organization, which was our main objective. Since we have a larger organization, we need to continue to develop leaders and fill the succession funnel for years to come,” stated Janeann Allison, Administrative Services Director at Gainesville.

Vikki Fox-Wilson, shared “It’s been good to see our up-and-coming managers step up and embrace this development program. We know that by talking to them and observing their behavior, they are better prepared to take on new roles. We are also pleased that they now have a better sense of our policies and how other departments operate. This will further prepare them for future roles in the organization. Overall, we are very pleased with this first year’s results.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

Participant comments regarding the program and workshops include.

- I really enjoyed this academy and feel it will be helpful for many years to come. Thank you for taking the time to put it together.
- I think having the Department heads as guest speakers was helpful, as well as tours and overviews of the different Departments represented.
- I truly enjoyed the course. It allowed me to focus on what I do positively and negatively. It allowed me to focus on why I do things the way I do, and showed me that I need to focus on others' perspectives more.
- When I first started the course I was having a real tough time connecting and working with a newly hired employee. As the workshops progressed I began to understand this person correctly and quit focusing on the negative. A year later this person and I understand each other's working style and actually work well together. I really enjoyed connecting the DISC styles with the way I and others work and think.
- One of the biggest benefits was being able to build connections with other departments and learning who to call when you need assistance.
- This has been a great opportunity to help grow and better myself to be a more effective leader and manager.
- I think it is a great program. It provided a great opportunity to learn new leadership skills and improve the skills we already have.

Comments on Facilitators

- Bill and Tim are just captivating. The ability they have to make you feel as if you've known them for years. I feel completely comfortable sharing and participating because of it.
- I enjoyed Bill and Tim speaking and they have some really great insights on management and leadership
- Bill and Tim were great, informative and engaging.
- They were motivational!! I enjoyed listening to them & I will be implementing some of the things that were discussed. Great speakers!
- They do a good job of engaging the audience and keeping everyone focused on the subject, instead of simply reading the slides.

PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION

To download a copy of Gainesville's GLA brochure please contact Bill Stark at bill@leadergov.com.