I. General Introductions:

The following agency is nominated for the 2018 IPMA-HR Agency Award for Excellence

Agency: Tennessee Department of Human Resources
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Number of employees covered by the human resource program: 43,000

Person Submitting this Nomination:

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I. Executive Summary:

This application highlights the overall quality, accomplishments, and contributions of the Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR) in consideration for the 2016 Agency Award for Excellence. As a cabinet-level agency that drives the strategic direction of HR for the State of Tennessee and its 43,000 employees, DOHR has been exemplary in successfully transitioning its practices from transactional to transformational.

DOHR’s transformation story began in 2011, when DOHR led the overhauled State employment practices to transition from a tenure-based model to a performance-based model designed to recruit, retain, and reward a talented workforce. In many ways, this groundbreaking change created the opportunity for DOHR to drive innovative practices in strategic focus areas, including leadership development, talent management, communication, culture, and technology. Today, DOHR continues to develop new programs and initiatives that drive organizational culture change, performance excellence, continuous learning, innovation, and servant leadership. DOHR’s innovative practices have positioned the State as an employer of choice, having a talented, thriving workforce to provide the best possible service at the lowest possible cost to citizens.

DOHR accomplishes its mission and the significant role of leading human resources throughout State government with 122 employees and an $11.5 million budget. Department leadership has two key areas of focus: 1) providing technical and strategic services to customers and 2) the management of the department itself, focusing on continuous improvement and the development of DOHR employees.

This award application highlights three initiatives that exceed the operation of a “good government human resource program,” all having been carried out within the three-year period preceding this nomination. Additional outstanding programs and initiatives are listed for reference.

First, DOHR’s state-of-the-art Performance Management (PM) program has been transformational in driving performance excellence and organizational success. The initiative to overhaul the PM program began in 2013, and it has been a continuous journey introducing new features each year to achieve today’s program, Performance Management 2.0 (PM 2.0), which was launched in October 2017. PM 2.0 is a comprehensive performance management program that aligns individual employee performance goals, including SMART work outcomes that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-sensitive, and behavioral competencies to the Governor’s priorities and vision for the State. All employees have the behavioral competency “customer focus” and supervisors have “developing direct reports and others” to further reinforce not only what should be achieved, but also the Governor’s vision for how goals should be achieved through a culture of service to others. PM 2.0 is managed through a year-long cycle with 3 performance check point meetings and a final performance review to drive continuous feedback and improvement. As a result, the PM program drives more than 150,000 conversations about performance at the State. At the conclusion of the PM cycle, the State implements Pay for Performance incentive rewards to employees who have demonstrated Valued, Advanced, or Outstanding performance. Pay for Performance bonuses have been paid for the past three years in 2016, 2017, and 2018 by increasing base salary from 3 – 5 percent and through one-time cash bonuses in an amount determined by a percentage of base pay. In summary, PM 2.0 is the foundation for excellence in performance and service at the State, and it has proven to be “best-in-class” for both the public and private sectors.

Second, the Management and Leadership Learning Pyramid (MLLP), which was initially launched in 2015, drives a systematic and strategic approach to learning development across the enterprise. Provided at no cost to the agencies, the MLLP is the foundation upon which DOHR delivers core management and leadership content to 7,500 managers and supervisors across the State, laying the foundation for a successful enterprise-wide succession planning program for all 43,000 employees. The program consists of 28 learning modules – more than 90 hours of content – organized as a four-level Management and Leadership Certificate program. Courses are delivered in both classroom and online learning environments. To ensure the consistent, high-level transfer of knowledge – coupled with mass distribution of the content, all the State agency trainers must attend a two-day course to receive a How-To-Facilitate Certification, and a “Train-the-Trainer” (T4T) session for each MLLP workshop they will teach. Several state and local government entities have already made such inquiries about adapting the MLLP for their state, including Oregon, Texas, Massachusetts, Kentucky, West Virginia, Florida, California, Louisiana, Maine, Hawaii, and Illinois.

Thirdly, Strategic HR Service Delivery was established in 2016 to modernize the State’s HR function to leverage and accelerate the implementation of state-of-the-art, strategic HR practices across the enterprise. The initiative transitions routine HR transactions and
inquiries to DOHR, resulting in more streamlined, consistent, and repeatable processes across the enterprise, and as a result increasing the capacity of agency HR teams to focus on strategic HR functions. A detailed Strategic HR Service Delivery framework (toolkit) was developed to align actionable processes, resources, and tools with strategic goals, such as succession planning, recruitment, and retention, providing a clear and supported path to execute strategic HR operations. Agency HR professionals survey executive and senior leaders to determine the unique strategic HR priorities necessary and then develop and implement customized action plans to address critical HR issues. DOHR employed innovative methods to drive the success of Strategic HR Delivery, including the creation of detailed transaction process maps; surveys to identify strategic needs in each agency; a centralized HR Service Center to field HR related inquiries from state employees and applicants to create additional capacity for agency HR teams; the DOHR “Strategic HR Mere” toolkit (as mentioned above) to connect our internal DOHR services, such as learning and development and strategic business planning, with broader strategic HR priorities; a Service Partnership Agreement (SPA) identifying key performance metrics to guarantee clear expectations around excellent service under the new Strategic HR Business model; and a detailed communication toolkit to provide relevant information to all key stakeholders and support change management.

At present, DOHR is executing additional transformational initiatives to drive organizational culture change, innovative workplaces, and position the State as an employer of choice. The HR Master Series is a leadership and skills development program for State HR executives that is based on the IPMA- HR and SHRM competencies designated for successful HR leaders. The program provides interactive, experiential learning for HR executives to execute strategic HR leadership across the enterprise. By empowering HR executives to apply the HR Master Series knowledge in their daily work, the State benefits through higher productivity, increased efficiency, and overall improved organizational performance. To make state government a more efficient, effective, and state-of-the-art workplace, DOHR has supported the implementation of Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS), an enterprise mobile work initiative, by creating policies and learning and curriculum to support the new work model. Our agency has also implemented data-driven decision making to use metrics and data to execute informed decisions around programs, practices, and policies, from addressing recruitment and retention needs to measuring customer satisfaction and transaction accuracy rates. In support of this initiative, DOHR has developed and deployed enterprise-wide surveys, including exit, stay, climate and engagement surveys. This year, DOHR has launched Tennessee Leaders of Tomorrow, an enterprise internship program, to develop young leaders and to recruit talent. We are implementing technology solutions, including the transition from NeoGov to Taleo to increase customer service to applicants and an automated dashboard to leverage real-time metrics. And finally, DOHR is also targeting the strategic development and engagement of its own workforce through its Next Level Leadership Academy (NLLA) for high potentials and Growing in Professional Series (GPS) for all DOHR employees to participate in learning around strategic HR competencies.

In recognition of DOHR’s innovative initiatives and accomplishments, the agency has received national, state, and local awards including the 2017 Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE) Achievement Award, the 2018 National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Innovative Program Award for the Management and Leadership Learning Pyramid. DOHR is proud of the momentous transformation of State HR practices from transactional to transformational. In fact, the transition has been described by the Governor and his Cabinet as one of the most transformative initiatives that will leave a lasting impact on the State of Tennessee, the quality of its workforce, and the efficiency and effectiveness of state business to better serve its citizens.

II. Organizational Biography:

Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR) is a cabinet level agency that was established as the Department of Personnel in 1937 and renamed the Department of Human Resources in 2006. DOHR has been led by Commissioner Rebecca Hunter since Governor Bill Haslam was elected into office in 2011. Today, DOHR has 122 employees who provide total HR services to 23 Cabinet-level agencies and ten smaller executive branch agencies through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and technical services to an additional nine boards and commissions. DOHR also serves the judicial and legislative branches by providing learning and development initiatives through DOHR’s Strategic Learning Solutions Division and transaction processing services (for record purposes only) through DOHR’s Agency Resource Center. In total, this customer group includes more than 43,000 State employees, thousands of applicants applying for positions with the State of Tennessee (DOHR processed 305,669 submitted applications in 2017), and more than 7 million Tennessee citizens who count on state government for critical services and support.

At the beginning of the Administration in 2011, the Governor and his cabinet conducted a top-to-bottom review of the Executive Branch.
They determined that in order to accomplish their goal of a more efficient, effective, and customer-focused government, they needed to reform the state’s antiquated civil service program. Like many other federal, state, and local government institutions, Tennessee was still functioning under a decades-old set of employment policies where employees were rewarded and promoted primarily on the basis of their tenure and not on the basis of their performance. That archaic structure perpetuated the public’s perception that state government workers were inefficient, entitled, and unengaged. In response to this push for civil service reform, the State enacted the Tennessee Excellence and Accountability Management (T.E.A.M.) Act of 2012, a landmark, forward-thinking effort to transform – and sustain – the culture of state government. The foundational premise of the T.E.A.M. Act is that state workers should be compensated – like those in the private sector – on the basis of their qualifications and performance, not on how long they have held their job.

Taking this new approach to HR management has had a tremendous impact on DOHR. Since the enactment of the T.E.A.M. Act, DOHR has championed a 3 Rs formula – Recruit + Retain + Reward – for shaping a high-performance, engaged workforce. By recruiting the right talent for the right roles, establishing strategies to retain that talent, and fostering an engaging culture through a reward strategy, agency leaders are able to attract and keep a more highly engaged workforce. This future-focused succession planning strategy, coupled with an award-winning leadership development program, has enhanced Tennessee state government’s visibility as a progressive, performance-based employer of choice.

III. Program Characteristics:

Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR) is a cabinet-level, central human resource agency that drives the strategic direction of human resources for the State of Tennessee, which is the largest employer in the state, with over 43,000 employees. The Commissioner reports directly to the Governor and DOHR has overall responsibility for statewide human resources processes and services for cabinet departments, boards, and commissions in the executive branch; and provides technical services to the legislative and judicial branches. The department advises the Governor’s Office on human capital matters; establishes and maintains statewide human resources policies, guidelines, and rules; provides guidance, consultation, and training to state agencies on personnel matters; and directs all professional and leadership development activities for State employees. There is not a State of Tennessee employee union group, and, therefore, DOHR does not have any union relations.

Having 122 employees and an $11.5 million budget, DOHR operates a total of ten divisions to provide clerical, administrative, and strategic services to customers and to support its internal operations. The Legal Division manages enterprise HR policy implementation, workplace investigations, employee appeals, and serves as the enterprise General Counsel for State HR practices. The Agency Resource Center (ARC) approves and processes HR transactions for the enterprise, including hires, promotions, equity increases, job classifications, demotions, separations, reclassifications, and compensation. The HR Service Center answers routine HR inquiries for the enterprise and is the point of contact for job applicants. Employee Relations drives the State’s employee relations programs, including the performance management process. Strategic Learning Solutions (SLS) drives enterprise learning and development, including the State’s leadership development programs and talent management strategy. HR Business Solutions drives the Strategic HR Service Delivery model and guides implementation of HR Strategy across the enterprise. The Recruiting Division provides recruitment services to the enterprise and manages the State’s Tennessee Leadership of Tomorrow internships program. The Records Management and Quality Assurance team manages personnel records for all separated State employees and provides the quality assurance function for DOHR. The HR Division provides HR services to DOHR employees, the Governor’s Office, and several boards and commissions through a Memorandum of Understanding. The Operations Division supports DOHR operations and manages the enterprise human capital data through its Organizational Performance and Data Management team. DOHR is also proud to be the first state government HR agency to have a Chief Learning Officer and a Chief Strategy Officer.

IV. Human Resources:

Tennessee Department of Human Resources (DOHR) strategically addresses the areas of leadership, culture, talent, technology, and communications through various innovative programs and initiatives. In fact, DOHR’s mission is “providing strategic human resources leadership and partnering with customers for innovative solutions,” and our vision is “to strategically drive transformation through innovative human resources leadership and practices to shape the best workforce for state government.”

Helping to drive that transformational effort is DOHR’s Strategic Learning Solutions (SLS) division. SLS directs the professional and leadership development activities for all 43,000 State employees in 95 counties across Tennessee. Under the direction of Dr. Trish Holiday, SLS’s purpose is “consulting and partnering with agency leaders to create a customized learning strategy that develops and
sustains a high performing workforce.” As an indication of the support provided by cabinet-level leadership, Commissioner Hunter named Dr. Holiday as the first State Chief Learning Officer in the U.S.

SLS’s primary role is to develop the State’s workforce by providing them with tools and resources needed to successfully meet talent challenges in state government. While there was a strong emphasis on developing leaders in recognition of insufficient bench strength available, the effort began in 2014 to look for ways to address the lack of concentrated supervisory development. Thus, an innovative framework for that development was needed.

Given consistent feedback from supervisors about the negative impact of these talent shortages and skill gaps, the SLS team committed themselves to the creation of a seamless, strategic approach to learning development across the enterprise. The result: the development and launch of the Management and Leadership Learning Pyramid (MLLP) in July 2015.

The MLLP consists of 28 learning modules organized as a four-level certificate program created to: (a) strategically address the learning and development needs of 7,500 supervisors state-wide, and (b) to lay the foundation for a successful enterprise-wide succession planning program. It is provided at no cost to the agencies.

Through this initiative, SLS-certified learning facilitators have successfully delivered a greater capacity for development through a large number of learning workshops required to certify employees across the State. That, in turn, has helped move state government away from a transactional, activity-based training focus to a more transformational, performance-based focus that is shaping Tennessee state government into what Peter Senge calls a “learning organization.”

Innovation

Upon identifying the need to move away from a generic, tenure-driven culture to a performance-based learning organization, one of the first questions DOHR had to ask was, “Who should really drive learning in state government?” At the time, training was a catalog-driven, generic “check-the-box” exercise not connected to the organization’s mission, vision, and strategic business needs for developing and retaining a high-performing workforce.

The turning point was changing the focus from 43,000 employees as end users of the training to the 41 key stakeholders. That is, the appointing authorities, the HR officers, and the talent management directors in the executive branch – the true drivers of learning – with DOHR as the subject matter experts.

Additionally, the innovation to transition from the term training to learning and development was a powerful standard vocabulary change to convey the message that learning is a life-long process, not a “one-and-done” event.

The next transitional hurdle addressed was empowering the “forgotten population” in government: the middle managers. Research shows the number one reason employees leave an organization is because of their relationship with their supervisor. Therefore, from a learning and development perspective, the State’s 7,500 supervisors held the key for relaying the message that innovation and continuous learning and leadership development are vital to organizational success.

As a result, the MLLP was developed to be an enterprise-wide learning initiative to support supervisors in improving their effectiveness and promotion of team development. When it was launched in July 2015, the MLLP was the first such state-wide learning and development certification program for state government managers in the nation.

Today, the MLLP is the foundation upon which SLS delivers core management and leadership content to 7,500 managers and supervisors across the state. It consists of 28 courses – more than 90 hours of content – presented as a four-level Management and Leadership Certificate program in both classroom and online learning environments. As shown in the blue half of the MLLP image attached, Level 1 begins with learning modules providing supervisors with management fundamentals. Level 2 focuses on advanced management skills. Level 3 then introduces fundamental leadership skills followed by Level 4 which focuses on advanced leadership competencies.

Through several cycles of learning, it became apparent that traditional classroom delivery methods were not the only approach to reaching supervisors. From customer surveys, focus groups, and user feedback, SLS created an innovative “How-to-Facilitate
Certification” workshop. Developed in collaboration with Vanderbilt University, this rigorous two-day course teaches agency trainers the skills required to facilitate at a professional level using adult learning theory. By mastering facilitation and classroom management skills, former agency trainers have become Certified Learning Facilitators, instilling confidence in the participants as they learn the necessary skills to be effective leaders.

Since it was launched, the MLLP has received national and international acclaim for its ingenuity and innovation from Talent Management industry peers in both the public and private sectors. As evidence of that, the MLLP was included in a case study cited in Dr. Holly Burkett’s new book, Learning For The Long Run: 7 Practices For Sustaining a Resilient Learning Organization (ATD Press, 2017).

Transferability

Once all the State agency trainers received their How-To-Facilitate Certification, they are then required to attend a “Train-the-Trainer” (T4T) session for each face-to-face MLLP workshop. Deliverables from each T4T include: a Participant’s Guide, a Facilitator’s Guide, a PowerPoint presentation, and when applicable, supplemental content. This provides a consistent, high-level transfer of knowledge—coupled with mass distribution of the content—resulting in increased user retention and application of the 28 MLLP competencies.

One indication of the internal transferability and acceptance of the MLLP as an innovative leadership content delivery tool has been the HR community’s adoption of a number of Level 1 courses that are now mandated for all 7,500 supervisors and 43,000 employees. For example, all state workers are now required to attend a "G.R.E.A.T. Customer Service" class and all supervisors are required to complete a "Developing Direct Reports and Others" course. Both core competencies are now key components of the annual performance management process. This further illustrates how the MLLP allows SLS to facilitate high quality content that can then be disseminated on a massive scale across the State in a short period of time.

While originally targeted to the executive branch, other state government entities—namely, the Department of the Treasury (Legislative) and the Attorney General’s Office (Judicial)—have since embraced this innovative leadership development learning initiative...further evidence of the MLLP’s use as a leadership tool to transform management culture within state government.

As to its external transferability, given that the MLLP was developed by the Tennessee Department of Human Resources’ Strategic Learning Solutions division, it is easily transferable to other public sector organizations that may be interested. In fact, several state and local government entities have already made such inquiries about adapting the MLLP for their state. These include: Oregon, Texas, Massachusetts, Kentucky, West Virginia, Florida, California, Louisiana, Maine, Hawaii, and Illinois.

Additionally, DOHR Commissioner Hunter and CLO Holliday have keynoted and/or led workshops at a number of national and international Human Resources and Talent Management events where the MLLP has been at the heart of their presentation. Some of these event sponsors include: NASACT, IPMA-HR, HR.com, Human Capital Institute, Corporate Learning Analytics, and ATD.

The Tennessee Department of Human Resources and its SLS team welcomes the opportunity to share what they have learned about developing and retaining top talent and consistently partner with customers to build a continuous learning culture by equipping employees, managers, supervisors, directors, and executives with the tools needed to excel in their roles.

Efficiencies Created

Since the Management and Leadership Learning Pyramid was first introduced in the summer of 2015, a number of innovations and efficiencies have been achieved. These include:

1. Improved customer-focused government messaging to all 43,000 employees—and the 6.5 million citizens they serve—through mandatory G.R.E.A.T. Customer Service training. Customer satisfaction rates are measured and monitored at the agency level via regular customer surveys.

2. Continued focus on the State’s enterprise-wide performance management training program that requires S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-sensitive) work outcomes for all State employees. This has helped transform state government from an archaic tenure-based civil service culture to a results-oriented pay-for-performance organization.
Cross-collaboration between certified learner facilitators across the State who are able to consistently deliver high-quality, standardized MLLP content for any agency at any location, thereby reducing out-of-office time and travel expense for both facilitators and participants.

Introduction of online and web-based MLLP courses, further reducing out-of-office time and travel expense.

Real-time tracking of MLLP course completion and progress updates through enhancements to the State’s ELM (Enterprise Learning Module) system. Metrics are monitored at the agency level and reported monthly to SLS leadership.

How-to-Facilitate Certification passing rates rose from 33% in 2015 to 87% in 2016 (as per SLS tracking metrics).

Completion rates for MLLP Certification Levels in 2016 (as per ELM metrics) were:
- 82% of all managers completed Level 1
- 16% of all managers completed Level 2
- 2% of all managers completed Level 3

Customer satisfaction with MLLP content relevancy to date (per SLS customer surveys after each class):
- 2015 – 92%
- 2016 – 96%
- 2017 – 97%

DOHR is proud to that MLPP is a four level certificate program for all state supervisors with 28 learning modules at no cost to the agencies and five optional modules that empowers managers and supervisors and all leaders of people to be equipped with the right tools for success.
1.

1. Applicant’s contact information,
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2. Which award are you applying for this year?
   Agency Award for Excellence - Large

3. Please upload your application. You may only upload 1 document (Preferred formats: Adobe PDF/Microsoft Word - Max file size: 5 MB). If you are unable to upload your document, please contact IPMA-HR at 703/549-7100.

   2018_Agency-Award-of-Excellence_Tennessee_Department_of_Human_Resources.pdf

2. Thank You!

   Award Application Received
   Jun 18, 2018 17:48:17 Success: Email Sent to: dtankersely@ipma-hr.org

   Award's Depot
   Jun 18, 2018 17:48:17 Success: Email Sent to: Rebecca.Hunter@tn.gov