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# California Government Operations Agency: Defining leadership values and training managers

### Challenge

The state of California had 30,000 managers but no consistent leadership values or training.

### Action

Using focus groups, surveys and interviews, a baseline of statewide leadership values was created.

### Results

A new manager training program based on consistent values was piloted to test adoption methods.

# Challenge

In 2012, California Governor Jerry Brown instituted **a reorganization of the state government (https://www.gov.ca.gov/docs/Reorganization_plan.pdf)** aimed at reducing inefficiencies and improving statewide collaboration by consolidating the state's dozen agencies into ten. The newly formed **California Government Operations Agency (http://www.govops.ca.gov/)** (GovOps) was created to — among other things — administer human resources, along with procurement and information technology, for the state's 209,000 employees (excluding higher education employees, who operate separately).

This new agency, under the leadership of Secretary Marybel Batjer, sought to understand the state's management training and development programs. With 30,000 managers in the state's workforce, making sure that these managers were properly trained was a top priority as the agency sought to modernize its antiquated civil service system. Like many organizations, the agency needed to make sure its leaders were prepared to manage a changing and diversifying workforce and also assess how its top leaders were being developed with an eye toward succession planning.

The first step was to evaluate the current programs and conduct an assessment of leadership training. Although California Government Code **requires 80 hours (http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=19995.4)** of training for supervisors, there wasn't a consistent set of leadership behaviors or competencies to guide this requirement. In fact, there were over 40 different versions of supervisory trainings, and the quantity, quality, and participation rates in all leadership development programs had been greatly diminished due to budget cuts.

GovOps decided it needed to identify the management training needs of the newly reorganized government, codify a management philosophy, and develop a curriculum that would not only support today's mid-level managers, but also prepare its staff to become the best civil service leaders of tomorrow.

# Action

This lead to the creation of one of the first state government-wide HR efforts within GovOps, Project GO! The effort was part of a larger **Civil Service Improvement (http://www.govops.ca.gov/Civil-Svc-Improvement.aspx)** (CSI) initiative established to address numerous state improvement efforts and involved representatives from many departments, agencies, and unions. Project GO! started with a team of HR leaders from across departments, from **CalHR (http://www.calhr.ca.gov/)** to **CalPERS (Public Employee Retirement System) (https://www.calpers.ca.gov/)** to **CDCR (Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation) (http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/)** and beyond. The group was tasked with assessing, researching, and developing a multi-level training program to better prepare state leaders and support effective succession planning.

The assessment involved collecting baseline data via surveys, focus groups, interviews, benchmarking calls, and more. The goal was to understand the leadership behaviors valued within the state government and compare them to how other public and private organizations approach development. Through their analysis, the team distilled nine distinct themes that contribute to successful leadership within state government. These became the underpinning of the state's new leadership values:

1. Achieving Results

2. Building Collaborative Relationships

3. Developing Others

4. Effective Communication

5. Fostering Team Environment

6. Good Governance

7. Inspirational Engagement

8. Organizational Change

9. Personal Credibility

Through this process, the Project GO! team recognized that developing a training program was only part of the solution. The state needed to create a culture of leadership, one that extended beyond an introductory new manager training program. To do so, they created an overarching leadership framework to guide all future work:

- **Leadership Philosophy:** Our leaders develop and inspire our workforce to deliver great results for Californians.

- **Leadership Values:** Our core leadership values are organized into three themes: Leading Yourself, Leading Your Team, and Leading Your Organization.

- **Leadership Competencies:** Our core leadership competencies identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors for successful leadership and illustrate the progression in leadership maturation and levels of proficiency expected of our leaders as they develop.

This framework was shared across the California government by the Project GO! department representatives, who gathered feedback and tested the ideas. Once these stakeholders were all updated, the behaviors and framework were presented to the Civil Service Improvement leadership including Governor Brown's Office, Secretary Batjer, and the CSI governing body for approval. Once all parties were on board, the team began to update their training curriculum based on this new framework.

# Results

At the end of 2015, Project GO! was ready to pilot and evaluate the updated supervisory training program. In partnership with their three training providers—Sacramento State University, Los Rios Community College, and CPS HR Consulting—82 participants (a mix of new supervisors and experienced supervisors) were enrolled into one of three training programs. All three were based on a shared framework and consistent goals and met the 80-hour training requirement, but varied slightly in curriculum design (e.g., training schedule and exercises). By measuring three variations, the Project GO! and training teams were able to gauge the effectiveness of different designs and delivery models.

Evaluation was based on the **Kirkpatrick Model (http://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/OurPhilosophy/TheKirkpatrickModel)**, which looks at the effectiveness of learning programs by considering the reaction and retention of the participant, how the participant's behavior changed, and how all of this impacted the overall organization. Both the participating managers and their own managers were given assessments aimed at measuring participant competency and proficiency levels before and after training on topics such as giving and receiving feedback, performance management, and good governance practices. Given that most participating managers were transitioning into their new roles and teams at the time of the training, participating managers' direct reports were not assessed. Consideration is being given to using 360-degree assessments and other methods in the Statewide Leadership management and executive development tracks to provide more feedback to participants.
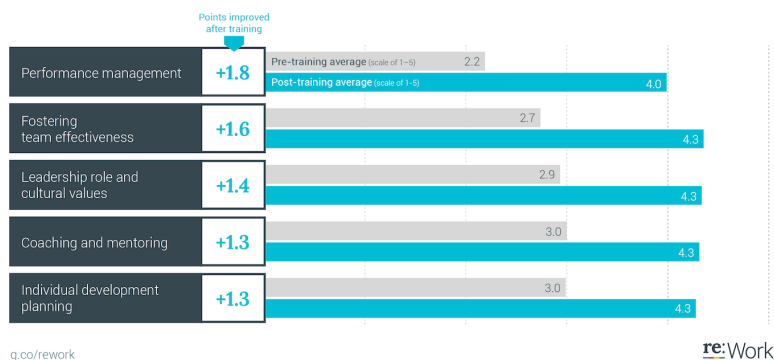
In addition, participants were asked to provide daily feedback on content and delivery throughout the training. At the end of training, participants engaged in a town hall-style debriefing session. And finally, participants and their managers were asked to fill out a final survey three months after training completion.

Sample participant survey questions included:

- At this point after the supervisory training program, how confident are you in your ability to serve in a leadership role? [Scale of 1 through 5, with 1 being low and 5 being high]

- Please identify any barriers that may have hindered your ability to apply the new knowledge and skills at your workplace. [Open Text]

- Have you and your supervisor discussed the Application Guide provided during the training to help apply the knowledge and skills learned back on the job? [Yes/No] If yes, how was the application guide helpful? [Open Text]

- Has the supervisory training impacted your relationship with your supervisor in any positive way(s)? [Yes/No] If yes, how has the supervisory training impacted your relationship with your supervisor? [Open Text]

**Figure 1. Top five subjects improved with leadership training**

State supervisors participating in the training and their managers were asked to fill out assessments both before and after completing the leadership training. Survey questions were rated on a scale of one through five. There was statistically significant improvement across all high-level subjects included in the assessment; below are the top five.

| Subject | Points improved after training | Pre-training average (scale of 1–5) | Post-training average (scale of 1–5) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Performance management | +1.8 | 2.2 | 4.0 |
| Fostering team effectiveness | +1.6 | 2.7 | 4.3 |
| Leadership role and cultural values | +1.4 | 2.9 | 4.3 |
| Coaching and mentoring | +1.3 | 3.0 | 4.3 |
| Individual development planning | +1.3 | 3.0 | 4.3 |

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By surveying participants before and immediately after the training, the team recorded statistically significant improvements across all subjects. The above graph shows high-level subjects which each consist of more granular learning objectives. For example, Coaching and Mentoring includes the following learning objectives:

- Define, discuss, and demonstrate best practices of coaching, mentoring, and on-the-job training

- Distinguish when to mentor, coach, counsel, make the decision, and consult with management and human resources

- Assess a current work situation and apply appropriate coaching approach. After, determine additional resources available to further develop coaching skills

The team also looked to understand where they could improve the curriculum. According to participant data, performance management-related sections were among the most impactful, whereas the communication, collaboration, hiring, and giving and receiving feedback sections were among the least. The team used this information to improve and make the topics more relevant for managers. For example, these modules now include more role playing and "doing" as opposed to instructor-led presentation and discussion.

The team also gathered data from participants' managers to underscore the importance of their role, and to capture their feedback early on. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the participants' managers reported that the training positively influenced their relationship with their direct report and that they "demonstrated increased confidence and motivation" and were "engaging with staff and stakeholders in a meaningful way." Three-month post-training data also revealed that managers of participants who responded to the survey were significantly more likely to be engaged in development conversations and more aware of potential development gaps. This not only emphasized the importance of manager support throughout this process, but was also an important signal for succession planning as identifying development gaps through input and feedback is an important part of that process.

While 82% of participants' managers agreed that the training positively influenced their relationship with their direct report, only 10% of participants' managers responded to the survey. This was alarming to the Project GO! team and highlighted a disconnect between the levels of leadership. Figure 2 suggests how this disconnect may influence how participants acquire, practice, and value the competencies learned. Participants without an engaged manager (defined as a manager who did not respond to the survey) were more likely to rate communication, coaching and mentoring, and onboarding as the main competencies needed for success, thus highlighting something that may be missing for them in their daily interactions. The lack of managerial engagement and the participants' responses signal a need to work on the prioritization and practice of coaching at all levels to better prepare our future state leaders.



**Figure 2. Top-rated competencies needed for success in leadership positions**

State supervisors and their managers were asked to rank the top five (out of 20) competencies needed in a successful leader. Participants without engaged managers (defined as managers who did not respond to the survey) were more likely to rate performance management, communication, and onboarding as the main competencies needed for success, which suggests these may be areas where they are feeling a void.

Participants **without** engaged management

- Addressing performance issues
- Communicate effectively
- Onboarding
- Developing others
- Building high-performance teams

Participants **with** engaged management

- Leadership role and cultural values
- Good decision making
- Giving and receiving feedback effectively
- Developing others
- Communicate effectively

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As a result of this data, the team will increase outreach to the managers of participants before, during, and after the training to increase engagement and manage expectations. This has been factored into the Project GO! team's three-year strategic plan to guide leadership development beyond this training. The plan also includes a vision for managers and executives to ensure there is a shared sense of accountability and understanding with respect to their responsibilities for staff development, and the tools available to support them.

All of the data is now being used to inform final curriculum development, statewide deployment plans, and leadership training across all levels. The team is focused on rolling out this consistent leadership narrative both in the classroom and beyond.

COMMUNICATION **(/search/?tags_ids=6749519184134144)**