

I. IDENTIFICATION INFORMATION:

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II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of Program/Project Nominated: Transition 2002
Nomination Category: Professional Development/Capacity Building
Month/Year Initiated: January 2002
Is the nomination for: statewide program
If local, the name of the locality is:

III. RESOURCE

Total Start-Up Costs: Direct: 0
Fund Source(s): 0
Indirect: 0

Total On-going Annual Costs: Direct: 0
Fund Source(s): 0
Indirect: 0

IV. SYNOPSIS (Narrative Section)

Name of file: d:\inetpub\wwwroot\surveys\Synopsis.doc

V. CRITERIA INFORMATION (Narrative Section)

Name of file: d:\inetpub\wwwroot\surveys\Criteria_Information_-_OED.doc

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Synopsis

In January, 2002, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber appointed Debbie Lincoln as Director of the Oregon Employment Department. The governor gave Ms. Lincoln four goals to achieve: 1. Become a stronger partner in the workforce development system. 2. Remove barriers to partnership. 3. Better integrate field and central office operations within the Department. 4. Build an increasingly successful relationship with the Child Care Commission. How the department's newly appointed Executive Team set out achieving these goals forms the basis of this nomination.

A great need existed to increase trust between its 47 field offices and the central office in Salem. The department also needed to become a more active and supportive partner in the Workforce Investment Act.

Rather than simply using a small group of managers to come up with new policies, the Executive Team sought and used input from every single employee – asking opinions and honest assessments, then using that information to create recommendations for change. Staff were asked to provide input in four areas: 1. Build an increased level of trust throughout the Department. 2. Identify and fix things that are preventing the Department from achieving excellence in programs and services. 3. Identify ways to accomplish the goals that the Governor outlined. 4. Identify the things that are going well and already being successful.

From February 25 to March 8, 2002, employees responded to an 8 question, open ended, survey to provide input into the Transition process. Of the 1,300 staff, 321 provided responses that included 3,603 suggestions. These suggestions came both from individual staff members as well as groups of employees. Teams from the central and field offices categorized and analyzed the suggestions, putting them into eight categories: Organizational Structure, Trust, Employment Services, Unemployment Insurance, Child Care, Workforce Partners, Central/Field Relationships, and Administration.

Transition workgroups developed 99 specific recommendations which were presented to the agency's Executive Team on April 25, 2002. Of the 99 recommendations, 85 were adopted. These recommendations were not simply window dressing, but created massive reorganization and redirection of the department's mission and way of doing business. In many ways the Transition process re-invented the department – all accomplished from the staff up, not the Director down.

In May of 2002, the Deputy Director was charged with monitoring the progress of the implementation of the recommendations. To date, 57, or 67% have been fully implemented. The agency published all of the suggestions on its internal web site. In addition, monthly progress reports from those directly responsible for implementing recommendations are published on a special internal web site.

The recommendations have resulted in major change. A new organizational structure was put in place, eliminating some sections, and creating new positions of Assistant Director for Business and Employment Services and an Assistant Director for Unemployment Insurance programs. The other specific recommendations are too numerous to name here, but have resulted in accomplishing the Governor's four goals. The department today is moving rapidly towards a more integrated, trusting, effective workforce partner for the 21st century.

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V. CRITERIA INFORMATION

a. Project Basis

The project was initiated after Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber named Debbie Lincoln as Director of the Employment Department in January, 2002. Ms. Lincoln was given four goals: Become a stronger partner in the workforce development system, remove barriers to partnership, better integrate field and central office operations within the Department, and build an increasingly successful relationship with the Child Care Commission. There was a well known break in the relationship between the department's 47 field offices and the central office. In addition, the department was seen as a reluctant partner in the Workforce Investment Act.

Rather than just force change on an already mistrustful department, the newly-appointed Executive Team asked staff to make recommendations for how to fix problems in the department and fulfill the governor's objectives. Thus began a six-phase process beginning in January 2002 and ongoing. The phases included: initial communications, information gathering, information analyzing, recommendations, decision-making, and implementation.

The goals for the project were: Build an increased level of trust throughout the Department, Identify and fix things that are preventing us from achieving excellence in our programs and services, Identify ways to accomplish the four primary goals that the Governor specified, and Identify the things that are going well and already being successful.

Department staff were given the opportunity to answer a free-form, in depth survey. Employees provided 3,603 comments and suggestions. These suggestions were categorized into eight general areas: Organization, Trust, Employment Services, Unemployment Insurance, Childcare, Workforce Partnerships, Field/Central Office Relations, and Human Resources/Administration. Suggestions were further condensed by teams of field office and central office staff (from all levels) into 99 specific recommendations. These recommendations were presented to the agency's Executive Team which approved 85 of them.

All of the suggestions and recommendations were posted on the agency's internal web site as well as on a matrix detailing how each recommendation's implementation is proceeding. Each month the Executive Team members charged with implementing a particular recommendation writes a progress report that is posted as well.

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In short, the entire Transition process – from initial suggestion through implementation was derived from staff and partner input. The Transition process then gave birth to a Strategic Plan process which will see even more significant re-engineering in the near future.

b. Project Operation

The **initial communications phase** included e-mails from the Director, the Deputy Director, and the transition coordinators (February 19-22). Also during this phase, members of the transition kick-off team personally visited every field office and central office section to provide documentation regarding the transition process, to promote the transition process, and to answer questions about the transition process. These visits took place during the week of February 25.

The **information-gathering phase** ran from February 25 to March 8. During this phase, all Department employees were invited to provide responses to eight questions posed by the Executive Team in a February 22 e-mail. These questions directly and indirectly address all the cited goals of the transition process.

Employees were asked to include their name with their suggestions, only so that the transition coordinators could contact them for clarification, if necessary. The transition work groups were not given the names associated with the suggestions, but they did receive the broad demographic information resulting from question eight. Employees were given the option to submit their comments anonymously; a small number did so.

The **information analyzing phase** started when the first submission was received, when the project's administrative support began entering responses into a database and tentatively assigning them to one of the eight pre-determined categories.

On March 15, the transition work group members met with the Deputy Director and transition coordinators. During this meeting, work group members were given an outline of the process, a series of documents and instructions regarding their role, the complete list of responses relating to "what's working best", and the complete list of suggestions relating to their assigned category. They were also given pertinent documents from recent past studies. Each work group member was assigned to either one or two work groups, with each group handling all suggestions in a particular category.

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During the week of March 18, work group members were asked to set aside substantial time simply to read the “what’s working best” and category-specific suggestions. Many work group members used this time to further break the suggestions into themes within the categories.

During the weeks of March 25 and April 1, the work groups met, often for several full days in a row, to review every suggestion submitted and to develop a series of specific and clear recommendations for consideration by the Executive Team.

It is difficult to define exactly when the work groups moved from the information-analyzing phase to the **recommendations phase**, but this was clearly in full swing by about April 2. Each work group developed recommendations that responded to the suggestions received. In many cases, one recommendation incorporated many (sometimes more than 50) individual suggestions. By April 8, all eight work groups had submitted their recommendations to the transition coordinators. The work groups developed formal recommendation papers for each individual recommendation and they completed a suggestion tracking system that demonstrated that every suggestion had been considered and explained why some suggestions were not incorporated into recommendations.

During the week of April 8, the transition coordinators reviewed all work group recommendations. The coordinators’ goals were to eliminate (or highlight) contradictory recommendations; to link and cross-reference similar or duplicative recommendations; and to ensure that all recommendations were worded and presented in a consistent fashion.

The **decision-making phase** started on April 15, when the first draft of a report was given to the Director and Deputy Director. This phase continued on April 17, when the coordinators met with the above two people. And it continued further on April 25, when the coordinators met with the entire Executive Team. All participants in the transition process understood that some suggestions would lead to recommendations, some of which would be selected for implementation. Put another way, it was made clear throughout the process that not every suggestion would result in a recommendation, and not every recommendation would be implemented. The period from April 17 to April 30, then, was a period in which the Director and her Executive Team could select those recommendations that would be supported and implemented.

The transition process, per se, was completed on April 25. After that date, the **implementation phase** began, during which members of the Executive Team, or their designees, assumed responsibility for implementing the 85 accepted transition recommendations. The Deputy Director was given overall responsibility for holding responsible persons accountable for implementing the

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recommendations assigned to them within the timelines that resulted from the transition process. (Every recommendation included the identification of an individual responsible for implementation and a suggested timeline for implementation.)

c. Use of Award Funds

If awarded, the funds will be used to further implement Transition recommendations. Some of the recommendations yet to be implemented involve training. This money would be used to provide more training for UI staff, for instance, to help provide more consistent statewide UI program service delivery.

d. Project Results

With over 57 recommendations completed to date, it is difficult to list all of the accomplishments of the Transition Process. It is also difficult to codify the cultural change that has taken place in the Oregon Employment Department. Its significance can be measured in part by two important events. One is the Strategic Plan process that was birthed out of the Transition. Because so much trust has now been built between the field and central offices, broad feedback on the plan did not modify its principals, only its implementation details. Secondly, the field and central offices are about to become one – as the three Assistant Director positions that oversee these areas will be merged into two positions – one overseeing central and field UI; one overseeing central and field Business and Employment Services. This simply would not have been accepted prior to the Transition process.

Some other major accomplishments: the UI & ES Policy Councils, new agency mission statement, new procedures for the collection of delinquent taxes, streamlining letter issuance procedures, better field technical support in both ES and UI, updating of several chapters of the UI Benefit manual, local office marketing grants and an agency-wide streamlined document creation process, new branding for the state's workforce system, new news and information products for internal staff, a simplified budgeting process, a new performance management system, a Human Resources Advisory Committee, cross training of partner staff, agency wide marketing training, a major child care marketing effort, a "Frequently Asked Questions" document on child care for staff, and addressing confidentiality issues with partners.