

2012 LGMA MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

Entering a Composite Team



This brochure identifies some of the implications of participating in and preparing a composite team for the Management Challenge. It will tell you what to expect and how to make the process work for you.

What Does the Challenge Involve?

It is an *experiential* learning program for local government staff. That is, you learn by experience, not by being lectured to or by reading somebody else's material or case studies. This in itself is a very significant factor as learning through experience is known to educators to be a far more effective means of professional development.

The Challenge is based on a simulation of real life local authority management and comprises a series of typical events, situations and tasks. In working through them, participants will explore every aspect of team processes.

The simulation will call on the critical skills and competencies needed for effective teamwork. It will define and expose leadership, management and cooperative qualities in a manner, which will positively reinforce individual's skills and transfer them to the work place.

But it is much more than a simulation. Weeks before the Challenge, a mentoring program and pre-Challenge exercise will not only thoroughly prepare the team but also focus its members on the key elements of effective problem solving and cooperative decision making.

Years after, the organisation will still benefit from effective practices which grew out of the experience.

Choosing a Team

A separate brochure provides some helpful hints in choosing the team that's right for your council or councils. (See 'Getting Started'). This can be a very positive process within the organisation and will start to tap the energy that derives from team activities.

Team Preparation

Somebody who is not a team member should be appointed as the team's mentor. They will be provided with a team preparation kit and play an important role in coaching, enthusing, instructing and preparing the team. The team will be now thoroughly prepared and looking enthusiastically toward the Challenge.

State/New Zealand Regional Finals

The actual day held in each state and New Zealand comprises a hectic program of management activity, responding to typical but sometimes surprising events. Although this is a very effective and serious learning process, team members universally find the Challenge day enjoyable and exciting.

Team Feedback and Debriefing

A detailed feedback report will be provided within a fortnight of the Challenge. This is based both on outcomes and process and is provided by a professional facilitator who observes the activities of the team on the day.

The feedback report is also written to enable the mentor to conduct a structured debriefing session to ensure that the learning experiences are reinforced and transferred back to the workplace.

Australasian Final

The successful team from each State and New Zealand go on to compete in an Australasian Final within the following months.

What is a Composite Team?

Some councils, for a number of reasons, are not able to field a six member team. This may be a particular problem for smaller councils. An excellent solution is to join with a neighbouring council or councils to provide the six team members. The entry fee is still the same but would be shared between the participating councils on any basis they agree to.

What are the Difficulties?

There are obvious potential difficulties with a composite team. Firstly, in selecting team members there is no single entity - one Chief Executive Officer for example - to choose the team members. Similarly, the basis for selection of team members is not so easy to articulate.

Another problem can stem from team preparation exercises. If the participating councils are some distance apart, it may be difficult for them to meet at the one location.

Choosing a mentor and/or team leader might be a problem.

What are the Solutions?

The good news is there are ready solutions to each of these problems. Better still, those solutions can bring significant organisational benefits.

Getting Started

Every idea needs a champion. So, typically one local government officer will want to promote the idea amongst the intended participating councils. This would normally happen at a senior level but, initially at least, can happen at any level. A telephone hook-up, or better still a personal meeting between colleagues from each council, which is convened for the purpose or attaches to some other business, can address the following agenda:

1. Benefits of entering a team
2. The basis of team selection
3. The basis for selecting a mentor
4. The basis for selecting a team leader
5. Team preparation processes

Typically, discussion of these issues will engender a cooperative framework that will not only strongly support the team, but also benefit inter-organisational cooperation.

Selecting a Team

The process already agreed to might involve a team selection committee with representatives from each organisation, or that might have been delegated to a single officer. In any event it will be based upon pre-determined criteria and will be an open and straight-forward process. If there are a large number of interested parties, this can lead to the entry of multiple teams, single teams from each organisation and/or a commitment to enter teams in subsequent years. These are all very positive outcomes, which would send strong signals of professional development support to your staff.

Preparing the Team

Again using the agreed processes for selecting a mentor and team leader, team preparation would proceed on the basis best suited to the participating organisations. The team preparation kit is designed so that it can be used just as effectively from multiple locations, although it will be necessary to have periodic telephone hook-ups or personal meetings. This in itself is an important skill development opportunity and again will build cooperative bridges.

Feedback/Debriefing/Follow Up

The same processes used for team preparation can be used for debriefing - either telephone hook-ups or personal meetings. A valuable aspect of a composite team is that there can be ongoing meetings between representatives from each council to reinforce the learning outcomes, share implementation experiences and generally ensure the maximum benefit is extracted from participation in the Challenge.

What Next?

You might still have some questions. If so, please give us a call at the National Office on the number listed below. If cost is a problem or if you envisage encountering additional costs because it is a composite team, you may be eligible for the LGMA's rural subsidy. Give the office a ring for further information.

As mentioned above, every good cause needs a champion, so the real next step is deciding to sell the idea around your organisation and amongst your neighbouring councils. It is well worth the effort. Not only is the Management Challenge an extraordinarily cost-effective professional development and team training program, it is also a wonderful personal and professional experience, which will have long term value, both for team members and their organisations.

Although it is a competitive Challenge, the program is not about winning, it is about improving our professional techniques and outputs - something our councils and we are all vitally interested in.

The Management Challenge is a Professional Development Program of
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Local Government



Leading Professionals in Local Government

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