



Developing Leadership Talent: Strategies and Tools & Assessment Certification Workshop

The chief designer of a state agency's leadership initiative finds the expertise she needs to move forward.

Valerie Wallen

Director, Organization Development & Accountability
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

When budget cuts and other economic factors resulted in a substantial loss of staff in the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, there was no question that the agency would cope without cutting back services. "People still want your state parks to be open and they want to come to your beaches," said Valerie Wallen, the agency's director of organization development & accountability. "We had to find a way to accomplish all that we do with the resources we have."

The agency's innovative solution was to move to a matrix-model organization of cross-functional leaders rather than managers working within "silos." They were in the first phase of making this culture change a reality when Wallen came to CCL's Developing Leadership Talent: Strategies and Tools program to learn how to make it to the next level.

"We had launched a very specific management skills course the previous year to act as a springboard into a leadership development program," she said. "What I was looking for at CCL was how to bring competency-based approaches into what we were doing." Wallen found that Developing Leadership Talent suited her needs – beginning with the pre-work in which she was asked to interview executives in her organization about key leadership competencies and leadership development as a system. "It was a nice platform for having conversations that provided a lot of substance," she said. "This homework reinforced it was the right class for me."

The program is specially focused on applying strategies and tools in a systematic way in the individual's organization. CCL's unique competency tools help participants create a competency profile linked to their specific business realities. Wallen described the environment as that of a laboratory, where classmates and facilitators

"What I was looking for at Developing Leadership Talent: Strategies and Tools was how to bring competency-based approaches into my agency's very traditional, skills-based training program. I came away with a written plan for taking our initiative to the next level, and the Assessment Certification Workshop helped me better understand how to fit 360-degree assessment into our organizational culture."

reviewed case studies and best practices and pulled on collective expertise. "Basically, in the short time I was there, I came up with a written plan for taking our initiative to the next level." An optional Assessment Certification Workshop follows the core three-day program, and Wallen took advantage of the opportunity to experience Benchmarks® feedback and become certified to administer all the assessments in CCL's Assessment Suite.

Though still in the midst of implementing her agency's leadership development program, with many elements to be worked through, Wallen said the competency-based framework she brought back from CCL is already having an effect. "We've seen a difference in team-leader and team-member selection. It's even affected our process for filling jobs. For the first time, we're assessing the level of a person's competence for a position and the support they need to succeed. That's a big shift.

"I think a knowledgeable person with a reasonable level of experience could take these two CCL courses and build a leadership development program."

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