



2007 Awards of Excellence for Municipal Workplace Literacy & Learning Achievements



Application for Submission Category: (#2):

“Organizational commitment to workplace literacy/learning and/or clear language”

“The Corporation of the City of Windsor unveils its learning philosophy.”

The Corporation of the City of Windsor has a longstanding *commitment* to workplace and life-long learning. Training has never been considered an expense designed to make employees “feel good,” but rather an investment for improving employee job skills, attitude, confidence and service.

This ideal is clearly articulated in the Corporate Staff Development Committee’s Vision Statement, which exemplifies the corporate commitment to innovative, quality, and lifelong learning through the design and delivery of essential skills training and career-path initiatives, which supports the corporate, personal and professional development aspirations of our workforce. By affording all employees an opportunity to participate in these programs, all training initiatives are aimed at helping create a customer-focused, quality-driven and results-oriented workforce.

In conjunction with this commitment, the Corporation embraces the principle of *equal opportunity*, by providing support and encouragement to its employees through a comprehensive program of *Learning & Development (L&D)* opportunities available to all staff. The goal of this program is to achieve business improvements in leadership, responsiveness, quality, legislative compliance and municipal service delivery.

“The significant problems we have cannot be solved at the same level of thinking with which we created them.”

Albert Einstein

How we did it, what it did, and the impact thusfar ...

Training and development initiatives were first made available to city staff in the early 1990’s. Though initially established to address fundamental changes within the Corporation and community, primarily social, technological and organizational, the programs were deemed fragmented and generic. At approximately the same time, an Educational Assistance & Tuition Reimbursement Policy was established to assist regular full-time employees actively pursue higher levels of education through accredited educational institutions in an attempt to meet the demand of internal vacancies and strengthen the core competency levels of our workforce.

At the turn of the 21st Century, training and development shifted focus from unstructured learning to essential skills training prompted by advancing technology, sophisticated information systems and municipal service expectations in a time of provincial downloading, legislative changes, internal restructuring and changing demographics.

Today, the Corporation has shifted focus to embrace a *“learning organization.”* Greater emphasis has been placed on valuing learning and promoting the exchange of information and ideas.

In an attempt to package educational opportunities for city staff, with the goal of attracting and retaining talent for the purposes of succession planning, the Corporation established a Corporate Staff Development Committee. The mandate of the committee was to support the venture of lifelong learning.

“Ancora imparo” ... I am still learning.

Michelangelo

For the sake of simplicity, the committee combined all educational and training opportunities under *one* L&D policy, which incorporated the Educational Assistance & Tuition Reimbursement Policy. This allowed staff to obtain information on all educational and training programs in one location under one comprehensive policy.

The outcome resulted in an all-encompassing L&D Policy incorporating; Educational Assistance, Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition; Conferences & Seminars; Licenses, Designations & Memberships; Management Windsor Certificate; Master’s Certificate in Municipal Management; Leadership Windsor/Essex; Executive Coaching; Computer Technology, Employee Development and Site Specific programs.

“If training is expensive, think about the cost of ignorance.”

*Dr. Bill Stieber,
Succession Planning Expert*

Essentially, this policy fosters a balanced approach to training and development. It affords equitable distribution of training and development across all levels in the organization. It also reflects the ideals that training and development will make a significant difference to the employee and the corporation, thereby making a sustainable contribution to the delivery of services and programs within our community.

To demonstrate the usage and effectiveness of training opportunities available to staff, we have identified the following statistical information relative to the programs noted below over a seven year period (2000-2006):

Staff Development Training

- ✓ 356 programs offered
- ✓ 9440 employees trained

Educational Assistance/Reimbursement

- ✓ municipal contribution of just over \$378,000 to corporate staff in relation to 903 higher education programs successfully completed

Computer Technology Certificate

113 certificates awarded

Master's Certificate in Municipal Management

(3 year program ~2002-2005)

- ✓ 10 Graduates

* 2005-2008 program underway

Executive Coaching (2005-2007)

- ✓ 26 management staff participants

Leadership Windsor/Essex (2002-2007)

- ✓ 6 corporate participants

Mentoring Program (2006-2007)

- ✓ 33 protégés matched to mentors

“Municipality continues to show its commitment to workplace learning after just two years of involvement.”

In response to two Morale Surveys conducted in 2004 and 2006, a number of objectives and key priorities were identified in an attempt to strengthen corporate culture. Seven of ten objectives were in direct relation to the Organizational Planning & Staff Development area. Through its commitment to workplace learning, the following initiatives were actioned, to name a few:

- ~ establish a core “Windsor” management training program for management positions;
- ~ update the new employee orientation program;
- ~ provide on-going investment in education and training in relation to corporate policy;
- ~ utilize the performance appraisal process as a means of succession planning, career development, skills development and training opportunities and;
- ~ create a succession planning and retention strategy program.



The corporation continues to show commitment to workplace learning by constantly reviewing and injecting new initiatives that heed the way for imparting organizational success. To help depict the strides we’ve made over the last few years, we’ve outlined some of our successes:

- ~ increased access of educational opportunities for staff at all levels of the organization;
- ~ enhanced communication of educational and training programs available to staff through one consolidated policy;
- ~ created awareness and understanding of internal policies & procedures inclusive of such programs as Collective Bargaining, Accessibility, Diversity and Human Rights responsibilities;
- ~ developed in-house certificates in Supervisory Management, Computer Technology and Management Windsor programs;
- ~ worked collaboratively with the Union Locals to institute an internal recruitment agreement that equates one year post secondary education with the completion of all levels of our in-house computer technology certificate and ten full-time years experience with the corporation;
- ~ established partnerships with industry leaders in developing Leadership and Management Development opportunities via Coaching and Mentoring programs;
- ~ established a corporate state-of-the-art computer training lab and teaching facility and;
- ~ propelled a number of “Career Day” exhibits in partnership with local educational institutions.

We remain committed to exploring other innovative approaches to learning (inclusive of e-learning and other modes of leadership and mentoring programs) which are currently at the forefront.

Parallel to the various learning and development opportunities available to staff, we’ve also taken a manageable, but responsible approach to limited cash infusion by delving into our own talent pool to utilize internal expertise which is relevant to corporate protocol and service.



SERVICE



LEARNING



INFORMATION

In addition to in-house talent, we’ve also enlisted the use of citywide facilities to compliment our training facility structure, which has resulted in considerable savings.

To further reduce ongoing overhead costs, we touted the first on-line orientation sessions through an internal link to corporate staff. On-line connectivity also allowed us to pilot a mentoring video which will yield sustainable longevity. The result of both projects allows for an increase in mass training and a decrease in absence from work due to live attendance.

“The Corporation of the City of Windsor deserves to receive CAMA award.”

What began over ten years ago as a need to upgrade skill levels to address fundamental changes within the organization, we’ve quickly grown to become a leader in providing cutting edge professional development opportunities for our workforce. Through a carefully, well drafted learning and development opportunities policy, the corporation’s commitment remains clear ~ to embrace a learning organization that invests in the future of the organization, the community, and its most important asset ~ its employees.

To further augment this commitment, the Human Resources Department recently underwent a message makeover and developed a logo that positions “learning” as one of its primary offerings.

Leveraging our talent pool invariably sustains organizational growth, and further places immeasurable value on our human capital.

To be recognized for this distinguished award will reinforce the value of placing workplace learning programs at the center of our current and long-range strategic planning.

“A compelling vision of what we can become as an organization will motivate people to change by creating a culture that is attractive & persuasive. The corporate culture initiative is our first step in the process.”

John Skorobohacz, CAO