

PPQ Deputy Administrator's Promising Practices Award Developmental Assignment Program

Group Nomination:

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Brief Narrative of the Promising Practice

The Developmental Assignment Program (DAP) was created in the Western Region Office (WRO) by a small team of WRO staff during the fall of 2007. DAP has been implemented in calendar year 2008. The program allows WRO managers and supervisors to identify specific needs within their program areas and to draft the framework of a 30 day developmental assignment that will achieve those goals. The managers and supervisors are intimately involved with the project and work directly with the DAP selectees as sponsor and mentor throughout the assignment. In addition to getting measurable work accomplished, a learning element is added to this program. Each DAP candidate works directly with the PDC Senior Training Specialist to identify specific competencies to be developed, and additional assignments are built into their TDY to assist in their professional development. The candidates work directly with their project sponsor throughout their TDY, and upon conclusion the candidates deliver a formal presentation to WRO management on their accomplishments and experiences during their assignment. Finally, evaluations are built in to provide feedback to the candidate as well as back to the program manager and sponsor.

Timeline: This promising practice is recent

In the fall of 2007 a formal developmental assignment program was conceived. A small team was assembled and drafted this new program. The program officially launched in late 2007 with a PPQ WR wide announcement. Over 20 applications were received and to date, beginning in January 2008, six 30 day DAP TDYs have come through the WRO and it is expected we will have a total of nine developmental assignments by the end of the year. DAP will become a formal program in the Western Region indefinitely.

▪ Is this promising practice a new idea, or an ongoing activity?

This promising practice has formalized a program that will replace a relatively informal and mostly ad hoc TDY process. The regional office, when it was in Sacramento, CA, had a more formal program like this one; however, this practice has not been championed by anyone for many years and developmental assignments have become infrequent.

▪ Can it be uniquely applied?

Definitely. This program is unique in that developmental assignments are created around specific program needs and the program managers and supervisors are directly involved in the individual developmental assignment activities. They provide insight into specific program needs, help to draft the framework for the TDY project, and then act as sponsors to the candidate shepherding him or her through the entire process. Each developmental assignment is unique in its own right and engages the program managers from various programs.

- **Is there an identifiable outcome?**

Yes. We have planned that as many as 10 developmental assignments can be accomplished in a calendar year. In addition each project has its own set of measurable outcomes. A project proposal document was developed to assist the sponsor in designing a viable 30 day assignment. This document leads the sponsor in drafting a project with specific outcomes in mind. (See project proposal document attached). It is then up to each candidate to work with their respective sponsor(s) on how best to achieve these agreed upon goals and outcomes. The accomplishments or “product” is ultimately presented during a formal presentation that concludes the candidate’s assignment.

- **Does it meet operational and strategic goals of program?**

Yes. As Cindy Smith stated, “two of my strategic priorities: Enhancing Supervisory Effectiveness and Succession Planning and Emergency Preparedness” this program works directly in supporting succession planning. This program is just another tool that demonstrates the agency’s commitment to invest in its’ employees. We continue to be leaders in planning and preparing for the future of our agency and this developmental assignment program will compliment other existing leadership training opportunities in building capacity in our future leaders.

- **Is it aligned with agency policy and procedures?**

Yes. We have created a transparent and fair process for selecting candidates.

- **Does it improve effectiveness or efficiency?**

Yes. A number of the “products” already generated from this program will have long lasting contributions to the effectiveness and efficiency of various programs. Some examples include: 1) the creation of the format and first drafts of the Standard Operating Guidelines for the Incident Management Teams (NIMTs) and the functional units (Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance). This effort has led to a collaborative effort between all 4 NIMTs in developing this valuable resource that will improve efficiency in managing incidents in a consistent manner; 2) the development of a draft manual for the SITC SNICAS system user instruction manual. This is a national system used by the SITC program to track and communicate operations; this product will become the official instruction manual which will increase user skills; 3) another project was to look at the different identifier resources currently available or in progress of development, evaluate them to meet the needs of identifiers, and propose a way to streamline the approach in providing electronic resources for identifiers; and 4) an ISIS design user guide was developed that will have immediate use to all ISIS users. It will contribute to standardizing data collection and make data management more efficient.

- **Does this practice encompass any of these 4 elements of the safeguarding review?**
 1. **permits**
 2. **international information**
 3. **pest detection and response**
 4. **exclusion**

Yes. The WR Developmental Assignment Program creates the opportunity for individuals to work on specific program issues that have or will contribute to these 4 elements of the safeguarding review. A few examples of past and current projects completed through the WR Developmental Assignment Program follow; 1) the development of an SOGs manual for the NIMTs will contribute to more effective and efficient response to incidents, 2) the creation of an instruction manual for the SNICAS system will support the actual system which is used operationally within the SITC program, 3) the creation of ISIS/NAPIS User Guide will directly assist domestic survey personnel in more effectively managing data for pest detection and exclusion programs.

- **Could this practice be applicable elsewhere**

Yes. This program need was added to the PPQ WR operational plan and is being considered by the ER management team. There are plans to work directly with PDC staff to discuss how the PDC might assist in making this program more national in scope. Depending on resource availability there is great potential to expand this program.

- **Could this practice be adopted regionally and nationally?**

Yes. This program could easily be adopted by other PPQ entities (PPQ ER, CPHST etc). It is foreseeable that this program can be implemented on a National scale and become part of the suite of leadership development opportunities currently available.

- **With lessons learned, is a broader application possible?**

Absolutely. Although this is the first year of operation for this program there is definitely potential to increase the scope of this program. Initially we limited the program to the PPQ WR, and taking into account lessons learned, and possibly getting assistance from the PDC this program could easily be ramped up to increase the number of candidates coming through the program and increase the number of programs benefiting from the products developed through the process.

- **How did the actions link to PPQ's mission? Provide an example.**

Several projects have already contributed to supporting the mission. For example, the National Incident Management Teams had already identified that a standard set of operating guidelines was required to ensure consistency in our response efforts. One of the WR DAP projects was to work directly with the four Incident Management Teams (IMTs) and the sectional unit chiefs and deputy chiefs in creating a standard format for how SOGs should be written. This project went beyond developing a standard format and actually began populating the manual with necessary SOGs as identified by the groups. This is a living document that will be part of the NIMTs arsenal of guidelines and reference material.