

Expanding Project Officer Capacity and Developing Essential Grants Management Skills

Consultative Approach and Flexible, Blended Learning Solution Combine to Deliver Performance Results for Major Federal Agency

The Challenge

A major Federal agency had provided Project Officers (POs) with training to obtain Federally mandated certification, but the training had not delivered the desired results. In interviews and evaluations, POs revealed that not only was the training inflexible and poorly designed for their work schedules, it didn't reflect a true understanding of their work environment. As a result, many POs were unclear about their job responsibilities and expectations.

With the success of its agency-wide initiatives dependent on a staff of highly effective POs, the agency sought a curriculum design partner with a proven track record in grants management skill development and experience tailoring training solutions to the needs and realities of their project officer's environment. Their specific requirements included:

- Developing a competency model to identify the competencies necessary for all POs to execute their roles and responsibilities effectively
- Creating a flexible curriculum design plan to develop and reinforce the competencies, incorporating a blended solution of training offerings and workshops for the POs

The Process

Management Concepts performed a detailed needs assessment within the agency to create a baseline for design and to determine the optimum approach for the solution. A competency development workshop followed to develop and validate a project officer competency model. This included interviewing internal SMEs to gain a better understanding of what POs need to do their jobs well and compiling their feedback into common themes about how POs perform their functions and view training needs.

The Solution

After completing the needs analysis and competency model development work, Management Concepts designed a comprehensive training curriculum that fit into the participants' work schedules and provided tools to match their skill and experience levels. The blended learning approach—which included online instruction, mentoring, on-the-job training, prerequisite instruction, reading assignments, self-evaluations, and action planning—allowed participants to incrementally develop and demonstrate their newly acquired skills and knowledge on the job. The program evaluation plan enabled the agency to integrate evaluation methods and metrics into the certification program design, ensuring that the value and impact of the program could be measured following implementation.

The Results

The training program met all of the agency's learning objectives, competencies, and training-hour requirements. Additionally, the blended learning approach met the participants' needs for self-paced, flexible training that not only clarified their responsibilities and developed their skills but also accommodated their demanding work schedules to complete the required training within the designated timeframe without sacrificing learning quality.

KEY FACTS

CLIENT

An agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

PROJECT GOALS

- Ensure staff capacity to implement agency-wide initiatives
- Sustain quality performance of experienced POs
- Create skills needed for exceptional performance

SIZE OF TARGET AUDIENCE

600 Project Officers

KEY OUTCOMES

- The agency was able to standardize their grants process
- Eliminated associated training travel expenses
- Project Officers are able to complete the training at their own pace

CALL TODAY to learn how Management Concepts can help you achieve your performance improvement objectives.

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