NOMINATION

for the

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE PERSONNEL EXECUTIVES'

ROONEY AWARD

in the Field of

INNOVATIVE STATE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Program Title: Delaware Employment Link (DEL)

State: Delaware

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

Organizational success depends on hiring and retaining top talent. The use of a comprehensive and reliable recruiting and selection system is fundamental to attracting and maintaining a high performing workforce.

DEL was created to address a variety of problems with the state's merit hiring system. After careful examination of the current system, we quickly recognized the opportunity not only to improve our hiring/selection process, but also to improve related human resource processes. We began with a comprehensive review of the state's classification structure, reducing the number of job classifications, developing new job codes, and revising job requirements. We thoroughly explored best practices from other states and the private sector, and evaluated software from leading hiring and recruitment vendors. We needed a system that would help us compete in the highly competitive job market while ensuring the integrity of the state's merit system. The implementation of DEL has met these challenges and has set the stage for other related improvements including online education for hiring managers and better alignment of competencies with job requirements and training. DEL is growing and changing on a regular basis.

The implementation of DEL required extensive preparation, research, education, marketing, and project management. The commitment of state agency managers, HR representatives, labor unions, and legislators was required. A very ambitious go-live deadline was established and met, and the results have been dramatic. The number of applications for state jobs has significantly increased. The time it takes to hire has been greatly reduced and the quality of our hires has improved. DEL has increased access to state jobs for the public and state employee alike, while enhancing productivity and service delivery. The demonstrated success of DEL has been recognized by many including the Governor, our Departments of Technology and Information and State, and Governing Magazine.

The implementation of DEL was the largest HR project implemented by Delaware in the past twenty years. Its success has positively affected thousands of applicants and employees while bringing very favorable public impressions of state government. It has led to better partnering relationships between the HR and Budget functions while fostering teamwork and high morale for the entire Human Resource Management section.

Answers to Questions Posed by the Nominations Committee

1. **Please provide a brief description of the program.**

   The Delaware Employment Link is a comprehensive online recruitment and selection system for state employment which uses a similar look and feel and is competitive with other large online job sites such as monster.com. Implementation of this new system presented the opportunity to significantly restructure the classification and merit hiring process and update job requirements statewide.

2. **How long has this program been operational?** The DEL system went live on March 24, 2007.

3. **Why was the program created? What problem[s] or issues does it address?** The program was created to address a variety of issues with the state's merit hiring system. Customers complained about the length of the hiring process along with inconsistent scoring of applications across agency lines. Managers wanted more flexibility in recruitment, and job applicants were frustrated by the complicated former system. The concept of "registers" after decades of use was still not widely understood outside of human resource staff. Many job requirements did not make sense to customers as the requirements for qualifying were often more difficult for lower paying jobs than for higher paying jobs. Reporting tools for managing recruitment were almost totally nonexistent. While Delaware had much of the hiring system automated, these nine sub-systems did not talk to each other. The main sub-system was so dysfunctional that Delaware's technology department was unable to provide any support for the system.

4. **Why is this program a new and creative method?** DEL positioned a state merit system to maintain the integrity of its classification and hiring system while providing a process for job applicants that was competitive to private sector systems. The program involved many layers including a comprehensive marketing and training campaign with the following components: (1) Developing a totally new website for job applicants; (2) Marketing materials including brochures, mouse pads, wallet cards, a "post it note" for the front of the State's major Sunday newspaper, posters, buttons, newspaper and newsletter articles, payroll stuffers, e-flyers and ads in Employment Guides; (3) Training all statewide Human Resources staff including quarterly newsletters and continuing education; (4) Training

all librarians in the State of Delaware so that they could assist applicants utilizing community-based personal computers in public libraries: (5) Training Department of Labor (DOL) employees working in our State's "One-Stop" Centers so they could assist their clientele in applying for state jobs; (6) Partnering with the DOL to utilize their mobile "one-stop" van at Job Fairs so applicants have computers available to apply for jobs. This partnership has been especially effective at Job Fairs to recruit Correctional Officers; (7) Partnering with labor unions in Delaware in the implementation of the system; (8) Meeting with officials from the Division of Social Services and the Division of State Service Centers to coordinate with their client base who are potential job applicants; (9) Extending hours at our county Employment Services Centers during the month after launch to ensure applicant's questions could be answered and to assist them in setting up their basic information in the system for those not computer literate. (Once applicants saw how easy it was to use the system, they registered at their leisure and felt comfortable applying without further assistance.); (10) Conducting education for employees and other potential applicants at state agencies and local libraries to again ensure their comfort in using the system; and (11) Attending local job fairs to educate jobseekers on the new system.

Legislation was passed and signed into law to modernize Delaware's employment services rules by changing the minimum number of days to post a vacancy from 15 to 7 and increasing the number of eligible candidates on an eligibility list from 15 or 15% of the pool to no more than 30 unless equally qualified. In addition, all tie breaker rules were deleted. The legislation eliminated registers and allowed agencies to post for actual vacancies, and it updated rules relating to veterans' preferences. (With the new system, veterans only have to submit their DD214 and/or proof of disability, once rather than for each separate job application.)

The creativity and effectiveness of DEL has been recognized in Delaware and nationally as (1) The DEL Project Team received the 2007 Governor's Team Excellence Award for teamwork and outstanding results; (2) The DEL program was recently honored at a ceremony held by the Departments of State and Technology and Information for its assistance in the state's web portal, Delaware.gov, being named among the top five state web portals in the nation in the Center for Digital Government's 11th Annual "Best of the

Web" Competition: (3) The DEL information brochure won the 2007 Communications Award (print category) from the National Association of State Personnel Executives; and (4) Governing Magazine, recognizing Delaware's successful deployment of technology, has requested a presentation of the DEL system at their May 28, 2008 conference in Seattle.

5. **What was the program's start-up cost?** One new project manager was added to the existing personnel complement to implement and operate this program. Other in-house staff were redeployed to assist in implementation. The initial cost was $180,000 plus $150,000 for additional Delaware-specific customization. Since the program utilizes an ASP (application service provider) solution, there were no additional costs or technology staff required. Such functions as database maintenance, web hosting and disaster recovery are provided by the vendor. Some computers utilized in our county employment service centers were simultaneously upgraded. Users access the program through their web browser on any computer using any network connection speed. Applicants access the system through a web browser and computer using Windows 2000, Windows XP, Windows Vista, LAN, and Internet Explorer 5 or above. There are nightly downloads from the State's HRIS.

6. **What are the program's operational costs?** The new program manager plus an annual cost of $180,000.

7. **How is this program funded?** Through a general fund appropriation in the state budget.

8. **Did this program originate in your state**? While other states have recently implemented software by the same vendor, it is believed that Delaware's overall program is unique.

9. **Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, how does this program differ?** The State of Oklahoma has implemented with the same vendor, but it is not believed that their classification and hiring system was essentially restructured prior to such implementation.

10. **How do you measure the success of this program?** DEL implementation has cut the hiring time in half; has greatly increased the number of applicants; agencies now have reporting tools for managing the hiring process; and hiring managers are reporting better quality applicants. We are looking long-term to see if the workforce has become more diverse and whether the new hires score higher than average on performance reviews. Applicants have reported the system successful since it does not time out on them as it did in the

previous system. It is faster to complete as profiles can be stored and copied for applying to multiple positions. They can follow the status of their recruitments (reducing calls to agencies) and can sign-up for e-mail notification of new job openings through an "interest card" feature. Agencies have been thankful to be able to monitor applications in real time. They can communicate with applicants via e-mail to save time and to reduce state spending by eliminating the cost of paper, envelopes and stamps. Hiring managers now only receive applications from individuals interested in their specific job as opposed to receiving a list of names from a register that could be almost a year old. In addition to traditional success measures, we have another unique success. Originally, it was generally thought that it would be impossible to fully do away with paper applications. By doing the comprehensive marketing and training campaign, the program has operated for a year without having to print any paper applications saving paper and ink. It has been estimated that the system has saved approximately 600,000 sheets of paper - enough paper to fill a 13 foot by 13 foot room one foot high with paper. It is hoped the system has made a positive contribution towards "thinking green."

11. **How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?** The initial implementation has been fully completed, but we have a longer range vision which will take multiple years for full fruition. One aspect of this vision includes implementing online testing of all jobs. Now most jobs are tested online via use of supplemental questionnaires developed through a process of converting all job requirements to screening questions. Written tests were eliminated for all but a very few law enforcement related classifications for whom on-line testing will be fully implemented by mid-April 2008. Some managers currently have access to follow the recruitment of their positions but others just receive an e-mail with a password and URL to retrieve their list. An online education program was developed to train hiring managers on both the system and best practice selection interviewing. A new *User's Guide to Merit* Hiring was developed and published. Delaware has a contract to further customize the system to better handle competencies so that ultimately the competencies in DEL, as associated with a particular job or classification, will be fully aligned across other Delaware human resource systems such as performance management and learning management.