

Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Program Title: **Intern Program Nomination** State: **Wyoming**

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Program Summary

The average age of current State of Wyoming employees is 45.8 with an average length of service of 10.9 years. Less than 25% of our employees are under 35. The percent of employees eligible to retire right now is 14.3% with a total of 31.1% eligible to retire within 5 years. The Human Resource Division has foreseen a significant gap in the number of available applicants to fill positions vacated by future retirements. The current national economy has slowed down employee retirements at the moment, but when the economy picks up more will retire. To meet the succession planning needs of the State of Wyoming the Internship Program was developed to encourage college level students to consider government as a career option. (Data from 2010 Workforce Report for the State of Wyoming)

To meet these needs the State of Wyoming Internship Program was created in the summer of 2001 to provide opportunities for students to gain first-hand knowledge and understanding of governmental processes through pre-professional work experience in various occupational fields.

The program is now in its eleventh year, and it has generated over 7,127 applications to fill approximately 373 internships over the eleven year period. During this time period we had 67 interns hired into full time state positions. Interns have been hired in a wide variety of agencies from the Attorney General's Office to the Human Resources Division.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program. The Wyoming Internship Program is dedicated to providing pre-professional work opportunities for sophomore level students to gain first-hand knowledge and understanding of governmental processes. State agencies are notified in March of the number of student internships available for the summer, agencies submit a request, a letter of justification and a proposed job description in the form of a vacancy announcement. Agency requests are evaluated based on need and equity among agencies. Final selection is solely at the discretion of the Human Resources Division. Depending on the university/college, some students will receive academic credits for internships. However, it is the student's responsibility to contact his/her advisor and obtain this credit within the school's guidelines, preferably before the internship begins.

Additional internship program information can be found on the State of Wyoming HRD website at:http://www.wyoming.gov/loc/06012011_1/jobs/Pages/Internships.aspx

2. How long has this program been operational? The Internship Program is in its eleventh year of operation. The first internship program was instituted in the summer of 2001.

3. Why was this program created? This program was developed to meet the long term need of attracting and retaining young employees into an aging workforce. Based upon state employee demographics over 75% of current employees are age 35 or older. The state also has over 30% of its employees who will be eligible to retire within the next five years. Long term succession planning to fill positions from an exodus of retirees to warmer climates looms before us.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method? The Human Resources Division provides the base funding for all internship positions. The hiring agency is provided a minimum hourly pay rate of \$9.00 per hour for a maximum of 520 hours through the summer. This is a grant of \$4,680

for each internship position. The hiring agency may pay the intern more than \$9.00 per hour, but the additional cost is absorbed from within their own budget.

Due to statewide budgetary restrictions most agencies do not have supplemental funding to provide this opportunity for student training and exposure to state programs. The HRD budget has also been reduced significantly. However, because of the success of this program, it has been deemed a priority for funding even though fewer positions are available for internships.

Internship selection and funding criteria is based on: date of the agency request to HRD, number of positions requested by the agency, internship justification letter, essential duties of the position and prior agency internship utilization history.

5. What was the program's start up costs? The initial start-up costs for the administration of this program were minimal. Coordination of the program was added to the duties of a current employee. All brochures, media materials and e-mail notification have been developed in-house by staff members. The initial funding for the program was provided as a part of budget authorization to increase training and development for state employees in 2001. The initial funding allowed for twenty-five internship positions with a funding of \$100,000. Since that time internship funds have been budgeted as part of the HRD's standard biennial budget.

6. What are the program's operational costs? Operational costs for HRD are minimal because existing positions coordinate and support the Internship Program as additional duties to their regular job function. Internship position funding is set at \$9.00 per hour for a maximum of 520 hours during the year. This cost is \$4,680 for each of the thirty positions for a total cost of \$157,895 for fiscal year 2011/2012.

7. How is this program funded? This program is funded within the HRD's interagency grant budget. This program is consistently funded within the division's biennial budget.

8. Did this program originate in your state? The Division realizes that a variety of states have used some form of internship program over the years. The funding mechanism that allows HRD to provide grant money to agencies in support of internship programs is fairly unique and innovative. In an age where governmental budgets are being streamlined and lower seniority positions are being reduced, Wyoming state government has dedicated a significant amount of money to encourage young applicants to try us out. Trying to change the cultural perception of government as a place for status quo employment is a goal of the internship program. Interns have been placed in the field and in the State Capitol. An intern's exposure to various occupational fields and mentoring by state supervisors and managers can have a very influential impact on future career decisions.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, how does this program differ?

HRD is aware of a variety of internship programs in other states. However, this program is unique in that money is provided to hiring agencies to fund the internship position at a minimum of \$9.00 per hour for 520 hours per position. This grant money does not need to be repaid to HRD. The hiring agency may increase the hourly rate if they have funds available.

10. How do you measure the success of this program? Measurement of success is through the number of applications received by hiring agencies. Also considered is the number of full time positions filled by past interns. The number of interns, 67, may seem small to states with larger total populations and larger state governments. However, with a population just over 500,000 and only 8,595 employees, the hiring of 67 new, young employees has a significant impact. This number is probably somewhat low because our human resource payroll information is limited, and

there are probably a number of past interns that have been hired after a break in service. Our current record keeping system does not provide this kind of data.

The State of Wyoming's Internship Program has also been recognized locally by the Cheyenne Business Leadership Network. As a result of placing applicants with disabilities in a variety of intern positions, the State of Wyoming Human Resources Division received the Employer of the Year Award in 2002 and 2005.

Also considered is anecdotal information heard from intern hiring agencies, and from our own experiences with interns in the HRD. One of our own interns works for us as a permanent employee and has developed over the years into a talented supervisor and manager.

Success is also measured by the number of internship position requests received from agencies.

Last year there were forty intern requests from eighteen agencies across the state, and there were only twenty internships funded. The agency application process for this year's program has just started, so data on the number of agencies wanting to hire interns or the number of interns requested is not currently available. There is definitely support from the top executives for this program. Our Governor's Office has already requested four internship positions.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception? It takes less staff time because all of the documentation has been developed and fine tuned over the years. The funding has been the big issue. When the program began in 2001, HRD had funding for twenty-five positions. Some years fewer internship positions were offered due to significant budget cuts. This year the Division was able to fund thirty internship positions.