2003 NASCIO Recognition Awards
Nomination Form

Please complete entire form.
All nominations must be postmarked no later than Sunday, May 18, 2003.

Title of Nomination: Missouri IT Mentoring – Building Star Performers

Project/System Manager: Tim Dwyer

Job Title: Manager of MIS

Agency: Management Information Systems

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**Category for judging
(please list only one):   State IT Management Initiatives**

Person Nominating
(if different than above):   Jan Grecian

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Please return nominations to:

**2003 NASCIO Awards
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Ashley Sinclair
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Missouri IT Mentoring
Building Star Performers

Executive Summary

If there is a truism about the field of information technology, it is that nothing stands still. Whether it be significant improvements in the hardware that run our systems, in the need for new applications to enhance the delivery of services to citizens, or expansion of our networks to meet the ever-increasing demand for electronic communication. Perhaps the most crucial component to this forward movement of information technology lies in the human aspect – the very people who lead and manage our information system environments.

Seldom does a new Chief Information Officer (CIO) step into his or her new role and have someone to "show them the ropes." Time is of the essence and the demands are many, so typically the new CIO is left to scramble the best they can and pick up pertinent bits of information either by chance or experience. Now complicate that within the realm of state government. As a department CIO, you are not an island unto yourself, but part of a much larger organization that is necessary to interact with in order to get the job done. On that larger scale, you now have to contend with purchasing rules, appropriation request processes, legislated budgets, statewide network configurations, enterprise architecture standards, and the list goes on and on.

In order to support and assist the new CIO with the challenges inherent in their new position, the Missouri State Government information technology community identified the need for a program designed to support and enhance the new CIO's performance and knowledge base. Sponsored by the state's Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) and created by a subcommittee of the ITAB, the result is an innovative, online program called "Missouri IT Mentoring – Building Star Performers".

This innovative mentoring program, serving the needs of both the mentor and protégé, is built around the three basic actions of apply, prepare and do. The online website provides the forms, resources and program information necessary to create a successful mentor/protégé relationship. It also helps to serve an educational function by providing information on positive role models for both mentors and protégés and offers advice on what negative behaviors to avoid. The web resource serves not only the mentor/protégé partnerships, but also offers a one-stop location for information related to understanding Missouri State Government that can prove helpful to even the well-seasoned CIOs.

Since its inception at the beginning of 2003, three partnerships have been formed and a fourth is currently in process. Although a dollar-savings measurement is yet to be identified, the intangible results are invaluable. With a program such as Missouri IT Mentoring, new CIOs become more effective leaders and decision makers in a much shorter period of time and the knowledge that comes from a mentor CIO is shared in a supportive environment. Together it is a win-win situation not only for the mentor and protégé, but also for the new CIO's department and the Missouri information technology community as a whole. The Missouri IT Mentoring site is accessible from the MO Office of Information Technology website at http://oit.mo.gov/mentoring/mentor_home.html. Please take the opportunity to explore what this program has to offer.

Missouri IT Mentoring
Building Star Performers

A. Description of Project

Imagine yourself as a newly hired CIO. You've accepted the position in an information technology organization that has not stopped moving forward for a moment since the previous CIO departed. Because of the fast pace of activity and ongoing deadlines, there is no one at the department's CIO level who can spend the time to introduce you to the department's and the state's information technology environment, let alone all the intricacies of maneuvering through the purchasing regulations, budget processes, architecture standards, etc.

How much more effective could you be as a new CIO if there was someone to support you in your new endeavor? From an experienced CIO perspective, the mentor could help you navigate state government's business processes, introduce you to other supportive CIOs through the Information Technology Advisory Board, bring you up to speed on statewide initiatives that impact your department, and serve as a sounding board and confidential counsel for issues to be addressed in your organization.

In order to assist the new CIO with the challenges inherent in their new position, the Missouri State Government information technology community identified the need for a program designed to support and enhance the new CIO's performance. Sponsored by the state's Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) and created by a subcommittee of the ITAB, the result is an innovative, online program, "Missouri IT Mentoring – Building Star Performers". Since its inception at the beginning of 2003, three partnerships have been formed and a fourth is currently in process. With the introduction of Missouri IT Mentoring, now the new CIO has an opportunity to get the needed support directly from the state's information technology community.

The entire mentoring process begins with the "apply" phase of the program. When a CIO in Missouri State Government is hired or promoted to their new position of responsibility, that person is contacted by a member of the Mentoring Subcommittee and asked to participate in the program. An application detailing the new CIO's background and areas of interest is received and an appropriate mentor is selected from existing CIO applicants. While the mentor/protégé match is being determined the participants can move on to the preparation phase.

In the "preparation" phase of the program, both the mentor and the protégé are encouraged to pursue either the onsite or online formal training that is available. Along with the formal training opportunities, they also are provided many resources to learn about positive role models for both mentors and protégés as well as what negative behaviors to avoid. A robust list of nationally recognized mentoring websites provides an abundance of additional information for anyone interested in learning more about the subject. An extra bonus is a list of frequently asked questions that allows the mentor and

protégé the opportunity to find answers to program details without having to contact the Office of Information Technology for assistance.

When the mentor and protégé reach the "do" phase of the Missouri IT Mentoring program they are offered a variety of tools to assist in the process. An important component of this program is the mentor/protégé agreement that sets goals, clarifies responsibilities and stresses the confidentiality necessary to create a successful partnership. This agreement is introduced at the initial meeting of the mentor and protégé and the initial meeting is scheduled and attended by a member of the Mentoring Subcommittee in order to make appropriate introductions.

Tools available for the "do" phase of the program include a plan guide with various subject areas such as project management, budgeting, purchasing and other valuable areas that can be reviewed and checked as action items for the mentor/protégé relationship. Quarterly evaluation forms for both the mentor and protégé are available and help to identify progress or problems associated with the mentoring partnership. Mentoring relationships are intended to be for a one-year time period, although it is encouraged that an informal partnership would continue on past that timeframe. To provide for a formal close to the mentor/protégé partnership, a final evaluation form is available and used to provide input for program improvements and success measures.

To round out the online mentoring program, additional information detailing expectations, guides and mentoring tips is available for the mentor and protégé. Valuable information to both the mentor/protégé and any other state government information technology professionals is a resource list providing links to items such as the state's phone and e-mail directory, the Missouri Technical Training and Education Center (MOTEC), the Missouri Research and Education Network (MOREnet), the Division of Purchasing and numerous other links.

B.   *Significance to the Improvement of the Operation of Government*

Information technology stands still for no one. The rate of change is incredible and the demand for increased services is constant. A change of leadership in an information technology environment creates a challenge for the organization to keep moving quickly forward. Until a new CIO has the opportunity to become familiar with their department, as well as the larger picture of the statewide information technology community, major decisions are often postponed and IT purchases put on hold until the new CIO has a good grasp of the details.

The Missouri IT Mentoring program was created to address this challenge and designed to support and enhance the new CIO's performance and knowledge base. It provides a "shortcut" to what is typically a lengthy learning curve by utilizing the experience and expertise of an existing department CIO with the knowledge of Missouri State Government. The significance to operational improvement occurs when the learning curve can be shortened, the new CIO confident they have the knowledge to make good

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decisions, and the support exists through the mentor for a confidential and experienced resource as counsel when necessary.

C.   *Benefits Realized*

Competent leaders and managers result in improved organizations. The Missouri IT Mentoring program is all about raising the competency level and confidence of the new CIO within their organization and the statewide information technology community. With a shortened learning curve to assist in bringing the new CIO up-to-speed with the state's information technology environment, much can be gained in productivity. A benefit to the program is that the assigned mentor will be available to the new CIO for a period of a year and it is anticipated the successful mentor/protégé relationships will continue on an informal basis long past that timeframe.

D.   *Return on Investment*

Although a dollar-savings measurement is yet to be identified, the intangible results are invaluable. With a program such as Missouri IT Mentoring, new CIOs become more effective leaders and decision makers in a much shorter period of time and the knowledge that exists with a mentor CIO is shared in a supportive environment. In a matter of speaking, the process becomes a human knowledge management system with the mentor serving as the delivery mechanism. Together it is a win-win situation not only for the mentor and protégé, but also for the new CIO's department and the Missouri information technology community as a whole.

The Missouri IT Mentoring site is accessible from the Missouri Office of Information Technology website at http://oit.mo.gov/mentoring/mentor_home.html. Please take the opportunity to explore what this program has to offer.