

NASCIO Awards Submission

State of Connecticut: Bureau of Information
Technology Solutions (BITS)



**Leading through Change: BITS'
Journey to Strong Management**

State CIO Special Recognition

2025



Category: State CIO Office Special Recognition

Project Dates: Initiated 2020, Results
measured 2024

Contact: Mark Raymond, mark.raymond@ct.gov
Chief Information Officer, State of Connecticut



Executive Summary

In 2020, the Bureau of Information Technology Solutions (BITS) centralized IT operations across more than 40 state agencies, integrating a diverse range of technical professionals into a single organization. This consolidation brought new skills and perspectives but also revealed a pressing need for consistent and effective management. Without targeted support, achieving BITS' vision of a collaborative, agile workforce would be difficult.

To meet this challenge, BITS launched a series of leadership development efforts informed by annual employee engagement surveys. Over 5 years, BITS has introduced and expanded upon a tailored Management Development Program to provide training, mentoring, and peer support. Additionally, the entire executive leadership team and management team, made up of 70+ managers, have participated in 360-degree leadership assessments which offer a detailed view of leadership strengths and gaps. These efforts have created a more capable, aligned management team, critical to fulfilling BITS' mission of delivering effective IT services to Connecticut residents as well as a double-digit percentage increase in employee satisfaction with their managers.



Idea

The Problem: In 2020, the Bureau of Information Technology Solutions (BITS) underwent a centralization effort combining the managerial supervisory and frontline ranks of IT talent across 40 plus agencies. With the centralization of resources came an influx of diverse backgrounds, talents, and skills – as well as the need to for a cohesive approach to management. Managers have often been successful because of their deep technical expertise and now promoted to management positions with little training and support. They find themselves ill equipped to navigate the diversity of needs, skills, personalities, challenges, and goals each of the people they manage brings to them daily. Without strong management, BITS’ vision of a flexible and agile workforce collaborating on serving Connecticut’s residents would be challenging, if not impossible.

Why it Matters: BITS’ management development efforts to go well beyond training into everyday application that helps drive three objectives – to be a great place to work, to be trusted by our customers, and to develop our people’s expertise. Additionally, LEA development gives managers the tools to gauge the impact they have on their direct reports and their colleagues and identify their strongest leadership aptitudes and opportunities to grow. Stronger leadership equates to higher employee and customer satisfaction.

The Solution: BITS conducts an employee engagement survey annually, soliciting employee opinion on BITS' performance across the categories most crucial to positive cultural transformation. Employees respond to questions feeding into categories such as communication and management performance, and leadership uses this report card as the basis for the upcoming year's development focus.

In response to these results, BITS launched a suite of customized management development interventions, including:

- **Management Development program:** immerses participants in six skill-building courses across four months. A specific skill topic is presented at each class and discussed with real-time application. Between classes, managers will apply the learned managerial skill to their current challenges and will practice with the support of a mentor and their peers. The program launches new cohorts as new managers and supervisors are hired.
- **Quarterly Manager Retreats:** full-day workshops designed to give participants development time on 2-3 high-impact skill-buildings, such as writing powerful performance reviews or understanding the legislative cycle.
- **[Leadership Effectiveness Analysis](#) (LEA):** a 360-degree feedback tool that scores participants across 20+ facets of leadership skills based on peer, boss and direct report feedback.

These combined efforts have contributed to a 20% increase in manager satisfaction amongst employees over 4 years.

What Makes it Different?

Connecticut's approach unleashes the power of our employees:

- The learning across the MDP and LEA exercises are combined with workshops at quarterly retreats, giving management both the ability to practice their learned skills and a common language with which to approach their managerial challenges.
- The MDP takes a principle-based approach to managing. When managers understand the organization's core principles, they are empowered to make managerial decisions better aligned with BITS' vision of becoming a great place to work even if they're unfamiliar with a process or question.
- BITS' management development uses employee input to identify the most relevant managerial skills to address.



What Makes it Universal?

All organizations need strong managers to achieve great results and create a positive work environment that fosters employee growth and retention (Workforce priority). BITS' management development and delivery methods were tailored to suit the busy state government environment, and the delivery models are easily scalable.

- Delivery model utilizes a low energy, high impact adult learning style that integrates seamlessly into existing meetings or in simple meeting cadences (ex: 6 x 1-hour sessions across six months). This balances time spent learning and time spent working.
- Programs limit learning to 1-2 topics per session and a simple, repetitive structure - learn, practice, debrief - to cut through even the most distracting environments
- Interventions directly focus on skill building, experience building, and knowledge sharing.

Implementation

Key milestones include:

- **2021:** BITS launched the Management Development Program, a series designed to offer skill development, mentoring, and peer learning support for consistent management across the new IT organization. Since then, BITS has held yearly learning cohorts to ensure that all managers and supervisors undergo the series that was completed in 2025.
 - **2022:** Executive Leadership participated in Leadership Effectiveness Analysis (LEA), a 360-degree feedback tool that scores participants across 20+ facets of leadership skills based on peer, boss and direct report feedback.
 - **2023-2024:** Managers participated in targeted skill-building sessions in quarterly manager retreats, focusing on the top two skills needed to improve leadership impact across the organization: communication and production
 - **2025:** The organization's 70+ managers participated in the same 360-degree development opportunity, providing leadership with a composite view of the group's greatest strengths and opportunities for more effective management.
-

Impact

Connecticut's management development work has already yielded significant benefits:

- **Higher Employee Satisfaction:** Over five years, consistent training, mentoring, and feedback efforts—grounded in employee engagement data—resulted in an increase in employee satisfaction with management. Employee-graded management performance sentiment scores improved by 6% from 2023 to 2024 and by 23% across 4 years.
- **Stronger Organizational Alignment:** Through initiatives like 360-degree assessments and quarterly retreats, BITS is cultivating a unified leadership culture, critical to delivering agile, effective IT services to Connecticut residents.

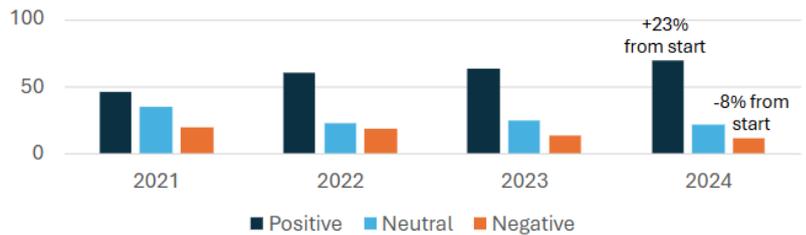
How Do You Know?

Our employee metrics directly measure the impact of management skill improvement, demonstrating a 23% increase from beginning.

Strong Management

Skilled coaches who bring out the best in their people, help them set clear goals and achieve them, and who are clear about their expectations and performance feedback

Management Performance Trend



Long Term Vision

Unleashing the talent of our employees and empowering them to perform their best will continue to be a focus of BITS leadership.

- **LEA:** Using the management team's individual LEA profiles, form peer learning groups to improve one leadership attribute through manager-to-manager coaching.
- **Management Development Program:** Continue to host cohorts as new managers and supervisors are onboarded.