

Nomination for NASPE Communications Award

Title of Nomination: LA Careers Biweekly User Calls: Connecting DSCS with our HR Department Users

State: Louisiana

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1. Please provide a brief description of the submission.

The LA Careers Biweekly User Calls are webinars presented every other Wednesday by members of the Staffing division of the Louisiana Department of State Civil Service. These calls are offered to provide human resources staff in our user departments an opportunity to speak directly with members of our division as well as each other on topics, questions and ideas related to LA Careers (our online application system) and Civil Service rules and policies related to posting and filling vacancies. These calls are conducted so the agency HR community and DSCS may partner to work through challenges that occasionally arise by sharing and discussing best practices, questions and concerns.

Use of the GoToWebinar format provides a medium by which we can quickly and affordably reach our target audience throughout the state. Our goal is to keep each call informative and beneficial by focusing the presentation on two topics and limiting the length of calls to a maximum of one-hour. Attendees are able to address the audience to ask questions or share their own practices, thus making the calls more interesting and informative for all. Afterwards, a written summary of each call is posted in the secure **HR Info** portion of the Civil Service website to serve as reference materials for attendees as well as for other HR staff who were unable to attend the call due to scheduling conflicts. These summaries may be viewed using the following link and signing on with the User Name: visitor and Password: visitor.

http://www.civilservice.la.gov/HRDirectors/Examining/LA_Careers_BiWeekly_UserCalls.asp

2. How long has the submission been in existence?

The LA Careers Biweekly User Calls began on June 25, 2009 and generally have been presented every two weeks since that initial presentation. Email invitations to register for the webinar are sent the Monday before the scheduled call with a description of the topics to be discussed. In addition, a summary and copy of the PowerPoint presentation from the previous call are attached to the invitation for the users' convenience. This email invitation is sent to all HR Directors and their staff who are registered HR users of the LA Careers online system.

3. Why was the submission created?

On February 16, 2009 the Louisiana Department of State Civil Service implemented LA Careers, an online application system to replace a largely paper process, along with new Civil Service Rules governing the requirements and processes to follow when filling job vacancies and making appointments to the state classified service. As would be expected, we soon found the need to communicate regularly with our user agencies to disseminate technical information about the new system as well as policy issues and decisions that were being made in conjunction with the new set of rules for the hiring process. Initially this communication was made through a series of bulletins and emails; however, we felt the need to find a more personal, interactive medium through which to communicate with our users. After implementation, the Staffing division also conducted post-hire audits of agency actions to monitor the accuracy of agency use of the new automated system and hiring rules. Through these audits, we discovered areas and practices where our users needed additional information and training.

Thus, in June 2009 we launched the LA Careers Biweekly User Calls, using a GoToWebinar format to reach human resource professionals across the state. What began as a method to issue announcements about important information has evolved into something much greater and more comprehensive. We have found these user calls to be a valuable and efficient training tool to reach our users and teach them about new policies and techniques to make their work easier. While initially used to offer training with technical areas in using the new online application system, seven calls in the fall of 2010 were used to offer users a review of Chapters 22 and 23 Civil Service rules. The calls have continued to offer training in areas of concern uncovered in our post hire audits and for early 2011 we plan to cover various topics in minimum qualification interpretation. In December of 2010, the biweekly user call was used to train over 200 HR personnel throughout the state on how to use our new web based Department Preferred Reemployment System which houses the lists of employees affected by department layoffs or reorganizations who have preferential hiring rights.

Given the current budget situation in our state where we are operating with a smaller number of employees but at the same time those employees are required to do more and many agencies do not have money to send employees to training, we have found this GoToWebinar format to be a powerful means to transfer valuable knowledge to the State of Louisiana HR community. Human resources staff can view and participate in the calls from their desks, minimizing disruption to their work schedules and reducing travel costs for their departments. This format also allows us to create audience polls and surveys, thus providing a quick and efficient means to gather information and aid our decision making process on policies and procedures that affect our users.

4. How does this submission support the goals and objectives of your agenda/ department?

It is the mission and philosophy of the LA Department of State Civil Service to partner with state agencies to provide human resource systems and services that will enable the

agencies of Louisiana state government to make merit-based, quality decisions regarding the hiring, training, and retaining of those skilled and capable individuals who are essential to providing cost effective, quality services to Louisiana's citizens. We strive to provide these services in an efficient and courteous manner and foster work practices that insure that classified employees work in an environment where excellence and productivity are encouraged and recognized.

The LA Careers Biweekly User Calls directly support these ideas by providing a means to quickly distribute information and training about staffing issues to HR departments throughout the state. In this way, we have found a cost-effective way to reach users and communicate policies and practices that will not only enable these HR employees to more effectively perform their work but which will also support the merit based practices that serve as the basis for the Civil Service system provided for in Article X of the Louisiana constitution.

5. Have you been able to measure the effectiveness of this submission? If so, how?

Yes, we have been able to assess the effectiveness of our biweekly user calls in a number of ways. First, we have monitored the rate of audit findings over time since we implemented the LA Careers online system. For hire actions in the four month period after LA Careers implementation but before the user calls began (2/16/09-6/30/09), the percentage of audited actions in which we discovered findings of errors was an average of 52%. The user calls began on 6/25/09 and for hiring actions effective 7/1/09 until 12/31/09, we saw that error rate drop to an average of 23% of hiring actions with audit findings. The percentage of hires with findings was cut by more than half. Since its initial launch, we have also seen the participation rate to our calls increase. When first implemented, we were finding that approximately 20-25 participants attended the user calls. In 2011, we have approximately 60-70 attendees per call. This number is likely larger due to the fact that often one employee will log in to the call while additional staff members will view and listen to the call in that person's office. When used for training HR staff in the use of the new Department Preferred List system in December 2010, we offered two calls each of which had over 100 participants. The fact that we continue to grow our audience is an indication that the HR community finds these calls to be helpful. Finally, users were surveyed during the February 24, 2010 call and asked if they found the calls to be helpful. Of the 92% of the attendees answering the poll, 100% answered "Yes" that they found the calls to be of benefit to them. On March 16, 2011 we again polled attendees to see how beneficial they found the user calls to be. Of the 73 participants polled, 78% reported that they found the information presented in the user calls to be "Extremely Helpful" to them. The remaining 22% reported that the calls were "Somewhat Helpful." Eighty-three percent reported having at least one HR staff member attend most or all of the biweekly user calls, and the majority of users responding to the question (64%) read most or all of the summaries posted for the calls with an additional eleven percent reported reading them about half of the time.