



L to R: Art Skimore, President of GSC & GSC Cooperative; Jane Hale-McDonald, GrandBridge Energy-VP People & Culture; Jennifer Smith, Burlington Hydro-EVP, Corporate & CPO; Jenny McGeachy, Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro-HR Manager; Dave Ferguson, Entegrus Powerlines-VP Regulatory & HR.

GridSmartCity[®] Cooperative A MCE CASE STUDY

Made up of 15-member local distribution company (LDC) partners, the **GridSmartCity[®] Cooperative (GSC)** is ideally positioned to compete as a leading innovator in Ontario's energy sector. Their unique organizational structure allows small LDCs to collaborate with each other in many ways including the training of their employees. With common goals and service standards,

GSC was looking for an organization to develop a customized, and targeted leadership training program for their cooperative.

In 2018, they reached out to Mohawk College Enterprise (MCE) to develop this program.

THE PROGRAM GOALS

- Develop a customized leadership program with industry specific content
- Focus on emerging leaders for succession planning
- Overcome challenges such as the buddy to boss transition and employee absenteeism

To facilitate the selection process, MCE invited Jenny McGeachy, Manager of Human Resources, to attend and observe a leadership course where she heard first-hand, testimonials from participants. MCE was ultimately chosen as GSC's training provider due to their ability to deliver on the client's top goal; **customization**.



THE PROGRAM SOLUTION

GSC had a general idea of their ideal training program, With MCE providing the knowledge and expertise in content and instructional design, their idea was refined into a customized program, embedded with real-life scenarios and activities. According to Jenny, the entire process was "timely and seamless". The outcome "exceeded expectations" and resulted in an intentional and relevant training program.

MCE developed 2 customized programs for GSC: **Future Ready Leadership Essentials (FRLE)** and **Leadership Level 1 (LL1)**, and are in the process of developing another program as a post-requisite for LL1. The purpose for building multiple programs at various leadership levels is to capture employees at all stages of the leadership journey.

Following the completion of the first cohort, MCE met with GSC to review course evaluations. The program was then revised according to participants' constructive feedback. This practice continued after each cohort to ensure relevance and engagement.

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THE OUTCOMES

- 103 Future Ready Leadership Essential (FRLE) graduates
- 9 Level 1 Leadership (LL1) graduates
- 100% of participants said the training was engaging
- 95% of participants said the mix of presentation and activities were appropriate

Having multiple programs at various leadership levels helps to move participants along their **leadership journey**, which in turn promotes succession planning. Recognizing their organization's investment in their career development causes employees to look forward to future training and see the value of implementing tools learned in the classroom into practice in the workplace.

Art Skidmore, President of GSC, notes that friendships made throughout training are “friends that will last a lifetime”. This truly speaks to the core of the organization; relationship-building. These training sessions provide an opportunity for participants to not only network but collaborate on solutions and best practices.

One participant was comfortable enough to share an issue in the workplace that was relevant to that day's topic of communication, demonstrating a **high degree of trust and vulnerability**. By the end of the day, the participant was thrilled with the solution. MCE's facilitator did not provide the answer, rather the solution came as a collaborative effort from the group.

WHAT PEOPLE THOUGHT

“Our Human Resources GridSmartCity folks have worked together with Mohawk College Enterprise (MCE) on the development of a leadership platform for our new and emerging leaders in the industry. MCE has been very collaborative with us which has enabled us to customize the programs to suit our needs; the process of which has been seamless. Our trainees are also able to share their knowledge and experiences with each other from other utilities who are in similar roles, thus building on their relationships and supporting each other into the future. The feedback we have received from our employees has been wonderful. One employee said, “I have already put into practice what I learned from the last session, and I look forward to more.” We are very pleased with the results of this program and are currently planning on expanding the program.”

Jenny McGeachy, Manager of Human Resources at GSC

“Bob Jones was an excellent instructor, and was very entertaining and kept the audience engaged and always interested. It was never boring.”

FRLE GSC Graduate

“The program was well presented and the activities forced the participants to think.”

FRLE GSC Graduate

Bob Jones, an MCE Facilitator, has had the pleasure of working with GSC on multiple occasions. Enthusiasm and energy were the first words that came to mind when asked about this group. “What made each cohort consistently unique was their willingness to share and their collaborative nature” says Bob. This aligns with the organization's purpose – an opportunity for small municipalities to collaborate and help one another. Their values reflect in their people. Bob is looking forward to working with GSC in the future!