

2022 NASPE Award Nomination for the Advancing the HR Profession Award

Arizona State Human Resources Academy Rooted in Knowledge, Strength & Diversity

CONTACT:

Barbara Bratcher
HR Deputy Director, Operations
State of Arizona
Dept. of Administration
Human Resources Division
100 North 15th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85007
Barbara.Bratcher@azdoa.gov
Office: (602) 542-4918

NOMINATOR:

Emily Rajakovich
Director of Human Resources
State of Arizona
Dept. of Administration
Human Resources Division
Office: (602) 542-4811
Emily.Rajakovich@azdoa.gov
hr.az.gov



What is the Arizona State Human Resources Academy (AzHRA)?

HR practitioners across State government are delivering on our Governor's aggressive goals for Arizona by committing to the State's culture of continuous improvement, where we all, individually and collectively, work every day to become better, faster, and more efficient at delivering value and mission-critical outcomes.

AzHRA is a vehicle not only for continuous improvement but also for continuous professional development. This nomination is for two components of AzHRA: *AzHRA Orientation* and *AzHRA Level 1*.

AzHRA Orientation is the prerequisite for entry into AzHRA Level 1 and provides a high-level overview for new State HR professionals to level-set knowledge in five foundational HR competencies: (1) Ethical Practice (2) HR Knowledge (3) Consultative Relationship Management (4) Business Acumen and (5) Communication. AzHRA Orientation participants:

- Discuss the State Personnel System (SPS) rules, Enterprise-wide policies and guidelines, Guiding Principles and Guidelines for State HR Representatives, Position Authority, Compensation Guidelines, including the HR Job Family Classifications, Performance Management, Communities of Practice, and relevant federal and state laws
- Review the State HR organizational structure, including Shared Services
- Observe an ADA/FMLA role play and brainstorm possible scenarios
- Engage in a panel discussion with the State's agency Chief HR Officers
- Navigate the State HR website
- Meet other HR professionals, establish an HR network and foster cross-agency collaboration

AzHRA Orientation is an interactive two half-day virtual session delivered by the State's agency Chief Human Resources Officers in a total of six hours. We are very proud of the fact that HR practitioners who attend AzHRA Orientation are eligible to receive six continuing education credits from the Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM). As of March 2022, 384 (approximately 62%) of HR practitioners across the enterprise have attended AzHRA Orientation. The goal is for all new HR practitioners to attend the AzHRA Orientation within 90 days of hire.

AzHRA Level 1. Once HR practitioners complete AzHRA Orientation, they are eligible to attend AzHRA Level 1. AzHRA Level 1 was designed, developed, and continues to be delivered to HR practitioners so that Arizona State government can achieve consistent application of employment laws, rules, policies, State HR practices and at the same time, provide professional development opportunities to build a bench of strong HR talent throughout the enterprise.



All HR practitioners across the enterprise are now required to attend AzHRA Level 1, and for employees new to state HR, ideally within 90 days of assuming the HR practitioner role. As of April 2022, 170 HR practitioners across Arizona State government have completed Level 1 of AzHRA.

AzHRA Level 1 consists of five days of virtual classroom sessions lasting 3 to 3.5 hours each day and is delivered on a bi-monthly cadence. Sessions include:

- Arizona Management System (Arizona's Lean Management System)
- Predictive Index
- Public Sector 101
- Communications
- Recruitment (including new job board demonstration)
- HR Operations
- Benefits
- Classification and Compensation
- Employee Relations (FMLA, ADA, Disciplinary Actions, Internal EO and EEOC Complaints)
- Ask the Panel (CHRO and Attorney General Representatives)

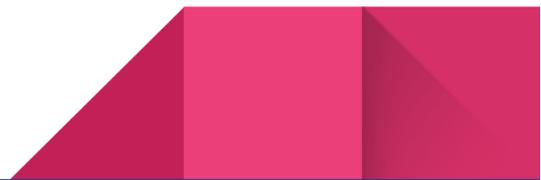
In addition to virtual classroom sessions using Google Meets (tools include Jamboards, breakout rooms for networking and collaboration, and poll questions), the State is making use of its LinkedIn Learning resources and recommends relevant coursework to AzHRA Level 1 participants. Beyond the virtual classroom sessions and LinkedIn Learning resources, the State of Arizona challenges AzHRA participants to further increase their professional development and to strengthen networking connections with peers throughout the enterprise by attending one or more of the State's Communities of Practice (e.g., FMLA/ADA; Operations; Recruitment). HR practitioners who attend Level 1 receive 12.75 SHRM continuing education credits.

How long has AzHRA been in existence?

AzHRA Orientation was first launched in October 2018. AzHRA Level 1 was first launched in person the week of October 29, 2019. Both AzHRA Orientation and AzHRA Level 1 have been converted to virtual formats in light of the pandemic.

Why was AzHRA created?

The State of Arizona lacked standardized enterprise-wide training and development specific to professional HR practitioners resulting in the potential risk of inconsistent application of employment law and State HR rules, policies, and practices ([Statewide Policies Guidelines and Bulletins | Human Resources](#)). HR information and guidance were made available on an ad hoc basis via the State HR website ([Human Resources](#)) and other informal settings such as standing meetings not attended by all HR practitioners across the state.



The State of Arizona created AzHRA to move away from the transactional training and development of the past to a more strategic approach with the ultimate goal of standardizing and elevating the delivery of HR services throughout the enterprise. AzHRA focuses on the application of key HR rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and best practices and provides tools to enhance the knowledge, consistency, and accuracy of the performance of HR roles throughout the State and to deepen our own bench of HR professionals.

What are the costs for AzHRA?

AzHRA course materials were designed, developed, and are delivered by State of Arizona HR professionals. With over 400 HR practitioners, including employees with decades of experience in state service, the State of Arizona has tremendous in-house knowledge, insight, and experience. AzHRA Orientation was developed and is presented by the State of Arizona's agency Chief Human Resources Officers, collaborating with an agency training officer and project manager. AzHRA Level 1 is led by a project manager based at the Arizona Department of Administration who works collaboratively with subject matter experts (SME) from across the enterprise to develop and deliver content. An estimated 700 SME hours were dedicated to the development of AzHRA Orientation and AzHRA Level 1. Preparation and delivery of the content is estimated at approximately 130 SME hours. Materials including supplies and printer costs are estimated at \$1,600 per year.

Funding comes from various sources within the enterprise including the Pro Rata Fund within the Arizona Department of Administration. SME participation is funded by the agency employing the SME.

How is AzHRA success measured?

AzHRA Orientation participants are asked to evaluate the content and delivery of the program, which has been administered quarterly since moving to a virtual format in 2021. AzHRA Orientation has received no less than 90% "very satisfied/satisfied" evaluation ratings for the last four sessions.

- 95.8% Very Satisfied/Satisfied with Virtual AzHRA Orientation
- 95.8% Very Satisfied/Satisfied with the activities and exercises
- 91.7% Felt the timing/pace was "just right"

Participants in AzHRA Orientation are provided an orientation workbook which contains exercises, the State of AZ HR competencies, the State HR essentials, guidelines for HR



representatives, laws that govern HR decisions, the State of AZ Department of Administration HR website and important links/information. [HR Orientation Workbook 11.18.21.pdf](#)

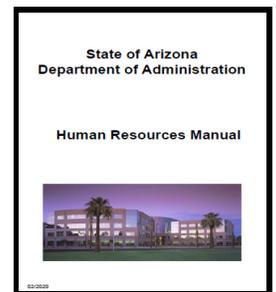
AzHRA Level 1 participants are required to complete a pre-assessment just before the kick-off of training and a post-assessment just before the close of training. Results are compared to determine knowledge transfer as well as identifying areas where the training can be improved. The average percent score improvement for each session is captured below.



Lag Metric: 100% of AzHRA participants successfully completed AzHRA Level 1 by showing improvement in the post-assessment compared to the pre-assessment.

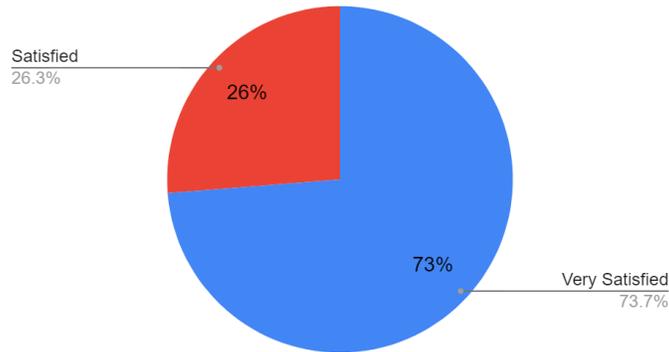
Lead Metric: Percent Reduction in HR Skills Gap. Based on the score improvements from the post assessments in AzHRA Level 1, the State of Arizona has increased HR knowledge across our enterprise an average of 13%.

One of the resources provided to AzHRA Level 1 participants is a State HR Manual. The manual consists of sections on the federal and state laws, rules comprising the AZ Administrative Code, statewide policies and guidelines that govern HR decisions, and the State Personnel System Employee Handbook. It also contains payroll codes, compensation guidelines, salary schedules and a reference section with the State records retention schedule, and the State FMLA process flow. When participants were surveyed on the effectiveness of the HR Manual, an average of 86.2% of participants rated it “very effective”.



When asked about the likelihood of recommending AzHRA Level 1 to their peers, 95.7% of respondents responded “very high/high”. Participants were also surveyed for satisfaction with the activities and exercises in AzHRA Level 1, which also earned high marks.

Satisfied with Activities and Exercises?



The tools and information used by the State of Arizona in both AzHRA Orientation and AzHRA Level 1 are easy to replicate and share. The State of Arizona would be willing to connect and share our resources for these programs with other states.

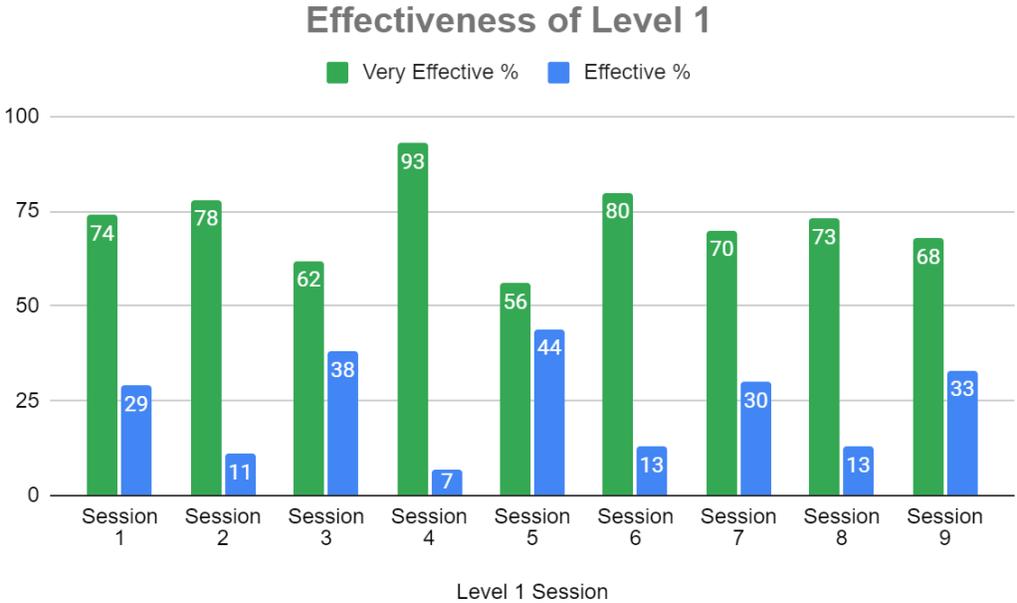
How has AzHRA evolved since its inception?

AzHRA leadership is committed to contribute and reinforce the State’s culture of continuous improvement. AzHRA Level 1 was first piloted in October 2019, but only after being delivered to focus groups to finely tune content and delivery. Pilot participants from across the enterprise were carefully and intentionally selected to ensure that candid and comprehensive feedback would be received to further enhance the training.

As a result of the pandemic, in-person training was drastically limited across the State in early 2020. The AzHRA project manager and contributing SMEs converted all in-person content to virtual content, researched the optimal structure for virtual delivery including shortening sessions from full to partial-day, and reducing the size of cohorts from approximately 30 to 10-12 participants for the initial virtual sessions.



Participants are asked to complete a course evaluation. Participant feedback is used to continuously improve the content and delivery of AzHRA. When asked: “How effective was the AzHRA Level 1 in helping you gain knowledge and skills”, participants responded as follows:



AzHRA has further evolved with the additions of a Level 2 General Session, Specialty Tracks in the fields of HR Operations, Employee Relations, Classification & Compensation, Recruitment and a Level 3 General Session. The State is actively gathering feedback and data from AzHRA Levels 2 and 3 attendees and will use this data to enhance participant outcomes. These levels will be considered for future award submission.

AzHRA was initially designed to level-set human resources knowledge to ensure the State’s HR professionals were consistently and effectively delivering HR services to the enterprise. AzHRA fully met our initial goal of providing a strategic approach to training and developing State HR professionals. As an added benefit, AzHRA became THE place for new and seasoned State of Arizona HR professionals to gather, learn and network. The sense of community has continued to blossom as participants attended more AzHRA sessions and referred peers to attend as well. The State of AZ advanced the HR profession simply by offering a regular gathering place of learning and sharing of HR knowledge.

