



the
NASPEs

Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award Nomination

Submittal

for

**Innovative State Human Resource
Management Program**

Nevada's Climate Study Program

State of Nevada

Human Resource Management

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Nevada's Climate Studies - Summary

Organizational climate studies are an independent study conducted at the request of an agency director by the State Human Resource Management Division (HR) to assess and evaluate the culture, effectiveness of management, employee morale and internal communications of an organization.

In analyzing workplace environments, it is clear that communication and harmony in the workplace play a critical role in the productivity of employees and the desire to promote quality work products.

In Nevada, we developed this program to assist agency leaders in creating and maintaining an effective, positive work environment; to gain the perceptions and perspective of employees; to engage employees and provide their voice to be part of an effective solution of fostering a positive work environment; to increase overall communication; to resolve employee conflicts and to evaluate and determine training needs of an organization. It is very important to note that this program is never a "gotcha" type program aimed at employees or management, but only a helpful tool to understand culture, resolve issues and create a positive work environment.

These studies consist of a team of trained mediators conducting an initial meeting to gain the confidence of the employees and create a safe and confidential environment; a thorough 74 question employee survey; and then continual face time feedback sessions with employees only, to get to the root of problems/concerns. Separate sessions are conducted with management team members. Once completed (2-3 months), results are analyzed and a comprehensive executive summary is presented to the agency management team. Then, HR works with the agency management to develop and implement a corrective action plan while continuing communications with employees and management. Follow-up surveys are conducted between 18-24 months and periodically thereafter to ensure satisfaction and continual improvement.

This program has measurements in place to assess the value and effectiveness of these studies and we provide follow-up studies to ensure that agencies are continuing to provide effective communications in the workplace. The proven results are more engaged employees, higher levels of productivity, lower grievances and employee complaints and overall better job satisfaction reported from employees and managers.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program

Organizational climate studies are an independent study conducted at the request of an agency director by the State Human Resource Management Division to assess and evaluate the culture, effectiveness of management, employee morale and internal communications of an organization.

2. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?

The first official climate study for another state agency began in January of 2011.

3. Why was this program created? (What problem[s] or issues does it address?)

This program was developed to assist agency leadership in creating and maintaining an effective, positive work environment; to gain the perceptions and perspective of employees; to engage employees and provide their voice to be part of an effective solution of fostering a positive work environment; to increase overall communication; to resolve employee conflicts and to evaluate and determine training needs of an organization.

4. Why is this program a new and creative method?

This program was a new way of thinking about how to permanently handle the resolution of workplace discontent. Instead of going through the normal motions of temporarily applying a band aid to individual issues until the next one arise, we wanted look at the agency as a whole and to understand what was causing the issues and low morale and to get the employees perspectives and re-engage our employees by getting to the root of the problem and providing solid and long lasting solutions. By getting the employees involved, we created buy-in of employees as they like having a voice and being a part of developing a solution. Management also appreciates the help resolving issues and moving forward with more positive agency results both in productivity and overall environments.

5. What was the program's startup costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)

This program had no true startup costs other than a minimal amount of employee travel which we conducted along with other normal work/travel to avoid additional costs. We have trained staff in

both Southern and Northern Nevada where majority of our state employees are staffed, therefore staff time was the only true cost.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

The program has minimal to no additional cost to date. To date the minimal cost includes paper, employee time, however, these expenses are not additional, except possibly the small amount of paper (most is via emailed documents and power point presentations). We have had to work more efficiently in all areas to take on this needed program and balance current workloads to keep the costs next to nothing. The costs for mediation training since all are trained mediators is already in our budget and conducted yearly.

The new costs we are anticipated to have going forward is that this program has become so sought after from agencies that we are currently in our legislative session and have requested for the first time an additional position just to act as the Climate Studies Project Lead/Coordinator to work with existing staff and schedule and help conduct all of the meetings/feedback sessions and focus groups, and to draft the executive summary as the coordination piece has become too much for existing staff to absorb.

This position is being requested in our budget at the annual salary of \$79,150. Additional office space/furnishings/computer was already available so that was not an additional expense.

Some additional and extremely important factors in the success of this program and reduced cost is the commitment to excellence from our employees. This program is housed in our Sexual Harassment/Discrimination Unit and most mediators are from that unit. Many employees throughout our agency contributed to the success of this program; and all of our mediators are invaluable as is our EEO Director Ron Grogan who is an extremely talented communicator and leader and has played an important role in the growth and continued success of this program.

7. How is this program funded?

This program is funded through our existing agency cost assessment/allocation to each agency. Our office bills agencies for all services we conduct through an assessment process. Our entire operating/HR costs are calculated and each agency is assessed an HR/Payroll Assessment. To date nothing additional has been billed to agencies for climate study work. However upon approval of our new position, that additional expense (\$79,150) will be included in the total assessment and divided up among all state agencies.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

Yes. Our state had been going through tough financial times and employees everywhere were feeling the effects. Morale was low in a lot of agencies and coupled with some managers not knowing how to manage and not fostering a positive work environment, created uproar and chaos in some agencies.

We had an employee morale issue in our own agency in one of our work units and requested two other unit managers conduct a small investigation of sorts to talk with employees and figure out what the issues were and then work with the unit manager to develop methods to correct the issues. That process was very effective. Right after that, a larger state department contacted our office and said they needed our help in figuring out what was going on in their agency. This agency had multiple grievances, employee conflicts, manager conflicts, high turnover and was completely unsettled. Thus began the brainstorming and unknown at the time, the development of this new program. It was clear that what we did in our own agency had to be modified to work in a larger setting, so although trial at first, it was a very successful outcome for that agency that has now completely turned around.

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If yes, how does this program differ?

No, we are not. When Nevada hosted the NASPE Annual Meeting in Las Vegas in 2013, we presented in one of the sessions to our NASPE friends this new and innovative program and shared

our experiences and successes. At that time, no other state said they had a program like this and since that time, we have provided several states with the surveys and process we use. We are not sure at this time if any states have begun a similar program since then or not.

10. How do you measure the success of this program?

When we first meet with employees, we discuss why we are there, make it a safe, confidential environment, make sure they all understand that all feedback, including the survey is confidential to our office only and this is not any type of a “gotcha” study on employees or management, but a helpful tool to look at what is going on in the agency and as a team, correct the issues and develop a better working environment for them. We talk to them about the process we would like their help and feedback with. We then launch a 74 question survey to get to the root of the problem. We then again meet with all employees and go over results and obtain more clarifying information as to the overall responses. After we go through the evaluation and executive summary, corrective action development and implementation processes which can take several months, we go back to the employees again typically 18-24 months later and hold the same type of meeting but this time we conduct a follow-up survey which is the exact survey we initially conducted. We then measure the effectiveness of the studies by the differences in employee responses and results of the surveys as well as follow up meetings with the employees.

11. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?

This program has grown from a trial of let’s figure out how to help an agency deal with very serious and significant employee morale issues and ugly work environments to a full Climate Study Program and a valuable service we now offer to all agencies. We have to date conducted 8 climate studies with over 1200 employees participating and currently 3 are in the continued implementation piece and will be resurveyed/evaluated (2 this fall and 1 next spring) and we are currently conducting 2 more and have 3 agencies waiting. Thus the reason for the new position being requested 😊 😊 😊.