

Arizona Department of Administration

Submittal for NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award

Category: Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Program Title: **Arizona Interns-In-Action**
State: Arizona
Contact Person: Susan Laurence
Title: Recruiting Manager
Agency: Arizona Department of Administration
Mailing Address: 100 North 15th Avenue, Suite 261
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Telephone: (602) 542-4757
Fax: (602) 542-7544
E-mail: susan.laurence@azdoa.gov

Program Summary:

In January 2010, the Human Resources Division of the Arizona Department of Administration created *Arizona Interns-In-Action* as a creative approach to help college students gain valuable government experience in an environment that was not hiring due to dramatic layoffs and restricted by an on-going hiring freeze. The State was in need because it was facing the possibility of nearly 25% of its workforce being eligible to retire within five years. This program has proven to be a win-win for both college students and the State of Arizona. Though many states have intern programs, *Arizona Interns-In-Action* is unique in many ways. Arizona was the first state to use a QR (Quick Response) code for instantaneous access to all program materials through the use of Smartphones; social media such as Facebook to reach students; and the career counseling and placement services available through their Career Center. At the time of this writing, nearly 120 students have participated in this innovative program.

**ARIZONA
INTERNS-IN-ACTION**
visit us at www.hr.az.gov/intern/

Arizona Interns-In-Action

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

College students are placed in unpaid internships assigned at a specific State agency to complete an identified project. The program provides real world experience for college students at the same time offering State agencies with a fresh approach to a specific project.

2. How long has this program been operational?

Since January 2010

3. Why was this program created?

Prior to the creation and branding of *Arizona Interns-In-Action*, four State agencies had intern programs, each with differing policies. A universal, unpaid intern program was created to benefit all State of Arizona agencies. One year prior, the State experienced its largest reduction in force and was in its second year of a hiring freeze. These situations made job opportunities nearly impossible for college students yet the State was facing the possibility of 25% of its workforce being eligible to retire within five years. The program was created for many reasons – to help develop the future workforce generation, to introduce interns to the State’s organizational culture, and to offer meaningful intern assignments accompanied with supervision to provide clear direction and targeted goals.

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

To our knowledge, no other state had used a QR (Quick Response) code for



instantaneous access to all program materials by Smartphones or reached out to college students through relatable social media such as Facebook. *Arizona Interns-In-Action* introduced a fresh, uniquely

creative brand that clearly communicated the name and awareness of the program while instilling action and motivating both State agencies and potential interns. The program also brings “humanness” to life with the creation of intern stories and student testimonials that are warm, inviting, and easy to relate to while showcasing the diversity of opportunities within many State agencies. These intern stories are available on our website at <http://www.hr.az.gov/Intern>. The program also offers students career counseling and placement through the State of Arizona’s Career Center and well as sponsoring unique networking and professional development events throughout the year.

5. What was the program's start up costs?

The program was created using existing staff (Recruitment Manager, Communications Manager, and Designer/Webmaster). It is estimated that the program start up costs were approximately \$63,000 over a three-month period. There were no printing costs since all material is available in an electronic format.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

The program continues to utilize the Recruitment Manager, the Communications Manager, and the Designer/Webmaster for an annual cost of approximately \$89,000.

7. How is this program funded?

Through budgeted State funds.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

Yes

9. Are you aware of similar programs in other states?

Other states have intern programs; however, *Arizona Interns-In-Action* is very unique as described in Question #4 above.

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

The success of the program is measured by the number of students successfully placed in agencies; the feedback received from both the interns and State agencies (both interns and sponsor agencies provided an overall rating of “Exceeds Expectations”); the number of repeat customers (i.e., agencies that continue to request interns each semester); and the number of students placed in paid full-time positions.

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

Since its inception, *Arizona Interns-In-Action* continues to grow. To date, more than 50 agencies have sponsored 115 students. These students have completed some

amazing projects that have benefited the State immensely and have provided valuable experience to the interns. Some work examples include

- Fiscal Impact Study & Budget Analysis for the AZ Board of Appraisal
- Development/Deployment of AZ Pandemic Assessment Surveys
- Field work to save endangered species
- Internal Policy and Procedure materials
- Digitizing preservation tapes and materials
- Health Literacy language translations
- Management assistance of fleet vehicles and safety training
- Legislative tracking, bill analysis, and handling constituent affairs
- Business Practices research report

One of the best testaments to the value of this program is now that the economy is improving, interns are becoming full-time State employees. And, as our brand suggests, interns are part of the action. As expressed by one intern, “I am participating, contributing, and hopefully doing something good with my life.” **Our interns are truly *Arizona Interns-In-Action!***