

Nomination for NASPE Eugene H. Rooney Jr. Award - Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

- **Program Title** – Fundamentals of Human Resources (HR) Course
- **State** - Florida
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Summary

In April 2009 the Division of Human Resource Management discussed creating a HR Certification Program (Program) to develop a knowledgeable body of HR professionals within the agencies of the Florida State Personnel System (SPS). The intent is to provide SPS HR practitioners with a means to enhance and transfer professional knowledge, skills and abilities.

However a determination was made that prior to developing a certification program, it would be necessary to establish a baseline of knowledge among SPS HR practitioners. In order to establish this baseline, the Fundamentals of HR course (Course) was developed. The Course addresses the essential functions of HR so that prior to participating in the certification Program, participants would have a basic understanding of the core functional areas in HR and how they apply within the SPS.

Areas covered by the Course include: Introduction to State Government, Classification & Compensation, Recruitment & Selection, Onboarding & Benefits, Attendance & Leave, Performance Management, Employee Programs, Workplace Issues, Employee Relations, and Separations. Upon successful completion of the Course, participants receive a Certificate of Completion and will be eligible to participate in the certification Program, once it is established.

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1) Please provide a brief description of this program.

The Fundamentals of HR course (Course) was developed to provide HR practitioners with a baseline of knowledge in HR and provides an overview of core HR functional areas. These areas are covered by taking participants on a journey through the key points of the employment life cycle. The purpose of this Course is to provide consistency across agencies as to how agency personnel rules are applied. It focuses on the theories behind why the SPS implements specific HR practices, rules and statutes.

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

The project began in April 2009 with research into HR Certification programs when the decision was made to create a course for participants to take as a precursor to sitting for the certification programs and to establish a consistent baseline of knowledge. Thus the development of the Fundamentals of HR course began. The pilot was delivered in February 2010 with two subsequent classes in April and November 2010. It is expected additional classes will be delivered in the Fall 2011.

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

As a result of outsourcing some HR functions and decentralizing the daily administration of statewide policies, the manner in which many of our statewide rules and statutes have been implemented within individual agencies is subject to inconsistencies. Therefore a decision was made to create a statewide certification program for HR practitioners within the State Personnel System (SPS). It is believed that a certified body of HR practitioners will add to the professional credibility of those individuals, and in turn, those individuals will be better equipped to provide a higher quality of service to employees of the agencies that serve the citizens of Florida. While researching development of a certification program, it was discovered that the outsourcing initiative, coupled with smaller HR offices and the loss of seasoned HR professionals through attrition had caused much of the institutional HR knowledge to be

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lost. Because, there was no established benchmark regarding the current level of knowledge within the agency HR offices, it was determined that creation of a fundamental course would solidify the knowledge base of HR professionals within the SPS.

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

In the past this division has been responsible for hosting a large HR conference that had many breakout sessions, addressing specific HR functions. Participants could attend those sessions that specifically pertained to the area of HR in which they work. This practice was indefinitely suspended due to budgetary constraints. With the resultant elimination of a dedicated statewide training staff, the ability of this division to provide specialized training in the various areas of human resources was severely impacted. Furthermore, after many years of specialization, there was a need to “get back to the basics” of HR. Therefore, the approach that was taken with the Fundamentals of HR course was to educate on the foundational HR theory of each area while demonstrating how core HR functions are interconnected and how what happens in one area may have an impact on other core functions. By showcasing “why we do what we do” and the interconnectivity of HR functions, practitioners will have a better understanding of how their job affects other HR areas. Of particular note is that, due to division budget cuts and loss of dedicated training staff, the development and delivery of the course required us to leverage current resources, such as gathering and directing a team of subject matter experts from various individual agencies to assist in content development and utilization of professional trainers culled from the user agencies to deliver the course and keep operational costs to a minimum.

5) What was the program's start up 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.)

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The Division of Human Resource Management possessed or had access to the needed technology, most supplies, a training facility, trainers and staff to implement the program. Purchases primarily consisted of course facilitator and participant materials in the form of personal and table tent name badges and a 3 ½ inch notebook with printed course materials. The cost was a little in excess of \$400.00.

6) What are the program's operational costs?

The operational costs for the program are: printing and notebooks, for 35 participants per course, averaging \$240.00. Future savings could be realized through electronic dissemination of course materials.

7) How is this program funded?

Through the existing annual appropriated budget for the Division of Human Resource Management.

8) Did this program originate in your state?

Yes, we believe so.

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

Throughout our research we found several states that currently offer (and some require) certification; California, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Delaware. However, throughout our research we did not discover any state that has developed a fundamentals course to serve as a prerequisite to taking the certification programs or a course that provides an all encompassing overview of core HR functions to provide the baseline of knowledge.

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

Upon completion of the course each participant is required to successfully complete an on-line test with a passing score of 70% or above. Upon successful completion of the Course, participants will be

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eligible to attend the certification program, which will also measure and document enhanced knowledge through a certification process to include completion of required coursework and a minimum passing score on a testing component. Additionally, a Level 1 evaluation is completed after each course is delivered. The response rate for the evaluations is above 90% with 100% of the responses falling into the “strongly agree” or “agree” categories for questions relating to overall satisfaction and would the participant recommend the course to other HR practitioners.

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

As previously mentioned, the pilot of the fundamentals course was delivered in February 2010. The original course was delivered in four and one half days. Following the pilot, focus groups, with participants from the course, were held to determine what aspects of the course worked and those that could be improved upon. Then the course was modified to reduce it to three and one half days while still covering the pertinent topics. We delivered the second course in April 2010 and after reviewing the evaluations from that session, a decision was made to reduce the length of the course yet again. The course was reconfigured and is now delivered in three days. In November 2010, the course was delivered a third time, following the three day schedule, and all the topics were well covered. By reducing the number of learning activities, we were able to reduce the delivery time while still covering the learning objectives in enough detail to ensure all participants gain enough knowledge to successfully complete the course post test. It is our intent to continue to deliver this course as needed as well as develop an on-line version of the course to increase accessibility to all HR professionals throughout the SPS.