

2004 ROONEY AWARD

NOMINATION – INNOVATIVE STATE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



Program Title: “Special Emphasis Project”

State: North Carolina

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North Carolina State Government
“Special Emphasis Project”

The Office of State Personnel (OSP) provides leadership and supports agencies and universities in creating and sustaining dynamic human resource systems to attract, retain, develop, and motivate a diverse and competent workforce. In meeting this mission, OSP annually provides the North Carolina General Assembly with several reports detailing workforce representation data as well as promotion, new hire, grievance, disciplinary action, performance management, and compensation information. Over the years, the analysis of these reports revealed several unfavorable trends related to various demographic groups. Therefore, in order to address these problems and respond to concerns that are unique to specific demographic groups, in 1999, OSP embarked upon a Special Emphasis Project, which was designed to ensure a working environment in which employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

Under the guidance of a 23-person Special Emphasis Project Advisory Committee, a decision was made to conduct further research on the demographic group that had the most apparent unfavorable trends. Current and historical data indicated that African American male employees within North Carolina State Government were not reaching full workforce representation levels and were also experiencing unfavorable trends in the performance management and disciplinary arenas. Therefore, the initial focus of the Special Emphasis Project was on African American males.

In response to OSP research findings, the aims of the Special Emphasis Project with a focus on African American males was to recruit and retain this demographic group at high occupational levels, and to address the unfavorable trends. The project development included dialogue through focus groups with African American males to gain their understanding and perspective and with supervisors of African American males in order to gain their perspective.

Based upon the recommendations of the focus groups, which were adopted by the Special Emphasis Project Advisory Committee, nine initiatives were developed and designed during the period of October 2002 through February 2003. With the assistance of the Special Emphasis Project Advisory Committee, OSP piloted the nine initiatives in selected agencies during the period of March 2003 – December 2003. At the conclusion of the pilots, an outside consultant was hired to conduct an evaluation to determine the results. Initiatives, which are deemed successful, will be implemented statewide.

The ultimate goal of the project is to develop and/or enhance existing programs to address the employment trends of the State to improve the functioning of the human resource system for all North Carolina State Government employees.

North Carolina State Government
"Special Emphasis Project"

1. Description of the program

In order to address several unfavorable trends related to various demographic groups, the Office of State Personnel (OSP) embarked upon a Special Emphasis Project (SEP). The ultimate goal of the project was to develop and/or enhance existing programs to address the employment trends of the State to improve the functioning of the human resource system for all employees. The initial focus of the project was on African American males since this demographic group had the most apparent unfavorable trends. The nine initiatives that were developed and piloted for the program are described below:

- Develop a mentoring program for African American male employees
- Expand recruitment efforts to target African American male employees for high level occupations
- Review performance management processes and documentation to determine if managers and supervisors are conducting performance evaluations in compliance with established policy
- Explore the development of a performance management system which considers occupational variations
- Review the promotional policies and practices for consistent application
- Review the disciplinary process to determine if differences occur in the way discipline is awarded for comparable offenses
- Design training programs for managers and supervisors to include information on cultural issues, communication, and career development
- Design training programs to assist young employees with career development strategies, communication, and interpersonal skills
- Conduct a study using correlation analysis of the salaries allocated to employees to identify any possible relationships between pay and race/ethnicity, years of service, job assignments, education, and supervisor assignment

These initiatives were implemented by OSP and 11 other state agencies.

2. How long has the program been operational?

Statistical research for the SEP began in December 1999 and continued until September 2000. In order to gain qualitative data to validate the quantitative data, focus groups for African American males and their supervisors were conducted in February 2002. The focus groups made recommendations and the Special Emphasis Project Advisory Committee adopted nine initiatives from the recommendations and issued a report, "Special Emphasis Project: African American Males and Employment in State Government" in June 2002. OSP and the Special Emphasis Project Advisory Committee designed pilots for the nine initiatives from October 2002 to February 2003. The implementation of the pilot initiatives began in March 2003 and was concluded in December 2003. An outside consultant is currently evaluating the pilots to determine the results, which should be completed by April 2004.

3. Why was the program created?

The SEP was created to address the unfavorable trends related to various demographic groups in the areas of promotion, new hire, grievance, disciplinary action, performance management, and compensation. The program will eventually address unfavorable trends for all demographic groups; however, since African American males were most affected, this group was the starting point.

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

The SEP was the first time that the personnel system for North Carolina State Government collaborated with the individuals most affected by disparities in the design of a program to address their issues. African American males played a pivotal role in qualifying the statistical data that showed several unfavorable trends related to their demographic group. African American males participated in the design of the nine pilots and served as chair for two of the initiatives. The SEP also allowed OSP to collaborate with HR professionals from a cross section of agencies in the design and implementation stages of the program. The Special Emphasis Project for African American males was endorsed by the Governor and received support from all agency heads.

5. What was the program's start cost?

The initial cost of the program included the expense of travel for the focus group facilitators. The facilitators were African American male employees from a cross section of agencies; their time for this project was

absorbed under their regular salary expenses. Along with the facilitators' travel expense, the associated expense of printing material for training and sending correspondences were also incurred. No new staff was hired for this project, employees from OSP and a cross section of agencies completed tasks for this project along with their other job responsibilities.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

Operational costs for the project included: staffing (program manager, sub-committee chairs, program coordinators for each of the nine initiatives at no cost to the project); material cost for training; cost of facilitators/trainers; cost for the consultant's fees for the program design of the training programs for young employees; and the consultant's fee for the SEP evaluation. The total operational cost was \$40,350.

7. How is this program funded?

The program was funded from lapsed salaries within the participating agencies for the training program of the young employees.

8. Did this program originate in your state?

To the best of our knowledge, the SEP originated in the North Carolina State Government.

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

To the best our knowledge, the SEP in the format designed by North Carolina State Government is not present in other states. Other states have addressed unfavorable trends in their individual agencies' Affirmative Action Programs; however, there was no single statewide program in existence to address issues of concern to specific demographic groups.

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

The success was measured by the products, services, and tools developed for use within the human resource system, such as:

- Created a model mentoring program; recruited, selected, and trained participants for the program; and piloted three formal mentoring programs, group mentoring, networking, and one-to-one mentoring.
- Developed a recruitment guide, handbook, checklist, and strategy options; these tools were piloted to employ African American males at salary grade 75 or higher (this level represents senior management).

- Created a computerized performance management trend analysis tool that was piloted in 11 correctional facilities. The analysis from this tool is utilized to improve the level of reliability of performance management reviews and to indicate whether managers are conducting the reviews in a fair and equitable manner for all employees.
- Designed a performance management system for occupations that have repetitive duties. The occupational group used in the pilot was “Transportation Worker”; employees and their supervisors within this group participated in the design of the system.
- Recommendations were made to North Carolina State Government for enhancement and additions to the State Personnel Policy to reflect the programs piloted under the SEP.
- Developed and piloted training courses for managers utilizing e-learning, classroom, and blended training to address the disparity in disciplinary actions.
- Conducted one-day executive retreat (“Strategies for Diversifying the Workforce”) for top-level management in the State’s three largest agencies. Completed a diversity plan for implementation by each of the three agencies during May 2003 – October 2003. Conducted two one-day course sessions, “Managing Differences: Reaching African American Males” for middle management.
- Developed a two-tier career development program to maximize the potential and professional success of African American males between the ages of 18-36. One program was for current employees through a weeklong “Career Development Training Program Institute” with monthly follow-up sessions to assess and enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities developed during the institute. The other program was for college juniors and seniors through a “Summer Internship Program”. OSP partnered with INROADS, Inc. for development; this was the first time that any governmental agency utilized the services offered by INROADS, Inc. for target recruitment and specialized training.
- Correlation analysis was conducted comparing pay to factors of: race/gender group; standard occupational categories; educational level; and service years.

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

The SEP will grow because North Carolina State Government will develop policies for statewide implementation of the successful pilots for all State employees.