



National Association of State Personnel Executives

2015 Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Awards Nomination

**Innovative State HR Management Program
Office of Diversity & Equality Training Program**

Kentucky
Timothy Longmeyer
Secretary
Kentucky Personnel Cabinet
501 High Street
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
502.517.6046
timothy.longmeyer@ky.gov

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Summary

The Kentucky Personnel Cabinet's Office of Diversity & Equality (ODE) assists state government agencies in developing work environments that value diversity and inclusion. Diversity compliments the organizational values of teamwork, leadership, empowerment, and service quality. It encompasses the way we work, the work environment, and respect for people and ideas. Our definition of diversity is not limited to gender and race, but extends to all the various dimensions that make each employee unique.

A key component to achieving the goal of inclusive work environments is the ODE training program. ODE training opportunities help develop and promote an environment of inclusion where we explore our differences and embrace and celebrate the unique perspective that each individual contributes to the success of the whole group. This training program is needs-driven and consists of three components: regular monthly training events in harassment prevention, diversity and inclusion, and generational differences; on-site local training for agencies within the enterprise; and specialized training on emerging issues for HR leaders and management professionals at the annual Governor's Equal Employment Opportunity Conference.

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1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The ODE Training Program is focused on educating employees about their role in creating work environments that are not only free from harassment and discrimination, but also capitalize on the unique contributions and perspectives of all employees. ODE staff provides monthly training in the areas of harassment prevention and diversity and inclusion. The *Anti-Harassment & Prevention* training lays the groundwork for understanding the role respect and trust play in promoting a positive work experience. This training extends beyond just themes of sexual harassment or sex/race discrimination, and includes discussion of all the protected classes and the general theme of treating others with respect. From there, through the *Moving Kentucky Forward: Embracing Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace* and the *Bridging the Generation Gap in the Workplace* training series, the program focuses on challenging employees to think beyond tolerance and to understand how valuing and appreciating difference can enrich the work experience.

Often agencies will have particular training needs in the areas of EEO and diversity. ODE trainers work with agencies to create training experiences that address these needs and further our mission to establish inclusive work environments. Though these on-site training events are sometimes conducted in reaction to an event or conflict within a work group, ODE has done a tremendous job in encouraging a preventative approach to training and most on-site training events are requested by agency leaders who recognize the value these training events bring to establishing happy, productive teams.

Of course, there are a wide array of topics that fall under the EEO, diversity and

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inclusion umbrella that require a more specialized approach than harassment prevention, diversity in the workplace, and understanding generational differences. In order to keep HR leaders and management professionals on the forefront of emerging issues in the workplace, and recognizing the limitations on an office of four employees, ODE decided to utilize the annual Governor's Equal Employment Opportunity Conference as a platform to present information and ideas about these new topics. In planning for the conference, ODE takes a needs-based approach in scheduling trainers for the annual event. Over the past few years the conference has brought in experts to address EEO and diversity topics including sexual orientation and gender identity, workplace bullying, religious discrimination, transgender employees, mental health issues in the workplace, leadership development, investigations, Hispanic outreach, workplace violence, generational work styles, understanding inclusion as behavior, conducting proper interviews, dispelling misconceptions of hiring people with disabilities, building resilience, national origin, hiring veterans, and resolving conflict.

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

Beginning in 2008, ODE staff developed and implemented the monthly on-site *Anti-Harassment & Prevention* and *Moving Kentucky Forward: Embracing Diversity & Inclusion in the Workplace* training programs. The 2010 Governor's EEO Conference was the first conference where ODE staff began to strategically pick topics to further and complement the office's training goals. In 2013, it became evident to ODE staff that understanding generation differences was a growing need of our workforce so the *Bridging the Generation Gap in the*

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Workplace was developed and added to the regular training catalog.

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

This training program was established as a result of ODE's strategic planning in 2009. ODE staff set a mission to provide innovative, effective training to state employees in order to establish inclusive work cultures across the enterprise. The anti-harassment training not only addresses sexual harassment but race, color, religion, national origin, age (40 and over), sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, disability, genetic information and retaliation.

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

ODE trainers pride themselves on an innovative approach to employee training. ODE training is high energy, fun and focused on employee participation. Participants leave our training not only more informed but also excited about the topic. ODE trainers are flexible and adaptable. Our training evolves as trainers explore new approaches to discussion topics and incorporate lessons and feedback gleaned both during and after training. ODE staff recognizes that these topics are not always easy for employees to talk about, so they are committed to developing a classroom atmosphere that is relaxed, fun and built upon trust between trainers and participants.

5. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide detailed information about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other expenditures, as well as existing

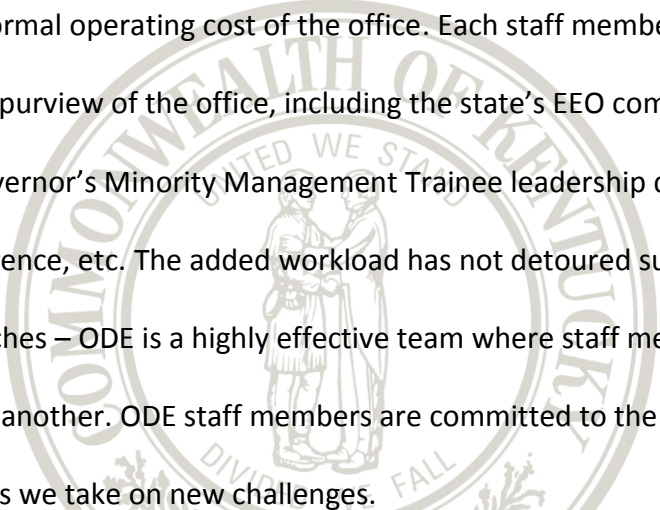
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materials, technology and staff already in place.)

No startup costs were needed. The program was a result of a strategic plan focused on “doing more with less” and was created using the various resources and tools already at the office’s disposal.

6. What are the program’s operational costs?

This program is staffed by the four members of the Office of Diversity & Equality and operates within the normal operating cost of the office. Each staff member also focuses on other areas under the purview of the office, including the state’s EEO compliance program, affirmative action, Governor’s Minority Management Trainee leadership development program, the annual EEO Conference, etc. The added workload has not detoured success. The office practices what it preaches – ODE is a highly effective team where staff members genuinely value and respect one another. ODE staff members are committed to the goals of the office and support one another as we take on new challenges.

The seal of the Commonwealth of Kentucky is visible in the background, featuring two figures holding hands, surrounded by the text "COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY" and "UNITED WE STAND". Below the figures, it says "DIVIDED WE FALL".

7. How is this program funded?

The program is funded through the normal operating costs of the Office of Diversity & Equality.

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

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This particular training program, with all three elements, is unique to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Additionally, this November saw the 28th Annual Governor's Equal Employment Opportunity Conference. Though this is not the only EEO focused conference in the country, its longstanding tradition and continued focus on empowering state employees to make their workplaces better is something to be proud of.

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

The success and impact of this training program is gauged through participant feedback and the growing demand for these services. Training events on these topics are in great demand: We have had more than 9,500 employees go through ODE's training program since 2008. As word has spread throughout the enterprise of the existence and effectiveness of these ODE training events, requests for training continue to rise. ODE has recently added additional training events to the monthly schedule to meet demand. ODE has also begun to receive requests from quasi-state agencies and professional associations for training.

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

The ODE Training Program is ever-evolving. As staff members learn new information regarding the topics, as workforce needs are evaluated, as outside factors and culture impacts our workplaces, we adapt our training to address new challenges, apply new approaches and inspire new and unique discussions. No two training events are exactly the same. ODE trainers are flexible and adaptable both in and out of the classroom. Attendee participation is highly

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valued and therefore flexibility is an essential component to both conducting and developing (and redeveloping) training modules.

