

Arizona Department of Administration
Submittal for NASPE Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Award
Category: Innovative State Human Resource Management Program

Program Title: **Supervisor Academy**
State: Arizona
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Program Summary:

In November 2011, the Human Resources Division of the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) launched its newly redesigned *Supervisor Academy*. Supervisor training has been legislatively required for nearly fifteen years; but past courses focused more on developing leaders than on the practical day-to-day skills of supervision. Agency training managers were expressing concern that new supervisors didn't have the skill level needed to benefit from leadership courses. After much research and deliberation it was determined to create an entirely new *Supervisor Academy* and use the existing courses in a future Leadership Academy. The new *Supervisor Academy* debuted more than a year ago with an updated look and fresh content that educates supervisors about their role *in all aspects of the life-cycle of an employee*. In addition to courses on employment law, the series of courses also covers such topics as filling vacancies, interviewing and selection, onboarding, managing performance, day-to-day supervision, employee discipline, dealing with difficult employees, among others. Agencies and supervisors alike are giving high praise to the new Academy.

Supervisor Academy

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The *Supervisor Academy* is series of 13 computer based training (CBT) courses that must be taken by State of Arizona employees with supervisory or management responsibilities within six months of hire or promotion to a supervisor.

2. How long has this program been operational?

The new *Supervisor Academy* has been in place since November 14, 2011.

3. Why was this program created?

The *Supervisor Academy* was created to provide supervisors with more day-to-day, hands-on skills needed to be successful within State government. Supervisors learn about the practical and legal aspects of supervision. The former Academy was thought to be more geared toward middle management and those who were already on solid footing in the area of daily supervision. Because of the concern expressed about supervisors lacking the basic skills, ADOA training professionals, in consultation with human resources staff and training personnel from many State agencies, designed the new courses based on the life-cycle of an employee. The new courses cover the supervisor's roles and responsibilities from hiring through separation of an employee. Post-course evaluations show that supervisors prefer the new Academy; plus agencies are extremely pleased with the new product and no longer need to provide additional training in this area. In fact, some agencies required all supervisors to take the new *Supervisor Academy* even if they had already completed their mandatory supervisor training.

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

The *Supervisor Academy* CBTs are packed with information and personalized the training for the learner by making the courses more visually interesting and incorporating the same two individuals throughout the courses. These supervisors have ongoing dialog between chapters to provide a mixture of delivery methods so supervisors feel the more friendly approach to learning. Great effort was devoted to covering employee situations that all supervisors face or know they will face, so supervisors are more inclined to pay attention. A test out option is provided for cases where a supervisor believes he or she already knows the material. Those supervisors can choose to proceed directly to the final exam and will receive credit for completing the course if they pass the exam. By providing the Academy in a CBT format, we have ensured all supervisors receive a consistent message. By condensing the material into the most salient points and keeping each CBT around 50 screens, supervisors can complete each course in approximately 30 minutes. All courses are available statewide on a 24/7 basis allowing prison guards and other shift workers to take courses in the middle of the night or whenever it is most convenient.



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

The program was created using existing staff (Training Manager, Section Manager, and a variety of Subject Matter Experts). It is estimated that the program start up costs were slightly more than \$100,000 over a nine-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 Training Manager, Section Manager, and several Subject Matter Experts whenever updates are needed for an annual cost of approximately \$30,000.

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 offer supervisor training; however, we are not familiar with other states offering mandatory training that follows the life-cycle of an employee. All course material pertains to laws and policies of the State of Arizona.

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

The success of the program is measured by ratings given through post-course survey tools. When considering Ease of Use, Easy to Understand, and Applies to My Job, ratings showed a 17 - 21% increase in supervisor satisfaction several months after launching the new Academy. The survey tool, attached to each CBT, provides an opportunity for supervisors to add comments. This allows us to improve the courses where needed and to bask in the appreciation sent our way. Here are a few examples of the praise we receive:

- Easy to use and full of great info.
- The visual examples and tables of exempt/non-exempt, covered/uncovered employees were great - it's the first time this has made sense in a simple way!
- Great info! I enjoyed the detail in which subjects were covered.
- I think that we need more reminder courses like this during the year.

- I really liked this course; very positive and good information to know.
- This is training that should be mandatory every year. We sometimes forget the importance of treating everyone equally. This is a great subject!
- This course should be taken more often so it stays fresh in our everyday routine.
- Very relevant and helpful--I wish I knew this information 18 months ago!
- I have 22 years in the DOC and about 16 years as supervisor. I have seen and heard a lot in the last 22 years. I feel this information is good for new supervisors and I wish I had it online when I became one - I had to learn it the hard way.
- I really like the courses on-line and they don't take long to take. I like the fact we do not have to sit in a classroom for most of our required training. This is great!
- This course will be quite useful in my job.

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

All courses were recently modified or rewritten to align with the transition to an at-will workforce as part of the most significant reform to the State's Personnel System in the last 30 years. Even with some of the courses being down for more than a month, 2,765 supervisors have completed the new *Supervisor Academy* in the past sixteen months and another 339 are in the process of doing so.

To view two of the thirteen *Supervisor Academy* CBTs, click on the links below:

[Introduction to Supervision](#)

[Day-to-Day Supervision](#)