

NASPE's 2006 Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Awards / Innovative State Human Resource Management

Program Title: The New York State Human Resource Academy (HRAcademy)

State: New York State

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Summary:

New York State employs nearly 190,000 individuals in over 450 agencies, commissions, councils, and other New York State and local government bodies. Of these, over 2,000 individuals are human resource (HR) professionals who serve as personnel administrators, affirmative-action officers, staff-development specialists, employee-relations representatives, payroll analysts, and health-benefits administrators for New York State and local government.

These HR professionals are key players in carrying out the strategic missions of their organizations and in effecting the successful deployment of their workforces. They are also the front line of customer service to state and local government agencies, employees, and managers, and to those who seek employment in New York State. Alarming, recent statistics show that nearly one-third of New York State's workforce will become eligible for retirement over the next five years. This potential workforce loss, coupled with significant workforce downsizing, increases the magnitude of the human resource challenge for New York State. Future HR professionals will be faced with the daunting responsibilities of acquiring new skills, taking on ever more challenging roles, and addressing increasingly complex personnel issues.

The Commissioner of the New York State Department of Civil Service (DCS), Daniel E. Wall, realized that the training and development of New York State's HR professionals was not centralized or organized in any way. Commissioner Wall took the initiative to fill this void, believing that, as New York State's central personnel agency, the Department of Civil Service must take the lead to ensure that New York's state and local HR professionals are prepared to deliver competent, comprehensive, and effective services. To this end, Commissioner Wall established the NYS HR Academy.

The HR Academy is the Department of Civil Service's centralized HR professional-development program designed to prepare human resource professionals for the challenges [of their](#) positions. Using such tools as the HR Newsletter, the HR website, the HR on-line community calendar, and HR web-casting, the HR Academy provides information, coordinates events, and serves as a forum by which New York's state and local HR professionals can learn, communicate, and network.

The HR Academy was developed with minimal start-up costs and has enabled the Department of Civil Service to reach HR professionals and coordinate HR events across New York State in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The HR Academy is reaping significant savings for New York State at a time when we are forced to do more with less.

1. Please provide a brief description of this program.

The HR Academy is a centralized professional development and training program for HR staff across New York State. The program was developed to provide New York's state and local government agencies with an ongoing supply of well-trained, broadly-experienced HR professionals who are ready and able to assume the new HR responsibilities, assignments, and challenges of the future. The program was designed to provide information, coordinate events, and establish communication and networking for the State's HR professionals. The specific goals of the HR Academy are:

- ***To Develop and Empower a New Generation of Human Resource Professionals:*** The HR Academy was developed to facilitate learning and to improve individual, team, and organizational performance via a centralized, coordinated, statewide training program. The program encompasses seminars, HR professional organizations, college course-work, e-learning, and training provided by DCS and HR professionals in New York State and local government. The HR Academy supports, encourages, and rewards a statewide culture of continuous learning.
- ***To Strengthen the HR Community within New York State Government:*** The HR Academy was developed to foster a strong sense of community among HR professionals throughout New York's state and local government agencies. The HR Academy builds on the existing HR network in New York State to develop a more integrated HR community which is collaboratively engaged in shared goals and objectives. An integrated HR community will increase the cohesiveness of the HR function, increase the sharing of HR information, and provide support for common HR goals.
- ***To Actively Partner with Agencies on Civil Service Based Projects:*** The HR Academy will continue to make efforts to enhance its partnership with New York's state and local agencies, to remain actively mindful of the customer's perspective, and to promote ongoing partnerships throughout every phase of its activities.
- ***To Create a Forum for HR Professionals and HR Management:*** Many HR directors have requested the Department of Civil Service to create a forum for the exchange of information and ideas among state and local HR managers. To this end, the HR Academy will support and partner with HR groups such as the NYS Personnel Council, the NYS Affirmative Action Advisory Council, the NYS Training Council, the NYS Employee Relations Advisory Council, the National Association of Personnel Executives, the American Society for Public Administration, and the International Public Management Association-HR, to foster the collaboration and sharing of HR information, trends, best practices, and activities.
- ***To Provide Conferences and Workshops Related to HR Specialties:*** The HR Academy will provide training and development opportunities for HR professionals.
- ***To Sponsor the HR Professional Certification Process:*** As effective HR management becomes increasingly more important to meet current and future workforce demands, there will be a

growing demand for improved access to certification from HR professional organizations. In addition to providing a developmental opportunity for HR professionals, the certification process will increase the skill level of HR managers in New York State and local government and will serve as an indicator of HR expertise and knowledge.

In order to realize its goals, the HRAcademy incorporated a number of learning tools and delivery methods to reach its diverse customer-base across the state in an efficient and effective manner. The HRAcademy enhanced and retained current resources and programs with established track records, then combined these with cutting-edge technology by coupling traditional classroom instruction with live web-casting. Recognizing that communication and sharing are key to developing and maintaining a knowledgeable and effective HR community, the HRAcademy developed the following tools:

- **HR Newsletter** - The HRAcademy publishes the HR Newsletter approximately once every three weeks. The HR Newsletter provides articles and insights from professional journals and disseminates them electronically to approximately 1,600 HR staff across New York State. The HRA Newsletter serves as a resource where HR professionals can keep apprised of new developments in the field, and serves as a forum for the exchange of best practices and ideas.
- **HR Website and On-Line Community** – The HRAcademy, via the Department of Civil Service website (<http://www.cs.state.ny.us/hr/>), offers links to workplace trends, succession-planning tools, HR technology, HR news, HR resources, and federal and other state HR sites.
- **HR Community Calendar** – The HRAcademy, in conjunction with the NYS Personnel Council, which consists of HR professionals in many NYS agencies, offers a constantly updated Community Calendar of HR programs and events on the HR website. The Community Calendar provides a description of programs, times, and locations to enable HR staff to better plan continuing-education endeavors and to better schedule meeting and training dates.
- **HR Web-Casting** – The HRAcademy uses web-casting to enable geographically dispersed HR staff in New York's state and local agencies to participate in training and education programs without the inconvenience and expense associated with travel and having to be away from their offices and customers. Web-conferencing enables the HRAcademy to use the Internet for visual display, and the telephone for audio presentation, to provide far-reaching delivery of meetings and training. In this manner, HR professionals can reap the benefits and vibrancy of live training, coupled with the convenience of on-line training.

Taken together, these approaches have enabled the HRAcademy to effect a positive, customer-oriented shift within New York State government. They have also enabled New York's state and local government agencies to more efficiently and effectively use limited resources to address evolving HR challenges, such as increased demands for service in the face of decreased staff and budget resources,

loss of institutional knowledge due to increased retirements, increased challenges in recruitment and retention, and increased cultural diversity.

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

The HRAcademy was initiated in December 2004. An advisory group was established in January 2005, consisting of members from the NYS Personnel Council, the NYS Affirmative Action Advisory Council, the NYS Payroll Users Group, the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, the NYS Training Council, IPMA representatives, and staff from the Department of Civil Service. The first HRAcademy course was held in September 2005 as a pilot program for NYS HR professionals.

3. Why was this program created? (What problems or issues does it address?)

People are an organization's most important asset. Human resource professionals are key players in accomplishing the strategic missions of New York's state and local government agencies, and are vital partners in the administration of the State's merit-based personnel selection system. Understanding the merit system is critical to the effective staffing of New York's State and local government workforces and to providing equal opportunities for current and prospective employees.

With increasing worker retirements and resultant workforce losses, New York State's HR professionals will have to acquire new skills, take on challenging roles, and address complex personnel issues to meet future workforce needs. New York's state and local government agencies have clearly identified a need for training, in both technical and non-technical HR competencies, to address their succession planning needs. As New York State's central personnel agency, the Department of Civil Service must do its part to ensure that HR professionals in New York State and local government are prepared to deliver competent, effective services. The HRAcademy was established to develop HR technical competencies and to empower a new generation of HR professionals.

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

The HRAcademy is more than just training – It is *redesigning strategies to improve service delivery, and identifying the steps necessary to become a customer-driven HR organization*. The HRAcademy has identified strategies to better provide electronic access to HR information and has effected procedural changes to more quickly deliver business decisions, services, and products. It embraces a shared-stewardship model of working together with New York's state and local government agencies to share knowledge and resources. Finally, the HRAcademy realizes that communication is the key to a knowledgeable and sharing community and that technology must be an integral, complementary tool for instruction and administration – not merely an independent resource.

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

The HRAcademy's start up costs were minimal. The program goal was to use existing staff who have the experience and ability to transfer knowledge to others. Web-casting-technology costs totaled less

than \$5,000 as an initial investment. As an added benefit, the costs and limitations associated with traditional classroom training were reduced. The HRAcademy is now able to reach each and every HR professional in New York State and local government in a far more efficient and cost effective manner.

6. What are the program's operational costs?

Operational costs will range between \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year for the web-casting service and the audio component. In comparison, the estimated cost for a one-day classroom session given outside the Albany area is approximately \$7,800, factoring in costs for travel, per diem, rental of facility space, etc. The cost-savings potential of the HRAcademy is significant.

7. How is the program funded?

The program is funded through the State's General Fund. No special funding was used to develop or maintain this program.

8. Did this program originate in your state? Yes.

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

Many states have some form of HR professional development program. Many states also utilize some form of e-learning. New York State's HRAcademy differs in that it seeks to build an on-line community for the HR professional -- a community in which HR professionals can develop their knowledge through shared experiences, interactions, and resources.

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

The success of the HRAcademy can be measured in the number of offerings delivered to customers in a cost-effective manner. The HRAcademy has identified at least 2,000 HR professionals around the state for participation in the program. The cost of providing traditional classroom training outside the Albany area is approximately \$7,800 a session. The cost of an HRAcademy web-cast session is approximately \$180 for a one-hour session with 30 participants. The HRAcademy will reap significant savings for New York State at a time when we forced to do more with less. The success of this program and its impact on our HR community can be summed up by a quote from Tom Peters, coauthor of [*In Search of Excellence*](#) in 1982, who, when asked, "*What happens if I train my people and they leave?*," responded, "*I'd be more concerned if you didn't train them and they stayed.*"

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

Originally viewed as a fundamentals-training program, the HRAcademy quickly expanded as experienced HR managers learned about the program and expressed the willingness to share their knowledge and expertise. More importantly, since we are no longer hampered by accommodations, time, travel, and scheduling constraints, our ability to provide training programs grows daily.