

State of Alabama Department of Transportation: Development of an Employee Development Program for Merit System Job Classifications in the Alabama Department of Transportation

Project Date: 1998-present

Description

Personnel Decisions Research Institutes, Inc. (PDRI) and Sheldon Zedeck, Inc. were hired by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) to develop an Employee Development Program for its merit system job classifications. We focused initially on the Engineering Assistant (EA) and Civil Engineer (CE) classifications because these two classifications represent a significant proportion of the ALDOT employee population and because they present some unique challenges (e.g., wide variation in job duties performed within the same job title). The general approach developed for EAs and CEs served as a prototype for the development of programs for approximately 75 additional merit system job classifications.

Our goal is to design an Employee Development Program that meets the following objectives:

1. provide ALDOT with a capable and flexible workforce that will facilitate the accomplishment of ALDOT's primary mission;
2. allow employees to move between jobs as freely as possible, but always within specific competency requirements (e.g., meeting minimum qualifications, passing exams, etc.);
3. provide employees with the information they need to make informed career decisions with regard to the various jobs, and provide this information very early in their careers;
4. provide a work environment that is both motivating and fair; and satisfy the terms of the 1994 Reynolds Consent Decree I.

The Employee Development Program is made up of three key components:

1. An orientation program for new hires,
2. A "module program" for each classification that describe the training courses and job experiences that employees important for career progression, and
3. System monitoring and documentation.

Each of these components is described in more detail below.

The goal of the orientation program is to provide new employees with information concerning career choices and opportunities, as early in their

ALDOT career as possible, and to help them set well-informed and appropriate career goals. The orientation program provides new employees with general information about ALDOT, information about the Employee Development Program, and an overview of all major types of work performed within ALDOT. For the EA job classification, the orientation includes hands-on experience performing basic job tasks and very basic training in content areas important for all jobs in that classification (e.g., basic math, computer, and contract plan reading).

The second key component of the Employee Development Program is a set of “module programs” that define the training courses and on-the-job training that will help employees prepare for career advancement. Each module program specifies the amount and type of classroom training and on-the-job experience employees will be offered. In classifications with a great deal within-classification heterogeneity in job tasks (e.g., EA and CE), module programs were developed for subspecialties within the classification.

System monitoring and documentation is handled through the PeopleSoft Human Resources tracking system. The tracking system helps ensure that module program opportunities are being offered equitably to all employees, in accordance with program policies. The EDP Administrator, currently supplied by PDRI, administers and coordinates the program state-wide, under the oversight of ALDOT's Training & Education Committee.

Throughout the course of this project, PDRI has (and will continue to) provided expert witness testimony and assistance to the Department of Transportation's legal team in legal matters related to the Reynolds Consent Decree.