

Guidelines For Designing Seminars and Seminar Materials

The GCSAA education staff can help affiliated chapters locate quality seminar providers. If, however, the chapter elects to develop its own seminar program, the following pages will prove invaluable during preparation.

The process for designing and developing an effective seminar involves the following steps:

- Identify competencies to be addressed.
- Create learning objectives.
- Design participant pre-work (preparation).
- Design strategy and materials for transferring learning to the job (presentation).
- Develop appropriate learning activities (practice).
- Develop methods for ensuring transfer of new knowledge and skills to members' job (performance).

Identify Competencies to be Addressed

As part of the GCSAA Professional Development Initiative, GCSAA has developed a comprehensive inventory of the competencies required of successful superintendents. The GCSAA curriculum is designed to completely address each of the competencies. The first step in creating a seminar is to determine which competency or competencies will be addressed in the seminar. The best way to do this is to consult with the GCSAA education staff. They will identify the competencies to be addressed — either by referring you to the competency model or to a request for proposal (RFP) connected to the seminar.

Create Learning Objectives

A learning objective is a statement of what a successful learner will be able to do upon completion of the seminar. It describes a proposed change or an improvement in a learner's on-the-job behavior. All learning activities are designed and developed to accomplish the learning objectives.

When writing learning objectives for GCSAA seminars, think in terms of **behavior**. What learner behavior(s) would indicate the participant has learned or mastered the seminar content at an acceptable level? Write your objective in response to this statement:

“At the conclusion of this seminar, each participant will be able to . . .”

An **action verb** begins each objective. Each objective must be **measurable and observable**. For help, use the competency model's performance statements—associated with your target competencies—as a source of language for learning objectives. GCSAA does not have a required number of objectives for a seminar. **A good rule of thumb is one to two objectives for every two hours of content.**

The following are examples of learning objectives:

At the conclusion of this seminar, each participant will be able to . . .

1. Perform and interpret a turfgrass tissue analysis.

2. Develop and implement a detailed soil amendment plan for identified soil deficiencies.

Designing Seminar Materials

Designing seminar materials is an essential element to the success of a seminar. Seminar manuals can be used to reinforce learning, break up the monotony of a lecture, allow learners to use more than one learning style and provide take home references for use when back on the job. Seminar materials should contain the following items: description of the seminar, timed outline, learning objectives, material that will help them follow along with the presentation (your PowerPoint slides) and reference articles or a list of references.

Preparation

During the preparation stage, efforts are focused on helping participants increase their ability to receive and later apply their new knowledge. This can be done through the development of outlines and objectives, which allows participants to perceive a clear linkage between what they will be learning and how they will utilize their new knowledge and skills on-the-job. Each seminar should have specific preparation activities for each seminar they teach.

Preparation activities may include such things as:

- Profiling and self-assessment.
- Personal study and pre-work.
- Establishing learning and performance objectives.
- Identifying resources and support mechanisms.
- Linking course objectives to employer performance expectations or personal development goals.
- Reading assignments.
- Research assignments.

Presentation

During the presentation stage, cluster the relevant content into digestible pieces of information. Include the following elements in your presentation: use a variety of instructional methods; ask the audience questions and give plenty of examples; and review and summarize the information. Significant learner participation is possible with any content and any teaching method—even lecture. Dedicate only one-third of the classroom time to presentation.

Potential presentation techniques may include:

- Lecture
- Discussion
- Brainstorm
- Demonstration

Lecture—The lecture is a formal talk on a specific subject for instruction. To use lecture interactively:

- Involve multiple senses by using a variety of visual and auditory aids.
- Use interesting language that participants will understand.
- Use repetition for important points.
- Suggest note taking to stimulate active attention.
- Make the organization of the lecture crystal-clear in the beginning.

- Do not read the material word-for-word.
- Develop good speaking habits and effective presentation skills.

Discussion—Discussion is a group activity where the facilitator and the participants cooperatively talk over issues. It is a process of thinking aloud together. To use discussion interactively:

- Arrange seating to maximize the opportunity for direct eye contact and easy interaction.
- Clearly define the goals of the discussion.
- Keep the discussion focused and on track. If necessary, establish ground rules for participation.
- If possible, involve everyone. Employ small breakout groups.
- Use periodic summaries. Assess the progress of the discussion, making changes in ground rules as necessary to keep the discussion moving and productive.

Brainstorming—Brainstorming is a group attempt to generate options or solutions to a problem by offering any ideas that come to mind—no matter how extreme. The purpose of brainstorming is to generate lots of ideas quickly, while suspending all judgment or criticism of the ideas. To use brainstorming interactively:

- State the problem clearly and specifically.
- Designate a recorder to capture all ideas where they can be seen (flipchart, overhead, etc).
- Rule out all judgmental commentary—positive as well as negative.
- Keep the setting informal and fun.
- Orchestrate participant suggestions—insert your own only to keep things moving or to open new lines of thought.
- Close the brainstorming session after 15-20 minutes.
- Restate the problem, then start sorting and refining the options.
- Narrow the ideas objectively, without assigning credit or blame, to the most promising ones.
- Summarize.

Demonstration—Demonstration is a group activity that can be used with large and small groups. They are used to stimulate interest, use multiple senses in the learners, present ideas, provide direct experience and reinforce learning. To use demonstrations effectively, follow these tips:

- Know your audience and their experience level.
- Set your objectives and know what you want the learner to get out of the demonstration.
- Involve the audience by asking for volunteers.
- Arrange the demonstration area so everyone can see.
- Provide handouts to support what you are showing the audience.
- Be organized.

Practice

In the practice step, frequently give learners time to practice what they've just learned. Monitor their practice to provide feedback regarding what is correct and what needs to be corrected in further practice. To increase retention, make it memorable and provide job aids, which attendees can use on the job. Two-thirds of your seminar time should be dedicated to practice.

Educators are expected to incorporate interactive techniques into their seminar designs. Training alone does not result in lasting performance improvement. Each seminar should feature tools or assignments that encourage participants to apply what they have learned to their job.

Seminar practice methods may include:

- Group Work
- Simulations
- Games
- Hands-on activities
- Case Studies
- **Action plans:** Attendees use action plans to document how they will implement their new knowledge and skills on the job. After completing each section within your seminar, give attendees five minutes to create their action plan.