

# **GCSAA Training Standard**

## **\*\*Materials to Provide Your Instructor**

### **About GCSAA Education**

The GCSAA Education Department strives to provide high quality, competency-based education to its members. This goal is accomplished through the use of the GCSAA Training Standard, attendee evaluations, seminar competency assessments and periodic staff or member seminar review.

Competency-based education targets the development or enhancement of the knowledge and skills key to the success of superintendents. GCSAA education is expected to address our superintendent competencies.

Our training standard is based on four steps essential in successful adult education:

**Step 1: Preparation**

**Step 2: Presentation**

**Step 3: Practice**

**Step 4: Performance**

The GCSAA Training Standard is designed to:

- Ensure the content development of GCSAA education is driven by the superintendent competencies.
- Improve the quality of educational materials utilized in GCSAA seminars.
- Improve the delivery of GCSAA education.

### **An Introduction to Competency-Based Education**

Competencies are the knowledge and skills a person needs to perform one's job successfully. Competency-based education targets the development or enhancement of knowledge and skills known to be the key determiners of success.

GCSAA competencies are broken-up as follows:

- The 48 competencies are grouped into five categories.
- Each competency is divided into five proficiency levels, ranging from one to five (novice to expert).
- Performance statements describe observable behavior within each proficiency level and are listed below each competency.

If superintendent performance is the key measure of success for a seminar, the question naturally arises as to how to achieve lasting performance improvement. We believe the answer lies in the GCSAA Training Standard.

## Guidelines for Designing Seminars

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 strategies 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 their job (Performance).

### Identify Competencies to be Addressed

The GCSAA curriculum is designed to address the superintendent competencies. The first step in creating a seminar is to determine which competencies will be addressed, by reviewing them and their performance statements.

### 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 . . .

3. Perform and interpret a turfgrass tissue analysis.
4. 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 your 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.

### **Applying the GCSAA Training Standard to Training Delivery**

Much of GCSAA education has been offered in a static or linear fashion, where the teacher stood in front of the room and imparted knowledge through lecture. Learner participation was restricted to an occasional question. This approach treated learners as though they were containers into which the teacher pours knowledge. Linear teaching involves an active teacher and a passive learner.

Now, however, we have become more hands-on in the way we approach learning. Interactive teaching involves an active trainer and an active learner and is based on these four steps: **preparation, presentation, practice and performance.**

An active trainer:

- Creates a climate where participation is encouraged and expected.
- Uses verbal and visual aids to gain and retain attention.
- Uses exercises, simulations, games and role-playing to reinforce teaching points, and gives participants practical hands-on experience.
- Uses a variety of teaching methods to sustain interest and create a stimulating learning environment.
- Uses questions to stimulate discussion and responds to questions in ways that encourage further participation.
- Respects participants' opinions and allows participants to act as teachers when they have something of value to offer.

### **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. GCSAA instructors should develop 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.

GCSAA instructors 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.

### **Using Practice Methods to Facilitate**

Practice methods, exercises and structured activities are the “hands-on” approach to learning. They illustrate teaching points and help participants see the value of principles and concepts. Relevant, focused exercises not only help people learn, they also add variety and help keep the participants' interest.

## **Introducing and Conducting Exercises**

### **Step 1: Give the rationale.**

Begin by telling participants why you are doing the exercise. When participants understand the potential benefits, they more likely want to be involved.

### **Step 2: Explain the task.**

Give complete and detailed instructions, both orally and in writing. When giving instructions, use active verbs like list, solve, identify and compare. Active verbs tell participants they must actually do something or produce a product.

### **Step 3: Define the context.**

Defining the context means telling participants how they will complete the task; the size and makeup of groups; how much time they will have to complete the exercise.

### **Step 4: Explain what is to be reported.**

Provide very clear instructions so groups know what and how to report. Do you want them to just report results, or are you also interested in the process used to arrive at the result?

## **Additional Guidelines for Conducting Exercises**

- Involve all group members; ensure every participant has a task to complete.
- Take care of the logistical details in advance, such as planning for things like breakout rooms, AV equipment, paper and pencils, handouts, etc.
- Monitor the exercise by moving from group to group to answer questions and keep things on target.
- Debrief the exercise after hearing reports, then highlight key points and summarize the learning.

## **Performance**

Performance improves when participants return to work and successfully integrate new knowledge and skills. This completes the learning cycle. Performance tools may include:

- Completing follow-up profiles.
- Computer-based tools.
- Online learning networks.
- Teaching others.
- Project management.
- Participation in mentoring programs.
- Message to the boss (the general manager, the owner, other) describing what the superintendent has learned and requesting support for applying the learning on the job.
- A performance evaluation checklist to serve as a reminder and a check on skill level.

Our goal is to provide high-quality, interactive, competency-based education to our members. This goal can be accomplished by our instructors through the use of these training standards.