AMSC Supervisor Development Course
Army Management Staff College, Fort Belvoir, VA

Module 4: Supervising a Diverse Workforce
Lesson 1: Supervising a Diverse Workforce
Lesson Welcome

Welcome to the lesson on Supervising a Diverse Workforce. This is an introductory lesson designed to lay the foundation for supervisors to effectively manage a diverse workforce. Diversity is not something we can ignore. People are your organization’s most important asset. As such knowing how to maximize their talents is critical to your personal success and the success of your organization.

Lesson Learning Outcomes

1. Describe the importance of managing diversity as a reality and as an organizational necessity.
2. Explain the basic characteristics and skills required to effectively supervise a diverse workforce.

Click the Next button to continue.
Supervisor Scenario

Click to review your team

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
What is Diversity?

We will begin with first defining the term diversity.

Take a few minutes and write down how you would define the term diversity.

Continue with the lesson content to see how close you are to an accurate definition of diversity.
Diversity Defined

Army diversity is defined as the different attributes, experiences, and backgrounds of our Soldiers, Civilians, and Family Members that further enhance our global capabilities and contribute to an adaptive, culturally astute Army.
Why is this important to me?

Army Policy on Diversity:

- Men and women that serve the Army come from all walks of life.
- Diversity is a great strength of our Army.
- Leaders must lead the Army’s diversity efforts.
The Diversity Environment

Diversity includes attribute differences that exert an impact on each of us at home, work and in society. While each dimension adds a layer of complexity to individual identity, it is the dynamic interaction among all the dimensions that influences one’s self-image, values, opportunities and expectations. Together, the components of diversity give definition and meaning to our lives by who we are as individuals.

- Career Field, Job Series
- Racial and ethnic minorities
- Immigrants
- Physically and mentally disabled

Employee Attributes within a Diverse Workforce

- Gender
- Age

Other
- Religious affiliation
- Veteran status
- Sexual orientation
- Expectations and values
- Lifestyle
- Skill level
- Educational level
- Economic class
- Work style
- Function and/or position within the organization

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
DoD Workforce Demographics

This chart is taken from the Defense Civilian Personnel Management Service web site. Here we see how the overall DoD civilian workforce differs in terms of education, disability, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Take a moment to review each of the five demographic categories—education, disability, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Selected Army Civilian Workforce Demographics

Regarding Army civilians:

- Currently approximately 325,000 civilians in the Army
- A little more than 50% of the generating force (Institutional Army) is the civilian workforce
- About 23% of our Total Army Force are civilians
- About 47% of civilians are former military; 17.6% are retired from the military
- Average age of an Army civilian steadily rising and is currently around 46 years old
- Approximately 44% of civilian workforce is over the age of 50
- The civilian workforce has grown 28% since 2001 compared to the military force which has grown 16% in that time frame
Diversity Management

Diversity management means creating and maintaining a work environment that:

- Provides opportunity for all employees to maximize their potential and fully contribute to accomplishing the organization’s mission.
- Does not advantage or disadvantage any group, and ensures all team members treat each other with dignity and respect.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Managing Diversity Viewpoints

Use the Golden Rule,

- Treat others as you want to be treated

or

Platinum Rule,

- Treat others as they want to be treated

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Positives of Workforce Diversity

Inclusion encompasses providing individuals in an organization challenging tasks, responsibility within their span of control, and support to grow and develop. It involves extending consideration to all qualified candidates. Inclusion provides an opportunity for individuals to be a part of — the team — thus, motivating them to employ their talents and contribute to the organization and mission. Potential returns on investment include member/employee development, improved performance, increased productivity, reduced attrition and making the U. S. Army more attractive to potential applicants, thus, enhancing the Army's ability to be a leading competitor in the search for talent.
Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Consequences of Ignoring Diversity

Ignoring diversity can cause:

- Unhealthy tensions
- Loss of productivity
- Miscommunication
- Recruitment and retention issues
- Complaints and legal issues
Self Assessment: How Well Do You Manage Diversity?

- Shifting frame of reference
- Listening effectively
- Telling one's own personal story
- Separating intent from impact
- Accepting feedback
- Demonstrating courage

*Click the blue boxes for more information.*

*Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.*
Self Assessment: How Well Do You Manage Diversity?

Shifting frame of reference
Effective supervisors are empathetic. In other words, you are skilled at putting yourself in another person’s position or shifting your frame of reference. You are able to see and appreciate the other person point of view.

Click the blue boxes for more information.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Self Assessment: How Well Do You Manage Diversity?

Listening effectively
The best leaders have outstanding listening skills. Some ways to improving your listening skills is to:

- Adopt an attitude of humility and openness to listening to someone who is different. Try to suspend the common habit of listening to respond or argue

- When listening, restrain from interjecting comments, questions, or other responses until you have listened for a period of time

- When you do ask questions, be patient and listen for a complete response before you ask another

Click the blue boxes for more information.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Telling one’s own personal story
Be open to talking about yourself in a personal way that reveals aspects of who you are along specific dimensions of difference. When you can talk about your own stories this sends the message that you are willing to look at yourself as a way to understanding how people differ.
Separating intent from impact
Supervisors in diverse organizations understand that actions and behaviors in which they engage may negatively impact individuals who are different from them, even if the supervisor had no intention of harming the individual.
Self Assessment: How Well Do You Manage Diversity?

Accepting feedback
Effective supervisors are able to accept feedback about their own behavior and modify that behavior appropriately. Everyone, regardless of position, improves his or her individual competence by receiving and acting on valid feedback. Effective supervisors are willing to act on valid feedback and change a behavior that is dysfunctional in diverse settings. Practice enhances this skill. Get feedback from two sources: one person who is like you and one who is different from you.

Click the blue boxes for more information.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Self Assessment: How Well Do You Manage Diversity?

Demonstrating courage
Supervisors in diverse organizations are courageous. No leader is free from prejudiced attitudes regarding differences. Whether along dimensions of race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or other differences, we all carry beliefs that range from innocently embarrassing to profoundly hurtful to others. Empathy, listening, and accepting feedback help supervisors in behaving more effectively, but we must also be willing to confront aspects of ourselves about which we are not proud.

Click the blue boxes for more information.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Disputed or Insufficient Documentation

Supervisors who create an environment of inclusion can expect their organization to be one that:

- Fosters innovation, creativity, and cohesion
- Provides equal opportunity for all to contribute
- Creates a safer work environment
- Drives employee engagement, commitment and pride
- Sees a positive impact on customer satisfaction
- Drives mission performance
Words To Ponder

“When we feel a sense of belonging it is not because we are the same as everyone else, but because we have been accepted as we are.”

~ Juan M. Garcia
Additional Considerations to Research

- Do you test your assumptions before acting on them? Your initial interpretation or observation of an event or behavior may be inaccurate.

- Do you believe there is only one right way of doing things, or that there are a number of valid ways that accomplish the same goal? Do you convey that to staff?

- Do you have honest relationships with each staff member you supervise? Are you comfortable with each of them? Do you know what motivates them, what their goals are, how they like to be recognized?

- Are you able to give negative feedback to someone who is culturally different from you?

- Do you take immediate action with people you supervise when they behave in ways that show disrespect for others in the workplace, such as ethnic jokes and offensive terms?

Click here to open a PDF file of this list. You can then print it and add it to your Supervisor Development Folder.

Remember you can always click the Reference button to help you find answers.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Lesson Takeaways

As a supervisor, make sure that you can:

- You can describe the importance of managing diversity as a reality and as an organizational necessity
- You can explain the basic characteristics and skills required to effectively supervise a diverse workforce
- You understand the concept of inclusion
- You can self-reflect and see your own potential biases

Do you have a thorough understanding of the Lesson Takeaways? Do you still need to do some reading about the Additional Considerations listed on the previous screen? If you feel confident about your knowledge of Supervising a Diverse Workforce, proceed to the next lesson. If not, use the fly-out menu to review, or use the Reference tool to gain more knowledge.

Click the Next button to continue, or the Previous button to review.
Reflections for a Supervisor

As a supervisor, consider the following...

- Do you insist on a diversity in forming a selection committee when you have open positions to fill?

- Are you willing to listen to constructive feedback from your staff about ways to improve the work environment? Do you implement staff suggestions and acknowledge their contribution?

- Do you have a good understanding of concepts such as racism and sexism and how they manifest themselves in the workplace?
Lesson Complete!

Congratulations, SDC Student.

You have completed the Supervising a Diverse Workforce lesson. To exit this lesson, click the exit button in the upper right corner of this browser window. Your status will be automatically updated on the ALMS, and you can continue on to another lesson by visiting your Current Enrollments. If you wish to revisit this lesson, you can find it in your Detailed Training Record on the ALMS.