



**DEOMI**  
Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute  
*CENTER OF EXCELLENCE*



## DEOMI Leverages Small Business Innovation Research to Design Rapid Assessment Tool for EO Practitioners

*Story by DEOMI Public Affairs*

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**PATRICK SPACE FORCE BASE, Fla.**— The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute was recently awarded a grant through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program to help develop and support future, innovative human-relations training.

The SBIR program is a highly competitive program that encourage domestic small businesses to engage in federal research/research and development (R&D) with the potential for commercialization. The program’s mission is to support scientific excellence and technological innovation through the investment of federal research funds in critical American priorities to build a strong national economy.

Through a competitive awards-based program, SBIR enable small businesses to explore their technological potential and provide the incentive to profit from its commercialization. By including qualified small businesses in the nation’s R&D arena, high-tech innovation is stimulated, and the United States gains entrepreneurial spirit as it meets its specific research and development needs.



The benefits of the program include: 1) it’s a safe way to try out R&D and improved modernization decisions; 2) you leverage budgeted dollars; 3) small businesses are often more cost effective and innovative than large primes (i.e., agile, niche); 4) it allows a second source/method to augment ongoing programs (risk management); 5) it aligns with the National Defense Strategy and DoD’s mandate to utilize innovation in contracting; and 6) it shortens the acquisition timeline.

DEOMI’s goal is to develop a methodological approach to utilize modular simulation learning to create realistic synthetic representations of adverse human relations issues for use in training Equal Opportunity (EO) practitioners to appropriately respond to with increased proficiency.

“Modernization of DEOMI’s education and training is necessary to ensure that future EO practitioners are fully equipped with the necessary tools and skills to address and prevent complex human relations issues,” shared Navy Lt. Jayson Rhoton, a DEOMI researcher and co-submitter of the SBIR package. “Recent advances in simulation learning will help fill the gap in current education and training approaches. The learner can progress at a pace that encourages mastery over completion. This is accomplished using realistic synthetic representations of adverse human relations events which promote creativity in the learner to develop new solutions; think critically (i.e., reflection); formulate one or more solutions; establish or recall strategies to implement the solution(s); discover new possible solutions; explain the problem (i.e., understanding); and provide a realistic and actionable solution (i.e., evaluation).”

Simulation learning is an effective learning approach as it increases knowledge structuring for human relations topics, and it also provides a tailored and adaptive approach to problem-solving skill development. It also increases confidence and knowledge, skills, and abilities by providing a training environment on how to communicate conversations topics. For example, fear of reprisal for addressing or confronting problematic behaviors (e.g., toxic leadership). Simulation learning would provide a learning environment wherein the learner is able to practice the skills.

Additionally, DEOMI-offered simulation learning would provide an opportunity for EO students to have a grounded, but safe, discussion. In the current training environment in a group setting, covering sensitive topics (e.g., sexual harassment, suicide prevention, SAPR, etc.) may sometimes cause discomfort and reduce participation in the discussion, interrupting the learning process.

Ultimately, simulation training offers the DoD an ability to train and educate a broader audience in a variety of locations, with potentially fewer human resources. It leverages already-funded technologies in development by other research organizations, saves millions of dollars, advances the methods currently utilized in training and education in human relations domain, and provides readily accessible and realistic refresher training for EO practitioners.

*The DEOMI team is an agile and inclusive force that values and develops all individuals and thrives on their contributions. Since its inception in 1971, then known as the Defense Race Relations Institute, DEOMI has fostered cultures of excellence through learning, research, and integrated knowledge management to optimize total force readiness.*

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