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Implementing Hiring Process Improvements at the Department of Housing and Urban Development

Office of Human Resources

Staffing and Classification Division

IMPLEMENTING HIRING PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES STAFFING AND CLASSIFICATION DIVISION

Background

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) partnered with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to conduct the very first hiring process "makeover." Makeover is a term that recently entered the vernacular after a series of television shows featuring beauty makeovers, home décor makeovers, and fashion makeovers became highly popular.

A hiring makeover involves assessing an agency's recruiting and hiring processes and recommending changes that could dramatically improve the time to hire and the quality of candidates who seek Federal employment. The hiring makeover process relies on the hard work of a team in reviewing agency case file reviews; mapping actual hiring processes; interviewing groups of hiring managers, HR personnel, and new hires; and consulting agency officials. Once all the details are discovered, the team builds a comprehensive report of its findings and develops a series of recommendations to improve the hiring process.

During the assessment phase of HUD's makeover that the HUD-OPM team conducted, research estimated that the average time to fill a vacancy was 96 days. Following the recommendation phase and final report, OPM and HUD met to discuss the proposed changes and select strategies for improving the hiring process.

Implementation

The report sparked action. The first action was to initiate a complete makeover of the Headquarters, OHR, Staffing and Classification Division (SCD). SCD addressed findings and recommendations in the OPM report and was able to facilitate the migration to HUD's automated human resource management system. That system is called HIHRTS/HR Connect.

Agency communication received great emphasis. For example, the Executive Human Capital Steering Committee was briefed on plans to redistribute certain hiring process-related tasks within SCD. A meeting was also held with the employee union to discuss the impact of changes on bargaining employees (HR Assistants) within the division.

SCD redistributed internal work assignments so that staffing and recruitment-related responsibilities applicable to Delegated Examining and Merit Staffing would be integrated under single portfolios. These process changes laid a preliminary foundation for consolidating recruiting and staff services under a "one-stop shopping" structure. The intent was to improve customer service and reduce the number of points of contact, thereby reducing the length of the process.

Recruitment for Interns and Student Programs remained separate during this initial implementation phase. Classification and Position Management also remained separate to focus efforts on developing a Position Description (PD) Library to support HIHRTS

SCD analyzed the processes that most affected the timeliness and quality of services in filling vacancies. A Pipeline Report tracked the status of all recruitment actions. To calculate the time to reach each milestone, the pipeline report format was modified to include key dates in the recruitment cycle. This report enabled the division to evaluate its operations and identify needed improvements.

Data were analyzed to assess the timeliness of services provided to each program office that SCD assists. The need for improvement was identified in all phases of the recruitment process. Front-end and back-end processes were also identified for revamping.

Selected Strategies

The following actions were considered vital for HUD to achieve OPM's recommended 45-day hiring model:

- **Developing the PD Library through a classification and automation team.**

  Team members analyzed common employment positions and identified the areas in which hirers could expedite the classification process by using generic PDs.

- **Identifying classification as a front-end, pre-recruitment process.**

  Program offices were asked to submit classification requests for determinations well before starting recruitment. Conducting both activities at the same time was found to add significant time to the hiring process.   The new PD Library allows managers to select or modify most job descriptions.

- **Establishing new target dates for posting vacancy announcements.**

  Program offices were asked to submit a Job Analysis and Crediting Plan along with their recruitment request(s). Assuming they had submitted all necessary documents before initiating a recruitment action, specialists were expected to post announcements within five calendar days.

• Coordinating the rating and ranking process with program offices.

Program offices were asked to identify prospective panel members and establish tentative panel dates during the announcement period. This coordination would expedite the rating and ranking process. No changes were made to advertisement periods that had been established in accordance with merit staffing policy and union agreements.

• Setting a new timeframe for completing rating and ranking.

Because rating and ranking is done manually, the maximum timeframe was set at 15 calendar days to process an unusually high volume of applications.