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Policies and Procedures

Title: REE Human Capital Accountability Plan

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Distribution: ARS Administrator's Council, Administrative and Financial Management Council, Research Leaders – All, CSREES executive Council, ERS – Audrey Farley, NASS HQ SES members, HQ DAFO-HRS

This policy and procedure describes the framework for ensuring accountability in the Human Capital programs and activities of the REE Agencies.

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1. POLICY

The Research, Education and Economics (REE) will conduct periodic assessments to the quality and impacts of its Human Capital (HC) programs in order to determine 1) the effectiveness and relevance of REE (HC) programs, policies, procedures and activities and 2) compliance with applicable laws, regulations and policies. Depending on the nature of the review, the assessment may be conducted by Human Resources Division (HRD) staff, other REE administrative and program personnel, and, in some cases, individuals and/or groups outside REE. The assessments will focus on evaluating the results of HC activities; analyzing compliance with merit system principles; identifying successes and weaknesses; and, implementing and monitoring appropriate modifications, changes or enhancements and will be in keeping with the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework. REE will create a culture of accountability that values compliant, effective and relevant programs that are aligned with REE agency missions and strives for continual improvement.

2. PURPOSE

This Plan describes the REE Human Capital Accountability strategy and complies with OPM requirements to establish and maintain a system for HC accountability.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Agency Administrators – Require, support and reward accountability for effective and compliant HC programs and initiatives throughout their Agencies by endorsing this Plan, communicating expectations of accountability at all level of the Agencies, and recognizing significant achievements and improvements in HC accountability.

REE Senior Executives, Managers and Supervisors - Conduct HC activities in accordance with established policies and procedures; provide input as requested to assist HRD with assessing HC compliance and effectiveness; and, integrate accountability for HC management in the performance expectations of all supervisors and managers.

HR Director – Develop and implement a REE Human Capital Accountability Plan (HCAP); designate appropriate resources to support the HCAP; and, report on findings, recommendations, decisions and results.

HR Deputy Directors – Participate in the development and implementation of HCAP; designate appropriate resources to support the HCAP; plan and carry out specific HCAP action items; and, report on findings, recommendations, decisions and results.

HR Branch Chiefs – Describe and implement evaluation criteria for designated work activities that focus on compliance with laws, regulations and policies as well as the effectiveness of program delivery; designate appropriate resources to support the HCAP; and, report on findings, recommendations, decisions and results.

4. PLAN ELEMENTS

A. Compliance

Various mechanisms will be used to assure that HC activities are managed and executed in accordance with merit principles, Federal laws, Departmental regulations and REE policies.

Program Accountability

REE will utilize existing assessment programs such as the Consolidated Assistance Review and Evaluation (CARE), Human Resources Management Evaluation (HRME) and Human Capital Management Assessment (HCMA) programs as the primary mechanisms for ensuring compliance with various HR laws, regulations, policies and procedures. These reviews encompass employment, position management, time and attendance, pay and leave, performance management, awards, employee development, employee relations, and, in ARS only, occupational medical surveillance and unemployment compensation.

In addition to CARE, internal HRD compliance reviews may, in addition to assessing the extent to which HR staff comply with relevant laws, regulations, policies and procedure, also review the customer portion of the policy or procedure being evaluated.

Other compliance reviews may stem from findings of outside audits of HC activities. These outside organizations include but are not limited to the USDA Office of Inspector General, the General Accountability Office, the OPM, the Office of Government Ethics, and the Office of Special Counsel.

Internal HR accountability

Each year, HRD will evaluate selected activities, functions, and/or types of actions for adherence to merit principles and relevant laws, regulations and policies and for accuracy of transactional processing. The activities to be evaluated will be identified through self-selection and through outside audits. The HRD Business Plan (HRDBP) will describe the evaluations to be conducted in the relevant year, responsible individuals will be identified, and quarterly updates on activities and results will be made to the HRDBP.

The Delegated Examining program will be evaluated annually in compliance with OPM requirements.

Compliance reviews will be data-driven and based on established criteria for the activities being evaluated.

Appendix 1 describes the annual schedule of internal HR reviews.

B. Effectiveness

Effectiveness reviews determine the extent to which the desired results of a HC program or activity have been achieved. As such, a key step in developing and implementing a HC program or activity is to identify the purpose, expected outcomes and desired results of the program. These will be used as the criteria against which the program is assessed. In addition, new HC initiatives will include a requirement for periodic assessment built into the documentation for the initiative, such as a Policy and Procedure.

Data from biannual OPM Federal Human Capital Surveys, REE Agency Climate Surveys, NASS Human Resources Management Evaluations, ARS Human Capital Management Assessments and other resources will be analyzed by appropriate Human Resources functional specialists to determine perceptions of the effectiveness of various HC programs and activities. Interventions for HC areas identified as weak or problematic will be implemented; HC areas with strong, positive findings will be recognized and assessed to determine whether best practices can be identified and transferred; and, trends and patterns over time will be identified to determine whether appropriate forward progress to improve HC programs is being made. Findings will be the basis for the development of future HC goals and objectives.

C. Relevance

All HC activities undertaken in REE by either HRD or agency program managers will be aligned with the Strategic Plan of the relevant organization or stem from an intervening document such as the REE Human Capital Plan, the REE Leadership Succession Plan and/or an Agency Workforce Plan.

D. Outcomes

1. Each review, evaluation or assessment will result in a written report to the Director, Human Resources Division or other identified individuals which describes the:
 - purpose and scope of the review;
 - methodology(ies) used;
 - name(s) and organization(s) of the reviewer(s);
 - date of the review;
 - findings and actions required or recommended

2. Within 30 days of the end of each fiscal year, the Director, Human Resources Division, will report to the REE Administrators a bibliography of all accountability reviews undertaken within the Mission Area during the fiscal year. This document will be the official record of each year's accountability activities under this Plan.

Schedule of Annual HR Database Reviews

MONTH	REVIEW
January	Separated employees still on database – quarterly
February	Listing of mandatory drug testing positions
March	Supervisory codes; probationary period listing
April	SCEP employee status review; Separated employees still on database – quarterly
May	Series/title match; working titles
June	Duplicate PD review/clean-up
July	Retention bonuses/recruitment bonuses/ student loans (where there is potential for recurring payments); Separated employees still on database – quarterly
August	Employees w/ tax deduction other than place of residence; duty station listing (where different than organizational assignment)
September	BUS codes; position sensitivity code review
October	Separated employees still on database – quarterly
November	FLSA code review
December	Reemployed annuitants; employees needing manual COLA adjustments