



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON DC 20420

Dec 8 2008

Ms. Nancy H. Kichak
Associate Director
Strategic Human Resources Policy
Office of Personnel Management
ATTN: Hispanic Report
1900 E Street, N.W., Room 6500
Washington, DC 20415-1900

Dear Ms. Kichak:

I am pleased to submit the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Report on Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government. This report addresses VA's best practices and innovative human capital practices used to recruit, outreach, and retain talented and skilled citizens, including Hispanic Americans.

VA's total number of Hispanic Americans in its permanent workforce during FY 2008 is 16,925 or 6.72 percent. Of these, 6,109 Hispanic Americans are veterans representing 2.42 percent of the Department's veteran population.

As the Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, I am committed to advancing the goals stated in the President's Management Agenda and outlined in Executive Order 13171 by building a Federal workforce that draws from the strength of America's diversity. I will continue to promote and encourage the Department to reach out to more communities so that all Americans interested in public service may have access to opportunities for Federal employment.

Sincerely yours,


Willie L. Hensley
Acting

Enclosure

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Hispanic Employment in the
Federal Government**

Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Report

Community Outreach – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) senior management and the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity (DM&EEO) continued to focus on outreach and recruitment processes during Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 through the Community Prosperity Partnership (CPP).

VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) during FY 2008 provided local VA Medical Center (VAMC) facilities support to VA, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and American GI Forum (AGIF) Community Prosperity (CPP). The CPP program of veteran business enterprise and outreach implemented the first ever local community service delivery model between affinity Hispanic associations, institutions of higher education, private sector, federal, state, and local governments. Seminars and workshops featured expert panelists addressing the issues that re impacting veterans the most, including access to benefits, education and employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and health care. CPP engages the Federal government in meeting the needs of all minority veterans including Operation Enduring and Operation Iraq Freedom veterans and their families.

The CPP program redefines the delivery of diversity management services for the Hispanic American community. This new approach defines the service deliver functions of the special emphasis programs as a diversity business enterprise supporting local communities. This high profile public service model is oriented on VA's enabling and mission goals, which VHA supports.

DM&EEO provided assistance in the planning and execution of the National Image Conference on August 4, 2008, in Washington, DC. The focus was to enhance the leadership skills of Hispanic Federal employees and to provide timely and cutting-edge information on upward-mobility careers. VA participated with other Federal agencies on a panel that addressed recruitment, hiring, training, and retention of Hispanic Americans in the Federal civilian workforce.

In November 2007, CPP and League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) hosted the 2007 Veterans Summit II in Orlando, Florida. The Summit consisted of panel plenary presentations, workshop tracks for Federal, community and private sector leaders, and a job exposition/health fair with 7,000 participants. Seven veterans' community centers in the State of Florida providing information to Veterans seeking re-entry into the workforce.

In January 2008, LULAC hosted the 2008 Veterans Summit III in San Antonio, Texas, consisting of a range of services that included a seminar track, and a job exposition / health fair. Also during FY 2008, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration donated computers and office furniture to two fully functional veterans' community centers in Florida.

This summit focused on increasing the awareness of Federal jobs, internships, and career development in Hispanic communities. VA participated in job fairs and ensured that four computers were available to applicants enabling them to apply online for VA jobs listed on USA Jobs and VA career Web sites. In addition, VA provided on-site employment specialists to assist applicants with resume building.

NCA promotes VA as an "Employer of Choice." The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) tracks the quality of NCA products and services from the perspective of our customers. The ACSI is the only quality measure for economic output nationwide. NCA received 95 points out of 100 for the second time this year; this also marks the third year that NCA achieved the highest score of all ACSI participants. NCA is also encouraging a workforce environment that is inclusive for all employees. In addition, the Cemetery Director Intern Program is announced worldwide to give employees and citizens a chance to be selected for the training program, applicants are trained at the NCA Training Center in St. Louis and upon successful completion of the program, the candidates are assigned to National Cemeteries all over the United States, to include Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii to include recruitment incentives such as Permanent Change of Station allowances.

VA's Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) New York Regional Office (RO) maintains a relationship with schools and organizations in the New York area. During this reporting period, the regional office hired 25 qualified individuals, including eight Hispanic Americans.

The Philadelphia RO participates in the Philadelphia Unity Day event, a multicultural event that reaches the Hispanic community. Information is provided to Hispanic veterans and their families concerning the wide-range of benefits available through VA. When positions are available at the facility, Unity Day event is also used as a recruiting tool.

The Philadelphia RO also participates in Operations Stand Down, another annual multicultural program. Homeless veterans, including Hispanic veterans, attending Operations Stand Down are provided with food, medical check-ups, and information on benefits available through VA.

The Waco RO provides VA benefits briefings and related assistance to more than 29,000 veterans annually. Waco's outreach activities include over 180 veterans' benefits seminars and outreach briefings, as well as numerous military

services briefings. Since 3.7 percent of Texas' population is of Hispanic and Latino origin, the Waco RO's outreach activities are especially valuable in reaching members of the Hispanic community.

Each year representatives of the Waco RO participate in a town hall meeting. The town hall meetings are videotaped and broadcast in Time/Warner Cable Television.

In this reporting period the Portland RO implemented an equal employment opportunity program circular that appointed a Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM). This individual has been instrumental in bringing increased visibility to special emphasis programs during lunchtime programs. The SEPM also participated in quarterly Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee meetings. There are future plans to offer educational programs to regional office employees during lunchtime which will feature an informational DVD.

Additionally, in response, several regional offices contacted local agencies to identify organizations that could provide assistance in attracting Hispanic employees.

VA's National Cemetery Administration supports the Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans through conference participation, education and training support and sponsoring interns through various internships. NCA also utilizes the VA Work Study Program, wherein a significant number of veterans who are of Hispanic origin. Through this program, these veterans have received valuable work experience in order to further their career goals. Many of the work study students have been employed by their respective cemeteries on a permanent, full-time basis. NCA participated in the National LULAC Convention in San Antonio, Texas, where cemetery employees provided information and answered questions from conference attendees on NCA programs and benefits.

In effort to reach a large number of professionally trained Hispanic students, NCA has partnered with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), through VA's National Internship Program. This program affords them the opportunity to gain professional work experience that will enable them to make more educated career choices and supplement academic study with practical experience. NCA will partner with other local colleges, high schools, and community associations in order to provide employment information to the Hispanic community.

NCA has identified Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPC) at each of the Memorial Service Networks (MSNs) and each cemetery that falls under their respective regions to conduct and participate in outreach efforts to further educate minority veterans and the community on the benefits and services that NCA provides. Additionally, information regarding employment opportunities is provided during the outreach efforts.

Cemeteries in the southeast region participated in several job fairs at local colleges and universities which included a diverse group of students. Among those institutions of higher learning were Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College and Jefferson Davis Community College in an effort to reach a large number of minority students. During this past year, employees from the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery participated in a town hall meeting in Brownsville, Texas, providing benefits information to an overwhelmingly Hispanic audience.

Cemeteries in the northeastern region participated in the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Resources day held in June 2008. This event promotes employment and service in government and other local civilian agencies. Other initiatives include attending various veterans' support and special interest agency conventions, such as the American Legion, AMVETS, and the Vietnam Veterans of Michigan to provide information on employment opportunities and benefits of Federal employment to a wide spectrum of potential applicants to include Hispanics. NCA established relationships with various community organizations such as churches and faith-based organizations, local Veteran of Foreign Wars and Veteran Service Organization chapters, and local schools. Additionally, the cemetery hosted a booth at the Illinois State Fair, presenting information to a wide-spectrum of the regional population concerning employment opportunities with the Federal government. NCA also participated in several "Veterans Job Fairs" throughout the region and attended by more than 2,000 participants, representing a broad and diverse spectrum of the general population. The participants received information concerning the opportunities and benefits of Federal employment.

Further, several cemeteries work on regular basis with minority-owned television, radio, and news media in an effort to reach out to veterans in remote areas and have them directed to the cemetery for information on benefits.

Recruitment

As of August 2008, VA's Central Office (VACO) total numbers of onboard Hispanic employees were 622; 400 males and 222 females.

During that period, 56 Hispanics were hired, 37 males and 19 females. Of the 1,596 promotion selections within VACO, 51 Hispanic males and 35 female were selected for advancement.

VHA with 153 VA Medical Centers (VAMC) nation-wide, manages the largest integrated health care system in the United States. In FY 2007, VHA employed 13,818 (6.82 percent) Hispanic permanent employees.

Several staff office organizations established ongoing partnerships with the HACU ensuring Federal employment opportunities were extended to qualified Hispanic Americans. The Hispanic National Internship Program increases professional career opportunities for program participants for the recruitment of Hispanics into the Federal government. During FY 2008, 9 interns were hosted at VACO.

Utilizing the Student Career Experience Program/Student Training Experience Program (SCEP/STEP), a total of 17 Hispanic Students were employed in VACO during FY 2008.

Healthcare Retention and Recruitment Office – In an effort to reach a large number of professionally trained Hispanic students, VHA's Healthcare Recruitment Retention Office (HRRO) partnered with the HACU. HACU's internationally recognized award winning Hispanic National Internship Program (HNIP) provides opportunities for students to gain professional work experience at VA that will enable them to make more educated career choices and supplement their academic study with practical work experience. VHA's internship commitment with HACU during FY 2008 totaled \$619,000.00. The total number of interns who participated was sixty. Of this number, eight interns worked in VHA's Central Office, Washington, DC; and 52 in VHA VAMC field facilities.

HRRO also further reported recruiting at the following two Hispanic conferences: HACU, Denver, Colorado; October 11-13, 2007 and the Hispanic Nurses Association Annual Conference, Boston, Massachusetts; July 15-18, 2008.

Student Education and Employment Program – VHA further provided minority students the opportunity to work at VA before making career choices. The annual budget for this program was \$3,000,000. This year HRRO reported 239 students who participated in the Student Education and Employment Program and 39 were Hispanic Americans.

VBA's presence on campus influences individuals to consider careers in the Federal sector. The ROs were highly successful in recruiting and have established effective relationships with organizations including the HACU, Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Hispanic professional organizations, and other advocacy and affinity groups.

To improve representation of Hispanics in the workforce, ROs have developed and maintained effective partnerships with academic institutions and professional associations. In 2008, ROs conducted several job fairs and campus visits, and participated in various conferences involving HSIs. These types of events helped to promote VBA careers among students.

Various RO employees volunteered at local schools, universities, and churches. While volunteering, the employees share their work experiences and encourage Hispanic students to pursue Federal careers.

The New York RO participated in the federal career intern program and hired 30 new employees, including 12 Hispanic Americans. During this reporting period, the RO sponsored a HACU intern who was later hired as a permanent full-time Veterans Service Representative.

These RO recruitment efforts have resulted in an increase in Hispanic employees. This past year, VBA hired an additional 94 permanent Hispanic employees. This increased the total population of permanent Hispanic employees to 863, compared to 769 in FY 2007.

VBA participated in the HACU National Internship Program, which affords Hispanics the opportunity to work as interns for the summer. During this reporting period 8 HACU interns were hired. The total cost to VBA for the HACU internship program was \$77,600.

VBA senior executives and managers continue to have direct involvement in the recruitment and retention of a high quality and diverse workforce. VBA provides an array of recruitment tools, used by human resources and management officials in designing effective programs, which seek out desirable candidates. These services include:

- Recruitment brochures
- Recruitment tri-fold handouts
- Instructions on establishing recruitment teams
- Training for members of recruitment teams
- A reference guide for human resource and management officials
- A website for VBA recruitment
- Posting of vacancy announcements at state and local colleges and university career placement offices.
- VBA representatives attending job fairs and other related programs designed to provide current employment opportunities for Hispanics in the federal sector.

The Waco RO Human Resource Manager recruited candidates from local colleges. During this reporting period, the regional office hired 138 new employees, including 12 (8.7 percent) Hispanic employees. Of the 12, one Hispanic male and five Hispanic females were recruited through appointment under the Federal Career Intern Program.

Regional Offices proactively partner with other organizations to provide Federal employment information through multiple venues. This outreach has included reaching potential applicants by sponsoring recruitment fairs, providing information to students and diverse communities to encourage people to apply for Federal jobs, and reaching potential employers by creating on-line tools.

During this reporting period, a total of \$6,000 was reported for advertising to recruit Hispanic applicants.

The Muskogee RO formed a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Committee. This committee will assist the RO in dealing with phone calls that require a Spanish-speaking employee. The committee will be instrumental in providing ideas on how to recruit more Hispanic employees from within the community.

NCA utilizes the SEEP and the Federal Career Intern Program to ensure Federal employment opportunities are extended to a broad array of sources for entry-level positions.

- During this reporting period, NCA utilized the Student Temporary Employment Program and converted one student to a permanent position of non-Hispanic origin.
- NCA participates in the National Internship Program to partner with the various organizations under that umbrella. NCA was given the opportunity to pilot and establish a new partnership with Minority Access, Inc., a non-profit educational organization that supports and assists individual institutions of higher education and Federal agencies to diversify their organizations. Through this new partnership, NCA can further broaden the opportunities for minorities to intern with the NCA. In FY 2008, the field facilities were given the opportunity to sponsor three interns from this program for the first time. Cemeteries throughout the Nation utilize various recruitment authorities to attract and employ minorities, including Hispanics, as well as at-risk students in local schools.
- Additionally, NCA also utilizes the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program to employ veterans and promote their re-entry into the workforce. The CWT Program includes a broad spectrum of the population, to include Hispanics.

Career Development

VACO Leadership Development Mentoring Program is a career development tool whose participants from diverse backgrounds, are trained and developed into high performing employees with a broader perspective of VA. The program fosters mentoring as a key aspect of VA's continuous learning culture and develops a leadership cadre that is competent and dedicated. During FY 2008, there were two Hispanic participants that gained skills in leadership, conflict resolution, communication, problem solving, and diversity. All can understand and are able to discuss the eight core competencies of the High Performance Development Model (HPDM): organizational stewardship, systems thinking, creative thinking, flexibility/adaptability, customer service, interpersonal effectiveness, personal mastery, and technical skills. They can develop and maintain processes and procedures that drive innovation and define performance goals.

During FY 2008, VACO Staff Office organizations had one Hispanic representative in each of the following programs: Senior Executive Service Career Development Program and Leadership VA Program.

Progression planning and leadership development in VHA is an integrated process for identifying, assessing, and developing high-potential leaders at all levels of the organization. The Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) and Facility Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability, Development (LEAD) Programs extend the Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program (ECFCDP) concept down through the organization to ensure that VHA has a diverse cadre of high-potential leaders prepared to assume roles of greater responsibility from entry-level positions to the top of the mid-management ranks. Utilization of this concept promotes a three-tiered continuum of progression planning and leadership development at the local, VISN, and national levels.

VISN LEAD Programs target Title 5 and Title 38 Employees at HPDM levels 2 and 3 (Title 5 is typically grade levels 9 through 13). Facility LEAD Programs target Title 5 and Title 38 Employees at HPDM levels 1 and 2 (Title 5 is typically grade levels entry through 9). Determination of eligible grade levels is at the discretion of management based on alignment with their strategic needs. VISN level LEAD programs have graduated 1,919 employees, 4.45 percent are Hispanic. Facility level LEAD programs have graduated 1,194 employees, 7.3 percent are Hispanic.

Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program – VA's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) offered individuals a structured approach to prepare for SES. Successful candidates are certified by the Office of Personnel Management as eligible for placement. SESCDP had one Hispanic female employee.

Executive Career Field Candidate Program – VA's Veterans Health Administration's Executive Career Field Candidate Program (ECFCDP), established in 2002, provide developmental opportunities for high-potential employees, by preparing them to apply for executive vacancies. ECFCDP is a two-year program with personal development planning (PDP) and mentor and preceptor components, as well as a wide variety of educational and experiential learning opportunities. Candidates attend an assessment center and learning goals are tailored to meet the identified needs of the individual. The program does not guarantee placement in an executive position. For FY 2008, there were 101 applicants and 64 candidates; 3 applicants (2.97 percent) and 2 candidates (3.12 percent) were Hispanic employees.

Technical Career Field Internship Program – VA's Veterans Health Administration's Technical Career Field Internship Program was created to develop employees in fields where full-time training in VHA procedures and regulations are required. Examples include Prosthetics Representative, Human Resource Specialist, Business Analyst, et al. Two-year internships are centrally funded. Recruitment is focused on local colleges and universities. Each intern is placed at a VHA facility and trained by a preceptor who is experienced in the target position. Preceptors receive training, interns convene for an annual conference with their peers, and the program is evaluated at the national level. The program is designed to flex with changing workforce needs. For FY 2007, there were six Hispanic employees; six Hispanic females (3.19 percent); and two Hispanic males (3.19 percent). FY 2008 data is not available.

Office of Research and Development – VA's Veterans Health Administration's Office of Research and Development (ORD) actively participates in a number of outreach activities with various Hispanic VSO and Hispanic-Serving Institutions, which include, but are not limited to The American GI Forum (a Hispanic VSO conference) and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). ORD has also been well represented at various conferences where a designated staff person served as a member of the Hispanic panel for the Center for Minority Veterans Program. ORD was represented at the American GI Forum in July 2008. ORD has also been asked to give a presentation at the upcoming Vietnam Veterans of America Minority Veterans Committee. ORD administers the VA Career Development Program (CDP) which provides mentoring for junior VA researchers, so that they may learn from renowned, experienced VA researchers. The Career Development Enhancement Award (CDEA) is an employee based program available to VA senior clinicians and non-clinician scientists to enhance their research. ORD has hired one Hispanic Program Analyst in FY 2008 currently employed in the PRIDE Directorate. The Director of Operations, along with Service Directors has joined efforts to recruit those Hispanic Program Managers through various Job Announcements.

Leadership VA – Leadership VA (LVA) is designed to identify 70 leaders in VA and to provide an enrichment of their career development through an intense leadership training experience. The program's general goals are to: 1) Identify unusually fine leadership talent in VA; 2) Expand the participants' leadership skills and provide them with the opportunity to come acquainted with VA's top leaders and to develop keener insight into the internal and external forces which affect VA; 3) Provide for an exchange of information and viewpoints which will broaden personal and professional perspectives and lay a foundation for a network of VA leaders who share a deep commitment to the Department of Veterans Affairs and to public service. The 2008 LVA program had one Hispanic male employee who participated.

Education Debt Reduction Program – This program helps recently appointed employees in shortage category Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 health care disciplines to reduce the interest and principal on government and commercial loans obtained to fund their health care education. Payments are limited to a maximum of \$6,000 for the first year, \$8,000 for the second year, and \$10,000 for the third, fourth, and fifth years. For FY 2008, 109 Hispanic employees participated in the Education Debt Reduction Program as compared to 135 in FY 2007.

Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program – Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program is one of the longest standing training programs in the VHA. It consists of three developmental programs designed to prepare today's promising candidates to become tomorrow's VHA leaders, Administrative Residents/Fellows, The Health System Management Trainee Program, and The Army-Baylor University Graduate Program.

Office of Academic Affiliations – For over 50 years, the VHA has been at the forefront of education and training of health care professionals. Education is one of VHA's four primary missions. It contributes to VHA's recruitment and retention of the highest quality staff at its health care facilities and creates a patient care environment characterized by an academic atmosphere of inquiry. Each year, over 100,000 students and trainees receive some, or all, of their clinical training in VA via affiliations with over 4,000 education programs at 1,200 colleges and universities.

The data for the HSIs Report is collected through the Annual Health Services Training Report. In FY 2007, (FY 2008 data will not be available until mid-December) 101,404 (24,965 paid and 76,442 without compensation (WOC) students/interns/residents received all, or part, of their clinical training in VA health care facilities in affiliation with over 1,000 institutions of higher education. Forty-four of these colleges and universities affiliated with VHA facilities have

been designated as historically Hispanic colleges or universities by the Department of Education. These affiliations resulted in 4,638 (1,261 paid and 3,377 (WOC) students from these HSIs receiving part of their required clinical education in a VA facility in FY 2007.

The Education and Training Budget for FY 2007 totaled \$1,138,344,000 (\$568,584,000 stipends or direct cost and \$569,760,000 indirect cost). The average stipend cost (direct) for paid trainees is estimated at \$22,777, (there is no stipend (direct cost) associated without compensation trainees). The average indirect cost for paid and WOC trainees is estimated at \$5,618. The total dollar support for students at HSIs for FY 2007 was \$45,344,406 or approximately 4 percent of the entire Education and Training Budget.

Office of Research and Development – VA's Veterans Health Administration Office of Research and Development (ORD) actively participates in a number of outreach activities with various Hispanic Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions, which include, but are not limited to The American GI Forum (Hispanic VSO conference) and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). ORD has also been well represented at various conferences where a designated staff person served as a member of the Hispanic panel for the Center for Minority Veterans Program. ORD was represented at the American GI Forum in July 2008. ORD has also been asked to give a presentation at the upcoming Vietnam Veterans of America Minority Veterans Committee. ORD administers the VA Career Development Program (CDP) which provides mentoring for junior VA researchers, so that they may learn from renowned, experienced VA researchers. The Career Development Enhancement Award (CDEA) is an employee based program available to VA senior clinicians and non-clinician scientists to enhance their research. ORD has hired one Hispanic Program Analyst in FY 2008 currently employed in the PRIDE Directorate. The Director of Operations, along with Service Directors, has joined efforts to recruit those Hispanic Program Managers through various Job Announcements.

VHA Advertising – VA's Veterans Health Administration manages a contract with a professional advertising agency that places advertisements on the Internet, in professional journals and other publications, creates other outreach materials such as brochures and pamphlets and develops Public Service Announcements for radio and television. Regular print media and online advertising include publications that target minorities, such as, Hispanic Network, Journal for Minority Medical Students, Hispanic Nurse Newsletter, Hispanic Annual Handbook, and Hispanic Healthcare International.

VA's Veteran Benefit Administration provided Hispanic employees with training, career development programs, and mentoring opportunities. A large number of the ROs reported their employees, including Hispanics, participated in career development programs.

ROs annually participate in numerous mentoring programs to motivate young Hispanics to pursue higher education and federal careers. For example, the Philadelphia RO participated in a citywide Business Mentoring Youth Program. The program was designed to provide young people an opportunity to gain valuable experience by working in businesses and organizations. Two of the participants were Hispanic youth and two of the mentors were Hispanic employees. In addition, two Hispanic employees at the RO furthered their education by taking college courses that were paid through the RO's tuition reimbursement program. The courses will enhance their potential for success and upward mobility as VA employees.

At the Houston RO, four Hispanic non-presidential career interns (VSR) were sent to the training academy during this reporting period.

VA's Veterans Benefit Administration offered the Assistant Director Development Program during this reporting period. This leadership program assists employees in acquiring skills to successfully compete for promotional opportunities. Of the 15 participants, one was a Hispanic employee.

Also, VBA works to improve the representation of Hispanics in the workforce by participating in special activities, including the volunteer program sponsored by the Federal Executive Board.

VA's National Cemetery Administration promotes participation of all employees, including Hispanics, in management, leadership and career development programs.

NCA is dedicated to identifying leaders and providing opportunities for enriching their career development through an intensive leadership training experience. The Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) is comprised of men and women charged with leading the continuing transformation of the Federal Government, and it promote well-honored executive skills and commitment. SES members are the major link between appointees and the rest of the Federal workforce. They operate and oversee nearly every government activity. NCA has one Hispanic American SES.

NCA develops mentoring programs to motivate employees, including Hispanics to pursue higher education and careers with the Federal Government –

- In an effort to reach Hispanic students, NCA will partner with local high schools and colleges to provide growth and development opportunities and direction for students in preparation for the Federal Government workforce.

- Although NCA does not have a formal mentoring program, managers/supervisors are encouraged to mentor employees and students during their tenure. Once the interns have completed the Cemetery Intern Program, seasoned cemetery directors provide mentorship to the newly graduates. Also, during the students' internship for each session, supervisors and other co-workers provide guidance to the interns and they may have the opportunity to work in other departments during their internship to get a better understanding of the agency's mission and the daily operations.

Accountability

As a vehicle to increase awareness and cultural sensitivity within VACO, the Office of Human Resources Management under the auspices of the Special Emphasis Program managed an active Hispanic Heritage Program dedicated towards educating VA managers and employees of its diverse culture. Observance events were conducted in an effort to educate the VA populace on Hispanic culture and their valuable contribution to society. During FY 2007, VACO hosted two events in celebration of the theme "Hispanic Americans: Making a Positive Impact on American Society."

The ultimate responsibility for achieving an effective workforce rests with VBA's leadership. In looking at effective practices for accountability, the most important aspect is the commitment to plan, which includes supporting diversity by senior leaders. Most of the regional offices reported that they trained their managers on diversity and equal employment opportunity issues. Areas of emphasis included the importance of leadership commitment to supporting diversity.

VA's Veteran Benefit Administration RO managers participate on an Interagency Task Force on Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government, which fosters improved communication, education and collaboration in accomplishing the goals of Executive Order 13171. The task force members meet to discuss the latest statistical information and share best practices among ROs about government wide and agency-specific recruiting.

The following are some effective practices that ROs use to create a workforce that draws on the strength of diversity:

- Reviewing internal policies to avoid barriers to effective recruitment and ensure the broadest consideration of applicants.
- Evaluating recruitment initiatives and retention strategies to identify effective practices.
- Collecting and analyzing workforce diversity data on attrition to develop succession plan.
- Implementing strategies to ensure the ROs have an effective workforce.

- Identifying and removing any existing barriers to recruiting, developing, and retaining talent, including Hispanics.
- Involving employees at every level to create an organization committed to diversity and inclusion.
- Requiring diversity-related training for managers and supervisors
- Recognizing special emphasis events, including Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Asian-Pacific American History Month, and Native-American Month.

VBA continues to provide employment information to all potential employees, including Hispanics. Accountability includes senior executives and managers' involvement in all phases of recruitment, outreach, and retention of a high-quality diverse workforce.

Accountability includes senior executives and managers' involvement in all phases of recruitment, outreach, and retention of high-quality workforce drawn from the diversity of this nation. These human capital responsibilities are linked to the performance of managers and supervisors.

VA's National Cemetery Administration's managers/supervisors are involved in all aspects of recruitment, outreach, and retention of a high-quality workforce drawn from a diverse population, to include Hispanics. NCA holds all managers/supervisors accountable for training subordinate staff on diversity issues. Additionally, one director attended a special training session in St. Louis devoted to targeting potential employees targeted in this report.

NCA ensures that agency managers and supervisors receive periodic diversity training to carry out their human capital responsibilities.

NCA conducts a supervisory training on a quarterly basis where managers/supervisors receive EEO/Diversity training. During the 2008 National Conference, all of the Directors were exposed to training involving the recruitment and retention of minority, female and disabled employees.

Cemetery management is held accountable for ensuring that all applicants or current employees for vacant positions receive fair and impartial consideration during the recruitment/hiring process. This includes providing training to selecting officials or interview panels on the conduct of performance based interviews.