



Manager's Guide to Recruitment Best Practices

Version 1

May 2009

DRAFT

Hiring the Right People at the Right Time

Recruitment is not just about filling jobs that are vacant right now or filling jobs that may become vacant soon; it is about making a continuous, long-term investment in attracting a high-quality workforce capable of accomplishing the organization's mission now and in the future.

From the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board 2004 Report, "Managing Federal Recruitment: Issues, Insights, and Illustrations"

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This document provides best practices for talent acquisition at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

1.2 Background

The Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) prepared this guide to provide a resource to NASA managers and supervisors during their recruitment process.

1.3 Applicability

This guide is intended primarily for use by NASA managers and supervisors. However, because of functional crossover and common workforce objectives, Human Resources (HR) Specialists and other stakeholders may find this a helpful resource as well.

1.4 About This Document

This document contains information on recruiting best practices. The following appendices are included in this document:

- Appendix A, Acronyms and Abbreviations
- Appendix B, Reports and Studies
- Appendix C, Candidate Sources for Women, Minorities, and Individuals with Disabilities

SECTION 2 – RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

NASA faces large-scale, unprecedented workforce challenges as it focuses on the goals necessary to achieve the new Exploration mission. To ensure we have the workforce we need now and in the future, it is essential that managers have a clear idea about what skills are needed and when, the attributes of the person who will best meet these requirements, and a methodology for acquiring this workforce. When you think about recruitment, think in terms of effective ways to attract strong candidates who are prepared to meet the Agency's goals and priorities at any time. Think of recruitment as an ongoing process to have access to candidates with the right skills at the right time.

Over the years, NASA has easily attracted candidates eager to be a part of the NASA workforce. As a result, the number of unsolicited resumes we have received has provided an excess supply of candidates from which to consider, but finding quality candidates who possess the right skills requires planning. This guide provides managers with best practices and suggestions for identifying and recruiting the best and brightest candidates for accomplishing the work of the Agency.

2.1 Identify the Type of Talent You Need – Workforce Planning

Workforce planning is a major component of strategic human capital management. It is a (systematic) process for identifying and addressing the gaps between the current workforce and the human capital needs of the future. This is the stage at which you determine the skill sets NASA will need and identify which positions will need additional sourcing.

Effective workforce planning enables managers and decision makers to:

1. Develop a comprehensive picture of where gaps exist between current competencies and future workforce requirements;
2. Identify and implement gap reduction strategies, especially for mission-critical occupations;
3. Identify and overcome internal and external barriers to accomplishing strategic workforce goals;
4. Target hiring and/or training to grow an existing capability or build a new one;
5. Identify capability and capacity to perform work in the short and long term;
6. Identify areas of risk for workforce misalignments (e.g., gaps, surpluses);
7. Outline management actions necessary to mitigate misalignments (e.g., human capital programs, adjustments to work distribution); and
8. Influence how and for what contractors are used and the general nature of the procurements needed to perform the work and maintain adequate flexibility.

Work with HR specialists, workforce planners, and budget and resource analysts during this process. The following NASA workforce planning tools are available to managers to accomplish these tasks:

NASA Workforce Planning Tools		
System	Description	Relevance to Managers
Workforce Information Cubes for NASA (WICN)	Provides aggregate information on workforce strength, competencies, history, demographics, and dynamics	Supervisors can conduct forecasts, analyze trends, evaluate workforce dynamics over time, and extract data points for reporting purposes

NASA Workforce Planning Tools		
System	Description	Relevance to Managers
NASA Organizational Profile System (NOPS)	Provides detail workforce data (e.g., retirement eligibility, diversity mix, salary costs) on current and past workforce for your organization	Supervisors can query to obtain demographics and trend data on their workforce
Workforce Integrated Management Systems (WIMS)	Provides a single, centralized repository for Center and Agency workforce and competency planning data for use in Agency workforce planning analysis and decisions	Supervisors submit deployment plans that capture staff aligned to funded work over the next 2 years, as well as staffing needs for the entire planning period
Agency's Competency Management System (CMS)	Provides an application in which supervisors identify competencies required for positions and employees identify their own personal competencies (which are validated by supervisors)	Supervisors have the responsibility to validate competencies and proficiency levels of their staff to develop employees (e.g., through Individual Development Plans (IDPs)) Supervisors can access an inventory of their employees' competencies

2.2 Create an Action Plan – Recruitment Strategy

Once you have identified the employees you will need, work with the Human Resources Office (HRO) to create a realistic, effective recruitment strategy to find them. Doing so will be an efficient use of your time as well as the HRO's time. Don't hesitate to utilize your HRO personnel as consultants and to help you execute the strategy.

Competition for the best candidates, especially in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, is increasing. Not only are we competing with the private and public sectors, but also other Federal agencies that may have a leg up in this competition due to leadership support, larger appropriations, and legislative authorizations with more flexibilities and/or more enticing salary packages. Therefore, you cannot wait until you need an employee to begin the search. As a manager, you need to be strategic and plan in advance what steps you will take to ensure you have a source of candidates that possess the right skills when you need them. Consider developing strategies that target specific skills needed (e.g., partnership with Federal Acquisition Institute).

2.3 Become Familiar with Hiring Flexibilities and Tools

Effectively attracting and evaluating candidates drives many of the components within the hiring process. Decisions such as use of the various hiring flexibilities, ranking procedures, and assessment instruments should be discussed with HRO well in advance of any job posting as part of an overall hiring strategy.

Hiring managers have a variety of appointing authorities to hire job applicants, including special authorities for targeting veterans and people with disabilities. Talk to your HRO about these and other appointing authorities or refer to the helpful links in Appendix C, Candidate Sources for Women, Minorities, and Individuals with Disabilities. Some of the more common authorities are listed as follows:

- Career/Career Conditional Appointments,
- Direct-Hire Authority,
- Disabled Appointing Authority,
- Schedules A and B Excepted Service Authorities,
- 30% Disabled Veterans Appointing Authority,
- Veterans Employment Opportunity Authority (VEOA), and
- Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) Authority.

Selecting qualified applicants is a critical step in building a talented and committed workforce, supporting an effective organizational culture, and enhancing the overall performance of the Agency. Candidates should be rated and ranked using differentiating criteria to ensure the best qualified candidates are referred. Ideally, you will partner with your HRO to develop these criteria or category rating factors. As an alternative to traditional numerical rating and ranking procedures, also referred to as the Rule of Three, agencies can also evaluate candidates and place them into pre-determined quality categories.

While many applicants may apply for any particular position, quantity does not guarantee quality. Assessment instruments can offer a cost-effective tool in narrowing down applicant pools. Assessment tools can also make the selection decision process more efficient because less time and fewer resources are expended dealing with applicants whose qualifications do not match what is needed by the Agency. Discuss with your HRO what may be appropriate (e.g., structured interview, work sample, crediting plan) for the position being filled.

2.4 Utilize Pipeline Programs

Pipeline programs such as the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP), and Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program allow you to get students and graduates into the NASA workforce and help develop them for future positions within the Agency. Upon completion of the program requirements, these employees can be noncompetitively converted to permanent positions.

These programs provide a win-win situation for the Agency and the employee. The benefits of using these programs are as follows:

- Contributes to reaching diversity goals;
- Brings “new blood” into the Agency;
- Provides a skilled resource at a low cost which can be particularly useful for shorter-term projects;
- Provides an opportunity to evaluate potential future employees, a “1-year interview;” and
- Provides opportunity to develop skills in current and projected competency areas.

The Cooperative (Co-op) Education Program, a component of SCEP, allows students to work while pursuing their degree. Co-ops can be hired at the associate through graduate levels. While many students alternate between periods of school and work, some work while also attending classes on campus. NASA has active Co-op program agreements with many colleges and universities throughout the United States, with the ability to expand in this area.

As an alternative to the competitive examining process, the FCIP provides streamlined hiring procedures with relatively few eligibility and procedural requirements. These procedures give agencies flexibility in recruiting, assessing and selecting candidates. Agencies can then convert interns to the competitive service if the interns successfully complete a 2-year training and development program.

The PMF program attracts outstanding men and women who have a clear interest in the Federal service. Eligible graduate students go through a national competition, application, and rigorous assessment process to become a finalist from which agencies can choose to appoint. Supervisors agree to hire Fellows for 2 years, develop these high potential employees, and upon successful completion of the program, convert them to permanent positions as future leaders.

The NASA Office of Education and the Mission Directorates sponsor and manage many programs geared primarily to students interested in careers in the STEM occupations. The programs include internships and fellowships at the high school through doctoral levels and are related to NASA research and development. While these participants are not civil servants, they can be considered for all types of employment opportunities including student programs, FCIP, permanent, and term employment.

2.5 Market and Promote the Agency

Also key to recruiting is understanding why high performers come to work for an organization and communicating what you believe is important to these candidates — growth, opportunity for impact, interesting work, training and career development, personal and sick leave, insurance benefits, and flexible work schedules. Doing so can result in a quality hire and increased retention. In the area of marketing NASA to potential candidates, we are fortunate to work for an Agency that has national name recognition as well as exciting work. But, we must go beyond this. There are many tools and practices available to help you promote NASA as an employer of choice and generate interest in working for NASA. The following are some options available to you:

- Provide a fact sheet highlighting key features about the organization and positions available.
- Distribute Agency-developed recruitment materials at events.
- Distribute materials, such as the NASA Spinoff publications, that highlight NASA contributions and work.
- Post information about the Agency on college and university Web sites.
- Participate actively in annual conferences conducted by professional organizations.
- Place advertisement in college/university publications.
- Work with HR to develop a list of benefits that can be formatted as a handout or used as talking points during interactions with candidates.

Advertisements are an excellent way to identify and attract a diverse candidate pool, especially for specialized and hard-to-find skills. All NASA Centers are delegated authority to use paid advertising through a Government-issued credit card or Purchase Request. When determining where to advertise, consider diversity and availability of the skills required. There are a variety of sources available for placing advertisements, including:

- Internet Web sites
- Periodicals
- Newspapers
- Professional or trade journals
- Banner advertisements on the Internet
- Placement of specific vacancy announcements on free or fee-based Internet sites

Lists of Internet recruiting sites are available on the NASA People Web site at:
<http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/recruitment/sources>.

2.6 Participate in Career and Job Fairs

On-campus recruiting normally focuses on positions for upcoming graduates and recent alumni, as well as internships for all students. Fall recruiting season normally runs between September and the first week in December, and spring recruiting is normally held between January and the end of April. Career fairs are hosted by colleges and universities, professional organizations, other government agencies, and companies that specialize in job searching such as Monster, Career Finder, and Career Builder.

To increase your Return on Investment (ROI) from participating in these events, the following practices are suggested:

- a. Participate in networking receptions and other campus activities conducted during the career fair timeframe and throughout the school year.
- b. Conduct employer information sessions.
- c. Participate in Agency recruitment events sponsored and coordinated by OHCM, the Office of Education, and the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.
- d. Identify potential candidates for interviews prior to visiting campus by contacting the career placement office, faculty, department heads, and special interest groups.
- e. Request a list of eligible candidates from Agency and/or Center FCIP notices for recruitment events. Pre-screening allows recruiters to review submitted resumes prior to the campus visit and to set up interviews.
- f. Get training from your HRO in contact and interview etiquette, the hiring process, and Agency personnel flexibilities. Ensure your recruiters are familiar with these areas as well.
- g. Know your hiring timeframes and the process so you can communicate them to prospective applicants.
- h. Include as part of the recruitment team new hires, Co-ops, and NASA education program participants.

2.7 Build and Cultivate Relationships

Creating linkages with colleges, universities, and student and professional organizations can bring long-term benefits in the area of hiring. You can raise NASA's reputation among students as a potential employer and target students with particular skills and qualities that your organization requires. Here are a number of ideas on building relationships:

- a. Establish a designated student liaison with targeted student organizations.
- b. Attend and get involved in campus functions/activities.
- c. Speak on campus or at professional organization meetings.
- d. Partner with professors to bring NASA content and expertise to the classroom.
- e. Provide faculty with information on skills that will be in demand in the future so they can tailor their courses to address those needs.
- f. Partner with targeted universities in curriculum design.
- g. Identify topics of mutual interest and conduct online discussions with students and professors.
- h. Nominate "link officers" within your organization to act as liaisons with universities and students at select schools.
- i. Join professional and technical organizations that draw from a cross section of society including, for example, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, women's colleges, and people with disabilities.
- j. Get involved with Honor Societies that have high caliber members with proven leadership potential. You can target candidates by major and graduation year. Do presentations at organization events.
- k. Partner with student, employee, and professional organizations to conduct workshops on how to apply for a Federal Government job and to share mission-related outlooks.
- l. Host speaking engagements at schools to educate students about NASA's mission and careers and to increase the next generation of applicants.

2.8 Seize the Opportunity to Achieve Diversity

Recruitment provides an opportunity to contribute to Agency diversity goals. It allows you to bring talent in areas where underrepresentation exists in the NASA workforce. Consider the following practices:

- a. Utilize special hiring authorities to bring highly qualified people with disabilities into Federal employment rather quickly.
- b. Advertise in publications and on Web sites that target special emphasis areas – people with disabilities and disabled veterans. For a list of special emphasis organizations, visit the NASA People Web site at: www.nasapeople.nasa.gov, click the **HR POLICIES & PROGRAMS** button, then click the **Recruitment** link. Lists are available by clicking the **Candidate Sources** button.
- c. Contact student organizations and department heads well in advance of visit (e.g., career fair) to let them know when you will be visiting their campus. Offer to speak to their members.
- d. Review your Center's Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program Plans available from your HRO or Equal Opportunity office.
- e. Participate in recruitment and outreach events geared to people with disabilities, veterans, and underrepresented groups.
- f. Utilize NASA Education Programs that target underrepresented students.

2.9 Don't Forget about Orientation

Orientation is an ongoing process, not a one-day program. The orientation process benefits both the organization and the individual. It is a method of educating new employees about the civil service, employee benefits, their specific organization (its mission, culture, structure, systems and resources), their job duties, and the responsibilities of serving as a Federal employee. As with any new relationship, how the organization treats a new employee during the first interactions leaves a lasting impression. By providing new employees with detailed information about the organization and their jobs, they will be able to work independently and contribute to their organization in a shorter time period. Reports indicate this also contributes to employee retention. To supplement what your HRO provides, your organization can implement practices such as the following:

- Notify everyone in your unit that a new person is starting and what the person's job will entail.
- Ask other staff to welcome the new employee and encourage their support.
- Prepare interesting tasks for the employee's first day.
- Make sure the employee's work location is available, clean, and organized.
- If possible, identify a staff member to act as a buddy for the first week or two.
- Put together a list of key people the employee should meet and interview to get a broader understanding of their roles.
- Draft a training plan for the new employee's first year.
- Conduct follow-up with the employee in the first few months to get feedback on their experience and orientation.

2.10 Evaluate Recruitment Strategies

The only way to determine if your plan is giving you access to the type and quality of candidates you are seeking is to assess your recruitment efforts. If your efforts are not providing an ROI, don't hesitate to adjust your plans if necessary.

The following are some of the recommended recruitment assessments:

- Identify what recruitment sources led to a larger number of qualified hires/applicants.
- Revisit your recruitment plan and recruiting activities regularly to determine if adjustments are needed.
- Provide feedback to career placement officers, school administrators, deans, faculty, professional organizations, and alumni groups on recruitment initiatives and results.
- Request feedback from career placement officers, school administrators, and faculty about NASA visits on campus and student perceptions to identify areas for improvement.

In addition, tools are available to help you assess your recruitment strategy. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has such a tool available for its members. For additional information in this area, contact the recruitment manager in your Center HRO who is a member of NACE.

SECTION 3 – CONCLUSION

Incorporating best practices identified in this guide into your ongoing workforce planning strategies is critical to ensuring NASA is prepared for current and future missions. The resources identified in this guide, coupled with your Center HRO personnel, will provide you all the tools necessary to assist you in this important component of building your most effective NASA team.

Take advantage of the many flexibilities and hiring authorities available (e.g., term appointments and recruitment incentives). Take advantage of technology. Take advantage of networks. Build relationships with organizations (e.g., National Honor Society, American Indian Science & Engineering Society, National Association of Colleges and Employers) and academic institutions. Be strategic by using pipeline programs such as PMF, SCEP, and FCIP. Tap into new and diverse populations like persons with disabilities, students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and military veterans.

Note that plans will evolve over time and should be reviewed as more decision-making information becomes available. It is suggested you select at least three practices from this guide that can be implemented fairly soon. This will continue the plan for having the best and brightest always work for NASA. To read more about NASA's 2007 ranking as one of the Best Places to Work, visit the NASA Jobs Web site at: www.nasajobs.nasa.gov, then under the **RECRUITMENT** heading, click **The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government 2007** link.

APPENDIX A – ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms that are used in this guide are identified upon first use in this document. Thereafter, the acronym is used. In cases where the first or only instance of the use of an acronym is in a table or graphic, it may not be spelled out on first reference. Since many acronyms and abbreviations have multiple meanings, the following list includes those used in this guide and the applicable meaning:

ACRONYM/ ABBREVIATION	MEANING
AISES	American Indian Science and Engineering Society
APA	Asian Pacific American
CMS	Competency Management System
Co-op	Cooperative
FAPAC	Federal Asian Pacific American Council
FCIP	Federal Career Intern Program
HR	Human Resources
HRO	Human Resources Office
IDP	Individual Development Plan
NACE	National Association of Colleges and Employers
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NOPS	NASA Organizational Profile System
NSBE	National Society of Black Engineers
OHCM	Office of Human Capital Management
PMF	Presidential Management Fellows
ROI	Return on Investment
SCEP	Student Career Experience Program
SHPE	Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
VEOA	Veterans Employment Opportunity Authority
VRA	Veterans Recruitment Appointment
WICN	Workforce Information Cubes for NASA
WIMS	Workforce Integrated Management Systems
WRP	Workforce Recruitment Program

APPENDIX B — REPORTS AND STUDIES

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- r. “Winning the Best and the Brightest: Increasing the Attraction of Public Service,” Chetkovich, Carol, July 2001, Cambridge, Massachusetts: A PricewaterhouseCoopers Endowment for the Business of Government.
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APPENDIX C — CANDIDATE SOURCES FOR WOMEN, MINORITIES, AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The NASA People Web site provides candidate sources for women and minority organizations. This appendix contains some of the sources, as well as Web sites and brief descriptions. Refer to the following site for additional source information:

<http://nasapeople.nasa.gov/recruitment/sources/women.htm>.

Candidate Sources for Women, Minorities, and Individuals with Disabilities		
Organization	Web Site	Description
American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)	www.aises.org	AISES develops culturally appropriate curricula and publications; builds partnerships with tribes, schools, other non-profit organizations, corporations, foundations and government agencies to realize its goals; and helps American Indian and Alaska Native students prepare for careers in science, technology, and engineering.
Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC)	www.fapac.org	FAPAC was founded in 1985. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization representing the civilian and military Asian Pacific American (APA) employees in the Federal and District of Columbia governments.
National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)	http://national.nsbe.org	The NSBE, with more than 24,000 members, is one of the largest student-managed organizations in the country. NSBE is comprised of more than 270 chapters on college and university campuses, 75 Alumni Extension chapters nationwide, and 75 Pre-college chapters. These chapters are geographically divided into six regions.
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE)	www.shpe.org	SHPE promotes Hispanics in engineering, math, and science and conducts the largest technical and career conference for Hispanics in the country.
The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)	https://wrp.gov	Coordinated by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy and the U.S. Department of Defense, the WRP for College Students with Disabilities is a resource that identifies qualified candidates for temporary and permanent employment in a variety of fields. Annually, trained recruiters conduct personal interviews with interested students on college and university campuses. From these interviews, a database is compiled containing information on the college students and recent graduates seeking temporary or permanent jobs.

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Document Number Here before final