

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Affirmative Recruitment Plan

Massachusetts and Rhode Island

FY 2008
October 1, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Federal Government strives to be a model employer by building and maintaining a workforce that reflects the rich diversity of the Nation. Diversity has evolved from sound public policy to a strategic business imperative. It is an issue that requires more attention and support within the Federal Workplace. This dual state plan reflects the U. S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) commitment to diversity and providing the best possible workplace for all Federal Employees. The importance of affirmative employment efforts by agency leaders and managers is stated in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Sections 501 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 714 which provides guidance for the USDA and NRCS Affirmative Employment Plan.

The States of Massachusetts (MA) and Rhode Island (RI) make up the MA/RI Civil Rights (CR) Program and Committee. The CR Committee members and Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) are volunteers from both states.

The goals of the Recruitment Plan (RP) is to provide a method to enhance and diversify the workforce by identifying actions, targeting dates, and naming responsible officials to insure that recruitment "happens". Recruiting and hiring under the RP is based on the qualifications and ability of an applicant to do the work.

DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY

STATE CONSERVATIONIST

The two state conservationists (STCs) serve as the Equal Opportunity Officer and are responsible for administering staff diversity in their individual states. The STC ensures that adequate staff and fiscal resources are available to effectively implement the RP. The STC leads the RP implementation with the assistance of the CR Committee, the SEPMs, and other management staff. The STC with the assistance of senior staff is responsible for implementing CR policies and procedures through CR performance appraisal elements, posters, education, training, outreach, and program delivery.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER, HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALISTS, and PUBLIC AFFAIR SPECIALIST

Following the leadership and management directives of the STCs: the Administrative Officer (AO), Human Resource (HR) Specialist, and the Public Affairs Specialists serve as advisors to the STCs. They carry out their advisory role by coordinating personnel and affirmative employment initiatives, identifying issues and providing perspective, promoting communication and training, and providing oversight to ensure that EEO/Affirmative employment activities are integrated into a comprehensive HR program.

Administrative Officer, Human Resource Specialists, and Public Affairs Specialists are responsible for:

- Collaboration with CR Committee members and SEPMs;
- Providing training and communications on CR matters;
- Developing Outreach and Recruiting initiatives
- Maintaining interaction with Headquarters staff
- Reviewing the RP annually and commenting on its effectiveness

SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM MANAGERS (SEPMs)

SEPMs are essential to the Affirmative Employment Plan. Our SEPMs cover the following areas: Women, Asian American-Pacific Islander, American Indian, Hispanic, Black, and Disabilities.

SEPMs assist in:

- Developing outreach and recruitment initiatives
- Collaborating with the STCs, Management Team and CR Committee
- Developing and presenting CR training to employees
- Communicating the CR message to employees

CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The CR Committee members serve as advisors to the STCs on all matters concerning equal employment opportunity and work place conditions. CR Committee members assist the STCs with outreach, recruitment, data analysis, and activities that support a diverse workforce. The CR Committee is made up of a cross section of employees including all EEO target groups and white males in all employment areas and grade levels.

OBJECTIVES

The Recruitment Plan objective is to expand targeted affirmative recruitment areas, to make applicant pools representative of the nation's diversity, and to hire in order to eliminate under representation in the Committee area of responsibility.

Covered Groups: Blacks, Hispanics, American Indian (AI)/Alaskan Native (AN), Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders (AA/PI), and White Women. Individuals with physical or mental disabilities are also included.

Legal Basis: 5 CFR 720.201

Definitions:

- Under Representation: Exists when minorities or women constitute a smaller percentage in an employment category than the group's percentage in the applicable labor force. The RP will evaluate under representation by state.
- Targeted Recruitment: Efforts to recruit are prioritized according to how severe that group is under represented.

PLAN OF ACTION

1. Targeted Recruitment for FY 08: Identify under represented groups per the September 2006, 714 Report, Change in Work Force EEO Profile by PATCO.

Massachusetts: Black Female and Hispanic Male.

Note: Massachusetts recruited one Asian American/Pacific Islander Female in August 2007.

Rhode Island: Black Male and Black Female and Hispanic Male and Hispanic Female

2. Work Force Planning

Projecting staffing needs for each state for Fiscal Year 2008.

Massachusetts: State Resource Conservationist
State Soil Scientist/MLRA Leader

Rhode Island: None

EEO in RECRUITMENT & HIRING

Objective: A diverse and representative workforce

<u>ACTION</u>	<u>Responsible Official</u>	<u>Target Date</u>
1. <u>Identify Effective Recruiting Sources</u>		
NRCS list of diverse Colleges provided to SEPMs and STCs	HR	As provided by NHQ
NRCS list of annual diverse job fairs provided to SEPMs and STCs	HR	As provided by NHQ
2. <u>Use effective Recruiting Techniques</u>		
On site visits to local community organizations and educational institutions with significant target group enrollment.	HR and SEPMs	Continuous
Attend and network at annual SEPM meetings/professional organization meetings.	SEPMs	Annually
Maintain telephone contacts with your FEORP network.	SEPMs	On-going
Mail vacancy announcements to local educational institutions and community organizations.	HR and SEPMs	As vacancies arise
Provide Vacancy Announcements directly to SEPMs for further distribution.	HR	As vacancies arise
3. <u>Use Personnel Management flexibilities</u>		
Expand the use of Personnel Management flexibilities.	HR and STCS	On-going

Human Resources Recruitment Tools

Other Than Full Time Employment - Seasonal and Intermittent Employment

Seasonal employment allows an agency to develop an experienced cadre of employees under career appointment to perform work which recurs predictably year-to-year. Consistent with the career nature of the appointments, seasonal employees receive the full benefits authorized to attract and retain a stable workforce. As a result, seasonal employment is appropriate when the work is expected to last at least 6 months during a calendar year. Recurring work that lasts less than 6 months each year is normally best performed by temporary employees.

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

The VRA is a special authority by which agencies may, if they wish, appoint an eligible veteran without competition. The candidate does not have to be on a list of eligibles, but must meet the basic qualification requirements for the position. The VRA is a convenient method of appointment for both the agency and the veteran. However, use of the authority is entirely discretionary and no one is entitled to a VRA appointment.

Federal Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP)

This program offers student employment opportunities with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) throughout the year. The Federal Student Educational Employment Program provides either temporary employment for up to 1-year, or career-related employment under the Career Experience Component. Positions may lead to permanent status after completion of a student's education.

Student Trainee (Natural Sciences)

The program provides students with opportunities to work and develop skills related to research or other professional and scientific work or subordinate technical work in any of the fields of science concerned with living organisms, their distribution, life processes and adaptation and relation to the environment. Includes the properties and distribution of soil and living organisms growing in the soil.

Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)

SCEP is a strong recruitment source for Federal agencies. SCEP can be used to attract diverse and talented students. The arrangements for such jobs are developed under the Federal Student Educational Employment Program. That program provides for work-study partnerships between the students, the educational institutions, and various Federal agencies.

Cooperative Programs

Provides the opportunity for the student, educational institution, and our agency to enhance a student's career through a combination of classroom studies and on-the-job training. Cooperative educational programs allow students to apply theories and work on projects that give real-life meaning to classroom instruction. Students or career professionals receive mentoring opportunities and closely interact with experts in a given field of study.

Outstanding Scholar Program

This program allows the direct hire of entry level applicants who have maintained an undergraduate grade point average of 3.5 or better, or who graduated in the upper 10% of their graduating class or major university subdivision. Applicants can apply nine months before graduation.

Career Intern

The Federal Career Intern Program is designed to help agencies recruit and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of occupations. It was created under Executive Order 13162, and is intended for positions at grade levels GS-5, 7, and 9 or other trainee positions. In general, individuals are appointed to a 2-year internship. Upon successful completion of the internships, the interns may be eligible for permanent placement within an agency. Individuals are non competitively selected.

Recruitment Bonuses

An agency may pay a lump-sum recruitment bonus of up to 25 percent of the annual rate of basic pay to an employee newly appointed to a difficult-to-fill position. Recruitment bonuses may be paid to eligible individuals who are appointed to a General Schedule (GS) position or to another type of position for which such payments have been approved by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).