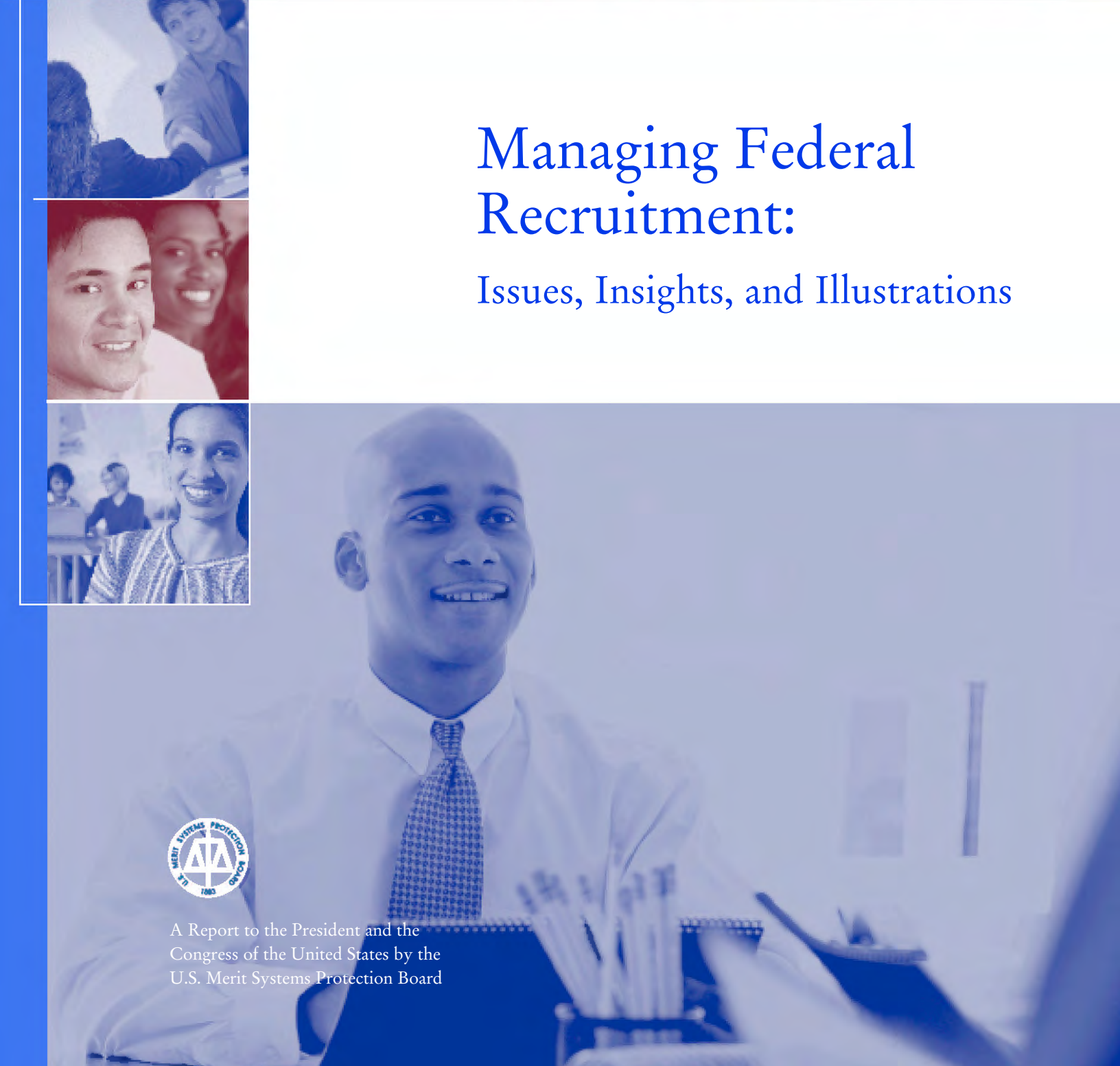


# Managing Federal Recruitment:

Issues, Insights, and Illustrations



A Report to the President and the  
Congress of the United States by the  
U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board



THE ACTING CHAIRMAN



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD  
1615 M Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20419-0001

September 2004

The President  
President of the Senate  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dear Sirs:

In accordance with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 1204(a)(3), it is my honor to submit this Merit Systems Protection Board report, "Managing Federal Recruitment: Issues, Insights, and Illustrations."

The Federal Government's human capital is its most critical asset. At a time when the Federal Government is preparing for increased retirements and striving to address evolving mission needs and changing skill requirements, recruitment plays a key role in ensuring that we are able to maintain a high-quality workforce capable of meeting the needs of the American public. However, there is growing concern about the Federal Government's ability to attract top talent – those who have the variety of knowledge and skills we need.

This report explores the practices agencies use to recruit a highly qualified, diverse workforce. In looking at Federal recruitment, the most striking finding is the degree of variability among agencies. They differ greatly in terms of support, resources, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The report goes on to present recommendations for agencies to consider in developing and improving recruitment programs and provides illustrations of how some agencies have used similar approaches to address their recruitment challenges.

The Federal Government faces many challenges when it comes to recruitment. However, the reward of taking on these challenges is great. With a little creativity and innovation, along with leadership support and adequate resources, we believe the Government can successfully meet its recruitment demands. I believe you will find this report useful as you consider issues affecting the Federal Government's ability to recruit a highly qualified, diverse workforce.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil A. G. McPhie".

Neil A. G. McPhie



# **MANAGING FEDERAL RECRUITMENT:**

*Issues, Insights, and Illustrations*



A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES BY THE  
U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**he Federal Government's human capital is its most important asset. Agencies cannot accomplish their missions without the right people with the right skills in the right jobs at the right time. Recruitment is critical to meeting this goal. This report explores the practices agencies use to recruit a highly qualified, diverse workforce; presents recommendations for agencies to consider in developing and improving recruitment programs; and provides illustrations of how some agencies have used these approaches to address their recruitment challenges. Our data indicate that it is possible for the Federal Government to successfully compete for talent; it just has to be proactive and creative in its approach to recruitment.

## Background

When the Federal Government downsized its workforce during the 1990s, it curtailed most new hiring. As a result, many agencies also downsized their recruitment programs. In recent years, however, agencies have started to increase hiring and rebuild recruitment programs. They have done this for a variety of reasons, including preparing for increased retirements and replacing skills lost during downsizing. At the same time, greater emphasis is being placed on changing skill sets and staff size to meet evolving mission requirements, to increase diversity, and to target hard-to-fill occupations.

However, there is growing concern about the Government's ability to compete with the private sector and other public sectors. To remain competitive in an environment where private sector employers often offer higher salaries, the Government must employ innovative recruitment approaches that meet its mission needs and also address the needs of the workforce and market the Government's strengths as an employer. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) studied Federal recruiting practices and presents this report to further agencies' efforts to meet these objectives.

## Findings

Federal agencies have made significant progress in improving recruitment practices over the past few years. Many agencies have garnered the management support and resources needed to build strong recruitment programs, established solid infrastructures to support recruitment activities, and used creative strategies to attract the right talent. The practices appear to support fair and open competition through posting vacancy announcements and other outreach efforts. Moreover, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has established a number of helpful tools and flexibilities to support agencies' targeted recruitment efforts.

Nevertheless, based on the information MSPB gathered through agency interrogatories, focus groups, and interviews, there remain variations across and even within agencies regarding elements crucial to effective recruitment. These variations point to a number of potential areas for improvement.

**Roles in recruitment.** Recruitment is often viewed as solely a human resources (HR) function. Because recruitment directly impacts workforce composition and competencies, it should be recognized as a management responsibility and managers should work with HR to plan, implement, and measure recruitment practices that best support the mission.

**Recruitment planning.** While a majority of agency participants in this study indicated that they base recruitment decisions on workforce analysis, the extent of recruitment planning varies across organizations, with many doing little to project their long-term needs.

**Training Recruiters.** While most agencies reported using collateral-duty or full-time recruiters, many of these recruiters may not be properly prepared for their responsibilities. Only about half of the agencies participating in this study indicated that they train recruiters for these responsibilities. In addition, many who do so rely only on informal or brief training sessions.

**Evaluate success.** Most of the responding agencies rely on rudimentary practices to measure recruitment success. Most commonly, this takes the form of feedback from managers, recruiters, and in some instances new hires. While this type of feedback is useful, it limits agencies' abilities to determine if long-term organizational needs are being met, which strategies work well, which do not, and how to best tailor approaches to specific circumstances.

**Evaluate cost benefits.** Many agencies are unable to estimate their recruitment costs. Over one-third of the agencies in our study could not identify how much money they spend on recruitment activities. At a time when budgets are declining and performance is being scrutinized, it is important to track overall recruitment costs and compare those costs to the benefits received.

**Governmentwide challenges.** Agencies cited a number of recruitment challenges that impact the Government as a whole, including:

- Length and complexity of the hiring process
- Perceptions of noncompetitive salaries
- Poor image of the Federal Government as an employer
- Regulatory obstacles to entry-level hiring
- Competition among agencies
- Labor market shortages
- Budget constraints and uncertainties
- Diminishing HR capacity

Many agencies attempt to tackle some of these challenges on an individual basis through legislation, OPM regulatory approvals, and budget requests, causing imbalances throughout Government.

## Recommendations

This report includes MSPB's recommendations for agency Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) and HR staffs to consider when developing, implementing, and evaluating their recruitment programs. Also included are recommendations for OPM on how it can address some of the issues that hamper Governmentwide recruitment efforts. While some recommendations address specific issues identified in the study findings, others are based on practices used in private and other public sector organizations.

***Agency Chief Human Capital Officers should work with their leadership to:***

**Distinguish recruitment as a critical management function and involve all levels of the organization in recruitment planning and implementation.** Considering that recruitment affects every facet of the organization, it should be viewed as a management function. Therefore, CHCOs should garner the support and involvement of agency leaders, managers, and even line employees for recruitment activities.

**Establish the needed infrastructure.** Few organizations can maintain a viable recruitment program without an established infrastructure. CHCOs should carefully examine what type of infrastructure is right for the agency's needs, including necessary funding mechanisms, tracking methods, and management processes as well as the size, selection, and training requirements for recruitment staff and recruiters.

**Plan for retention.** It is not cost effective to recruit talent the organization can't keep. Therefore, before embarking on a resource-intensive recruitment program, CHCOs should spur agency leadership to plan for retention by identifying and improving cultural and environmental factors that might otherwise drive away talented employees. While not directly related to agency recruitment activities, this type of action will help improve the long-term return on investment for agency recruitment efforts.

*The HR staff, in consultation with agency managers, should:*

**Develop a recruitment plan that is aligned with the agency strategic and workforce plans.** A recruitment plan that is aligned with the agency strategic and workforce plans will help map out what the agency wants to achieve through its recruitment program. It will help anticipate needs rather than react to individual vacancies. As a result, the agency will be better able to prioritize strategies, decrease duplication of effort, and pool resources across the organization.

**Employ a balanced set of recruitment strategies that effectively market the organization.** Agencies have different recruitment needs and should tailor their recruitment strategies to meet those needs. MSPB has identified some important steps agencies should consider when developing recruitment strategies, such as:

- Use proactive strategies to seek out qualified applicants.
- Research the market from which the agency is recruiting to identify the best strategies to employ.
- Ensure that recruitment materials are clear, are of professional quality, and represent the organization well.
- Use automation to complement human interaction, not replace it.
- Build relationships that can be beneficial now and in the future.
- Use available HR flexibilities to be more responsive to applicants.
- Leverage existing low-cost and no-cost tools to support recruitment efforts.

**Evaluate success.** With limited resources available, agencies must strategically manage costs and resources and be able to justify allocations. Therefore, evaluating the success of individual recruitment strategies and the overall program's ability to attract qualified candidates should be an integral component to any recruitment program.

**Position the agency to make good selections.** Recruitment is just one aspect of a comprehensive staffing program. Even the best recruitment strategies will not result in high-quality hires unless the agency has adequately defined job requirements, employed valid applicant assessment tools, and established a reasonable hiring process.

**OPM should:**

**Address Governmentwide challenges.** OPM has played a valuable leadership role in helping agencies' recruitment efforts through its many Governmentwide initiatives. We recommend OPM continue looking for new flexibilities and developing programs that can help agency recruitment efforts. In addition, we recommend that OPM evaluate the impact of imbalances caused by legislative flexibilities granted to individual agencies, examine agency barriers to using HR flexibilities and how to overcome them, and expand efforts to market the Government by improving its image as an employer.

To demonstrate that the Federal Government can compete for talent if it is proactive and creative, this report also provides illustrations of how agencies have already implemented similar actions to those listed above to address their individual recruitment needs.



# INTRODUCTION

The American public depends on the Federal Government to provide a vast array of products and services. The Government is responsible for protecting our borders, our food supply, our environment, and our health. It attempts to ensure equal access to education and affordable housing, promote the welfare of the labor force, and provide for transportation and energy systems fundamental to national interests. It manages and administers vital benefits programs to care for the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and veterans. It serves as steward of the U.S. economy and the nation's natural resources and strives to protect the public's safety and defend Americans at home and abroad. Ultimately, it is the Federal workforce that is responsible for the day-to-day administration of these tasks and more.

Because of the diverse and often divergent nature of Federal agency missions, the Government needs to continuously attract large numbers of high-quality applicants who have a variety of knowledge and skills to serve the needs of the American public. This should not be a difficult task. After all, the Federal Government is the largest employer in the United States. The work it offers prospective applicants includes many distinguished and unique opportunities not found in the private sector. It also offers challenging work that impacts national and global policy, worldwide job opportunities, numerous prospects for career growth, generally stable employment, and appealing benefits. However, there is growing concern about the Federal Government's ability to compete with the private sector and other public sectors for the talent that it needs.

## Purpose

To help address this concern, MSPB conducted a study of Federal civilian recruitment methods. The purpose of the study is threefold: (1) identify current recruitment trends and challenges in the Federal Government, (2) provide recommendations about how to improve Federal recruitment, and (3) highlight examples of how individual agencies have implemented actions similar to those we recommend to address their recruitment challenges. This study is not intended to evaluate the outcomes of agency recruitment practices. Rather, the objective is to provide policymakers with information on current recruitment methods and challenges and to share useful practices and ideas with agency officials who are exploring ways to better compete in the labor market.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this study, recruitment is the process of attracting qualified applicants to apply for positions within the hiring organization. By this definition, recruitment does not include the processes to assess the applicant, choose the most qualified, or make a job offer.



## Why Is Recruitment So Important Now?

While many say recruitment is critical right now because of the impending “human capital crisis” in the U.S. labor force, we argue that recruitment should always be a critical component of an agency’s management agenda – not only during times of crisis. 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. In other words, it is about attracting the right person to the right job at the right time. Recruitment practices are also particularly critical elements in supporting Federal merit systems, as defined by the Merit System Principles. Appropriate practices should ensure that qualified individuals are recruited from all segments of society after fair and open competition.<sup>2</sup>

Understanding how to effectively recruit is particularly important today because of the dramatic changes taking place in the nation’s workforce.

- U.S. labor force demographics show a more diverse, older workforce with increasing numbers of women, minorities, single parents, and dual-income families. As the composition of the labor force changes, so too must recruitment strategies.
- The nature of work has changed with manual work declining, knowledge-based work increasing, and technology redefining the work we do and how we do it. Recruitment practices must therefore focus on the new competencies and skill mixes needed now and in the future.
- The Federal Government is no longer seen as the secure, lifetime employer it once was and often cannot match private sector employers with respect to competitive salaries for many occupations, rapid job offers, and, sometimes, work benefits. To address these challenges, the Government needs to find ways to market its strengths as an employer.

Finally, it is true that the Government, as well as the national labor force, may face a “human capital crisis” over the next several years due to a large portion of the workforce nearing retirement eligibility. While there is debate as to when these retirements will take place and what impact they will actually have on the labor force, the statistics show that the Federal workforce is indeed aging. For instance:

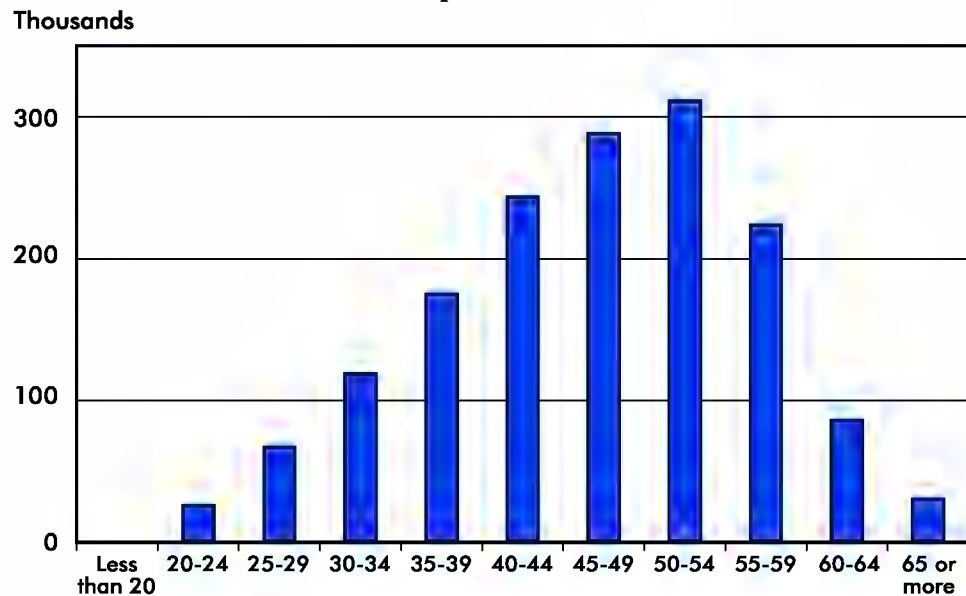
- The average age of the Federal employee increased from 42.3 years in 1990 to 46.5 in 2001.<sup>3</sup>
- As of September 2003, 22 percent of the Federal workforce was already at or above the minimum retirement age of 55, but only 6 percent was below the age of 30 (based on data in Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Merit Principle No. 1 (5 U.S.C. 2301).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *The Fact Book: Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics*, 2001 and 2002 Editions, respectively, Washington, DC, <http://www.opm.gov/feddata>.

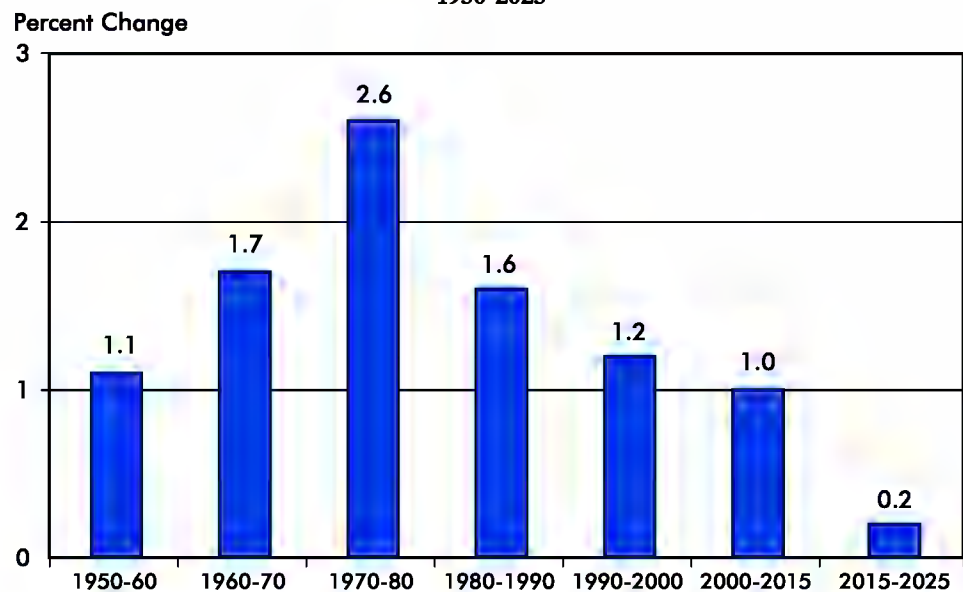
<sup>4</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, “Employment Data Cubes,” full-time, permanent, nonseasonal, Washington, DC, Sep. 2003, <http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/employment.htm>.

**Figure 1. Federal Civilian Workforce Age Distribution**  
As of September 30, 2003



This “graying of the workforce” comes at a time when the labor force growth rate is not growing as quickly as in previous decades (as shown in Figure 2), potentially leaving fewer people to fill vacated jobs.<sup>5</sup> The combination of aging workforce and slowing labor force growth rate will likely result in increased competition for qualified applicants across all sectors to fill gaps left by retirees. To remain a competitive employer, the Government must address the changes taking place in the workforce and work place through innovative recruitment practices.

**Figure 2. Annual Rates of Labor Force Growth**  
1950-2025



<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Monthly Labor Review: The Editor’s Desk,” Washington, DC, June 25, 2001, <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2001/June/wk4/art01.htm>.

## The Study

This study was designed to identify and describe methods Federal agencies are using to recruit applicants. Governmentwide data collection efforts were completed in the spring of 2003 and agency-specific data was collected and verified through the summer of 2004. To obtain information related to these practices, we did the following:

- Sent interrogatories to 46 Federal departments and agencies. We received responses from the HR staffs of 124 organizations – individual departments, agencies, and/or agency subcomponents – and analyzed the responses to determine Governmentwide trends and innovative practices;<sup>6</sup>
- Conducted focus groups with agency managers and HR staff from 13 departments and 9 agencies in Chicago, Denver, and Washington, DC, to determine participants' views and experiences regarding their agencies' recruitment practices;
- Conducted individual interviews with HR officials in over a dozen Federal organizations, including OPM, to explore innovative Federal recruiting practices; and
- Conducted an extensive literature review of private, public, and Federal sector recruitment practices.

<sup>6</sup> The terms “agency” and “organization” are used interchangeably throughout this report to describe the 124 interrogatory respondents. These responses came from a total of 15 departments and 20 independent agencies which comprise approximately 80 percent of the non-Department of Defense (DOD) Executive Branch civil service, as defined by OPM's FedScope. Because of the HR servicing structure in DOD, it is not possible to determine what percentage of the DOD workforce is represented by the responses.

# GOVERNMENTWIDE FINDINGS

**T**he Federal Government downsized its workforce by approximately 400,000 employees during the 1990s and curtailed most new hiring.<sup>7</sup> As a result, many agencies with previously robust recruitment programs reported scaling them down or abandoning them altogether. In recent years, agencies have started to increase hiring and restore these programs.

For example, Federal hiring increased from 65,000 accessions in 1998 to 133,000 in 2002, an increase of over 100 percent.<sup>8</sup> Even disregarding the approximately 36,000 accessions in the recently created Transportation Security Administration, there was still a sizable 48 percent increase. In addition, over three-fourths of the agencies participating in our study reported that they actively recruit for positions within the organization.

Agencies cited a number of reasons for establishing or re-establishing recruitment efforts, including preparing for the possibility of increased retirements over the next few years and replacing skills lost during downsizing. At the same time, they are placing greater emphasis on changing skill sets and staff size to meet evolving mission requirements, increase diversity, and target hard-to-fill occupations.

## Nature of Recruitment Programs

Certain characteristics determine how a recruitment program will be implemented, including whether the program is centralized at the headquarters level or decentralized to the field offices as well as the types of positions and grade levels being targeted. These factors will drive how an agency coordinates and funds recruitment efforts and what types of recruitment strategies it uses. We have noted some interesting patterns regarding the nature of agency recruitment programs.

### Centralization

Agencies were evenly split as to whether their recruitment programs are centralized to the agency or component level, decentralized to the local level, or implemented

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (formerly the General Accounting Office), *Major Management Challenges and Program Risks: A Governmentwide Perspective*, GAO-01-0241, Washington, DC, Jan. 2001, pp. 20-21.

<sup>8</sup> OPM defines accession as “a personnel action resulting in the addition of an employee to an agency’s staff.” Data are from U.S. Office of Personnel Management, “Accession Data Cubes,” full-time, permanent, nonseasonal, Sep. 1998 and 2002, <http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/accessions.htm>.

through a combination of both. Table 1 illustrates the general rationale for why agencies use certain approaches.

**Table 1. Centralization of Agency Recruitment Programs**

Agency Practice	Rationale
Centralize programs for high-volume and mission-critical positions, when developing corporate brands, marketing materials, and agencywide recruitment strategies, and for small agency programs with limited resources. <sup>9</sup>	Provides economies of scale for hiring activities and consistency in corporate marketing approaches.
Decentralize strategies that address local needs.	Provides flexibility in tailoring approaches to meet needs that may be different across localities.
Centralize corporate activities but allow decentralized strategies at the local level.	Attains economies of scale for agencywide activities while allowing for flexibility in tailoring approaches to meet local needs. Particularly prevalent for large agencies with many subcomponents.

### Targeted Occupations

Because of the wide range of missions in the Federal Government, agencies recruit for a mix of occupations. Some recruitment programs are structured to meet a particular occupational need (e.g., a specific job series or intern program). Generally, these structured recruitment programs focus on technical (e.g., information technology, engineering, and science), mission-critical, hard-to-fill, and/or high-volume (e.g., entry-level, intern, and student) positions. Other agency recruitment programs are more informal and change according to the type of job openings the agency has.

### Targeted Grade Levels

Agencies also recruit for a range of experiential levels. Structured recruitment programs tend to focus on entry-level positions (GS-5/7), occasionally expanding to the GS-9 equivalent when looking for candidates with higher levels of education or experience. In 2002, 40 percent of the Federal accessions were appointed in the GS-5/7 and related grade range and 50 percent in the GS-5/7/9 and related grade range.<sup>10</sup> Hiring at the entry-level can attain economies of scale. Agencies can generally hire a larger number of employees at one time at this level and obtain a larger return on investment for recruitment, selection, and training expenses.

<sup>9</sup> “Mission-critical” denotes a position that the agency deems critical in carrying out its core mission functions.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, “Accession Data Cubes,” full-time, permanent, nonseasonal, General Schedule and Related Grade, Sep. 2002, <http://www.fedscope.opm.gov/accessions.htm>. Accessions related to the recently created Transportation Security Administration were not included.

Several agencies reported taking advantage of the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) to hire entry-level employees. This largely noncompetitive hiring authority allows agencies greater flexibility in targeting recruitment efforts at needed skills and competencies and underrepresented groups.

Only a small number of agencies reported targeting higher-level positions using a structured recruitment program. These positions are generally recruited for on a case-by-case basis since most agencies do not hire in volume at that level. This may change with the recently announced overhaul of OPM's Presidential Management Intern Program (now Presidential Management Fellows Program). The revised program will allow agencies to hire "senior fellows" at the mid-management level (GS 13-15) using an excepted appointing authority. OPM will continue to centrally announce openings, assess candidates, and determine the number of annual senior fellow appointments.

## Recruitment Roles and Responsibilities

Recruitment ultimately determines the composition and capabilities of an organization's workforce. Therefore, it is important to understand who is involved in recruitment activities and what role they play. Table 2 provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities each level of the organization generally has, according to our study respondents.

**Table 2. Typical Roles and Responsibilities in Federal Recruiting**

<b>Roles</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
HR Professionals	Primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and overseeing recruitment programs. Responsibility rests either with the main HR office or with a separate recruiting office in the HR office.
Hiring Manager/Supervisor	Identifies job requirements, provides potential recruitment sources, and occasionally meets with candidates at job fairs, professional meetings, and campus events. Extent of involvement varies significantly by agency.
Line Employees	Attend job fairs and college events, especially at alma maters. Talk with candidates about the job, their personal experiences, and the hiring process. Try to sell the job to candidates. About two-thirds of the agencies indicated using line employees in recruitment.

It is interesting to note that HR professionals are viewed as having primary responsibility for the agency's recruitment program and that involvement of the hiring manager or supervisor varies significantly from agency to agency. Given the direct impact that recruitment has on the organization's ability to meet its requirements, it would make good business sense for hiring managers, as well as other agency leaders, to take a more active role in planning, implementing, and evaluating recruitment activities. For instance, they can work with the HR staff to

identify recruitment needs in advance, draft vacancy announcements, obtain funding, design recruitment strategies, attend recruitment events, and assess both short- and long-term results.

## Recruiters

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, most agencies indicated that they also assign members of the workforce specifically to be recruiters. Over half use collateral duty recruiters – HR professionals, supervisors, or line employees who carry out recruitment activities as an additional duty. About a quarter of the agencies reported assigning full-time recruiters or coordinators to ensure continuous attention to recruitment matters, particularly for mission-critical occupations.

Recruiters are often the first agency representatives a potential job candidate meets. Therefore, it is critical for them to acquire the skills necessary to successfully carry out their responsibilities. However, we found that only half of the organizations reported providing recruiter training. In addition, many that do so rely only on informal or brief training sessions. These findings indicate that many recruiters may not be properly prepared to carry out their responsibilities.

### Recruiter Responsibilities

- Plans and attends college events, job fairs, and other networking opportunities.
- Conducts interviews.
- Communicates with applicants about available job opportunities and the hiring process.
- Builds relationships with schools and professional organizations.

The training that is provided covers a range of topics, including interviewing techniques, hiring regulations, recruitment techniques and resources, how to answer candidate questions, mission responsibilities, and how to set up recruitment booths and materials. The extent of training varies by organization and can consist of any of the following:

- On-the-job training,
- Brief, informal discussions about recruiting,
- Internet-based training materials,
- Vendor/in-house workshops,
- Lengthy training sessions from professional vendors.

## Recruitment Planning

Recruitment should not be performed in a vacuum but should be based on the organization's needs as defined through its strategic and human capital plans. Once an organization has identified the type of workforce it needs to carry out its mission, it can then strategize how to obtain that workforce, including how to recruit for it.

Almost three-fourths of the organizations reported that they align recruitment strategies with the organization's strategic plan. Often, this takes the form of including a human capital goal, such as recruiting a high-quality workforce, in the strategic plan. Or agencies target recruitment strategies at occupations that most directly support programmatic strategic goals. Additionally, over half of the organizations indicated that they base recruitment decisions and strategies on some type of workforce analysis that attempts to project future staffing needs. However, the sophistication of these analyses varies greatly by organization.

Many organizations rely only on input from managers to determine fiscal year recruitment needs and therefore do not consider longer term requirements. A number of agencies have gone a step further and are beginning to analyze historical trends in an attempt to project future staffing needs. Finally, a few agencies have identified competencies needed for mission-critical positions, as identified through the agency's strategic goals, and have conducted needs assessments to determine the current and future competency gaps to help identify long-term workforce goals.

On the other hand, over a quarter of the organizations reported that they do not base recruitment decisions on any workforce analyses. Many claimed that they are constrained by limited staff, limited funding for information systems, or continually changing priorities. Others asserted that their small size made it unnecessary to do formal planning.

It is good news that so many organizations are trying to align their recruitment strategies with the organization's mission and are attempting to analyze their workforce needs. However, the number of organizations reporting that they look only at short-term recruitment needs or that they do not do any workforce analyses indicates that proactive, long-term planning based on mission needs is still a work in progress.

## Recruitment Strategies

Agencies use a wide variety of recruitment strategies to try to attract applicants. Generally, the location and type of position determines the most effective recruitment method and the amount of effort needed. However, there are general trends in what methods agencies use and which ones they find to be most productive. Not surprisingly, the strategies reported as the most common were also reported as the most effective; the top four are listed in Table 3.



**Table 3. Recruitment Strategies Most Often Used by Federal Agencies**

Strategy	Purpose
Agency's web site and/or USAJOBS	Convey an improved Federal Government image and educate applicants on benefits of working for the Government and how to apply.
College visits and job fairs	Expand agency exposure and rebuild relationships with colleges, universities, and the public.
Paid advertising	Target specific trade and professional audiences.
Professional networks	Network with related professional organizations to identify potential applicants and recruitment sources.

### Agency Web Site/USAJOBS

Nearly all agencies indicated that they recruit through the Internet, using their own agency web site, OPM's USAJOBS.com site, or both. They also reported that the Internet is one of the most effective recruitment methods, confirming that automated recruitment is essential in today's environment. Research indicates that 91 percent of the world's 500 largest companies use the Internet for recruitment purposes.<sup>11</sup> About 20 million people participate on the recruitment site Monster.com (representing 15 percent of the U.S. workforce), and job seeking is the second most popular Internet activity.<sup>12</sup> To take advantage of this trend, OPM and individual agencies have spent much time and money upgrading their Internet sites to convey an improved image to the public and educate potential applicants on the benefits of working for the Government and how to apply.

OPM has hosted USAJOBS, a web site for Federal jobs seekers, since 1996 and continually updates and improves the site. Some of its main features include capabilities for applicants to create resumes, search Federal job announcements using a variety of criteria, apply for an assortment of jobs on-line, access employment information and forms, and register to receive notification of new job postings.

The number and quality of agency recruitment sites are continually growing. Generally, these sites attempt to describe an agency's mission and how employees contribute to it, market and explain appealing job benefits, and list or link to the agency's current vacancy announcements. Some of the more enhanced sites list recruitment fair information, provide employee testimonials on the advantages of working for the agency, and list points of contact to talk to about agency careers. On the other hand, some of the less advanced sites do no more than list or link to vacancy listings, contain limited employment information, include broken links, or bury employment information under multiple links.

<sup>11</sup> Graeme Browning, "Embracing Online Recruiting," *Federal Computer Week*, Apr. 8, 2002, <http://www.fcw.com>.

<sup>12</sup> Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, "Why Net Searches for Jobs Are So Popular," Dec. 22, 2001, <http://www.CNET.com>.

## College Visits and Job Fairs

College visits and community job fairs are also popular recruitment strategies, with about three-fourths of the organizations we surveyed reporting using them. Because the Federal Government spent the 1990s downsizing and doing very little hiring, many agencies reported having lost touch with colleges and universities. As agencies rebuild their recruitment programs, many have found it necessary to also rebuild their relationships with these institutions. These relationships are particularly important when recruiting from outside the Government for entry-level positions or seeking candidates with advanced degrees.

Agencies vary significantly in the reported number of college visits they make and job fairs they attend. Some choose to participate in a large volume of events to expand their exposure, whereas others prefer to focus on building strong relationships with a smaller number of organizations. It is apparent, though, that agencies are trying to increase their presence and name recognition. The majority of surveyed agencies participate in at least a few college visits and job fairs per year.

## Paid Advertising and Professional Networks

The other top recruitment methods are paid advertisements and networking through professional organizations. Some agencies use print advertisements on a regular basis. Those that do have typically found them to be most effective when targeted to specific audiences or occupations. For instance, trade and professional journals tend to be more effective than general newspaper ads for jobs requiring specific skills or education levels. Networking with related professional organizations helps develop positive relationships with potential applicants and with professionals who are able to recommend high-quality candidates.

## Mid- and Senior-Level Strategies

When recruiting for mid- to senior-level management positions, agencies tend to use vacancy announcements, print advertising, and private recruiting firms targeted at specific applicant pools. The limited number of reported strategies is not surprising considering that agencies recruit for these positions on a case-by-case basis and tend to select applicants from within Federal organizations. A recent Partnership for Public Service study found that only 13 percent of fiscal year 2000 mid-career hires (GS 12-15) were filled by individuals from outside the Government.<sup>13</sup>

## Marketing Materials

Marketing materials depicting an agency “brand” quite often complement all of these recruitment strategies and attempt to present a professional image and communicate employer strengths. Branding is the attempt to create a positive, familiar image of the agency in the minds of applicants so they associate the

<sup>13</sup> Partnership for Public Service, *Mid-Career Hiring in the Federal Government: A Strategy for Change*, Washington, DC, Feb. 22, 2002.

agency's reputation with a positive place to work. To establish the brand, agencies generally create an integrated package of marketing materials that are distributed to applicants or promising applicant pools, including displays, brochures, posters, print media, and recruitment web sites.

### Internal Versus External Recruitment

It is interesting to note that the recruitment strategies agencies reported using most often focus on increasing outreach beyond the Federal sector. The most likely reason for this is that the Federal Government operates parallel internal and external hiring operations. Vacancies filled through internal hiring – i.e., merit promotion – are generally open to current or some former Federal employees who are already knowledgeable about how to find and apply for vacancies. Federal employees are also easily accessible through internal notification mechanisms, including hard copy job announcements, e-mail, USAJOBS, and Intranet web sites. Therefore, it appears that agencies are less likely to spend limited recruitment resources on outreach efforts to this applicant pool. In contrast, vacancies filled through competitive examining procedures are open to any qualified U.S. citizen and therefore may be viewed as requiring more outreach and steps to educate job seekers on how to apply.

## Diversity Outreach

Achieving diversity is an increasingly important aspect of agency recruitment practices. The Government sees diversity as an important way to promote fairness and equity in the workplace, foster communication, creativity, innovation, and respect among members of the workforce, and thereby increase the Government's ability to provide high-quality products and services to the American public. As Government addresses its human capital challenges and reshapes its workforce, it is presented with a valuable opportunity to increase the representation of minorities, women, veterans, and the disabled, especially in occupations and grades where they are currently underrepresented.

Many agencies are working to integrate diversity into their recruitment strategies. They typically use the same strategies discussed above and target them at recruitment sources that expand minority, women, veteran, and disability applicant pools. The most common approach to diversity recruiting appears to be visiting and establishing relationships with colleges and universities that have large populations of targeted students, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Other common strategies include:

- Establishing intern programs targeted at minorities, such as the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Internship Program and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Internship Program;
- Partnering and networking with professional associations and organizations whose members consist of persons who have been traditionally underrepresented in the labor force;

- Advertising in publications and on web sites whose focused readership include minorities, women, veterans, and the disabled;
- Visiting and partnering with military transition centers;
- Using targeted mailings and e-mailings; and
- Partnering with special emphasis event coordinators.

## Recruitment Funding

Adequate funding for recruitment activities is pivotal to ensuring a successful recruitment program. The level of funding determines what kind of staff and resources can be established for the recruitment program and what strategies can be implemented, how often, and by whom. However, we found that it is difficult to isolate and track agency recruitment spending.

First, agencies define “recruitment funds” differently. Some define the term narrowly, tracking only the costs of implementing recruitment activities, such as fees for job fairs, travel costs, and advertisements. Others take a broader view and track the overall cost of the program, including costs related to developing recruitment strategies, recruiter and HR specialist salaries, and financial incentives for desirable candidates accepting a job offer.

The complexities of funding allocation also make it difficult to pinpoint overall recruitment costs. Recruitment funds come from a variety of sources, such as the HR office, the Equal Employment Opportunity office, the program office, centralized agency funds, or a mixture of these sources. Further, different levels within the organization (e.g., agency level, the subcomponent level, the field level, or a combination) dedicate funds to recruitment activities, making total funding even more difficult to determine.

Considering these complexities, it is not surprising that over one-third of the responding organizations could not identify how much money they spend on recruitment activities. The rest of the organizations varied dramatically in reported costs, from no funding dedicated to recruitment to millions of dollars per year. Until agencies can better account for their recruitment costs, it will be difficult to determine the return on investment for these activities and to justify the expenditures.

## Financial Incentives

Agencies have a wide variety of financial incentives available to them to help attract and recruit applicants. A vast majority of agencies reported using these incentives, though there is significant variation in the extent to which they are used. Some offer them on a regular basis, others on a case-by-case basis, and still others only rarely. The decision to use incentives appears to be based on mission needs, availability of high-quality candidates, and/or availability of funding. They tend to be used for hard-to-fill jobs, but are also used for exceptional candidates and certain entry- or senior-level positions.

The most common financial incentives cited include:

- Signing or recruitment bonuses,
- Payment of expenses related to relocating or first duty travel,
- Higher entry-level salaries based on superior qualifications.<sup>14</sup>

Many agencies reported noncompetitive salary rates as one of the chief constraints to Federal recruitment. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that the most frequently used incentives are those geared toward alleviating starting salary concerns.

Another incentive that agencies have available to them is the Student Loan Repayment Program, which currently allows agencies to repay student loans up to \$10,000 per employee per year and up to a lifetime limit of \$60,000.<sup>15</sup> Though this program got off to a slow start in 2001, with only one agency using it that first year, participation has increased significantly. In fiscal year 2003, 24 agencies provided more than \$9.1 million in repayment benefits to 2,077 Federal employees.<sup>16</sup> Because repaying student loans is a major concern for many recent graduates, repayment aid is a valuable recruitment incentive. However, several of our study participants indicated they do not utilize the program because they do not have adequate funding for it.

## Measuring Recruitment Success

Measuring the success of individual recruitment strategies and the overall program's ability to attract qualified candidates should be an integral component to any recruitment program. Measuring costs, benefits, and results allows an organization to determine which strategies attract the best candidates and, therefore, where recruitment funding and resources should be targeted. Further, such evaluation can help justify resource allocation to agency leadership.

Although most agencies report that their recruitment initiatives have been successful in building a qualified workforce, little formal evaluation appears to occur. A few agencies report attempting to assess the more quantitative aspects of their program, such as the number and diversity of applicants, new hire performance, attainment of hiring goals, and number of hires from individual recruitment sources. Those that have done so have found the information useful in determining successful approaches and informing future activities.

<sup>14</sup> A superior qualifications appointment is defined by the Code of Federal Regulations as an appointment made at a rate above the minimum rate of the appropriate General Schedule grade because of the superior qualifications of the candidate or a special need of the agency for the candidate's services.

<sup>15</sup> When the program was implemented in 2001, agencies could authorize \$6,000 per year and \$40,000 per lifetime. Public Law 108-123, signed November 11, 2003, increased the authority to its current levels.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Federal Student Loan Repayment Program: Fiscal Year 2003 Report to the Congress*, Washington, DC, May 2004.

However, most agencies reported relying predominantly on managerial, recruiter, and occasionally new hire feedback to determine their satisfaction with the recruitment efforts. Few are implementing systematic, ongoing efforts to assess the long-term impacts of their recruitment strategies, such as the quality and retention of the workforce and whether they are meeting organizational needs. It is these types of efforts, however, that will help agencies best determine where to concentrate their resources for the best return on investment.

A number of agencies are implementing automated hiring tools with data collection and analysis features that they expect will help them measure recruitment efforts. However, MSPB has found in its study of automated Federal hiring that few agencies are taking full advantage of these features.<sup>17</sup> Many use the systems to capture basic applicant data and customer feedback but do not have the expertise to use the more advanced aspects of the applications, such as tracking the success of individual recruitment sources. In addition, many agencies do little advance planning to determine their data needs before identifying system requirements and are therefore left with automated capabilities more limited than need be.

## Office of Personnel Management Assistance

As part of its mission, OPM is to assist agencies in building a high-quality and diverse workforce. OPM has recently taken a number of important steps to help agency recruitment efforts. It established new benefit programs agencies can use to attract applicants, regulated hiring flexibilities to assist targeted recruitment efforts, organized job fairs across the nation as well as a virtual information technology (IT) job fair, and is redesigning USAJOBS to expand its capabilities and user-friendliness.

We asked agencies what type of recruitment support they receive from OPM. Although most agencies reported that they were not currently receiving assistance from OPM, those that did receive various types of assistance found the following areas to be most helpful:

- USAJOBS;
- Rating and ranking candidates for jobs;
- Job fairs, including the virtual IT job fair and the National Career Services Conference;
- Developing recruiting materials.

We also asked agencies what challenges they face in the recruitment process. In response, many agencies cited a number of recruitment barriers that fall under OPM's purview, including the complex and lengthy hiring process, differences in availability of HR flexibilities among different agencies, constraints on entry-level hiring, and the loss of HR expertise Governmentwide. These are discussed in more detail in the next section of this report.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Identifying Talent Through Technology: Automated Systems in Federal Agencies*, Washington, DC, August 2004, pp.1.



# GOVERNMENTWIDE CHALLENGES

**A**gencies are generally positive about the progress they have made in their recruitment efforts. Even so, some note that they still have individual challenges meeting diversity goals and recruiting for certain skills, occupations, and locations, and they are looking at ways to address these shortcomings. In addition, they identified a number of systemic obstacles to successful recruitment that cannot necessarily be addressed at the agency level. These are discussed below.

## Length and Complexity of Hiring Process

The Federal hiring process is often a long process. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that it takes an average of 102 days to complete all of the steps in the competitive hiring procedure (from making the request to fill the position to making the appointment).<sup>18</sup> However, a somewhat lengthy process is not necessarily a bad thing. It takes time to recruit, assess, and select the best candidate for a job, and quality should not be sacrificed for speed. However, the longer the process takes, the more applicant attrition is likely to increase as potential candidates accept positions with other employers. This is particularly true for those top applicants who are simultaneously being recruited by companies with faster hiring processes. Furthermore, for positions that require background investigations or medical examinations, the process can take substantially longer and result in even higher applicant attrition.

The Federal hiring process is also complicated. Many applicants claim they do not understand how to apply, and this deters them from doing so. According to a National Association of Colleges and Employers student survey, 37 percent of respondents interested in Federal careers did not understand the application process, and 49 percent thought the process was too lengthy and complicated.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately, vacancy announcements that are intended to instruct applicants on how to apply are often badly written, confusing, and vague.<sup>20</sup> Though we cannot calculate applicant attrition rates, agencies cited hiring regulations that make the

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<sup>18</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Human Capital: Opportunities to Improve Executive Agencies' Hiring Processes*, GAO-03-450, Washington, DC, May 2003, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Mackes, "Keys to Finding Quality Entry-Level Employees," National Association of Colleges and Employers, Presentation for the National Academy for Public Administration, Washington, DC, Apr. 2001.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Help Wanted: A Review of Federal Vacancy Announcements*, Washington, DC, Apr. 2003.



process lengthy and complex as the chief obstacle to successful recruitment. When applicants lose interest in or are deterred from even applying for jobs, agencies lose much of the return on investment for their recruiting efforts.

## Image of Federal Employment

The Federal Government is currently at a distinct disadvantage in attracting and competing for applicants largely because of its image. Several recent surveys demonstrate that there is low interest in the Federal Government as an employer compared to private and non-profit sector organizations. College graduates and public policy graduate students tend to view entry-level Government jobs as less challenging, rewarding, and developmental than private and nonprofit sector jobs. They tend to believe the private sector offers better compensation, more challenging work, and better developmental opportunities, while the nonprofit sector offers more rewarding work.<sup>21</sup> This comes at a time when the U.S. labor force growth rate is declining, resulting in increased competition for qualified applicants across all sectors. The Federal Government and its individual agencies will need to fully recognize the negative impact of these perceptions and commit the appropriate attention and funding needed to improve marketing efforts sufficiently to change these perceptions.

## Competition Among Agencies

The Federal Government is competing not only with the private and public sectors but also, in a sense, with itself. Several of our study participants indicated that some of their toughest recruitment competition comes from other Federal agencies. In fact, one agency representative told us that part of its recruitment strategy is to target other agencies' talent; after all, those employees have already been trained and prepared for Federal employment. Many agencies have a leg up in this competition due to leadership support, larger appropriations, or a more compelling mission. Still others have attained legislative authorizations that provide more funding, more flexibilities, and/or more enticing pay scales.

One notable example of this intergovernmental competition for qualified candidates was the recent expansion of the Federal air marshal program. After September 11, 2001, the Federal Aviation Administration and then the Transportation Security Administration began recruiting heavily for air marshal positions. Because of personnel flexibilities granted in the 1995 Department of Transportation Appropriations Act and the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001, air marshal compensation exceeded that available to many other law enforcement

<sup>21</sup> Carol Chetkovich, *Winning the Best and the Brightest: Increasing the Attraction of Public Service*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: A Price Waterhouse Coopers Endowment for the Business of Government, July 2001; Hart Teeter Research on behalf of the Partnership for Public Service and the Council for Excellence in Government, *The Unanswered Call to Public Service*, Washington, DC, Oct. 2001; and Marilyn Mackes, "Keys to Finding Quality Entry-Level Employees," National Association of Colleges and Employers, Presentation for the National Academy for Public Administration, Washington, DC, Apr. 2001.

organizations. These flexibilities reportedly allowed the air marshal program to attract hundreds of law enforcement officers from other Federal agencies.<sup>22</sup>

## Budget Constraints and Uncertainties

Shrinking budgets are nothing new in the Federal Government. However, lack of funding can have a significant impact on agencies' ability to recruit, preventing them from visiting colleges, participating in job fairs, hiring recruitment staff, developing marketing materials, and offering recruitment incentives. Uncertainty about funding levels and delayed appropriations decisions can also negatively affect Federal recruitment efforts. For example, many agency college recruitment activities begin in the fall. Delayed appropriations decisions can prevent agencies from committing the funding to these events and thus cause recruitment schedules to lag.

## Perceptions of Noncompetitive Salaries

As indicated above, there is a perception in the American public that Federal salaries are not competitive with private sector salaries. Sometimes, this is true. For instance, most agree that specialized physicians earn more in private practice than federally employed physicians do. However, many Federal occupations offer salaries that are quite competitive with those in the private sector. Additionally, salaries are only a part of the Federal compensation package. Other salary add-ons include retirement benefits, health insurance, leave accrual, and other numerous incentives that are available to attract candidates and bolster starting salaries. The Federal Government needs to better market its opportunities, salaries, and incentives to help educate the public on its total compensation packages.

## Labor Market Shortages

Another challenge agencies face is the shortage of qualified applicants in certain labor markets. For example, many researchers are currently alarmed about an emerging nationwide nursing shortage because enrollment in U.S. nursing schools is declining while the need for nurses in the health care industry is increasing.<sup>23</sup> Labor market shortages can impact at a national or local level and can affect particular industries, occupations, and geographic areas. They can also occur within specific minority groups, so that a diverse labor pool is not available in many occupations and/or locales. Labor market shortages will result in further increasing competition across all sectors for particular candidates and skills, which means the Government must position itself to be a strong competitor.

<sup>22</sup> Brian Friel, "Cop Wars," *Government Executive Pay and Benefits Watch*, June 20, 2002, <http://www.govexec.com>.

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Nursing Workforce: Emerging Nurse Shortages Due to Multiple Factors*, GAO-01-944, Washington, DC, July 2001.

## Obstacles to Entry-Level Hiring

Several agencies reported that provisions of the *Luevano Consent Decree* hamper their entry-level hiring (GS-5/7 equivalent), the level at which outside applicants are most commonly recruited for professional and administrative jobs. The decree requires agencies to use court-approved assessment procedures for over 100 entry-level occupations. Generally, agencies are required to use the Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) self-rating schedule or the less-used ACWA written test for these occupations. Several agencies that depend on OPM to conduct these assessments found the process to be untimely and cumbersome. Moreover, the validity of the self-rating schedule as a predictor of future job performance is uncertain. Finally, some agencies reported that the requirement hinders their ability to use the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP).

The FCIP is an excepted service, noncompetitive appointment authority that allows agencies to target their recruitment activities at particular skills, competencies, and/or underrepresented groups. However, agencies must administer ACWA for the Luevano-covered occupations and rate and rank candidates. Some agencies indicated that in using the self-rating assessment procedures of ACWA, they are oftentimes unable to reach the applicants they actively recruited – particularly when they receive large numbers of applications after publicly announcing positions (something not required by FCIP). The *Luevano Consent Decree* therefore negates the core recruitment advantages of the FCIP for those occupations. This has led some agencies to stop publicly announcing these vacancies and has caused others to hire for those occupations above the GS-5/7 level to avoid the requirement to use the ACWA assessment tools.

## Human Resources Capacity

Finally, many organizations reported that they find it difficult to establish and maintain vigorous recruitment programs because they do not have the staff, resources, and expertise to devote to this function. Between 1991 and 1998, the number of Federal HR professionals was reduced by 20 percent.<sup>24</sup> With this decline in capacity, HR offices often find it necessary to focus resources on reacting to crises, leaving fewer resources to devote to more proactive activities, such as well-planned recruitment programs. Further, recent MSPB research suggests that the downsizing and consolidation of HR staffs have led to the loss of Governmentwide HR expertise.<sup>25</sup> For recruitment to be effective, it must be an agency-level priority and have adequate human, financial, and technological resources devoted to it. While individual agencies are responsible for ensuring the capacity of their HR staff, the overall decline in HR resources and expertise should be viewed as a Governmentwide issue in these times of intense and increasing competition for high-quality employees.

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Federal Human Resources Employment Trends: An Occupation in Transition: A Comprehensive Study of the Federal Human Resources Community*, MSE-9-5, Washington, DC, Sep. 1999, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Competing for Federal Jobs: Job Search Experiences of New Hires*, Washington, DC, Feb. 2000; and *Help Wanted: A Review of Federal Vacancy Announcements*, Washington, DC, Apr. 2003.

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Conclusions

Federal agencies have made significant progress in improving recruitment practices over the past few years, after a decade of little Federal hiring. While many agencies are still struggling with recruitment issues, others have garnered the management support and resources needed to build strong recruitment programs, have established solid infrastructures to support recruitment activities, and are using creative strategies to attract the right talent. The practices appear to support fair and open competition through appropriate job posting and outreach and are complemented by targeted recruitment strategies. Moreover, OPM has established a number of helpful tools and flexibilities to support agencies' targeted recruitment efforts.

Nevertheless, variations appear to remain across and even within agencies regarding elements crucial to effective recruitment. These variations create imbalances in Federal recruitment practices and point to a number of potential areas for improvement.

**Recruitment is generally viewed as an HR function.** Agencies indicated that the HR office is primarily responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating recruitment programs. Hiring managers are involved in a number of recruitment activities and often take the lead in some of these activities, such as identifying recruitment sources. However, their involvement varies dramatically by agency and even subcomponent. Because recruitment decisions affect the composition and competency of the entire workforce, recruitment should be recognized as a management function, not solely an HR function. Managers at all levels of the organization need to be involved in the process and accountable for the results. Moreover, recruitment should receive the priority attention and support of top agency leadership given its critical role in mission accomplishment.

**The extent of recruitment planning varies across organizations.**

Recruitment programs should be based on the organization's long-term workforce needs, taking into consideration not only the skills they need now but also those they will need in the future. The good news is that a majority of the agencies reported that they base recruitment strategies on some type of workforce analysis. However, the scope of these analyses varies greatly by organization.

Some agencies have gone so far as to identify needed workforce skills through competency assessments based on long-term strategic goals. Other agencies simply base recruitment decisions on annual input from managers and do not take into consideration future long-term needs. Further, over a quarter of the reporting organizations indicated that they do not base their recruitment strategies on workforce analysis. If agencies are to get the most out of their recruitment efforts, it is essential that they identify recruitment goals and plan recruitment strategies based on the organization's long-term needs.

### **Recruiters may not be properly prepared for their responsibilities.**

Recruiters are generally the first agency representatives a potential job candidate meets; yet only half of the organizations participating in this study indicated that they train recruiters for their responsibilities. In addition, many of these rely only on informal or brief training sessions. Given the importance of the recruiter role to agency recruitment efforts, agencies should ensure that recruiters are selected carefully, trained properly, and evaluated to ensure they have the skills necessary to perform their duties.

### **Most organizations rely on rudimentary practices to measure recruitment success.**

Few organizations appear to be implementing systematic efforts to assess their recruitment practices. Most rely on feedback from managers, recruiters, and in some instances new hires. While this type of feedback is important in identifying perceptions of success, it does not allow agencies to determine if long-term organizational needs are being met, which strategies work well and which do not in comparison, and how to best tailor approaches to specific circumstances.

In addition, the widespread inability to account for recruitment costs hinders evaluation efforts. Over one-third of the organizations in our study could not identify how much money they spend on recruitment activities. Many others narrowly define recruitment costs in terms of fees, travel costs, and advertisement costs. At a time when agency budgets are shrinking and agencies are being asked to demonstrate that expenditures show positive programmatic results, it is important for them to track the overall costs of recruitment activities, including salaries, development costs, and related expenditures, and to compare those costs to the benefits received.

### **Agencies attempt to tackle Governmentwide recruitment challenges on an individual basis.**

Agencies cited a number of recruitment challenges that impact the Government as a whole. Some agencies have attempted to mitigate these challenges through use of agency-specific legislation, regulations, and budget requests. These individually tailored approaches have caused inconsistencies in human resources management throughout Government and fueled the ongoing debate as to whether the Federal Government is one employer or many.

Working together, agencies could achieve economies of scale in improving the Government's ability to market itself and recruit high-quality talent. This could even out the playing field for agencies with fewer resources but may counter or delay the efforts of others that have specialized needs or are ahead of the

recruitment curve. Separately, agencies can tailor recruitment strategies to better meet their mission needs, but this gives an advantage to agencies with more compelling missions and encourages the use of separate application and hiring systems that confuse applicants. The Federal Government, under the leadership of OPM, needs to strike a balance between Government as a single employer and Government as many employers to bring about a systematic process that attends to the needs of the Government as a whole, individual agencies, and applicants.

## Recommendations

In conducting this study, MSPB relied on a number of sources for information: agency interrogatories, focus groups, individual interviews, and literature reviews. Based on the study's findings, the Merit Systems Protection Board makes the recommendations discussed below for agencies to consider when establishing or evaluating their recruitment programs. Some of these recommendations address specific issues or challenges identified in the study findings, while others simply point to good practices we found used in private and public sector organizations. In addition, the next section of this report (Agency Illustrations) includes examples of how some agencies have already been implementing many of these recommendations.

The recommendations are targeted at specific audiences. The first set of recommendations pertains to agencywide recruitment efforts that Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) should lead given their statutory responsibility to advise and assist agency heads and other officials in strategically managing the workforce in accordance with the Merit System Principles.<sup>26</sup> The second set are steps that agency HR staff should take, in consultation with agency managers, to plan, develop, implement, and oversee recruitment activities. These steps require that the CHCO first ensure that the HR staff has the resources, capacity, and expertise needed to carry out such responsibilities. The final recommendations are intended for OPM and focus on how that agency can further address some of the issues that hamper Governmentwide recruitment efforts.

### *CHCOs should work with agency leadership to:*

**Distinguish recruitment as a critical management function and involve all levels of the organization.** Leadership support is critical to establishing a successful, sustainable recruitment program. Recruitment is about making a continuous, long-term investment in attracting a high-quality workforce capable of accomplishing the organization's mission. It affects every facet of the organization and therefore should not continue to be viewed solely as an HR function. Each level of the organization has a role in recruitment, and CHCOs can help gain the necessary understanding and commitment to this principle. The various roles include the following:

<sup>26</sup> "The Homeland Security Act of 2002," Public Law 107-296, Title VIII, subtitle A, 107th Congress, Nov. 25, 2002.

- **Agency senior leadership** should show their commitment to recruitment by making it an agency priority, acquiring and allocating the needed resources, obtaining the commitment of the agency's subcomponents, and holding mid-level managers accountable for recruitment activities and decisions pertaining to their operating organizations.
- **Mid-level managers and first-level supervisors** are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their immediate staff has the skills necessary to carry out the day-to-day activities of the agency. They should therefore have the lead role in identifying the type of workforce and skills necessary to accomplish program priorities and work with the HR staff to plan, implement, and evaluate recruitment activities. For example, they can work with the HR staff to identify recruitment needs in advance, draft vacancy announcements, obtain funding, design recruitment strategies, attend recruitment events, and assess both short- and long-term results.
- **HR staff** serve as technical experts for all levels of the agency's management (from first-level supervisors through senior leadership). HR should work with managers to identify how recruitment can support mission accomplishment at all levels of the organization and consult with managers to identify current and future workforce needs. HR should also work with managers to plan, develop, execute, and measure the success of targeted recruitment strategies.
- **Line employees** can be an organization's best recruiters. They know the work and can probably sell it better than almost anyone else. Their supervisors and the HR staff should encourage them to network, talk about agency career opportunities, and become involved in recruitment fairs and college visits.

**Establish the needed infrastructure.** Few organizations can maintain a viable recruitment program without an established infrastructure. CHCOs should carefully examine what type of infrastructure is right for the agency's needs. Below are some recommendations on the types of issues that should be examined.

- **Funding mechanisms.** Because funding is so critical to recruitment, we contend that a good recruitment program needs a designated budget, making it possible to adequately staff, plan, and coordinate recruitment efforts. CHCOs should promote this step to agency leadership and also work to garner agency support in devising and using consistent cost accounting methods to track recruitment funding and expenditures throughout the organization to help measure recruitment results.
- **Management process.** Each agency must decide if it needs centralized and/or decentralized recruitment processes to determine the necessary programmatic structure, staff, and resource allocation. The agency should consider factors such as its organizational culture, how it typically divides and coordinates work, and its long-term operational needs when making this decision. CHCO leadership will be essential in this agencywide effort.
- **Recruitment Staff.** For agencies with active recruitment programs, we recommend assigning dedicated HR staff to develop, implement, and evaluate recruitment activities. Collateral-duty staff often finds that time for these activities is limited because of other mission priorities. In contrast, dedicated staff can focus attention on recruitment needs, fostering consistency,

collaboration, and economies across the organization. Staff size will vary based on organizational needs, but the staff should be properly trained in areas such as planning and evaluation, recruitment, marketing, and staffing.

- **Recruiters.** While we recommend assigning dedicated staff to manage the recruitment program, we saw no evidence that using collateral-duty recruiters to attend actual events hinders recruitment efforts. In fact, if agencies use a core group of line employees who are selected carefully, trained properly, and given the time to fulfill their duties, recruitment can be very successful. We recommend that the recruitment staff develop criteria-based selection processes to identify a core set of recruiters with the right skill sets, obtain supervisory commitment for the collateral duty assignments, and train recruiters on the principles of marketing, recruitment, selection, and merit-based hiring. If recruiters are assigned on an ad-hoc basis without proper preparation, it could cause inconsistency in the information and message delivered to potential applicants.

**Plan for retention.** Recruitment is important, but employee retention is critical. High turnover is expensive, disruptive, and keeps agencies from establishing the institutional knowledge and expertise needed to accomplish their missions. Because it is not cost-effective to recruit talent the organization can't keep, agencies should first examine their retention record and plan for good retention rates before embarking on a resource-intensive recruitment program. This will entail examining the work environment, supervisors' skills, the organizational culture, and the developmental opportunities the agency offers, and then improve what might otherwise drive away talented employees. Because this type of organizational change effort will especially require top agency support, it will be essential for the CHCO to garner the support of agency leadership and oversee this initiative.

*HR staff, in consultation with agency managers, should:*

**Develop a recruitment plan that is aligned with the agency's strategic and workforce plans.** Yogi Berra once said, "You've got to be careful if you don't know where you're going 'cause you might not get there." His words capture why recruitment planning is so important. If an agency doesn't know what it wants to achieve through its recruitment program, it will not know where to invest resources or how to measure success.

Most agencies are required through the Government Performance and Results Act and the President's Management Agenda to develop 5-year strategic and workforce plans. Developing a 3-5 year recruitment plan that is aligned with the agency strategic and workforce plans will help map out what the agency wants to achieve through its recruitment program, how it will achieve those goals, and how it will know when those goals are met. Recruitment plans should specify recruitment goals, the targeted applicant pool(s), the strategies necessary to attract those candidates, and the performance indicators needed to determine if the goals are



met. Such planning will help the agency, as a whole, anticipate needs rather than just react to individual vacancies. As a result, the agency will be better able to prioritize recruitment strategies, decrease duplication of effort, and pool resources across the organization.

HR staff should develop the plan with input from all stakeholders, including the CHCO, senior leadership, managers at all levels, and external stakeholders as appropriate. The plan should be flexible enough to allow for adjustments when priorities or budgets change. Finally, the plan should be widely communicated and publicized throughout the agency so that all those involved in implementation understand their roles and responsibilities.

**Employ a balanced set of recruitment strategies that effectively market the organization.** All recruitment strategies are not created equal – nor should they be. Some agencies have no trouble recruiting the people they need. Other agencies have little difficulty recruiting in general, but need strategies that target particular skills or underrepresented groups. Still others have a hard time recruiting for any and all positions. There are various reasons for these differences. For instance, some agencies are much more visible to the public or have more compelling missions. Some have a need for greater technical skills that are not readily available. Some have geographical locations that either draw interest from applicants or deter applicant interest.

Therefore, agencies should employ a balanced set of recruitment strategies that meet their various needs. It is entirely possible for the Federal Government to recruit successfully – even when competing against the private sector. It just needs to be proactive and creative. When identifying what recruitment strategies to use, HR staff should work with hiring managers to:

- Tailor recruitment strategies to the market (e.g., demographic, geographic, and occupational specialties) from which the agency is recruiting; that means doing the homework necessary to get to know that market.
- Make sure recruitment materials, especially vacancy announcements, are clear, professional, and represent the organization well.
- Get beyond posting. Posting vacancy announcements to an agency web site is, at best, a passive recruitment strategy. Rather than making applicants search for the agency, the agency must identify the type of applicants it needs and actively search for them.
- Use automation to support, not replace, human contact. Interaction between an applicant and the agency's recruiters helps build and keep the applicant's interest.
- Build relationships with colleges, universities, and professional organizations and maintain those relationships even when not hiring. Because these relationships provide such a constant, rich recruitment source, HR staff should continually encourage hiring managers and line employees to also build them.
- Build relationships with applicants. Did the organization have more qualified applicants than it could hire this time? Then make them want to keep applying. HR staff (and hiring managers when appropriate) should actively

communicate with all applicants and make the process a positive experience for them even if they do not get hired this time.

- Use available flexibilities. If recruitment bonuses or student loan repayments are not affordable for the agency or hiring manager, HR should encourage the use of smaller referral bonuses or build a marketing strategy that highlights the agency's strong points, such as work life programs or developmental opportunities. Further, HR staff should explore how new hiring flexibilities, such as direct hire and the FCIP, can complement recruitment efforts.
- Leverage existing low-cost or no-cost tools to support recruitment efforts. This is particularly important for agencies with limited resources or that only have occasional hiring needs. There are a number of examples of these types of resources in the next section of this report, including OPM's USAJOBS and its Featured Job, Featured Employer, and Jobs in Demand sections and the Partnership for Public Service's *Call to Serve* network.

**Evaluate success.** It cannot be said enough – measurement is critical to an effectively managed enterprise. With limited resources available, agencies must strategically manage their costs and resources and be able to justify allocations. Therefore, HR should ensure that evaluating the success of individual recruitment strategies and the overall program's ability to attract qualified candidates becomes an integral component of the recruitment program.

Working with hiring managers, HR staff should be able to identify which recruitment strategies work well, which do not, and when to use specific approaches – tailored to the specific circumstances – to earn the biggest return on investment. HR staff and managers should be able to demonstrate that the recruitment efforts the organization employed resulted in more diverse, more qualified applicant pools. Finally, they should be able to track the quality and retention of new hires to determine the long-term impact of the recruitment strategies on the organization.

HR should collaborate with hiring managers to use the information derived from these evaluations to improve recruitment efforts and direct resources where they have the highest return on investment. Automation can help measure the results of recruiting activities, but this capability must be planned for in advance. HR staff should not assume that the new system will automatically include needed data tracking capabilities specific to the agency's requirements.

**Position the agency to make good selections.** The ultimate goal of recruitment is to ensure that the Government has a diverse, highly skilled workforce that can provide high-quality services to the American public. However, recruitment alone cannot achieve this goal. It is but one aspect of a comprehensive staffing program. Even the best recruitment strategies will not result in a high-quality hire with the needed talent unless the agency has adequately defined the job's requirements, employed valid instruments to assess applicant qualifications, and established a reasonable hiring process. The HR staff should take the lead on this effort to ensure these practices are in place.

**OPM should:**

**Address Governmentwide challenges.** OPM has played a valuable leadership role in recent years to help the Government retool its recruitment efforts after nearly a decade of little hiring. We encourage OPM to continue looking for new flexibilities and developing programs that can help agency recruitment efforts in this time of ever-increasing competition for high-quality employees. In addition, we recommend that OPM consider the following actions:

- Examine the impact of legislated personnel flexibilities granted to individual agencies to determine if they create imbalances in recruitment and retention. In recent years, numerous agencies have been granted legislative relief from portions of Title 5 of the U.S. Code, which contains the laws governing the civil service merit system. Some of the flexibilities have provided these agencies a competitive edge in recruitment. Compensation reform that allows some agencies to offer higher salaries is a prime example. OPM should evaluate the results of these flexibilities to determine if they should be extended Governmentwide and then seek to grant regulatory or statutory authority for all agencies where appropriate.
- Evaluate how to overcome barriers in using HR flexibilities. For instance, recent OPM and GAO reports indicate that direct hire and category rating flexibilities are not being used by agencies to the extent expected and agencies cite a number of barriers. These are two flexibilities that could shorten the hiring process, possibly making Government jobs more attractive to applicants. The reported obstacle to entry-level hiring caused by the *Luevano Consent Decree* and the related ACWA assessment tools could also be a topic of study.
- Expand efforts to market the Federal Government. OPM has done an impressive job through USAJOBS, the virtual IT job fair, and the nationwide recruitment fairs to market Governmentwide opportunities and to simplify the application process. We encourage OPM to continue these efforts and possibly expand them to include working with agencies on developing a nationwide marketing campaign to improve the Government's public image as an employer, rather than trying to accomplish this agency by agency.

# AGENCY ILLUSTRATIONS

**A**s the Government finds itself competing for talent with the private sector, other nonprofit sectors, and even with itself, it needs to be better prepared to recruit a diverse, high quality workforce. In the previous section of this report, MSPB provided a number of recommendations to assist agency efforts in this regard. In this section, we illustrate how agencies have already implemented some of these same recommendations to address their individual recruitment challenges.

The practices described below are meant to provide a sample of the many creative recruitment activities occurring in Government. They by no means catalogue all of the strategies being employed. Rather, we have provided examples from a diverse selection of organizations that vary by mission, size, occupation, and recruitment approach, hoping to address a wide set of reader needs and interests. We do not attempt to evaluate the outcomes of the cited recruitment practices. Rather, the examples should be used to stimulate discussion and further investigation into the types of recruitment approaches available to meet particular organizational needs.

## Obtain Management Support and Participation

MSPB interviewed a number of HR officials at agencies with prominent recruitment programs, and they all indicated that leadership support is one of the most important factors in establishing a successful recruitment program; it drives all recruitment activities.

### National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

NASA's Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, has served as the impetus behind many of the agency's human capital initiatives. When he became the Administrator in December 2001, he brought with him a commitment to sustaining a high quality workforce and a vision for a "One NASA" approach to achieving the agency's mission. This leadership commitment has enabled the agency to move forward on a number of innovative approaches to managing its human capital, particularly in regard to recruitment.

At NASA, human capital strategies are integrated and linked to the agency's mission, vision, core values, goals and objectives through a Strategic Human Capital Plan and companion Strategic Human Capital Implementation Plan.

These two documents provide a roadmap for specific actions and initiatives to ensure that NASA has the right workforce, at the right time, with the right skills.

On February 24, 2004, after House and Senate approval, President George W. Bush signed into law the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004. This law provides NASA with new human capital flexibilities that have been crafted to enhance its ability to recruit and sustain a world-class workforce. Additionally, NASA has developed a Competency Management System (CMS) that reportedly enables managers to compare future competency demands with the current knowledge base. When projected skills gaps are identified, the CMS ties that information into a variety of human capital initiatives including training, diversity, and education.

NASA's corporate recruitment strategy is an element of the agency's integrated human capital management strategy. It is a deliberate, focused initiative structured to help ensure a flexible, agile, and diverse workforce not just for the short-term but also for the future. It supports the human capital objective of the NASA 2003 Strategic Plan to "attract and maintain a workforce that is representative of the nation's diversity and includes the competencies that NASA needs to deliver sustained levels of high performance that the agency's challenging mission requires."

Using workforce planning tools and the competency management system, NASA identified 10 agency at-risk competencies (i.e., those that if left unaddressed could become future competency gaps). These at-risk competencies became the focus of the fall 2003 corporate recruitment activity in which all the NASA Centers and Headquarters participated. Staff from the Offices of Human Resources and Equal Opportunity Programs and their Center counterparts supported the corporate recruitment effort. The Enterprises and Center leadership and Center hiring managers also participated. The program developed targeted recruitment strategies and more efficient hiring processes to attract and obtain entry-level talent. Officials have reported that the agency has been able to make over 100 offers of employment to highly qualified, diverse candidates either during on-campus events or shortly thereafter. Additionally, the corporate recruitment strategy has resulted in enhanced collaboration among the Centers' recruitment efforts and increased the effectiveness of outreach and recruitment activities to academic institutions and professional associations.

In addition to obtaining leadership support, a number of agencies indicated that involving top management in recruitment activities is an important way to further recruitment efforts. It not only serves to impress candidates and increase their interest in the organization, but it also gets managers invested in the process. They learn the importance of these activities and see that recruitment is a management function, not solely an HR function.

## Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)

DFAS markets itself as the world's largest finance and accounting organization, with approximately 15,000 civilian employees who provide financial and accounting services for the Department of Defense. In keeping with this image, DFAS initiated an extensive recruitment program to develop the expertise and professionalism of its accountant workforce. A key recruitment strategy is to acquire name recognition among accounting students and professionals through building relationships with colleges and universities.

Thomas Bloom, DFAS's Director from May 1999 to December 2003, was a strong advocate for the recruitment program, recognized its importance to the delivery of the service's mission, and became actively involved in recruitment activities. He vigorously recruited at his alma mater by attending college fairs, meeting with and interviewing potential applicants, establishing relationships with accounting and management professors, and accepting speaking engagements at the university. Officials reported that his one-on-one recruiting was a big hit with candidates and played a major role in getting them interested in and excited about the organization. They were impressed that such a high-level official would spend his time attending these events and felt it demonstrated the organization's commitment to its workforce. Furthermore, it set an example for other executives within the service, increasing field director participation in recruitment activities.

## Plan for Recruitment

A number of agencies indicated that recruitment planning is crucial to a successful program. Once the agency determines through strategic and workforce planning that there is a need to recruit talent, it can then identify specific recruitment goals, define the targeted applicant pool, and determine the strategies necessary to attract those candidates. A written recruitment plan helps communicate and coordinate priorities, strategies, and responsibilities across the agency.

## Social Security Administration (SSA)

In the late 1990s, SSA conducted an advanced analysis of its workforce, using historical attrition and retirement data broken down by occupation, location, and diversity. It discovered that a large percentage of its mission-critical workforce would be leaving through retirement or attrition at a time when its workload would be increasing because of aging baby boomers. The retirement wave report projected a reasonably accurate level of annual attrition.

The workforce analysis served as a stimulus for agency management to make human resources a priority. As a result, SSA identified human capital management as one of its four strategic goals, developed a workforce transition plan that supports its strategic objective to "recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing workforce," and crafted a national recruitment plan. The

recruitment plan was developed through discussions with SSA executives and human resource directors, obtaining commitment from other agency stakeholders, and benchmarking against leading Federal agencies and private sector companies. The plan guides the national recruitment and marketing effort started in 2001.

As part of recruitment planning, some agencies conduct market research to find out how to best attract the targeted applicant pool by analyzing economic conditions, employment trends, the potential applicant pool, and demographic factors.

### Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The IRS Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998 drove a comprehensive reorganization and modernization within the agency. To support the restructuring, IRS conducted workforce analysis and competency modeling that was later used in formulating a recruitment strategy.

As part of its recruitment analysis, IRS conducted market research to identify how to appeal to the targeted applicant pool. The agency worked with a contractor to conduct focus groups, demographic research, and market analyses to identify marketing needs. The results indicated that most college students, a targeted demographic, knew very little about the agency and what it does and view Government employment as mundane and bureaucratic. In addition, many of the agency's own employees indicated they would not recommend working for IRS to a friend.

As a result of IRS's workforce planning efforts and market research, the agency designed a multimedia marketing strategy and a 3-year recruitment and marketing plan. The plan prioritizes needs and strategies, thereby allowing for flexibility in response to shifting budget allocations and agency priorities. Through these efforts, HR officials reported having met the agency's hiring goals for 2001-2003 and having increased the quality and diversity of candidates to carry out the agency's mission.

## Improve Marketing Efforts

The way an agency presents itself to the public is important to its ability to recruit a qualified, diverse workforce. Appearing disorganized or unprofessional gives the impression that the agency is bureaucratic and nonresponsive and discourages applicants from applying. Furthermore, having no name recognition undermines an agency's ability to compete with known private sector companies. In response, agencies try to develop recruitment and marketing materials that are clear and professional and present a unified, memorable message that appeals to targeted applicants.

## Social Security Administration's Integrated Marketing Package

The Social Security Administration started a national recruitment and marketing campaign in 2001. The goal of this campaign is to represent the agency to applicants as well as, if not better than, the private sector does. SSA faces particular recruitment challenges because of its size, geographic dispersion, and workforce needs. It employs almost 65,000 employees in 1,300 offices nationwide, and its employees deal with people from all walks of life on a daily basis. Therefore, recruiting for diversity and foreign language skills is particularly important.

First, SSA developed a tagline that would appeal to applicants' altruistic nature and demonstrate that SSA's mission touches the lives of all Americans: "Make a difference in people's lives and your own." The agency then developed an integrated package of general and occupation-specific marketing materials built around that tagline. The materials use photographs and testimonies of actual SSA employees and discuss the advantages of working for SSA and the Federal Government, including the innovative jobs, career advancement, health benefits, and retirement benefits. The different materials are used at conferences, diversity fairs, and community events all over the country. The marketing package includes:

- A recruitment web site
- Bookmarks and other giveaways
- Brochures and posters
- A CD-ROM
- Displays, banners, and other signage
- Print and radio advertisements

SSA's nationwide offices have access to all of the recruitment materials and are encouraged to use them so as to establish a consistent corporate image. The recruitment web site serves as the key information point for applicants, and other recruitment materials are designed to drive potential applicants to the web site where they can learn more about career opportunities.

Finally, SSA attempts to target media to the intended audience. For instance, it produces bilingual recruitment materials and advertises in bilingual magazines and newspapers to target diversity. A Latina magazine has even featured an article about three SSA executives and how they became leaders. Originally, the national marketing campaign addressed three core SSA occupations: claims representatives, teleservice representatives, and IT specialists. It is continually expanding to include other key occupations within the agency.

A particular marketing effort that needs improvement is the Federal job announcement. The job announcement is currently one of the most visible, yet weak, Federal recruitment tools. MSPB recently recommended that agencies improve announcements by reducing their length, reducing the use of negative and confusing language, using clear descriptions to explain and sell jobs, and clearly describing how to apply for positions.<sup>27</sup> Some agencies have started to show progress in this area.

<sup>27</sup> U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Help Wanted: A Review of Federal Vacancy Announcements*, Washington, DC, Apr. 2003.



## IRS's Model Vacancy Announcement

OPM, in its redesign of USAJOBS, is attempting to revamp the job announcement template to make it more streamlined and user-friendly. The template is a tool to help organize announcements, but agencies must still put forth the effort to improve the actual content. Using the new template, OPM recently worked with IRS to write an announcement for the criminal investigator position. This particular announcement uses a new tabbed display format that allows applicants to access necessary information in a quick and organized manner. In addition, the announcement does a fairly good job of clearly describing job responsibilities, necessary qualifications, and how to apply. IRS's announcement can serve as a model for other agencies' attempts to improve job announcements.

## Use the Internet

The Internet can serve several recruitment purposes:

- Improve the organization's image through branding,
- Educate applicants about the organization and its career opportunities,
- Announce jobs,
- Allow applicants to post or update resumes and contact information on-line,
- Allow applicants to apply on-line,
- Communicate with the applicant.

Agencies have begun to use the Internet to address all of these objectives. Below are examples of how agencies have used web sites, on-line applications, virtual career fairs, and chat rooms to broaden their recruitment approaches.

### Web Sites

Agencies increasingly use web sites to provide guidance and tools to educate applicants about the Federal hiring process, how to find jobs, how to apply for jobs, and what to expect during the process.

### *Department of Defense (DOD)*

DOD's recently launched civilian occupation recruitment site ([go-defense.com](http://go-defense.com)) not only does an impressive job of marketing the Department's mission and benefits in an eye-catching, professional manner, but also purports to offer real time applicant assistance through its Defense Applicant Assistance Office (DAAO). According to the web site, applicants can communicate with DAAO staff advisors through e-mail or a toll-free telephone number as they research career opportunities, search vacancy announcements, and build resumes. The staff can provide assistance in completing required documentation and forms and offer guidance on responding to vacancy announcements. Finding ways to be responsive to applicants in real time should help decrease applicant attrition

and improve applicants' perceptions of the agency and the Federal hiring process.

The downside to recruitment web sites is that they can actually discourage potential applicants if the sites are disorganized, unprofessional, or contain negative messages. Redesigning web sites can be the first step in improving recruitment programs.

### *Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)*

Between 1993 and 2000, VA downsized its workforce by about 15 percent and did very little hiring. Now, the Department is trying to revamp its recruitment program and started with its recruitment web site. As late as July 2001, applicants who accessed the site found the following greeting:

Even though the Department of Veterans Affairs is consolidating facilities and reducing administrative functions, some positions are difficult to fill and vacancies exist.

Obviously, this is not a strong way to market an agency. Further, the site had broken and disorganized links and offered little information regarding the agency, what it does, and why applicants would want to work there.

Using in-house expertise, the Department completely overhauled the site in November 2002 (VA.gov/jobs), creating a site that conveys a positive and progressive image. It has an array of photographs depicting VA's multiple missions and diverse workforce; working links to VA job announcements; a clear, concise summary of Federal benefits and other employment information; a "15 Things You Probably Didn't Know About VA" link that highlights VA's mission accomplishments; and more. Traffic to the web site has increased dramatically from 50,000 to approximately 120,000 average monthly visitors. The Department plans to continually improve the site. The next step is to incorporate a newly developed marketing theme designed around VA's tagline, "The career you want, the future you deserve."

### **On-Line Applications**

The slow, nonresponsive Federal hiring process can deter applicants from applying for jobs and creates a negative impression of the Government. To try to address this issue, agencies have begun to implement automated application and selection tools designed to speed the hiring process and be more responsive to applicants.

### *U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)*

In February 2000, the USGS was one of the first civilian agencies to implement a comprehensive automated staffing system. The HR staff can use its Online Automated Recruitment System (OARS) to develop vacancy announcements and criteria for rating and ranking. A vacancy notification service sends e-mail notifications to interested applicants and other targeted recruitment sources. Applicants register and apply for vacancies on-line. The system immediately rates, ranks, and scores applications, taking into account Federal hiring

regulations. The list of best qualified candidates is manually verified and provided to the hiring manager within 7 days of the vacancy closing – in contrast to the 30 to 60 days that was typical before automation. USGS reports that OARS has dramatically reduced the time it takes to fill merit promotion and competitive examining vacancies with high-quality hires, increased the number of applicants per vacancy, and given applicants a quick and easy way to apply for jobs.

A key drawback to current automation practices is that agencies are developing individual systems that do not communicate with one another. Therefore, an applicant who is searching for a Government job must complete a separate application for each individual agency to which he or she applies. This makes the process even more complicated and cumbersome than before. As shown below, OPM is working to address this concern.

### *OPM's Recruitment One-Stop*

The Office of Personnel Management is in the process of implementing Recruitment One-Stop (ROS), an e-Government initiative associated with the USAJOBS web site. ROS is intended to provide all potential applicants with a single location where they can find out about Federal employment and vacancies, create a single application that can be used for jobs across the Government, and submit the application electronically for each vacancy. OPM is coordinating with agencies to ensure that application data can be securely exchanged between ROS and agency automated systems while maintaining agencies' autonomy in tailoring marketing messages and implementing staffing solutions, such as tailored application information, to meet their needs. This is a step in the right direction. The easier and faster Government can make the hiring process, the more encouraged applicants will be to apply.

### **Virtual Career Fairs**

Traditional career fairs continue to be an important part of agencies' recruitment programs, but the emergence of new Internet technology allows agencies to reach a broader, worldwide audience without having to travel to individual fairs. Marketing virtual career fairs should be planned carefully, however. Audiences should be properly targeted to ensure the agency is not overwhelmed by applications from unqualified candidates.

### *Virtual Information Technology Job Fair*

In April 2002, the Federal Chief Information Officer Council and OPM teamed up to conduct a first-ever Governmentwide virtual information technology job fair. They widely marketed the fair through web sites, Internet banners, and other targeted advertisements. Applicants logged onto OPM's web site and completed an application, a screening questionnaire, a technology aptitude test, and an interactive IT skills inventory. OPM used automated selection tools to rate and rank applicants and forwarded qualified candidates to the participating agencies.

In all, 23 agencies participated in the job fair, 270 job openings were posted, and about 20,000 applications were submitted. OPM issued on-line selection certificates 15 days after the first day of the job fair, and 103 job offers were made (as of July 31, 2002). Though some applicants noted a few problems with slow servers and data-entry mechanisms, this first-time effort proved to be an innovation in Federal recruitment and selection.

## Chat Rooms

Communicating with applicants is extremely important in keeping them interested, informed, and positive about the application experience. Chat room technology is a new way to communicate with applicants, answer their questions, and prepare them for the possibility of Federal employment.

### *Foreign Service Officer Chat Rooms*

The Department of State has used Internet chat rooms to demystify the examination process for Foreign Service Officer applicants. The Department hired a contractor to set up the site and process for the chats. Five to ten days before the events, State sent e-mail invitations to targeted groups and posted a notice on the Department's web site. They set up 2-hour sessions in five rooms that were staffed by Foreign Service Officers. In two of the rooms, applicants could ask questions about the test: what it is like, how they can prepare, how it is scored, and so forth. In the other rooms, applicants could find out about the job itself as well as what life is like in the Foreign Service: what the living conditions are like and how they can prepare their families, for example. Transcripts of sessions were later posted on the Department's web site. Although State has not measured the impact of the chat rooms on exam registration or performance, they have received positive feedback from the participants.

## Build Relationships With Schools

Because the Federal Government has been downsizing and doing very little hiring, agencies reported having lost touch with a rich recruitment source – colleges and universities. Now that agencies are rebuilding their recruitment programs, they have found it necessary to also rebuild their relationships with these institutions. Many of the agencies we interviewed believe they receive a larger return on investment when they target a limited number of schools and build strong relationships with them. They recommend several steps to build these relationships:

- Identify schools that best meet recruitment needs. Building relationships with schools that do not have the academic programs being targeted or a diverse student body will probably not provide the candidates an agency needs. Identify selection criteria and choose schools based on those criteria.
- Get involved on campus. Participating in occasional campus recruitment events may not be enough to establish a good working relationship. Agencies should take the time to become involved with the school. Establish recruiters

on campus, make presentations to classes or student organizations, serve as guest faculty, or talk regularly with the school's career services staff or faculty. Using alumni in these activities is especially effective.

- Get students involved with the agency. There is no better way to build name recognition than involving students in agency projects. Two ways this can be done is through hiring interns or asking classes to conduct projects for the agency.
- Hire from the targeted schools. When school faculty or career services staff spend time nurturing relationships with agencies, they want to see a return on that investment of time – meaning they want to see their students hired.
- Keep in touch even when not hiring. Too often, agencies only take part in campus activities when they are recruiting for an open vacancy. Relationships grow stale this way. If agencies maintain even a minimal presence on campus, they will create name recognition with the students and career counselors. This will help sustain a rich recruitment source for when they are hiring.

Below are a few examples of what some agencies are doing to build relationships with targeted colleges and universities.

### **IRS's School Selection Process**

The IRS has devised a fairly rigorous program for choosing schools. Each year or so, the Talent and Technology Management staff identifies or updates school selection criteria, such as the diversity of the student body, academic programs offered, and locations. Then it conducts a search of schools that meet the criteria. To further narrow the field, the staff measures those schools against a secondary set of selection criteria, such as the number of students that graduate from the targeted academic programs and the number of students IRS previously hired from the school. The staff then categorizes the schools into three tiers: Tier A schools are the core schools where Internet and recruiter activity should be targeted; Tier B schools are those that provide unique opportunities and should be targeted if there are time and resources; Tier C schools are the remaining schools that IRS can reach through general recruitment media.

### **Government Accountability Office's (GAO) Targeted College Outreach**

GAO has a vigorous and highly acclaimed recruitment program that has been spearheaded by its Comptroller General and Governmentwide human capital advocate, David Walker. The program is centrally administered by a small staff in the Human Capital office and is carried out by collateral duty staff. It relies heavily on its workforce to be constant recruiters for the organization. GAO has identified approximately 50 national colleges and universities with which it seeks to establish long-term relationships, increase on-campus visibility, and highlight minority outreach.

For most of these “focus universities,” GAO has assigned an agency senior executive as the Campus Executive. Among the executive’s other duties, he or she has primary responsibility for establishing collegial relationships with that university. The Executive is supported by a Campus Manager who handles the operational aspects of campus recruitment and a team of recruiters. Together, they implement the agency’s recruitment strategy at the school. They establish relationships with professors, deans, and the career placement director and work with them to identify the most effective recruitment strategies and how GAO can best establish a presence at the school. They attend recruitment events, distribute recruitment materials, conduct interviews on campus, make presentations to student organizations, serve on advisory boards, and act as guest speakers for classes. They use these relationship-building efforts to recruit up to 200 entry-level analysts and approximately 140 summer interns per year.

### Two Agencies’ Success in Getting Students Involved in Recruitment Schemes

Both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security’s Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement involve college students in developing agency recruitment and marketing schemes. Agency recruiters establish relationships with marketing professors at targeted colleges and universities, particularly those with a diverse student body. As class projects, marketing students design and implement fun, creative recruitment strategies on their campus that are based on agency objectives.

The program benefits both students and the agencies. Students gain first-hand experience in designing and implementing a marketing program, learn about Federal career opportunities, and gain college credit. The agency can establish partnerships with targeted schools, increase awareness of the agency on campus, improve student perceptions of the agency, generate imaginative recruitment strategies and marketing ideas, and, ultimately, increase recruitment opportunities on the campus.

## Target Diversity

As the Government addresses its human capital challenges and reshapes its workforce, it is presented with a valuable opportunity to increase the representation of minorities, women, veterans, and the disabled, especially in occupations and grades in which those groups are underrepresented. To take full advantage of this opportunity, many Government agencies are developing targeted recruitment strategies to increase diversity in the applicant pool and address existing inequities.

### Federal Bureau of Investigation

The FBI has established an aggressive nationwide recruitment program to attract applicants, especially minorities and women, for Special Agent and support positions. The FBI does not have a problem recruiting highly skilled

candidates, but recruiting for a diverse workforce is more of a challenge. Therefore, approximately 80 percent of the FBI's recruitment resources are used to develop and implement a variety of recruitment strategies to expand the diversity of the applicant pool.

Over 90 percent of the career fairs and conferences attended by FBI recruiters target persons, particularly minorities and women, possessing critical skills. National advertising strategies also aggressively target these job seekers. Specific strategies use industry trade publications; multi-media materials distributed to colleges, the military, and other targeted groups; classified ads and banner ads; and a host of other targeted media sources. Further, the FBI is actively partnering with the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education Internship Program, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Community Leaders, and the Faith-Based Community Council on Law Enforcement and Intelligence to recruit and hire minorities possessing vital skills, such as fluency in critical foreign languages. The FBI reports that its program has improved the public image of the agency and increased the number and diversity of well-qualified applicants.

## Streamline the Hiring Process

As mentioned, applicants often perceive the Federal hiring process to be long and arduous. If applicants continue to be discouraged from applying for Federal jobs because of the complexity of the process, applicant attrition rates may rise as they accept other job offers. Rather than wait for Governmentwide reforms, many agencies are exploring how internal regulations or practices contribute to the length of the process and are identifying strategies to overcome these internal barriers.

### Department of State

Historically, the Department of State's hiring process for Foreign Service Officers took up to 2 years from start to finish. Potential applicants would register for the annual Foreign Service Written Examination, take the exam at the appointed time, and wait to hear the results. Successful candidates would go on to take the oral assessment. Once notified that they had passed the oral exam, they would then proceed for the medical and background checks. All of the individual processes were compartmentalized and administered sequentially.

In 2001, the Department undertook the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative (DRI), with the goal of hiring about 1,000 employees (over attrition or additional employees) within 3 years to ensure global diplomatic readiness. Human resources and personnel security professionals examined the existing hiring process and determined that it could be streamlined to support this goal, largely by reducing wait times and de-compartmentalizing the different processes. First, they made it possible for potential applicants to register for the written exam on-line and offered the exam twice in 2002, making it more accessible to a wider, more diverse audience.

They then reduced wait times and aligned some of the processes. Once applicants successfully complete the written exam, they call and schedule an individual oral examination with a contractor. Applicants bring to the oral assessment the information they need for the background investigation and medical clearance. If they pass the assessment, they immediately begin the medical clearance process and background investigation, with the initial personal interview being conducted on-site. The background investigations and medical clearances are prioritized, and “clear cases” are fast-tracked with final adjudication often occurring within weeks.

In addition to streamlining the hiring process, State also evaluated what resources would be necessary to meet its 3-year hiring goal. As a result, the HR office hired additional staff to assist with applicant follow-up and the final review process. The Diplomatic Security staff hired or contracted with additional background investigators to speed up that process. State was able to reengineer what had been a 2-year process and reduce it, in many cases, to 10 months.

We recognize that the State Department has a unique hiring system, and its streamlining solutions may not work for other agencies. Furthermore, the Department received additional funding for the DRI that allowed it to hire more staff. But the concept is the same for all agencies – identify what parts of the agency’s hiring system slow the process and find agency-specific strategies to deal with those barriers.

## Use Available Flexibilities

Federal agencies have many human resource flexibilities available to them to recruit and hire a high-quality workforce, and the number increases every year. In recent years, agencies have been given the ability to offer student loan repayments to help attract candidates, hire through the Federal Career Intern Program to better target recruitment and cultivate tomorrow’s leaders, and use category rating to assess applicants’ qualifications in order to streamline the hiring process. These are just a few of the many flexibilities available through Title 5, and some agencies have made great strides in capitalizing on these flexibilities.

### The Department of Labor’s (DOL) MBA Fellows Program

In June 2002, the Department of Labor’s (DOL) Secretary Chao launched the MBA Fellows Program to attract and hire candidates with business expertise and prepare them for future leadership positions through developmental assignments and rotations. The Human Resources Center then set out to create a program that could serve as a model across DOL agencies in terms of using available human resource flexibilities. Examples of how the Center integrates HR flexibilities into the program include:

- Using the FCIP as the vehicle to hire MBA Fellows because the program’s excepted service appointing authority allows for targeted recruitment and requires developmental opportunities that align with DOL’s hiring goals.



- Advertising positions at the GS-9 level to attract a higher level of talent. The Center is targeting candidates with advanced degrees, particularly Masters of Business Administration, and these candidates are more difficult to recruit at the GS-5/7 entry-level.
- Using recruitment bonuses and superior qualifications authority to make competitive job offers. DOL advertises bonus availability on its recruitment web page, and almost 80 percent of the Fellows received recruitment bonuses.
- Using a streamlined vacancy announcement that aptly describes the type of skills DOL is seeking, what the program entails, and how to apply.
- Automating the process to make it more streamlined and efficient.
- Using category rating to assess applicants, a step that helps the program reach candidates targeted in recruitment efforts and accelerates the hiring process.

The MBA Fellows Program is an excellent example of how to use HR flexibilities to meet agency-specific recruitment challenges. By coupling these flexibilities with outreach to 350 accredited business schools, consortiums, and alumni, professional, and special-emphasis organizations, DOL was able to hire three classes totaling 45 highly qualified, competent, and diverse Fellows, all of whom DOL anticipates converting to permanent positions at the end of their rotations.

## Use Resources Strategically

In today's environment, resources are limited and need to be strategically managed to ensure they achieve intended objectives and generate a strong return on investment. This means measuring the success of recruitment strategies and using that information to determine where recruitment funding and personnel should be targeted.

### IRS Return on Investment Tracking

IRS has begun to track the return on investment of its individual recruitment efforts, making possible informed decision-making on recruitment resource allocation. IRS staff members use cost models to track the money spent on individual strategies. They then use various feedback mechanisms (such as applicant surveys, web site tracking, and new hire surveys) to identify which recruitment strategies have the biggest impact. The agency has found that 60 percent of applicants are brought in through the Internet and 30 percent through its full-time recruiter staff. IRS has also found that the use of print media does not increase the applicant pool, but can serve to increase name recognition and knowledge about the type of work IRS does.

Determining the most productive recruitment methods has helped IRS modify its recruitment program. After seeing the effectiveness of the Internet, the agency is exploring ways to leverage technology to supplement recruiter activities, which are also effective but labor and cost intensive. For instance,

IRS is expanding its web site to include an automated application system, anticipating that this will further increase the use and usefulness of the web site.

## Build a Recruitment Pool

During our research, several agencies noted that it is hard to recruit qualified applicants in certain occupations and from certain underrepresented groups because of labor market shortages. Some may consider this an issue beyond the control of Federal agencies. However, a number of agencies are trying to address it through long-term capacity building programs that can help increase interest in academic disciplines as well as agency programs, and thus make it easier to recruit a qualified applicant pool later.

### NASA's Summer High School Apprenticeship Research Program

Numerous studies have shown that the pipeline of scientists and engineers is shrinking in the United States and competition for these skills is increasing. To increase its bench strength in these disciplines, the NASA Summer High School Apprenticeship Research Program (SHARP) offers approximately 400 junior and senior high school students the opportunity to participate in an 8-week intensive science and engineering apprenticeship program every summer. Approximately 200 attend a commuter component in which they commute regularly to a NASA field installation, and 200 attend the residential component in which they reside at select NASA space grant funded universities. The students are selected competitively based on their aptitude for and interest in science, technology, and engineering careers. SHARP's goal is to increase the participation and success rates of students in these academic disciplines while also building interest in future career opportunities with NASA.

NASA markets the program through traditional recruitment sources, such as local high schools, local, regional, and national educational conferences, the agency's educational portal, brochures, and magazine advertisements. Additionally, it targets non-profit and social organizations whose memberships include minorities and other underrepresented groups to enhance the diversity of the applicant pool. It continues to mail hard copies of the recruitment materials to ensure that candidates without access to computers are also aware of the program. The agency continues to build relationships with a cadre of science and math teachers who have provided student applicant recommendations. NASA has found that word of mouth is the key method through which applicants hear about the program, and SHARP alumni are some of the strongest ambassadors for the program. While NASA is still measuring the long-term impact of SHARP on future recruitment efforts, participants report having positive experiences in the program.

## U.S. Forest Service

For over 10 years, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) has managed a national recruitment program that is based on developing partnerships with targeted universities that offer degree programs related to USFS's mission and have diverse student populations. In addition to using traditional types of campus recruitment activities, the Forest Service dedicates part of its recruitment budget to working with universities to develop and increase their capacity to provide natural resource management academic programs. Not only can this development work help increase the number of diverse, qualified applicants in the overall labor force, but it also can be an excellent recruitment source for USFS.

A particular success story is USFS's 10-year partnership with Alabama A&M University (AAMU), a historically black university that trains more African American foresters than all other institutions combined, according to the USFS. Although African-American foresters are still underrepresented in the agency's workforce, foresters trained at AAMU represent the largest source of recruitment of African Americans into the Forest Service. USFS has one of its largest student recruitment programs at AAMU, hires a number of its forestry students as summer and permanent employees, provides financial support to students for training in forestry and natural resource fields, and conducts research with faculty members. In addition, USFS uses capacity enhancement funds to support faculty positions in AAMU's forestry program and to add forestry resources to the university library. Over the past ten years, USFS reports that this partnership has enabled the university's forestry program to grow and flourish. As a direct result of this partnership, in June 2002, AAMU became the first historically black university to receive professional accreditation from the Society of American Foresters.

## Partner and Leverage Resources

Robust recruiting programs are not cheap. They cost money, use employee time, and need leadership commitment. But some agencies do not have money, resources, and/or commitment at the top – particularly smaller agencies and those that do not often have vacancies. What can they do? According to the agencies we interviewed, quite a bit.

They suggested leveraging free or inexpensive recruitment strategies and offer agencies the following tips. Take advantage of word of mouth as a recruitment tool by offering referral bonuses to employees who recruit successful hires. Advertise in military magazines or at military transition centers to target veterans. Encourage managers and employees to visit alma maters and become involved in activities with college classes, student organizations, and career placement centers. Target university consortiums to obtain broader outreach. Network with professional organizations. Use in-house talent to design and produce recruitment materials. Use available technology to its greatest potential. Be creative, and the possibilities

are endless. Below are some examples of additional free resources available to agencies.

### OPM's Nationwide Recruitment Fairs

In September 2003, OPM launched the first of 11 nationwide recruitment fairs as part of its *Working for America* initiative. OPM recognized that many agencies have critical staffing needs but strained resources. Therefore, it set out to create an initiative that would benefit all agency recruitment efforts, help applicants find jobs, and ultimately result in a set of high-quality, diverse hires in the Government.

OPM not only arranged the logistics for each of the fairs, but also paid for agencies' participation. This was a great motivator for many agencies that cannot afford to attend such events on their own. To identify fair sites, OPM analyzed nationwide demographics and chose sites that would facilitate reaching out to large, diverse populations. OPM conducted advance outreach to obtain agency participation, prepare agencies for the events, and market the fairs to the host communities. Further, OPM operated a booth at each fair to answer questions about Federal employment, review applicant resumes and narrative statements, provide training in using USAJOBS, and conduct workshops on various employment topics.

At the time of this writing, it is too early to measure the actual impact of these recruitment fairs on agencies' ability to recruit. However, the preliminary feedback from agencies has been positive, and OPM has exceeded its goals for agency and job seeker participation. OPM hopes to ultimately track the number, quality, and diversity of hires made as a result of these job fairs. This is a good example of an initiative that attempts to promote a unified recruitment approach to applicants, build recognition of Government job opportunities, improve the public's perception of the Government as a desirable employer, and achieve economies of scale in recruitment activities, especially for financially strapped agencies. We encourage agencies to seek out, and create, other opportunities to partner with OPM on Governmentwide recruitment efforts.

### USAJOBS Features

OPM's USAJOBS web site is considered the Federal Government's official source for jobs and employment information and is being enhanced under Recruitment One-Stop to become a one-stop source for Federal job applicants to search and apply for jobs. In addition to hosting vacancy announcements, the site offers agencies many free tools to help increase their name recognition and exposure. The home page displays three agency highlight areas: Featured Job, Featured Employer, and Jobs in Demand. Each of these features gives individual agencies a way to publicize what they do and markets the diverse opportunities in the Federal Government. If agencies are interested in being featured, they simply provide the feature's content in a required format, and OPM will run it in 3-day rotations for as long as the agency requests.

The agencies that we interviewed also recommend leveraging existing information to find out what other agencies are doing, learn from their successes and mistakes, and build on their experiences. Even the agencies that have strong, established recruitment programs seek to learn what others are doing, and many cited the *Call to Serve* initiative, discussed below, as an example of a great opportunity to learn and share information across the Government.

### Call to Serve

In April 2002, the Partnership for Public Service, a non-profit organization dedicated to revitalizing Federal public service through a campaign of educational efforts, policy research, public-private partnerships, and legislative advocacy, partnered with OPM to launch *Call to Serve: Leaders in Education Allied for Public Service*. This is a national effort designed to educate students about the importance of public service and the dynamic career opportunities available to them. It also seeks to rebuild partnerships between the Federal Government and college campuses. Since 2002, *Call to Serve* has grown to a network of over 500 colleges and universities, 60 Federal agencies, and 10 partner organizations. *Call to Serve* provides numerous benefits and resources to agencies, including access to the national college and university network, best practice information exchanges, and updates on campus trends and career fairs.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For more information, see the Partnership for Public Service's *Call to Serve* web site at [www.ourpublicservice.org](http://www.ourpublicservice.org)

# POINTS OF CONTACT

The following resources can help you research additional information regarding some of the recruitment practices cited in this report. The contact information was verified in August 2004 and is subject to change.

**Defense Finance and Accounting Service**

*www.dfas.mil/careers/*

**Department of Defense**

*www.go-defense.com/*

**Department of Labor**

*www.dol.gov/oasam/doljobs/*

Sharon Ratliff-Gross

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**Department of State**

*www.careers.state.gov*

Diane Castiglione

castiglione1@state.gov

**Department of Veterans Affairs**

*www.va.gov/jobs*

**Federal Bureau of Investigation**

*www.fbijobs.com/*

**Forest Service**

*www.fs.fed.us/fsjobs/*

John Kusano

Johnkusano@fs.fed.us

**Government Accountability Office**

*www.gao.gov/jobopp.htm*

**Geological Survey**

*www.usgs.gov/ohr/*

Jo Ann Dack

jdack@usgs.gov

**Internal Revenue Service**

*www.jobs.irs.gov/*

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration**

*www.nasajobs.nasa.gov/recruit*

**Office of Personnel Management**

*www.usajobs.com*

**Partnership for Public Service**

*www.ourpublicservice.org*

Caroline Chang

Cchang@ourpublicservice.org

**Social Security Administration**

*www.ssa.gov/careers*

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