



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Tuesday, March 26, 2002
MSG-022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Human Resources Directors

FROM: Kay Coles James, Director

Subject: Agency Responsibilities to Recruit and Assess High Quality Candidates

As you know, we are facing an environment where many Federal employees soon will be eligible to retire, the knowledge gap is widening, and the job market is more competitive than ever. A strong commitment to improving the Federal hiring process and recruiting the very best candidates is critical, and an underlying factor in your agency's performance on the human capital measure of the President's Scorecard.

Recently, we have noted at least four unacceptable practices that can prevent agencies from being most effective in their recruitment efforts.

- **Job Qualification Descriptions.** An increasing number of job announcements describe qualifications too narrowly. Although they must be job-related, qualifications should not be so agency-specific that only applicants who have worked for your agency qualify for consideration. Requiring that applicants must have prior agency or government experience may eliminate from consideration many talented individuals who are in fact highly qualified for the position.
- **Policies on Receipt of Applications.** While we encourage agencies to take full advantage of technology by accepting on-line applications, they must not restrict individuals who do not have Internet access from being able to apply. Agencies may require submission of applications in a particular format or form, but must not require only electronic submission. Job announcements can and should encourage electronic filing, but must provide information about alternative methods or a contact for those who do not have Internet access.
- **Contact Information.** The job announcement is one of the most important recruitment tools. To present your agency in its best light, announcements should be clear, specific and accurate. Every job announcement must have a point of contact and phone number. Ensure that telephones and automated systems are staffed with professional, knowledgeable representatives who are informed about the positions advertised and the application process.
- **Assessment Tools.** To choose the best assessment tool, agencies should consider the benefits and limitations of each. A test can assess either a small or large number of applicants. On the other hand, a structured panel interview is one of the best tools for assessing qualifications when the applicant pool is small, or has been filtered through

other selection procedures. Regardless of the tool, it should be administered correctly. For example, when using a structured interview:

- ∅ Standardize the interviews so that each applicant is asked the same questions,
- ∅ Evaluate applicant responses against pre-determined benchmarks,
- ∅ Use subject matter experts (including non-career personnel, if appropriate) as panelists, and
- ∅ Train the panelists on rating procedures.

Even without regulatory or statutory changes, there are positive steps agencies can and should take today to improve recruitment, make employment offices more customer-focused, attract the highest caliber candidates to public service, and assess them effectively.

OPM is available to provide further advice and guidance on how to recruit and assess high quality candidates, including in-depth assistance and quick response "strike force" teams to service your needs. Your Director of Human Resources may contact Richard A. Whitford, our Acting Associate Director for Employment Service, on (202) 606-6500 whenever they would like advice or assistance with their recruiting efforts.

cc: Directors of Human Resources
Directors of Operating Human Resources Offices