

Hiring and Training Strategies

June 2006

INTRODUCTION

While the increased workload related to new reactors is impacting staffing throughout the Agency, the greatest impact by far is being felt by the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR). To accommodate the increased staffing requirements, NRR has developed strategies for recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, and providing physical and IT infrastructure support. The strategies being implemented by NRR are outlined in this Enclosure.

Since the beginning of this fiscal year (FY), the Offices of Human Resources (OHR) and the NRR have hired a record setting number of employees to prepare for new reactor licensing activities. This enclosure describes how the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) staff is continuing to work cooperatively to hire, train, and support new employees.

IDENTIFYING NECESSARY TALENT AND EXPERTISE

For FY 2006 and FY 2007, NRR identified the positions and expertise needed for near-term activities and is working to identify the positions and expertise needed to meet the projected workload demands for new reactor licensing activities in FY 2008. To address these staffing and hiring challenges, NRR managers and the Human Resources Services and Operations (HRSO) team leader – servicing NRR – participate in a monthly human capital meeting. Additionally, HRSO and NRR human capital staff meet frequently to discuss on-going needs.

The New Reactor Planning and Scheduling Branch (NPLB) continues to inform the projections for staffing levels for new reactor licensing activities and the areas of expertise that are needed to meet the increased demand to create projected FY 2008 staffing plans. The budget adjustment proposals for FY 2007 and FY 2008 will reflect the impact of the NRR staffing increases.

As part of the OHR annual request for workforce skill gaps and training needs, offices identified the critical skill areas where gaps exist or were projected to exist in the coming year. Gap closure strategies included hiring, training, rehiring annuitants, and utilizing knowledge transfer activities. The offices are using the identified workforce skill gaps as guidance for recruitment and hiring needs.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS

NRR, in partnership with OHR, continues to evaluate job markets and professional conferences in various geographical locations to determine if advertising or recruitment activities would attract candidates with the skills and knowledge needed by the Agency.

In addition to improving the hiring process, the HRSO group in OHR is evaluating and improving recruitment strategies to attract highly qualified candidates to the Agency. The NRC staff finalized the policy of offering referral awards. The referral award provides employees with a

monetary “thank you” if candidates they refer to the Agency are hired. Finally, the NRC staff request for direct-hire authority from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was not approved. OPM opined that the law which authorizes direct-hire authority applies to the competitive service, not the excepted service, and therefore OPM could not approve the NRC’s request. NRC is exploring the possibility of obtaining direct-hire authority via direct legislation.

NRR will experience the largest growth in the Agency as a result of the new reactor licensing activities. In the last update in mid-January, NRR reported that 84 new employees were selected. As of August 22, 2006, NRR has selected 242 employees in both technical and support areas. Of the 242 employees selected, 171 are on board and personnel are categorized as follows: 27 Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPD) candidates, 25 administrative and 119 technical. The 71 remaining employees selected are going through the security clearance process. The table below details activities in the hiring plan for NRR employees.

Hiring Tasks for NRR employees			
	Task	Status	Responsible group
1	Review the existing recruitment locations and identify events and locations for additional recruitment events.	initial review completed; on-going	NRR/PMAS
2	Identify opportunities and create advertisements for targeted advertising in local newspapers as well as national publications, trade journals, etc.	initial completed; on-going as needed	OHR/HRSO; NRR/PMAS
3	Evaluate and improve recruitment and hiring strategies, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revise the generic open vacancy announcement for mid-career engineers and scientists to provide additional flexibilities to offer relocation and recruitment incentives. • streamline the request and approval process for a standard incentive (i.e., a cash incentive for a pre-determined percentage of the offered salary) • create the government version of referral award • request direct hire authority 	on-going completed completed completed completed	OHR/HRSO
4	Hold NRR monthly human capital meetings to discuss staffing challenges	on-going	NRR management

Hiring Tasks for NRR employees			
	Task	Status	Responsible group
5	Identify technical expertise and infrastructure support staff to meet FY 2007 staffing projections	Completed	NRR/NPLB; NRR/PMAS
	Identify technical expertise and infrastructure support staff to meet FY 2008 staffing projections	4 Qtr 2006	NRR/NPLB; NRR/PMAS

Finally, while the staff continues to focus on recruiting new staff as the principle vehicle for preparing for future challenges, it also is utilizing other staffing options to bridge the gap while new employees are being brought on board. Most notably, pension offset waivers for re-employed annuitants are being used when no other reasonable staffing option exists to accomplish mission critical tasks. Individuals are currently being used for their unique or specialized skills in a variety of tasks such as development of a construction inspection program, inspection support, and safety culture, as well as significant knowledge management/knowledge transfer activities such as completion of Standard Review Plan sections and mentoring and training of new staff.

TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT/TRANSFER

The rapid integration and training of a large number of new employees into the Agency is a significant challenge but is essential for the Agency’s and the employees’ future success and productivity. To address this, NRR is utilizing and expanding the use of existing training tools, including mentoring, on-the-job-training, formal classroom and on-line training, and self-study activities. NRR’s updated training plan is provided below. Similar activities are underway in RES at a scope commensurate with its expected growth and turnover.

To help new employees succeed, NRR has developed and is using a new employee orientation and training guide. The staff is continuing to develop its qualification plans for engineers and scientists. Training the new employees will increase the need for courses held at the Technical Training Center and Professional Development Center. The staff is continuing the process of the job task analysis (JTA) and, based on the skill sets developed, the staff will examine pre-existing training to identify course work that either 1) provides the necessary training, 2) provides a degree of the necessary training and can be modified to meet a greater degree of the need(s) identified in the JTA, or 3) needs to be developed specifically to support the skill sets identified in the JTA. As a result of the JTA, the staff is developing a training course on the Part 52 licensing process. Additionally, the staff is letting a contract for developing and administering courses on new reactor design technologies (i.e., Advanced Plant 1000, Economic Simplified Boiling Water Reactor, and Evolutionary Power Reactor).

Additionally, for succession planning and knowledge management in critical skills and knowledge areas, supervisors and managers received an updated tool in April 2006. The staff created succession planning notebooks for NRR first-line supervisors to assist in closing

identified skill gaps, identifying new skill gaps and managing succession planning and knowledge transfer. The notebook included strategic workforce planning (SWP) staff and critical skill matrix, SWP Retirement Eligibility Report, 2006 Workforce Skill Gap report, staffing plan, external training priority guidance, and the draft knowledge transfer process.

Training Tasks			
	Task	Status	Responsible group
1	Identify training needs for new employees and to support new reactor licensing process	Feb 2006; interviews complete; on-going	OHR/HRTD NRR/DNRL NRR/PMAS
2	Assess existing training based on needs assessment	2nd Qtr FY 2006 preliminary courses identified; others on- going	OHR/HRTD
3	Develop training or modify existing training	3rd Qtr FY 2006	OHR/HRTD
4	Fill an administrative lead position for assisting new employees, coordinating Office seminars, and tracking the completion of new employee training	Complete	NRR/PMAS
5	Qualification Plans for technical staff	1st Qtr 2007	NRR/PMAS

SUMMARY

The NRC staff is working aggressively to meet the demand for the recruitment, hiring, training, and support of new engineers, scientists, and other support staff.

Recruitment efforts have expanded to target experienced professionals, as well as to expand the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPDP) for this year and next year (2009 class). Improvements in the hiring process have decreased the time for the hiring process and the burden on supervisors. The staff continues to use staffing models from the NRPB and identified workforce skill gap to assess the need for additional positions for engineers, scientists, and support staff to support new reactor licensing activities. The staff continues to conduct the JTA to assess the increased training needs for new employees.

NRR is currently hiring staff to meet the projected full-time equivalent for FY 2007 and is working towards projections for FY 2008 staffing. The impact of the NRR staffing increases will be reflected in the budget adjustments for FY 2007 and FY 2008. In the last update in mid-January, NRR had selected 84 employees. As of July 31, 2006, NRR has selected over 200 employees in both technical and support areas. The staff is dedicated to working to meet

the challenge of recruiting, hiring, training and integrating new employees into the Agency with the necessary infrastructure to support our activities.