

Hiring and Training Strategies February 2007

INTRODUCTION

While the increased workload related to new reactors is affecting staffing throughout the agency, the greatest impact has been on the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR). With significant resources needed to guide the reorganization of NRR into NRR and the Office of New Reactors (NRO), the hiring process has been a major challenge. To accommodate the increased staffing requirements, NRR and NRO have developed strategies for recruiting, hiring, training, supervising, and providing physical and information technology infrastructure support. This enclosure outlines the strategies that NRO is implementing. During this fiscal year (FY), the Office of Human Resources (HR) and NRO/NRR have hired a large 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, NRO 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, NRO managers and the Human Resources Services and Operations (HRSO) team leader servicing NRO participate in a monthly human capital meeting. Additionally, HRSO and NRO human capital staff meet frequently to discuss ongoing needs. The New Reactor Planning and Scheduling Branch (NPLS) continues to inform the projections for staffing levels for new reactor licensing activities and the areas of expertise 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 NRO staffing increases. As part of the HR 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 using knowledge transfer activities. The offices are using the identified workforce skill gaps as guidance for identifying recruitment and hiring needs.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS

NRR and NRO, in partnership with HR, continue 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 HR 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.

As of January 31, 2007, NRR and NRO have selected 351 employees in both technical and support areas. Of the 351 employees selected, 283 are on board and personnel are categorized as follows: 30 Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPD) candidates, 54 administrative and 199 technical. The 68 remaining employees selected are going through the security clearance process. The table below details activities in the hiring plan for NRO/NRR employees.

Table 1 - Hiring Plan for NRO/NRR Employees

Hiring Plan for NRO/NRR employees			
	Task	Status	Responsible Group
1	Review the existing recruitment locations and identify events and locations for additional recruitment events	initial review completed; ongoing	NRR/ PMAS
2	Identify opportunities and create advertisements for targeted material in local newspapers as well as national publications, trade journals, etc.	initial effort completed; on-going as needed	HR/HRSO, NRR/PMAS
3	Evaluate and improve recruitment and hiring strategies, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • revise the generic open vacancy announcement for midcareer 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 predetermined percentage of the offered salary) • create the Government version of referral award 	ongoing, completed completed completed	HR/HRSO
4	Hold monthly human capital meetings to discuss staffing challenges	completed; ongoing	NRR/NRO management
5	Identify technical expertise and infrastructure support staff to meet FY 2007 staffing projections	completed	NRR/NPLS, NRR/PMAS
	Identify technical expertise and infrastructure support staff to meet FY 2008 staffing projections	completed	NRO/NPLS, NRR/PMAS

Finally, while the staff continues to focus on recruiting new employees as the principal vehicle for preparing for future challenges, it also is using other staffing options to bridge the gap while

new hires are being brought on board. Most notably, reemployed annuitants are being offered pension offset waivers when no other reasonable staffing option exists to accomplish critical tasks. These individuals with unique or specialized skills perform 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, including the completion of Standard Review Plan sections and mentoring and training of new staff.

TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT/TRANSFER

The rapid integration and training of many new employees are major challenges but are essential to the future success and productivity of the agency and the employees. To address this, NRO/NRR is expanding the use of existing training tools, including mentoring, on-the-job training, formal classroom and online training, and self-study activities. The NRO/NRR updated training plan appears below. Similar activities are underway in the Office of Nuclear Regulatory Research at a scope commensurate with its expected growth and turnover. To help new employees succeed, NRO/NRR has developed and is using a new employee orientation and training guide.

In September 2006, the professional development center began offering the new course on the licensing process under Title 10, Part 52, of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR Part 52). In addition, in October 2006, NRO/NRR established a qualification program to certify employees' knowledge for licensing and regulating nuclear power plants. The qualification program is detailed in NRR Office Instruction ADM-504. The NRC has been developing these two initiatives during the year and completed them on schedule to meet the agency needs to ensure readiness of new reactor licensing and continued safe regulation of operating nuclear power plants.

Table 2 - Training Plan

Training Plan			
	Task	Status	Responsible Group
1	Identify training needs for new employees and for support of the new reactor licensing process	February 2006; HR interviews complete; ongoing	NRO/NRR/ PMAS
2	Assess existing training based on needs assessment	2nd qtr FY 2006 preliminary courses identified; others ongoing	OHR/HRTD
3	Develop training or modify existing training	3rd qtr FY 2006; ongoing	HR/ HRTD,

Training Plan			
	Task	Status	Responsible Group
4	Fill an administrative lead position for assisting new employees, coordinating office seminars, and tracking the completion of new employee training	Completed	NRO/NRR/ PMAS
5	Qualification plans for technical staff (NRR Office Instruction ADM-504, Qualification Program)	Completed	NRO/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. The staff continues to use staffing models from the NRPB and identified workforce skill gaps to assess the need for additional positions for engineers, scientists, and support staff for new reactor licensing activities. NRR/NRO is currently hiring staff to meet the projected full-time equivalent need for FY 2007 and is working on the projections for FY 2008 staffing. NRR and NRO have selected more than 351 employees in both technical and support areas. In October 2006 and January 2007, NRR and NRO, respectively established their qualification programs for training and certifying that employees have obtained sufficient regulatory knowledge for regulating and licensing nuclear power plants. The staff is dedicated to meeting the challenge of recruiting, hiring, training, and integrating new employees into the agency with the necessary infrastructure to support all activities.