

May 24, 2000

MEMORANDUM TO: William D. Travers  
Executive Director for Operations

FROM: Irene P. Little, Director */RA/*  
Office of Small Business and Civil Rights

SUBJECT: SES APPRAISAL INPUT

The following input highlights accomplishments for the Office of Small Business and Civil Rights. This summary is based on an assessment of activities for the rating period July 1, 1999 to June 30, 2000. If you have questions regarding any of the information provided, please give me a call on extension 415-7380.

Attachment: As stated

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FROM: Irene P. Little, Director **Original signed by**  
Office of Small Business and Civil Rights **Irene P. Little**

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**FY 2000 INPUT FOR SES EVALUATION  
OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

**Introduction**

The Office of Small Business and Civil Rights (SBCR), develops, implements, and manages four major programs: (1) Affirmative Action, including the Federal Women's Program and implementing a managing diversity process; (2) Civil Rights; (3) Small Business; and (4) Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). Complies with all reporting requirements imposed by the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Commission, Small Business Administration, and other Federal agencies associated with Federal EEO Programs. Develops and implements Agency's EEO policy. Sponsors activities designed to enhance career-development for all employees, with emphasis on fair opportunities for women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities. Initiates activities to achieve a high quality, culturally diverse applicant pool, and for implementing a Managing Diversity (MD) Process within the Agency. Plans, coordinates, and conducts annual special emphasis events.

Receives, acknowledges, and processes complaints of discrimination and manages the Agency's EEO Counselors who provide counseling to Agency employees on allegations of discrimination. Develops and implements the Agency's procurement preference programs. Manages the Cooperative Agreement with Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education for implementing the Agency's HBCU Program.

**Summary Statements**

- ◆ Irene has the ability to work effectively with individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultures, handle controversy, diverse opinions, and broadly differing agendas; and build consensus. She effectively uses memos, phone calls, e-mails, one-on-one discussions, and group meetings to accomplish her program objectives.
- ◆ Irene has a clear sense of priority. She encourages others to participate in decision making. She uses all information available when making decisions, which usually results in solid, supportable decisions. She considers the impact of her decisions on others by consistently informing management services offices and other organizations, as appropriate of new decisions and general information. She solicits input and takes steps to minimize negative effects. As a result, there is generally support for her decisions.
- ◆ Irene is resourceful in devising new ways to accomplish goals and to achieve the desired outcomes. She is able to effectively assess a situation and very quickly determine the appropriate course of action. She is confident of her judgment and accepts responsibility for the actions of her office. She takes advantage of her experience and knowledge gained during her career and has a broad perspective on problem solving.
- ◆ She recognizes and addresses her employees' strengths and weaknesses. She is committed to her and her employees' professional development. She broadly utilized rotation assignments to increase office effectiveness for the good of the program and provided development opportunities for the individuals, e.g., P. Easson.

- ◆ Irene consistently establishes high standards for herself and her team. She works with her team to establish a clear direction and focus. She is effective at developing, communicating, and reinforcing a shared sense of purpose throughout the organization. She is committed to directly confronting tough issues. She investigates the situation, gets input from those concerned, determines a plan of action and moves forward. This contributes to her reputation as a strong and decisive manager.

### **Specific Accomplishments**

#### Element 1 - Achievement of Program Goals

- ◆ Implemented the second phase of the MD process for employees. Managing diversity awareness sessions have been completed for the regional offices. Five employee sessions in headquarters will be completed by the end of FY 2000. Scheduling was done consistent with the overall training priorities in the Agency. Procurement of videos for MD awareness for managers and supervisors was complete for all managers and supervisors who were not able to attend the previous MD leadership seminars. Approximately 80% of all agency managers and supervisors have completed the MD leadership seminar. The procurement process for the third phase (which will consist of an assessment of NRC's organizational culture) will begin in early FY 2001.
- ◆ She conducted meetings with office directors, regional administrators, and staff to discuss objectives of the Agency's Five-Year Affirmative Employment Plan (AEP), and employee and management roles in AEP implementation. Reviewed EEO accomplishments for each office/region; provided feedback to the respective offices and input to the Deputy Executive Director for Management Services (DEDM) regarding these accomplishments.
- ◆ Supported SBCR representation in a Public Service Diversity Network forum. This forum provides up-to-date information on the status of Diversity Programs in Federal, State, local, and private organizations. The information obtained during these forums helped to identify resources for planning NRC's Diversity Day pilot.
- ◆ Planned and coordinated the NRCs' Diversity Day pilot. During this pilot, a variety of cultural artists performed, a keynote speaker provided thought-provoking insight regarding the concept of diversity, and a panel discussion was held on age related issues in the workplace. Arts and craft vendors, professional organizations and embassies were featured.
- ◆ Managed and provided support to the Agency's EEO Advisory Committees. To obtain employee opinion regarding the Diversity Day pilot and the Special Emphasis Programs, the EEO Advisory Committees, along with the SBCR and the Office of Human Resources, developed an employee survey which will be distributed by June 2000. The results of the survey will be published. A final decision in support of an NRC Diversity Day or the Special Emphasis Programs will be made for FY 2001 events. SBCR has worked with the EEO Advisory Committees to develop an EEO issues and action-item tracking system. This tracking system will be updated periodically to include status and final resolution of issues.

- ◆ Planned, coordinated, and conducted seven special events: (1) Hispanic Heritage Month; (2) Disability Awareness Month; (3) Native American Heritage Month; (4) Black History Month; (5) Women's History Month; (6) Asian Pacific American Heritage Month; and (7) Bring the Children to Work Day.
- ◆ Planned and developed SBCR Standard Operating Procedures for implementation of the Small Business Program. Took the lead to establish procurement preference goal methodology agreed to by Division of Contracts and Property Management (DCPM) and SBCR. Continue to monitor the computerized Voice Mail and Fax on Demand system for small business concerns and the public which provides immediate information on doing business with the NRC, NRC's procurement forecast, and notices of upcoming SBCR-hosted business forums. Meetings were held with six business representatives to discuss ways to increase 8(a), small, minority, and women-owned business participation in NRC's procurement activities. Participated in a small business seminar at Congresswoman Connie Morella's Small Business Forum and provided information on NRC FY 2000 Forecast of Procurement Opportunities.
- ◆ Initiated a more proactive role in preventing problems with small business concerns by making routine contacts with small businesses following contract award to introduce the role of SBCR.
- ◆ Planned, coordinated, and conducted the biannual EEO briefings to the Commission that provided a status report on the problems and progress of the Agency's EEO Program. The briefing format was changed to reflect consistency with the objectives of the Agency's Affirmative Employment Plan. For the first time, a status report on the progress of the Agency's Small Business Program and the Historically Black College and Universities was included.
- ◆ Met with several office directors, regional administrators, and staff members to discuss their role in implementing the Agency's EEO Program. Assisted in identifying factors that contribute to poor management practices, poor morale, lack of trust, and reductions in staff productivity. Assisted in developing strategies to improve the working environment, retention, targeted hiring, management/employee relationships, and communication; encouraged implementation of sound merit principles to resolve issues before they emerge as formal complaints.
- ◆ Evaluated EEO accomplishments of headquarter and regional offices and prepared an annual report to the EDO for his use in evaluating the performance of senior executives.
- ◆ Worked together with HR staff in developing a new separate EEO subelement to be included in SES performance plans for the July 1, 2000 - June 30, 2001 performance period. Currently, working with HR to develop the new performance element for non-SES managers and supervisors.
- ◆ Enhanced the Agency's facilitated Mentoring Program by introducing new employees to the program, encouraging their participation, and conducted three orientation sessions for new program participants in headquarters and in Region 1. This included one session requested by the CIO. Thirty participants completed the orientation. Feedback from

participants (mentors and mentees) indicates a great degree of satisfaction with the session and program. Participates with Montgomery County's Task Force on Mentoring which seeks to obtain information regarding all such programs within the county's public and private sectors, and develop a central resource for public and private sector use.

- ◆ Developed career profiles for several employees outlining their career goals, strategies to achieve their goals, and identified staff/management contacts who provided additional career guidance.
- ◆ Managed the EEO Complaint Process. During this fiscal year, 6 informal and 10 formal complaints were resolved. Provided expert guidance and recommendations to staff, senior management, and other Agency officials regarding final Agency decisions on complaints. Continued to prepare final Agency decisions in "Plain English" format. Resolution of complaints helps to reduce expenditures of monies and other Agency resources in more expensive avenues of redress, and create improved relationships between management and employees.
- ◆ Planned and coordinated EEO Counselor's Training for the Agency's 26 counselors to address changes in the discrimination complaint process, including NRC's new alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process to resolve employment discrimination claims; and sexual and non-sexual harassment in the workplace.
- ◆ Implemented the Agency's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process, a confidential, non-adjudicative, and non-adversarial process, to assist in resolving EEO complaints at the lowest possible level. Information on the complaint process, including ADR, were distributed to all employees via the NRC internal web page.
- ◆ Planned and developed a new complaint data system to track the informal counseling issues and formal complaints filed by employees. For the first time, informal counseling issues are being tracked. Information generated from this system is consistent with reporting requirements of the EEO Commission. A new complaint form that captures all pertinent employee information regarding informal counseling issues and formal complaints was completed and is currently in use by NRC employees who file complaints. Managers involved in complaints are kept informed of the complaint status. Collectively these efforts resulted in a more efficient and effective complaint process.
- ◆ Completed and submitted to the appropriate Federal agency reporting requirements associated with the EEO Program: (1) NRC's Annual Federal EEO Statistical Report of Discrimination Complaints; (2) Annual Federal Performance Report on Executive Agency Actions to Assist HBCUs; and (3) NRC's FY 1999 Program Update and Accomplishment Report on Affirmative Action Program Plan for Hiring, Placement, and Advancement of Individuals with Handicaps.
- ◆ Updated the display of the Agency's EEO and Diversity Policy Statement, steps for filing a complaint, and names/photographs of EEO Counselors throughout the Agency, including all sites where NRC employees are assigned. All employees are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the EEO area, as required by statute.

- ◆ Routinely update SBCR's website which provides employees and the public access to information on SBCR's program areas (Affirmative Action, Civil Rights and Small Business and Historically Black Colleges and Universities Program), Affirmative Employment Plan, Special Emphasis Activity Schedule, schedule of Small Business Forums, and information about EEO Advisory Committees.
- ◆ Took an active role, with input from the EEO Advisory Committees, to identify recruitment resources that could potentially yield diverse applicant pools for the Agency's major job categories. Identified minority and female employees to serve as recruiters for college and professional career fairs, including SBCR staff who made five focused recruitment visits.
- ◆ Served as a member of the ERB Review Group and provided guidance regarding the potential EEO related impact on merit staffing reviews, and assisted in ensuring that senior management was aware of highly qualified women, minorities, and candidates with disabilities.
- ◆ SBCR staff member served on a new committee, along with a diverse group of staff from headquarters and regional offices, to identify strategies to recruit and retain Hispanics. SBCR and HR are working together to evaluate and develop an action plan based on these strategies to recruit and retain Hispanics.
- ◆ Coordinated the renewal of NRC's cooperative agreement with the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education for managing the HBCU Program. Students/faculty are selected from HBCUs to participate in research activities that support the NRC mission. One student received the Los Alamos National Laboratory's University Program Outstanding Student Award for his work this year. NRC continues to achieve its dollar goal of expended funds to the HBCU Program. Participated in the White House Initiative HBCU Technology Cluster to assist in preparing the nomination form for the Millennium Awards for Teaching and Research Excellence in Mathematics, Science, Engineering and Technology at HBCU's. Revised the form and distributed it for comments to Federal agencies designated within NRC subordinate cluster.

Element 2 - Management Effectiveness:

- ◆ Met bimonthly with staff to provide general information regarding SBCR/Agency's programs and management decisions. Met monthly with SBCR staff to discuss the status of projects, pending actions, and employee concerns.
- ◆ Managed and facilitated additional tools and services needed by the staff to improve the efficiency of staff functions. SBCR obtained remote access software for the laptop computer, facilitated framing of special emphasis posters for the SBCR Gallery located on the second floor of TWFN, and subscribed to web version of Personnet Database to obtain information on current EEOC regulations and case laws. .
- ◆ Continued to use a comprehensive operating plan format that identified planned accomplishments and provided quarterly updates in a timely manner.

- ◆ Prepared SBCR's budget and program scenarios for FY 2001-2003; expenditures are tracked on a real-time basis. Funds are obligated and expended in an efficient and expeditious manner.
- ◆ Continued to meet with office directors and regional administrators to discuss their role in support of the Agency's EEO Program. Encouraged early resolution of informal complaints to minimize resources expended and bad faith created in issues that are "dragged out" or moved to a formal area when informal resolution is possible.
- ◆ Hired one Hispanic female for a temporary appointment. Selected a African American female for a three-month rotation to SBCR to assist in SBCR's secretarial and administrative support to SBCR; and selected a white female for a 9-month rotation to SBCR to assist two program areas.
- ◆ Gave Instant Cash Awards for immediate and positive feedback for an outstanding outcome to 15 employees: (1) ten EEO Counselors, and (5) seven SBCR employees (six African American females and 1 White female). Nine EEO Counselors received recognition for their contribution and support for the EEO Complaint Program process. Performance awards were given to six employees: (1) five African American females and (2) one White female. Training for SBCR staff included: (1) one African American female attended the International Society of Performance Management Conference and gave a presentation on the NRC's Mentoring Program process; (2) one African American female received training in Starfire Time Entry and Approving Functions for Approving Officials, Interactive EEO Counseling, (3) one African American female attended the Federal Dispute Resolution Conference, and (4) one White female received training in EEO Assistant Database System, Introduction to People Soft, Crystal Report Design Essentials.

### Element 3 - Individual Performance

- ◆ Served as a task force member, along with other management officials and employees, to develop strategies to recruit and retain Hispanics. SBCR, along with HR, will evaluate and develop an action plan for this initiative.
- ◆ Served as a member of the Executive Resources Board Review Group responsible for the review of merit staffing packages/Best Qualified lists for positions at the GG-15 and above. This review ensures that the process has attracted the widest pool of applicants and that women and minority applicants are given fair and equal consideration.
- ◆ Met with management and employees during visits to each of the four regional offices. Also met with senior managers in each major program office. The purpose of these meeting was to discuss additional strategies to achieve the Agency's EEO goals and to resolve issues with potential EEO implications.
- ◆ Promptly met with EEO Advisory Committees to discuss issues addressed and comments made during the last two EEO Commission Briefing. Met regularly with committee Chairs to discuss committee goals and objectives and respond to committee recommendations. SBCR staff worked with the EEO committees to develop an EEO issues and action-item

tracking system. SBCR, along with the Asian Pacific American Advisory Committee, met with NRR management to discuss recommendations to enhance career growth for Asian employees with the office. As a result, some recommendations were adopted and implemented in NRR. Annual committee goals were submitted to SBCR at the beginning of the fiscal year. These goals were stated in the February 2000 publication of the NR&C.

- ◆ Met regularly with employees and managers to resolve issues that could lead to EEO complaints and to assist in resolving informal and formal complaints at the lowest level. Met with EEO counselors to discuss the scope of both informal and formal complaints, to insure that counselors are functioning within the scope of their authority, and to insure that appropriate emphasis is placed on issue resolution at the lowest possible level in the organization.

### **Areas of Improvement**

- ◆ Place greater emphasis on interacting with EEO Director counterparts in other agencies to gain insights from their success.
- ◆ Meet with each office Director/Regional Administrator early in the fiscal year to discuss EEO goals, EEO emphasis, and their offices' contributions for the upcoming fiscal year.