

Human Resources Processes, Policies, and Practices

The human resources processes, policies, and practices initiative represents the agency's infrastructure for knowledge retention. This initiative has five principal functions: evaluating the state of the agency's skill and knowledge base; planning career development and succession planning; building an employee retention culture; retaining long-tenure employees; and investing in recruiting processes. The following discussions describe both the agency's current activities in each of these areas and the staff's assessment of what more needs to be done.

Evaluating the Agency's Skill and Knowledge Base

Strategic Workforce Planning

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) is the process that the agency uses for identifying the core technical, administrative, and leadership capabilities employees must possess to perform activities and deliver products and services to support the agency's current and future strategic goals. The SWP provides tools for all levels of managers and staff to self-identify their proficiencies in identified skills, competencies, and knowledge areas. Skill gaps identified in the SWP are used for selecting the disciplines sponsored by the Graduate and Undergraduate Fellowship Programs.

As part of the agency KM program, all supervisors and managers will periodically and systematically conduct assessments to identify the skills, competencies, and knowledge areas that are "most critical" for the successful completion of their organization's mission both in the short and long terms. Supervisors and managers will then compare the SWP inputs to identify and project short-term and long-term agency skill gaps. These skill gaps will be used by the offices and regions to target their development and recruiting efforts. (See *Targeted Recruiting* below).

Career Development and Succession Planning Processes

Succession Planning

A formalized succession planning process is conducted by the Executive Resources Board to identify likely succession candidates for specific Senior Executive Service (SES) positions. That process identifies key agency management positions, potential succession candidates, and developmental activities and assignments that should occur prior to filling higher level positions in the agency. Some offices conduct their own succession planning activities at the staff level for key positions.

Under the agency KM program, succession planning would not be restricted to the SES and will be performed at the office level to identify and develop designated backups for key staff roles to help assure that work can be accomplished, knowledge is transferred, and that extended absences, vacations, promotions, and retirements can be handled with less disruption. After identifying key roles, offices will identify one or more potential replacements and create action plans that will outline the training and development activities needed to grow the replacements to the appropriate level of expertise over the anticipated time horizon.

Individual Development Plans

Supervisors and employees use Individual Development Plans (IDP) and other mechanisms to identify developmental activities. The IDP is also valuable as a planning tool when managers and supervisors use identified future staffing needs to help individuals develop skills related to the anticipated gaps. IDPs provide a structure for establishing goals and strategies for employees' development by specifying appropriate training and rotations. The IDP tool is readily available and is already widely-used.

The IDP process is currently being integrated with the new Learning Management System (LMS) to make the process more convenient for staff and supervision and also to create a more powerful tool for planning agency training. As part of the agency KM program the IDP will be given increased emphasis for structuring career development at all staff levels.

Building a Retention Culture

Influencing and Monitoring the Retention Climate

Historically the NRC has been very successful in retaining employees for long tenures, however there is adequate anecdotal evidence, primarily from the external environment, that retention paradigms may be shifting. The agency will continue to monitor employees' sentiment, conduct targeted exit interviews of individuals who leave before retirement, and maintain a senior management awareness of the NRC retention climate as the nuclear industry moves into a new growth phase that will likely create shortages of highly-skilled individuals.

Under the agency KM program, NRC employees would be both empowered and expected to share their knowledge through numerous behaviors described in this paper including mentoring, coaching, and conducting seminars for the staff. The agency KM program would emphasize the importance of person-to-person knowledge transfer particularly from senior experienced staff to junior less-experienced staff. The agency's KM initiatives will encourage sharing of intellectual capital and may include setting expectations and recognizing success.

Policies to Retain Older Workers

Retention Allowance and Waivers of Dual Compensation Limitations

Employees who are planning to leave Federal service or retire from the agency but whose knowledge is needed to carry out critical activities or functions may be offered retention allowances to continue working for the agency for specified periods of time. The allowances encourage knowledgeable, experienced employees to continue serving in mission-critical areas long enough to transfer their knowledge to others prior to leaving the agency. Retention allowances are available and in use within the agency's existing authority.

Current SWP strategies may allow for rehiring annuitants using a waiver of dual compensation limitations. The agency has the authority under certain circumstances to waive the regulations requiring salary "offsets" for rehired Federal annuitants. The NRC may waive the offset to rehire selected retirees who have scarce skills for limited periods when compelled by critical work needs. This practice can be used to provide rehired retirees with ample time to transfer

knowledge that would otherwise be lost from the agency. However, it has in general been used at the NRC to support emergent work and special activities.

Under the agency KM program more emphasis will be placed on using retention allowances and rehiring annuitants for the purpose of knowledge transfer rather than to support special projects or complete unfinished activities.

Reinventing Recruiting Processes

Targeted Recruiting

Several agency offices and regions have been successful during the last two years in targeting their recruiting efforts to fill existing or projected skill gaps identified through the SWP database.

Under the agency KM program the use of the SWP as an information source would be encouraged for all of the offices and regions to inform and direct their hiring processes to meet short-term needs and also to create a pipeline for meeting long-term needs to support succession planning for key staff positions.