

NRC HIRING AND STAFFING GUIDANCE

January 2016

Objective:

Provide guidance to effectively manage positions, control salaries and benefits, and ensure the agency can meet fiscal year (FY) 2016 and FY 2017 staffing targets.

Background:

The combination of external factors and internal drivers, such as the outcome of Project AIM, has impacted the current staffing environment. The U.S Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) continues to decline in full-time equivalent (FTE) utilization, and is planning for an FTE ceiling for FY 2016 of **3,565** FTEs (including 13 reimbursable details). This means that the agency must plan to utilize no more than 3,552 FTEs by the end of FY 2016. This FTE target will position the NRC well to accommodate further FTE reductions anticipated in the President's FY 2017 budget request. At this time we are working toward a FY 2017 FTE utilization of 3,465 FTE¹.

NRC Hiring Guidance:

OCHCO is working to align FTE levels with salary and benefit projections. In addition, as part of Project Aim 2020, OCHCO was tasked with ensuring that the NRC has the right number of people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time. In order to ensure that the NRC maintains an agile workforce during these dynamic times this guidance will be adjusted throughout the year, as appropriate, depending on the budget and changing priorities.

Overall:

The offices and regions should submit to the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) for approval, by January 29, 2016, a prioritized list of staffing needs, which identifies the internal and external hires expected for the remainder of FY 2016. Vacancies and other recruit actions currently in process will be put on hold and should be included by the office as part of the prioritized list of staffing needs being requested. OCHCO will confer with the Strategic Workforce Oversight and Utilization Panel (SWOUP) and will consider the following for each office:

- FY 2016 resources and planned FY 2017 budget resources
- FTE utilization
- Critical skills and needs
- Succession planning and knowledge management
- Historical and anticipated attrition
- Availability of a qualified applicant pool within the agency
- Special educational requirements
- Ability to retrain and/or reassign internal staff to support need
- Continuing need for the position, as well as the appropriate grade
- Double Encumbering – requests to double encumber known losses for knowledge management purposes

¹ Please note that this number is subject to change.

If needs arise after the prioritized list of staffing needs has been submitted, the office/region will be asked to submit an updated list to OCHCO to be reviewed by the SWOUP.

Job analysis: As part of Strategic Workforce Planning, all positions posted as external vacancies will require a corresponding job analysis. The job analysis should identify the tasks performed in a job, the competencies required to perform those tasks, and the connection between the tasks and the competencies. The offices and regions are expected to work with OCHCO to develop the job analyses.

Filling Positions

OCHCO will closely scrutinize all requests for internal and external postings. The offices and regions should take the following steps to fill vacant positions: 1) determine if the position is still needed and evaluate the necessary grade of the position. 2) If it is determined the position is still needed work with OCHCO to explore all internal possibilities for accomplishing the work needs including: internal office reassignments, details², training and development of internal office staff, and internal solicitations. In addition, where appropriate, and in consultation with OCHCO, consider management directed reassignments, as well as such other options as reprioritizing and shifting work and using existing contractor support. Step 1 and 2 will not require SWOUP oversight. 3) If the requisite skill set is not available within the office or region, work with OCHCO and the SWOUP to determine if there is a suitable reassignment eligible within the agency. In general, use solicitation of interest (SOI), and consider management directed reassignments where appropriate. 4) After attempting to fill a position through internal reassignments, if a suitable eligible is not identified within the agency, the office or region may request OCHCO to post an internal competitive vacancy announcement (i.e., a promotion opportunity). OCHCO will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis and only after steps 1), 2), and 3) have been exhausted. 5) If a suitable candidate is not identified through the internal vacancy announcement, the office or region may request OCHCO to post an external vacancy announcement. The SWOUP led by OCHCO will review all requests for external vacancy postings, and issue final decisions on how to proceed.

Exemptions: In the past, hiring for Senior/Resident Inspectors (SRI/RI), regional inspectors and Headquarters Operations Officers/Emergency Resource Operators (HOO/HEROs) was exempt from the hiring guidance. **Given the need to look at all hiring holistically, these positions are no longer exempt.**

For SRI vacancies, the affected Director, Division of Reactor Projects (DRP) will inform the other three regions of the vacancy. All four regions will identify the existing SRIs who have been in their position for four or more years and identify those SRIs who are interested in reassignment to the vacant position. The selecting official will review the list and determine if the lateral transfer of a SRI to the vacant position should be offered based on the specific needs at the reactor site. If an existing SRI is not identified by this process, the affected region will work with OCHCO and the SWOUP to determine if there is a suitable reassignment eligible within the agency. If a suitable reassignment eligible is not identified, the affected region will refer to step 4 above.

For RI vacancies, regions will first consider staff within the Resident Inspector Development Program to fill these vacancies. If a suitable candidate is not identified, the region will adhere to step 3 above.

² Use of details may be appropriate for short-term projects.

The following guidance applies to entry-level, technical, administrative assistant, supervisory, and corporate positions.

While 25% of all hires at the entry-level is no longer possible, the agency remains committed to an entry-level program. In addition, consistent with diversity and inclusion initiatives, the agency will continue to pursue opportunities for hiring veterans, the disabled, and others through diversity hiring programs.

Entry-level

Entry level hiring should be tied directly to anticipated skill gaps and/or hard-to-fill positions. If approval has been granted to fill an entry-level/ Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPDP) position with an external candidate, the Human Resources (HR) specialist will first search for disabled and veteran applicants, and grant recipients from Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and non-MSIs who are eligible for non-competitive selection for suitable candidates. Offices and regions are encouraged to consider any such candidates before hiring a candidate from the current NSPDP vacancy.

Technical Positions

Given the environment of limited external hiring, OCHCO will not post an ALL OFFICE engineering/scientific vacancy for the remainder of FY 2016. Rather, offices and regions with critical external hiring needs should work with OCHCO to explore all available staffing options. As appropriate, OCHCO will involve the SWOUP.

Administrative Assistants

Requests to fill vacant administrative assistant (AA) positions will be reviewed by OCHCO and the SWOUP. Offices and regions should consider restructuring workload among remaining administrative staff and utilizing contractor resources prior to requesting OCHCO to post a vacancy for an AA. Offices should target to have one AA supporting the front office. Regions are permitted to fill vacant resident site office AA positions due to remote location considerations. The region should include site AA positions in its prioritized list of staffing needs.

Supervisory Positions

Offices and regions are expected to align the number of supervisors with the approved supervisory FTE in the budget and to reduce the number of team leaders within their organizations (as described below). Office and regional branches should have a minimum of 10 staff with an overall staff to first line supervisor ratio of at least 10:1, and should actively work to combine organizations and reassign individuals to budgeted non-supervisory work. In general, OCHCO will not approve reorganization requests that include branches with fewer than 10 individuals.

Offices and regions are expected to follow the following guidance when filling any supervisory position:

1. SOI – Offices and regions should consider current/former NRC supervisors before considering other interested employees. Depending on projected FTE utilization as well as other factors (e.g. adequate internal pool of reassignment eligibles), an office may laterally reassign a current/former supervisor from within the office without posting an agency SOI.

When these strategies are not successful, the office may reach candidates from outside of the office through an SOI or a management directed reassignment.

2. If there are no viable candidates from an SOI and no current/former supervisors who need to be placed, offices and regions (on a case-by-case basis) may request OCHCO approval to post an internal agency-wide competitive vacancy announcement.

Team leader (TL) positions: Offices are expected to minimize the number of TL positions by combining duties and other appropriate strategies. TLs are required to have no fewer than 4 direct reports and a cap of 5 direct reports. OCHCO will not approve requests for new or modified teams with fewer than 4 direct reports. In addition, any new TL position must include having up to 25% supervisory responsibilities, approving time and labor for direct reports, and conducting performance appraisals for direct reports. This guidance does not apply to Senior Resident Inspector positions where the number of direct reports is normally less than 4.

Offices Over-Utilizing their FTE Ceiling:

Generally, offices that are projected to over-utilize FTE in FY 2017 are restricted and are not permitted to post any SOI or vacancy announcements outside of the office³. Offices should use the FTE utilization as reported by OCHCO as to their current utilization rate for FY 17. OCHCO will partner with the offices and regions, as appropriate, to develop and implement strategies to reduce the number of overhires and work towards meeting the office's FTE target. This includes working with the SWOUP to identify potential reassignment opportunities and using such position management strategies as combining duties into fewer positions.

³ Few exceptions will be granted to meet mission-critical needs or mandates that cannot be met by any other means.