

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Bureau of Land Management
Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 South Development Avenue
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EMS Transmission 06/12/03
Director's Office Instruction Memorandum No. 2003-006
Expires: 09/30/04

To: Supervisors and Managers

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: OF&A Recruitment, Outreach, Interview and Selection Policy

Program Area: Human Resources

Purpose: The purpose of the Personnel Management Committee (PMC) is to provide a strategic management approach to review and approve proposed personnel actions associated with establishing and filling positions in accordance with approved organizational structure and staffing plans. Our goal is to fill positions at the Office of Fire and Aviation (OF&A) with individuals who have the ability, desire, professionalism and solid skills to support the mission of the organization now and into the future.

Policy/Action: The OF&A PMC will schedule weekly meetings to discuss proposed personnel actions. The membership includes the chair, Deputy Director or acting, Group Managers (Support Services, Fire Operations, Aviation, Planning & Resources, External Affairs), International Programs Coordinator, EEO Manager, Human Resources (HR) Officer or designated acting (from the HR acting schedule), and Budget Officer or designated acting.

All proposed positions with justification/background/draft organization chart must be submitted by email to the HR Officer the Wednesday **prior** to requesting presentation at the next PMC. At the PMC meeting, the HR Officer will present the proposed requests and if there are additional questions regarding the position the PMC member submitting the proposal will be asked to discuss the matter.

All proposed positions shall be discussed and approved by the OF&A PMC prior to engaging in outreach protocol. In addition, the OF&A Deputies and Group Managers at the GS-15 level must also be forwarded to the National PMC for recruit/fill and selection approval. Decisions of both PMCs will be included in the OF&A PMC update. The PMC update is emailed out to all BLM OF&A employees following the weekly PMC meeting.

The PMC will review and approve or disapprove all requests for details which are for periods greater than 30 days.

The PMC will review all position descriptions for new positions before those position descriptions are submitted to the Firefighter/Law Enforcement Team for coverage determination. This will also apply to any presently covered positions which are re-described to the extent that there is a change in the title, series or grade.

All changes to the OF&A organizations must be discussed and approved by the PMC. Also, all accretion of duties promotions must be discussed and approved by the PMC. Once accretions are approved, the DOIM 2002-12, dated May 17, 2002, will be followed.

All nominees from OF&A for the Leadership Academy must be reviewed by the PMC in the following manner. Recommendations of OF&A employees for the Leadership Academy must include a written proposal and rationale for the Director of OF&A's approval. Such requests will be forwarded through their direct supervisor and reviewed and approved by the Group Manager and then briefed to the PMC. The briefing will include the individual development plan; accompanying rationale for attendance must reflect leadership competencies and characteristics including leading people, leading change, results driven, business acumen, and building coalitions/communication. Once approved by PMC, the request will be forwarded to the Director for final approval and signature.

RECRUITMENT/OUTREACH

OF&A managers have the responsibility to determine the best outreach methodology to attract a wide variety of applicants for job vacancies. However, the OF&A will continue the practice of holding pre-staffing meetings (selecting official, HR and EEO personnel) prior to vacancies being announced. During this meeting, the following issues will be addressed:

- Grade level to be advertised (managers are encouraged to advertise at multiple grade levels);
- Knowledges, skills and abilities (KSA's) and rating plans are reviewed for barriers;
- Statistics for the particular job grouping will be reviewed for targeted recruitment of under-represented groups;
- Recruitment strategy to get the vacancy announcement as wide a distribution as possible;
- Appropriate areas of consideration (e.g., government-wide, bureau-wide, etc.).

The pre-staffing form, which serves as documentation of the meeting, will be signed by the selecting official, HR and EEO representative.

Selecting officials, in consultation with the EEO and HR Office, will develop an outreach plan, recruitment strategy or equivalent documentation for each vacancy that identifies methods and approaches for recruitment. The plan must identify specific organizations or individuals to be contacted to reach under-represented groups.

INITIAL STAFFING

Following the closing of the vacancy announcement, HR reviews the applicants for the position against the OPM qualification standards to ensure they meet the basic experience and/or education requirements, plus all selective placement factors and time-in-grade requirements within 30 days following the closing date of the vacancy announcement. If there are less than ten qualified applicants, HR will rate and rank all qualified applicants against the Crediting Plan which has been prepared or approved by the selecting official.

RATING PANELS

If HR determines there are ten or more qualified applicants, a rating panel must be convened. The rating panel rates the qualified applicants against the Crediting Plan. HR will look for a natural break in scores, and refer the top (best qualified) applicants. The selecting official may request a specific number of applicants.

The panel will submit its results and all panel materials (including panel members' notes) to HR. HR will prepare a Certificate of Eligibles and forward it to the selecting official. When the Certificates are received, the selecting official has the option to interview all the applicants personally or to convene an interview panel. BLM policy is to interview all the applicants on the Certificate from which the selecting official makes a selection.

GENERAL RULES FOR RATING PANELS

It is the responsibility of the selecting official, in consultation with HR and EEO, to set up the logistics of the panel. The selecting official must identify panel members (preferably three or more members for the rating panels, one of whom is a subject matter expert at an equivalent or higher grade than the full performance level of the position being filled). Panel members should be thoroughly familiar with the specific requirements of the position being filled. Members of the panel can be Bureau of Land Management employees or other federal employees. There shall be no more than one panel member from within the organizational unit in which the vacancy is located. The panel will identify the best qualified applicants for the position being filled.

Panel members must not base their assessments on personal knowledge of the applicants. ONLY the information provided in the application package can be used to base their assessment.

All information contained in the application or derived from interviews or from references is strictly confidential. Crediting Plans are also confidential. The deliberations of the panel are confidential; however, panel members are free to discuss the panel process without revealing any confidential information.

INTERVIEW PANELS

The selecting official may choose to use an interview panel. It is the responsibility of the selecting official, in consultation with HR and EEO, to prepare interview questions for the panel and to set up the logistics of the panel.

The selecting official must brief the panel. The briefing must include describing the position and explaining the manager's expectations. At that time, the selecting official can ask the panel to narrow the number of applicants by identifying the top qualified applicants.

INTERVIEW PROCESS

- Interview questions should avoid addressing basic qualifications which have already been reviewed by HR. Questions should explore the applicant's work and educational background, work habits, leadership style and abilities, teamwork, personal strengths and weaknesses, decision making abilities, etc.
- Interviewers may not ask about or discuss an applicant's race or ethnic background, color, sex, age, disability, religious beliefs, marital or family status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or labor organization affiliation or activity.
- Interviewers should not have hiring standards that are not job-related. Beware of tendencies toward stereotyped thinking throughout the interview process and in review of the interview. The bottom line of nondiscrimination is that people be considered on the basis of their individual skills and experience.
- Interviewers must use the same list of questions for each applicant. A response to one question leading to another question is a natural part of the interview process. These secondary questions do not have to be repeated to all applicants.
- It is acceptable to interview some applicants in person and others over the telephone.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW/CHECKING REFERENCES

- Introduce yourself, or panel members introduce themselves to the applicant.
- Explain to the applicant that you have a standard set of questions, and that you will be taking notes throughout the interview. Document factual information only.
- At the conclusion of the interview, ask the applicant if he or she has any questions for you. End the interview by informing the applicant when he or she will be notified of the final selection.
- The selecting official and/or the interview panel are strongly encouraged to contact references and/or current supervisors for each applicant. Questions asked must relate to the applicant's duties, quality of performance and work habits. You may also contact peers or employees in other agencies who have a working knowledge of the candidate's duties, quality of performance and work habits.

MAKING A SELECTION

The selecting official has the option to conduct further interviews of the top applicants or to make a final selection from the recommendations of the interview panel. The interviewing requirement is satisfied once the interview panel has interviewed all the applicants on the Certificate of Eligibles as required in BLM Manual 1400-335 – Promotion and Internal Placement, Section .42 C. The selecting official still has the option to select any applicant referred for the position, even if that individual is not one of the top applicants recommended by the interview panel.

The selecting official can select the applicant whom the selecting official considers to be the best qualified for the position being filled. In cases of multiple vacancies, multiple selections can be made. Conversely, the selecting official can choose not to make any selection from the applicants certified and can request that the position be re-advertised to attract a higher qualified or more diverse group of applicants.

Once a tentative selection is made, the selecting official will prepare a justification documenting why the person was selected. The documentation should contain the following information:

- Summary of outreach
- Method of recruitment
- Process utilized to interview the applicants
- Describe why you are recommending the selectee. Focus on specific performance and/or experience that make this applicant the best person for the job.

Submit the package (applicant referral roster and/or certificate of eligibles, all original applications, rating plans, rating sheets and notes) to the OF&A HR Officer. The package should

include a routing sheet that is used for all certificates. Upon receipt of the package, HR will review the selection, seek clearance of the selection from the EEO Manager and obtain approval from the Director or Deputy Director for GS-11 and above positions.

DOCUMENTATION

HR will retain all materials/documents used for selection for a period of three years. This is important for a variety of reasons, i.e.:

- Respond to applicants' questions that may arise.
- Preserve the records in the event of an EEO complaint. (A charge of discrimination may be made to an EEO counselor within 45 days after an alleged discriminatory act has occurred, or 45 days after an effective date of a personnel action.)
- Preserve the record in event of a grievance. (An employee grievance can be made within 15 days of the date of the act or occurrence, or of the date he/she became aware of it.)
- Requirement of the Disposition Guide.

Timeframe: This policy is effective immediately.

Budget Impact: None.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: None.

Contact: For any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact the OF&A Human Resources Officer, Jim Knox, or call him at 387-5514.

Signed by:
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