

REPORT: EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Background

Beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, the Environmental Management Advisory Board (EMAB or Board) has continued to pursue a review of EM's human capital issues, focusing specifically on the areas of Morale/Workplace Census; Planning/Accountability; Training/Certification; Mentoring/Career Growth; Staffing/Resource Management; and Competing Industries.

This review produced a number of recommendations that were presented in the Board's FY 2006 report to the Assistant Secretary and approved and implemented to varying degrees.

- **Recommendation 2006-01:** Develop accountability for the Human Capital Plan.
- **Recommendation 2006-02:** Identify the efforts being made to increase morale and establish a positive work culture, and expand upon these efforts.
- **Recommendation 2006-03:** Take steps to develop and institutionalize the Mentoring Program, thereby connecting it to career development.
- **Recommendation 2006-04:** Promote executive development and increase efforts to retrain and develop current employees.
- **Recommendation 2006-05:** Develop advanced management training modules and review the DOD's career development processes to devise a suitable DOE career-progression path for internal advancement and growth. Such action would strengthen EM's resources and aid in leadership retention.

In FY 2007 EMAB was directed to narrow its review of human capital issues to address and provide advice on the urgent matter of EM's employee recruitment and retention. Like many federal agencies, the Department of Energy (DOE) faces the possibility of a dramatic reduction in its workforce in the near future, and will have to contend with private industry to secure suitable and qualified replacements.

Discussion

The Board commends EM for its many successful human capital initiatives throughout FY 2007, the most notable of which include the creation and implementation of the EM Professional Development Corps and the activities and recommendations of the program's Embracing Diversity Working Group. While these developments are significant, EM must continue to proactively confront a number of formidable human capital challenges. The program's workforce has decreased in recent years and is beginning to experience the first throes of attrition due to an aging and retiring employee population. Reported figures and predictions are staggering; EM must work expeditiously to recruit and secure new talent as well as reinforce its core senior and mid-level staff.

One of the important components of the dialogue surrounding employee recruitment and retention is the issue of how to attract and secure talent. Given EM's urgent need to fill and fortify its ranks, the program will be best served by identifying and targeting new recruits' values and needs with appropriate resources and messages. Recognizing these values early will help secure the right individuals and promote employee retention. EM cannot afford to invest its time and efforts on recruits who are interested in temporary projects and frequent career changes.

As the program begins to bring new employees aboard, it must be sensitive to the cultural and communication components of hiring and recruitment in order to realize long-term benefits. Incorporating new individuals into an organization without knowledge of how that organization works can result in dysfunction. Recognition of these components should be included in the implementation of EM's Human Capital Plan.

It is also important to note that diverse talent and a diverse workforce must be both recruited and retained. Increased and specialized mentoring activities that endure throughout an individual's career will help address gaps in mid-level employment and create an inclusive environment for all individuals.

Lastly, EMAB is concerned that the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey reported a number of discouraging figures pertaining to EM's employee satisfaction with leadership, empowerment, and the use of merit-based promotions, all of which are critical components for a healthy and successful workforce. While EM has developed and implemented a number of action plans across the complex to address these results, it must be sensitive to the fact that its employees must also understand and believe that their managers have a personal commitment to changing those areas for the better. Resolving the disparities in current workforce satisfaction will help EM retain key employees and institutional knowledge, thereby aiding in the efforts to confront the challenges that lie ahead.

Recommendations

Recommendation 2008-03: Identify and optimize those resources and corporate messages that prove most effective in recruiting and securing new talent.

Suggestions for Implementation:

- Review current hiring practices to measure the wants and needs of prospective entry, mid-level, and high-level employees, and brand EM accordingly.

Recommendation 2008-04: Create an inclusive environment where all employees continue to feel valued and involved throughout their tenure.

Suggestions for Implementation:

- A diverse workforce must be both recruited and retained. EM should explore the use of specialized mentoring programs to facilitate continued and proactive interest in career development.

Recommendation 2008-05: Review the Federal Human Capital Survey and aggressively address findings that indicate employee dissatisfaction.

Suggestions for Implementation:

- The results from the recent survey indicate that the current workforce needs to understand that they are valued and appreciated as employees.
- Explore opportunities to build on the innate altruistic characteristics of the EM mission to improve job satisfaction and morale, and increase employee pride.