EPA

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Cross-Cutting Fundamental Strategy
FY 2012 Action Plan Annual Progress Report
Strategy 5: Strengthening EPA's Workforce and Capabilities

Continuously improve EPA's internal management, encourage innovation and creativity in all aspects of our work, and ensure that EPA is an excellent workplace that attracts and retains a topnotch, diverse workforce, positioned

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Executive Summary

In FY 2012, cross-cutting Agency actions under Strategy 5 focused on support of the President's pledge to make the government "smarter, leaner, and more effective." Guided by the overarching application of strong resource stewardship, our efforts were directed at improving EPA's ability to attract and maintain a talented and diverse workforce and equipping them with the tools to work effectively in today's business environment. Our goal is to help EPA employees work collaboratively to protect human health and the environment while operating with fiscal responsibility, maximizing the use of limited resources, and demonstrating results.

Accomplishment Highlights:

- ✓ **Reduced Unliquidated Obligations (ULOs) and Unobligated Balances:** EPA reduced ULOs on grants expired as of October 1, 2011 by 63% to $13M and on contracts expired as of October 1, 2011 by 92% to $7.8M. The Agency reduced the number of active grants with project periods of 7 years or more by 23% (213 grants).
- ✓ **Increased Telework Use:** EPA increased the average number of hours teleworked in FY 2012 by 35%, well above the 10% target.
- ✓ **Increased Use of Video-Conferencing:** In FY 2012, EPA totaled 96,134 video-conference occurrences, a 73% increase over the FY 2011 baseline of 55,373 occurrences.
- ✓ **Collaboration Tools:** EPA's new email and collaboration suite, My Workplace, is poised to enable more effective communication, coordination, and information sharing; provide secure access to information, anytime and anywhere; and help improve productivity and effectiveness. Transition to My Workplace will take place during the first half of FY 2013, with employee training focused on email, calendar, and contacts.
- ✓ **Advanced Design of EPA's Modern Workplace:** The Office of Administration and Resources Management (OARM) is working with offices across the Agency to plan for and build workplaces that promote collaboration and improve efficiency. EPA began workplace analysis planning in Regions 7, 9, and 10 and three headquarters offices. The Agency completed space consolidation plans in Regions 7 and 9 and three headquarters offices. Execution of the new space plan will be completed in Region 7 during the first quarter of FY 2013. Plans to redesign space in Region 10 should be completed by the second quarter of FY 2013.
- ✓ **Integrated Sustainable Waste Management:** Region 9 decreased overall waste generation in the Regional office by 12% and achieved a 97% rate for diverting materials to composting and recycling, in lieu of landfills, saving $45,900. Clear the Clutter efforts produced more than 30 tons of recycled paper and 8,000 pounds of e-waste and removed 450 file cabinets and other office furniture.
- ✓ **Reduced Average Time to Hire:** EPA streamlined tools that make the hiring process easier and faster for Agency hiring managers, including:
  - Released 13 standard recruitment packages in FY 2012. A total of 23 occupations now have standardized recruitment packages. Seven percent of successful recruitment actions in FY 2012 utilized a standard

package, a 4% increase over FY 2011. When used, standardized recruitment packages decreased end-to-end hiring time by an average of 32 days.
- Instituted the use of Adobe Connect during the hiring process, saving time and fostering a more collaborative process between subject matter experts and human resources specialists.
- Issued standard operating procedures (SOPs) for shared certificates, which allows a Region/program office to make multiple selections across organizational components for like positions from a single certificate when using standardized recruitment packages.
- The HR Fast Track System is ready for testing. This online solution will provide managers with one-stop shopping to assemble their standard recruitment packages.

✓ **Strengthened Framework for Ensuring Workforce Quality and Diversity:** The Agency issued the EPA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and distributed quarterly Diversity Dashboard reports providing extensive demographic information on EPA's workforce.

✓ **Key Finding in Workforce Planning:** A key finding from the FY 2012 Gap Analysis Report is that EPA will need to shift occupational series for approximately 236 positions over the next 4 years to secure scientific/technical skills and competencies to meet future mission requirements.

Challenges:

✓ **Reduce Average Time to Hire to 86 days:** EPA's FY 2012 average time to hire was 94 days for all General Schedule (GS) and Senior Executive Service (SES) positions. Factors that challenged the Agency's efforts to reach EPA's FY 2012 86-day goal:
- To help manage the Agency's budget, EPA instituted a hiring pause during the first half of FY 2012, which resulted in an intentional slow-down of hiring actions.
- The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) directed agencies to include hiring for SES positions in their time-to-hire calculations. The timeline for SES hiring does not align with the 80-day process established by OPM for GS positions.
- The interview and selection timeframe consistently exceeds the 21 days provided for in OPM's model.
- Other challenges: Many EPA scientific/specialist occupations require longer hiring times, and the 13-day limit on the period a vacancy is open (a key part of the OPM model) cannot be required for many positions due to EPA's collective bargaining agreements.

Next Steps:
- Building upon an email sent to senior Agency leaders stressing the need for hiring officials to make selections within 20-30 days, continue ongoing partnerships and communication with customers/hiring officials regarding hiring targets and expectations.
- Establish quarterly targets as part of a graduated approach to meeting the 86-day goal in FY 2013, and issue quarterly "Time-to-Hire" reports to ensure headquarters and Regional offices are aware of hiring time requirements and how the Agency is performing.
- Create applicant "how-to" videos. These quick clips will be part of EPA vacancy announcements on USAJobs to assist applicants with navigating the site and completing their applications.

✓ **Modern Workplace:** This is an ambitious, multi-year, cross-Agency effort for which we need continued headquarters and Regional leadership, communication and collaboration, commitment, and mutual adherence to timelines to ensure progress and success. Challenges faced in FY 2012 included the need to adjust the timing of our plans in response to funding uncertainties and the need to resolve union concerns.

FY 2012 Performance Summary Strategy 5: Strengthening EPA's Workforce and Capabilities	
FY 2012 Action Plan Activity	**Status/Explanation** ✓ **= Activity Complete**
1. <u>**Reduce time to hire and ensure a well-qualified and diverse candidate pool**</u>**: Shortening the timeframe for making selections for Agency vacancies is the key to having the talent in place when needed to meet mission requirements. We expect to continue reducing hiring time by automating processes and improving hiring tools and practices, including increased use of standardized recruitment packages, to ensure we hire the best talent available** *(Supports Principle 1).*	
• Reduce average time to hire to 86 days, 10% below the FY 2011 baseline. (September 30, 2012)	EPA's FY 2012 average time to hire was 94 days for all positions (GS and SES). The Office of Administration and Resources Management (OARM) continues to develop and implement tools to reduce time to hire. • Released 13 standard recruitment packages in FY 2012. A total of 23 occupations now have standardized recruitment packages. 7% of successful recruit actions in FY 2012 utilized a standard package, a 4% increase over FY 2011. Use of standardized recruitment packages decreased the end-to-end hiring time by an average of 32 days. • Instituted the use of Adobe Connect during the hiring process, saving time and fostering a more collaborative process between subject matter experts and human resources specialists. • Issued Shared Certificates SOP. Allows a Region/program office to make multiple selections across organizational components for like positions from a single certificate when using standardized recruitment packages. • Developed the HR Fast Track System, which is ready for testing. This online solution provides managers with one-stop shopping to assemble their standard recruitment package. It is scheduled for Agency-wide release in the second quarter of FY 2013. • Email issued by OARM to Agency senior leadership stressing the need for hiring officials to make selections within 20-30 days.

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FY 2012 Action Plan Activity	**Status/Explanation** ✓ = Activity Complete
	<u>Key Challenges</u>: • The impact of the hiring pause and subsequent 1-hire-for-2-vacancies policy on the time used to make hiring decisions. • OPM's requirement to include SES hiring in time-to-hire numbers. • The interview and selection timeframe consistently exceeds the 21 days provided for in OPM's model. <u>Other Challenges</u>: • Many EPA scientific/specialist occupations require longer hiring times. • The 13-day limit on the period a vacancy is open (a key part of the OPM model) cannot be required for many positions due to the Agency's collective bargaining agreements. <u>Next Steps</u>: • Issue quarterly "Time to Hire" reports to ensure headquarters and Regional offices are aware of hiring time requirements and how the Agency is performing. • Establish quarterly targets as part of a graduated approach to meeting 86-day goal. • Create applicant "how-to" videos. These quick clips will be part of EPA vacancy announcements on USAJobs. They will assist applicants with navigating the site and completing their applications. The first of these videos will be completed in January 2013 and will serve as a prototype for additional videos. • Continue ongoing partnership and communication with customers/hiring officials regarding hiring targets and expectations.

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FY 2012 Action Plan Activity	**Status/Explanation** ✓ **= Activity Complete**
• Establish a baseline for assessing the quality and diversity of the candidate pool for EPA new hires through collection and analysis of information from existing data sources. (September 30, 2012)	✓ • OARM, in collaboration with other Agency offices, evaluated data sources to judge their utility for improving our understanding of the quality and diversity of EPA's candidate pool. For FY 2013, we adopted a measure that utilizes the Diversity Dashboard workforce data as a basis for conducting targeted outreach and recruitment to under-represented groups. • OARM distributed quarterly Diversity Dashboard reports providing extensive demographic information on EPA's workforce.
• Establish a baseline for assessing quality of EPA new hires through revision/ administration of an EPA survey for supervisors of new employees. (September 30, 2012)	By March 31, 2013, EPA will utilize two existing OPM survey instruments to develop baseline data going back through FY 2012 that captures: • EPA hiring managers' satisfaction with selected applicants after 6 months of service, and • Satisfaction of new hires with their new positions after 6 months of service.
2. **Improve workforce planning: Organizations use workforce analysis to guide organizational developmental opportunities, direct recruitment activities, enhance use of individual development plans, and promote team-building initiatives. This will broaden the strengths of the EPA's talent pool to better meet mission objectives. Workforce skill need projections will support management decision making on resource allocations and effective management of staffing levels** *(Supports Principles 1 and 3).*	
• The Office of Administration and Resources Management (OARM) issues a Gap Analysis Report based on workforce projections from program and Regional offices, analyzing potential gaps in mission critical occupations, and identifying the data's implications for hiring efforts, succession planning initiatives, and training/professional development needs. (February 29, 2012)	✓ • Gap Analysis Report issued August 30, 2012. • Key Finding: EPA identified the need to shift occupational series for approximately 236 positions over the next 4 years to secure scientific/technical skills and competencies to meet future mission requirements.

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• OARM will work with program and Regional offices to identify next steps in response to issues identified in the Gap Analysis Report. (June 30, 2012)	✓ • OARM briefed and sought feedback from the EPA Human Resources community, including senior leaders and the Human Resources Council, on FY 2012 Gap Analysis and FY 2013 Workforce Planning Process. • Lessons Learned: FY 2012 workforce planning process provided a foundation for expanding the FY 2013 process.
• OARM initiates Succession Management Pilot Program focusing on developmental needs of senior leadership, including the Agency's Senior Executive Service (SES) corps. (September 30, 2012)	✓ • Draft business case and guide for succession management beta testing is under internal review.
3. <u>**Build a Supportive Work Environment**</u>*:* **Take advantage of technology to improve collaboration and change the way we work, including enhancing our ability to telework and increasing employee connectivity and productivity, while reducing costs, energy, and greenhouse gas emissions** *(Supports Principles 2, 3, 4, and 5).*	
• Increase the number of hours teleworked by 10% over the FY 2011 baseline. (September 30, 2012)	✓ • EPA increased the number of hours teleworked in FY 2012 by 35%, well above the 10% target.
• Conduct and complete up to 6 collaboration tools pilots. (September 30, 2012) Two examples of how the use of these tools in the agency will help build a flexible workplace are: (1) using an expertise locator to find employees with specific skills across organizations; and, (2) providing the capability to allow employees to post and share work products from both the office and remote locations.	✓ • EPA conducted six mission-oriented pilot projects to evaluate different cloud-based email and collaboration tools. Business requirements identified through the pilots were used in the procurement of a new Agency email/collaboration/professional networking suite. • My Workplace will enable more effective communication, coordination and information sharing; provide secure access to information, anytime and anywhere; and help improve productivity and effectiveness.

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• Advance space consolidation goals by initiating workplace analyses in at least 3 Regional offices and a Headquarters location by May 2012 and completing space consolidation plans in those offices by September 2012.	OARM continues to work with offices across the Agency to plan for and build workplaces that promote collaboration and improve efficiency. • OARM began workplace analysis planning in Regions 7, 9, and 10 and three headquarters offices. • Space consolidation plans have been completed in Regions 7 and 9 and three headquarters offices. Execution of the new space plan is anticipated to be completed in Region 7 during the first quarter of FY 2013. • Plans to redesign space in Region 10 should be completed by second quarter FY 2013. Key Challenges: • The need to adjust the timing of our plans in response to funding uncertainties. • The need to resolve union concerns.
4. **Practice outstanding resource stewardship and ensure maximum use of Agency funds by reducing unliquidated obligations (ULOs) and reducing unobligated balances** *(Supports Principle 3).*	✓
• Reduce ULOs in expired grants by 15% to $17.6 million and reduce ULOs in contracts expired as of October 1, 2011 by 30% to $67.5 million. (September 30, 2012)	✓ The Agency has exceeded the targets for both grants and contracts. • As of September 30, 2012, EPA reduced ULOs on grants expired as of October 1, 2011 by 63% to $13M. • As of September 30, 2012, EPA reduced ULOs in contracts expired as of October 1, 2011 by 92% to $7.8M.
• By September 30, 2012, all Responsible Program Implementation Offices (RPIOs) must close out, shorten the period of performance, or provide justification for 100% of grants 7 years or older as of October 2, 2011.	✓ • All RPIOs responsible for grants identified as having project periods of 7 years or more as of January 1, 2012, certified in their FY 2012 assurance letters that 100% of these grants were reviewed, and closed out, shortened, or had a continuing need for the project period length. • Reduced the number of active grants with project periods of 7 years or more by 213 grants (23%) – from 932 grants on January 1, 2012 to 719 grants on November 27, 2012.

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5. **Increase use of Green Conferencing and Green Meeting practices to reduce business travel and the EPA's environmental footprint (*Supports Principles 2, 4, and 5).***	
• Increase use of video conferencing equipment by 10% over the FY 2011 baseline of 55,373 occurrences.	✓ FY 2012 videoconferencing usage as of September 30, 2012: • Total sum of duration (minutes): 3,178,469 • Total sum of occurrences: 96,134 % increase over the FY 2011 baseline (55,373 occurrences): 73%