

Federal Hiring Process Reform

At the July 24, 2013 Rules and Economic Development Committee meeting, it was requested that the IBA review civilian hiring practices in the Navy. When researching for this report, we located information on Federal government hiring reform, and the Department of the Navy participated in this reform. The Navy distributed numerous memos in conformance with the reform effort. A recent visit to its website indicated that the Navy has reduced time to fill vacancies and states they are filled within 80 to 110 days. We reached out to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Navy, but have been unable to confirm the average timeframes we found, whether Federal Excepted Service hiring is generally faster than Competitive Service hiring, and whether any difference would have a measurable impact on average hiring timeframes.

We provide here a brief discussion on the Federal hiring process reform. The Federal competitive examining process has a number of similarities to the City's process, in that it follows merit system principles and has steps for minimum qualification review and certification of eligible candidates before the interview/selection process. OPM delegates examining authority to Federal agencies, which includes screening for minimum qualifications; and this authority can be suspended or revoked. The City's Personnel Department provides independent review in this capacity.

The summary of Federal reform below was derived from the May 11, 2010 Presidential Memorandum entitled "Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process." OPM was charged with establishing a government-wide performance review and improvement process related to hiring reform. The process was to include a timeline, benchmarks and indicators of progress, as well as use of a goal-focused data-driven system for accountability. Additionally, the improvement process was to be in accordance with merit system principles and veterans' preference requirements. Goals for improvements included the following:

- Eliminating the requirement of essay-style questions upon candidate submission of the initial application.
- Allowing applicants to submit resumes and cover letters or complete simple, plain language applications.
- Providing agencies with the ability to select from a larger number of qualified applicants using a "category rating" approach (candidate groups could include best qualified, highly qualified or qualified), rather than using the "rule of 3" approach (managers may only select from among the candidates with the three highest scores). Note that by doing this the Federal government is providing more flexibility to hiring managers. The City moved in this direction a couple decades ago. For the City most certified lists have all candidates in a singular group, or category – except safety positions utilize multiple categories and rankings.
- Requiring that managers and supervisors be more involved in and accountable for elements of the hiring process: including workforce planning, identifying required job skills, actively engaging in the recruitment and interview process, and supporting the employees' successful transition into the job.
- Providing OPM and OMB with timelines and targets for recruitment process activities:

- Taking steps to improve the quality and speed of hiring by measuring the quality/speed, and analyzing causes of hiring problems and related solutions;
- Completing hiring manager training on effective recruiting and hiring.
- Notifying applicants of application status at key stages of the application process.
- Identifying a senior official in each agency for implementation of these goals.