Delaware State Personnel Office

Research Project: Phase I

JUNE 2002

submitted to

Delaware State Personnel Office

by

Institute for Public Administration
College of Human Services, Education & Public Policy
University of Delaware

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Introduction

One of the most challenging and crucial tasks for any public sector organization is developing and maintaining an effective human resource management system, particularly those components that support attracting, screening, and selecting highly qualified candidates. Such a system should not only ensure that the most meritorious individuals are hired in a timely fashion but strive, to the extent possible, to assemble a diverse workforce that reflects the greater society. Coupled with these challenges are the overarching expectations that the organization will display leadership, efficiency, neutrality and an emphasis on customer services in all its activities.

In early 2002, the State Personnel Office (SPO) contracted with the Institute for Public Administration (IPA), University of Delaware, to examine selected personnel practices and conduct research in three areas:

- Current employment-related services provided by the SPO to state agencies;
- Review recommendations and suggestions from previous studies, reports and other relevant documents that may relate to State employment practices; and,
- Search for emerging trends and best practices in employment related activities among selected public and private employers.

As part of its preliminary research, the IPA research group met with SPO Employment Services staff to review current services/practices and to discuss salient issues, suggestions, and concerns. In addition, the IPA research group conducted telephone interviews with human resource specialists in a number of major state agencies. Other interviews were conducted with selected hiring managers in several departments. The research group developed flowcharts detailing the hiring process both from the perspective of the SPO and the agencies. In addition, a list of suggestions and concerns raised by the agency HR specialists and hiring managers was compiled.

Next, the IPA research group reviewed five studies related to complaints/concerns about merit system practices and SPO operations that have been produced over the past eight years. A consolidated listing of recommendations from these studies was compiled.

As part of its efforts to research best practices and emerging trends in the HR field, the IPA research group contacted national professional organizations, research centers, prominent practitioners, academics, a federal oversight agency as well as state, county and municipal governments; particular emphasis was placed on centralized versus decentralized systems, technology applications in employment process, and information sharing among the agencies.

Current SPO Employment Services for State Agencies

The IPA research group met with SPO Employment Services staff on March 8, 2002 to review current services/practices and to discuss salient issues, suggestions, and concerns. Based on this discussion, the IPA research team developed a flow chart detailing the major steps in the employment process. This flow chart is included as Chart 1 (see Appendix I).

From mid-March through early April 2002, IPA research group members conducted telephone interviews (See Appendix II for questioning protocol) with designated human resource specialists from the following state agencies:

- Department of Corrections;
- Delaware Health and Social Services;
- Department of Labor;
- Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control;
- Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families;
- Department of Transportation;
- Department of Agriculture; and
- Department of State.

Additional interviews were held with selected hiring managers in several departments. Based on these interviews, the IPA research group developed a second flowchart to illustrate the steps of the hiring process from the agency perspective. This flowchart is included as Chart 2 (see Appendix I). In addition, a list of suggestions and concerns mentioned by the agency HR staff and hiring supervisors during the interviews has been compiled.

Current Hiring Processes

Based on the interviews conducted, no significant differences were identified in the employment process utilized for new or existing positions. When a position becomes vacant, the hiring manager seeks internal approval to refill the slot (the complexity and level of approval required varies by agency) and submits a hiring request form—either paper or electronic—to the SPO. The hiring request form is submitted to SPO only for registers that SPO handles or for agencies for which SPO does the recruitment. Requests for the remaining job classifications are sent directly to the agency or to SPO for the agencies for which SPO recruits. This request includes the type of recruitment preferred (in-house, merit employees or open-competitive) as well as special or selective skill requirements. The SPO then prepares a job announcement for posting. For continuously open positions, candidate names are pulled from the existing register. The job

opening is advertised and interested candidates submit applications through the SPO on-line application system, by e-mail attachment to SPO, or by mail or in person to one of our State Personnel locations or directly to the hiring agency.

After all applications are received, the applicant data is entered into the applicant tracking system by the recruiting agency. The applications are then reviewed by the agency HR specialist for minimum qualifications and any selective requirements. For positions evaluated through the Training and Experience Form (T&E Form), which also have over 15 applicants, the HR specialist and subject matter experts formulate the criteria to compare credentials and develop each candidate's score for the register. If there are less than 15 applicants, and if all applicants meet the minimum qualifications, then all are placed on an eligible listing in alphabetical order.

Letters are sent from the agency notifying applicants (1) if they meet the minimum qualifications and (2) their ranking. If they do not qualify, the list of those lacking qualifications is provided along with suggestions to revise or append their application information.

The SPO determines which positions require a written exam, and develops the great majority of tests. Agencies administer certain written exams, primarily those assessing the technical capabilities of candidates. The SPO also predominantly tallies test results. *(The IPA research group noted that of thirty-eight written exams currently administered through the SPO, thirty-three (87%) have not been revised or updated within the past five years. In fact, about nineteen tests (50%) have not been revised or updated within the past ten years. This failure to insure relevancy and job relatedness in written examinations may have serious impacts on the validity and reliability of any written test results.* Staffing limitations have contributed to not addressing this matter more promptly; the SPO is aware of this concern.) The issue of testing—especially test reliability—is explored further in later portions of this report.

Applicants from the certification list are contacted for an interview and an interview is scheduled based on mutual availability. After all interviews are conducted, a hiring decision is made. The selected candidate is notified, and those not selected receive notification letters.

In terms of the overall employment process timeline, agency HR representatives indicated that, generally, the SPO is providing the required information in a timely fashion. It may be difficult to streamline the hiring process from the agencies' perspective because many of the required employment procedures are dictated by merit regulations. Some hiring managers, while aware of these constraints, would still like additional options for hiring more promptly.

From these interviews it is clear that one aspect slowing down the employment process is the lack of vacancy planning at the agency level. For whatever

reasons, managers are not usually provided much advanced notice when an employee decides to resign or retire, and thus are not able to start the recruiting process in advance. However, agencies should be encouraged to develop strategic plans for filling high turnover positions. Another obvious reason for hiring delays is scheduling difficulties at the interview stage: it takes time to coordinate the schedules of HR specialists and hiring managers for panel interviews. One of the suggestions in this regard was to advise the staff people who conduct the interviews to block out the time for the interviews allowing at least a week for application review and candidate notification from the date when they expect to receive the certification list. SPO's hiring request form requires managers to identify interview panels and determine interview dates. This practice should be considered for adoption by agencies as well.

Agency HR staff suggestions for improving their internal employment process

Listed below are suggestions for the improvement of employment processes gathered from HR staff in the agencies interviewed by the project team. These suggestions reflect the perceptions of individuals for internal improvement in their own respective agencies. Obviously, some suggestions may be relevant to only one agency, while others may be more general in application.

- Increase outreach efforts to insure recruiting a more diversified workforce; greater coordination between the SPO and agencies by co-sponsoring and co-staffing job fairs;
- SPO should provide more training on recruitment, classification, evaluating applications, developing/evaluating T&Es, hiring etc. Currently there is no such formal training provided regularly to the agency HR specialists or hiring managers[1];
- Educate managers and supervisors on options they may consider when anticipating vacancies, particularly service retirements, in order to minimize the time filling a vacancy;
- Authorize "on the spot" hiring offers at job fairs. This is especially important for the hard-to-fill positions;
- Continue improving the training and experience (T&E) rating system with "content area experts". Depending on the agency, there may be major variation in how a resume is evaluated. This leads to conflict and confusion for the applicant, since they may receive two different scores from essentially the same application materials;
- Review the geographic designations on the application forms. For example, some applicants are not aware that the Delaware Correctional Center in Smyrna is in New Castle County,; other applicants will only work in certain buildings or areas. Continue to

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[1] Except for the Secretary of State Office, which has mandatory seminars on interviewing and hiring for all managers.

enhance the Departments' websites and work on the Intranet and the Internet;

- Implement the applicant tracking system to replace current non-computerized process of handling applications. Automate the process for submitting hiring requests, especially for those agencies that experience considerable hiring activity. Hiring managers would like to be able to check the status of any vacancy at any time[2];
- Revise the rule for interviewing 15% or 15 candidates. *(We received two opposing suggestions on this point. On the one hand, hiring managers feel that selecting the top 5 people through effective screening and ranking is sufficient and would make the interview process less time consuming. On the other hand, some HR representatives feel that expanding the list of eligible candidates beyond the current maximum of 15/15% merits further discussion, particularly in reducing legal vulnerability due to inconsistent T&E ratings and/or non-validated written tests. Some also expressed concern that the unions may want to limit eligible lists to current employees.)*

In general the SPO received favorable feedback from the agency HR staff and hiring managers. While these telephone surveys engaged only a very limited portion of two SPO stakeholder groups, the Employment Services staff is now viewed as more responsive and efficient; communications and cooperation with the agencies is perceived as improving.

Agency HR staff suggestions for improving SPO services

Listed below are suggestions gathered from the interviews conducted with agency HR staff by the project team. These suggestions reflect the perceptions of individuals regarding the improvement of services offered to agencies by the State Personnel Office. While some may pertain only to specific agencies, others may be more general in nature.

- There is a need to constantly update and validate written exams. This should be done as a collaborative effort between the SPO, the agency, the subject-matter experts, and, perhaps, assistance from professional associations or other specialists trained in job analysis, examination planning and test development. Specific aspects to evaluate include test content, construction, performance reliability and cultural comprehensiveness;
- The SPO relies excessively on the website for recruitment, which results in little diversification in non-unique classifications. Some

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[2] SPO has indicated that, since the early 1990s, it has been advocating for greater use of technology to automate the state's recruiting and hiring process.

departments feel that the certification lists could have more diversity if the SPO utilized different recruitment strategies in addition to the Internet[3];

- Some departments want to receive test results faster to streamline the employment process;
- Considering the pervasiveness of technology in the workplace, there has been an increasing number of IT support people hired by the departments. While the SPO develops tests for these positions, there is no specialist on the SPO Employment Services staff proficient in understanding qualifications and requirements for technical positions.[4] Thus, some former employees of the OIS are automatically classified as qualified for a vacancy regardless of their actual ability;
- Some certification lists contain the names of people who are not interested in interviews or opening positions, but they refuse to remove their names from the list. State Merit Rule says that a candidate "may be removed" after three declines, but it is the candidate's right to remain on a certification list.. This issue remains a concern. SPO may wish to clarify this policy since the current Applicant Tracking system cannot track whether an applicant has declined three interviews;
- Much of what the departments do in hiring is under SPO guidelines. Managers complain both ways: minimum qualifications are too easy and the certification lists are not of high enough quality; or, they are too hard, especially for tested positions;
- For some vacancies (e.g. management analyst) when there is a posting and open competitive recruitment, the applications may go to the agency and to SPO. Even though the closing date is the same for both, the agency has to wait for applications from the SPO. It would be helpful if the SPO let the agency know prior to closing if there are any applications forthcoming;
- There are some positions that are difficult to fill, especially at entry level or those situated in "undesirable" locations across the state. Currently, if the certification list includes more than five applicants SPO will not send more names. With four or less, the department can get "replacement" names. Although certification lists are a Merit Rule, some department would like more flexibility on this point;
- The SPO may wish to encourage agency HR specialists to adopt an internal hiring status reporting process. For instance, one agency currently e-mails a weekly report to all its managers showing vacancies, hiring processes, and starting dates for new hires. Sharing this information with managers within the agency has cut down dramatically on complaints;

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[3] SPO encourages agencies to advertise positions through newspapers, special mailings, professional associations or direct contact with client groups to increase diversity. Further discussion on best practices and recruitment strategies is found later in the report.
[4] SPO does seek advice from their IT staff for specialized positions.

- Implementing effective technology would facilitate the process and improve efficiency in hiring. It is essential that all parts of the system are compatible and information is easily transferable across the system. The current SPO applicant tracking system is DOS-based. Agencies migrating to Windows have to maintain a DOS-based computer in order to communicate with SPO.

Previous Studies and Reports

The IPA research group reviewed five studies or reports that relate to the State Personnel Office, in general, and employment practices, in particular. A summary listing of recommendations from these five reports has been compiled and categorized by major HR activity and is included as Appendix III. These five reports include:

- ***KPMG Peat Marwick Report, July 1994***. Commissioned as part of the Task Force on Workforce Quality and Personnel Reform, KPMG was hired to conduct an independent review of the overall role of the State Personnel Office as well as employment, compensation, classification and benefit practices. KPMG was also enlisted to aid the five working groups of the Task Force in developing an integrated strategic plan for SPO. The KPMG Peat Marwick Report generated 61 recommendations.

- ***The Governor's Task Force on Workforce Quality and Personnel Reform (The Minner Report), August 1994***. In February 1993, Governor Thomas Carper's First Executive Order created the Governor's Commission on Government Reorganization and Effectiveness with the charge to review the structure of state government. Then-Lieutenant Governor Ruth Ann Minner chaired the Commission. In December 1993, Governor Carper issued Executive Order 14 establishing a fifteen member Task Force on Workforce Quality and Personnel Reform to conduct the in-depth research that the Commission called for. The Task Force was charged with examining human resource management and compensation administration practices in the State. Although six working groups were formed within the Task Force, only five areas are addressed: Personnel Process, Total Quality Management, Career Ladders, Diversity and Training. Previous fact-finding, contact with approximately 13,000 state employees, public forums, personal site visits by the Lt. Governor and over 160 letters served to provide the Task Force with the issues needed to make 63 recommendations. These recommendations fall into three general areas: 1) the mission and role of SPO, 2) the need for a comprehensive and user-friendly Human Resource Information System (HRIS) and, 3) the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations.

- ***Sterling Institute Report, October 1996***. Underwritten by a 1996 First State Quality Improvement Fund grant, Sterling Institute staff facilitated a series of employment process mapping exercises and formulated alternative staffing scenarios with SPO staff members. The Institute's interim report, issued in October 1996, called for a consolidated recruitment and certification process under the auspices of the SPO. This would be achieved by shifting two dozen HR staff from the agencies to the SPO. Further, the Sterling Institute recommended a dramatic increase in technology to make the overall employment process more efficient and

user-friendly, thus reducing time needed to fill positions while addressing complaints of slowness, unfair job postings and a confusing application flow process.

- *Legislative Committee on Personnel Practices (Ennis & Ennis Committee), January 1997*. Established by House Concurrent Resolution 37 of the 139th General Assembly, this committee sought to address concerns from state workers regarding employment practices and grievance procedures. In May 1996, almost 15,000 surveys were distributed to state employees, yielding 3800 responses. Interviews were also conducted with agency heads and attorneys involved in employee disputes. Twenty recommendations were put forth, emphasizing both "humane" and process enhancements.

- *Acuent Business Assessment Review, June 2000*. Commissioned specifically to look at the Employment Services unit of SPO, this internal review included extensive recommendations for the design and implementation of an upgraded employment process from the perspective of ES employees.

Certain recommendations appear consistently in these five reports. And while some have been addressed by the SPO, others should be given further consideration.

Best HR Practices from Public and Private Sector

The project team researched trends and best practices among selected public and private employers focusing on the following aspects of HR management:

- Centralized versus decentralized employment systems
- Recruitment, screening, testing, certification and selection procedures
- Technology applications in employment processes, including:
  - o Applicant tracking systems; and
  - o Sharing applicant information among agencies.

The project team focused on those best practices that could be implemented in Delaware's state personnel system and the SPO. The International Personnel Management Association's *HR Benchmarking Best Practices* provided a valuable starting point by identifying potential best practices using the following criteria:

- Successful over time
- Quantitative and/or qualitative results
- Recognized or recognizable positive outcomes
    - Customer satisfaction
    - Positive impact
- Innovative
- Replicable
    - Transferable with modifications
    - Portable
    - Adds value by improving service, quality and/or productivity
- Meaningful to users of the benchmarking site[5]

In addition to examining HR best practices, the project team took into consideration the *Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence* because these quality criteria are widely used and respected as measures of organizational excellence. Specifically, we focused on how the SPO could achieve "Customer-Driven Excellence" – where job seekers and state agencies are considered their two primary customers. Focusing chiefly on the "employment services" related criteria in Baldrige's Human Resource Focus category, we considered these elements of criteria 5.1 Work Systems which asks the award applicant to "Describe how your organization's work and jobs, compensation, career progression, and related workforce practices motivate and enable employees and the organization to achieve high performance." [6] Two specific areas are significant to our study:

I.   How do you organize and manage work and jobs to promote cooperation, initiative/innovation, your organizational culture, and the flexibility to keep current with business needs? How do you achieve

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[5] IPMA's Best Practices resources can be found at the IPMA website: http://www.ipma-hr.org/public/bestp_index.cfm
[6] See the following website for the 2002 Criteria for Performance Excellence:
http://www.quality.nist.gov/Business_Criteria.htm

effective communication and knowledge/skill sharing across work units, jobs, and locations, as appropriate?

II.   How do you identify characteristics and skills needed by potential employees? How do you recruit, hire, and retain new employees? How do your work systems capitalize on the diverse ideas, cultures, and thinking of the communities with which you interact (your employee hiring and customer communities)?

We will return to these quality criteria in the discussions of the best practices that follow, as well as in our recommendations to the Delaware State Personnel Office.

CENTRALIZED VERSUS DECENTRALIZED EMPLOYMENT SYSTEMS

FINDINGS: Agencies do not always have the knowledge and expertise necessary to carry out decentralized HR functions, and have expressed a need for greater training and support from SPO in order to more effectively take on these HR responsibilities.

Numerous studies of centralized versus decentralized systems of human resource management have demonstrated that each has its benefits and shortcomings. While both systems aim to achieve similar general results – improved productivity, employee satisfaction, cost-savings through streamlined administrative procedures, and quality service – each utilizes distinct methods. Further, each approach has its own pros and cons.

Centralization

Advantages

- System-wide processes will improve administrative effectiveness and administrative consistency;
- Eliminated duplication of HR functions throughout the organization;
- Consistent development, administration, and management of a human resources program;
- Facilitating role of the central unit in providing leadership, consultation, training, and information to fulfill the state HR needs.

Disadvantages

- Potential delays in performing the HR functions;
- Lack of flexibility and authority by the agencies to make the HR decisions without prior approval of the central office;
- Excessive workload for the staff in the central unit.

Decentralization

Advantages

- Has a potential of improving responsiveness and timeliness of employment services;
- Enhances flexibility;
- Greater motivation and commitment among employees.

Disadvantages

- Disperses power, both geographically and institutionally
- Creates new responsibilities for inexperienced actors
- Introduces more levels into the state
- Creates a tension between local autonomy and central standards: decentralization relaxes central control and creates the potential for more local variation in civil service conditions.
- Can increase administrative costs

Given these relatively balanced sets of advantages and disadvantages for both approaches, it was not entirely surprising to learn that there is a distinct trend toward shared authority between the central personnel office and the agencies. Reporting on the *Trends in Human Resource Management: Lessons from the States, 2001* Selden and Jacobson present data from *The Government Performance Project (GPP)*[7] indicating that state governments are choosing the path of shared authority between the central personnel office and the agencies in order to capitalize on the advantages of both centralized and decentralized human resource management systems. *GPP* is an effort to conduct a comprehensive analysis and create comparative ratings of the performance of state governments, including information about which HR practices are achieving results in state governments.

The same pattern of shared responsibility between the central personnel office and business units was found in ten world-class businesses reported in the Best Practices Benchmarking[TM] Report. However, that study[8] did find most benchmark companies – whether they have a centralized or decentralized personnel function – reserve two responsibilities to the central personnel office:

- HR information systems and other HR technologies
- HR performance measurement

The Government Performance Project (GPP) found that the one responsibility most likely to remain centralized in the central state personnel office is:

- Designing the classification system

Beyond that, most states share responsibility for actually conducting the job classifications and reclassifications. Most state personnel offices also share responsibility with agencies for designing performance appraisal systems, but delegate administering the appraisals to the agencies. In HR systems in which authority is shared between the central personnel office and the agencies, the central personnel office is usually responsible for:

- Developing partnerships with their clients (the agencies)
- Providing agencies with expert consultation and guidance from each of the central personnel office units, thus empowering the agencies to act effectively in each dimension of HR
- Providing training in HR functions to the HR and line managers in the agencies, utilizing the expertise of each unit in the central personnel office
- Serving as a leader in evolutionary reforms in HR practices

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[7] *The Government Performance Project (GPP) is*[7] a collaboration between *Governing* magazine and Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Government, with funding from the Pew Charitable Trust. A detailed description of the GPP goals, methods, and results is provided at the following web sites: http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/gpp and http://governing.com/gpp/gp9intro.htm
[8] http://www.benchmarkingreports.com/humanresources/hr54_optimizing_hr_organizations.asp

The federal government's experience with decentralized HR systems has been reviewed and analyzed by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). As part of the U.S. Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the MSPB was established as an independent, quasi-judicial "watchdog" agency that serves as a guardian of the federal merit system and investigates allegations of prohibited personnel practices. It also reviews actions and regulations of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and conducts studies of merit system practices.

One recent MSPB study, *Assessing Federal Job Seekers in a Delegated Examining Environment,*[9] notes that the great majority of federal job applicants are no longer screened and evaluated by the OPM; rather, a network of almost seven hundred agency-based delegated examining units (DEU) assess candidates' qualifications. These DEUs have formal arrangements with OPM that authorizes them to "…select and develop assessment tools, perform the assessments, and refer candidates to selecting officials, with OPM periodically reviewing their activity." OPM staff members meet with each DEU to establish standards, prescribe procedures to be followed, offer training and resources[10] (e.g. assessment tools and strategies to insure appropriateness, validity and reliability) and periodically review actions for procedural consistency.

The key to developing effective partnerships with agencies appears to be through practices such as Kansas' team of Agency HR Consultants, or Idaho's three Customer Service Teams that "specialize in consulting with and assisting agencies in recruitment, assessment and selection processes, classification, and compensation."[11] These agency consultants go well beyond simply responding to inquiries from agencies. Rather, the agency consultant takes responsibility for helping the agency/customer develop the highest possible performance levels in all HR functional areas by taking on the role of a consulting partnership intended to empower the agency. This is a fundamentally different role from the traditional regulatory enforcement role played by central personnel office staff.

Two key linchpins to successful shared responsibility between state agencies and the central personnel office are clear responsibilities for each entity and functioning accountability systems. The State of Utah's central personnel office delegates many personnel functions to the agencies through authority granted by state statute. Agencies are held accountable through a signed "Contract Delegation Agreement" detailing responsibilities, standards of performance to be met, and periodic compliance reviews. Failure to remain in compliance with the contract can result in cancellation of the delegation agreement. (See APPENDIX 3 for the relevant Utah Statute, and the Contract Delegation Agreement.) North

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[9] Office of Policy and Evaluation, U.S. Merit System Protection Board, *Assessing Federal Job Seekers in a Delegated Examining Environment: A Report to the President and the Congress of the United States. (Washington, D.C. MSPB, 2001).* Sections quoted can be found on p viii.
[10] U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Delegated Examining Operations Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990).
[11] See the Idaho Division of Human Resources website at http://www.dhr.state.id.us/AboutUs/WhatWeDo.htm.

Carolina's central personnel office has established a Program Evaluation unit whose goal is to help agencies improve HR processes for a) compliance with state and federal requirements and policies, b) progress toward improvement of HR services and policies, c) providing accountability for HR practices and d) monitoring HR trends across agencies. "Holistic and comprehensive evaluations" are a part of the evaluation unit's program.[12]

The GPP noted Delaware's large number of bargaining units and collective bargaining agreements as a significant challenge in terms of HR practices, and the study identified this as a major impediment to decentralization. Since Delaware will need to remain vigilant in order to remain in compliance with all labor agreements, this must be a major consideration as the SPO works with agencies to achieve an effective partnership and a high performing work environment. If SPO considers delegating responsibility to agencies, any contracts or audits SPO uses to assure agency accountability would need to be attentive to issues related to compliance with labor agreements. Measures of compliance with labor agreements, as well as many other items that would assure accountability for appropriate and effective HR practices at both the agency and state level. The *Baldrige Criteria* organizing and managing the work in a manner that promotes cooperation, initiative and innovation.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The types of services provided by Employment Services staff are key to the overall ability of the SPO to meet needs and expectations of two primary customer groups – agencies and job seekers. Our research on trends and best practices suggests the following strategies for shifting staff time toward more productive services:

- **SPO should provide more training and expert consultation to the agency HR and line managers in order to enable agencies to effectively carry out decentralized or shared HR functions.**

- **Assigning some SPO staff the primary responsibility of serving as "Agency HR Consultants" would help SPO staff focus on developing partnerships with agencies.**

- **SPO should implement a system of agency accountability similar to either Utah's contracts between the central personnel office and the agencies, or North Carolina's evaluation and audit of agency HR functions.**

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[12] See the website for North Carolina's HR Program Evaluation unit at
http://www.osp.state.nc.us/divinfo/frames/divisions/progeval/evaluate.html

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES:
RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING
(Testing, Certification and Selection)

Findings: Employment testing creates bottlenecks in the hiring process, many written tests have not been updated or validated in years, certification lists contain too many names of candidates who are not interested in the job, and training and evaluation (T&E) screening is inconsistent across agencies.

Performance excellence throughout state government demands excellence in recruiting, hiring, and retaining a high quality workforce. Both the State Personnel Office and the agencies play key roles in assuring this outcome. Best practices include innovative actions and shifts in attitude.

Recruitment   The IPMA/NASPE report on *Trends in Public Sector Human Resources* states "recruitment practices must become more timely, efficient, and even more aggressive"[13]. They report the following prevalent trends:

- Making the hiring process more timely
- Making recruitment more proactive/aggressive
- Tracking and monitoring recruitment methods
- Decentralization

Electronic application processing helps expedite the hiring process, broaden the pool of potential candidates, and provides job seekers with the easier application processes they are increasingly expecting and demanding. Best practices include creating web based application processes that permit applicants to "store" the state application in order to submit it easily as jobs open up, as is done in Florida, as well as Indiana's on-line Spanish translations that enable non-English speakers to apply for state jobs.

Currently, the State of Delaware does accept on-line applications, but these are received only at the SPO where they are printed as a hard copy and sent to the agency after the closing date for the job. The agency is not able to review on-line applications as they come in, creating both a time lag and an inability for the agency to confirm with a job seeker that an application has been received. Best practices suggest the need for a much more efficient mechanism for receiving applications. For example, Kansas has an entirely automated People Soft based system for receiving applications. Approximately 50% of all applications are received on-line. The remaining applications are faxed to a specific number attached to an OCR scanner that automatically reads the application and puts it

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[13] International Personnel Management Association (IPMA) and National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) *Trends in Public Sector Human Resources* (John Thigpen and Jason Phillips) is available at http://www.ipma-hr.org/pdf/research/trends.pdf

into the system. Nothing is keyed into the system, and no hard copy applications are handled by the agencies.

Even when utilizing automated systems it is essential to work out a few "bugs" along the way. For example, one Delaware agency reported a job seeker who had confused position vacancies with a general listing of positions in the agency and had attempted to submit an application even though no vacancy existed.. These applications are sent to the agency HR staff who then must tell the disappointed job seeker that no openings are posted. Both SPO and the agencies must ensure that on-line information more clearly indicates whether openings are currently available for that job title.

Best practices in many locations include recruiting through on-line job postings in widely recognized sources such as Monster.com, CareerMosaic.com, Bestjobsusa.com, and jobs.com. Maryland is one state that uses these extensively. Utilizing these sources can be a very effective and inexpensive method of publicizing job openings. For highly specialized jobs, listing job openings on job-specific sites and list serves has been demonstrated to reach the target recruitment population more effectively. These sites are most appropriately identified by the recruiting agency. Recruiting a more diverse applicant pool requires identifying advertising sites (on-line, print, or media) that are most likely to be accessed by underrepresented groups in the job category for which you are recruiting.

The overall trend in recruitment is toward more shared responsibility between state agencies and the state's central personnel office. The GPP reports that in 2000, 37 state central personnel office and agencies shared responsibility for developing recruiting plans; 33 states shared responsibility for implementing recruiting plans.[14] Delaware's SPO shares responsibility for recruiting with agencies by providing templates for ads, for example. However, agencies might also benefit from being provided with better information about successful recruiting strategies.

These new recruiting strategies have not entirely eliminated the need for "old fashioned" recruiting techniques such as job fairs and sending recruiters out in search of talent with specialized skills for hard to fill positions. Rather than having agencies take on this role, it is more common for the agency to work with a central personnel office recruiter in carrying out this function. In South Carolina a State Career Fair has been held twice to raise the profile of the state's recruitment effort and generate applications in critical areas. Career fairs do raise visibility, but also tend to have fairly low yields in terms of applications for existing jobs. Twelve states have used "virtual job fairs" and nineteen states operate online resume banks[15] which might have better yield rates over time than career

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[14] Sally Selden and Willow Jacobson, "Trends in Human Resource Management: Lessons from the States, 2001" Government Performance Project Learning Paper Series, April 2001
[15] Seldon and Jacobson, 2001: p.10.

fairs. Wisconsin has implemented a "critical recruitment program" with a streamlined hiring process for hard-to-fill positions such as IT specialists. In Maryland, the central personnel office has developed a television campaign that recruits by promoting the valuable jobs held by state employees. Indiana developed a campaign using print, radio, television, web sites, and video to promote the image of being a state employee.

Innovations in how states handle job counseling and walk-in applicants have been significant. South Carolina has a State Career Center which helps applicants search for good job matches. Kansas has a Statewide Employment Office to handle calls on their 800 number as well as walk-ins, but partners with the Job Service Centers of another state agency (equivalent to Delaware's Department of Labor) to more effectively reach potential applicants around the state. Where states operate employment offices which serve potential applicants with job counseling, job searches, and the application and testing process, these offices are becoming much more "customer friendly" environments. Idaho has a Customer Support Team to answer applicant questions, receive visitors, help customers apply online, and explain policies and procedures to applicants.

In order to know which recruitment methodologies are best, it is important to track the "yield rates" for various methods such as state website postings, other internet postings, activities of SPO job counselors, agency "walk ins", and newspaper advertisements. Yield rates can include number of leads and applications resulting from a specific source, or the sources most likely to yield candidates who are selected for interviews and/or receive job offers. Expensive, low yield methods should be eliminated, and high yield methods should be enhanced. The *Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence* also place a high priority on collecting and utilizing evaluation data, especially in priority setting and strategic decision-making.

Screening Three methodologies for screening applications will be discussed – testing, training and experience evaluations, and certification lists (including discussion of minimum qualifications vs. desirable qualifications).

Testing Applicants for the majority of Delaware's 1400 job classifications are rated using a T&E. However, the State of Delaware currently utilizes 38 written tests, primarily for entry level positions. Many of these written tests have been in place since the 1980's. While testing is not *ipso facto* illegal, many employment tests have been challenged in court and found to be unconstitutional because they could not be demonstrated to be job related or valid predictors of success on the job[16]. In addition, many have been found to have adverse impact on specific categories of employees and applicants.

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[16] Gillian Flynn, "A Legal Examination of Testing" *Workforce*
http://www.workforce.com/archive/article/23/24/16.php

Testing may also create a bottleneck in the recruitment and selection process because some tests may not be offered on a sufficiently regular basis to assure that all candidates for a job vacancy have had an opportunity to take the test.[17] This results either in a delay in filling the job, or an unnecessarily restricted pool of applicants. Neither agencies nor job seekers are satisfied with this situation.

Because of the legal and logistical problems associated with pre-employment testing, there is a strong trend across states to replace employment testing with more effective and timely methods of screening applicants. South Carolina recently eliminated 90% of all tests, keeping only those mandated by statute. Instead they rely on evaluation of applicant training and experience. Kansas does no testing in the central personnel office, and there are only a few testing procedures utilized at the agency level (e.g. law enforcement testing and keyboard proficiency testing). Instead they rely on evaluation of applicant training and experience. The widespread practice of making "conditional hires" (in anticipation of passing the qualifying test at a later date) has been eliminated.

The American Management Association's *Survey on Workplace Testing* shows the use of testing dropped significantly between 1998 and 2001:[18]

	1998 use	2001 use
Cognitive Ability Test	32.4%	17.7%
Managerial Assessments	22.9%	11.9%
Physical simulation of job tasks	18.9%	8.9%

In those cases where written tests are viewed as necessary and appropriate, it is a best practice to select tests produced by experts in testing, validation, and meeting EEOC guidelines, usually "off the shelf" from nationally recognized testing services rather than tests produced for a specific jurisdiction.

Training and Experience (T&E) Evaluations   When testing is eliminated or dramatically reduced, it is necessary to enhance other methods for screening applicants such as T&E evaluations. But as SPO has found, it is sometimes difficult to achieve consistency and reliability when T&E evaluations are delegated to agencies. The federal government has experienced similar inconsistencies. The MSPB study[19] cited earlier cautions *strongly* that current federal applicant assessment practices "…appear to be most often driven by a desire for a process that is fast and inexpensive. Although federal agencies also want applicant assessment tools that will help them select the relatively best

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[17] SPO has noted that, once candidates are qualified and scheduled to take a test, they can walk in to a test center at anytime. Saturday and evening hours have been established in Georgetown.

[18] American Management Association, AMA Survey on Workplace Testing: Basic Skills, Job Skills, and Psychological Measurement: Summary of key Findings 2000 and 2001

[19] Office of Policy and Evaluation, U.S. Merit System Protection Board, *Assessing Federal Job Seekers in a Delegated Examining Environment: A Report to the President and the Congress of the United States. (Washington, D.C. MSPB, 2001).* Sections quoted can be found on p viii.

person for the job, in actual practice the weight given to that criterion too often appears to come in a distant third to speed and cost savings." Further, some federal agencies lack the trained staff or internal processes to insure accurate, consistent rating systems. Rather than investing the time and resources to develop job-specific supplemental questionnaires or behaviorally anchored performance measures, some federal organizations rely on "less valid approaches" such as an *ad hoc* education, training and experience 'points method' rating system. The MSPB description of 'point method' rating systems sounds strikingly similar to the few point value ratings still in used by the SPO and state agencies.

One solution to inconsistent T&E evaluations is automating the process. Kansas utilizes a People Soft based automated system for job seekers to register their skills and attributes. Though there was initial concern that applicants would inflate their skills, experience has shown that it is more likely for applicants to under-report training and experience when registering their skills on line. This failure to register skills correctly can lead to the applicant being rated as "not qualified" for a job classification, even though they do have the requisite skills. To address this problem, the central personnel office in Kansas has used two methods. First, greater effort has been put into developing descriptions and equivalencies the job seeker can refer to when registering their training and experience.[20] Second, the system generates a narrative for each job applicant that the hiring agency and/or central personnel office recruiters can read in order to assess whether the applicant's T&E have been properly registered. When mistakes are recognized through this narrative, it is possible to correct the error and get the candidate into the job pool if the candidate was inappropriately screened out of the pool. Agency managers in Kansas report that state employees have found it difficult to keep their qualifications up to date in the system, or to report those qualifications in a manner that accurately screens them for the position. It appears that some improvements in this aspect of electronic screening still need to be made.

The federal government is exploring the use of automated systems as well, and the MSPB is currently preparing a report entitled *Automated Tools for Candidate Assessment.* While this document is not yet available, a conversation with one of the lead project researchers revealed some salient points for the SPO to keep in mind as it considers emerging trends and best practices linking employment procedures and utilization of information technologies.

- Federal hiring managers overwhelmingly applaud the potential of automated systems to screen and assess candidates' qualifications in a timely and cost-effective manner;
- Agencies are researching and purchasing commercial packages based on their specific needs. Typically such systems require modifications;

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[20] See the State of Kansas' on-line applicant registration at http://da.state.ks.us/ps/aaa/recruitment/

- The most popular automated systems are able to "read" narrative applications and/or scan for KSA keywords or phrases. Job seekers must be instructed or trained on how to complete a supplemental statement;
- Neither the MSPB nor the OPM currently have authority for approving any automated applicant tracking or staffing system;
- Automated systems can be "host providers", modular configurations or stand alone systems

There is some evidence in Delaware that when agencies evaluate T&E, there can be a lack of consistency in how qualifications are interpreted and rated. The automated systems adopted by Kansas and being considered by many federal agencies helps assure more consistency. Agency-specific needs and qualifications can be addressed through having "Agency HR Consultants" from the central personnel office assist agency managers in adapting the T&E evaluations to their specific needs and criteria.

One might reasonably wonder how a state central personnel office with limited resources could accomplish innovations such as automating T&E evaluations and setting up a cadre of Agency HR Consultants. For Kansas, the solution was found by shifting HR employees who had been responsible for developing, validating, and implementing testing to new responsibilities related to registering skills on-line and developing the competency model. A team of three former testing specialists was given the new responsibility of developing the methodologies for evaluating the skills and attributes (or T&E) evaluation. This system is in place now, and assures that T&E evaluations are consistent across agencies. In the mode of "continuous improvement" the team then turned their attention to developing a "competency model" approach which they will implement when they roll out People Soft 8.0 in the future. They gathered input from stakeholders around the state through the use of focus groups as they developed this new model.

By eliminating responsibility for developing, validating, and implementing tests, the central personnel office can free up significant staff time that can then be devoted to developing better T&E evaluation systems.

Certification Lists   Ultimately the screening process needs to result in a list of qualified applicants for the agency to use in selecting applicants to be interviewed for the available position. The practice of using a "Rule of 3" (or 5, 10, 15) is losing favor across the country. Delaware has already adopted an improved approach of providing a longer certification list consisting of 15 or 15% of the qualified applicant pool, whichever is greater. However, agencies continue to have some difficulty with the certification lists they are provided because too often people on the list are not interested in the specific job. Often this is because an applicant wants to remain a potential candidate for a specific job, yet the individual's name will show up on all certification lists for that job title. Other states have addressed this problem in a variety of ways:

- Allow job applicants to specify their interest only in specific jobs, agencies, or geographic areas. The names of these applicants will not appear on any certification lists outside of their specified areas of interest. This saves time and annoyance for both the applicant and the agency.

- Kansas requires that job applicants make a specific request to "attach" their application to a specific opening. The certification list consists only of those who specifically request to be attached. Currently the job seeker does this by identifying appropriate vacancies then contacting a recruiter to ask that their stored on-line qualifications be attached to the list for a specific job opening. When People Soft 8.0 is implemented, Kansas expects to include a mechanism whereby job seekers could request to be automatically notified by e-mail when a vacancy in the specific job title comes up.

- Other states avoid "stale" certification lists by reducing the amount of time applicants may keep their names in the system.

A different type of problem exists in getting certification lists for hard to fill job classifications. For those jobs, the best practice appears to be a *continuous database of qualified applicants.* When a vacancy arises, the agency can turn immediately to the database of qualified applicants.

Another matter related to certification lists is whether applicants are screened according to "minimum qualifications" or "desirable qualifications". The State of Washington has increased the use of "desirable qualifications" rather than screening applicants for jobs based on "minimum qualifications". This results in agencies being able to begin the interview process with the best qualified applicants, and more timely offers to the top candidates. At the same time, Washington has moved away from using rigid test scores to create the rankings of qualified candidates, and instead uses bands of scores (awarding all grades above 95 a top rating, for example) in order to give managers a larger applicant pool. This practice of "banding" scores is consistent with recent court rulings which have stated that a few points differences in test scores is not valid evidence that the higher scoring candidate is more qualified for the position.

Taking a quite different approach, Kansas provides the hiring agency with a list of *all* candidates who meet "minimum qualifications" and allow the agency to interview and hire anyone on that list. The rationale is that agencies can do a better job of finding the right candidate for the job from a longer list of qualified candidates than from a shorter list of "highly qualified" candidates. In analyzing hiring data while this policy has been in force, the central personnel office of Kansas found that 88% of the time agencies hired a candidate in the top 10% of the list (which is rank ordered beginning with the "most qualified" even though the agency may interview and hire anyone on the list.)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

•   Eliminate most employment testing because such tests are a potential legal liability and tend to slow down the process of filling vacant positions. Effective approaches to training and experience (T&E) evaluation will be a successful and efficient substitute for testing. Where written tests are mandated by statute or labor agreement, the SPO should consider purchasing validated tests from recognized national sources.

•   Enhance "client friendly" dimensions of job counseling services for job seekers in terms of the types of assistance provided and the accessibility of those services. Consider partnering with other agencies (e.g. Department of Labor's Division of Employment and Training) in order to provide more access points for job seekers and reduce burden on the Employment Services staff of SPO. Work with agency HR staff to determine how to effectively coordinate SPO's job counseling efforts with job counseling done at the agency level.

•   Adopt an automated applicant screening and tracking system that interfaces with People Soft and on-line applications. This will enhance consistency in Training and Experience (T&E) evaluations across agencies.

•   Examine current SPO strategic plan performance measures for usefulness in yielding rates for various recruitment efforts and success in hiring practices.

TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS IN EMPLOYMENT PROCESSES
(Including Applicant Tracking and Sharing
Applicant Information Among Agencies)

FINDINGS: Implementation of the People Soft based PHRST system has been fraught with difficulties and frustrations. Progress has been made toward achieving ultimate success, however. Implementation of additional automated functions will be necessary if Delaware is to have a well-functioning and user friendly HR system. New automated functions are being considered and need to be selected and implemented in a manner that avoids repeating problems of the past. Since the automated systems are so new, utilization of available data and reporting mechanisms is not well developed.

According to the 2000 report of the NASPE (National Association of State Personnel Executives) *State Personnel Office: Roles & Functions,* 12 states had fully automated HRIS (Human Resource Management Information Systems). In bringing the PHRST system on-line Delaware joins those states. The difficulties the State of Delaware encountered in implementing the PHRST system are not unusual for People Soft and other large IT implementations. Delaware has made significant progress in the past two years in moving the PHRST system toward a successful implementation. However, some crucial decisions remain for SPO in terms of the automated HR technologies and the quality of those decisions and implementation efforts will be a deciding factor in whether SPO will be able to claim success.

As noted in previous sections, it is not yet possible for agencies to access on-line applications for job vacancies. These applications arrive at SPO and must be printed in hard copy and sent to the agencies. Such an approach creates excess work and bottlenecks in the process, and undermines the very purpose of an automated application system. While no state can claim to have an entirely "paperless" system, Kansas has come fairly close to such a system utilizing People Soft demonstrating that a People Soft implementation can be successful statewide.

The project team initiated extended conversations with managers and consultants who have been involved with People Soft implementations and came away with a number of important lessons from successes and failures in those implementations.

First, automated systems are only successful when all the pieces are fully integrated. Multiple systems that do not "talk to each other" are not successful, even if each system individually functions well. If it is necessary to enter data separately into multiple systems (as Delaware does with PHRST and the current applicant tracking system) then the system is far from optimal.

Second, one of the best determinants of implementation failure is a large number of modifications in the basic People Soft system. Not only is the original roll out delayed and full of glitches, but also these modifications make upgrades to better versions of the software difficult or impossible. Purchasing an enterprise wide system like People Soft carries the tremendous advantages of being able to add modules, upgrade the system regularly at a reasonable cost, and the assurance of continued support from the software company.   The State of Delaware made something in the vicinity of 170 modifications in the People Soft system in the initial implementation, which experts view as a serious (but not irrevocable) mistake.

Third, another determinant of implementation failure is "decision by committee" with no one in charge. It is essential to have a single, executive sponsor for the project who has decision-making authority and is able to be a single point of accountability. Delaware's early efforts to implement PHRST were hampered because of divisions of responsibility and authority across several agencies. With no one in charge, no one could take responsibility for managing the overall project and shepherding it to a successful completion. With more recent efforts to place the project under the auspices of SPO, progress has been made toward alleviating this problem.

Fourth, People Soft implementations on the verge of failure can be turned around and ultimately judged as successful. One of the key elements in turning around such a project is making the hard choices necessary to eliminate modifications so that more advanced (and improved) versions of the program can be implemented. Having a single executive sponsor who can push hard for the elimination of most modifications can help turn around a floundering project.

Fifth, as important as it is to have a single executive sponsor within the state, it is similarly important to have a single consultant as the point of contact rather than multiple, independent contractors working on different aspects of the project. Outside consultants might be necessary and beneficial in a People Soft implementation, but just as "too many cooks spoil the broth", too many independent consultants spoil the IT system. In the world of IT consultants there is a growing number of "turnaround specialists" for floundering People Soft projects who can be helpful by providing a single point of contact and accountability for the work being performed by whatever outside consultants are needed.

Kansas has had People Soft on line for six years and is getting ready to upgrade to version 8.0 which is web based and viewed as a quantum leap forward. In the initial stages, Kansas made more modifications that they wanted (though far fewer than Delaware), but in each successive upgrade have found it easier to eliminate those earlier modifications. Thus each upgrade becomes easier, smoother, and less dependent on the help of outside consultants.

As mentioned in an earlier section, Kansas has come very close to a "paperless" system. About 50% of applications for state employment are submitted on-line. Hard copy applications must be faxed to a specific fax linked to an OCR scanner that scans the application into the system. Nothing is keyed into the system. This system gives agencies immediate access to the applications, as well as permitting computerized evaluation of Training and Experience in order to determine the list of qualified candidates. (As noted earlier, Kansas allows agencies to interview and hire from the entire list of candidates who meet minimum qualifications.) The system is not without flaws (e.g. some applicants make mistakes in submitting their qualifications) but those flaws are no more serious than the flaws identified with the system Delaware currently utilizes (e.g. where T&E evaluations are inconsistent across agencies).

Both Kansas and North Carolina have created small "data units" within the central personnel office in order to promote access and utilization of the tremendously valuable data available. The Workforce Information unit in Kansas currently provides state agencies with data and reports as requests come in from the agencies. Agency consultants within the central personnel office may suggest to the client agency which data and reports might be useful to the agency as they manage their human capital. As agencies increase their use of available data, Kansas has begun working on a user-friendly tool for the agencies to access and manipulate the data from their own desktops.

North Carolina's data unit evaluates/audits compliance among agencies, but it also performs holistic HR evaluations, provides HR statistics and measures, as well as supporting benchmarking efforts. Since any agency committed to improving performance will need access to the kinds of data automated HR systems can provide, it is important that the central personnel agency structures itself to provide data to meet the needs of agencies. Increasingly the role of those units will be to help agencies learn to access, utilize and analyze the data themselves rather than depending on making requests of the central personnel office.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace the current applicant tracking system with one that interfaces with People Soft and the on-line application system. While the current system has valuable features, this is far outweighed by the work involved in entering applicant data into the system and being able to access the information on a limited number of computers with DOS operating systems. (If the People Soft applicant-tracking module is not appropriate for the SPO's needs, then only systems recommended for interface with People Soft should be considered. In-house development of the interface middleware is not recommended.)

- Assure that there is a single, strong executive sponsor for the PHRST system who will stake his/her reputation on successful implementation of the system. All automated HR systems should interface with PHRST and be placed under the authority of that same strong executive sponsor.

- Begin the process of eliminating modifications to the People Soft PHRST system in order to make future upgrades in the system smoother, faster and more successful.

- Having achieved significant progress in automating HRIS systems, we recommend that SPO push forward to become more fully automated. The maximum benefits of automation come when the interrelated functions of HR provide information to one another through integrated technologies. While the transition to fully automated and integrated HRIS systems is difficult, it is necessary in order to meet the rising demands from job seekers and agencies. In addition, automated and integrated HRIS systems are the only way to meet the growing demands for data required to assess agency performance.

Appendix I: Charts

Chart 1. SPO Hiring Process Flowchart

Fill a vacant position

Hiring Request to Employment Services

Selective requirements requested by agency

No selective requirements

Clarification of selective req.

Approved

Selective req. modified

Made preferential

Approved

Develop job announcement

Review job announcement

Job posting

No posting required for entry level global registers

Receive applications:
  _ Online
  _ Forwarded from agency SPO offices

Applications forwarded to an agency

Review for minimum qualifications

NO

Rating

YES

Ranking of T&E or testing

Letters sent to those not qualified

14 or less T&E ordered alphabetically

Top 15 or 15% on certification list

Hiring Manager receives applicant list

Interview Process

Hiring Decision

NO

Letters sent to those not selected

YES

Certification list forwarded to agency HR or directly to SPO with comments and decisions

LEGEND

SPO Functions

Agency Functions*
These are performed by the SPO for the following agencies: State Personnel; Criminal Justice Council; DELJIS; Delaware State Housing Authority; Legislative Council; Statistics Analysis Center; Board of Parole; Court of Common Pleas; Department of Elections; Commissioner of Elections; Fire Commissioners Office; Office of the State Fire Marshall; State Fire School; Higher Education; and

Chart 2. Typical Agency Hiring Process Flowchart

Fill a vacant position

Hiring Request to HR Services (determining the type of recruitment)

Selective requirements requested by agency

No selective requirements

Clarification of selective req.

Approved

Selective req. modified

Made preferential

Approved

HR develops job announcement

Review job announcement process

Job posting

No posting required for entry level global registers

Agency receives applications:
_ Online
_ In agency
_ From SPO offices

Data entered into the applicant tracking system or organized into files

Review for minimum qualifications

NO

Rating

YES

Ranking of T&E or testing

Letters sent to qualified applicants with their ranking

Letters sent to those not qualified

14 or less T&E ordered alphabetically

Top 15 or 15% on certification list

Hiring Manager receives applicant list

Testing and examination (mostly by the SPO)

Interview Process

Chart Legend:

Process Steps

Process End Points

Decision Points

Dotted margins indicate uncertainty

Hiring Decision

NO

Letters sent to those not selected

YES

No differences were indicated with regard to the employment process for existing and new vacancy

Certification list forwarded to agency HR or directly to SPO with comments and decisions

Appendix II: Telephone Protocol

Employment Practices
Agency Telephone Protocol – Spring 2002

Agency _____

Name of Person _____

Title of Person _____

Phone # _____ E-mail Address _____

Interviewer _____

I am calling from the Institute for Public Administration at the University of Delaware. We are working on a project with the State Personnel Office to identify "best practices" and emerging trends in public-sector human resource management. We are contacting certain human resource representatives and asking them to describe their agency's recruitment, applicant screening and hiring procedures. This interview should take about 20-30 minutes to complete. Also, in order to speed up the interview process, I would like to tape this conversation so that I won't need to take as many detailed notes. Is this OK with you? If not, I will turn off the recorder now. If yes, let's start with the first question.

1) Is your agency's employment process different when filling vacant existing positions and new positions? (*SPO says no difference*)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2) In general, what steps does your agency follow when recruiting for an existing vacant position? Are the steps different when recruiting for a new position? *(SPO says no difference)*

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3) What is your agency's application process?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4) How are applications screened? How are applicants ranked?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5) Who decides if the vacant position requires an exam or performance test?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6) Does your agency develop its own performance tests and/or examinations?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7) How are applicants tested? (e.g. paper versus online, keyboard skills, performance tests; Who proctors the exam and tallies the results? Who notifies the applicants?)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8) How are the certification lists and rankings created?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

9) How satisfied are you with your agency's overall employment process and services? (e.g. How long to get certification lists? How are they managed? Are they accurate? Etc.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

10) What suggestions do you have for improving the employment process within your agency?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

11) What services related to recruitment and selection do you receive from the State Personnel Office?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

12) How satisfied are you with SPO's overall employment process and services? (e.g. How long to get certification lists? How are they managed? Are they accurate? Etc.)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

13) What suggestions do you have for improving the services your agency receives in the recruitment and selection areas from the State Personnel Office?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14)   Could you please give us a name and a contact number of a manager in your department, who has recently filled a job opening.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix III: Report Recommendations

Appendix III: Report Recommendations

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Mission and Role of SPO					
a) SPO develops and maintains the Human Resource Management System	X	X			
b) SPO sets standards and criteria		X			
c) SPO trains agency human resources staff in procedures and guidelines	X	X	X		X
d) SPO delegates responsibilities to agency		X			
e) Agencies administer personnel processes		X			
f) SPO maintains overall HRIS		X			
g) Agencies make on-line personnel transactions		X			
h) SPO post-audits and reports	X	X			
Centralization v. Decentralization					
Adopt a "one stop shopping" approach by consolidating all recruitment and certification activities under the SPO, including the maintenance of the register and certification lists for all non-unique positions.		X	X		
These functions should be centrally administered through the SPO: Deferred compensation; health, life dental benefits; most leave benefits; the pay plan; pension; and workers' compensation.		X			
Position descriptions, job evaluations and salary increase decisions should be performed at the agency level	X				
Classification specifications should be developed and maintained by the SPO with input from agencies, but classification decisions (slotting) should be delegated to the agencies as they become qualified to administer those decisions according to adopted principles and guidelines		X			
SPO should develop all tests for classifications that exist throughout state government and administer all written testing.	X	X			
Broad guiding principles should provide for a reduction in the amount of paperwork and duplication in all personnel processes.		X			
There should be more flexibility in agencies to offer advanced starting or promotional salaries in critical needs areas.		X			
Existing state employees should not be at a disadvantage to applications outside the merit system in terms of compensation.		X			
Improve communication with agencies and document end-to-end procedures in agencies.					X

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Validate and align the future vision of the SPO and state agencies					X
Require agencies to post all positions and processes by which positions will be filled; and an annual report to the JFC, at the time of the next FY budget submission, stating how each of these positions, for the previous FY, were filled.				X	X
Emphasize and define statewide hiring procedures for all agencies, including the statistics of agency hiring violations and the adverse public image of agencies.	X			X	
Require that inappropriate hiring and misuse of funding for positions be reported to and acted upon by the Controller General and Joint Finance Committee.				X	
Develop and impose financial sanctions against the agency with annual public reporting of violations				X	
Ask the Attorney General (AG) to require Deputy AG to bring violations of rules and/or law to the attention of the agency head, in writing, with a copy to the AG.				X	
Strengthen the role and the authority of SPO to have the capacity to do more than make recommendations to agencies who violate the (hiring) rules .				X	
The Governor should issue an executive order mandating that all state agencies adopt consistent training and development policies, as well as mission and vision statements regarding these policies.		X			
Personnel Process					
Recruiting & Hiring					
Continually seek ways to expedite and simplify the recruiting process	X				
Eliminate delay in posting Job Request by standardizing the procedures and creating a user guide for the agencies			X		X
Develop and implement professional recruiting efforts that include college job fairs and agency open houses		X			
Simplify and expand sources of communication with external job-seekers			X		
Review & revise employment hiring procedures to reinforce state's beliefs/principles		X			
Eliminate Application Log					X
Improve call screening procedures					X
Establish a transfer-only posting, both intra– interagency, as an option for filling positions		X			
Classification					
Expand the provisions of Title 29, Chapter 59, 5919 to include paygrade 4. HB 1139 allows paygrade 1, 2, 3 to be filled without requiring a cert list. (PG4 includes approx. 800 positions)		X			

Appendix III: Report Recommendations

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Classification and compensation should be restructured, integrated throughout the process, and adequately maintained; agencies should be apprised of decisions as they occur	X	X			
Provide for an alternative to the PCQ for gathering information needed for classification		X			
For the establishment of a new position into an existing classification, a PCQ should not be required		X			
The PCQ for the establishment of a new position for a non-existing classification should be prepared by the agency in collaboration with SPO. To ensure a proper budget request, the Hay Evaluation should be communicated to the agency.		X			
Decisions on crucial reclassifications should be effective immediately.		X			
The State should reduce the number of job classes by consolidating and create more generic classes	X	X			
SPO should work with DNREC to ensure that all jobs are evaluated and classified properly.	X				
Testing					
Review Merit Rule Commentaries					X
Require agencies to have copies of Merit Rules available for all employees at all worksite locations.				X	
Increase the use of Training & Experience (T&E) evaluations as an alternative to testing		X			X
Eliminate the expiration date for written tests for cognitive skills.		X			
Allocate sufficient human and capital resources as well as facility space in as many accessible and convenient sites as possible in all three counties for written test administration.		X	X		X
SPO should re-evaluate its written tests and consolidate or eliminate unnecessary tests	X				
Evaluation & Promotion					
Continue to outsource test facilities and expand current partnership with DelTech					X
Alternative methods of employee evaluation should be considered in the revitalization of the evaluation system, with particular attention paid to development of TQM in state government.		X			
Re-examine the promotional policies, procedures and practices, and redraft them to clarify the intent and philosophy of the state with regard to employee career opportunities.	X				

Appendix III: Report Recommendations

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Revitalize the performance management system to restore credibility to the Employee Performance Appraisal process.	X				
Grievances					
Review the need for a new and independent classification appeals process separate from the Merit Employees Relations Board (MERB).		X			
SPO should redesign the five step grievance process in order to streamline and expedite it. The redesign could include a mediation step that can only be waived if both parties agree.		X		X	
Investigate alternative conflict resolution methods	X				
Establish an avenue of advocacy in the form of "Office of Ombudsman," designed to provide a cost-effective means of preventing and resolving employee complaints to be accountable to the Comptroller General, and revising the grievance procedures.				X	
Require that when employees are demoted, dismissed or suspended, they shall receive in writing their options for appeal and available resources for assistance, including proposed office of Ombudsman.				X	
Agencies should be required to provide employees written policies on grievance procedures based on existing merit rules upon employment.				X	
Because the efficiency of agencies is directly related to the health, morale and productivity of the people who fill the positions and carry out public service, agencies should be required to file an annual report to be submitted to the JFC. The information must include the number and nature of grievances, number won and lost, time, money and human resources spent on defending the grievance and agency perspective compliance rulings and implementation. If there is evidence of non-compliance and/or retaliation, fiscal sanctions should be considered by JFC.				X	
Human Resource Information System (HRIS)					
Create an interactive management information system that allows agency human resource managers and SPO to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the recruiting, hiring and promotional process through automation	X	X			X
Enable supervisors to document and update training and education accomplishments of employees, as well as their performance evaluations		X			
Establish a comprehensive, statewide, on-line user-friendly human resource management system that allows the state and agencies to continuously monitor the diversity of the workforce across the paygrades	X	X			X

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Develop an automated job posting hotline for informing employees and applicants of current openings and criteria for selection		X			
Develop a State Human Resource Management System or "talent bank" that includes a statewide database to maintain records in all state employees' skills, knowledge, experience, education and training. This automated system could be used to match pre-qualified state employees with job requirements for promotional opportunities and to promote consulting capabilities.		X			
Update and consolidate the Applicant Tracking system across the agencies			X		X
Automate the T&E (training and experience) evaluation process					X
Enhance web site by Implementing an Online Application Form and Putting Study Guides online					X
Improve system reporting capabilities for effective internal management					X
Examine the current use and potential of the telephone Job Line vs. online job site					X
Create an online Certification List Log to enable the SPO to expedite the provision of agency hiring lists			X		X

Other Recommendations

Diversity

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Issue an executive order that elevates the diversity issues to the highest level and outlines the structure of diversity and affirmative action programs in state government.		X			
Assign the responsibility for diversity within the Governor's office.		X			
Establish an advisory board that can assist with the review and evaluation of diversity throughout state government and provide advice and counsel.		X			
Spell out the state's beliefs, philosophy and principles, as well as overall goals related to diversity and affirmative action.		X			
Recognize the need to educate state employees about the benefits of mentoring and encourage informal mentoring programs.		X			
Recognizing the need for adequate staff in the SPO to support diversity and affirmative-action goals.		X			
Establish management accountability for creating an environment conducive to diversity and affirmative action by including diversity measures/statements in all managers' performance plans and agency strategic plans.		X			
Review the current holiday structure to enhance choice among state employees regarding official paid state holidays.		X			

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Employee Training, Development, and Career Advancement					
Establishing a requirement for orientation of the Merit System rules for new employees, agency leadership, management and supervisors.				X	
Provide training to agency HR staff on rating training and experience.			X		
Each agency should commit a minimum percentage of its payroll to training and employee development based on its strategic plan and internal needs assessment.		X			X
A statewide training and education policy should be implemented that directs supervisors to facilitate career-path planning and arrange for job coverage, equal access to training, and tuition reimbursement.		X			
SPO should negotiate with all state-affiliated and funded colleges and universities to offer courses to state employees for free or at a substantially reduced rate on a space-available basis and encourage employees to attend adult literacy and GED classes.		X			
SPO, in partnership with state agencies, should identify minimum core competencies for all state employees, and then develop and deliver courses addressing these competencies. Through a formal needs assessment, SPO should assess current offering in their Management Development Institute and Career Enrichment Program.		X			
All supervisors and managers should include an internally created training and development plan as part of employee performance plans.		X			
Agencies should develop performance benchmarks and design training programs supporting their goals and measure employee progress toward meeting organizational goals.		X			
Establish a Center for Excellence that would be an all-purpose training, Customer College, and personnel services facility.		X			
A fully operating state employee assistance program should be funded		X			
Investigate creating a Secretarial Training Program					X
Develop expertise on career counseling; clarify and expand the role of the counselor as a career advisor – include aptitude testing and requisite interpretive analysis of test results.					X
Establish a career-counseling and development unit within SPO for all inter-agency positions. Career counseling should be ongoing within agencies for all intra-agency positions.		X			X
Increase training of agency personnel					X

Appendix III: Report Recommendations

Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Development of agency initiatives to prevent employment problems and grievances through cabinet level and management training.				X	
Orientation of basic employment procedures and legal perimeters to all management staff.				X	
In coordination with SPO, require training in basic management and human relations skills for anyone hired in management positions in State agencies to be administered by SPO.				X	
Require agency heads and management to participate in ethics training provided by the Public Integrity Commission throughout the year.		X			
Create more opportunities for state employee career growth by expanding the number of career ladder series.		X			
Identify and establish generic class series that can be developed as inter-agency career ladders (e.g., clerical, secretarial, counseling and planning classes).		X			
Each career ladder system established by the state should include a consistent set of required elements.		X			
Offer employees a range of experience that would enhance their competitiveness for promotions, including but not limited to: (6 notations in report).		X			
Concurrent with expansion of career ladders, SPO and agencies should identify paths between career ladders and define the KSAs necessary to progress.		X			
Whenever possible, fill vacancies by promotion of merit and then merit-comparable employees. If an internal candidate is not selected for a promotional opportunity, the employee should be apprised of which job-related skills are lacking for the position and how they can be obtained.		X			
Total Quality Management (TQM)					
Issue an executive order proclaiming that First Quality will be the management philosophy for the operation of the State of Delaware. The governor's office and SPO should be named as the model agencies for state government.		X			
Appoint or assign a First Quality Administrator to facilitate the transformation, along with the creation of a talent bank and loaned executive program.		X			
Establish the First Quality Council, comprised of the secretaries of the respective departments and other select agency directors, who will oversee the implementation of First Quality in state government.		X			
Educate the First Quality Council in the benefits and philosophy of the Total Quality process.		X			

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Recommendations	KPMG Peat Marwick (July 94)	Minner Commission Report (August 94)	Sterling Institute Report (October 96)	Ennis & Ennis Report (January 97)	Acuent Review (June 00)
Ensure that the governor, cabinet, and other executive officers show their commitment through personal involvement in the First Quality process through planning, communication, training and the recognition of state employee efforts.		X			
Implement the First Quality process in a department with a strong desire to become a model site for quality initiatives.		X			
Share resource talent to assist other departments implementing the First Quality process		X			
Miscellaneous Recommendations					
Improve efficiency of current procedures by excluding administrative tasks from Counseling Report and automating letter folding and envelope stuffing.					X
Perform analyses to evaluate current procedures: perform work load distribution analysis.					X
Develop a Change Management Plan					X
Examine management and fiscal audit procedures, purpose and impact as they relate to hiring, classification and employment.				X	
Enhance a system of accountability for agencies at all levels, including sanctions, with Chapter 105 of the Administrative Procedures Act.				X	
Set the tone to place a value on human resources by prioritizing preventive management programs and consistent application of rules with the goal of minimizing employee complaints.				X	
The Management Development Institute Advisory Board should be expanded to include a member of STAN, a union representative and an unaffiliated "customer" of state services. The name and function of the MDIAB should be changed to the Training and Development Advisory Board, and its role should be expanded to include advisement on all SPO training programs.		X			
Report Findings					
SPO promulgates policy and standards and pre-audits agency compliance.		X			
The distinction between an agency's authority to perform a particular personnel function and the responsibility to perform that function is not always clear, causing some duplication of effort.		X			
Pre-selection and inconsistent hiring practices among agencies; manipulation of hiring cert. lists and significant lack of confidence with the hiring process.				X	
Incentives for agencies to minimize grievances are lacking and consistent accountability minimal.				X	

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There is no state-wide commitment to a management philosophy that focuses on customer-driven quality, continuous improvement and full employee participation.		X			

Matrix Legend for Recommendations Completion

Not completed	White Cell, Regular Font
Do not know	*White Cell, Cursive Bold Font*
Completed	Gray Cell, Regular Font
Partially completed	*Gray Cell, Cursive Bold Font*

Appendix III: Report Recommendations

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The Institute for Public Administration (IPA) links the research and resources of the University of Delaware with the management, information, and leadership needs of schools and local, state, and regional governments in the Delaware Valley. IPA provides assistance to agencies and local governments through direct staff assistance and research projects as well as training programs and policy forums. IPA's wide range of program areas includes civic education, conflict resolution, health-care policy, land-use planning, local, state and international government, school leadership, water resources, and women's leadership. IPA's main office is on the University's Newark campus in 180 Graham Hall. Jerome Lewis is the director of the Institute and can be reached at 302-831-8971.