

## **Report: Human Capital Discussion, Observations, and Recommendations**

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### **Background:**

During the March 23-24, 2006 EMAB Public Meeting, Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management (EM-1), James Rispoli, asked the EMAB members to pursue a review of EM Human Capital issues. Although the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) is also conducting a review of this topic - the results of which will be available in October 2007 - Mr. Rispoli instructed EMAB to identify areas that need improvement and make recommendations to begin bettering the program now.

EMAB focused specifically on the areas of:

- Morale/Workplace Census
- Planning/Accountability
- Training/Certification
- Mentoring/Career Growth
- Staffing/Resource Management
- Competing Industries

### **Findings and Observations:**

EMAB commends EM for its proactive Human Capital Program. The basic Human Capital Plan (Plan) is concise in establishing needs and priorities. The Plan faces many challenges, but EM Executive Management is openly addressing the issues and obstacles through independent review and collaboration. The institution of the Plan will provide documented accountability for the EM staff, able to be measured and corrected as necessary.

Morale has not been fully addressed. Conversations with EM staff indicate that morale has improved; however, the Plan should be revised to articulate morale standards and efforts.

The Plan fails to adequately recognize the competitive environment that has developed for industry-wide nuclear staff. Currently, the Department of Energy (DOE) is looking at a 40% reduction in staff due to retirement in the near future, and will have to contend for

suitable and qualified replacements. With increased Defense Programs and Nuclear Reactor Design and Construction funding, agencies such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, National Nuclear Security Administration, and Office of Nuclear Energy will draw more candidates. Also, the commercial industry provides an attractive alternative for those eligible for early retirement. The Plan needs to increase its focus on this challenge, as well as further explore the issues of training and developing the current workforce resource. Furthermore, the Plan should expand on the staffing of new and replacement personnel. Human Resources needs additional staff for FTE placement in order to catch up. The plan should develop accountability in regards to placing new hires when authorization and budget is in place. Also, metrics, should better tie accountability to people and departments.

**Recommendation 2006-01: Develop accountability for the Human Capital Plan.**

Suggestions for Implementation:

- Identify a point of contact for Plan metrics and performance.
- Publish the results from the 2006 Federal Human Capital Survey quickly, and indicate how they will be addressed.
- Conduct mandatory exit interviews.

**Recommendation 2006-02: Identify the efforts being made to increase morale and establish a positive work-culture, and expand upon these efforts.**

Suggestions for Implementation:

- Change the type of service award given to employees.
- Collaborate with DOE corporate to redesign the current service pin and make it both suitable, and attractive, to male and female recipients. Recipients should want to wear their recognition.
- Provide employees with an anonymous voice, managed by an external source (contractor) for input and suggestions to promote active engagement within their office.
  - This could be accomplished through employee surveys, email, or secured suggestion boxes.
- Increase employee access to program information to promote EM interest and involvement.
  - Make EM Portal (intranet) more easily accessible.

- Forward the EM Weekly to all EM Federal employees and contractors, or consider posting it on the EM portal.

**Recommendation 2006-03: EM should take steps to develop and institutionalize the Mentoring Program, thereby connecting it to career development.**

Suggestions for Implementation:

- Secure an endorsement of the Mentoring Program from EM-1.
- Have Deputy Assistant Secretaries formerly encourage participation.
- Couple mentoring and training together by people and topic.
- Establish participation recognition for the Mentoring program.
  - Incorporate an award for participation in performance reviews.

**Recommendation 2006-04: EM should promote executive development and increase their efforts to retrain and develop current employees.**

Suggestions for Implementation:

- Create a required leadership refresher-course for all levels of management, administered annually, to build on existing knowledge and incorporate current information and practices.
  - Focus the course on specific areas, including but not limited to, problem-solving, communication skills, and conflict resolution.