HUMAN CAPITAL

Transforming Federal Recruiting and Hiring Efforts

What GAO Found

Numerous studies over the years have identified a range of problems and challenges with recruitment and hiring in the federal government. Some of these problems and challenges include passive recruitment strategies, unclear job vacancy announcements, and manual processes that are time consuming and paperwork intensive. In recent years, Congress, OPM, and agencies have made important strides in improving federal recruitment and hiring. For example, Congress has provided agencies with hiring flexibilities that could help to streamline the hiring process. OPM has sponsored job fairs and developed automated tools. Individual agencies have developed targeted recruitment strategies to identify and help build a talented workforce.

Building on the progress that has been made, additional efforts are needed in the following areas.

Human capital planning: Federal agencies will have to bolster their efforts in strategic human capital planning to ensure that they are prepared to meet their current and emerging hiring needs. Agencies must determine the critical skills and competencies necessary to achieve programmatic goals and develop strategies that are tailored to address any identified gaps.

Diversity management: Developing and maintaining workforces that reflect all segments of society and our nation’s diversity is another significant aspect of agencies’ recruitment challenges. Recruitment is a key first step toward establishing a diverse workforce. Agencies must consider active recruitment strategies, such as building formal relationships with targeted schools and colleges, and partnering with multicultural professional organizations.

Use of existing flexibilities: Agencies need to reexamine the flexibilities provided to them under current authorities, including monetary recruitment and retention incentives, special hiring authorities, and work-life programs. Agencies can then identify those existing flexibilities that could be used more extensively or more effectively to meet their workforce needs.

OPM leadership: OPM has taken significant steps in fostering and guiding improvements in recruiting and hiring in the executive branch. For example, OPM, working with and through the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, has moved forward in compiling information on effective and innovative practices and sharing this information with agencies. Still, OPM must continue to work to ensure that agencies take action on this information. Also, OPM needs to make certain that it has the internal capacity to guide agencies’ readiness to implement change and achieve desired outcomes.

OPM and agencies should be held accountable for the ongoing monitoring and refinement of human capital approaches to recruit and hire a capable and committed federal workforce. With continued commitment and strong leadership, the federal government can indeed be an employer of choice.