HUMAN CAPITAL

Additional Collaboration Between OPM and Agencies Is Key to Improved Federal Hiring

What GAO Found

Congress, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and agencies have recognized that federal hiring has needed reform, and they have undertaken various efforts to do so. In particular, Congress has provided agencies with additional hiring flexibilities, OPM has taken significant steps to modernize job vacancy announcements and develop the government's recruiting Web site, and most agencies are continuing to automate parts of their hiring processes. Still, problems remain with a job classification process that many view as antiquated, and there is a need for improved tools to assess the qualifications of job candidates.

On the basis of our survey of members of the interagency Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, agencies appear to be making limited use of two new hiring flexibilities that could help agencies in expediting and controlling their hiring processes (see figure below). Frequently cited barriers to using the new hiring flexibilities included (1) the lack of OPM guidance for using the flexibilities, (2) the lack of agency policies and procedures for using the flexibilities, (3) the lack of flexibility in OPM rules and regulations, and (4) concern about possible inconsistencies in the implementation of the flexibilities within the department or agency.

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**Extent of Use of New Hiring Flexibilities**

Number of agencies

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14

- Little or no extent
- Some extent
- Moderate extent
- Great extent
- Very great extent
- No basis/not applicable

Source: CHCO Council members' responses to GAO questionnaire.

The federal government is now facing one of the most transformational changes to the civil service in half a century. Today's challenge is to define the appropriate roles and day-to-day working relationships for OPM and individual agencies as they collaborate on developing innovative and more effective hiring systems.