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A Guide for FWPMs and SEPMs

The Law

Federal Women's Program Managers (FWPMs) and Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) primary roles are to assist managers in identifying employment problems and solutions with respect to the organization's women, minorities and disabled workers.

The Problem

Many FWPMs and SEPMs do not receive timely and/or adequate professional training and guidance to fulfill this important role. In addition, because SEPMs were established after the Federal Women's Program (FWP), guidance for these employees has been piecemeal and sporadic. Many times the employees responsible for these functions have received conflicting and confusing advice as the job roles continued to be merged with other EEO responsibilities.

Further these managers do not receive access to the highest levels of management in many agencies to implement recommended changes.

The Solution

First, OPM should mandate that FWPMs and SEPMs receive professional training within two weeks of being appointed to their position on their responsibilities, the personnel system, agency statistics, human resources, management and other topics germane to their roles as managers.

In addition, OPM should provide guidance on how FWPMs and SEPMs should develop and implement a strategy to managing the FWPs and SEPs and require managers to review this guidance in detail with their program managers.

FEW proposes the following five-step approach:

1. ***Analyze the work force and identify barriers to the employment and advancement of women, minorities and disabled employees.*** For example, do recruitment efforts reach these groups? Are these employee groups informed of and encouraged to apply for special training opportunities or does notice of such opportunities travel only through word of mouth instead of through a formal internal announcement or directive? The compilation of statistics is very important to conduct this analysis.

2. ***Prioritize the problems and devise feasible solutions.*** All the identified problems cannot be solved at once so one must choose the top two or three most serious or critical problems to focus on. As issues are resolved, move others to the forefront.
3. ***Present the findings and recommendations to management and develop a joint agreement on an action plan.*** Calculate what the implementation steps will cost in terms of time, staff and funding. Prepare implementation timetables. Anticipate possible objections or obstacles that management may bring up with respect to your proposed solutions and develop answers or solutions in advance.
4. ***Work continually with management and supervisors with respect to these agreed-upon actions.*** The top supervisor could be asked to chair an initial, general session, to outline the organization's FWP's and SEP's. Then conduct individual sessions with each bureau, office and unit chief to discuss the plans in more detail.
5. ***Monitor progress and, if necessary, fine-tune the implementation strategy.*** Follow up with management every three or six months to gauge progress and to document subsequent problems and solutions. Senior staff level progress reports should be required quarterly to top management.