

**Partnership Agreement
Between
The United States Department of Veterans Affairs
And
The Federally Employed Women**

I. PARTIES

The parties to the Partnership Agreement (PA) are the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Federally Employed Women (FEW).

II. BACKGROUND

FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968 shortly after Executive Order (E.O.) 11375 was issued, which added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination within the Federal Government. Although E.O. 11375 was an important milestone, several women were concerned that the Civil Service Commission and individual agencies may not put forth the vigorous effort necessary to ensure compliance with E.O. 11375. Although the Federal Women's Program (FWP) had been established, the early organizers of FEW realized that the Government could dismantle FWP, and they wanted to ensure that there would always be an organization dedicated to promoting equality for women and addressing concerns of women in the Federal workforce.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this PA is to provide the cooperative framework for the parties to develop and establish the VA and FEW Partnership Program. The Program will foster a mutually supportive relationship and develop initiatives to enhance VA's ability to recruit and retain highly skilled women and prepare them to become future VA leaders.

IV. OBJECTIVES

A. The objectives of the PA shall be to coordinate and facilitate activities that are responsive to the needs of VA and FEW. In this regard FEW shall make recommendations to VA on program initiatives that address concerns affecting the recruitment, accessions, training, career development, promotion, and retention of qualified women in VA's workforce.

B. Specific goals are to:

1. Improve the representation of women in management and other senior level positions through substantive training,
2. Provide better educational and leadership development opportunities for women in VA,

3. Provide knowledge-networking training on issues that affect women in VA's workforce, and
4. Strengthen the Department's support for FEW's goals and objectives.

C. VA and FEW shall establish a joint VA/FEW Partnership Management Team (PMT) to identify and create opportunities for joint ventures between VA and FEW to include:

1. Identifying VA employment and mission-related training and development initiatives;
2. Identifying meaningful training that increases awareness of the business, cultural, demographic, and legal frameworks for understanding and managing diversity;
3. Identifying leadership development programs and providing training to employees in an effort to improve their understanding of diversity issues; and
4. Conducting yearly evaluations of all initiatives to identify improvements and to measure the effectiveness of the PA in meeting its objectives.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. In fulfilling the objectives of the PA, the parties agree (subject to applicable legal limitations, including the Federal Labor Relations Statute) to participate and be responsible for the following activities:

1. VA will:
 - a. Advise Administrations and other VA organizations of this PA and disseminate information about the VA/FEW PMT.
 - b. Participate in FEW's annual National Training Program; i.e, conduct agency workshops.
 - c. Issue Department-wide all-station memoranda endorsing active participation in FEW's training program.
 - d. Provide FEW with information on employment needs of VA to assist in development of women employees modeled after the Office of Personnel Management Leadership Competencies.
 - e. Participate in FEW career fairs, recruitment activities, and outreach efforts.
 - f. Issue Department-wide all-station memoranda encouraging employees to become involved in the Federal Women's Program in VA.

- g. When agreed to by both parties, purchase exhibit booth space at FEW's annual training program to further VA's policies and program objectives for women in VA.
- h. Promote at all levels FEW's national, regional, and chapter programs.
- i. Encourage VA employees to consider Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) developmental assignments with FEW as loaned executives.
- j. Advertise on FEW's official Web site and the annual training program brochure to meet the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Management Directive 715 (MD-715) and Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) recruitment and training initiatives.
- k. Provide FEW with an inventory of career development programs for GS-12s and above with participation rates of minorities and women in comparison with total participation rates.
- l. Collaborate with FEW in the development of a strategic plan for increasing representation at the GS 12-15 grade levels and SES, through outreach and targeted recruitment, and marketing which includes use of electronic media (home page and Internet resources).

2. FEW will:

- a. Advise all FEW members and partners in the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS) consisting of Blacks in Government; Federal Asian Pacific American Council; National Image, Inc.; and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society of this PA and afford VA the opportunity to submit article(s) for FEW's newsletter *News & Views*.
- b. Provide VA the opportunity to hold an agency forum in conjunction with FEW's National Training Program. FEW will provide space and logistical support on a mutually agreed-upon basis.
- c. Participate in VA-sponsored events supporting women and minorities as mutually agreed to by both parties.
- d. Provide opportunities for developmental IPA assignments with FEW as approved by VA management and agreed to by both parties.
- e. Recommend speakers on diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and women's issues for VA's internal programs.
- f. Provide assistance and support to VA in its work with women veterans groups.

- g. Provide assistance and support to VA on policies and programs that further the mission and objectives of both parties to this PA.

VI. BENEFITS

The provisions of the PA will be addressed as part of VA's Department-wide strategy to improve the employment of women.

VII. PARTNERSHIP MANAGEMENT

A. A Partnership Management Team (PMT) will be formed to facilitate the direction and management of the Partnership. The PMT will consist of the following VA and FEW representatives:

1. VA Department representation from the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity.
2. VA Administration and Staff Office staff.
3. Other VA participants as needed.
4. FEW's Executive Vice President.

B. The PMT will perform a variety of activities to facilitate the success of the PA, including:

1. Develop and recommend plans and initiatives in furtherance of objectives of the PA.
2. Hold quarterly conference calls.
3. Track, analyze, and share information on Partnership activities and results.
4. Meet at least annually to jointly evaluate the effectiveness of the Partnership. The evaluation will be due annually on the effective date of the PA.
5. Ensure that issues and concerns, as well as best practices and successes, are appropriately communicated.

VIII. PROGRAM FUNDING

Nothing herein shall be construed as obligating VA and FEW to expend funds on behalf of the purpose, objectives, and responsibilities set forth in this PA except as stated herein or agreed to in writing by the signatories or the organizations they represent. All obligations of funds for expenditures by VA are subject to the availability of funds.

IX. EFFECTIVE DATE

This PA shall become effective on the date when the two parties sign. All terms are subject to Federal law and VA policy.

X. AMENDMENTS

This PA may be amended at any time by mutual written agreement of VA and FEW.

XI. TERMINATION

This PA may be terminated at any time by either party upon 60-day notice to the other party.

XII. AUTHORITY

This PA is entered into pursuant to 5 CFR Part 251.

XIII. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION


Subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), decisions or disclosure of Information to the public regarding projects and programs within this PA will be made following consultations by the parties to the PA.

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

R. Allen Pittman
Assistant Secretary for Human Resources
and Administration

Date

FEDERALLY EMPLOYED WOMEN ORGANIZATION:



Rhonda Trent
National President
Federally Employed Women



Date