



Are Effective Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) Necessary?

Janet E. Sellars
EEO Director
NASA Langley Research Center
Hampton, Virginia

What is the objective of SEPs?

- The primary objective of SEPs is to assist in the recruitment, development, training and advancement of minorities, women, disabled veterans and other people with challenged abilities.

What does Special Emphasis Program (SEP) mean?

- Refers to those programs which focus special attention on certain specific groups as a result of a particular law, regulation, or Executive Order.
- Initiated to address the employment-related concerns of groups not specifically included in other programs and where a need has been demonstrated.

Legislated and Mandated SEPs

- The Federal Women's Program (FWP)
 - This program was established to implement a recommendation of the President's Committee on the Status of Women and was later integrated into the Federal EEO Program after the issuance of E.O. 11478 (August 1969).

Legislated and Mandated SEPs (cont'd)

- Hispanic Employment Program (HEP)
 - This program was established initially by a Presidential Directive in 1970 as a Sixteen-Point Program for Spanish-speaking Americans.
 - In 1997, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued a memorandum to Heads of Executive Departments and Independent Agencies which proposed a Nine-Point Plan to improve the representation of Hispanics in the Federal workforce.
 - Executive Order 13171 of October 12, 2000, (Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government)

Legislated and Mandated SEPs (cont'd)

- Individuals with Disabilities Program (IDP)
 - Promotes the hiring, placement, and advancement of employees with disabilities. The IDP has its modern origins in P.L. 89-554, codified as 5 USC 7153, and Presidential policy statements and regulations issued pursuant thereto. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) issued instruction (501) on affirmative action plans for persons with disabilities.
 - Executive Order 13164 (July 26, 2000) - ...Procedures to Facilitate the Provision of Reasonable Accommodations

Legislated and Mandated SEPs (cont'd)

- Individuals with Disabilities Program (IDP)
(cont'd)
 - Most Federal agencies have a Selective Placement Program Coordinator, Special Emphasis Manager (SEP) for Employment of Adults with Disabilities, or equivalent, who helps the agency management recruit, hire and accommodate people with disabilities at that agency.

Legislated and Mandated SEPs (cont'd)

- The Veterans Emphasis Program

- This program is directed at assuring that all veterans, particularly Vietnam Era and disabled veterans, have the full measure of employment in the Federal service.
- Legal bases include: Veterans Preference Act of 1944 (5 USC 2108); non-competitive appointing authority for 30 percent or more disabled veterans (5 USC 3114); the Veterans Readjustment Appointment (EO 11521); and the Vietnam Era Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (38 USC 2104).

Non-Legislated/Non-Mandated SEPs

- Most Federal agencies have initiated special emphasis programs to address the employment-related concerns of Asian American/Pacific Islanders, American Indian/Alaskan Natives, and Blacks. The authority for such programs is rooted in Executive Order 11478.
- Executive Order 13126 (President's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders)

What does a typical SEP Manager do?

- Advise management on the unique concerns of and barriers to equal opportunity for a particular underrepresented group.
- Monitor and evaluate human resource policies, practices, and procedures to determine the existence of barriers to full participation; and report findings to the appropriate officials with recommendations for corrective action.

What does a typical SEP Manager do? (cont'd)

- Participate in studies and systemic analyses to identify barriers to equal employment opportunity.
- Educate supervisors, managers and employees on the goals and objectives of SEPs.

What does a typical SEP Manager do? (cont'd)

- Assist in identification of training needs and recruitment sources for minorities, women and persons with disabilities.
- Serve as representative with various organizations with common goals, e.g., Federally Employed Women, IMAGE, Federal Executive Boards.

What does a typical SEP Manager do? (cont'd)

- Coordinate and/or sponsor educational programs (on a variety of subjects, e.g., career planning, interviewing techniques, supervisory development, team building skills).
 - Seminars
 - Workshops
 - SEP observances

How do we do all that?

- Ensure you are knowledgeable about the recruitment practices and policies at your organization.
- Establish a good working relationship with the Human Resources Office. They are ultimately responsible for recruitment and they know which jobs will be available.
- Get on senior leadership's calendar regularly. Remind them of your role and how you can help them. The information and guidance you provide can lead to a decrease in discrimination complaints when managers are aware of issues affecting employees and can adequately address them.

How do we do all that? (cont'd)

- Explore issues that generate ideas for improvement of current organization programs (i.e., “Can We Talk” initiatives), and that advance awareness and appreciation of diversity.
- Support programs pertaining to EEO, education of a diversified workforce and enhanced workplace productivity, as well as recruitment of underrepresented individuals.

Recruitment Strategies

- Make yourself available to selection officials and work closely with human resources and EEO staff during the recruiting process.
- Maintain close relationships with these experts to facilitate a smooth and easy recruiting process.
- Know the competition (other federal agencies and private sector) and their recruiting needs, methods, *and strategies*.

Recruitment – Places to Start

- college placement centers
- minority student associations (fraternities and sororities)
- college organizations of students with disabilities
- high schools
- internet websites
- newspapers and magazines
- community newsletters
- radio announcements
- community centers
- professional organizations
- alumni associations
- minority organizations
- libraries
- grocery stores

Partnering

- Make regular presentations to faculty, students, and the community about issues of interest to both the agency and the school or community.
- Make visits to high schools, using video tapes and CD-ROMs to describe the agency's work.
- Host field trips and tours to the agency.
- Sponsor agency employee volunteer activities such as mentoring and tutoring.
- Offer presentations at meetings and conferences of professional associations.

NASA Langley Recruitment Initiative

■ Dot.Com Initiative

- Developed collaboratively with OHCM, OEOP and hiring managers
- Goal is to locate future workforce with non-traditional competencies
- Thinking more broadly in approach to attract best talent
- Strategic focus allows for more options w/right talent, skills and competencies mix
- Expands pool

NASA Langley Recruitment Initiative (cont'd)

- Monster.com
- DiversityInc.com
 - Get limited subscriptions to “mine” for talent
 - Management and OHCM have access
 - Potential candidates are contacted and directed to USAJOBS
 - Via e-mail directly from OHCM
 - Continue w/recruitment efforts/assistance
 - Management selects ...

NASA Langley Retention Initiative

- Strategies to Reach and Teach (STRETCH)
- Goal to provide skills to prepare for increased opportunities for growth
 - Series of mini-workshops
 - Intensive, skill-based
 - Presentation Skills
 - Clear/Technical Writing
 - Negotiating
 - Team Building

NASA Langley Recruitment Initiative (cont'd)

- Combine training with a mentor
 - E-based mentoring
 - Letter of interest (Mentee)
 - Biographical Sketch (Mentor)
 - Match for best fit
 - Mentor will assist mentee in STRETCH participation and provide feedback

The \$100,000.00 Question

- If recruitment and education are the driving forces behind SEPs, why are so many special observances in support of SEPs focused on food and entertainment?
 - One reason: Because it's more palatable for people to be entertained than to have their shortcomings or biases pointed out with respect to an organization's education and recruitment efforts.

Awareness Is KEY!

- Management is already aware, aren't they?

Are Special Emphasis Programs Really Necessary?

- YES!! Provided that SEPMS remember that
 - You can better serve your organizations by remaining focused on their original purpose: to recruit, develop, train, and advance minorities and women.
 - Take creative license with your programs and educate your people about the valuable contributions that everyone in the organization can make.

And ...

The “E’s” in EEO do not stand for
Entertainment!”