



**UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

**STATEMENT OF**

**JOHN BERRY**

**DIRECTOR**

**U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**

**before the**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE  
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

**on**

**"Building and Maintaining an Effective Human Resource Workforce in the Federal  
Workforce"**

**May 9, 2012**

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Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson and members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon to discuss the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) efforts to professionalize the human resources (HR) career field in the Federal government. OPM's core mission is to recruit, retain, and honor a world-class workforce to serve the American people. At the forefront of these efforts are human resources professionals, and when these individuals are given the tools they need, they can partner with Federal managers for positive results.

A perfect example of these positive results can be found in the increased Federal hiring of our nation's veterans. Since the signing of Executive Order (EO) 13518 in November of 2009, the Veterans Employment Initiative (the 'Initiative') has produced an increase in the percentage of veteran and disabled veteran new hires in the Federal government. In FY 2009, 24.0 percent of new hires were veterans. This percentage increased significantly in FY 2011 to 28.3 percent. The number of newly hired disabled veterans also grew from 7 percent to 9 percent during the same period.

In 2001, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified the Federal government's management of human resources as "the critical missing link in reforming and modernizing the Federal government's management practices." Over the last several years, OPM, the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Defense, the Department of Treasury, and other agencies have aggressively launched

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initiatives to enhance the skills of human resources professionals across government. The Administration has made closing Federal skills gaps one of only 14 cross-agency priority goals, and I am accountable for achieving results. My team has partnered with the CHCO Council to identify the top government-wide mission critical occupations. Based on rigorous analysis of agency mission and workforce data, we have identified human resources as one of these five occupations. With this designation, the CHCO Council and OPM will partner to identify skills gaps in the human resources workforce and build on the many initiatives that we have underway to fill critical gaps in human resources skills training. And, with better skills, our HR community can then help close the other high-risk skill gaps across the government. GAO has acknowledged improvements made by OPM and agencies to address human capital issues, and we are now turning our attention to the one remaining area GAO identified as high risk - our ability to demonstrate a government-wide approach to closing skill gaps.

**OPM Core Function/Value**

OPM, through its Employee Services operation, works with agencies throughout the Federal government to develop and train human resources professionals. OPM has developed and created online and classroom training modules, classes, and workshops with other agencies in order to ensure Federal agencies have access to the customized human resources solutions they need. The larger training modules can be broken down into shorter modules by topic, allowing for flexibility in the training each human resources professional chooses to follow. Additionally, OPM has provided targeted agency support, mobile assistance teams, communication and training, including bite-size awareness training, seminars, do-it-yourself training materials, and frequently asked questions. This highly valued resource is available to other Federal agencies at no additional cost.

The quality of our training is now being informed by a star rating system we have put in place for training programs listed at HR University. Additionally, OPM administers the Federal Competency Assessment Tool-HR to assess the HR workforce's proficiency level in an array of HR-related competencies. The results of the assessment help inform our developmental strategies, programs, and/or resources for HR professionals. Also, we routinely conduct evaluations of our training to determine whether participants received the information and skills they need. Finally, we conduct needs assessments through the CHCOs, HR Directors and other key officials to inform what training we develop and how best to deliver it.

**HR University**

Part of the recent effort to work with human resources professionals has been the creation of the HR University (HRU) website, which provides an excellent foundation for human resources professionals to get training to help them do their jobs even better. I was happy to launch this endeavor with the full support of the CHCO Council, and I was particularly grateful for the specific assistance and tools we received in standing up the HRU website from the Department of Defense, the Department of Treasury and NASA. The courses offered through HRU are a combination of classroom, online, and web-based courses and are offered across the government.

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HRU's course catalog, which is approved by OPM, continues to grow, and we recently added college-level courses on human resources management.

HRU presents a savings to the Federal government. These savings are realized through the sharing of resources and economies of scale by reducing duplicative courses across the government, identifying the best human resources training, and by sharing these resources through HRU. Today, the cost savings figure is approaching \$13 million. This is a real-time calculator, visible on HRU's home page, that represents the number of agencies benefitting from the course multiplied by the initial course development cost. Cost savings are only calculated for the courses that were developed by Federal agencies and are now offered for free through HRU. The cost saving figure increases each time someone completes a free course from an agency that has not previously benefitted from it. Second, HRU features course ratings that allow users to rate the quality of the content and share that feedback with the public so that we strive for and maintain the highest level of quality in our training curriculum.

**Mentoring**

OPM is building on our successful human resources mentoring program by partnering with agencies to develop "HR Mentorship Clusters." These clusters will join large agencies with small agencies that share common mission and workforce characteristics. These mentorship clusters will enable human resources professionals from large agencies to mentor small agency human resources professionals who often do not have the resources needed to obtain outside support. These clusters will serve as a "big brother/big sister" type of mechanism to help human resources professionals develop lifelong partnerships with their colleagues and provide mentorship, coaching, and best practices. Another important tool we are developing is a government-wide mentoring "hub," which will afford Federal agencies a one-stop shop for their mentoring needs. The "hub" will be a resource to all Federal agencies, regardless of whether they have their own mentoring programs. It will provide tools, techniques, tips, and technical assistance relating to mentoring. The mentoring "hub" will promote a knowledge-sharing culture government-wide, ensuring that information is shared and retained within each agency and across the Federal government.

**Partnership with Colleges and Universities**

We recognize the value of working with others outside the Federal government, and to that end, OPM is partnering with colleges and universities to create opportunities for human resources professionals to pursue advanced professional training leading to bachelor and masters-level degrees. OPM is currently developing partnership agreements with the Northern Virginia Community College, Prince George's Community College, the University of the District of Columbia (including its community college program), the University of Maryland, and George Mason University.

**Role of Federal Executive Boards in Training**

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The Federal Executive Boards (FEBs) also have an important role in training. They enhance communication, coordination and collaboration among Federal agencies in 28 locations across the country. As interagency organizations, FEBs do not receive direct appropriations; they rely on voluntary support from Federal agencies. They operate on a shoe-string budget with minimal funds for staffing and operations. The FEBs respond to member agency needs by providing coordinated, quality programs and activities, training being one focus area. By leveraging a large number of agency participants, FEBs are able to offer training sessions at either low or no cost. They reduce costs even more by local delivery, negating the need for travel and lodging. In 2011, FEBs provided training opportunities to 33,499 Federal employees at an estimated cost avoidance of more than \$8.7 million.

**OPM's Own HR Workforce**

It is especially important that OPM's own human resources workforce is highly skilled and able to support our external and internal strategic and agency priority goals. Through a unique collaboration with our local unions, OPM will open our new Center for Innovative Learning and Professional Growth (the 'Center') to further enhance our training offerings to our workforce. The Center, designed and built by employees for employees, serves the entire OPM workforce with a comprehensive array of career development and learning services, including classroom and online training, career counseling, and mentoring. OPM's human resources workforce will be a focus customer for this Center. In July, OPM plans to launch comprehensive training on basic and immediate human resources skills for the human resources employees in the agency and will open these sessions to other agencies as space becomes available. Training courses will cover the range of human capital management issues, and focus on specific skills human resources professionals need to support agency performance.

**Future Challenges**

Challenges for the future include staying at the forefront of human resources professional needs during a time of fiscal austerity. While we have made many great strides in addressing human resources professionals' needs, it is of the utmost importance that we stay focused and continue to offer the top notch training and support that Federal agencies have come to expect and that they deserve.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the important work that OPM is doing to address the complex educational needs of the Federal human resources workforce. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.