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OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL POLICY GOVERNING THE HIRING PROCESS IN USING THE FEDERAL CAREER INTERN PROGRAM

Policy

The Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) is an important vehicle for hiring bright and talented individuals into the Office of Inspector General (OIG). This program gives a level of flexibility to management officials to tap into a talented pool of potential employees without some of the constraints found in other hiring methods. In order for the OIG to achieve its business goals and to continue to grow as an organization, it is imperative to harness this program early in the process to ensure the organization's continued success.

This hiring process, as with any other, is regulated and monitored by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The OIG's Human Resource Office (JPH) is accountable for every candidate who is hired and the conditions in which the selection is made. As the FCIP grows as a hiring tool within the OIG, it is crucial that there is consistency in how the program is administered throughout the organization. The following policy outlines the program's requirements and guidelines for the hiring process and the steps that should be followed when acting on the program's hiring authority.

Authority

Executive Order 13162

5 C.F.R. 213

5 C.F.R. 315

Definition

The FCIP was developed to assist agencies in recruiting and attracting exceptional individuals with a variety of experience, academic disciplines, or competencies necessary for the effective execution of public programs. This program is an effort to recruit the highest caliber people into the Federal Government, develop their professional abilities, and retain them in Federal agencies. It is intended for positions at grade levels GS-5, 7, and 9. Interns are appointed to a 2-year internship. Within these 2-years, agencies are responsible for ensuring that every intern is provided with at least 2-years of formal training. Upon successful completion of the internship, the intern may be eligible for permanent placement within the agency, and will not be required to serve a probationary period following their conversion to the competitive service. The 2-years the intern

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spends on the excepted appointment will serve as the employee's probationary (trial) period.

Agencies should view the program as complementary to existing programs that provide career enhancement opportunities for Federal employees, and agencies are encouraged to identify and make use of those programs, as well as the FCIP, to meet agency needs. In addition, agencies have the authority to recruit from a variety of sources to locate candidates that would most likely meet their organization's mission and needs. The program requires that agencies develop appropriate procedures for the recruitment, screening, placement and continuing career development for the Career Interns. These procedures must conform to the merit systems principles and assure equal employment opportunity and the application of appropriate veterans' preference criteria.

Although public notice is not a statutory requirement under 5 U.S.C. 3327 and 3330 for the FCIP, agencies are still required to have open and fair competition when recruitment and filling positions. Regardless of the hiring method, the merit principles must still be followed.

Veteran's Preference

Veterans' preference still applies when selecting Career Interns. The Executive order establishing the FCIP does not exempt agencies from the Veterans Preference Act of 1944, as amended, or from applying 5 C.F.R. 302 procedures, otherwise known as the "rule of three." Consequently, there is no legal basis for exempting these appointments from the procedures of part 302. Agencies must establish specific rules and procedures for accepting, rating, and ranking applications in accordance with the "rule of three."

Agency Responsibilities

- Agencies will provide Career Interns with formal training and developmental opportunities to acquire the appropriate agency-identified competencies needed for permanent placement.
- Each agency will ensure that programs are developed and implemented in accordance with the merit system principles. Agencies may adapt the program to meet their individual requirements, including, but not limited to such aspects as:
 - Deciding how to delegate the authority to develop Career Intern Programs (e.g., department-wide versus bureaus and agency components);
 - Defining the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and other key officials in career intern program administration, such as human resources staff, budget and finance staff, career counselors, or mentors;
 - Designing, implementing, and documenting formal program(s) for the training and development of employees, including the type and duration of assignments;

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- Deciding how to inform the career interns of what will be expected during the internship, including developmental assignments and performance requirements; and,
- Planning, coordinating, implementing and monitoring program activities.

Steps in the Hiring Process

1. Contact your AIG for their concurrence and approval to hire under the FCIP;
2. The AIG will contact the Budget Office via email with a cc' to JPH's Director for budgetary concurrence;
3. The Budget Office will clear the appropriate funds and notify JPH of their concurrence;
4. JPH will contact the hiring office;
5. JPH will determine the appropriate FCIP announcement in accordance with the hiring office's needs;
6. JPH will assign a number to the announcement for tracking purposes and then will forward the announcement to the manager;
7. Announcements will be open in 3-month increments, to allow flexibility in filling vacancies – this will help in recruiting college graduates;
8. A list of qualified applicants may be compiled and referred to the selecting official every 5-10-15 working days after the opening of the vacancy announcement, up to the closing date;
9. Managers may distribute the announcement in a variety of ways:
 - a. Local college campuses
 - b. Job fairs
 - c. Newspapers
 - d. Monsters.com
 - e. Other sources
10. Applicants should apply directly to JPH, as stated in the announcement. Except in unusual circumstances, managers should not collect applications directly;
11. If the manager receives any applications/resumes/transcripts, **ALL** submissions must be forwarded to JPH for eligibility determination and review;
12. Managers must give all inquiries and resumes for employment appropriate consideration;
13. A list of qualified applicants (certificate of eligibility) will be completed by JPH and forwarded to the hiring manager;
14. Manager makes a selection and notifies JPH of their decision;
15. JPH contacts the candidate and makes an offer of employment; and,
16. JPH begins the administrative tasks in order to complete the hiring process.

Cautionary Note on Merit Principles

Even though there might be the tendency to make selections via word-of-mouth, friends-of-friends, or through other various “on-the-side” conversations and methods, it is important to remember that Veteran's Preference still applies and this hiring process, like any other, is regulated. The law requires that all potential applicants have the same

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opportunity to apply for a vacant position. The OIG is required to document the process and method used when hiring a potential employee. This includes the FCIP. Therefore, it is important that JPH is involved throughout the entire hiring process and that all documents received by the hiring office be forwarded to JPH. These measures are imperative in order for JPH to certify to OPM that all regulations and guidelines were appropriately and ethically followed.

Training Plans

Training plans should be formulated into a plan that can be easily administered and monitored. Positions within the same series should have comparable tracks for training interns, to ensure consistency in its administration. GSA policy requires that Career Interns be provided an Individual Development Plan (IDP) within 30-days from the date hired into the FCIP. The IDP should identify all training expectations while the intern is in the program. As a supervisor, it is very important that you take the time and work with the intern to identify all job-related training an intern will need to fully develop within the 2-year timeframe by taking into account the incumbents' skills, current knowledge and experience. Training may include, but is not limited to, formal training classes, rotational or other job assignments, attendance at conferences and seminars, interagency assignments, Governmental training, or other activities approved by the agency.

A vital part of the training plan is the concept of a mentor/coach to provide counsel and advice to the intern on his/her professional growth and development and who will also attend all evaluation panel meetings. Each intern must be assigned a coach who will be selected by the supervisor.

Evaluation Panel

The intern's progress must be evaluated quarterly, for the first year, by the evaluation panel. All training plans must be documented and certified by the Career Intern's supervisor of record, a representative from JPH, the coach, and a management official equal or higher in grade or rank than the supervisor. The panel determines whether the intern has attained the level of progress and development as specified in their IDP. The panel will review the Intern's Career development folder, IDP, and other documents related to the intern's training and will make a recommendation as to their readiness for promotion to the next higher grade. In order to fulfill this requirement, it is important that meetings are established and the training plan be appropriately monitored. By actively monitoring each plan, JPH will be able to certify that the intern has successfully completed their training plan and is eligible for promotion. A representative from JPH must be involved in this part of the process. Once the IDP is completed, HR will be able to certify with OPM that all guidelines and regulations were followed in the hiring process and that the Career Intern is eligible for promotion and permanent placement within the agency.

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