

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) policies for human resources management (HRM) program evaluation in support of overall human resources accountability.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This directive sets forth policies for evaluating the VA human resources management program. The former policy issuance was rescinded on April 15, 2002 when the new System of VA Human Resources Management Directives and Handbooks was issued.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Human Resources Management Office of Oversight and Effectiveness (054), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK:** VA Handbook 5024, Human Resources Management Program Evaluation.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/Robert N. McFarland
Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/William H. Campbell
Assistant Secretary for Management
Office of Human Resources and Administration

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HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. PURPOSE. This directive establishes VA policies for human resources management (HRM) program evaluations, and outlines responsibilities for the conduct and review of such evaluations. The provisions of this directive do not apply to the Office of Inspector General.

2. POLICY

a. The VA HRM accountability program is the responsibility of top VA management, line managers, and human resources (HR) officials working together to ensure Federal and VA's HRM programs, policies and delegated HR authorities are carried out and are in accord with merit systems principles, Title 5 and Title 38 provisions, or other applicable laws, rules, and regulations related to human resources management.

b. All VA elements are required by Executive Order 13197 (January 2001) to maintain an effective internal HRM accountability system for monitoring and evaluating HRM programs, results, and accountability. An effective VA human capital program depends on attracting, developing, and retaining quality employees from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that they perform at high levels. Sound investment in human capital is essential if VA organizations are to achieve their missions. The VA HRM accountability program also ensures that there is an assessment of VA facilities use of human capital processes. These processes should enable organizations to achieve program goals and objectives that accomplish VA's mission.

c. The objectives of HRM evaluations in VA are to ensure standards and measures are in place to assure that:

(1) HRM programs are responsive in carrying out the VA's mission;

(2) The spirit and intent of Federal HRM programs including laws, Executive Orders, rules, and regulations are being adhered to;

(3) Major HRM objectives contained in 5 U.S.C. Chapter 23 and 38 U.S.C. Chapter 74 are being achieved;

(4) Management's goals and objectives that are established giving special emphasis to certain program activities are given sufficient attention; and

(5) Action plans are developed and implemented as necessary to improve programs.

d. To meet these objectives:

(1) The effectiveness of the VA-wide HRM program will be reviewed and evaluated on a continuing basis;

(2) Analysis and evaluation of HRM will be accomplished annually at each management level with HRM authority. Findings will be coordinated with appropriate line and staff officials at field stations and in VA Central Office (VACO);

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(3) The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) reports annually to the Secretary and other top management officials on the operational status of HRM programs so that the impact of findings can be taken into account in formulating management decisions; and

(4) Each field station will conduct an annual HRM self-evaluation as an integral part of local management's systematic internal review system. Documentation used to prepare the self-evaluation will be maintained for review during on-site visits. A self-evaluation will be conducted by the end of each fiscal year and posted to the OHRM Web site. These evaluations should be updated preceding the regularly scheduled on-site visit by OHRM representatives. OHRM is responsible for maintaining the current self-evaluation questionnaire and schedule of on-site reviews on the OHRM Web site.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, in collaboration with Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Other Key Officials, and Deputy Assistant Secretaries, has overall program responsibility for assessment and evaluation of HRM programs, results, and accountability within VA.

b. The Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for HRM is responsible for the design and operation of VA's HRM evaluation system consistent with this Directive and 38 U.S.C. 527 as it pertains to human resources management, and will:

(1) Appraise internal VA HRM activities through on-site surveys, assistance visits, review of records, and analysis of management information systems reports;

(2) Develop methods of utilizing evaluation information to improve and strengthen VA's HRM. Identify program activities that should be given additional attention department-wide, publicize these needs to all field stations, and measure established goals and objectives where needed. (The authority to evaluate HRM objectives is found in VA Handbook 5001, Part II, paragraph 7a. This includes HRM objectives found in VA Handbook 5001, Part II, paragraph 4, and specific objectives described in individual directives and handbooks.)

(3) Establish appropriate procedures and provide follow-up action to overcome identified HRM deficiencies and recommend needed improvements;

(4) Coordinate evaluation findings with appropriate management levels and annually provide necessary reports to top management officials;

(5) Ensure appropriate collection, maintenance, and dissemination of information needed to accomplish the purpose of this directive and the requirements of 38 USC 527;

(6) Coordinate HRM evaluation activities with the Administrations and with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), to maximize program coverage and strive toward consistency in program assessment; and

(7) Utilize appropriate procedures during on-site reviews to observe the rights of labor organizations.

c. Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Other Key Officials, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Directors, Area Directors, Memorial Service Network Directors, equivalent officials or designee will:

(1) Ensure that self-assessment of HRM is performed in their respective organizations, and that methods used are sufficient to support viable assessment and evaluation of HRM within their organizations;

(2) Report at the request of the DAS for HRM on the adequacy of HRM within their organizations and offices;

(3) Respond to requests for information or action from the DAS for HRM, and ensure that subordinate activities comply with required actions within specified timeframes; and

(4) Use assessment and evaluation information to improve HRM practices.

d. Facility Directors will:

(1) Perform annual self-assessments of HRM as required by 2.d.(4) above;

(2) Provide information requested by the DAS for HRM;

(3) Host on-site verification of HRM results by OHRM designated officials;

(4) Furnish necessary support to representatives of the DAS for HRM in support of assessment requirements;

(5) Use self-assessment results to improve HRM within their chain of command; and

(6) Actively cooperate in supporting HRM accountability within their organizational scope of authority.

e. Human Resources Management Officers will cooperate fully with on-site evaluations conducted by OHRM representatives and provide assistance to organizations in carrying out HRM self-assessment programs that:

(1) Are consistent with facility size and mission;

(2) Ensure HRM services provided are the most effective, efficient, and compliant as possible;

(3) Comply with technical and legal requirements while being responsive to customer concerns; and

(4) Exemplify highly effective HRM products and services that transcend the entire organization.

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4. REFERENCES

- a. Executive Order 13197 (January 2001)
- b. VA Directive 5001, System of VA Human Resources Management Directives and Handbooks, General Introduction and Administration
- c. 5 USC 2301 (Merit Systems Principles)
- d. 5 and 38 CFR
- e. 38 USC Chapters 3, 71, 73, 74 and 78
- f. 38 USC Chapter 5, Subchapter II, Sections 501 and 527

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This handbook explains and provides instructions regarding VA's mandatory facility based HR Self-evaluation Program and associated on-site evaluation visits and complements the policies contained in VA Directive 5024, Human Resources Management Program Evaluation.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES: This handbook introduces procedures for the completion of facility level HR self-evaluations and the process for conducting on-site HRM evaluations.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Office of Oversight and Effectiveness (054), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.

4. RELATED DIRECTIVE: VA Directive 5024, Human Resources Management Program Evaluation.

5. RESCISSION: None

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**PART I. FIELD FACILITY HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
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FIELD FACILITY HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT SELF-EVALUATIONS

1. PURPOSE. To explain and provide instructions regarding VA's facility based Human Resources Management (HRM) Self-evaluation Program.

2. BACKGROUND

a. **Human Capital Standards.** VA like every other Federal agency is rated against the following six Human Capital Standards (i.e. objectives):

(1) **Strategic Alignment.** Agency human capital strategy is aligned with mission, goals, and organizational objectives and integrated into its strategic plans, performance plans, and budgets;

(2) **Workforce Planning & Deployment.** Agency is citizen-centered, delayed and mission-focused, and leverages e-Government and competitive sourcing. (Note: Consult existing VA policy regarding competitive sourcing.)

(3) **Leadership and Knowledge Management.** Agency leaders and managers effectively manage people, ensure continuity of leadership, and sustain a learning environment that drives continuous improvement in performance.

(4) **Results-Oriented Performance Culture.** Agency has a diverse, results-oriented, high performance workforce, and has a performance management system that effectively differentiates between high and low performance, and links individual/team/unit performance to organizational goals and desired results.

(5) **Talent.** Agency has closed most mission-critical skills, knowledge, and competency gaps/deficiencies, and has made meaningful progress toward closing all.

(6) **Accountability.** Agency human capital decisions are guided by a data-driven results-oriented planning and accountability system.

b. **VA Strategic Human Capital Plan.** VA's official plan includes workforce and succession plans submitted by Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) and VA Central Office (VACO). The Departmental Human Resources Management Accountability Plan is included with a brief description of facility HR self-evaluations and on-site reviews as its cornerstones.

c. **Human Capital Scorecard.** Each agency is rated annually by OMB and OPM against the six human capital standards and these ratings are reported to the President.

d. **Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Oversight.** Executive Order (EO) 13197, Part 10, requires OPM to have oversight of Federal agencies accountability systems. VA's accountability system under the EO must therefore: 1) set standards for applying the merit system principles, 2) measure effectiveness in meeting standards, and 3) correct deficiencies in meeting these standards.

e. **HR Self-evaluation Instrument.** To help measure VA's performance against the six human capital standards, a HR self-evaluation instrument exists to assist field facility Directors in conducting yearly, systematic, internal facility HR self reviews utilizing "point and click" responses to the Web based evaluation instrument.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Directors (VISN) and Area Field Directors.** VHA VISN Directors and VBA Area Field Directors will periodically review the status of subordinate facility HR self-evaluations and associated improvement action plan objectives as part of the systemic review of VA's HRM program.

b. **Facility Directors.** Each Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration field facility Director will complete an evaluation of the facility HR management program each fiscal year utilizing the Office of Human Resources Management Oversight & Effectiveness Web based evaluation instrument. Each Director must also approve action plans. (See instructions in paragraph 4.)

c. **VA Human Resources Office of Oversight & Effectiveness (054).** Office of Oversight and Effectiveness (O&E) staff will verify the content of the facility self-evaluation, review improvement action plans and documented progress during on-site reviews (see Part II of this Handbook). O&E evaluators will conduct on-site HRM program evaluations of a cross-section of field facilities on an annual basis in accordance with the evaluation schedule located on the O&E Web site. O&E staff will review the annual Web based submissions and compile a report on the status of the VA's HRM program for submission to the Secretary by November 15 of each year. O&E will also provide quarterly accountability status updates to the Secretary's Strategic Management Council.

4. CONDUCTING THE SELF-EVALUATIONS

a. **Evaluation Goals.** Each facility Director or designee is expected to conduct a frank and realistic HR self-evaluation. The primary goal is to identify areas that are successful and can subsequently be evaluated as a "best practice," those needing improvement that can be corrected over time, and those that need urgent attention and to establish achievable improvement targets. Over time, the typical facility will be able to report and demonstrate progress in a number of human capital areas. O&E verified "best practices" will be highlighted on the O&E Web site as examples for potential adoption by other VA facilities.

b. **Timing of Evaluations.** Each field facility is to complete the HR self-evaluation by the end of each fiscal year. The self-evaluation is to be completed twice. The first evaluation posting to the Web site is to capture the current status of HRM processes at the facility. The second posting is to communicate targets for where the facility plans to be with respect to these same HRM processes at the end of the next fiscal year. The second posting may be done in conjunction with the first evaluation or at any time during the fiscal year but must be posted no later than September 30. It is advised that facilities conduct the current status evaluation early enough to ensure that adequate analysis and action plans can be completed on time.

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c. **Evaluation Process.** The following steps lay out the self-evaluation process:

(1) The facility Director or designee will distribute copies of the Web based evaluation instrument for input to all facility management or a significant representational sample of management officials (e.g., managers and supervisors) throughout the facility. If the facility provides HR services to another VA organization; e.g., a National Cemetery, management from that organization should participate in the self-evaluation.

(2) Alternately, the facility may utilize focus groups of management officials to achieve the same results as in paragraph 4.c.(1).

(3) To respond to some questions, the facility may need to designate a lead staff member to confirm factual information.

(4) The facility Director or designee will then compile the overall facility evaluation instrument which will then be completed on-line on the O&E Web site.

(5) The facility Director or designee should also involve facility managers in completing the instrument again indicating improvements the facility plans to achieve within the next 12 months. For each planned improvement, the facility Director or designee will post an improvement action plan to the O&E Web site utilizing the action plan format contained on the Web site. This posting will be done during the same time frame as the instrument indicating planned improvements is completed on the Web site.

d. **Access to the Web site submissions.** O&E will manage and control access to the O&E Web site. Executives in the direct chain of command will also have access to the Web site submissions. Each Under Secretary may designate additional officials to access the O&E Web site.

e. **Subsequent Facility Activity.** The facility must publicize its action plans to ensure that improvement efforts permeate throughout the facility. Periodic progress reports also should be publicized throughout the facility.

f. **File Maintenance**

(1) Each facility Director or designee is to retain a signed hard copy of the three postings made to the O&E Web site; i.e., the current evaluation instrument, the target evaluation instrument, and associated action plan(s).

(2) Each facility Director or designee is to retain copies of all documents used in compiling the facility's current and future HR self-evaluations. These will be reviewed by O&E on-site evaluators as part of the systematic on-site evaluation process.

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PART II. ON-SITE FIELD EVALUATION VISITS

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ON-SITE FIELD EVALUATION VISITS

1. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND. The Office of Personnel Management, through Executive Order 13197 (January 2001) requires VA to establish and maintain a system of accountability for merit system principles that (a) sets standards for applying the merit system principles, (b) measures VA's effectiveness in meeting these standards, and (c) corrects any deficiencies in meeting these standards. Therefore, VA, through the Office of Human Resources Management's Office of Oversight and Effectiveness (O&E), will conduct periodic human resources management on-site reviews in order to review human resources management programs and report on the effectiveness of these programs and practices, including whether they are consistent with the merit system principles.

2. OVERSIGHT PROGRAM. O&E's oversight program emphasizes both adherence to the merit system principles and results-focused human resources management (HRM). The program is based on the premise that VA facilities in general, including HRM, need to focus on results, not just obedience to laws and regulations, to work effectively and meet the expectations of our veterans and their families. Reviews will tend to be more consultative than investigative, and will help advance HR's and VA's understanding of how to achieve and to assess HRM accountability for results.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY OUTCOMES. VA has identified the following outcomes of its accountability program to be considered in these reviews:

a. Managers, supervisors, and HRM officials are aware of and are held accountable for operating in a manner consistent with the merit system principles.

b. Managers and supervisors manage their human resources to support mission accomplishments and VA's Strategic Human Capital Management Plan. HRM measures are identified and key outcome indicators are assessed. Both are consistently maintained and reported, and are used for decision making and continuous improvement.

c. Managers, supervisors, and employees are held accountable for effective and efficient performance. They know what results are desired, are supported in achieving those results, are trained to do their jobs effectively, and have the information they need.

d. The human resources function has a proactive customer service orientation, is responsive to customer needs, develops policies or programs that address human resources needs, and is sensitive to cost.

e. Systematic HRM self-assessment leads to constructive change.

4. THE EVALUATION PROCESS.

a. **Consultative Process.** O&E's consultative evaluation process will:

(1) Involve the people staffing human resources management.

- (2) Build on the positives.
- (3) Show linkages to higher goals, e.g., mission, quality of worklife, etc.
- (4) Use evaluation results for potential legislation or policy development.
- (5) Give as much attention to “what the managers need” as to what the regulation requires.
- (6) Provide continuous support.
- (7) Share information on a continuous basis.
- (8) Facilitate positive change.

b. **Verification.** During the on-site review, O&E evaluators will verify the content of the facility’s self-evaluation (see Part I of this Handbook), review improvement action plans and documented progress, as well as conduct reviews of the major HR programs.

5. CONDUCTING THE EVALUATION

a. **Analysis of Information and Data.** O&E will periodically conduct a review of field station human resources management programs through analysis of:

- (1) Office of Personnel Management (OPM) evaluation reports.
- (2) VA management reviews (department/staff office reviews, etc.).
- (3) Statistical and narrative human resources management reports.
- (4) Information resulting from ongoing communication with field stations.

b. **Advance Information Request.** Approximately 60 days prior to the scheduled on-site visit, O&E will request the facility provide certain information which will be used in developing the individual HR program review. A copy of the advanced information request can be found on the O&E Web site. Facility directors are responsible for ensuring that the requested information is forwarded to O&E within 14 days of receipt of the request.

c. **On-site Evaluations.** On-site evaluations will be scheduled on the basis of such factors as consultation with each Administration, lapsed time since last visit, and stations’ need for assistance. They typically involve a full review of all human resources management activities. These surveys may involve a review of human resources management activities and services rendered to separate VA facilities for which a single human resources management office provides support.

d. **Programs Covered During On-site Reviews.** Most major HR programs will be reviewed while on-site. Examples follow: (Note: This list is not all inclusive. As circumstances warrant, the on-site visit may culminate in looking at additional or differing HR specialty programs. O&E's full agenda will be discussed with facility management before going on-site.)

- (1) Recruitment and Placement (including regulatory and merit staffing compliance and use of staffing flexibilities)
- (2) Performance Management and Incentive Awards
- (3) Training and Development
- (4) Capability to Provide HRM Service

e. **On-site Meetings.** While on-site, O&E evaluators will meet with selected management officials, supervisors, and union representatives in order to assess the quality of HR programs and adherence to the merit system principles. Most meetings and interviews will be scheduled well in advance of the on-site visit. Others may be scheduled while on-site.

6. PEER REVIEWS. O&E encourages facility directors and HR managers to assist one another in periodically reviewing their respective HR programs before scheduled O&E site visits. Assistance of this nature can be an invaluable tool in preparing for O&E evaluations.

7. ASSISTANCE VISITS. When requested, ad hoc on-site assistance visits may be made for the purpose of providing advice and help on human resources management programs. These visits may be scheduled by the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), O&E, or an Administration and are outside the functional mission of O&E.

8. EVALUATION REPORTS. Evaluation reports (prepared by O&E) will show clearly those program strengths and weaknesses which form the basis for an objective appraisal of the status of the human resources management program. Such reports will be brief and to the point, highlighting how well program objectives are being met. Identification of problem areas, or functions in need of improvement, will be supplemented by suggestions, recommendations or other indications concerning action to be taken to correct inadequacies and strengthen programs. Action to implement corrective measures will be monitored through the submission of reports or follow-up site visits, to the extent deemed necessary, for completed action or to provide additional assistance.

9. SELF-GUIDED ASSISTANCE FOR ADDRESSING DEFICIENCIES. As when preparing for the facility's required self-evaluation, facility officials may wish to peruse Web posted (through the OHRM or O&E Web site) and/or written guidance, tool boxes, and other information in order to assist in addressing any deficiencies identified during the on-site review (see Appendix A). This may help when responding to any required corrective actions and/or recommendations cited in the O&E review report.

10. BEST PRACTICES. Various best practices gleaned by O&E evaluators may be posted on the O&E Web site based on post-evaluation discussion with facility management or VA Administrations.

SELF-GUIDED ASSISTANCE FOR ADDRESSING DEFICIENCIES

1. GUIDANCE, TOOLS AND SUPPORT. When completing the required self-evaluation assessment and/or responding to required corrective actions or recommendations addressing deficiencies identified by O&E's on-site HR evaluation review, management officials may wish to seek additional guidance and tools. Below is a listing of Web sites and other information which can assist in setting specific objectives for improvements and assessing progress.

2. WEB SITES

a. **OHRM Human Resources Management Intranet**. This Web site offers links to almost all available VA HR information.

b. **HR Library**. This Web site offers manuals, documentation handbooks, directives, archives, resources and consulting tools that provide information on a broad range of human resources topics.

- (1) Human Resources Policy Directives and Handbooks
- (2) VA Employee Handbook
- (3) Associated Directives
- (4) Code of Federal Regulations
- (5) Congressional Record
- (6) Employee Survey
- (7) Federal Register
- (8) HR Archives (including the MP-5)
- (9) Other Information

c. **Staffing**. Follow the link on the right side of the OHRM Home Page.

- (1) Staffing Index of Topics
- (2) Human Resources Management Letters (HRMLs)
- (3) Employment Forms
- (4) Hiring Disabled Employees
- (5) Human Resources System of Records
- (6) Qualification Standards
- (7) Reduction-In-Force (RIF)
- (8) Scholar Programs

d. **Recruiters' Toolkit**. This Web site offers information on implementing a successful recruitment strategy, including:

(1) Recruiters' Toolkit Handouts

- (a) Benefit Fact Sheet
- (b) How to Apply for a Federal Job (Title 5 and Title 38)
- (c) National Veterans Employment Program
- (d) VA Application Forms
- (e) Other Information

(2) Recruiters' Toolkit References

- (a) Digest of HR Hiring and Retention Authorities and Options
- (b) Making a Difference in the Hiring Process
- (c) Description of Opportunities for Personal Growth and Career Development
- (d) Frequently Asked Questions About Pay Flexibilities
- (e) Hiring Applicants with Disabilities
- (f) Pay Flexibilities for Recruitment and Retention
- (g) Performance Based Interviews
- (h) Staffing and Pay Guides for VA Managers
- (i) Other information

e. **Workforce and Succession Planning.** This site includes numerous resources to help learn more about workforce planning as well as information about VA's own workforce and succession planning initiatives:

- (1) Workforce Planning Tools
- (2) VA Human Capital Plan
- (3) Entrance & Exit Survey Guide
- (4) Workforce Planning Library
- (5) Other Information

f. **Pay Administration.** Follow the link on the right side of the OHRM Home Page.

- (1) General Pay Administration (Title 5 and Title 38)
- (2) Federal Wage System (FWS)
- (3) Nurse Locality Pay System (LPS)
- (4) Special Salary Rates
- (5) Recruitment and Retention Flexibilities
- (6) Other Information

g. **Employee Relations.** Follow the link on the right side of the OHRM Home Page.

- (1) Performance
- (2) 5 Level Appraisal Process Training Materials
- (3) Awards
- (4) Other Information

h. **Training and Development.** Follow the link on the right side of the OHRM Home Page

- (1) Title 38 Courses
- (2) Training Assessment
- (3) High Performance Development Model
- (4) VA Learning University (VALU)
- (5) Other Information

i. **Work Life**

- (1) VA Child Care Subsidy Program
- (2) Dependent Care Index
- (3) Health and Wellness
- (4) Telework
- (5) Flexible Spending Accounts
- (6) Long-Term Care Insurance
- (7) Life Insurance