

Background

On December 9, 2009, the President issued Executive Order (E.O.) 13522, Creating Labor-Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government Services. The Department is submitting this plan to implement the E.O., which demonstrates the Department's commitment to collaborative labor relations that will significantly improve the labor-management climate and improve the Department's performance. This plan has been jointly developed by union representatives on the requirements set forth in President Obama's order. All parties recognize the need for input from all to advance the delivery and improvement of government services.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has seven (7) unions representing approximately 7,000 Federal employees in 14 bargaining units across the Department's complex, including DOE Headquarters. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) is the largest union within the Department and is located at most of the Field Site Offices. The National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) has significant visibility because of its location at Headquarters.

There is no one union within the Department with "National Recognition" or "Consultation Rights." Therefore, all negotiations and discussions with the unions are conducted at the local levels of recognition. As a result, we are implementing elements of this plan locally with each union.

The goal of DOE's Labor-Management Forums is to aid the Department in effective and efficient mission accomplishment and delivery of high quality and responsive services to the public.

DOE's Implementation Plan:

Describe how the Department will conduct a baseline assessment of the current state of labor relations within the Department.

The Department and its unions will collaborate on a baseline assessment of the current state of labor management relations within the Department. Our baseline assessment will:

- Develop process-improving performance goals in the areas of "employee engagement." The level of employee engagement will be measured by conducting formal employee surveys, in addition to the OPM government-wide survey, that will focus on the myriad aspects of employee engagement.
- Conduct regular meetings (at least quarterly) between site offices and unions to increase and enhance communication and collaboration between labor and management as intended by the Executive Order.
- Conduct surveys that address a variety of employee engagement topics, including employee commitment to producing quality work, employee awareness of the work results expected of them, and the extent to which development of employees is encouraged. The quantifiable results from these surveys will measure progress over time toward increasing the level of employee engagement.
- Conduct surveys that measure employee satisfaction through enhanced pre-decisional communications and information sharing. This should result in more union and employee engagement in management decisions.

- Conduct a Supervisory Survey to improve the Department's Flexi-place Program. This will improve the quality of life and our readiness for pandemic or continuity of operations situations. In addition, this should assist us in recruiting and retaining a highly skilled work force and in improving productivity. A final joint report with recommended actions will be compiled by this group and presented to their senior management by September 30, 2010.

Beyond the annual baseline assessment, the Department will collaborate to develop and implement annual goals to improve Union and management officials' technical knowledge and best practices in labor relations, including training in: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Federal labor relations law, conduct and discipline, and performance management.

2. Report the extent to which the Department has established labor-management forums, as set forth in section 3 (a) (i) of the Order, or may participate in the pilot projects described in section 4 of the Order.

The Department and each of the seven (7) unions, which covers eight (8) site offices have created forums that will evaluate the performance culture to determine the extent to which employees feel that performance expectations are communicated clearly and the extent to which employees believe that it is measured fairly.

Labor and management will adopt metrics resulting from the annual OPM survey to address baseline information.

The level of employee engagement at some sites will be measured by conducting formal employee surveys, in addition to the OPM government-wide survey, that will focus on the myriad aspects of employee engagement. The following dimensions from the OPM survey will be used as part of the Department's metrics to monitor improvement in the following areas:

- Complaints, disputes, or grievances are resolved fairly in my work unit;
- Arbitrary actions, personal favoritism, and coercion for partisan political purposes are not tolerated;
- Prohibited Personnel Practices (for example, illegally discriminating for or against any employee/applicant, obstructing a person's right to compete for employment, knowingly violating veteran's preference requirements) are not tolerated; and
- Disclosure of suspected violation of any law, rule or regulation without fear of reprisal.
- The degree to which employees are involved with decisions that affect their work.

3. How will the Department work with the exclusive representatives of its employees through its labor-management forums to develop department, agency, or bargaining unit specific metrics to monitor improvements in areas such as labor-management satisfaction, productivity gains, cost savings, and other areas as identified by the relevant labor-management forums' participants.

Some DOE organizations have a long history of Labor Management Partnership and desire to maintain that relationship which meets the intent of the creation of Labor Management Forums. The Department and its' unions have agreed to focus on process-improving performance goals in the areas of "employee engagement" and "communication." The level of employee engagement will be measured by conducting formal employee surveys, in addition to the OPM government-wide survey, that will focus on the myriad aspects of employee engagement.

The following are some of the initiatives that the Department will pursue:

- Summaries of the management/labor meetings (i.e., minutes) will be posted on the intranet as well as decisions, actions, and solutions emanating from the meetings. These results will be communicated on a timely basis to the workforce. For example, AFGE Locals 1916, 1995, 1104 will provide a mailbox that employees can communicate their issues or comments to management. Once specific issues are identified, strategies will be developed to address the issues which may include process improvement teams, employee surveys, etc.
- Management and local labor unions are reviewing their respective charters and will align them as much as possible to the role of the Labor Management Forums with a goal of identifying problems, processes, and issues at the earliest possible time and develop solutions that enhance quality and productivity, improve services to stakeholders, and promote quality working conditions for employees.
- Focus of each of the forums will be on internal communications, partnering with the Union to identify membership from Headquarters, Elements and field offices, business units and teams across the functions, and to share vital information up, down, and across the organization.

4. Explain the Department's plan for devoting sufficient resources to the implementation of the plan.

The Department will devote sufficient resources to the implementation of its plan. To date, resource commitments have included:

- Duty time for bargaining unit employees and/or subject matter experts to attend Forum meetings, or perform work on collaborative efforts.