



United States Department of Agriculture


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Office of the
Assistant Secretary
for Administration

Office of
Human Resources
Management

1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC
20250-9600

TO: Deputy Administrators for Management
Mission Area Human Resources Directors
Staff Office Human Resources Directors

FROM: William P. Milton, Jr. 
Chief Human Capital Officer

SUBJECT: Human Resources Delegations of Authority – OHRM Advisory 2015-002

The purpose of this Advisory Notice is to remind Staff Offices, Mission Areas, and Agencies of the delegations of authority for the management of human resources and to affirm consistent practice across the Department.

Title 7, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 2, Subpart P, establishes the delegations of authority by the Secretary to the General Officers of the Department and to the Assistant Secretary for Administration. The Assistant Secretary for Administration further delegates to the Director, Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), under 7 CFR, Part 2, Subpart P, §2.91, authority to exercise human resources authorities and to formulate and issue Department policy, standards, rules and regulations relating to human resources management. As the official delegated authority for administration of human resources authorities, it should also be noted that the Director, OHRM, is responsible for representing the Department in human resources matters in all contacts outside the Department.

For purposes of this Advisory, human resources management includes activities related to:

- (1) Position management
- (2) Position classification
- (3) Employment
- (4) Pay administration
- (5) Automated human resources data and systems;
- (6) Hours of duty
- (7) Performance management
- (8) Promotions
- (9) Employee development
- (10) Incentive programs
- (11) Leave
- (12) Retirement
- (13) Human resources program management accountability and evaluation
- (14) Social security
- (15) Life insurance
- (16) Health benefits

- (17) Unemployment compensation
- (18) Labor management relations
- (19) Intra-management consultation
- (20) Discipline
- (21) Appeals
- (22) Drug testing program
- (23) Work/Life program
- (24) Transit Subsidy Program
- (25) Alternative Dispute Resolution

For additional information regarding delegations to the Director, OHRM, please refer to 7 CFR, §2.91.

The Director, OHRM, hereby re-delegates to Under Secretaries, Agency Heads, and Staff Office Heads authority to exercise human resources authorities under 7 CFR§2.91. Under Secretaries, Agency Heads, Staff Office Heads, and individuals acting for them who are delegated authority from the Director, OHRM, are authorized to re-delegate such authority to Mission Area Human Resources Directors and subordinate positions for the exercise of these authorities, as appropriate, with respect to the management of human resources.

Each, Mission Area, Agency, Staff Office, and those exercising delegated authority are required to implement appropriate controls within their respective offices for the delegation and administration of human resources authorities. Offices and individuals delegated human resources authority are required to adhere to requirements defined in Departmental Regulations and related Advisory Notices pertaining to the administration of the various human resources authorities.

The Director, OHRM, retains the authority to make final decisions in any human resources matter so re-delegated. The controls of each Mission Area, Agency, and Staff Office must be consistent with this policy and may not be further re-delegated without prior approval of this office. This prohibition extends to intra- and inter-agency agreements for human resources services, as well as contracting with any entity for the delivery of human resources services. Establishment of any such agreement or contract is subject to approval of the Director, OHRM.

The following authorities are reserved to the Assistant Secretary for Administration:

- (1) Authorize organizational changes occurring in a Department agency or staff office which affect the overall structure of that service or office (i.e., require a change to that service or office's overall organization chart).
- (2) Approve coverage and waiver of individual law enforcement and firefighter positions under the special retirement provisions of the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees Retirement System.

In addition, it is important to note the need to cooperate fully and respond timely on all OPM and USDA led accountability audits. All responses to OPM audits are required to be reviewed by OHRM prior to submission to OPM. There have been a few instances in which this was not done, and responses had to be withdrawn. Also, there has been an increasing trend of untimely

agency responses. OPM typically provides a full 30 calendar days for the submission of a response to their report of findings. Because OPM fully briefs agencies after an audit and prior to issuing written findings, there should be no need for extensions, nor should responses be untimely. On those rare occasions when an extension is necessary, such requests must be submitted through OHRM for approval.

Finally, DR 4020-250-1, USDA Human Capital Accountability System, dated October 28, 2013, requires Mission Areas, Agencies and Staff Offices to:

- Ensure the integrity of human capital programs consistent with the merit system principles;
- Conduct evaluation of their own HR management programs annually at whatever geographical area that such HR activity is conducted within the agency, whether or not that activity includes merit promotion or delegated examining, and forward findings and corrected actions to OHRM;
- Ensure reimbursement of funds to cover travel costs for USDA audit team members whenever USDA or OPM-led audits are conducted in other USDA HR offices;
- Provide properly trained senior staff to participate as members of an accountability audit team when USDA or OPM led audits are conducted in other USDA HR offices;
- Take timely and effective action to remediate deficiencies;
- Conduct annual DEU and/or DEMO self-audits and forward findings to OHRM;
- Provide information or systems access to OHRM representatives for ongoing oversight activities and to OPM representatives, as necessary, to conduct an accountability audit;
- Respond to OHRM and OPM evaluation findings, recommendations, and required actions within required timeframes; and
- Initiate appropriate corrective and/or adverse action for violations of merit system principles and/or the commission of prohibited personnel practices within required timeframes.

Should any member of your staff have questions regarding this Advisory Notice, please contact Christine Jones at (202) 720-5873, or email christine.jones@dm.usda.gov; or Allen Hatcher at (202) 720-0941, or email allen.hatcher@dm.usda.gov.

cc:

Dr. Gregory L. Parham, Assistant Secretary for Administration