



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Hiring Practices in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Audit Report

Report Number
HR-AR-15-003

December 18, 2014

MAIN POST OFFICE

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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

Highlights

Overall, the hiring practices for the Postal Support Employee laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas were adequate to ensure fairness to applicants.

Background

This report responds to a request from Representative Donna M. Christensen of the U.S. Virgin Islands to review concerns about the hiring process used to fill the Postal Support Employee (non-career) laborer custodian positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas. She also inquired as to whether the Postal Service hired any employees in St. Croix in the past 10 years.

In November 2013, the Caribbean District needed seven laborer custodial positions for post offices in St. Croix and St. Thomas. Our objective was to evaluate the hiring practices for Postal Support Employee laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas.

What The OIG Found

Overall, the hiring practices for the Postal Support Employee laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas were adequate to ensure fairness to applicants. In total, seven applicants were hired to fill the Postal Support Employee laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas in 2014. Further, in the past 10 years, 12 people were hired for various Postal Service positions in St. Croix, including four from the seven hired in 2014.

Although five of these seven positions were eventually filled by residents from the U.S. Virgin Islands, there were inaccuracies and problems in the job announcement process that may have resulted in the perception of improprieties. For example, we found that three job announcements for St. Croix were initially canceled because of an inaccuracy in the announcement or because the test site was unavailable. Also, one announcement for St. Thomas was canceled because of an inaccuracy in the work location. District personnel resolved the errors by issuing three valid announcements.

In June 2014, the Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC) took over responsibility for external hiring for the Caribbean District. HRSSC was given overall responsibility for the entire hiring process from creating job announcements to making job offers. Creating and posting job announcements is now done by a team of three specialists in HRSSC. The HRSSC has standardized procedures to ensure the accuracy of job announcements, including quality review checks and enhanced supervisory oversight. Therefore, we are not making any recommendations at this time, but plan to review the HRSSC in the future.

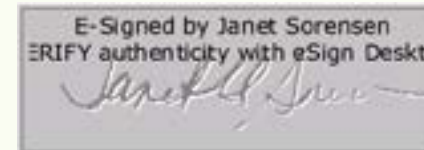
Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

December 18, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR: LISA M. OJEDA
DISTRICT MANAGER, CARIBBEAN DISTRICT



FROM: Janet M. Sorensen
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Revenue and Resources

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Hiring Practices in the U.S. Virgin Islands
(Report Number HR-AR-15-003)

This report presents the results of our audit of Hiring Practices in the U.S. Virgin Islands (Project Number 14YR004HR000).

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Monique P. Colter, director, Human Resources and Support, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Corporate Audit and Response Management

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Findings

In total, the Postal Service hired seven applicants to fill the PSE laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas in 2014. Further, over the past 10 years, it hired 12 people for various positions in St. Croix, including four of the seven hired in 2014.

Introduction

This report presents the results of our audit of Hiring Practices in the U.S. Virgin Islands (Project Number 14YR004HR000). The report responds to a request from Representative Donna M. Christensen of the U.S. Virgin Islands (Virgin Islands) to review concerns about the hiring process used to fill the Postal Support Employee (PSE) (non-career) laborer custodian positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas. She also inquired as to whether the Postal Service hired any employees in St. Croix in the past 10 years. See [Appendix A](#) for additional information about this audit.

In November 2013, the Caribbean District needed seven laborer custodial positions for post offices in St. Croix and St. Thomas. Our objective was to evaluate hiring practices for PSE laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas.

Vacancy announcements for PSE laborer custodial positions advise potential applicants that they must apply online. The U.S. Postal Service uses an automated assessment system called eCareer¹ to collect application materials and determine basic eligibility and qualifications. In addition, applicants can use this system to:

- Search for vacant positions.
- Apply online, 24/7 from any computer with Internet access.
- View application status.
- Withdraw an application.

Eligible applicants must take the job placement test and receive a passing score of 70 or better.

Conclusion

Overall, the hiring practices for the PSE laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas were adequate to ensure fairness to applicants. In total, the Postal Service hired seven applicants to fill the PSE laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas in 2014. Further, over the past 10 years, it hired 12 people for various positions in St. Croix, including four of the seven hired in 2014.

Although five of these seven positions were eventually filled by residents from the U.S. Virgin Islands, there were inaccuracies and problems in the job announcement process that may have resulted in the perception of improprieties. For example, we found that the Postal Service initially canceled three job announcements for St. Croix because of an inaccuracy in the announcement or because a test site was unavailable. It also canceled one announcement for St. Thomas because of an inaccuracy in the work location. District personnel resolved the errors by issuing three valid announcements.

¹ The online selection system the Postal Service uses for hiring and promotional activities.

Inaccuracies and problems with the job announcements caused the Postal Service to cancel four announcements for the PSE laborer custodial positions in St. Croix and St. Thomas.


HR personnel did not adequately review the announcements for accuracy and did not confirm the test site was available before posting the job announcements.

Hiring Process


Inaccuracies and problems with the job announcements caused the Postal Service to cancel four announcements for the PSE laborer custodial positions² in St. Croix and St. Thomas. We found the Postal Service initially canceled three job announcements for St. Croix because of an inaccuracy in the announcement or because the test site was unavailable. The Postal Service also canceled one announcement for St. Thomas because of an inaccuracy in the work location. This occurred because district HR personnel did not adequately review the announcements for accuracy and did not confirm the test site was available before posting the job announcements.

The test site in St. Croix at the University of the Virgin Islands was unavailable due to the university’s closure for winter break and building renovations. An independent contractor managed the test site and district HR personnel were unaware the test site was unavailable. The Postal Service did not have an alternative test site available in St. Croix, so the Online Assessment System (OASys) referred applicants to a St. Thomas test site. On April 1, 2014, Representative Christensen contacted the Caribbean District manager regarding the unavailability of the test site in St. Croix. In response, Postal Service officials approved an alternative testing site at a St. Croix Post Office. Additionally, Caribbean District HR personnel are currently being trained to administer the test. District personnel resolved the errors by issuing three valid announcements.

Table 1. Canceled Job Announcements for PSE Laborer Custodians for St. Croix and St. Thomas Postal Facilities



Canceled Job Announcements for PSE Laborer Custodians for St. Croix and St. Thomas Postal Facilities

Announcement Number	Dates	Total Applicants	Eligible Applicants	Outcome of Job Announcement
				

Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis.

² This position is restricted to applicants eligible for veterans’ preference; however, due to lack of veteran participation or eligibility district HR personnel received approval to lift the veterans’ preference restriction.

Table 2. Valid Job Announcements for PSE Laborer Custodians for St. Croix and St. Thomas Postal Facilities

<div><div>Valid Job Announcements for PSE Laborer Custodians for St. Croix and St. Thomas Postal Facilities</div></div>					
Announcement Number	Dates	Total Applicants	Eligible Applicants	Outcome of Job Announcement	
					

Source: OIG Analysis.

In June 2014, the Human Resources Shared Services Center (HRSSC) took over responsibility for external hiring for the Caribbean District. The HRSSC was given overall responsibility for the entire hiring process from creating job announcements to making job offers. Creating and posting job announcements is now done by a team of three specialists in HRSSC. The HRSSC has standardized procedures to ensure the accuracy of job announcements, including quality review checks and enhanced supervisory oversight. Therefore, we are not making any recommendations at this time, but plan to review the HRSSC in the future.

Recommendations

We are not making any recommendations in this report.

Management's Comments

The Postal Service informally reviewed a discussion draft version of this report and concurred with our findings.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

Although the report does not contain any recommendations, the OIG considers management's comments responsive.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Background

In the 2010-2015 American Postal Workers Union's (APWU) National Labor Agreement, the Postal Service created a new category of non-career employees called PSEs to increase its workforce flexibility and reduce labor costs. PSEs are non-career employees paid at a lower rate than career employees and may work in various areas, including customer service, mail processing, maintenance, and custodial work. The APWU agreement also established staffing limitations for PSEs.³ PSE laborer custodial positions are restricted to applicants eligible for veterans' preference under the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944.⁴ As of September 2014, there were six PSEs and 137 career employees on the rolls in maintenance operations in the Caribbean District.

District HR personnel identify hiring needs, submit job vacancy requisition for approval, and post vacancy announcements on the Postal Service's website.⁵ Much of the application and hiring process involves use of automated assessment systems called eCareer and OASys.⁶ As part of the hiring process for custodial positions, applicants are required to take the Postal Service Custodial Maintenance Examination 916 and receive a passing score of 70 or better. The OASys is used to access and deliver the tests and other data collection tools over the Internet. Results of the assessments are documented through OASys and the data and exam results for the applicants flow electronically back to the eCareer system. The OASys also allows HR personnel to limit the number of people invited to test for an exam. The eCareer system compiles the hiring list of eligible candidates and forwards it to the field maintenance operations manager (FMOM). The FMOM conducts the interviews for the PSE laborer custodial position. Applicants referred from the interview process are screened using established eligibility and suitability guidelines. Applicants who pass the screening process are given a conditional job offer. See [Appendix B](#) for additional information on the hiring process for the PSE laborer custodial positions.

Vacancy announcements for PSE laborer custodial positions advise potential applicants that they must apply online. The announcements also advise applicants to have valid email addresses since all communications concerning their applications and the next steps in the hiring process will be sent by system generated emails. In order to move to the next phase in the hiring process, applicants must follow instructions outlined in the emails. Otherwise, the application could be rejected or marked incomplete.

In June 2014, the HRSSC assumed responsibilities for external hiring for the Caribbean District to improve the process. These responsibilities include creating job postings and publications, overseeing veteran adjudication, and conducting background checks and drug tests. However, the Caribbean District is still responsible for the interview process.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate the posting and hiring practices for PSE laborer custodial positions for St. Croix and St. Thomas. To accomplish this objective, we:

- Evaluated the hiring process and procedures relating to PSEs.
- Reviewed hiring and complement data contributing to the number of PSEs per location.

³ The agreement says each district may employ up to 10 percent of total maintenance craft career employees.

⁴ A federal law that requires the federal government to favor returning war veterans when hiring new employees in an attempt to recognize their service, sacrifice, and skills.

⁵ The Postal Service's website is www.usps.com.

⁶ The OASys is a web-based assessment system that schedules, administers, and scores all primary and secondary assessments required for hiring and promotions.

- Analyzed hiring packages for the St. Croix and St. Thomas post offices.
- Analyzed hiring statistics at the St. Croix facility.
- Reviewed data in the eCareer system on PSE laborer custodians at St. Croix and St. Thomas locations for fiscal years 2013 through July 2014.
- Reviewed test score data in OASys on Examination 916 for January 2011 through July 2014.
- Interviewed headquarters, district, and unit management to determine their processes and procedures for hiring PSE laborer custodians.
- Interviewed recent St. Croix and St. Thomas laborer custodial hires.

We conducted this performance audit from May through December 2014, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on December 11, 2014, and included their comments where appropriate.

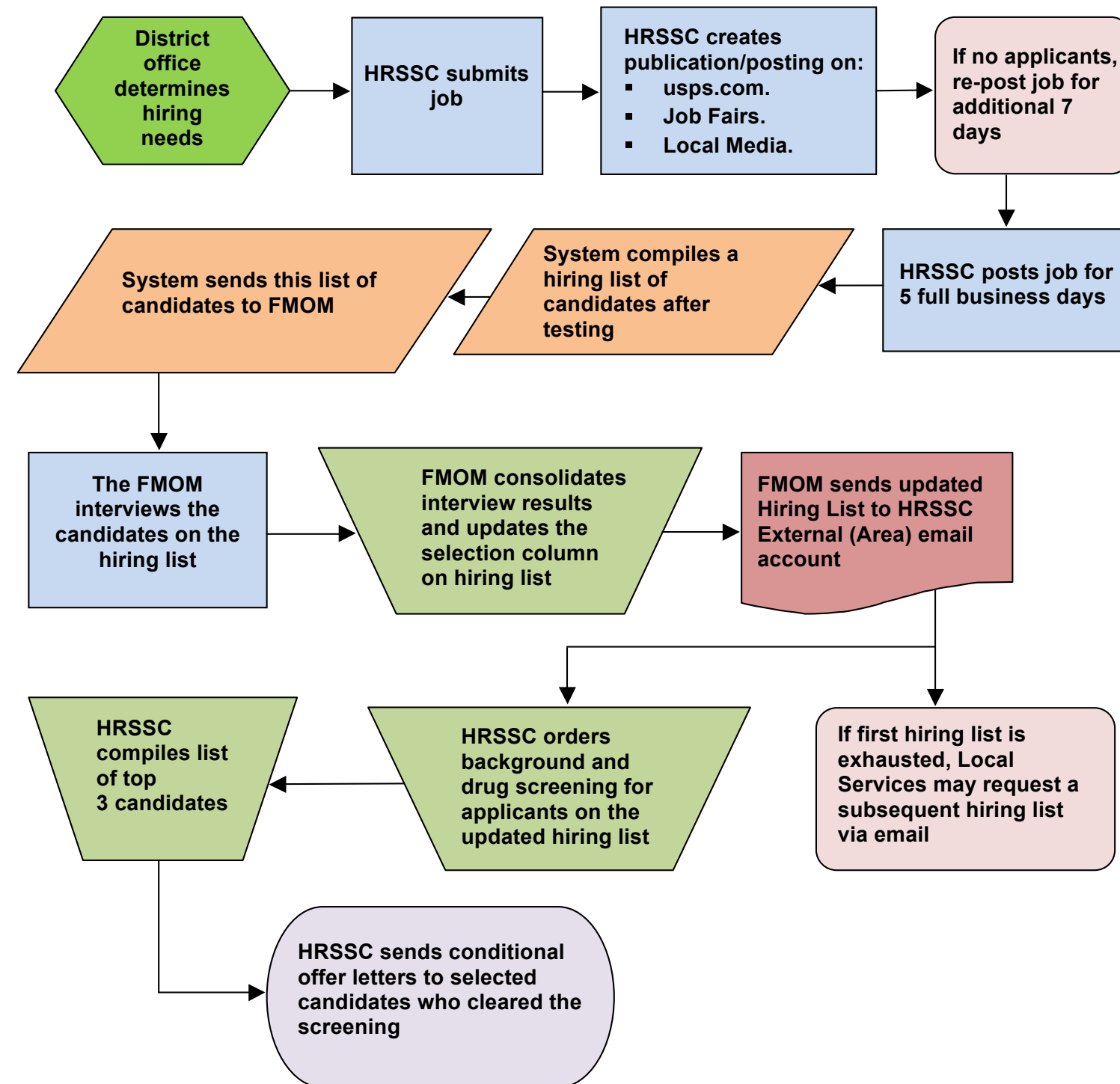
We assessed the reliability of the eCareer and OASys data by interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data and comparing the information to source documents. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

The OIG did not identify any prior audits or reviews related to the objective of this audit.

Appendix B: Hiring Process for Postal Support Employee Laborer Custodial Positions

The flowchart illustrates the hiring process⁷ for Postal Service laborer custodians from posting of the position to job offer.



Source: OIG analysis.

⁷ Prior to June 2014, Caribbean District HR personnel performed these steps.



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