

Affirmative Employment Program

The Affirmative Employment Program is a tool to achieve equal opportunity. It is a program of self-analysis, problem identification, data collection, policy statements, reporting systems and elimination of discriminatory policies and practices past and present.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission requires employers with more than 500 employees to compile an annual affirmative employment plan (MD 715 Report) that includes aggregate workforce data as well as information relating to goal accomplishments. The plan identifies ways to remove barriers, if any, to the employment and advancement of women, minorities and individuals with disabilities.

There are important distinctions between Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Employment and Diversity.

EEO

- Provides open and fair consideration of all
- Necessitated by past history of discrimination
- Mandated by EEO Act of 1972 and other laws and executive orders

Affirmative Employment

- Takes positive, legal action to overcome discrimination barriers
- Necessitated by discrimination/barriers
- Mandates by Executive Orders and Judicial decisions
- Temporary actions and remedies taken to overcome discrimination and employment barriers
- Workplace begins to reflect the population served

Diversity

- Recognizes and values differences in leadership, communication and learning styles
- Organization views and accepts differences as assets
- Voluntary pro-active tool for managing a heterogeneous workforce
- Leadership, productivity and quality work obtained from a heterogeneous workplace

The following Special Emphasis Programs were established to address those special employment issues and concerns affecting all employees and to serve in conjunction with all levels of management in designing a program that will further the installation's Affirmative Employment Program goals.

- Black Employment Program
- Federal Women's Program
- Hispanic Employment Program

- American Indian/Alaskan Native Employment Program
- Program for Individuals with Disabilities
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Employment Program

Affirmative Employment Program Objectives:

- Act as a channel for communication between the workforce and management, seeking to create a climate of understanding and cooperation.
- Analyze statistical data concerning the composition of the workforce by organization and type and grade of positions in order to identify those areas in which minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities are significantly underrepresented.
- Study issues involved in complaints of discrimination in order to identify patterns of practice, attitudes, and other problem areas that result in the denial of equal opportunity for minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities in employment and advancement opportunities.

Model EEO Program

EEOC MD 715 requires each federal agency to complete a self assessment checklist regarding various aspects of the Six EEO Program Essential Elements. The essential elements of a model EEO program are:

1. Demonstrated commitment from agency leadership;
2. Integration of EEO into the agency's strategic mission;
3. Management and program accountability;
4. Proactive prevention of unlawful discrimination;
5. Efficiency; and
6. Responsiveness and legal compliance.

1. Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership

This Directive requires agency heads and other senior management officials to demonstrate a firm commitment to equality of opportunity for all employees and applicants for employment. Even the best workplace policies and procedures will fail if they are not trusted, respected and vigorously enforced. Agencies must translate equal opportunity into every day practice and make those principles a fundamental part of agency culture. This commitment to equal opportunity must be embraced by agency leadership and communicated through the ranks from the top down.

2. Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission

Equality of opportunity is essential to attracting, developing and retaining the most qualified workforce to support the agency's achievement of its strategic mission. To this end agencies must:

- Maintain a reporting structure that provides the agency's EEO Officer with regular access to the agency head and other senior management officials for reporting on the effectiveness, efficiency and legal compliance of the agency's EEO program.
- Allocate sufficient resources to the EEO Office to: 1) identify and eliminate barriers that impair the ability of individuals to compete in the workplace because of race, national origin, sex or disability; 2) establish and maintain training and education programs designed to provide maximum opportunity for all employees to advance; and 3) ensure that unlawful discrimination in the workplace is promptly corrected and addressed.
- Attract, develop and retain EEO staff with the strategic competencies necessary to accomplish the agency's EEO mission, and interface with agency officials, managers and employees.

3. Management and Program Accountability

A model EEO program will hold managers, supervisors, EEO officials and personnel officers accountable for the effective implementation and management of the agency's program. In ensuring such accountability, the agency must:

- Conduct regular internal audits, on at least an annual basis, to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Title VII and Rehabilitation Act programs and to ascertain whether the agency has made a good faith effort to identify and remove barriers to equality of opportunity in the workplace.
- Establish procedures to prevent all forms of discrimination, including harassment, retaliation and failure to provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities.
- Be mindful of the agency's disability program obligations, including the provision of reasonable accommodations, when negotiating collective bargaining agreements with recognized labor organization(s) representing agency employees.

4. Proactive Prevention of Unlawful Discrimination

Agencies have an ongoing obligation to prevent discrimination on the bases of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, reprisal and disability, and eliminate barriers that impede free and open competition in the workplace. As part of this on-going obligation, agencies must conduct a self-assessment on at least an annual basis to monitor progress, identify areas where barriers may operate to exclude certain groups and develop strategic plans to eliminate identified barriers.

5. Efficiency

- Agencies must have an efficient and fair dispute resolution process and effective systems for evaluating the impact and effectiveness of their EEO programs.

- Maintain an efficient, fair and impartial complaint resolution process.
- Establish and encourage the widespread use of a fair alternative dispute resolution (ADR) program that facilitates the early, effective and efficient informal resolution of disputes. Whenever ADR is offered in a particular workplace matter, ensure that managers at all appropriate levels will participate in the ADR process.
- Identify, monitor and report significant trends reflected in complaint processing activity.

6. Responsiveness and Legal Compliance

Federal agencies must:

- Ensure that they are in full compliance with the law, including EEOC regulations, orders and other written instructions.
- Report agency program efforts and accomplishments to EEOC and respond to EEOC directives and orders in accordance with EEOC instructions and time frames.
- Ensure that management fully and timely complies with final EEOC orders for corrective action and relief in EEO matters.