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US Dept. of Energy

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February 6, 2020

Brian Vance, Manager
U.S. Department of Energy
Office of River Protection and Richland Operations Office
P.O. Box 450 (46-60)
Richland, WA 99352

Re: Future Workforce Collaborations HEWP (HAB Consensus Advice # 305)

Dear Mr. Vance,

Background:

Hanford has made significant cleanup progress with effective teamwork among the Department of Energy (DOE), the regulators, Hanford contractors, and the dedicated, skilled Hanford workforce. However, the pace of cleanup will quicken, and operations will expand to support tank cleanup, the Waste Treatment Facility, and land management. The success of these activities will require an experienced, innovative, and flexible workforce consisting of individuals with varied backgrounds and capabilities. Some examples of effective workforce collaborations are currently in place are: Tri City Connect and Hanford Future Workforce Committee.

The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) appreciated receiving a presentation on “The Hanford Workforce: Collaboration for the Future” from DOE and the Site Contractor Presidents at our December 4, 2019 HAB meeting. DOE and the Hanford contractors appear to be engaged in a site-wide approach to fulfilling the current workforce needs focused on forming a network of partnerships and collaboration activities that result in retaining and capturing the appropriate workforce skill mix. The HAB believes DOE’s goal is to develop a site-wide workforce HEWP (Hanford Employee Workforce Pipeline) strategy and system that is easy to navigate and makes DOE and the Hanford Contractors employers of choice. Part of that goal should be to establish and maintain a HEWP (Reference 1), the feed funnel of recruits to fill Hanford workforce needs.

The HAB is concerned that due diligence and the required attention will not be continuously applied to fulfill the HEWP. After years of using long-term, process-based contract models, the Office of Environmental Management is instituting the “End State” contract model for Hanford Prime Contracts, and this model utilizes the Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) approach.

The HAB believes that DOE faces several critical challenges in using this contracting approach. One such concern is how the execution of this new task-orientated End State approach will affect the current and future workforce. DOE Senior Adviser for Environmental Management William (Ike) White has raised this concern. (Reference 2). The HAB believes that this new contracting approach may exacerbate workforce concerns that include the significant financial hardships endured by dedicated, career Hanford workers during past Hanford contract transitions that have the potential to occur again with this new contracting strategy.

Creation and maintenance of a HEWP or similar strategy will require the involvement of DOE and its contractors, Labor Unions, K-12 public and private schools, post-secondary institutions, community agencies, human resources and other departments. This partnership will better serve all students. In particular, the program will include elements that emphasize under-represented groups, attracting more of those individuals into the science and engineering curricula, and then into the HEWP. This partnership and collaboration will enhance the potential HEWP recipients' education by providing real life meaningful work experience, relevant job training, mentoring partnerships, and role models.

Demographics:

DOE communicated the current Hanford demographics and future skills needed over the next 10 years at the December 4, 2019 HAB meeting. DOE projected the workforce to be consistent at approximately 9,000 workers for those next 10 years. Currently, 75 percent of the workforce is male and 25 percent female, with 16 percent identified as minorities. Hanford has a high percentage of workers 50 years of age or older, with less than 10 percent at 30 years of age or younger. Depending on the contractor, 25-35 percent are eligible to retire and some hold critical positions. The site has a highly educated workforce with 50 percent having degrees. The Building Trades and the Metal Trades Unions represent 37 percent of the workforce. On the DOE side, 22 percent are eligible to retire immediately, and 42 percent are eligible for retirement in the next four years.

Loss of Institutional Knowledge:

The HAB is sensitive to the risk of losing critical institutional knowledge that could severely affect mission success due to the number of eligible workforce retirements. There needs to be a consistent Hanford-wide strategy to identify and prevent loss of critical institutional knowledge.

The Need for a Diverse Workforce:

By 2060, the U.S. Census projects that white Americans will comprise only 36 percent of the under age 18 population, with Hispanics accounting for 32 percent. It is clear how important minority youth populations will become to the nation. (Reference 3)

Diversity and multiculturalism have great advantages for maintaining a strong Hanford workforce into the future. This type of workforce enhances the ability to identify and implement new ideas and philosophies, strengthening workforce cohesiveness and thereby successfully completing the challenging cleanup goals at Hanford. In 2015, McKinsey and Company (Reference 4) conducted a study that found companies with high racial and ethnic diversity among their employees outperformed their counterpart companies by 35 percent.

Diversity should be reflected in all levels and sectors of employment. Recruitment and training programs should reach out to underrepresented populations in order to increase diversity and provide opportunities for advancement within all levels of the organization.

DOE and the Hanford site have a storied reputation of possessing the best educational outreach programs among all of its sites (Reference 3). However, DOE and its Contractors should "Walk the Talk" more effectively. DOE senior management should advocate for a diverse workforce at all organizational levels, recognize the demographic shift, and make diversity a part of the Hanford culture. If this is done, DOE will instill a belief in the workforce and candidates that there are unlimited career opportunities at Hanford. DOE should lead on this issue with open and honest dialogue with the contractors and workforce.

Advice:

The following Advice addresses necessary improvements in the Hanford Workforce planning, development, and job security as discussed above. Where appropriate the HAB has provided suggestions on possible methods that DOE may utilize in addressing the concerns.

- The HAB requests that DOE define a smooth transition process between IDIQ tasks to ensure that experienced workers (some in very critical positions) see that their Hanford employment is secure. This may also include financial incentives for experienced workers to remain on critical jobs to completion.
- The HAB recommends that DOE encourage contractors to offer benefit program improvements when implementing the IDIQ contract process, including consideration of fair and reasonable transfer of benefits and reimbursed relevant education programs.
- The HAB recommends that DOE thoroughly assess and provide a briefing to the HAB of DOE Complex-wide Contract Transition lessons learned since the issuance of the Defense Authorization Act of FY 1993, Section 3161 - “Worker and Community Transition” as it applies to the implementation of the IDIQ contracts.
- The HAB recommends DOE establish an Integrator or standing Consensus Committee to address contract transitions to assure that the Hanford workforce is protected from any undesirable effects during these transitions.
- The HAB encourages DOE to institute a mandated apprenticeship utilization program for building trades (to address the shortage of skilled labor in this region and the nation). Additionally, DOE needs to look strongly at re-instituting the cancelled Metal Trades Apprenticeship Program.
- The HAB recommends that the development of the HEWP, diverse workforce objectives (accountability), and a site integrator be an award fee item with the newly awarded Hanford Prime Contractors and future Hanford contracts.
- The HAB recommends re-instituting concepts similar to the Cooperative Office Education concept (COE) and Inquiry Into Science (IIS) programs (see attached description of these past programs). These programs create pathways to work, helping to produce a workforce with an appropriate cultural mix for optimal value. This allows the site to develop local talent and to train diverse and underrepresented populations at a lower cost.
- The HAB recommends that DOE again take the lead in re-introducing Hanford cultural awareness events that focus on specific ethnic groups. These initiatives will help increase the sensitivity to the changing demographics, diversity, and teamwork required to complete the Hanford mission.
- The HAB recommends that DOE develop and implement a Formal Mentoring Program to help maintain Hanford’s institutional knowledge and help advance cultural awareness in all employment categories. This Mentoring Program should become a contractual requirement for all existing and future contracts.

- The HAB recommends DOE develop a “Hanford Critical Skills” database, and to identify those individuals at Hanford (and at other DOE sites, if possible) that possess those skillsets. This list, employed effectively, would utilize individuals that can assist in high priority tasks in which they are qualified to assist.

The HAB strongly believes that without a smooth transition of the new IDIQ model, fresh innovative workforce initiatives that emphasize diverse backgrounds, and the need for robust education outreach initiatives, the Hanford Mission will be at serious risk. We believe DOE needs to put fee requirements on the recommended advice to become a priority for completion by the Hanford Contractors. All progress on Hanford cleanup activities is dependent upon an effectively trained and fully engaged, dedicated, and diverse workforce. The HAB looks forward to further discussions with DOE on these important issues.

Very truly yours,



Susan Leckband, Chair
Hanford Advisory Board

Enclosure

cc: Ike White, Senior Advisor of Environmental Management, U.S. Department of Energy, Headquarters,
Dave Borak, Designated Federal Officer, U.S. Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management,
Emerald Laija, Environmental Scientist, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
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The Oregon and Washington Congressional Delegations

REFERENCES

- 1) Environmental Education Work Force HEWP, Strategic Plan, DOE, April 1994, pg.1
- 2) WEAPONS COMPLEX/ MONITOR, Vol. 30 No 44/11/15/2019, Wayne Barber, pg.1
- 3) William H. Frey analysis of U.S. Census population projections released March 13, 2018 and revised September 6, 2018, Figure 4, pg. 4
- 4) McKinsey & Company, McKinsey Report Diversity Matters, February 2015, pg.3

ATTACHMENT

Description of Previous DOE Education Outreach Work-Based Learning Model Programs

Cooperative Office Education (COE) Program:

Provides an opportunity for High School students to experience administrative support roles through a cooperative work experience. They must have at least a 2.5 GPA, be 16, and not work more than 20 hours a week while in school. They receive mentorship and learn work discipline that leads to successful careers. A high percent of these students become vital employees of their perspective companies after graduation from high school, trade schools, and college.

Inquiry Into Science (IIS) Program:

Provides an opportunity for High School students to experience technical support roles through a cooperative work experience. They must have at least a 2.5 GPA, be 16, and not work more than 20 hours a week while in school. They receive mentorship and learn work discipline that leads to successful careers. A high percent of these students become vital employees of their perspective companies after graduation from high school, trade schools and college.