

Savings in Personnel costs

2.1 Decrease the use of contracts by using floating FTEs (3)

Recommendation: NIH create a system to allow ICs to temporarily “borrow” an FTE from another IC for temporary scientific and administrative needs because using FTE positions is usually a less expensive way to acquire services than via contract. Could also have people themselves who are “borrowed” for short term needs such as when people go on medical leave, maternity leave, during the “downtime” when people are recruiting for replacements etc. This will incur cost savings for retraining and recruitment of new personnel.

OHR Response: OHR agreed this was a great idea and recommended that Susan Harrelson and Linda Adams make an appointment with John Bartram from the NIH Budget office since he is responsible for managing FTEs in NIH. Susan and Linda will contact John.

2.2 Use the most economical source for acquiring services. (1)

Recommendation: In some cases, organizations such as Kelly contract have lower overhead than more traditional contractors. Much easier for scientists and administrators to use because services are acquired through an interagency agreement rather than taking the time to award a contract.

OHR RESPONSE: There is no action required, this item is a recommendation to the ICs to use as they deem appropriate for their situations.

2.3 Use Kelly contract instead of ORISE for contractors needed H1B visa (1)

Recommendation: H-1B visas can now be granted by Kelly contract which can be less costly than using ORISE and other contracting mechanisms

OHR RESPONSE: There is no action required, this item is a recommendation to the ICs to use as they deem appropriate for their situations.

2.4 Provide Title 42 positions for laboratory scientific support functions & patient care providers/clinical research support staff (3)

Recommendation: Expanding the use of T42 positions would allow more flexibility and thus cost savings to the personnel costs in the following ways:

- Less cumbersome recruitment process
- Allows for foreign hires
- Allows for “temporary” hires
- Allows for more flexibility in pay

OHR RESPONSE: Since this would require legislative authority, Chris Major recommended that we defer consideration until the new administration takes over. At that time, we can assess whether it would be appropriate to pursue.

2.5 Extend time limit on TERM extensions (3)

Recommendation: Extending the time limit on a TERM appointment beyond the 4 year current limit would allow for “temporary” hires for longer periods of time. This is especially crucial for a tenure-track position which is 6 years or a staff clinician appointment which is typically 5 years. This could also be used for workers in core facilities for staff scientists who are typically on 5 year appointments.

OHR RESPONSE: Chris Major and Marvin Lee felt that this is an idea worth pursuing and would be willing to look into pursuing with OPM. As requested by OHR, Susan Harrelson has drafted a justification for this request and has been forwarded to OHR to review.

2.6 Options for permanent GS scientists when PI leaves or lab closes (3, 3)

Recommendation #1: Retrain laboratory support personnel when a laboratory shuts down. If the NIH transition center’s function were expanded, they could serve as a central place where people can go for retraining and supervisors who have needs can go looking for help.

OHR RESPONSE: Chris Major explained that the transition center would need additional resources to be able to help with this recommendation. She offered the Work Life Center as an alternative that is currently available to help people with resume writing, how to look for jobs, etc. She also said that the new Recruitment Center will be available in FY09 and might be able to help with some of this. It is also recommended that people being displaced by a laboratory closing join a scientific interest group and the Lab Manager’s Group to network and look for opportunities.

Recommendation #2: Offer buyouts (Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments) to people whose jobs are abolished when these situations occur

OHR RESPONSE: Chris Major clarified for us that we would not be able to ask OPM for a general authority for VSIP for all laboratory closings. Each individual laboratory closing would be required to go through a request to OPM for VSIP. She and Marvin Lee agreed to investigate the procedures to request VSIP and to get some idea about what types of requests are approved or denied by OPM so that the ICs could get some general information to be able to make informed choices.

2.7 Avoid duplication by sharing information (2, 3)

Recommendation #1: Contextware is a system that was developed in NIAID for providing useful procedures to users in a consistent manner. It connects users to forms, experts and policies connected to each process. If all ICs used this system, we could save time/money retaining people who go to different ICs, and it will speed the training of new employees. It can increase employee productivity, reduce waste and redundancy and improve business practices.

OHR RESPONSE: There is no action required, this item is a recommendation to the ICs to use as they deem appropriate for their situations.

Recommendation #2: Establishing best practices within HR and between HR and the ICs could save time and money

- Share lists of eligible candidates for jobs especially between ICs.
- Establish a web-site to share position description, checklists, templates, and examples.
- Establish a committee to look at workflow/processes in HR to reduce unnecessary work for the labs.
- Establish uniform policies between centralized HR and the individual ICs.

OHR RESPONSE: Chris Major has a committee already established to look at “reengineering” and she agreed to add the “sharing a list of eligible candidates to that committee’s work.

For the web-site Chris Major agreed that Jennifer Burton can chair a committee comprising AOs and HR staff to give her feedback on things that would be useful to have on this website. Susan will coordinate with the AO working groups to see if there is an interest in joining a group like this and in having Jennifer give a presentation on what already exists on the site.

To address the workflow/process issue, Chris Major said that there is a committee which is looking at Service Level Agreements and she will ensure that there are customers, including intramural representatives on that committee.

Additional Information:

1. ICs can do with current authority
 - Use Kelly contract as economical and simple way for acquiring services.
 - Use Kelly contract instead of ORISE for contractors needed H1B visa
2. Would need collaboration/authority outside of own IC to do
 - Contextware
3. Would need approval from OD functional area or beyond
 - Decrease the use of contracts by using floating FTEs
 - Provide Title 42 positions for laboratory scientific support functions & patient care providers/clinical research support staff
 - Extend the time limit on a TERM appointment beyond the 4 year current limit appointments.

- Retrain laboratory support personnel when a laboratory shuts down. (If utilizing NIH training center)
- Offer buyouts (Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments) to people whose jobs are abolished
- Establishing best practices within HR and between HR and the ICs could save time and money