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ACFO-ACAF Staffing Position Paper

In the 2019-20 Public Service Commission (PSC) Annual Report, the PSC stressed the importance of attracting new talent from across Canada to the public service and of developing and retaining public service employees throughout their career.

As a federal public service union, ACFO-ACAF has insight into the challenges staffing poses to federal public servants and how the system might be improved. We believe that a staffing process that is fair, transparent and considered can help both public servants and the PSC achieve their goals of recruiting and retaining the best talent for the public service of Canada.

To that end, ACFO-ACAF has three specific recommendations for improving the staffing process:

- reduce the number of non-advertised staffing actions and make the rationale for non-advertised staffing more transparent;
- broaden the area of selection; and
- reassess the relevancy of recent experience requirements.

Non-advertised staffing actions

The use of non-advertised staffing actions in the federal public service is on the rise: in 2019-20, the 52% of all actions were non-advertised, a drastic increase from 29% only three years prior. At the same time, in 2018-19 the PSC reported that only 46% of employees viewed staffing as fair, with that number being lower among people with disabilities, Indigenous people and members of visible minorities.

While many hiring managers rely on non-advertised staffing actions as a way to get around the time-intensive staffing process, an over-reliance on non-advertised actions negatively affects the public service overall and especially members of employment equity groups.

ACFO-ACAF recommends that non-advertised staffing actions be limited to specific circumstances and that hiring managers be required to be transparent about the rationale for a non-advertised staffing competition in the instances when it is necessary.

Area of selection

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, most public servants have been teleworking successfully for almost a full year. This has demonstrated that while not every job can be performed across Canada, many of them can.

Rather than repeating the specifications from a previous posting, it is important to actively reflect on the duties of a specific position and if they can reasonably be performed at home. This provides more opportunities for public servants across Canada and also gives the employer access to a broader range of talent.

ACFO-ACAF recommends that hiring managers in both the National Capital Region and the Regions carefully assess the area of selection requirements and broaden the area of selection to all of Canada if the position duties can be performed at home.

Recent years of experience

The term “recent” when referring to employee experience in a staffing competition is not specifically defined, and depending on the job posting, it can mean anywhere between two to ten years. While some experiences, such as financial systems, might have an expiry date, others such as managerial, analytical and critical thinking experiences might not.

Imposing a narrow, arbitrarily defined limitation of experience on a competition can eliminate qualified candidates and even force employees to leave a position to avoid losing an experience they have.

ACFO-ACAF recommends that hiring managers carefully assess the relevancy of the recent experience requirements in their postings to ensure that qualified employees are not unnecessarily excluded.

Conclusion

ACFO-ACAF has been [advocating for improvements](#) to the staffing system for several years now. It is our position that these improvements include:

- reducing the number of non-advertised staffing actions and making the rationale for non-advertised staffing more transparent;
- broadening the area of selection; and
- reassessing the relevancy of recent experience requirements.

We believe that making these changes will create a fair, transparent and considered staffing process that will benefit employees and help the PSC achieve their stated goals.