

NASA Guidance: A Strategic Approach to Special Emphasis Program Management



Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity

January 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
LEADING THE WAY: THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY SEPMS 5
SEP CONSTITUENCY GROUPS
DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN SEPS AND EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS
ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUCCESS INDICATORS
KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES 14
CONCLUSION 15
SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS SUMMARY 17
APPENDIX A. SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST 18
APPENDIX B. SPECIAL OBSERVANCES 21

INTRODUCTION

This guidance offers a strategic approach to reinventing the Special Emphasis Program (SEP) model for the 21st century NASA workplace, helping to better leverage SEP synergies with the newer diversity and inclusion (D&I) model, along with the more traditional legal compliance function. The approach is fully aligned with and supportive of the Agency's Strategic Plan and the NASA Core Values, particularly as they relate to attracting and advancing a diverse workforce and enhancing inclusion in Agency workplaces.

SEPs were first established by law, regulation, and Executive authority in the 1960s and 1970s. They were intended to be an integral part of Federal agencies' equal employment opportunity (EEO) programs. SEPs remain critical to agencies' efforts to attain "Model EEO Agency" status, as required by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in its Management Directive (MD) 715. Today, SEPs also play an instrumental role in fulfilling a host of other ongoing planning, reporting, and implementation requirements, including the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP), the Notification and Federal Employee Anti-Discrimination and Retaliation (No FEAR) Act, the Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program, Agency and Center Diversity and Inclusion efforts, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the White House Council on Women and Girls.

To better define the role and functioning of SEPs in the NASA workplace, this guidance addresses three key policy questions relating to SEPs:

- 1. What are the groups for which NASA will have Agency and Center SEP Managers (SEPMs)?
- 2. What are the key SEPM roles, responsibilities and appropriate performance indicators?
- 3. What are the knowledge, skills, and abilities required of SEPMs?

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS

In 1972, Congress amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to extend the Act's anti-discrimination protections to Federal employees. Government agencies with responsibility for implementing the Act began to focus increased attention on underrepresented groups in the Federal workforce, such as racial/ethnic minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, including disabled veterans. One way in which this was done was through the establishment of Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs).

SEPs have been authorized since the late 1960s and 1970s by Executive Branch regulations and Presidential Executive Orders for the purposes of helping underrepresented groups enter into the Federal workforce, develop professionally, and advance within its ranks.¹ The basic U.S. Equal

¹ See, e.g., Executive Order 11478 (accessible at <u>http://www.archives.gov/federalregister/codification/executive-</u> order/11478.html); 5 C.F.R. Part 720. For a history of SEPs and their various authorities over time, see ODEO's Information Resource Guide section on SEPs, accessible at

Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulatory provision on SEPs states that each agency head shall:

Designate a Director of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO Director), EEO Officer(s), and such Special Emphasis Program Managers (e.g., People With Disabilities Program, Federal Women's Program and Hispanic Employment Program)... as may be necessary to carry out the functions described in this part in all organizational units of the agency and at all agency installations.²

In the 1970s and 1980s, SEPs played a vital role in addressing basic equal opportunity issues relevant at that time, for example, opening the door for greater numbers of African Americans and women to enter the government workforce. However, by the 1990s and 2000s, SEPs began to lose momentum. The lack of ownership or specific guidance from the EEOC or the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for SEPs, along with the surfacing of anti-affirmative action sentiment, may have contributed to a decline in their visibility and effectiveness. A common perception was that the programs were no longer as necessary as they had been, and resources committed to the programs declined.

In 2011, the President issued Executive Order 13583, "Establishing a Coordinated, Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce."³ D&I efforts reach out to segments of American society based on a host of individual characteristics, perspectives, and backgrounds much broader than the race, gender, and disability focus of traditional SEPs.



² 29 CFR Part 1614.102(b)(4), available at <u>http://www1.eeoc.gov/federal/directives/1614-final.cfm</u>.

³ This Executive Order is accessible at <u>http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative-prom</u>.

However, the D&I rubric also helped to highlight the continuing need for SEPs in two important ways. First, race, gender, and disability are important facets of D&I, and any planning of D&I efforts invariably includes attention to the issues and needs of traditional SEP groups. Secondly, D&I proponents recognize the value of the original SEP focus on structured and strategic ways for employee constituency groups to organize, meet, and influence workforce decision-making and employment policies and practices. Thus, while the Federal government has added a focus on D&I, EEO requirements, including SEPs, remain a fundamental part of efforts to enhance opportunity and inclusion for all members of the civil servant workforce.⁴ Importantly, EO and D&I are not mutually exclusive, but on the contrary, complement one another (see diagram above). Synergy results when EO and D&I practitioners collaborate, i.e., their collective achievements are greater than the sum of the two efforts operating separately. Synergy occurs in part because of a more efficient use of resources, but also because of the heightened creativity and innovation that result from mixing diverse perspectives.

NASA strives to advance opportunities and engage all members of its civil servant workforce in its mission, consistent with the law. SEPs play a role in ensuring that all employees, especially those members of underrepresented groups, are afforded such opportunities in alignment with NASA's goals. SEP efforts should not be misconstrued as "special" rights, quotas, or "reverse discrimination." They are, rather, a good faith effort to counter past and present inequities in our society that can still impact equal opportunities in the workplace.

LEADING THE WAY: THE ROLE OF THE AGENCY SEPMS

Overall leadership for NASA SEPs resides in the Agency Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO). Agency level SEPMs ensure a strategic approach for each special emphasis area. They actively partner with the Agency D&I Manager, the Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM), the Office of Education (OE), and other stakeholder offices to collaborate on SEP activities such as outreach, recruitment, retention, and employee development and recognition. The Agency SEPMs thus play a critical role in the development and leveraging of the synergies described above.

Agency SEPMs communicate EEO and D&I policies, procedures, management directives, and other information to their Center counterparts through regular communications (e.g., telecons, video teleconferences, and other virtual media) and help to strengthen the skills and leadership abilities of Center SEPMs through mentoring, coaching, education and training, and other guidance. Agency SEPMs represent the concerns of the Center SEPMs and their constituencies to ODEO and Agency senior leadership. Finally, Agency SEPMs partner with each other, as well as external federal and state agencies, to the greatest extent possible, to address common challenges of their SEP constituencies and to plan collaborative events, programs, and communications.

⁴ It is important to note that this SEP Guidance is intended to apply only to the civil servant workforce.

SEP CONSTITUENCY GROUPS

Prior to issuing this guidance, ODEO benchmarked SEP practices Government-wide as well as internally within the Agency. Our internal benchmarking shows that NASA is in conformity with EEOC's core requirements. At the Agency level, there has traditionally been a designated SEP Manager (SEPM) that devotes a certain percentage of time to the SEPM role, and this is mirrored at the Centers. Roles and responsibilities at the Agency level typically include providing leadership to implement nationwide policy driven by Presidential Executive Orders, such as the current Administration's policies on women and girls, individuals with disabilities, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.⁵ At the Center level, SEPM roles and responsibilities typically include providing leadership to implement the Agency's policies; providing advice, guidance and recommendations to Center leadership; and serving as a focal point for communicating challenges, issues and concerns of their respective constituents on matters affecting employment at the Center.

ODEO's external benchmarking encompassed Departmental level agencies such as Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, and Justice, as well as similarly situated agencies in terms of size and mission, such as the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Science Foundation. The Department of Justice (DOJ), a leading agency for SEP development representative of the other agencies, lists the following as groups for which it maintains SEPs: African Americans; Native American/Alaska Natives; Asian American/Pacific Islanders; Individuals with Disabilities; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT); Hispanics; and Women. DOJ states that the Department's SEPs were established "to develop a diverse and talented workforce, which can include support for racial/ethnic minorities; women, persons and veterans with disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender applicants and employees in various categories and occupations and in all organizational components throughout the Department."⁶

DOJ's SEPs are in alignment with Executive policy in this arena, as numerous Executive Orders and/or Presidential Memoranda have been issued addressing EO for one or more of these groups, for example, Hispanics, women, and individuals with disabilities.⁷ Moreover, Executive policy going back to 1998, when discrimination based on sexual orientation was prohibited in Federal employment, has been inclusive of the LGBT community.⁸ More recently, with the overturning of key provisions of the Defense of Marriage Act and the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, as well as the issuance of a

⁵ See e.g., Executive Order 13506, Establishing a White House Council on Women and Girls (March 11, 2009) (accessible at <u>https://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Executive-Order-Creating-the-White-House-Council-on-Women-and-Girls/</u>); Executive Order 13515, Increasing Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Oct. 14, 2009) (accessible at <u>https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-asian-american-and-pacific-islander-community</u>); Executive Order 13548, Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals With Disabilities (July 26, 2010) (accessible at

<u>https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-increasing-federal-employment-individuals-with-disabilities</u>). ⁶ See DOJ Justice Management Division website at <u>http://www.justice.gov/jmd/affirmative-employment-special-emphasis-programs</u> (accessed March 4, 2015).

⁷ Executive Order 13555, White House Initiative On Educational Excellence For Hispanics (Oct. 19, 2010) (https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/10/19/executive-order-white-house-initiative-educational-excellencehispanics); see also fn. 4 above.

⁸ See Executive Order No. 11478, 3 C.F.R. 803 (1966-1970), as amended by Exec. Order No. 13087, 3 C.F.R. 191 (1998) making nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation a Federal policy (accessible at <u>http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/executiveorders/13087.cfm</u>).

raft of Presidential Memoranda and Executive Orders, there has been an overall trend toward greater LGBT inclusiveness in and by the Federal workforce.⁹

In accordance with the results of its benchmarking and the policies and direction provided by the Administration, the Agency and each NASA Center are expected to designate SEPMs for the following groups:

- African Americans;
- American Indian/Alaska Natives;
- Asian American/Pacific Islanders;
- Hispanics;
- Individuals with Disabilities and Disabled Veterans;
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender; and
- Women.

Each Center should determine the appropriate level of activity for each SEP. Some programs may warrant more activity than others, based on regional demographics and Center specific issues, but there should be some level of activity for all of the SEPs. Special observance efforts for the constituency groups noted above will be made at each Center (see Appendix C for additional information).

DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN SEPS AND EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

SEPs are mandated by law and regulation and, therefore, must exist at NASA as at other federal agencies. However, voluntary groups that have common interests with SEPs may co-exist with them. Such groups may be known by various names, including employee advisory groups (AGs), advisory committees (ACs), and employee resource groups (ERGs).¹⁰ Decisions regarding the formation and utilization of ERGs are appropriately made by Center management.¹¹ However, if the Center approves ERGs for any of the SEP constituencies cited above, it should provide the same opportunities for interested employees of the other designated constituencies to form such groups.

It is important to note that although SEPs and ERGs may share common objectives and overlapping efforts, the two roles are distinct. SEPs are rooted in EEO laws and regulations, as noted above, and SEPMs are therefore required to have knowledge, skills, and abilities related to enforcing EEO laws and regulations to advance EEO. SEPMs will be held accountable through performance planning and

http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-07-23/pdf/2014-17522.pdf); Presidential Memorandum - International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons, December 6, 2011, accessible at http://www.upice.u

⁹ See e.g., Executive Order 13672, Further Amendments to Executive Order 11478, Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government, and Executive Order 11246, Equal Employment Opportunity (July 21, 2014) (accessible at

¹⁰The terms EGs, AGs, and ACs are used interchangeably at NASA; in this Guidance, "ERGs" is used to refer to all three types of employee groups. ERG Guidance, issued previously by ODEO is accessible at: <u>http://odeo.hq.nasa.gov/documents/</u> ERG_Guidance_7-17-13.pdf.

¹¹ All references to NASA Centers are inclusive of NASA Headquarters and NSSC.

evaluation for meeting EEO requirements. Although the SEPM is usually an employee located in the EO Office, collateral duty SEPMs are acceptable, if their SEP duties, including percentage of time, are defined in their position descriptions and performance plans. SEPMs, including collateral duty employees, report on their EEO activities to the EO Director (at the Center level) and to the ODEO, Director of Program Planning and Evaluation (at the Agency level). In this way, there is a direct line of authority for SEPs to the management officials that have been charged by the NASA Administrator and Center Directors for meeting EEO requirements.

While ERGs are extremely valuable resources, EEO and diversity are not the primary work of their members. They are not held accountable to the same extent as SEPMs for the advancement of EEO, since they are not supervised by the EO Director. ERG members are not required, when hired, to demonstrate in-depth knowledge, skills, or abilities pertaining to EEO laws, regulations, Executive Orders, management directives, etc. For these reasons, an ERG (or its chairperson) does not take the place of the SEPM unless a collateral duty position is defined as noted above.

However, if and when employee groups exist, it is important that the SEPMs interface with them. The interface may take different forms (e.g., the ERG reports to the SEPM, the ERG consults with and advises the SEPM, the SEPM enlists the ERGs' assistance on ad hoc projects, etc.). The critical point is that when an SEP and employee group have overlapping goals and objectives, they will both be more effective and efficient by collaborating in their efforts. If a Center has an ERG whose constituency overlaps an SEP, but is not currently communicating with the SEPM, the SEPM will reach out to engage the employee group and explore how they may collaborate to support the common constituency at the Center.

It is also important to note (as it is also noted in ODEO's previously issued ERG Guidance), that SEPMs shall not conduct collective bargaining activities (e.g., salary, work hours, benefits, or any other term or condition of employment) with employee groups. Likewise, when SEPs and ERGs collaborate, they shall not:

- \varnothing form or evolve for the purpose of opposing other groups;
- \varnothing form or evolve to promote political positions; or
- \varnothing seek remedies for individuals.

Furthermore, if discussions between SEPs and ERGs cross into collective bargaining territory, they will be tabled and discussed in a different forum with Labor present. If the SEPM and ERG meet with a management official present (including the EO Director), a labor representative must be invited to the meeting.

SEPM ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SUCCESS INDICATORS

NASA determined, based on its benchmarking with leading agencies and its review of Center practices, that key roles and responsibilities for the Agency and Center SEPM fall into five main areas:

- 1. Advice and Education
- 2. Workforce Interface and Integration

- 3. Monitoring and Workforce Data Analysis
- 4. Community Outreach and Recruitment
- 5. Measuring EEO Performance

Each of these areas has an essential interplay with the others. For example, workforce interface, such as with employee ERGs, facilitates efforts to advise and educate Center management regarding institutional and organizational level EEO challenges, and, importantly, to develop actions to address them. The actions developed based on interface with ERGs, as well as monitoring and workforce analysis, might very well include targeted outreach and recruitment efforts, in which ERGs can play a critical role. Each of the five main areas is delineated below to more clearly describe the key roles and responsibilities of SEP Managers in their everyday practice.

ADVICE AND EDUCATION

This area may be described overall as SEP efforts to provide advice and education to Center and Agency management, supervisors, and employees. It also includes assisting management in addressing the needs and concerns of SEP groups. Specific activities and initiatives include:

- Coordinating or sponsoring educational programs on a variety of subjects, e.g., career planning, resume writing and interviewing techniques, reasonable accommodations, mentoring, and development of supervisory and team building skills.
- Providing review and comment on Agency and Center proposed policy impacting EEO through the head of the EO office, including draft NASA or Center policy directives and procedural requirements.
- Educating supervisors, managers and employees on the goals and objectives of SEPs through development of articles for organizational newsletters and other media related to SEP issues, programs and activities.
- Increasing awareness of the contributions, abilities, and cultural impact of targeted communities.
- Providing advice to employees regarding training needs and career development opportunities while also collaborating with Human Capital to keep the training office informed of constituency training and development needs.
- Developing and conducting forums, workshops, and commemorative observances to provide awareness, sensitivity and understanding of the special issues affecting employment of the targeted groups, such as information about architectural accessibility and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities.
- Ensuring that the Agency and Center EO and D&I websites provide information about and visibility to SEPs, including SEP events and projects, identification of SEPMs at the Agency and Center levels (with contact information), and promising SEP practices.

WORKFORCE INTERFACE AND INTEGRATION

The overall approach for this area is effective interface between SEPMs and constituency employees (ideally with ERGs) and the integration of the concerns of diverse subgroups of the larger

constituency. The interface between SEPMs and employees is critical to ensure that SEP activities are focused on the most relevant and highest priority concerns. Effective SEPs can help to create more inclusive work environments, thereby improving employee morale and retention, increasing employee engagement in Agency/Center missions, and enhancing career opportunities. Integration requires the SEPM to bring together the multi-dimensional concerns of subgroups of his/her constituency into an effective, holistic program. For example, scientific and technical women may have different issues and concerns than women in administrative and mission support roles. It is the responsibility of the Women's Program Manger to integrate and represent the concerns of all women, in all occupations and grade levels. The interface and integration role is more difficult, but still critical, if there is not an organized employee group to collaborate with the SEPM. The specific activities and initiatives in this area may include:

- Communicating regularly and often with constituents to gain community perspectives and input on programs, initiatives, and challenges and to collaborate in implementing proactive efforts such as educational programs and targeted recruitment. SEPMs communicate and collaborate with the ERGs, if they exist at the Center.¹² If ERGs do not exist, the SEPM facilitates focus groups or town hall type meetings, in addition to using electronic media, to meet with his/her constituency periodically.
- Supporting Agency-recognized groups, including Blacks in Government, Federal Asian Pacific American Council, Federally Employed Women, Federal GLOBE, Society of American Indian Government Employees, and National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives.
- Coordinating with partner offices to conduct programs and forums on issues and concerns to SEP constituency groups, both internal and external to the agency (see Special Emphasis Program Collaborations diagram on the following page).

The interface between the SEPM and employees is also critical for building coalitions with relevant advocacy groups and targeted communities, which will be discussed below in the area on Community Outreach and Recruitment.

MONITORING AND WORFORCE ANALYSIS

This area encompasses monitoring of employment policies, practices, and procedures and analysis of data to determine whether constituency groups are fully and successfully participating in the Agency and Center missions. Where full participation is not indicated, the SEPM (with input from ERGs, as appropriate) reports findings, develops strategies to address the challenges/issues, and provides recommended actions to appropriate NASA officials. SEPMs are instrumental to a Center's EEO and D&I Plans, in terms of identifying employment and workforce practices that may adversely impact particular groups of employees, as well as in the development and implementation of action plans to address EEO and D&I challenges. SEPMs can serve as a representative voice to raise employment issues and concerns to management for their respective groups.

¹² See ODEO Guidance on ERGs accessible at: <u>http://odeo.hq.nasa.gov/documents/ ERG_Guidance_7-17-13.pdf</u>.

Conversely, SEPMs are well situated to observe and/or note promising practices, policies, and procedures, as they monitor their constituency groups' participation and engagement in the NASA mission. The documentation and reporting of promising practices to NASA management, including the Agency ODEO, is an important aspect of the monitoring role.



AG = Advisory Group (see page 7) ERG = Employee Resource Group AC = Advisory Committee CAP = Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program

Specific actions and activities include:

- Monitoring and analyzing Agency workforce, survey, and focus group data to identify challenges or barriers in recruitment, hiring, promotions, career development, awards and recognition, reasonable accommodations, retention, and inclusion in the workforce that impact targeted groups.
- Making note of promising practices, policies, and procedures in relation to the constituency group as the SEPM monitors recruitment, hiring, promotions, career development, retention, reasonable accommodations, inclusion in the workforce, and other workplace activities.
- Keeping the EO Director (at the Center level) and ODEO senior staff (at the Agency level) apprised of results of the workforce monitoring and analysis.
- Recommending actions to increase participation of underrepresented groups for inclusion in the Agency/Center EEO and D&I Plans.
- Participating in the development and monitoring of the organization's other equal opportunity plans and reports (e.g. Asian American and Pacific Islander Plan and Report; White House Council on Women and Girls Report).
- Participating in studies and compliance reviews to identify possible systemic forms of discrimination and barriers to equal opportunity in employment activities.
- Evaluating effectiveness of activities and programs toward achieving SEP objectives.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

Another significant way in which SEPMs assist the Agency is by playing a liaison role with professional advocacy and community based groups, as well as educational organizations and institutions.¹³ Relationships with these external organizations are critical to achieving greater diversity in the NASA workforce and science, technical, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) pipeline. They also serve to engage diverse members of the public with the NASA mission. Examples of activities in this area include:

- Participating with the appropriate offices in advance planning of activities that enhance employment opportunities, such as training, career development, and outreach and recruitment events at professional advocacy conferences, e.g., National Society of Black Engineers, Society of Asian Scientists and Engineers, Society of Women Engineers, American Indian Science and Engineering Society, Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, Out and Equal, etc.
- Encouraging and coordinating the involvement of ERGs in outreach and recruitment activities.
- Identifying specific occupations and grade levels that lack demographic diversity and helping to identify recruitment events that expand the applicant pool with the underrepresented group(s).

¹³ SEPMS should ensure that they are not engaging any outside group in any way that would be in violation of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). See: <u>http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/101010</u>.

- Assisting in the broadest possible dissemination of vacancy announcements for Agency and Center positions, for example by providing managers and supervisors with resource lists for broad dissemination of vacancy announcements.
- Actively participating in "NASA Days" and other outreach events at primary and secondary schools and in the local community.
- Increasing the use of culturally competent social and electronic media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, email blasts, websites) to inform the public of outreach and recruitment events and other NASA activities (e.g., science and robotic competitions, rocket launches, community observatory nights).
- Representing NASA at community events such as Gay Pride Day and Martin Luther King Day celebrations, etc.

MEASURING EEO PERFORMANCE

Another critical role of the SEPM is the assessment of outcomes, that is, measuring, through appropriate performance indicators, the success (or lack thereof) of SEP efforts. Just as with their workforce analysis, SEPMs should keep the EO Director apprised of the results of their assessments. Specific performance indicators include:

- Positive (or negative) trends toward achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce at all grade levels and in all occupations, as measured through analysis of workforce and survey data.¹⁴
- Noticeable changes in the numbers of discrimination complaints, types of issues, bases of complaints, and/or findings of discrimination.
- Increases or decreases in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) at either the informal and formal stages of the EEO complaints process.
- Success of education, awareness, training and information dissemination efforts, which may be measured by looking at responses to specific Federal Employment Viewpoint Survey (EVS) and NASA D&I Assessment Survey questions, for example, "The diversity and inclusion training employees receive at NASA is useful," and comparing positive response rates over time.
- Success of efforts to reach out to underutilized and underserved communities, as measured by the participation of Agency and Center outreach and recruitment representatives at minority and women's professional conferences, and at minority serving institutions, as well as invitations to participate in local school and community events, particularly those that target diverse and/or underserved populations, and feedback received from such events.
- Improvement (or lack thereof) in retention and inclusion of minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities in the workplace, as measured by workforce data, exit surveys, focus groups, survey data, and other innovative means of acquiring qualitative data.

¹⁴ Because workforce data are not available for LGBT employees, performance will be measured through other indicators, such as survey results, complaints data, focus groups, and anecdotal information.

SEPM KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES

NASA requires that SEPMs possess the critical knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to successfully fulfill the roles and responsibilities described above.¹⁵ ODEO and the Centers will take steps to develop the KSAs of SEPMs through individual development plans and performance planning. ODEO will provide technical assistance to the Centers in this regard. When new SEPMs are hired, these KSAs should be considered as critical job factors in position descriptions and vacancy announcements. The specific knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by SEPMs are outlined below.

KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS

SEPMs should have a knowledge of relevant civil rights laws; executive orders; EEOC regulations, management directives, and guidance; NASA policy directives and procedural requirements; and ODEO guidance. The breadth and depth of the SEPM's knowledge depends on his/her grade level. However, as a general matter, SEPMs should have a working knowledge of the following authorities:

- Equal Pay Act of 1963;
- <u>Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;</u>
- <u>Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967;</u>
- <u>Sections 501</u> and <u>508</u> of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- Legal hiring authorities such as <u>Schedule A</u> and <u>Veteran's Preference</u>;
- Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002;
- Code of Federal Regulations, <u>Title 29, Part 1614;</u>
- Executive Orders <u>11478</u>, <u>13163</u>, <u>13164</u>, <u>13171</u>, <u>13506</u>, <u>13515</u>, <u>13548</u>, and <u>13583</u>;
- EEOC Management Directives <u>110</u> and <u>715</u>;
- NASA Policy Directives <u>NPD 3713.2I</u>, <u>3713.60</u> and <u>3713.8B</u>;
- NASA Procedural Requirements NPR <u>3713.1B</u>; <u>3713.2</u>; <u>3713.3</u>; <u>3713.4</u>;
- ODEO Guidance on <u>ERGs</u>, <u>Transgender Employees</u>, and SEPs.

ODEO notes that this list is not exhaustive. For example, SEPMs also need to have knowledge of Center specific EEO policies and procedures.¹⁶ Furthermore, some SEPMs will need to have a more comprehensive knowledge of some of these authorities than others. For example, Asian American/Pacific Islander Program Managers will need a more thorough knowledge of Executive Order 13515 than other SEPMs, and Disability Program Managers will need a more thorough understanding of the laws, policies, and procedures that pertain to individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, SEPMs should have specialized knowledge pertaining to their constituencies. They should know the primary issues of concern to their constituencies, both locally and nationally. They

¹⁵ See OPM's Equal Employment Opportunity Series, GS-0260 at: <u>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/classification-</u> <u>qualifications/classifying-general-schedule-positions/#url=0200</u>.

¹⁶ Agency and Center policy directives and procedural requirements are accessible at: <u>http://nodis3.gsfc.nasa.gov/.</u>

should be aware of local, state, and national organizations relevant to their groups, particularly those that advocate for education and employment opportunities. They should also be culturally competent within the community of their constituency.

SKILLS

In addition to specialized knowledge, SEPMs need specific skills to be effective advocates, facilitators, and liaisons. First, it is critical that SEPMs have or develop strong communication skills, both written and verbal. SEPMs must be able to communicate effectively with their constituents and management inside the organization, and with community groups and professional organizations outside the organization. SEPMs must likewise develop analytical skills, in order to conduct analysis of workforce and survey data, and be able to assess organizational behavior. This does not mean that SEPMS need to be statisticians or survey experts. However, they need to be able to think critically and logically and understand and use descriptive statistics.

SEPMs need to have conflict management skills, such as mediation and negotiating. There are times when SEPMs may need to manage conflict or negotiate solutions within their constituencies, between their constituencies and other constituency groups, or between their constituencies and management.

ABILITIES

SEPMs need to be able to build and lead teams. Included in their leadership abilities, SEPMS need strong consensus building and coalition building abilities. SEPMs are, in essence, change agents. The ability to build coalitions and lead teams is a critical component of leading or influencing change. Similarly, SEPMs need to cultivate their creativity in order to develop innovative strategies to address challenges and issues.

SEPM SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST

ODEO has developed an SEP Self-Evaluation Checklist (attached as Appendix A). The Checklist is designed to provide the Agency and Centers with a means of assessing the progress of our SEPs in the five key areas identified above. The Checklist should be utilized to enhance Center EEO planning and execution, for example, planning and reporting under MD 715 and other externally required reports. ODEO will ask for the SEP evaluation tool to be completed and submitted on an annual basis, along with other MD 715 deliverables. ODEO will review the Center checklists to assess the extent to which SEPMs are interfacing with employees, management, and partner offices to advance EEO and D&I objectives.

CONCLUSION

This Guidance establishes the Agency's position on SEP management and provides a means for assessing the progress of SEP efforts, in alignment with the Agency's Strategic Plan. Attracting and

advancing a diverse workforce and continually enhancing the inclusiveness of our workplaces are critical components of the NASA Strategic Plan, one that serves to keep the Agency at the forefront of EO and D&I efforts government-wide. We hope that this Guidance serves to provide the necessary framework for high-functioning SEP management in the dynamic NASA workplace of the 21st Century. ODEO will monitor the implementation of the Guidance to ensure that it does. The chart on the following page summarizes the SEPs designated by NASA, their roles and responsibilities, and the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed of SEP managers.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS SUMMARY

NASA Special Emphasis Programs:

- African Americans
- American Indian/Alaska Natives
- Asian American/Pacific Islanders
- Individuals with Disabilities and Disabled Veterans
- Hispanics
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered
- Women

Primary roles and responsibilities of SEP Managers:

- Advice and education to supervisors, managers, and employees to better address the needs and concerns of SEP groups.
- Interface with employees to better understand the needs and concerns of SEP groups and integration of various subgroups within the larger constituency.
- Monitoring and analysis of workforce data to assess successful participation of SEP groups in the NASA mission.
- Community outreach and recruitment to achieve and retain greater diversity in the NASA workforce and in the STEM pipeline.
- Measuring EEO progress in achieving a diverse workforce in all occupations and at all grade levels.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Needed by SEP Managers

- Working knowledge of civil rights laws, executive orders, EEOC management directives, NASA policy directives and NASA procedural requirements.
- Communication skills, including negotiating.
- Data analysis skills.
- Leadership skills and abilities.
- Consensus, coalition, and team-building skills

APPENDIX A. SEPM SELF-EVALUTION CHECKLIST

The following checklist evaluates the SEP based on five key areas of roles and responsibilities: (1) Advice and Education, (2) Workforce Interface and Integration, (3) Monitoring and Workforce Analysis, (4) Community Outreach and Recruitment, and (5) Measuring EEO Performance.

Special Emphasis Programs – Self Evaluation		
Evaluated By: Evalua	tion Date:	
1. Advice and Education		
Does Center policy explicitly reference SEPs in Center directives, statements or memos? (Center may adopt Agency policy) (<i>Please elaborate in Comments section.</i>)	□ YES	□ NO
Do SEPMs provide an opportunity for constituency group members to provide input and comment on proposed Agency or Center policy affecting the workforce? (<i>Please</i> <i>elaborate in Comments section.</i>)	□ YES	□ NO
Has the Center provided educational opportunities for managers, supervisors, and employees on objectives of SEPs, such as through newsletters or other media (either all SEPs or specific ones) in the past year? (<i>Please</i> <i>elaborate in Comments section.</i>)	☐ YES	□ NO
Has the Center provided education and awareness events or activities for SEP groups, for example, during commemorative months? (<i>Please elaborate in Comments</i> <i>section.</i>)	□ YES	□ NO
Is the Reasonable Accommodations Process under NPR 3713.1B functioning effectively, for example, requests processed in required timeframes? (<i>Please elaborate in</i> <i>Comments section.</i>)	□ YES	□ NO
Have the Center's EO/D&I and other websites been updated to provide specific information about SEPs and AGs and/or to link to Agency websites and guidance? (Please elaborate in Comments section.)	□ YES	□ NO
Comments:		

2. Workforce Interface and Integration		
Is there an Advisory Group or Employee Resource Group for	□ YES	
each SEP? (If no, please elaborate in Comments section.)		
<i>If no</i> , do the SEPMs periodically hold focus groups or town hall meetings to communicate with constituencies?	□ YES	
<i>If yes</i> , are there functioning interfaces between the SEPMs and the Advisory Groups/ERGs?	□ YES	□ NO
For example:		
Does the SEPM participate in Advisory Group or ERG meetings?	□ YES	
Do the SEPMs support Agency-recognized groups such as FEW, GLOBE, and BIG?	□ YES	
Do the SEPMs coordinate activities with partner offices such as Education, Human Capital, and others? (Please elaborate in Comments section.)	□ YES	
Comments:		

3. Monitoring and Workforce Analysis		
Have SEPMs identified challenges and or action plans for	□ YES	
inclusion in the Model EEO Center plan and/or D&I plan?		
(Please elaborate in Comments section.)		
Have SEPMs identified promising practices to share with	□ YES	□ NO
management and employees?		
Are SEPMs involved in implementing actions in the Model	□ YES	
EEO Center plan and/or D&I plan? (Please elaborate in		
Comments section.)		
What other Plans or Reports do SEPMs contribute to?		
What types of data are SEPMs analyzing?		
What are the specific needs and concerns culled from these and	alyses?	
Comments:		

4. Community Outreach and Recruitment		
Do the SEPMs coordinate with Education and Human	□ YES	
Capital on planning outreach, recruitment events,		
including identification of recruitment venues? (Please		
elaborate in Comments section.)		
Do the SEPMs help to ensure the broadest dissemination	□ YES	
of vacancy announcements? (Please elaborate in		
Comments section.)		
Do the SEPMs participate in recruitment events such as	□ YES	
professional and advocacy group conferences, e.g.,		
Society of Women Engineers, Society of Asian Scientists		
and Engineers? (Please elaborate in Comments section.)		
Do the SEPMs involve employees in outreach and	□ YES	
recruitment? (Please elaborate in Comments section.)		
Do the SEPMs measure return on investment for outreach	□ YES	
and recruitment efforts, for example, recording the		
number of vacancy announcements transmitted to		
participants? (Please elaborate in Comments section.)		
Comments:		

5. Measuring Progress

What progress has been made in addressing SEP concerns over the past year, e.g., has	
there been an increase in employment, average grade, and retention rates for groups?	
(Please describe in Comments section.)	

2 years?			
4 years?			
Has applicant data for this group improved over time?	□ YES		
Is progress indicated for SEP groups by results of EVS, D&I survey, focus groups, exit surveys, or other means. (<i>Please describe in Comments section</i> .)			
Are sufficient resources being allocated for SEPs to function effectively?	□ YES		
Comments:			

APPENDIX B. SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Based on the constituency groups set forth in this Guidance, special observance efforts should be made at each Center for the following:

- Black History Month (February)
- Women's History Month (March)
- Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month (May)
- Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Pride Month (June)
- Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15)
- Disability Employment Awareness Month (October)
- Native American Heritage Month (November)

SEP efforts for these events can take many forms, depending on available resources and level of interest at the Center (e.g., lobby displays/posters, newsletter articles, keynote speakers, panel discussions, brown bag lunches, etc.). Monthly observances also could be shared with installation neighbors, via webinars, or through partnerships with other Federal agencies. Centers may also wish to consider programs and events commemorating additional special observances, for example, the following:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration (January)
- Holocaust Remembrance Week (late April early May)
- Memorial Day (last Monday in May)
- ADA Passage Day (July 26)
- Women's Equality Day (August 26)
- LGBT History Month (October)
- National Coming Out Day (October 11)
- Disabled Veterans' Day (Veterans' Day November11)
- Native American Heritage Day (November 28)
- NASA Day of Remembrance (late January)