



APR 20 2012

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

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The Director

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6143

The Honorable Dennis Ross
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6143

Dear Chairmen Issa and Ross:

Thank you for your letter of March 1, 2012, expressing your concerns about the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. The purpose of the PMF Program is to attract outstanding men and women with a clear interest in and commitment to the leadership and management of public policies and programs to develop them into the future leaders in government. The Program has a long and distinguished history of successfully carrying out its purpose. However, as you noted, the Program experienced some unfortunate problems during the recruitment cycle for the Class of 2012. I have taken steps to address the problems encountered during this cycle and also to substantially enhance the program in response to President Obama's Executive Order 13562 – Recruiting and Hiring Students and Recent Graduates, issued in December 2010. These changes are designed to burnish the prestige of the program and improve the application and assessment process. The revitalized program will be in place in time for the next recruitment cycle for the Class of 2013.

The following response is provided to your request for information:

1. A description of all issues that may have adversely affected a candidate's ability to apply for the Program and what specific actions OPM took to remedy those issues.

Though there were some complications during the application cycle this year, we do not believe they prevented any applicant from being able to complete the application. Instead, upon learning of the problems, OPM took prompt action to resolve them.

First, in November 2011 and January 2012, some individuals received incorrect results via email notice. Though we identified these errors almost immediately and sent the correct notifications promptly, these miscues undoubtedly were a source of frustration for the applicants. These notices had no effect on the applicant's ability to apply to the program.

Some individuals did encounter additional problems when attempting to complete the application process. Some did not receive emails related to the application process, some experienced a broken link to the on-line assessment, and some were affected by a server outage. Each time an issue arose, the PMF Program communicated with applicants through a variety of means including social media, sending multiple emails from different servers, and phone calls. Each applicant issue was addressed individually and, in order to ensure that interested individuals were not prevented from applying, OPM provided affected individuals with additional time to take the assessment or an opportunity to retake the assessment, as individual circumstances dictated.

2. A timeline for any changes to the PMF program (including new pending program regulations that affect Student Pathways.)

- PMF Program Reinvigoration:
 - OPM has fostered a relationship with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration and the Partnership for Public Service to seek their professional advice for the program. We also conducted focus groups and surveys with PMFs, coordinators and supervisors in an effort to enhance the program. This collaboration has the basis for our efforts to reinvigorate the PMF Program. Our latest step in this effort was to award a new contract designed to remake the application and assessment processes and create a new database of PMF finalists. The new application will incorporate a more user friendly on-line assessment process. We are also developing an exciting and challenging in-person assessment and are exploring involving senior government officials as assessors. We are significantly improving and enhancing our communication tools and adopting quality assurance measures. We will have better support systems for data access, management, and reporting, as well as improved tracking for PMF alumni. The new application and on-line assessment will be tested in July 2012 and completed by August 2012. The in-person assessment will be ready for use by September 2012. All new systems include multiple stages of validation and quality assurance reviews. We are confident we will overcome past issues with the new system.
- Pathways Program Regulations:
 - OPM anticipates that the regulations implementing Executive Order 13562, including changes to the PMF Program, will be published in final form later this spring. The regulatory changes affecting the PMF Program will apply to the class of 2013 recruitment cycle.

3. A list of training or training materials OPM provides Agency PMF Coordinators to help them better administer the Program within their own agencies.

- The PMF Program conducts an in-person training session for PMF Coordinators at least once a year. The training includes a discussion of hiring practices, the purpose for the PMF Program, how individuals should be developed through formal training and rotational opportunities, how individuals should be utilized in the program; and what is required to complete the program. We also provide a list of resources. In addition, the PMF Program Office will be initiating monthly webinar training for coordinators who are appointed between the annual training sessions.
- The PMF Program website (www.pmf.gov) includes information on program requirements as well as a copy of the PMF Guide for Agencies.
- In addition to meeting with Agency PMF Coordinators on a one-on-one basis when requested, the PMF Program Office provides continuous assistance through a call-in line and group email box. Both are monitored throughout the workday to provide immediate assistance.

4. A description of what, if any steps OPM takes to:

- Qualify an individual as an Agency PMF Coordinator.
 - The PMF Program is administered by OPM but operationally delivered at the agency level. Therefore, agencies have the discretion to determine who will serve as their PMF Coordinators. Accordingly, OPM does not specifically qualify agency coordinators but works with them to help ensure the program's success. Often the role of PMF Coordinator is assigned as collateral duty.
- Ensure that Agency PMF Coordinators provide adequate guidance and supervision of the Program and Fellows within their respective agencies.
 - While the current regulations do not specifically require an agency to identify a PMF Coordinator, OPM believes it is a critical component to an exceptional PMF Program. For that reason, OPM added this requirement to the new Pathways regulations. Agencies will be required to identify the PMF Coordinator in their Memorandum of Understanding in order to implement the program. The role of the PMF Coordinator is defined in the new regulations and includes information about the creation of the Individual Development Plan for each PMF. The guidance specifies that the coordinator should be someone in the agency's Human Resources Office or Training Department. In addition to the steps outlined in response to item 3, we have also convened an inter-agency Pathways Advisory Council to promote sharing of best practices for all Pathways programs, including PMF.

5. The retention rate for Fellows (compared to all new employees, all new employees hired directly from college or graduate school, and all employees in general.)

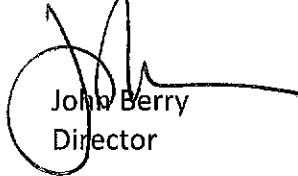
The Fellows retention rate has clearly exceeded that of other new employees in government and has been consistent with the general employee rate. Looking at retention over a recent 4-year period for new PMF hires, at the 2-year mark, the average rate of retention was approximately 84%. The overall retention rate for new employees hired during this same period averaged only 58%. At the 4-year mark, 71% of Fellows were still in the government while only 49% of other new government employees were on-board.

6. A list of formal complaints received by OPM regarding the Program.

The PMF Program has not received any formal complaints, e.g. letters to the OPM Director, Ombudsman, or other OPM official, during the period running from January 2009 to present (as specified in the attachment to the letter). The PMF Program received informal complaints through our social media sites. These issues were addressed immediately and to the satisfaction of the candidates. The PMF Program Office constantly monitors emails, phones and Facebook to provide timely assistance and responses to inquiries.

I appreciate your interest in the PMF Program. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact Tania A. Shand, Director, Congressional and Legislative Affairs at (202) 606-1300.

Sincerely,



John Berry
Director

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

The Honorable Stephen Lynch
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce
U.S. Postal Service and Labor Policy