

**ASSESSMENT OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE AND CIVIL SERVICE
RECRUITMENT SYSTEMS**

**A Report for the Deputy Administrator
Agency for International Development**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

People are A.I.D.'s most important asset. But A.I.D. pays insufficient care to human resources. The Assessment Team looked at but one symptom of this larger problem - recruitment. This Team reviewed A.I.D.'s system for identifying, qualifying, and employing new U.S. direct hire employees. By way of comparison, it also conducted selective reviews of the recruitment/selection procedures of other private and public organizations.

A.I.D. may not be doing as well as it might at recruiting either Foreign or Civil Service staff. This perception is often shared by Recruitment and other PM Officers charged with attracting/selecting new hires. If A.I.D. is to "do more with less," its needs the best people it can get.

Recruitment system weaknesses are not primarily the responsibility of recruitment staff. A.I.D.'s recruitment staff copes heroically in an ad hoc stop-and-start environment, with virtually no workforce planning other than replacement for anticipated attrition. In fact, during the course of the recent past those who manage the function have made improvements much to their credit. A good example are the new and separate criteria for both entry and mid-level hiring.

We're sure that more would have been done if only the staff had sufficient resources and time to address the many issues that faced them. A.I.D. requires a more effective, more rapid way to hire the people it needs. But confidence and communications between recruiters and program managers/end-users do need repair.

Major components of a better recruitment system are:

- **Continuing senior management involvement.**
- **Comprehensive workforce planning.**
- **Targeted recruitment especially of minority and women candidates.**
- **A more professional approach, including adequate staff, space, and automation in the Recruitment Office.**
- **Simplification of the Technical Review Committee Process.**

Workforce Planning and the Employee of the Future: A.I.D. cannot have an effective recruitment strategy without comprehensive/continuous workforce analysis. As well as replacing people leaving the work force, A.I.D. urgently needs input on the different kinds of new staff needed to carry out new program directions. Agency consensus is lacking on the kind of people we require. We recommend that a new workforce planning unit include oversight by senior staff to ensure top level attention to our recruitment strategy and to define the occupational skills and personal qualities needed to manage our programs. A.I.D. should reinstate the IDI and Management Intern programs as major means of getting bright entry-level people into the Agency. It should also consolidate backstops as part of our efforts to develop broader gauged cross-trained managers.

Minorities/Women: Despite good intentions on the part of A.I.D.'s recruiters and EEO staff, under-representation of women and minorities continues to be a serious problem in professional positions. A.I.D. needs more diverse representation on its Technical Review Committees and outreach recruitment efforts, including better coordination between the Office of Equal Opportunity and the Recruitment Staff of Foreign Service Personnel.

Clerical/Secretarial: The serious lack of qualified GS secretaries is one of our largest human resources management problems. Along with other federal agencies, A.I.D. finds it harder to compete with other employers. It needs a comprehensive outreach plan, tighter screening of GS secretarial applicants, active and creative efforts to improve non-compensation aspects of our secretarial positions that affect job satisfaction and retention, and some motivational techniques (e.g. an employee referral cash incentive program).

Foreign Service Recruitment: The FS Recruitment staff works in a crisis-management environment. It needs more people and space, to be elevated in PM's organizational structure, and to run a more proactive and continuous operation. Its internal paperwork screening process, time-consuming and archaic, needs drastic revision and automating. A.I.D. should do more phone screening to reduce the number of interviews we conduct. Recruiters need to focus more on people, not paper -- and on quality rather than volume. Technical Review Committees' screening criteria need a overhaul, with senior manager input and guidance on how to apply the criteria. These committees, or a single, select committee, with PM direction, will

insure more consistent treatment to applicants. Today, the committees are too large and overly stressful for job candidates. Raising the quality and continuity -- while reducing the size -- of committee membership should help correct some of these failings.

Treatment of New Hires: Both recruitment and pre-employment processing suffer from poor public relations. A.I.D. needs to be more responsive and accurate in giving information. It should do better orientation. Pre-employment processing is untimely, and confusing. The function should be located in the Recruitment Branch, and salary setting should be made more flexible. Reference checking should be done more thoroughly.

Civil Service Recruitment: Despite its foreign service orientation, A.I.D. still needs special skills and experience that only civil service employees may be able to provide. It should combine FS and GS outreach/recruitment as part of a central human resources strategy. A.I.D. should consider further relaxing of Obey Amendment implementation.

Other Organizations: Private sector and international organizations often use different approaches in their hiring. Their recruitment, compared to A.I.D.'s, is both more continuous and more targeted, with more emphasis on quality, not quantity. There is more mutual confidence and communication between recruiters and program managers, and more senior manager involvement in the recruitment process. A.I.D. should consider making use of some of the approaches used by other organizations.

II. INTRODUCTION

This assessment was commissioned by the Deputy Administrator as part of the continuous series of internal appraisals begun in early 1988.

The initial Scope of Work presented to the Assessment Team called for a broad review of the problem of filling vacancies in A.I.D. But the Team felt the overall question of supply and demand for human resources was, in practical terms, beyond the realm of possibility for it to address in the time allowed for this review. A multitude of issues affect the vacancy question, particularly in field missions. These include: career opportunities for spouses; educational facilities for children; health care facilities; discipline in the assignment process; gaps in certain backstop specialties attributable to previous hiring freezes; incoherent hiring practices; accelerated rates of early retirements; unattractiveness of some overseas assignments, due to such factors as terrorism and newly emerging health concerns.

The broader question of the supply and demand of human resources is of vital importance to the success of the Agency's program. This report identifies several major issues which deserve to be dealt with as in-depth exercises independent of this assessment.

However, with the concurrence of the Deputy Administrator, this assessment concentrates on the narrower question of the input of new U.S. Direct-Hire employees (both FS and GS) to the Agency.

The Assessment Team primarily used the interview method of gathering information. In addition, the team observed the Technical Review Committee interviews of 14 applicants, and separately surveyed forty committee members about their role. The results of that survey are summarized in Appendix 4. The Assessment Team also reviewed an array of background documents relevant to the topic.

A.I.D. personnel interviewed represent a cross-section of both those directly responsible for the recruitment process and those who are clients for A.I.D.'s recruitment services. The team also met with representatives of the private sector, other Federal agencies, and international development organizations. The team appreciates the input of the substantial number of people who made time available for interviews. A list of those interviewed can be found at the end of the report. See Appendix 1.

The Foreign Service Personnel Division as well as the Civil Service Personnel Division were particularly helpful with information and exhibited a large amount of patience with the process for which the Team is deeply appreciative. The Team also wishes to express its gratitude to former Recruitment Directors, Judy Ross and Bill Granger, who gave liberally of their time and advice; the former was especially helpful in arranging for Team members to gain access into several private sector organizations.

There is underway concurrently with this assessment a review of the Recruitment Staff workload by Booz Allen & Hamilton, Inc., the results of that work should be read as a companion piece to this report.

A draft report of the Assessment was given broad distribution and resulted in the receipt of comments from 27 bureaus and offices. The Assessment Team appreciates these responses and has carefully considered all the remarks and accommodated them where possible.

The Team believes that the report is an accurate portrayal of the current state of the recruitment system based on the perceptions of a large number of senior managers in the Agency and information gathered from a broad range of officers who are intimately involved in the recruiting process. We are convinced that there are many valuable observations and recommendations in the report which impact on recruiting and are worthy of serious consideration by senior management.

III. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A. WORKFORCE PLANNING

OBSERVATION: Workforce Planning, central to any effective personnel system and recruiting activity, does not take place in any comprehensive way in A.I.D. At best we have an ad hoc system which considers several components of workforce analysis, such as attrition and operating budget constraints. This system is badly flawed because it does not consider program needs, directions, and changes. There is no strategic vision of the Agency's program, its direction and changes, and no analysis of the skill mix and personnel needs related to them. A recruiting activity not based on such an understanding is incomplete, and results in simply replacing losses with employees who have similar skills, which may or may not match the Agency's needs.

DISCUSSION: Without comprehensive and continuous workforce analysis, there is no recruitment strategy. The process is driven by short-fused emergencies and high-pressure interest groups. This aggravates the ad hoc nature of the process. Static hiring levels and the changing nature of our work and the labor force underline the importance of better job analysis, which is the first critical step in workforce planning. To the credit of some senior managers, activities underway are moving toward correcting the situation. The Assistant to the Administrator for Personnel and Financial Management has proposed that a workforce planning unit be attached to his office. (As of the final editing of this report, this proposal has been approved.)

A shortcoming of this proposal is the lack of input of program strategy, directions and needs. It has been suggested that the deficiency can be overcome by using a multi-year projection of personnel needs, both in numbers and skills, provided by our field mission directors. The problem with that approach is that our field programs and their needs are dynamic and change rapidly. Even now, the annual budget submission is not used as a basis for personnel decisions, because missions frequently modify their original one-year projections. A static four-year projection would be no better, and would undoubtedly be far less accurate than our annual projections. What is needed is a continuous dialogue with operating units -- to help translate changing program needs into onward recruitment goals.

If a workforce planning function is located organizationally in PFM, high-level senior managers from the operating bureaus and offices must provide oversight. Without that continuous participation and verification of personnel needs, the new approach will be no better than what we have now, namely, a replacement of anticipated employee losses, based solely on projected attrition and availability of operating funds.

Under the current approach, very few, if any, senior managers participate in the decision-making process on the types or numbers of people to be hired. These managers, who should be concerned with the composition of the Agency's workforce, have no real input into the decisions which influence that composition. Because we lack a long-term recruitment strategy, the recruitment function of the Agency is a stop/start affair with no continuity, no uniformity, poor networks and contacts, and a poor public relations image. It is forced to respond to urgent outbursts of demand for recruiting, which result from the pressures and influence of both internal and external interest groups (e.g. cases in point - the current pressure to hire Foreign Service Natural Resource Officers, and a variety of Civil Service specialists, e.g. a GS-14 Biologist, a GS 12/13 General Services Specialist, a GS 9/11 Damage Claims Examiner and a (GS-FS) mix of six attorneys.) These are exactly the sort of ad hoc requirements that contribute to A.I.D.'s unfocused approach to hiring, and may result in hiring people who do not fit long-term needs. An integrated workforce analysis function should be activated immediately to review all current and projected recruiting and devise a short term strategy compatible with the overall Agency perspective.

The Agency is currently in a selected hiring freeze. We understand that recruiting is active only for five categories. There appears to have been minimal participation by senior managers in the selection of these categories. Senior managers have also been told that hiring for FY 1989 would be based on quarterly determinations of operating budget availability. The result is a hiring situation driven by budget constraints and special interests, rather than an identification of priority requirements adjusted to budget availabilities. That situation is further aggravated by significant changes in geographic program levels, without corresponding adjustments in operating budget/personnel levels, e.g. the Africa Bureau dilemma of increasing program funds and a decreasing operating budget. (A Task Force led by PPC has been organized to address this issue.)

RECOMMENDATION: Workforce planning should be tied together in a single unit staffed by those qualified to conduct the essential analyses. The work of the unit should be reviewed periodically by the senior staff in a forum organized much like the earlier Senior Operations Group. It would be comprised of Assistant Administrators (or their deputies) and chaired by the Deputy Administrator (or, alternatively, the Counselor). The workforce planning unit would prepare an annual plan incorporating hiring levels by occupational skills for consideration and approval by the senior group. This plan would be the basis for the recruitment strategy implemented by the Recruitment staff of the Personnel Office.

B. EMPLOYEE OF THE FUTURE

OBSERVATION: There is no clear definition of the A.I.D. Employee of the Future.

DISCUSSION: No Agency consensus seems to exist on what the A.I.D. "Employee of the Future" should look like. One does find trends, however, which should at least provide a basis for dialogue among Agency leadership on this important topic. We know for example that the A.I.D. program is increasingly focused on policy dialogue; sector programming is replacing the project approach; the Agency needs greater analytical capability. OMB staff have recently concluded that A.I.D. has been unable to push economic reform initiatives strenuously partly because A.I.D. staff do not have expertise in either economics or business.

A.I.D. staff are forced more and more to be managers of resources, rather than hands-on doers; communication skills are more prized; smaller field missions make greater use of generalists; the Agency is moving toward multi-skilled staff; the Agency will always need a core of technical specialists; and the "Modernizing Asia" approach is moving toward Science and Technology exchanges. Collectively, regardless of where the program ultimately goes, a theme underlying these observations is the need for a motivated workforce, broad-gauged and flexible enough to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Advance glimpses of the work of the Hamilton Task Force indicate a strong push toward exploiting those Foreign Assistance opportunities where the U.S. has a comparative advantage. The focus is on such areas as trade promotion, Science and Technology exchange and cooperation, private enterprise development, agriculture, education and training, high-tech industries (manufacturing, communications), research on global problems, management expertise, and public administration. Programs for Advanced Developing countries and the use of the one-person "facilitator" model in Brazil and Mexico are highlighted by the Task Force. Fewer field missions and greater use of intermediaries also rank high on the Task Force agenda.

Many of the above are already happening and others will predictably happen. The Agency must get ahead of the curve and focus its attention now on the question of the "Employee of the Future". Trends already taking place call for a certain set of skills emphases in new employees. These trends are likely to continue even after the November election, whichever political party wins.

Rather than continue with our current replacement mode of hiring, the Agency should develop an inventory of skill needs and translate them into a recruitment strategy for immediate use by the Recruitment Office. Even during these lean budget times, the Agency is hiring. But the hiring continues to be in the traditional mold, with little seeming concern for any of the trends which impact on the kinds of staff we should be seeking. The thirty-nine people currently being recruited for FY 1989 should more clearly fit the "Employee of the Future," as seen by senior managers.

RECOMMENDATION: Stop the traditional hiring pattern. Task the Workforce Planning Unit for a definition of the occupational skills and personal qualities needed to manage Agency programs.

OBSERVATION: Selective, entry-level programs can develop "Employees of the Future."

DISCUSSION: Traditionally, the most effective recruitment instruments for the "Employee of the Future" in A.I.D. have been selective entry-level programs, such as the IDI and Management Intern Programs. These programs, targeted on bright recent

graduates with usually only limited work experience, have fallen on hard times in the recent past. Invariably, in discussions with all elements of the Agency, the original versions of these program, are fondly remembered and praised. Much of today's leadership in the Agency, both GS and FS, started as Interns.

Today, there is no management intern program. The IDI program has lost its special identity. Both programs were and should be for entry-level hiring. The recent use of the IDI program to hire mid-level candidates is widely recognized as a regrettable error which should not be repeated.

RECOMMENDATION: The Management Intern Program should be reinstated (we learned during interviews that there is a move to organize a PFM Intern Program) and both it and the IDI program should be used only for entry level hiring.

C. BACKSTOP SYSTEM

OBSERVATION: The current backstop system constrains hiring flexibility and employee mobility.

DISCUSSION: Declining personnel levels coupled with continuing or rising program funding levels, a growing sophistication in the A.I.D. program and greater use of a contractor work force have created the need for more multi-skilled managers. The Backstop System seriously inhibits employee mobility in an era when broad-guaged managers are critical. The system perpetuates a parochial approach to hiring. The Agency must broaden its occupational cones to provide greater mobility, stimulate more effective program management and raise morale. In this regard, the efforts to "Food Assistance, Certify" staff and to hire staff who can manage an integrated portfolio of agricultural, rural development and natural resource activities are steps in the right direction. Of equal importance, the Agency should continue to seek technicians with management experience.

RECOMMENDATION: Consolidate backstops to no more than a handful of broad-guaged occupational specialities. (We understand that Personnel Management is studying possible consolidations of backstops.) Cross-train existing staff to be multi-skilled. Special skills needed for the short term are best obtained using non-career hiring and IPAs, JCCs, PASAs, and other limited appointments.

D. MINORITIES AND WOMEN

OBSERVATIONS: Overall representation of professional non-minority women has improved. However, there is continuing under-representation of all women in most occupational specialties.

Under-representation of minorities in major occupational specialties is still a serious problem and the improved record in white female hires often masks the less than satisfactory performance in regard to Blacks, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

DISCUSSION: An August, 1987 Equal Opportunity Office analysis of the major occupational groupings in both the Civil and Foreign Services showed underrepresentation of women and minorities in a significant number of the key job specialties. For example, there is underrepresentation in these Civil Service career groupings: program officers, program managers, budget analysts, computer specialists, auditors, nutritionists, health advisors, and contract specialists. On the Foreign Service side, these imbalances occur in such important specialty areas as: agriculture development officers, program management, program officers, financial managers, public health and population, medical officers, contract officers, auditors. There are also imbalances in both FS and GS ranks of economists, attorneys, housing officers, and trade development officers.

Imbalances in some of these career specialties are especially critical as they are among the more important routes for upward mobility in promotions and movement toward executive level positions. Overall agency numbers are much less significant than imbalances in particular job categories. Successful careers with upward mobility in A.I.D. are traditionally more likely in certain job specialties. If women and minorities are concentrated in occupational specialties with less opportunity for upward mobility, then the imbalances in these job categories take on serious consequences.

Unfortunately, these imbalances are still reflected in recent hiring data. See Appendix 2. From January 1, 1985 through August 31, 1988, the Agency hired 622 GS and 335 FS employees. The Agency is doing a better job of hiring white females and minorities. Of the 957 new hires, 627 are white females or members of a minority (see attached statistical summaries). But about a third of the minority/female new hires are clerical employees based in A.I.D. Washington (i.e. BS 05, BS 07). Most of them are working at low grades, with limited upward-mobility opportunities.

In fact, if the BS 05s and BS 07s are deleted from the GS/FS pool, the record indicates a need to continue improving recruitment efforts. Over the last three years, we have not done as well as desired in attracting successful candidates to the so-called 'fast track' professional paths, such as the program and project development officer cones. Of 51 new FS hires in these categories, eleven white women and fourteen minority candidates came on board. One black male program officer and no black female program officers were hired. Similar challenges remain across the other backstops.

The lack of success in minority and female recruiting does not result from lack of good intentions on the part of the recruitment staff. It results, instead, from the fact that the Agency has permitted the recruitment function to deteriorate into a paper routine without a strategy for any kind of recruiting. It leads back to the question of Agency emphasis on the recruitment function. The approach to all recruiting, including minorities and women, is ad hoc by an office which is understaffed and overloaded. Although we have contacts and carry on business with 8-A firms and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, we do not systematically view them as recruiting pools. Without a clear view of recruiting needs and without a focussed effort at attracting candidates who fit program requirements, the result is predictable. We hardly attract minority candidates at all in fast track areas, and white women are concentrated in traditional specialties, such as health and education.

It's worth noting that the start of the era when greater numbers of women were recruited coincides with a time when those responsible for the recruitment effort were themselves females. To recruit more minority employees, it would seem to follow that we need greater involvement by our minority employees in our recruiting effort. The fact that there are very few minorities represented in the Technical Review Committees, a key selection point for incoming Foreign Service Officers, is evidence that consciousness raising and significant change are in order. The team was told by a female recently hired that she was struck by the fact that her Technical Review Committee was an all-white male committee of seven. Her perception was that the power and authority in this Agency belong to the white male population.

A minority Foreign Service officer who accompanied a recruiter on a trip to the Atlanta University Center (one of the few trips made) found that the minority students were unaware of career opportunities in international affairs. They explained that, whereas the private sector recruited actively and continuously, the U.S. foreign affairs agencies have not made an effort to get minority students interested or recruited for foreign affairs professions.

This trip has led to a continuing series of inquiries directed to this particular officer, which confirms the value of this approach. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any systematic Agency follow-up to this trip.

A.I.D.'s recruiting strategy must attract more minorities in general, and women in selected areas, to the Agency. We need a proactive effort to search out candidates rather than having them trickle into the Agency by chance. Professional women and minority employees in the Agency should be asked for their advice in this matter and be teamed with recruiters to personally visit target organizations. They can effectively explain our program and a career in the Foreign Assistance program. It will not suffice simply to send out brochures or wait for invitations. A personal touch is needed. The Agency needs to establish special linkages to university students before they graduate, using internships and work study programs.

OBSERVATION: A program analysis of the Agency's Affirmative Employment Program for Minorities and Women done in August 1987 cited a number of deficiencies in the Agency's recruitment activity.

DISCUSSION: The analysis "inferred that some of the procedures and operations of the Technical Review Committee process may be restricting the selection of minority group members and women for the Foreign Service." And that "... Technical Review Committee members are not exercising realistic criteria that are objective and uniformly applied in making certification and selection decisions." The analysis went on to say that: "Agency recruitment activities are fragmented," i.e., split between Civil Service Personnel and Foreign Service Recruitment. "These activities are done independently of each other, and nowhere do they appear to come together to produce a coordinated approach to affirmative employment recruitment." The analysis also found that "recruitment activities are not planned well in advance to provide the lead time required to effectively tap minority and women's recruitment sources." The analysis also found that "Foreign Service applicant flow data is incomplete" making it difficult to determine whether barriers exist for EO target groups.

This Assessment Team has found confirmation of all of the observations of the EO analysis. There is little uniformity in the conduct of the Technical Review Committees. Recruiting for candidates outside the government is fragmented. A.I.D. lacks an overall long-term recruitment strategy or even a short term plan for hiring. Lastly, the Foreign Service applicant tracking system is incomplete, complicated, and not user-friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Agency should develop a systematic approach for identifying recruitment sources for women and minorities and organize an aggressive outreach program to tap those sources. Greater utilization of the Agency's female and minority staff as recruiters is highly desirable.

Make greater use of Agency contacts with the HBCUs and hispanic oriented institutions. Tap the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization for recruiting targets.

Software packages are readily available to provide more efficient tracking systems. Recruitment should be given a budget priority to seek professional advice and install user-friendly systems quickly.

The Agency should expand a paid summer internship program for minority students at the undergraduate level, including an Agency-sponsored program for missions. Such programs can often lead to permanent hires. For example the American Academy for the Advancement of Science has been an excellent source of new hires.

Ongoing cooperative work/study programs should be enlarged.

OBSERVATION: There is room for a more structured role in recruitment of the Equal Opportunity staff.

DISCUSSION: The roles of the Recruitment staff and the Equal Opportunity Office need better definition in accordance with the provision of Handbook 25, which charges the Recruitment Staff with responsibility for coordinating all Agency recruitment. There currently is room for improvement in collaboration on outreach activities. Equal Opportunity is actively involved in minority recruiting, but not always in tandem with the Recruitment staff. Concentrating resources in a focused approach will have a much greater impact than will the staffs duplicating each other.

The Equal Opportunity Office can be helpful in identifying sources of minority candidates and acting as recruiters in a combined effort. There is also room for more involvement by EOP, as advocate of all minority groups and women in the screening process. If the Equal Opportunity staff is actively involved in these steps, the Agency will have a stronger Equal Opportunity focus and the EO staff will not have to sit on Technical Review Committees, whatever form the latter may take in the future. They will have done their job outside the Committee setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS: EO staff should play a more collaborative role in the hiring process. They should be consulted more systematically for sources of minority candidates and encouraged to act as recruiters in tandem with the recruitment staff.

EO should assist in making the applicant tracking system functional.

The Agency should ascertain whether EO has sufficient staff resources to effectively cover its broad responsibilities.

E. CLERICAL/SECRETARIAL

OBSERVATION: The GS clerical/secretarial problem is often described as the single largest human resources management—problem the Agency faces. A.I.D. is not alone, as it is a government wide problem. Yet, there is no comprehensive Agency plan for addressing it.

DISCUSSION: A.I.D. has a serious shortage of qualified GS applicants for secretarial positions, particularly to fill its Washington-based General Schedule (GS) positions. The three Regional Bureaus, for example, reported during the study that they have 37 clerical/secretarial vacancies and most of those positions have been vacant for up to six months.

Sources that traditionally have been used to reach qualified GS secretarial applicants have largely disappeared over the last ten to fifteen years and, where they do exist, the federal government does not seem to have a strong competitive position vis-a-vis the private sector. More alarming, however, is the fact that A.I.D. seems content to accept the problem as a fait accompli and is not conducting a broad-based visible outreach program that, among other things, draws upon promising ideas advanced by those affected by the

problem. Taken alone, any one of the ideas may not produce a large pool of qualified applicants, but if adopted together could serve to fill the serious gaps that now exist.

A focussed, centrally directed, sustained effort is needed to attract a larger pool of good applicants. Among the targets suggested are: students of area colleges and universities interested in part-time work; graduates of schools which have highly regarded secretarial programs; focussed recruitment in areas where unemployment is high due to loss of local industries; establishing long-term ties with institutions/organizations that are doing creditable training so as to gain first access to their graduates, etc. (The recent appointment of a full-time recruiter for GS secretaries is a good beginning, but much more is needed.)

RECOMMENDATION: A.I.D. should place a high priority on the problem of secretarial recruitment and begin by developing a comprehensive outreach plan to attract good applicants, drawing on the many promising ideas that have been suggested by Agency managers and using these managers to implement the plan.

OBSERVATION: A range of nontraditional, innovative ideas may help to improve A.I.D.'s competitive position vis-a-vis the private sector or even other federal agencies in attracting qualified GS secretarial/clerical applicants.

DISCUSSION: A recent study commissioned by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management has concluded that the likelihood of the federal government attracting the best and brightest into its workforce is bleak. This outlook is true especially of secretarial/clerical employees who, in earlier periods, turned to the federal government first, for job security and associated benefits. This is no longer the case, and special incentives may be required to stimulate renewed interest in federal service. A.I.D. should elicit some innovative ideas for fostering a renewal of interest in international development. One idea currently in use in the private sector is an employee referral incentive program under which employees receive a cash bonus for suggesting an applicant who is hired upon their recommendation and successfully completes the required probationary period.

RECOMMENDATION: A.I.D. should institute immediately an Employee Referral Incentive Program, targeted to GS clerical/secretarial applicants.

OBSERVATION: More careful screening of the GS secretarial applicants who are now applying must be done to reduce the frustration of supervisors.

DISCUSSION: Applicants attracted to A.I.D. are all too often only minimally qualified and bring into the workplace poor technical, language, telephone, and human relations skills, as well as serious Work Ethic shortcomings. Some hires, in retrospect, seem unsuitable. Many are being terminated in the first year of their appointments, requiring that supervisors must first endure poor performance then spend the extra time required to substantiate termination decisions. In some cases, the applicants would appear to benefit from additional training and grooming before assuming regular positions.

RECOMMENDATION: PM should apply a more rigorous standard before making referrals and establish a "secretarial training pool" for promising GS applicants, with the primary objective of providing the additional training needed to sharpen their skills before they are assigned to regular positions. Adequate space must be dedicated to this purpose. Successfully trained employees would be expected to make an associated commitment to A.I.D.

OBSERVATION: Indications are that qualified GS secretaries are leaving A.I.D. positions in alarming numbers. This trend must be reversed.

DISCUSSION: Beyond the issues of attracting and bringing on board qualified applicants for secretarial positions are the more complex issues surrounding job satisfaction and retention of those secretarial staff who are performing well and should be retained. Compensation does not appear to be as relevant as many believe it to be. Reasons for leaving include unreasonable expectations for the grade and pay scale of the positions; poor attitudes of supervisory and managerial staff; lack of a clear track to advance, etc. At the request of the Women's Action Organization, A.I.D. recently commissioned a study to assess the current environment, morale and productivity of staff in secretarial type support positions. The study envisions surveying all GS support staff to elicit information on such questions as reasons for turnover, factors in the environment which affect morale and productivity, views of the staff of possible improvements, and what is needed to improve job satisfaction and productivity.

RECOMMENDATION: A.I.D. senior management should become directly involved in this job-satisfaction study. The study's principal findings should be widely shared among managers, and its recommendations should be implemented.

OBSERVATION: The issues surrounding recruitment (and retention of GS and FS secretaries when examined together indicate that some changes are needed in the way both pools of resources are viewed.

DISCUSSION: Recruitment of Foreign Service secretaries brings a different mix of issues, although not totally dissimilar to those affecting GS secretaries. The principal issue is the length of time it takes to bring Foreign Service secretaries on board, followed by growing concern that, once on board, there are not always assignments suitable to their skills, experience and interests -- either in Washington or in the field. Very little creativity is used in finding challenging alternatives. One indication of this problem is the fact that, currently, there are too many Foreign Service secretaries in the pool, relative to the number of overseas assignments available, -- the result of flawed workforce planning. Some very real tensions seem to exist between Foreign Service supervisors and Civil Service clerical/secretarial staff. The former, in relating to GS secretaries, often draw unrealistically on their working relationships in the overseas setting. The Foreign Service secretary overseas is usually the ranking support employee with broad and varied duties including supervision and training of FSN and/or locally hired secretaries.

As with other professional FS backstops, recruitment of Foreign Service secretaries is done in a start/stop mode. While A.I.D. continues to attract good applicants, there is the underlying concern of whether they would be better if better targeted, and recruitment done on a continuous, albeit reduced scale. Currently, there is almost no coordination between Foreign Service secretarial recruitment and Civil Service secretarial recruitment. In periods when Foreign Service secretaries are not being hired, there may be opportunities to make referrals for consideration for Civil Service slots until there are openings overseas.

RECOMMENDATION: Recruitment of GS and FS secretaries should be consolidated in the enlarged Recruitment Office. As a first step in the process, applications received for Foreign Service secretarial positions should be routinely reviewed by the Civil Service secretarial recruiter to determine the applicant's interest in being considered for a GS position at A.I.D., pending the opening of a Foreign Service slot.

OBSERVATIONS: Many good secretarial (FS and GS) candidates are being lost to A.I.D. as they await security clearance, medical clearance and other pre-employment approvals.

DISCUSSION: The length of time associated with the processing of secretarial/support positions is a source of frustration and concern within the Agency. Office of Personnel sources reported processing times from three to twelve months, with security and medical clearances requiring the greatest blocks of time. Statistics maintained by the Office of Security reflect the FY 87/88 average for clearance processing to be 56.5 days.

The Office of Security is acutely sensitive of the processing time attributed to their office. They speak with pride, however, when they compare their average to the recently reported GAO figure of 140 days for clearances within the Department of State. IG/SEC believes that their current average will further improve by mid-February, 1989, following the hiring of two additional security professionals and the activation of an automated processing system that will be on-line in December of 1988. With these changes in place, IG/SEC believes that a 30 to 45 day turn-around time is realistic for clear cases being run entirely within the United States. In instances where applicants have lived or travelled extensively outside of the United States, IG/SEC does not anticipate a significant downward adjustment in current processing times due to their dependence upon the Department of State's Regional Security Officers for investigative assistance. In these instances, investigations generally take a back seat to other RSO priorities.

When questioned on the efficacy of shortening the investigative process, the Office stated that the A.I.D. system must adhere to established community standards. The Assessment Team certainly supports this objective. IG/SEC also clarified a popular misconception within this Agency when they advised that they do accept active clearances from other federal agencies.

Two additional factors identified by IG/SEC as adversely impacting upon timely clearance processing were improperly filled out security forms and an ever increasing number of marginally qualified candidates, whose prior drug, criminal, credit and otherwise questionable conduct require expanded investigative efforts prior to a clearance determination.

It is agreed by all that the security and medical clearance processes are having a direct impact upon the availability and timely recruitment of secretarial personnel, and that some qualified candidates are accepting positions with other organizations as a result of this screening process. To reduce this likelihood, changes are called for. IG/SEC is optimistic that current timeframes can be reduced.

RECOMMENDATION: IG/SEC should establish a policy of expediting security clearance actions for secretarial applicants so that they may be cleared within a thirty day timeframe.

IV. FOREIGN SERVICE RECRUITMENT

A. FOREIGN SERVICE RECRUITMENT STAFF

OBSERVATION: As currently organized and staffed, the unit, doesn't appear to have a high-priority, relative to other PM functions in competing for management attention and resources.

DISCUSSION: To its credit, the Recruitment Staff has performed the function far better than the Agency has a right to expect, given the lack of priority the staff has received over the past several years. The 1987 reorganization resulted in a downgrading of the function, despite the perceived merits of placing all Foreign Service Personnel-related work under the direction of a single officer. The office has not been fully staffed for any period since the reorganization, even at the height of the major recruitment campaign of 1987. Indicative of the low priority and seeming temporary nature of the organization is the manner in which staff resources have been allocated. All of these factors combined have served to create a pressure-filled work environment, with inadequate staff resources to perform even the most basic tasks of a viable recruitment program.

The manner in which employees have been temporarily assigned to assist with the ongoing workload has sometimes created more problems than solutions and is indicative of the low priority afforded to the operation. One such employee was on 300 hours of LWOP during a six month assignment; another was on duty for only 15 days of the last 50 days of the assignment. Both employees were separated following their temporary assignment to the unit, requiring that the unit chief become involved in a burdensome process to substantiate their separation action. Three of the four vacancies in the office have remained unfilled now for more than a year. More significantly, however, the unit has continued to exist under the cloud of temporary leadership. The last two unit chiefs have served on an acting basis, underscoring a view held in many quarters that the recruitment program is not taken seriously, particularly in relation to other PM responsibilities.

Many interviewed assert that the title "Recruitment Staff" is a misnomer for the office. They further assert that it is simply a reactive screening of thousands of unsolicited applications which appear to produce good applicants, but perhaps not the best. Staff have little choice but to perform in a reactive mode, leaving no time available for outreach, networking and forward planning. To their credit, however, the staff have continued to manage most work remarkably well. They are doing so by deferring work on some tasks, while staggering other tasks so that the more pressing work can be done on schedule, and by making effective use of staff on loan. This is an undesirable approach to such an important program, however, and brings the attendant risks of staff making errors and creating a bad image of A.I.D. with those who seek employment.

The Recruitment Office currently has an authorized employment allocation of six full-time permanent positions, one full-time temporary position, and one part-time clerical position. The staffing plan provides for a chief, three recruiters, three full-time clerks, and a part-time data entry clerk. On loan to the office are a trainee and FS secretary, who are performing regular, continuing responsibilities.

The role of the office, as envisioned by the Assessment Team, will clearly require additional resources. Filling vacant positions must be made a top priority, and greater stability must be achieved in the staffing plan to establish an air of permanency and commitment. The full-time temporary ceiling for a recruiter should be made permanent. Thereby, the chief of the unit would have more time to better focus on outreach activities, to better target applicants, and to undertake a wide range of planning activities heretofore neglected. Pre-employment processing and GS outreach activities, both professional and secretarial, should be consolidated in the new Recruitment Office.

Therefore, the two individuals currently doing GS secretarial recruitment and FS pre-employment processing (and the associated ceilings) would be transferred to Recruitment at the time of the change. One additional full-time ceiling is proposed to assure that adequate support resources are available to this enlarged pool of professionals. The office should consider retitling the full-time clerk positions to Personnel Assistant (Typing) so as to attract a different level of skills to support the recruiters. The change might also increase the likelihood of attracting highly motivated applicants willing to make a commitment to this important function.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Give the function proper emphasis. Elevate to independent division status, reporting directly to the Director of Personnel. Ensure adequate staff and space. Provide for a proactive outreach operating on a continuous basis. Make greater use of employee networks and referrals and the Agency's speaker's Bureau as recruitment vehicles.

Increase the FTE allocation by four full-time permanent positions: Two of the increases would be accommodated by transfer from other PM units; one represents a conversion from temporary to permanent status, resulting in an overall net increase of one. The support positions dedicated to the Recruiters should be redefined as Personnel Assistants.

OBSERVATION: The Office is handling a large volume of paper as it seeks to respond to and track applications. Improvements are needed to reduce the amount of staff time currently being devoted to these tasks.

DISCUSSION: Approximately 25 SF 171s (applications for Employment in the Federal Government) are received in PM/FSP/R daily. About an equal number of letters and resumes are received each day. Resumes are routinely returned with a form letter to indicate that only SF 171s may be used to apply for positions in A.I.D. SF 171s are moved immediately into the screening process after they have been date-stamped.

They are screened initially by a member of the staff to verify (1) citizenship status, (2) willingness to work overseas, and (3) the number of years the applicant would be available for service before reaching the mandatory age-limit for the Foreign Service. Failure to meet any one of these tests results in a "rejection" determination and the application is acknowledged and closed from further consideration.

A second screening is done by a Recruiter to determine an appropriate backstop for the applicant. Following that, a determination is made of whether the applicant meets the minimum requirements for education and work experience based on the standards which have been established for employment in that backstop, either as an intern or at mid-level. The applications of candidates who pass the review are then given to the designated Technical Review Committees, which conduct the final paper screenings.

All SF 171s are controlled within PM/FSP/R through an automated system known as the Revised Automated Tracking System, or RATS. This system, while permitting staff to track the status of every application at any given point in the screening and review processes, has been characterized by the office as non-user friendly requiring an inordinate amount of steps to enter basic information. PM/FSP/R staff believe some efficiencies could be achieved by moving to a less cumbersome, less labor-intensive system than RATS. In the course of this assessment, IRM staff were asked to evaluate RATS and confirm whether other options should be considered. Separately, the review team became aware of a number of software packages already available on the market that are being used by organizations to track the large volume of employment applications they receive. Central to any decision on automation is a review of the rationale for and manner in which applications and associated correspondence are now being handled. It may be useful to include such a task in the parallel review being conducted by Booz Allen. The analysis might also indicate which, if any, of the office tasks could be done under contract, e.g. advertising, data entry services.

RECOMMENDATION: An in-depth review of the internal screening process should be undertaken to reduce redundancy in the handling of papers and to make better use of automation.

B. SELECTION PROCESS (Foreign Service)

OVERVIEW: The selection of applicants to be hired is broken down into a series of screening points which narrows the field from the thousands of applications in the pool to the handful of people finally selected. Following the initial screening described above, a more rigorous screening is conducted by Technical Review Committees (there are eleven Committees broken down by backstop) which measure the applicants' SF 171 against a standard set of criteria for either entry level or mid-level hires. These same Committees conduct interviews of applicants who have passed through the paper review process and, based on the interviews, recommend the best-qualified candidates to the Director of Foreign Service Personnel for his consideration.

1. PAPER SCREENING BY TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEES

OBSERVATION: The paper screening process is labor intensive. Too many applicants survive the initial screening by Recruitment. Too many people handle too many applications too often. The paper screen is a stop/start process.

DISCUSSION: The Recruitment Staff screens all Standard Form 171s. In 1987, an unsolicited pool of over 7,500 applicants yielded about 2,100 "live," minimally qualified, applications. Recruitment sorts those applications by backstop and, farms them out to the 11 Technical Committees with over 50 members. Personnel's sorting by backstop is generally adequate. Committees rank order candidates to determine whom to interview.

Applications are screened in batches. The timing and sizes of batches are varied. Certain backstops tend to get greater numbers of applicants than others. During hiring phases, the pace quickens and committee members are asked to expedite reviews. Committee members are busy people. Gluts of minimally screened applications are a burden. In some cases, the burden is shifted from committee members to other officers in their divisions/sections.

RECOMMENDATION: Processing of applications should, as part of the overall strategy for recruitment planning, be cycled. That is, for example, paper screen reviews should take place only twice a year or four times. Similarly there would be interviewing cycles and deadlines for applications against annual targets.

OBSERVATION: Screening criteria are fair, but weights for overseas experience and foreign language ability may disadvantage minority candidates. Likewise the balance between education and experience may unduly favor educational credentials in certain specialties such as Economists.

DISCUSSION: The Technical Committee Members, using a numerically weighted check list, assess SF 171s. The recruitment staff should be commended for initiating a process of setting selection criteria for both IDIs and mid-entry level candidates. In the past there apparently were none. These criteria have been developed by Personnel, with some involvement by technicians and no review by senior managers. Criteria are applied individually and panelists are given no training in applying them.

After analysis, Committee Members return their score sheets for tabulation by Recruitment. A rank-ordered list is compiled and a cutoff point, usually at 60 of 100, is set. Arbitrarily, sixty is generally selected as the cutoff point. However, it is a sliding scale, which changes in relation to the numbers of applicants and Agency needs. Those above the cutoff line are called in for an interview. Sometimes, when a list is prepared, a minority or female candidate may fall somewhat below sixty. In these instances, Personnel will lower the cutoff point to be able to interview such candidates. (Not all Committee members subscribe to this policy). All candidates above the new line are called for interviews. Usually, the line is lowered no more than 3 to 4 points. In one instance the line was lowered as much as 7 points. Obviously, when the line is lowered, the number of interviewees increases with consequent work load implications for the Committees. Knowledge of this practice appears to vary from Committee to Committee. In fact, the Office of Equal Opportunity informed us that the Committees have never been instructed to "lower the cutoff point." They have been asked to consider a minority or woman ranked within a reasonable distance of the cutoff line in a given occupational specialty if affirmative employment goals have been set for that specialty.

RECOMMENDATION:

- **The long range goal should be to actively target and recruit sufficient female and minority candidates so that it is not necessary to use extraordinary means to achieve affirmative action goals.**

- **Criteria for screening need to be reviewed and approved by senior managers. Senior managers should meet with Committees to give them guidance on the application of the criteria.**

OBSERVATION: In some instances the weighting of criteria and the criteria themselves seem arbitrary.

DISCUSSION: The Committees judge candidates against four basic areas: language skills, education, work experience and 'special qualifications'. Each member has sheets for their backstop for mid-career or IDI-level candidates, which identify sub-topics of each of the major areas in greater detail and assign these elements points. Between the different Committees, there are variations in weights for each of the four basic areas and, within each of the areas, there

are similar differentiations between sub-factors between Committees. Not all the Committees use a scoring system that totals 100. A table is attached, as an appendix, which delineates some of the differences. See Appendix 3.

At least one Deputy Assistant Administrator has questioned the relative weights for a priority occupational specialty. This points to the value of input from senior managers in the process. Slight differences between the weights for sub-factors can be telling. A few points one way or another can make a tremendous difference in helping or failing a candidate. Many of these differences appear to be rationally related to the purposes of a technical selection. The basis for others is less clear. For example the commodity management backstop gives points for membership in an association, and another committee points for knowledge of A.I.D. operations. Generally, one might also question the different weights between certain kinds of education as opposed to experience. Overseas experience counts, but comparable inter-cultural exposure does not -- for example, work with Native Americans or along the Texas-Mexican border. Committee members are concerned about the rigidity of the current criteria and their valuation. One committee member lamented that "We're missing people who aren't paper pushers or world travellers."

RECOMMENDATION: Recruitment should annually review and adjust criteria with relevant personnel, program and technical staff. In the review of the criteria we recommend that greater flexibility be incorporated by giving more weight for pertinent experience as compared to educational background.

OBSERVATION: Currently, it is difficult to establish how the Review Committees are applying the criteria.

DISCUSSION: There is no feedback mechanism, nor does Recruitment train new members in how the system is meant to operate. The importance of achieving consistency to ensure fairness is not well understood. Likewise the predominantly white-male mix of the members, the general mid-level status of members, and the chance, during peak times, that the assessment may be superficial are cause for concern.

RECOMMENDATION: Committees need to have better minority and female participation, and to be trained in the application of the criteria.

OBSERVATION: Screening is expensive, but appropriate screening is necessary.

DISCUSSION: Of the 2,100 or so applicants who were paper screened, during the 1987 campaign about 700 were eligible to be called in for an interview. Several hundred were interviewed, perhaps 300. Of this number, about 140 were put into processing.

Screening and interviewing costs the agency money. A very gross-cost analysis indicates the order of magnitude of direct costs associated with the current practice for technical panelists only. This analysis excludes the costs to the candidate, costs which (aside from the airfare and hotel costs) recent hires tell us are significant and opportunity costs. The "normal" Technical Committee has from three to four technical members. To thoroughly paper review an SF 171 probably takes about fifteen minutes. (This assumes two read-throughs and some thought.) We assume that each SF 171 is seen by at least three committee members. If each 171 gets fifteen minutes of attention, and 2,100 forms are involved, 1,575 man hours have been invested, or about three quarters of a person year (2,080 hrs.) The actual time investment is probably much greater.

OBSERVATION: We interview too many people.

DISCUSSION: Participation on interview committees is even more labor intensive. Each interview takes at least an hour and a half per Committee member -- one hour for the interview, and a half hour for discussion, ranking, and review of the 171. Again assuming only three members on a Committee and between 2-300 interviews per panelist (6-900 total), we have an investment of at least 2,700 man hours, well over a person-year.

Generally, the private sector offers a position to one in two interviewed candidates. To reduce the interview pressure the private sector augments paper screening with telephone screening. This screening serves as another filter. It is the first "live" contact with a candidate. Appropriately trained and sensitive staff can use such a contact to assess the seriousness of an applicant, better inform the applicant about the Agency, the job and the interview process. In the private sector, in some instances, thirty percent of potential candidates withdraw from consideration at this point.

RECOMMENDATION: Successful rank-ordered candidates should be telephone screened by a professional in recruitment before coming in for an interview.

Improved automation is needed. Electronic mailing of information between Recruitment and Committee Members is desirable.

2. TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEES - A NEW APPROACH

OBSERVATION: If senior management insures that there is:

- a serious effort at comprehensive workforce analysis,
- an accurate identification of sources for new employees, (especially minorities)
- an active/continuous outreach program,
- a strengthened equal opportunity focus,
- and a high-priority recruitment function with the tools it needs to do a professional job,

the Agency will then have an effective and reliable system, which lessens the perceived need for detailed involvement by too many players. The Technical Review Committees, as we presently know them, can be disbanded.

DISCUSSION: The Agency is rife with defensive systems put into place because the confidence factor between entities is so low. Everyone has to sit on every committee and be in every meeting and clear every document in order to defend their interests. This terrible waste of time does not permit more substantive focus by a very talented, but highly frustrated, staff.

The Technical Review Committees are a good case in point. Equal Opportunity has to be represented because that office doesn't feel there is sufficient sensitivity to the hiring of women and minorities. All geographic Bureaus have to be represented because they don't have any confidence in the personnel system, and they don't trust colleagues to look out for their interests. The Recruitment Staff feel they must chair the meetings to keep everyone honest and apply uniform procedures. If the confidence factor in the Agency's systems, particularly personnel/recruitment, were substantially higher, these inefficient systems would not be needed.

RECOMMENDATION: Disband the eleven Technical Review Committees as presently constituted, and replace them with one select Committee made up of three senior officers.

After a thorough screening (both paper review and telephone screening) candidates should be interviewed by a select group of three senior managers, two of whom would represent broad Agency concerns, and one from the occupational specialty being considered. Each occupational specialty would provide one senior specialist, who

will rotate on the Committee as appropriate. The two core members and the pool of specialists would perform this function for a one-year cycle of structured recruitment. The ultimate responsibility of this select Committee would be to present its best qualified candidates for consideration by the Director of Foreign Service Personnel. We suggest that the Agency consider Civil Service participation on this committee.

We do not feel the need for participation on the Committee by the Office of Equal Opportunity, Career Development Staff, or the Recruitment Staff. If all are performing their roles efficiently outside the Committee setting, it is not necessary for them to be at the table. (This assumes that senior management will play a very active role in affirmative employment.)

3. TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEES (As Currently Constituted)

(Note: The Team has recommended that the Committees, as presently constituted, be disbanded. If they continue to function over the short-or long-term, the process must be strengthened. It is not working well as presently organized. A number of issues cited in the following section are confirmed in the responses to a questionnaire sent to forty committee members. We received twenty eight responses and a summary can be found in Appendix 4.)

OBSERVATION: The Technical Review Committees are operating in an atmosphere devoid of senior management guidance regarding program direction, desirable employee skill mixes, or target hiring numbers. The system may not be producing the "best" candidates for the agency's needs. The current system tends to perpetuate traditional types of employees and skill mixes, perhaps to the exclusion of candidates with innovative ideas and approaches.

DISCUSSION: The breakdown in workforce planning discussed earlier carries over into the Technical Review Committee process. That is, the Committees have not been given a set of goals to hire against. They often do not know the target numbers for hiring, and more importantly, they have no guidance from the Agency on program direction and skill mixes to complement the program. The process is almost completely divorced from senior management. In a word

the Committees do not have a vision, but they do have the responsibility (and authority) to recommend people for hiring. Amazingly the system seems to produce what A.I.D. staff generally conclude are "good people". But are they the best people? Are they correct for the program? No one can answer these questions because the Agency's personnel needs have not been defined, and the Technical Review Committees do not have a set of clear goals against which to measure prospective employees.

Almost without exception, there is no senior direction or participation in the Technical Review Committees. The criteria for selection are devised and applied by the committee members themselves. The Committees' judgments regarding the kind of employees the Agency needs and their assessments of the personal characteristics of individual applicants is practically a unilateral process devoid of senior management participation. The result is a system which tends to perpetuate traditional types of employees and skill mixes, perhaps to the exclusion of candidates with innovative ideas and approaches.

The Committees are not to be faulted, for they are simply filling a void which the Agency has created by not supplying a vision, or guidance for hiring. There is no framework. But the Committees are not the best judges of what the Agency needs. What is missing is a more comprehensive view of the Agency's needs -- one which could be brought to the process by the Agency providing guidance and with the participation of senior managers chairing the Committees. The chairperson would substitute a cohesive view of Agency needs for the parochial view of Committee members coming out of technical specialties and narrow Bureau backgrounds.

Senior managers have invariably expressed a variety of concerns that the recruitment process (which often means Technical Review Committees) has not produced the skills needed for their programs. Some examples: Private Enterprise Officers are hardly ever hired, even though the Private Sector is an Agency priority; Sector Programming requires a new type of Project Development Officer, but we seem to be hiring in the old mold. There is a need for solid program economists in field missions but the emphasis is on Ph.D candidates with spectacular academic credentials. Natural Resource management is at the head of everyone's agenda except that of the Agency's recruitment activity. Selection criteria for Human Resources Development officers do not incorporate training background, while participant training is one of the Agency's higher priorities.

Several things must happen here. Needs must be precisely defined and validated as part of an Agency strategy and, once validated, assigned to the recruitment staff as hiring targets. Neither of these things happen in any systematic way now. The result is frustrated senior managers who condemn the system as unresponsive, and who look for alternate ways of carrying on business, e.g., use of A.D. appointments and consultants.

The workforce analysis function should be organized immediately to deal with the ad hoc recruiting being conducted. A workforce analysis group (Personnel and Financial Management with input of Regional Bureaus) should translate program directions, projected changes, expected attrition and operating budget limits into hiring targets, for review by the senior staff as discussed earlier. Ad hoc hiring currently authorized should be temporarily suspended and a short term comprehensive plan developed. (If current hiring is critically urgent the mix of skills and numbers should at least be verified with operating bureaus.) Longer-term forecasting should follow closely, with precise instructions and targets for the Recruitment Staff and the Technical Review Committees.

RECOMMENDATION: The workforce analysis unit should be organized immediately to formulate precise instructions for the Recruitment Office and the Technical Review Committees on short-term hiring goals. This to be followed by a long-term recruitment strategy.

OBSERVATION: There is no uniformity in Committee approaches to interviews. The inconsistency of the current system is not tolerable.

DISCUSSION: The Committees take on the personalities of their most aggressive members and are very uneven in their styles. The numbers present for interviews varies from meeting to meeting. Some Committees attempt cordiality. Some do not. Some use the standard questions and hypotheticals prescribed by the Personnel Office. Some do not. Some continuously review 171s. Others refuse to do so. Some accept the prescribed cutoff score for successful interviews. Others do not. Such inconsistency is detrimental to the process, and can be unfair to candidates.

RECOMMENDATION: The Office of Personnel Management and the Recruitment Staff must give greater direction to the committees to establish acceptable and unacceptable norms of conduct.

OBSERVATION: The Technical Review Committee process compresses a case study and its defense and an oral interview into a relatively short time frame (usually about 2 hours). This can be stressful to the point that candidates may be overly intimidated by the process, losing their composure and perhaps not being able to exhibit their technical competence. The stress factor is compounded by the fact that the Technical Review Committees can have as many as seven people at the table to interview the candidate. The candidate may be unprepared for this style of interviewing.

DISCUSSION: Life and work in the Foreign Service is not stressfree, and we don't want the Committees to be that way either. Candidates should be able to handle a certain amount of stress and to demonstrate their skills under a reasonable amount of pressure. But we don't want an over-intimidating situation, where seven Committee members rigorously examine an applicant in an atmosphere devoid of normal social interaction. Committees vary greatly in their efforts to create a congenial atmosphere. Some exhibit a certain amount of cordiality, while in others the atmosphere is colder and somewhat adversarial.

RECOMMENDATIONS: All Technical Review Committees should be limited to three voting members. The composition of the committees would be the same as the one select Committee recommended in the preceding section, i.e. three senior managers, two representing broad agency concerns, and one representing the technical speciality being considered. Panel members would serve for a one-year cycle of structured recruitment as previously explained. If Equal Opportunity, and the Career Development Staff are doing an effective job, they do not have to be represented on these Committees, even as observers.

OBSERVATION: Technical Review Committee members have questioned the validity of the rating system used in Committee interviews. The scoring is broken into four 25-point segments. These are: management/technical skills, organizational skills, communications, and interpersonal skills.

DISCUSSION: Review Committee members have questioned the appropriateness of that segment of the interview which scores 25 of 100 points for "Organizational Skills." They find it is extremely difficult to assess the elements in that segment during the course of a one-hour meeting. Such things as team work, adaptation, wise use of

resources, establishing schedules and prioritizing are difficult to judge except in a real-life situation. But 25 points can make or break a candidate. Committee members tend to rate high in this area if they want the candidate to succeed, or low if they don't, without much real regard for the elements described. This 25-point element does not appear to be performing a useful function.

Some Committees are also questioning the established cutoff of 80 of 100 points for certification of best qualified for hiring. The rationale for the cutoff has not been described with any precision.

RECOMMENDATION: The Technical Review Committee scoring system in general and the cutoff mark of 80 both need to be scrutinized for validity.

OBSERVATION: The interviewing techniques of Technical Review Committee members vary greatly and are in need of improvement. Techniques can be learned, but at the present time there is no training program for Committee members in interviewing techniques.

DISCUSSION: The lack of uniformity among the interviewing techniques of Committee members, and the fact that some committees do not create a very congenial atmosphere, may be attributed to Committee members who are inexperienced interviewers. This deficiency could be remedied by a training program. There is a precedent for this. Several years ago, all Committee members were required to take a focussed interviewing training course.

RECOMMENDATION: The interviewing technique training course be revived as a requirement for all Technical Review Committee members as soon as possible.

OBSERVATION: Turnover in Review Committee membership is frequent.

DISCUSSION: During an 18-month period, the entire membership of the Committee for Economists and all but one technical member of the Agricultural and Rural Development Committee have changed

completely and just as important, Committee membership changes from meeting to meeting. Rapid turnover in membership detracts seriously from continuity and uniformity. The Team has heard that service on Committees is considered time-consuming, frustrating, and unpopular and that Committee members look for opportunities to send substitutes to meetings and escape permanently from the process.

Management must seize the Bureaus and staffs with the importance of service in the human resource area and recruiting in particular. Concerned sensitive officers should be nominated for service and continue that service for a reasonable time. Alternate members should be understudies well versed in the process, and ready to substitute if needed. Alternates are the natural successors to the principals when it is time to move. It should be clear that inexperienced surrogates are unacceptable. Service should be recognized by management, to encourage voluntariness and reward those who accept this important role. It will take a special and rather extraordinary effort on the part of senior management to ensure a more meaningful effort.

RECOMMENDATION: The Administrator, or Deputy Administrator, should raise Agency consciousness to the importance of human resource management in general, and service in the recruiting area in particular. The Senior Staff meeting would be a logical forum to start what must be a continuous campaign to attract good staff to meaningful participation. There is a fair amount of rhetoric about doing better, but its the translation into action that counts.

OBSERVATION: Two Technical Review Committees have both a supervisor and subordinate as technical representatives on the committee.

DISCUSSION: The possibilities of undue influence are obvious and unacceptable. The committee process cannot afford to have the possible bias resulting from stifling the honest appraisal of a member who happens to be sitting next to his/her boss.

RECOMMENDATION: This situation should be corrected immediately to provide for the most open possible discussion of a candidate's merits.

OBSERVATION: There is a serious lack of diversity among Technical Review Committee members.

DISCUSSION: Only one minority Bureau representative serves on the committees (among 33 members) and six of the eleven Committees (covering 10 backstops) have no female technical representation from the Bureaus.

The Agency has done better in overall numbers of women in the Foreign Service. In the case of minorities, our overall numbers are not as good, and in both cases there is serious underrepresentation by backstop. The fact that there are few females on the Committees and even fewer minority representatives may be dampening the Agency's effectiveness to hire more minorities and women.

RECOMMENDATION: The Office of Personnel Management, in consultation with the Office of Equal Employment, should immediately embark on a campaign to place more women and minorities on the Technical Review Committees.

OBSERVATION: The Bureau representatives on Review Committees are in many cases officers of lesser responsibility than the process warrants.

DISCUSSION: The original intention was to have Division Chiefs sitting on the committees. In many instances those participating now are not Division Chiefs or Deputies. There is a tendency to provide members who can spare the time. This results in junior membership or possibly weak performers sitting on committees.

The importance of the selection process demands the participation of the best and brightest. The future of the Agency is tied to its incoming workforce. Management must stress the importance of Bureaus providing their best staff for committee membership and recognize that participation in its reward system.

RECOMMENDATION: Technical Review Committee membership should be scrutinized carefully, and the level of participation raised.

OBSERVATION: Orientation for new Committee members is very uneven.

DISCUSSION: Many Committee members complain that they got no orientation at all -- simply on-the-job-training. For those responsible for providing orientation, it is largely governed by time available (and there is precious little) and when given varies greatly.

Lack of orientation on the process, roles, and responsibilities adds significantly to the unevenness and lack of uniformity among committees. The committees may be conducting business the way they think best, rather than in a standard way directed by the Agency. Observation of a number of committees disclosed that some asked both the prescribed standard and hypothetical questions. Others did not. The problem is compounded by surrogate participants sent as last minute replacements for regular members, who may be completely unfamiliar with the proceedings. Apparently this happens with some frequency.

RECOMMENDATION: The entire current committee membership be assembled as a group and briefed by the Recruitment staff on procedures. Periodic meetings with the entire membership would also help to establish uniformity. New committee members should be oriented systematically and uniformly.

4. FINAL SELECTION OF NEW HIRES

OBSERVATION: The Director of Foreign Service Personnel's final selection of new hires is from pools of "best qualified" candidates that are uneven in quality. The Director has considerable discretion in making his decision.

DISCUSSION: Paper screening is done in batches of uneven size and quality. This process generates the groups of candidates interviewed by the Technical Review Committees. Batches are larger or smaller depending on the numbers of applicants in a particular occupational specialty and the current demand. When demand is high, the batches are small. The applicants in these groupings who make it through screening and interviews are accumulated in pools held by the Director of FSP. It's from these pools that he makes the final selections.

The problem is that the members of different batches within the same backstop may not be competitive with each other if all batches for a single backstop are viewed as a whole. You may have a relatively weak group one week and a very strong group the next, but members from each could make it into the final pool. Candidates only compete with applicants from their own interview groups. The Director of FSP has no way of knowing who came from relatively strong or weak groups. He may unknowingly select candidates who might not have made the final pool if they had been competing in a different grouping. This argues for more structured, cyclical hiring so that larger numbers of applicants are competing against each other for the few positions A.I.D. has to offer. And those candidates are seen by the same people at about the same time.

RECOMMENDATION: Recruiting and hiring must be structured and cycled to provide a fairer competitive process to measure all candidates against a skill area. This will give A.I.D. the best possible talent for a limited number positions and provide the Director of Foreign Service Personnel a more competitive pool.

V. OTHER A.I.D. RECRUITING SYSTEMS

OBSERVATION: There are two offices in A.I.D. that manage recruitment systems that are, in various degrees, independent from the overall Agency system. They are: the Inspector General whose legislative authorities make the entire activity autonomous, and the General Counsel (GC). The process managed by the GC is partially integrated into the overall Agency system and while the GC points to the excellence of attorney candidates hired through the process (including a significant number of minorities and females.), there is room for greater collaboration between the two systems.

DISCUSSION: The Office of the General Counsel does its own recruiting, screening, and selection for Civil Service, as well as Foreign Service attorneys. Consistent with government practice, Civil Service attorneys are employed in excepted positions exempt from procedures governing competitive service personnel. In the case of Foreign Service hiring, the interview process is shared with the Offices of Equal Opportunity and Personnel Management in a series of sequential interviews. Periodically, there has been some active recruiting through advertising but the Office mostly relies on a large and continuing pool

of unsolicited applicants which has typically included substantial numbers of candidates with impressive credentials and significant numbers of women and minorities. The Office appears to have a rigorous screening and interviewing process with heavy involvement of the Senior Legal Staff and its record on hiring women and minorities is good.

Admittedly, there may be some lessons to be learned from the GC system, but in viewing the A.I.D. recruitment system as a whole, we do see the need for greater collaboration between the Personnel Office and the General Counsel in the following:

- o The Office of Personnel Management needs a better sense of the GC hiring criteria and information on the attorney hiring pool, screening, and the interviewing process. (During the course of our discussions with the Office of the General Counsel, they made it quite clear that they are prepared to discuss all of these items with Personnel Management.)
- o The decisions to hire attorneys and the mix of Foreign Service and Civil Service appointments should be incorporated into the overall A.I.D. workforce planning function.

RECOMMENDATIONS: G.C. and Personnel Management staff should share the above information as soon as possible.

The A.I.D. workforce planning function should include hiring projections for FS and GS attorneys.

VI. A. TREATMENT OF NEW HIRES

OBSERVATION: Recruitment and pre-employment processing efforts suffer from poor public relations.

DISCUSSION: Two recent classes of new-hires have expressed extreme frustration with the way in which they were treated before they joined A.I.D. At the request of the Director of Foreign Service Personnel, both groups, totalling nearly 80 IDIs, prepared detailed memos which outlined a range of concerns. (These memos have become the basis for corrective action by FSP.) While part of the difficulty came from the extraordinary workload in Recruitment and the Assignment Branch, several recurrent systematic failures were identified.

Both sections gave out inconsistent and incomplete information about the Agency. In some cases, to the acute financial disadvantage of several employees, information was misleading. In particular, salary levels in some cases may have been inflexibly determined. There was no one point of steady contact with the agency which gave applicants reliable information. Orientation to the hiring process and to the Agency's purpose, employment policies, and practices was haphazard at best, and normally non-existent. And, the applicants paid their own expenses at every step of the process. They pay airfare for interviews, the cost of innumerable long distance calls, and other charges.

Consequently, new hires were oftentimes unaware of basic benefits to which they were entitled, i.e. actions required to effect moves, basic information about pension benefits, overseas tax policies, promotion practices and the like. Occasionally, they encountered rudeness and insensitivity. Basic information about the Agency should be routinely available to applicants, to help them to make an informed judgment about working with the Agency. Recent hires felt the current attitude of the Agency could be summed up as "take it or leave it," without a clear idea of what "it" was. Employee morale and attitudes have suffered. Fortunately, the work experience in A.I.D. has usually been better for these employees than was the pre-employment process. Nonetheless, our new employees are still resentful of the treatment and disdainful of A.I.D.'s personnel system.

The public image of the Agency must be improved. Oftentimes, the first and only point of contact between the public and the Agency is the recruitment office. That contact should be a positive one. Many highly qualified people are being turned off by the system. One also suspects that many potential minority candidates and applicants in hard to get categories have other more pleasant options to pursue. A toll free 800 number will soon be established by FSP for applicant and new hire inquiries which will help the situation.

The number of unsolicited applications we receive must not be mistaken for "success." Those applications are usually not the result of either targeted recruiting or the good name of the Agency.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. All applicants should be followed by a "case worker," from time of application until the first day on board.**

2. **Accurate orientation materials (including videos, brochures and tapes) should be prepared to provide applicants and new hires more systematic and thorough vital information about A.I.D., its policies and practices, and life in the foreign service for employees and their families in the U.S. and overseas.**
3. **Recruitment staff should routinely interview a sample of new-hires to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of these materials.**
4. **Entry-level and mid-level employees should not be lumped together for training or for pre-employment orientation.**

B. PRE-EMPLOYMENT PROCESSING

OBSERVATION: Pre-employment processing is untimely, confusing to new-hires, and not integrated into the recruitment process.

DISCUSSION: The final step in the selection process of a Foreign Service employee rests with the Director of Foreign Service Personnel, who selects from pools of the best qualified candidates provided by the Technical Review Committees. Those selected are turned over to the Assignment Branch of FSP for pre-employment processing which includes both the medical and security clearance processes and salary determinations. The first two are largely important administrative monitoring activities to ensure that the proper forms are provided to applicants, that they are correctly filled out, returned to the pertinent offices with necessary follow up, and the results passed to the applicant. If problems arise in either the medical or security checks applicants are informed by letter and are provided a security office contact to talk with if they wish. Both of these activities provide numerous contacts with applicants and opportunities for providing useful feedback on the status of the process. The public relations value is considerable. Salary-setting which has some judgement aspects, is discussed in the next section.

The more concentrated the recruitment process is, the more effectively and efficiently it will be carried out. Concentrating the entire recruiting process from the receipt of an SF-171 until the employee is sworn in has the benefit of providing fewer and more knowledgeable contact points for the applicant. It also enhances coordination with

such other players in the process as State/Med Unit, and the Security Office. Such a focussed system would reduce the possibility of errors in information, should save handling time, and would result in the continuity of an experienced staff.

Separation of this important function from the rest of the recruitment chain is further evidence of an inefficient process, which presents a confusing array of contacts and has caused frustration, inconsistent and sometimes erroneous information, poor public relations, and morale problems.

RECOMMENDATION: Pre-employment processing, including medical checks, security checks, and salary setting, should be located in the Recruitment Branch rather than the Assignment Branch. An additional position be allocated to the Recruitment Branch to accommodate this additional workload.

OBSERVATION: Salary setting is excessively rigid and may be costing the Agency good candidates.

DISCUSSION: Salary-setting appears to be based on a set of very rigid criteria, tied mostly to actual income during a specific recent time-frame. The system disadvantages candidates who may have relevant experience but who are working for organizations like the Peace Corps or Private and Voluntary Organizations where salary levels are low, or candidates who left well-paying jobs to go back to school in pursuit of advanced degrees. Spouses who have accommodated their partners' career advancement and have worked overseas in modestly salaried and/or parttime positions are also disadvantaged. This is particularly true of female candidates. In such cases, recent salary history is not a good measure of the candidate's worth to the Agency.

Candidates have been given mixed signals on the question of salary negotiation. Some were led to believe that salaries are non-negotiable, while others seem to have influenced changes in salary-setting. New employees of similar backgrounds have sometimes discovered, once on the job, that they are working at different salary levels. This has created a serious morale problem.

Currently in the system, the applicant is asked for verification of the salary quoted in the applicant's SF-171. Base salary is determined by twelve months of salary history during the past three years.

Incremental increases are added to the base salary for special qualifications such as language skills. When the staff person has arrived at a salary determination, the applicant is advised by letter. The latter is asked to acknowledge the salary determination by signing and returning a copy of the letter. As a result of employee complaints and one Assistant Administrator memo on the subject, the Office of Personnel Management is studying the salary setting question.

RECOMMENDATION: The Office of Personnel Management accelerate its study and the formula used to set salaries be modified to provide more flexibility (especially on the question of experience versus salary history) and equity in arriving at starting salary levels.

OBSERVATION: Reference checking needs to be more thorough.

DISCUSSION: Reference checks are a crucial element in the judgement to hire or not to hire. It takes a good deal of skill to ask the right questions and elicit hard information regarding competence and performance. Those responsible should either be very experienced or thoroughly trained. Currently, neither is the case, and reference checks are superficial and of questionable value. Ideally, reference checking and decisions flowing from these checks should be made by someone with personal contact with the employee. The reference checking is now done by the Recruitment Branch, where interviewees have made personal contact. But judgments of suitability based on the reference checks are made in the Assignments Branch of Foreign Service Personnel. The two should be co-located for greatest effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION: Reference checking be done by experienced professionals and removed from the Assignment Branch and incorporated in the responsibilities of a consolidated Recruitment function.

VII. CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT

OBSERVATION: Civil Service outreach needs to improve, i.e. recruiting outside of the Government.

DISCUSSION: Civil Service recruitment is the responsibility of the Staffing Services Branch of the Civil Service Personnel Division of the Office of Personnel Management.

Within the Staffing Services Branch of CSP, the responsibility for outreach is vested in four Personnel Staffing Specialists who are also responsible for all personnel actions related to promotions, reassignments, training and filling vacancies for the Agency's 1500 GS employees. Each specialist is responsible for an average of 7 major bureaus or offices. Recruitment and outreach have a low priority among these major responsibilities.

The staff have, in a limited number of instances, advertised in professional journals and newspapers for a particular category usually a narrow technical skill, e.g., computer specialist. They have also made appearances at job fairs and made an occasional visit to a university in the Washington, D.C. area. On balance however, there is not much real outreach which actively seeks a set of skills from outside the Government. Most of the activity is really a replacement of losses, i.e., filling vacancies from the existing pool of Government Civil Servants (either from within A.I.D. or OPM inventories of job applicants) using the Merit Promotion System. Approximately 160 professional GS positions were filled in FY 88. A small portion of this group came from outside of government.

Like the Foreign Service system, the replacement approach from existing pools tends to perpetuate the Agency's current GS skill mix and does not provide opportunities for the interjection of innovative thinking. The Agency needs employees from outside of the government, employees who bring special skills, new ideas and enthusiasm to positions which we may not find among current government employees. Most Bureaus like the Bureau for Science and Technology and the Private Enterprise Bureau have their own networks in professional institutions and universities. In fact, most non-governmental GS recruiting is decentralized and done by the bureaus themselves.

In the short term, we can expect this to continue but we need to move toward a more constructive, coordinated approach to GS recruiting. The result should be to make use of individuals within the Bureaus, drawing on their professional relationships, but to have an effective, centrally managed system.

More generally, all A.I.D. recruiting should be tied to the Agency's strategy, and the skills needed for carrying out that strategy. The recruitment activity should flow from that strategy as a central focus, and not as a parochial decentralized approach -- which is inefficient -- and may not be in the best long-term interests of either the Agency or

the employee. The Agency needs a central recruitment strategy and a single focal point for its implementation particularly as regards outreach programs for both GS and FS. To achieve more commonality among GS and FS employees calls for a combined recruitment function which speaks with one voice on behalf of the Agency.

The fragmentation between Foreign Service and Civil Service Recruiting is also cited by the most recent Affirmative Action Report as a contributing factor to the Agency's seeming inability to attract minority candidates.

Concentrating all outreach recruiting in one focal point should result in attracting employees who meet our long-term strategy and hopefully are somewhat interchangeable between the Civil Service and the Foreign Service. As a spinoff benefit, it should promote a greater exchange of information between the Foreign Service and Civil Service staffs of the Personnel Office. A more centralized recruitment function, by its nature, should be more efficient and result in better public relations in our contacts with non-governmental organizations and the public at large. A related benefit would be to free up whatever time GS Personnel Staffing Specialists devote to this task, as clients complained that the staffing process takes too long, generally.

RECOMMENDATION: All outreach/recruitment for GS should be consolidated into one Recruitment Office which reports directly to the Director of Personnel.

VIII. ALTERNATE RECRUITING AND SELECTION METHODS

OVERVIEW

The private sector recruits and selects staff more quickly and more efficiently than does A.I.D -- through a better fit between end-user needs and recruiters' goals/methods, more senior management involvement, a more targeted and more continuous recruitment operation, greater use of automation, much more one-on-one interviewing as opposed to panels, and much more telephone pre-screening and less extensive "paper review." Private sector recruitment is "easier" than A.I.D.'s in that it is normally better financed, and less subject to "stop and start" influences.

The two international organizations studied, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, are closer to A.I.D. than most private companies, in that they hire people with skills, experience, and career goals similar to A.I.D.'s, some of whom will work overseas. Some of their recruitment/selection practices are closer to those of private companies, however, than to A.I.D.'s methods. These include the use (in the case of IBRD) of executive search techniques, extensive phone screening and relatively less review of applications, reliance on one-to-one interviews, greater authority and control over hiring by the individual end-user who has a job vacancy. The international organizations do not have to concern themselves with merit promotion or EEO programs *per se*. But both the IBRD and IADB have to focus on geographical diversity, and both are making efforts to hire more women professionals. Neither recruits/selects new hires nearly as rapidly as does the typical private company.

State and USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, two other U.S. agencies studied, encounter problems similar to A.I.D.'s. Each of their recruitment operations is more continuous than ours. Their systems have a few features we might consider.

OBSERVATION: One very important generalization about the recruitment/selection function in both the private companies and international organizations studied is that those organizations appear, compared to A.I.D., to have better mutual trust/communications between the recruiters (and in fact the whole personnel system) and the end-users/supervisors needing to fill vacancies in their operating divisions and departments.

DISCUSSION: This report, elsewhere, recommends that A.I.D.'s recruitment function be given higher priority within the Personnel Division, and that A.I.D.'s entire Personal/Human Resources operation be elevated in the hierarchy to give it more authority and visibility. In most private companies and in both the IBRD and IADB, the recruitment function has no higher place on the organization chart than it does in A.I.D. What the recruitment function generally does have in those organizations, however, is a more continuous and professional mode of operation with far better communication with line managers on the needs of the end-users than appears to exist in A.I.D. Because of these communications, end-users seem to have more trust in the ability of recruiters to get them the kind of people they need. These make the difference.

RECOMMENDATION: Organizational changes to elevate the prestige and access of A.I.D.'s recruitment function are necessary to overcome the communication problem and low confidence factors so important to the process.

Recruitment staff communications with program operators should be improved. This could mean 1) insuring that the Bureau EMS staff - who generally are well-informed about program changes (both numbers and types of people needed) affecting recruitment needs -- have a better channel than now exists to inform Personnel of these changes; and/or 2) insisting on more frequent and meaningful participation by senior Bureau staffs (at the DAA level) in both Bureau workforce analysis and orientation on changing program needs of recruitment and other personnel staff.

OBSERVATION: Private companies, the IBRD, and IADB all target their recruitment more than does A.I.D. They use (with the exception of the IADB) costly but efficient executive search techniques. They almost always hire for specific jobs (the IBRD's Young Professional Program is an exception, but its graduates go, after rotational assignments, to a specific Washington position). They do a lot of phone screening -- (which may seem costly, particularly in the case of the IBRD and IADB, which recruit and receive applications from many countries) -- and thus can reduce substantially the volume of paper screening compared to A.I.D.. By and large, these organizations can offer more in the way of salary and benefits than does A.I.D. (or any other USG agency). But we can offer something most of them can't -- a chance to take part in a fulfilling foreign service career.

DISCUSSION: So long as A.I.D. considers it desirable to have a career foreign service corps spending most of its professional life abroad, we cannot select most of our new entries for specific jobs (except for GS/AD positions). Rather, we attempt to recruit/select a group of new and middle-level candidates, who can fill a variety of jobs both in our field missions and in our Washington headquarters. There are, however, some techniques we can adopt from non-USG organizations, which can partially improve both our foreign and civil service pool of new-hires.

We can, for instance, focus our recruiting/selection effort by reducing the attention we give to the thousands of unsolicited applications and refocussing our efforts on a smaller pool of talent likely to more specifically fit our needs. As a U.S. Government agency, we are required by custom and practice (if not by law) to be more responsive to

unsolicited applications than is the average private company. We are also required, and want as a matter of policy, to attract more women and minorities in professional positions. A more professionally trained recruitment staff with less of a volume of paperwork should be able to focus more on specific college campuses and professional association more likely to produce candidates interested in A.I.D. and in whom we are interested.

RECOMMENDATIONS: A.I.D. should:

Explore the economies of large-scale phone screening as a means of reducing the volume of unsolicited applications we receive and of winnowing down the numbers of individuals whose applications we must review.

Not "automatically" invite interested individuals to submit SF 171s but instead request them only if, as determined after phone screening by well-trained individuals, the former seem to have a possible fit with Agency needs.

Invest modestly in automation that can be more efficient and less labor intensive in the collection of information from these SF 171s.

Assist the recruitment staff with the tools it needs to refocus and target its time and energies on more selected potential candidates.

Invest resources in more targeted college campuses and professional association visits.

OBSERVATION: Also, as part of an increased targetting effort, we should explore greater use of hiring techniques already used in A.I.D. which brings to the agency a variety of a "temporary" talents, akin to the "limited term" employees hired by both the IBRD and IADB.

DISCUSSION: A.I.D. already makes use of such individuals, e.g., "IPAs" brought on its rolls, but not receiving a lifetime commitment, under the Inter-Governmental Personnel Act. These individuals, typically from a university, a state or local government, or some other non-profit organization, can bring superior technical skills to the Agency for a 2-4 year period. Like members of the Joint Career Corps which brings technically trained well-qualified individuals into A.I.D. for overseas limited duration positions, A.I.D.'s use of IPAs

allow temporary personnel to maintain their tenure and seniority in non-A.I.D. positions. At the same time, IPAs can infuse new blood and skills into the Agency for relatively limited periods of time, not involving a long-term commitment on either side. The use of IPAs also allows A.I.D. to secure certain skills that the Agency may not need for as long as 10-20 years -- as is now the case of individuals typically bought into the Foreign Service.

The same general argument can be made for individuals, usually from USDA or HHS agencies, brought into A.I.D. under Participating Agency Support Agreements (PASAs) abroad or RSSAs in AID/W. While these hiring devices may be viewed by some as a means to get around permanent-hire ceilings, they should also be viewed consciously as a desirable means of securing talent for intentionally limited periods of time. Morale of permanent-hire employees could be adversely affected by relatively high-paid individual coming into GS or FS positions in this manner. Since the latter would not be competing for permanent grades or promotions, negative impact should be minimized.

RECOMMENDATION: A.I.D. should review possibilities for increased use of "limited term" appointments as described above, in a deliberate effort to secure scarce talents for intentionally limited periods of time.

XI. OTHER PERSONNEL ISSUES

A. GREATER DIVERSITY IN THE WORKFORCE

In a Foreign Service without periodic breaks for training, sabbaticals, details to other organizations (including the private sector) there is the risk of creating a stale workforce. Historically, the Agency has not encouraged time away from the A.I.D. line of operations, and the bulk of the Agency's employees never have an opportunity to refresh and update skills and thinking, recharge energy levels, or observe and emulate other approaches to development and management. Without these opportunities, the Agency may be foregoing the development of innovative ideas.

The Foreign Service Act of 1980 has improved conditions for career employees tremendously. There is a continuing requirement to recognize, develop, and reward a career cadre of Foreign Service officers. The Agency needs to build on these requirements to energize those dedicated officers who chose to make a career in A.I.D.

There is a need for improved in-service training efforts, cross fertilization through outside training and work experience, greater mobility between cones, and a more visible system of rewards.

At the same time, there is an increasing awareness that the system would benefit from a modest external infusion of new talent at both the mid- and upper levels. This should include fostering conversion of GS to FS in appropriate cases. Such infusions would complement the experience of the career corps and senior political appointees.

A.I.D. must build on its comparative advantage, its staff, by leavening this resource with new ideas to maintain and strengthen its competitive position in development efforts.

An outreach program for senior hires could also be used to reach female and minority executive-level talent with proven track records of success. These candidates can counteract the dangers of complacency inherent in a predominantly career system. Limited Agency experience with senior new hires confirms the benefits the Agency and its staff gain from such interchange. A certain measure of new vision, mixed with the solid experience of the career corps, makes for a stronger Agency. Changing problems in economic and social development overseas and changes in the United States mitigate for such an effort.

Senior new hiring adversely affects promotional opportunities for career employers. In the short term, this, is especially unfortunate for career employees. Many have been employed for several years already and have settled expectations about the rules of the game. However, the incentive system for the Federal Service -- including performance appraisal systems and benefits -- is becoming more flexible and comparable to the private sector. This should encourage mobility. Over time, as this happens and as new hires understand that there will be greater competition from a limited number of "outside hires," these disadvantages can be overcome. The failure to commit to more senior hiring may have adverse consequences to the Agency. Complacent organizations stagnate and decline. A.I.D.'s current replacement-recruitment system risks complacency.

A.I.D. should target a modest percentage of competitive F.S. new-hires for senior level career candidates to fill EPAP or EPAP-equivalent positions, subject to the usual probationary period for conversion to permanent status. Relief from the Foreign Service Act of 1980, Sec. 307 should be sought by the Agency to permit this routinely.

Central Bureaus, such as S&T, and service organizations such as the Personnel Office, need an infusion of Foreign Service Officers. Foreign Service Officers bring invaluable overseas experience to bear, but they can also learn a great deal from such a greater rotation. This kind of exposure will help them to become better managers of A.I.D.'s resources. Likewise, GS employees need to be stimulated by new challenges and intra-Agency mobility can help them to break out of the stale situations in which many are caught. In short, the Agency needs to force more flexibility in the Washington assignment process to overcome an unhealthy lack of circulation in several parts of the Agency. Creative thinking and a system which makes it clear that Foreign Service career progression must include service in central Bureaus and services organizations will do much to revitalize a frustrated workforce and inward looking service organizations.

B. CROSS-TRAINING

As part of its efforts to improve circulation, the Agency needs to assist employees to obtain requisite on-job training to undertake new positions. Modest hiring authority and the emergence of more sophisticated program initiatives point to the importance of developing among current staff a cadre of multi-skilled employees capable of managing a variety of technically innovative activities. Realistically, the Agency will continue to need to rely on its existing work force to take on many new responsibilities in the years ahead. One of the most cost effective methods for meeting this challenge is through cross training of existing staff in new positions. Currently, such cross training occurs on an ad hoc basis. The Agency needs to do a better job of consciously identifying suitable opportunities for such training on a systematic basis.

C. IDI PROGRAM:

Although we have reinstated entry-level recruiting of IDI's, the well remembered IDI program of the past has not been resuscitated. We think this is a mistake. The historical success of the IDI program should be renewed, with a central focus/backstopping point with interfunctional training in Washington and the field. Our perception of the great value of a quality IDI training program was shared by virtually every long-term A.I.D. employee we interviewed.

D. FOREIGN SERVICE ASSIGNMENTS SYSTEM:

Although a centralized system in theory, the assignments system appears to have become decentralized with the Regional Bureaus playing a larger role in the process than was envisaged. We encourage management to take an in-depth look at the process.

E. SHADOW WORKFORCES

Early in the process of this study, it became clear to us that most new-hire recruitment in the Agency is being done by missions in the field. New-hire USDH are a small part of annual hiring by the Agency. We did not look at this phenomenon in detail and understand some of the budgetary/legislative barriers to a more transparent system. However, some part of this hiring, perhaps most of it, takes place because of failures in our personnel system. Several mission directors noted the rigidities of the current assignments system (the right person not available at the right moment) and problems with staff flexibility as they moved to create new programs. The result is shadow workforces. The fact is that these flexible and innovative responses to our system increasingly reduce the Agency's direct control over much of this interesting key work.

F. G.S. OPPORTUNITIES

A.I.D.'s Foreign Service orientation discourages GS entry into some key parts of A.I.D. particularly the Regional Bureaus. We may be too parochial as a consequence.

A.I.D.'s Foreign Service orientation has also led in recent years to efforts, supported by Congress, to reduce higher-level Civil Service positions in the Agency for a variety of reasons, including the perceived need to supply appropriate AID/W jobs for FSOs rotating into headquarters for 3-4 years. The relatively closed nature of the AID/W regional bureau officer-level jobs to Civil Service candidates, however, has minimized infusions of new blood into GS ranks and of different skills and viewpoints. Some tipping of the current balances to allow more different perspectives would make A.I.D. less parochial.

As current GS employees in regional Bureaus leave the Agency rolls, A.I.D. should review Obey Amendment implementation and consider hiring mid-level GS professional employees in limited numbers.

**List of Contacts
Recruitment Assessment**

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List of Contacts
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Gannett Company, Judy Ross, Chris Landover
Marriott Corp., James Mueller
Riggs Bank, Joseph Avis

A.I.D. DIRECT HIRE - Foreign Service by Backstop*
FY 85 - FY 88

<u>Backstop</u>	<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>Of Grand Total</u>	
		<u>Minority</u>	<u>White Female</u>
01	4		1
02	22	5	7
03	27	4	12
04	30	9	5
05	32	9	23
06	2	1	1
07	19	3	15
08	33	5	3
10	18	2	3
11	11	2	1
12	7		2
14	1		
15	7		
20	13		2
21	3		1
25	16	2	5
30	2		1
50	14	1	5
60	13		3
75	1		
85	7	2	2
92	8	1	3
93	14	2	3
<u>94</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	335	57	102

*Please note the 116 BS 95 IDIs hired from FY85-FY88 have been split up by occupational BS, i.e. engineering, agriculture, etc.

Av. Age New Hires 40.9 yrs.
Av. Age IDIs 36.4 yrs.
Av. Age non-IDIs 43.3 yrs.

Appendix 2

A.I.D. DIRECT HIRE - General Schedule by Backstop
FY 85 - FY 88

<u>Backstop</u>	<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>Of Grand Total</u>	
		<u>Minority</u>	<u>White Female</u>
01	15	11	4
02	24	2	11
03	74	12	33
04	24	10	7
05	273	213	48
06	1	1	
07	70	49	16
08	7	2	1
10	14	2	
11	7	1	2
12			
14	1	1	
15			
20	1		
21	14	3	4
25			
30			
50	14		1
60	12	2	7
72	4	2	2
75	13	3	
85	13	2	1
92	1	1	
93	16	3	3
94	1	1	
99	<u>23</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>4</u>
	622	318	150

Committee Weights for Major Hiring Criteria

<u>Panel</u>	<u>Language</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Work</u>	<u>Special</u>
Administrative				
IDI	15	20	45	20
Mid	10	15	55	20
Secretaries	-	15	60	25
Agriculture				
IDI	15	30	35	20
Mid	10	15	55	20
Economist				
IDI	15	45	20	20
Mid	10	20	50	20
Housing				
IDI	15	30	30	20
Mid	10	15	55	16*
Engineers				
Mid	10	10	60	16*
Health/Pop				
IDI	15	30	35	20
Mid	10	15	57	18
Education				
IDI	15	30	35	20
Mid	10	15	61	14
Commodity Management				
IDI	15	30	30	20
Mid	10	10	50	28*
Contract Management				
IDI	15	30	30	20
Mid	10	10	50	28*
Program/Project				
IDI	15	30	35	20
Mid	10	15	59	16

*Total Not 100



Technical Committee Questionnaire

After interviewing a number of technical committee members, the task force prepared and distributed a questionnaire to the members. This questionnaire was directed at soliciting the views of all of the members on their experiences as participants in the recruitment process.

The questionnaire was sent to forty members. Twenty-eight responded. A copy of the questionnaire interpolated with summaries of responses, follows. We have also included some comments.

Generally, the results confirmed our initial findings based on oral interviews with committee members. In short, the committees lack clear guidance and have not been managed consistently. Training and information has been provided to members on an ad hoc basis. This has created confusion among members regarding roles and responsibilities.

Questions.

1. Prior to your participation on the committee, were you provided with any orientation about the committees, your role on them, and how Personnel manages the recruitment process?

Eleven members received significant orientation. Nine members got none. Eight members noted 'a little' or 'minimal' orientation. The provision of orientation was ad hoc and in most cases consisted of counseling from the Committee Chairperson.

2. Were you given training on how to be an effective participant on the committee? (ie. Training in interview techniques, inadmissible questions, etc.) If you were given such training, did you feel that it was effective?

Eleven members acknowledged getting some training in interviewing. A number of long time members recalled the Xerox focussed training of several years ago. Those getting that training were divided in assessing its usefulness. Some informal training was given on EOP issues to a few members. Seventeen members received no training of any kind.

3. Do you feel that you now have a good understanding of the recruitment process and how it works? (ie. How hiring numbers are established, how the numbers are related to the Agency's program, and what happens to the candidates after you have interviewed them.)

Most members (16) don't know how hiring numbers are established or how they are related to the Agency's program (13). Three were uncertain about the hiring process and eight committee members felt that they had a good understanding of it.

After the interview, fourteen respondents reported they knew what happened to interviewees. One member was unsure and eight didn't know.

One member described the process as 'a big black hole', another wondered 'what the underlining rationale was' and a third asked if only the highest ranked were selected. One stated that they understand the system but disagreed with it completely.

4. Have you ever received formal training or information from the Equal Opportunity Office about their role in the recruitment process and your EEO responsibilities?

The majority of members (20) have never received formal training from EOP. Seven noted some formal training had been received.

One noted that 'EOP has been absent much more than present', and another remarked that EOP provided 'little, if any, information.' A third commented that EOP was active on their committee informally.

5. Do you think that the current paper screening process is too tough or too easy? How would you change it? Are you satisfied with the selection criteria for the paper screening and the interview and did you help to prepare/review the criteria?

Most of the members are satisfied with the current process. Fourteen were involved in the review of the criteria. Nine were not satisfied with the criteria nor criteria development.

These generally approving comments were hedged with the following kinds of observations. 'I helped prepare (criteria) but I'm not satisfied.' (four members) 'It would be nice to know what we're looking for.' 'Have we defined what skills we're looking for?' 'SF-171 doesn't give us enough information.' (two members) 'Changing that (criteria) is the least of your worries.' 'I don't believe that the process necessarily gets the best candidates.' 'Criteria are watered down.'

6. Overall what do you think of the committee process? Is it working? Is the Agency attracting and hiring the best possible candidates?

Overall, most of the members (22) felt that the system was working but only four were confident that we were hiring the 'best and the brightest'. Four members did not feel the process was working. Six members, perhaps because of uncertainty over A.I.D. objectives or the performance of new hires, did not feel comfortable in making a judgment. Ten were convinced that we were not getting the best.

Members commented as follows. 'Rare for an economist candidate to generate real enthusiasm.' 'Improve outreach.' 'We tend to look at what a person has done as opposed to how successfully he has done it.' 'Qualified, but...' 'More involvement in reference checking needed' 'It's not clear new hires will best serve Agency in future.' 'Hopeless.' 'Process unwieldy and ineffective.' 'We have some outstanding IDIs.' 'I suspect we are losing many.'

7. Are there other observations you would like to offer about the recruitment process in general?

Member observations.

- Personnel needs and hiring are out of sync.
- On again/off again recruitment is damaging.
- We need guidance regarding agency direction.
- We need project managers, not just technicians. (Agriculturist)
- We're hiring people on the basis of their ability to do the work we hire contractors for.
- Something fundamentally wrong when IDI's are in their late thirties.

Appendix 4

- Recruitment staff in M/PM need more training in how to conduct an interview.
- I wonder how many good candidates we lose because of delays. Much too extended.
- Need data system to track minority status.
- The process is stultifying and enervating for virtually all candidates.
- Recruit PhDs only (Economist).
- Don't go below the cut off line.
- Time intensive process.
- Wait until after the election.
- The Agency should establish a serious recruitment effort which includes sending technical types to universities... to encourage more applications.
- The SF 171 should have an addendum for A.I.D. use.
- A.I.D. should pay travel costs.
- Need more coordinated planning of the annual recruitment process at senior levels of PM and operational offices.