FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



SPECIAL PROJECT

Survey of the Federal Election Commission's New Employee Orientation Program

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ASSIGNMENT No. OIG-12-08

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

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PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) recently surveyed current Federal Election Commission (FEC) employees who were hired between June 30, 2009, and June 30, 2012, concerning the FEC's New Employee Orientation (NEO) program. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the effectiveness of the FEC's NEO program and suggest improvements to enhance the program. The NEO program currently consists of two main segments – a general briefing conducted by the Office of Human Resources (OHR), including an administration of the oath of office and overview of federal benefits, and functional area briefings from agency components, such as the OIG, Deputy Designated Agency Ethics Officer, and Office of Equal Employment Opportunity.

The OIG survey was conducted between July 31 and August 15, 2012. The survey was sent to sixty-eight (68) employees who met the criteria specified above. Forty-three (43) employees responded, with forty (40) completing the survey and three (3) only partially responding; twenty-five (25) employees did not respond. The overall response rate was sixty-three percent (63%), and the response rate for completed surveys was fifty-nine percent (59%). The results of the survey, including comments by the respondents (some of which may have been non-substantively altered to protect the respondent's identity), are attached.

DISCUSSION

The NEO program survey responses were generally positive. For example, ninety percent (90%) responded that both the general and functional area briefings were helpful, and eightyone percent (81%) found the length of both the briefings to be "just about right." The following are OIG suggestions, primarily based on an analysis of respondent comments, to improve the NEO program:

- Functional area briefings should be provided on the same day as the general briefings. OHR has already changed the format of the NEO program so that even when only one person starts work on a particular date, both sets of briefings are scheduled and conducted on the same day. Previously, if only one employee was on-boarded on a particular date, the general briefing would be held on that date but the agency components providing the functional area briefings were told to schedule their briefings independently at a later date. As a result, twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents did not receive their functional area briefings on the same day as their general briefings, and some employees <u>never</u> received their functional area briefings. Functional area briefings cover critical information for new employees. For example, the briefing by the Deputy Designated Agency Ethics Official covers laws and regulations that FEC employees are required to follow, violations of which may incur administrative or even criminal sanctions.
- An OHR employee should be assigned to check in each time a functional area briefing is scheduled to begin to keep the orientation on track. Several respondents indicated that not all the speakers showed up and some were late. As a result, new employees were left sitting in the room alone for an extended period of time. First impressions are important, and large gaps in an employee's first day can make the FEC appear disorganized. Assigning an OHR employee to check in periodically should help eliminate these gaps of empty time and keep the program on schedule, and the OHR employee could summon a person to fill in for a presenter, if necessary. It would also be helpful to have the presenters notify the OHR employee when they have finished their presentations of their functional area.
- The NEO schedule should be expanded, perhaps to at least a partial second day, to allow more time to provide important information in some areas, particularly benefits (including flexible schedules and flexiplace). Although eighty-one percent (81%) responded that the time allotted for the briefings was about right, some respondents commented that not enough time was spent on benefits information and that the presentations were rushed. Comments included that there was "[t]oo much thrown at you in one day" and "[t]oo much crammed in one day."

- Several commenters felt a macro overview of how the agency functions and how the various offices and divisions interact in fulfilling the agency's mission would be helpful. Topics could include, for example, the campaign finance violation complaint process and the functioning of the Reports Analysis Division, and how they relate to the agency's mission. A brief history of the FEC, if not already included, may be helpful in this regard.
- Skillport, an online training program used by the FEC, could also be used for some of the NEO program material, but the OIG strongly believes that computer training should not replace face-to-face communication between new employees and presenters. Direct interaction helps to build important relationships and fosters understanding.
- OHR should consider adding a functional area briefing by the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, according to a commenter, although this could be included in a section on agency function and how each office contributes to the FEC's mission.
- Some information for new employees, like an overview of benefits (including flexible schedules and flexiplace) available and other basic information, as well as forms that need to be completed, should be sent to the new employee by email before the first day. This would allow new employees to have a foundation for the information presented during the NEO program, and forms could be filled out beforehand and save time.
- OHR, in conjunction and cooperation with other agency components, should take the lead to develop an employee handbook that compiles and details policies and procedures applicable to all employees, and all agency policies and procedures should also be compiled in one location on the server (i.e. FECNet, the FEC's intranet site) where they can be easily accessed and updated. New employees should be provided this information on the first day. The survey revealed that while seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents were provided at least some reference material on policies and procedures, only sixty-one percent (61%) were informed of where they could find electronic versions of policies and procedures, and forty-five percent (45%) felt that there were policies and procedures they were supposed to follow but did not know what they were or how to locate them.
- A tour of the FEC building and offices should be part of the NEO Program. Only thirty-five percent (35%) of respondents received a tour, and of those who received a tour, seventy-one percent (71%) thought the tour was helpful in understanding the

agency and its functioning. Of those who did not receive a tour, seventy-seven percent (77%) thought a tour would have been helpful.

- Although it was not addressed in the survey, OHR should ensure that all new employees receive training in emergency procedures and the FEC's *Occupant Emergency Plan*.
- New employees who have never worked in the federal government before might benefit from an additional introduction to working for the federal government, which could be given on another day. A presentation on legal issues, including topics such as the statutes that govern federal employment and the FEC, and the difference between statutes and regulations for non-lawyers, could be informative.

The attached report of the survey responses follows in the next section, and provides detailed answers and comments by the respondents. With the exception of some limited redactions to protect a respondent's identity, the individual comments have not been altered.

SURVEY RESULTS



1. Did you receive a NEO on your first day at the FEC? Response Response Percent Count YES 93.0% 40 NO 7.0% 3 answered question 43 0 skipped question

2. If NO, please indicate when you received NEO		
	Response Percent	Response Count
First week	0.0%	0
Second week	0.0%	0
First month	33.3%	1
After first month	33.3%	1
Never received NEO	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	33.3%	1
	answered question	3
	skipped question	40

3. Did you receive FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings (NTEU, EEO, OIG, etc.) on the same day as your general briefing?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	71.4%	30
NO	28.6%	12
	answered question	42
	skipped question	1

4. If NO, were you informed by OHR that you would need to schedule your FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings with the appropriate offices?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	25.0%	3
NO	75.0%	9
	answered question	12
	skipped question	31

5. Please indicate when you received you FINAL FUNCTIONAL AREA briefing

	Response Percent	Response Count
First week	22.2%	2
Second week	0.0%	0
First month	44.4%	4
Never received functional area briefings	33.3%	3
	Other (please specify)	4
	answered question	9
	skipped question	34

6. Overall, did you find the GENERAL briefing (oath of office, federal benefits, etc.) to be helpful?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	90.2%	37
NO	9.8%	4
	answered question	41
	skipped question	2

7. What aspects of the GENERAL briefing did you find particularly helpful?

[Please see page 11 of the Survey Results]	Response Count
	22
answered question	n 22
skipped question	n 21

8. What aspects of the GENERAL briefing did you find particularly NOT helpful? Response Count [Please see page 12 of the Survey Results] Response Count 21 21 answered question 21 Skipped question 22

9. In terms of overall time allocated for the GENERAL briefing, did you find it to be:

	Response Percent	Response Count
Not enough	14.6%	6
Just about right	80.5%	33
Too much	4.9%	2
	answered question	41
	skipped question	2

10. If "not enough" or "too much," please explain why	
[Please see page 13 of the Survey Results]	Response Count
	7
answered question	7
skipped question	36

11. Overall, did you find the FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings (NTEU, EEO, OIG, etc.) to be helpful?

Response Count	Response Percent	
37	90.2%	YES
4	9.8%	NO
41	answered question	
2	skipped question	

12. What aspects of the FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings did you find particularly helpful? [Please see page 14 of the Survey Results] Response Count 16 answered question 16 skipped question 27

13. What aspects of the FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings did you find particularly NOT helpful?

[Please see page 15 of the Survey Results]	Response Count
	14
answered question	14
skipped question	29

14. In terms of overall time allocated for the FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings, did you find it to be

Response Count	Response Percent	
4	9.8%	Not enough
33	80.5%	Just about right
4	9.8%	Too much
41	answered question	
2	skipped question	

15. If "not enough" or "too much," please explain why	
[Please see page 16 of the Survey Results]	Response Count
	6
answered question	6
skipped question	37

16. Were you provided any type of employee manual or handbook containing employee policies and procedures?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	71.8%	28
NO	28.2%	11
	answered question	39
	skipped question	4

17. Were you provided any other type of reference material on employee policies and procedures?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	74.4%	29
NO	25.6%	10
	answered question	39
	skipped question	4

18. Were you informed where you could find electronic versions of employee policies and procedures?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	61.5%	24
NO	38.5%	15
	answered question	39
	skipped question	4

19. Do you feel there are employee policies and procedures that you are supposed to follow but you do not know what they are or cannot locate them?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	45.0%	18
NO	55.0%	22
	answered question	40
	skipped question	3

20. Did you receive a tour of	the FEC building and offices?	
	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	35.0%	14
NO	65.0%	26
	answered question	40
	skipped question	3

21. Was the tour helpful in understanding the organization and internal functioning of the FEC?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	71.4%	10
NO	28.6%	4
	answered question	14
	skipped question	29

22. Do you think a tour would have been helpful in understanding the organization and internal functioning of the FEC?

	Response Percent	Response Count
YES	76.9%	20
NO	23.1%	6
	answered question	26
	skipped question	17

23. Additional comments, including changes you think would be helpful to the NEO program	
[Please see page 17 of the Survey Results]	Response Count
	20
answered question	20
skipped question	23

Page 2	, Q2. If NO, please indicate when you received NEO	
1	I rec'd much of the NEO on the first day (including OHR's presentations) others were later, some not at all	

Page 3,	Q5. Please indicate when you received you FINAL FUNCTIONAL AREA briefing
1	Probably received most of it. But half of my orientation speakers did not show up.
2	Only received separate OHR, OCIO, and OIG briefings; not NTEU or EEO briefings
3	I never recieved the EEO briefing.
4	I was told I would be contacted by functional areas for briefings but never was. About 8 months later my manager arranged for me to sit in on other new hires NEO

Page 3,	Q7. What aspects of the GENERAL briefing did you find particularly helpful?	
1	Ethics and role of Commission	
2	The overview of the history of the FEC and the different offices.	
3	Benefits	
4	federal benefits	
5	-Nothing particuarlly. All information was helpful.	
6	All of it. I am new to the federal govenment so it was all new to me and pretty interesting.	
7	The ethics aspects.	
8	overview of the agency	
9	The staff administering the general briefing was helpful in answering questions and providing clarifying information. They were also able to provide answers based on individual circumstances.	
10	discussion of benefits	
11	OHR explained benefits well.	
12	Talking about specific situations and effective dates of coverage.	
13	the general overview of the subject matter	
14	The variety of presentations was particularly helpful. The briefings gave us the opportunity to learn about each division and their responsibilities.	
15	The benefits are complex so that part was helpful, but I could have used even more information.	
16	the slideshow	
17	All.	
18	All aspects	
19	Filling out the federal benefits forms and having my questions answered on the spot to avoid any delays.	
20	I did not find the general briefing to be helpful.	
21	overview of the agency's departments.	
22	Understanding the different offices in the agency.	

1	Luce a transfer employee and had been in the recommendation and the	
1	I was a transfer employee and had been in the government for over 20 years and most of this information I already knew.	
2	N/A	
3	Federal benefits briefing was done quickly and with other new entrants so it was difficult to process all of the information and what pertained to me. I didn't want to ask too many questions because I didn't want to hold up the group and some of my questions dealt with private matters so I had to come back seperately.For something so important not enough time was spent on federal benefits.	
4	the lack of a comprehesive document for policies applicable to an employee	
5	NA	
6	About four presdenters did not show up.	
7	The briefing seemed a little rushed in terms of going over, completing, and submitting some of the forms.	
8	none	
9	My briefing was individual since no one else hired on my start week. I would have liked to attend the group orientation too since it seems to have offered more information but I was no aware of it at the time. Also, I was brand new to the Federal Government and I think that there is much that was not explained to meespecially no information on Performance evaluations and schedule. The OHR forms were hard copies and seemed to get lost in OHR dept causing need to resubmit some. I was not briefed prior to start day on some Benefits. For example, I asked OHR for some additional information on benefits for Short and Long Term Disability but it was not provided. This made it more difficult to compare benefits with my prior employer and make decisions on accepting the offer. They provided a link to the Benefits online but this topic was not discussed at the website. Also, I asked about Performance Evaluations after I was provided an offer but was not given very clear or complete information on the process.	
10	Nothing stands out.	
11	don't recall	
12	I would have like to have a more detailed/floor-by-floor tour of the building to learn the location of everything and figure our way around. It took a while for me to learn where things were and what amenities the building has so a more detailed "tour" on the first day might have been helpful.	
13	Continuing from above, for the benefits briefing, it would be helpful to have an overview of what all of the benefits are before diving into the details.	
14	I was only given a book of all the medical benefits and plans,There were soo many, it would have been helpful to get a brief overview of all the plans.	
15	Too much thrown at you in one day and the people went through the material so quickly that you didn't really know who went with what office.	

Page 3, Q8. What aspects of the GENERAL briefing did you find particularly NOT helpful?			
16	the timeframe- I wasen't sure if I needed to fill out the paperwork by the end of the briefings or not		
17	None.		
18	Video introducing FEC's components was outdated. This was corrected shortly after I brought this to the HR Director's attention.		
19	The oath of office.		
20	The FEC orientation video and NTEU briefing.		
21	No one walked us through the federal benefits program.		

Page 4,	Q10. If "not enough" or "too much," please explain why	
1	While the staff was helpful in answering questions, the briefing seemed a little rushed in terms of going over, completing, and submitting some of the forms.	
2	See previous answer.	
3	Didn't allow time to give an adequate overview of all the federal benefits. May have been ok for someone coming from another federal agency but was not adequate for someone coming from private industry. The amound of plans and other benefits was pretty overwhelming.	
4	I wasen't sure if I needed to fill out the paperwork by the end of the briefings or not	
5	Too much crammed in one day. It would have been better to have an hour or so spread out over several days	
6	The general briefing could have been conducted in 15 minutes. Further, any ancillary materials such as videos and pamphlets could have been sent to the new employee via email or shared via the FEC Intranet site.	
7	same as earlier question - no one came to talk us through the federal benefits program. It was on the schedule, but as was the case for a few sections of our orientation, no one showed up.	

Page 4, Q12. What aspects of the FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings did you find particularly helpful?		
1	OIG, EEO, Ethics Office	
2	I never received an briefing from EEO	
3	I thought that the briefings were a good way to introduce different parts of the agency. They were brief, but informative, and I liked that they were presented by representatives from each of the functional areas.	
4	Never got one	
5	I enjoyed the OIG briefing because it explained their processes well and gave me a better understanding.	
6	The IT portion- familiarization with particular software.	
7	don't recall specifics	
8	It was detailed and gave a good overview of the functional area briefings.	
9	The brief history/understanding of the different areas.	
10	useful information	
11	All	
12	It provided general diretion and guideline for a new employee to get started at FEC.	
13	I did not find the functional area briefings to be helpful.	
14	EEO briefing.	
15	OIG.	
16	NTEU	

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Page 4, Q13. What aspects of the FUNCTIONAL AREA briefings did you find particularly NOT helpful?		
1	NTEU didn't present. IT and Admin briefings were helpful but I don't think they need as much time as some of the other areas that had to rush presentations.	
2	the lack of a comprehensive document which included all policies relevant to an employee	
3	It was a lot of information to take in at once, with one presentation after another.	
4	Never got one	
5	I was not provided a Union or EEO briefing. I think it would also be helpful to be briefed about OCFO Functional Area to understand the payroll process lag before Pay Date and the related benefits of hours of accrual for annual, and sick leave and the limits of carry over each year. Maybe this is OHR but it maybe would be useful to have OCFO explain since it affects the paycheck.	
6	Repetition of aspects common to all other federal agencies. The computer training requried as a part of the briefings too many required areas, required to be completed too quickly,	
7	don't recall specifics	
8	I'm not a bargaining unit employee, so there was really no benefit to the union briefing.	
9	none	
10	could have been spread out over more time	
11	None	
12	None.	
13	Any functional area briefings should be conducted through Skillport in future.	
14	NTEU briefing.	

Page 5, Q15. If "not enough" or "too much," please explain why			
1	The presenters basically read from the documenation provided to me which seemd unproductive		
2	Because it never happened.		
3	The briefing themselves, timewise, were okay, But having to complete training and other requirements in the timeframes established in conjunction with other duties was too much.		
4	The presenters seemed rushed to get done in the alloted time. As a result not sure they were able to give all the information they would have liked.		
5	everything started to get crammed and overlapped over the next or previous presentation		
6	The functional area briefings interfered with critical on-the-job training that I received in my office.		

Page 7, Q23. Additional comments, including changes you think would be helpful to the NEO program 1 If I was a new employee, a tour would have been helpful. 2 Program is not too bad,... 3 Was not given information about agency policies and procedures. Was not given a proper overview of compressed schedules and telework policies and proceudres. Since different rules apply to different types of employees it would be more helpful to address them specifically after the employee is informed about whether they are bargaining unit or non-barganing unit. 4 I feel that the different divisions within the FEC are very disjointed. Due to the nature of our work we are not often required to work with individuals from another division or branch and I beleive that it would have been beneficial to get an overview of all the different offices, their functions and relationship to eachother. 5 My main suggestion would be to provide an employee handbook. 6 Making sure that all benefits, TSP deductions are current before your first paycheck at the agency. 7 In general, I think the NEO program was helpful during my first couple of days at the FEC. I liked that I was able to learn a little bit more about the Commission before being thrown into an unfamiliar environment. Personally, it would have been helpful to have had more time with the general briefing, since this is my first government job and I was unfamiliar with many of the aspects of the benefits package. 8 My employment took place prior to the current HR administration's tenure. I'm sure things are better and more efficient now. 9 A new employee orientation is very helpful and much appreciated. The individual orientation sessions I received were good and I was satisfied with them. However, being new to Government work it would be helpful to have a separate session for new Federal Employees to better acclimate us to the Federal processes and expectations. Also, an overview session on FEC operational policy and procedures so as to inform what is normal workflows and who to contact when workflow isn't accomplished. For example, currently, I haven't received a Performance Review for my 6 month or 1 year events; 10 There were ethics publications, and an IT directives and other policy/policy type documents provided along with other information, but there was no FEC manual that provided all the FEC policies and procedures. Its learn as you go. For example, what are the FEC's core hours, what are the attendance options. What are the governing contractual agreements between management and employees. Are there continuity of operation plans, and what are employees suppose to do, what are the emegency evacuation procedures, etc... 11 I would prefer a more detailed reference book on what is and is not permited under both Ethics regulations and the hatch act.

Page 7, Q23. Additional comments, including changes you think would be helpful to the NEO program

12	While I unfortunately don't recall specifics about the NEO program, I do remember thinking that it would be helpful to have a greater overview of all ofthe divisions within the FEC, and how they work together - this could be very effectively combined with a tour. Additinally, while this is outside the scope of this particular survey, I think it would be helpful to review the orientation that each division provides to its new employees - from what I understand, some are more thorough than others, and I think I would have benefitted from a more intense divisional orientation.	
13	I would clarify that on the employee handbook question, the answer is more a "maybe." I don't recall ever going over a handbook, but I may have received one somewhere in the stack of materials. For the most part, however, the agency relies heavily on the online Skillport trainings to communicate employee policies. Some of those are helpful, but most of them do not prioritize important information very well. That would be my strongest overall suggestion focus more on what employees need to know to do their jobs and to use their employee resources. That information alone would be a lot to absorb all of the extraneous information makes it even more difficult.	
14	None	
15	More time should be given for functional briefings and an employee handbook should be given out that includes at least some of the main policies that employees must follow, for example Time & Attendence policy	
16	Questions regarding employee policies and procedures are too vague. What kind of policies and procedures are you referring to? Yes, I did receive overall information regarding my benefits, safety, health, etc. as an employee of FEC if that's the question.	
17	Provide a briefing that covers general policies and procedures, and an employee handbook copy. Further, detail the relevant offices that provide services to employees and their relevant points of contact, and explain whether the function is handled internally or externally. This content should be delivered in 30-45 minutes, and should not exceed 1 hr. Further, move the functional area briefings to Skillport and/or the FEC Intranet. This would reduce the amount of official time spent in meetings.	
18	Additional time for tours and meeting colleagues would be helpful. It was nice to start with a new group of attorneys and feel that we could lean on each other for information.	
19	There were a few times where people were supposed to show up to talk to us about different divisions of the agency or different federal programs and no one came by. My coworker and I just sat there waiting multiple times, sometimes as long as 45 minutes. I understand people can be busy, but there should at least be (if there wasn't) someone overseeing the overall orientation, checking in on the new hires and making sure people are showing up to talk to them, or if people have to cancel, to let the new hires know so they aren't just waiting for someone who doesn't show up.	
20	I did not receive a tour as part of my NEO, but my mentor later gave me a partial tour, which I found helpful.	

Federal Election Commission Office of Inspector General



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