



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit Services

March 24, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Buggs
Chief Human Capital Officer
Human Capital and Client Services
Office of Management

FROM: Keith West /s/
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

SUBJECT: Closure of OIG Audit of the Appropriateness, Accuracy, and Timeliness of
Processing Personnel Actions
Control Number ED-OIG/A19I0005

This memorandum advises you of the closure of our audit of the Appropriateness, Accuracy, and Timeliness of Processing Personnel Actions. We will not be issuing an audit report. The objectives of the audit were to determine: (1) the length of time to process various non-hiring personnel actions; (2) whether actions are being processed in accordance with applicable policies and regulations; and (3) whether failure to process actions in a timely manner resulted in any salary overpayments or underpayments.

To accomplish our objectives, we gained an understanding of internal control applicable to the Department's processing of non-hiring personnel actions. We reviewed applicable laws and regulations, Department policies and procedures, and the Government Accountability Office "Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government." We also reviewed the Office of Personnel Management "Guide to Processing Personnel Actions." We conducted interviews with Human Capital and Client Services (HCCS)¹ staff responsible for processing personnel actions. We held discussions with support staff involved in the initiation and processing of personnel actions from eight judgmentally selected Principal Offices (POs). In addition, we performed a limited review of a sample of non-hiring personnel actions. The scope of our review included actions completed during the period October 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008.

With the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in February 2009, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) added higher priority audit assignments to its work plan that required the reassignment of the resources that had been devoted to this audit. Since then, management officials and staff in HCCS have changed significantly. As a result, continuing with this audit at this time would require us to revisit a substantial amount of our fieldwork to determine whether criteria had changed and whether potential weaknesses were already being addressed. In addition, the time period associated with the actions that were being reviewed as part of this audit has become dated. To ensure that our results would be meaningful and relevant, we would likely

¹ During the time of our audit, HCCS was named Human Resources Services.

need to revisit the original scope period of our audit. We subsequently concluded that the circumstances surrounding this audit do not warrant the expenditure of additional OIG resources.

The work we performed was not extensive enough to answer the objectives described above and would not necessarily disclose all material weaknesses in the appropriateness, accuracy, and timeliness of personnel action processing. However, the work we performed did identify the following issues that we wanted to bring to your attention.

We noted that, at the time of our review, the Department had not established specific timeliness standards or goals for processing non-hiring personnel actions, nor was there a management reporting and tracking process that would flag actions that were about to become overdue for completion based on established standards. We also noted there was no formal guidance provided to POs with regard to timeframes for initiating the various types of non-hiring personnel actions. POs noted that HCCS expectations in this area were unclear.

If not already addressed, we suggest that HCCS consider establishing applicable timeliness standards for processing non-hiring personnel actions. Without such standards, the Department cannot completely foster a results-oriented workforce or hold individuals accountable for results. We also suggest that guidance that clearly communicates HCCS expectations with regard to timeframes associated with PO initiation of actions should be documented and distributed. The lack of clear and consistent guidance to PO staff promotes confusion and frustration and hinders the ability of such staff to comply with HCCS expectations.

The closure of this audit does not preclude further reviews of this or similar areas by the OIG in the future, nor is our review to be construed as a substitute for any other reviews required by law. In addition, closure of this audit should not be interpreted as agreement with or endorsement of areas reviewed.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. § 522), reports and other products issued by the Office of Inspector General are available to members of the press and general public to the extent information contained therein is not subject to exemptions in the Act. This memorandum will be made available on the OIG internet website.

We wish to express appreciation for the cooperation and assistance extended by your staff during the review. If you have any questions about the review, please contact Michele Weaver-Dugan at 202-245-6941 or michele.weaver-dugan@ed.gov. No response to this memorandum is required.

cc: Winona Varnon, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Management (OM)
Donna Butler, Chief of Staff, OM
Jeanie Banks, Audit Liaison Officer, OM