

REGION 1 NORTHERN ROCKIES GREAT NORTHERN FIRE OUTREACH, RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM	
Submitting Region/Area: Region 1 Northern Rockies	Submitting District/Unit: Region 1 Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment, Training Program
Contact Responsible For The Proposal:	
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Brief description of the proposal:

For the past decade the Aerial Fire Depot Outreach, Recruitment and Retention Program (ORRP) has taken a serious and meaningful approach to outreach, recruitment and retention with the goal of embracing diversity and providing for a progressive workforce. The program has been nationally commended for its success. The program equips employees with the skills necessary to assist the Forest Service in its mission. The Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment, Training Program has its roots in the AFD Outreach Recruitment and Retention Program, and has grown into a nationally recognized program of its own, by attempting always to do the right thing as a matter of principal, rather than mandate.

We believe that we have leadership, the tools, and the experience to assist others in finding the same kinds of success in their Workforce Diversity Management, as well as in the concepts of developing our organizations future through strong ties to our Doctrinal Guidelines and Leadership Principles.

We propose sharing and fostering the processes that have developed into the successes of the R1 Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program in a more institutionalized manner, so as to develop a national level model that can be adapted and utilized by others to meet the needs sought after by USFS Fire and Aviation Management regarding Workforce Diversity Management. We seek to develop and utilize the experience, the working knowledge, and the immense number of partnerships founded by the Leaders of the Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program as Formal National Level Recruiters and Program Liaisons for those seeking assistance in growing their own programs (Job Corps).

If we are to assist in developing a strong and able diverse workforce in the future, we must begin by offering credible expertise, both to the employee candidates, and to the Fire and Aviation Management Employers that would trust our judgment in recruitment and training efforts. We start with an incredibly strong foundation built on honesty and service, which puts the needs and futures of the recruited first, which ultimately serves the individual and the organization best in the long run.



The fixed leadership (overhead) of the Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program includes the positions of the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and a Squad Leader. Within the overhead of the Great Northern, there is a great diversity of experiences and backgrounds which offer above all else, an immense amount of credibility. That credibility is reflected in the backgrounds and the services that our leadership provides. In an effort to offer new recruits and employees the most well rounded information and advice, our leadership positions are always comprised of personnel having experience in multiple areas of fire and land management backgrounds, to include: Ranger District/Forest level fire, fuels and land management units, helicopter programs, interagency hotshot crews, smokejumper units and fire use modules. Also, it is an expectation and a promise from the leadership of the Great Northern, to be actively involved in training of all sorts locally, regionally and nationally.

As a form of credibility, involvement and development for our people, the leaders from the Great Northern are involved with national and regional level committees, such as the F&AM Workforce Diversity Committee and the NWCG Leadership Committee, and have participated in the development of the USFS Northern Regions' Doctrinal Guidelines and several fire management skills course revisions. Our overhead members have participated in the development of the Leadership Curriculum, and are among the only Agency Certified Instructors of Fireline Leadership Courses nationally. The same people that hold high regard and credibility in our culture and our organizations... **those that are trusted by other fire managers**, are the people that after outreaching, recruiting and hiring new employees, take them into the field and mentor and develop these young people on a day-to-day basis. Upon developing relationships with these new people, the overhead team then assists the best of these in finding placement in fire management or related fields that will best suit their aspirations and abilities.

The Great Northern is heavily invested in the future of our organization, and we believe in diversity as a way of being. Our people see that, and feel that in our everyday business. They are valued for what they bring to the table, and they are not a number. They are held accountable and they expect to be held accountable, and they deliver, or they do not stay with the program. This format is simple, honest and it works. We believe that we can model and share this with others effectively, by developing a national outreach and recruitment position that has the support of our overhead team.

Many of the people that we spend our time and efforts with during the outreach and recruitment phases, are sticking around (retention) in fire management and/or related land management positions nationwide. Above and beyond sticking around, they are making a positive impact in the units that they are moving into, as well as in the communities that the USFS resides in and serves. And in the long run... isn't that why it's important to have a diverse workforce?

It is our belief that the great success of past outreach and recruitment efforts will multiply exponentially when implemented at the national level. The outreach/developmental positions will ensure that lessons learned up to this point would be preserved. Plus, it will increase the knowledge base and enthusiasm for diversity in the workforce for the future.

Other fire programs throughout the different federal and state agencies have recognized this success and are willing to make the commitment to support and establish the Great Northern model within their areas.

What is the total contribution being requested from F&AM for this Proposal?

This table is a breakdown of what is being requested to expand on the current efforts being put forth. Table includes: 25% of the wages of Superintendent (working as national recruiter and assisting in development of new programs/fire curriculum w/partners {Job Corps}). Travel costs associated with Outreach, Recruitment and Hiring Missions. Funding of two pay periods for Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program... exposure to would be employers for those recruited from around the U.S.

National Outreach/Recruitment Coordinator position		Year-2008	Year-2009	Year-2010
OFF Season Networking/Partnering	Wages GS-9 (x .25%)	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$18,000
Travel/Per diem for Outreach/Recruitment/Partnering	Travel expenses:	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Exposure of crew to would be employers... project work on field units	Crew wages (x 2 Pay Periods)	\$49,300	\$49,300	\$49,300
Total:		\$82,300	\$82,300	\$82,300

By providing the funding requested above the following can be accomplished:

- Development of not only a single national level recruiter, but a team of national level recruiters by way of training and mentorship. Providing a way of succession and sustainability.
- Establish a standard for Outreach, Hiring and Selection, as well as a tool for placement.
- Assistance in the development of an Advanced Fire Curriculum for Job Corps and/or other Vocational Education Institutions, with leads into National Apprenticeship Academy.
- Strengthening of our existing networks and partnerships for outreach, recruitment and hiring, to include the option of re-establishing the connection between the USFS and the Job Corps program as a source for a top quality, diverse work force.
- Create and standardize mentoring success models for others to follow throughout the nation.
- Provide leadership and accountability regarding workforce diversity directly to the WO.
- Develop a closer connection between Diversity as a Core Value and our Doctrinal Guidelines in USFS F&AM... Making that “cultural change”.

Signatures:

Regional Fire Director	/s/ George Weldon
Regional Representative to F&AM WDC	/s/ Edmund Ward
Smokejumper Program Manager	/s/ Edmund Ward
Regional Civil Rights Director	/s/ Debby Wivholm
Unit manager	/s/ George Weldon

1. Workforce Diversity Management:

Outreach- This proposal focuses on the creation of a National Outreach and Recruitment Coordinator position (Superintendent focused on outreach/recruitment). This person would be in charge of the training of new regional positions to be mentored and trained to assist in the efforts to increase Workforce Diversity within the Fire Programs Nationally. By having a single point of contact and extra Level II recruiter positions who work in Fire and Aviation Management a part of their “day jobs”, efforts to reach the designated under-represented populations can be maximized. By expanding efforts with more recruiters who have the same goal and objectives identified, the numbers of those being reached at job fairs, schools, environmental programs, on-the-fireline networking and FS sponsored events will meet an all time high. With the implementation of these positions, the recruitment of qualified individuals will be greatly enhanced.

Recruitment- The lure of smokejumping can be a benefit when looking for qualified candidates who can be placed in various duties with the Forest Service, and more specifically, fire. As these recruiters visit schools, job fairs, career days, and common meetings, they will have the knowledge of what qualifications would be necessary for Type II crews, Type I crews, Helitack crews, Smokejumpers, and District fire fighters. With this knowledge the recruiters will be able to help place these individuals in positions where they would be successful and have the ability to move on to possibly more fulfilling careers. Not only will these recruiters focus on fire related jobs, but their knowledge will also be helpful in transferring knowledge of other Forest Service positions to prospective employees seeking careers as Biologists, Engineers, and other careers deemed desirable.

Hiring & Selection- All recruiters having the same approach and objectives when hiring candidates will show consistency and ensure that the need for a more diverse workforce within the Forest Service will be met. With these recruiters focusing not only on fire positions, *all* units with the Forest Service will benefit from their efforts.

Retention- A mentoring program established to aid in the transitioning of firefighters to the smokejumper environment has been one of the successes of the Missoula smokejumpers and other programs at the AFD (Great Northern). Along with the mentoring, it is important to have a workplace that supports the efforts of the Workforce Diversity hiring. The recruitment and hiring are only the first steps of a diverse workforce, an environment that continues to nurture and promote it is also important. With the continued hiring of individuals from under-represented populations, a desirable work environment will continue to be in place. Employees immersed in this environment will want to remain in place and will strive to enhance it.

2. Management Support:

Even with diversity being a point of contention for some, management nationally and within the region continues to see the importance of having a diverse workforce. Outreach and Recruitment are dynamic processes that require creativity and energy. The Outreach/Recruitment Developmental Positions will only be successful with the support of management. It is essential that quality individuals with a passion for people and a firm grasp on the desired diversity goals are put in these positions to ensure success.

From the beginning of Region 1's efforts to increase workforce diversity, there has always been support from the Regional Forester's office and on through the immediate supervisors directly in contact with those being hired. With their continued support, as well as that from the Regional Fire Director, Regional Civil Rights Director, and Smokejumper Program Manager, recruitment goals within Workforce Diversity will continue to climb. Having management support for this proposal will also enable our efforts to become national and expand throughout the entire Forest Service.

3. Scope and Sustainability:

This proposal of a National Program will enhance the previous successes of Region 1 by bringing it to the national level. The proven success of the Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program serves as the basis for this proposal.

The Northern Region strongly believes they have the credibility, the foundation and the experience to take a small but highly effective program and reach a nation-wide audience in an effort to enhance to mission of the US Forest Service and other natural resource agencies. In fact, other regions and other agencies are already attempting to duplicate what has been successful here. Region 1 personnel believe that diversity is a critical component for future US Forest Service success.

Regarding sustainability... Every dollar we spend towards our future that is not invested in our people will depreciate with time. The only investment that appreciates in value is that which we make in our people. That investment is best spent in the foundation of these people... in their beginning. This investment we are finding, while not being a quick return... has long term, exponential and lasting implications. This investment, if tied to something substantial, like our Doctrinal Guidelines, leadership, and the people being recruited, can have a cultural effect on our organization as a whole.

4. Partners and Shared Funding/Resources:

The Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program, and its leadership has the most developed networks of partnerships currently available (see below), and the credibility in the field to make a difference with those connections. Currently, the Great Northern has developed partnerships and is working with some of the following organizations for recruitment, training and placement:

- Job Corps Programs (Locally and Nationally) and Vocational Training Schools (recruiting and hiring out of Schenk and Mingo Job Corps Centers); feeding into the Midewin and other IHC.
- Several Universities offering Natural Resources Degrees
- Several 1890's Colleges and Universities
- Historically Black Colleges
- Many Large Urban Municipal Fire Departments and Law Enforcement Agencies
- U.S. Military Academies and R.O.T.C. programs
- Land Management Work Contractors such as Grayback and Pat Rick Co.
- Professional Forums such as Women in Fire Service
- Other USFS Regions, as well as other Federal and State Agencies
- Multiple disciplines within the Fire and Land Management organizations, such as forests and grasslands, ranger districts, parks, fire use modules, helicopter modules, interagency hotshot crews and smokejumper units.

5. Integration with Civil Rights and Human Capital Management Professionals:

There has always been strong support from the Regional Civil Rights Director for the Missoula Smokejumper and Aerial Fire Depot's efforts in increasing the Workforce Diversity. Debby Whivholm, Region 1 Civil Rights Director has been integral in these efforts and has aided in ensuring that Civil Rights plays a role in these efforts.

In the Northern Region the concept of having a diverse workforce, which provides services to a diverse public, is central to a successful diversity strategy. Involving underserved publics and increasing workforce diversity in the Northern Region are directly related to the future success of the agency. Key to this success is ensuring that the Forest Service organization of the future is being hired today. As current leaders reach retirement and leave the Service, future leaders must be in place. To reach, hire and retain future leaders that are a reflection of the publics we serve we must seek out non- traditional communities, schools and a diverse applicant pool.

Once we have reached and selected from that diverse applicant pool, individuals committed to the success of recruitment efforts take a personal interest in coaching, training, mentoring and following the personal development of these new employees. These efforts in turn are shared with future applicants and the job of outreach, recruitment and retention becomes easier, more successful and is shared across regional boundaries to contribute not only to a diverse fire organization in Region 1, but a diverse organization Forest Service wide. This project is clearly the type of project that contributes to an ideal civil rights program, a cornerstone of MD 715. In addition the AFD efforts include ensuring new employees receive a mix of knowledge, skill

development, attention to safety, and understanding and respect of team commitment which serves employees and the agency very well.

6. Management Directive (MD) 715:

Even with the successes in R1 and the Great Northern Fire Outreach, Recruitment and Training Program, there are still some challenges and barriers hampering the efforts to increase diversity. Some of the barriers that recruiters face while making their outreach and recruitment efforts and some of our proposed actions are:

Barrier: Inability to hire “On the spot” of those quality individuals that meet qualifications and are strong diversity candidates.

Action: Ability for recruiters to make offers on the spot and ensure that quality candidates are not lost in the hiring process.

Barrier: Difficulty in navigating the complex world of AVUE (or whatever online application process we are utilizing) and the STEP/SCEP processes.

Action: Definitive assistance from a team of recruiters that understand and have navigated the current issues found in our hiring procedures, to include assistance in filling out applications, online support, and the ability to find all of our forms, procedures (stated and implied) and instructions for completion in one spot... “one stop shopping”

Barrier: Difficulty for hiring officials in fire and aviation units to select and place diverse candidates in available positions due to complex applications procedures.

Action: Our recruiters will work hand-in-hand with HR and CR professionals to develop hiring/placement procedures that assist would be hiring officials in selecting people that the recruiters/fire training programs have gone to great costs and lengths to recruit, hire and train. For example, expanding the ability to hire these individuals as forest or regional employees, which would offer our hiring officials the ability to be hire our most qualified and diverse candidates with Non-Competitive Rehire (NCR) authority, anywhere within that forest or regions fire or land management position needs.

Barrier: Not having a positive work environment that will mentor and retain those diversity individuals.

Action: We can be more efficient and do a better job of recruitment for the fire manager when we have the trust of those other fire managers and the on-the-ground credibility, that many current HR/CR recruiters may lack. With candid honesty with those being recruited and with increased recruitment efforts from recruiters who have the same objectives, they will be able to place individuals in locations and positions that will allow them to be successful. When a new employee of a program is successful, this proves positive on the program, which in turn creates a positive, progressive work environment.

Barrier: Very remote and often intimidating rural environments associated with many US Forest Service Fire Units.

Action: The ability to bring people from all over the U.S. to a place well renowned for its openness to cultural diversity, as well as being one of the capitals for Wildland Fire, Missoula,

MT. Missoula has much in the way of culture and opportunities for those looking for a career in land management. New employees may find that, while much of the USFS is remote, there are places in the agency where they can enjoy all of the amenities they are used to having, while learning about the opportunities that exist within the Forest Service.

Barrier: Affordable housing in a rural area that may be quite uniform in the ways of diversity. While we are cutting costs in our budgets, one of the most highly impacted areas is our Working Capital Funds and our existing infrastructure. It is nearly impossible to bring young folks half way across the country, where many of our Fire and Aviation positions are, with no place to put them. The communities may be remote, there is seldom a support system for those that look or sound like themselves, and the expense for young people of trying to find housing without knowing someone in the area, can be overwhelming and is often restrictive.

Action: The Great Northern, along with some of the programs that could imitate it, has the ability to provide housing at very low costs to the employee, and can develop a network of support for these incoming employees prior to their showing up. Likewise, the community in which the employee initially arrives, is very open, and less overwhelming, while offering the best of what a diverse wildland fire organization has to offer... The Missoula Smokejumper Base, Missoula Technology and Development Center, The Northern Rockies Training Center, The Northern Rockies Fire Cache, the Missoula Retardant Base, the National Weather Service, that Intermountain Region Fire Science Lab, etc... all of which are employed and utilized in our training and to educate the new employee regarding the future options with the USFS.

Barrier: Misconception that there's a lack of career opportunities in Fire and the Forest Service.

Action: Having knowledgeable overhead and recruiters who have backgrounds and qualifications in fire that demonstrate success models from all walks of fire and land management. Each of these overhead/recruiters are models and mentors that have created successful careers in fire and explain examples of career opportunities within the Forest Service.

Barrier: Misconception by certain individuals that they may not be able to be physically successful in the job, women in particular.

Action: Recruiters who can provide success stories of individuals who have successfully overcome initial physical shortcomings to carve out careers in fire and land management, including such high profile positions as smokejumping.

7. Measurement of Success:

Success will, in part, be in the establishment and expansion of a National Outreach and Recruitment program. This program would be one in which the Fire and Land Managers share in the concept of diversity as a value of the USFS, and are given the tools to succeed in the pursuit of achieving and retaining a diverse workforce. These tools would be a credible recruitment network, which the fire and land managers believe are working on their behalf. The creation of this National program that has the ability to reach out to more of the underrepresented populations and bring them into the Forest Service family will enhance the work and the work environment that we so greatly value.

Another measurement of success may be represented in the long term retention of employees that are recruited through this initiative, which could be tracked over the course of a five year period.

Yet another measurement of success in this program would be the establishment of an Advanced Wildland Fire Curriculum, first within the Job Corps Program, and later within other Vocational and Technical Education Programs and Community Colleges throughout the nation. This curriculum would enhance the opportunities for Job Corps students to compete for positions, including our National Apprenticeship Program, and to be successful in the Fire and Aviation Management organizations, as well as assisting in reestablishing our relationship with the Job Corps as a talent pool, a priority expressed by our former Chief of the Forest Service.

The success of this program will be evident in the diverse cross section represented in the next generation of Forest Service employees. Although tracking numbers is the easiest way to quantify and measure the numbers of under-represented individuals within a workforce, this will not be the only measurement. The amount of individuals who are reached and successfully placed in programs that are in full support of increasing workforce diversity would have more impact. The important measurement of success for this proposal will be the placement of even one individual into a program that will mentor and strive to retain them, in hopes of maintaining a work environment that will continue to expand like efforts.