

Effective union engagement through pre-decisional involvement

*Lessons Learned from the development of EPA's
Skills Marketplace*



*An innovative approach to developing, deploying and retaining
EPA's workforce and enhancing the way we deliver on our mission*

What is the Skills Marketplace?

- An EPA program that gives employees the opportunity to work on a project in a different part of the agency for up to 20% of their time without leaving their home office.
- Skills Marketplace is continuously available throughout the year
- Managers post project announcements to an EPA-wide portal
- Employees see what opportunities exist and after getting their supervisor's approval, apply to participate in them.



Skills Marketplace: the Journey

An inclusive transparent process:



Resulting in: an Operational Framework that has garnered widespread buy-in and provides the guidelines and policies to make this program operational and workable from the perspective of both managers and staff

Convene PDI Team and Clearly articulate PDI Team Charge to achieve buy-in

Convening the PDI Team

- Diverse representation on the team to ensure adequate representation of perspectives:
 - All of EPA's 5 unions were represented
 - Management representatives from different offices and management levels

Example charge for a PDI process:

- Goal of the PDI process: Develop a draft Operational Framework for the Skills Marketplace Program
- PDI participants charged with ...
 - Identifying interests, functions and characteristics related to each of the Operational Framework elements;
 - Developing and brainstorming solutions, building on the input provided by the pre-PDI consultation process;
 - Analyzing the extent to which various options meet the interests, functions and characteristics sought; and
 - Developing a draft Operational Framework

Keep the team engaged and focused to produce results

For the Skills Marketplace, the PDI Team:

- Held regular meetings and divided responsibilities for the work
- Had ongoing access to a subject matter expert
- Reached an agreement on the goals of the Skills Marketplace Program: as an important tool for employee professional development and maximizing the application of the skills and knowledge that employees currently have to help improve knowledge sharing across the Agency and help to reduce stovepipes.
- Developed the program guidelines and policies: to set the clear expectations related to the functioning of the program and help ensure consistency in the agency-wide implementation of the program while reducing any bureaucratic burden on managers and staff participating in the program.

Lessons Learned from PDI Process

- High-level management support for the project
- Early scoping and pre-planning to tee up issues for the PDI process
- PDI Team composition an important factor
- Team members should be prepared to invest time and actively participate in team discussions and “homework activities”
- Support resources helped to keep the process focused and build trust
- Setting up coordination structure to provide continuous updates to management on the progress of the PDI process and resolve any issues as they arise while empowering the PDI Team.

Skills Marketplace Results Dashboard

340

Total Project Opportunities posted

528

Total Number of Employee Applications submitted

326

Total Number of Employees selected

How has this worked in practice?



Alison is a Region 1 employee. She worked with Mark, the project supervisor in OITA to provide technical expertise in designing the Cities Clean Air Partnership Programs to improve air quality in Asian cities



Results

“Skills Marketplace worked better than I anticipated. It provided my team with technical skills that are not resident in our AA-ship. We could not have achieved our mission goals without her. It was so successful, that we extended her for another six months and brought on additional Skills Marketplace candidates to strengthen the program.” --**Mark Kasman, OITA, Project Supervisor**

“This position gave me an opportunity to travel to Taiwan to participate in a CCAP workshop attended by representatives (including mayors) from eight Asian cities. At this workshop, I gave a presentation on the “US Experience Managing PM2.5 Pollution” and participated in consultations with Clean Air Asia, the NGO responsible for implementing CCAP. Skills Marketplace provided me with the opportunity to participate in an exciting EPA international initiative, and provided OITA with the means to acquire needed technical support.” – **Alison Simcox, Region 1, Project Participant**

“As Alison’s supervisor, I agree that this Skills Marketplace project was a good experience for her. She had an opportunity to collaborate with EPA staff from other parts of the Agency and learn how other parts of the world deal with the challenges of fine particle pollution.” --**Anne Arnold, Region 1, Alison’s Home Office Supervisor**

A Successful Partnership

The EPA Skills Marketplace was developed in partnership with:

- National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU)
- American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE)
- National Association of Independent Labor (NAIL)
- National Association of Government Employees (NAGE)
- Engineers and Scientists of California (ESC)



Karen Kellen (President of AFGE Council 238) meeting with EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy

Thank you

Skills Marketplace Senior Champion: John Reeder, Deputy Chief of Staff, EPA

Skills Marketplace Program Manager: Noha Gaber, Director, Office of Internal Communications, EPA

Skills Marketplace PDI Team Member: Sandra Pearlman, Acting Director, Labor and Employee Relations, EPA

Skills Marketplace PDI Team Member: Amer Al-Mudallal, Co-Chair, EPA National Partnership Council