

Railroad Retirement Board's Implementation Plan of Executive Order 13522: Creating Labor—Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government

On December 9, 2009, President Obama requested that agencies provide a report to the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations on their plans to implement the directives outlined in his Executive Order 13522 on Creating Labor-Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government Services. This document furnishes the requested information for the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Also, as requested in the report, it was prepared with the involvement and input of Council 57 of the American Federation of Government Employees which holds the exclusive recognition for the agency.

The RRB is an independent agency located in Chicago, Illinois. The RRB's primary function is to administer comprehensive retirement-survivor and unemployment-sickness benefits programs for the nation's railroad workers and their families, under the Railroad Retirement and Unemployment and Sickness Insurance Acts. In connection with the retirement program, the RRB has administrative responsibility under the Social Security Act for certain benefit payments and railroad workers' Medicare coverage.

The Railroad Retirement Board is a small agency that employs approximately 900 people the majority of which work in the William O Lipinski building in Chicago, IL. We have about 250 employees who work in 53 District offices throughout the country. The RRB has just under 200 managers/ supervisors, with a bargaining unit of about 700 people.

RRB and AFGE Create Labor- Management Council

The agency and the union have agreed on the make-up of a Labor-Management Council (LMC) under this Executive Order. The LMC will consist of three members who will represent the AFGE and three members who will represent RRB management. The RRB management team will consist of one representative from Human Resources, one representative from the Office of the General Counsel and the Senior Executive Officer who will represent the Executive Committee and the Board. The Senior Executive Officer

has the authority to make agency-wide binding agreements with the union. The union believes that this change will enhance labor relations within the RRB.

One of the first subjects for discussion in the new LMC will be the drafting of an agreement describing how the LMC will operate and setting some ground rules for meetings and agenda items. Information discussed at the LMC meetings will be shared with employees. The LMC will also develop a plan to collect data that will be used to measure the state of labor relations at the agency. As an example, the data could be collected from employees through focus groups and may also include input from other union officials and top management officials.

Through the LMC, we will re-commit to supporting a cooperative labor management group that will work together to allow the RRB to meet our strategic goals. Initially, we will focus on our strategic goal to provide excellent customer service. The agency's goal is to satisfy our customer's expectations of quality service in terms of delivery of service and manner of performance. The agency and union believe that through this forum, we can start using input from the employees. If we start incorporating this knowledge from the people who perform the work into the policies and procedures of our agency, we can improve our effectiveness to provide a better overall product. Involving the people who do the work in the process, leads to greater satisfaction among employees. Both the union and management are committed to establishing a more cooperative and collaborative future but the ultimate measure of whether the LMC is successful in this endeavor will be in the satisfaction of the rail community which we serve and the people that we employ.

It should be noted that the RRB has ten committees or groups in which the union participates as full members. The ten groups are as follows:

Building Security Committee

Employee Assistance Committee*

Employees with Disabilities Advisory Committee

Equal Opportunity Committee*

Incentive Awards Committee

Occupational Safety and Health Committee*

Labor Management Committee*
RRB Award for Excellence Selection Committee
Training Council
Merit Promotion Panels for bargaining unit positions *

* These groups and committees were established as a result of negotiations with the AFGE and are included in the RRB's Collective Bargaining Agreement.

RRB Commitment of Agency Training Resources

In order to facilitate the implementation of this plan, the agency is committed to allocating our resources in the following manner. The RRB will allocate a larger portion of our training funds for labor relations training for both management representatives and union officials. The agency and union believe funding (when appropriate) of both separate training and joint training will benefit the agency and lead to a more cooperative relationship. In addition, the agency will increase the allocation of time that Human Resources Specialists (Labor Relations Specialist and Training Specialist) devote to labor relations activities. The agency will also commit to providing the appropriate technological resources needed in order to gather relevant data concerning labor relations issues.

Once the method for determining a baseline assessment of views on labor relations has been established, the LMC will develop a method to measure improvements. Possible methods for achieving this goal would be the same method used for assessing the baseline such as surveys of employees and focus groups. In addition, data tracking activities such as Unfair Labor Practices (ULP's), arbitrations and grievances that cannot be resolved within the initial filing unit could also be used to determine if the state of labor relations within the agency has improved.

RRB and Union Agree to Dissemination of Pre-Decisional Guidance

As part of our implementation of Executive Order 13522 both management and the union are moving forward with a plan to begin immediately using pre-decisional involvement of the union in workplace challenges and problem solving. We are awaiting guidance on this matter from the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations. We have developed an initial plan which includes informing

our managers and supervisors of the new change in procedures. The information will be distributed electronically in the form of written document. In addition to the written document, we plan on holding an informational session for our managers to discuss in detail what these new changes mean to them as managers and to answer any questions that they may have. This initial plan will be updated and revised as we receive additional information and guidance from the Office of Personnel Management and the National Council.