

**FIFTIETH MEETING OF THE
COMMITTEE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS**
(17–19 November 2020, Virtual Meeting)

Working Paper

AGENDA ITEM No. 6: Report on human resources and health and safety

(Paper presented by the Secretariat)

Purpose

1. This paper presents an update of key initiatives being undertaken by the Secretariat's Human Resources department (HRD).
2. To ensure a fit-for-purpose HR function focused on impactful operational and strategic delivery, HRD continues to create and deliver on a strategic work plan that aligns with the overall Operations and Management Directorate's (OMD) business plan and the Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020.
3. HRD has implemented several key initiatives, as well as delivering its core activities of recruitment and operational HR management.

Recommendations

4. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note progress in implementing the human resources work programme and key initiatives in alignment with the Operations and Management Directorate's business plan;
 - ii. encourage the Secretariat to continue investing in health and safety initiatives to meet its objectives of zero accidents and occupational illnesses, elimination of hazards and reduction of risks;
 - iii. direct the Secretariat to continue working to develop a high-performing, engaged and diverse workforce as a critical contribution to 'One SPC' and to high-quality service delivery to members.
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Report on human resources and health and safety

Background

5. OMD's business plan guides HRD's operations with a divisional objective 'to provide HR interventions that contribute to attracting, retaining and developing a diverse and engaged workforce'. These interventions include four elements focused on HR operations, effective recruitment, fit-for-purpose remuneration and talent management.
6. The following sections of this paper highlight HR initiatives undertaken in 2018 and 2019 to achieve this objective.

Covid-19

7. The global pandemic and closing of borders across the region and globally have had a significant impact on staff movement. Recruitment and onboarding of new staff during the pandemic have been challenging due to flight availability, frequent changes in countries' regulations, and quarantine requirements. The Secretariat has also had to manage several cases of staff unable to return to their duty station while on duty or personal travel. The Secretariat has been able to repatriate most of these staff members and continues to work closely with SPC host countries to facilitate the repatriation or onboarding of the remaining staff and their family members.
8. In addition, the Secretariat acted swiftly when mandatory lockdowns were implemented in our host countries. All staff moved to a 'work from home' arrangement and were provided with assistance on ICT equipment and connectivity. Our comprehensive warden system, which is normally used during natural disasters, was activated and staff were provided with a support network and key contacts during lockdown periods.
9. In regard to recruitment, HRD was able to provide hiring managers with clear guidelines and assistance during this time and has continued to meet the Secretariat's resourcing needs and contribute to the continued delivery of projects and services to our members.

Policies

10. Following a comprehensive review that began in 2015 and final approval by CRGA, a full suite of revised Staff Regulations and Manual of Staff Policies entered into force on 1 July 2020.
11. The Manual of Staff Policies consolidates all staff policies and previous administrative instructions into a single document. It forms part of SPC's ongoing strengthening of internal governance processes and provides the Secretariat and staff with an updated and readily accessible suite of HR policies. It also includes a fair and transparent review process, including the opportunity for staff to appeal to the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT), as mandated by CRGA 49.

Ongoing contracts

12. Ongoing contracts for locally recruited staff were approved in principle by CRGA 44, but not implemented due to the prioritisation process and various reforms that SPC had to implement in the following years.

13. The Secretariat is pleased to report that the new SPC Staff Regulations and Policies have enabled delivery on this important commitment to staff in locally recruited positions (PAL) across SPC. The first series of ongoing contracts were awarded from 1 September 2020 to PAL staff who have served SPC for more than 12 years.
14. Special committees will now convene to review the eligibility for an ongoing contract for PAL staff who have successfully completed an initial period of service to SPC of three years.

Staff engagement and well-being

15. In August/September 2020, HRD conducted an organisation-wide Employee Engagement Survey to encourage feedback from staff, provide management with insights into levels of satisfaction and areas for improvement, help identify ways to strengthen SPC's organisational culture, and continue efforts to enhance SPC as a workplace.
16. An external provider, Culture Amp, was again engaged to administer the engagement survey, which staff were able to access online. The format of the survey was similar to the one run in 2018 to provide valuable comparable data.
17. HRD intends to run the next engagement survey in 2022.

Health and safety

18. In 2019 the Secretariat recruited a dedicated resource to strengthen its commitment to health and safety and formulate a clear strategy and guidelines.
19. The key focus areas for health and safety are aligned to:
 - i. leadership commitment
 - ii. employee commitment
 - iii. resource availability
 - iv. continuous improvement.
20. The Secretariat has made significant progress in risk and hazard identification and reporting, safety audits, corrective actions, production of clear guidelines and procedures for high-risk areas, and raising of staff awareness of the importance of health and safety.
21. Initial training has been delivered to staff with health and safety responsibilities (fire wardens, first aid providers) to ensure compliance with current practices. Further health and safety training is being developed for delivery in 2021 to enhance the Secretariat's health and safety awareness and capability, and ensure alignment to current policy and best practice in this area.
22. In 2021 the Secretariat will continue to champion the importance of health and safety to meets the objective of 'Zero accidents and occupational illnesses, elimination of hazards and reduction of risks'.

Learning and development

23. HRD successfully delivered performance management and performance development key result area (KRA) training across the Secretariat.

24. Operational training and development programmes and opportunities continue to be taken up by staff. During the Covid-19 pandemic, most courses and training have been accessed by way of webinars or online.
25. Throughout 2019 and 2020, HRD conducted systems training to support the systems changes implemented in the Secretariat.
26. Priorities for 2021 include further development of skills in people management and development training to enhance the capability of managers, as well as continued delivery of existing performance management and KRA activities.
27. Future initiatives include exploring a learning management system, developing a funding model to better support training and professional development activities, and a focus on, and commitment to learning and development for local staff.

Recruitment

28. The HRD recruitment team continues to deliver high-quality service to the Secretariat, providing excellent candidates in a streamlined and efficient recruitment process.

Recruitment activity	2020 (to end of August)*	2019	2018	2017
Applications received and processed	4350	6300	6600	5500
New positions opened	95	147	149	134
Positions filled	90	143	138	101
Interviews conducted	350	550	550	430
Time to fill (days)	81	75	81	93

**Covid-19 impacts and results will be measured and consolidated after 2020 year-end closing.*

29. The recruitment team is capturing data on applications from Pacific Island and female candidates, and the appointment of these candidates. This data enables measurement of performance and assessment of the effectiveness of recruitment initiatives in the areas of:
 - i. ensuring gender equity;
 - ii. continuing to attract more applications from qualified women and Pacific Island nationals;
 - iii. ensuring that SPC continuously brings on board the skills and values required to deliver high-quality services.

Population appointed	2020 (to end of August)*	2019	2018
Female applicants	42%	47%	42%
Females appointed	52%	59%	43%
Pacific Island applicants	39%	45%	41%
Pacific Island appointments	60%	72%	70%

**Covid-19 impacts and results will be measured and consolidated after 2020 year-end closing.*

30. This data shows that Pacific Island nationals and women are well represented on SPC staff and demonstrates the Secretariat's commitment to recruiting and developing a highly skilled and diverse workforce.
31. In addition to bringing in high-quality candidates, the recruitment team also focuses on continuous improvement of systems, processes and technology to increase SPC's visibility and attract new talent.

Recommendations

32. CRGA is invited to:
 - i. note progress in implementing the human resources work programme and key initiatives in alignment with the Operations and Management Directorate's business plan;
 - ii. encourage the Secretariat to continue investing in health and safety initiatives to meet its objectives of zero accidents and occupational illnesses, elimination of hazards and reduction of risks;
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