



Government Performance Project

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (HRM) METHODOLOGY

An important component of the Government Performance Project's (GPP) approach is to assess government capacity using a criteria-driven approach. The GPP study uses five criteria to characterize sound human resources management in state governments. The key components of good human resources management systems include: workforce and strategic planning, the ability to facilitate timely and quality hiring, ability to create a work environment that retains skilled employees, sophisticated professional training and development programs, and meaningful reward and evaluation structures that support the state's strategic goals.

Criterion 1: The state regularly conducts and updates a thorough analysis of its human resource needs.

This criterion hinges on the extent to which a government is aware of and addresses its personnel capacity over time, particularly the sophistication with which the government conducts strategic analysis of present and future human resource needs and links workforce planning to its budgetary and strategic planning processes.

Criterion 2: The state acquires the employees it needs.

This criterion addresses the extent to which the government is able to obtain the employees it needs and determine the quality of its new hires. To accomplish this, a government must be able to conduct effective recruiting efforts and to hire appropriately skilled and qualified employees in a timely manner, especially for positions critical to its core services.

Criterion 3: The state retains a skilled workforce.

This criterion concerns the government's ability to retain skilled and experienced employees, to discipline poor performers, and to terminate employees who cannot or will not meet performance and behavioral standards. This criterion focuses on the state's workforce environment, including employee benefits and labor relations.

Criterion 4: The state develops its workforce.

This criterion captures the government's commitment to training and developing its employees, as well as its future leaders. This includes providing resources for training and leadership development, focusing on employee career development, and providing internal opportunities for employees' professional growth.

Criterion 5: The state manages its workforce performance programs effectively.

This criterion focuses on whether a government is able to encourage employees to perform effectively in support of the government's goals. Effective motivation typically rests on the use of appropriate monetary and non-monetary rewards and incentives, an effective performance appraisal system linking individual and agency goals, and sound mechanisms that facilitate and utilize employee feedback.



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The GPP administered a survey to states that included three sections about human resources management practices. One section requested data from the central human resources management agency and the other two sections requested HRM-related data from two state agencies. The survey instrument contain a series of closed- and open-ended questions designed to yield information about a given state's capacity with respect to each of the criteria described above, as well as a request specific human resource management documents and policies. In addition to the survey and state documents, GPP journalists interviewed state officials in the central HRM agency and state agencies.

Forty states completed the survey in full; three states partially completed the survey, and seven states did not respond to the survey. In the cases where survey data was not available, grades are based on information from public documents and extensive interviews with state officials.

As discussed above, the GPP survey, document collection, and interviews were designed to assess five criteria. Each of the criteria was equally weighted in the analysis of the state's HRM system. An important issue when using criteria-based assessment is choosing a coherent structure for the system of evaluation indicators.

We grouped human resource management data submitted by the central human resource management agency and the two state governments by subcriteria and established a series of benchmarks by subcriteria. GPP staff analyzed the relevant portions of documents and compared document analysis to survey responses (where appropriate). For example, if a state indicated that it conducted formal, centralized workforce planning on the survey, we expected to find a copy or an example of its workforce plan. When inconsistencies emerged between the document analysis and the survey response, GPP journalist or staff followed up with states to address the inconsistency.

We carefully examined central and agency responses for all states, regardless of the degree to which the central HRM function was decentralized, to ensure that we had a thorough understanding of human resource management practices in the state. When the central HRM survey responses differed considerably from the agency responses, GPP journalists addressed these findings during the interviews. In some states, different HRM functions are decentralized to state agencies and as a result, the central HRM agency was unable to provide data. In these instances, we relied upon the data and documents provided by the two state agencies.

Three GPP reviewers evaluated independently each state's human resource management system by subcriterion. The three reviewers convened and thoroughly discussed each state's evaluation by subcriterion. In instances where the evaluation differed across at least two reviewers, the team reviewed the state's data to determine why the disparities emerged. GPP journalists and staff followed up with states to address the questions that were raised. For example, a state may have responded that it took 110 days, on average to hire new employees on its central HRM survey, a state official might have indicated in the interview that it took the state, on average, 20 days to hire a new employee, and the HRM agency's annual report documented that it took 95 days, on average, to fill a new position. When differences could not be reconciled through our follow up process, we utilized the data provided in the survey or documents by the central HRM agency.

We evaluated each criteria based on the subcriterion to determine whether it was an area of strength or weakness. We determined the overall HRM grade by equally weighting the criteria scores.