

AU/ACSC/2017

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

TECHNICIAN HIRING IN THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD:
A TIMELINE STUDY

by

Christine E. Munch, Lt Col, Pennsylvania Air National Guard

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Instructor: Dr. Marci Ledlow

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

June 2017

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Acknowledgements

I am exceedingly thankful to my children and my grandson for their unwavering patience and encouragement to me as I dedicated much of our family time to this project. Likewise, I am very grateful for the support of the many unnamed coworkers and fellow students who have provided feedback on my project and leads toward additional useful information, and to those who responded to my calls for data from the Force Support Squadrons and Joint Force Headquarters Human Resources Offices. Much appreciation also goes to my Wing Commander, Colonel Howard “Chip” Eissler, for allowing me the freedom to devote snippets of my work time to this, as well as to Colonel Claudia Malone for her thorough review and honest feedback of my work. I would also like to thank my mentor, Colonel Thomas James, whose unceasing cheer, motivation, and assistance made it possible to conclude this project with my sanity intact. And finally, to Dr. Marci Ledlow, my instructor and, as it often felt, my personal cheerleader. Her jewels of information and lengthy, personalized feedback, as well as her high energy motivation combined to make an arduous task achievable and something of which I am very proud. I am a better officer (and writer) for having worked through this project with these influential leaders as my guide.

Abstract

Anecdotal narratives throughout the Air National Guard (ANG) tell of long-standing angst regarding the abnormal length of time to hire a Technician (Title 32) position. As Technicians constitute approximately two-thirds of the ANG's full time force and exist for the purpose of organizing, training, and equipping ANG military members to deploy in support of our nation's objectives, as well as to support state domestic operations, it is easy to understand why this is disconcerting. This Descriptive Survey explored various timeframes for hiring Technicians across the ANG and identified possible causes of hiring delays. The target population studied consisted of Force Support Squadrons at ANG Wings, Human Resources Offices at the Joint Force Headquarters level, as well as external federal agencies. Based on the responses received from the ANG's Human Resource professionals via data calls, two main themes surfaced: lack of education of the Human Resource professionals at the Wing-level and lack of tracking and hiring metrics across the ANG. The application of the findings from this research may lead to increased awareness of the disparate issues, change within ANG metrics gathering, cross-tell of best practices, and additional changes/updates to the processes related to hiring Technicians.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

SMSgt John Doe is the Superintendent for a Communications Flight in the Air National Guard (ANG) who needs to replace one of his Title 32 Technicians retiring in late October, four months away. He consults with his Human Resources Office (HRO) representative and is that he cannot request the job be announced any earlier than 90 days prior to the Technician's retirement, according to the state's Labor Relations Agreement. He waits until the end of July and makes the request again. About a week later the request for the job announcement is sent from the Wing to the Joint Force Headquarters HRO (HQs) staff for their action. SMSgt Doe checks in with the HRO representative a couple of weeks later but is told that the request for the job announcement is still at the HQs for review and action. By Labor Day, the job still hasn't been announced and SMSgt Doe is feeling anxious as he realizes he will not have a new Technician through the hiring process until well after his retiring employee leaves. Six weeks after the request for the announcement was sent to HQs, he finally receives a draft announcement to review. He does so and gives it his approval and the job is posted two days later. SMSgt Doe elected to have a 30 day announcement; it will run from 15 September to 15 October. Because his Technician employee is taking 30 days of terminal leave starting 1 October, SMSgt Doe must divvy up his employee's work and distribute it amongst his other employees and does his best to ensure they've received a "warm handoff" on the duties they'll be expected to do.

It's mid-November before SMSgt Doe is notified who applied for the position and can begin his interview of the sole candidate (Some of SMSgt Doe's own troops told him they applied but HQs determined they weren't qualified for the position. He later found out their résumés didn't accurately represent their qualifications.). By early December, he's made his selec-

tion and sent the name to HQs for approval. The nominee is notified of his selection in mid-January but he calls SMSgt Doe and turns down the job. He took another Technician job which he applied for at the same time and has already started working in it (the new job is at a nearby federal agency which offered a higher salary and the ability to telework three days a week). SMSgt Doe hangs up with the realization he's going to have to start this lengthy process over again. He wonders how much longer his troops can carry the retired employee's workload as they face the new year ahead of them, already scheduled to capacity with maternity leave, PME attendance, and preparation for an upcoming deployment. If the process follows this same timeline, he won't have a new employee in the shop until July or August, almost a full year after his troop retired.

The above scenario is one often repeated across the ANG, with similar timelines (some better, some worse), and varying policies and processes affecting the actions. It is an issue of great concern to senior leaders at Wings across much of the ANG, according to responses received during this research. This descriptive survey aids in understanding what current hiring timelines are in the ANG, identifies what factors were found which influence the hiring timelines, and what common themes are present.

The results of this research revealed that while a few ANG Wings do very well with their hiring timelines, most of the units have lengthy timelines, and very few of the responding units conform to the federal government's hiring model timeline. Much of this is attributable to two main factors: lack of education of the Human Resource professionals at the Wing-level and lack of tracking and hiring metrics across the ANG. Recommendations for improved hiring timelines will focus both on those managed within the various states, as well as those from an ANG community level.

Background of the Problem

Traditional, deliberate, and risk-averse hiring models lead to positions remaining open for long periods, opportunities lost as top prospects find other positions, and a reduction in the overall talent level of the organization. To be more competitive and effective in their recruitment and hiring processes, [agencies] must foster manageable internal solutions, look to other professions for effective hiring techniques and models, and employ innovative concepts from modern personnel management literature.

Gregory K. Raschke
Hiring and Recruitment Practices in Academic Libraries

Although the quote above talks about the difficulties in hiring academic librarians, the message also holds true for hiring federal civilians within the Air National Guard (ANG). Indeed, it has become such an issue that it is not just Human Resources personnel who are scrutinizing the situation; the subject has also reached the top levels of the chains of command in many Wings and states. During the Wing Commanders' (CCs) Conference in January 2017, attendees were told their message was heard: data pulled from CC's Annual Inspections Reports (a report each Wing Commander must submit annually) showed manning was named the top concern across the Wings, specifically, the "civilian hiring process and its effect on the mission."¹

The ANG's full time force is comprised of about 60% federal (Title 32) civilian positions; for FY17 this totals 22,103 positions.² Applicants for these federal civilian positions are at the mercy not only of the process as dictated by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), but also the policies of the National Guard Bureau (NGB), and unique policies specific to each state. The lengthy process often results in the loss of top candidates who find jobs elsewhere more rapidly, resulting in positions which remain vacant for extended periods of time. This causes the work to go undone or the workload to be distributed to other employees, as depicted in the representative story above. These extended vacancies increase the stress load of the remaining workers and potentially cause burnout, sometimes leading to the loss of additional personnel. As

Technicians exist for the purpose of organizing, training, and equipping ANG military members to deploy in support of our nation's objectives, as well as assisting with domestic operations within their respective states, it is easy to understand why this is disconcerting.

It's a Leadership Issue

In August 2016, Gen David Goldfein, Air Force Chief of Staff, wrote of the need to reimagine squadrons to take care of Airmen and function more efficiently. While he commends the efforts of every Airman over the past 15 years, he acknowledges it came at a price in many areas (budget, manpower, and airpower accounts) resulting in squadrons bearing "the brunt of an incredible deployment tempo and manpower shortages which have had a direct impact on readiness."³ Additionally, he recognizes manning is "hovering between 60-70% with many key supervisors and leaders deployed or dual-hatted, [and] remaining Airmen working overtime."⁴

These statistics are very troubling and can have an unfortunate effect on the ANG's ability to retain Airmen. In early 2016, an ANG Member Retention Research Report revealed Technician employees have "lower rates of satisfaction" when compared against Active Guard and Reserve (AGRs) and Traditional Guardsmen (those who serve two days each month and two weeks each year).⁵ Additionally, both Technicians and AGRs strongly agreed the ANG is more understaffed than their active duty counterparts and deployments have increased over time, further exacerbating the situation.⁶

The men and women of the ANG trust their leaders will engage in study on the hiring issue and tenaciously see it through to a resolution. General Colin Powell identified trust as a key characteristic of leadership, emphasizing leaders need to "create the conditions of trust."⁷ He continued by saying "Prepare [your] followers; train them. Give them what they need to get the job done. Don't give them a job to do if you're not going to give them the resources."⁸

According to Air Force Instruction (AFI) 1-2, *Commander's Responsibilities*, "Commanders hold the authority and responsibility to act and to lead their units to accomplish the mission."⁹ To do this, "Commanders must...*manage resources* to adjust the timing, quality, and quantity of their support to meet the requirements..." and "A commander's stewardship of personnel to meet evolving mission requirements is *vital to mission success*."¹⁰ (Italics added)

To that end, a detailed review of the Technician hiring process must occur to determine what can be done to effect change (this research only scratches the surface). A portion of ensuring the ANG's goal of executing its missions effectively and efficiently is continually reviewing processes to identify areas of improvement. This charge to commanders holds such importance that it comprises one quarter of the AF's Inspection System (AFIS) as the major graded area (MGA) entitled "Improving the Unit." Referring again to AFI 1-2, "Commanders must foster a culture of innovation and challenge inefficiencies."¹¹ Additionally, they "must make data-driven decisions and manage risk while ensuring their unit's authorities, missions, plans and goals stay strategically aligned."¹² Further, as a method to ensure a unit's programs are operating correctly and effectively, commanders are directed to create a "robust self-inspection program" to identify any deficiencies and/or best practices.¹³

The AFIS also serves the purpose of relaying information to senior leaders concerning issues pervasive throughout the ANG. Unfortunately, the Technician hiring process is not governed by any AFI or Air National Guard Instruction (ANGI) and therefore, is not inspectable within a CC's inspection program.¹ This is unfortunate as one of the main tenets of the AFIS is

¹ AFI 36-117, *Civilian Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Plan*, does not apply to Title 32 ANG Technicians, however, it does apply to Title 5 ANG Technicians. As the ANG transitions 20% of its Title 32 Technicians to Title 5 by 1 October 17 as mandated by the FY17 National Defense Authorization Act, ANG HR professionals will need to address how AFI 36-117 and its prescribed AF Civilian Human Capital Self-Assessment Guide will be applied to the management of ANG Title 5 Technicians. Both documents strongly emphasize the use of metrics to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of a process.

to assess and report on a unit's "effectiveness to execute assigned missions."¹⁴ One must consider the fact that some senior ANG leaders may not be aware of the scope of the issue and/or the length of time the issue has been a problem because this process is not measured and therefore there is no data to measure to track any trends or deficiencies.

The Measure – OPM’s Hiring Model

The federal government’s hiring practices have long been criticized for being both too long and too opaque, leaving applicants to wonder if their application was even received. In 2010, President Obama directed OPM to reform the federal hiring process and reduce it to a standard of 80 days. OPM did so, resulting in the optimal hiring timeline as depicted in Figure 1. It now serves as the model all federal agencies should be striving toward.

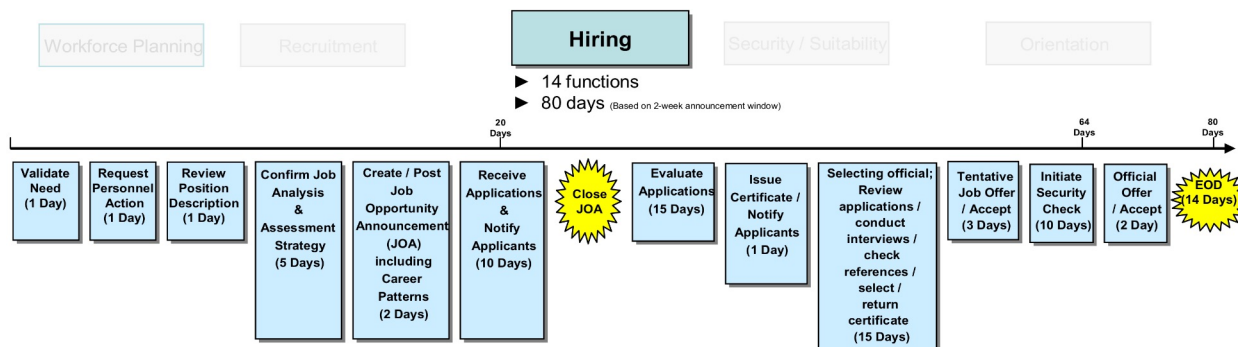


Figure 1: OPM’s Hiring Process Roadmap¹⁵

A November 2016 memorandum co-authored by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and OPM addressed hiring issues, saying “Several agencies have identified the hiring process as one of their top challenges to achieving mission performance objectives,” citing a two-year survey in which federal managers identified the recruiting and hiring services as having the lowest level of quality.¹⁶ The memorandum indicated that the Chief Human Capital Officers

(CHCO) Council “identified improving hiring as one of their top priorities of focus for the coming year.”¹⁷ Clearly there is frustration across the federal government regarding hiring. It comes as no surprise then that the ANG is having trouble with it as well.

Key Issues

The ongoing lengthy hiring timelines result not only in increased stress on those picking up the workload of vacant positions, but they also cause readvertisements of positions when the selected applicant finds employment with other agencies which have faster hiring processes, slowing down the process down even more. Additionally, if the candidates who found other positions were quality applicants, the processes failed to serve the very units they support in that regard as well.

While there is a standard to measure against for these federal hires, the author could find no evidence to show the ANG submits statistical data to OPM for feedback and, assumingly, pointers on how to improve the process. This lack of tracking and metrics gathering attributes to the reason this issue has not been addressed from an ANG-wide perspective. As the saying goes, “What is not measured is not managed.”

Conceptual Framework

This paper uses the Descriptive Survey framework to present the overall picture of Technician hiring timelines in a portion of the ANG. As Paul Leedy, author of Practical Research, explains “The ultimate goal [of a Descriptive Survey] is to learn about a large population by surveying a sample of that population...by drawing conclusions from one transitory collection of data, we might generalize about the state of affairs for a longer time period.”¹⁸ The paper performs this by revealing hiring timelines of several ANG Wings and HQs, comparing those timelines against the federal model, and identifying common themes potentially causing delays.

Method

This issue was examined primarily using data from a random representative sampling of several ANG Wings and HQs HR Offices. The collected data was compared against OPM's guideline as well as the timelines of another federal agency. This paper also drew upon secondary sources such as studies, articles, and white papers addressing hiring practices in general, e.g. discussions on the issues and challenges within the federal government's hiring practices.

Data Collection

A data call with questions relating to the hiring process at the Wing level was emailed to the ANG Wing's Force Support Squadron Commander and Superintendent distribution listing within the Global Email Listing (Appendix A). Similarly, a data call with questions relating to the hiring process at the HQs level was emailed to the HQs Military Personnel Management Officer (MPMO) distribution listing within the Global Email Listing, with a request that the email be forwarded on to the HQs office (Appendix B). Each data call was sent with an explanatory email explaining the purpose of the research and contact information in the event of any questions.

Figure 2 shows the states who had one of their Wings respond (represented in blue), or their HQs respond (represented in green). In total, the data collected represents 28 of the 54 states and territories (51%) of the ANG. In cases where the data call questions were not answered or were answered with a response of "data not tracked," the data was excluded from analysis. However, the author made every effort to include reported data from the respondents by

following up for clarification when appropriate. The population responding to the data calls

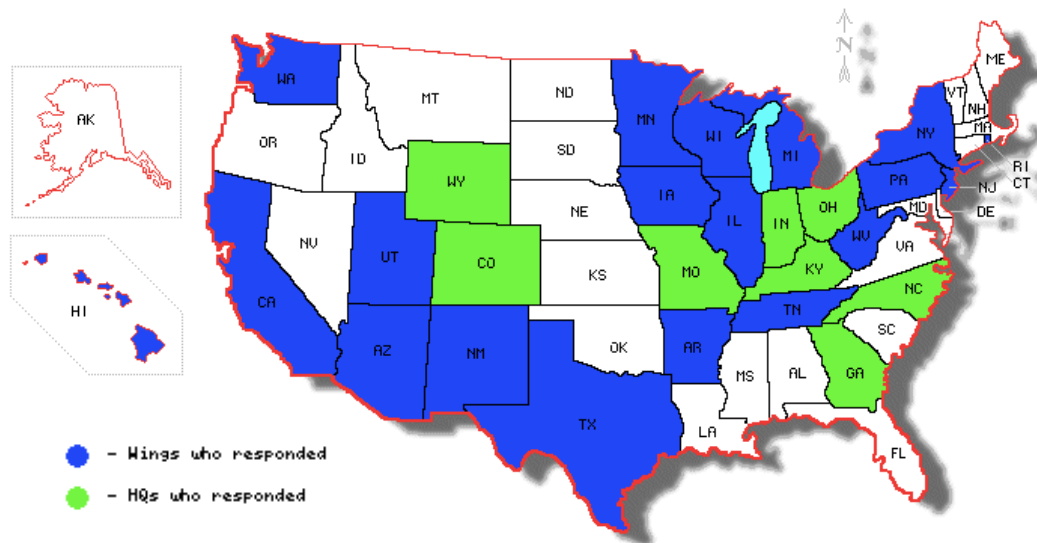


Figure 2: States with Wings and HQs Who Responded to the Data Calls

did so voluntarily and thus the sampling is of the non-probability, convenience type.

SECTION 2: CASE STUDY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research conducted for this paper identifies several major themes regarding the ANG's Technician hiring process. A comparative analysis was conducted of the two primary phases within the hiring processes both via the data reported by the various Wings and HQs, and against the OPM hiring timeline. This analysis confirmed that most of the ANG's Technician hiring processes far exceed the timeline in OPM's hiring model. Research also concluded the primary reasons for the extreme length of the process can be attributed to 1) lack of training for HR professionals at the Wing levels, and 2) lack of tracking hiring metrics across the ANG.

Hiring Timelines – Overall

The overall hiring timeline for a majority of the hiring process is reflected in Figure 3 (as reported by Wings). In this figure, the process begins when a formal request is submitted to the HQs and ends when leadership approves the nominated applicant. It does not include the amount of time necessary to perform any number of actions required to start the applicant in the position, e.g., retake Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test, obtain interim top secret security clearance, movement into the correct military position, resignation from former job, etc. Those additional timelines vary (anywhere from two to six weeks in the author’s experience,

Technician Hiring Timelines - Wing

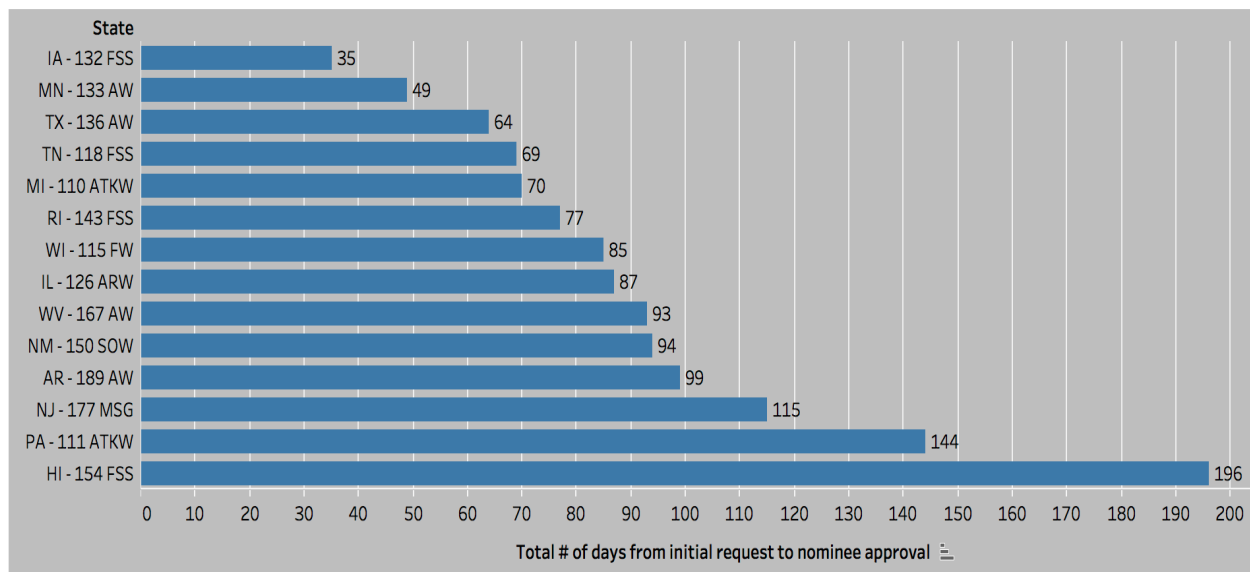


Figure 3: Technician Hiring Timelines (from Wing Data Call)
(These timelines do not include accession time. They do include job announcement average time of 15 days.)

though extenuating circumstances could make this portion of the timeline much longer). This was intentionally not included in the data call as the timeline is largely in the control of the on-coming member and the gaining unit.

As mentioned earlier, not all the respondents at the Wing level provided timeline data for each category queried, instead leaving the field blank or providing the comment “this data not

tracked.” Due to this omission of quantifiable data, the author was unable to use some or all of that particular Wing’s timeline information provided to potentially avoid a misrepresentation. Also, in cases where a respondent gave a range of numbers, e.g., “2-4 weeks,” the author used the average number of days in the range provided. A breakdown of each responding Wing’s timelines is in Appendix C.

The ranges of Technician hiring timelines vary greatly amongst the responding Wings, with the 132nd Wing (Iowa Air National Guard) reporting a mere 35 days to complete the most time consuming portion of the hiring process, and the 154th Wing (Hawaii ANG) reporting a staggering 196 days (again, not including accession time for the new hire). The length of times the jobs were announced was averaged to be 15 days, however, this could be longer or shorter depending on the state’s policies. This average of 15 days is included in each Wing’s timelines in Figure 3.

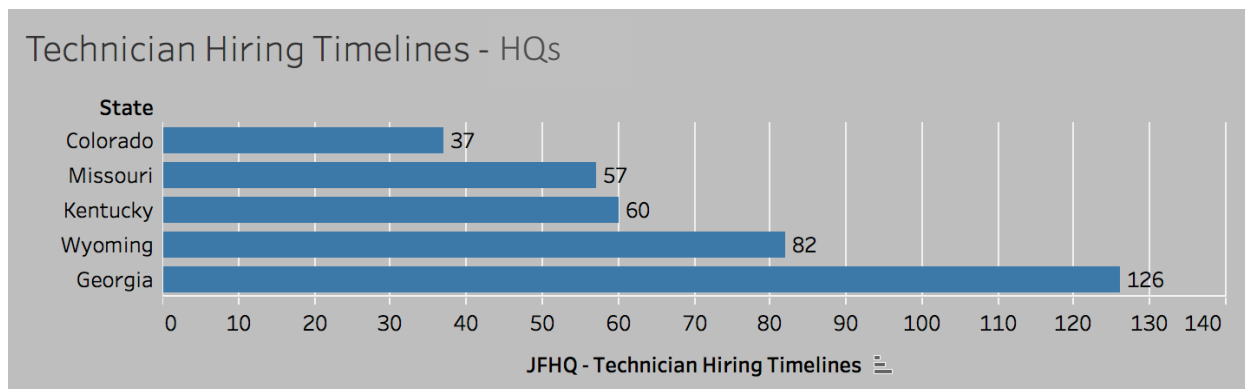


Figure 4: Technician Hiring Timelines (from HQs Data Call)
(These timelines do not include accession time. They do include job announcement average time of 15 days.)

Similarly, the data provided by several ANG HQs also showed a wide disparity in hiring timelines. As with the Wings’ responses, some of the HQs indicated they do not track the requested data or provided qualitative data not able to be used for hiring timeline comparison. Once again it is important to note the timelines do not include accession time which occurs after

a nominee is approved for hire. The timeline does include an average of 15 days for job announcement time. It is noted there are extremes in the lengths of hiring timelines amongst the states, with Colorado reporting only 37 days and Georgia a total of 126 days (see Figure 4).

Hiring Timelines – Phase 1

Recall that the entire hiring process in OPM’s Hiring Model takes 80 days. Taking the model from Figure 1 and breaking it down into two main sections helps to identify possible areas of improvement. The first section of the process starts with the Selecting Official’s request that the position be advertised, and ends with the job being announced on USA Jobs. For the purposes of this paper, this portion of the process will be termed “Phase 1.” Figure 5 shows the actions included in this first portion of the hiring process. Per OPM, the actions included in this phase should take no more than ten days.

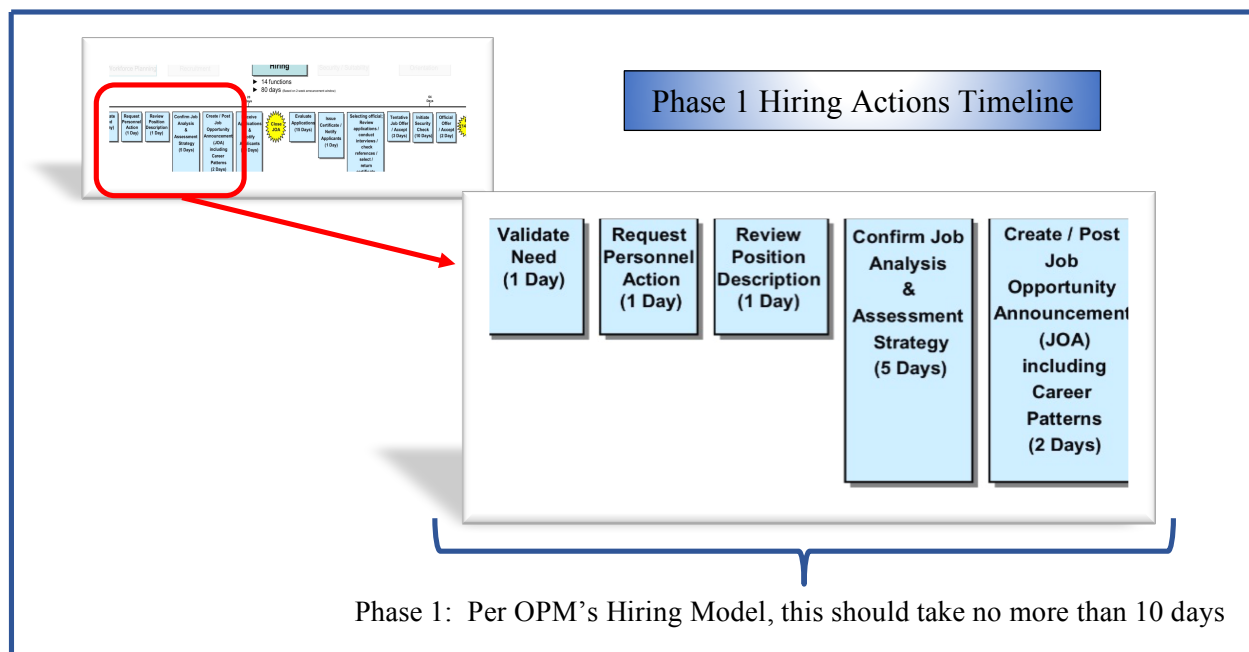


Figure 5: Focus on Phase 1 of OPM’s Hiring Model

As shown in Figure 6, only four Wings reported that their timelines for this phase of the process were at or under the recommended time as determined by OPM. The remaining Wings reported times which ranged from 18 to 86 days over OPM's optimum timeframe of ten days.

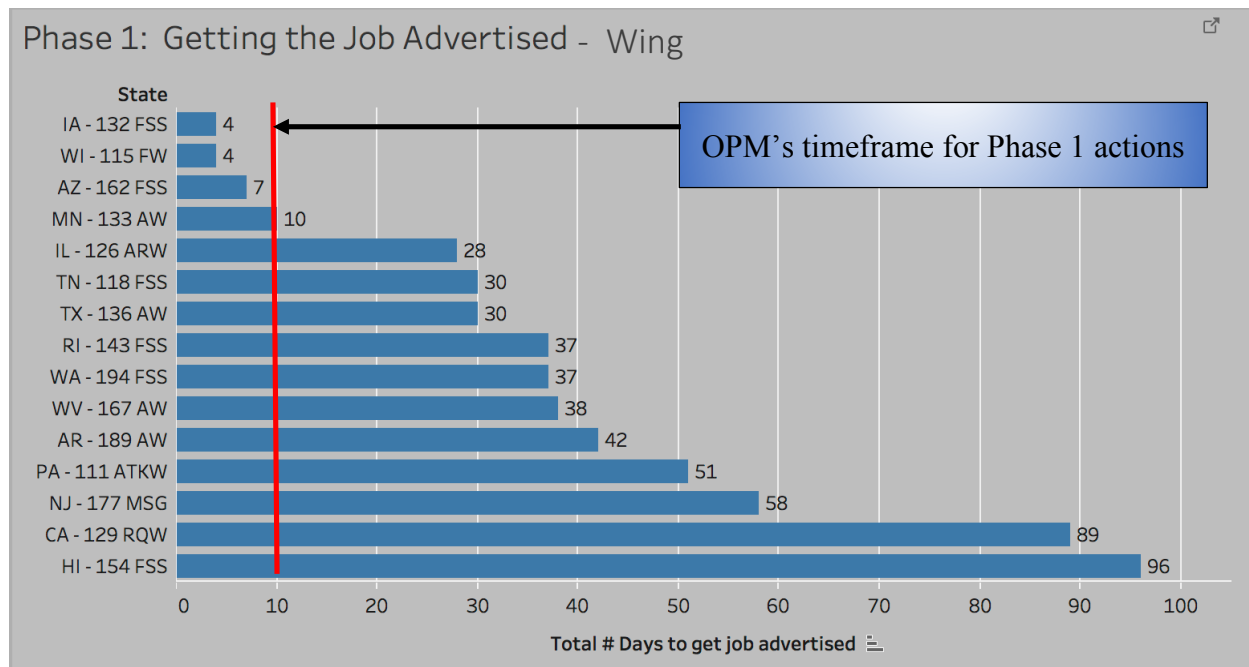


Figure 6: Wing-Reported Phase 1 Timeline Comparison Against OPM's Hiring Model

As with the timelines at the Wing level, the data from the HQs level also showed timelines which far exceed the time prescribed by OPM to finish the actions required in Phase 1 of the hiring process (see Figure 7).

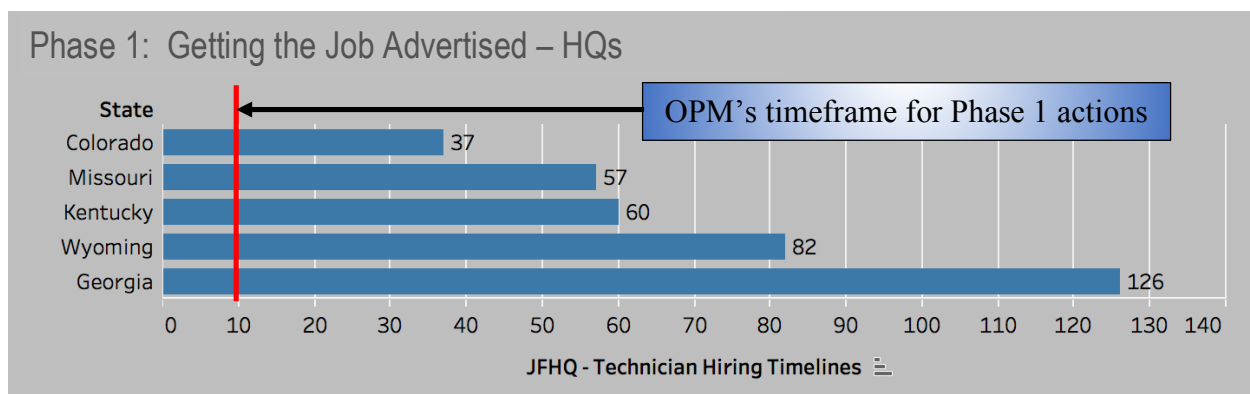


Figure 7: HQs-Reported Phase 1 Timeline Comparison Against OPM's Hiring Model

In the author's experience, the processes involved in the Phase 1 tend to be the most complex of the entire hiring process, therefore causing this portion of the hire to typically take more time than the steps in the latter portion of a hiring action, which is identified below as Phase 2.

Hiring Timelines – Phase 2

Similarly, it is important to look at the timelines for the activities which occur after a job announcement closes. Referring again to OPM's Hiring Model, one can see that 46 days are allocated for the processes in this phase (see Figure 8).

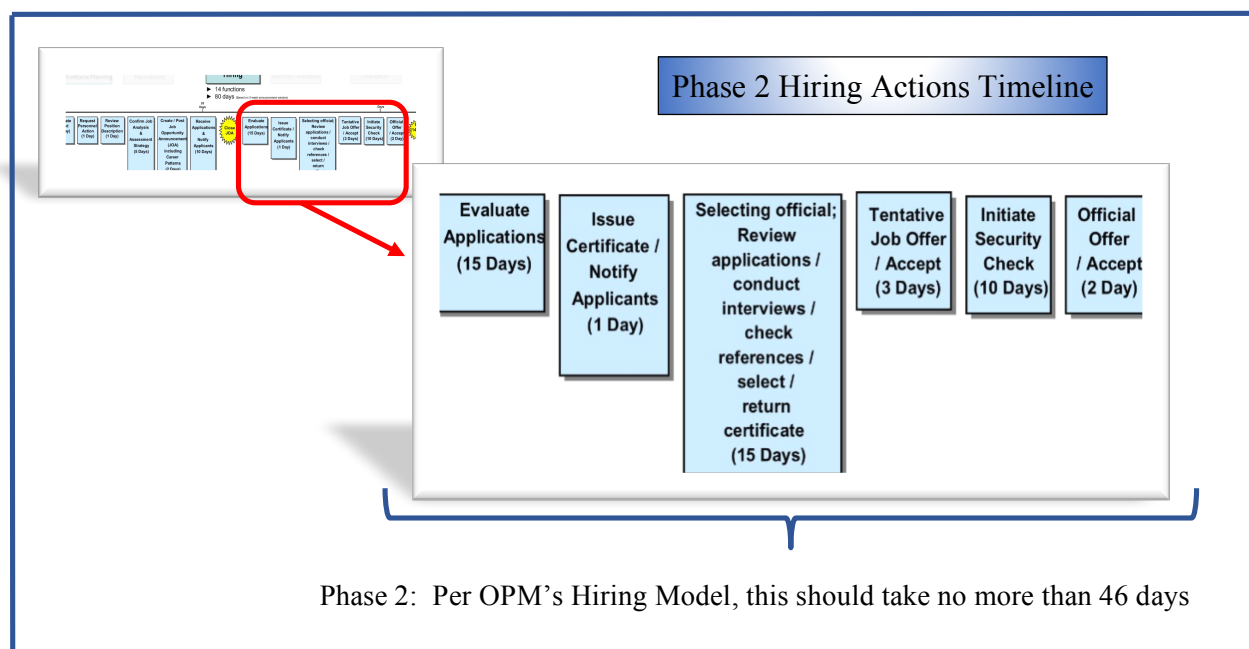


Figure 8: Focus on Phase 2 of OPM's Hiring Model

Figure 9 shows how the information reported from the Wings stack up against the recommended timelines for the Phase 2 actions. On a positive note, 71% of the responding Wings have timelines falling within the hiring model, with only four taking longer than recommended.

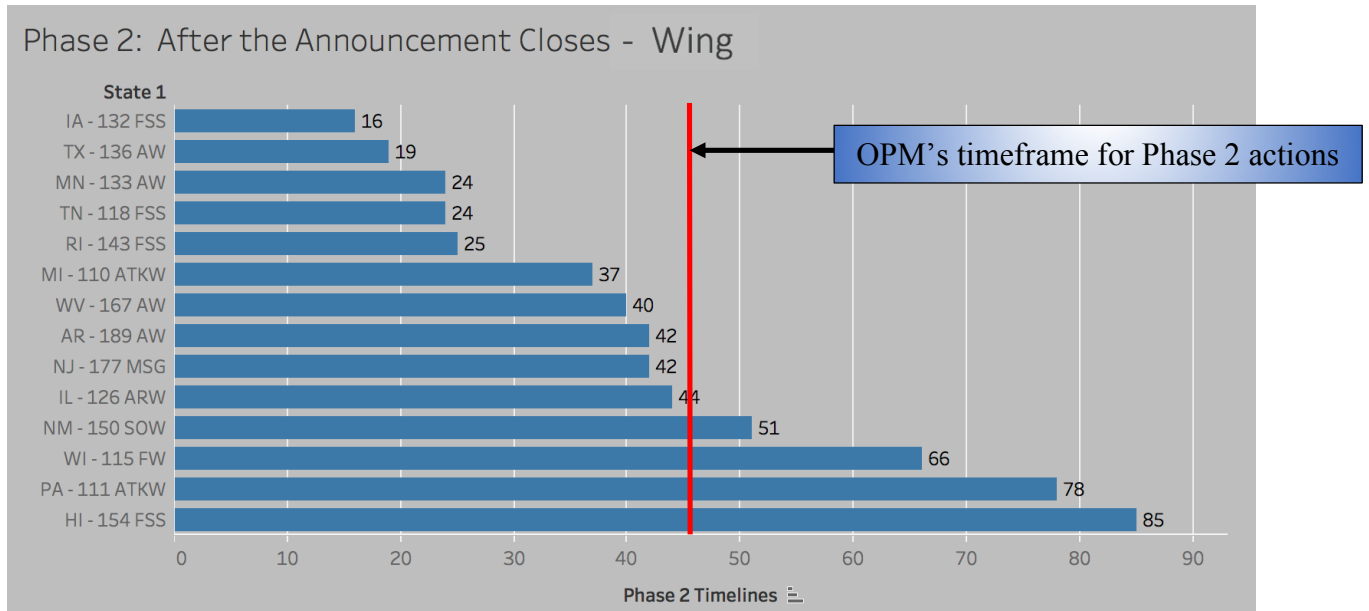


Figure 9: Wing-reported Phase 2 Timeline Comparison Against OPM's Hiring Model

At the HQs level, only one state reported a process which timelines exceed the recommendation of OPM (see Figure 10).

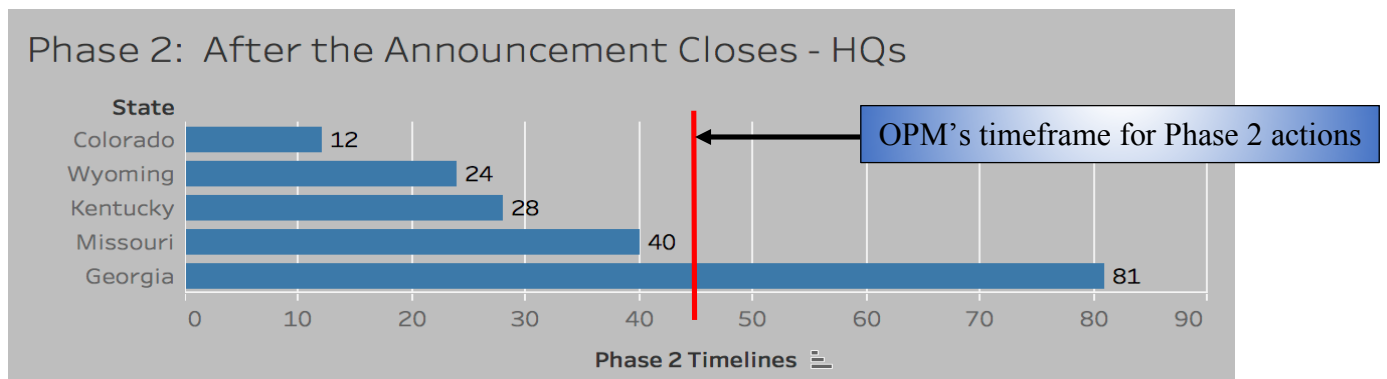


Figure 10: HQs-reported Phase 2 Timeline Comparison Against OPM's Hiring Model

A detailed study will need to be performed at both the Wing and the HQs levels to determine the reasons for the vast divergence from OPM's recommended timelines for these actions in both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

Hiring Timelines – Another Federal Agency’s Data

Most federal agencies are required to provide their hiring statistics to OPM for analysis purposes. A search for datasets on the website “data.gov” (<https://www.data.gov>) resulted in two findings. Hiring data for the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) was available, allowing for analysis and comparison against the OPM model and the ANG data collected. OPM has loaded data on the site, however, it is locked and therefore not available for this research.¹⁹

The GSA data pulled from the dataset included hiring actions where the new employee started in 2009 or 2010. This amounted to 1,744 total actions, 151 of which were corrupt due to data issue errors (some actions later in the process were dated prior to actions earlier in the process), resulting in 1,593 records being analyzed. Figure 11 shows that it took GSA an average of 86 days to hire a new employee.

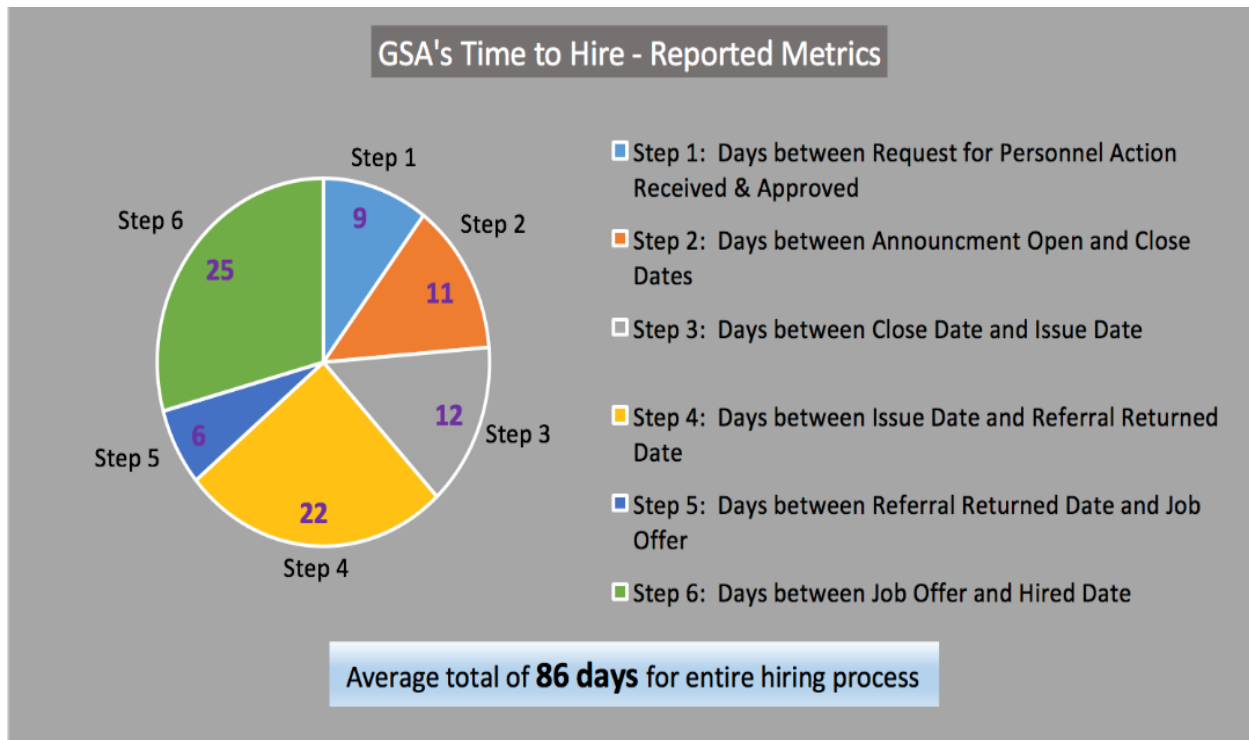


Figure 11: Statistical data from GSA’s hiring process (2009-2010)

It is important to note that the GSA timelines includes the time after the nominated applicant is approved and must meet the requirements of the position to start the new job. The Wing

and HQs data does not include this additional time. This data from GSA clearly shows that the hiring process can be done in a very efficient manner, even within large federal agencies.

Manning Levels in Wing HRO Remote Office and HQs

It is easy to conclude that hiring timelines may be affected by the manning levels in HR Offices. The responding Wings reported anywhere from zero to three personnel working in their HRO Remote office, with “one” being the most common response (60%). A few Wings reported they were only recently authorized to fill their HRO Remote position. Others reported they have

Wing Full Time Population vs. HRO Manning

State	Size of Full Time population	# of staff in HRO Remote office
PA - 111 ATKW	270	2
TX - 136 AW	293	1
NM - 150 SOW	294	1
RI - 143 FSS	302	0
IL - 126 ARW	326	1
CA - 129 RQW	338	2
IA - 132 FSS	339	1
MI - 110 ATKW	346	1
MN - 133 AW	362	2
TN - 118 FSS	385	1
WV - 167 AW	411	2
WI - 115 FW	415	1
NY - 105 AW	417	1
NJ - 177 MSG	422	1
UT - 151 ARW	480	0
MI - 172 FSS	487	1
WA - 194 FSS	538	1
AR - 189 AW	550	1
AZ - 162 FSS	608	3
HI - 154 FSS	800	2

one full time HRO Remote but occasionally borrow a nearby or former HRO Remote to provide additional manpower when necessary. In those instances, their number was counted as 1.5 and rounded up to two. As noted in Figure 12, two Wings report do not have an HRO Remote authorized. These Wings rely solely on their HQs to process their hiring actions. Also, several Wings reported sending some of their staff to HQs to aid in processing actions.

Figure 12: Wing Full Time Population vs. # HRO Remotes

While Figure 12 is sorted on size of Wing full time population, Figure 13 provides an excellent comparison of levels of manning within the HRO Remote offices across the responding Wings. The size of each Wing's full time force is noted at the end of each horizontal bar. Sixty percent of the Wings, ranging from 293 to 550 full time employees, have only one person working in their HRO Remote office.

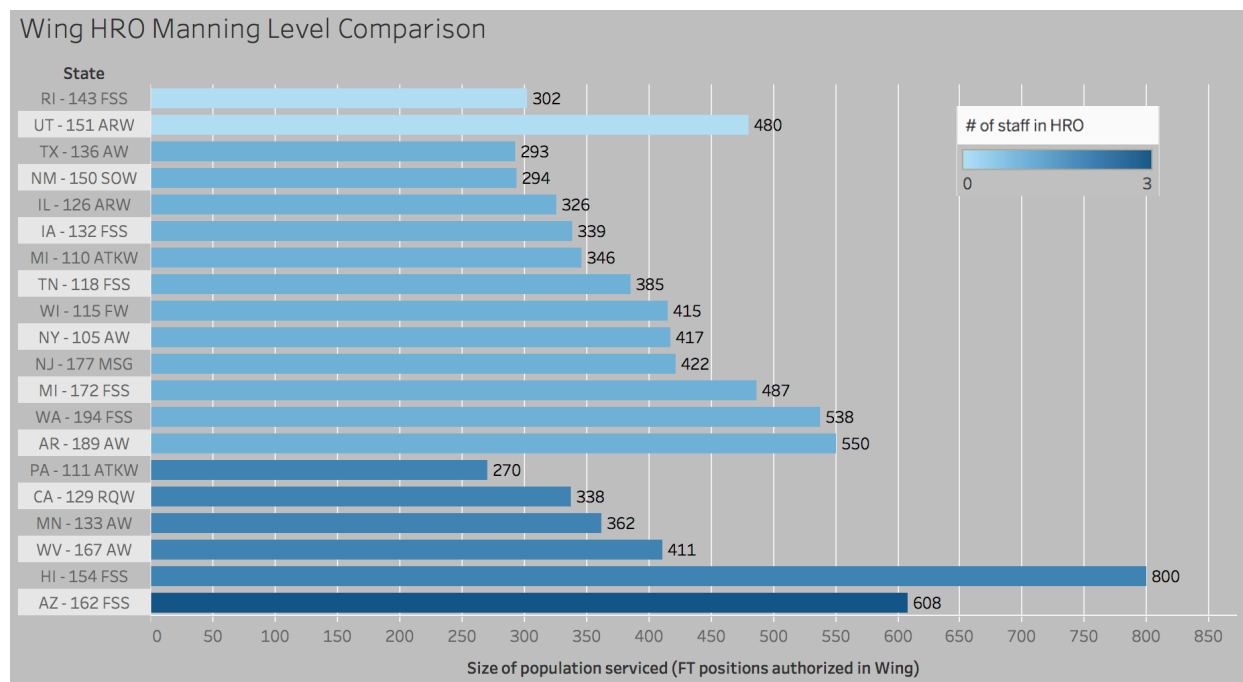


Figure 13: Comparison of HRO Manning Levels Across Wings

Similarly, there was a great variation in the number of staff within HQs supporting the full time populations, both Army and Air Guard, within their respective state (see Figure 14). It is not difficult to see some of the HQs would be spread thin with the minimal manning they possess, especially those supporting larger populations.

State	Size of Full Time population	# of HQs Staff
Wyoming	454	15
Colorado	715	13
Kentucky	1,385	5
North Carolina	1,938	21
Missouri	2,100	25
Indiana	2,153	27
Georgia	2,666	28
Ohio	3,047	14

Figure 14: State Full Time Population (Army and Air) vs. # of HQs Staff

Figure 15 is sorted based on the size of the full time manpower within each state, making it effortless to see the disparities in the levels of staff across the states.

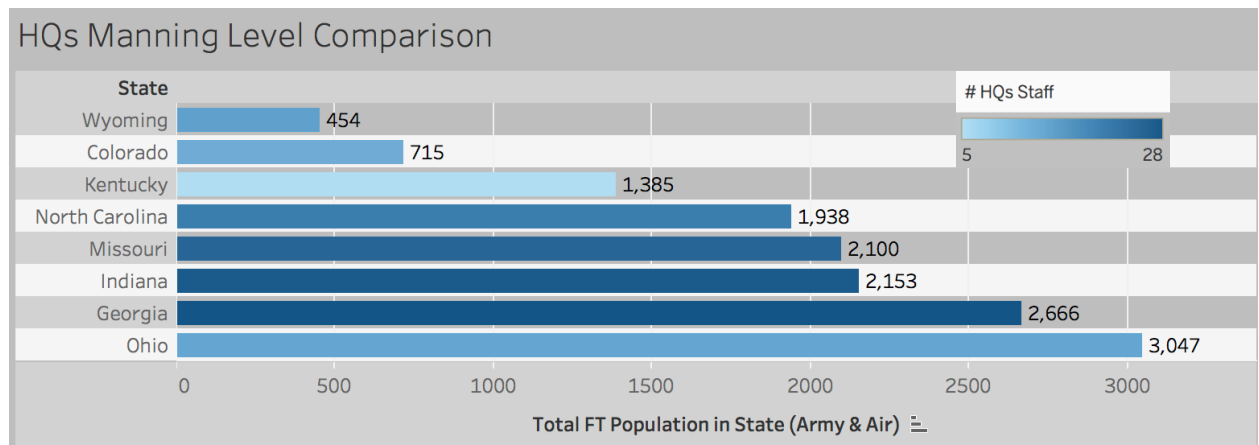


Figure 15: Comparison of HRO Manning Levels Across HQs

Future research will need to be done to determine if the manning levels at either the Wings or HQs are a contributing factor to delays in the ANG's hiring process.

Changes of Mission at the Wings

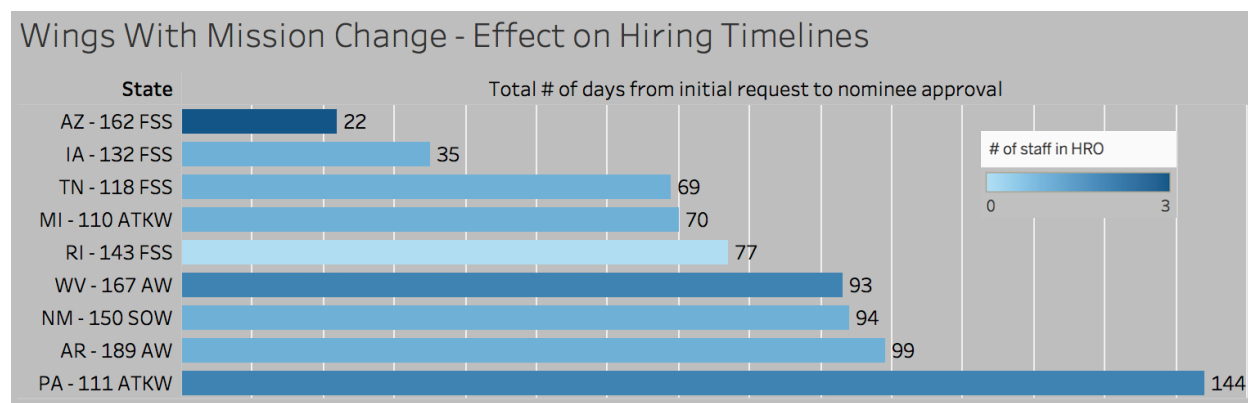
Any action which increases the number of hiring transactions needs to be taken into account, therefore, it is important to discuss mission changes. Many ANG Wings have undergone changes of mission sets since Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) of 2005. The BRAC actions had far-reaching effects on offices involved in the hiring process. The quote below is provided to give context to the amount of actions the HR professionals needed to take because of BRAC.

The BRAC recommendations affected 56 (62 percent) of ANG flying units with 14 units losing their flying mission, 4 units reducing their flying mission, 5 units converting from one type of aircraft to another, 4 units associating with another unit, and 29 units receiving an increase in the number of aircraft assigned to them.

To implement the recommendations, ANG must relocate hundreds of aircraft and retrain or recruit about 15,000 personnel.²⁰

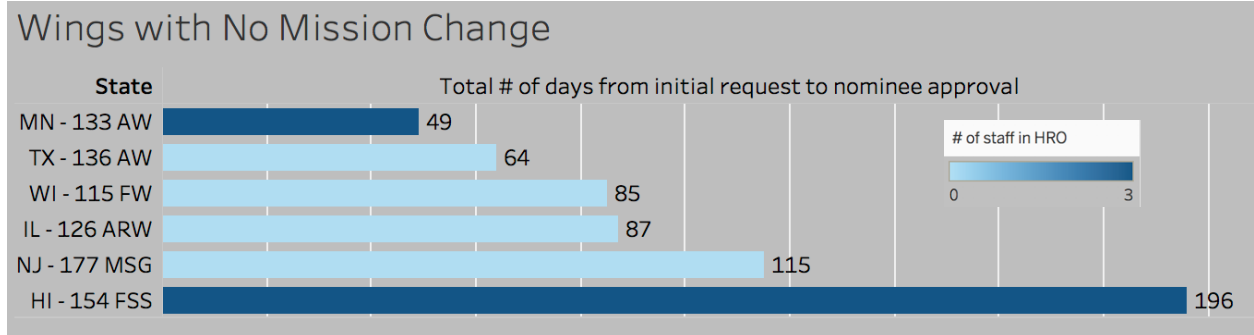
Although BRAC took place 12 years ago, the actions stemming from the decisions take several years to work through. If a Wing was selected to transition from F-16s to Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs), the aircraft and associated maintenance packages wouldn't be moved for several years to provide the ability to transition effectively. In the case of the author's Wing, BRAC realigned the mission set from A-10s to an Air Force Forces (AFFOR) augmentation mission. However, since then, the AFFOR mission was replaced with RPAs and a Cyber Operations Squadron. While the RPA unit reached Initial Operating Capability (IOC) in March 2016, the Cyber unit is still in the hiring process with an IOC date set in the future. Thus, the Wing has been in transition for over 10 years, a situation which has been repeated across the ANG.

Figure 16 shows the hiring timelines from Wings which reported they have undergone a mission change, as well as how many employees are working as HRO Remotes to handle the workload. It is clear and even understandable that these units have longer than optimum timelines. BRAC is the “gift that keeps on giving” as employees transfer from one mission set to the next within their Wing or another Wing, vacating their previous Technician job which only serves to bog down the hiring system. Having a minimally manned HR Office only serves to exacerbate the situation.



*Figure 16: Hiring Timelines of Wings Reporting Mission Changes
(Also depicts level of staff in HRO Remote Office)*

Figure 17 represents the timelines of Wings who did not report a mission change.



*Figure 17: Hiring Timelines of Wings Reporting No Mission Change
(Also depicts level of staff in HRO Remote Office)*

In reviewing Figure 17, it is interesting to note that of the six Wings with no mission change, four have only one employee in their HRO Remote office, whereas the manning levels for the Wings who experienced a mission change clearly have more manpower and many have long hiring timelines, despite the extra manpower (see Figure 16). This speaks to the effects of mission change on the hiring process.

Training of Those Involved in Hiring Process

There is no formal training provided for the HRO Remotes, the Director of Personnel, or the MSG/CC in his/her role as the Position Management Officer (PMO). Neither the 3S0X1 (Personnel - Enlisted) or 38P3 (Personnel – Officer) AFSC training addresses the activities related to any type of full time hiring, either Technician or AGR. They more closely align to the 3S3X3 (Manpower) AFSC on the enlisted side, however, even this is not a great match as it contains many duties which are performed for ANG units by Manpower Analysts at NGB, and are duties which are not required at Wing-level. (See Appendix D for a description of 3S3X3 duties.) Neither AFSC is truly appropriate for the type of work being performed.

Because of this, it is up to each state or Wing to train new HR employees, training which is only as accurate and varied as the experience of the person providing it. Fifty-seven percent (12 of 21) of the Wings reported their HRO Remotes did not receive any training from the HQs.

The remaining respondents indicated their HQs provided appropriate initial training, provided recurring training on a monthly or quarterly basis, and were easily accessible and responsive. Many Wings who received training also reported having weekly telecons with their HQs to alleviate any issues with ongoing hiring processes.

On a positive note, the National Guard Bureau (NGB) has a robust training program in place for HR professionals at the HQs-level.

Access to Civilian Personnel Systems

One of the topics HQs must train Wings on is the use of the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS). The system is used to begin any action HR-related action on a Technician. This system allows the Wing's HRO Remote (or the Selecting Official, depending on the agreed upon arrangement at each base) to input the Request for Personnel Action directly into the system utilized by HQs, route it around electronically for approvals, after which it is delivered immediately to HQs. Hiring timelines for the Wings who have DCPDS are reflected in Figure 18.

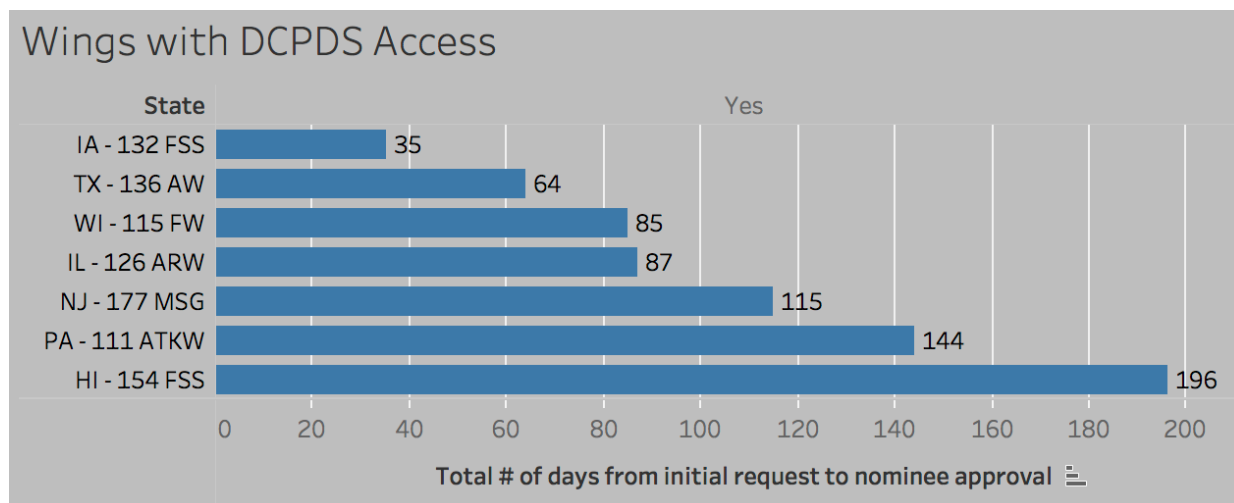
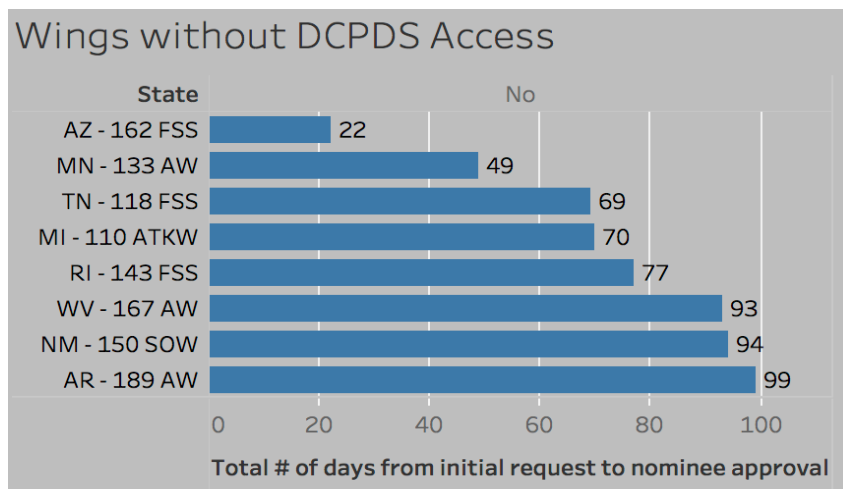


Figure 18: Wings with Access to DCPDS

Eleven Wings reported that they do not have access to DCPDS. Many Wings who do not have access expressed an earnest desire to be granted the access to allow for faster processing of



Technician hires. (Although 11 of the 21 Wings who responded indicated they did not have DCPDS access, several units did not provide hiring timeline data and therefore are not included in Figures 18 or

Figure 19: Wings with no DCPDS Access (also depicts hiring timeline) 19.)

As Figure 19 shows, the data seemingly suggests the hiring process runs more quickly for Wings without DCPDS access, however, readers must use caution as many other steps along the process could contribute to the delays for Wings who do have access to DCPDS. (For example, several Wings report obtaining access to DCPDS within just the past six to nine months.) Continued analysis will need to be done to determine if lack of DCPDS is a factor in hiring delays.

Leadership Concern and Continuous Process Improvement

Sixteen of the 21 responding units (80%) reported that their Wing leadership is very concerned about the status of Technician hiring. Two of the remaining five units reported that leadership at their Wings weren't concerned "at this time," but would be concerned if their timelines lengthened again. Although the level of concern is quite high, only 13% of the units reported that a Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) event had been performed on their hiring process to determine areas for improvement. CPI events typically result in streamlined processes which are "completed faster and more efficiently at no cost to quality."²¹ It is important to note that the

decision to run a CPI event on the entire hiring process is not simply a decision that can be made by Wing leadership. HQs plays a primary role in the process and thus would need to agree a CPI event was necessary.

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

The ANG has the opportunity address the two major issues identified in this research by creating a training program for Wing HR specialists and by ensuring hiring metrics are tracked at an ANG-level. Additionally, states should conduct CPI events to evaluate and improve their processes, make use of available hiring authorities and other policies to improve retention, and the ANG should improve marketing and advertisement of full time positions.

Since formal training at the Wing-level is lacking, this is an area which HR professionals within the ANG could solve, with the support of Wing and state leadership. The A1 sub-council of the MSG/CCs' Council must form a group of subject matter experts in ANG hiring (with regional representatives) and charge them with developing a training curriculum for HR professionals at the Wing-level. This group could utilize the tools within milSuite to publish best practices, training videos, and share resources with the HR field.

Created and used extensively by the Army, milSuite is a series of secure, collaborative tools which are CAC accessible with over 650,000 registered users (see Appendix E for a listing of available tools). The information contained in the milSuite applications is typically available to any user, but can be restricted to a smaller group.²² It provides an outstanding method to “reduce duplicative efforts and facilitate knowledge sharing.”²³ Praise of the new technology includes “The Army’s Office of Business Transformation has found milSuite to be the premiere site collaboration tool available within the Department of Defense...” and also that it provides “...the opportunity to inform and collaborate not only throughout the Army but across the Joint

footprint. The ability to exchange ideas, concepts, doctrine and TTP's with knowledge [management] workers across the Force has increased organizational performance at every level of the Army.”²⁴

The milSuite applications have recently been used by Air Force Chief of Staff Gen David Goldfein to support his number one focus: Revitalizing Air Force Squadrons. The site also supports former Defense Secretary Ashton Carter's goal to build the Force of the Future, which is “an initiative to modernize the personnel management systems/processes of the DoD to maintain a competitive edge in attracting top talent to serve the nation.”²⁵ The Army National Guard's Education Services site is a stellar example of collaboration amongst like-minded professionals and distribution of knowledge and accessibility to SMEs within a subject area, and could be used as a template for a similar site for ANG HR training (see Appendix F).

Secondarily, a recommendation is made to initiate the collection of ANG-wide hiring metrics. Far more focus would be given to this issue if HR professionals were able to provide quantifiable data to ANG leadership, along with underlying causes for delays. Rather than anecdotal horror stories about the length of time it took to hire someone, the situation could be tackled from a scientific standpoint across the ANG. Writers for the Harvard Business Review addressed this in an article about evidence-based management saying,

If taken seriously, evidence-based management can change how every manager thinks and acts. It is, first and foremost, a way of seeing the world and thinking about the craft of management; it proceeds from the premise that using better, deeper logic and employing facts, to the extent possible, permits leaders to do their jobs more effectively. We believe that facing the hard facts and truth about what works and what doesn't, understanding the dangerous half-truths that constitute so much conventional wisdom about management, and rejecting the total nonsense that too often passes for sound advice will help organizations perform better.²⁶

An additional recommendation is that states with timeline concerns conduct a CPI event to further identify the snags that cause delays in their processes. Anecdotal stories about lengthy timelines have little value when attempting to resolve an issue. “Agencies should use a data-driven approach to select their priorities, determine scope, and review relevant policies and practices to determine whether hiring barriers may exist.”²⁷ The author’s home state recently completed the first phase of a Lean Six Sigma event through which it was discovered that errors in the Request for Personnel Actions were one of the primary reasons for delays, along with duplicative efforts at the HQs staff level.²⁸ As a result, a form was created for Selecting Officials to complete when requesting a job announcement be posted, and increased training is scheduled to be provided to the HRO Remotes via monthly telecons and quarterly in-person meetings. This proven CPI is used in the civilian industry as well. A recent LSS event from the civilian sector resulted in a 75% decrease in the company’s hiring process timeline.²⁹

CPI is currently used for reform within the Civil Service System, especially in light of President Trump’s mandate to reorganize the Executive Branch to “improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of federal agencies.”³⁰ In January 2017, OPM itself admitted the need for change, saying “We must analyze the impact of new policies and procedures, evaluate new methodologies, and identify and resolve potential challenges through coordination with stakeholders from across the government.”³¹ President Trump’s previously mentioned Executive Order instructed each agency to open a Federal Register to invite comments from the public on just how the reform should take place.³² Inviting comments from Selecting Officials and/or leadership upon the conclusion of each hire could provide an additional mechanism for gathering timely information regarding potential process change.

An additional recommendation is for states to utilize the ability to use the Direct Hire authority to appoint employees into key positions, without the normal competition. This action is supported by NGB-J1-TN's August 2007 memorandum which states "The Adjutant General has the authority to non-competitively assign military technicians, AGR members, and traditional Guard members to accommodate either an 'overarching military consideration' or a military assignment at the Key Staff level. Simplified merit placement procedures will be developed for Key Staff technician positions."³³ Although the authority exists, each HQ must come to an agreement with their Association of Civilian Technicians representatives to include it in the state's Merit Placement Plan (MPP). Wyoming National Guard has done so successfully and, in fact, has included Contracting Technicians (General Scale (GS)-1102 series) under the Direct Hiring Authority section of their MPP, an excellent decision at a time when filling the Contracting positions is extremely difficult to do.³⁴ Utilizing this Direct Hire Authority fills positions much more quickly than the typical process and aids by not clogging the hiring process with additional vacancy postings.

Throughout the course of this research, respondents shared their frustration concerning potential applicants not knowing what internet site to search to find information about employment with the ANG in a given state. Similarly, members leaving active duty service typically say they "knew nothing about the Air National Guard." The recommendation to alleviate this issue is to: 1) develop a central site which provides links to all jobs (both Technician and AGR) available throughout the ANG, and 2) link it to the GoANG.com site used for recruitment. Advertising both sites at active duty installations could help to educate active duty members looking to continue their military careers. The Air Force's Civilian Service website provides an outstanding example of just such a site.³⁵

An increase in full time manpower at both the Wing and HQs may be called for, but this can be managed within the Wing or state by bringing on temporary assistance. If some of the recommendations here are implemented and an issue with lengthy timelines still exists, a manpower study may be in order at that time.

Future Research

Approximately 65% of the responding Wings indicated in the data call that the number one reason Technicians leave their position is because the ANG's Position Descriptions are often graded out at a lower level than what can be found outside the ANG. (This information is anecdotal based on the experience of the responding HR professionals but could be a potential topic for future research in and of itself.) Additionally, some of positions the Technicians are leaving the ANG for often have less responsibilities (such as supervisory duties) for an equal or higher GS/Wage Grade (WG) level and offer the ability to telework. New research could provide a thorough look at the rationale behind the lower graded PDs and potentially identify some career areas which are in dire need of upgrade.

As part of this research, the author began gathering data from each HQ's website to determine which states already make use of the Direct Hire Authority for Key Staff positions, which allow the Selecting Official to extend a tentative job offer pending HQs' approval (both of which speed up the hiring process), and which allow select employees to telework, as well as other unique policies. The initial research revealed many states already have policies in place to allow the actions mentioned above. To compete with civilian industries in the local area as well as other ANG Wings, states must give serious consideration to utilizing every allowable policy to increase process effectiveness and efficiency. This would be an excellent future research topic, especially when paired with quantifiable data about the Technician hiring process as it could

clearly reveal how these policies affect the timeliness of the hiring process, the number of hiring actions in the queue, and the retention of Technicians.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

The ANG's Technician Hiring process continues to be a challenge for many of the Wings and HQs. Unfortunately, the scenario with SMSgt Doe and his struggle to replace his retired employee is not unusual throughout the ANG. This research has shown the majority of responding Wing and state hiring actions do not comply with the federal hiring model; in fact, many don't come anywhere close to meeting the recommended timelines. An analysis of the data collected has identified two major themes: lack of education of the Human Resource professionals at the Wing-level and lack of tracking hiring metrics across the ANG. Recommendations for improving hiring timelines were made, many of which can be implemented from within the ANG's HR community. Continued focus from the highest levels in the ANG will advance this issue from simply anecdotal frustration into a measured and analyzed, and thus an efficiently and effectively, managed process.

This issue reaches far beyond the confines of the ANG; rather, it directly impacts the Air Force's ability to fulfill its national security role. As stated in a recent brief to the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel, "The Air Force must continue to leverage the total force to support ongoing operations and future missions based on global security and joint force requirement."³⁶ When supervisors such as SMSgt Doe cannot replace his Technician in a reasonable timeframe, the ripple effect of all such delays across the ANG eventually influence the viability of the Air Force's total force mission.

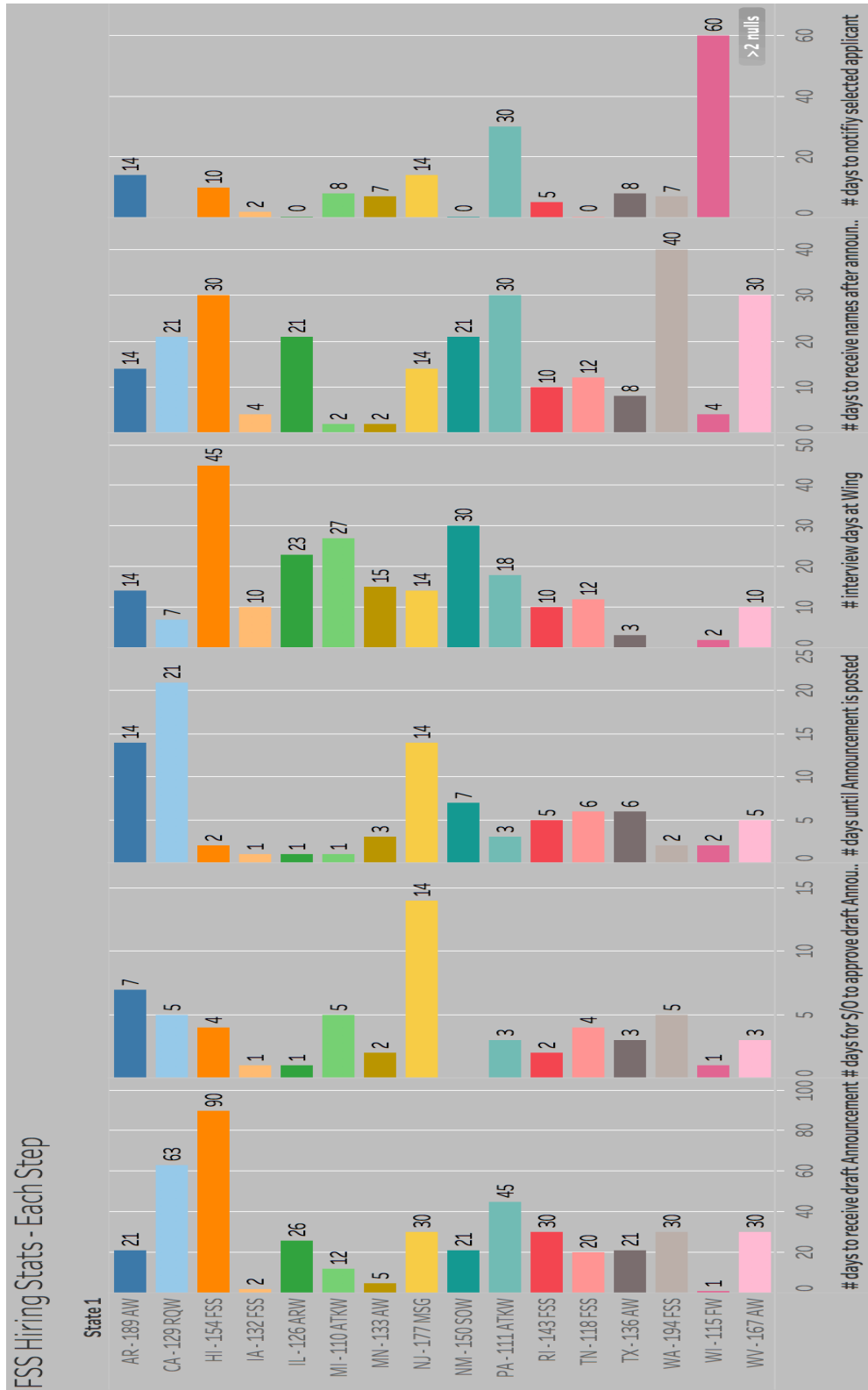
Appendix A - Data Call sent to Force Support Squadrons at each ANG Wing

HRO Remote Staff & Processes	Size of population serviced (FT positions authorized in Wing)
	# of staff in HRO Remote office
	Is/are your HRO Remote(s) Technician or AGR? (If Technician, what GS level?)
	Are you using the e52 process in DCPDS?
	If you utilize DCPDS, how many of your HRO staff have access to the system?
	Do you experience issues retaining staff? If so, what are the reasons for the retention issues?
	What experience do any of your staff members have with hiring practices in from Active Duty, Reserve, or civilian entities? How has that influenced your processes?
	Have you performed a Lean Six Sigma (LSS) or Black Belt (BB) study on your hiring process? If so, how long ago was it?
	What changes did you make to your hiring process, if any, as a result of your LSS/BB study?
	Has your staff ever provided assistance to the JFHQs HR staff to ease the burden of their workload? If so, how often have you done it and for how long each time?
	Does the JFHQs HR staff provide training to new HRO Remotes? Do they provide refresher training? (Telecons, in person, etc.)
	What best practices do you feel your staff uses to provide efficiency in your processes?
	On average, how many times each year do you host other HRO Remotes to provide training/share best practices?
	Do you provide resources to your customers on a SharePoint site?
	Does your office provide training for new supervisors?
Hiring Data	Do you require your Selecting Officials to submit the e52 in DCPDS?
	If your Selecting Officials aren't utilizing DCPDS to submit e52s, do you require them to complete a hardcopy or digital version of a 52 or another locally devised form to request that a job be announced?
	Do applicants submit their applications to the JFHQs HR staff directly or via USA Jobs?
	Avg # days until Selecting Official receives a draft announcement after sending 52 to JFHQs HRO
	Avg # days for Selecting Official to approve draft announcement
	Avg # days for announcement to be posted after draft has been approved by Selecting Official
	Avg # days for Selecting Official to receive Referral Package after announcement closes
	Avg # interview days at Wing
	Avg # days for JFHQs to notify applicants once selection has been made
Miscellaneous	Does your Wing leadership have concerns about the length of time it takes to hire a Technician? Please explain briefly.
	Has your Wing undergone a mission conversion (e.g., A-10s to RPAs) and/or a RIF? Please explain.
	Which federal entities (e.g., DCMA, DISA, DLA, depots, etc.) are in your local area which are hiring your Technicians?
	What are the main reasons Technicians are leaving your Wing to work at local federal entities? (Hired at higher GS level, telecommuting allowed, etc.)
	Please add anything you think may be of value for other states to know.

**Appendix B - Data Call sent to each Joint Force Headquarter's HRO
(via MPMO)**

JFHQ Human Resources Staff & Processes	Size of ANG population serviced (FT positions authorized in state)	
	Total # of ANG mbrs on staff	
	ANG staff trained on ARNG processes?	
	Size of Army population serviced (FT positions authorized in state)	
	Total # of ARNG mbrs on staff	
	ARNG staff trained on ANG processes?	
	Staff primarily Technician or AGR?	
	Do you experience issues retaining staff? If so, what are the reasons for the retention issues?	
	What regional- or national-level Human Resources-related councils are your staff members on, if any?	
	What experience do any of your staff members have with hiring practices in from Active Duty, Reserve, or civilian entities? How has that influenced your processes?	
	Have you performed a Lean Six Sigma (LSS) or Black Belt (BB) study on your hiring process? If so, how long ago was it?	
	What changes did you make to your hiring process, if any, as a result of your LSS/BB study?	
	Are you now utilizing or have you ever utilized HRO staff from Wings, Battalions, or NGB to assist with your workload? If so, how often have you done it and for how long each time?	
	Do you have issues with licensing restrictions (e.g., Only 1 or 2 licenses authorized) for the systems you use? If yes, which systems? Any other system-related issues which you feel may effect your efficiency?	
	Do you build all of your jobs (including assessments) in USA Jobs from scratch or do you cut and paste them from previous announcements?	
	Do applicants submit their applications to your office directly or via USA Jobs?	
	What type of training do you provide for your HRO Remote(s)? How often do you provide this training?	
	How often do you provide training for new supervisors?	
	How often do you provide refresher training for your supervisors?	
	What best practices do you feel your staff uses to provide efficiency in your processes?	
	Do you provide resources to your customers on a SharePoint site?	
	On average, how many times each year do you host other state's Human Resources staff to provide training/share best practices?	
	Do you require the use of e52s in DCPDS?	
	Hiring Statistics	Avg # days to send draft announcement to Selecting Official after receipt of 52
		Avg # days for Selecting Official to approve draft announcement
Avg # days to post announcement after draft has been approved by Selecting Official		
Avg # days to send Referral Package to Selecting Official after announcement closes		
Avg # interview days at Wing		
Avg # days to notify applicants once selection has been made		
How many ANG Technicians did your state transfer to Federal entities in 2016?		
How many ANG Technicians did your state transfer to non-Federal entities in 2016?		
Miscellaneous	Does your state allow direct appointments for Key Staff?	
	Does your state allow longer announcements for certain positions, e.g. 6-12 months or open-ended?	
	Do you allow your Selecting Officials to give a nominee a tentative job offer (pending approval of selection by JFHQ leadership)?	
	Do you allow the Wing CC to be the approval authority on selections?	
	Does your state allow telecommuting?	
	Please add anything you think may be of value for other states to know.	

Appendix C - Timelines for Each Step of Hiring Process (As reported by Wings)



Appendix D - 3S3X3, Manpower AFSC Duties

Performs the following manpower core competencies: Organization Structure, Requirements Determination, Program Allocation and Control, and Improve Performance. Manages manpower and organization (MO) functions including: Air Force organization structure, organizational and manpower standards, manpower resources, military grades, manpower data systems, peacetime and wartime manpower requirements and utilization, and commercial services to include strategic sourcing. Manages process reengineering, continuous improvement initiatives, and management consulting services. Supports operational planning and execution.³⁷

Appendix E – milSuite Tools³⁸



milBook
User, team and organization collaboration and networking
[Go to milBook >](#)



milWiki
Articles on organizations, systems, and places across the DoD
[Go to milWiki >](#)



milTube
Video sharing services where users can upload, watch, and share videos
[Go to milTube >](#)

More milSuite

In addition to our main products milSuite also offers specialized capabilities born from X Projects to help you get the most out of milSuite.



eureka
Idea generation and crowd sourcing innovation
[Go to eureka >](#)



milReads
Share, rate, and discuss books or access other DoD reading lists
[Go to milReads >](#)



milAdvisor
Access and Share Information to Improve Planning
[Go to milAdvisor >](#)

Training and Support



milSuite's application set offers a wide range of functionality that members of the DoD workforce are leveraging on a daily basis to improve their methods for collaboration. Learn how to navigate and use the products in your environment with milUniversity, or join one of our user communities to connect with others.

[milSuite Users' Community >](#) [milSuite Media Channel >](#) [milUniversity >](#)

milSuite Playbooks



milSuite is a robust platform that enables every member of the DoD to use it in whichever way makes sense for them or their organization. However, there's no need to start from scratch! Over the years the milSuite team has captured some best practices and examples from users and compiled them into what we call the milSuite Playbooks.

[Go to milSuite Playbooks >](#)


milSuite X



milSuite X is the extension of milSuite by its users through ideas, discussions, development, or outreach efforts to find new ways to solve existing problems. Whether it is submitting innovations to lower costs, building reading lists, or reviewing installations these initiatives have sparked new ways of working using milSuite.

[Go to milSuite X >](#)

Appendix F – Army National Guard’s Education Services milBook Site³⁹

<p>GROUP OVERVIEW</p>  <p>This group is designed to connect all who are involved in providing Education Services to the Soldiers of the Army National Guard</p> <p>Owned by: Melissa Burgosvazquez, Alan Maboa, Sydney Joiner-Leppert, THOMAS REGAN, Lola Andrade, Alan Schreck, Kenneth Hardy, Jeffrey Haycraft, Sean Ferrell, Donald Sutton, James Smith, Tommy Austin, Kurt Rauschenberg</p> <p>Tags: education</p> <p>Group Type: Members only</p> <p>Created: Jul 28, 2010</p>	<p>ACTION REQUIRED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Tuition Assistance Usage FY16 <p>EDUCATION SERVICES PROGRAMS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARNG Education Services on GKO Education Services Officers GI Bill Federal Tuition Assistance Testing Licensure and Certification Support Programs NCB Education Updates Marketing Helpful Education Links <p>RECENT BLOG POSTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best of MilBook Awards 2016 in ARNG Education Services Great job Team!! in ARNG Education Services 	<p>LATEST NEWS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DB, FEB 17 Education Services Field Call 024Mar 2017 .pptx <p>LEGISLATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> S. 473.pdf H.R. 245.pdf S. 687.pdf H.R. 925.pdf S. 708.pdf H.R. 1112.pdf S. 844.pdf H.R. 1379.pdf S. 882.pdf H.R. 1384.pdf S. 410.pdf H.R. 1783.pdf <p>KEY DOCUMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FY17 ARNG Education Benefits Handbook - Oct 2017 ESO Quick Reference Sheet-FY17 ARNG Education Benefits Briefing October 28 2016 FY17 ARNG Education and Incentive Contact Roster FY17 ARNG Education-Incentive Courses
<p>CONTACT ROSTERS AND STATE TUITION ASSISTANCE</p> <p>NCB Points of Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Services Branch GI Bill Support Team (PEC) Incentives Oversight Branch Incentives Support Team POCs <p>Please ensure your state information is up to date</p> <p>State and Territory Points of Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Services Officers Educational Services Specialists (Title 5 DMAs) Incentive Managers GI Bill Managers Support Staff Mailing Address National Guard.com Website Content <p>Please ensure your state information is up to date</p> <p>State Tuition Assistance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FY17 - State Tuition Assistance 	<p>RECENT CONTENT</p> <p>Filter by Categories & Tags ▾</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incentives Payout Comparisons Is there a program that provides Tuition Assistance to State Employees? FY16 Policy Best of MilBook Awards 2016 in ARNG Education Services Rec. Question: Does the National Guard provide the service of foreign credential evaluations? <p>More</p>	<p>EXAMPLE MARKETING PRODUCTS FROM STATES</p> <p>From Tennessee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Info Tennessee ARNG Education-Incentive Contacts Newsletter Guard SMART 3rd Quarter 2016 Poster TEB Poster 4K Reenlistment Bonus Poster 60 Colleges Poster Army Personnel Testing Poster Read it before you sign it Poster Stop before you transfer <p>ASK ARNG EDUCATION SERVICES</p> <p>Type your question</p> <p>Ask it</p>

Notes

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