Task Force on the Modernization of the State Personnel Management System

Meeting Minutes

Date: 10/3/2023, 10:00am-11:30am (Meeting #4)

Location: Web: Microsoft Teams Meeting

Video Conferencing: Meeting Recording Link

Presentation link: Link to Presentations

Task Force email: spms.taskforce@maryland.gov

Members Present: Secretary Tisha Edwards, Chair
Dianna Rosborough, Member
Cindy Kollner, Member
Erin McMullen, Member
Rianna Matthews-Brown, Member
Aaron Jacobs, Member
Gwen Schindler, Member
Tara Nelson, Member
Denise Gilmore, Member*
Rosemary Wertz, Member
Joel Martinez, Member
Kimberly Prescott, Member
Jerry Smith, Member

* Stuart Katzenberg substituted for Denise Gilmore from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

Members Absent: Denise Gilmore, Member
Secretary Serena McIlwain, Member

Staff Present: Raquel Coombs
Laura-Vykol Gray
Max Pierce

Presenters: Mark Townend, Director of Recruitment and Examination Division, Office of Personnel Services and Benefits (OPSB), Department of Budget and Management (DBM)
Max Pierce, Administrator IV, Legislative Affairs and Special Projects Unit, OPSB, DBM

Call to Order: Secretary Tisha Edwards, Chair, called the fourth meeting of the Task

Force on the Modernization of the State Personnel Management System (SPMS) to order at 10:00am via Microsoft Teams web video conferencing. The Chair introduced herself and welcomed all participants and members to the meeting. The Chair reminded all attendees that this meeting is being recorded. The Chair put five general proposals to the membership that will later be adopted as recommendations, if the Task Force is in agreement. The proposals include the creation of Service Level Agreements (SLAs), engage applicants throughout the hiring process, expand use of referrals and job matching, consider a "hire now process", and dedicate and specialize staff to the recruitment process. The Chair asked that the membership consider and review these proposals in this week's feedback survey. The Chair then introduced Mark Townend and Max Pierce to present and give a live demonstration on applicant experience through the state's applicant portal.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

Presentation – SPMS Applicant Experience – Mark Townend and Max Pierce, DBM: Mark Townend and Max Pierce gave a live presentation on the applicant experience of what it is like to apply to State jobs under current procedures. The presentation used a fake applicant account to apply to real and current State of Maryland job listings. The demonstration highlighted how to use the website, the variety of notices the applicant may receive during the job selection process, and the current issues/confusions that may arise. The Chair then opened the floor to questions by the membership about the demonstration.

Task Force Discussion: Kimberly Prescott asked two questions about email notifications and the customization options of notifications to applicants. Mr. Townend explained that all notifications are additionally sent to the email address on file but sometimes are flagged as spam by the applicant's email address provider. Mr. Townend further explained that notifications are fully customizable but DBM asks that agencies send a request to RED to do so to keep messaging consistent and accurate across all job listings. Rosemary Wertz asked if applicants have to apply for all state jobs individually. Mr. Townend answered in the affirmative, except when job listings are designed to allow applicants to apply to all levels of a singular job series (i.e Accountant I,II,III), which is usually the

exception. Stuart Katzenberg asked if the job platform is optimized for cell phones. Mr. Townend answered that the system has the potential, but DBM has had issues with implementing it in the past and are actively working on a fix.

The Chair then reminded the audience that participation is limited to the Task Force membership during the meetings. Questions from the public can be submitted to **spms.taskforce@maryland.gov**

The Chair then shifted the discussion towards the topic of what the State can do better for the applicants to State jobs. The Chair stated that she is hearing that applicants often apply to jobs and feel like there is no contact on the progress of their applications and that this is an issue for candidates. Kimberly Prescott commented that there should be an easy visual or status bar that applicants should be able to use to see where they are on a given job application. The Chair agreed.

Diana Rosborough asked how long it typically takes an applicant to complete an application after starting one. Mr. Townend replied that it typically takes one day. Ms. Rosborough asked a follow up question about phone accessibility in the application process and further raised that resumes should be key in the recruitment review process. Mr. Townend clarified that, for at-will positions, the use of the resume is more important. Ms. Rosborough feels the current application process is cumbersome and outdated from both the perspective of the hiring manager and the applicant as applications are long, visually dense and duplicative of what can be seen on a resume. Kimberly Prescott responded that hiring managers should be getting only a small number of the resumes submitted for a given position and should be filtered extensively. Cindy Kollner asked Joel Martinez and Kimberly Prescott what the private sector best practices are in common applications. Ms. Prescott responded that she understands the need for the state to use a formalized application process, but she personally prefers individualized applications specific to each job. Mr. Martinez replied that applications should be used to establish a base level of candidacy and that supplemental areas like Linkedin are more effective for gaining more detailed information. Ms. Kollner further asked about the use of AI filtering of applicants and both Mr. Martinez and Ms. Prescott replied that this system is not currently in use. The Chair prompted further conversation around the most efficient way to filter candidates and their data. Ms. Prescott elaborated that the use of screening

questions and not key words or AI filtering of keywords is current best practices for her. Mr. Martinez responded that Amazon uses human screening and allows applicants to self-select their qualification up front and that all technology should be used thoughtfully.

The Chair then moved the conversation onto current best practices and stated the importance that the back end of the hiring system is just as important as the front end. The Chair then gave the floor to Tara Nelson for comment. Tara explained that the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS) has applicants do applications on site at hiring events. Ms. Nelson went on to agree the current application process is not intuitive. DPSCS created a dedicated recruitment call center in 2022 to help address the high number of applicants with questions. The Chair expressed her support for this call center and applicant help line, especially for agencies with a large number of vacant positions. Rianna Matthews-Brown agreed that the system is antiquated and questioned the necessity of the current system when resumes and screening questions might be sufficient. The Chair agreed with the effectiveness of resumes, but cited equity concerns that not all populations may be able to craft high quality resumes. Kimberly Prescott suggested that technology, such as QR codes, should be used to expedite the in-person hiring process at events and further stressed the necessity of specialization of recruiting and human resources more generally. Mr. Townend offered a clarification that supplemental questions aid in the filtering of applicants process and they are manually reviewed by an analyst. After the prompting of the Chair for final questions or comments, Aaron Jacobs stressed the importance of accessibility in how jobs are posted and titled, that jobs should not be listed as confusing or vague internal class codes but should be intuitive to applicants. The job title is the first thing an applicant sees and sets the tone for the whole application process.

The Chair in a round robin format then asked each member of the Task Force to comment their current thoughts on how the State can best modernize and cover their bases in the recruitment process. Members brought up the use of technology, prioritization of equity and diversity, utilization of existing best practices more broadly, analysis of current barriers in the process, supporting the existing needs of human resources, SLAs, difference of needs between types of applicants, accessibility, the specialization of human resources, and prioritization of pertinent data.

Minute Approval: Erin asked that the minutes for meeting #3 be amended to reflect that Jordan Fisher attended as her substitute. The minutes were then unanimously approved with one clarification.

Closing Discussion: The Chair then asked the body to fill out the feedback survey with their comments and suggestions. She also asked the body to consider the addition of an additional meeting to the schedule.

Next Meeting Dates (10:00am-11:30am):

- October 17, 2023
- October 31, 2023
- November 14, 2023

Adjournment