

USPACFLT EEO FACT SHEET

Special Emphasis Programs April 2021

This Fact Sheet:

- Connects high performing organizations with effective SEPs
- Explains the background and purpose of SEPs
- Identifies six federally recognized SEPs
- Identifies Key Roles and Responsibilities
- Explains differences and synergies between EEO, SEP and Diversity and Inclusion
- Provides SEP resources

Contact your servicing EEO office for more information:

- **Hawaii:**
808.471.0271
- **Northwest:**
360.476.5020
- **Southwest:**
619.705.4139

Introduction

High-performing organizations rely on a dynamic workforce with the requisite talents, multi-disciplinary knowledge, and relevant skills to ensure that it is equipped to accomplish its mission and achieve its goals. One approach that high-performing organizations take is drawing on the strengths of all its employees. Their inclusive efforts facilitates everyone's chance to reach their potential and maximize their contributions to their organization's goals. Thus, Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) are foundational to high performing organizations.

Background

SEPs were first established by law, regulation and Executive authority in the 1960s and 1970s. SEPs were intended to be an integral part of Federal agencies' EEO programs to help address lack of participation of groups in the Federal workforce, such as minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities, including disabled veterans. A common perception today is that SEPs are no longer necessary. Annual assessments and workforce analysis results verifies that low participation and unresolved challenges still exist for certain groups. Thus, SEPs still play a vital role.

Purpose

- Support equal employment opportunity for all groups;
- Educate and improve awareness of the contributions of Special Emphasis groups; and
- Proactively address employment issues through barrier identification and elimination.

Special Emphasis Programs

- Asian American/Pacific Islander Employment Program
- American Indian/Alaskan Native Employment Program
- Black Employment Program
- Federal Women's Program (FWP)*
- Hispanic Employment Program (HEP)*
- Individuals with Disability Program (IWDP)*

*Mandated programs for Federal agencies are required by law, noted as follows:

FWP – 5 U.S.C. 7201; 38 U.S.C. 4214; Title 5 CFR, Subpart B, 720.204; HEP– Title 5 CFR, Subpart B, 720.204; and IWDP – Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act; Title 5 U.S.C. Subpart B, Chapter 31, Subchapter I-3102; 5 CFR 213.3102(t) and (u); 5 CFR 315.709

What does a SEP encompass?

Given the wide variations of potential employment issues, demographic composition, as well as diverse missions and geographical distribution, SEP objectives will vary. Each organization should determine what employment policies, procedures and practices are

affecting the workforce and focus efforts to address barriers to equal opportunity. Some programs may identify several employment issues and warrant more initiatives than others.

Who is responsible for SEP Execution?

There is joint responsibility to implement a compliant SEP program; key roles and responsibilities are discussed below. While programmatic oversight and some educational initiatives can be effectively led at the command-level, localized efforts are able to better address employment issues unique to the organization, geographical area, grade level, or occupational community.

What are the key roles and responsibilities related to SEPs?

Commanding Officers: Responsible for the implementation of a Model EEO Program, including SEPs.

Senior Leaders: Support the SEPs, including engaging with various stakeholders, ensure resources for education and awareness and barrier identification and elimination efforts, and champion recommended changes in employment policies, procedures and practices.

Director, EEO (DEEO), Command SEP Managers (SEPMs) and the Command Affirmative Employment Program Manager (AEPM): Provide policy/guidance and programmatic oversight.

Deputy Directors, EEO (DDEEO) and field level AEPMs: Lead SEP efforts at serviced commands, with the support of their cognizant field level SEPMs, provide advice and guidance to leadership and related forums, such as Barrier Analysis Teams (“BATs”), diversity councils, Model EEO Teams and EEO advisory committees, as well as keep field level SEPMs informed of current challenges and emerging issues facing their customers. The DDEEO assesses the effectiveness of respective SEP efforts and balances resources to reach model EEO program goals and competing operational requirements.

SEPMs: (EEO staff at the field level): Provide support to their DDEEO, AEPM and customer base, which may include some of the following activities: provide advice and guidance to leadership, engage with employee resources and related forums as referenced above, conduct training, participate in barrier analysis efforts and provide input to annual EEO assessment reports.

SEP Point of Contact: (Designated by the organization) Serve as a liaison for SEPMs to coordinate activity-level efforts and implement command plans.

SEP Champions: (Optional for Command/large activities): Utilizes their influence and network to resolve issues, formulate strategic plans and goals, secure resources, and disseminate best practices to maximize progress towards goals. Engages with their organization’s SEPMs and leaders to identify and eliminate barriers, and support advancement and career development opportunities for their SEP.

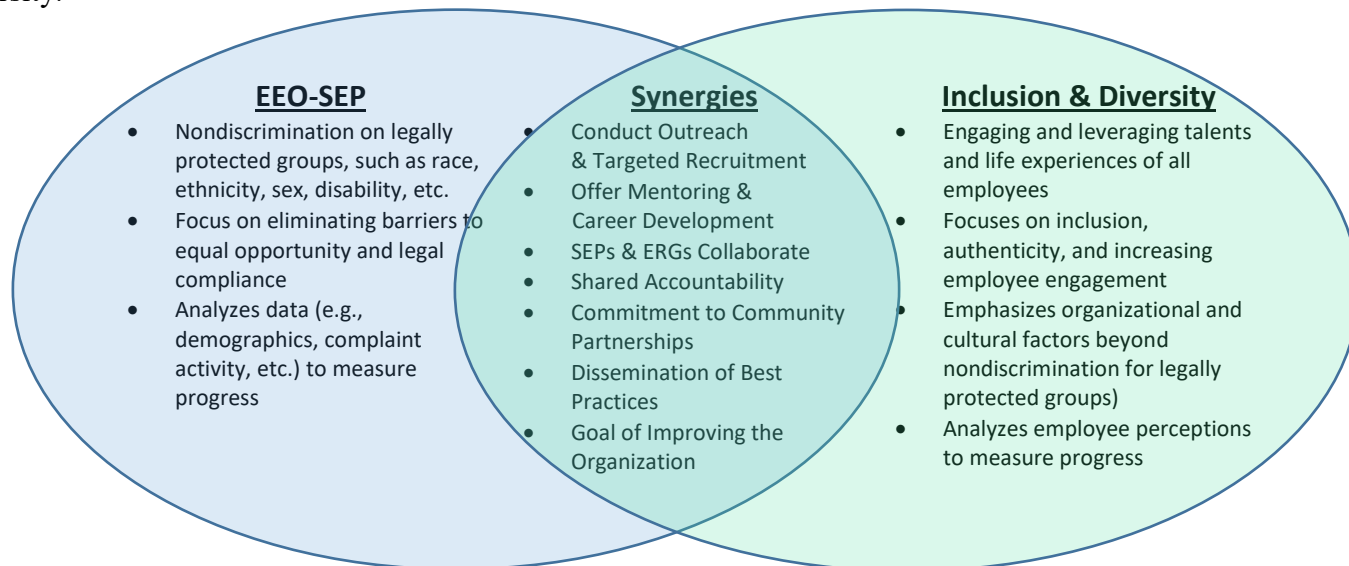
Managers/Supervisors: Activity leaders are responsible for ensuring all employees and applicants are afforded equal opportunity to compete on a fair and level playing field and actively support and participate in the implementation of DON, PACFLT and local EEO program initiatives and barrier analysis efforts.

HR practitioners: HR practitioners are the subject matter experts on employment policies, practices, and procedures that guide those processes. Thus, their participation and collaboration is vital to success of SEPs. HR practitioners also provide data analytics, support barrier analysis efforts, workforce development, and recruitment/outreach in support of SEPs and the EEO program.

Differences and Synergies between EEO-SEPs and Inclusion & Diversity

SEPs are mandated by law and regulation and, therefore, must exist within the EEO program for federal agencies. However, voluntary groups that have common interests with SEPs may co-exist with them. Such groups may be known by various names, including employee advisory groups, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) and Lean-In Circles. Further, some of our organizations have established Diversity Councils, Model EEO / Barrier Analysis Teams and EEO Advisory Committees that are often led by management and supported EEO. *These groups within the same or related organizations may have overlapping goals and objectives. When they do, they will be more effective and efficient by collaborating in their efforts.*

Illustrated below are some of the more common differences and synergies between EEO-SEP and Inclusion and Diversity.



How can I support my organization's SEP?

- Attend and participate in SEP events and initiatives, volunteer to assist with coordination or serve as a guest speaker.
- Utilize relationships with community, professional and national organizations, colleges and universities to network your organization with SEP outreach and other initiatives.
- Volunteer to serve as a SEP POC or to support barrier analysis efforts.
- Participate in focus groups, command climate and employee satisfaction surveys, and EEO program assessments.

Why isn't there a SEP for my group?

SEPs are intended to help address *low participation* of certain groups in the workforce. Some groups don't lack participation in the workforce and thus, a SEP group is not warranted.

Do SEPs give certain groups an unfair advantage in the workplace?

No. SEP efforts should not be misconstrued as special rights, quotas, or reverse discrimination. Rather, SEPs address the unique concerns for specific groups in achieving equality of opportunity throughout the full spectrum of the employment cycle.

What resources are available with respect to SEPs?

Your servicing EEO office can provide you with more information about SEPs and put you in touch with the appropriate SEPM (see first page for contact telephone number). The EEOC's website also has information about barrier analysis: <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/management-directive/instructions-federal-agencies-eeo-md-715-1>.