
CHAPTER 4

The SRT section of HRD makes limited use of its data resources

In limiting its data use to description, SRT is overlooking a valuable tool.

As part of the online vacancy announcement and application systems, HRD through the SRT section is collecting large amounts of process-related information. However, it uses that information largely to describe section workload statistics, rather than as a tool to improve the state's ability to attract quality employees. Thus, SRT is bypassing a tool that can help improve its own parts of the state's hiring process.

SRT's limited use of data is an outgrowth of a longstanding compartmentalization of data within state government programs. SRT needs to use recruitment- and selection-based data to lead state agencies in the selection process; in so doing, it can provide a valuable service to all agencies that need to recruit and hire staff. We recommend that SRT expand its use of data, making it an integral part of a more useful and broadly-scoped human resource management information system.

SRT's recruitment and selection processes generate useful data

Existing data could be used to improve SRT processes.

SRT plays a pivotal role in attracting and retaining the workforce state agencies need to accomplish their objectives, with recruitment and selection being crucial first public steps toward reaching the state's goal of attracting such a workforce. For the past 35 years, the primary function performed by SRT has been posting job announcements and screening applications. In 2004, SRT launched an online version of its existing paper-based vacancy announcement and application system. This system, the electronic Human Resources Management System (eHRMS), stores information on positions, announcements, and applications for each vacancy.

eHRMS was developed to speed HRD's processes

SRT uses eHRMS applicant and recruitment data primarily to track its own workload, such as the number of applications submitted for position vacancies, the number of applicants who meet minimum qualifications, and the time it takes to generate a register after a vacancy closes. In FY '06, SRT staff screened 45,717 applications for 1,817 vacancy announcements and 2,207 positions.

SRT has used eHRMS data to demonstrate it is getting vacancy announcements out and producing applicant registers quickly. Agencies appreciate this. However, the speed with which vacancy announcements are posted and applicant registries are produced is secondary to attracting applicants well enough qualified to hire, and if hired, motivated to stay and to perform.

Agencies value improvements in timeliness, but speed is only one of many considerations.

Our interviews with agency HR staff and hiring supervisors indicate that despite increased numbers of applicants since the process went online, they believe the quality of applicants has not improved. It appears that automating the application process may have produced the unintended consequence of increasing workloads for SRT and agency personnel, without necessarily increasing the number of quality applicants.

eHRMS data could be used to identify problems

SRT could identify cross-agency recruitment problems.

With eHRMS' comprehensive data on position vacancies and applicants, SRT is in a unique position to examine recruiting practices and help identify and distinguish internal SRT problems from agency-specific and cross-agency problems. This sort of analysis can support the exchange of information about successful recruiting practices.

The same data SRT uses to measure its own workload also show that the state is experiencing problems in attracting both enough applicants and enough quality applicants. In FY '06, only 65 percent of vacant positions resulted in a hire; also, almost 10

percent of applicant pools had 2 or fewer applicants and almost 20 percent of hires were from applicant pools with 2 or fewer applicants meeting minimum qualifications.

Recruitment data suggest problems with vacancy announcements

A more focused look at this data shows that individual position vacancy announcements generate very different numbers of applications. This occurs not just for certain locations, or between classifications, which is to be expected given the difficulty of recruiting for some locations and classifications, but also within specific classifications.

Recruitment data also suggest where to focus for solutions.

We found that at different times, vacancy announcements for positions in one classification attracted from 0 to 161 applicants. This raises an important but as yet unanswered question: Are differences in the numbers of applicants due to things over which SRT has direct control, or to problems it can help solve? The data can help determine if the problem lies, for example, with vacancy announcements, and if so, whether successful ones are more likely to be precisely or generically worded. It can also indicate if there is an association with the timing of the announcements and whether successful ones were placed just on the state's website or also in other media.

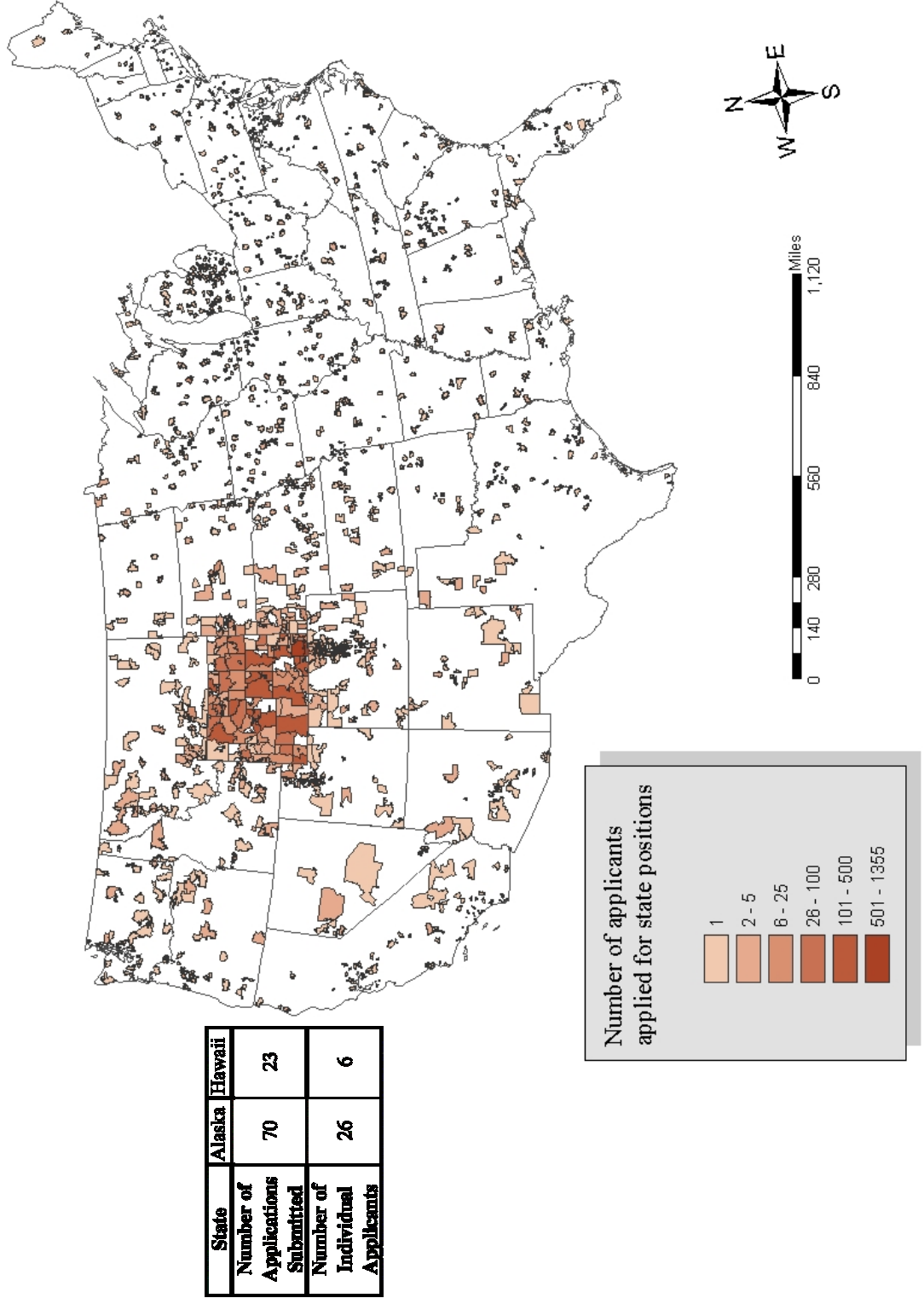
Data suggest current screening process may be counter-productive

Having more applications does not mean having better applicants.

In the classification referenced above, data combined with hired applicant information, show that more important than the number of applicants for a specific position is whether announcements for a particular vacancy result in applicants being hired. We found an no relationship between the number and proportion of applicants who met minimum requirements for positions and the likelihood that an applicant would be selected for that position. HRD staff spends considerable time and effort on the screening of applications. Agency staff then review, and often reject, all applicants, having not found any that meet job requirements. These indicators, together with comments from agency staff who review applications, suggest problems with the relevance of SRT's minimum qualification reviews, something SRT needs to assess.

Figure 4.1

Zip codes from which applicants submitted State of Wyoming employment applications, FY '06



State	Alaska	Hawaii
Number of Applications Submitted	70	23
Number of Individual Applicants	26	6

Source: LSO analysis of HRD and U.S. Census Bureau data.

Some retention problems are related to recruitment and selection processes.

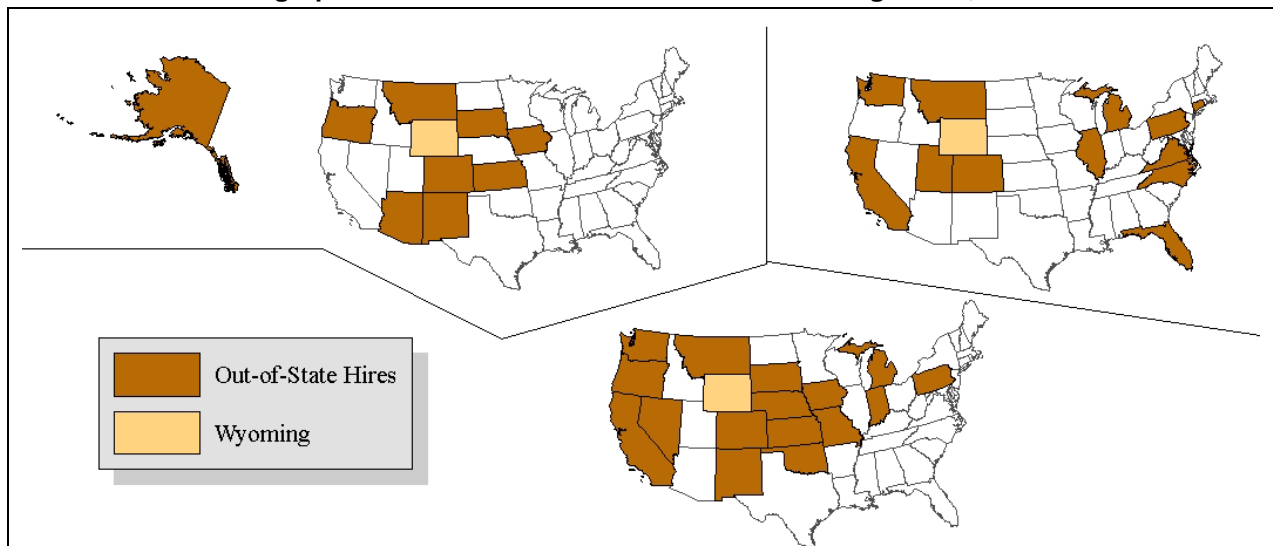
While SRT staff believe retention issues are beyond the scope of their operations, best practices suggest that retention problems can be an outgrowth of recruiting problems. Data from an HRD-contracted review¹ currently underway shows that Wyoming loses a high proportion of employees in the first 3 months of employment, and provides evidence that agencies are not equally effective in recruiting and retaining staff. Further analysis of applicant qualifications and retention and exit information contained in the State Auditor's payroll system, which SRT says constitutes the statutorily-required state roster, could help SRT identify specific recruitment-related problems with inappropriate hires.

Different agencies have different needs

Used another way, applicant data can visually summarize situations in which recruiting strategies may need to be refined for individual agencies or for different classifications. Figure 4.1 (on the facing page) shows where applicants were at the time they applied. Figure 4.2 below shows that in FY '06, the distribution of successful out-of-state applicants was very different for 3 state agencies.

Figure 4.2

Geographic distribution of out-of-state hires for 3 agencies, FY '06



Source: LSO analysis of HRD and U.S. Census Bureau data.

¹ Beginning in 2005 Saratoga, PricewaterhouseCoopers' Human Resource Services practice began a review of HRD. Initial findings were presented in *State of Wyoming Measurement Analysis* 11/10/05 and *Initial Results Review*, 7/27/06.

Figure 4.3
Number and percent of out-of-state hires for Wyoming
departments, FY '06

Agency Name	Number of Hires	Number of Out-of-State Hires	Percent Out-of-State Hires
Transportation	286	20	6.99%
Health	211	30	14.22%
Corrections	153	39	25.49%
Family Services	136	18	13.24%
Military	70	7	10.00%
Workforce Services	66	5	7.58%
Administration and Information	55	4	7.27%
Game and Fish	54	13	24.07%
Employment	49	6	12.24%

Agencies have varying needs for, and success in, recruiting from out-of-state.

Source: LSO analysis of HRD data.

SRT focuses on discrete pieces of a continuous process

In state government, HR information is scattered among free-standing applicant and employee data sets housed separately within HRD, elsewhere in A&I, and in individual state agencies. These systems do not communicate directly with each other; thus the increased value that might accrue from linking the state's many sources of HR information has not materialized.

Fragmented systems minimize the value of extensive data collection efforts

On its own, eHRMS reporting functions are limited.

Contrary to what the name implies, eHRMS is not a human resources management system. It does not lend itself to flexible or responsive use: reporting functions must be developed by a programmer, and the system does not accommodate ad hoc queries of the database. If anomalies appear in standard reports, SRT or agency staff cannot easily explore the source of the underlying problem to determine whether the problem is agency-specific, cross-agency, or an SRT problem. Data generated from

recruitment and application systems can identify problems across agencies and help pinpoint problems specific to individual agencies.

Used with other HR data, the state has valuable information to guide its new HR initiatives.

Existing data has uses beyond tracking SRT workload

Data that could constitute a true human resources management system appears to exist, but in pieces. Linking existing application data to employees' performance appraisal data could give the state a skills inventory and gap analysis. The same information linked to termination data could help determine whether retention problems are related to vacancy announcements, classification and compensation issues, other agency-specific problems that can be targeted and solved, or larger economic and cultural problems to which the state at least needs to be prepared to respond, if it cannot control them.

Recommendation: SRT should expand its use of HR data, making it an integral part of a more useful and broadly-scoped human resource management information system.

SRT can use its data to help define a broader role for the section.

Success in recruiting does not mean simply filling a position; it means filling a position with a productive employee. Turnover, training, and recruiting all have their costs, as does retaining a poorly-performing employee for 20, 30, or more years. SRT says it is poised to make a major change in focus from transaction processing to agency consultant; how it uses the wealth of data available will be critical to its success in this transition.

Much of the necessary data and expertise already exists within HRD. The key will be for SRT to develop the capacity to coordinate and analyze HR information to the benefit of all agencies. As the generator and custodian of recruitment and selection data and employee performance data, SRT can use its wealth of data to fashion a much broader and more useful human resource management information system.

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