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In Indian Country, remote rural agencies are often challenged with limited access to computers or the internet. This limited access to technology often leads to routine, hard-to-fill vacancies. In 2016 the BIA Branch of Wildland Fire Management invested $193,000 to hire four human resource assistants to address these challenges.

While numerous strategies are being taken to address hiring challenges, one successful approach that is becoming more common is hosting job outreach events.



Victoria Wesley provides an interview at local Tribal radio station, San Carlos, AZ.

This year, with the critical assistance of HR staff, Navajo Region (Ft. Defiance and Shiprock), Mescalero, San Carlos and Crow Agencies hosted their first outreach events. By documenting their process, successes and what not to do, HR staff is sharing that knowledge with others.

What makes a successful outreach event? Planning and teamwork!

How much planning? After the date is chosen, work starts 4-6 weeks in advance. A team leader calls a planning meeting to identify timelines and assign responsibilities to six to ten people (more individuals may be needed for larger events).



March 2017 Job Fair with a San Carlos Apache Tribal Human Resources representative.

Planning tasks include securing a central community location, creating advertising materials, updating and printing IQCS master records, and working with Tribal officials to prepare them for an increase in requests for Verification of Indian Preference (Form BIA-4432). People also are assigned to manage the registration process, Xerox extra handouts, assist HR staff to answer basic questions, staff display tables promoting wildfire career opportunities, and of course, setting up and breaking down tables and chairs.

One of the most important planning requirements involves advertising the event. Mescalero Agency took the approach to print nearly 1,300 fliers to distribute in common community areas and door to door in rural areas. At San Carlos, public service announcements on the Tribal radio and newspaper helped. Both agencies and Tribes aggressively used Facebook to post “save the date,” event invites and other reminders to applicants to have them bring required forms. In total, 80-90 applicants attended the Mescalero Agency event while San Carlos had approximately 75 applicants at theirs

“We had a great turn out and received positive feedback from applicants and community members. Some people said, “I hope this happens every year. Others thought the event was a good thing for the community.” – Charles Riley, Mescalero Agency Superintendent

What does HR staff do at these events? A lot!

Before an event takes place, they prepare all job announcements, forms and tools the planning team will need. These include developing job listings and printing of position specific assessment questionnaires that will be used for an initial assessment of the applicant. It also helps applicants understand which jobs they best qualify for and where they are located.



New Firefighters at San Carlos prepare to complete applications during a 2017 job fair.

HR assistants provide onsite guidance in resume building, completing OPM 1203-FX forms from the occupational questionnaires, Motor Vehicle License & Driving Record forms and of course, the interpret qualification requirements listed in the vacancy announcements.

BIA HR staff familiar with Federal and Interagency Fire Program Management qualifications review the documentation to ensure the applicant is positive to receive consideration for vacant position(s) they've applied to. If computers fax, and scanners are available, HR staff also assists the applicant in completing the online application process. If computers are not available, HR staff ensures a hard copy of the application package is safely transported to their Recruitment Center where the application is manually processed. The San Carlos Apache Tribe and the San Carlos Agency partnered in San Carlos with HR representatives to improve turnout at their outreach event. They chose to host the event during a week of fire school training in order to reach a wider applicant pool.

The target was to hire 35 potential employees. San Carlos Tribe identified 26 vacancies while BIA had eight difficult-to-fill vacancies.



Geronimo IHC Staff gathered in front of office building.

Six HR staff from BIA and three HR staff from the San Carlos Apache Tribe worked together to during the event which gathered 75 applicants. BIA received certs for six positions while the Tribe filled vacancies for their hotshots, wildland fire module and engines crews.

After experiencing several failed attempts to fill a critical position on Crow Agency's helitack crew, HR staff stepped in to identify what the problems may be.

The Agency learned people were applying for the job, but were being disqualified because they were missing key documentation such as their Indian Preference verification form or a copy of their Red Card. To address these issues, HR staff then provided onsite assistance.

On April 6th the Crow Agency held their first outreach event. Rhonda Hogstad, Billings HR Specialist, was critical in providing assistance. She helped organize the event and provided the specialized experienced needed to ensure people were completing and submitting all forms correctly with their applications.

Eighteen people attended the event and all successfully applied for the position. Coe Half and Leo Goes Ahead, two crew members from the helitack crew, answered questions and provided assistance.

"Having staff familiar with the process and how to obtain necessary forms sets applicants and the agency up for success. For the first time, we had a deep applicant pool to select from. We will defiantly be using this approach again." - Colton Herrera, Crow Helicopter Manager

HR staff do much more than review forms and ensure applications are correct and complete; they are teaching firefighters and new supervisors how the hiring process works.

One-on-one personal contact creates meaningful exchanges with field managers and applicants. This exchange helps them to internalize the process and instills confidence for the next time they need to host an outreach event. It also strengthens an applicants' knowledge and confident so they are more apt to apply for future BIA jobs.

For high school students and other young adults looking for career opportunities, these events encourage new recruits who are pondering a career in wildland fire management to get involved!

"Thank you for making the effort to reach out to the community and for making it personal for the applicants." – Mescalero Tribal Leadership

A special thanks the following individuals who went above and beyond the call of duty to make each event successful and for supporting this work: John Cervantes, David Garcia Jr., Kevin Pellman, Aldon Coriz, Nicholas Garcia, Sterling Bigmouth, Velda Garcia, Deb Abeita, Toni Gachupin, Candace Chischilly, Colton Herrera, Rhonda Hogstad, Ni'cole Macdonald, Sam Ware, Charles Walks Slow, Marvin Dawes, Katie Keller-Manuelito, Andy Quam, Dale Glenmore, Johnson Benallie, Charles Smith, Benson Johnson, Carlos Nosie Jr., Duane Chapman, Jere Classay, Dan Pitterle, Clark Richins, Kathleen Livingston, Victoria Wesley, Berlinda Gilbert, Donna Benallie, San Carlos Tribal HR Staff, Tribal Enrollment Staff, Geronimo IHC staff, and Superintendents Charles Riley, Irene Herder, and Nona Tuchawena.

If your agency wishes to host a job outreach event, get started by visiting the online wildland fire job outreach toolbox to download how to guides, pre-planning checklists, brochures, registration forms, public service announcements, template posters and other tools: https://www.indianaffairs.gov/bia/ots/dfwfm/bwfm/job-information

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