

Electronic Official Personnel Folder (E-OPF) Concept of Operations for NOAA

Introduction – The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is implementing several systems across Government that are intended to improve the management of human capital. One of these systems is E-OPF. This system is already implemented in a few agencies. Others like the Department of Commerce are in the process of implementing it. It will be mandatory across Government within a few years. E-OPF replaces the current paper based folder containing each employee's with an electronic folder containing each employee's personnel records. Information on E-OPF can be found on the OPM web site, http://www.opm.gov/egov/ehri_overview.asp.

Benefits - E-OPF improves the ability of the Government to provide personnel services in many ways including:

Access – Currently employees, who are not collocated with the personnel office that maintains their paper based OPF, have little or no access to the documents in their folder. In many cases an employee never reviews the content of his or her folder until retirement. If errors have occurred and critical documents have not been properly filed early in a person's career, they are much more difficult to correct 10, 20 or 30 years after the fact. E-OPF provides employee access any time and any place.

Security/Continuity of Operations – The current paper based folder is a "single point of failure". A folder can be lost. A fire or natural disaster can destroy hundreds or thousands of folders. There is no back up. As an electronic data base, E-OPF allows every employee's documentation to be backed up and securely stored at a remote site. The employment record for each employee can be restored if a disaster occurs.

Efficiency of Operations – The current system requires documents such as a "Notification of Personnel Action" to be printed. One copy gets filed and one copy gets mailed to the employee. For example the annual pay adjustment in January produces approximately 12500 documents that must be individually filed. Obviously this process requires significant resources and as a manual process there are many opportunities for mistakes. When E-OPF is implemented the National Finance Center will transmit the data which will be automatically filed in each employee's electronic folder. Rather than get a copy of the document in the mail, the employee will get an email notification that a document has been added to their folder. The employee can then go online to review the document and, if desired, print a copy.

Responsiveness – In many instances providing services or answers is dependent on having access to an employee's OPF. Delays occur when a paper based folder has to be retrieved. Information in E-OPF will be available at any time to

authorized servicing personnel specialists . As an example this will allow retirement questions to be answered more quickly. Investigators doing background checks can be given short term access to an employee's electronic folder. This will allow background checks and security clearances to be done much more quickly.

Implementation Plans - Within the Department of Commerce, NOAA and the Office of the Secretary will go first. Implementation will begin as an "Electronic Day Forward" start. This means that an E-OPF will be established for each employee. New documents received from NFC will be electronically filed. Employees will be notified how to access the system using a phased approach over approximately a two month period.

As funds become available, existing paper folders will be reviewed; documents that are no longer supposed to be in the folders will be removed; and the folders will be sent to an OPM approved contractor who will scan and index the documents in the folders. Documents that are removed will be given to the employee from whose folder they were taken. Once scanned, the folders will be returned to a NOAA warehouse for storage. OPM is expected to issue guidance on how long the folders should be retained.

Shortly after the documents are scanned the images will be loaded into the employee's E-OPF. The employee will then be able to review the scanned documents and can assist with the overall quality control of the process by reporting any problems not previously detected.

We hope to launch the system in January 2006 so that the annual cost adjustment can be handled electronically.

Training – Use of the system by employees is not complicated. Training materials will be distributed to help employee's get started. The development of a short e-learning course to which employees can refer is also planned. There will be help desk support provided by the National Finance Center.

Data Security – The E-OPF will be operated by the National Business Center in Denver CO, part of the Department of Interior. This operation has a certified and accredited security plan. Access to an employee's records will be limited to the employee and the Workforce Management Office servicing the employee's organization. Access is controlled by userid and password. The userid is assigned by the system and should be kept private. Passwords will initially be emailed to the employee. The password can then be changed. Employees will not be able to enter or change information in the e-opf.