

PROGRAM TITLE: Quality Express Staffing (QUEST) Initiative  
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## PROGRAM SUMMARY: Quality Express Staffing (QUEST) Initiative

The Louisiana Department of State Civil Service initiated a new program in 2004 called the Quality Express Staffing (QUEST) Initiative. The program is designed to give agencies greater flexibility in hiring candidates for high volume jobs. Strategic planning discussions indicated that one of the greatest frustrations among state agencies was the amount of time from vacancy to hire. Therefore, the Staffing Division developed a program where agencies would have total responsibility for recruiting and hiring in these high volume jobs. The QUEST direct-hire process eliminates the involvement of Civil Service and allows agencies to control the hiring process for themselves. As a result, agencies have been able to decrease time to hire from as much as 8 weeks to 2 or 3 weeks.

The QUEST Initiative applies to jobs covered by the COAST (Clerical) test, the Professional Entry Test (PET), the LEAPS (law enforcement) test, and the LEAPS Supervisor test. Agencies who have vacancies in these jobs must post an announcement on the Civil Service web-based job board. Applicants would then submit their application and test score information directly to the agency. The agency will then verify that the applicant meets the minimum qualifications and testing requirements. From the qualified applicants, the agency determines which candidates they wish to consider and then offer the position to the candidate of their choice. The agencies are no longer subject to the rule of five for these jobs. Any applicant who meets the qualification and testing requirements is considered certified and can be appointed.

Several basic premises have been established for this program. First, all job postings must remain active for a minimum of one week. Second, all test scores used in the QUEST Initiative have been converted to a percentile which gives the agencies an idea of where the candidate scored relative to all other candidates. All passing scores are considered “certifiable” for hire. All documentation of the process must be maintained by the agency and available for review upon request and during audits.

1. The QUEST Initiative is a staffing model established by the La. Dept. of State Civil Service that grants the authority to all state agencies to recruit and hire candidates into certain high volume occupational groups. Agencies are required to follow the QUEST Guidelines when recruiting for one of the eligible jobs and must maintain documentation of such compliance for future audits. If a vacancy occurs in a job that requires the COAST (clerical) test, the Professional Entry Test (PET), the LEAPS (law enforcement), or the LEAPS Supervisor series, agencies are required to post the position on the Civil Service web site. Applicants who respond to the posting will forward their application and test grade directly to the agency where the vacancy has occurred. Then, the agency will determine which of the respondents is qualified for the position, interview those candidates in which they are interested, and hire the selected candidate. There are flexibilities built into the program guidelines that allow agencies to slightly adjust their recruiting strategy using this program to address different needs.
2. This program went into effect in March of 2004.
3. This program was created to address concerns that were expressed by different agency administrations about the amount of time from vacancy to hire. Prior to QUEST, the time from vacancy to hiring could sometimes be as long as 2-3 months. Using the QUEST guidelines, agencies could shorten their time to hire to as little as possibly 2 to 3 weeks.
4. The QUEST Initiative is a new and creative method because it categorically eliminates the agencies previous requirement for involving Civil Service in the hiring process for the relevant jobs. Prior to QUEST, agencies had to seek permission from Civil Service to recruit for certain types of positions without Civil Service involvement and those who were granted this permission were then contractually obligated to maintain the standards established for

that agency. The QUEST Initiative eliminates the variation among agencies that was caused by the different contractual obligations established for each. It also allows agencies some flexibility such as length of time the position will be posted for application, the addition of special requirements within the posting, and greater flexibility in the use of test score information. However, agencies are still free to request Civil Service assistance in their recruiting processes for these jobs if they wish.

5. There were no additional costs associated with the implementation of the QUEST Initiative. Agencies were able to implement the program using existing staff. The internet job posting system had been established and was in use prior to QUEST. Civil Service staff members, who previously were heavily involved in the posting of positions and preparation of certificates, now became resources for the agencies staff that were charged with this responsibility. Current Civil Service staff members were utilized to provide training on the transition and the only minimal cost may have been there travel reimbursements.
6. There are no additional operational costs associated with this program.
7. This program is administered by established Civil Service staff members whose compensation is provided for in the General Fund.
8. This program originated in the State of Louisiana.
9. No, we are not aware of similar programs in other states.
10. The success of this program is measured in two ways. First, regular agency interactions are monitored to identify any systemic problems or concerns that arise. Civil Service staff members who administer this program meet regularly and discuss any issues that agencies may have. Also, whenever the program is changed or expanded, the Staffing Division of Civil Service conducts meetings with Human Resources offices in the various agencies to

seek feedback and provide advance notice. Second, the Accountability Division of the Department regularly audits the personnel records of all state agencies including their documentation of recruiting activities. If an agency is found to have not complied with any aspect of the QUEST Initiative guidelines, then that is noted as an official finding in the audit reports. These audit findings are monitored by Civil Service liaisons to the different agencies and problems or trends of non-compliance would be detected at that level.

11. When the QUEST Initiative was implemented in 2004, it was only for the jobs that required applicants to have a score on the COAST (Clerical) exam. In July 2005, the program was expanded to include all jobs covered by the Professional Entry Test (PET), the LEAPS test (law enforcement) and the LEAPS Supervisor test. The Department is currently considering expanding the program to include other occupational groups. However, in our current paper laden process, the recordkeeping requirements for agencies has grown substantially. So, prior to expansion of the program, the Department is in the process of initiating a web-based application process. Allowing applicants to submit electronic applications rather than paper will significantly decrease the amount of documentation that currently has to be maintained as hardcopy. The conversion to electronic applications is a substantial undertaking and is anticipated to be implemented in late 2007 or early 2008. Following that implementation, the Department will consider expanding the Quality Express Staffing (QUEST) Initiative to jobs in other occupational groups.