USEPA

One EPA Skills Marketplace and Virtual Collaboration Program

Draft Program Operational Framework

September 13, 2012

The One EPA Skills Marketplace (hereafter, Skills Marketplace) program provides a unique approach to accomplishing our work and promoting a common understanding of our complex mission. It is designed to leverage and develop the skills and capabilities of EPA's greatest assets: YOU! This program, which is being developed as part of the Administrator's One EPA, One Great Place to Work Campaign, is the first of its kind in the Federal Government.

1. What is the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program?

This voluntary program will allow employees the opportunity to proactively offer their skills and expand their experience at EPA by participating in projects in any part of the agency for a limited portion of their time (not to exceed 20%) without leaving their home office on detail. It thus complements, and provides a more flexible and nimble alternative, to other existing EPA employee professional development programs such as full time details (with or without temporary promotions), rotational assignments, IPAs and the Leadership and Professional Development Rotational Program. This program is not intended to take the place of, or impact the terms or availability of these other programs , or other ways in which employees may expand their skills and experience. The Skills Marketplace program will provide a spectrum of project opportunities of different levels of complexity in numerous disciplines that will foster development of knowledge and skills in a range of EPA program areas among participants.

2. What are the goals of the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program?

EPA's Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of continuously building and nurturing a skilled workforce, "equipped with the technical skill and knowledge needed to accomplish the agency's mission and to meet evolving environmental challenges" (EPA Strategic Plan 2011-2015). The Administrator's One EPA: One Great to Work campaign also recognizes that providing opportunities for employees to gain experience in more than one program area would bolster employees' overall career development and ultimately benefit the agency by providing a talented pool of employees with a broad knowledge of Agency programs. The Skills Marketplace program is intended to provide a unique opportunity for employees to gain valuable professional development experience while also supporting a One EPA way of working: one that both values and makes more efficient and better coordinated use of our wealth in human capabilities and our increasingly limited fiscal resources. It also keeps pace with the broader recognition that, aided by powerful new collaboration tools, EPA can enable cross-agency groups to share and use information fully and to function truly as One EPA teams. Thus the goals of the program are to:

Commented [GN1]: Update with new Strategic Plan information?

- Bolster employees' overall career development and increase the breadth and depth of their knowledge and experience;
- Maximize the application of the skills and knowledge that employees currently have;
- Improve communication, collaboration and knowledge sharing across the Agency;
- Reduce stovepipes and improve focus on Agency goals, and
- Contribute towards more holistic solutions to environmental issues.

3. How was the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program developed?

At the request of the Deputy Administrator and to ensure that the program was developed with an Agency-wide perspective and meets the needs of both employees and managers, the program Operational Framework ("rules of the road") was developed with input from a "Pre-Decisional Involvement" (PDI) team that included representatives from management and EPA's unions.

4. How will the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program be implemented?

Commented [GN2]: Update with Agency-wide launch strategy

Prior to any agency-wide launch, the program will be implemented in a pilot phase, which will be conducted over approximately a 6-month period. During this period, staff from participating offices will have the opportunities to enter their skills, experience and interests in the expertise locator for the Skills Marketplace, and to apply to work on projects that are advertized in the Skills Marketplace by any of the participating offices. A range of project types will be sought from the offices participating in the pilot. While the focus of the Skills Marketplace program is on expanding professional development opportunities for staff, the projects will also incorporate and serve as examples of how One EPA, manifested as cross-office collaboration and knowledge sharing in virtual teams, will enable more effective and integrated work products to be developed. The pilot phase of the Skills Marketplace program will test the program Operational Framework to evaluate the following aspects:

- Provide a range of project types to foster employee professional development in a number of program areas, disciplines, and skills.
- Enable staff to enter their skills and interests information into the Skills Marketplace and to apply for, and if selected, to participate in projects that are useful to their professional development.
- Enable managers to select project staff from among the Skills Marketplace entries and applicants, and to benefit from employee skills from across the participating organizations.
- Provide evidence of practicality, potential effectiveness, and desirability of extending the Skills Marketplace agency-wide from experiences of participating employees and managers.

During the pilot phase, agency-wide coordination and evaluation of the program will be provided by the Administrator's Office. The Administrator's Office will design the implementation of the pilot phase of the program, including identifying what data collection will be necessary to evaluate the challenges, successes and best practices in its implementation. Upon completion of the pilot, the information collected will be shared with the Human Resources Council and with a Pre-Decisional Involvement team (to include a group of EPA managers and representatives from all of EPA's Unions). The PDI Team will review and evaluate the results of the pilot and make recommendations regarding the development of any changes to the program based upon the pilot results before the program is launched agency-wide.

5. How is the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program managed at the agency-wide level and at the individual office level?

Commented [GN3]: Update with information on Office level Champions and Program Coordinators

This program Operational Framework is designed to provide simple and clear guidelines to help ensure

consistency in the implementation of the program agency-wide, while at the same time reducing any bureaucratic burden and transactional costs on offices and employees participating in the program. The program Operational Framework lays out the basic requirements for clear expectations and shared understandings while providing flexibility for employees and managers to tailor a short-term assignment to their needs rather than provide a set of rules that attempts to control all situations uniformly.

The program does not mandate a specific approach to program coordination at the AAship/ Regional Office level, but encourages offices to track the participation in the program by their managers and employees. For example, offices are encouraged to identify a point of contact who could assist with answering questions regarding the program and assist managers in developing and listing projects on the Skills Marketplace. Offices (and individual work units) are also strongly encouraged to develop their own internal procedures for determining a manageable and productive flow of projects and employee participation in the Skills Marketplace, to balance workload, and to ensure completion of "home" work.

6. What is a Skills Marketplace Project?

- Skills Marketplace Projects cover a broad spectrum of opportunities that cover a range of position types, subject areas and disciplines.
- Skills Marketplace Projects can be completed without the need for travel or specialized training.

The following are intended to provide illustrative examples of types of projects that could be offered through the Skills Marketplace:

IT Project – The employee will be responsible for leading a pilot project to evaluate lightweight tablet computers to select a new Agency standard. The project will last approximately five months and take about 16 hours per pay period to complete. Skills required include previous project management experience, knowledge of the Agency's technical IT standards, experience evaluating computer systems, and excellent writing and interpersonal skills.

Open Pit Mining EIS – the employee will be responsible for reviewing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in Region 8 and propose mitigation strategies to protect underground sources of drinking water from mining contamination. The project will last approximately 10 months and take about 16 hours per pay period to complete. Skills required include a background in geochemistry, experience with hard rock mining chemistry, excellent writing skills, and collaboration with other Federal and State Agency partners.

Commented [GN4]: Add another example that is not technical. Add examples from pilot.

7. What is the time commitment associated with participating in a Skills Marketplace Project?

- The program offers short-term opportunities or projects that will generally require no more than 20% of the employee's time over the course of a year. It is recognized that more or less time may be devoted to the project activity at different times during the life of a project. For example, an

employee may need to spend more time in one week than in another week, or not spend any time on the project for a few weeks as long as the average is no more than 20% of the employee's time over the course of a year.

- There is no minimum length of time, but projects should take no longer than 1-year to complete. Within the context of the pilot phase, projects should be completed within the 6 month duration of the pilot.
- Time estimates for projects may require adjustment in consultation among the employee and the home office and project supervisors based upon a variety of factors including changing demands of the home office workload.

8. Who is eligible to participate in the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program?

- The Skills Marketplace Program is open to all full-time employees, including all grade levels and job classifications (e.g., technical, administrative, and professional employees).
- To be eligible, employees must have at least a Fully Successful rating during their last performance period, not currently be on a PIP (Performance Improvement Plan) or PAP (Performance Action Plan), and have no mutually-known conduct or performance concerns that may interfere with the employee's ability to successfully work on the project.

9. How can employees participate in the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program?

- Program participation is voluntary for all.
- Employees are encouraged to consider the Skills Marketplace Program as an option for their individual professional development, to seek an advance discussion with their supervisors to express their interest in participating in the program, and to describe the skills that they would like to gain through participation. This discussion should also cover the appropriate timing for participation in a Skills Marketplace project to avoid conflicts with the home office workload and priorities.
- Employees are encouraged to create, and keep updated, an employee profile on the EPA collaboration and professional networking platform upon which the Skills Marketplace is hosted.
- Employees can opt to receive notifications about all Skills Marketplace project announcements or build preferences for notifications based on categories (organization, type of projects, subject area).

10. How are project opportunities developed and advertized in the One EPA Skills Marketplace Program?

Step 1: Identifying and Approving the Project Opportunity

Commented [GN5]: Update with information on project identification and vetting

- Each Skills Marketplace project host organization is strongly encouraged to develop its own internal transparent and inclusive processes to solicit and vet proposals.
- Any employee may propose a project to his/her supervisor.

- Supervisors are encouraged to engage current employees in their work unit in identifying project opportunities.
- All projects must be approved by a supervisor before being posted.
- First-line supervisors may approve projects unless their organizations have established an internal policy requiring a higher level of approval.
- Any employee may post the project and serve as the point of contact for the approved project~~s~~.

Step 2: Posting the Skills Marketplace Project Opportunity:

- An electronic portal for the Skills Marketplace will serve as the central place for posting available projects.
- Project opportunities will be posted on the Skills Marketplace according to the following template:
    - Point of Contact: name, telephone number, email, organization, location
    - Project Supervisor: name, telephone number, email, organization, location
    - Brief Description (what exactly is the project or opportunity?)
    - Starting and ending date ranges (flexible)
    - Skills required and optional useful skills
    - Any required or desired credentials and certifications (e.g. COR or Bar member)
    - Number of project slots available

11. What is the application process for participating in a Skills Marketplace project?

Step 1: Planning for and Obtaining Immediate Supervisor's Approval

All employees who wish to participate in the Skills Marketplace and who meet eligibility criteria can apply for, and if selected, work on Skills Marketplace projects.

- If an eligible employee wishes in the year ahead to participate in the Skills Marketplace and requests to do so, the supervisor will discuss and specify any limitations as to timing, duration, and workload management of home office responsibilities. This discussion can take place at any time in the year.
- An employee's interest in the Skills Marketplace may be included in the employee's IDP (individual Development Plan).
- Before applying for a specific project, the eligible employee and home office supervisor must meet to discuss the project. Before an application is submitted, they should agree that the time commitment to participate in a specific project is manageable, and consistent with any current or other previously discussed limitations. Home supervisors may need to adjust an employee's workload to facilitate participation in the program.

Step 2: Submitting an Application for a Skills Marketplace Opportunity

Employee Profile

- Employees should have, or if necessary, place for the first time, up-to-date profiles on EPA's collaboration and professional networking tool. The employee profile should detail the following:
    - Employee Contact Information: name, telephone number, email, organization, location

- Supervisor Contact Info: name, telephone number, email, organization, location
- Employee Position/ Title
- Work activities
- Previous participation in Skills Marketplace projects, intra or inter-Agency details, workgroups or communities
- Educational background
- Certifications and qualifications
- Skills (include skills not utilized in present position)
- Disciplines with experience and knowledge

Additional Application Materials

- In addition, an employee should submit:
  - A statement of interests, skills to be developed, and other anticipated gains, and
  - Names of two (2) references, other than the first-line supervisor.
  - A full Curriculum Vitae (CV)/resume or attachment(s) of writings or products is *optional*
- After submitting an application through the Skills Marketplace portal, the employee will receive an auto-generated email confirming that their application has been received and is complete.

12. What is the selection process for participating in a Skills Marketplace project?

- APPLICATION REVIEW AND INTERVIEWS: Individual offices and work units are strongly encouraged to develop their own internal inclusive, transparent, objective and fair processes to review applications, short-list applicants, conduct interviews and select project participants. The selection criteria should be made clear to the applicants.
- DECISION-MAKING: The project supervisor may at his/her discretion designate a screening panel or other party to make recommendations; however, the final decision on the project participant(s) should be made by the project supervisor. Before extending an offer to the selected participant(s), the project supervisor or his/her designee should conduct a reference check.
- NOTIFICATION: After the selection(s) have been made, the project supervisor should contact the selected participant(s) to offer the opportunity and confirm their availability. Those not selected will receive an email advising that they were not selected. Applicants who were not selected may contact the selecting official for feedback.

13. What are the guidelines and conditions for participation, once an employee is selected to participate in a Skills Marketplace project?

- Both supervisors (project supervisor and home office supervisor) and the employee involved with the Skills Marketplace project should reach a shared understanding as to the terms of the project, such as amount of time to be spent, duration and expectations for completion, and planning for core work.
- The Skills Marketplace Participation Agreement included in the Appendix should be completed and signed by all parties (employee and home office and project supervisors). Project activities and

ED_002345B_00019095-00007

goals should be well-defined and understood, and major task modifications should be avoided as the work progresses, unless all three parties agree to the task changes.

- Program participants (supervisors and employees) must make a commitment to devote sufficient time, expertise and resources to the new work assignment or project.
- An employee's participation should not interfere with the completion of assigned core duties, high priority deadlines, or responsibilities.
- Periodic check-ins should be conducted by all parties (employee and home office and project supervisors) to ensure that the workload is manageable and objectives are being met and determine whether initial expectations remain valid or need to be adjusted. If changes to the employee's workload and expectations are necessary, all parties (the project supervisor, home office supervisor and employee) should discuss those changes before they are made.
- If issues or concerns arise during the Skills Marketplace project, the employee is encouraged to discuss it with their project supervisor, home office supervisor or union representative.
- Early termination of the Skills Marketplace project will not result in adverse consequences after discussion among managers and employee.

14. How is an employee's performance on a Skills Marketplace project evaluated and/or recognized?

Employees who participate in the Skills Marketplace pilot may be recognized in the following ways:

- Listing the participants' names and assignments on the EPA Skills Marketplace webpage.
- Receipt of an **"EPA Skills Marketplace Pioneer"** Certificate.
- If funds are available and the work meets the applicable conditions, the "host" office may nominate the employee for an award in accordance with Agency policy and procedure.
- The duties and assignments on which an employee works under the Skills Marketplace Program will not be considered in assessing an employee's performance at any time during the PARS appraisal period.
- The Skills Marketplace project supervisor will provide a letter of participation reflecting employee contributions/accomplishments, which may be used at the employee's discretion (e.g. posted to his/her profile on the Skills Marketplace).

15. How is a manager's participation in the Skills Marketplace Program recognized?

Supervisors who participate in the Skills Marketplace pilot may be recognized in the following ways:

- Receipt of a standardized letter from the Office of the Administrator thanking both the "host" and "donor" supervisors for their participation in the program and designating them as **"Skills Marketplace Champions"**.
- Listing the names of both the host and donating supervisors as a team on the skills Marketplace Website.
- The participation of the two supervisors may be considered as a contribution to the Agency wide diversity/inclusion program.

ED_002345B_00019095-00008

Appendix: Skills Marketplace Participation Agreement Template

Employee: _____ **Grade/Step:** _____

Office/Division/Branch: _____ **Telephone #:** _____

Date of Selection: _____ **Selecting Official:** _____

SKILLS MARKETPLACE PROJECT DUTIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Title: _____ **Office/Division/Branch/Section:** _____

Overview of Duties: _____

_____

_____

_____

Expected Outcome/Product: _____

Anticipated Beginning Date: _____ **Anticipated End Date:** _____

Estimated hours of work per week: _____

Work Schedule: _____

Employee Assumptions concerning detail: _____

_____

_____

Supervisor Assumptions concerning detail: _____

_____

_____

_____

Detail Supervisor: _____ **Telephone #:** _____

Any major changes to the work elements after the mini-detail has begun will require the input and agreement of the parties named below. These changes shall be documented in a new Agreement. Early termination of the Skills Marketplace project will not result in adverse consequences after discussion among managers and employee.

_____	_____
(Employee)	**Date**
_____	_____
(Home Office Supervisor)	**Date**
_____	_____
(Detail Supervisor)	**Date**

ED_002345B_00019095-00009

Agreement on this Draft Operational Framework for the Skills Marketplace program was reached among Pre-Decisional Involvement (PDI) Team Members identified below. The team members' signatures are attached.

Management	Unions
• Donna Vizian, (Co-chair)	• Karen Kellen (Co-Chair)
• Mike Moore	• Amer Al-Mudallal
• Martha Shimkin	• Andy Grange
• Ruth Alene Soward	• Tom Link
• Allison Ziegler, in lieu of Barbara Sanford	• Leah Oliver
• Gregory Zurla	• Mark Sims

ED_002345B_00019095-00010