



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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GENERAL GOVERNMENT  
DIVISION

MAR 26 1981

The Honorable Carl C. Ulsaker  
Senior Assistant Postmaster  
General  
Employee and Labor  
Relations Group

DLG05470  
06371



Subject: [Cost of Examinations to Fill Anticipated  
Vacancies Could Be Reduced] (GGD-81-63)

Dear Mr. Ulsaker:

We have reviewed the Postal Service's system for examining, grading and selecting applicants for employment. Our review was conducted at Postal Service Headquarters, Washington, D.C.; Central Region Headquarters and the Chicago Post Office, Chicago, DLG05821 Illinois; and the National Test Administration Center, Los Angeles, California. We reviewed the eligibility registers and hiring worksheets for four Chicago Post Office announcements of written examinations for employment issued between May 1978 and December 1979. We also obtained from the Chicago Post Office and the National Test Administration Center the costs of examining and grading applicants. DLG0632

TOO MANY EXAMINATIONS GIVEN

Many more applicants were examined and graded than were needed to fill anticipated vacancies. The four announcements reviewed produced about 98,500 applicants to fill 2,600 anticipated vacancies in the Chicago Post Office. We estimate that it cost the Service \$94,700 to examine and grade the 54,200 applicants who reported for examination.

Of those applicants who took the examination, 37,940 or 70 percent passed. At the time of our review, the Chicago Post Office had considered 5,293 of these applicants for employment and hired 1,859--a hiring rate of 35 percent. Based on this experience, the Chicago Post office will need to consider about 7,430 1/ eligible applicants to fill 2,600 anticipated vacancies. To obtain this many eligible applicants, about 10,600 2/ people needed to be examined. We estimated that about \$74,800 was spent to examine the remaining 43,600 applicants.

1/2,600 divided by 35 percent.

2/7,430 divided by 70 percent.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe the Postal Service could significantly reduce the cost of examinations to fill anticipated vacancies. One possible approach to reducing cost would be for postal installations to accept applications for employment on a continuing basis with the understanding that applicants will be examined in the order applications are received but only when vacancies are anticipated.

Accordingly, we recommend that the Postal Service explore the possibility of ~~changing its~~ hiring procedures to:

- allow applicants to file applications for employment at any time,
- examine applicants in the order applications for employment are received, and
- examine only the number of applicants needed to fill anticipated vacancies. (The Chicago experience indicates a ratio of 4 to 1)

## OTHER MATTERS

The large number of applications examined for Postal Service vacancies also results in examinations not being given within the required time frame of 30 days and creates a grading backlog at the Service's National Testing Administration Center.

### Examinations Not Timely

In response to a April 1979 clerk-carrier vacancy announcement the Chicago Post Office received 42,500 applications. The examinations for this announcement were not completed until late October 1979.

Chicago Post Office officials acknowledged that they did not always examine applicants within the prescribed 30 days after receipt of applications. They attributed delays to inadequate space for processing large numbers of applicants and lack of examination material.

### Test Center Backlog

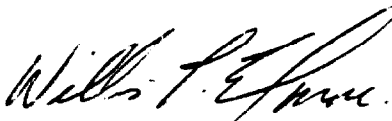
The National Test Administration Center periodically experiences backlogs in processing examinations or rated applications. According to test center officials, the center usually grades examinations or applications within 10 working days after receipt.

During the first 10 months of 1980 the Center graded 486,000 examinations and applications. As of October 1980 the Center had a 1-month backlog of applications. Reducing the number of applicants examined would help to alleviate this backlog.

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I would appreciate being informed of actions taken by the Postal Service in response to our recommendations. If you have any questions concerning this report, please call me on 245-5652.

Sincerely yours,



Willis L. Elmore  
Group Director