

A think-tank for staff problems

TO HELP improve personnel policies throughout the government, a new office will start cropping up in government agencies during the coming year.

It will be known as "Civil Service Staff" and it aims to help personnel to give their best performance and to assist the government agency, at the same time, to get the best performance out of them.

The name "Civil Service Staff" was chosen because some government agencies already have various types of Civil Service Offices or Civil Service Units. Thus a new name was needed. Planners at the CSC Commission note, however, that the word "staff" also has the happy connotation of being something you can lean on, or get help from, on a journey.

At the start, many of them will be manned by existing personnel and administrative officers of the agency concerned, but the Civil Service Commission will hire and train its own permanent specialists. It is hoped these units will have their own private offices with easy and confidential access within the agencies.

Presidential Decree 807, which earlier this year redefined the powers and functions of the Civil Service Commission, specifically called for the organization of a Civil Service Staff in every department, bureau, agency, office, corporation, and in provincial and city governments.

The terms of reference are specific: It shall provide technical assistance in all aspects of personnel management; Monitor and periodically audit the personnel practices and performance of the department or agency concerned as well as those of its officers and employees;

Determine agency compliance with Civil Service laws and rules; and Receive and receive any suggestions, observations or complaints from

the public pertaining to the conduct of public officers and employees.

These functions may not appear to differ much from what the Civil Service Commission, as the government's central personnel agency, has already been doing. But there is a big difference: Instead of acting from afar, the Civil Service Staff will be within the mainstream of agency operations. Therefore it can determine more effectively the type and form of assistance to be rendered.

The rationale behind this stems from the Commission's desire to be right where the action is. Personnel management is so inherent a function, and so permeates every single activity in an organization, that assistance must be on a timely and continuing basis. In the past, personnel management has often been overlooked and regarded as

a peripheral activity.

One important thing about the Civil Service Staff: It is not intended to do any "police" function. The Commission, in fact, is trying to get away from its old image of "policeman".

The new chairman of the Civil Service Commission, Secretary Jacobo C. Clare, says: "We want to capture the imagination of the department and agency heads and of their personnel so that they will be more wholeheartedly committed to the cause of good personnel administration. It is not our intention to use this device to catch violators of Civil Service laws and rules."

To back up the contention that the CSC Staff is not intended as a covert policing operation, the Commission hopes each unit will be prominently accommodated and signposted in its own room with easy accessibility.

The Commission contends that if the aim were to catch violators, this probably could be more effectively done if the Commission were to conduct surprise raids.

THE sheer bulk of work is one of the reasons why the Civil Service Staffs have become necessary. The Commission, which oversees a total government workforce of 650,000, has 613 personnel. This means it has been unable to exercise its assistance function to the fullest.

In local governments, for example, there is great need to launch more information campaigns on the policies of the Commission, more training seminars, position clarification programs, and other personnel matters.

Under LOI 319, the head of the Civil Service Staff in each agency shall be appointed by the Civil Service Commission. But additional personnel and other logistical support is to be provided by the agency concerned. The Commission will have to recruit people, and

put them through training courses, to fill the positions. But at the same time the Commission has the opportunity to avail of manpower support from the agencies. By so doing, the Commission has a better means of multiplying its efforts.

As a transitional measure while obtaining the personnel who will head the CSC Staffs, the Commission has deputized the existing personnel officers or, in some cases, administrative officers to head them. As the system started getting underway during the past month, around 50 agencies had already responded. Not only have they designated officers for deputization, but they have also allocated other personnel to the Staff.

Some personnel officers, however, express apprehension that their dual roles might be incompatible. But the Civil Service Commission asserts: Since the two roles are each concerned with the effective implementation of personnel programs and of the merit system, how can conflict arise?

Personnel officers of various agencies have already held meetings at the Civil Service Commission to discuss details. One of the main tasks so far is that standards may vary from agency to agency and even for the same type of job within an agency. For example, some typing positions may require speed rather than an artificially laid-out result, while others may require the opposite. The CSC Staff will take this into account when setting out standards.

An important factor is that each agency will play a leading role in setting its standards, monitoring them, and giving timely assistance to any employee who does not meet them.

The Civil Service Commission emphasizes that the main task of the new units is to give assistance to staff and not to act as a fifth column in their midst. □



Guidelines for the Civil Service Staff units

HERE are the guidelines which the Civil Service Commission distributed to government agencies for setting up internal "Civil Service Staff" units to evaluate personnel performance:

Objectives:

1. To further improve the performance of government officials and employees and enhance the contribution of the civil service to national development;

2. To establish measures or indicators of performance of government personnel;

3. To recognize deserving personnel through honorary or monetary awards and to provide opportunities for the improvement of the performance of the least satisfactory or unsatisfactory personnel;

4. To promote a closer working relationship between the Civil Service Commission and other agencies of the government in the common pursuit of providing effective public services through better personnel performance; and

5. To assure the effective utilization of government personnel.

Responsibility for the Program:

Responsibility for the successful achievement of these program objectives rests upon the Civil Service Commission, the department/agency concerned, and

the Civil Service Staff.

Methodology:

1. The Civil Service Commission shall be responsible for:

(a) Formulation of policies, standards and guidelines relative to the establishment of the Performance Appraisal System.

(b) Training of instructors on how to develop effective raters, with particular emphasis on the performance standards/requirements.

(c) Institution of an effective reporting system for the monitoring and evaluation of overall personnel performance in the government.

(d) Preparation of integrated reports to higher authorities with emphasis upon the recognition of those with exemplary performance and the institution of remedial measures for the least deserving.

2. The Department/Agency shall take charge of:

(a) Implementation of the Performance Appraisal System. This means that the agency supervisors at every level of the hierarchy shall determine, jointly with their employees, performance standards for particular jobs. They shall accordingly use these standards as bases for rating employee performance and shall provide feedback to the employees regarding their respective strengths and weaknesses.

(b) Preparation of semi-annual reports on the performance of the agency employees which shall be submitted to the Personnel Officer for evaluation and reference. A copy of such reports shall be given to the Civil Service Staff.

3. For its part, the Civil Service Staff shall:

(a) Extend assistance in the proper implementation of the Performance Appraisal System. To carry this out, he may act as resource person in training programs to be held by the agency for the purpose and shall at all times be available for consultation.

(b) Initiate the establishment of performance standards for each organizational unit in the agency and give active assistance when these are being established.

(c) Receive copies of semi-annual reports of employee performance ratings and prepare a consolidated report on the same every year for submission to the Office of Personnel Planning and Program Evaluation, Civil Service Commission, in August each year. Such report shall call attention to the outstanding employees up to the least satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

The following documents shall be attached to the report:

—Performance rating forms reflecting the ratings of the employees for the last two reporting periods;

—Performance standards established

for the positions occupied by the employees concerned;

—Records of performance of the employees concerned which would show those who have exceeded/met/not met such standards;

—Justification for outstanding performance by some employees, if any.

(d) When an employee has been rated as "Unsatisfactory", the Civil Service Staff shall determine whether or not such employee has received prior notice of unsatisfactory performance and has been given the opportunity to improve such performance. If this has not been done, the Civil Service Staff shall:

—Consider giving the employee opportunity to improve himself, with the assistance and encouragement of his supervisor, and the official report on his performance when he has been away for a period not exceeding two months or 60 days; and

—Take steps to emphasize this aspect of the rating system in training programs on Performance Appraisal of the agency.

The head of the agency and other officials concerned shall be furnished copies of such reports.

(e) Any recommendations made by the Commission affecting both outstanding and least satisfactory employees shall be communicated by the Civil Service Staff to the agency head who shall take appropriate steps to implement them.