Institute of Health Research and Policy Academic Year and Salary Increase Process Improvement [UIC]

Business Case

The academic year reappointment process at the Institute of Health Research and Policy (IHRP) at UIC is lengthy and complicated due to the fact that it depends on numerous individuals to provide correct, critical information. This information requires various approvals and there are limitations and variations on what can be entered into Salary Planner, the HR Frontend Application (HRFE), and Banner and when these actions can be completed. If the process is further delayed or any deadlines are missed, it can result in a large group of employees not being paid correctly, not being paid on time or with the wrong labor distribution.

Goal

Improve efficiency of the Academic Year process, decreasing the amount of time spent gathering and correcting information.

Approach

Mapped the Academic Year Reappointment Process end to end, establishing current state time durations for each step. Discussed issues and causes of delays with IHRP staff, Coordinators, Principal Investigators, and Units. Identified opportunities for improvement and brainstormed potential solutions, leading into the creation of an Action Plan. Developed future state process map with revised timings based on the implementation of developed solutions, to measure time savings and quantify potential benefits.

Outcome

Identified 10 recommendations for improvement expected to result in a time savings of over 1,100 hours annually, representing a 50% overall improvement and nearly $40,000 in savings. Identified 26 action items required to implement improvement recommendations, starting 4 prior to the completion of the project. IHRP believes the improved process will eliminate missed processing deadlines, ensuring employee paychecks are on-time and accurate.

Key Findings

- **Significant delays due to late, inaccurate, or missing information, requiring additional time from IHRP staff to research and resolve.**
- **Coordinators and Principal Investigators are often unsure of key dates and deadlines.**
- **Process lacks a prioritization approach for incoming requests, resulting in critical actions being queued behind less critical actions.**
- **Insufficient job aides, manuals, and cross-training for IHRP staff, resulting in delays when key staff are unavailable.**
- **Significant delays and rework resulting from units failing to respond to time sensitive requests by IHRP staff.**
- **Lack of coordination from Principal Investigators sharing resources often results in inconsistencies and requires additional time from IHRP staff to research and resolve.**
- **Exceptions process is extremely time consuming and often occurs near critical deadlines.**

Process Improvement Recommendations

1. **Document and publish end-to-end AP Reappointment process including roles and responsibilities for all individuals/entities involved in the process -** reduces confusion, provides process consistency for everyone touching this process.
2. **Coordinate Incoming Information / Outgoing Documentation by Priority –** establishes a document priority approach to managing and processing incoming information that would positively benefit the turn-around time on critical documents that need to be sent out.
3. **Cross-train Core IHRP Team –** enables and enhances team's agility in responding to issues and moving the process forward when someone is out of the office or unavailable.
4. **Develop comprehensive training materials and job aids –** provides a foundation of knowledge for everyone touching the process and will reduce time spent on answering related questions.
5. **Create a single location "Templates Folder" that houses all communication and letters –** reduces confusion and provides HR clients with accurate and consistent policy information.
6. **Resume Unit Email Confirmations –** reach out to the Units to have them resume sending an email confirmation of receipt of documentation and approvals.
7. **Facilitate system enhancements –** reach out to and work with IT representatives from Banner, Salary Planner, and more, to research and create expanded system deadlines (where possible) as well as a system "bridge" enhancement that would save significant time for IHRP.
8. **Coordinate notification of deliverables/deadlines to Coordinators and Principal Investigators in advance of the May process start-up –** enables knowledge and anticipation of deadlines in advance for swifter, more accurate response.
9. **Request when multiple Principal Investigators work on the salary increase percentage for a single employee, they coordinate their efforts and resolve the increase amount <u>prior</u> to submitting to IHRP –** reduces significant time for IHRP who has, in the past, coordinated and resolved these inconsistencies.
10. **Notify Principal Investigators of the "No Exception" rule –** reduces time wasted requesting exceptions when they will be refused (in part due to current budget constraints).

Implementation of Recommended Improvements

Of the 26 Action Items, 21 are identified as being completed by September 2015 and the remaining 5 are planned to be completed by December 2015. Four (4) actions are already in progress. Status updates for the implementation of recommendations will be requested at 6 month intervals through May of 2016.