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STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE COMPTROLLER

June 28, 1999

Mr. George C. Sinnott
Commissioner
Department of Civil Service
State Office Campus Building #1
Albany, NY 12239

Re: Report 98-F-60

Dear Mr. Sinnott:

Pursuant to the State Comptroller's authority as set forth in Article V, Section 1 of the State Constitution and Article II, Section 8 of the State Finance Law, we have reviewed the actions taken by officials of the Department of Civil Service, as of March 31, 1999, to implement the recommendations contained in our audit report, *Department of Civil Service Reduction of Job Titles* (Report 96-S-69). Our report, which was issued on February 18, 1998, examined the Department's efforts to reduce the number of job titles in New York State's classified services.

Background

New York State employs more than 228,000 people. The Civil Service Law divides the State workforce into two categories: classified service and unclassified service. Employees in the classified service are subject to New York State's Civil Service regulations, while employees in the unclassified service are not. These regulations are administered by the Department. Job titles in the classified service are created and managed by the Department's Division of Classification and Compensation.

Summary Conclusions

Our prior audit found that the Department, as of May 29, 1997, had achieved 25 percent of its goal to reduce the number of job titles from 5,950 to 3,967 (a reduction of 1,983 titles) by the end of 1999. However, the rate of title reduction was slower than necessary for the Department to achieve its goal. We concluded that this rate would have to increase significantly were the Department to achieve its goal. We also determined that the Department had developed neither detailed plans for achieving its title-reduction goal nor performance indicators for measuring its progress in achieving the goal. We recommended that the Department develop such plans and performance indicators.

In our follow-up review, we found the Department had reported that, as of March 31, 1999, it had eliminated about 1,050 of the 1,983 titles (53 percent) that it had originally planned to abolish by December 1999. Despite the progress that has been made, Department officials told us they will not meet their goal to reduce the number of job titles to 3,967 by the end of 1999.

Summary of Status of Prior Audit Recommendations

Of the three prior audit recommendations, Department officials have partially implemented two recommendations and have not implemented one recommendation.

Follow-up Observations

Recommendation 1

Establish an information and reporting system to monitor and demonstrate aggregate and agency specific title reduction accomplishments in each of the following targeted areas: regrouping multiple, specialized titles into fewer, more broadly defined titles; reducing the existing number of single-position titles; engaging the support of State agency managers in the title consolidation effort; and carefully governing the creation of new titles.

Status - Partially Implemented

Agency Action - Department officials provided us with records that show the progress they have made in reducing the number of single-position titles and eliminating and consolidating other job titles. They also provided evidence of their efforts to work with State agencies to reduce job titles. However, the information and reporting system in place does not evidence how the Department has controlled the creation of new titles. The Department is developing a new information and reporting system called the New York State Electronic Personnel System (NYSTEP), which, when it is fully operational, will include information on the Department's title-reduction efforts. Department officials told us that the information in NYSTEP is not yet totally reliable and that they are working to debug the system. The Department expects NYSTEP to be fully operational by the end of 1999.

Recommendation 2

Document the basis for the job title reduction goal.

Status - Not Implemented

Agency Action - Department officials issued a memorandum describing the process they used to arrive at the goal. However, they could not provide us with analytical support for their determination that the number of remaining job titles will meet the needs and objectives of New York State's Civil Service System.

Recommendation 3

Develop a detailed plan to achieve the job title reduction goal and establish performance indicators to measure progress toward the goal.

Status - Partially Implemented

Agency Action - In 1997, the Department established a work plan for consolidating and eliminating job titles through 1998. However, Department officials told us that they have not updated the plan for 1999, primarily due to their efforts to implement NYSTEP.

Auditors' Comments - Department officials have indicated that they will not achieve their goal by December 1999; as of March 31, 1999, they have reached only about half of their goal, while more than 900 titles remain to be eliminated. The Department needs to develop detailed plans for achieving its title reduction goal, as well as performance indicators for measuring its progress in achieving the goal.

Major contributors to this report were Thomas Nowinski, Stephen Goss, Joan de Paz, and Richard Gerard.

We would appreciate your response to this report within 30 days, indicating any additional actions planned or taken. We also thank the management and staff of the Department of Civil Service for the courtesies and cooperation extended to our staff during this review.

Very truly yours,

Frank J. Houston
Audit Director

cc: Charles Conaway