

Department of the Interior

Office of Human Capital
Strategic Talent Programs Division

Merit Promotion & Staffing Policy
Personnel Handbook



NOVEMBER 2020

This Merit Promotion & Staffing Policy Personnel Handbook supersedes the
DOI Merit Promotion Plan Personnel Handbook dated July 9, 2012.

FOREWORD

This Handbook establishes the Department-wide policies and procedures for merit staffing according to the Department of the Interior (DOI) Merit Promotion Plan (MPP) Policy for the General Schedule and Federal Wage System. It provides policy and operational instructions relative to merit staffing and merit promotion program areas. This system is used to consider current and former federal employees for positions based on personal merit. Positions are usually filled through competition with applicants being evaluated and ranked for positions based on their experience, education, skills, and performance record.

Bureaus may use this Handbook to implement the Departments MPP. Bureaus may want to set specific internal operational procedures where flexibilities and discretionary actions are allowed. Bureaus will be required to meet their statutory obligations where there is an exclusive representative for bargaining unit employees. This MPP must be used in conjunction with the current Departmental Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP). Where the Departmental MPP or bureau specific operational procedures conflict with a negotiated agreement covering bargaining units, the agreement will prevail. The Human Resources Division (HRD) must ensure that all bargaining obligations are fulfilled prior to implementation for covered bargaining units.

It is the policy of DOI to provide a fair and systematic approach for the identification, evaluation, and competitive selection of highly qualified employees based on merit after fair and open competition. Management has the right to fill or not fill a specific vacancy and to determine the most appropriate method for filling a vacancy. The MPP does not guarantee promotion. Management has the right to make selections from properly ranked and certified candidates or may choose to make selections from a variety of other appropriate sources. Identification, qualification, evaluation, and selection will be made on the basis of merit principles, without regard to political, religious or labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, non-disqualifying physical or mental handicap, sexual orientation, or age and shall be based solely on job-related criteria in accordance with legitimate position requirements.

Questions regarding the contents of this MPP Personnel Handbook may be directed to the Departmental Office of Human Capital (OHC) at DOI_Office_of_Human_Resources@ios.doi.gov, or to the respective Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO).

A copy of this Handbook will be available on the Department's Electronic Library of the Interior Policies (ELIPS): <https://elips.doi.gov/ELIPS/Welcome.aspx>

Authorities

The legal and regulatory basis for agency merit promotion plans (MPP) are contained in 5 CFR 335.103. This handbook meets the requirements for a MPP and establishes a systematic means of selection based on merit in accordance with Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C), Section 2301, Merit Systems Principles; Section 2302, Prohibited Personnel Practices; chapter 23 Merit System Principles; and Title 5 CFR 335, Promotion and Internal Placement, which ensure equitable treatment for accretion-of-duties situations.

Applicability

This document applies to all DOI positions subject to 5 U.S.C. Chapter 51 (General Schedule positions), and Chapter 53 (Federal Wage System positions). This policy Handbook governs merit promotion staffing programs and actions throughout the Department of the Interior (DOI). The information provided in this Handbook is designed to provide operational policy guidance for managing the promotion and internal placement, or merit staffing, program for Civil Service (CS) employees at DOI within the General Schedule (GS)-15 level and below and Federal Wages System (FWS).

Provisions of this document apply to DOI positions in other pay systems unless specifically exempted by special instructions and authority governing the specific pay system involved. DOI adheres to the policies and procedures regarding filling competitive positions contained in 5 CFR 335.103 as well as the policies and procedures outlined in 5 CFR 330, Subparts F and G, in regard to Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plans (ICTAP). The MPP provides an open, systematic, and bias-free placement system that ensures positions are filled with the best qualified individuals available. Bureau and Office management personnel, in consultation with human resources, determines when the use of merit staffing is appropriate for filling vacant positions.

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1 MERIT PROMOTION

1.1 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MERIT PROMOTION PLAN EXECUTION

The efficacy of the hiring process is a shared responsibility among human resource professionals, selecting officials/hiring managers, and personnel security professionals. Each stakeholder is responsible for accomplishing their tasks timely, accurately, and collaboratively.

Hiring Managers/Selecting Officials are responsible for ensuring requests (SF-52) in USA Staffing (USAS) system for hiring actions are initiated, approved and consistent with DOI's T2H policy; actively engage and collaborate closely with HR personnel through the whole hiring process – especially during classification, job analysis, assessment (as SMEs), and selection phases; establishing diversity goals and objectives and monitoring achievement of those objectives; giving full and fair consideration to the qualifications of each candidate referred for a vacancy; and ensuring that selections are based on merit without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, physical or mental disability, sex (including gender identity and pregnancy), age, sexual orientation, genetic information, reprisal for engaging in the EEO complaint process or opposing protected activity, parental status, marital status, political affiliation, or other non-merit factors. Hiring Managers/Selecting Officials are responsible for the timely selection and returning of certificates of eligibles as well as ensuring accurate selection/non-selection notes and applicant record of contact documentation.

Human Resource Professionals/Servicing Human Resource Offices are responsible for administering this policy, managing the overall hiring process and actively engaging hiring managers/officials throughout the hiring process by providing technical guidance and/or training to selecting officials and employees on the use of merit staffing automated processes. HR offices are responsible for ensuring data entered into the talent acquisition system is accurate, valid and meets the minimum standards established herein. HR professionals/SHROs should also utilize time to hire (T2H) data to advise hiring managers on approaches to efficiently and effectively fill positions, per Personnel Bulletin (PB) 20-09, dated July 23, 2020. The selecting official in conjunction with the servicing HR Office should determine which announcement mechanisms will ensure the availability of a sufficient pool of highly qualified candidates. This may include running concurrent Delegated Examining (DE) and Merit JOAs.

Employees are responsible for complying with merit staffing policies and procedures; submitting all required application materials and supporting documentation within specified time limits in accordance with Job Opportunity Announcements (JOA) and fulfilling the conditions for career ladder promotions; and assuming responsibility for their own self-development and exercising diligence in pursuing job opportunities for which they are interested and qualified, including during periods when they are temporarily absent for legitimate reasons (e.g., on detail, temporary duty assignment, leave, at military training courses in the military service).

Bureau Human Resource Policy Offices are responsible for maintaining oversight of Servicing HR Offices (SHROs) to ensure adherence to policy and standards and the integrity of the system and meeting T2H goals; managing the overall vacancies, recruitment, and hiring processes and procedures, and for issuing any individual bureau guidance that ensures selections are based on merit after fair and open competition; working with servicing Human Resource Offices to implement any OPM, DOI regulations or bureau policy related to job evaluation, assessment and

vacancy announcements.; and implementing management controls to maintain quality assurance of data entry and overall process.

Department Office of Human Capital is responsible for the overall management of this policy; assessing compliance through HR independent audit and evaluation processes; and reporting T2H metrics to Department leadership and OPM; approving exceptions to merit staffing policy and procedures; and making changes to the program as new government-wide policies are issued.

Each Bureau/Office will implement requirements that are compatible with its own mission goals and eliminate services, activities or functions that are not core to Department/Bureau mission. Effective implementation of a sound MPP plays a key role in selecting, promoting, and retaining a world-class high-performing, high morale, diverse and inclusive workforce.

1.2 LABOR-MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Bureaus/Offices must fulfill their labor-management obligations, as appropriate, prior to implementing any changes in personnel policies, practices, and working conditions that may result from implementation of processes contained in this Handbook.

1.3 GENERAL MERIT PROMOTION GUIDELINES

A sound merit staffing program is a responsibility of management and is achieved when hiring managers continually assess their organization's ability to fulfill the commitments, goals and objectives that constitute the MPP mission and purpose and establish enhanced efficiencies and effectiveness within the plan.

Management must plan the structuring of its positions to achieve and maintain the best possible balance between: mission requirements, the need for each position, economy and efficiency, skill and knowledge utilization, attraction and retention of qualified staff, employee motivation and engagement, career development, upward mobility opportunities, and the overall effectiveness of the structure of the organization.

Supervisors should make every reasonable effort to ensure that employees under their direct supervision receive appropriate consideration for vacancies which occur under the supervisor's immediate jurisdiction while the employee is on an approved, extended absence. Additionally, each employee is responsible for informing his or her supervisor of those promotional opportunities for which he/she wishes to be considered during periods of legitimate absence and for providing his/her supervisor with an updated written application and other required forms for those vacancies.

1.4 APPLICATION OF COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES

The following actions must follow competitive procedures as required by 5 CFR 335.103(c)(1):

- i. Time-limited promotions for more than 120 days to higher graded positions. Prior service during the preceding 12 months under non-competitive time-limited promotions and non-competitive details to higher graded positions count toward the 120-day total period.

- ii. Details for more than 120 days to higher-graded positions.
- iii. Selection for training that is part of an authorized training agreement, part of a promotion program, or required before an employee may be considered for a promotion (5 CFR 410.306).
- iv. Reassignment or demotion to a position with greater promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service (except as permitted by reduction in force (RIF) regulations).
- v. Transfer to a position at a higher grade or with more promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service (5 CFR 330.705).
- vi. Reinstatement of an employee to a permanent or temporary position at a higher grade or with more promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- vii. When applicable, appointment of other candidates with non-competitive eligibility under authorities regulated by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), under interchange agreements with other merit systems, and under miscellaneous authorities not regulated by OPM (statutes and court orders), to positions higher than the last equivalent grades held by the employees or to positions which would offer promotion potential

1.5 APPLICATION OF NON-COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES

Competitive procedures do not apply to the following actions:

- i. Upgrading of a position due to application of a new classification standard without a significant change in duties.
- ii. Upgrading of a position resulting from the correction of an initial classification error.
- iii. A promotion resulting from an employee's position being classified at a higher grade (with no further promotion potential) because of additional duties and responsibilities, commonly known as accretion of duties. The noncompetitive upgrade requires the employee to continue to perform the same basic function in the new position that is a clear successor to and absorbs the duties of the old position. In addition, there may be no other employees within the organizational unit to whom the additional duties and responsibilities could have been assigned.
- iv. Actions taken under Reduction in Force (RIF). Employees downgraded through no fault of their own (i.e. RIF) are entitled to noncompetitive priority consideration and placement for a period of *two years* from the effective date of the employee's downgrade.
- v. Promotions without current competition when the employee competed earlier for an assignment intended to prepare the employee for the position being filled, and the intent was made a matter of record and made known to all potential candidates (career ladder promotions).
- vi. Re-promotion, permanent or temporary, to a grade previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- vii. Promotion, reassignment, transfer, change to lower grade, or reinstatement of an employee from a position with known promotion potential to another position

- having no higher promotion potential than any other position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- viii. Promotion to a position with a representative pay rate equal to or lower than that of any position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- ix. Details to higher-graded positions or temporary promotions not to exceed 120 days.
- x. Details made in 120-day increments up to one year to unclassified duties.
- xi. Details made in 120-day increments to the same grade or lower-graded positions, up to one year.
- xii. Time-limited promotions made permanent when such a possibility was publicized in the original competition notice.
- xiii. Consideration and/or selection of a candidate not given proper consideration in a previous competitive promotion action.

See Appendix B for The Competitive Process Overview Chart.

1.6 CAREER TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PLAN (CTAP) & INTERAGENCY CAREER TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PLAN (ICTAP)

The Department's Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP), as outlined in Personnel Bulletin (PB) 11-06, is a program that aids in finding employment for individuals who have been or are likely to be separated by RIF. The CTAP has four components: Career Transition Training and Support Services, Special Selection Priority (SSP), Reemployment Priority List (RPL), and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP).

CTAP will have varying effects on staffing activities and there is an order of selection when filling competitive service vacancies that exceed 120 days, as noted in the Department CTAP policy. All vacancies must be advertised unless the personnel action being taken is an exception, such as temporary appointments less than 121 days, details, reassignments, career ladder promotions, accretion of duties, et. al., or a determination has been made by the servicing HRO, through contact with other bureaus in the local commuting area (LCA) of the JOA that there are no SSP candidates available.

CTAP and ICTAP requirements must be stated in all job opportunity announcements (JOA). The selecting official must select a well-qualified* eligible applicant under the SSP component of CTAP before selecting any other candidate from within or outside the Department, unless doing so would cause another employee to be separated by RIF. In addition, the reemployment priority list (RPL) must be cleared before filling any competitive service position from outside the Department, regardless of whether the organization plans to make a temporary, term, or permanent appointment. *For Merit Promotion or competitive vacancies that uses an assessment tool to rate and rank applicants and produces a score, well qualified candidate will generally be candidates who self-rank themselves with a score of 85 or higher. The definition of well-qualified must be included in the JOA.

The Department's bureaus must advertise vacancies with a minimum Area of Consideration (AOC) of Departmentwide when affected employees on the SSP are likely to meet the qualifications and eligibility requirements for the position. If there are available SSP eligibles under the CTAP in the LCA, the minimum AOC will be department-wide unless applying Section 6 (g) of the DOI CTAP that states "For non-competitive actions, they must ensure that

no displaced or surplus candidates are available on the CTAP listing maintained by the Department.” When applying Section 6 (g) of the CTAP, the minimum AOC will be bureau wide in the LCA. Determining whether there are SSP candidates in the LCA is accomplished by checking the DOI SSP List of Eligibles or by contacting other DOI bureaus in the LCA.

JOAs should generally be open for a minimum of five (5) business days, however Bureaus and Offices may determine that there is a business reason to establish an open period for less than five business days, based on objective factors. In those cases, the reasons should be documented in the JOA case file. The defined order of selection contained in a CTAP position must be followed for all actions that aren’t excepted. Hiring that is listed as specifically excepted from CTAP (temporary appointments less than 90 days, details, career ladder promotions, accretions of duties, etc.) has minimal to no effect on merit staffing actions.

If there are SSP eligibles who apply for a JOA and meet the defined parameters in a CTAP, one of them must be hired unless the position is not filled, or recruitment is canceled. Qualified RPL eligibles within the LCA must be selected prior to selecting a candidate from outside of the Department. Hiring Managers are encouraged to select RPL eligibles within or outside the LCA any time they identify a vacancy.

Component	Purpose	When to Clear
Special Selection Priority (SSP)	Priority consideration of well-qualified displaced and surplus DOI employees who apply for vacancies in the local commuting area.	When filling competitive service positions from within or outside the Department, unless selection causes another employee to be separated by reduction-in-force and again before a tentative job offer is extended to a selectee.
Reemployment Priority List (RPL)	Priority consideration of displaced and surplus DOI employees and employees who are fully recovered from a compensable injury after more than one year.	When filling competitive (temporary, term, or permanent) positions from outside the Department and again before a tentative job offer is extended to a selectee.
Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP)	Priority consideration of well-qualified displaced employees from other Federal agencies who apply for vacancies in the local commuting area.	When filling competitive service positions from outside the Department.

See Appendix C, OPM Language to be used in ALL JOAs to Explain CTAP and ICTAP.

1.7 TIME-LIMITED PROMOTIONS

A time-limited promotion is an appropriate mechanism for managers to use in filling temporary positions to accomplish project work, or to meet other temporary needs for a specified period of no more than five years, unless OPM authorizes the Agency to make and/or extend time-limited promotions for a longer period. Bureau or Office Human Resources personnel provides the employee advance written notice of the conditions of the time-limited promotion, or within 30 days from the date of the promotion when the promotion is effected under a non-discretionary provision (5 CFR 335.102(f)).

Temporary promotions not to exceed 120 days are exempt from competitive procedures. However, for positions/employees covering under bargaining unit, DOI bureaus and offices must comply with the requirements in the agreement for non-competitive temporary promotion

if applicable.

A temporary promotion may be made permanent without further competition, provided (1) the temporary promotion opportunity was stated in the JOA and the promotion was originally made under *competitive* procedures and (2) it was made known to all potential candidates that the temporary promotion might lead to a permanent promotion. If the employee was issued a SF-50(s) for their temporary promotion, indicating that there is an official record of serving 52 weeks either continuously or cumulatively, then the employee meets time-in-grade for the next higher grade.

1.8 PERMANENT POSITIONS

"Permanent position" is defined in 5 CFR 531.403 as a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. "Permanent position" includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year. The term does not include a position filled by an employee whose appointment is limited to 1 year or less and subsequently extended so that the total time of the appointment exceeds 1 year.

1.9 DETAILS

Employees may be detailed, in 120-day increments, to the same, lower, or higher-grade positions for up to 1 year. Details of 120 days to higher graded positions in the absence of a major reorganization must be approved by DOI bureaus and offices Heads/Director's to extend for an additional 120 days (maximum period of 240 days).

If a detail of more than 120 days is made to a higher graded position, or to a position with known promotion potential, it must be made under competitive promotion procedures.

Prior service during the preceding 12 months under non-competitive details to higher graded positions and non-competitive time-limited promotions count toward the 120-day total period. Return rights from temporary promotion or detail: (1) At the end of a temporary promotion or detail, the employee is either returned to his or her original position or to a position anywhere else in the bureau with the same geographic location (as possible) and of a grade and pay rate equivalent to that from which originally selected and for which the employee is qualified. An employee cannot be laterally reassigned to a permanent position at the same grade as that of the temporary promotion or to a position with higher promotion potential than the position held prior to the temporary promotion.

1.10 APPOINTMENT TYPES (STATUS)

The Federal Government employs permanent and temporary employees. Permanent employees are generally hired under a career-conditional appointment (Permanent - Career-Conditional Appointment). Normally this is the first career-type of appointment and the appointee must complete a 1-year probationary period and 3 years of total creditable service to attain a career appointment (Permanent - Career Appointment).

Temporary appointments are defined as appointments expected to last for a specified period not to exceed 1 year (Temporary Appointment - Time limited not to exceed 1 year but could be less) or a specified period of time that is at least more than 1-year but not to exceed 4 years (Term Appointment - Time limited more than one year but not more than 4 years). Neither type

of appointment is a permanent one, so they do not give the employee competitive/permanent status.

When announcing for a temporary position, the JOA must include the time limits for the position, e.g., “not to exceed (NTE) one year.” You may wish to include a statement saying that the job may be extended for an additional year if the nature of the duties would warrant such a statement. Jobs lasting a total of 121 days or more must be cleared for Career Transition Assistance Plan CTAP/ICTAP.

2 JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS (JOA)

When announcing a position, HR Specialists coordinate recruitment efforts with the selecting officials, collaborating and consulting to ensure the end product yields positive results. It is critical that selecting officials give considerable thought when identifying the competencies and knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA)s required for successful performance in the position and the depth and breadth of the appropriate area of consideration (AOC). The selecting official must review and approve the JOA, and, if applicable, can add, delete, or edit assessment questions and screen-out question(s), if any.

2.1 USA STAFFING

All JOAs will be advertised on the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) USA Jobs website utilizing OPM's USA Staffing system. Appropriate USA Staffing policy and procedural documents must be followed in posting JOAs. All competitive service vacancies must be posted to USAJOBS when the AOC includes applicants who are not current DOI employees.

2.2 AREA OF CONSIDERATION (AOC)

AOCs (also referred to as the “Who May Apply” within the JOA) describe the individuals from whom the Bureaus will accept applications. AOCs will be established to ensure the availability of a sufficient number of well-qualified candidates. The AOC must be clearly indicated on the JOA.

In determining AOCs, Selecting Officials must consider Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) goals and objectives, the likelihood of producing sufficient numbers of well-qualified candidates without unreasonably restricting fair and open competition; advantages and disadvantages of each recruitment area, results of past recruitment efforts, budgetary/hiring constraints and cost-effectiveness.

AOCs identified for competitive candidates do not preclude consideration and selection of candidates eligible for non-competitive appointments. AOCs must be sufficiently broad to ensure the availability of high-quality candidates, considering the nature and level of the positions covered. All AOCs must be set to promote fair and open competition and to attract and maintain a diverse workforce.

When the AOC defined in the JOA fails to identify a sufficient number of well qualified candidates, and the JOA has not yet closed, the AOC may be expanded. In such situations, the JOA will be amended to provide notice of the expanded AOC and the open period extended to allow for receiving additional applications.

Bureaus and Offices may establish minimum AOC that is not more restrictive than bureau-wide

local commuting area (LCA)." and, only the Bureau Human Resources Officer for Policy may approve a more restrictive AOC. Requests must be in writing and describe the nature and level of the position, why the restrictive AOC is appropriate, and how the restrictive AOC will result in high-quality candidates, not violate fair and open competition, and consider similarly situated employees (same line of work, series, and grade level in the organizational entity). In addition, the justification for the restricted AOC must include information supporting the fact that there are sufficient internal candidates and must include an estimate of the number of eligible candidates within the proposed AOC.

Candidates eligible to apply/compete in the merit promotion process include individuals who meet the definition of a status candidate, VEOA eligibles (of which are not limited to a LCA, and non-competitive candidates; however, the HR Specialist will determine final eligibility using any specific requirements and qualifications of the JOA, such as:

- i. Status applicants must be in the AOC and meet all eligibility and qualification requirements of the position advertised in the JOA.
- ii. When the AOC includes all DOI employees serving on a career or career-conditional appointment, CTAP eligibles must be included. CTAP applicants must meet the Department's requirements to apply and receive priority consideration for the position being advertised in the JOA.
- iii. Allow DOI bureaus and offices discretion when to solicit and accept application from special appointment authorities whether DOI-wide or Govt-wide. When accepting applications from candidates outside the DOI workforce, the AOC must include CTAP, ICTAP, VEOA, and both non-competitive and excepted service eligible (unless there is a justifiable reason as to why a special appointment authority wouldn't be appropriate for the position).
- iv. VEOA applicants are eligible to apply and their applications must be accepted when the AOC of the JOA is outside the Department. Veterans' preference doesn't apply to VEOA. To be considered, a VEOA candidate must apply for the position and meet all eligibility and qualifications requirements, including time-in-grade, if applicable (time-in-grade applies if the applicant is a current Federal employee or was separated from Federal service for less than 52 weeks) and must rate and rank as best qualified candidate.
- v. When advertising for permanent positions in the competitive service under merit promotion procedures applicants eligible under the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA) should be included in the AOC for department-wide JOAs, but not for bureau-wide non-land management bureaus.

Applications will only be accepted by those indicated in the AOC. For example, if the AOC was defined as "Current Federal employees serving on a career or career-conditional appointment", then a former Federal employee could not be considered. Likewise, if the AOC did not include "applicants under a Special Hiring Authority", then an applicant applying under a special hiring authority cannot be considered.

2.3 JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) OPEN PERIODS

Hiring Managers, in consultation with servicing personnel/human resources offices determine the length of time a JOA will remain open, however all JOAs must be open at least five business days, or in accordance with current DOI CTAP guidance. Typical open periods are 10 business days; however, this period can be shorter or longer depending on the need to attract qualified

diverse applicants. If a JOA is opened for less than five calendar days, the case file must include written documentation that clearly outlines the reason(s) for opening the JOA for less than five calendar days. Longer open periods may be used when warranted, e.g. hard to fill positions, the need to fill several vacancies, temporary seasonal vacancies, etc.

DOI requires bureaus and offices to establish policy on who determines/approve the length of time a JOA will remain open. Bureaus have the discretion to establish cutoff dates for receipt of applications based on the closing date of the JOA for applicants submitting hard copy application packages, the application package must be received by the date specified by the HR Professional.

2.4 OPEN CONTINUOUS JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS (JOA)

HR Offices may use JOA's without specific closing dates (up to one year) to advertise recurring vacancies or where recruitment is expected to be difficult. When a sufficient number of candidates apply for consideration, the HR Office may establish a register for a period no greater than six months, from which they may consider candidates for applicable vacancies. Cut-off date(s) must be identified on the JOA. The following statement must be included: *"Initial consideration will be given to candidates whose applications have been received before the first cut-off date. Qualification and/or time-in-grade requirements must be met for those applications submitted by the first cut-off date."*

2.5 JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) REQUIREMENTS

To promote efficiency in the hiring process and reduce the Time-to-Hire (T2H), every effort is to be made to share resumes of best qualified applicants among HR staff. HR Specialists are strongly encouraged to conduct internal pre-recruitment surveys prior to posting a JOA (per local bureau policies) to see if an opportunity exists to share JOAs and/or certificates. To ensure a valid opportunity exists, all aspects of the vacancies must be the same, including the title, series, grade(s), promotion potential, general job responsibilities, location (or note dual locations), selective placement factors (SPF), competencies documented in the job analysis, KSA's and any evaluation/testing requirements stated in the original JOA.

In accordance with the President's Hiring Reform Initiative, HR Offices should strive to advertise JOAs that are limited to five pages. Per 5 CFR 330.104, each JOA must contain the following information:

- i. Name of issuing agency;
- ii. Announcement number;
- iii. Position title, series, pay plan, and grade (or pay rate);
- iv. Duty location;
- v. Number of vacancies;
- vi. Opening date and application deadline (closing date) and any other information concerning how receipt of applications will be documented, such as by date of receipt, and considered, such as by cut-off dates in open continuous announcements;
- vii. Area of consideration;
- viii. Starting pay;
- ix. Brief description of duties;
- x. Qualification requirements, including knowledge, skills, and abilities or competencies—including any SPF and/or quality ranking factors (QRF);

- xi. Basis of rating/evaluation methods to be used;
- xii. The full performance level of the job;
- xiii. What to file;
- xiv. Instructions on how to apply;
- xv. Information on how to claim veterans' preference, if applicable;
- xvi. Contact information;
- xvii. Payment (or non-payment) of relocation expenses
- xviii. Recruitment or retention incentives, if applicable
- xix. CTAP/ICTAP language, including the definition of “well-qualified,” and how candidates eligible under CTAP/ICTAP may apply, including required proof of eligibility;
- xx. Any other special requirements such as items specified for law enforcement (LE) and Fire positions e.g. Maximum Entry Age for special enhanced retirement coverage; pre-employment requirements, certifications, licenses, requirement to have and maintain an LE commission, adequate documentation to determine special retirement and minimum/maximum age requirements, and SF-50’s to document employee’s time in all other special retirement covered positions (starting and ending).
- xxi. Equal Employment Opportunity nondiscrimination statement
- xxii. Reasonable Accommodation statement: *Learn more about disability employment and reasonable accommodations or how to contact an agency.*
- xxiii. If sharing a certificate of eligibles *within* DOI, utilize the following verbiage: *Applicants who apply under this job opportunity announcement agree to have their application, associated documents and applicable personal information shared with other Bureaus/Offices within the Department of the Interior (DOI) who have vacancies with the same occupational series, grade, full performance level and in the same geographic location(s). Applying to this announcement does not replace the need to apply to other job opportunity announcements for which you wish to receive consideration.*

2.6 JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) RE-ADVERTISEMENTS

After 180 days, the JOA is considered a new JOA and not a re-advertisement. A JOA meets the requirements for re-advertisement if:

- i. There is no change in the AOC, position title, series, grade and full performance level, duty station, or job assessment; and
- ii. It was previously posted 90 days from the date a certificate(s) was issued or the date the JOA was cancelled.

2.7 JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) ADMINISTRATIVE ERRORS

An administrative error is inaccurate or missing information on any aspects of the position that must be reported to OPM and made known to interested applicants through the JOA on OPM’s USAJOBS site. If the HR Specialist can fix any administrative error(s) before applicants apply to the posted JOA, it is not necessary to cancel the JOA and re-advertise. If administrative errors are discovered after the JOA close date, the HR Specialist must take the following corrective action:

- i. The JOA must be cancelled even if a certificate(s) has been issued to the hiring manager.
- ii. Advise the hiring manager that he/she cannot select from the JOA, but he/she can re-advertise the JOA without any delay.

- iii. Determine if applicants need to re-apply to be considered for the position.
- iv. Include information regarding the re-advertisement on the JOA and instructions to applicants regarding their application.

Example JOA templates are available on the Department's Electronic Library of the Interior Policies (ELIPS).

3 APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY & QUALIFICATIONS

Agency's Merit Staffing Program requires that all eligible applicants be evaluated to determine to what extent their qualifications exceed the minimum requirements. HR Specialists review the eligibility, qualifications, and the rating and ranking of the applications according to the evaluation criteria.

Applicants must meet both eligibility and qualification requirements for the position of interest by the closing date of the JOA. Specifically,

- i. Area of Consideration.
- ii. Time-in-grade (TIG) requirements as specified in 5 CFR 300, Subpart F.
- iii. Time after competitive appointment as specified in 5 CFR 330.502.
- iv. Qualification requirements outlined in OPM's Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions or for Federal Wage System (FWS), wage grade positions, applicants are evaluated using the OPM Job Qualification System for Trades and Labor Occupations and the job element examining method
- v. Any Selective Placement Factors (SPF)

Whenever there is a minimum education requirement or an applicant is using a combination of education and experience to be determined as minimally qualified, the applicant must submit a copy of their transcripts. This also applies to status applicants who are applying to a position as well even if the position is the same occupation series as the position they serve currently (prior SF-50 is not an alternative form of documentation to the transcripts). If there is a minimum education requirement and the applicant fails to provide a copy of their transcript, the applicant will be removed from further consideration.

If the applicant is using a combination of education and experience to qualify and the applicant fails to provide a copy of their transcript, the applicant will be evaluated based solely on experience. The applicant's original official transcript(s) must be received prior to the extension of a final job offer. If applicant fails to provide a copy of their transcript(s) within the specified time period, a final job offer will not be made, and the applicant is removed from further consideration. The HR Specialist must verify that schools are accredited prior to making job offer(s) when using education to qualify applicants. Visit the Department of Education's Database of Accredited Post-Secondary Institutions and Programs to verify that schools are accredited. All transcripts and related correspondence must be kept in the case file and Electronic Official Personnel Record (eOPF) if selected.

Education completed from a foreign institution/university must be evaluated by an accredited organization to ensure that the foreign education is comparable to education received in accredited institutions in the United States. Visit the Department of Education's Web site for a listing of credential evaluation services that can perform this evaluation. When applicable, applicants are required to submit their foreign education equivalency at the time of application. Applicants who do

not submit their equivalency at the time of application will be evaluated based on the information provided. Those deemed tentatively best qualified will be considered and referred to the selecting official. A copy of the applicant's foreign education equivalency will be requested by the HR Specialist prior to extending a job offer. If the applicant fails to provide a copy of the equivalency within the specified time period, a final job offer will not be made, and the applicant is removed from further consideration. All equivalencies and related correspondence must be kept in the case file (and eOPF, if selected).

3.1 VETERANS'S EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ACT (VEOA)

The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998, as amended (VEOA) provides preference eligibles and certain eligible veterans the opportunity to compete for certain positions announced under an agency's merit promotion procedures when the agency is filling a permanent, competitive service position and has decided to solicit candidates from outside its own workforce.

To be eligible to be considered pursuant to VEOA appointment, the veterans' discharge must be issued under honorable conditions (honorable or general discharge), AND must be either:

- i. A preference eligible (defined in title 5 U.S.C. 2108(3)), OR
- ii. A veteran who substantially completed 3 or more years of active service under honorable conditions.

VEOA eligibles are not subject to geographic area of consideration limitations. VEOA eligibles must still rate and rank among the best qualified applicants to be considered for appointment. The preference conferred, in this case, is the opportunity to compete; the statute confers no entitlement to be selected ahead of non-preference eligible candidates. Veterans' preference does not apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments and reinstatements.

Current or former Federal employees meeting VEOA eligibility can apply. However, current employees applying under VEOA are subject to time-in- grade restrictions like any other General Schedule employee.

"Active Service" under VEOA means active duty in a uniformed service and includes full-time training duty, annual training duty, full-time National Guard duty, and attendance, while in the active service, at a school designated as a service school by law or by the Secretary concerned. "Preference eligible" under VEOA includes those family members entitled to derived preference.

3.2 NON-COMPETITIVE APPLICANTS

Non-competitive applicants are eligible to apply for JOAs when the AOC is open outside the Department. In addition, certain excepted-service employees (e.g., Pathways, Schedule A appointments, Veteran Recruitment Appointments (VRA)) eligible for non-competitive conversion to the competitive service may be eligible to apply when the AOC is Federal-wide.

Non-competitive applicant(s) may include, but are not limited to the following individuals:

- i. Veterans who are 30 percent or more disabled (30%)
- ii. Veterans who are eligible for veteran recruitment appointment (VRA)
- iii. Individuals eligible for an appointment under the special appointment authority for people with a disability (Schedule A)
- iv. Pathways interns and recent graduates who have completed the requirement for the non-competitive conversion

- v. Appointment of Peace Corps personnel with non-competitive eligibility to a competitive service position, under 5 CFR 315.607
- vi. Applicants under Public Land Corps hiring authorities
- vii. Appointment of certain former overseas employees with non-competitive eligibility to a competitive position, under Executive Order 12721 and 5 CFR 315.608
- viii. Appointment of other candidates with non-competitive eligibility under authorities regulated by OPM, under interchange agreements with other merit systems, and under miscellaneous authorities not regulated by OPM statutes and court orders (5 CFR 315 and 5 CFR 6.7)
- ix. Eligible military spouses

3.3 SCHEDULE ‘A’ APPLICANTS

Applicants with disabilities claiming non-competitive eligibility under Schedule A must submit proof of their disability at the time of application. Acceptable proof of an individual’s mental disability, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability and work readiness is appropriate documentation (e.g. records, statements, or other appropriate information) issued by a licensed medical professional (e.g. a physician or other medical professional duly certified by a state, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory to practice medicine); a licensed vocational rehabilitation specialist (i.e., state or private); a licensed allied health professional; or any Federal agency, state agency, agency of the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits.

3.4 30% OR MORE DISABLED VETERANS

The 30% or More Disabled Veteran authority allows an agency to non-competitively appoint any veteran with a 30% or more service-connected disability as long as eligibility requirements are met:

- i. Retired from active military service with a service-connected disability rating of 30% or more; OR
- ii. Have a rating by the Department of Veterans Affairs showing a compensable service-connected disability of 30% or more.

This authority can be used to make temporary (at least 60 days but not to exceed 1 year) or term (more than 1 year, but not more than 4) appointments in the competitive service. There is no grade level restriction. There is no requirement that you be converted to a permanent position, but the agency has the authority to convert such a position to a permanent position if it chooses to do so.

The agency would first place the veteran on a time limited appointment of at least 60 days and could then convert that appointment to a permanent appointment at management's discretion. When the authority is used to meet a time-limited need, the employee will not be converted to a permanent appointment.

Applicants claiming eligibility for 30% or more disabled veteran **MUST** submit a copy of their DD-214s (Member #4 copy) showing their type of discharge and other supportive documents (if applicable) at the time of application. Preference eligibles or veterans who have been separated under honorable conditions from the armed forces after completing three or more years of continuous active military service (as determined by the agency) may compete for vacancies under merit promotion when the agency accepts applications from individuals outside its own workforce. All DD-214s received must be kept in the case file (and eOPF, if selected).

3.5 MILITARY SPOUSE APPLICANTS

Military spouse applicants claiming eligibility via Executive Order 13832, dated May 9, 2018 and Public Law 115-232 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2019, section 673, August 13, 2018, authorizing the noncompetitive appointment of certain military spouses to competitive service positions must provide documentation supporting eligibility. The required documentation includes a valid marriage certificate or other document verifying marriage (such as any official documentation verifying a recognized common law marriage), a copy of their spouse's DD-214 (Member #4 copy), and as applicable – a copy of the military orders assigning the service member to a certain post (including authorizing the spouse) or a copy of documentation from either the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Defense indicating the service member has a disability rating of 100% due to a service connected disability. This Executive Order applies to the following categories of military spouses:

- i. Those who are relocating with their service-member spouse as a result of permanent change of station (PCS) orders
- ii. Spouses who are not relocating with their active duty service member,
- iii. Spouses of service members who incurred a 100% disability because of the service member's active duty service; and
- iv. Spouses of service members killed while on active duty.

This appointing authority allows for noncompetitive entry into the competitive service. Those military spouses who are eligible under this authority do NOT have hiring preference by virtue of this authority. It does not constitute, establish, or convey a hiring preference. This hiring authority does not take precedence over other appointment options. Agencies must still clear CTAP, ICTAP, and RPL before making a selection under this Executive Order.

3.6 EXCEPTED SERVICE APPLICANTS ELIGIBLE FOR COMPETITIVE SERVICE APPOINTMENTS

Generally, applicants who are eligible for certain excepted service appointing authorities or who are from excepted agencies that have an agreement with OPM which allows entry into the competitive service, i.e., Interchange Agreement may be considered for advertised positions.

Servicing HROs can provide more specific information concerning eligibility for excepted service appointments. Applicants applying for consideration under an excepted appointing authority are responsible for identifying the particular appointing authority under which consideration is requested and providing evidence of eligibility for the particular appointing authority by the dates specified in the JOA. For additional information, refer to PB) 17-13, Excepted Service Policy.

3.7 VETERANS RECRUITMENT APPOINTMENT

Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) is an excepted authority that allows an agency to non-competitively appoint an eligible veteran that:

- i. Served during a war or are in receipt of a campaign badge for service in a campaign or expedition; OR
- ii. are a disabled veteran, OR
- iii. are in receipt of an Armed Forces Service Medal (includes the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal) for participation in a military operation, OR
- iv. are a recently separated veteran (within 3 years of discharge), AND
- v. separated under honorable conditions (this means an honorable or general discharge).

Appointments under this authority can be made at any grade level up to and including a GS-11 or equivalent. This is an excepted service appointment. Upon satisfactory completion of 2 years of substantially continuous service, VRA hires will be converted to the competitive service. If an agency has two or more VRA candidates and at least one is preference eligible, the veterans' preference procedures of 5 CFR, part 302 of OPM's regulations must be applied when using the VRA authority.

Agencies may also use VRA to fill temporary (not to exceed 1 year) or term (more than 1 year but not to exceed 4 years) positions. If one is employed in a temporary or term position under VRA, they will not be converted to the competitive service after 2 years. There is no limit to the number of times one can apply under VRA (or be appointed to a VRA appointment), as long as they meet the definition of a covered veteran under applicable law.

Applicants claiming eligibility for Veterans Recruitment Appointment MUST submit a copy of their DD-214s (Member #4 copy) showing their type of discharge and other supportive documents (if applicable) at the time of application. Preference eligibles or veterans who have been separated under honorable conditions from the armed forces after completing three or more years of continuous active military service (as determined by the agency) may compete for vacancies under merit promotion when the agency accepts applications from individuals outside its own workforce. All DD-214s received must be kept in the case file (and eOPF, if selected).

Qualified VRA eligibles are listed separately on a VRA certificate, since veteran's preference applies. There will be a separate certificate for competitive merit promotion eligibles, which will include Veterans Employment Opportunities Act eligibles. Because veterans' preference applies to both VRA and Schedule A, bureaus may elect to issue a separate certificate if one or more of the applicants have veterans' preference. There is no requirement to do so, however it may assist the hiring manager in managing the selection process and allow for efficient audit and validation of selections before making a job offer.

4 RATING, RANKING, AND REFERRAL

Competitive candidates are rated and ranked based on their résumés and selection of the defined levels of competencies and KSAs that best describe their level of experience.

Applicants eligible for the various non-competitive appointing authorities who meet the qualifications standards as well as any SPFs and other eligibility requirements identified for the position in the JOA are considered eligible and are referred regardless of their rating and ranking.

The appropriate use of other assessment tools (e.g., USA Hire) may be used in accordance with availability and adherence to other applicable Departmental assessment policy.

Note: Both VRA and Schedule A hiring authorities require application of veterans' preference i.e. you may not select a non-veteran over a veteran Schedule A eligible.

A copy of the Hiring Tools at a Glance will be available on the Department's Electronic Library of the Interior Policies (ELIPS): <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/hiring-tools-at-a-glance-1.pdf> to assist in additional flexible hiring authorities.

4.1 RATING & RANKING EVALUATION PANELS

Evaluation panels may be convened, or a Subject Matter Expert may be used as appropriate. Selecting officials, in conjunction with the servicing personnel office, determine when a panel is needed, and select the personnel to serve on the panel. Factors in making this decision include the complexity and organizational level of the vacant position, any controversy surrounding the JOA and the number of applicants. If convened, these panels consist of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) at an equivalent or higher-grade level than the FPL of the position being filled; typically, the number of panel members is three.

4.2 REFERRAL LISTS (CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBLES)

Referral lists are generated from the results of the rating and ranking process. These lists may include:

- i. Candidates who lost consideration or were demoted without personal cause (e.g., RIF); these employees are referred ahead of others.
- ii. Well qualified ICTAP candidates who are eligible for special selection consideration under ICTAP regulations as outlined in 5 CFR 330 Subpart G.
- iii. Promotion eligibles.
- iv. VEOA eligibles.
- v. Transfer eligibles from other Federal agencies, or reassignment eligible from another organization within DOI.
- vi. Candidates who are eligible for consideration under other noncompetitive authorities.

HR Offices are to issue separate referral lists for competitive and non-competitive candidates at each grade level and location advertised. All non-competitive candidates, within the AOC regardless of their score, will be referred as long as they meet the qualifications for the position. Applicants will be referred in alphabetical order.

When two or more VRA candidates are qualified and one or more is a preference eligible, veterans' preference must be applied as outlined in 5 CFR 302 and a separate referral list will be issued for the VRA candidates in veteran's preference order.

4.3 LATE APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Preference Eligibles and Schedule A eligible applicants filing after the closing date of a JOA will be considered under the non-competitive application process. Preference eligibles filing within 10 calendar days of the closing date of an announcement and when a selection has not been made will be considered and placed on a separate certificate, if qualified. The applicable JOA identification number must be provided by the applicant to be considered under this process. The same rating and ranking criteria will be used in evaluating this applicant as was used for each group referred under merit promotion.

4.4 RECONSIDERATION OF RATING

A reconsideration of a rating may be provided upon request from the applicant who believes their rating is in error. Their request for reconsideration must be in writing to the servicing HR Office or the HR Specialist who evaluated the applicant. No additional application information or materials may be submitted after the closing date of the JOA. Upon receiving the applicant's request for reconsideration, the HR specialist who made the original rating decision must conduct the review in consultation with the team lead or first line supervisor. The response to the reconsideration of the original rating decision must contain a full explanation of the reasons for the decision. If the

reconsideration prompts a rating change, the applicant's record and the certificate of eligibles, providing it has not been issued, must reflect the change. If the certificate of eligibles has been issued, it should not be amended unless:

- i. The new rating is "eligible;"
- ii. Veterans' preference points were improperly awarded; or
- iii. The rating error was erroneous certification.

If an applicant submits an appeal of the 1st reconsideration decision, a second level review must be conducted by the Supervisor. The 2nd reconsideration decision is final, and no further reconsideration is required.

Bargaining unit employees covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) may file a negotiated grievance regarding their rating if such matters are not otherwise excluded from the applicable negotiated grievance procedures. However, for non-bargaining unit employees, the DOI Administrative Grievance Procedures (AGP), 370 DM 771, 1.7(B)(3), excludes grievances related to a selection process, including non-selection from a group of properly ranked and certified candidates. There is no right of appeal to OPM, but OPM may conduct investigations of substantial violations of OPM requirements.

Where employees are in a bargaining unit and covered by a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), and the applicable negotiated grievance procedures (NGP) do not exclude these matters, bargaining unit employees must use the NGP to file a grievance. They may not, even if such matters were covered, use the administrative grievance procedure (AGP). The AGP excludes matters related to the selection process.

4.5 PRIORITY CONSIDERATION DUE TO MERIT PROMOTION VIOLATION

Priority consideration is an effort to correct a prior Merit Promotion violation, such as missed consideration. In accordance with 5 CFR 335.103(c) (3) (vi), consideration of a candidate not given proper consideration in a competitive promotion action will be an exception to competition. The candidate must be notified in writing that they are eligible for a one-time priority referral for a like position, i.e., same grade, minimum qualifications requirements, and organizational location of the original competitive announcement. This candidate will be referred, non-competitively, after CTAP candidates, but ahead of other candidates.

4.6 ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR RESULTING IN NON-REFERRAL

When a candidate was not referred to the selecting official, due to an administrative error, the following procedures will be applied:

If a selection has not been made;

- i. The selecting official is notified immediately,
- ii. HR amends the certificate

If a selection has been made and it is prior to selectee's entry on duty;

- i. The offer will be rescinded,
- ii. The selecting official and the selectee are notified immediately,
- iii. The certificate is amended

If a selection has been made and the selectee has already entered on duty, the candidate will receive consideration on the next available certificate for the same grade, title and series and location. This procedure is only required if the candidate is determined to be among the “best qualified” group of candidates that should have been originally certified to the selecting official. The candidate is entitled to consideration concurrently with any other candidate with similar entitlement, as an exception to the competitive procedures, but before a list of other best qualified candidates is provided and before any other action is taken to fill the vacancy (with the exception of CTAP and ICTAP).

The selecting official is not required to select these candidates but must fully and fairly consider them. A candidate is entitled to only one instance of priority consideration for each instance of lost consideration. Candidates who meet the criteria will receive consideration for the next appropriate vacancy in the same grade, title and series, and location. The candidate’s eligibility for such referral will expire after one referral or after one year from the date in which he/she lost consideration, whichever comes first.

4.7 REFERRAL LISTS SUSPENSE DATE

Referral lists will be issued to the selecting official with a suspense date of not more than 90 calendar days from the date the referral list is issued. Selecting officials may request an extension of a referral list from their HR Officer or designee on a case-by-case basis. The reason(s) for requesting an extension of a referral list beyond the initial 90 calendar days must be submitted to the HR Officer in writing. The HR Officer, or his/her designee, may extend referral lists in two-week increments. Referral lists may not be extended beyond a total of 120 days total from the original referral list issue date unless rare circumstances occur. The written justification must be maintained in the case file. Requests for the extension of referral list(s) will only be approved when management has provided a reasonable rationale for extending the expiration date of the referral list.

A referral list may be used within 90 days from initial selection when vacancies with all the same conditions occur. These conditions include the same title, series, grade, target grade, Bureau, and type of appointment (i.e. permanent, temporary or term).

If a referral list is less than 90 days old, based on issuance date, the referral list may be used to make a selection for a like position (same series, grade(s), and location) without issuing a new, separate JOA if the original JOA indicated that multiple positions may be filled. Management is not required to select from prior JOA referral lists for like positions.

5 INTERVIEWS

A selecting official and/or interview panel may interview some, all or none of the referred candidates. Selecting officials and/or interview panels will ensure that all interviews are properly conducted, all questions are job-related, and that every effort is made to obtain the same information from each candidate. Interviewers may not ask about or discuss a candidate’s race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age (as defined by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended), disability, genetic information (including family medical history), marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, labor organization affiliation or non- affiliation, status as a parent, or any other non-merit-based factor. Establish the same requirements for Interview panel as established for Evaluation Panels in Section 4.1 (e.g.

individuals must be at the same grade or higher or equivalent; consist of 3 or more who are knowledgeable of the position, etc.)

Unsuccessful efforts to contact candidates, declination of interviews, not reporting for interviews, etc., must be documented by the selecting official and maintained with the merit promotion case file.

Selecting officials are highly encouraged to conduct reference checks. Conducting reference checks is not mandatory. However, conducting reference checks are a best practice for selection of successful candidates.

5.1 PAYMENT OF INTERVIEW TRAVEL EXPENSES

To the extent possible, it is recommended that all interviews be held in the same manner. If distance precludes a personal interview, video or telephone interviews may be conducted, or the payment of expenses for in-person interviews may be authorized.

In accordance with 5 CFR 572.101(b) selecting officials may determine which interviewees are eligible for payment of pre-employment interview travel expenses. Payment of these travel expenses will be in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations.

6 SELECTIONS

Selecting officials must base their selections using job-related factors. The selecting official is not required to select from the competitive referral list. The job may be filled by some other type of internal action or by appointment from outside the agency. Candidates from other sources may be considered concurrently or in any sequence. The selecting official may choose to fill a vacancy noncompetitively as long as such action is consistent with appropriate approved exceptions to merit promotion procedures (VRA, Pathways Program, reassignments), and CTAP requirements.

The hiring manager may select or not select from the certificate(s) issued to him/her for the position. If the hiring manager makes a selection, he/she must follow the servicing HR office instructions for documenting his/her selection(s) and the dates he/she conducted the interview (if applicable). If a certificate was not used, which means none of the candidates were interviewed, the hiring manager can annotate “certificate not used.”

6.1 NUMBER OF SELECTIONS

If the JOA was advertised for one position, the selecting official can make only one selection unless the language in the JOA allows for more than one selection. The standard language provides that more than one position can be filled from an announcement.

6.2 RETURNING REFERRAL LISTS

Selecting officials are required to return referral lists to the HR Office within 90 calendar days after receipt. Selecting officials are encouraged to indicate secondary selectees in addition to their primary selection. Selecting official’s and/or interview panel’s notes and responses to interview questions should not be included in the merit promotion case file but retained by the selecting official. For all selections, the hiring manager must sign as the selecting official.

6.3 NON-SELECTIONS

A selecting official who returns the referral lists without any candidate(s) chosen must provide an

explanation. The selecting official may request that the AOC be extended to recruit additional candidates; fill the vacancy by other means (e.g., detail, reassignment); or formally withdraw or cancel the request to fill the vacancy, specifying the reason. Upon receipt of a withdrawal justification, Hiring Managers will evaluate subsequent requests to fill the same or similar vacancies occurring within 30 days of the non-selection.

Non-selection is when the hiring manager does not make a selection from a valid selection certificate(s) issued from an advertised JOA due to one of the following reasons (note: non-selection because of any of the issues below is justification for re-advertisement before or after the expiration date of the selection certificate(s):

- i. There were fewer than 10 best qualified (BQ) candidates on the merit promotion competitive promotion certificate and few or no non-competitive candidates. If the position was advertised at multiple grade levels, the total number of applicants must be used to determine if re-advertisement is justified.
- ii. Regardless of the number of BQ candidates, the majority or all declined the interview or job offer.
- iii. The hiring manager can provide information (review of application, interview, or reference check) that the candidate(s) lacked the necessary skills to perform the work (exaggerated responses and resumé).
- iv. The hiring manager and the HR Specialist determine there was a problem with the job analysis and Job Questionnaire Assessment that affected the quality evaluation of the applicants.

The HR Specialist must determine if applicants need to re-apply to be considered for the position. The HR Specialist must also include information regarding the re-advertisement on the JOA and instructions to applicants regarding their application).

The hiring manager must provide the servicing HR Specialist information on non-selections and cancellations of JOAs to maintain in the merit promotion JOA case file. If the request to advertise a previous JOA is not covered by one of the situations described above, the hiring manager and HR Specialist must wait 180 days before posting a new JOA. The 180 days starts after the date the hiring manager provides written notification to HR that he/she took no action on the previous JOA.

7 EMPLOYMENT OFFERS

Job offers are not valid unless they are extended by a member of the servicing HRO. All selections are considered tentative until the servicing HRO has conducted all pre-employment processes, e.g., security clearance, medical examination, drug tests, etc. HR Specialists will have three workdays, after receipt of the selection package to extend tentative job offers. The pre-employment process must be initiated by the servicing HRO within 10 working days after acceptance of the job offer. Official job offers will be extended within two workdays after completion of the pre-employment process.

8 RELEASE OF EMPLOYEES

Employees are normally released within two weeks of official notification of selection for a promotion and within four weeks for a reassignment, change to a lower grade, or detail (unless travel is involved, or an action is delayed due to required clearances such as drug testing and security). When mutually agreeable to both the gaining official and the releasing official, the release

date may be extended. Relocating employees and the gaining supervisor are jointly responsible for working out reporting dates, which will minimize relocation expenses. Reporting dates will be established far enough in advance, or otherwise managed in conjunction with current DOI Finance guidance for relocating employees, to minimize temporary quarters and household goods storage expenses. Movement and transfers in the middle of pay period will result in T&A and payroll deductions problems.

9 AUDITING CERTIFICATES

Within 10 days of finalizing the selection/making the official job offer, the servicing HR office must notify all the other applicants who were referred on the certificate(s) of the status of the job. HR Specialist must make every effort to close out and audit vacancy announcements within 30 days of finalizing the selection; and 10 days upon receiving notification from the hiring manager to cancel the vacancy.

Reissuing a selection certificate from an audited JOA. If the person selected declines a confirmed job offer within 90 days of expiration of the selection certificate(s), the HR Specialist may reissue the certificate to the hiring manager. If this happens, the hiring manager may make another selection within 30 days of reissuance of the certificate.

When no selection(s) are made. The servicing HR office should cancel the JOA and audit the certificate of eligibles within 10 days after receiving the hiring manager's decision of non-selection/cancellation.

10 ACCRETION OF DUTIES

An accretion-of-duties is a rare situation when an employee's duties and responsibilities have expanded, which can occur because the scope of the work has increased over time, usually as an evolutionary process and not specifically as a result of management assigning new work or responsibilities, or the impact of the person in the job.

Title 5 U.S.C. Chapter 23 Merit System Principles, and Title 5 CFR 335, Promotion and Internal Placement ensure equitable treatment of all employees for accretion-of-duties situations. 5 CFR 335.103(c)(3)(ii), allows agencies, at their discretion, to exclude from competitive procedures those promotions resulting from an employee's position being classified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities.

Both OPM and Merit Systems Protection Board recognize the propriety and utility of accretion promotions. Both, however, caution that misuse undermines the trust employees must have in the merit promotion/assignment process, and may result in increased complaints, grievances or violations of Merit System Principles.

Promotions based on accretion of duties are rare occurrences and used only in those situations where the appropriate basis for an exception to the competitive process exists. Promotions based on job accretion are recognized exceptions to the merit promotion process. Managers, supervisors and servicing HR offices will ensure that a reasonable and accurate career ladder is established before a position is filled. Following good management practices, supervisors must be aware of the duties assigned or assumed by their staff, and exercise vigilance for changes that result in the unintentional growth or erosion of assignments sufficient to affect grade level.

The Servicing HRO notifies and consult with Bureau Policy HRO on requests for accretion of duties. Consult PB 18-03, Position Management and Position Classification Policy and Handbook for more information.

In order for an employee to be promoted, using an accretion of duties, as an exception to merit promotion procedures, all of the following criteria must be met:

- i. The employee is not assigned to a Standard PD and/or identical additional position. A promotion based on an accretion of duties involving one incumbent is prohibited when multiple incumbency (“identical-additional”) positions exist within the same organizational unit, and/or when there are other employees in similar positions within the organizational unit. “Organizational unit” is defined as immediate organizational entity, component or group of employees directed by a supervisory position.
- ii. The employee is the only one in the organizational unit to whom the additional duties and responsibilities could be assigned and/or who is capable of performing the new duties.
- iii. A desk audit was performed. Results are documented in an evaluation statement/report that documents the performance of higher-graded work performed by the employee.
- iv. The complexity, range and/or level of difficulty in the duties and responsibilities of a position have gradually increased over a significant period of time (i.e., approximately one year or longer) usually as an evolutionary process and not specifically as a result of management assigning new work or responsibilities, or the impact of the person in the job. The new duties comprise at least 25% of the employee’s time on a regular basis, are based on recurring responsibilities that require a higher level of knowledge, skill and/or ability, and the additional duties are considered major and grade-controlling, not merely new or different work.
- v. The employee continues to perform the same basic functions of the former position, the major duties of the employee’s former position are absorbed into the new position, and the employee’s position description (PD) is re-described incorporating the additional duties and responsibilities.
- vi. The additional duties and responsibilities are expected to be performed on a regular basis.
- vii. The new position has no further promotion potential.
- viii. The promotion is not based on projected duties.
- ix. The additional duties and responsibilities do not adversely affect another encumbered position, such as abolishing the position, eroding its current grade or reducing its known promotion potential.
- x. The new position does not involve the addition of supervisory or leader responsibilities (i.e., the position does not change from non-supervisory to a supervisory or leader position).
- xi. The new position does not involve reclassification from a one-grade interval series to a two-grade interval series or across occupational series.
- xii. The employee meets all qualifications and eligibility requirements for the position.
- xiii. The proposed upgrade is in conformance with Merit Promotion plans and all other applicable statutes, rules, and regulations.
- xiv. The impacted employee(s) meet(s) all qualification and time-in-grade

- requirements (Applies to GS positions only.) [5 CFR 300 subpart F].
- xv. A position description is classified for the new position.
- xvi. Incumbent will be reassigned/promoted to the new position.
- xvii. There is no reduction-in-force or transfer of function being planned or implemented within the organization.

The following documents will be included in each promotion record that is based on the addition of higher-graded duties:

- i. The original position description;
- ii. The accreted position description;
- iii. The evaluation statement for the new position, and;
- iv. Certification that a desk audit was conducted.

See Appendix D: Accretion of Duties Eligibility Checklist

11 DUE WEIGHT

When reviewing merit promotion applicants, selecting officials have an obligation under 5 CFR 335.103(b)(3) which requires that methods of evaluation for promotion and placement, and for selection for training that leads to promotion, provide due weight to performance appraisals and incentive awards. This will be done by completing the Supervisory Due Weight Certification Form (see Appendix E: Supervisory Certification—Due Weight for Performance Appraisals and Awards).

The documentation must be completed, signed and uploaded to the merit promotion case file in USA Staffing when a selection has been made and the certificate is returned. Each Region and all SHROs must adhere to this policy and may not establish regional or local policy or procedures that conflict with this service-wide policy. Completed due weight certifications must be retained for no less than 3 years.

11.1 DUE WEIGHT – USED CERTIFICATES

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) audits due weight and therefore, due weight is a regulatory requirement. A certification form must be completed for each merit promotion certificate used by the selecting official, regardless of competitive status. For this purpose, a used certificate is any certificate on which the selecting official takes any of the following actions:

- i. Reviews any part of an application package (receiving, opening, and looking at the names on a certificate is not considered a review of the application package)
- ii. Interviews an applicant
- iii. Checks references for an applicant
- iv. Conducts availability checks for an applicant
- v. Makes a selection
- vi. Makes annotations (other than being unused) on the certificate

11.2 DUE WEIGHT—REQUIRED JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) LANGUAGE

All JOAs must contain language describing how due weight is applied in the ‘Required Documents’ section: *Please submit 1) a copy of your most recent performance appraisal/evaluation and 2) a list of any awards (e.g. superior performance awards, special act or achievement awards, quality step increase, etc.) you received in the last 5 years. Any performance appraisal/evaluation and award*

documentation you provide will be forwarded to the selecting official. The selecting official will review this documentation and give it due weight consideration during the overall selection process. If you do not have your most recent performance appraisal/evaluation, please submit a statement as to why it is not available. Please indicate if any prior performance appraisals/evaluations were at an acceptable level.

11.3 DUE WEIGHT—REQUIRED ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The required (5 CFR § 335.103(b)(3)) non-rated question must be placed in the assessment questionnaire:

My performance is at an acceptable level and I am not serving under a Notice of Opportunity to Demonstrate Acceptable Performance (NODAP).

A. Yes

B. No

The due weight assessment question is a “flag” for a manager. It is not used as a screen out, therefore a negative response would not remove an applicant from consideration. Regardless of how an applicant responds to the assessment question, due weight documentation (i.e. the most recent performance appraisal or a statement as to why one is not available) should be provided and is required documentation for current and former federal employees. HR should redact any sensitive information prior to providing to the selecting official.

Performance and award documentation from other agencies or private industry require due weight consideration regardless of the format. Managers should use their best judgement when deciding how to review outside performance appraisals.

If an applicant withdraws from consideration on an unused certificate, then due weight does not need to be applied. However, if an applicant withdraws from a used certificate, due weight would still need to be applied to the other applicants on the used certificate.

SHROs must provide a quarterly report of merit promotion cases. A reporting template can be found in Appendix F: Due Weight Recordkeeping.

12 COMPLAINTS & RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The Bureau Personnel/Human Resource Office shall respond promptly to questions or complaints about the program or about a specific selection action. Bureaus should develop procedures to address corrective actions due to procedural violations or administrative error. An employee of the Bureau may submit a complaint under the Bureaus grievance procedure or under a negotiated grievance procedure as appropriate.

Non-selection from a list of properly ranked and certified applicants is not grievable (370 DM 1.7(B)(3)).

An employee cannot use the grievance procedures and the EEO complaint process at the same time for the same issue.

If a candidate feels that he/she has been discriminated against in the merit process on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, or age,

every effort will be made to handle the matter on an informal basis with the assistance of an EEO counselor. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the candidate may submit a formal complaint according to the procedures for handling equal employment opportunity complaints.

The following information may be released to an applicant or his/her designee when requested:

- i. Whether the requesting applicant was qualified and/or referred for selection;
- ii. Who was selected;
- iii. The applicant's supervisory appraisal and rating on the ranking elements;
- iv. Procedures used to arrive at the final scores, and cut off scores; or
- v. Any other information allowed by the Freedom of Information Act or the Privacy Act.

Documentation in the case file must be sufficient for a reviewer to reconstruct the action in its entirety, including reasons for determining not qualified, qualified, well-qualified and best qualified applicants. The case file must be maintained electronically in the automated hiring management system and should include, at a minimum, the following information:

- i. Case File checklist
- ii. SF-52, Request for personnel action or equivalent
- iii. Position description for all grade levels recruited, to include the full performance level
- iv. Justification from management, if the JOA is open for less than five calendar days
- v. The reference to the OPM occupational qualification standard applied or a copy of the OPM-approved standard if it is different from the OPM qualification standard
- vi. Evaluation criteria, including the job analysis, crediting plan*, SPFs, and other data for each grade level that documents the validity and job relatedness of the assessment material used to evaluate applicants. *See Appendix G: Guidance on Devising Crediting Plans.
- vii. DOI Relocation Expense Worksheet (<https://www.doi.gov/pfm/travel/Relocation-Expense-Worksheet>)
- viii. Documentation verifying the dates RPL and SSP were cleared in accordance with policy
- ix. USAJOBS Job Opportunity Announcement
- x. Qualifications and eligibility determinations for applicants
- xi. Documentation for adjusting applicant answers when using an automated qualification, rating, and ranking system, if applicable
- xii. Referral List(s) of eligibles including criteria and documentation supporting actions taken to close out the referral list(s)
- xiii. Any written guidance and instructions issued to the interview panel, if applicable
- xiv. Evidence of notifications to applicants via the automated hiring management system
- xv. Declinations/withdrawals of consideration from applicant, if applicable
- xvi. Name(s) of individual(s) selected and the justifications why the applicant was selected
- xvii. SF-50, Personnel Action of selected applicant
- xviii. Electronic annotation by hiring official as to why a referral list is returned unused and/or cancelled
- xix. Written documentation as to why an HR Officer or designee approved a request from the selecting official asking to re-advertise a vacant position when there were at least three applicants remaining on a referral list, if applicable
- xx. Evidence the electronic case file is closed out and selectee is coded as hired
- xxi. Any other information that may be needed to sufficiently reconstruct or support actions taken during the qualification, evaluation and selection process

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

30% or more Disabled Veteran: The 30% or More Disabled Veteran authority allows an agency to non-competitively appoint any veteran with a 30% or more service-connected disability.

Accretion of Duties: Promotion of an employee whose position is reclassified at a higher grade due to the performance of additional duties and responsibilities.

Agency: The term ‘Agency’ refers to the Department.

Area of Consideration (AOC): The organizational and/or geographic boundaries within which a search is made for eligible candidates for a specific merit promotion and placement action. AOC may be defined geographically, organizationally, by recruitment source or appointment status. All AOCs must be set to promote fair and open competition and to maintain a diverse workforce.

Appointing Authority: The legal or regulatory basis to which a specific appointment may be made to a Federal civilian position.

Assessment: A method used to measure the degree to which an applicant possesses the competencies/KSAs necessary for successful job performance. The list of multiple-choice questions on which an applicant self-rates based on their qualifications or competencies. Other examples of assessment instruments include rating schedules, written tests, work samples, and structured interviews.

Best Qualified Candidates: Applicants determined by the rating and ranking process to possess the job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required or desired in applicants for a particular position to a greater degree than other qualified applicants being considered, and who are subsequently referred to the selecting official.

Career Ladder: Grade range from the entry level through and including the previously established full performance level of a position.

Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP): A Federal placement program that provides priority consideration for job opportunities to certain individuals who have been or will be adversely impacted by Federal downsizing activities.

Career Promotion: Promotions without current competition when the employee competed earlier for an assignment intended to prepare the employee for the position being filled, and the intent was made a matter of record and made known to all potential candidates.

Certificate: A document referred to the selecting official containing the names of eligible candidates.

Change to Lower Grade: For this Handbook, the term ‘change to lower grade’ refers to a voluntary reduction in an employee’s current grade level or representative rate.

Competency: An observable, measurable pattern of skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully. Competencies are typically required at different levels of proficiency depending on the specific work role or occupational function.

Competitive Service: All civilian positions that are: (a) in the executive branch of the Federal Government not specifically excepted from civil service laws by or pursuant to statute, by the President, or by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and not in the Senior Executive Service; and (b) all positions in the legislative and judicial branches of the Federal Government and in the Government of the District of Columbia specifically made subject to the civil service laws by statute.

Competitive Status: Basic eligibility of a person selected to fill a position in the competitive service. Competitive status may be acquired by career-conditional or career appointment through open competitive examination or may be granted by statute, executive order, or civil service rules.

A person with competitive status may be promoted, transferred, reassigned, reinstated, or demoted subject to the conditions prescribed by civil service rules and regulations.

Crediting Plan: A plan developed through the process of job analysis used to rate and rank qualified applicants for a position. It consists quality ranking factors with typically three quality level descriptions for each factor.

Cut-off Date: The date after which applications will continue to be accepted but will not be given initial consideration. A cut-off date may be useful where large numbers of applications are expected over an extended period of time, and there is an immediate need to fill a position. If a cut-off date is established, it must be stated in the job announcement.

Detail: A temporary assignment of an employee to a different position for a specified period, with the employee returning to his or her regular duties at the end of the assignment. While on detail the employee continues to hold their official position from which detailed and keeps the same status and pay.

Direct Hire Authority (DHA): an appointing (hiring) authority that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) can give to Federal agencies for filling vacancies when a critical hiring need or severe shortage of candidates exists. Utilizing a DHA requires prior public notice, as prescribed in 5 U.S.C. 3327 and 3330, and 5 CFR 330, subpart G. Chapter 2, section A, of the Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) Handbook states that DHA JOAs are part of case exam recruitment, not merit promotion.

Delegated Examining Unit (DEU): DEU is competitive examining, known as “open to the public” only. It does not apply to merit promotion, the excepted service, or the Senior Executive Service. Agencies may be granted delegated examining authority under section 1104 of title 5, United States Code (USC).

Due Weight: A review process used to provide consideration to performance appraisals and awards submitted with each application on a used merit promotion certificate and factoring the results into the merit promotion selection process.

Evaluation Panel: Evaluation panels are established to rate and rank candidates, and generally consist of individuals at the same or higher-grade level than the full performance level of the position to be filled who are familiar with the requirements of the job and occupation. Qualified candidates are evaluated based on the quality ranking factors identified for the position.

Excepted Service: Positions in the Federal civil service not subject to the appointment requirements of the competitive service. Exceptions to the normal competitive requirements are authorized by law, executive order or regulation.

Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP): The Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program requires agencies to establish targeted recruitment programs for categories of positions where a determination of underrepresentation, manifest imbalance, or conspicuous absence of women and/or minorities has been made.

Federal Wage System (FWS): The FWS is a uniform pay-setting system that covers Federal appropriated fund and non-appropriated fund blue-collar employees who are paid by the hour.

Full Performance Level (FPL): The highest-grade level to which an employee may be promoted through successive noncompetitive career promotions.

General Schedule (GS): The General Schedule (GS) pay system covers the majority of civilian white-collar Federal employees in professional, technical, administrative, and clerical positions. GS classification standards, qualifications, pay structure, and related human resources policies (e.g. general staffing and pay administration policies) are administered by OPM on a Government wide basis. The General Schedule has 15 grades - GS-1 (lowest) to GS-15 (highest). Each grade has 10 step rates (steps 1-10).

Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan for Displaced Employees (ICTAP): ICTAP provides eligible displaced federal employees with interagency selection priority for vacancies that are being filled from outside the Agency’s competitive service workforce. The ICTAP selection priority does not prohibit movement of permanent competitive service employees within the Agency.

Interview Panels: Used to further screen all applicants referred to the selecting official to determine those who will be recommended for an interview by the selecting official. At least one panel member must be a subject-matter expert. To the extent possible, all panels must consist of individuals at the same or higher-grade level than the full performance level of the position being filled. Every effort should be made to ensure that the panel is made up of diverse individuals.

Job Analysis: The analysis of a position to identify the basic duties and responsibilities; the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the duties and responsibilities; and the factors that are important in evaluating candidates for the position.

Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA): Also known as “vacancy announcement”, describes all requirements of the position and instructs the applicant on how to apply to the position, including necessary applicant documentation. JOAs must be posted on the USAJOBS website as a means of satisfying the competitive procedure requirement.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs): The attributes required to perform a job which are generally demonstrated through qualifying experience, education, or training. Knowledge is a body of information applied directly to the performance of a function. Skill is a present, observable competence to perform a task with ease and proficiency. Ability is a present competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product.

Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA): On August 7, 2015, the President signed the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act, P.L. 114-47 (the “Act”), which was amended by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, dated December 23, 2016. The Act allows certain individuals who are serving or who have served under a time-limited competitive service appointment in a land management agency to compete for a permanent position in the competitive service when the hiring agency is accepting applications under merit promotion procedures. Individuals must have served for an accumulative of 24 months without a 2-year break in service. Land Management bureaus include BIA, BLM, BOR, USFWS, and NPS.

Local commuting area: The geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities in which people live and can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily to their usual employment (5 CFR 351.203).

Merit Promotion: Besides current and former employees, other candidates are eligible to apply to merit promotion announcements such as VRA, VEOA, and Military Spouses. If the position has promotion potential for a current or former Federal employee, merit promotion procedures are applicable. Candidates who are “bidding” on a promotion must compete with others and a selection is made from amongst the best qualified candidates.

Merit Staffing: Internal agency staffing that allows Federal jobs to be filled outside of, but in the spirit of, open competitive examining procedures.

Merit System Principles: Statutory Federal employment principles contained in 5 USC Section 2301, Merit Systems Principles. These principles were established to ensure appointments and promotions are based on open and fair competition; and that employment practices are based on job-related competencies.

Military Spouses: Executive Order (EO) 13473 authorized the noncompetitive appointment of

certain military spouses to competitive service positions (5 CFR 315.612). Recent provisions have significantly impacted the non-competitive hiring authority of military spouses as found in EO 13832, “Enhancing Noncompetitive Civil Service Appointments of Military Spouses” signed by the President on May 9, 2018.

Minimum Qualifications: Qualifications an applicant must possess to be minimally qualified for hire or promotion under the competitive system as defined in OPM’s General Schedule and Federal Wage System.

Noncompetitive Action: An appointment to or placement in a position in the competitive service that is not made under competitive procedures for an open competitive examination and that is usually based on current or prior Federal service. A noncompetitive action includes (1) all of the types of actions described under in-service placement; (2) appointments of non-Federal employees whose public or private enterprise positions are brought into the competitive service under 5 CFR 316.701; and (3) appointments and conversions to career and career-conditional employment made under special authorities covered in 5 CFR 315.

Noncompetitive Eligibles: Individuals who can be placed in a vacant position without competition, e.g., through promotion, reassignment, reinstatement, transfer, change to lower grade, or the use of a special appointing authority, based on meeting all qualification and eligibility requirements, e.g., education and/or experience, career ladder, time in grade, etc.

Open Opportunities: Open Opportunities is a government wide program offering professional development opportunities to current federal employees and internships to students. The program facilitates collaboration and knowledge sharing across the Federal Government.

Preference Eligible: A veteran, spouse, widow, or parents, who meets the definition provided in 5 U.S.C. § 2108. They are also afforded higher retention standing in the event of a reduction-in-force (see 5 U.S.C. § 3502). Preference does not apply to in-service placement action such as promotions. (Refer to OPM Vet Guide)

Priority Consideration: The referral and consideration of candidates who are entitled (based on having something happen to them such as being affected by a reduction-in-force), before considering other candidates.

Prohibited Personnel Practices (PPP): Employment-related activities that are banned in the federal workforce because they violate the merit system through some form of employment discrimination, retaliation, improper hiring practices, or failure to adhere to laws, rules, or regulations that directly concern the merit system principles.

Promotion: Advancement from one grade to another within a pay schedule, or from the equivalent of one grade to another from one pay schedule to another.

Qualification Standards. Applicants who do not meet the minimum qualification requirements for the position are deemed “not qualified” and receive no further consideration.

Quality Ranking Factor (QRF): Job related KSAs, documented through job analysis, used in rating and ranking all eligible candidates to distinguish the best qualified ones.

Rating and Ranking: The determination of best qualified candidates based on the degree to which each candidate meets the quality ranking factors (KSAs) of the position. This process is completed by a human resources specialist, subject matter expert, or an evaluation panel.

Reassignment: A change of an employee from one position to another, in the same grade, and in the same agency.

Reemployment Priority List (RPL): The RPL is the mechanism agencies use to give reemployment consideration to their former competitive service employees separated by a RIF or who have fully recovered from a compensable injury after more than one year. The RPL must be cleared before filling any competitive service position, regardless of the duration of the

appointment, and whether the organization plans to make a temporary, term, or permanent appointment.

Reduction in Force (RIF): A management process that may be required for such reasons as reorganization, lack of work, shortage of funds, insufficient personnel ceiling, or the exercise of certain reemployment or restoration rights. A furlough of more than 30 calendar days or of more than 22 discontinuous calendar days is also a RIF.

Reinstatement: The reemployment of a former employee with competitive status.

Repromotion: Noncompetitive promotion or placement, permanent or temporary, of an employee to a grade or FPL previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.

Schedule A: The Schedule A appointing authority for people with certain disabilities, 5 CFR 213.3102(u), is an excepted service authority that agencies can use to appoint individuals, including veterans who have a psychiatric, intellectual or severe physical disability (5 CFR 213.3102(u)).

Selective Placement Factor (SPF): Mandatory KSAs that are essential for successful performance in the position to be filled, in addition to the basic qualifications outlined in OPM Qualification Standards. Applicants not meeting this factor are ineligible for further consideration. Selective placement factors must be job related and their validity documented through job analysis and the position description.

Special Selection Priority (SSP): A program that provides priority placement to eligible employees under both CTAP and ICTAP. The CTAP program is administered by DOI and provides special selection priority for displaced/surplus DOI employees within the local commuting area and within the prescribed time frames indicated in the JOA. Each Federal agency administers the SSP placement for displaced employees outside of their agency called ICTAP.

Specialized Experience: Experience defined in a JOA to provide detailed information about the KSA's required to perform successfully the duties of the position, and that is typically in or related to the position to be filled.

Status Applicant: Refers to those individuals who are current or former Federal civilian employees who hold or held non-temporary appointments in the competitive service, not the excepted service.

Subject-Matter Expert (SME): A person with bona fide expert knowledge about what it takes to do a particular job. Former and current first-level supervisors are normally good SMEs. Superior incumbents in the same or very similar positions and other individuals may also be used as SMEs if they have current and thorough knowledge of the job's requirements. An SME may provide input on qualifications determinations if they are not the Selecting Official and if all applicant identifying information has been removed. An SME who provides input on qualification determinations should not be a panel member.

Time-to-Hire (T2H): T2H data is measured and reported in calendar days, as informed by the OPM End-to-End Hiring Roadmap's 80 day Hiring Model, which begins with the *Hiring Need Validated Date*, based on each individual hiring action/request. T2H is counted for *all* hires, not just hires from a Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA), with DOI reporting T2H from the time the manager validates the need, until the tentative officer is accepted and until entrance on Duty (EOD).

Temporary Appointment: A time limited appointment not to exceed one year but could be less (5 CFR 316).

Temporary Promotion: A promotion to a higher graded position for a specified period of time to accomplish project work, fill positions temporarily pending reorganization or downsizing, or meet other temporary needs. Temporary promotions for more than 120 days are subject to competitive procedures. Service during the previous 12 months in higher graded positions either by noncompetitive temporary promotion or detail counts toward the 120-day limit. Temporary promotions can be made in any increment up to a maximum period of 5 years. Temporary

promotions may be made permanent when such a possibility was publicized in the original competition notice.

Term Appointment: A time limited appointment for at least one year but not to exceed four years (5 CFR 316).

Time in Grade (TIG): TIG applies to advancement to a General Schedule position in the competitive service by an individual who, within the previous 52 weeks, held a General Schedule position under non-temporary appointment in the competitive or excepted service in the executive branch, unless excluded in 5 CFR 300.603.

Transfer: A change of an employee, without a break in service of one full workday, from a position in one agency to a position in another agency.

Unclassified Duties: A set of duties and responsibilities that have not been officially classified, i.e., assigned a title, series, and grade level. A short statement of duties and responsibilities must accompany the request for detail of an employee if a job description is not available.

USA Hire: An online assessment program designed by a team of Industrial/Organizational psychologists at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to meet the hiring needs of Government agencies.

USA Staffing: The Federal Government's Talent Acquisition System, used to recruit, evaluate, assess, certify, select, and onboard talent.

USAJOBS: The official job site of the United States Federal government. This website is the centralized site for most Federal agencies to post JOA's and for applicants to view the status of their applications on-line.

Veterans Employment and Opportunities Act (VEOA): Amendment to 5 USC 3304 to allow eligible veterans to compete for vacancies under agency merit promotion procedures. To receive consideration under the VEOA appointing authority, a veteran must be a preference eligible or a veteran separated after three or more years of continuous active service performed under honorable conditions. A veteran, who is released under honorable conditions shortly before completing a three-year tour of continuous active service, is also eligible for a VEOA appointment. A VEOA eligible, separated 30 or less calendar days prior to completion of the three-year active duty service requirement, is eligible to receive consideration for DOI vacancies.

Veterans Preference: A special privilege that entitles qualifying veterans or their family members to certain advantages in consideration for Federal employment. Applicable only when referring VRA applicants.

Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA): The VRA authority allows agencies can appoint an eligible veteran without competition. The candidate does not have to be on a list of eligibles but must meet the qualification requirements for the position. The VRA is an excepted appointment to a competitive service position up to the GS-11 level (or equivalent). Positions filled through a VRA can have promotion potential higher than GS-11. After two years of satisfactory service, the veteran will be converted to a career conditional appointment in the competitive service. Many candidates eligible for VRA appointments apply under Merit Promotion announcements.

Qualified: Eligible candidates who possess the KSAs which clearly exceed the minimum qualifications requirements for the position, as determined by the crediting plan.

Quality Step Increase (QSI): A QSI is an additional within-grade increase (WGI) used to recognize and reward General Schedule (GS) employees at any grade level who display outstanding performance. A QSI has the effect of moving an employee through the GS pay range faster than by periodic step increases alone.

Within grade Increases (WGI): Each General Schedule (GS) grade has 10 steps. Within-grade increases (WGIs) or step increases are periodic increases in a GS employee's rate of basic pay from

one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade. For WGI purposes, an employee's rate of basic pay is the rate of pay fixed by law or administrative action for the position held by the employee before any deductions and exclusive of additional pay of any kind. See Appendix H: General Schedule/Promotions/WIGI/QSI.

APPENDIX B: THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS OVERVIEW CHART

Proposed Action	Position	And	Competition Required
Reassignment	At same grade under same pay schedule	Position is one with known promotion potential and employee will gain eligibility for noncompetitive career promotion to grade higher than previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service	Yes
		Position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Change to lower grade	Lower grade under same pay schedule	Position is one with known promotion potential and employees will gain eligibility for noncompetitive career promotion to grade higher than previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service	Yes
		Position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Assignment from one pay schedule to	Higher representative rate under a different pay schedule		Yes
	Same or lower representative rate under different pay schedule		No
		Employee's pay will be at same or lower rate, but position is one with known promotion potential	Yes
Assignment from one pay schedule to (cont.)	Same or lower representative rate under different pay schedule (cont.)	Employee's pay will be set at same or lower rate, but the position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Reinstatement or transfer	At a higher grade than previously held		Yes
	At same or lower grade than previously held	Position is one with known promotion potential and the employee will gain eligibility for noncompetitive career promotion to grade higher than previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service	Yes
		Position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Detail	Same grade and is not one with known promotion potential	Detail is for any length	No
	Higher grade or to position of same grade with known promotion potential	The detail is for 120 days or less	No
		The detail is for more than 120 days	Yes
Selection for training leading to promotion		Successful completion of training is a condition of eligibility for promotion	Yes

Promotion from position of known promotion potential	Originally identified as the target position to which employee would advance without competition Or Full performance level of a career ladder	Competitive procedures were fully applied at the time of placement into position of known promotion potential and all competitors were informed that selection for the entry position could lead to promotion without further competition	No
Promotion	Upgraded by classification	Incumbent's position upgraded without significant change in duties and responsibilities because of classification error or new or revised standards	No
		Incumbent's position reconstituted into a successor position with clearly and solely identifiable duties of the former position and there are no other employees serving in similar or identical positions within the same organization to whom the duties could have been assigned	No
		Incumbent's position reconstituted into successor position and position is not a clear successor or there are other employees serving in similar or identical positions within the same organization to whom the duties could have been assigned	Yes
Promotion	To position to which employee was detailed for training or evaluation	The employee was selected for detail under full competitive procedures and all competitors were informed that the detail could lead to promotion without further competition	No
Temporary promotion or extension of temporary promotion	Higher grade under same pay schedule Or Under a different pay schedule when action is processed as a promotion or represents a promotion under rules above	The temporary promotion is for 120 days or less total in 12-month period	No
Conversion of temporary promotion to permanent promotion		The employee was selected for temporary promotion under full competitive procedures and all competitors were informed that the temporary promotion could lead to permanent without further competition	No
Promotion without time limitation	Higher grade under same pay schedule	Is not covered by promotion rules above	Yes

APPENDIX C: OPM CTAP & ICTAP JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) LANGUAGE

The following two paragraphs are based on the language supplied by the OPM to explain CTAP and ICTAP. This language should be used in all JOAs.

CTAP/ICTAP: CTAP/ICTAP provides placement assistance to permanent Federal employees who are surplus, displaced, or involuntarily separated. Applicants claiming CTAP/ICTAP eligibility must submit a copy of their most recent performance appraisal, proof of eligibility, and most current SF-50 noting position, grade level, and duty location with their application. To be considered under CTAP/ICTAP, applicants must be well-qualified (i.e., meet the minimum qualification requirements, including any selective placement factors; education, and experience requirements), score at least 85 on the assessment questionnaire, and be able to perform the duties of the position upon entry.

For information on CTAP and ICTAP visit: <https://www.usajobs.gov/Help/working-in-government/unique-hiring-paths/federal-employees/career-transition/>"

CTAP/ICTAP Documentation: If you are applying under CTAP or ICTAP, you MUST submit proof of eligibility under 5 CFR 330.602(a) for CTAP and 5 CFR 330.704 for ICTAP. This includes a copy of the agency notice, a copy of your most recent performance rating, and a copy of your most recent SF-50 (Notification of Personnel Action) showing your position, grade level, and duty location. Please annotate your application to reflect that you are applying as a CTAP or ICTAP eligible.

APPENDIX D: ACCRETION OF DUTIES ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

5 CFR 300 & 335; GPPA, Ch. 14

Employee:
From (<u>Current</u> Title/Pay Plan/Series/Grade/Organization):
To (<u>Proposed</u> Title/Pay Plan/Series/Grade/Organization):
NONCOMPETITIVE PROMOTIONS BY ACCRETION OF DUTIES
Y/N
Review Item
Comments
Agency/bureau MPP allows promotion resulting from an employee’s position being classified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities. [5 CFR 335.103(c)(3)(ii)]
Note: Although this regulatory citation does not refer to this type of promotion as an accretion of duties promotion, an employee’s position being classified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities has often been referred to as an accretion of duties promotion.
The employee continues to perform the same basic functions.
The additional duties and responsibilities are expected to be performed on a regular basis.
The new position has no known promotion potential.
There are no other employees in similar or identical positions within the immediate organization to whom the accreted duties could be assigned.
The upgrading of the position does not involve the addition of any lead or supervisory duties to a formerly non-lead or non-supervisory position.
Basis for noncompetitive promotion based on accretion of duties can be reconstructed (current and proposed PDs, evaluation statements/justification; updated PD, signed OF-8 or equivalent, organizational charts, work samples, etc.)
Y/N
Review Item
Comments
Employee meets qualification requirements. (An employee whose position is upgraded as a result of a reclassification is considered to meet the qualification requirements of the upgraded position, since he/she has been performing the higher-graded work. However, employees must meet any licensure or certification requirements, as well as any minimum educational requirements.) [Qualification Standards Operating Manual, Section 2E(3)(d)]
Employee meets time-in-grade. (GS positions only.) 5 CFR 300 Subpart F
The new position does not involve reclassification from a one-grade interval series to a two-grade interval series or across occupational series.
There is no reduction-in-force or transfer of function being planned or implemented within the organization.
The complexity, range and/or level of difficulty in the duties and responsibilities of a position have gradually increased over a significant period of time, i.e., approximately one year or longer usually as an evolutionary process and not specifically as a result of management assigning new work or responsibilities, or the impact of the person in the job. The new duties comprise at least 25% of the employee’s time on a regular basis, are based on recurring responsibilities that require a higher level of competency, and the additional duties are considered major and grade-controlling, not merely new or different work.
The additional duties and responsibilities do not adversely affect another encumbered position, such as abolishing the position, eroding its current grade or reducing its known promotion potential.
The promotion is not based on projected duties.
Does employee meet criteria for noncompetitive accretion of duties promotion eligibility?

Classifier: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E: SUPERVISORY CERTIFICATION—DUE WEIGHT FOR PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS & AWARDS

SUPERVISORY CERTIFICATION:

DUE WEIGHT FOR PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS AND AWARDS

When reviewing merit promotion applicants, hiring officials have an obligation to consider performance appraisals and awards for each merit promotion candidate on a used certificate and must give due weight to these in the merit promotion selection process.

Performance appraisals are a tool for evaluating the candidate’s work habits and past performance of duties and can assist you as the hiring official in determining how well the candidate will perform in the particular job being filled. The more a candidate’s background reflects the knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies (through work experience, training related to the position being filled, outside activities, performance appraisals, awards, and supplemental information) required for the position to be filled the more credit he/she should be given.

This Supervisory Certification form must be completed and signed for each used certificate of eligibles. Signing the form means you have reviewed any provided performance appraisal and/or award documentation for each candidate on the certificate, and it was given due weight consideration during your selection evaluation process. Considerations should be given to how recent the completed performance appraisal, award, or comparable documentation of work performance are, and how closely the duties mentioned relate to the position being filled.

CERTIFICATE NUMBER: _____

In accordance with 5 CFR 335.103(b)(3), I have reviewed all provided performance appraisal and/or award documentation and it was given due weight consideration during my selection evaluation process.

Hiring Official Signature

Date

APPENDIX G: GUIDANCE ON DEVISING CREDITING PLANS

A crediting plan (or rating schedule/evaluation plan) is a plan developed to rate and rank candidates for a specific position. It is designed to measure the level at which eligible applicants possess the job-related competencies that are necessary for successful performance in the job to be filled. This is done through a review of the applicant's total education, training, experience, activities, awards, supervisory appraisals, and background in relation to each competency identified. Validity refers to the accuracy with which the crediting plan identifies the best-qualified candidates. Careful construction of the crediting plan based on a job analysis and consistent application of the evaluation criteria developed during that analysis are key elements in the preparation and use of a valid crediting plan.

In accordance with Federal regulations (5 CFR 300.103 and 5 CFR 335.103; 29 USC 1607), a job analysis must be conducted when filling a position. A job analysis is defined as a systematic examination of a position to determine the duties and worker characteristics which are important for successful job performance. The job analysis is used to document the relationship between the basic duties and responsibilities and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the duties and responsibilities. To conduct a job analysis, the servicing personnel practitioner meets with the selecting official and/or a subject matter expert. The following guides are useful for preparing the job analysis:

- (a) Office of Personnel Management Qualifications Standards Guidebook;
- (b) Official position description;
- (c) Classification standards and evaluation statements;
- (d) Functional statements;
- (e) Organization charts;
- (f) Occupational literature; and
- (g) Performance standards.

Conducting the Job Analysis. The first step is to identify and record the major duties of the position. Next to each duty, list the competencies necessary to perform those duties. A competency may pertain to more than one duty. A competency may include:

- (a) Knowledge - A body of information applied directly to the performance of a function. It includes information about persons, places, facts, events, systems, ideas, theories, methods, procedures, principles, concepts, or cases, that a person mentally possesses as a result of formal education, training, or personal experience.
- (b) Skill - A present, observable competence to perform a task with ease and proficiency. It often requires the use of equipment, machinery, or tools and implies measurable performance.
- (c) Ability - A present competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product. It is often broader and more abstract than skills or knowledge.

After identifying all the competencies and characteristics, you must further refine them.

- (a) Which competencies can be rated from an application and which must be evaluated by another method, e.g., interviews, reference checks, written tests, or assessment centers? Generally, when developing a crediting plan, you should list as rating criteria only those competencies that can be evaluated from an application or other supplementary written information.
- (b) Which are necessary to have entering on the job and which may be picked up at a later date after a reasonable amount of training? Those necessary for immediate performance are selective factors. They should not be so stringent that they disqualify all but those people

who may already be working in the office. Program knowledge can often be learned on the job. They often are not appropriate selective factors for lower grade positions. Selective factors should not be those things that can be learned in the position but something that must be brought from outside, for example, knowledge of a language other than English.

- (c) Of those competencies that remain, which are most important to doing the work? How do the competencies rank against each other? (These considerations are important in order to document weighting.) When determining its importance, you should consider the amount of time a competency will be used, the difficulty/complexity of the competency, and the consequences of performing the competency well or poorly. Importance can be stated by a 1, 2, 3 scale (Most important - least important) with documentation as to why that "rating" was chosen. Once these determinations have been made, you should have left a reasonable number of competencies (3-5) to use in an actual job analysis/crediting plan. Make sure your competencies are properly described as they pertain to the position.

**APPENDIX H: FAQ—GENERAL SCHEDULE (GS) PAY SYSTEM:
PROMOTIONS/WIGI/QSI**

Question	Answer	OPM URL
<p>What is the General Schedule classification and pay system?</p>	<p>The General Schedule (GS) classification and pay system covers the majority of civilian white-collar Federal employees in professional, technical, administrative, and clerical positions. GS classification standards, qualifications, pay structure, and related human resources policies (e.g. general staffing and pay administration policies) are administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on a Government wide basis.</p> <p>The General Schedule has 15 grades - GS-1 (lowest) to GS-15 (highest). Each grade has 10 step rates (steps 1-10) that are each worth approximately 3% of the employee's salary. Within- grade step increases are based on an acceptable level of performance and longevity (waiting periods of 1 year at steps 1-3, 2 years at steps 4-6, and 3 years at steps 7-9). It normally takes 18 years to advance from step 1 to step 10 within a single GS grade if the employee remains in that single grade. However, employees with outstanding (or equivalent) performance ratings may be considered for additional quality step increases (maximum of one per year).</p>	<p>http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/general-schedule/</p>
<p>How do General Schedule Promotions work?</p>	<p>GS employees may advance to higher grades by promotion at certain intervals (generally after at least a year), as determined by OPM regulations and qualification standards and DOI policies, up to the full promotion potential advertised in the job announcement. After that, competition under merit system principles is necessary to advance to a higher GS grade. Generally, a GS promotion increase is equal to at least two steps at the GS grade immediately before promotion to the higher GS grade.</p>	<p>http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/general-schedule/</p>
<p>What are GS Pay Adjustments, Locality Pay, and Special Rates?</p>	<p>The GS base pay schedule is usually adjusted annually each January with an across-the-board pay increase on nationwide changes in the cost of wages and salaries of private industry workers. Most GS employees are also entitled to locality pay, which is geographic-base percentage rate that reflects pay levels for non-Federal workers in certain geographic areas as determined by surveys conducted by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.</p> <p>GS employees on foreign areas are not eligible for locality pay. Special Rates are salary rates higher than the normal GS rates. These rates are approved by OPM based on serious difficulties in staffing certain occupations at GS grade levels in certain geographic areas.</p>	<p>http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/general-schedule/</p>
<p>What are within-grade increases or step increases?</p>	<p>Within-grade increases (WGIs) or step increases are periodic increases in a General Schedule (GS) employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of his or her position to the next higher step of that grade. For WGI purposes, an employee's rate of basic pay is the rate of pay fixed by law or administrative action for the position held by the employee before any deductions and exclusive of additional pay of any kind.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p>
<p>Who in the GS can earn WGIs?</p>	<p>Employees who occupy permanent positions earn WGIs upon meeting the following three requirements established by law: (1) The employee's performance must be at an acceptable level of competence. To meet this, an employee's most recent performance rating of record must be at least Level 3 ("Fully Successful" or equivalent). (2) The employee must have completed the required waiting period for advancement to the next higher step. (3) The employee must not have received an "equivalent increase" in pay during the waiting period.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p>

<p>What is meant by Permanent Position for WGI purposes?</p>	<p>Permanent position means a position filled by an employee whose appointment is not designated as temporary and does not have a definite time limitation of 1 year or less. Permanent position includes a position to which an employee is promoted on a temporary or term basis for at least 1 year.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p>
<p>What are the required WGI waiting periods and when do they begin?</p>	<p><u>Step 1 to Step 2</u>: 52 weeks of creditable service at the Step 1. <u>Step 2 to Step 3</u>: 52 weeks of creditable service at the Step 2. <u>Step 3 to Step 4</u>: 52 weeks of creditable service at the Step 3. <u>Step 4 to Step 5</u>: 104 weeks of creditable service at Step 4. <u>Step 5 to Step 6</u>: 104 weeks of creditable service at the Step 5. <u>Step 6 to Step 7</u>: 104 weeks of creditable service at the Step 6. <u>Step 7 to Step 8</u>: 156 weeks of creditable service at the Step 7. <u>Step 8 to Step 9</u>: 156 weeks of creditable service at the Step 8. <u>Step 9 to Step 10</u>: 156 weeks of creditable service at the Step 9.</p> <p>A WGI waiting period begins upon (1) first appointment in the Federal service, (2) receiving an "equivalent increase," or (3) after a period of nonpay status and/or a break in service in excess of 52 calendar weeks.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p> <p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p>
<p>What is considered an "equivalent increase" for GS employees?</p>	<p>An equivalent increase is considered to occur at the time of any of the following personnel actions:</p> <p>A within-grade increase, excluding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) a quality step increase granted under 5 CFR part 531, subpart E, or (2) an interim WGI if that increase is later terminated under 5 CFR 531.414; <p>A promotion (permanent or temporary) to a higher grade, including the promotion of an employee receiving a retained rate under 5 CFR 359.705 or 5 CFR part 536 that does not result in a pay increase, but excluding (1) a temporary promotion if, at the end of that temporary promotion, the employee is returned to the grade from which promoted, or (2) a promotion to a higher-graded supervisory or managerial position when the employee does not satisfactorily complete a probationary period established under 5 U.S.C. 3321(a)(2) and is returned to a position at the lower grade held before the promotion;</p> <p>Application of the maximum payable rate rule in 5 CFR 531.221 that results in a higher step rate within the employee's GS grade; or</p> <p>Application of the Superior qualifications and special needs pay-setting authority in 5 CFR 531.212 that results in a higher step rate within the employee's GS grade.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p>
<p>What is the effective date of a WGI?</p>	<p>A WGI is effective on the first day of the first pay period beginning on or after the completion of the required waiting period (5 U.S.C. 5335 and 5 CFR 531.412).</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/within-grade-increases/</p>

<p>What is a quality step increase (QSI) and how does it affect a within- grade increase?</p>	<p>A QSI is a faster-than-normal WGI used to reward employees at any GS grade level who display high quality performance. To be eligible, employees must: (1) be below step 10 of their grade level; (2) receive the highest rating available on their performance appraisal; (3) demonstrated sustained performance of high quality; and (4) have not received a QSI within the preceding 52 consecutive calendar weeks. A QSI does not affect the timing of an employee's next regular WGI unless the QSI places the employee in step 4 or step 7 of his or her grade. In these cases, the employee becomes subject to the full waiting period for the new step--i.e., 104 or 156 weeks, and the time an employee has already waited counts towards the next increase. The employee receives the full benefit of receiving a WGI at an earlier date and has not lost any time creditable towards his or her next WGI.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-administration/factsheets/quality-step-increase/</p>
<p>What is the Federal Wage System?</p>	<p>The Federal Wage System (FWS) was developed to make the pay of Federal blue-collar workers comparable to prevailing private sector rates in each local wage area.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/federal-wage-system/facts-about-the-federal-wage-system/</p>
<p>How does the FWS compare to the GS pay system?</p>	<p>There are a number of differences between the FWS and the GS in terms of occupational coverage, geographic coverage, and pay adjustment cycles because separate laws and regulations authorize different surveys and methodologies. GS locality payments, which are authorized under the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990, are based on a comparison of Federal and Non-Federal pay. Each January, the law provides for GS employees to receive a general across the board increase based on the 12 month increase (if any) in the Employment Cost Index, plus an increase, if warranted based on the local cost of labor for white-collar occupations in each of the 32 GS locality pay areas. On the other hand, the FWS operates under carefully regulated procedures OPM has developed cooperatively with Federal agencies and labor organizations over a 30-year period. These procedures are not static but have been continually updated based on the advice of the Federal Prevailing Rate Advisory Committee.</p>	<p>https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/pay-systems/federal-wage-system/facts-about-the-federal-wage-system/</p>

APPENDIX I: FEDERAL WAGE PAY SYSTEM (FWS)

The Federal Wage System (FWS) is a uniform pay-setting system that covers Federal appropriated fund and non-appropriated fund blue-collar employees who are paid by the hour. FWS positions are craft, trade, and laboring positions and include several different pay plans (WS, WG, WL, etc.). The system's goal is to make sure that Federal trade, craft, and laboring employees within a local wage area who perform the same duties receive the same rate of pay. The FWS includes 130 appropriated fund and 118 non-appropriated fund local wage areas. Successful labor-management partnership is the hallmark of the FWS, with labor organizations involved in all phases of administering the pay system.

Under this uniform pay system Pay will be the same as the pay of other similar Federal jobs in the wage area, and the pay will be in line with pay for similar private sector jobs in the wage area.

To review more information on the FWS Pay System, please see OPM's [Fact Sheet: Federal Wage System](#) and the [FWS Overview](#)

References

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)

5 CFR 213	Excepted Service
5 CFR 300	Employment (General) including TIG (Subpart F)
5 CFR 302	Employment in the Excepted Service
5 CFR 307	Veterans Recruitment Appointments
5 CFR 310	Employment of Relatives
5 CFR 315	Career and Career-Conditional Employment
5 CFR 316	Temporary and Term Employment
5 CFR 330	Recruitment, Selection, and Placement (General)
5 CFR 335	Promotion and Internal Placement
5 CFR 338	Qualification Requirements (General)
5 CFR 340	Other Than Full-Time Career Employment
5 CFR 351	Reduction in Force
5 CFR 572	Agency Authority
5 CFR 720	Affirmative Employment Programs

DOI Departmental Manuals (DM) and Personnel Bulletins (PB)

370 DM 300	Employment (General)
370 DM 315	Career and Career-Conditional Employment
370 DM 330	Recruitment, Selection and Placement
370 DM 335	Promotion and Internal Placement, DOI Merit Promotion Plan
370 DM 338	Qualification Requirements
370 DM 430	Performance Management System
370 DM 771	Administrative Grievance Procedures
<u>PB 99-6: Travel, Transportation, and Relocation Expenses</u>	
<u>PB 11-06: Career Transition Assistance Plan</u>	
<u>Career Transition Assistance Plan Memorandum, August 4, 2010</u>	
<u>PB 01-03: Career and Career-Conditional Employment—Probation</u>	
<u>PB 06-01: Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentives</u>	
<u>PB 17-13: Excepted Service Policy</u>	
<u>PB 18-03: Position Management and Position Classification Policy and Handbook</u>	
<u>PB 20-09: Time to Hire Reporting Requirements</u>	
<u>PB 20-14: Merit Promotion Shared Certificate Policy</u>	
<u>PCS and Travel Regulations</u>	

Title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.)

U.S.C. Ch. 33	Examination, Selection, and Placement
U.S.C. 2108a	Treatment of Certain Individuals (veterans and preference eligibles)
U.S.C. 2301	Merit System Principles
U.S.C. 2302	Prohibited Personnel Practices

U.S.C. 3502 Order of Retention
U.S.C. 3304 Competitive service

Office of Personnel Management

Job Analysis and Job Assessment Tools

Qualifications and Classification Standards

Human Capital Management—Hiring Reform

End to End Hiring Initiative

Time to Hire (T2H) Reporting Requirements

The Employee’s Guide to Career Transition (CTAP, ICTAP, RPL)

Types of Appointments

Guide to Data Standards

Miscellaneous

Presidential Memorandum—Improving the Federal Recruitment & Hiring Process