

TITLE - 7 AGRICULTURE

SUBCHAPTER S - PERSONNEL

PART 2045 - General

SUBPART C - MERIT PROMOTION PROGRAM

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PART 2045 - GENERAL

SUBPART C - Merit Promotion Program

§2045.101 General.

(a) This Instruction provides policies and procedures in accordance with Federal Personnel Manual (FPM) 335 and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Merit Promotion Plan for the Merit Promotion Program for Rural Development. This Instruction supplements information contained in FPM 335 and USDA, Merit Promotion Plan.

(b) If there is any item in the Merit Promotion Plan which conflicts with any negotiated Union Agreement, the Union Agreement will take precedence over the Merit Promotion Plan item during the life of the present negotiated Union Agreement.

(c) This Instruction governs the staffing of all competitive positions (i.e., General Schedule, General Merit, and Federal Wage System) through the grade of GM-15. This Instruction does not apply to positions in the excepted service or the Senior Executive Service.

§2045.102 Policy.

(a) It is the policy of Rural Development to fill positions efficiently and on the basis of merit without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, non-disqualifying handicap, or age.

(b) The objective of both the USDA and Rural Development in the area of merit promotion is: (1) bring the best qualified candidates to the attention of management; (2) give employees an opportunity to receive fair, equitable, and appropriate consideration for higher level jobs; (3) provide an incentive for employees to improve their performance and develop their knowledges, skills, and abilities; and (4) provide career opportunities for employees.

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Personnel
General

(c) The policy does not guarantee that employees will be promoted, nor does it require that a vacancy be filled by promotion. Merit promotion is but one means to fill a position. When fully qualified candidates for positions can be obtained through other means of recruitment (i.e., reassignment, transfer, reinstatement, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) register of eligibles, special appointing authorities, direct hire, change to lower grade, etc.), these methods may be properly used concurrently with, or to the exclusion of, the merit promotion process. Once initiated, the merit promotion process may be cancelled at any time management elects to fill the position(s) through other recruitment source(s). Management may cancel the merit promotion process if they chose not to fill the position.

(d) The following officials are responsible for the administration and operation of this program in their jurisdictional areas:

(1) Director, Personnel Division

- (i) Positions in the National Office;
- (ii) GM-14 and above positions in the Finance Office;
- (iii) GM-13 and above positions in State Offices;
- (iv) All State Administrative Officers; and,
- (v) All Personnel Management Specialists - This may be redelegated in certain situations.

(2) State Directors - All State, District, and County Office positions (except as cited above) under his/her jurisdiction.

(3) Assistant Administrator, Finance Office - All positions in the Finance Office at the GM-13 level and below.

§2045.103 Competitive procedures.

The competitive procedures established by this plan apply to the following placement actions:

(a) Temporary promotions of more than 120 days (prior service under all temporary promotions and details to higher-graded positions during the previous 12 months count toward this limitation). If competitive temporary promotions do not become permanent and are terminated, employees will be returned to the position and pay level held prior to the temporary promotions.

(b) Details of more than 120 days to either a higher-graded position or to a position with known promotion potential (prior service under all temporary promotions and details to higher graded positions during the previous 12 months count toward this limitation). Details in excess of 30 days to Program Chief, District Director, and Administrative Officer positions must be approved in the National Office by the appropriate Deputy Administrator.

(c) Transfer from another Federal agency to a higher grade position than the position currently held, or to a position with known promotion potential over and above the promotion potential of the position currently held.

(d) Reassignment or demotion to a position with more promotion potential than the position last held in the competitive service (except as permitted by Reduction-in-Force (RIF) regulations).

(e) Reinstatement to a permanent or temporary position at a higher grade than the person last held in a non-temporary position in the competitive service.

(f) Training which is part of an authorized training agreement, part of a promotion program, or required before an employee is qualified for reassignment to a different occupational series or considered for a promotion.

(g) Term promotions that are in excess of 2 years but not more than 4 years in duration.

§2045.104 Exceptions to merit staffing procedures.

(a) Career promotion within a classification series if competition was held at an earlier stage; that is, the employee was selected from an OPM register or selected for a position advertised as having promotion potential to the next higher grade. Noncompetitive promotions can be made in this situation only if all the following conditions exist:

(1) The employee was originally selected from an OPM register or by competitive promotion procedures. Conversion to a career-conditional appointment under the Veterans Readjustment, Cooperative Education Program, Handicapped Program, Employment Program, or other OPM approved special emphasis conversion authority meets this requirement.

(2) At the time of competition, all applicants were made aware that the initial selection could lead to a promotion. Vacancy announcements for internal actions and Form OF-5 (Inquiry as to Availability) for selection from OPM register, which are sent to all applicants, are to indicate the full performance level and any occupational series changes that are planned. Vacancy announcements and Form OF-5 document the noncompetitive action.

(3) The employee is in a classification series in which grade-building experience is acquired and promotion is determined by demonstrated knowledges, skills, and abilities required to perform at the higher grade level, and a fully successful or higher performance rating. This determination is to be made by the immediate supervisor in consultation with the second level supervisor. After a careful review is made, the decision is documented in Part D, of the Standard Form SF-52, "Request for Personnel Action."

(4) If a group of employees is to be considered for career promotion, there must be a sufficient number of positions at the next higher level for all employees in the group. If there are not enough positions to promote all applicants who

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meet time-in-grade requirements and who have demonstrated ability to perform at the next higher level, competitive procedures must be used.

(5) The applicant meets X-118 qualifications and time-in-grade requirements.

(6) Repromotion of an employee who was separated through RIF and reinstated at a lower grade than that held prior to separation.

(b) Promotion based on reclassification when:

(1) No significant change occurs in duties or responsibilities and the position is upgraded due to issuance of a new classification standard or the correction of a classification error.

(2) The position is upgraded due to the accretion of duties and responsibilities and all of the following provisions are met:

(i) The employee continues to perform the same basic function;

(ii) The major duties of former position are absorbed into the new position;

(iii) The new position has no further promotion potential;

(iv) No other positions within the organizational unit are adversely affected;

(v) The new position is not a reclassification from nonsupervisory to supervisory; and

(vi) There is no other employee qualified or in direct line for a promotion to the position within the organizational unit.

(3) See Exhibit B of this Instruction for procedural steps for securing approval of non-competitive reclassification actions based on accretion of duties.

- (4) An individual may not be given a promotion from a one-grade interval series to a two-grade interval series through an accretion of duties promotion.
- (c) Competitive appointment from an OPM or Special Examining Unit (SEU) certificate of eligibles or under direct hire authority.
- (d) Reinstatement to a position with no more promotion potential than the last grade held in a nontemporary position under competitive procedures.
- (e) The reassignment, demotion, or promotion of any Federal permanent employee from a position having known promotion potential to a position having no higher potential.
- (f) Selection from the Reemployment Priority List (RPL) to the same or lower grade level than the position from which the candidate was separated or demoted. Noncompetitive selection from the RPL automatically removes the individual from the RPL.
- (g) Transfer of employees of other Federal agencies to the same or lower grade level with no higher promotion potential than their currently held position.
- (h) A temporary promotion of 120 days or less.
- (i) An action taken as a remedy for failure to receive proper consideration in a competitive promotion action.
- (j) Permanent promotion to a position held under temporary promotion when:
- (1) The assignment was originally made under competitive procedures; and
 - (2) It was made known under competitive procedures to all competitors at the time that it might lead to a permanent promotion.
- (k) Placement as a result of a RIF is covered under FPM Chapter 351.

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(l) Repromotion to a grade or position from which an employee was demoted within the Department without personal cause and not at his/her request (i.e., acceptance of a lower grade level position in lieu of RIF separation or acceptance of a lower grade level position when their organization is relocated as a result of a transfer of function). Competitive procedures of the promotion plan will not be used before noncompetitive consideration of these employees.

(m) A detail to a higher grade of 120 days or less.

§2045.105 Mandatory pre-recruitment actions.

Before taking any action to fill a vacancy, either competitively or noncompetitively, the servicing personnel office is responsible for ensuring the requirements pertaining to priority consideration are adhered to.

(a) The order of preference for employees entitled to priority consideration is:

(1) Employees downgraded through no fault of their own. These employees are entitled to priority consideration for a period of 2 years from the date he/she is notified of his/her priority placement rights.

(2) Employees entitled to priority consideration whenever reconstruction of a promotion action shows that, except for some error, (i.e., wrong qualification determination, failure to consider, improper rating, failure to follow competitive procedures, etc.), the employee would have appeared on a selection certificate. The employee shall be entitled to one bonafide consideration for the type of position previously applied for, under competitive procedures, for a period of 1 year.

(b) Selecting officials considering nonselection of the referred priority consideration employee shall provide written justification, which is to be submitted to the Administrator for prior approval.

(c) The process for placement of employees downgraded through no fault of their own, for National, Finance, and State Offices, is discussed in Exhibit C of this Instruction.

§2045.106 Applicant search.

All announcements will be placed in an area that is accessible to all employees; however, there are times an employee is absent for legitimate reasons, e.g. on details, on leave, at training courses, in the military, serving as jurors, etc. In these instances it is the responsibility of the employee's supervisor to make a reasonable effort to notify the employee of the announcements.

(a) Area of consideration.

(1) The area of consideration (AOC) refers to the geographical/organizational area in which it is expected sufficient high quality applicants may be located. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Affirmative Action goals should be considered in setting the AOC. The minimum AOC is as follows:

(i) The minimum AOC for GS-12 and below positions in the State, District, and County Offices will be State-wide. Recruitment may be extended to either Rural Development-wide, USDA-wide, or Government-wide by the State Director. Written justification signed by the State Director will be filed in the Merit Promotion File as a permanent document.

(ii) The minimum AOC for GS-12 and below positions in the National Office will be Rural Development-metro. Recruitment may be extended to either Rural Development-wide, USDA-wide, or Government-wide. Written justification will be filed in the Merit Promotion File as a permanent document.

(iii) The minimum AOC for GS-12 and below positions in the Finance Office will be in the Finance Office, St. Louis area. Recruitment may be extended to either Rural Development-wide, USDA-wide, or Government-wide. Written justification will be filed in the Merit Promotion File as a permanent document.

(iv) The minimum AOC for GM-13 and above positions in the National Office will be Rural Development-wide. Recruitment may be extended Government-wide. In the Finance Office, the

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minimum AOC for GM-13 and above positions will be St. Louis area Government-wide. Written justification will be filed in the Merit Promotion File as a permanent document.

(v) The minimum AOC for Program Chiefs at the GM-13, and District Directors at the GS-12/GM-13 will be Rural Development Nationwide and will be advertised by the National Office. Recruitment may be extended to USDA-wide or Government-wide. Written justification will be filed in the Merit Promotion File as a permanent document.

(vi) The minimum AOC for Administrative Officers at the GS-11, or GS-11/12, or GS-12/GM-13 will be Government-wide and will be advertised by the National Office.

(vii) The minimum AOC for Personnel Management Specialists will be Government-wide and will be advertised by the National Office. This may be redelegated in certain instances.

(2) Voluntary applications from Rural Development employees outside the minimum AOC must be considered. The AOC may not be used as a basis for refusing to consider applicants who are outside the area, but who are not required to compete under this plan (e.g. reinstatement, reassignment, transfer, etc.). Each State will establish their own internal system on acceptance and maintenance of a voluntary applicant file for employees in Rural Development.

(3) When a position is advertised Rural Development-wide or less, voluntary applications from persons outside the Agency will be accepted and basic qualifications and eligibility will be determined. If less than ten (10) basically qualified, eligible promotional applicants from within the advertised AOC are available, the selecting official may elect, on a discretionary basis, to have voluntary promotion applicants from outside the area receive further consideration. If ten (10) or more basically qualified eligible

promotion applicants are available from within the AOC voluntary promotion applicants from outside the area will receive no further consideration.

(4) Voluntary applications received from employees of USDA agencies other than Rural Development will be treated in the same manner as other voluntary applicants. No distinction will be made between USDA employees and other Government employees.

(5) The area of consideration may be broadened by readvertising the position and extending the area of consideration.

(b) Developing evaluation criteria. Upon receipt of the SF-52, the personnel specialist, as a minimum, will discuss with the supervisor distinguishing features of the job being filled, and enlist his/her assistance and input in developing evaluation criteria. The use of other subject matter experts is strongly encouraged. The evaluation criteria will be developed through a Job Analysis. For additional information refer to Exhibit G, H, and I of this Instruction.

(c) Vacancy announcement procedures.

(1) Vacancy announcements for all appropriate positions under recruitment will be prepared. The announcement will contain all required information or will advise applicants where information can be obtained. (See Exhibit D of this Instruction.)

(2) Each Rural Development office issuing announcements will maintain a master file of all current open announcements, which will be made available for review by an interested applicant.

(d) Duration of vacancy announcements. As a minimum, announcements will be open for 2 weeks (14 calendar days). Government-wide, USDA-wide, and Rural Development-wide announcements will be open for 30 calendar days. The duration of an announcement may vary depending on the circumstances, as documented.

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(e) Methods of locating applicants. Management officials may, at any point in the staffing process, select or not select from a promotion certificate or from any other appropriate source of applicants, and may consider, in any sequence, different sources of eligible applicants. The following applicant sources are illustrative, but not all inclusive: individual vacancy announcements, open continuous registers, direct hire, OPM certificates, reinstatement eligibles, Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA) appointments, 30 percent or more disabled veterans, severely handicapped eligibles, change to lower grade, reassignment, etc.

(f) Registers. Open continuous registers may be established, as needed, for frequently filled positions, and promotion certificates may be prepared as vacancies occur. Procedures for registers are the same as for other merit promotion cases, except that the same rating schedule will be used to rank all applicants. If changes occur in the position which require changes in the rating schedule, previous applicants must be re-rated against the new plan rating schedule. Multi-rating schedules are required for multi-grade announcements.

§2045.107 Application procedures.(a) General.

(1) All applicants for announced vacancies must provide the following:

(i) An SF-171, "Application for Federal Employment," with an original signature;

(ii) The most recent (within 18 months) performance appraisal. A written justification will be required if none has been received in the last 18 months;

(iii) Reinstatement/non-Rural Development applicants must submit a copy of his/her latest SF-50, "Notification of Personnel Action,"; and,

(iv) Specific documentation of experience and/or training for each knowledge, skill, and ability (KSA).

(2) Applications received without information requested in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) through (iv) of this section will disqualify the applicant from consideration for the position. A separate application package, including all required documents, must be submitted for each vacancy for which application is made. The personnel office will retain all documents submitted in response to a vacancy announcement. Copies of application packages will not be provided to applicants. Applicants will be notified of ineligibility and/or non-selection as soon as the selection is made and/or an announcement is cancelled.

(3) Supervisors and managers must notify eligible employees in their offices, who qualify, of announcements advertised during their temporary absence (e.g., on detail, leave, at training courses, 2-week active duty for employees in the Military Reserves, or other similar reasons), which have a closing date prior to their return to the office.

(b) Requirements for accepting applications.

(1) Applications will be accepted from all eligible employees within the announced area of consideration.

(2) Applications must be received in the personnel office by close of business on the closing date on the announcement.

(3) Applications will be accepted from qualified applicants with handicapped conditions who are eligible for appointments under Section 213.3102(t) or (u) of Schedule A, and from applicants who are 30 percent or more disabled veterans who have been certified by authorized agencies. If qualified, these applicants will be referred on a separate certificate to the selecting official.

(4) Applicants must meet time-in-grade and other qualifications requirements within 30 days from the closing date of the announcement or 30 days from each cutoff date for Open Continuous Registers.

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(5) Applications may be accepted from noncompetitive eligibles and those eligible for concurrent consideration who are outside the area of consideration. Applications for specific announcements from noncompetitive eligibles will not be accepted after the closing date of the announcement.

(6) The application must include enough information on which to make eligibility and/or qualifications determination, and must be legible and accurate.

(7) Applications will not be considered unless the SF-171 has an original signature, a most recent performance appraisal attached, and a separate sheet addressing the evaluation criteria.

§2045.108 Evaluation of employees for promotion and internal placement.

(a) To be considered basically qualified for the position, applicant must meet the minimum qualification standard prescribed by OPM, time-in-grade, time-after-competitive appointment within 30 days after the closing date of the announcement, or 30 days after each cutoff date for Open Continuous Registers.

(b) Selective factors must be used in determining eligibility when they are essential to successful performance in the position to be filled, and cannot be expected to be acquired during the training period customary for the position being filled. As such, they constitute a part of the minimum requirements for the position.

(c) Procedures outlined in the Job Qualification System for Trades and Labor Occupations (Handbook X-118C) will be used for Federal Wage System positions. Applicants must receive a score of two or more points on the screen-out element to meet basic eligibility requirements.

(d) Evaluation of basically qualified applicants.

(1) When there are six or more qualified applicants, the method shown in Exhibit E of this instruction must be used to determine the best qualified.

(2) When there are five or fewer qualified applicants eligible for consideration, the alternate method shown in Exhibit F of this instruction may be used to determine the best qualified. While it is still necessary to identify evaluation criteria based on job analysis and to evaluate applicants against this criteria, it is not necessary to apply a rating schedule using the alternate method in Exhibit F.

§2045.109 Promotion panel membership.

(a) For announcements which have six or more basically qualified applicants, a panel will be convened to rate the basically qualified applicants utilizing a rating schedule. The panel will have a minimum of three panel members whose role is to evaluate applicant credentials against a rating schedule developed by subject matter expert(s) for the position being filled. Each three member panel will consist of at least two subject matter experts, e.g., personnel specialists for personnel specialist positions. If a larger panel is used, a majority will be subject matter experts. One of the panel members will be designated as the Chairman. In the Finance Office, the Assistant Administrator will designate a Chairperson from the panel members prior to the panel convening. In the State Offices, the State Director will designate a Chairperson from the panel members prior to the panel convening. In the National Office, the Director and/or Deputy Director of the Personnel Division will designate a Chairperson prior to the panel convening. There will be one facilitator. The role of the facilitator is to ensure compliance with the requirements of merit promotion procedures and expedite the process. **The facilitator will emphasize, at the beginning, to the panel members that the ratings of the applicants and the panel members' discussions during**

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the panel process are confidential. The ratings of the applicants and panel members' discussions will not be discussed with anyone outside of the panel members and facilitator. The contribution of the facilitator is based on knowledge of merit promotion principles. This person does not serve as a panel member. A personnel representative may serve on panels at Agency option, either as a facilitator or a panel member, but one may not be a panel member and facilitator simultaneously.

(b) Panel members should be at or above the grade level of the journey level of the position being filled.

(c) To the extent possible, all merit promotion panels will have ethnic and racial balance, and include members of both sexes. Participation of an EEO representative as a non-voting observer is optional, but encouraged.

(d) Selecting officials or others participating in the final selection process by recommending or advising on final selection, may not serve as members of the promotion panel, but may serve as subject-matter experts in the job analysis process to develop KSA's important for the position.

§2045.110 Referral and selection.

(a) All certified promotional applicants will be referred to the selecting official in alphabetical order, unless otherwise stipulated by a union contract, within the grade level group for which referral is made, on "Promotion Certificate" Form RD 2045-3. Certificates will be valid for 30 days from the date of issue. However, if the selection certificate cannot be returned within 30 days, the personnel office will be contacted by telephone to request an extension. Extensions may be granted in 30-day increments; however, the total length of a certificate, including extensions, will not exceed 120 days.

(b) Noncompetitive eligibles will be referred on a separate certificate from promotional applicants. Selecting officials shall be asked if they want noncompetitive eligibles to be paneled with

competitive eligibles. If the selecting official says yes, then the noncompetitive eligibles will be paneled with competitive eligibles. Selecting officials may request a certificate of applicants who are eligible for noncompetitive referral after the close of the vacancy announcement.

(c) If the date of an initial certificate issued is less than 120 days old and another position (same grade, series, and location) becomes vacant, another selection may be made from the original list without advertisement. For example, a GS-1101-5, County Office Assistant in Berkley, South Carolina, is advertised and a promotion list is prepared. If, within 120 days from the date the initial certificate is issued, another GS-1101-5, County Office Assistant in Berkley, South Carolina, becomes vacant, a selection for the second vacancy may be made from the original list.

(d) Only the best qualified applicants will be certified to the selecting official. A reasonable number of best qualified applicants (normally 3 to 10) may be certified. If only one or two of the applicants are best qualified, the selecting official may make a selection or request that the area of consideration be extended.

(e) The selecting official must be provided with the applications and other related material of the best qualified applicants used by the panel in evaluating them (i.e., performance appraisals, awards, etc.).

§2045.111 Selection procedures.

(a) The selecting official is entitled to make the selection from any of the applicants on a selection certificate. Selecting officials must base their selection on one or more legitimate job-related reasons as to why the selectee may be expected to perform the job most successfully. If one applicant is interviewed on the selection certificate, all must be interviewed. On lateral reassignment eligibles, the selecting official may interview all or as many as he/she chooses after reviewing the applications. If necessary, interviews may be conducted by telephone. The interview is an important part of the selection process and is encouraged.

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(b) The selecting official is not required to select someone from the selection certificate. The selecting official may select from any appropriate source, such as reemployment priority lists, reinstatement, transfer, severely handicapped referrals, OPM certificates, or open competitive registers issued by the Agency under OPM delegated authority, VRA eligibles, or 30 percent or more disabled veteran eligibles, reassignments, changes to lower grade, etc.

(c) If management elects not to make a selection from the certified applicants, the personnel office may be consulted to help determine the best course of action to fill the position. If it is determined that there are an insufficient number of qualified applicants, the servicing personnel office should be consulted to discuss various recruitment options.

§2045.112 Release of employees and effective dates.

Employees selected under the provisions of this Instruction, whether for promotion, reassignment, demotion (voluntary change to lower grade), or detail, must be released by the losing supervisor. An employee selected should normally be released between 2 weeks and 30 days. This timeframe may vary depending upon the circumstances, e.g., relocation and/or transfer. Release dates should be coordinated between the gaining and receiving personnel units. If a dispute arises, the decision of when to release will be made by a senior management official (i.e., Assistant Administrator or above for the National Office; State Director for the States; and Assistant Administrator for the Finance Office) who has the authority to determine if the proposed action is in the best interest of Rural Development.

§2045.113 Prohibited practices.

(a) Employment or advocacy of relatives by public officials. A public official (See Exhibit A of this Instruction for definition of terms) in Rural Development may not appoint, employ, reassign, promote, or advance any relative (See Exhibit A of this Instruction) to the unit over which that official exercises jurisdiction or control. A public official also may not advocate a relative's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement

anywhere in Rural Development. A public official may not appoint, employ, reassign, promote, or advance the relative of any other public official in the USDA, if that official has advocated the action.

(b) Supervision of relatives. Rural Development employees may not supervise a relative either directly or indirectly. Direct supervision includes assigning responsibilities, granting leave, evaluating performance, approving training, evaluating for promotion, and taking or recommending adverse action. Indirect supervision involves sharing supervisory activities with the immediate supervisor of an employee by participating in a substantive way with the immediate supervisor in such activities as making work assignments, monitoring performance, and participating in promotion evaluation of the employee. Any instance of direct or indirect supervision of an employee by a relative shall be eliminated at the first reasonable opportunity (DPM 310, Subchapter 1, Section 1-3).

(c) Discrimination. Selection, and all procedures leading to selection, must be made without discrimination for any nonmerit reasons such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, marital status, nondisqualifying physical handicap, age, or membership/nonmembership in a labor organization. Discrimination for any of these reasons is a serious disciplinary offense. Each manager and supervisor has the obligation to ensure all candidates receive full consideration and should take no action which would either discourage or give the appearance of discouraging potential candidates from applying for a position. Supervisors and selecting officials will avoid practices that give employees the impression that a person was preselected for a job or that a selection was based on favoritism.

§2045.114 Records.

Personnel offices must maintain a record of each selection made under the plan for 2 years. This 2-year retention period will be extended if there is a formal grievance and/or EEO complaint filed. The record of the merit promotion case will be maintained by an appropriate employment officer/official until the grievance and/or EEO complaint is finalized. The record must contain sufficient information to allow complete reconstruction of the promotion action (See Exhibit J of this Instruction). All applications constitute a part of the merit staffing case file and will not be returned.

§2045.115 Information to employees.

(a) The Personnel Office is responsible for ensuring that each employee is given a copy of the USDA Merit Promotion Plan along with a copy of this Instruction.

(b) Employees will be reminded periodically about the existence and availability of the Merit Promotion Plan.

(c) Employees may request the following additional information from their personnel offices:

(1) About the plan.

(i) Explanations of any part of the Plan.

(ii) Details of supporting regulations.

(iii) The qualifications required for a position.

(iv) Details of the evaluation process.

(2) About a specification.

(i) Whether he/she was considered for promotion, and if so, whether he/she was found eligible on the basis of the minimum qualification requirements for the position

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(ii) If he/she was grouped among the best qualified.

(iii) Who was selected.

(iv) In what areas, if any, the employee should improve to increase chances for future promotion.

§§2045.116 - 2045.150 (Reserved)

Attachments: Exhibits A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Adverse Impact - a substantially different rate of selection in hiring, promoting, or other employment decision which works to the disadvantage of members of a race, sex, or ethnic group.

2. Area of consideration - the area in which the Agency makes an intensive search for eligible candidates in a specific promotion action. The minimum area of consideration is the area designated by the Promotion Plan in which the Agency should reasonably expect to locate enough high quality candidates, as determined by the Agency, to fill vacancies in the positions covered by the Plan. (When the minimum area of consideration produces enough high quality candidates and the Agency does not find it necessary to make a broader search, the minimum area of consideration and the area of consideration is the same.)

3. Best qualified candidates - are qualified candidates who rank at the top when compared with other eligible candidates for a position and are referred for consideration.

4. Career Ladder - the range of grades in an occupational series or specialization within an organization which represents the levels at which all employees are given grade-building experience and to which they may be noncompetitively promoted. There must be enough work classifiable at the highest grade so that there is a reasonable expectation that all employees in the given organization and occupational series or specialization can progress to that grade.

5. Certificate of Best Qualified/Selection Certificate - a list of candidates who received the highest scores in an evaluation process and whose qualifications clearly distinguish them from other candidates.

6. Demotion - the change of an employee to a lower grade when both the old and new positions are under the GS, GM, or any similar pay schedule, or under the same wage grade schedule, or a position with a lower rate of basic pay when both the old and new positions are under the same type ungraded schedule or in different pay-method categories.

7. Job Analysis - a systematic, documented review of the job to be filled to determine what knowledges, skills, abilities, and other characteristics the worker must bring to the job to perform successfully in a reasonable period of time.

8. Position change - a promotion, demotion, or reassignment made during an employee's continuous service within the Department. A position change by any of these methods may also involve a change of official headquarters or post of duty within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

9. Priority consideration - special consideration given to an employee as the result of his/her failure to receive proper consideration on a previous Merit Promotion action. This means that an aggrieved employee will be considered first for a Merit Promotion activity before other candidates. If the selecting official declines to select the aggrieved employee, documentation must be presented showing legitimate job-related reasons for the nonselection.

10. Promotion - a change of an employee while serving continuously within USDA;

a. To a higher grade when both the old and new positions are under the GS, GM, or the same type graded wage schedule; or

b. To a position with a higher rate of pay when the old and the new positions are under the same type ungraded wage schedule or in different pay method categories.

11. Promotion panel - a permanent or ad hoc committee of subject matter experts established to evaluate, compare, and rank employees for promotion.

12. Public Official - anyone who, by law, rule, regulation or delegation has appointment or promotion authority, or authority to recommend employees for appointment or promotion.

13. Qualified candidates - those candidates who meet established qualification requirements for the position.

14. Rating schedule - a scaled set of training, education and experience examples used to assign POINT values to portions of applicant's background that demonstrate possession of the required knowledge, skills, or abilities (KSA).
15. Reassignment - the change of an employee from one position to another without promotion or demotion while serving continuously with USDA.
16. Reinstatement - the noncompetitive reemployment as a career or career-conditional employee of a person formerly employed in the competitive service who had competitive status or was serving a probation when he/she was separated from service within the last 3 years following the date of their separation.
17. Relative - Aunt, brother, brother-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, father, father-in-law, first cousin, half brother, half sister, husband, mother, mother-in-law, nephew, niece, sister, sister-in-law, son, son-in-law, stepbrother, stepdaughter, stepfather, stepmother, stepsister, stepson, uncle, wife. Strict legal definition is applied to all of these terms; excluding spouses of nieces, spouses of uncles, spouses of sisters-in-law, etc.
18. Selective factors - are KSA's essential for satisfactory performance on the job which represent an addition to the basic standard for a position. The following are examples of appropriate selective factors for determining eligibility when the factors are essential for successful job performance:
- a. Ability to speak, read, and/or write a language other than English;
 - b. Knowledges and abilities pertaining to a certain program or mission, when these cannot readily be acquired after promotion; and
 - c. Ability in a functional area (for example, ability to evaluate alternative Automated Data Processing systems).
19. Term promotion - a promotion that is in excess of 2 years but not more than 4 years in duration.

20. Transfer - a change of an employee from a position in USDA to a position in another Government Agency or a change from a position in another Government Agency to USDA.

21. Validation - the demonstration of the job relatedness of a selection procedure.

22. Work behavior - a job-duty, task or activity expressed in operational terms, (e.g. writes technical reports; types statistical charts).

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RECLASSIFICATION
ACCRETION OF DUTIES

The following steps must be taken in order to process a promotion resulting from an employee's position being reclassified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities:

1. National, Finance, and State Officials must submit the following documentation to the National Office, Director, Personnel Division, for approval prior to noncompetitively promoting the incumbent:
 - a. A statement is to be prepared, signed, and dated by the supervisor which outlines all changes in duties and responsibilities which have occurred and the reason for those changes.
 - b. Documentation as to how these additional duties came to be assigned to one particular employee and not to another; or, why duties were not assigned among employees on a rotational basis.
 - c. An audit (desk audit, questionnaire, or telephone audit) of the position which reflects that the employee is performing at the higher grade level and not merely that the higher grade level duties are present or projected.
 - d. An analysis, which must address issues outlined in paragraph 2 (c), (d), and (e) of this exhibit must be completed by the Administrative Officer (AO)/Personnel Management Specialist (PMS) with a summary indicating why the changes are not considered to be the result of planned management action.
2. The State Director should also consider the following factors prior to submission of the request to noncompetitively promote an employee based on accretion of duties:
 - a. Length of time an incumbent has been performing the higher level duties and the likelihood these duties will continue to be assigned to this position in the future.

- b. A review of X-118 qualification standards to ensure that the incumbent can qualify for the higher grade level. This review should be in writing and should be retained by the Personnel Office for a period of 2 years after the accretion is approved.
- c. The nature of the work assigned to others in the office and the continuance of good position management principles in work organization.
- d. Management's knowledge of impact of additional duties on the grade of the position. If it can be reasonably assumed that the supervisor knowingly assigned additional duties which he/she knew were of a higher grade level, competitive procedures should be used.
- e. To what extent the previous duties were absorbed into the new one. If the position is entirely new and not an extension of the previous position, it is difficult to assume absence of planned management action.

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PRIORITY PLACEMENT PROCEDURES

1. The primary responsibility for placement of employees downgraded through no fault of their own is with the affected employee's Agency. The following are the priority procedures for employees downgraded through no fault of their own to facilitate their repromotion and, when necessary, provide training and developmental assignments to enhance repromotion opportunities. The same procedures apply in the National, Finance, and State Offices.

a. In the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area:

(1) An employee, who has been placed in a lower graded position through no fault of his or her own as a result of one of the following actions: A) an error in the prior classification of position; B) a change in classification standards without a change in duties and responsibilities; C) a change in the duties and responsibilities caused by a gradual erosion or by management action; or D) any other action that led to down-grading as a result of reduction-in-force procedures, has repromotion placement rights within his/her own agency for 2 years. Other agencies may consider this employee, but do not have to give the employee priority consideration. The total period of priority consideration entitlement is 2 years from the date the employee is notified of his/her priority placement rights.

(2) The Personnel Division, Operations Branch, shall maintain a priority placement list of all Rural Development downgraded employees in the National Office.

(3) The Personnel Division, Operations Branch, will establish a priority placement file for each employee containing an SF-171, "Application for Federal Employment" and current performance evaluation, plus documentation of all considerations of the employee within Farmers Home Administration and through referral to other U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies. Records of considerations must be retained for 2 years or until a Departmental Personnel Management Evaluation, whichever is first.

(4) Qualified downgraded employees must first be considered for vacancies before undertaking to staff the position by any other means.

(5) If there are job-related reasons for not placing a downgraded employee in the vacancy, these reasons must be fully documented and retained in the priority placement file.

(6) Repromotion job offers must be made in writing allowing the employee a reasonable time to respond (no less than three working days).

(7) Downgraded employees who refuse repromotion to a position, the grade or pay of which is equal to or greater than his/her retained grade and pay in their commuting area, are to be removed from the priority placement list and their benefits under grade and pay retention terminated. Employees must be notified in writing of this action.

b. The State and Finance Offices' priority placement plan will operate in the same manner as the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, except:

(1) The area where the downgraded employee has priority placement rights shall be the commuting area; and

(2) The downgraded employee's personnel office will be responsible for establishing priority placement lists and sending an SF-171 to other USDA agencies in the commuting area.

2. Rural Development activities in placing employees downgraded through no fault of their own will be subject to regular and recurring reviews by the USDA Office of Personnel. Where it is determined that employees have been improperly denied promotion, they shall have mandatory repromotion rights within Rural Development. Selecting officials considering denying repromotion to a basically qualified downgraded employee are cautioned to do so only for the most compelling job-related reasons. Written justification to bypass a downgraded employee must be submitted to the Deputy Administrator for Management for prior approval.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
PROCEDURES AND FORMS

1. At a minimum, a vacancy announcement must contain the following information:

- a. Name of Agency and announcement number.
- b. Position title, series and grade (number of positions if filling more than one position). If the position is other than full-time permanent, state the type (i.e., part-time, number of hours under the part-time schedule, intermittent, temporary appointment, etc.). If the announcement is for a temporary promotion, state this fact.
- c. Promotion potential, if any.
- d. Location of position.
- e. Area of consideration.
- f. Opening and closing dates.
- g. Statement of duties and qualification requirements (including evaluation criteria). When advertising a position at multi-grades, evaluation criteria for each grade level must be outlined in the vacancy announcement. The announcement should also require candidates to specify the lowest grade they will accept.
- h. If a supervisory or managerial position, indicate that person must serve a probationary period if he/she has not held a supervisory position in the past that fully meets the requirements outlined in FPM Chapter 315, subchapter 9.
- i. Address, phone number, and contact person for making application.
- j. Equal Employment Opportunity Statement: Candidates will be considered without discrimination for any nonmerit reasons such as race, religion, sex, national origin, marital status, politics, physical handicap, age, or membership or nonmembership in an employee organization.

k. To be eligible for consideration for a competitive promotion, applicants must meet OPM Handbook X-118 or X-118C requirements, time-in-grade restrictions, and time-after-competitive appointment, if applicable, within 30 days after the closing date of the vacancy announcement or 30 days after each cutoff date on Open Continuous Registers.

l. Identify KSA's (knowledges, skills, and abilities) to be used in the evaluative process.

m. Provide a statement that applications must be received in the Personnel Office no later than close of business on the closing date in order to be considered under the announcement.

n. Submit an SF-171, "Application for Federal Employment" with original signature, the most recent (within 18 months) performance appraisal (a written justification will be required if none has been received in the last 18 months); a reinstatement/non-Rural Development applicant must submit a copy of his/her latest SF-50, "Notification of Personnel Action,"; specific documentation of experience and/or training for each KSA. Applications received without the above information will eliminate the applicant from consideration for the position.

o. A statement that a security clearance is required and state the type, if applicable.

p. A statement that travel is a requirement of the position and identify the percentage of travel time, if applicable.

q. A statement that a mobility agreement is required, if applicable.

r. A statement that use of government franked envelopes to mail applications is prohibited by Federal laws and regulations. Applications submitted in government franked envelopes will not be accepted.

s. Supervisors and managers must notify eligible employees in their offices, who qualify, of announcements advertised during their temporary absence (e.g., on

detail, leave, at training courses, 2 week active duty for employees in the Military Reserves, or other similar reasons), which have a closing date prior to their return to the office.

t. Applicants are requested to complete a "Background Survey Questionnaire" (Form AD-1007) and submit it with each application. Completion of this form, however, is voluntary. It should be noted that this information is used only for statistical purposes and is not provided to selecting officials nor is it maintained as a permanent part of the promotion file.

u. Male applicants born after December 31, 1959, will have to certify prior to, or at the time of, appointment that they have registered with the Selective Service System.

2. Form AD-411, "Vacancy Announcement," shall be used to announce vacancies. A copy of a completed Vacancy Announcement is provided under Attachment 1 of this exhibit.

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Exhibit D, Attachment 1 is not automated see Manual.

EVALUATION METHOD A

The identified subject matter expert(s) will define three level definitions for knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSA) identified in the announcement. The three levels will be Superior, Satisfactory, and Minimally Acceptable. These levels will be assigned individual point values. The following is an example for "ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ORALLY":

5 points - Superior Level: Experience in: (a) oral communication with Program/Administrative Officials for the purpose of persuading or negotiating on complex and controversial issues; and (b) giving oral presentations to high-level groups of Agency personnel to justify or explain complex issues.

3 points - Satisfactory Level : Experience in: (a) oral communication with Program/Administrative Officials and/or Agency employees to discuss concerns or issues that may be of a technical nature; and (b) presenting information at staff meetings. Equivalent training may be substituted, such as formal course work in presentation techniques, public speaking, etc.

1 point - Minimally Acceptable Level : Experience in oral communication for the purpose of obtaining or providing facts/information which may be routine or non-controversial. Such communications are limited to the candidate's own internal organization. Equivalent training may be substituted, such as training in speech or presentation techniques.

The "Best Qualified" group will be determined by the following steps:

1. The panel members will use the established rating schedule developed by a subject matter expert(s) to individually rate each applicant's package. A single point value will be assigned to each KSA.

2. Once the individual rating is accomplished for each KSA, each panel member will add the point value assigned to each KSA to obtain a total score of the KSAs for that individual applicant. After each panel member evaluates the first 3 applicants on the evaluation list, the panel members will discuss their point values with each other. The Chairman will facilitate the discussion. The discussion is to ensure that there is not a wide disparity between panel members point value assigned (For Example: Panel Member #1 - 3, 1, 3; Panel Member #2 - 5, 5, 5; Panel Member #3 - 3, 3, 1). This process should be continued throughout the panel process. After the discussion, the Chairman will verify all applicants' total rating scores. The Chairman will combine the three panel members' total scores, by applicant, and divide each individual applicants' overall total rating score by the number of panel members. An example of a rating for Applicant B, based on five KSAs would be as follows:

- a. Panel Member 1 - Total Rating Score of 15.
- b. Panel Member 2 - Total Rating Score of 25.
- c. Panel Member 3 - Total Rating Score of 21.
- d. Total Rating Scores of all three panel members are added: $15 + 25 + 21 = 61$. This is the overall rating, 61.
- e. Divide the overall rating score of the three panel members, for Applicant B, which is 61 by the number of panel members, which is 3, (Example: $61 \div 3 = 20.3$. If .5 or more, round to the next whole number). The averaged score for Applicant B is 20.
- f. Repeat this process for each Applicant rated.
- g. Each individual's averaged score is then recorded on the final rating sheet.

h. The applicants' averaged score will be utilized for determining the "Best Qualified".

3. The "Best Qualified" group will be determined by a natural break point. The natural break point will be defined as a division in number which will clearly separate the "Best Qualified" group from the "Qualified" group and provide 10 or less applicants to certify to the selecting official. An example of a natural break point would be as follows: there are two applicants with a score of 25, one with 23, one with 21 and one with 15. There are 2-point intervals between each score down to 21, and a 6-point interval between 21 and 15; therefore, the natural break-point would be 21, which clearly separates the "Best Qualified" from the "Qualified".

EXAMPLE: 25
23
21 NATURAL BREAK POINT
15

In cases where the Natural Break Point is not as clearly identified as in the above example, the Chairman should discuss the issue with the facilitator. The Chairman and the facilitator will make the determination what number will be the Natural Break Point.

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EVALUATION METHOD B

This procedure must be applied to all positions for which there are 5 or fewer basically qualified applicants:

1. Basically qualified determination. Basic qualifications will be accomplished by the servicing personnel specialist.
2. Evaluation. When using evaluation Method B, it is not necessary to convene a panel of subject matter experts. A personnel specialist may evaluate the applicants while determining basic qualifications. However, it is still necessary to evaluate the applicants against the evaluation criteria (knowledges, skills, and abilities) but it is not necessary to apply a rating schedule. If the personnel specialist cannot determine whether the experience, education, or training relates to the evaluation criteria, technical advice should be obtained from a subject matter expert. If this is done, the promotion record should reflect the basis of any decisions made.
3. Best qualified determination under this method. In order to have their names forwarded for consideration, applicants must have the following:
 - a. A summary performance rating of "fully successful" or higher; and
 - b. Related experience, education, or training in all of the evaluation criteria (KSA's). This determination should be made through a review of the applicant's SF-171, "Application for Federal Employment," and response to the individual KSA's. If it is determined that an applicant does not possess a particular KSA, the file should contain a statement explaining how this determination was made.

Any candidate not meeting the above will not be considered as best qualified.

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DPM 335 PROMOTION AND INTERNAL PLACEMENT
APPENDIX C - DEVELOPING EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR MERIT
PROMOTION

INTRODUCTION

In developing evaluation criteria for use in merit promotion actions, agencies must fulfill both Merit System principles and the requirements of the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. This Appendix contains a discussion of the Guidelines as they apply to the merit promotion process.

A. THE UNIFORM GUIDELINES - GENERAL

The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures, (FPM Supplement 335-1, Appendix A), are a set of principles to assist employers in making employment decisions that comply with equal employment opportunity requirements of Federal law with respect to race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. They are designed to provide a framework for determining the proper use of tests and other selection procedures consistent with equal opportunity requirements. According to the Uniform Guidelines, a selection procedure that has an adverse impact on the employment opportunities of a race, sex, or ethnic group is unlawfully discriminatory unless the selection procedure can be justified on grounds of business necessity and properly validated. (See Appendix B, Section 1 of the Department Merit Promotion Plan). While the Uniform Guidelines do not require validation of selection procedures that produce no adverse impact, the Department strongly recommends that agencies develop and use only those selection procedures that are based on job analysis and that can be supported by appropriate validity studies.

B. VALIDATION PROCESSES

Selection procedures and job analysis methodologies can be supported by three different validation strategies: content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. Content validity demonstrates that the content of a selection procedure is a representative sample of important aspects of job performance. Criterion-related studies statistically demonstrate a correlation between scores on a selection procedure and the job performance of a sample population of employees. Construct validity proves that a selection procedure measures a construct (defined as an underlying human trait or characteristic) that is

important for successful job performance. The Uniform Guidelines include the technical standards which govern each of these validation strategies.

Any one of these strategies can be used to defend a selection procedure when the existence of adverse impact makes validation necessary. Criterion-related studies, however, require sophisticated statistical research based on the collection and correlation of both selection and job performance data. Construct validation is a relatively new and complex process that has not yet been widely applied to selection practices. Therefore, content validity seems the most appropriate validation method for use in the Department.

C. CONTENT VALIDITY

Content validity demonstrates that the content of a selection procedure is representative of the content of a job. Content validity can justify selection procedures which measure knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSA's) when those KSA's are directly linked to successful job performance. A knowledge, therefore, should be operationally defined as a body of learned information which the employee must use to perform some observable work behavior. Skills and abilities should also be operationally defined in terms of observable aspects of work behaviors. Content validity cannot, however, support selection procedures which rely on inferences about mental processes, or measure traits and constructs (e.g., intelligence, aptitude, personality, common sense, judgment, and leadership). (See FPM 335-1, Appendix A-6 and A-37.)

D. DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR CONTENT VALIDATION

Content validity studies conducted in defense of selection procedures should contain the following information:

1. User(s), location(s), and date(s) of study (including the date(s) and location(s) of the job analysis).
2. Problem and setting. The report should define the purpose(s) of the study and the circumstances in which it was conducted. A description of existing selection procedures, and cutoff scores, if any, should be provided.

3. Job analysis - Content of the job. The description of the method used to analyze the job should include:

- a. The work behaviors, tasks, and work products, if any;
- b. Measures of the importance of the work behaviors and the method used to establish these measures;
- c. The KSA's identified by the job analysis, and
 - (1) An operational definition of each knowledge in terms of a body of information;
 - (2) An operational definition of each skill and ability in terms of observable behaviors and outcomes;
 - (3) The relationship between each KSA's and the work behaviors;
 - (4) The method used to determine these relationships; and
- d. A description of the work situation specifying
 - (1) The setting in which the work behaviors are performed;
 - (2) The manner in which the KSA's are used; and
 - (3) The difficulty and complexity of the KSA's used on the job.

4. Selection procedure and its content. A complete description of the selection procedure should be provided.

This description should:

- a. Specify the work behaviors measured by the selection procedure, and
- b. Support the procedure's claim to measure KSA's.

5. Relationship between the selection procedure and the job. The report should demonstrate that the selection procedure is:

- a. A representative work sample;
- b. A representative sample of the work behaviors; or
- c. A representative sample of KSA's necessary for the performance of specific work behaviors.

For paragraphs (a) and (b) above, the manner, setting, and level of complexity of the selection procedure and the work situation should be compared. Time limits, if any, should be explained and justified in terms of job requirements. The report should describe any modifications in the content or administration of the selection procedures that were made for the purpose of reducing adverse impact.

6. Alternative procedures investigated. The report should identify the alternative selection procedures investigated, provide evidence of their impact, and describe in detail the scope and method of the investigation as well as the findings and conclusions.

7. Users and applications. A description of the operational uses of the selection procedure (e.g., ranking, screening, cutoff score, etc.) and their impact should be included. The report should explain the rationale behind the operational use chosen for the selection procedure, provide validity evidence for the selection procedure in terms of its operational use, and define the personnel decisions which the procedure will support (e.g., promotion, score(s) - the user must show how the score(s) was determined). When the selection procedure supports ranking, the report must prove that a higher score on the selection procedure will predict better job performance.

8. Contact person. The name, address, and phone number of a person who can supply further information about the validity study should be provided.

9. Accuracy and completeness. The report should describe the steps taken to ensure its accuracy and completeness.

JOB ANALYSIS

A Job Analysis is a structured approach that analyzes the primary knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSA's) required to successfully perform a job. There are 8 steps involved in the Job Analysis process. The 8 steps are as follows:

1. Identify major duties (usually 4 or 5).
2. Identify associated KSA's.
3. Determine whether each KSA is essential to perform the duties of the position.
4. Combine similar KSA's.
5. Determine KSA's that are measurable (i.e., KSA's for which a rating schedule can be developed that distinguishes superior from minimally acceptable).
6. Document measurement tool(s).
7. Develop operational definition.
8. Develop level definitions (Rating Schedule).

Each step in the Job Analysis process is explained below.

1. Step 1. Identify major duties (usually 4 or 5).

The following sources, if available, should be taken into consideration when listing the major duties of a position:

- a. The official position description and classification evaluation statement;
- b. X-118 Qualification Standards;
- c. Position Classification Standards;
- d. Performance Elements and Standards;

- e. Mission and function statements and organization charts; and
- f. Any occupational literature available.

Write down each major duty in a short, direct statement, using active verbs (refer to Worksheet No. 1 of this exhibit).

Example:

1. Advises management on all aspects of position management and position classification.
2. Classifies a variety of technical, clerical, and professional positions.
3. Maintains position audit program.
4. Maintains position management program for the Agency.
5. Reviews and comments on new or revised position classification standards.

2. Step 2. Identify Associated KSA's.

Identify the actual KSA's necessary to accomplish each of the major duties. All KSA's must relate directly to a major duty. There is no limit on the number of KSA's that can be identified (some KSA's may apply to more than one major duty). (Refer to Worksheet No. 1.)

3. Step 3. Determine whether each KSA is essential to perform duties of the position.

Identify each KSA that is necessary in order to perform the duties of the position. Eliminate any KSA's that are highly desirable but are not really necessary, or that can be learned "on the job" in a reasonable period of time, usually 90 days (refer to Worksheet No. 2 of this exhibit).

4. Step 4. Combine similar KSA's.

Combine those KSA's which are similar. For example:

7. Ability to research and analyze.
8. Ability to analyze organizational structure.

9. Ability to obtain, evaluate, and interpret information.

Combine 8 and 9 with 7, KSA: Ability to research and analyze (refer to Worksheet No. 2, Column 3).

5. Step 5. Determine KSA's that are measurable (normally 3 to 7).

Determine whether KSA's can be measured to distinguish a range from superior to minimally acceptable performance by using available measurement tools. Those KSA's that can be measured will be used as the evaluation criteria (refer to Worksheet No. 2, Column 4).

6. Step 6. Document measurement tool(s).

The measurement tools to be taken into consideration in evaluating the KSA's will be an SF-171, Performance Appraisal, and information provided by the candidate for each KSA. If a KSA cannot be measured by these documents, then the KSA should not be used. If the KSA's can be measured by these documents, then the KSA's should be used (refer to Worksheet No. 2, Column 5).

7. Step 7. Develop operational definition.

Develop a concise statement that describes what is expected in terms of a KSA in a particular job. An operational definition may be described in one of two ways:

Example:

KSA: Ability to communicate in writing

(1) Describe as a separate statement: This element includes the ability to document the objective, the source, the analytical process, and the conclusion of a project or study.

(2) Describe as part of the KSA: Ability to communicate in writing in order to document the objective, the source, the analytical process, and the conclusion of a project or study.

8. Step 8. Develop level definitions (Rating Schedule).

Define KSA's at 3 (or 4) levels by citing examples of what would be indicative of superior, satisfactory, and minimally acceptable performance for each KSA. Assign point values to these levels. This information will serve as the Rating Schedule that will be used to determine best qualified candidates.

Example: KSA: Ability to communicate orally

Superior level: Experience in: (a) oral communication with Program/Administrative Officials for the purpose of persuading or negotiating on complex and controversial issues, and (b) giving oral presentations to high-level groups of Agency personnel to justify or explain complex issues.

Satisfactory level: Experience in: (a) oral communication with Program/Administrative Officials and/or Agency employees to discuss concerns or issues that may be of a technical nature, and (b) presenting information at staff meetings. Equivalent training may be substituted, such as formal course work in presentation techniques, public speaking, etc.

Minimally acceptable level: Experience in oral communication for the purpose of obtaining or providing facts/information which may be routine or noncontroversial. Such communications are limited to the candidate's own internal organization. Equivalent training may be substituted, such as training in speech or presentation techniques.

The level definitions of the job analysis package is equivalent to the answer key on an examination, it must be kept confidential.

At this point, the job analysis is completed. The vacancy announcement is then prepared with KSA's listed as the evaluation criteria (see Worksheet No. 3 of this exhibit).

SAMPLE JOB ANALYSIS WORKSHEET #1

JOB TITLE: Position Classification Specialist
PAY PLAN, SERIES, AND GRADE: GS-221-12_____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

JOB ANALYSIS INTERVIEW

COLUMN 1

COLUMN 2

A. What are the four or five major duties to be performed on this job?

B. For each duty, what KSA's are required to perform this?

1. Advises management on all aspects of position management and position classification.

1. Ability to communicate orally.
Ability to communicate in writing.
Ability to negotiate/persuade.
Ability to meet and deal with people.

2. Classifies a variety of technical, clerical, and professional positions.

2. Ability to communicate in writing.
Ability to communicate orally.
Ability to research and analyze.
Knowledge of classification principles/practices.
Knowledge of the Position Classification Standards, FPM, DPM, and Agency Instructions.

3. Maintains position audit program for the Agency.

3. Ability to communicate orally.
Ability to conduct desk audits.
Ability to research and analyze.
Knowledge of classification principles and practices.

4. Maintains position management program for the Agency.

Ability to provide guidance and advice.

4. Knowledge of position management principles and practices.
Ability to analyze agency organizational structure.

5. Reviews and comments on new or revised position classification standards.

5. Ability to evaluate and interpret information.
Ability to analyze.
Knowledge of Position Classification Standards.
Ability to obtain, evaluate, and interpret information.
Ability to communicate in writing.

SAMPLE JOB ANALYSIS WORKSHEET #2
KSA DETERMINATION SHEET

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Knowledges, skills, and abilities	Essential	KSA Combination	Distin-guishes Superior from Minimally acceptable	Measure-ment Tool
1. Knowledge of classifica-tion princi-ples/practices	X		X	Trg & Exp Perf Appr
2. Knowledge of position classification standards, FPM, DPM & Agency instructions	X	Combine with 1		
3. Ability to communicate orally	X		X	Trg & Exp Perf Appr
4. Ability to communicate in writing	X		X	Trg & Exp Perf Appr work samp
5. Ability to conduct desk audits	Eliminate can be learned			
6. Knowledge of position management principles/practices		Combine with 1		

7. Ability to research and analyze	X			
<hr/>				
8. Ability to analyze organizational structure	X	Combine with 7	X	Experience Perf Appr
<hr/>				
9. Ability to obtain, evaluate, and interpret information	X	Combine with 7		
<hr/>				
10. Ability to provide guidance and advice	X	Combine with 3		
<hr/>				
11. Ability to negotiate/persuade	X	Combine with 3		
<hr/>				
12. Ability to meet and deal	X	Combine with 3		
<hr/>				

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

SAMPLE WORKSHEET 3 - Supplement
POSITION CLASSIFICATION SPECIALIST
GS-221-12

Below is an example of what the final evaluation criteria that would be published in the vacancy announcement may look like:

1. Ability to research and analyze in order to obtain and interpret information pertaining to organizational structures, position management, and position classification.
2. Ability to communicate in writing in order to provide documentation of classification evaluation, and findings and recommendation on organizational studies and position management issues.
3. Knowledge of classification principles and practices in order to conduct desk audits and organizational studies and classify positions.
4. Ability to communicate orally in order to provide information, advice and guidance to administrative and program officials; persuade; and provide/obtain information from agency employees on a variety of controversial or complex issues.

NOTE: The portion of the evaluation criteria that is underscored is the knowledge, skill or ability, and the remaining phrase is the operational definition.

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DEVELOPING RATING SCHEDULES

1. In developing rating level definitions, remember that a knowledge, skill, or ability (KSA) should identify one simple, readily identifiable KSA to which a candidate can respond with a specific description of his/her experience, training, awards, performance evaluations, etc., that a promotion panel can review and evaluate.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Ability to communicate in writing.

2. In developing level definitions, consider possible job accommodation provisions in order that handicapped employees are not unnecessarily excluded.

3. In documenting evidence of a level of performance, begin level definitions with "experience in" or "training in".

4. Express KSA's in a general way so as not to restrict applicability to a specific or narrow interpretation of what is required for satisfactory performance of the position.

EXAMPLE:

Use - Knowledge of budgeting techniques, principles, and procedures.

Not - Knowledge of revolving accounts and industrial-type funding.

Not - Knowledge of Farmers Home Administration budgeting and accounting procedures.

5. Avoid the following in developing rating schedules for a position:

a. Describing work performance in specific settings when the KSA is measuring a basic skill or ability.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Ability to maintain records.

Superior Levels -
Experience or education which shows that the candidate maintained detailed progress notes and case histories in an alcohol rehabilitation setting.

Experience or education which shows that candidate maintained detailed reports and records in an international trade setting.

These level descriptions for this KSA reflect an ability to maintain complex records, but performing that activity in an alcohol rehabilitation setting, or maintaining reports and records in an international trade setting can probably be learned in a reasonable period of time by someone who has the basic ability, which implies that the specific setting is not important to consider for selection.

- b. Using length of experience in relationship to ability to perform a job.

EXAMPLE: One candidate may have worked in a particular job for 5 years at a minimally acceptable level, but would receive more credit than an applicant who had performed the same job for only two years at a superior level.

- c. Establishing differentiating level definitions based on breadth of knowledge when the intent is to measure the quality of a basic ability.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Ability to administer an organization which manages personnel, budget, and procurement for an Agency installation.

Superior Level -
Experience in all three areas mentioned above.

Satisfactory Level -
Experience in two of the three areas mentioned above.

Minimally acceptable Level -
Experience in one of the three areas mentioned above.

Although variety of experience may be a legitimate requirement for this job, it has been used here to create level definitions which have little or no relationship to an applicant's administrative abilities. In the example, the administrative ability should have been evaluated, not the specific areas of responsibility.

d. Artificial level evidence which has little relationship to performance of the job.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Ability to perform mathematical calculations such as addition, multiplication, division, percentages, and simple algebra.

Superior Level -
Three semester hours of college calculus.

Satisfactory Level -
Three semester hours of college math.

Minimally acceptable Level -
One semester hour of college math.

The additional mathematical ability demonstrated by passing a calculus course adds little to the applicant's ability to perform basic mathematical calculations.

e. The use of job titles as sample evidence of performance because titles alone do not provide enough information to the rater to give appropriate credit to such important variables as:

- how well the person performed
- what he/she actually did in the job
- special assignments they may have received
- latitude allowed in carrying out proposals or recommendations made.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Ability to motivate, train, and evaluate both clerical and professional subordinate employees.

Superior Level -
Experience as a Division Chief.

Satisfactory Level -
Experience as a Branch Chief.

Minimally acceptable level -
Experience as a Section Head.

Highlight actual work behaviors to insure that proper credit is assigned.

f. Using qualifiers or descriptive words or phrases to describe a KSA.

EXAMPLES:

- "thorough" knowledge of ...
- "above average" skill in ...
- "sound" knowledge of ...
- "good judgment" in ...
- "basic" knowledge of ...

g. Developing more level definitions than necessary, especially if the end result is an exaggeration or an almost identical level to one already developed. For example, if a 4 or 5 level system results in artificial distinctions, consider using 3 levels. It is recommended that at least 3 levels be used to permit a range of scores. The following 2 levels are essentially the same and should be combined.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Knowledge of concepts, principles, practices, and techniques applicable to one or more major communication fields in order to manage and control nationwide Agency telecommunications.

Outstanding - Experience participating in planning the development of a major communications program.

Superior - Experience assisting in the planning and development of a major communications program.

h. Using Agency or program-specific KSA and level definitions when it is determined by the job analysis that the Agency or program-specific KSA can be learned within a reasonable time.

EXAMPLE: KSA - Ability to research, analyze, and interpret Farmers Home Administration regulations, policies, and procedures pertaining to administrative management.

i. Using qualifiers or descriptive phrases to describe supervisory controls as they are difficult to measure.

EXAMPLE:

- "with general guidance"...
- "independently researches material"...

j. Establishing a KSA that is so general that it places a tremendous burden of interpretation on the rater.

EXAMPLE:

Use - Ability to understand and apply regulations, principles, and concepts.

Not - Ability to use "good judgment".

6. Review the final product before it is used to ensure that the evaluation criteria (KSA and level definitions) are job related.

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Rural Development MERIT PROMOTION ACTION CHECKLIST

POSITION (TITLE, SERIES AND GRADE): _____
(If a target position, identify entry and full performance level.)

LOCATION OF THE POSITION: _____

PMS, PA/C, AND/OR AO: _____

SELECTED CANDIDATE'S NAME: _____

EFFECTIVE DATE OF SELECTEE'S ACTION: _____

___ Copy of SF-52, "Request for Personnel Action,"
requesting position be filled.

___ Copy of AD-734, "Request for Candidates". State what
Qualification Standard was used. Identify panel
members.

___ Documentation on SF-52 that Repromotion and Priority
Consideration eligibles were checked and cleared prior
to proceeding under merit promotion.

___ Copy of Position Description.

___ Job Analysis documentation.

___ Evaluative Method identified to be used and a copy of
Evaluative Measurement Tool (rating schedule).

___ Copy of Announcement and/or Announcements, if
readvertised.

___ Evaluations of Candidates by Panel Member(s).
Must have specific written documentation that supports
ratings above or below those directly related to
rating schedule.

___ Copy of AD-735, "Evaluation of Candidates". Should
depict: a) the consolidated scores of the panel and the
method for consolidation; and b) each panel member's
individual ratings.

___ Promotion Certificate(s) (Competitive and Non-
Competitive Certificates, if both used).

___ Copy of selected candidates' SF-171, "Application for Federal Employment" and related documentation submitted by candidate. Copy of selection notification letter sent.

___ Copy of other best qualified and/or qualified candidates' SF-171 and related documentation submitted by candidates. Copy of nonselect letters sent.

___ Copy of ineligible candidates' SF-171 and related documentation submitted by candidate. Copy of ineligible notification letters sent.

Explanation of any missing items:

Signature of Personnel Specialist/Administrative Officer,
and the Personnel Assistant/Personnel Clerk.

Date the file was closed out