

## CHANGE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

- DIRECTIVE  
 REVISION  
 AMENDMENT  
 OTHER

FSIS DIRECTIVE  
MERIT PROMOTION PLAN

4335.1  
REVISION 2

5/6/99

### I. PRINCIPAL CHANGES

This directive transmits the new USDA Merit Promotion Plan and updates Agency specific procedures on merit promotion. Changes include the following:

- A. Uses the term "evaluation criteria" instead of "job elements," to refer to KSA's and other characteristics needed to successfully perform in the job being filled.
- B. Allows for additional noncompetitive placement actions, where applicable.
- C. Changes:
  - 1. Application procedures to consider applicants who meet qualifications and other requirements within 30 days after the vacancy announcement closes.
  - 2. Consideration of outside candidates competing for FSIS announced vacancies.
  - 3. Minimum number of promotion panel members for nonbargaining unit positions.
  - 4. Interview policy for nonbargaining unit employees.
- D. Removes restrictions on the number of:
  - 1. Best qualified candidates referred for a position.
  - 2. Grade levels that may be advertised in multi-grade announcements (previously restricted to three; EXAMPLE: GS-5/7/9).
- E. Revises procedures for certifying the best qualified candidates for a position when there are 10 or fewer qualified candidates.
- F. States when subsequent vacancies can be filled from the same promotion certificate.

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G. Revises information on how employees on extended approved absence can learn of available vacancies.

H. Identifies the minimum area of consideration for announced vacancies primarily by type of position (EXAMPLE: professional, administrative, clerical).

I. Allows the selecting official (or other appropriate management official) to request an extended area of consideration for specific positions, as appropriate.

J. Provides additional guidance for treating a reclassification action as a noncompetitive career promotion.

K. Describes eligibility requirements for a career promotion to the next higher grade, when applicable.

L. Updates the FSIS Career Ladder Chart (see Attachment 2-3).

M. Deletes procedures for the Recurring Vacancy System (used to fill Food Inspector vacancies) and the sample FSIS Form 4335-1. These procedures are in FSIS Directive 4335.6.

N. Adds provisions for qualified employees involuntarily downgraded through no fault of their own and candidates entitled to priority consideration.

## II. CANCELLATION

Cancel this transmittal when the contents have replaced FSIS Directive 4335.1. For recordkeeping purposes, users may retain or destroy this transmittal.



Deputy Administrator  
Office of Management

## FILING INSTRUCTIONS

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# MERIT PROMOTION PLAN

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

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# FSIS DIRECTIVE

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4335.1  
REVISION 2

5/6/99

## MERIT PROMOTION PLAN

### PART ONE—BASIC PROVISIONS

#### I. PURPOSE

This directive:

- A. Transmits the USDA Merit Promotion Plan.
- B. Supplements the USDA Plan with Agency-specific procedures.
- C. Gives basic requirements for evaluating, ranking, and selecting employees under competitive procedures.

#### II. CANCELLATION

This directive cancels:

- A. FSIS Directive 4335.1, dated 4/8/82. **NOTE:** This directive is numbered Revision 2. Previous editions were dated 11/19/79 (Basic) and 4/8/82 (first revision).
- B. FSIS Directive 4335.7, dated 5/26/93.

#### III. REASON FOR REISSUANCE

This directive is completely rewritten to:

- A. Comply with provisions of the USDA Plan.
- B. Update career ladders and minimum areas of consideration for FSIS positions.
- C. Incorporate guidance formerly issued in FSIS Notices and FSIS Directive 4335.7.

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#### **IV. EFFECTIVE DATE**

This policy applies to:

- A. Positions advertised with an opening date on or after June 1, 1999.
- B. Other placement actions covered by this directive which are effective on or after June 1, 1999.

#### **V. REFERENCES**

FSIS Directive 4300.1, Reassignment of Food Inspectors in Work Reduction Situations  
FSIS Directive 4300.3, Career Transition Assistance Program  
FSIS Directive 4335.3, Reassignment of Veterinary Medical Officers  
FSIS Directive 4335.6, Applying for Recurring Vacancies  
FSIS Directive 4430.1, Performance Evaluation Plan  
FSIS Directive 4771.1, Administrative Grievance System  
DPM Chapter 335, Promotion and Internal Placement (Attachment 1-1)

#### **VI. ABBREVIATIONS AND FORMS**

The following will appear in their shortened form in this directive:

DPM	Department Personnel Manual
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ESPB	Employment Services and Policy Branch, HRD
GS	General Schedule
HRD	Human Resources Division
KSA's	Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
POB	Personnel Operations Branch, HRD
SPO	Servicing Personnel Office

FSIS Form 4335-1, Application for Promotion  
OF-612, Optional Application for Federal Employment  
SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action  
SF-52, Request for Personnel Action  
SF-171, Application for Federal Employment

#### **VII. POLICY**

- A. DPM 335 contains the USDA Merit Promotion Plan. The Plan provides the basic policy for promotion and internal placement for all USDA agencies.

B. FSIS policy is to:

1. Comply with Federal and Departmental rules and regulations related to merit promotion and with the terms of any negotiated bargaining agreement.
2. Base selection for promotion (including placement and training that could lead to promotion) on merit factors and job-related criteria without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or nonaffiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, nondisqualifying disability, age, or sexual orientation.
3. Consider candidates eligible for placement through other means, including special hiring authorities and programs, as appropriate (**EXAMPLES**: veterans readjustment appointments, displaced/surplus employees, disabled veterans, reinstatement eligibles, persons with severe disabilities, or **OPM** certificates of eligibles).

C. FSIS policy does not guarantee employee promotions and does not require that a vacancy be filled by promotion.

## VIII. COVERAGE

A. This directive covers promotions in the competitive service through grade 15 in the GS and similar pay systems, and in prevailing rate schedules.

B. Competitive promotion procedures apply to the selection of employees for promotion and the other placement actions in DPM 335, Appendix B, Section I., Part B. 1. (See Attachment 1-1.)

C. Competitive procedures do not apply to:

1. The actions listed in DPM 335, Appendix B, Section I., Part B. 2. (a) (1), (b), (c) and 3. (See Attachment 1-1.)

2. Promotions resulting from an employee's position being classified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities when **all** of the following apply:

a. The conditions in DPM 335, Section, I, Part B, 2. (a) (2) are met. (See Attachment 1-1.)

b. The action does not result in an additional vacancy.

c. The occupational series for the position does not change from one-grade interval (**EXAMPLE**: GS-303-5/6/7/8) to a position with two-grade intervals (**EXAMPLE**: GS-343-5/7/9)



3. Placement in a position having the same promotion potential as a position previously held on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment, **if**:

a. The employee was not demoted or separated from the previous position because of performance deficiencies or other "for cause" reasons.

b. The promotion potential of the previous position is documented in the employee's personnel records (SF-50) or in promotion file records, or there is other acceptable evidence of the promotion potential of the former position on which noncompetitive eligibility is based. (**EXAMPLE**: A GS-7 career employee occupies a position with promotion potential to GS-9, but resigns before being promoted. Upon re-hire and at any time thereafter, the employee may be noncompetitively placed in any position (for which qualified) with promotion potential up to GS-9, because the earlier job had that potential.)

4. Repromotion of an employee who voluntarily changed to a lower grade, up to the highest grade previously held on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment, unless performance or conduct was a factor in the grade loss. **NOTE**: For Field Operations in-plant positions, employees applying for repromotion under this provision should follow the procedures covering bargaining unit positions or FSIS Directive 4335.3 for Veterinary Medical Officers.

## **IX. DEFINITIONS**

Definitions of terms used throughout this directive are listed either below or in DPM 335, Appendix B, Attachment 5. (See Attachment 1-1.)

A. **Commuting (or Local Commuting) Area.** The geographical 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.

B. **Detail.** A temporary assignment of an employee to a different position or to perform different duties for a specified period, with the employee returning to regular duties at the end of the period.

C. **Evaluation Criteria.** The KSA's and other characteristics needed for successful performance in the position to be filled. These criteria are rated to determine the best qualified candidates for the position. **NOTE**: Evaluation criteria are referred to as "job elements" in various Agency issuances including vacancy announcements, FSIS Form 4335-1, and FSIS Directive 4335.6.

D. **Job Elements.** The same as "Evaluation Criteria."

E. **Performance Rating of Record.** The performance rating required at the end of the annual appraisal cycle or at other times when specified in FSIS Directive 4430.1.

F. **Promotion (or Selection) Certificate.** A roster containing the names of the best qualified candidates (in alphabetical order) from which selections may be made for promotion or other competitive personnel action.

G. **Promotion File.** A file containing all relevant documentation about a particular vacancy filled through the merit promotion process. Such documentation typically includes the vacancy announcement, applications submitted, record of each candidate's eligibility for consideration, promotion ratings (if rated by a panel), promotion certificate, and the name of the candidate selected.

H. **Promotion Rating.** The numerical rating assigned to a candidate's application by the promotion panel.

I. **Qualified Candidate (or Applicant).** An applicant who meets the OPM qualifications standards, any selective factors, performance rating level, and other requirements (such as time-in-grade, if applicable) within 30 days after the closing date of the vacancy announcement (for announced vacancies).

J. **Recurring Vacancy System (or Recurring Vacancies).** The competitive procedures used to fill most food inspector positions (GS-1863) on a recurring basis as vacancies occur. (See FSIS Directive 4335.6.)

K. **Selecting Official.** The person who selects the candidate to fill a vacant position. The immediate supervisor of the position to be filled is normally the selecting official unless another appropriate management official is designated.

L. **Servicing Personnel Office.** The designated contact office for a particular vacancy.

M. **Temporary Promotion.** The official assignment of an employee to a higher-grade position for which the employee receives compensation at the higher grade for a specified period.

N. **Vacancy Announcement.** A notice used to solicit applications for a vacant position. The announcement describes the position to be filled, qualification requirements, application procedures, evaluation criteria, and similar information.

**DEPARTMENT MERIT PROMOTION PLAN**  
**DPM CHAPTER 335, APPENDIXES, A, B, AND C**

## **PART TWO—FSIS MERIT PROMOTION PLAN SUPPLEMENT**

### **Section One—Basic Provisions**

#### **I. PURPOSE**

This part contains Agency-specific procedures which supplement the Department Merit Promotion Plan (see Attachment 1-1).

#### **II. EMPLOYEE NOTIFICATION**

A. Covered employees receive a copy of the Plan and all subsequent revisions. New employees receive a copy with orientation materials. Covered employees should review the Plan to understand its basic provisions and how to apply for promotion consideration.

B. Supervisors and managers must be sufficiently familiar with appropriate provisions of the Plan to properly carry out their responsibilities.

#### **III. SPO RESPONSIBILITIES**

A. Issues vacancy announcements, receives applications, determines applicant eligibility for a vacancy, conducts or oversees the evaluation of candidates, issues promotion certificates, and maintains vacancy records. Each vacancy announcement contains the SPO's address and telephone number. The SPO's have position responsibility, as follows:

1. **POB.** All field positions.
2. **ESPB.** All headquarters positions.

B. Maintains records according to DPM 335, Appendix B, Section V. (see Attachment 1-1), and Agency instructions.

#### **IV. PLAN REVIEWS**

Periodic reviews are made, as needed, to ensure that the Plan:

- A. Meets the needs of program officials in filling vacancies.
- B. Is understood by program officials, supervisors, and employees.
- C. Is administered fairly and impartially, and according to applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

## **V. EXCEPTIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS TO THE PLAN**

Coordinate exceptions and written issuances on procedures, policies, and interpretations of the Plan through the Chief, ESPB.

## **VI. EMPLOYEE INFORMATION**

Applicants for a vacancy may request certain information about the specific promotion action according to DPM 335, Appendix B, Section V., Part D. 3. b. (See Attachment 1-1.)

## **VII. COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

A. **Grievances.** Failure to be selected from among a group of properly ranked and certified eligible is not a basis for formal grievance or appeal.

### **1. Informal Inquiry.**

a. Employees with questions on the merit promotion program and related procedures may contact the SPO's personnel staffing specialist.

b. Supervisors may provide suggestions to enhance an employee's chance for career advancement. Supervisors should respond to requests in a timely manner and seek assistance from the SPO as needed.

2. **Formal Grievance.** Any employee who, after informal inquiry, believes that a violation of this Plan has occurred may file a grievance under the procedures in FSIS Directive 4771.1 or a negotiated grievance procedure, as appropriate.

B. **Discrimination Complaints.** An aggrieved applicant for a competitive personnel action who believes that discrimination occurred may file a complaint under the discrimination complaint procedures. Contact the FSIS Civil Rights Division for specific information.

## **VIII. CORRECTIVE ACTION**

Failure to adhere to applicable laws, regulations, policies, and procedures may require corrective action. Such action may involve employees erroneously promoted or considered, and officials who caused or sanctioned the violations. The nature of the corrective action is determined on a case-by-case basis.

## **IX., X. (RESERVED)**

## Section Two—Operation of the Plan

### XI. ANNOUNCED VACANCIES

Most FSIS vacant positions (**except** food inspector vacancies covered by FSIS Directive 4335.6) are advertised in vacancy announcements issued by the appropriate SPO.

### XII. AREA OF CONSIDERATION

A. **Defining the Area of Consideration.** The area of consideration is defined by organization and geographic boundaries. Attachment 2-1 shows the minimum area of consideration for announced FSIS positions.

B. **Extending the Area of Consideration.**

1. **Announced Vacancies.** The minimum area of consideration may be extended for various reasons, such as:

a. The identified minimum area does not (or is not expected to) produce enough best qualified candidates with the desired KSA's.

b. A broader area is needed to produce a more diverse applicant pool.

2. **Documenting Extensions.** The SPO documents the reasons in the promotion file for re-advertising a vacancy announcement with an extended area of consideration.

C. **Determining the Extended Area of Consideration.** The SPO and the selecting official (or appropriate management official where the vacancy exists) determine the extended area of consideration on a case-by-case basis. Various information sources (**EXAMPLES:** samples of past actions, workforce profiles, discussions with EEO specialist, and EEO reports) may be used.

D. **Temporary Promotions and Details.** When a vacancy will be filled through temporary promotion or detail, the area of consideration is decided on a case-by-case basis depending on the grade level of the position and the number of qualified candidates in the Agency. The SPO and the appropriate management official in the organization where the vacancy exists determine the area of consideration. Considering candidates outside FSIS may be impractical for temporary promotions.

### **XIII. HOW TO APPLY**

A. **Announced Vacancies.** Follow instructions in the vacancy announcement. Attachment 2-2 contains additional guidance and tips on completing an application.

B. **Absent Employees.**

1. Employees on extended approved absence (**EXAMPLES:** leave, official travel, detail, or long-term training) who are seeking promotion opportunities should regularly seek information on available vacancies as described in Subparagraph C.

2. Employees must file the appropriate forms within the required timeframes or as specified by the SPO.

C. **Locating Vacancies.**

1. FSIS vacancies with a “nationwide” area of consideration are posted in the Agency’s printed Bi-Weekly Nationwide Listing. The listing is also available electronically in:

a. HPDesk in the electronic library. Open the catalog entitled “Field Vacancies” or “HQ Vacancies”.

b. Outlook, in the Public Folder entitled “Personnel”.

2. Employees may also:

a. Call POB for information about FSIS field vacancies, and ESPB for headquarters vacancies.

b. Locate vacancies posted in OPM’s Federal Job Opportunities Bulletin by accessing “USAJobs” as follows:

(1) Access the Internet (address: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>).

(2) Dial (912) 757-3100 (modem required).

(3) Call by telephone on (912) 757-3000.

D. **Accepting Outside Applications.**

1. Applications may be accepted from qualified USDA employees and others outside the area of consideration, depending on such factors as the number of applicants and whether hiring restrictions are in effect. The vacancy announcement states how applications outside the area of consideration will be handled.

2. Unless otherwise stated on the vacancy announcement:
  - a. FSIS employees outside the area of consideration who apply and are otherwise eligible will be considered.
  - b. Other qualified candidates who do not have to compete will be considered, as appropriate, if within the geographic area of consideration.

#### **XIV. REVIEW OF ANNOUNCED VACANCY CANDIDATES**

##### **A. SPO.**

1. Screens each applicant for basic eligibility, which includes:
  - a. Completeness of the application.
  - b. Whether the applicant meets OPM qualification standards and other requirements. (**EXAMPLES:** Minimum performance rating level required for promotion, selective factors, and time-in-grade requirements, if applicable.)
2. Notifies ineligible applicants (in writing) of the reason for ineligibility.
3. Conducts or oversees the evaluation process for candidates competing for promotion (see Subparagraph B.)
4. Refers the names and applications of qualified noncompetitive applicants and those from other sources, as appropriate. Candidates from separate sources are clearly identified. (**EXAMPLES:** Candidates eligible for reassignment or voluntary demotion, reinstatement eligible, disabled veterans, or former Peace Corps volunteers.)

##### **B. Competitive Evaluation Process.**

1. **Objectives.** The evaluation process:
  - a. Narrows the number of eligible applicants to a reasonable number from which a selection may be made.
  - b. Assures that selection for promotion is made from the best qualified candidates.
2. **Procedures.** The following procedures are used to evaluate qualified candidates for consideration under competitive procedures.
  - a. **More than 10 Candidates.** A promotion panel evaluates the applications to determine the best qualified candidates.



b. **Ten or Fewer Candidates.** A promotion panel is not required, but may be used at the option of the selecting official. If a promotion panel is not used, the SPO certifies the best qualified candidates. A candidate is certified as best qualified **if**:

- (1) All basic eligibility requirements are met.
- (2) The applicant's current performance rating of record is at least "fully successful."
- (3) The applicant meets the "acceptable" level for all the evaluation criteria and exceeds that level on at least one of the criteria. **NOTE:** If needed, the personnel specialist consults with a subject-matter expert to determine if the candidate's background meets this requirement and documents the promotion file to indicate the person consulted (name, position, and grade), the decision made, and the basis for the decision.

### C. **The Promotion Panel.**

#### 1. **Membership.**

a. **Bargaining Unit Positions.** Refer to the basic or local negotiated agreement.

b. **Non-Bargaining Unit Positions.** See Attachment 1-1 for DPM 335, Appendix B, Section III., Part B. 4.; Appendix B, Attachment 2; and Appendix C, Part F. 3.

2. **Responsibilities.** Panel member responsibilities are outlined in DPM 335, Appendix B, Attachment 2. (See Attachment 1-1.)

#### 3. **Evaluation Process.**

a. Panel members use an appropriate crediting plan and rating schedule to:

(1) Compare each applicant's background to the rating schedule to assess the degree to which the applicant possesses the KSA's.

(2) Consider the applicant's quality and type of work experience, education and training, performance appraisal, awards and accomplishments, and related outside experience.

(3) Assign a point value for each evaluation criterion.

(4) Arrive at a composite rating for each evaluation criterion by average or consensus of the individual ratings.

b. The panel facilitator sums the composite ratings for all the evaluation criteria to compute each applicant's total promotion rating.

c. The panel members identify the best-qualified candidates as those whose qualifications (as a group) clearly distinguish them from the other candidates based on the total promotion ratings. (Also, see Attachment 1-1, DPM 335, Appendix C, Part F. 4.)

D. **Other Evaluation Procedures.** Evaluation procedures (other than those described in Subparagraph B. 2.) may be used to identify the best qualified candidates. The procedure used must comply with OPM and USDA promotion policy, be approved in advance by the Chief, ESPB, and be indicated in the vacancy announcement (**EXAMPLES:** written tests or assessment centers).

## **XV. SELECTION OF CANDIDATES**

A. **Referral of Candidates and Information to the Selecting Official.** (See Attachment 1-1, DPM 335, Appendix B, Section IV., Part B. 1. a., and Attachment 3, paragraph A.) Promotion ratings are not provided to the selecting official.

### **B. Supplemental Referrals.**

1. If the conditions in DPM 335, Appendix B, Section IV., Part B. 1. b. (see Attachment 1-1) are met, supplemental referrals of promotion candidates may be made from the same certificate when:

a. The individual(s) selected declines or vacates the position, and the selecting official wants to choose another candidate, **or**

b. One or more like vacancies occur in the same commuting area and the evaluation criteria and rating schedule are appropriate.

2. The candidates on the certificate may receive consideration through the maximum period authorized for the original promotion certificate.

### **C. Interviews.**

1. **Bargaining Unit Positions.** If one candidate on the certificate is interviewed, all must be interviewed.

2. **Nonbargaining Unit Positions.** Interviews are recommended for all candidates on the certificate before choosing a candidate from the certificate. (**NOTE:** For GS-13 through -15 positions, an interim policy **requires** interviews. Contact the SPO for more information.)

3. **Noncompetitive Candidates.** The selecting official may choose which candidates to interview. (**NOTE:** For bargaining unit positions, follow the procedures governing employees who request voluntary reassignment. Contact POB for more details.)

D. **Selecting Official Action.** (See Attachment 1-1, DPM 335, Appendix B, Section IV., Part B. 3.) The selecting official:

1. Consults the servicing personnel specialist as needed for advice on interviewing, supervisory reference checks, and other appropriate screening techniques.

2. Keeps notes documenting interview and selection decisions. (**EXAMPLES:** Keeps a record of the interview questions. Takes notes during the interview to document and assess the candidates' responses. Notes rationale for decisions.)

3. Makes selection based on:

a. Job-related criteria and the specific needs of the position to be filled.

b. Extent to which each candidate would contribute to the work of the unit.

4. Provides written justification for non-selection of a **candidate entitled to priority consideration** or with repromotion placement rights. Include job-related reasons why the candidate was not selected.

5. Notifies all candidates on the certificate of the selection decision in a timely manner including the name of the candidate selected. **NOTE:** The selecting official may offer non-selected candidates an opportunity to obtain feedback on their qualifications based on the KSA's for the advertised position.

6. Provides a brief written explanation(s) for not making a selection from certificate, when applicable. (See Attachment 1-1, DPM 335, Appendix B, Attachment 3, Paragraph B.)

7. Keeps all documentation for at least 2 years or until any grievance, appeal, or complaint is resolved (whichever is longer).

**XVI. (RESERVED)**

### **Section Three—Special Consideration**

#### **XVII. PREFERENCE IN FILLING VACANCIES**

A qualified employee (or applicant) receives placement preference under any of the following circumstances. (See Paragraphs XVIII. and XIX. for specific requirements.)  
The employee:

A. Is entitled to special selection priority under the FSIS Career Transition Assistance Program. (See FSIS Directive 4300.3.)

B. Has repromotion placement rights to a grade from which involuntarily downgraded without personal cause.

C. Accepted a lower grade position within the commuting area after being identified as surplus under the provisions of FSIS Directive 4300.1.

D. Was not considered for selection in a previous promotion action due to a procedural error. (Reconstruction of the previous action must show that the person's name would have appeared on the promotion certificate).

#### **XVIII. REPROMOTION PLACEMENT FOR DOWNGRADED EMPLOYEES**

A. Procedures for considering employees involuntarily downgraded through no fault of their own are in DPM Chapter 335, Appendix A, Exhibit 1 (see Attachment 1-1).

B. Employees receive placement consideration for positions in their commuting area where downgraded.

C. Employees who accept a lower grade position in the commuting area after being adversely affected by a work reduction situation (as described in FSIS Directive 4300.1) receive repromotion placement consideration for FSIS positions in the commuting area. Length of eligibility is 2 years, or until repromoted to the former grade, whichever occurs first.

D. Employees with repromotion placement rights are offered vacant positions that have no higher potential than the position from which downgraded.

E. Vacancies excepted are those filled by:

1. Actions stated in DPM Chapter 335, Appendix A, Exhibit 1, paragraph 3 (see Attachment 1-1).

2. Application of provisions of a collective bargaining agreement.

3. Entitlement to special selection priority under the FSIS Career Transition Assistance Program.

F. Employees who are involuntarily downgraded, through no fault of their own, may contact SPO to confirm their placement on the Repromotion Placement List and the length of their eligibility.

## **XIX. PRIORITY CONSIDERATION**

A. A candidate who fails to make a promotion certificate because of a procedural error, and who has not been promoted since, receives priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy for which qualified and in the same commuting area where denied selection consideration.

B. A candidate receives one priority consideration for each instance of failure to receive proper consideration.

C. Priority consideration does not provide selection entitlement.

## **XX. NONSELECTION OF PLACEMENT PREFERENCE CANDIDATE**

The selecting official provides a written explanation for not selecting a candidate entitled to placement preference. Reasons for nonselection must be job related. If candidate has repromotion placement rights, nonselection must be strongly justified by the most compelling reasons.

## **XXI. (RESERVED)**

### **Section Four—Career Ladders and Career Promotions**

## **XXII. CAREER LADDERS**

Attachment 2-3 contains career ladders for most FSIS nonsupervisory positions. Candidates typically compete for a grade within the career ladder and are later eligible for career promotion to the full performance level (top grade of the ladder) without further competition when all requirements are met.

## **XXIII. CAREER PROMOTIONS**

A. The career ladder chart (Attachment 2-3) and vacancy announcements indicate promotion **potential** for a position. Promotion within a career ladder (or to the full performance level of the position) depends on employee performance.

B. The immediate supervisor recommends a promotion by using SF-52 and obtains approvals through appropriate channels.

C. Except as provided in a collective bargaining agreement, an employee is eligible for a career promotion when the conditions in Subparagraphs D. and E. are met. In addition, work assignments upon promotion must be properly classified at the higher grade.

D. When an employee is below the full performance level of the position, the:

1. Supervisor assigns work that provides the employee with experience to prepare for advancement to the next higher grade. Any performance deficiencies must be appropriately addressed. (Contact the SPO for advice.)

2. Employee must demonstrate the ability to perform successfully at the next higher level.

E. The following criteria must be met for promotion to the next higher grade if the employee is below the full performance level of the position. The employee must:

1. Meet the condition in Subparagraph D. 2.

2. Meet the basic eligibility requirements for the higher grade (including OPM qualifications standards and other applicable requirements, such as time-in-grade).

3. Have a current performance rating of record of at least "fully successful."



Deputy Administrator  
Office of Management

**MINIMUM AREA OF CONSIDERATION FOR FSIS VACANCIES**

The minimum area of consideration for FSIS vacancies is the organizational and geographic area in which the Agency expects to find enough well-qualified candidates to fill a vacancy covered by the Plan. (**NOTE:** See Part Two, Subparagraph XII. D., for defining the area of consideration for vacancies filled through temporary promotions.) The following chart lists the minimum areas of consideration for announced vacancies and notes exceptions.

Position Recruiting For and Series	Minimum Area of Consideration	Comments
<b>Food Inspector, GS-1863</b>	FSIS-Districtwide (GS-10 and below)  FSIS-Nationwide (GS-11 to 13)	1. Most positions (GS-11 and below ) are filled through the procedures in FSIS Directive 4335.6.  2. <b>Exception:</b> The minimum area of consideration for Food Inspector (Imports) is "FSIS-Nationwide."
<b>Clerical and Technician Positions</b> (one-grade interval)	FSIS-Local Commuting Area	The area may be extended to "nationwide" if there are insufficient candidates in the local labor market.
<b>Professional Positions</b> (those with minimum education requirements)  <b>EXAMPLES:</b> Veterinary Medical Officer, GS-701; Chemist, GS-1320; Food Technologist, GS-1382; Microbiologist, GS-403	FSIS-Nationwide (GS-13 and below)	1. Inplant GS-12, Veterinary Medical Officer and Supervisory Veterinary Medical Officer positions in all field locations are filled through a single vacancy announcement that is open continuously. Contact POB for specific information.  2. <b>Exception:</b> The geographic area may be reduced if there are at least 5 potential applicants eligible to compete in the smaller area.

Position Recruiting For and Series	Minimum Area of Consideration	Comments
<b>Administrative Positions</b> (two-grade interval)	FSIS-Local Commuting Area (GS-13 and below)	<b>Exceptions:</b> 1. If there are fewer than 5 FSIS employees in the commuting area who are eligible to compete for the position, extend the area of consideration to “FSIS-Nationwide” or outside the Agency, as needed, to increase the applicant pool.  2. For positions in Field Operations, the minimum area of consideration is “FSIS-Nationwide” for: a. Compliance Officer, GS-1801-9 through 13; and b. Resource Management Specialist, GS-301 (all grades) in the District Offices.
<b>GS-14 and 15 Positions</b> (all series)	FSIS-Nationwide; <b>or</b> USDA-Local Commuting Area	Either area may be used if there are at least 10 potential candidates eligible to compete for the position. <b>EXCEPTION:</b> If there are fewer than 10, extend the area to increase the applicant pool.



## PROMOTION APPLICATION TIPS

### Do

Read the vacancy announcement carefully to see which forms and information are required. For most FSIS announced vacancies, you can choose an application format such as a resume, OF-612 or the FSIS Form 4335-1. **NOTE:** SF-171's may be used until the supply is exhausted.

Tailor your responses to the evaluation criteria so they fit the job being announced and stress your specific accomplishments.

Describe your experience in a way that highlights the KSA's needed for the announced position.

Address all the evaluation criteria (or job elements) on the vacancy announcement. Be sure to emphasize your accomplishments relating to each criterion, using specific examples.

Use active verbs when describing your experience. Be specific and concise.

Keep experience descriptions and evaluation criteria responses brief.

Use your own words when describing experience.

Include all experience whether paid or volunteer.

Arrange your experience in chronological order.

Print or type your application.

### Don't

Don't use an obsolete form. If the form is not current, the SPO can eliminate it from competition.

Don't use the same application for unrelated jobs. This gives the appearance you don't care.

Don't exaggerate but don't be humble, either. Let your application reflect your true background and accomplishments.

Don't omit or give vague responses to the evaluation criteria. Your application will not receive consideration if all the criteria are not specifically addressed.

Don't attach position descriptions or school transcripts, unless specifically requested.

Don't use more than two one-sided pages for each evaluation criterion. Additional pages are **not** considered.

Don't quote from position descriptions.

Don't omit church, community or club work.

Don't submit an application that is hard to read or confusing to follow.

Don't submit a messy application.

## **Do**

Make sure every word is legible.

Organize your application in the proper sequence. If the application is reproduced, ensure each page is legible.

Submit your most current performance appraisal. Sign and date the application form.

Prepare and submit your application to the SPO by the specified deadline.

## **Don't**

Don't make your application a challenge to read. Hard-to-read applications do not usually make the "best qualified" category.

Don't expect the SPO to organize your application.

Don't send an outdated performance appraisal. This can disqualify you for the job.

Don't use postage stamps or metered envelopes designated for official business. Such use is prohibited, and your application will not be considered.

### CAREER LADDER POSITIONS

The chart does not include:

1. Supervisory positions.
2. Series with 10 or fewer incumbents Agencywide.
3. Wage grade positions.
4. Positions in the GS-303 general clerical series (since a wide variety of positions can be classified in this series).

Promotion potential of positions not shown in the chart is documented in the vacancy announcement when the position is advertised.

SERIES	POSITIONS	LOCATIONS	PROMOTION POTENTIAL TO
GS-200	Personnel Specialist Positions Regardless of Series	All Locations	GS-12 <sup>1/</sup>
GS-203	Personnel Clerk/Personnel Actions Clerk	All Locations	GS-5
	Personnel Assistant	All Locations	GS-7
GS-260	Equal Employment Specialist	Headquarters	GS-12 <sup>1/</sup>
		Field	GS-11
GS-301	Various Titles	All Locations	GS-9 <sup>1/</sup>
	Resource Management Specialist	Field	GS-9
GS-318	Secretary	All Locations	GS-5
GS-326	Office Automation Clerk	Headquarters	GS-4
		Field	GS-3
GS-334	Computer Specialist	Headquarters	GS-12 <sup>1/</sup>
		Field	GS-11 <sup>1/</sup>
GS-335	Computer Clerk	All Locations	GS-4
	Computer Assistant	All Locations	GS-5
GS-341	Administrative Officer	All Locations	GS-9
GS-343	Management/Program Analyst	All Locations	GS-9

<b>SERIES</b>	<b>POSITIONS</b>	<b>LOCATIONS</b>	<b>PROMOTION POTENTIAL TO</b>
GS-344	Management and Program Clerk	Headquarters Field	GS-4 GS-3
	Management and Program Assistant	All Locations	GS-5
GS-403	Microbiologist	Headquarters Field	GS-12 GS-11
		All Locations	GS-7
GS-404	Biological Science Lab Technician	All Locations	GS-7
GS-501	Financial Specialist/Analyst	All Locations	GS-9
GS-510	Accountant	Headquarters	GS-12 <sup>1/</sup>
GS-525	Accounting Technician	All Locations	GS-5
GS-560	Budget Analyst	Headquarters	GS-12 <sup>1/</sup>
GS-701	Veterinary Medical Officer	Headquarters Field	GS-12 GS-11
		All Locations	GS-12
GS-1035	Public Affairs Specialist	All Locations	GS-12
GS-1311	Physical Science Aid	All Locations	GS-4
	Physical Science Technician	All Locations	GS-7
GS-1320	Chemist	Headquarters Field	GS-12 GS-11
		Headquarters Field	GS-12 GS-11
GS-1801	Compliance Specialist/Officer	Headquarters Field	GS-13 GS-11
		Field	GS-7
GS-1863	Food Inspector (Slaughter)	Field	GS-7
	Food Inspector (Processed Products)	Field	GS-8

<sup>1/</sup> There are exceptions to this career ladder where one or more positions have a lower career ladder than indicated in the chart. For these exceptions, the promotion potential of the position is indicated in the vacancy announcement when the job is advertised.