

(2) *Specified provisions.* The provisions specified in this paragraph (c) are—

(i) The 90-percent separate employee workforce requirement of § 1.414(r)-3(b)(4);

(ii) The 80-percent separate management requirement of § 1.414(r)-3(b)(5);

(iii) The 25-percent provision-to-customers requirement of § 1.414(r)-3(d)(2)(iii);

(iv) The minimum and maximum highly compensated employee percentage ratios under the statutory safe harbor of § 1.414(r)-5(b)(1)(i) and (ii) (50 percent and 200 percent, respectively), but not the 10-percent exception in § 1.414(r)-5(b)(4);

(v) The employee assignment percentage applied for purposes of the dominant line of business method of allocating residual shared employees under § 1.414(r)-7(c)(2) and the pro-rata method for allocating residual shared employees under § 1.414(r)-7(c)(3).

(3) *Averaging of large fluctuations not permitted.* A provision is not permitted to be applied based on an average determined under this paragraph (c) if the percentage for any testing year taken into account in calculating the average falls below a minimum percentage, or exceeds a maximum percentage, by more than 10 percent (not 10 percentage points) of the respective minimum or maximum percentage. Thus, for example, the statutory safe harbor of § 1.414(r)-5(b) is not permitted to be applied based on an average determined under this paragraph (c) if the percentage for any testing year taken into account in calculating the average falls below 45 percent (which is 10 percent below the 50-percent minimum) or exceeds 220 percent (which is 10 percent above the 200-percent maximum).

(4) *Consistency requirements.* A provision is permitted to be applied on an averaging basis under this paragraph (c) regardless of how any other provision is applied, except in the case of the separate employee workforce and separate management requirements of § 1.414(r)-3(b)(4) and (5), which each must be applied on the same basis as the other. A provision is also permitted to be applied on an averaging basis under this paragraph (c) for a testing year, regardless of how the provision is

applied for any other testing year. However, once a provision is applied on an averaging basis under this paragraph (c) for a testing year, it must be applied on the same basis to all the employer's lines of business to which the provision is applied for the testing year. The percentage for a preceding testing year may be taken into account under this paragraph (c) only if—

(i) The employer calculates the percentage for the preceding testing year in the same manner as the employer calculates the percentage for the current testing year;

(ii) The employer is treated as operating qualified separate lines of business in accordance with § 1.414(r)-1(b) for the preceding testing year; and

(iii) The employer designated the same lines of business in the preceding testing year as in the current testing year.

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§ 1.414(s)-1 Definition of compensation.

(a) *Introduction—(1) In general.* Section 414(s) and this section provide rules for defining compensation for purposes of applying any provision that specifically refers to section 414(s) or this section. For example, section 414(s) is referred to in many of the non-discrimination provisions applicable to pension, profit-sharing, and stock bonus plans qualified under section 401(a). In accordance with section 414(s)(1), this section defines compensation as compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3). It also implements the election provided in section 414(s)(2) to treat certain deferrals as compensation and exercises the authority granted to the Secretary in section 414(s)(3) to prescribe alternative non-discriminatory definitions of compensation.

(2) *Limitations on scope of section 414(s).* Section 414(s) and this section do not apply unless a provision specifically refers to section 414(s) or this section. For example, even though a definition of compensation permitted under section 414(s) must be used in determining whether the contributions or

benefits under a pension, profit-sharing, or stock bonus plan satisfy a certain applicable provision (such as section 401(a)(4)), except as otherwise specified, the plan is not required to use a definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s) in calculating the amount of contributions or benefits actually provided under the plan.

(3) *Overview.* Paragraph (b) of this section provides rules of general application that govern a definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s). Paragraph (c) of this section contains specific definitions of compensation that satisfy section 414(s) without satisfying any additional nondiscrimination requirement under section 414(s). Paragraph (d) of this section provides rules permitting the use of alternative definitions of compensation that satisfy section 414(s) as long as the nondiscrimination requirement and other requirements described in paragraph (d) of this section are satisfied. Paragraph (e) and (f) of this section provide special rules permitting the use of rate of compensation, or prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation, rather than actual compensation, under a definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s). Paragraph (g) of this section provides other special rules, including a special rule for determining the compensation of a self-employed individual under an alternate definition of compensation. Paragraph (h) of this section provides definitions for certain terms used in this section.

(b) *Rules of general application—(1) Use of a definition.* Any definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s) may be used when a provision explicitly refers to section 414(s) unless the reference or this section specifically indicates otherwise.

(2) *Consistency rule.—(i) General rule.* A definition of compensation selected by an employer for use in satisfying an applicable provision must be used consistently to define the compensation of all employees taken into account in satisfying the requirements of the applicable provision for the determination period. For example, although any definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s) may be used for section 401(a)(4) purposes, the same defini-

tion of compensation generally must be used consistently to define the compensation of all employees taken into account in determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4). Furthermore, a different definition of compensation that satisfies section 414(s) is permitted to be used to determine whether another plan maintained by the same employer separately satisfies the requirements of section 401(a)(4). Although a definition of compensation must be used consistently, an employer may change its definition of compensation for a subsequent determination period with respect to the applicable provision. Rules provided under any applicable provision may modify the consistency requirements of this paragraph (b)(2).

(ii) *Scope of consistency rule.* Compensation will not fail to be defined consistently for a group of employees merely because some employees do not receive one or more of the types of compensation included in the definition. For example, a definition of compensation that includes salary, regular or scheduled pay, overtime, and specified types of bonuses will not fail to define compensation consistently merely because only salaried employees receive salary and these specified types of bonuses and only hourly employees receive regular or scheduled pay and overtime.

(3) *Self-employed individuals.* Notwithstanding paragraph (b)(1) of this section, self-employed individuals' compensation can only be determined under paragraph (c)(2) of this section (with or without the modification permitted by paragraph (c)(4) of this section or a modification permitted by paragraph (c)(5) of this section) or by using an equivalent alternative compensation amount determined in accordance with paragraph (g)(1) of this section. These limitations on self-employed individuals do not affect their common-law employees. Thus, the compensation of common-law employees of a partnership or sole proprietorship may be defined using an alternative definition, provided the definition otherwise satisfies paragraph (c)(3), (d), (e), or (f) of this section. If an alternative definition of compensation under paragraph (c)(3), (d), (e), or

(f) of this section is used for other employees to satisfy an applicable provision, the consistency requirement is only met if paragraph (g) of this section is used for the self-employed individuals.

(c) *Specific definitions of compensation that satisfy section 414(s)*—(1) *General rules.* The definitions of compensation provided in paragraphs (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section satisfy section 414(s) and need not satisfy any additional requirements under section 414(s). Paragraph (c)(2) of this section describes definitions of compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3). Paragraph (c)(3) of this section provides a safe harbor alternative definition that excludes certain additional items of compensation. Paragraph (c)(4) of this section permits any definition provided in paragraph (c)(2) or (c)(3) of this section to include certain types of elective contributions and deferred compensation. Paragraph (c)(5) of this section permits certain modifications to a definition otherwise provided under this paragraph (c).

(2) *Compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3).* A definition of compensation that includes all compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3) and excludes all other compensation satisfies section 414(s). Sections 1.415-2(d)(2) and (d)(3) provide rules for determining items of compensation included in and excluded from compensation within the meaning of section 415(c)(3). In addition, section 414(s) is satisfied by the safe harbor definitions provided in § 1.415-2(d)(10) and (d)(11) and any additional definitions of compensation prescribed by the Commissioner under the authority provided in § 1.415-2(d)(13) that are treated as satisfying section 415(c)(3).

(3) *Safe harbor alternative definition.* Under the safe harbor alternative definition in this paragraph (c)(3), compensation is compensation as defined in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, reduced by all of the following items (even if includible in gross income): reimbursements or other expense allowances, fringe benefits (cash and noncash), moving expenses, deferred compensation, and welfare benefits.

(4) *Inclusion of certain deferrals in compensation.* Any definition of compensa-

tion provided in paragraph (c)(2) or (c)(3) of this section satisfies section 414(s) even though it is modified to include all of the following types of elective contributions and all of the following types of deferred compensation—

(i) Elective contributions that are made by the employer on behalf of its employees that are not includible in gross income under section 125, section 402(e)(3), section 402(h), and section 403(b);

(ii) Compensation deferred under an eligible deferred compensation plan within the meaning of section 457(b) (deferred compensation plans of state and local governments and tax-exempt organizations); and

(iii) Employee contributions (under governmental plans) described in section 414(h)(2) that are picked up by the employing unit and thus are treated as employer contributions.

(5) *Exclusions applicable solely to highly compensated employees.* Any definition of compensation that satisfies paragraph (c)(2) or (c)(3) of this section, with or without the modification permitted by paragraph (c)(4) of this section, may be modified to exclude any portion of the compensation of some or all of the employer's highly compensated employees (including, for example, any one or more of the types of elective contributions or deferred compensation described in paragraph (c)(4) of this section).

(d) *Alternative definitions of compensation that satisfy section 414(s)*—(1) *General rule.* In addition to the definitions provided in paragraph (c) of this section, any definition of compensation satisfies section 414(s) with respect to employees (other than self-employed individuals treated as employees under section 401(c)(1)) if the definition of compensation does not by design favor highly compensated employees, is reasonable within the meaning of paragraph (d)(2) of this section, and satisfies the nondiscrimination requirement in paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(2) *Reasonable definition of compensation*—(i) *General rule.* An alternative definition of compensation under this paragraph (d) is reasonable under section 414(s) if it is a definition of compensation provided in paragraph (c) of

this section, modified to exclude all or any portion of one or more of the types of compensation described in paragraph (d)(2)(ii) of this section. See paragraph (e) of this section, however, for special rules that permit definitions of compensation based on employees' rates of compensation and paragraph (f) of this section for special rules that permit definitions of compensation that include prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation.

(ii) *Items that may be excluded.* A reasonable definition of compensation is permitted to exclude, on a consistent basis, all or any portion of irregular or additional compensation, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: Any type of additional compensation for employees working outside their regularly scheduled tour of duty (such as overtime pay, premiums for shift differential, and call-in premiums), bonuses, or any one or more of the types of compensation excluded under the safe harbor alternative definition in paragraph (c)(3) of this section. Whether a type of compensation is irregular or additional is determined based on all the relevant facts and circumstances. A reasonable definition is also permitted to include, on a consistent basis, all or any portion of the types of elective contributions or deferred compensation described in paragraph (c)(4) of this section and, thus, need not include all those types of elective contributions or deferred compensation as otherwise required under paragraph (c)(4) of this section.

(iii) *Limits on the amount excluded from compensation.* A definition of compensation is not reasonable if it provides that each employee's compensation is a specified portion of the employee's compensation measured for the otherwise applicable determination period under another definition. For example, a definition of compensation that specifically limits each employee's compensation for a determination period to 95 percent of the employee's compensation using a definition provided in paragraph (c) of this section is not reasonable. Similarly, a definition of compensation that limits each employee's compensation used to satisfy an applicable provision with a 12-

month determination period to compensation under a definition provided in paragraph (c) of this section for one month is not a reasonable definition of compensation. However, a definition of compensation is not unreasonable merely because it excludes all compensation in excess of a specified dollar amount.

(3) *Nondiscrimination requirement*—(i) *In general.* An alternative definition of compensation under this paragraph (d) is nondiscriminatory under section 414(s) for a determination period if the average percentage of total compensation included under the alternative definition of compensation for an employer's highly compensated employees, as a group for the determination period does not exceed by more than a de minimis amount the average percentage of total compensation included under the alternative definition for the employer's nonhighly compensated employees as a group.

(ii) *Total compensation*—(A) *General rule.* For purposes of this paragraph (d)(3), total compensation must be determined using a definition of compensation provided in paragraph (c)(2) of this section, either with or without the modification permitted by paragraph (c)(4) of this section. Thus, total compensation does not include prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation described in paragraph (f)(1) of this section (including imputed compensation for a period during which an employee performs services for another employer). Total compensation taken into account for each employee (including, if added, the elective contributions and deferred compensation described in paragraph (c)(4) of this section) may not exceed the annual compensation limit of section 401(a)(17).

(B) *Alternative definitions with exclusions applicable solely to highly compensated employees.* If an alternative definition of compensation contains a provision that excludes amounts from compensation and, as described in paragraph (c)(5) of this section, the provision only applies in defining the compensation of some highly compensated employees, then, for purposes of this paragraph (d)(3), the total compensation of any highly compensated

employee subject to the provision must be reduced by any amount excluded from the employee's compensation as a result of the provision. However, if the provision applies consistently in defining the compensation of all highly compensated employees, this adjustment to total compensation is not required.

(iii) *Employees taken into account*—(A) *General rule.* In applying the requirement of this paragraph (d)(3), the employees taken into account are the same employees taken into account in satisfying the requirements of the applicable provision for the determination period. For example, in determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4), an alternative definition must satisfy this paragraph (d)(3) taking into account all employees who benefit under the plan for the plan year (within the meaning of § 1.410(b)-3(a)). If an employer is using the same alternative definition of compensation to determine whether more than one separate plan satisfies section 401(a)(4), the employer is permitted to take into account all the employees who benefit under all of those plans for the plan year in determining whether the alternative definition of compensation being used satisfies this paragraph (d)(3).

(B) *Exclusion of self-employed individuals.* In applying the requirement of this paragraph (d)(3), self-employed individuals are disregarded.

(C) *Certain employees disregarded.* If an employee's total compensation for the determination period, determined under paragraph (d)(3)(ii) and (d)(3)(vi)(B) of this section, is zero, the employee is disregarded in determining whether the nondiscrimination requirement of paragraph (d)(3) of this section is satisfied for that determination period. For example, an employee who does not receive any actual compensation during a determination period because the employee is on unpaid leave of absence for the entire period, but who is credited with imputed compensation described in paragraph (f)(1) of this section, is disregarded in determining whether the nondiscrimination requirement of this paragraph (d)(3) is satisfied for that determination period.

(iv) *Calculation of average percentages*—(A) *General rule.* To determine the average percentages described in paragraph (d)(3)(i) of this section, an individual compensation percentage must be calculated for each employee in a group, and then the average of the separately calculated compensation percentages for each employee in the group must be determined. The individual compensation percentage for an employee is calculated by dividing the amount of the employee's compensation that is included under the alternative definition by the amount of the employee's total compensation.

(B) *Other reasonable methods.* Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(3)(iv)(A) of this section, any other reasonable method is permitted to be used to determine the average percentages described in paragraph (d)(3)(i) of this section for either or both of the groups (i.e., highly compensated employees and nonhighly compensated employees), provided that the method cannot reasonably be expected to create a significant variance from the average percentage for that group determined using the individual-percentage method provided in paragraph (d)(3)(iv)(A) of this section. The same method is not required to be used for calculating the two average percentages. For example, to determine the average percentage for nonhighly compensated employees as a group, an employer may calculate an aggregate compensation percentage by dividing the aggregate amount of compensation of nonhighly compensated employees that are included under the alternative definition by the aggregate amount of total compensation of nonhighly compensated employees, provided the resulting percentage is not reasonably expected to vary significantly from the average percentage produced using the individual-percentage method provided in paragraph (d)(3)(iv)(A) of this section because of the extra weight given employees with higher compensation.

(v) *Facts and circumstances determination.* The determination of whether the average percentage of total compensation included for the employer's highly compensated employees as a group for a determination period exceeds by more than a de minimis amount the

average percentage of total compensation included for the employer's non-highly compensated employees as a group is based on all the relevant facts and circumstances. The differences between the percentages for prior determination periods may be considered in determining whether the amount of the difference between the percentages is more than de minimis. In addition, an isolated instance of a more than de minimis difference between the compensation percentages that is due to an extraordinary unforeseeable event (such as overtime payments to employees of a public utility due to a major hurricane) will be disregarded if the amount of the difference in prior determination periods was de minimis.

(vi) *Special rules for definitions of compensation based on rate of compensation or that include prior-employer or imputed compensation*—(A) *Special rule for determining compensation included under an alternative definition.* If an alternative definition uses rate of compensation or includes prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation, the amount of each employee's compensation for a determination period that is treated as included under the alternative definition for purposes of determining the average percentages for the nondiscrimination requirement (i.e. the amount used in the numerator) must not be more than 100 percent of the employee's total compensation for that period, determined under paragraph (d)(3)(ii) and (d)(3)(vi)(B) of this section. This limit on the amount of compensation treated as included under the alternative definition applies even if the amount of compensation actually credited to the employee for the determination period under the definition and, thus, used as compensation within the meaning of section 414(s), exceeds the employee's total compensation for the period.

(B) *Special rule for determining total compensation.* If an alternative definition uses rate of compensation or includes prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation, each employee's total compensation for purposes of determining the average percentages for the nondiscrimination requirement (i.e. the amount used in the denominator) must include all the types of

elective contributions and deferred compensation described in paragraph (c)(4) of this section.

(e) *Rate of compensation*—(1) *General rule.* A definition of compensation satisfies section 414(s) as a reasonable definition of compensation even though it defines the amount of each employee's basic or regular compensation using the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation rather than using the employee's actual basic or regular compensation from the employer if the definition satisfies the requirements specified in paragraph (e)(3) of this section and otherwise satisfies the requirements of paragraph (d) of this section, including the nondiscrimination test in paragraph (d)(3) of this section. For this purpose, the employee's rate of compensation must be determined using an hourly pay scale, weekly salary, or similar unit of basic or regular compensation applicable to the employee. A definition will not fail to satisfy the requirements of this paragraph (e) merely because it defines compensation as including each employee's basic or regular compensation, the amount of which is determined using each employee's basic or regular rate of compensation, plus actual amounts of irregular or additional compensation, such as overtime or bonuses. In addition, a definition of compensation will not fail to satisfy section 414(s) merely because it defines compensation for each employee as the greater of the employee's actual compensation, the amount of which is determined using a definition that would otherwise satisfy paragraph (c) or (d)(2) of this section, or the employee's basic or regular compensation, the amount of which is determined using the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation.

(2) *Not applicable to certain contributions.* This paragraph (e) does not apply to a definition of compensation used in determining whether elective deferrals (as defined in section 402(g)(3)), matching contributions (as defined in section 401(m)(4)), or employee contributions subject to section 401(m) satisfy any applicable provision. Thus, for example, a definition of compensation that defines compensation based on each employee's basic or regular rate of compensation may not be used to

measure compensation for purposes of determining if a qualified cash or deferred arrangement satisfies the actual deferral percentage test in section 401(k)(3).

(3) *Requirements for definitions of compensation based on rate of compensation*—(i) *Benefit determination.* The definition of compensation must actually be used to calculate the benefits, contributions, or other amounts, that are subject to the applicable provision. For example, a definition of compensation that defines compensation based on each employee's basic or regular rate of compensation may not be used to determine whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) unless the benefits, contributions, or other amounts for each employee in the plan are determined using that definition of compensation.

(ii) *Period for determining compensation.* The amount of each employee's basic or regular compensation for the determination period must be determined using the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation as of a designated date in the determination period. For example, if the determination period is a calendar year, this requirement would be satisfied if the amount of each employee's basic or regular compensation for the calendar year is determined using the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation as of January 1 of the calendar year. Alternatively, the amount of each employee's basic or regular compensation for a determination period can be the sum of the amounts separately determined for shorter specified periods (e.g., weeks or months) within the determination period provided the amount of each employee's basic or regular compensation for each specified period is determined using the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation as of a designated date within the specified period.

(iii) *Dates for determining rate of compensation.* One or more dates may be used to determine employees' rates of compensation for a determination period or specified period provided that, if the same date is not used for all employees, the dates selected are designed to determine the rates of compensation for that period on a consistent basis for all employees taken into account for

the determination period. For example, if annual compensation increases are provided to different groups of employees on different dates during the year, it would be consistent to choose a different date for each group in order to include the annual increase in the employees' rates of compensation for the determination period. In addition, the date or dates selected, by themselves, must not cause the portion of total compensation included to vary significantly among employees.

(iv) *Periods without compensation or with reduced compensation.* An employee's compensation may generally only be determined using the employee's rate of compensation for employment periods during which the employer actually compensates the employee. However, if an employee terminates employment or otherwise stops performing services (such as for a leave of absence, layoff or similar event) either without compensation or with reduced compensation during a determination period, the employer may continue to credit the employee with compensation based on the employee's rate of compensation for a period of up to 31 days after the event, but not beyond the end of the determination period. Paragraph (f) of this section contains special rules for crediting imputed compensation for periods extending beyond 31 days during which an employee is not compensated or an employee's compensation is reduced. See also the definition of *Section 414(s) compensation* in § 1.401(a)(4)-12 that, for purposes of satisfying section 401(a)(4), permits adjustments to compensation to reflect the equivalent of full-time compensation to the extent necessary to satisfy the requirements of 29 CFR 2530.204-2(d) (regarding double proration of service and compensation).

(f) *Prior-employer compensation and imputed compensation*—(1) *General rule.* Solely for purposes of determining whether a defined benefit plan, as defined in § 1.410(b)-9, satisfies section 401(a)(4) or 410(b), an alternative definition that includes prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation satisfies section 414(s) as a reasonable alternative definition if the definition satisfies the requirements specified in

paragraphs (f) (2) and (3) of this section. For this purpose, prior-employer compensation is compensation from an employer other than the employer (determined at the time that the compensation is paid) maintaining the plan that is credited for periods prior to the employee's employment with the employer maintaining the plan and during which the employee performed services for the other employer. For this purpose, imputed compensation is compensation credited for periods after an employee has commenced or recommenced participation in a plan while the employee is not compensated by the employer maintaining the plan or is compensated at a reduced rate by that employer because the employee is not performing services as an employee for the employer (including a period in which the employee performs services for another employer, e.g., a joint venture) or because the employee has a reduced work schedule.

(2) *Requirements for definitions of compensation crediting prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation*—(i) *General requirement.* The definition must otherwise be described in paragraph (c) of this section or must otherwise satisfy the requirements of paragraph (d) or (e) of this section for alternative definitions of compensation, including the nondiscrimination requirement in paragraph (d)(3) of this section.

(ii) *Benefit determination.* A definition of compensation that credits prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation must actually be used to calculate the benefits under the plan. For example, the definition may not be used to determine whether a defined benefit plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) unless the benefits for each employee in the plan are determined using that definition of compensation.

(iii) *Provision applied to all similarly-situated employees.* A provision in a plan's definition of compensation crediting prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation must apply on the same terms to all similarly-situated employees in the plan. The criteria for determining whether employees are similarly situated for this purpose are the same as the criteria for determining whether a plan provision

crediting pre-participation or imputed service satisfies the requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iii)(A).

(iv) *Legitimate business purpose.* There must be a legitimate business purpose, based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, for crediting prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation to an employee for the period being credited. The standard for determining whether crediting prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation satisfies this requirement is the same as the standard for determining whether crediting pre-participation or imputed service under a plan satisfies the requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iii)(B) and whether crediting imputed service satisfies the additional requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iv)(A). However, if the legitimate business reason for crediting imputed compensation relates to the services the employee is performing for another employer and the reason satisfies the standard in § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iii)(B), the additional requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iv)(A) are deemed to be satisfied. For example, if an employee becomes employed by another employer as a result of a merger, acquisition or similar transaction with the other employer and imputed compensation is credited to the employee while the employee is performing services for the other employer, the crediting of imputed compensation to the employee satisfies the standard in § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iii)(B). Thus, under that example, crediting the imputed compensation to the employee is deemed to satisfy the additional requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iv)(A), even if the employee is not performing those services under an arrangement that provides an ongoing business benefit to the employer maintaining the plan.

(v) *No significant discrimination.* Based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, crediting prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation must not by design or in operation discriminate significantly in favor of highly compensated employees. The standard for determining whether crediting prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation satisfies this requirement is the same as the standard

for determining whether crediting pre-participation or imputed service satisfies the requirement in §1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iii)(C) and whether crediting imputed service satisfies the additional requirement of §1.401(a)(4)-11(d)(3)(iv)(B).

(3) *Reasonable method*—(i) *General rule*. Any reasonable method may be used to determine the amount of prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation provided that the requirements of paragraph (f)(3)(ii) or (iii) of this section are satisfied, whichever is applicable.

(ii) *Requirements for prior-employer compensation*. Prior-employer compensation credited to an employee for a period that an employee is performing services for another employer must be compensation for the employee from the other employer (or be based on the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation from the other employer) for that period. In addition, prior employer compensation credited to an employee must not exceed the amount of compensation from the other employer that would have been included under the definition of compensation in effect for that period for compensation from the employer maintaining the plan. Reasonable assumptions may be made in determining the amount of compensation received from another employer for a period that would have been included under the definition of compensation in effect for that period for compensation from the employer maintaining the plan.

(iii) *Requirements for imputed compensation*—(A) *General rule*. The amount of imputed compensation credited to an employee during any period, when combined with the amount of any actual compensation being included, must not exceed an amount that, based on all of the relevant facts and circumstances, is reasonably representative of the amount of compensation that the employee would have received and that would have been included under the definition of compensation in effect for the period if the employee had continued to perform services for the employer during that period at the same level as the employee was performing before the employee stopped performing services or changed to a re-

duced work schedule. The relevant facts and circumstances include the compensation that the employee was receiving immediately before the employee stopped performing services or changed to a reduced work schedule, and, if applicable, the rate of compensation in effect while the employee is not performing services or has a reduced work schedule that is applicable to the employee's specific job grade immediately before the change occurred.

(B) *Imputed compensation from another employer*. Imputed compensation credited for a period that an employee is performing services for another employer is deemed to satisfy paragraph (f)(3)(iii)(A) of this section if the amount of compensation credited satisfies the requirements of paragraph (f)(3)(ii) of this section for prior-employer compensation. Thus, for example, the amount of imputed compensation credited to an employee for a period that the employee is performing services for another employer is deemed to satisfy paragraph (f)(3)(iii)(A) of this section if the amount credited is compensation for the employee from the other employer (or is based on the employee's basic or regular rate of compensation from the other employer) for that period, and the amount credited does not exceed the compensation from the other employer that would be included for the employee under the definition of compensation in effect for that period for compensation from the employer maintaining the plan.

(4) *Special nondiscrimination rule for safe harbor definitions*. If a definition of compensation crediting prior-employer or imputed compensation is otherwise described in paragraph (c) of this section, and the prior-employer compensation or imputed compensation credited satisfies the requirements of paragraphs (f)(1), (2), and (3) of this section, then the definition is deemed to satisfy paragraph (d) of this section (i.e., it is deemed to be nondiscriminatory).

(g) *Special rules*—(1) *Self-employed individuals*—(i) *General rule*. If an alternative definition of compensation under paragraph (c)(3), (d), (e), or (f) of this section is used to satisfy an applicable provision, an equivalent alternative compensation amount must be

determined for any self-employed individual who is in the group of employees for whom paragraph (b) of this section requires a single definition of compensation to be used. This equivalent alternative compensation amount is determined by multiplying the self-employed individual's total earned income (as defined in section 401 (c)(2)) for the determination period by the percentage of total compensation (as defined in paragraph (d)(3)(ii) of this section) included under the alternative definition for the employer's nonhighly compensated common-law employees as a group (determined in a manner consistent with the rules in paragraph (d)(3)(iii) of this section and, if applicable, paragraph (d)(3)(vi) of this section). Thus, for purposes of this determination, highly compensated common-law employees must be disregarded. This equivalent alternative compensation amount will be treated as the self-employed individual's compensation under the alternative definition of compensation for the determination period.

(ii) *Inclusion of elective contributions.* If the alternative definition of compensation includes any types of elective contributions described in paragraph (c)(4) of this section, the self-employed individual's earned income for this determination must be increased by the amount of elective contributions made by the employer on behalf of the self-employed individual, and the definition of total compensation for this determination must include all the types of elective contributions described in paragraph (c)(4) of this section made by the employees (other than highly compensated employees).

(iii) *Reductions in equivalent alternative compensation amount applicable only to highly compensated employees.* An alternative definition of compensation may provide that compensation under the alternative definition for some or all self-employed individuals who are highly compensated employees is a specified portion of, rather than equal to, the equivalent compensation amount determined under paragraph (g)(1)(i).

(2) *Leased employees.* [Reserved]

(h) *Definitions.* The following definitions apply for purposes of this section:

(1) *Applicable provision.* Applicable provision means a provision that specifically refers to section 414(s) or this section.

(2) *Determination period.* Determination period means a period during which the amount of compensation is measured for use in determining whether the requirements of an applicable provision are satisfied. If no period is provided under the applicable provision for measuring compensation, the determination period is the period for which the applicable provision must be satisfied. The applicable provision may provide additional rules concerning the determination period to be used for satisfying the nondiscrimination requirement in paragraph (d) of this section.

(3) *Employee.* Employee means employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)-9.

(4) *Highly compensated employee.* Highly compensated employee means highly compensated employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)-9.

(5) *Nonhighly compensated employee.* Nonhighly compensated employee means nonhighly compensated employee within the meaning of § 1.410(b)-9.

(6) *Self-employed individual.* Self-employed individual means self-employed individual within the meaning of section 401(c)(1).

(i) *Additional rules.* The Commissioner may in revenue rulings, notices, and other guidance of general applicability provide additional rules for defining compensation within the meaning of section 414(s), including additional definitions of compensation that satisfy section 414(s).

(j) *Effective date and transition rules—*
(1) *Statutory effective date.* Section 414(s) applies to years beginning on or after January 1, 1987.

(2) *Regulatory effective date—*(i) *In general.* Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (j)(2)(ii) of this section, § 1.414(s)-1 (a) through (i) apply to years beginning on or after January 1, 1994.

(ii) *Plans of tax-exempt organizations.* In the case of a plan maintained by an organization that is exempt from income taxation pursuant to section 501(a), including plans subject to section 403(b)(12)(A)(i) (nonelective plans),

§1.414(s)-1 (a) through (i) apply to plan years beginning on or after January 1, 1996.

(3) *Compliance during transition period.* For plan years beginning before the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in paragraph (j)(2) of this section, and on or after the statutory effective date as set forth in paragraph (j)(1) of this section, a plan must be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 414(s). Whether a plan is operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 414(s) will generally be determined based on all relevant facts and circumstances, including the extent to which an employer has resolved unclear issues in its favor. A plan will be deemed to be operated in accordance with a reasonable, good faith interpretation of section 414(s)(1) and (2) if it is operated in accordance with the terms of §1.414(s)-1 (a) through (i). For years beginning on or after the statutory effective date and before the effective date of these regulations, a definition of compensation is also deemed to satisfy section 414(s) as an alternative method of determining compensation under section 414(s)(3) if the definition satisfies the requirements of §1.414(s)-1 (a) through (i) or if the definition satisfies the prior regulation provisions of §1.414(s)-1T. (See §1.414(s)-1T as contained in the CFR edition revised as of April 1, 1991.) In addition, for those transition years, a definition of compensation is deemed to satisfy section 414(s) as an alternative method of determining compensation under section 414(s)(3) if, based on all the relevant facts and circumstances in effect for the year, use of the definition does not cause discrimination in favor of highly compensated employees.

[T.D. 8361, 56 FR 47662, Sept. 19, 1991; 57 FR 10815, 10953, Mar. 31, 1992, as amended by T.D. 8488, 58 FR 47063, Sept. 7, 1993]

§ 1.415-1 General rules with respect to limitations on benefits and contributions under qualified plans.

(a) *Trusts.* Under sections 415 and 401(a)(16), a trust which forms part of a pension, profit-sharing or stock bonus plan will not be qualified under section

401(a) if any one of the following conditions exists:

(1) The annual benefits under a defined benefit plan with respect to any participant for any limitation year exceed the limitations of section 415(b) and §1.415-3.

(2) The contributions and other additions credited under a defined contribution plan with respect to any participant for any limitation year exceed the limitations of section 415(c) and §1.415-6.

(3) Where an individual has at any time participated in a defined benefit plan and also has at any time participated in a defined contribution plan maintained by the same employer, the trust has been disqualified under section 415(g) and §1.415-9.

(b) *Certain annuities and accounts—(1) In general.* Except as provided in paragraph (c) of this section, an annuity, account, etc., listed in section 415(a)(2) will not be considered to be described in the otherwise applicable section unless—

(i) It satisfies the requirements of §1.415-3 (relating to limitations on benefits), §1.415-6 (relating to limitations on contributions and other additions) or §1.415-7 (relating to limitations where an individual has at any time participated in a defined contribution plan and also has at any time participated in a defined benefit plan maintained by the same employer), whichever is applicable, and

(ii) It has not been disqualified under §1.415-9 (relating to disqualification of plans and trusts).

(2) *Special rule for section 403(b) annuity contracts.* (i) With respect to an annuity contract described in section 403(b), the provisions of subparagraph (1) of this paragraph apply only to that portion of the contract which exceeds the limitations of §1.415-3, §1.415-6 and §1.415-7, whichever is applicable.

(ii) In addition, where the amount of the contribution under the section 403(b) annuity contract exceeds the applicable limitation, the exclusion allowance described in section 403(b)(2)(A) is reduced in the manner described in §1.415-6(e)(1)(ii).

(3) *Cross references to additional rules for section 403(b) annuity contracts.* For