



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, D.C. 20240

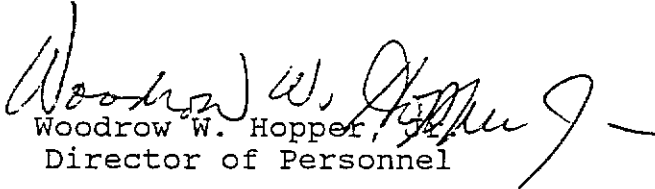
JUN 13 1995

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 95-6 (335)

SUBJECT: Departmental Merit Promotion Plan

Final recommendations from the Recruitment and Internal Placement Task Group were received in December 1994. One of the recommendations of the group was to establish a standardized Departmental Merit Promotion and Placement Plan (MPPP). As a result, attached is such a plan. Effective immediately DM 370.335 is superseded by this letter, as are any bureau plans previously approved by the Department. If there is negotiated agreement language that conflicts with this plan, the agreement prevails. All agreements must be opened by management at the appropriate time to bring them into conformance with this plan.

The plan has been developed to take full advantage of all flexibilities allowed by law. It allows managers and supervisors to make decisions regarding recruitment and placement that fit their particular employment situation and environment.

  
Woodrow W. Hopper,  
Director of Personnel

Attachment

DOI  
MERIT PROMOTION AND PLACEMENT POLICY

1. **What is the Department's policy on Merit Promotion Placement actions?**

Each position must be filled by the best qualified person available whether by promotion, reassignment, transfer, appointment or other appropriate means. Competitive procedures and recruitment methods will be based solely on relative ability, knowledge, and skills after fair and open competition that assures all applicants receive equal opportunity while maintaining a culturally diverse workforce.

2. **What positions are covered under this Merit Promotion Plan?**

All positions covered by the General Schedule, the Federal Wage System and negotiated prevailing rate contracts.

3. **What specific actions are covered by this plan?**

- o Permanent promotion to a higher graded position or to a position with a higher full performance than previously held on a non-temporary basis in the competitive service.
- o Temporary promotions or details for more than 120 days to a higher graded position or to a position with greater promotion potential.
- o Selection for training which is part of an authorized training agreement (e.g. the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program or a training program that leads to non-competitive promotion eligibility).
- o Reassignment or demotion to position with promotion potential greater than any position previously held in the competitive service (except as allowed under reduction in force regulations).
- o Reinstatement to a permanent or temporary position at a higher grade or with a higher full performance level than any position previously held on a non-temporary basis in the competitive service.

4. **What actions are specifically excepted from coverage by this plan?**

The following are excepted from this policy:

- o Career promotions.

- Promotions due to the accretion of substantive new and higher graded duties and responsibilities.
- Upgrading of a position due to the application of a new classification standard without a significant change in duties.
- Actions taken under Reduction In Force.
- Promotions resulting from the correction of an initial classification error.
- Repromotion to a grade previously held on a non-temporary basis.
- Promotion to a position with a representative rate equal to or lower than that of position previously held on a non-temporary basis.
- Promotion of a career/career-conditional employee from a position with known promotion potential to another position having no higher promotion potential than any other position previously held on a non-temporary basis.
- Details or temporary promotions not to exceed 120 days.
- Transfer or reassignment to a position at the same grade and with the same promotion potential as the current position or a previous position on a non-temporary basis in the competitive service.
- A position filled by an individual within reach on a competitive certificate of eligibles.
- Reinstatement to a grade no higher than the full performance level of any position held on non-temporary basis in the competitive service.
- Details made in 120 day increments up to one year to unclassified duties, and to the same or lower grade duties.
- Temporary or term promotions made permanent when such a possibility was publicized in the original competition notice.

**5. What is required to initiate a personnel action covered by this policy?**

A manager or supervisor can initiate an action by using the automated Standard Form 52 system and a current position description.

**6. How do I create a Vacancy Announcement?**

Use the Department's Automated Vacancy Announcement Distribution System (AVADS), which is available to managers, supervisors, personnel offices and any other organization providing staffing services.

**7. Must AVADS be used for all vacancies?**

No, temporary promotions, details and vacancies publicized under a limited area of consideration can be announced under local procedures and formats.

**8. How do I determine who can compete for a recruit action and how long a vacancy announcement will remain open?**

Managers can establish areas of consideration and the length of time an announcement will be open. The area of Consideration must be broad enough to ensure the attraction of diverse pool of highly qualified applicants. Managers can extend open time periods or reopen a vacancy announcement if the diversity, number and/or quality of applicants are deemed inadequate. Announcements must clearly state if applications will be accepted from individuals with non-competitive appointment eligibility. Voluntary applications from Departmental employees must be accepted.

**9. Where are procedures found for the receipt/acceptance of applications?**

Vacancy announcements will identify the forms needed for consideration. Applicants may submit an OF 612, Optional Application For Federal Employment or a resume. Under no circumstances can applicants be required to submit a Standard Form 171, Application for Federal Employment. In addition, any applicant who submit's a Standard Form 171 will not receive consideration. All application materials must be received in the Personnel Office by the closing date of the announcement. Failure to submit all the required forms may result in the application being rejected.

**10. What rating/ranking procedures should be followed prior to the referral of applicants for selection consideration?**

All applicants will be rated to ensure that they meet the qualification requirements, as described in the vacancy announcement. Applicants must meet all qualification requirements by the closing date of the announcement.

Regardless of the number of applicants, qualitative distinctions must be made among the promotion eligible in terms of relative merit and ability. If there are more than 10 candidates eligible for promotion, a formal rating schedule must be developed or an automated ranking process will be used.

Use of a rating/ranking panel is optional. When a panel is convened, it should consist of at least one subject matter expert (not the selecting official) who will apply the rating schedule and assign appropriate scores. If there are 10 or fewer promotional candidates, a determination as to the "well qualified" must be made. Performance appraisals and awards may be used and given due consideration at the option of the manager. Rating and ranking decisions must be documented and kept in a case file. Candidates must be notified of the selection decision once it has been made.

**11. How are candidates referred to the selecting Official?**

Eligible candidates will be referred, in alphabetical order, to the selecting official through use of a Selection Certificate. The Selection Certificate will consist of groupings of eligibles based upon the authority under which they can be appointed.

A Selection Certificate will be issued for an initial 60 day period with extensions possible for a maximum of 180 days. Additional selections may be made during the 180 day "life" of the Certificate for identical positions at the same location. Managers have the right to select or not select from among properly ranked and certified sources of applicants.

**12. Do Merit Promotion case files have to be maintained?**

Yes. These files must be maintained for 2 years, by the manager or the office providing the staffing service.

**13. What type of rating and ranking information can be released to applicants?**

The following information can be released to applicants: Whether the applicant was qualified and/or referred for selection; who was selected; the applicant's own supervisory appraisal and rating on the ranking elements; procedures used to arrive at the final scores, cut off scores, and certification; or any other information allowed by the Freedom of Information Act or the Privacy Act.

**14. What type of complaints can applicants make regarding merit promotion actions?**

Applicants may file complaints and grievances pertaining to specific merit actions. These are resolved through the grievance process or EEO complaint procedures. Non-selection from a list of properly ranked and certified applicants is not grievable.

15. **How does this plan apply to negotiated agreements between unions and management?**

Where this plan conflicts with a negotiated agreement, the agreement prevails.

Where conflict does exist between the plan and a negotiated agreement, labor management partnerships or bargaining should be utilized to resolve the conflict.

Where bargaining unit employees wish to grieve any merit action, they must use the negotiated grievance procedures rather than the agency grievance procedures.

16. **How does Indian Preference apply in the Department of the Interior?**

Indian Preference applies only within the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). BIA is required to apply all applicable laws and associated regulations that govern the employment of American Indians and Alaska Natives who qualify for Indian Preference.