

  
Approved for Release

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Oct 20, 2010  
Date

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

**HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BULLETIN #131, FY11**

**SUBJECT:** Application Acceptance and Processing

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** November 1, 2010

**SUPERSEDES:** HR Bulletin #044, FY06 "Application Acceptance and Processing," dated August 31, 2006.

**REVISIONS:** The time limit for date of return of applicant referral certificates has been changed; preference eligible objection/pass-over request procedures have been omitted.

**COVERAGE:** This bulletin applies to all competitive service positions through the GS-15 or equivalent levels when public notice is provided, and rating and ranking procedures are applied.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this HR Bulletin is to establish Department-wide policy for the acceptance and processing of applications under competitive examining and merit assignment procedures. In the event of a conflict between a provision of the Recruitment Plan and applicable provisions of negotiated collective bargaining agreement, the provision of the collective bargaining agreement will apply.

**Standard Application Procedures:** Completed applications (including all requested supplemental documentation) must be received in the servicing human resources office (SHRO) by the closing date of the announcement unless otherwise specified in the vacancy announcement.

**Alternative Application Procedures:** For each vacancy announcement, SHROs must state an HR contact for applicants who need additional assistance.

**Complete Applications:** SHROs may establish policies regarding acceptance of completed applications, to include minimum submission requirements and the effects of not receiving a complete application; for example, an application may be considered incomplete if an applicant:

- Does not submit a required form or other material, as specified in the job announcement;
- Fails to respond to questions that he/she must answer before any action can be taken; or
- Submits insufficient information concerning education or experience.

Vacancy announcements should clearly state which documents are required as well as the impact if an applicant fails to submit a complete application by the established date.

SHROs may rate incomplete applications based on the information provided; may ask the applicant to furnish the required information; or may disqualify the applicant. However, regardless of the option chosen, it *must be applied consistently*, and the justification documented in the case file (signed and dated by the HR practitioner), for all applicants for any specific position.

**Late Applications:** Thirty percent or more compensable veterans may file an application for a vacancy after the closing date of the announcement, up to the issuance of the applicant referral certificate. All other applicants must apply in accordance with the vacancy announcement specifications.

**Supplemental Documentation:** Supplemental documentation is any documentation other than a resume, used by the SHRO office to determine the eligibility for consideration or qualifications of an applicant. These may include: school transcripts; DD-214 – Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (stating disposition of discharge or character of service), Veterans Affairs letters, SF-50 – Notification of Personnel Action; Performance Evaluation; etc. Supplemental documentation should be submitted with the application, and applicants must be given a contact phone number and directions on how to submit the supplemental documentation should any difficulties arise in submitting it. Applicants are not required to submit official documents as part of their application package; copies are sufficient. Once selected and prior to appointment, applicants will be required to provide official documentation.

**Four Points of Notification:** Applicants who apply through USAJOBS must receive notification through USAJOBS at each of the following points during the application process: application received, application assessed for qualifications, applicant referred or not referred to selecting official, and applicant selected or not selected for the job. SHROs must determine how to notify applicants who apply using alternative methods.

**Acting on Certificates:** Applicant referral certificates must be returned within 30 days of the issuance date. Extensions of certificates will only be given on a case-by-case basis, with full justification, and only by the Principal Human Resources Manager or his/her designee.

**Reconsideration of Ratings:** SHROs should establish a procedure by which an applicant may appeal his/her rating. Applicant reconsideration requests should be handled as follows:

Applicant Responsibility:

- The applicant's request should be made in writing and should indicate why the applicant believes the original decision is inaccurate.

SHRO Responsibilities:

- The office that made the original decision will conduct the review.

- A staff member other than the person who made the original decision must conduct the review.
- The office that made the original decision must develop a written response to the request with a full explanation of the reasons for the decision, without compromising the rating schedule.
- The office that made the original decision must issue a response to the applicant as soon as practicable (for example, bureaus might consider establishing policy to respond within 30 days).

**Documenting Certificates:** The applicant referral certificates must document action for each certified eligible in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, and/or appropriate merit assignment plans.

**Auditing Certificates:** Auditing competitive examining certificates is the process of certifying the action taken by hiring managers on returned certificates of eligibles, in order to comply with legal and regulatory selection procedures. Certificates should be audited prior to the selectee entry-on-duty date. In an instance where the vacancy announcement has been cancelled but a certificate was issued, the certificate must still be audited.

For positions advertised under competitive examining procedures, Delegated Examining Unit staff must evaluate the certificate for proper selections.

- Is the certificate properly documented for each eligible?
- If an applicant(s) was removed from consideration, was this proper?
- Were veterans' preference rules followed?
- Were those applicants eligible for priority consideration selected?

**Case Documentation:** All cases should be documented with the relevant initiating documents (e.g., SF-52, SF-39, and relevant e-mail requests), job analyses, position descriptions, rating schedules/crediting plans; as well as OPM qualification standards or approved modified qualification standard.

**REFERENCES:** Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 300; Delegated Examining Operations Handbook; HR Bulletin #098, FY09, "Process for Requests to Pass Over All Preference Eligibles for Competitive Service Positions and Excepted Service Positions Covered Under Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)"

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