



INTERAGENCY CONNECTION

215 Dean A. McGee, Suite 153, Oklahoma City, OK 73102

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Chair's Corner



The temperatures always make Oklahoma an interesting place to be in July!

While July brings the increase in temperatures, it just provides the “warm up” for our Federal

Executive Boards’ Strategic Planning session. This month, our FEB’s Executive Director and I will attend the National FEB Conference to participate in the Strategic Planning session which will determine the direction of FEBs for the next five years.

During our June Executive Policy Council meeting, I received some input from the Steering Board; AND, I would love to hear from any of you! If you have ideas or suggestions on initiatives, projects, activities that FEBs (as a network or as just OUR FEB) should pursue, please send these to LeAnn Jenkins (LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov) before July 20th. This will ensure your ideas and suggestions are included in the planning session.

On the horizon:

August has several activities planned for your participation!

Leadership FEB: This year’s Class has four forums to their credit. Their fifth session is planned for this month; they will be visiting the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center.

An all-class reunion is also scheduled for Leadership FEB participants for classes 2005

through 2012, designed to share leadership concepts, lessons learned and best practices. The FEB office will be in contact with Alumni to provide details on how to participate.

Guardian Accord: This exercise is designed to increase awareness of Federal, State, territorial, tribal and local government jurisdictions, and the private sector, about the importance of incorporating the specific risks of terrorism into continuity planning. The session is designed for supervisors, leaders and continuity of operations managers.

Pre-retirement Seminars: We have 3-1/2 hour sessions planned for CSRS and FERS. These are not the comprehensive full day seminars; however, they provide more information than the vignettes previously held.

Efficiency Training: This one-day training is designed to address the issues and challenges that come with a “do more with less” environment. Specific topics include “taming the email beast”, getting the most from “smart phones” and other PDA equipment, and organizing the stacks that result from the multi-tasking demands of public service.

Please be sure to contact the FEB office with any ideas you would like us to take forward for the FEB Strategic Planning session!


A.D. Andrews, Chairman

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Business Etiquette Tips

First Things First: Dress

For Women, make sure you have an 'updated' look and wear a little make up ("some make up" is professional). Keep outfits neutral (black, grey, navy, taupe). Pull hair back if it's long and hide the grey. Keep jewelry simple: Pearls – small and skinny for traditional; big and chunky for a trendy look. Nails short and clean, light polish. Shoes: closed-toe. Men are judged by their shoes (keep them shined). Women: own a 3-piece suit (jacket, slacks, skirt) and two blouses. Men, own a suit and one or two jackets with two tailored shirts.

Making Contact:

Make eye contact 40-60% of the time, looking in-between the person's eyes. The lower you gaze downward, the more it conveys a personal (not professional) relationship. Shake hands in a firm web-to-web manner. Avoid the 'limp fish' handshake (conveys weakness), 'politicians gloved' handshake (too personal), Queen's handshake (offering just your fingertips rather than your palm connotes superiority).

Cultures Vary - Do Your Homework: Do you bow, kiss or shake hands with a business contact from another culture? (Chinese bow from the shoulders; Japanese from the waist)

Remembering Names:

Can't remember names? Join the club. Here's a trick that will help: repeat the person's name 3 times - when meeting, once in conversation, when saying goodbye.

Avoid Hot Topics:

Don't discuss religion, money, sex or politics, even in casual settings – you never know if you'll 'hit a nerve.'

Nailing eEtiquette.

Don't text or take a cell call in a meeting, no matter how important. Keep PDAs on vibrate. E-mails are traditional memos gone digital — do not use anger (e-mail lives forever in cyberspace and anger is bad for business, regardless). Avoid humor — it doesn't translate well on-line. Use spell check.

Dining Skills + Personality Testing:

Twitter rocks, but business still gets done at the dining table. Employers often take candidates to lunch to test dining and "personality" skills. Do arrive 5 minutes early. Don't order the most expensive dish. Don't order a cocktail. Don't order 'messy' food like spaghetti. Don't eat like a 'piglet' – do butter and eat bread one small piece at a time; work utensils from the outside-in; know your bread plate is on your left and if in doubt, follow the host's lead.

Follow Up is Everything:

Within 48 hours, send a hand-written note and hand-address the envelope to stand out in a digital world.

No Biz Card Opportunity – No Sweat:

Social Business Cards are THE new business networking tool. These basic cards, with just a name and phone number or e-mail, are ideal for social events when business cards are inappropriate.

*Information provided by PSOW, the **Protocol School of Washington**®, a leader in international protocol and etiquette services.*

Special thanks to Donna Sullivan, past Oklahoma FEB Assistant for contributing this article for the newsletter!



Spotlighting Information in Public Service

Did you Know.....

USDA Encourages Summer Travelers to Protect American Agriculture by Not Packing a Pest



WASHINGTON, June 14, 2012 - Whether you're studying abroad in Europe, traveling on business in Asia, or taking that dream vacation to Hawaii, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is

urging summer travelers to join us in the fight against invasive pests by not packing a pest.

While agricultural products make tempting souvenirs, invasive pests can hitchhike on fruits, vegetables, meats, processed foods, plants, and handicraft items. If these invasive pests were to become established in the United States, they could devastate urban and rural landscapes and cost billions of dollars in lost revenue and eradication efforts. As a result, APHIS restricts or prohibits the entry of certain agricultural products from foreign countries and from Hawaii and U.S. territories.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officers or agriculture specialists with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will inspect your baggage when you first arrive in the United States to ensure that the agricultural items you are carrying are allowable under APHIS regulations. Be sure to declare all agricultural items to CBP officers or CBP agriculture specialists at the first port of entry. Failure to declare food products can result in fines and penalties.

The following food items are generally allowed entry, but should still be declared and presented

to a CBP agriculture specialist or CBP officer for inspection:

- Condiments such as oil, vinegar, mustard, catsup, pickles, syrup, honey without honey combs, jelly, and jam
- Foodstuffs such as bakery items, candy, and chocolate
- Hard cured cheeses without meat, such as parmesan or cheddar
- Canned goods and goods in vacuum packed jars (other than those containing meat or poultry products, and those containing certain dairy products) for personal use
- Fish or fish products for personal use
- Powdered drinks sealed in original containers with ingredients listed in English.
- Dry mixes containing dairy and egg ingredients (such as baking mixes, cocoa mixes, drink mixes, instant cake mixes, instant pudding mixes, liquid drink mixes containing reconstituted dry milk or dry milk products, potato flakes, and infant formula) that are commercially labeled, presented in final finished packaging, and require no further manipulation of the product are generally allowed.

You may also be allowed to bring back certain fresh fruits and vegetables, animal products and by-products, plants and plant parts for planting, cut flowers, firewood, or miscellaneous agricultural products, depending on the item and its country of origin. APHIS encourages travelers to be aware of restrictions pertaining to agricultural products before leaving the United States and to use these as guidelines when purchasing souvenirs. For comprehensive information on importing agricultural items for personal use, visit APHIS' Agricultural Information for International Travelers Web page at www.aphis.usda.gov/travel.



An Explanation of Early Outs & Buyouts

Taken from Personal Adviser column of Federal Times, June 18, 2012 written by Reg Jones

In these days of tight budgets and pinched staffing ceilings, employees at some agencies, including the US Postal Service, are weighing whether to accept offers of early outs or buyouts. There are two flexibilities agencies can use to reduce the disruption of downsizing: the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and the Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP).

Most agencies have to get Office of Personnel Management approval to offer a VERA, the early-out authority. OPM will designate the geographic areas and occupations to be covered by a VERA. It also will set the time during which the early outs will be offered. If enough employees agree to retire before the end of that time, the agency can cancel the offer.

To qualify for early retirement, Civil Service Retirement System or Federal Employees Retirement System employees must be at least age 50 with 20 years of service or any age with 25 years of service. For both CSRS and FERS, the early-out annuity, like a regular annuity, will be based on a formula that includes your high-three, which is the average of your highest three consecutive years of salary, and your years and full months of creditable service.

The CSRS annuity is the sum of three factors: 1.5% of your high-three multiplied by your first five years of service; plus 1.75% of your high-three multiplied by your next five years of service; plus 2% of your high three multiplied by all remaining years and full months of service. Your annuity will be reduced by 1/6 of 1% for each month you are under age 55. That's 2% per year. But you'll be eligible to receive annual cost-of-living-adjustments, regardless of the age at which you retire.

The FERS annuity is 1% of your high-three multiplied by all years and full months of service. The usual 5% per-year penalty for retiring before age 62 (age 60 if you have 20 years of service) is waived. When you reach your minimum retirement age, which ranges from 55 to 57 depending on when you were born, you will be eligible for a special retirement supplement that approximates the Social Security benefit you earned while employed under FERS. COLAs are never applied to the special retirement supplement.

Further, unlike CSRS retirees, FERS retirees aren't eligible to receive COLAs until they reach age 62.

The VSIP, or buyout authority, differs in two ways from the VERA. First, an agency can offer a separation payment only if it is necessary to eliminate a position. Second, a separation incentive can be offered to any employee, not just those who are eligible to retire.

VSIPs at most agencies can only be offered if approved by OPM and the Office of Management and Budget. The buyout amount is equal to the lesser of the employee's severance pay calculation and \$25,000, or an amount determined by the agency head that doesn't exceed \$25,000.

Insurance Coverage Before you put in your retirement papers or resign, be sure that you will have adequate insurance coverage.

As a rule, you can keep your Federal Employees Health Benefits Program coverage in retirement only if you are currently enrolled and have been continuously enrolled for at least five years or from your earliest opportunity to enroll, or if you have been covered since the beginning date of either your agency's latest statutory buyout authority or an OPM-approved buyout or early retirement authority.

If you aren't eligible to carry your FEHBP coverage into retirement, you will be given a 31-day extension of coverage at no cost to you. After that, you can drop your coverage entirely, convert to an individual contract, or request Temporary Continuation of Coverage, which allows you to keep your FEHBP coverage for up to 18 months. However, you will have to pay the full premium plus 2% to cover administrative costs.

The Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance program has stricter rules. If you haven't been enrolled for five continuous years, you can't continue that coverage in retirement. If you can't, you'll receive the same 31-day extension of coverage as under FEHBP.

If you aren't eligible to continue your coverage, you can drop your coverage or convert all or part of your insurance to a private policy at your own expense.

Reg Jones was head of retirement and insurance programs at the US Office of Personnel Management.



Retirement Estimate: The Details

By [Tammy Flanagan](#), May 11, 2007, Taken from GovExec.com

...We'll get into a little more detail about how your basic retirement benefit is calculated.

Even in this column, though, I won't be able to fill you in on every step in the process. But I'll try to provide an overview so that you're familiar with all of the terminology before you work with a human resources expert in your agency to come up with an accurate estimate of your future retirement benefits.

Let's dive right in.

Step One

The first step is computing your high-three average salary. The high-three is the largest annual rate resulting from averaging your rate of basic pay in effect over any period of three consecutive years of creditable civilian service, with each rate weighted by the length of time it was in effect.

Basic pay is the rate fixed by applicable law or regulation. It includes locality pay, but not cash awards, bonuses or overtime. Also, basic pay does not include annual cost of living allowances for employees in Alaska, Hawaii and Guam. But for law enforcement officers, availability pay is counted in the basic pay definition. (For a full definition of basic pay, see [Chapter 30 of the CSRS and FERS Handbook](#).)

Your salary rates during the high-three period are weighted based on how many days each pay rate was in effect before it changed. For example, if you were to retire on May 31, 2007, your pay rate for this year would be in effect since Jan. 7 (the first day of the new leave year for most federal employees). So of your high-three years, a period of four months and 24 days would be at the 2007 pay rate. Of course, if you have received a pay increase since Jan. 7, this

would have to be factored in as another pay rate during the high-three period.

Because of this method of computing the high-three, your retirement benefit will increase slightly every day that you continue working. This makes it difficult for some employees to commit to a specific retirement date. But you should also consider that as soon as you retire, you'll have that many more days, months and years to enjoy your retirement.

Step Two

Once you've determined your high three, you need to compute your total service. Prior to retirement, this is where you may have the most questions. If there are discrepancies in the history of your federal service or if there are missing records that document periods of service, this can cause problems and your retirement estimate may not be accurate. Only you know how much service you have and where you've worked during your federal career.

Your retirement benefit will be computed based on your creditable service. It is calculated by subtracting your service computation date from your retirement date. This is a tricky area. Sometimes the rules regarding service credit for retirement are different than the ones used to compute your service computation date for annual leave purposes. The service computation date on your leave and earnings statements and your Notification of Personnel Action statements is your "leave" date. Your retirement service computation date is figured when you retire or when you request a retirement estimate from your human resources office.

To better understand the service credit concept, you may wish to review a few of my previous articles on this topic: [Getting Credit](#) (Jan. 27, 2006), [Buying Retirement](#)



[Credit](#) (Feb. 10, 2006), [Redepositing CSRS Refunds](#) (Feb. 17, 2006) and [Military Service Payback](#) (Feb. 24, 2006).

Also, for those of you under the Civil Service Retirement System, your unused sick leave is converted to extra service credit in the computation of your retirement benefit. Here's a previous article to help you understand this credit: [Taking Your Sick Leave](#) (Feb. 9, 2007).

Under CSRS, total creditable service is limited to 41 years, 11 months. For CSRS Law enforcement officers and firefighters, it's 35 years. Employees with additional service will be entitled to a refund of excess retirement contributions, with interest, at retirement. The maximum CSRS retirement benefit is limited to 80 percent of the high-three average salary. Sick leave credit allows the benefit to exceed 80 percent.

Step Three

Your high-three average salary and length of service are used to compute your CSRS or Federal Employees Retirement System basic benefit. Once you've determined what they are, fill in the blanks on the appropriate worksheet below to determine your benefit.

CSRS Retirement Formula

Percentage	High-Three Avg Service	Totals	
1.5%	x\$	x5 years	=\$
1.75%	x\$	x5 years	=\$
2%	x\$	xRemaining=	=\$
		years and months	
Total all three answers in right column			\$

FERS Retirement Formula

$$1\% * \frac{\text{Total years}}{\text{months}} / x \$ = \$ \text{FERS basic High-three annuity}$$

*Use 1.1% if age 62 or older with 20 or more years service

Remember, part-time service may affect these computations. See [Part-Time Rules, Part One](#) (March 2, 2007) and [Part-Time Rules, Part Two](#) (March 9, 2007). Also there are reductions -- such as those for unpaid service credit deposits or early retirement -- that may apply to your basic benefit, depending on your circumstances.

Retirement benefits are paid monthly. All of your withholdings for income tax and insurance will be monthly amounts.

Tammy Flanagan is the senior benefits director for the [National Institute of Transition Planning Inc.](#), which conducts federal retirement planning workshops and seminars. She has spent 25 years helping federal employees take charge of their retirement by understanding their benefits.

Thinking About Retirement?

The US Office of Personnel Management has a booklet available on their website, entitled "Thinking about retirement?" It provides an overview of the most important things that Federal Employees need to do when planning for retirement. You can download or print a hard copy from:
www.opm.gov/forms/pdfimage/RI83-11.pdf



Half-Day Pre-Retirement Training Seminar-2012



Be sure you are financially prepared to do all the things you've planned for your retirement!!

CSRS session topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overview of CSRS ➤ Survivor Benefit ➤ Voluntary Contribution Program ➤ Federal Employee Health & Life Insurance Programs ➤ Identity Theft Solutions ➤ Social Security ➤ Flexible Spending Accounts ➤ Annuity Calculation ➤ Thrift Savings Plan 	FERS session topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overview of FERS ➤ Survivor Benefit ➤ Voluntary Contribution Program ➤ Federal Employee Health & Life Insurance Programs ➤ Identity Theft Solutions ➤ Social Security ➤ Flexible Spending Accounts ➤ Annuity Calculation ➤ Thrift Savings Plan
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TIME: 8:30am–Noon OR 1:30pm-5:00pm (each day) Registration will begin 30 minutes prior to the training

LOCATION: OKC Public Works Training Center, 3738 SW 15th Street, Oklahoma City

COST: No Cost

- I am registering for the CSRS session on Wednesday, August 22, 2012, 8:30 am-Noon
- I am registering for the CSRS session on Wednesday, August 22, 2012, 1:30 pm-5:00 pm
- I am registering for the FERS session on Thursday, August 23, 2012, 8:30 am-Noon
- I am registering for the FERS session on Thursday, August 23, 2012, 1:30 pm-5:00 pm

Seating is limited to 50 per session. Once a session is filled, future registrants will be notified and provided the opportunity to be placed on a waiting list for the next Pre-Retirement session.

NAME(S): _____
List name of employee and spouse on same form to receive the discounted price for spouse

AGENCY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: () _____ EMAIL: _____

Mail this registration form to:	Oklahoma Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Suite 320 Oklahoma City, OK 73102
or email to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!



Guardian Accord Tabletop Exercise



Date:	Tuesday, August 14, 2012 (no cost)
Time:	8:30 a.m. registration 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. exercise
Location:	Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism 621 North Robinson Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK
Objectives	<p>This exercise is designed to increase awareness of Federal, State, territorial, tribal and local government jurisdictions, and the private sector, about the importance of incorporating the specific risks of terrorism into continuity planning.</p> <p>Upon completion of this course, participants should be able to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness about the importance of incorporating the specific risks of terrorism into continuity planning • Discuss how critical Essential Functions will continue through a terrorist event and the planning required to perform those functions • Identify gaps or vulnerabilities in organizational continuity plans and procedures; and discuss solutions or alternative actions to challenges.

Class participation is limited; however, a waitlist will be established and applicants will be contacted should there be a cancellation (up to 3 individuals from the same agency can attend)

Name:	Agency:
Title:	Email:
Phone:	Fax:

Name:	Agency:
Title:	Email:
Phone:	Fax:

Name:	Agency:
Title:	Email:
Phone:	Fax:

There are no tuition fees for this course. Participants from Federal and Non-Federal governmental agencies, private industry, and contractors must pay their own transportation and lodging fees.

Mail to:	Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 153 Oklahoma City, OK 73102
Or fax to:	(405) 231-4165
Or email to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov



Financial Wellness Workshop



Date:	Wednesday, October 17, 2012
Time:	Three Hour Sessions (morning and afternoon, please identify your choice below)
Location:	Oklahoma City Public Works Training Facility, 3738 Southwest 15th Street, OKC
Why?	With Federal Salaries remaining flat and cost of living increasing, it is more important than ever for federal employees to be equipped with information on how to maximize their incomes.
Topics:	How Money Works – basic fundamentals you were definitely never meant to “know” Debt Solutions – alleviate unnecessary stress of too much month and not enough money Retirement Planning – protecting your money and never running out Long-Term Care – fastest growing need of people over 50
Instructor:	Eric Dubbell, Senior Vice President of Primerica

Registration

Name _____ Agency _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please sign me up for the following session:

October 17, 2012, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

October 17, 2012, 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.


Mail registration to:	Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 153 Oklahoma City, OK 73102
Or fax to:	405-231-4165
Or email to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, cancellations will be permitted through October 10, 2012. Since this is a “no-cost” training, we ask your courtesy to cancel early so that we can accommodate people on the waiting list, if one exists.



Leadership Development Training Tired of “Doing More with Less”? Maximize Tools Available and Increase your Efficiency!



Date:	August 24, 2012
Time:	8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Location:	Magnuson Hotel, 737 S. Meridian Ave, Oklahoma City
Cost:	\$165.00 per person
Why?	Has email (which was suppose to make our lives easier) dominated many of your work hours and cut into your personal time to “keep up”? Do you ever suspect that your “smart phone” has a higher IQ than you? Do the papers that come across your desk have a tendency to gather in social groups (otherwise knows as “piles of paper”)?
Topics:	Taming the E-mail Beast, Key Strategies for Managing the Mess of E-mail Overload: Learn how to tame your e-mail account, with proven strategies for keeping your inbox efficient and under control by having “natural” places for your email to go. Smart Phone Success, Getting more productivity (and FUN!) from your Smart Phone and Table devices: Learn about the apps and peripheral devices that help take your SmartPhone (and tablets) from “cool” to “critical” when it comes to productivity, time, project, people, and e-mail management as well as “remote” productivity. Ending the Office Clutter: Key Strategies for Managing Info Overload, “Stacks & Piles”: Learn how to reduce the mess on your desk by having “natural” places for all of your papers, project folders, items to read, etc., to go.
Instructor:	 Randall Dean, MBA, and author of the recent Amazon.com #1 E-mail Bestseller, <i>Taming the E-mail Beast</i> has more than 20 years of experience using and teaching an advanced time management/personal organization system, including systems for effective e-mail management, office clutter reduction, optimizing your Outlook usage, and getting the most from affiliated SmartPhone/PDA devices. He has personally tested his time, e-mail, Outlook, and office clutter management systems in major corporate, academic, and non-profit settings, as well as in small and fast-paced for-profit companies, and has found the system to be flexible enough to provide great support in all of these differing environments. His speaking and training programs are consistently some of the highest-rated programs for the many conferences and clients he speaks for, including major conferences, Fortune 500 organizations, top universities, governmental agencies, and leading nonprofits -- basically anyone struggling to better manage their time, e-mail, SmartPhones, Google apps, and/or Outlook. (And he makes these topics fun and engaging too!)

Registration

Name _____ Agency _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Method of payment: Check Government Voucher Credit Card

Mail registration to:	Federal Executive Board 215 Dean A. McGee, Ste 153 Oklahoma City, OK 73102
Or fax to:	405-231-4165
Or email to:	LeAnn.Jenkins@gsa.gov

Cancellation Policy: Understanding that unforeseen circumstances may preclude an individual from attending, refunds and cancellations will be permitted through August 17, 2012. However, after that date, registrations must be honored by the individual or agency involved. If you are unable to attend, substitute attendees are authorized and encouraged!



SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Agency Visits: Tulsa	12	13	14
15	16	17 Leadership FEB	18 10:00 ITC	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 12:00 LFCC	26 2:00 Emgcy Prep Mtg	27 Naturalization	28
National FEMA COOP Conference-Rochester, NY						
29	30 National FEB Conference	31		July 2012		

OKLAHOMA FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BOARD
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