

FOREIGN SERVICE ASSIGNMENTS

1. PURPOSE

This Directive establishes Agency objectives, policies, and procedures regarding selection for the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), International Services (IS), Foreign Service (FS) assignments and tours of duty.

2. REPLACEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

This Directive replaces APHIS Directive 4301.1, FS Assignments, dated 9/7/94.

3. SCOPE

This Directive covers members of APHIS-IS FS assigned to positions at foreign posts, and within the United States and its territories, as well as rotational assignments to foreign and domestic posts.

4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of selection for FS assignments are to:

- a. Maintain the most effective staffing of positions, consistent with the principles and requirements of the Foreign Service Act of 1980;
- b. Be consistent with Agency budget and staff year limitations;
- c. Establish a selection process principally based on quantitative procedures; and
- d. Meet the career interests and aspirations of APHIS-IS FS personnel by providing career-enhancing opportunities.

5. POLICY

It is APHIS policy that priority for assignment selections will be given to qualified members of the APHIS-IS FS cadre. Foreign Service Officers/Specialists (FSO/S) approaching 15 consecutive years of foreign tours are automatically given high priority for domestic assignments.

6. SELECTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS TO FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POSTS

- a. Consistent with the objectives stated in Section 4, APHIS-IS selects and assigns FS employees to positions at foreign and domestic posts based on a combination of the following factors:
- (1) Fulfills current and long-range staffing needs of APHIS-IS.
 - (2) Ensures a reasonable sharing of tours at hardship posts.
 - (3) Ensures that employees serve in a variety of positions in foreign countries/regions for maximum exposure and development of skills.
 - (4) Accommodates, as far as possible, individual employee preferences as to the area, post, or type of assignment, including training and long-range career interests and aspirations.
 - (5) Gives consideration to family status, including educational needs of children and availability of suitable housing, health limitations of the employee and/or members of the family, personal problems, including those of a compassionate nature, and prior service, particularly at hardship posts.
 - (6) Fulfills statutory requirements concerning length of service at both foreign and domestic posts.
 - (7) Makes effective use of employees' abilities and skills for the mutual advantage of employees and APHIS-IS.
 - (8) Provides appropriate orientation and on-the-job training, and stimulates employees to improve their qualifications and capabilities.

- (9) Supports management flexibility to assign employees from location to location whether within the United States or abroad to accommodate differences in specialties/classes, grades, developmental requirements, and the needs of APHIS-IS.
 - (10) Guarantees that candidates will be considered without discrimination for any non-merit reason such as race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical or mental handicap, and membership or non-membership in employee organizations.
- b. Assignments to Domestic Posts from a Foreign Post. APHIS-IS selects and rotates employees to domestic posts based on a principle supported by the Foreign Service Act of 1980 that, after assignment at foreign locations, an employee will be rotated to a position in the United States for the purposes listed below plus all objectives listed under Section 4 to:
- (1) Utilize the specialized knowledge gained during foreign duty to enhance operational and administrative activities.
 - (2) Provide the employee the opportunity to gain a more complete knowledge of the United States Department of Agriculture and APHIS-IS policies, programs, objectives, and management concepts.
 - (3) Take advantage of career development opportunities through orientation and training.
 - (4) Provide the employee and family the opportunity to reacquaint themselves with U.S. culture.

7. **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a. The IS Deputy Administrator (ISDA):
- (1) Provides overall leadership to the FS assignment process.
 - (2) Serves as the chairperson.
 - (3) Nominates members to serve on the APHIS-IS FS Assignment Committee.

- b. IS Administrative Services (ISAS):
 - (1) Manages the FS assignments process.
 - (2) Makes recommendations to the APHIS-IS FS Assignment Committee.
 - (3) Provides coordination, administrative support, and policy guidance.
- c. The IS Leadership Team:
 - (1) Provides knowledge and insight on APHIS-IS FS positions and FSO/S.
 - (2) Makes recommendations to assist the APHIS-IS FS Assignment Committee.
- d. The Employee Services Division, Training and Development Branch, provides direction on individual learning contracts, training, and career development.
- e. Supervisors must be aware of FSO/S assignment status and interests, and will facilitate communication among employees, management, and ISAS.
- f. FSO/S must provide timely and accurate responses to requests for information, and report to their assigned post or they may be subject to administrative action.

8. PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

- a. Each FSO/S must complete two forms: IS Form 1, Assignment History and Preference List; and IS Form 2, Background and Skills Resume (Attachments 1 and 2) that will be used for making assignments. Each FSO/S will update these forms annually to ensure that they provide current information.
- b. The ISDA notifies all Regional Directors (RD) of proposed vacancies that were created from new assignments or from new funding. Input is requested from each RD regarding vacancies. All of this information is pooled into a final vacancy list.
- c. Each RD is notified of regional vacancies and then completes IS Form 3, Requirements for Position (Attachment 3). The completed forms are forwarded to the ISDA and copies provided to the Assistant Deputy Administrator, ISAS, and the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel.
- d. ISAS notifies all FSO/S of identified vacancies. An FSO/S expresses interest in a

position by sending IS Form 4, Rotational Assignments Bid Form, for each vacancy (see Attachment 4) to the Assistant Deputy Administrator, ISAS, with copies provided to the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel and the respective RDs.

- e. ISAS prepares a short list of personnel for each vacancy that:
 - (1) Have been at a post for a minimum of 2 years,
 - (2) Possess the appropriate class level (at or one below that of the vacancy), and
 - (3) Are in an appropriate series.
- f. All short lists are sent to each RD who rank the candidates. These rankings are returned to the Assistant Deputy Administrator and copies provided to the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel. These rankings are totaled and the candidates are ordered based upon these rankings.
- g. The ISDA, in consultation with the Associate and Assistant Deputy Administrators and the Chief of Staff, ranks the vacancies in the order that they are to be filled.
- h. The ISDA is responsible for convening the Assignment Committee. This committee is composed of the ISDA, Associate Deputy Administrator(s) (there will be two in the future), Assistant Deputy Administrator, an Equal Employment Opportunity observer and up to three representatives from other programs (Plant Protection and Quarantine, Veterinary Services, Legislative and Public Affairs, Wildlife Services, Policy and Program Development, et. al.).
- i. Selections are made by members of the Assignment Committee through reviewing:
 - (1) The rankings of the RDs,
 - (2) The description and requirements for the position,
 - (3) Bid applications, and
 - (4) The Assignment History and Preference List, IS Form 1; and the Background and Skills Resume, IS Form 2; submitted by the FSO/S.

- j. The committee members rank each candidate for a vacancy using the Candidate Scoring form, IS Form 5 (see Attachment 5). These rankings are tabulated using IS Form 6, Candidate Tally form (see Attachment 6) by the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel or a designated representative and are immediately available to the committee. The candidate receiving the lowest score constitutes the recommendation of the Assignment Committee. This ranking process may be suspended if the Assignment Committee is unanimous in any of its decisions.
- k. All selections must have the approval of the ISDA and the APHIS Administrator prior to a recommendation from the Assignment Committee becoming final. In the event that the selections are not approved, the Assignment Committee will reconvene.
- l. New assignments will be communicated verbally to FSO/S by their current RDs or an appointed representative. After all FSO/S have been notified, the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel will disseminate this information to all IS personnel.

9. INQUIRIES

- a. Direct inquiries through administrative channels to the ISAS Director of Personnel and Travel.

Director of Personnel and Travel
USDA/APHIS/IS, Unit 65
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737
USA

- b. This Directive is available on the Internet at www.aphis.usda.gov/library.

/s/

William J. Hudnall
Deputy Administrator
MRP Business Services

6 Attachments

