

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

Subject:	Hiring Process-Merit Promotion
Purpose:	To establish promotion and internal placement requirements for filling competitive service positions. The benefits of this Directive and Standard (D&S) are to standardize the Bureau of Reclamation's promotion and internal placement process to assure recruitment methods and selection procedures are based solely on merit after fair and open competition.
Authority:	5 USC 33, 5 CFR Part 335, and 370 Departmental Manual (DM) 335
Approving Official:	Director, Policy and Administration
Contact:	Human Resources (HR) Policy and Programs Division, 84-58000

1. **Introduction.** This D&S, together with Reclamation's Merit Promotion Desk Guide, and 370 DM 335, cover promotion and internal placement actions for competitive service positions. Identification, qualification, evaluation, and selection will be made on the basis of merit principles, without regard to political, religious or labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, non-disqualifying physical or mental handicap, sexual orientation, or age and shall be based solely on job-related criteria in accordance with legitimate position requirements. A sound merit promotion program properly administered and fully supported by management and employees at all levels is essential to the staffing of an effective and highly-motivated workforce.
2. **Applicability.** This D&S applies to competitive service positions up to the grade GS-15 level or equivalent and to Senior Level (SL) positions.
3. **Definitions.**
 - A. **Accretion of Duties Promotion.** Non-competitive promotion of an employee whose position is reclassified at a higher grade because of the performance of additional duties and responsibilities.
 - B. **Area of Consideration.** The organizational and/or geographic boundaries within which eligible candidates may apply to be considered for a specific merit promotion and placement action.
 - C. **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP).** CTAP and ICTAP are special placement programs which provide placement assistance to surplus and displaced Federal employees affected by downsizing or restructuring, see <http://elips.doi.gov/ELIPS/DocView.aspx?id=3356> and http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/workforce-restructuring/employee-guide-to-career-transition/ctap_guideline.pdf.

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- D. **Competitive Service.** All civilian positions that are (a) in the executive branch of the Federal Government not specifically excepted from civil service laws (Excepted Service) by or pursuant to statute, the President, or the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and not in the Senior Executive Service (SES); and (b) in the legislative and judicial branches of the Federal Government and in the government of the District of Columbia specifically made subject to the civil service laws by statute.
 - E. **Extension of a Certificate.** A request to extend the date a certificate is considered valid beyond the 60-day life of the certificate duration when more time is needed to make a selection.
 - F. **Local Commuting Area.** The geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities in which people live and can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily to their usual employment.
 - G. **Priority Consideration.** The referral of candidates who are entitled to consideration (such as being affected by a reduction-in-force), before other candidates are referred.
 - H. **Promotion.** The change of an employee to a higher grade or to a position with a higher representative rate of pay.
 - I. **Reclamation Leadership Team (RLT).** Reclamation's SES and SL positions.
 - J. **Reissuing of a Certificate.** A request to recreate a certificate to allow additional selections to be made for other positions subsequent to a selection being made or the certificate being returned unused. The initial certificate is audited and closed out by the servicing HR office and may be reissued only for selections to fill new vacancies of identical positions.
 - K. **Temporary Promotion.** A promotion to a higher-graded position for a specified period of time to accomplish project work; temporarily fill positions pending recruitment, reorganization, or downsizing; or meet other temporary needs.
4. **Responsibilities.**
- A. **RLT.** To ensure that recruitment methods and selection procedures are based on merit after fair and open competition and made without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, marital status, race, color, gender, national origin, non-disqualifying physical disability, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, or status as a parent.
 - B. **Hiring Officials.** To conduct the recruitment and selection process consistent with merit principles and other applicable laws and regulations. Hiring officials must ensure

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interviews and reference checks are properly conducted, that all questions are job-related, and every effort is made to obtain the same information from and for each candidate.

- C. **HR Professionals.** To advise hiring officials and provide training to hiring officials and employees on merit promotion practices and selection procedures; maintaining Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) files (as appropriate); and ensuring special approvals are obtained when necessary.
 - D. **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Diversity Professionals.** To assist, jointly with HR professionals, with identifying recruitment sources and advise hiring officials, as appropriate, in identifying and removing barriers; and for maintaining FEORP files (as appropriate). See Reclamation Manual D&S, *Pre-recruitment Consultation* (HRM 04-04) for more information.
 - E. **Employees.** To follow the application instructions outlined in specific vacancy announcements and submit the required application materials by requested deadlines. Employees must avail themselves of self-development and job training opportunities.
5. **Management Directive 715 (MD-715).** The EEO Commission's MD-715 requires agencies to take appropriate steps to ensure that all employment decisions, including promotion and internal placement actions, are free from discrimination. Reclamation must perform an annual self-assessment and develop action plans for the removal of barriers to equal opportunity. Reclamation has also formed the Reclamation Diversity Council under the direction of the Commissioner to implement the Reclamation's MD-715 Plan (<http://www.usbr.gov/cro/pdfsplus/md715memobroch.pdf>).
6. **Program Requirements.**
- A. **Merit Promotion Vacancy Announcement Procedures.**
 - (1) **Advertising Merit Promotion Vacancies.** All Reclamation vacancies and temporary promotions lasting more than 120 days must be advertised on USAJOBS (www.usajobs.gov), the Federal Government's official Web site for posting jobs. Exceptions only apply to recruitment associated with reorganizations and budget constraints (see exceptions in Paragraph 6.A.(6) below).
 - (2) **Area of Consideration.** Hiring officials, in consultation with the servicing HR professional, will determine the area of consideration and the length of time a vacancy announcement will remain open. The area of consideration may be as large as Government-wide or as narrow as Reclamation-wide local commuting area, unless covered by an exception listed in Paragraph 6.A.(6) below. Areas of consideration must be sufficiently broad to ensure the availability of high-quality

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candidates and to take into account the nature and level of the positions covered. All areas of consideration must be set to promote fair and open competition and to attract and maintain a diverse work force.

- (3) **Request to Restrict Area of Consideration.** An area of consideration more restrictive than Reclamation-wide, local commuting area must be approved by the Manager, HR Policy and Programs Division, 84-58000, before a position is advertised, unless the area of consideration is a result of an exception as listed in Paragraph 6.A.(6) below. Requests must be in writing and describe the nature and level of the position, why the restrictive area of consideration is appropriate, and how the restrictive area of consideration will result in high-quality candidates, not violate fair and open competition, and consider similarly situated employees (same line of work, series, and grade level in the organizational entity). In addition, the justification for the restricted area of consideration must include information supporting the fact that there are sufficient internal candidates and must include an estimate of the number of eligible candidates within the proposed area of consideration.
- (4) **CTAP and ICTAP.** CTAP and ICTAP may affect the area of consideration and open period of the vacancy announcement. Priority consideration must be given to any surplus/displaced Department of the Interior employee in the local commuting area. The provisions for granting special selection priority are those described in 5 CFR Part 330, Subpart F and G and Department Personnel Bulletin No: 11-06.
- (5) **Open Period.** The minimum open period for merit promotion vacancy announcements is 5 business days on USAJOBS. An adequate open period will vary depending on the job analysis, nature of the position, promotion potential, available labor market, and other considerations.
- (6) **Restrictive Area of Consideration.** Hiring officials may restrict the area of consideration and the vehicle for announcing positions that are a result of reorganizations or budget constraints. The basis for the exception must be documented in the merit promotion vacancy announcement case file. Hiring officials must also assure adherence to local work force diversity outreach plans, which may require mandatory areas of consideration for occupations with low participation rates. For actions that are excepted from competition, see Reclamation's Merit Promotion Desk Guide, page 5.
 - (a) **Reorganization.** In a reorganization where the changed responsibilities of an office or organization require changes to existing positions and grade-levels but no increase to staffing levels, the area of consideration may be restricted to the employees within that organizational entity for competition or selection without competition where appropriate.

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- (b) **Budget Constraints.** If budget constraints prevent a manager from hiring for a new position or increased responsibility, the existing employees within that organization may be exclusively considered for promotion to accommodate the new tasks and responsibilities.
- B. **Accepting Applications.** Candidates must submit application materials (i.e., resume, responses to applicant assessment questions, and supporting documentation) by the closing date of the vacancy announcement and by the method(s) specified in the vacancy announcement. Candidates must also meet all qualification and eligibility requirements for consideration by the closing date of the announcement.
- C. **Life of Certificate of Eligibles.** Certificates will be issued for 30 calendar days with no more than one 30-calendar-day extension.
- (1) **Approval for Extensions Beyond Initial 60 Days.** HR officers in regions with an 80-day average hiring time, based on the last two quarters of hiring activity as verified by the HR Policy and Programs Division, 84-58000, will approve one 30-calendar-day extension beyond the initial 60 days. Regions with an average hiring time greater than 80 days must make a formal request to extend a certificate beyond the initial 60 days to the Director, Policy and Administration in accordance with the requirements in RM D&S, *Request for Waiver from a Reclamation Manual (RM) Requirement and Approval or Disapproval of the Request* (RCD 03-03) <http://www.usbr.gov/recman/rcd/rcd03-03.pdf>.
- (2) **Reissuing Certificates.** Certificates that are returned after selection, or returned as unused, may be reissued to allow additional selections to fill subsequent vacancies of identical new positions within 120 days after the initial announcement closed. Certificates cannot be reissued for the same position vacancy for which they were originally issued and returned unused.
7. **Corrective Actions.** Priority consideration is an effort to correct a prior merit promotion plan violation, such as missed consideration. In accordance with 5 CFR 335.103(c) (3) (vi), consideration of a candidate not given proper consideration in a competitive promotion action is an exception to competition. The candidate must be notified in writing that they are eligible for a one-time priority referral for a like position, i.e., same grade, minimum qualifications and geographic location of the original competitive announcement. The candidate will be referred, non-competitively, after any available CTAP candidate but before any other candidates. The hiring official is not required to select an individual referred under this corrective action but must give the candidate proper consideration. The hiring official must also provide to the servicing HR professional documentation detailing the reason why the priority candidate was not selected before another certificate of eligibles will be issued.
8. **Accretion of Duties Promotion.** Promotions resulting from upgrading of an employee's position because of additional duties and responsibilities require a desk audit by the HR

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professional, who must document evidence that (1) the employee is continuing to perform the same basic function in the new position; (2) the former position is a clear successor to and is absorbed into the new position; and (3) the promotion does not directly affect other employees in the organizational unit. All three criteria must be met in order to process an accretion action. If all three criteria are met, the hiring official may choose to request an accretion action or competitive promotion. If all three of the criteria above are not met, competitive promotion procedures must be followed. Non-competitive promotions are permitted only when other like-qualified employees (same series and grade) in the same organization are not deprived of an opportunity to compete for promotion. All accretion actions must follow special approval procedures when necessary. For more information about accretion of duties promotions, see Reclamation's Merit Promotion Desk Guide, page 11.

9. **General Procedures.** See Reclamation's Merit Promotion Desk Guide, a compilation of higher-level requirements and resources for internal placement and promotion, available on Reclamation's HR Intranet site, 370 DM 335, and 5 CFR 335 for more information.

Reclamation Manual Transmittal Sheet

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