In Reply Refer to:
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Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2003-070
Expires: 9/30/2004

To: DMs, DSDs, Staff and Branch Chiefs
From: Associate State Director
Subject: OR/WA Priority Placement Program

Program Area: Priority Placement Program (PPP)

Purpose: As we transition to a workforce that we know will be smaller, we also want to shape it in a way that will make it flexible and responsive to rapidly changing workloads and priorities. As in the past, we will use attrition as one method to draw down our workforce. However, attrition rates are currently lower than anticipated and drawing down a workforce through attrition often creates skills imbalances that are unplanned and adversely affect our ability to accomplish our mission objectives. Therefore, we need other tools to help maintain a balanced and viable organization.

Currently, the OR/WA BLM leadership is moving forward with several identified strategies to help reshape our workforce. These include workforce planning efforts, a state-wide program efficiency study, e.g., forest development study in FY03, and a priority placement program. The OR/WA Priority Placement Program (PPP) is being established specifically to minimize the potential adverse effects on permanent employees caused by limited budgets, competitive sourcing, restructuring, etc.

The PPP provides for reassignment and/or change to lower grade personnel actions which attempt to match employees to current vacant positions for which they qualify outside their commuting area. Promotions to individual positions are not part of the PPP, but rather are accomplished through the merit promotion competitive process. A description of the OR/WA PPP process and frequently asked questions are attached.

In order for the PPP to be effective, we must look ahead and make reasonable projections and assumptions as to what the future may hold. Management has the responsibility to plan the work and to organize the workforce to accomplish objectives with available resources. This may result in some positions being identified as “unfunded.” These positions, and individuals who encumber these positions, will need to be identified to allow their consideration for vacant positions. To that end, offices will be encouraged to place employees on the PPP list at such time as it is reasonable to assume they are in jeopardy of their job being eliminated as a result of limited budgets, skills mix imbalances, competitive sourcing, and/or restructuring. This should allow the greatest time frame for those individuals identified to receive priority consideration for vacant positions.

Policy/Action: Effective immediately, we will implement the attached PPP process. DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs should submit their list of impacted positions and employees, along with your list of approved voluntary employees to the Branch of Human Resources.
Timeframe: Effective immediately.

Background: The Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) State Leadership Team (SLT) has examined recent budget trends and project these trends will continue for the next several years. In general, our budgets have been flat, and we anticipate they will remain flat over the next several years. This means that we are absorbing the cost of inflation and annual pay raises. Over the past couple of years, the result is significantly less buying power for the money we have. We have reduced our operations and non-permanent labor costs to absorb the loss of buying power; however, that short term flexibility is in large part used up. We must now look to drawing down our permanent workforce in order to maintain a healthy balance between labor and operations costs.


Coordination: State Leadership Team, managers and supervisors, and unions.

Contact: Questions concerning the OR/WA PPP can be directed to Gayle Donahue or Richard Scott in the Branch of Human Resources at 503-808-6409.

Districts with Unions are reminded to notify their unions of this IM and satisfy any bargaining obligations before implementation. Your servicing Human Resources Office or Labor Relations Specialist can provide you assistance in this matter.

Signed by
Charles E Wassinger

Authenticated by
Mary O'Leary
Management Assistant

2 Attachments
1 - Priority Placement Program (PPP) - (3pp)
2 - PPP FAQs - (3pp)

Distribution
WO700 (Rm. 5628, MIB) - 1
Purpose: The BLM Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) Priority Placement Program (PPP) is a statewide initiative administered at the Oregon State Office (OSO) level. The PPP is established to minimize adverse effects on permanent employees caused by actions such as limited future budgets, restructuring, competitive sourcing, possible future reduction-in-force (RIF), etc. The PPP provides for reassignment and or change-to-lower grade personnel actions by attempting to match employees with vacancies. Promotions to individual positions are not a part of the PPP, but rather are accomplished through the merit promotion competitive process.

Responsibilities:
The OR/WA Human Resource Management Committee (HRMC) is responsible for establishing policy and guidance for the PPP and reviews and approves exceptions. The HRMC is composed of the Associate State Director (Chair), DSD for Management Services, and two District Managers (eastside and Westside). The Budget Officer, HR Officer and EEO Manager serve as advisors.

The OSO, Branch of Human Resources (HR) will administer the PPP statewide for the HRMC.

Process:
The following outlines the process and requirements to identify positions and employees for consideration in filling current and future permanent vacancies within the OR/WA workforce plan:

I. Identification of Impacted Positions – DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs identify positions by title, series, grade and location of positions:
   i. Unfunded positions (current or future FY’s).
   ii. Positions that require skill shifts, e.g., job requires other or new skills.

II. Identification of Impacted Employees - DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs identify employees, title, series, grade and duty location:
   i. Employees in unfunded positions.
   ii. Employees in positions that require skill shifts, e.g., job requires other or new skills.
   iii. Employees identified for the PPP will be afforded consideration consistent with employee’s RIF retention standing or unique skill requirements. As appropriate, employee selections will be made in district competitive areas and in budgetary units in the State Office.
   iv. Employees will be notified in writing to explain reasons and linkages to program of work, budget and/or organizational or needed skill changes.

III. Identification of Other Employees
   i. Voluntary applicants must be in unfunded and/or in skill replacement needed positions. OR
   ii. Voluntary applicants can be those who may be subjected to loss of position following a competitive sourcing study decision. AND
   iii. Employees given an opportunity to volunteer for the PPP must be approved by the DM, DSD or Staff Chief.

IV. Identification of Vacant Positions – DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs are required to identify permanent positions prior to recruitment outside of their BLM local commuting area. This information will be forwarded to HR on a weekly basis.
   i. BLM local commuting area vacancies are exempt from the PPP and may be filled locally.
   ii. Recruitment for positions outside the BLM local commuting area requires placement of the vacant position in PPP prior to the recruitment process.

V. Placements - Outside of BLM Local Commuting Area
   • Permanent vacant positions to be filled are entered into the PPP for all grade levels.
   • DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs approve all employee placements on the PPP, both voluntary and involuntary.
• Selecting official must give priority consideration to PPP employees.
  • Selecting official may pass over PPP listed employees only with written justification that provides a valid job related reason (e.g., qualifications), with DM, DSD, or Staff Chief approval and HRMC concurrence.
  • Employee has a right to receive documented reason for pass over upon request.

• Voluntary (Placement from PPP):
  i. Voluntary employee placements from PPP include both reassignment and change to lower grade actions.
  ii. Voluntary placement consideration is required before initiating involuntary placements.
  iii. HR will refer all qualified voluntary PPP employees for vacancy opportunities prior to the formal recruitment process.
  iv. Selections are based on individual employee qualifications (similar to merit promotion procedures).
  v. Voluntary PPP employees accepting employment offers are entitled to PCS relocation expenses and grade/pay retention benefits, as appropriate.

vi. Voluntary PPP employees refusing offers of employment may be removed from the PPP list.

• Involuntary (Placement through Directed Reassignments):
  i. Use only after all identified employees eligible for voluntary placement have been considered.
  ii. HR reviews qualifications and potential matches for vacant positions and coordinates directed reassignment actions.
  iii. If several employees are qualified for a vacant position, the employee with the lowest retention standing will receive a directed reassignment to the position. All employees in this situation will receive a letter notifying them of the vacancy providing them an opportunity to voluntarily accept the position prior to initiation of a directed reassignment action.
  iv. Employees accepting directed reassignment offers are entitled to PCS relocation expenses and grade/pay retention benefits, as appropriate.
  v. Employees refusing directed reassignment offers may be removed from the federal service. Employees may be eligible for optional or discontinued service retirement, or severance pay benefits.

VI. Placement Procedure – Covers all placement actions, voluntary and involuntary. The following information is required:
  i. DMs, DSDs, and Staff Chiefs provide employee name, title, series, grade, and current duty location. In addition, employees need to identify acceptable duty locations, position preferences and lowest acceptable grade.
  ii. Employee through management provides updated resume/application to HR.
  iii. HR conducts qualifications analysis and provides position placement options for consideration to HRMC.

VII. System For Tracking – HR will do the following:
  i. Establish and maintain PPP applicant file and referral system.
  ii. Maintain vacancy listing of positions targeted for recruitment.
  iii. Track status of employee placements.
  iv. Provide management reports.