March 16, 2009

EMS TRANSMISSION- 03/18/2009
Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2009-025
Expires: 9/30/2010

To: DMs, DSDs, Staff and Branch Chiefs

From: State Director, Oregon/Washington

Subject: Student Career Experience Program Housing Assistance Incentive Policy

Program Area: Human Resources

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) establishes a Housing Assistance Incentive Policy for the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) for the Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Policy: The SCEP Housing Assistance Incentive Program in OR/WA is being established to provide affordable temporary housing assistance to SCEP participants whose official duty locations are outside of the local commuting areas (more than 50 miles) of their residences and educational institutions. Organizations may utilize the authority in 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and 5 C.F.R part 410 to pay lodging expenses for SCEP participants, in whole or part, as such expenses constitute necessary training expenses directly related to the SCEP participants’ official duties.

OR/WA SCEP Housing Assistance Guidelines

1. Intent: The SCEP Housing Assistance Incentive Policy is intended to provide financial resources to those participants (regardless of when they entered the SCEP program) who relocate from outside the local commuting areas to establish temporary residences for purposes of securing required training and work experience directly related to their academic fields of study at their official duty stations of record.

2. Eligibility: Participants hired under the SCEP program are eligible for temporary housing assistance, provided their official duty locations are outside of the local commuting areas of their homes and educational institutions. Participants are eligible for housing assistance regardless of
the years in which they were appointed to the program. Participants are eligible for this assistance for the duration of their SCEP agreements and/or until such time as they graduate from the program. However, students are prohibited from securing temporary housing accommodations from BLM employees, supervisors, and/or managers as convenience checks or government credit cards cannot be used to pay rent/monies to employees. This prohibition is intended to ensure that the renter/landlord relationship is not perceived to be an unfair market advantage for Federal employees and/or does not establish business relationships between employees with potential ethical complications in the workplace.

3. Maximum Housing Assistance Incentive Payments: Each participant may receive up to $500.00 per month to assist with paying housing expenses and no more than $1,500.00 per year regardless of the work period. Housing assistance is not considered a participant entitlement but rather an incentive used by the OR/WA BLM to recruit and retain quality SCEP candidates.

4. Securing Housing and Assistance Incentive Payment Process: Supervisors and/or authorizing officials should provide participants with assistance in locating and obtaining temporary housing prior to arrival for duty when government housing is not available and the participants do not have residences in the local commuting areas. Supervisors and/or authorizing officials will ensure that the temporary housing secured is not the residence of a BLM employee, supervisor, and/or manager. Supervisors and/or authorizing officials will secure such housing by coordinating the payment of deposits that will be either refundable or applied to the participants’ rent. Additionally, supervisors and/or authorizing officials will ensure that the agency portion ($500.00 per month, not to exceed $1,500.00 per year for each participant) of the participants’ rents are paid monthly and in a timely manner to the landlords by the proper method. Supervisors will coordinate the payment method with those individuals in their respective districts authorized to use corporate government credit cards or to write convenience checks.

Supervisors and/or authorizing officials will coordinate and ensure that the participants receive and sign all leases and/or rental agreements with the landlords of record prior to or upon arrival and that the SCEP participants fully accept all responsibility for the occupancy of such housing. The final decision regarding securing of the housing is solely the responsibility of each SCEP participant.

Each SCEP participant is responsible for payment of all additional rent in excess of the $500.00 monthly assistance incentive provided by the BLM; all additional costs incurred, such as utilities; and any other expenses associated with the rental of such housing, including damage and cleaning and those terms and conditions as outlined in the rental/lease agreement.

Each SCEP participant is responsible for paying his/her portion of the rent payment to his/her landlord and submitting receipts, rental agreements, and other documentation to his/her supervisor of record. The supervisor should then verify that rental payments are paid in full and in a timely manner.
**Administration:** The Student Career Experience Program will be administered by the OR/WA BLM in accordance with the Department of the Interior Personnel Bulletin No. 06-08, dated July 19, 2006.

**Timeframe:** Effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** As determined by each organizational unit.

**Background:** The housing assistance incentive authority is to be used in conjunction with other SCEP authorities and policies.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** None.

**Coordination:** OR/WA Human Resources Management Committee.

**Contact:** The point of contact for this IM is Alina Malray, OSO SCEP Coordinator (OR953), at 503-808-6242 or Alina_Malray@blm.gov.

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

Signed by

Michael S. Mottice
Associate State Director

Authenticated by

Rhondalyn J. Darnell
Records Section

Attachment

1. **SCEP Agreement (5pp)**

**Distribution**

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