



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Release
1-1798

Date
02/27/2019

MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Subject: **1400-335 – MERIT PROMOTION AND INTERNAL PLACEMENT PLAN**

1. Explanation of Material Transmitted: This Manual establishes and provides a general understanding of the staffing human resources authorities and required operation. It is to be used to ensure all available candidates receive equitable and fair consideration for positions filled in the competitive service under the BLM Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plan. The benefits of this Manual are to standardize the Bureau of Land Management's promotion and internal placement process to assure recruitment methods and selection procedures are based solely on merit after fair and open competition.
2. Reports Required: None.
3. Material Superseded: This release supersedes Manual Section 1400-335, Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plan dated April 22, 2011 Release 1-1732 and Instruction Memorandum 2015-049, Standard Vacancy Announcement Language.
4. Filing Instructions: None.

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Chapter 1 - Overview

1.1 Purpose

As part of the BLM Manual, this Plan establishes standardized policies and procedures for promotions, competitive and noncompetitive placement actions for all activities serviced by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Human Resources Offices (HRO). This Plan is in accordance with statutory and regulatory guidance from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Department of the Interior (DOI).

This Plan complies with the Merit System Principles governing competitive procedures used in selecting best-qualified applicants to fill vacancies on the basis of merit without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or protected genetic information. The Plan does not guarantee promotion. It is intended to ensure that all minimally qualified applicants receive fair consideration for positions filled under competitive procedures. This Plan does not pertain to promotion and internal placement for Senior Executive Service (SES) positions.

1.2 Objectives

To provide equitable means of referral and selection, for all placement actions, according to merit principles.

1.3 Authority

The authority for the Bureau of Land Management's Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plan is derived from Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 335, Promotion and Internal Placement (5 CFR 335.101 - 106). The Merit Promotion Plan is established to ensure a systematic means of selection for promotion and internal placement actions based on merit in accordance with Title 5, United States Code, Section 2301, Merit Systems Principles (5 USC 2301) and Section 2302, Prohibited Personnel Practices (5 USC 2302).

This release transmits a revised plan that establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and prescribes procedures for promotions and other competitive/noncompetitive placement actions and is to be used with support and advice from the servicing Human Resources offices. The Plan implements procedures to standardize the Bureau of Land Management's promotion and internal placement process to assure recruitment methods and selection procedures are based solely on merit after fair and open competition for positions filled in the competitive service.

The provisions of the collective bargaining agreement will take precedence in filling bargaining unit positions where those requirements conflict with the Plan. If the provisions in the Plan are mandated by higher regulation, or the negotiated agreement is silent, the provisions herein will govern. It is recognized that aspects of the implementation of this Plan policy may be subject to

collective bargaining, the results of which may modify implementation procedures stated or implied herein.”

1.4 Responsibility

- A. *The BLM Director and the Deputy Director:* BLM Director/Deputy Director is responsible for ensuring the BLM Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plan is developed, implemented, and carried out in principle and practice throughout the BLM in accordance with in accordance with 5 CFR 335-Promotion and Internal Placement.
- B. *Assistant Directors, Human Capital Management is responsible for:*
1. Ensuring the Plan complies with Federal Laws, regulations, Merit System Principles, and DOI/BLM policies and is carried out in principle and in practice throughout the BLM;
 2. Developing, establishing, and monitoring the policies, practices, and procedures governing the HR programs;
 3. Human Capital Accountability reviews for each state;
 4. Providing guidance and review for variation requests due to erroneous appointments; Ensuring the Plan is evaluated and updated periodically; and
 5. Issuing program updates and process improvements to the HR program as required.
- C. *The State//Center HR Offices are responsible for:*
1. Implementing the Plan;
 2. Ensuring the Human Resource Office complies with Merit System Principles, Federal Laws/Regulations, DOI, and BLM policies/procedures governed by the Plan;
 3. Developing operating procedures and implementation guidance, coordinating with the WO700 as necessary;
 4. Providing authoritative advice and guidance to HR Staff, Managers/Supervisors, and employees necessary to operate the Plan;
 5. Evaluating effectiveness of the HR operations and functions within the organization;
 6. Ensuring recruitment records are documented, maintained, released, and protected in accordance with 5 CFR 335.103;

7. Ensuring recruitment records are properly disposed in accordance with BLM Records Schedule.
8. Assisting selecting officials with the development of job analyses/crediting plans and job specific questions.
9. Posting Job Opportunity Announcements (JOA) within two calendar days after receipt of all required documentation.
10. Screening, reviewing and rating applications within 15 calendar days after an established cut-off date or the closing date of a JOA.
11. Issuing referral lists within one calendar day after completion of the rating and ranking process.
12. Ensuring applicants receive email notifications on the status of their application.
13. Extending tentative job offers within three calendar days after a referral list is returned.
14. Initiating requisite pre-employment clearances, e.g. security checks, drug tests, physicals, etc. within 10 calendar days after a tentative job offer is accepted.
15. Extending firm job offers and establishing entrance on duty dates within two calendar days after the requisite clearances are completed.
16. In-processing new employees within 16 calendar days after a firm offer is accepted, notwithstanding factors outside of State/Center control e.g. drug testing, security, PCS.
17. Providing guidance to managers and employees in the prevention and resolution of merit promotion related complaints.
18. Advising managers and selecting officials on personnel processes and the best manner in which to produce a quality workforce to accomplish the BLM's mission.
19. Counseling employees regarding merit promotion procedures, promotion opportunities, qualification requirements, and results of merit promotion actions.
20. Providing periodic training to management and employees on current merit promotion practices and selection procedures.
21. Adhering to the DOI and the BLM Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plans.
22. Ensuring records and case files are appropriately maintained and handled in accordance with information security rules.

D. Office of Civil Rights (OCR) employees are responsible for:

1. Collaborate with HR Offices as well as the Office of Recruitment and Retention Programs (ORRP) employees to develop strategies and ensure equal opportunity in employment for all employees and applicants for employment; to include working directly with hiring managers and supervisors to gain a better understanding of potential barriers that might be contributing to low participation of women and minorities in the agency.
2. Organize a focus group consisting of EEO, HR, ORRP personnel as well as a select group of hiring managers to meet quarterly for the purpose of establishing outreach objectives and developing supporting strategies. More specifically, this group will assess the agency's workforce demographics and prioritize the most critical needs in regards to recruitment, retention and hiring.
3. Collaborate with HR and ORRP personnel to develop EEOC and OPM mandatory annual reports (i.e. Management Directive MD-715, Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program, Disabled Veteran Affirmative Action Program, Hispanic Employment Program and Reasonable Accommodation) that are designed to show the agency's progress in meeting its affirmative employment requirements.
4. Assess programs designed to support Affirmative Employment Programs (AEP) such as the MPP, Employee Recognition and Awards Program, and the Employee Development/Training Programs and thereafter regularly advise and train managers/supervisors on AEP goals and responsibilities.

E. Supervisors/Selecting officials are responsible for:

1. Ensuring the selection process follows the BLM Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plan, National Personnel Management Committee (NPMC) selection requirements, merit principles, and other applicable laws, policies and procedures.
2. Providing accurate position descriptions and working with the HR Offices to finalize assessment tools (conduct the job analysis and develop the crediting plan for the position to be filled). This must occur prior to submission of the Request for Personnel Action (RPA) to the HR Office.
3. Submitting a RPA within one calendar day after all required documentation is received in the HR Office.
4. Ensuring employment barriers, which preclude consideration of under-represented groups, are addressed and eliminated.
5. Reviewing applications, conducting interviews, checking references, making selections and returning referral lists to the HR Office within 20 calendar days after receiving them.

6. Notifying employees of vacancies within the organization.
7. Ensuring that employees are familiar with merit principles.

E. *All Employees are responsible for:*

1. Familiarizing themselves with the provisions of the Plan;
2. Seeking out vacancy announcements for positions in which they are interested;
3. Contacting the HR Point of Contact listed on the vacancy announcements should they have any questions regarding the vacancy;
4. Applying for positions in accordance with the instructions provided in vacancy announcements and submitting complete and timely application packages;
5. Review and confirm their application status through USAjobs.gov; and
6. Taking an active interest in formal and informal self-development and training opportunities.

1.5 References

- A. Title 5 USC 2108a, Treatment of certain individuals as veterans, disabled veterans, and preference eligibles
- B. Title 5 USC 2301, Merit System Principles
- C. Title 5 USC 2302, Prohibited Personnel Practices Title 5 USC 3502, Order of Retention
- D. Title 5 USC 3304, Competitive service; examinations 5 CFR 300, Employment (General)
- E. 5 CFR 302, Employment in the Excepted Service 5 CFR 307, Recruitment Appointments
- F. 5 CFR 310, Employment of Relatives
- G. 5 CFR 315, Career and Career-Conditional Employment
- H. 5 CFR 316, Temporary and TERM Employment
- I. 5 CFR 330, Recruitment, Selection and Placement (General)
- J. 5 CFR 335, Promotion and Internal Placement
- K. 5 CFR 338, Qualification Requirements (General)
- L. 5 CFR 339, Medical Qualification Determinations
- M. 5 CFR 351, Reduction in Force
- N. 5 CFR 572, Agency Authority
- O. 370 DM 300, Employment (General)
- P. 370 DM 310, Employment of Relatives
- Q. 370 DM 315, Career and Career-Conditional Appointments
- R. 370 DM 330, Recruitment, Selection and Placement
- S. 370 DM 335, Promotion and Internal Placement
- T. 370 DM 338, Qualification Requirements

- U. 370 DM 339, Qualification Requirements (Medical)
- V. Service First Agreements
- W. Federal Hiring Process Modernization Act of 2010
- X. Title 29. CFR 1607 (Uniform Guidelines)
- Y. Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act 2016
- Z. 1270 Records Management Manual
- AA. BLM Records Management Program

1.6 Policy

This Plan outlines competitive procedures to be used in selecting qualified persons who express interest in and are available to fill vacancies. Identification, qualification, evaluation and selection will be made on the basis of merit principles, without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age (as defined by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended), disability, genetic information (including family medical history), marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, status as a parent, or any other non-merit-based factor, or retaliation for exercising rights with respect to the categories enumerated above, where retaliation rights are available.

Management has the right to make selections from among properly ranked and certified candidates, or may choose to make selections from a variety of other appropriate sources, such as reassignment eligibles, reinstatement eligibles, Veterans Recruitment Appointment candidates, referral lists obtained through the OPM or through the Interagency Delegated Examining Agreement between the OPM and the DOI and/or other special hiring authorities.

Negotiated Collective Bargaining agreements which contain procedures that differ from the provisions of this regulation remain in effect until renegotiated, except where such agreements are specifically superseded by applicable law or regulation.

1.7 File and Records Maintenance

Administration of the promotion system will include recordkeeping and the provision of necessary information to employees and the public, ensuring that individuals' rights to privacy are protected. Each agency must maintain a temporary record of each selection sufficient to allow reconstruction of the action, including documentation on how candidates were rated and ranked. These records may be destroyed in accordance with the current Bureau Records Schedule or after the program has been formally evaluated by OPM (whichever comes first) if the time limit for grievance has lapsed before the anniversary date.

Recruitment case files must be uploaded into the automated hiring management system for case file management.

Complete files (electronic) must be maintained in accordance with the BLM Records Management manual.

Destruction of hard copy case files must be made in accordance with BLM Records Schedule.

Chapter 2 - Coverage

2.1 Competitive Actions

The following placement actions must be accomplished in accordance with the competitive procedures of this Plan:

- A. Permanent promotion to higher graded positions or to positions with more promotion potential than any position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- B. Reassignment or change to lower grade to a position with more promotion potential than any position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service, except as permitted by reduction in force (RIF) regulations.
- C. Temporary promotions and details to higher graded positions, and details to positions with promotion potential for more than 120 days. Temporary promotions can be made in any increment up to a maximum period of 5 years. A temporary promotion may be made permanent, without further competition provided the temporary promotion was originally made under competitive procedures, and the fact that it might lead to a permanent promotion was stated in the original JOA.
- D. Selection for training which is: part of an authorized training agreement, part of a promotion program, or required by regulation before an employee may be considered for a promotion.
- E. Appointment, transfer or reinstatement to a position at a higher grade or with more promotion potential than any position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- F. Appointments of Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA) eligibles.
- G. Appointments of former temporary employees who have Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA) eligibility (PL 114-47, the "ACT").

2.2 Noncompetitive Actions

The following actions are excluded from the competitive procedures of this Plan:

- A. Promotions resulting from the upgrading of a position without a significant change in the duties and responsibilities due to the issuance of a new classification standard or the correction of an initial classification error as long as the employee meets all qualification and eligibility requirements for the position.

- B. Promotions resulting from an employee's position being reclassified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities.
- C. Placements made during or in lieu of RIF permitted by governing regulations.
- D. Actions involving statutory, regulatory or administrative placement, to include actions directed by higher authority levels i.e., Merit Systems Protection Board, arbitration decisions, court decisions, local settlements and discrimination complaint decisions.
- E. Promotions within an established career ladder to the identified full performance level, when prior competition established eligibility for promotion. The intent must be made a matter of record and the career ladders must be documented.
- F. Promotions, reassignments, demotions, transfers, reinstatements, or details to positions having no greater promotion potential than that of a position the employee currently holds or previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.
- G. Temporary promotions or details to higher graded positions or details to positions with known promotion potential of 120 days or less. Prior service during the preceding 12 months under non-competitive time-limited promotions and non-competitive details to higher graded positions or details to positions with promotion potential counts toward the 120 day total.
- H. Promotions of employees entitled to priority consideration as corrective action for failure to be given proper consideration under the requirements of this Plan.
- I. Non-competitive conversions of individuals appointed under excepted service procedures and promotion after conversion, provided the position occupied has an established full performance level.
- J. Non-competitive conversion of an employee in a trainee program as identified by the OPM, (Pathways Program, Veterans Recruitment Appointment, etc.) and promotion after conversion provided the position occupied has an established full performance level.
- K. Other actions not specified above which are permitted by regulation and are consistent with the spirit and intent of the merit principles delineated in Title 5 United States Code.

2.3 Recusal Requirement

HR staff members, subject matter experts (SME), supervisors, interview panel members and selecting officials may not participate in any part of the recruitment process if they intend to

apply for the position or if they know that a relative, household member or other person with a close affiliation intends to apply. Notification of recusals must be submitted, to the servicing Human Resource Office prior to any such participation.

Chapter 3 - Strategic Recruitment Conversation

A strategic recruitment conversation must take place between the Selecting Official and the HR Professional prior to beginning any recruitment efforts. The conversation will include discussion regarding position information, the position description, hiring options, outreach, use of the 3Rs (recruitment, relocation and retention incentives), and diversity. The conversation will ensure a good understanding of the job requirements, hiring process, roles, and responsibilities resulting in a qualified, diverse candidate pool.

Chapter 4 - Development of Assessment Criteria

4.1 Job Analysis

- A. Federal merit promotion policy requires that selection for positions filled through competitive procedures be made from among the best qualified candidates. Job related evaluation criteria beyond the standards used for determining basic qualifications must be used to identify the best qualified candidates for a position. This candidate evaluation must be based on a job analysis. Selecting officials, with the assistance of an HR Professional, should develop the assessment criteria and a recruitment strategy before an RPA is submitted.
- B. A job analysis is an in-depth review of the position to identify the major duties and to determine the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) essential to the position and the associated KSA-based application questions for use in an automated rating and ranking system. The job analysis must be conducted by an SME in conjunction with an HR Professional. The job analysis must be signed and dated by the SME and the HR Professional and filed in the merit promotion case file. Electronic approval is acceptable.
- C. KSAs and the associated KSA-based application assessment questions must be identified through a job analysis of the position being filled. Only those candidates who meet basic qualification requirements will be further evaluated on the basis of demonstrated job-related KSAs. Measurable KSAs will be identified in the JOA, and candidate's response to assessment questions, resume, and supporting documentation will be required to document information as to experience, education, training, awards, etc., relating to each KSA.

4.2 Crediting Plans

- A. The crediting plans are a documented summary of the developed applicant evaluation methods for a specific job or a number of similar jobs. Questions and weights must be developed and used for each position and each grade level for positions being filled. The SME, in conjunction with an HR Professional, should review and recertify the job analysis and crediting plan each time it is used for recruitment purposes.
- B. As part of the job analysis process, the SME, in consultation with the HR Professional, selects and/or writes the KSA-based selective and/or ranking factor questions (and the related response choices) and determines the numeric weights to assign to the question responses, before the JOA opens. The KSA-based questions associated response choices and assigned numeric weights make up the crediting plan for the position. The HR Professional selects the basic qualifications questions.
- C. Weighting is used to ensure that qualified candidates, with particular KSAs, will be ranked higher than candidates lacking such KSAs. Individual question response choices

can be weighted differently depending on how important the KSA-based questions are in relation to the overall rating of the applicant. The basis for determining that a particular KSA-based question should be more important and have more weight assigned should be based on one or a combination of the following:

1. **TIME** – A significant portion of the incumbent's time is spent on the duties requiring the KSA to be performed frequently.
2. **DIFFICULTY** – The level of difficulty of duties requiring the KSA is quite high.
3. **ERRORS** – The consequences of committing errors in duties requiring the KSA are serious.
4. **PAYOFF** – The payoff from a high level of performance of duties requiring the KSA is great. The employing organization will benefit greatly if an employee does an excellent job in performing the duties requiring the KSA.
5. **OTHER** – Document other reasons that a determination is made to justify a higher weight.

Chapter 5 - Locating Candidates

5.1 Reemployment Priority List (RPL)/Special Selection Priority (SSP)

The RPL/SSP must be cleared before the recruitment process begins and must be re- cleared before a tentative job offer is extended to a selectee.

5.2 Area of Consideration (AOC)

- A. AOCs (also referred to as the “Who May Apply” within the JOA) describe the individuals from whom BLM will accept applications. AOCs will be established to ensure the availability of a sufficient number of well-qualified candidates. The AOC must be clearly indicated on the JOA. Through the Strategic Recruitment Conversation, Selecting Officials, in consultation with their HR Professional, will develop an outreach plan and recruitment strategy for each vacancy that identifies methods and approaches for encouraging under-represented candidates to apply. In determining AOCs Selecting Officials must consider:
1. EEO goals and objectives.
 2. The likelihood of producing sufficient numbers of well-qualified candidates without unreasonably restricting fair and open competition.
 3. Advantages and disadvantages of each recruitment area, and the results of past recruitment efforts.
 4. Budgetary/hiring constraints and cost-effectiveness.
- B. When the AOC includes all DOI employees serving on a career or career-conditional appointment, Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) eligibles must be included.
- C. When advertising for permanent positions in the competitive service under merit promotion procedures applicants eligible under the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA) should be included in the AOC.
- D. When accepting applications from candidates outside the DOI workforce, the AOC must include Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) /Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) and VEOA eligibles.
- E. When applications are accepted from outside the DOI workforce, the Veterans’ Employment Opportunity Act of 1998 (VEOA) allows eligible veterans to compete for these vacancies under merit promotion procedures. To be eligible under VEOA, an applicant must be a preference eligible or a veteran who separated from the armed forces after 3 or more years of continuous, active service performed under honorable conditions. Veterans who separate with 30 days or less prior to completion of the 3 years of

continuous, active duty service will receive consideration for BLM vacancies under VEOA. “Preference Eligible” under VEOA includes those family members entitled to derived preference. A VEOA eligible is considered to be within the AOC, regardless of where they live. Veterans who are selected may be appointed at any level for which they apply and are found qualified and will be given career or career conditional appointments in the competitive service. Veterans Preference is not a factor in these appointments.

- F. VEOA selectees are subject to the Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) testing if the position to be recruited is covered under the Luevano Consent Decree. Prior to appointment a VEOA Selectee at the GS-05/07 level will be referred for the ACWA examination administered under authorities of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).
- G. AOCs must be clearly identified in the JOA. Applications will only be accepted by those indicated in the AOC. For example, if the AOC was defined as “Current Federal employees serving on a career or career-conditional appointment”, then a former Federal employee could not be considered. Likewise, if the AOC did not include “applicants under a Special Hiring Authority”, then an applicant applying under a Special Hiring Authority cannot be considered. Great care should be taken in identifying and defining the AOC in the JOA.
- H. When the AOC defined in the JOA fails to identify a sufficient number of well qualified candidates, and the JOA has not yet closed, the AOC may be expanded. In such situations, the JOA will be amended to provide notice of the expanded AOC and the open period extended to allow for receiving additional applications.
- I. AOCs identified for competitive candidates do not preclude consideration and selection of candidates eligible for non-competitive appointments.

5.3 Job Opportunity Announcements

- A. JOA announcements, also known as vacancy announcements, will normally be open for at least 7 calendar days to ensure that people who want to apply for the position have an adequate opportunity to do so. If a JOA is opened for less than 7 calendar days, the case file must include written documentation that clearly outlines the reason(s) for opening the JOA for less than 7 calendar days. Longer open periods may be used when warranted, e.g. hard to fill positions, the need to fill several vacancies, temporary seasonal vacancies, etc.
- B. Interest job opportunity announcements may only be used for non-competitive actions that will not exceed 120 calendar days and lateral reassignments. When using an interest job opportunity announcement for lateral reassignments, the AOC must be limited to current career or career-conditional DOI employees. Interest job opportunity announcements for non-competitive actions not to exceed 120 days may include current career or career-conditional employees outside of DOI in the AOC. When accepting resumes outside the State/Center’s own workforce, the interest job opportunity

announcement must be posted on BLM's Detail and/or Temporary Promotion Opportunities page located on the National BLM Intranet site.

- C. All competitive service vacancies must be posted to OPM e.g. USAJOBS when the AOC includes applicants who are not current DOI employees. The selecting official in conjunction with the HR Office should determine which announcement mechanisms will ensure the availability of a sufficient pool of highly qualified candidates. This may include running concurrent DE and Merit Job Opportunity announcements.
- D. In accordance with the President's Hiring Reform Initiative, HR Offices should strive to advertise job opportunity announcements that are limited to 5 pages. In addition, no modifications may be made to the five page job opportunity announcement template unless approval is received from the Washington Office through the HR Program Manager at the National Operations Center.
- E. Open Continuous Announcements. HR Offices may use JOA's without specific closing dates to advertise recurring vacancies or where recruitment is expected to be difficult. When a sufficient number of candidates apply for consideration, the HR Office may establish a register for a period no greater than six months, from which they may consider candidates for applicable vacancies. Cut-off date(s) must be identified on the JOA. The following statement must be included: "Initial consideration will be given to candidates whose applications have been received before the first cut-off date. Qualification and/or time-in-grade requirements must be met for those applications submitted by the cut-off date."
- F. Grouping of Announcements. In an effort to promote efficiency in the hiring process, HR offices are encouraged to collaborate with other offices to combine JOAs. HR Professionals are strongly encouraged to conduct internal pre-recruitment surveys (prior to posting an announcement) to see if an opportunity exists to combine JOA's. To ensure a valid opportunity exists, all aspects of the vacancies must be the same, including the title, series, grade(s), promotion potential, general job responsibilities, location (or note dual locations), selective factors, competencies documented in the job analysis, and any evaluation/testing requirements stated in the original announcement

5.4 Required Information

In accordance with 5 CFR 330.104 the information required in all JOA's will be addressed in the bureau's JOA template.

Chapter 6 - Acceptance of Applications

6.1 Acceptance/Receipt of Applications and Required Documents

- A. Application control procedures must be specified in the JOA and must be applied consistently to all applicants. JOA's must contain information advising applicants who they must contact if they are unable to apply through the on-line automated hiring management system. All applications and required documents, regardless of the application method, must be received by the HR Office by the closing date of the JOA. For applicants submitting hard copy application packages, the application package must be received by the date specified by the HR Professional.
- B. When using an automated hiring management system the application package must be completed by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.
- C. Supplemental documents must be submitted by fax, uploaded electronically or as instructed in the JOA.
- D. Active Duty applicants: A person does not have to be separated from active duty military service to be considered for a JOA. OPM leaves to agency discretion the decision whether to consider applications from individuals who are still in the military. OPM provides the following guidance in the Vet Guide available on OPM's website: "By law, a person on military duty cannot be appointed to a civilian position (unless on terminal leave), but he or she can certainly be considered should the agency wish to do so. The determining factor, here, should be whether the person will be available when the agency needs to have the job filled." The Hiring Official in the organization where the vacancy exists should determine the acceptable timeframe for filling the vacancy in such cases. The name of any applicant not available by that date would be removed from consideration. The Hiring Official's decision must be documented and filed in the official case file.

6.2 Failure to Submit Documentation

- A. Applicants who fail to submit the appropriate required documentation by the closing date of the JOA or by the date specified by the HR Professional will normally not be considered. However, if the situation warrants, HR Offices may, at their discretion, request missing or updated documentation from qualified applicants. If one qualified applicant is contacted to request missing or updated documentation, all qualified applicants who failed to submit any of the required documentation, must be contacted and given an opportunity to submit their required documentation. If a request for additional information is made, it must be properly documented in the recruitment case file.
- B. Applications will be accepted from all applicants within the AOC. Applicants may be required to submit the following materials, if applicable:

1. Resume.
2. On-line questionnaire.
3. SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action, (non-award), if applicable. The SF 50 verifies status eligibility and full performance level held.
4. College transcripts.
5. DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, which indicates character of release or discharge and dates of service. Active duty members who expect to be separated in the next 120 days will need to submit documentation IN ACCORDANCE WITH 5 USC 2108a.
6. SF-15, Application for 10-Point Veterans Preference and supporting documentation.
7. Licensures.
8. Certifications.
9. In the case of CTAP/ICTAP eligibles. Must submit all documentation in accordance with 5 CFR 330.612
10. Eligibility documentation if applying under a Special Hiring Authority.
11. Other documentation, as necessary.

6.3 Use of Government Postage or Envelopes

The use of Government postage or envelopes to mail job applications is a violation of OPM and Postal Service regulations. Applications and/or supplemental documents submitted in Government postage envelopes will not be considered.

6.4 Use of Government Computers to Apply for Federal Positions

The use of government computers by current BLM employees to prepare and send applications for federal employment is acceptable as long as the use occurs before or after work or during lunch breaks. Employee's use of the government computer and other office equipment to apply for federal positions must not detract from the employee's official duties or result in additional expense to the government.

Chapter 7 – Qualification Determinations

7.1 Qualifications

Applicants must meet the basic qualifications, specialized experience (when applicable), and time in grade requirements as outlined in the pertinent OPM qualification standard, and all other agency specific job requirements, within 30 calendar days after the closing date of the JOA or the cut-off date being used to begin reviewing applications. All selective placement factors and/or educational factors must be met by the closing date of the JOA.

7.2 Rating and Ranking Candidates

- A. Applicant's answers to the JOA specific questions are used by the automated hiring management system to rate and rank applicants. JOA specific questions include basic qualification questions and quality ranking factor questions. After the JOA closes, the HR Professional must conduct a quality review before an applicant's rating is finalized. Quality reviews must be conducted within 15 calendar days after the JOA closes.
- B. When an automated hiring management system is used, applicant scores are based on responses to established evaluation criteria. HR professionals must take steps to ensure the integrity of the self-report assessment procedures. The HR professional will review self-supporting evidence when determining qualifications based on the best qualified candidates' experience/education and/or training. In the event that an applicant's response on a self-report questionnaire cannot be verified within the application materials (e.g. resume, cover letter, education/training), the HR office has the authority to lower the score of the candidate on that item to the response level supported by their application materials. The HR professional must review the self-reported response and application materials, and forward a summary of his/her initial rating decision and any proposed changes to the applicant's self-reported scores to the next higher level reviewer (i.e., his/her team leader or direct supervisor) for concurrence. Upon written concurrence, the score will be adjusted accordingly. Reasons for lowering the scores of candidates should be done on a case-by-case basis and the justification must be documented in the electronic staffing case file. Applicants will be notified in advance of this policy by including information on all JOA's.

7.3 Applicant Scores

- A. Qualified: Candidates who have been determined to meet OPM basic qualification standards for the position and achieve an overall rating less than specified for well-qualified.
- B. Well-qualified: Normally requires a minimum score of 90. CTAP/ICTAP eligibles must also obtain a minimum score of 90 to be considered as well-qualified.
- C. Best qualified: Not all applicants with a score of 90 or above are considered to be best qualified. Once the HR Specialist has performed a qualifications analysis on the

applicants, they will determine the cut-off score for the group of candidates to be designated as best qualified. The cut-off for best qualified can occur wherever a natural break in scores occurs as long as a sufficient number of candidates (at least three) are referred for consideration. The best qualified candidates will be referred to the selecting official in alphabetical order. Please refer to Section .64 for additional information.

7.4 Determining Qualifications

- A. Traditional Cut-off Scores: All candidates that have rated themselves 90 or above will be reviewed to determine qualifications. If there are at least three candidates that have been determined to meet qualification requirements and have scored 90 or above, the cut off score cannot be lowered.
- B. Alternative Cut-off Scores: As an alternative, the cut-off score can occur wherever a natural break in scores occurs that still provides a sufficient number of candidates (at least three) to be referred for consideration. In most instances a natural break is defined as a two point break. This option may be used in consultation with the selecting official in instances where there is a large number of applicants that have rated themselves 90 and above. Conversely, where there are not a sufficient number of candidates who have rated themselves 90 or above, the HR Professional, in conjunction with the selecting official, will determine if further recruitment is necessary, or whether the cut-off score should be lowered, and qualified candidates with scores below 90 should be referred for consideration. Written documentation must be placed in the case file, justifying the use of a natural break, or when referring candidates with scores below 90.
- C. For applicants that have rated themselves below 90, the HR Professional must review the application packet to determine non-competitive eligibility. All non-competitive applicants, within the AOC, regardless of their rating, who meet the qualification requirements listed in the JOA, must be referred to the selecting official. However, veteran's preference procedures apply when considering applicants eligible for appointment under the VRA authority. This means that if two or more VRA candidates are qualified and one or more is a preference eligible, veterans preference must be applied as outlined in 5 CFR 302. A non-preference VRA eligible may not be selected over a VRA preference eligible.
- D. CTAP/ICTAP eligibles who meet all qualification requirements noted in the JOA AND rated themselves 89.99 or lower are NOT eligible for CTAP/ICTAP preference. These applicants may still be referred on a non-competitive referral list, however will not receive CTAP/ICAP preference.

7.5 Reconsideration of Qualifications or Rating

- A. When a request for reconsideration is received in writing from an applicant, the HR Professional must review the case and forward a summary of his/her initial rating decisions and any proposed changes along with the reconsideration request to the next higher level reviewer (i.e., his/her team leader or direct supervisor) for a decision. The next higher level reviewer will respond in writing with his/her decision directly to the applicant, providing a copy to the HR Professional.
- B. If the applicant requests in writing a second level review, that request, along with decision documentation from the first review is to be forwarded to the HR Professional's second level supervisor (i.e., the Human Resource Officer (or designee)), for additional review and a final decision. The Human Resource Officer (HRO) will then respond in writing with his/her decision directly to the applicant, providing a copy to the HR Professional and first level reviewer.
- C. Applicant's request for reconsideration must be received within seven (7) calendar days of issuance of not eligible or not qualified notification. The HRO response must be provided within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of applicant's request for reconsideration. A second level request and corresponding response must also each be within seven (7) calendar days. Documentation of reconsideration must be included in the case file.

Chapter 8 – Referral Lists and Selection

8.1 Referrals

- A. HR Offices are to issue separate referral lists for competitive and non-competitive candidates at each grade level and location advertised. All non-competitive candidates, within the area of consideration, regardless of their score, will be referred as long as they meet the qualifications for the position. Applicants will be referred in alphabetical order. When two or more VRA candidates are qualified and one or more is a preference eligible, veterans preference must be applied as outlined in 5 CFR 302 and a separate referral list will be issued for the VRA candidates in veteran's preference order. A non- preference VRA eligible may not be selected over a VRA preference eligible.
- B. Referral lists will be issued to the selecting official with a suspense date of not more than 20 calendar days from the date the referral list is issued. Selecting officials may request an extension of a referral list from their HR Officer on a case-by-case basis.
- C. The reason(s) for requesting an extension of a referral list beyond the initial 20 calendar days must be submitted to the HR Officer in writing. The HR Officer, or his/her designee, may extend referral lists in two week increments, not to exceed a total of 40 calendar days. Referral lists may not be extended beyond a total of 60 days from the original referral list issue date. The written justification must be maintained in the case file. Requests for the extension of referral list(s) will only be approved when management has provided a reasonable rationale for extending the expiration date of the referral list.
- D. Referral Lists may be reissued for another selection to an identical position. Identical position means the exact same position for which the original referral list was issued. The original referral list is audited and closed out by the servicing HR Office prior to a new referral list being issued. Referral lists may be reissued for up to 90 calendar days after the original referral list issue date.
- E. If a referral list is less than 90 days old, based on issuance date, the referral list may be used to make a selection for a like position (same series, grade(s), and location) without issuing a new, separate JOA if the original JOA indicated that multiple positions may be filled. Management is not required to select from prior JOA referral lists for like positions.
- F. If selections are not made from referral lists containing at least three BQ applicants, selecting officials will not be allowed to re-advertise the position for 90 calendar days from the date the referral list is returned to the HR Office. HR Officers may, at their discretion allow exceptions to the 90 calendar day limit. Exceptions must be documented in writing and placed in the case file.

8.2 Interviews/Selection

- A. Referral lists may be further screened to narrow the number of candidates to be interviewed. The screening must be based on job-related criteria in line with the position being filled.
- B. A selecting official and/or interview panel may interview some, all or none of the referred candidates. If using an interview panel please consult with your HR Office for guidance. Selecting officials and/or interview panels will ensure that all interviews are properly conducted, all questions are job-related, and that every effort is made to obtain the same information from each candidate. Interviewers may not ask about or discuss a candidate's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), national origin, age (as defined by the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended), disability, genetic information (including family medical history), marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, labor organization affiliation or non-affiliation, status as a parent, or any other non-merit-based factor. To the extent possible, it is recommended that all interviews be held in the same manner. If distance precludes a personal interview, telephone interviews may be conducted or the payment of expenses for pre-employment interviews may be authorized. In accordance with 5 CFR 572.101(b) selecting officials may determine which interviewees are eligible for payment of pre-employment interview travel expenses. Payment of these travel expenses will be in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations.
- C. Selecting officials must base their selections using job-related factors. The selecting official is not required to make a selection from the competitive referral list. The job may be filled by some other type of internal action or by appointment from outside the agency. Candidates from other sources may be considered concurrently or in any sequence.
- D. Interviewing candidates is not mandatory. However, conducting interviews are a best practice for selection of successful candidates and progress in improving workforce diversity. Selecting officials are required to return referral lists to the HR Office within 20 calendar days after receipt. Selecting officials are encouraged to indicate secondary selectees in addition to their primary selection. Selecting official's and/or interview panel's notes and responses to interview questions should not be included in the merit promotion case file, but, retained by the selecting official.
- E. Unsuccessful efforts to contact candidates, declination of interviews, not reporting for interviews, etc., must be documented by the selecting official and maintained with the merit promotion case file.

8.3 Selection Notification

Job offers are not valid unless they are extended by a member of the HR Office. All selections are considered tentative until the HR Office has conducted all pre-employment requirements,

(e.g. security clearance, medical examination, drug tests, etc.). HR Professionals will have three calendar days, after receipt of the selection package to extend tentative job offers and receive acceptance of the offer from the selectee. The pre-employment process must be initiated by the HR Office within 10 calendar days after acceptance of the job offer. Official job offers will be extended within two calendar days after completion of the pre-employment process.

8.4 Reference Checks

Selecting officials are highly encouraged to conduct reference checks. Conducting reference checks is not mandatory. However, conducting reference checks are a best practice for selection of successful candidates.

8.5 Release of Employees

- A. Employees are normally released within two weeks of official notification of selection for a promotion, and within four weeks for a reassignment, change to a lower grade or detail (unless travel is involved or an action is delayed due to required clearances such as drug testing and security). The gaining official and the releasing official should work to establish a mutually agreeable release date.
- B. Relocating employees and the gaining supervisor are jointly responsible for working out reporting dates which will minimize relocation expenses. Reporting dates will be established far enough in advance or otherwise managed, to minimize temporary quarters and household goods storage expenses.

Chapter 9 – Applicant Notifications

Applicants must receive timely written communications concerning the status of their application package. Notifications to applicants are sent through the automated hiring management system e.g. Monster, USA Staffing, and WTTS/EODS and must occur after completion of the following steps of the hiring process, where applicable:

- A. Application received: When applying on line, once the applicant clicks on the finish button, USAJOBS sends an automatic notice advising the individual that their resume has been received. For applicants who submit their application package in hard copy, the HR Professional must send them written notification (electronic notification is acceptable) that their application package has been received after receipt of the hard copy application.
- B. Application packages assessed: HR Professionals must review application packages to ensure all required documentation was submitted and conduct the rating and ranking and qualification determination process after the JOA closes. Applicants must receive a notice once the application review process is completed. These notifications must be sent to applicants after the qualifications process has been completed. Please take care that applicants are coded appropriately ineligible e.g. (does not meet AOC) and not-qualified e.g. (does not meet TIG, positive education, or specialized experience).
- C. Application Referred or Not Referred to Selecting Official: Applicants must receive another notification advising them that their application package has been referred to the Hiring Official for further consideration or that they were found ineligible or not-qualified. This notification must be sent by email via the automated hiring management system after completion of the application assessment process (can be done concurrently with the second notification).
- D. Applicant Selected or Not Selected: HR Professionals must notify applicants of their selection after the referral list is received in the HR Office. All non-selected applicants will receive notification of non-selection after the firm job offer has been extended and accepted.

Chapter 10 - Case File Documentation and Release of Information

10.1 Case File Documentation

Documentation in the case file must be sufficient for a reviewer to reconstruct the action in its entirety, including reasons for determining not qualified, qualified, well-qualified and best qualified applicants. The case file must be maintained electronically in the automated hiring management system and should include, at a minimum, the following information:

- A. Case File checklist.
- B. SF-52, Request for personnel action or equivalent.
- C. Position description for all grade levels recruited, to include the full performance level.
- D. Justification from management, if the JOA is open for less than seven calendar days.
- E. The reference to the OPM occupational qualification standard applied or a copy of the OPM-approved standard if it is different from the OPM qualification standard.
- F. Evaluation criteria, including the job analysis, crediting plan, selective placement factors and other data for each grade level that documents the validity and job relatedness of the assessment material used to evaluate applicants.
- G. DOI Relocation Expense Worksheet.
- H. Documentation verifying the dates RPL and SSP were cleared in accordance with policy.
- I. USAJOBS Job Opportunity Announcement.
- J. Qualifications and eligibility determinations for applicants.
- K. Documentation for adjusting applicant answers when using an automated qualification, rating, and ranking system, if applicable.
- L. Referral List(s) of eligibles including criteria and documentation supporting actions taken to close out the referral list(s).
- M. Any written guidance and instructions issued to the interview panel, if applicable.
- N. Evidence of notifications to applicants via the automated hiring management system.
- O. Declinations/withdrawals of consideration from applicant, if applicable.
- P. Name(s) of individual(s) selected and the justifications why the applicant was selected.

- Q. SF-50, Personnel Action of selected applicant.
- R. Electronic annotation by hiring official as to why a referral list is returned unused and/or cancelled.
- S. Written documentation as to why an HR Officer approved a request from the selecting official asking to re-advertise a vacant position when there were at least three BQ applicants remaining on a referral list, if applicable.
- T. Evidence that the electronic case file is appropriately closed out and selectee is coded as hired.
- U. Any other information that may be needed to sufficiently reconstruct or support actions taken during the qualification, evaluation and selection process.

10.2 Release of Information

Disclosure of merit promotion information must be in accordance with the Privacy Act and/or Freedom of Information Act. However, allowable information regarding the number of applicants, the number who met minimum qualification requirements, the number of applicants referred to the Selecting Official, and the name of the selectee may be provided to any individual. Applicants can be given any information that pertains to their specific application or status.

The following information may not be released:

- A. Test material;
- B. Job analysis; and
- C. Identifiable material on other candidates or any information that would be an invasion of privacy.

Chapter 11 - Priority Consideration

Priority consideration (PC) generally means that an applicant will receive bona fide consideration by the Selecting Official before any other candidate is referred for consideration. If an applicant fails to receive proper consideration and a selection is made from any of the certificate(s) issued from the announcement, the applicant will be given priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy (same title, series, grade, full performance level, and duty station) before any recruitment action is initiated. Priority consideration will last for a period of 6 months or until the applicant has received priority for the next equivalent vacancy, whichever occurs first. It will be the responsibility of the servicing HRO to ensure that the application of the individual receiving priority consideration is provided to the selecting official. The selecting official must fully consider the individual based on the application referred, but is not obligated to select him/her.

The Selecting Official must provide a written and signed certification that the applicant was given full and fair PC for the vacant position. Documentation should be placed in the case file as appropriate.

Chapter 12 – Accretion of Duties

- A. This is a non-competitive promotion to a higher grade that occurs when additional substantive (25% or greater) higher level duties and responsibilities are added through the process of accretion to an encumbered position, which results in the position becoming classified at a higher grade. Duties accumulate gradually over an extended period of time and become a permanent part of the position as a result of technological changes, changes in OPM rules and regulations, change in organization's mission, or as a result of an office acquiring a new program. The supervisor must ensure these changes are properly documented within his/her work organization. In order to be processed non-competitively, an accretion of duties must meet all established requirements, must adhere to merit principles, and position classification standards and guides.
- B. Promotions based on job accretion are very rare and should not be used to circumvent the merit promotion process.
- C. A noncompetitive promotion is not permitted when supervisory duties are added to a nonsupervisory position causing it to be classified to a higher grade.
- D. Supervisors who anticipate requesting a personnel action of this type should seek the advice and assistance of the appropriate NOC Classification specialist(s) before initiating such action.

Chapter 13 - Grievances

The HRO will promptly respond to questions about the merit promotion process or about a specific selection action. A DOI employee may submit a grievance concerning merit promotion matters under the DOI's grievance program or under local negotiated grievance procedures as appropriate, unless otherwise excluded from either process. Where this Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Plan conflicts with a negotiated agreement, the agreement prevails. Non-selection from a list of properly ranked and certified applicants, dissatisfaction concerning the number of positions to be filled, grade levels at which positions are advertised or filled, and a Hiring Official's right to choose the best recruitment strategy are not grievable. Further, an employee cannot use the formal grievance procedures and the formal EEO complaint process at the same time for the same merit promotion issues.

Glossary of Terms

-A-

Accretion of Duties: Noncompetitive promotion of an employee whose position is reclassified at a higher grade because of the performance of additional duties and responsibilities.

Agency: Refers to the Department of the Interior (DOI).

Applicant: A person who applies for a vacant position.

Appointing Authority: The legal or regulatory basis to which a specific appointment may be made to a Federal civilian position.

Area of Consideration (AOC): The organizational and/or geographic boundaries within which a search is made for eligible candidates for a specific merit promotion and placement action. AOC may be defined geographically, organizationally, by recruitment source or appointment status. All AOCs must be set to promote fair and open competition and to maintain a diverse workforce.

Assessment: A method used to measure the degree to which an applicant possesses the competencies/KSAs necessary for successful job performance. The list of multiple choice questions on which an applicant self-rates based on their qualifications or competencies. Other examples of assessment instruments include rating schedules, written tests, work samples, and structured interviews.

-B-

Best Qualified Candidates: Those applicants who are determined by the rating and ranking process to possess the job-related knowledge, skills and abilities required or desired for a particular position to a greater degree than other qualified applicants being considered and who are subsequently referred to the selecting official.

Automated hiring management system: A system that automates the Federal Hiring Process. The system enables HR Offices to use the Internet to build and post vacancies, allow applicants to submit their resume, and respond to position-specific questions. This automated system also rates and ranks candidates and allows HR Professionals to send the appropriate notifications.

-C-

Candidate: An applicant who meets the minimum qualifications requirements for a position, and is therefore eligible for consideration.

Career Ladder Promotion: Noncompetitive advancement to a higher grade of an employee who was selected at an earlier stage under competitive procedures and the higher graded full performance level is a matter of record. Supervisors are responsible for initiating career ladder promotion SF-52s (Requests for Personnel Actions).

Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP): The CTAP provides priority consideration to DOI employees who have been or are likely to be separated from Federal service by reduction in force or decline a directed reassignment or transfer of function outside of their commuting area.

Change to Lower Grade: The change of an employee to a lower grade when both the old and new positions are under the same pay systems or to a position with a lower representative rate of basic pay when the old and new positions are under different pay systems.

Competency: An observable, measurable pattern of skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics which an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully. Competencies are typically required at different levels of proficiency depending on the specific work role or occupational function.

Competitive Service: All civilian positions that are: (a) in the executive branch of the Federal government not specifically excepted from civil service laws by or pursuant to statute, by the President, or by the Office of Personnel Management, and not in the Senior Executive Service; and (b) all positions in the legislative and judicial branches of the Federal government specifically made subject to civil service laws by statute and in the Federal positions normally filled through open competitive examination under civil service rules and regulations.

Competitive Status: Basic eligibility of a person selected to fill a position in the competitive service. Competitive status may be acquired by career-conditional or career appointment through open competitive examination or may be granted by statute, executive order, or civil service rules. A person with competitive status may be promoted, transferred, reassigned, reinstated, or demoted subject to the conditions prescribed by civil service rules and regulations.

Crediting Plan: A written guide with benchmarks that is used to rate and rank applicants for the position advertised. Crediting plans consist of the knowledge, skills, and abilities, required by the

position, developed through the process of job analysis, with typically three quality level descriptions (benchmarks) for each KSA factor. Crediting plans are used when a JOA is advertised using an automated rating and ranking process. Weights and screen-outs used to rank qualified candidates for positions.

Cut-off Date: The date after which applications will continue to be accepted, but will not be given initial consideration. A cut-off date may be useful where large numbers of applications are expected over an extended period of time, and there is an immediate need to fill a position. If a cut-off date is established, it must be stated in the job announcement.

-D-

Detail: A temporary assignment of an employee to a different position for a specified period of time with no change in pay. Employees do not have to meet OPM experience requirements, but they must possess the minimum education requirements, if applicable. Details must be documented in 120 days increments (or less) by a Personnel Action (SF-50).

-E-

Eligible: An applicant who satisfies the Area of Consideration, as stated in the Job Opportunity Announcement and is therefore eligible for consideration.

Excepted Service: Are positions in the Federal civil service not subject to the appointment requirements of the competitive service. Exceptions to the normal competitive requirements are authorized by law, executive order or regulation.

-F-

Full Performance Level (FPL): The grade of a position at which the employee is expected to competently perform the full range of duties in a specific occupation. All jobs below the full performance level are developmental levels through which an employee may progress to the FPL.

-I-

Ineligible: Does not meet the area of consideration as stated in the Job Opportunity Announcement.

Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP): Regulations which provide selection priority to well-qualified displaced Federal employees when applying for jobs with other Federal agencies. When filling competitive service positions from outside the DOI any eligible, well qualified ICTAP applicant within the local commuting area of the JOA must be selected for the vacancy.

Interview Panels: Interview panels are used to further screen all applicants referred to the selecting official to determine those who will be recommended for an interview by the selecting official. At least one panel member must be a subject-matter expert. To the extent possible, all panels must consist of individuals at the same or higher-grade level than the full performance level of the position being filled. Every effort should be made to ensure that the panel is made up of diverse individuals.

-J-

Job Analysis: The analysis of a position to identify the basic duties and responsibilities; the competencies required to be successful in the position; the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the duties and responsibilities; and the factors that are important in evaluating candidates for the position.

Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA): Also known as “vacancy announcement”, describes all requirements of the position and instructs the applicant on how to apply to the position, including necessary applicant documentation. JOAs must be posted on the USAJOBS website as a means of satisfying the competitive procedure requirement.

-K-

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs): The attributes required to perform a job. KSAs are generally demonstrated through qualifying experience, education, or training. Knowledge is a body of information applied directly to the performance of a function. Skill is a present, observable competence to perform a task with ease and proficiency. Ability is a present competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product.

-L-

Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act (LMWFA): On August 7, 2015, the President signed the Land Management Workforce Flexibility Act, P.L. 114-47 (the “Act”), which was

amended by the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, dated December 23, 2016. The Act allows certain individuals who are serving or who have served under a time-limited competitive service appointment in a land management agency to compete for a permanent position in the competitive service when the hiring agency is accepting applications under merit promotion procedures. Individuals must have served for an accumulative of 24 months without a 2 year break in service.

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 (5 CFR 351.203).

-M-

Merit Promotion: An appointment made under the authority of 5 CFR 335, Promotion and Internal Placement. Career or career-conditional status (tenure I or II) employees as well as individuals who qualify under special hiring authorities may be considered for positions which are to be filled under merit promotion authority.

Merit Systems Principles: Statutory Federal employment principles contained in 5 USC Section 2301, Merit Systems Principles. These principles were established to ensure appointments and promotions are based on open and fair competition; and that employment practices are based on job-related competencies.

Minimum Qualifications: Qualifications an applicant must possess to be minimally qualified for hire or promotion under the competitive system as defined in OPM's General Schedule and Federal Wage System Qualification Standards. Applicants who do not meet the minimum qualification requirements for the position are deemed "not qualified" and receive no further consideration.

-N-

Noncompetitive Action: An appointment to or placement in a position in the competitive service that is not made under competitive procedures for an open competitive examination and that is usually based on current or prior Federal service. A noncompetitive action includes (1) all of the types of actions described under in-service placement; (2) appointments of non-Federal employees whose public or private enterprise positions are brought into the competitive service under title 5 CFR 316.701; and (3) appointments and conversions to career and career-conditional employment made under special authorities covered in 5 CFR 315.

Noncompetitive Eligibles: Individuals who can be placed in a vacant position without competition, e.g., through promotion, reassignment, reinstatement, transfer, change to lower grade, or the use of a special appointing authority, based on meeting all qualification and eligibility requirements, e.g., education and/or experience, career ladder, time in grade, etc.

-O-

Office of Personnel Management (OPM): The Federal agency that regulates administers and evaluates the civil service program according to merit principles.

-P-

Preference Eligible: A veteran, spouse, widow, or parents, who meets the definition provided in 5 U.S.C. § 2108. They are also afforded higher retention standing in the event of a reduction-in-force (see 5 U.S.C. § 3502). Preference does not apply to in-service placement action such as promotions. (See Vet Guide)

Priority Consideration: A special order of consideration for placement given to an eligible that was previously denied consideration due to an administrative error, law or regulatory violation.

Promotion: The change of an employee to a position at a higher grade level when both the old and new positions are under the General Schedule or under the same wage grade schedule, or to a position with a higher representative rate of basic pay when the old and new positions are under different pay schedules.

-Q-

Qualifications: Basic qualifications an applicant must possess to be qualified for hire or promotion under the competitive system as defined in the pertinent OPM General Schedule and Federal Wage System Qualification Standards as noted in the JOA. Applicants who do not meet the basic qualification requirements for the position are deemed “not qualified” and receive no further consideration.

Qualified: An applicant who meets the OPM basic qualification standards for the position as noted in the JOA and achieved an overall rating less than specified for well-qualified.

Quality Ranking Factor: KSAs that could be expected to enhance significant performance in a position, but, unlike selective placement factors, are not essential for satisfactory job performance.

-R-

Rating and Ranking: The determination of best qualified candidates based on the degree to which each candidate meets the KSAs of the position. This process is completed by a Human Resources Specialist.

Reassignment: A change of an employee from one position to another in the same grade in the same agency without promotion or demotion.

Reduction in Force (RIF): A management process that may be required for such reasons as reorganization, lack of work, shortage of funds, insufficient personnel ceiling, or the exercise of certain reemployment or restoration rights. A furlough of more than 30 calendar days or of more than 22 discontinuous calendar days is also a RIF.

Reemployment Priority List (RPL): The RPL is the mechanism agencies use to give reemployment consideration to their former competitive service employees separated by a RIF or who have fully recovered from a compensable injury after more than one year. The RPL must be cleared before filling any competitive service position, regardless of the duration of the appointment, and whether the organization plans to make a temporary, term, or permanent appointment.

Referral List: A document given to selecting officials containing the names of eligible candidates in alphabetical order.

Reinstatement: Non-competitive appointment of an individual whose previous employment as a career or career-conditional employee (tenure I or II) made him/her eligible for reinstatement into the competitive service as a career or career-conditional employee. (See 5 CFR 315.)

Request for Personnel Action (RPA): A request initiated by management to effect a personnel action, usually signals the beginning of the recruitment process.

-S-

Selective Factor: Selective Factors are knowledge, skills, abilities, or special qualifications that are in addition to the minimum requirements in a qualification standard, but are determined to be essential to perform the duties and responsibilities of a particular position. Applicants who do not meet a selective factor are ineligible for further consideration.

Special Selection Priority (SSP): A program that provides priority placement to eligible employees under both CTAP and ICTAP. The CTAP program is administered by DOI and provides special selection priority for displaced/surplus DOI employees within the local commuting area and within the prescribed time frames indicated in the JOA. Each Federal agency administers the SSP placement for displaced employees outside of their agency called ICTAP.

Specialized Experience: Experience defined in a JOA to provide detailed information about the KSA's required to perform successfully the duties of the position, and that is typically in or related to the position to be filled.

Status Applicant: Refers to those individuals who are current or former Federal civilian employees who hold or held non-temporary appointments in the competitive service, not the excepted service.

Structured Interview: Assessment method used to help determine the best candidate for the position. Applicants are asked a series of fixed questions concerning their job-related competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities. In each structured interview, the applicant is asked the same questions in the same sequence and his or her responses are scored according to predetermined criteria or benchmarks.

Subject-Matter Expert (SME): A person with bona fide expert knowledge about what it takes to do a particular job. Former and current first-level supervisors are normally good SMEs. Superior incumbents in the same or very similar positions and other individuals may also be used as SMEs if they have current and thorough knowledge of the job's requirements. An SME may provide input on qualifications determinations if they are not the Selecting Official and if all applicant identifying information has been removed. An SME who provides input on qualification determinations should not be a panel member.

-T-

Temporary Promotion: Placement of an employee into a higher graded position for a specified period of time. Employees must meet the OPM's education and experience requirements as well as time-in-grade restrictions. A temporary promotion must be made to a classified position.

Time-In-Grade: The length of time served at a specific grade level used to satisfy requirements for promotion to a higher grade.

Transfer: Movement of an employee, without a break in service of one full workday, from a position in one agency to a position in another agency.

-U-

Unclassified Duties: A set of duties and responsibilities that have not been officially classified, i.e., assigned a title, series, and grade level. A short statement of duties and responsibilities must accompany the request for detail of an employee if a job description is not available.

USAJOBS: The official job site of the United States Federal government. This website is the centralized site for most Federal agencies to post JOA's and for applicants to view the status of their applications on-line.

-V-

Veterans Employment and Opportunities Act (VEOA): Amendment to 5 USC 3304 to allow eligible veterans to compete for vacancies under agency merit promotion procedures. To receive consideration under the VEOA appointing authority, a veteran must be a preference eligible or a veteran separated after three or more years of continuous active service performed under honorable conditions. A veteran, who is released under honorable conditions shortly before completing a three-year tour of continuous active service, is also eligible for a VEOA appointment. A VEOA eligible, separated 30 or less calendar days prior to completion of the three-year active duty service requirement, is eligible to receive consideration for BLM vacancies.

Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA): The VRA is a special option by which agencies can appoint an eligible veteran without competition. The candidate does not have to be on a list of eligibles, but must meet the qualification requirements for the position. The VRA is an excepted appointment to a competitive service position up to the GS-11 level (or equivalent). Positions filled through a VRA can have promotion potential higher than GS-11. After two years of satisfactory service, the veteran may be converted to a career conditional appointment in the competitive service. Many candidates eligible for VRA appointments apply under Merit Promotion announcements.

Veterans Preference: A special privilege that entitles qualifying veterans or their family members to certain advantages in consideration for Federal employment. Applicable only when referring VRA applicants.

-W-

Well-Qualified: A qualified applicant who possesses the KSAs which clearly exceed the minimum qualification requirements for the position. A well-qualified applicant will not necessarily meet the definition of best qualified when evaluated against other candidates who apply for a particular vacancy.

Illustration 1 – Action Matrix

Proposed Action	Position	And	Competition Required
Reassignment	at same grade under same pay schedule	position is one with known promotion potential and employee will gain eligibility for non-competitive career promotion to grade higher than previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service	Yes
		position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Change to lower Grade	lower grade under same pay schedule	position is one with known promotion potential and employee will gain eligibility for non-competitive career promotion to grade higher than previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service	Yes
		position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Reinstatement or Transfer	at a higher grade than previously held on a permanent basis		Yes
	at same or lower grade than previously held on a permanent basis	position is one with known promotion potential and employee will gain eligibility for non-competitive career promotion to grade higher than previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service	Yes
		position is not one with known promotion potential	No
Detail	same grade and is not one with known promotion potential	detail is for any length	No
	higher grade or to position of same grade with known promotion potential	the detail is for 120 days or less	No

Proposed Action	Position	And	Competition Required
Detail	Unclassified Set of Duties	the detail is for 120 days or less	No
Selection for training leading to promotion		Successful completion of training is a condition of eligibility for promotion	Yes
Promotion	Known promotion potential, originally identified as the target position to which employee would advance without competition or	Competitive procedures were fully applied at the time of placement into position of known promotion potential and all competitors were informed that selection for the entry position could lead to promotion without further competition	No
Promotion	upgraded by classification	Incumbent's position upgraded without significant change in duties and responsibilities because of classification error or new or revised standards	No
Promotion	upgraded by classification	Incumbent's position reconstituted into a successor position with clearly and solely identifiable duties of the former position and there are no other employees serving in similar or identical positions within the same organization to whom the duties could have been assigned	No

Promotion	to position to which employee was detailed for training or evaluation	the employee was selected for detail under full competitive procedures and all competitors were informed that the detail could lead to promotion without further competition	No
Proposed Action	Position	And	Competition Required
Temporary promotion or extension of temporary promotion	higher grade under same pay schedule or under a different pay schedule when action is processed as a promotion or represents a promotion under the rules above	the temporary promotion is for a total of 120 days or less within the preceding 12 months (details to a higher grade count toward the 120 day limitation).	No
Conversion of temporary promotion to permanent promotion		the employee was selected for temporary promotion under full competitive procedures and all competitors were informed in advance that temporary promotion could lead to permanent promotion without further competition	No
Promotion without time limitation	higher grade under same pay scale	is not covered by promotion rules above	Yes