NASA Procedural Requirements

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COMPLIANCE IS MANDATORY

Internal Placement of NASA Employees

Responsible Office: Office of Human Capital Management

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Preface

P.1. Purpose

PART I: NASA Competitive Placement Plan

a. This NPR provides Agency direction to be used in conjunction with the referenced statutory and regulatory requirements. Center Human Resources Offices should be consulted for further information and guidance.

b. The NASA Competitive Placement Plan establishes minimum Agency procedures for filling positions, except positions in the Office of the Inspector General, with current or former Federal employees with competitive status at and below the GS-15 level (including trades and labor positions) through competition and on the basis of merit. It also covers term employees with conversion eligibility as authorized in the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004.

c. Selections will be made without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or nonaffiliation; marital status; race; color; sex; national origin; nondisqualifying disability; age; sexual orientation; or status as a parent.

d. This Plan does not guarantee promotion but rather ensures that all qualified available candidates receive fair and equitable consideration for positions filled under these competitive procedures.

e. Announcing a vacancy under this Plan is only one method of locating applicants for a position and can be used in conjunction with other methods. Subject to applicable law and regulations, selection of an individual to fill a position is the decision of management, as is the decision regarding the method(s) to be used in identifying candidates.

PART II: The Upward Mobility Program

a. In addition to the Competitive Placement Plan and various training programs, a formal Upward Mobility Program will be maintained. Within budget and personnel ceiling limitations, upward mobility positions will be established to offer specific career opportunities to lower level employees (GS-9 and below or equivalent).

b. The Upward Mobility Program will be used to enhance NASA's ability to meet its affirmative employment goals and to help eliminate underrepresentation in targeted positions.

P.2. Applicability

a.This NPR is applicable to NASA Headquarters and NASA Centers, including Component Facilities. Unless otherwise indicated, use of the word Center(s) in the text of this NPR includes NASA Headquarters and any reference to Center Director(s) includes the Associate Administrator for Infrastructure and Administration.

b. Negotiated Collective Bargaining Agreements that contain procedures that differ from the provisions of this Plan remain in effect until renegotiated, except where such agreements are specifically superseded by applicable laws or regulations.

c. This NPR does not apply to the Office of the Inspector General.

P.3. Authority

a. 5 U.S.C. 7101 et. al., The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, as amended.

b. 42 U.S.C. 2000, The Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

c. 5 U.S.C. 9812 et. al., The NASA Flexibility Act of 2004.

d. 5 U.S.C. 2101, Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998.

e. 5 CFR Part 335, Promotion and Internal Placement.

f. 5 CFR Part 536, Grade and Pay Retention.

g. E.O. 11478, Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government, August 12, 1969.

P.4. References

a. NPD 3000.1, Management of Human Resources.

b. NPR 3300.1, Appointment of Personnel To/From NASA, Chapter 9 Term Appointment Authority.

c. NPR 1441.1D, NASA Records Retention Schedule.

d. NPD 1382.17G, NASA Privacy Policy.

P.5. Cancellation

NPR 3335.1F, Internal Placement of NASA Employees, dated June 16, 2003.

/S/
James L. Jennings
Associate Administrator for
Institutions and Management

PART I: NASA Competitive Placement Plan
Chapter 1. Responsibility

The Human Resources Officer at each NASA Center is responsible for the following:

1.1 Implementing and administering the Competitive Placement Plan. Unless expressly prohibited, all authorities and responsibilities may be redelegated.

1.2 Publicizing the Competitive Placement Plan's provisions to current employees and to new employees upon entrance on duty. The location and availability of this Plan, for review and reference, will be posted where information about competitive opportunities is publicized to employees.

1.3 Ensuring that actions are fully documented to include all appropriate metrics.

PART I. Chapter 2. General Provisions

2.1 Applicant Selection

Announcing a vacancy under this Plan is only one method of locating applicants for a position and can be used in conjunction with other methods. Subject to applicable law and regulations, selection of an individual to fill a position is the decision of management, as is the decision regarding the method(s) to be used in identifying candidates.

2.2 Bilateral Consultation and Collective Bargaining

Negotiated labor agreements and other local policy issuances may augment, but cannot be inconsistent with, applicable laws.

PART I. Chapter 3. Competitive Procedures

3.1 When Competitive Procedures Are Required

3.1.1 For selections of all the following actions and all other promotions not excluded in paragraph 3.2:

a. Temporary promotions over 120 days. In computing the 120 days, prior service under all noncompetitive details to higher graded positions or noncompetitive temporary promotions during the preceding 12 months is included. If appropriate, the option to make these promotions permanent, without additional competition, must be in the announcement. (Note: Competition is not required if the individual has previously held, or successfully competed for, the higher grade on a permanent basis.)

b. Details of more than 120 days to a higher graded position or to a position with greater promotion potential. If appropriate, the option of extending the detail without additional competition must be stated in the announcement. (Note: Competition is not required if the individual has previously held, or successfully competed for, the higher grade on a permanent basis.)

c. Training that is required for promotion.

d. Reassignment, or change to a lower grade, to a nontemporary position with more promotion potential than a nontemporary position previously held (except when permitted by reduction-in-force regulations).

3.1.2 Term employees who meet conversion requirements under the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004 may be selected for permanent appointment under competitive placement procedures.

3.1.2.1 To be eligible for conversion, an employee must meet the following criteria:

a. The employee must have been selected for a term position under a competitive announcement stating that the individual(s) selected might be converted to permanent appointment.

b. The employee must have at least 2 years of continuous service under a term appointment in the competitive service. The service need not have been performed entirely at NASA.

c. The employee?s performance must be fully successful or better for the 2-year period preceding conversion. Documentation of level of performance is required prior to effecting the conversion. (Note: Under the NASA performance system, the employee must have a rating of at least ?meets or exceeds expectations.?)

3.1.2.2 Employees meeting the criteria for competitive conversion may be considered equally with NASA permanent employees for any positions for which they qualify. (See Section 3.2.11 for criteria for noncompetitive conversion.)

3.2 When Competitive Procedures Are Not Required

3.2.1 Promotion resulting from reclassification of a position (without significant change in duties and responsibilities) on the basis of either issuance of a new classification standard or the correction of a classification error.

3.2.2 A position change permitted by reduction-in-force regulations.

3.2.3 Any action including a promotion, directed by an individual or organization with authority that supersedes this Plan. These include, but are not limited to, actions as a result of discrimination complaint decisions, court decisions, settlement of judicial or administrative cases, or arbitrators' decisions.

3.2.4 A career promotion, when:

a. The employee?s position is reclassified because of additional duties and responsibilities.

b. Competition was held at an earlier stage (e.g., Office of Personnel Management (OPM) register, NASA Competitive Placement Plan, or other approved competitive process such as direct hire or delegated examining authorities) and the promotion is to a grade at or below the full performance level of the position.

c. Promotion following noncompetitive conversion of a Cooperative Education student, a Veteran's Readjustment Act (VRA) appointee, Federal Career Intern, or other such authorized actions.

3.2.5 Selection of current or former Federal employees from another competitive staffing authority, such as Direct Hire.

3.2.6 Movement to a position having the same (or lower) potential than a current or prior position held on a nontemporary basis.

3.2.7 Temporary promotions for periods of 120 days or fewer.

3.2.8 Details for 120 days or fewer to higher graded positions or positions with promotion potential.

3.2.9 Repromotion, transfer, or reinstatement up to the highest grade previously held on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment, unless demoted for personal cause or unacceptable performance.

3.2.10 Selection of a candidate from the Reemployment Priority List.

3.2.11 Term employees may be noncompetitively converted to a career or career-conditional appointment under the following circumstances:

a. The employee must have been selected for a term position under a competitive announcement stating that the individual(s) selected might be converted to permanent appointment.

b. The individual must have at least 2 years of continuous service under a term appointment in the competitive service. The service need not have been performed entirely at NASA.

c. The individual?s performance must be fully successful or better for the 2-year period preceding conversion. Documentation of level of performance is required prior to effecting the conversion. (Note: Under the NASA performance system, the employee must have a rating of at least ?meets or exceeds expectations.?)

d. The position for which the individual is competing is in the same geographic location, and is in the same occupational series, and has no greater promotion potential that the term position currently held. (Note: If all of the criteria in this paragraph are not met, the employee may be eligible under competitive conversion procedures. See Section 3.1.2.)

3.3 Special Considerations

3.3.1 Special Consideration for Repromotion or Reassignment

3.3.1.1 Employees who have been demoted in NASA without personal cause are entitled to special consideration for repromotion or reassignment.

3.3.1.2 This special consideration applies to positions at the employee's former grade or any intervening grades that are to be filled under this Plan.

3.3.1.3 The right to special consideration does not apply to any position with a projected promotion potential higher than the retained grade or the grade held at the time the change to lower grade was effected.

3.3.1.4 This special consideration is to be given at the NASA Center where the employee was demoted and is currently employed.

3.3.1.5 The entitlement to special consideration will begin as of the effective date of the action on which the eligibility is based and will continue for a 2-year period, unless the employee declines a reasonable offer of a position as defined in OPM regulations. If an employee accepts an equivalent position within the 2-year period, eligibility ends with the effective date of the action.

3.3.2 Correction of Procedural Error

3.3.2.1 An employee who was not afforded proper consideration, due to a harmful procedural error in a previous competitive placement action, must be given priority consideration for the next appropriate (i.e., similar) vacancy filled under this Plan. "Appropriate" vacancy is defined in Appendix B.

3.3.2.2 Priority consideration means that the employee must be referred to the selecting official for consideration before other candidates are considered under these competitive procedures. If selected on the basis of the priority consideration, the employee may be promoted or reassigned as an exception to the competitive procedures of this Plan.

3.3.2.3 When an employee is referred for priority consideration but is not selected, this decision must be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.

3.4 Area of Consideration

3.4.1 The minimum area of consideration for positions advertised under this Plan will be NASAwide, unless otherwise specified in the announcement. The basis for a decision to use a smaller minimum area must be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.

3.4.2 When the minimum area of consideration fails to identify sufficient high-quality and diverse candidates, the area may be extended.

3.5 Announcements

3.5.1. Announcements will conform to the requirements of the NASA STARS vacancy builder. In addition to minimum Federal information requirements, announcements will also include:

a. A statement concerning payment or nonpayment of relocation allowances must be included in the announcement if the area of consideration extends beyond the local commuting area

b. In accordance with the Agency?s Plan for a Drug-Free Workplace, the announcement must indicate whenever the vacancy is for a Testing Designated Position.

c. A statement regarding the need for a security clearance must be included if the position designation is other than nonsensitive.

3.5.2 For positions filled under this Plan, an announcement must be posted on a publicized web site or other location available to Center employees.

3.6 Application Period

3.6.1 Specific Vacancies

3.6.1.1 Announcements shall generally remain open for at least 5 workdays. A shorter open period may be used if large numbers of qualified and diverse applicants are anticipated and the case file is documented as to the rationale for the reduced open period.

3.6.1.2 Employees shall be advised at least annually where vacancy announcements for other Centers can be reviewed.

3.6.2 Recurring Vacancies. Vacancy announcements with closing dates of up to 1 year from the initial opening date, i.e., ?open continuous,? may be used to advertise recurring vacancies. All employees who file under such announcements will be automatically considered for all covered vacancies filled after the submission of their application, providing they comply with all instructions in the vacancy announcement.

3.6.3 Like Vacancies. A selection certificate may be reissued to fill like vacancies if the selection(s) can be made within 90 days of issuance of the original certificate. A ?like vacancy? is considered to be one with the same title, series, grade, promotion potential, and duty location; the primary duties of the position are similar and require possession of the same knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) or competencies.

3.7 Application Procedures

3.7.1 General Procedures

3.7.1.1 A résumé is required for all positions filled under NASA's automated Staffing and Recruitment System (NASA STARS). Optional application forms, such as the Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF 612) will not be accepted under NASA STARS.

3.7.1.2 Applicants are responsible for ensuring that their résumés are up to date and properly reflect current employment status and qualifications.

3.7.2 Acceptance of Applications

3.7.2.1 Electronic résumés must be received by midnight, central time, on the closing date of the announcement. Hard-copy résumés must be received by close of business on the closing date.

3.7.2.2 The Center's Human Resources Officer (or designee) may grant an extension of the application deadline if circumstances warrant. All applicants who are known to be in like circumstances must be granted the extension. All decisions to extend the closing date must be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.

3.7.2.3 It is the applicants' obligation to present their qualifications for the position. Individuals who submit some, but not all, required information will be ineligible for consideration for the position.

3.7.3 Supervisory Referrals

Upon an employee's written request (e-mail or hard copy), the supervisor must submit the employee's name for appropriate vacancies announced during an employee's absence. Prior to making the request, the employee must ensure that she/he has completed a résumé. The employee?s written request must provide the supervisor with all of the information necessary to use the designated application process.

3.8 Concurrent Consideration of Outside Applicants

3.8.1 Applicants who are eligible for transfer or reinstatement may, at the option of the Center, be given concurrent consideration with NASA employees under this Plan. Such applicants will be evaluated using the same criteria as NASA employees and compete with NASA employees for consideration.

3.8.2 Applicants who are neither current Federal employees nor transfer or reinstatement eligibles do not compete under the provisions of this Plan, except for veterans eligible for consideration under the Veterans Employment Opportunity Authority (VEOA). Veterans eligible under the VEOA may compete under this Plan only when positions are open to applicants outside of the Agency. (Note: If an announcement is open to the acceptance of applications under this Plan and also from external candidates, VEOA provisions do not apply. Such individuals shall compete as external candidates.)

3.9 Determining Basic Qualifications

3.9.1 The minimum qualification standards prescribed or approved by OPM (including any required written tests and selective factors) will be used to determine basic eligibility of candidates for competitive consideration. These standards are to be available in the Center's Human Resources Office for review by candidates.

3.9.2 Selective factors (i.e., KSAs or competencies essential for satisfactory performance in the position to be filled) are part of the minimum qualification standards. Justification for use of selective factors will be recorded in the Competitive Placement Record. Vacancy announcements will identify the minimum qualification standards (including selective factors).

3.9.3 Applicants must meet time-in-grade and time-after-competitive-appointment requirements by the closing date of the vacancy announcement to be eligible for consideration for selection.

3.10 Evaluation of Candidates

3.10.1 General Information

3.10.1.1 Candidates eligible for noncompetitive selection need not be rated or referred under this Plan, but may be referred separately, outside of competitive procedures, to the selecting official.

3.10.1.2 Selections made under this Plan will be made from among the best available qualified candidates based upon job-related evaluation criteria.

3.10.2 Methods of Evaluation

3.10.2.1 The skills or competencies used in evaluating candidates for competitive placement will be identified on the basis of a job analysis and must be supported by the position description.

3.10.2.2 The skills or competencies and the rating criteria must be developed jointly by the Center's

Human Resources Officer and the selecting official (or their designees). The basis of rating and specific duties required for successful performance on the position must be included in the announcement.

3.10.2.3 The degree to which applicants possess the skills or competencies will be determined through an evaluation of pertinent information such as experience, education and training, awards, and performance appraisals. The evaluation process will consist of the use of an automated rating process and further evaluation by the selecting official (or designee).

3.10.3 Ranking and Selection

3.10.3.1 The ranking process is intended to identify the relative degree to which applicants possess the specified skills or competencies. The Center's Human Resources Officer (or designee), after consultation with the selecting official, may waive the normal ranking process if there are 10 or fewer qualified applicants at a given grade level. In such cases, the qualified applicants will be further screened against job-related criteria. Applicants who are minimally qualified and possess the additional job-related criteria will be eligible for selection consideration.

3.10.3.2 When ranking is performed, applicants who meet the minimum qualifications of the position will be rated on either a numerical scale (e.g., 70, 80, and 90) or a nominal scale (e.g., Qualified, Highly Qualified, Exceptionally Qualified). The rating process must measure all applicants against the same job criteria (skills) or competencies.

3.10.3.3 In cases where there are a large number of candidates in the top evaluation group, applicants may be further evaluated by identifying those who possess the skills determined to be most important for successful performance.

3.10.3.4 Once applicants are rated, they will be ranked in order. The Center's Human Resources Officer (or designee) will consult the selecting official (or designee) to determine the point in this order above which all candidates will be referred. This will be the point at which there is some meaningful distinction between the candidates above and below that point.

3.11 Competitive Placement Certificates

Candidates will be listed on the certificate in alphabetical order. Any employee listed on the certificate is eligible for selection. If no selection has been made within 30 days of the date the certificate was issued, the certificate will be canceled unless the Center's Human Resources Officer (or designee) approves an extension. With appropriate justification, the selecting official may have up to two 30-day extensions. In no case will the certificate be extended beyond 90 days.

3.12 Interviews

The selecting official and/or designee(s) may conduct interviews (including telephone interviews) of some, all, or none of the candidates.

3.13 Release

The Center's Human Resources Officer (or designee) will arrange for the expeditious release of the selectee from his or her current position.

3.14 Timeliness

Each Center will determine appropriate procedures to ensure the timeliness of all activities associated with this Plan.

PART I. Chapter 4. Other Provisions

4.1 Information to Candidates

4.1.1 Applicants will be promptly notified of the successful submission of their applications and of the status of vacancy announcements for which they have applied; e.g., when a selection is made.

4.1.2 Upon specific request to the Center's Human Resources Office, any applicant considered for a vacancy under the NASA Competitive Placement Plan procedures (or a properly designated representative) will be furnished the following:

a. The name of the individual selected.

b. Whether the applicant was found to be qualified.

c. Whether the applicant's name was on the certificate from which selection was made.

4.2 Employee Grievances

4.2.1 If an employee has a question or complaint about the Competitive Placement Plan or a specific competitive action, the employee (or designated representative) should discuss it with the Center's Human Resources Office.

4.2.2 Formal grievances concerning Competitive Placement Plan actions will be processed through the NASA Grievance System or other grievance procedures negotiated with recognized bargaining units, as appropriate.

4.2.3 Not being selected from a properly ranked certificate is not a sufficient basis for a grievance.

PART I. Chapter 5. Responsibility for Implementation

5.1 Human Resources Officers

5.1.1 Each NASA Center's Human Resources Officer and his or her staff are responsible for implementing and administering this Competitive Placement Plan. Unless expressly prohibited, all authorities and responsibilities vested by this Plan in the Human Resources Officer may be re-delegated.

5.1.2 Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Determining the minimum area of consideration, approving job analysis (including selective factors), participating in the development of rating criteria, and publicizing vacancies within the area of consideration.

b. Screening applicants and evaluating their qualifications in accordance with this Plan.

c. Ensuring that selections are made in accordance with this Plan and documented as required. This includes information necessary to manage and monitor staffing and recruitment metrics.

d. Ensuring that necessary files and records are maintained, controlled, and protected in accordance with NPR 1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedules, and any other appropriate laws and regulations.

e. Ensuring that applicants are notified promptly of the outcome of the consideration accorded them.

f. Ensuring that repromotion and special placement eligibles are properly considered.

g. Ensuring that any employee not afforded proper consideration in a competitive action is given priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy.

h. Keeping employees informed of the provisions of this Plan and providing specific information on these provisions at least annually.

5.2 Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for the following:

a. Anticipating personnel needs and, if the position is to be filled through competitive procedures, initiating action in sufficient time to allow for proper selection in accordance with this Plan.

b. Serving as subject-matter experts in supporting the job-analysis process.

c. Releasing subordinates to serve as subject-matter experts in the job-analysis process or when using interview panels.

d. Identifying and providing documented justification for the use and importance of selective factors (and other KSAs) in the evaluation process.

e. Making timely selections from certificates.

f. Ensuring that subordinates are considered for advancement opportunities arising during their temporary absences for leave, travel, detail, or training, when such assistance is properly requested in writing by the subordinate.

g. Ensuring that employees temporarily absent for military service, service with public international organizations, on worker's compensation, or on Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments are properly accorded advancement consideration.

5.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for the following:

a. Being aware of the provisions of this Plan and complying with its requirements.

b. Properly presenting their qualifications for positions for which the employee chooses to apply.

c. Advising their supervisor in writing (hard copy or e-mail), if they want to be considered for appropriate vacancies that may occur during their temporary absence for leave, travel, detail, or training. In such situations employees must have completed and submitted a résumé of record in the NASA STARS system.

d. Serving as subject-matter experts when called upon.

Appendix A: Information Required for Competitive Placement Plan Records

At a minimum, the following information is to be maintained for each Competitive Placement Plan action, in accordance with NPR 1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedules, for a period of 2-years from the closing date of the action. Closing date means the effective date of the resulting personnel action or the cancellation of the Competitive Placement Plan action. In the case of a complaint of discrimination or grievance, the Competitive Placement Record becomes a part of the complaint or other appropriate file, and its destruction or scheduled disposal is modified accordingly. Case files are normally maintained electronically, and there is no requirement to maintain a hard copy record.

a. A description of the position.

b. The vacancy announcement.

c. Identification of repromotion, special placement consideration, and/or other required priority considerations.

d. Qualification standard(s) used (by reference) and justification for any selective factors.

e. A description of the job-analysis process that was used to identify the skills or competencies and the names and titles of those participating in it.

f. A listing of the skills or competencies (and relative importance) and a description of the way in which these were used to evaluate candidates.

g. The documents used in evaluating candidates.

h. Names of the applicants as they appeared in the final ranking.

i. The selection certificate(s).

j. Names of those selected.

k. Any other information necessary to reconstruct the action completely.

Appendix B: Definitions

B.1 Area of Consideration. The organizational and/or geographical area within which an intensive search is made and qualified candidates are considered.

B.2 Promotion. The change of an employee to a position of one of the following:

a. At a higher grade level within the same job classification system and pay schedule.

b. With a higher rate of basic pay in a different job classification system and pay schedule.

B.3 Position with Promotion Potential. A position from which a career promotion may be made because adequate competition was held at an earlier stage which includes, among others, the following:

a. Apprentice positions.

b. Career ladder positions.

c. Trainee positions.

d. Understudy positions.

e. Positions filled at a grade level below the established or anticipated grade. The target position or full performance level of the position being filled must be documented.

B.4 Minimally Qualified Candidates. Those who meet the OPM's qualification standards and any selective factors applicable to the position.

B.5 Screening. The process of identifying those candidates who meet minimum qualification, legal, and regulatory requirements for the position to be filled.

B.6 Evaluation. The process of assessing the degree to which each applicant possesses the skills or competencies essential for satisfactory performance in the position.

B.7 Rating. The end product of evaluation. A rating reflects the degree to which the candidate's qualifications meet the skills or competencies identified in the vacancy announcement.

B.8 Ranking. The process of arranging eligible candidates in order of rating scores or relative standing.

B.9 Best Available Candidates. Those who are referred to the selecting official on a competitive placement certificate.

B.10 Competitive Placement Certificate. A list of the best available candidates identified through competitive placement procedures.

B.11 Selecting Official. A NASA employee with authority to select an individual for assignment to a position.

B.12 Appropriate Vacancy for Priority Consideration to Correct Procedural Violations. A vacancy to be filled through the following competitive placement procedures:

a. For which an employee meets the minimum qualification requirements.

b. Which is in the same grade and in a similar (although not necessarily identical) occupational

group to the position for which the violation occurred.

c. Is in the same geographic area.

d. Under the same appointing office as the position for which the employee was denied proper consideration.

B.13 Job-Analysis. The systematic process of gathering, analyzing, and documenting information about a position in order to determine minimum qualification requirements and identify the skills or competencies to be used in further evaluating qualified candidates.

B.14 Competitive Placement Record. A record, retained for 2 years, of the Competitive Placement Plan action that contains sufficient information to allow reconstruction of an action.

PART II: The Upward Mobility Program Chapter 1. General Provisions

1.1 Program Definitions

1.1.1 Upward mobility is a systematic management effort that focuses Federal personnel policy and practice on the development and implementation of specific career opportunities for lower level employees [General Schedule (GS)-9 and below or equivalent (normally Wage Grade 1-9 and Wage Leader 1-7)] who are in positions or occupational series that do not permit further advancement.

1.1.2 The Growth Opportunity (GO) covers paraprofessional, technical, or administrative positions normally classified at one-grade intervals.

1.1.3 The Specialty Training for Entry Professionals (STEP) component covers administrative or technical positions, normally classified at two-grade intervals, which do not have a positive education requirement.

1.2 NASA-wide Upward Mobility Program Objectives

1.2.1 More effective use of the capabilities, talents, and interests of NASA employees.

1.2.2 Enhanced career opportunities for lower graded (GS-9 and below or equivalent) employees who have demonstrated the ability and interest to assume greater responsibility but whose current positions do not offer opportunities for further development or advancement.

1.2.3 Enhancement of NASA's ability to meet its affirmative action goals and to help eliminate underrepresentation in targeted positions.

PART II. Chapter 2. Planning the Program

2.1 Initial Planning

For the program to work effectively and for it to be accepted and understood by both management and employees, the program must be a ?systematic management effort? that is well defined, well planned, and well publicized with meaningful objectives and strategies. Adequate initial and continual planning includes the following:

a. Knowledge of workforce skill levels and educational levels.

b. Knowledge of positions (e.g., dead-ended vs. high-career potential), overlapping skill areas, and Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) target positions.

c. Knowledge of staffing patterns--which positions are easily filled under the Competitive Placement Plan; which most often require outside recruitment; and which suffer frequent turnover or attrition rates.

2.2 Identifying Positions

2.2.1 The identification of target positions is an essential ingredient of the Upward Mobility Program. The target position is the specific position to be filled through the Upward Mobility Program. The selection of target positions should be preceded by a careful analysis of workforce and staffing requirements and affirmative employment goals. Positions that are easily filled under the Competitive Placement Plan or positions in which under-representation of minorities, women, or persons with disabilities is not present need not be filled through the Upward Mobility Program.

2.2.2 Entry levels for Upward Mobility Program positions must be established with care. Knowledge of the target population grade levels and skill levels, as well as organizational knowledge, is necessary to decide the entry level that will meet the needs of both the target population and the organization in which the target position is located.

2.2.3 Each target position has three levels: entry level, target level, and full performance level. Upward Mobility Program applicants will be selected for the entry level and will receive subsequent training to enable them to meet the qualifications for promotion to the target level. Normally, the target level will be one or two grades above the entry level, depending on whether the target position is in a one- or two-grade interval series. Upon promotion to the target level, the employee will generally have completed the Upward Mobility Program. However, further training may be provided, and future promotions in the career ladder may be made noncompetitively up to the full performance level.

PART II. Chapter 3. Career Counseling

3.1 Career counseling is that aspect of the Upward Mobility Program designed to help employees realistically assess their strengths, weaknesses, interests, and aptitudes in relation to the Center's mainstream occupations or other likely upward mobility positions. Through career counseling, lower level employees interested in advancement will be able to better prepare themselves for future upward mobility opportunities.

3.2 The scope of a Center's career counseling services will largely depend on the skills and expertise of the designated career counselor. At a minimum, the counseling services must include assistance to employees in the following:

a. Assessing their skills, abilities, interests, and aptitudes on the basis of past education and training, supervisory evaluations, work accomplishments, and self-appraisals.

b. Determining qualifications required for occupations at the Center and, in general, within the career system. The counselor should assist the employee in understanding the ways these requirements relate to individual capabilities.

c. Defining career goals and developing plans for reaching the goals.

d. Identifying career ladders and programs that provide opportunities.

e. Identifying and assessing education and training opportunities and clarifying enrollment procedures.

f. Identifying factors that may impair career development.

g. Learning about resources, inside or outside the Agency, in which additional assistance is available.

3.3 Communication between the career counselor and the Upward Mobility Program Manager is essential. An exchange of information between the two will reveal the skill level and interests of likely upward mobility applicants and the most likely job opportunities to be announced under the Upward Mobility Program. This exchange of information may be accomplished informally or at regularly scheduled meetings involving all those engaged in the Upward Mobility Program operation.

PART II. Chapter 4. Program Implementation

4.1 Source of Eligibles

NASA employees in grade levels GS-9 and below or equivalent, who are serving under the following appointments, are eligible:

a. Career or career-conditional appointments.

b. Term appointments, where the employee meets the requirements for conversion under the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004.

c. Veterans Readjustment Appointments (VRA) - If selected, the appointee will remain on the VRA, but the initial training plan will be terminated, and a new upward mobility training plan will be developed at the time of selections. The appointee will remain on the VRA until completion of the required 2 years of service necessary for conversion to competitive status.

d. Excepted appointments under Schedule A 213.3102(u) (severely handicapped) and (t) (mentally retarded) and Schedule A 213.3102 (gg) (persons with psychiatric disabilities) - If selected, employees will remain under the Schedule A appointment until they have completed the required 2 years of service necessary for conversion to competitive service.

4.2 Area of Consideration

The minimum area of consideration for positions advertised under this program will be NASAwide, unless otherwise specified in the announcement. The basis for a decision to use a smaller minimum area must be documented in the case file.

4.3 Qualification Requirements

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) general and specialized experience requirements will be waived for entry-level upward mobility positions. However, applicants must meet time-in-grade and time-after-competitive appointment requirements. Applicants will be evaluated on their possession of the competencies as described in the major duties portion on the announcement. Selected employees will be laterally reassigned to the position as announced or must accept a downgrade (with highest previous rate protection or retained pay as appropriate).

4.4 Announcing The Position

4.4.1 All positions to be filled under the Upward Mobility Program will be announced on a case-by-case basis. Like positions requiring the same skills or competencies and being filled at the same grade level may be advertised and filled using the same announcement.

4.4.2 Each Upward Mobility Program announcement must identify the Upward Mobility Program component (STEP/GO), the area of consideration, and the eligibility requirements. In addition, each announcement will state that all OPM general and specialized experience requirements will be waived for entry into the entry-level position and will identify the competencies within the duty statement on the announcement against which the applicant will be rated. Also included will be the duties and location of the position, identification of the target level and full performance level of the

position, and whether or not promotion to the full performance level will be made noncompetitively.

4.4.3 The announcement should be posted in a location known and available to employees and for a sufficient length of time to allow employees to apply.

4.5 Application Procedures

4.5.1 General Procedures

4.5.1.1 A résumé is required for all positions filled under NASA STARS. Optional application forms, such as the Optional Application for Federal Employment (OF-612) will not be accepted under NASA STARS.

4.5.1.2 Applicants should indicate their performance rating of record on their résumé under the ?Additional Information? section of the Resume Builder.

4.5.1.3 In accordance with NASA STARS procedures, applicants are strongly encouraged to electronically submit their résumés, but may submit a hard copy if electronic access is not available.

4.5.2 Acceptance of Applications

4.5.2.1 Résumés must be received by midnight, central time, on the closing date of the announcement.

4.5.2.2 The Center?s Human Resources Officer (or designee) may grant an extension of the application deadline if circumstances warrant. All applicants who are known to be in like circumstances must be granted the extension. All decisions to extend the closing date must be documented in the case file.

4.5.2.3 It is the applicants? obligation to present their qualifications for the position. Individuals who submit some, but not all, required information will be ineligible for consideration for the position.

PART II. Chapter 5. The Selection Process

5.1 Evaluation of Applicants

5.1.1 Applicants must be evaluated and ranked against job-related criteria (skills) or competencies to identify the best applicants from among the pool of eligible employees. The job-related skills or competencies will be identified using job analysis, and must be supported by the position description and the environment in which the duties of the position will be performed. The Center Human Resources Officer or designee must review and concur with the skills or competencies and the rating criteria. The job duties against which the applicants will be evaluated also must be included in the vacancy announcement.

5.1.2 Applicants for upward mobility positions are not required to meet the OPM qualification requirements for the position or to have experience in the career field of the position; neither are they required to have a college degree or extensive education. Therefore, the evaluation system will not rely solely on these traditional evidences of ability to do the job. No particular coursework or specific work experience is required. The evaluation process will provide for the crediting of nontraditional and off-the-job experiences that have provided the candidates with the KSAs or competencies necessary to perform the duties of the entry-level position.

5.2 The Rating and Ranking Process

5.2.1 All Upward Mobility Program applications will be evaluated by NASA STARS.

5.2.2 To screen out those applicants who are not eligible, applications will be reviewed by the personnel office before submission to the selecting official. Applicants who fail to provide the information requested on the announcement will not receive consideration for the position.

5.2.3 Applicants will be rated on a numerical scale. The rating process must measure all applicants against the same job-related criteria (i.e., skills) or competencies. Once applicants are assigned a numerical score, they will be ranked in numerical order. The Human Resources Officer (or designee) and selecting official will determine the point in this numerical order above which all applicants will be referred. This will normally be the point at which there is some meaningful distinction between the applicants above and below that point. Generally, at least the five best applicants will be referred to the selecting official for consideration. If there is no meaningful distinction among the applicants, the number of applicants referred may be expanded to a maximum of 10. When more than one candidate has the lowest score to be referred, all such candidates with that score will be referred.

5.3 Selection

5.3.1 Because of the nature of the Upward Mobility Program and the fact that the selected applicant may be exposed to several different supervisors over the course of the training, where practical, selection should be accomplished by the highest ranking official in the target career field in the organization in which the position is located. This official is ultimately responsible for the success of the training program and for ensuring that the selected applicant will fully meet the qualifications necessary for promotion to the target level.

5.3.2 An alphabetical listing of the best applicants for the upward mobility position will be referred

to the selecting official, along with the résumé of each referred applicant. All referred applicants should be interviewed, and if one applicant is interviewed, all others must be interviewed. Any employee referred is eligible for selection. After the selection, every applicant will be notified of the selection. If no selection is made within 30 days of the date of the referral list, the list becomes void, and no selection may be made from it. If the selecting official provides acceptable reasons the Human Resources Officer or designee may approve up to two 30-day extensions to the certificate.

5.4 Release

The Center?s Human Resources Officer or designee will arrange for the release of the selectee from his or her current position. Every effort will be made to arrange an expeditious release of the selected employee.

PART II. Chapter 6. Training Agreements

6.1 All NASA Centers have the authority to develop and implement training agreements when they want to authorize the following:

a. Waive qualification requirements for trainee positions to permit employees to enter a training program.

b. Credit time spent in training at an accelerated rate for qualifications.

c. Credit, as specialized experience, rotational assignments outside the target occupation.

6.2 Although training agreements may also be used to authorize a waiver of time-in-grade requirements, training agreements of this type must be approved by the Agency?s Director of Human Resources. In most instances, upward mobility positions will not meet the criteria necessary for justifying such a waiver.

6.3 When Centers wish to use a training agreement to substitute intensive accelerated training for a portion of the normal qualification requirements, the employee?s training period must be at least as long as the difference between the qualifications which that employee already possesses and the qualifications required by the position.

6.4 The training agreement may be the basis of crediting training at an accelerated rate only when making assignments to the specific target position. An employee who fails to complete the training program, therefore, will not receive accelerated credit for that portion of the training he/she completed when being considered for another position. In addition, an employee may be promoted a maximum of two grades (or equivalent) in 1 year solely on the basis of a training agreement or series of training agreements.

PART II. Chapter 7. Individual Development Plans

7.1 Whether or not Centers use a training agreement, all Upward Mobility Program trainees must have an Individual Development Plan (IDP). This plan is a detailed outline of the KSAs or competencies that are necessary to perform the target position and the training assignments (classroom or on-the-job training) that will be used to prepare the trainee for the position. Since each trainee will enter the program with a unique background and degree of preparation for the target position, IDPs must be written on an individual basis.

7.2 The IDP should be written within the first 30 days after the employee's selection. The IDP should state specific training objectives and the tasks that will be assigned to accomplish these objectives. The person(s) or organization responsible for each task should also be stated, as well as target dates for completion. A copy of the IDP must be given to the employee.

PART II. Chapter 8. Employee Evaluation

8.1 The IDP should clearly state the method of evaluation that will be used and at what intervals the trainee will be evaluated on his/her progress towards meeting the training objectives. Each evaluation must be discussed with the employee and reviewed by the Upward Mobility Program Coordinator.

8.2 If at any time during the training program the employee fails to meet the requirements, or wishes to voluntarily withdraw from the program, he/she may be reassigned to the position held immediately prior to entry into the program or one of like grade of which he/she meets the minimum qualification requirements.

PART II. Chapter 9. Program Evaluation

9.1 Upward Mobility Program objectives are included in each Center's yearly Affirmative Employment Plan. Meeting these objectives is dependent upon comprehensive planning, effective management, and the acceptance of the program by both management and employees. However, equally important to the program's success and improvement is an overall periodic evaluation. Although last in chronological sequence, the program evaluation is the first step in the planning and establishment of Upward Mobility Program objectives for the following year.

9.2 The evaluation of the Upward Mobility Program should include not only a measurement of how well the stated objectives were met, but also include an evaluation of the systematic operation of the program. The evaluation should not rely solely on statistical data, but also include information gathered through the use of feedback from program participants and nonparticipants, management officials, EEO officials, and other personnel specialists. Where barriers to program accomplishments are found, the evaluation should include suggested remedies or solutions.

PART II. Chapter 10. Required Reports

10.1 The NASA Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity will furnish the Agency Upward Mobility Program Coordinator with a copy of each Center?s Upward Mobility Program objectives, as included in their Affirmative Employment Plan.

10.2 As requested, the Center?s Upward Mobility Program Coordinator will furnish the Center?s EEO Officer data indicating Upward Mobility Program accomplishments.

10.3 Periodically, due to congressional or other special inquiries, Centers may be required to furnish data to the Agency Upward Mobility Program Coordinator on short notice.

PART II. Chapter 11. Key Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 Human Resources Officers

The Center Human Resources Officer is responsible for implementing, administering, and evaluating the Upward Mobility Program. Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Designating an Upward Mobility Program Coordinator who has a working knowledge of staffing, employee development, and affirmative employment principles.

b. Allocating sufficient additional personnel resources as necessary to implement, administer, and evaluate the program.

c. Ensuring that the Center?s Upward Mobility Program objectives are consistent with the Center?s staffing needs and the FEORP Plan.

d. Providing workforce data as needed.

e. Ensuring necessary files and records are maintained, in accordance with NPR 1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedules, to permit the reconstruction of actions at a later date and to respond to inquiries.

11.2 Upward Mobility Coordinators

As with other special emphasis program managers, the Upward Mobility Program Coordinator has the lead role in planning, implementing, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the program. Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Developing clearly defined Center Upward Mobility Program objectives.

b. Maintaining liaison and ensuring cooperation among staffing, training, and EEO Personnel, and other interested people, as appropriate.

c. Ensuring full and effective publicity for the program.

d. Providing information to and enlisting the support of management and supervisors.

e. Coordinating and ensuring that the selection process operates smoothly and effectively according to merit-based principles.

f Ensuring that all Upward Mobility Program participants are periodically evaluated and advised of their progress.

g. Developing any special forms or orientation or instructional pamphlets necessary for the overall operation of the program.

h. Annually evaluating the Upward Mobility Program and monitoring its progress.

i. Advising the Agency Upward Mobility Program Coordinator of problems and suggesting program improvements.

j. Providing periodic reports as required.

11.3 Equal Opportunity Program Directors

The Upward Mobility Program is a part of each Center's affirmative employment program. As such, the specific responsibilities of the Equal Opportunity Program Directors include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Assisting in the overall planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program.

b. Ensuring that overall program objectives are consistent with affirmative employment and FEORP goals.

c. Analyzing workforce data and assisting in identifying target occupations.

d. Assisting in publicizing the program to eligible employees and in soliciting the support of management and supervisors.

11.4 Training Directors

Specific responsibilities of the Training Directors include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Assisting in the preparation of training agreements and IDPs.

b. Ensuring that training records of participating employees are maintained and include IDPs, employee evaluations, and other pertinent documentation.

c. Ensuring that career-counseling services are made available to all interested employees.

d. Providing information regarding training courses and developmental assignments appropriate to upward mobility target positions.

11.5 Managers and Supervisors

Specific responsibilities of managers and supervisors include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Periodically reviewing their organizational structure and staffing patterns to assess and improve upward mobility opportunities within their organization.

b. Assisting in the selection and training process by identifying skills or competencies, serving on selection panels, and establishing performance standards.

d. Evaluating participants' progress and providing feedback to participants and the Upward Mobility Program Manager at regular intervals.

e. Assisting in publicizing the program and encouraging other managers and supervisors to participate.

f. Assisting in attaining of equal opportunity and diversity management goals.

11.6 Interested and Participating Employees

Specific responsibilities of employees include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Participating in career counseling activities.

b. Keeping informed regarding the eligibility requirements, selection process, and limitations of the Upward Mobility Program.

c. If selected, assisting in the preparation of the IDP and actively participating in the evaluation process.

d. Assisting in publicizing the program and encouraging others to participate.

e. Assisting in the overall evaluation of the program.