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# NASA Procedural Requirements

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2015

**COMPLIANCE IS MANDATORY**

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## Internal Placement of NASA Employees

**Responsible Office: Office of Human Capital Management**

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# Preface

## P.1. Purpose

### a. NASA's Competitive Placement Plan

- (1) This NPR provides the procedures and requirements of NASA's Competitive Placement Plan. This NPR shall be used in conjunction with the statutory and regulatory requirements referenced herein.
- (2) Center's Human Resources Offices shall be consulted for further information and guidance.
- (3) NASA's 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 General Schedule (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 5 U.S.C. § 9806 (the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004).
- (4) Selections shall 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; gender identity; genetic information; or status as a parent.
- (5) This plan does not guarantee promotion, but rather ensures that all qualified candidates receive fair and equitable opportunity for positions filled under these competitive procedures.
- (6) Announcing a vacancy under this plan is only one method of locating applicants for a position. This method may also be used in conjunction with other methods (e.g., delegated examining, non-competitive appointing authorities). Subject to applicable laws 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.

### b. The Upward Mobility Program

- (1) In addition to the Competitive Placement Plan and various training programs, a formal Upward Mobility Program shall be maintained.
- (2) Within budget and personnel ceiling limitations, upward mobility positions shall be established to offer specific career opportunities to lower-level employees (GS-9 and below or equivalent).
- (3) The Upward Mobility Program shall be used to enhance NASA's ability to meet its Model Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Agency goals and to help eliminate underrepresentation in targeted positions.
- (4) Selections shall 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; gender identity; genetic information; or status as a parent.

## P.2. Applicability

- a. This NPR is applicable to NASA Headquarters and NASA Centers, including Component Facilities and Technical and Service Support Centers. Unless otherwise indicated, the word

Center(s) in this NPR includes NASA Headquarters, and any reference to Center Director(s) includes the Executive Director, Headquarters Operations and the Executive Director of the NASA Shared Services Center.

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. § 3361, Promotion; competitive service; examination.

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

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

d. Public Law 93-112, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

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

f. 5 C.F.R. § 335, Promotion and Internal Placement.

g. 5 C.F.R. § 536, Grade and Pay Retention.

h. NPD 3000.1, Management of Human Resources.

### **P.4. Applicable Documents and Forms**

a. 5 U.S.C. § 9806, The NASA Flexibility Act of 2004, Term appointments.

b. NPD 1000.3, The NASA Organization.

c. NPD 1382.17, NASA Privacy Policy.

d. NPR 1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedules.

e. NPR 3300.1, Appointment of Personnel To/From NASA.

f. NPR 3319.1, Management of Senior Scientific and Technical (ST) and Other Senior Level (SL) Positions.

g. NPR 3792.1, Plan for a Drug-Free Workplace.

h. NM 3713-86, National Aeronautics and Space Administration Policy Statement on Equal Employment Opportunity - available at [http://nodis.hq.nasa.gov/policy\\_letters/NM\\_3713-86\\_.pdf](http://nodis.hq.nasa.gov/policy_letters/NM_3713-86_.pdf).

i. NASA Staffing and Recruitment System (STARS) Applicant Guide - available on the NASA Jobs Web site at [https://ifmpmsfc11.ifmp.nasa.gov/nasa/info/applicant\\_guide.html](https://ifmpmsfc11.ifmp.nasa.gov/nasa/info/applicant_guide.html).

j. NASA Staffing and Recruitment System (STARS) Users Guide - available at <https://epss.nasa.gov/ucontent/de55c340be2a419280bfc60a28aa701a/index.pdf>.

### **P.5 Measurement/Verification**

a. Program compliance with this NPR shall be evaluated through the following means:

(1) The Assistant Administrator for the Office of Human Capital Management (OHCM) shall conduct periodic on-site and program reviews to ensure program compliance within the OHCM's area of responsibility.

(2) The NASA Center's Human Resources Directors (HRDs) shall conduct periodic internal reviews to assess compliance with applicable statutory, regulatory, and NASA policies.

(3) Agency OHCM personnel and Center's Human Resources Offices shall maintain and safeguard all records and documents in accordance with applicable regulatory and policy guidance, including NPR 1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedules.

## **P.6. Cancellation**

NPR 3335.1G, Internal Placement of NASA Employees, dated July 18, 2005.

/S/

Woodrow Whitlow, Jr.  
Associate Administrator for  
Mission Support Directorate

# Chapter 1. NASA's Competitive Placement Plan - General Provisions

## 1.1 Applicant Selection

Announcing a vacancy under this plan is only one method of locating applicants for a position. This method may also be used in conjunction with other methods. Subject to applicable laws 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.

## 1.2 Bilateral Consultation and Collective Bargaining

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

# Chapter 2. Responsibilities

## 2.1 Human Resources Directors

2.1.1 Human Resources Directors are responsible for implementing and administering the Competitive Placement Plan. Unless expressly prohibited, all authorities and responsibilities vested by this plan to the Human Resources Director may be redelegated. 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 applicants are notified promptly of the outcome of the consideration accorded them.
- e. Ensuring that repromotion and special placement eligibles are properly considered.
- f. Ensuring that any employee not afforded proper consideration in a competitive action is given priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy.
- g. Ensuring that actions are fully documented.
- h. Ensuring that necessary files and records are maintained, controlled, and protected in accordance with NPD 1382.17, NASA Privacy Policy, NPR 1441.1, NASA Records Retention Schedules, and any other appropriate laws and regulations.
- i. Publicizing the Competitive Placement Plan's provisions to new employees upon entrance on duty.
- j. Keeping current employees informed of the provisions of this plan and providing specific information about the plan at least annually.

## 2.2 Supervisors

2.2.1 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 documenting the justification for the use of and importance of selective factors 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 workers' compensation, or on Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments are properly accorded advancement consideration.

## **2.3 Employees**

2.3.1 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 shall have completed and submitted a résumé of record in NASA STARS.
- d. Serving as subject-matter experts when called upon.

# Chapter 3. Competitive Procedures

## 3.1 When Competitive Procedures Are Required

3.1.1 The requirements of NASA's Competitive Placement Plan shall apply to the following actions and all other promotions not excluded by Section 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, shall be in the announcement. (Note: Competition is not required if the individual has previously held the higher grade on a permanent basis or successfully competed for promotion potential to the higher grade.)
- 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 shall be stated in the announcement. (Note: Competition is not required if the individual has previously held the higher grade on a permanent basis or successfully competed for promotion potential to the higher grade.)
- 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).
- e. Term employees who meet conversion requirements under the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004 may be selected for permanent appointment under competitive placement procedures. The requirements for competitive conversion are contained in NPR 3300.1, Appointment of Personnel To/From NASA.

## 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. Care shall be taken to ensure that the merit system principle of fair and open competition for advancement is followed when determining the appropriateness of an accretion promotion by offering other employees in similar positions the opportunity to compete for the higher-graded position.
- b. Competition was held at an earlier stage (e.g., Office of Personnel Management (OPM) register,

NASA's 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 Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) appointment, a Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA), a Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) appointment, or other such authorized actions.

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

3.2.6 Movement to a position having the same (or lower) promotion potential than a current or prior position held on a permanent 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 appointed under the NASA Flexibility Act noncompetitively converted to a career or career-conditional appointment. The requirements for non-competitive conversion are contained in NPR 3300.1, Appointment of Personnel To/From NASA.

## **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 a 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 shall begin as of the effective date of the action on which the eligibility is based.

3.3.1.6 The entitlement to special consideration shall continue for a two-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 two-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, shall be given priority consideration for the next appropriate (i.e., similar) vacancy filled under this plan. "Appropriate" vacancy is defined in Appendix A.1.

3.3.2.2 Priority consideration means that the employee shall 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 shall be documented in the Competitive Placement Record (see Appendix A.5 for definition).

## **3.4 Area of Consideration**

3.4.1 The minimum area of consideration for positions advertised under this plan shall be Center-wide, unless otherwise specified in the announcement.

3.4.2 The basis for using a smaller minimum area shall be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.

3.4.3 When the minimum area of consideration fails to identify a diverse applicant pool with sufficient numbers of high-quality candidates, the area may be expanded.

3.4.4 Employees in long-term rotational assignments in technical roles at the Independent Program Assessment Division (IPAD), the NASA Engineering and Safety Center (NESC), and the NASA Safety Center (NSC) shall be eligible to apply and be considered for any vacancy in the Agency, including those open only to Center employees. Long-term rotational assignments are those lasting two to five years. Such employees may be asked to provide documentation that validates that they are on such a rotational assignment (e.g., a memorandum of understanding). Employees in administrative, secretarial, and business support positions at IPAD, NESC, and NSC are not eligible.

## **3.5 Announcements**

3.5.1. Announcements shall be prepared using the NASA STARS vacancy builder.

3.5.2 In addition to minimum Federal information requirements, announcements shall also include:

a. A statement concerning payment or nonpayment of relocation allowances if the area of consideration extends beyond the local commuting area.

b. In accordance with NPR 3792.1, Plan for a Drug-Free Workplace, an indication if the vacancy is for a Testing Designated Position.

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

3.5.3 For positions filled under this plan, an announcement shall 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 five workdays. A shorter open period may be used if large numbers of qualified and diverse applicants are anticipated and the Competitive Placement Record 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 may be reviewed.

3.6.2 Recurring Vacancies. Vacancy announcements with closing dates of up to one year from the initial opening date, i.e., "open continuous," may be used to advertise recurring vacancies. All employees who file under such announcements shall 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) may 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 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 Competitive Placement Plan.

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 received by midnight, Eastern time, on the closing date of the announcement shall be accepted.

3.7.2.2 Hard-copy résumés received by close of business on the closing date shall be accepted.

3.7.2.3 The Center's Human Resources Director (or designee) may grant an extension of the application deadline if circumstances warrant. All applicants who are known to be in like circumstances shall be granted the extension.

3.7.2.4 All decisions to extend the closing date shall be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.

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

3.7.2.4 Applicants are encouraged to use the NASA STARS Applicant Guide when preparing résumés and submitting their résumés through STARS. The Applicant Guide is available on the NASA Jobs Web site at [https://ifmpmsfc11.ifmp.nasa.gov/nasa/info/applicant\\_guide.html](https://ifmpmsfc11.ifmp.nasa.gov/nasa/info/applicant_guide.html).

### 3.7.3 Supervisory Referrals

3.7.3.1 Upon an employee's written request (e-mail or hard copy), the supervisor shall submit the employee's name for appropriate vacancies announced during an employee's absence.

3.7.3.2 Prior to making the request, the employee shall ensure that a résumé has been completed.

3.7.3.3 The employee's written request shall 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 shall be evaluated using the same criteria as NASA employees and compete with NASA employees for consideration.

3.8.2 Applicants who do not have competitive status (i.e., are not current Federal employees, transfers, or reinstatement eligibles) do not compete under the provisions of this plan, except for veterans eligible for consideration under the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA). Veterans eligible under the VEOA may compete under this plan only when positions are open to competitive status applicants not currently employed by NASA. (Note: If an announcement is open for the acceptance of applications under this plan and also open to any U.S. citizen, VEOA provisions do not apply.)

## **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) shall be used to determine basic eligibility of candidates for competitive consideration.

### **3.9.2 Selective Factors**

3.9.2.1 Selective factors (i.e., competencies essential for satisfactory performance in the position to be filled) are part of the minimum qualification standards. Justification for use of selective factors shall be recorded in the Competitive Placement Record.

3.9.2.2 Vacancy announcements shall identify the minimum qualification standards (including selective factors).

3.9.3 Applicants meeting time-in-grade and time-after-competitive-appointment requirements by the closing date of the vacancy announcement shall 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 shall be made from among the best-qualified candidates based upon job-related evaluation criteria.

### **3.10.2 Evaluation Criteria**

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

3.10.2.2 The skills or competencies and the rating criteria shall be developed jointly by the Center's Human Resources Director and the selecting official (or their designees).

3.10.2.3 The basis of rating and specific duties required for successful performance of the position shall be included in the announcement.

3.10.2.4 The degree to which applicants possess the skills or competencies shall be determined through an evaluation of pertinent information such as experience, education and training, awards, and performance appraisals.

3.10.2.5 The evaluation process shall consist of the use of an automated rating system and review of applications by the Center's Human Resources Office.

### 3.10.3 Ranking Candidates

3.10.3.1 The ranking process is intended to identify the relative degree to which qualified applicants possess the specified skills or competencies. The Center's Human Resources Director (or designee), after consultation with the selecting official, may waive the normal ranking process if there are ten or fewer qualified applicants at a given grade level. In such cases, the qualified applicants shall be further screened against job-related criteria.

3.10.3.2 When ranking is performed, all applicants shall be evaluated against the same job criteria (skills) or competencies. Complete details are found in the NASA STARS Users Guide. The NASA STARS Users Guide is available at <https://epss.nasa.gov/ucontent/de55c340be2a419280bfc60a28aa701a/index.pdf>.

3.10.3.3 Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications of the position shall be rated on either a numerical scale (e.g., 70, 80, and 90) or a nominal scale (e.g., Qualified, Highly Qualified, Exceptionally Qualified).

3.10.3.4 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.

3.10.3.5 Once applicants are rated, they shall be ranked in order.

3.10.3.6 The Center's Human Resources Director (or designee) shall consult the selecting official (or designee) to determine the point in this order at which there is meaningful distinction between the candidates above and below that point.

3.10.3.7 All candidates above that point shall be referred to the selecting official.

## 3.11 Competitive Placement Certificate

3.11.1 Candidates shall be listed on the competitive placement certificate in alphabetical order (see Appendix A.4 for definition). Any employee listed on the certificate is eligible for selection.

3.11.2 If no selection has been made within 30 days of the date the certificate was issued, the certificate shall be canceled unless the Center's Human Resources Director (or designee) approves an extension. With appropriate justification, the selecting official may have up to two 30-day extensions.

3.11.3 In no case shall 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 Director (or designee) shall arrange for the expeditious release of the selectee from their current position.

### 3.14 Timeliness

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

# Chapter 4. Assignments to Agency-Level Functions

## 4.1 Purpose

This Chapter enables organizations with responsibility for Agency-level functions to recruit and select candidates for key positions from highly qualified individuals across the Agency. This shall ensure that these organizations are staffed by top Agency talent, with technical excellence, specialized expertise, breadth of experience, and varied perspectives, while providing unique career development opportunities to participating employees.

## 4.2 Coverage

4.2.1 This Section applies to filling technical positions/assignments in organizations with responsibility for Agency-level functions. On the issuance date of this NPR, these organizations include the Independent Program Assessment Office, the NASA Engineering and Safety Center, and the NASA Safety Center.

4.2.2 Organizations established in the future, which are categorized within NPD 1000.3, The NASA Organization, as an organization with responsibility for an Agency-level function or technical resource shall also be covered by this Chapter.

4.2.3 Administrative, secretarial, and business support positions/assignments within these organizations are not covered by this Chapter.

## 4.3 Duration of Assignments

4.3.1 Assignment periods shall be designated as long-term rotational assignments lasting two to five years.

4.3.2 The rotational nature of the assignment shall be documented in a memorandum of understanding or other appropriate documentation.

4.3.3 Long-term rotational assignments of more than two years shall be assessed on an annual basis.

## 4.4 Temporary Promotions

4.4.1 To attract NASA's best talent to Agency-level positions, temporary promotion opportunities may be offered. When offered, temporary promotions shall be in effect for the duration of the assignment.

4.4.2 When offered, temporary promotions shall be reassessed prior to exercising each one-year option.

4.4.3 Temporary promotions of GS employees into these assignments are subject to the requirements in Section 3.1 of this NPR.

4.4.4 Senior Level (SL) and Senior Scientific and Technical (ST) positions shall continue to be

regulated by the Executive Resources Board as specified by NASA Management (NPR 3319.1, Management of Senior Scientific and Technical (ST) and other Senior Level (SL) Positions)).

## **4.5 Duty Locations**

4.5.1 Vacancy announcements for positions within these organizations shall specify the duty location.

4.5.2 Depending on the nature of a long-term rotational assignment, the selectee may be allowed to remain at their current duty location. This shall be clearly stated on the vacancy announcement.

## **4.6 Eligibility to Apply for Vacancies**

Employees on long-term rotational assignments shall be eligible to apply for any NASA vacancy announcement, regardless of the area of consideration.

## **4.7 Placement of Returning Employees**

4.7.1. If employees on a long-term rotational assignment choose to return to their Center, the Center shall noncompetitively place the returning employee into a position at the same grade level and with the same promotion potential as the position occupied immediately before assignment to the Agency-level function.

4.7.2 The employee may also be competitively selected for a higher-graded position or one with greater promotion potential.

# Chapter 5. Other Provisions

## 5.1 Information to Candidates

5.1.1 Applicants shall be promptly notified when:

- a. Their résumés are received.
- b. Their résumés are being reviewed.
- c. Their names are referred to the selecting official for consideration, if applicable.
- d. The selection is made and whether or not they were selected.
- e. The vacancy announcement is cancelled, if applicable.

5.1.2 Upon specific request to the Center's Human Resources Office, any applicant considered for a vacancy under NASA's Competitive Placement Plan, or a properly designated representative, shall 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.

## 5.2 Employee Grievances

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

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

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

# Chapter 6. The Upward Mobility Program - General Provisions

## 6.1 Program Definitions

6.1.1 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 [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.

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

6.1.3 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.

## 6.2 Upward Mobility Program Objectives

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

6.2.2 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.

6.2.3 Enhancement of NASA's ability to meet its Model EEO Agency goals and to help eliminate underrepresentation in targeted positions, per Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government, Executive Order 11478 and NM 3713-86, National Aeronautics and Space Administration Policy Statement on Equal Employment Opportunity.

# Chapter 7. Key Roles and Responsibilities

## 7.1 Human Resources Directors

7.1.1 The Center's Human Resources Director 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 equal employment opportunity 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, the Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) Plan, and the Model EEO Center 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.

## 7.2 Upward Mobility Coordinators

7.2.1 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 officials, 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 OHCM of problems and suggesting program improvements.
- j. Providing reports, as needed, on program status and effectiveness.

## **7.3 Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management Program Directors**

7.3.1 The Upward Mobility Program is a part of each Model EEO Center plan. As such, the specific responsibilities of the Equal Opportunity Program and Diversity Management 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 Model EEO Center plans and FEORP goals.
- c. Assisting in workforce data analysis and in identifying target occupations.
- d. Assisting in publicizing the program to eligible employees and in soliciting the support of management and supervisors.

## **7.4 Training Officers**

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

- a. Assisting in the preparation of training agreements and individual development plans (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.

## **7.5 Managers and Supervisors**

7.5.1 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.
- c. Approving IDPs for Upward Mobility Program participants under their supervision.
- d. Evaluating participants' progress and providing feedback to participants and the Upward Mobility Program Coordinator at regular intervals.
- e. Assisting in publicizing the program and encouraging other managers and supervisors to participate.
- f. Assisting in attaining equal opportunity and diversity management goals.

## 7.6 Interested and Participating Employees

7.6.1 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.

# Chapter 8. Program Planning

## 8.1 Initial Planning

8.1.1 For the program to work effectively and for it to be accepted and understood by both management and employees, the program shall 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., limited opportunity for career advancement vs. high-career potential), overlapping skill areas, and 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.

## 8.2 Identifying Positions

8.2.1 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 shall be preceded by a careful analysis of workforce and staffing requirements and equal employment opportunity goals. Positions that are easily filled under NASA's 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.

8.2.2 Entry levels for Upward Mobility Program positions shall be established with care.

8.2.3 Knowledge of the target population grade levels and skill levels, as well as organizational knowledge, is necessary to decide the entry level that shall meet the needs of both the target population and the organization in which the target position is located.

8.2.4 Each target position has three levels: entry level, target level, and full performance level. Upward Mobility Program applicants shall be selected for the entry level.

8.2.5 Upward Mobility Program participants shall receive training to enable them to meet the qualifications for promotion to the target level.

8.2.6 Normally, the target level shall be one or two grades above the entry level, depending on whether the target position is in a one- or two-grade interval series.

8.2.7 Upon promotion to the target level, the employee shall 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.

## Chapter 9. Career Counseling

9.1 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 are better able to prepare themselves for future upward mobility opportunities.

9.2 At a minimum, the counseling services shall 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 shall 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.

9.3 Communication between the career counselor and the Upward Mobility Program Coordinator is essential. An exchange of information between the two reveals 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 shall be accomplished informally or at regularly scheduled meetings involving all those engaged in the Upward Mobility Program operation.

# Chapter 10. Program Implementation

## 10.1 Sources of Eligibles

10.1.1 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 Recruitment Appointments (VRA) - If selected, the appointee remains on the VRA, but the initial training plan is terminated and a new upward mobility training plan shall be developed at the time of selection. The appointee remains on the VRA until completion of the required two years of service necessary for conversion to competitive status.
- d. Excepted appointments under Schedule A, 5 C.F.R. 213.3102(u) (persons with mental retardation, severe physical disabilities, or psychiatric disabilities)- If selected, the employee remains on the Schedule A appointment until they have completed the required two years of service necessary for conversion to the competitive service.

## 10.2 Area of Consideration

10.2.1 The minimum area of consideration for positions advertised under this program shall be NASA-wide, unless otherwise specified in the announcement.

10.2.2 The basis for a decision to use a smaller minimum area shall be documented in the NASA STARS case file.

## 10.3 Qualification Requirements

10.3.1 OPM general and specialized experience requirements shall be waived for entry-level upward mobility positions.

10.3.2 Applicants shall meet time-in-grade and time-after-competitive appointment requirements.

10.3.3 Applicants shall be evaluated on their possession of the competencies as described in the major duties portion on the announcement.

10.3.4 Selected employees at the same grade as the entry-level position shall be laterally reassigned to the position as announced.

10.3.5 Selected employees at higher grades than the entry-level position shall accept a downgrade (with highest previous rate protection or retained pay as appropriate).

## 10.4 Announcing the Position

10.4.1 All positions to be filled under the Upward Mobility Program shall 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.

10.4.2 Each Upward Mobility Program announcement shall include:

- a. The Upward Mobility Program component (STEP/GO) under which the position is being filled.
- b. The area of consideration.
- c. The duties and location of the position.
- d. The target level and full performance level of the position.
- e. The eligibility requirements.
- f. A statement that all OPM general and specialized experience requirements are waived for entry into the entry-level position.
- g. The competencies which will be used to rate applicants.
- h. A statement regarding whether or not promotion to the full performance level is noncompetitive.

## **10.5 Application Procedures**

### 10.5.1 General Procedures

10.5.1.1 A résumé is required for all positions filled under the Upward Mobility Program.

10.5.1.2 Applicants shall indicate their performance rating of record on their résumé under the "Additional Information" section of the Resume Builder.

10.5.1.3 Applicants are strongly encouraged to electronically submit their résumés through NASA STARS, but may submit a hard copy if electronic access is not available.

### 10.5.2 Acceptance of Applications

10.5.2.1 Résumés received by midnight, Eastern time, on the closing date of the announcement, shall be accepted.

10.5.2.2 The Center's Human Resources Director (or designee) may grant an extension of the application deadline if circumstances warrant. All applicants who are known to be in like circumstances shall be granted the extension.

10.5.2.3 All decisions to extend the closing date shall be documented in the NASA STARS case file.

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

# Chapter 11. The Selection Process

## 11.1 Evaluation of Applicants

11.1.1 Applicants shall be evaluated and ranked against job-related criteria (skills) or competencies to identify the best applicants from among the pool of eligible employees.

11.1.2. The job-related skills or competencies shall be identified using job analysis.

11.1.3 The job-related skills or competencies shall be supported by the position description and the environment in which the duties of the position are to be performed.

11.1.4 The Center's Human Resources Director or designee shall review and concur with the skills or competencies and the rating criteria.

11.1.5 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 shall not rely solely on these traditional evidences of ability to do the job. No particular coursework or specific work experience is required.

11.1.6 The evaluation process shall provide for the crediting of nontraditional and off-the-job experiences that have provided the candidates with the competencies necessary to perform the duties of the entry-level position.

## 11.2 The Rating and Ranking Process

11.2.1 All Upward Mobility Program applications shall be evaluated using NASA STARS.

11.2.2 To screen out those applicants who are not eligible, applications shall be reviewed by the Center's Human Resources Office before submission to the selecting official.

11.2.3 Applicants who fail to provide the information requested on the announcement shall not receive consideration for the position.

11.2.4 Applicants shall be rated on a numerical scale.

11.2.5 The rating process shall measure all applicants against the same job-related criteria (i.e., skills) or competencies.

11.2.6 Once applicants are assigned a numerical score, they shall be ranked in numerical order.

11.2.7 The Center's Human Resources Director (or designee) and selecting official determine the point in this numerical order above which all applicants shall be referred. This is normally the point at which there is some meaningful distinction between the applicants above and below that point. Generally, at least the five best applicants are 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 ten.

11.2.8 When more than one candidate has the lowest score to be referred, all candidates with that score shall be referred.

## 11.3 Selection

11.3.1 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 shall 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 fully meets the qualifications necessary for promotion to the target level.

11.3.2 An alphabetical list of the best applicants for the upward mobility position shall be referred to the selecting official, along with the résumé of each referred applicant. Any employee referred is eligible for selection.

11.3.3 If one applicant on the list is interviewed, all others on the list shall be interviewed.

11.3.4 After the selection, every applicant shall be notified of the selection.

11.3.5 If no selection is made within 30 days of the date of the referral list, the list becomes void, and no selection shall be made from it. If the selecting official provides acceptable reasons, the Center's Human Resources Director or designee may approve up to two 30-day extensions to the certificate.

## 11.4 Release

11.4.1 The Center's Human Resources Director or designee shall arrange for the release of the selectee from his or her current position.

11.4.2 Every effort shall be made to arrange an expeditious release of the selected employee.

## Chapter 12. Training Agreements

12.1 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.

12.2 Although training agreements may also be used to authorize a waiver of time-in-grade requirements, training agreements of this type shall only be approved by the Assistant Administrator for Human Capital Management. In most instances, upward mobility positions do not meet the criteria necessary for justifying such a waiver.

12.3 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 shall be at least as long as the difference between the qualifications which that employee already possesses and the qualifications required by the position.

12.4 The training agreement shall be the basis of crediting training at an accelerated rate only when making assignments to the specific target position.

12.5 An employee who fails to complete the training program shall not receive accelerated credit for that portion of the training he/she completed when being considered for another position.

12.6 An employee may be promoted a maximum of two grades (or equivalent) in one year solely on the basis of a training agreement or series of training agreements.

## Chapter 13. Individual Development Plans

13.1 Whether or not Centers use a training agreement, all Upward Mobility Program trainees shall have an Individual Development Plan (IDP). An IDP is a detailed outline of the competencies that are necessary to perform the target position and the training assignments (classroom, on-the-job training, or other developmental opportunities) to be used to prepare the trainee for the position.

13.2 Since each trainee enters the program with a unique background and degree of preparation for the target position, IDPs shall be written on an individual basis.

13.3 The IDP shall be written within the first 30 days after the employee's selection.

13.4 The IDP shall state specific training objectives and the tasks to be assigned to accomplish these objectives.

13.5 The person(s) or organization responsible for each task shall also be stated, as well as target dates for completion.

13.6 The IDP shall be approved by the supervisor.

13.7 A copy of the IDP shall be given to the employee.

# Chapter 14. Employee Evaluation

14.1 The IDP shall clearly state the method of evaluation to be used and at what intervals the trainee is to be evaluated on his/her progress towards meeting the training objectives.

14.2 Each evaluation shall be discussed with the employee and reviewed by the Upward Mobility Program Coordinator.

14.3 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 shall 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.

# Chapter 15. Program Evaluation

15.1 Upward Mobility Program objectives shall be included in each Center's annual Model EEO 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.

15.2 The evaluation of the Upward Mobility Program shall include a measurement of how well the stated objectives were met and an evaluation of the systematic operation of the program.

15.3 The evaluation shall 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.

15.4 Where barriers to program accomplishments are found, the evaluation shall include suggested remedies or solutions.

# Chapter 16. Required Reports

16.1 The NASA Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity shall furnish the Agency Upward Mobility Program Coordinator with a copy of each Center's Upward Mobility Program objectives, as included in their Model EEO Plan.

16.2 As requested, the Center's Upward Mobility Program Coordinator shall furnish the Center's EEO Officer with data indicating Upward Mobility Program accomplishments.

16.3 Periodically, due to Congressional or other special inquiries, Centers may be required to furnish data to the OHCM on short notice.

# Appendix A: Definitions

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. Is under the same appointing office as the position for which the employee was denied proper consideration.

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

Best Qualified Candidates. Those who are referred to the selecting official on a Competitive Placement Certificate.

Competitive Placement Certificate. A list of the best-qualified candidates identified through competitive placement procedures.

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

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

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.

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

Position with Promotion Potential. A position from which a career promotion may be made because competition was held at an earlier stage (e.g., career ladder position, trainee position).

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.

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

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.

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

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



# Appendix B: Acronyms

CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
EO	Executive Order
FCIP	Federal Career Intern Program
FEORP	Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program
GO	Growth Opportunity
GS	General Schedule
HRD	Human Resources Director
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IPAD	Independent Program Assessment Division
NESC	NASA Engineering and Safety Center
NSC	NASA Safety Center
OHCM	Office of Human Capital Management
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
SCEP	Student Career Experience Program
SL	Senior Level
ST	Senior Technical
STARS	Staffing and Recruitment System
STEP	Specialty Training for Entry Professionals
USC	United States Code
VEOA	Veterans Employment Opportunity Act
VRA	Veterans Recruitment Appointment

# Appendix C: Information Required for Competitive Placement Records

C.1 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 two 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. Competitive Placement Records 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.