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ADS Chapter 418
Merit Staffing Program
for
Civil Service (CS) Employees

Document Quality Check Date: 04/11/2013
Partial Revision Date: 12/14/2010
Responsible Office: OHR/CSP/PO
File Name: 418_041113

Functional Series 400 – Personnel
 ADS 418 – Merit Staffing Program for Civil Service (CS) Employees
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This chapter has been revised in its entirety.

Table of Contents

418.1 OVERVIEW 4

418.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES 4

418.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES.... 7

418.3.1 Hiring the Right Person for the Job 7

418.3.1.1 Measuring Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities 7

418.3.1.2 Nepotism - Employment of Relatives 8

418.3.1.3 Merit-Based 8

418.3.1.4 Requirements for Promotion 8

418.3.1.5 Drug Testing 8

418.3.2 The Merit Staffing Program 8

418.3.2.1 Actions Subject to Competitive Procedures 9

418.3.2.2 Exceptions to Competitive Requirements 10

418.3.3 General Provisions 11

418.3.3.1 Time-Limited Promotions 11

418.3.3.2 Priority Consideration..... 11

418.3.3.3 Repromotion Consideration 12

418.3.3.4 Career Ladder Promotion 12

418.3.4 The Hiring Process 14

418.3.4.1 Automated Human Resources System 14

418.3.4.2 Vacancy Announcements 14

418.3.4.3 Areas of Consideration 14

418.3.4.4 Job Posting Periods..... 15

418.3.4.5 Open Continuous Announcements 15

418.3.4.6 Accessing Announcements..... 15

418.3.4.7 Circulation of Announcements 15

418.3.4.8 Who may apply? 16

418.3.4.9 Application Procedures 17

418.3.4.10 Eligibility and Qualifications 17

418.3.4.11 Evaluation Methodology..... 17

418.3.4.12 Rating and Ranking 17

418.3.4.13 Referral of Best Qualified Candidates..... 18

[418.3.4.14](#) [Selection](#) [18](#)
[418.3.4.15](#) [Office of Civil Rights and Diversity \(OCRD\)](#) [20](#)
[418.3.4.16](#) [Release of Employees for New Assignment](#) [21](#)
[418.3.4.17](#) [Additional Referrals](#) [21](#)
[418.3.4.18](#) [Recordkeeping](#)..... [21](#)
[418.3.4.19](#) [Program Evaluation](#) [21](#)
[418.3.4.20](#) [Employment Concerns and Complaints](#)..... [21](#)

[418.4](#) [MANDATORY REFERENCES](#) [22](#)

[418.4.1](#) [External Mandatory References](#) [22](#)

[418.4.2](#) [Internal Mandatory References](#) [23](#)

[418.5](#) [ADDITIONAL HELP](#) [23](#)

[418.6](#) [DEFINITIONS](#)..... [23](#)

ADS 418 – Merit Staffing Program for Civil Service (CS) Employees

418.1 OVERVIEW

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

This chapter provides the policies and procedures for managing the promotion and internal placement, or merit staffing, program for Civil Service (CS) employees at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The objectives of the program are to ensure compliance with applicable regulations and to provide the Agency with the best-qualified candidates to fill competitive and excepted service positions.

The chapter also contains the Upward Mobility Program (UMP) to provide career opportunities for underutilized and underdeveloped USAID employees in the General Schedule (GS).

418.2 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

- a.** The **Director, Office of Human Resources (OHR/OD)** is responsible for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's CS Merit Staffing Program and its overall compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
- b.** The **Office of Human Resources, Policy, Planning, and Information Management Division (OHR/PPIM)** is responsible for making changes to the program as new Government-wide policies are issued, in collaboration with OHR Civil Service Personnel Division (OHR/CSP).
- c.** The **Office of Human Resources, Employee and Labor Relations Division (OHR/ELR)** is responsible for:
 - Negotiating with the local labor organization, as required and/or appropriate, under the provisions of the Federal Labor-Management Relations Program; and
 - Informing the local labor organization about regulatory and administrative requirements that have an impact on the way in which jobs are filled.
- d.** The **Chief, Civil Service Personnel Division (OHR/CSP)** is responsible for:
 - Managing the overall vacancies, recruitment, and hiring processes and procedures;

- Ensuring that the Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCRD) is involved in designated steps in the “End-to-End” recruitment and hiring processes;
- Providing access to the automated selection certificates/referral lists to OCRD simultaneously with sending to hiring officials; and
- Approving exceptions to merit staffing policy and procedures as outlined in this chapter.

(1) The **Office of Human Resources, Civil Service Personnel Division, Recruitment and Staffing Branch (OHR/CSP/RS)** is responsible for:

- Providing technical advice and guidance as necessary to Bureaus and Independent Offices (B/IOs) on the use of automation in the merit promotion process;
- Working with Administrative Management Staff (AMS) and selecting officials to develop assessment tools and vacancy announcements; and
- Overseeing the merit promotion process, from announcement to selection, to ensure the integrity of the system.

(2) The **Office of Human Resources, Civil Service Personnel Division, Outreach and Marketing Branch (OHR/CSP/OM)** is responsible for:

- Promoting the Agency’s diversity goals and job opportunities through various external venues such as educational institutions and community job fairs or other events;
- Partnering with USAID Affinity Groups and organizations, such as, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and
- Collaborating and working with OCRD to develop and implement recruitment strategies for a diversified and well-qualified workforce.

(3) The **Office of Human Resources, Civil Service Personnel Division, Program Oversight Branch (OHR/CSP/PO)** is responsible for oversight of staffing and recruitment programs and activities to ensure compliance and effectiveness, and the management of the Official Personnel Records Center.

e. Supervisors, Hiring Officials, and/or AMS are responsible for:

- Initiating actions to recruit and fill positions;
- Establishing diversity goals and objectives and monitoring achievement of those objectives;
- Using the special features of the automated system, when necessary, to accomplish the range of activities associated with the merit staffing program;
- Working with OHR/CSP/RS to develop assessment tools (i.e., knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and ranking experience questions) to properly evaluate and distinguish applicants' qualifications according to the level and quality of their experience;
- Giving full and fair consideration to the qualifications of each candidate referred for a vacancy; and
- Selecting the candidate best able to perform the job as measured by job-related selection criteria.

f. AMS is responsible for:

- Providing assistance and guidance to hiring officials and employees on basic merit staffing and other promotion policies and procedures;
- Authorizing the submission of Personnel Action Requests with appropriate documentation to OHR to fill vacant positions and coordinating the actions through completion; and
- Providing technical guidance to selecting officials and employees on the use of merit staffing automated processes.

g. Employees are responsible for:

- Complying with merit staffing policies and procedures as outlined in this chapter; and
- Assuming responsibility for their own self-development and exercising diligence in pursuing promotional opportunities for which they are interested and qualified, including during periods when they are temporarily absent for legitimate reasons (e.g., on detail, on leave, at

military training courses in the military service, or serving in public International Organizations).

418.3 POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

This section contains the procedures when filling CS positions under the merit staffing program.

418.3.1 Hiring the Right Person for the Job

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

It is the Agency's policy to fill positions from among the best qualified candidates. Accordingly, managers may elect to fill positions from recruitment sources that best meet the needs of the organization in terms of productivity, short and long term staffing plans, and Agency objectives, including affirmative action and equal employment opportunity.

Recruitment through merit staffing process is but one means to fill a position. When USAID can obtain qualified candidates for positions through other alternative recruitment sources, USAID can use these methods concurrent with, or to the exclusion of, the merit staffing process.

The merit staffing process may be cancelled any time management elects to fill a position(s) using another recruitment source, i.e., accommodation of an employee exercising reemployment rights or a displaced employee. (See [ADS 469, Civil Service Recruitment](#))

418.3.1.1 Measuring Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID's merit staffing plan requires that selections be made from among the best-qualified candidates who apply for announced vacancies ([5 CFR 335.103, Agency promotion programs](#)). Therefore, USAID must evaluate the basically eligible candidates to determine to what extent their qualifications exceed the minimum requirements. Evaluation criteria used must be reasonable, related to the job, and applied equitably to all candidates. To do this, the hiring official works with OHR/CSP/RS to:

- a. Analyze positions to identify the basic duties and responsibilities;
- b. Review the specialized experience questionnaire and KSAs to determine appropriateness to the position;
- c. Assign weights to KSAs;

- d. Review the specialized experience statement to ensure it specifically describes the experience candidates must have in order to be qualified; and
- e. Use selective (screen-out) factor(s), as appropriate, to define the required competency (KSA) essential for successful performance on the job (i.e., if individuals do not have the selective factor, they cannot perform the job).

418.3.1.2 Nepotism - Employment of Relatives

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID adheres to all Federal requirements regarding employment of relatives contained in [5 CFR 310](#), **Legal restrictions on the employment of relatives.**

418.3.1.3 Merit-Based

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID adheres to the merit system principles, **5 USC Sec. 2301**, and the policies and procedures regarding job-related criteria (non-discrimination) indicated in [5 CFR 335.103](#).

418.3.1.4 Requirements for Promotion

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

To be eligible for promotion, the employee must have at least one year of relevant experience at the next lower grade and a summary rating of "Fully Successful" or better on his/her most recent Annual Evaluation Form (AEF) (also see section 418.3.4.10).

418.3.1.5 Drug Testing

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID implements a drug-free workplace policy. Many USAID competitive service positions are subject to drug testing. (See [ADS 410](#), **Drug Free Workplace**)

418.3.2 The Merit Staffing Program

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID adheres to the policies and procedures regarding filling competitive positions contained in [5 CFR 335.103](#), as well as the policies and procedures outlined in [5 CFR 330, Subparts F and G](#), in regard to Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP). (See [ADS 452](#), **Civil Service Reduction in Force (RIF)**, for mandatory placement and employee entitlements under RIF).

The Merit Staffing Program provides for an open, systematic, and bias-free placement system that ensures positions are filled with the best qualified individuals available. Agency management determines when the use of merit staffing is appropriate for filling vacant positions.

The Merit Staffing Program governs the recruitment and placement of CS positions in General Schedule (GS) grades 01 through 15 in the competitive service. USAID also uses this plan to fill excepted service positions.

418.3.2.1 Actions Subject to Competitive Procedures

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Unless specifically described in 418.3.2.2 of this chapter, the following actions must follow competitive procedures as required by [5 CFR 335.103\(c\)\(1\)](#):

- a. Time-limited promotions for more than 120 days to higher graded positions. (Prior service during the preceding 12 months under noncompetitive time-limited promotions and noncompetitive details to higher graded positions count toward the 120-day total period). A temporary promotion may be made permanent without further competition, provided the temporary promotion was originally made under competitive procedures and it was made known to all potential candidates that the temporary promotion might lead to a permanent promotion;
- b. Details for more than 120 days to a higher-grade position or to a position with known promotion potential. (Prior service during the preceding 12 months under noncompetitive details to higher graded positions and noncompetitive time-limited promotions counts toward the 120-day total period). (See [ADS 432](#) and [ADS 434](#), for more information on details);
- c. Selection for training that is part of an authorized training agreement, part of a promotion program, or required before an employee may be considered for a promotion (See [5 CFR 410.306](#));
- d. Reassignment or demotion to a position with greater promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service (except as permitted by reduction in force (RIF) regulations (See [ADS 452](#) for information on RIF));
- e. Transfer to a position at a higher grade or with more promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service (see [5 CFR 330.705](#), **Order of selection in filling vacancies from outside the Agency's workforce**);
- f. Reinstatement of an employee to a permanent or temporary position at a higher grade or with more promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service; and

- g. When applicable, appointment of other candidates with noncompetitive eligibility under authorities regulated by OPM, under interchange agreements with other merit systems, and under miscellaneous authorities not regulated by OPM (statutes and court orders), to positions higher than the last equivalent grades held by the employees or to positions which would offer promotion potential.
- h. Upward Mobility Program (UMP) – UMP enables managers to provide career development and growth opportunities for current USAID underutilized and underdeveloped GS employees, in positions at the GS-09 level or below, whose current assignments do not permit further advancement. The Program supplements the career ladder promotion program described in 418.3.3.4 of this chapter. Guidelines and policies for the UMP are located in Attachment A.

418.3.2.2 Exceptions to Competitive Requirements

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Competitive procedures do not apply to certain actions; other actions may also be excepted at the Agency's discretion ([5 CFR 335.103](#), **Agency promotion programs**).

At USAID, the following actions are not subject to competition:

- a. A promotion resulting from a review of a new classification standard, or the correction of an initial classification error;
- b. Consideration of a candidate not given proper consideration in a previous competitive promotion action, as set forth in 418.3.3.2 of this chapter;
- c. Promotion to a grade previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service (or in another merit system with which the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has an approved interchange agreement) from which an employee was separated or demoted for other than performance or conduct reasons, as set forth in 418.3.3.3 of this chapter;
- d. A career promotion when the employee has previously competed for a position with promotion potential (the intent must be made a matter of record, i.e., career ladders must be documented on the job opportunity announcement (JOA), as well as on the initial position description and initial personnel action, as set forth in 418.3.3.4 of this chapter;
- e. A promotion resulting from an employee's position being classified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities (accretion of duties), when certain conditions are met;

- f. A temporary promotion, or detail to a higher graded position or a position with known promotion potential of 120 days or less;
- g. Promotion, reassignment, demotion, transfer, reinstatement, or detail to a position having promotion potential no greater than the potential of a position an employee currently holds or previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service, unless required by [5 CFR 330.705](#), **Order of selection in filling vacancies from outside the agency's workforce**;
- h. Selection of employees from the Agency's Reemployment Priority Lists for positions at a grade previously held in the competitive service (See [ADS 452](#), **CS Reduction in Force**);
- i. Conversions to the competitive service under various formal programs and authorities, subject to satisfactory completion of requirements or meeting appropriate criteria. (See [ADS 469](#), **Civil Service Recruitment**)

418.3.3 General Provisions

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Subject to [5 CFR 335.103](#), the Agency has the authority to promote, demote, or reassign employees.

418.3.3.1 Time-Limited Promotions

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

A time-limited promotion is an appropriate mechanism for managers to use in filling temporary positions to accomplish project work, or to meet other temporary needs for a specified period of not more than five years, unless OPM authorizes the Agency to make and/or extend time-limited promotions for a longer period. OHR/CSP gives the employee advance written notice of the conditions of the time-limited promotion, or within 30 days from the date of the promotion when the promotion is effected under a nondiscretionary provision. (See [5 CFR 335.102\(f\)](#))

418.3.3.2 Priority Consideration

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

If a candidate failed to receive proper consideration in a previous competitive placement action(s), USAID gives priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy or vacancies before the position is filled by competitive means. Such an employee is entitled to one priority consideration for each selection made from a vacancy where there was an instance of lost or improper consideration. The employee receives priority consideration for a period of one year from the date of the decision or grievance approval.

In the case of an open-continuous announcement, the candidate would continue to receive priority considerations until appointed or until the candidate has received the number of bona fide employment considerations that he or she would have received had the fault not occurred, whichever comes first.

(See **418.3.4.20** of this chapter for information on addressing employment concerns or complaints.)

418.3.3.3 Repromotion Consideration

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

An employee demoted without personal cause (e.g., RIF) receives special consideration for vacancies at or below the grade level from which the employee was demoted; if selected, the employee is promoted without competition to the grade formerly held. USAID's policy is to minimize the impact involuntary actions, such as RIF, have on employee careers.

Under this section, OHR/CSP establishes a roster of employees eligible for re-promotion. The names of eligible employees remain on the roster for a period of three years unless they are selected for re-promotion to their original grades, or receive promotions to grades higher than those from which they were demoted.

418.3.3.4 Career Ladder Promotion

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Some positions are announced and filled as career ladders. A career ladder is a series of developmental positions of increasing difficulty in the same line of work, with the intention of preparing the employee for successive noncompetitive promotions up to the full performance level of the position, when certain conditions are met.

If USAID selects an employee for a career ladder position, the following procedures apply:

- a. AMS notifies the supervisor, in writing, of the effective date of the employee's entrance on duty in the position and his/her responsibilities at the time of the assignment.
- b. The supervisor:
 - Develops and provides the employee a clear description of benchmark performance criteria required at each level of the career ladder;
 - Ensures that an individual development plan (IDP) is developed specific to the employee's needs;

- Assigns the employee some developmental work and/or projects of sufficient complexity and responsibility to allow the employee to demonstrate capability to perform satisfactorily at the next higher level;
 - Provides feedback on the employee's performance during and at the completion of any developmental assignment; and
 - Provides timely evaluation of the employee's overall performance at the end of the rating cycle.
- c. Entrance into a career-ladder position does not guarantee promotion. To be eligible for promotion to each level of the career ladder, the employee must meet the following requirements:
- Have progressed steadily within the terms of his or her IDP or program;
 - Have a supervisor certify, in writing, to OHR/CSP that the employee demonstrates the ability to perform at the next highest level, that the work continues to exist, and that the supervisor recommends the employee for promotion to the next higher grade;
 - Have a current rating of record of "Fully Successful" (level 3) or higher. An employee may not receive a career-ladder promotion if his or her rating is below "Fully Successful" on a critical work objective that is also critical to performance at the next higher grade of the career ladder. (see [5 CFR 335.104](#), **Eligibility for career ladder promotion**); and
 - Meet the one year time-in-grade and qualification requirements for the higher grade of the position.
- d. If a request for the employee's promotion has not been initiated by the anniversary date of the employee's last promotion, the employee shall request, in writing, from the supervisor the reason for the delay. The supervisor provides the employee a written response within 10 work days of the employee's request. If the employee is dissatisfied with the response from the supervisor, the employee may contact OHR/ELR for further guidance.
- e. If the supervisor recommends the employee for promotion, the supervisor or AMS submits the required paperwork to OHR/CSP for action.
- f. The promotion is effected at the beginning of the first pay period after proper approval by OHR/CSP.

418.3.4 The Hiring Process

418.3.4.1 Automated Human Resources System

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID uses a human resources web-based application that automates the announcement of positions, the assessment and referral of candidates, and notifications of status to applicants.

The system allows applicants to create, edit, and archive electronic resumes; rates and ranks the candidates according to pre-established criteria; and generates referral list(s) of best qualified candidates. The Staffing Specialist reviews the process and ensures referred candidates are properly rated and ranked.

418.3.4.2 Vacancy Announcements

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

When announcing a position, HR Specialists coordinate efforts with the hiring official to ensure that the end products yield positive results. It is critical that hiring officials give considerable thought when identifying the breadth and depth of the KSAs required for successful performance in the position. The hiring official must review and approve the vacancy announcement, and, if appropriate, can add, delete or edit ranking experience questions, KSAs and corresponding questions, and screen-out question(s), if any. Screen-out questions are optional; if used, they must be added to the applicant questionnaire. Screen-out questions are intended to identify applicants who possess the critical competencies needed to perform successfully on the job, and to screen out those who are unlikely to do so or will require extensive training. Hiring officials are advised to meet with their servicing HR Specialist to discuss options.

Reasonable accommodation is afforded to applicants with disabilities, on a case-by-case basis. The vacancy announcement provides a point of contact (POC) for those who need reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring processes.

418.3.4.3 Areas of Consideration

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Areas of consideration (AOC) are established to ensure that an adequate supply of well-qualified candidates can be located. An AOC describes the area in which the search for highly qualified candidates is directed and from which applications will be accepted. An area of consideration balances such needs as open and fair competition, adequate numbers of qualified applicants, outreach to diverse applicant pools, and equal employment opportunity goals and objectives.

The AOC in USAID are:

- USAID-wide (permanent CS employees).
- Government-wide (status candidates, including veterans who qualify under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998).
- Other eligible applicants under special hiring authorities.

(Also refer to **418.3.4.8** below.)

NOTE: U.S. Citizens may apply under competitive examination (delegated examining), which is governed by the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH), <http://www.opm.gov/deu/>.

418.3.4.4 Job Posting Periods

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

All announcements are open for five work days, with exceptions made on a case-by-case basis, such as for open continuous or hard-to-fill positions. Employees should be cognizant of opening and closing dates of job announcements so they can apply in time to be considered.

418.3.4.5 Open Continuous Announcements

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

In occupational categories where there is frequent turnover or great demand, JOAs may remain open continuously to respond quickly to an office's need to fill additional vacancies. Information on cut-off dates, application retention period, and other relevant details will be included in each open continuous announcement.

418.3.4.6 Accessing Announcements

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Merit promotion announcements are listed on the Agency's External Website with a direct link to OPM's USAJOBS. They are also accessible through the Agency's internal Web site located at <http://www.usaid.gov/work-with-us/careers/vacancy-announcements>. USAID employees and other applicants can go directly into the application process by clicking on the appropriate announcement number.

418.3.4.7 Circulation of Announcements

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Candidates may be located using a wide range of methods that may vary with each JOA depending on the area of consideration, type of position, and other similar considerations. Announcements will be distributed to appropriate resources, as necessary, to recruit and hire a diverse and talented workforce.

418.3.4.8 Who may apply?

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

- 1) If the position is advertised USAID only: Agency employees in permanent, competitive service positions, including those eligible under the Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP), if any;
- 2) If the position is advertised as status candidates, the following are eligible to apply:
 - Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) eligibles;
 - Current permanent competitive service Federal employees;
 - VEOA eligibles;
 - Reinstatement eligibles; and
 - Persons eligible for non-competitive appointment under special authorities, such as:
 - a. Appointment of a career Foreign Service Officer into the competitive service, under [Executive Order 12292](#) and [5 CFR 315.606](#);
 - b. Appointment of Peace Corps personnel with noncompetitive eligibility to a competitive service position, under [5 CFR 315.607](#);
 - c. Appointment of certain former overseas employees with noncompetitive eligibility to a competitive position, under [Executive Order 12721](#) and [5 CFR 315.608](#); and
 - d. Appointment of other candidates with noncompetitive eligibility under authorities regulated by OPM, under interchange agreements with other merit systems, and under miscellaneous authorities not regulated by OPM (statutes and court orders. (See [5 CFR 315](#), Career and Career Conditional Employment and [5 CFR 6.7](#), Movement of Persons between the Civil Service System and Other Merit Systems.)

Employees or applicants who are uncertain about their eligibility to apply need to consult with the POC identified on the JOA.

418.3.4.9 Application Procedures

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

The automated system is the primary means by which applications are received and processed. On-line applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. eastern standard time on the closing date of the announcement. Applicants may contact the POC identified in the announcement prior to the closing date, if they are unable to apply electronically.

418.3.4.10 Eligibility and Qualifications

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Applicants must meet both eligibility and qualification requirements for the position of interest by the closing date of the JOAs. Specifically,

- time-in-grade requirements as specified in [5 CFR 300, Subpart F](#), **Time-in-Grade Restrictions**.
- qualification requirements outlined in OPM's Operating Manual: Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions. (<http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/standards/index-Standards.asp>)
- selective (screen out) factors, if any (see 418.3.1.1 and 418.3.4.2 of this chapter for discussion of selective factors.) Applicants must meet all identified selective factors in order to be considered for the JOA in question.

NOTE: Applicants are notified by a system generated e-mail of the status of their applications, i.e., receipt, eligible/ineligible, qualified/not qualified, or selected/not selected for the position.

418.3.4.11 Evaluation Methodology

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

The Agency's Merit Staffing Program requires that all eligible applicants be evaluated to determine to what extent their qualifications exceed the minimum requirements. The automated system evaluates eligibility and minimum qualifications, and rates applications according to defined criteria. OHR/CSP HR Specialists review the eligibility, qualifications, and the rating and ranking of the applications according to the evaluation criteria. (Also see 418.3.4.1 of this chapter)

418.3.4.12 Rating and Ranking

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Candidates are rated and ranked based on their résumés and selection of the defined levels of KSAs/competencies that best describe their level of experience.

NOTE: CTAP/ICTAP is automatically applied when announcements are advertised Agency-wide or Federal-wide (status applicants), respectively. Veterans' preference is not applied for merit staffing vacancies.

418.3.4.13 Referral of Best Qualified Candidates

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Referral lists are generated from the results of the rating and ranking process. These lists may include:

- Candidates who lost proper consideration (also see **418.3.3.2** of this chapter)
- Candidates who are eligible for special selection consideration under CTAP/ICTAP regulations as outlined in [5 CFR 330 Subpart F](#);
- Promotion eligibles;
- VEOA eligibles;
- Transfer eligibles from other Federal agencies, or reassignment eligibles from another organization within USAID;
- Candidates who are eligible for consideration under other non-competitive authorities.

418.3.4.14 Selection

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

The hiring official has 15 work days to interview and make a selection from any one of the referral lists issued. USAID will grant extensions up to an additional five work days, on a case-by-case basis. A written request for the extension must be submitted to the Chief, OHR/CSP/RS for decision at least five work days before the initial referral listing expires.

Hiring officials must follow the instructions below for processing the referral lists:

- a. Candidates eligible for special selection priority under CTAP or ICTAP. Special selection priority means, unless specifically excepted, surplus and/or displaced employees must be selected over any other candidate for vacancies in the local commuting area for which they apply and are

found well-qualified. The term well-qualified is defined in [5 CFR 330 Subpart F](#).

- b. USAID employee interviews. If a selection is to be made from the promotion referral list, all direct hire USAID employees (if any) must be interviewed, unless the employee is on leave or unavailable for an extended period, or waives the interview process. Alternatively, telephone interviews may be conducted, particularly when candidates are outside the commuting area. If a candidate declines or misses an interview and does not call to reschedule, no further consideration is given to the candidate's application. If a candidate fails to respond, the hiring official must contact the HR Specialist for further guidance.

Hiring officials have the option to interview external candidates. They may also pay for interviews of candidates outside the commuting area under their own B/IO budget.

- c. Conducting the Interview. Hiring officials or designees may conduct interviews. It is important that applicants be given fair and equal consideration in the interview process. Accordingly, the questions asked must essentially be the same for all candidates. The hiring official or designee shall not show or give preference to any candidate based on factors other than the candidate's qualifications for the job.
- d. Responding to Referral Lists. The hiring official completes the selection process according to procedures or guidance provided, and forwards the list(s) electronically to the servicing HR Specialist.

A selecting official who returns the referral lists without any candidate(s) chosen must provide an explanation. Concurrently, the selecting official may:

- (1) Request that the area of consideration be extended to recruit additional candidates;
 - (2) Fill the vacancy by other means (e.g., detail, reassignment); or
 - (3) Formally withdraw the request to fill the vacancy (cancel), specifying the reason. Upon receipt of a withdrawal justification, OHR/CSP will evaluate a subsequent request to fill the same or similar vacancy within 30 days from date of the request.
- e. A referral list may be used within 120 days from initial selection when vacancies with all the same conditions occur. These conditions include the same title, series, grade, target grade, bureau, and type of appointment (i.e. permanent, temporary or term).

418.3.4.15 Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCRD)

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

It is the Agency's policy that its workforce reflects the American population in terms of representation of minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities. OCRD is charged with pursuing diversity goals and taking positive steps to improve the diversity profile within the Agency. To achieve this objective, OCRD

- a. develops and issues an annual diversity profile that identifies under-representation in each B/IO;
- b. provides the diversity profile to each B/IO Head, and discusses diversity goals and strategies for each year at the start of the fiscal or calendar year;
- c. provides the diversity profile data to selection officials as part of the hiring process via the automated referral system;
- d. collaborates and engages with OHR (CSP and OM) to develop and implement recruitment strategies for a diversified and well-qualified workforce;
- e. participates actively with hiring managers and OHR CSP during at least two designated steps of the recruitment and hiring process prior to selection:
 - (1) upon receipt by OHR/CSP/RS of the SF-52, Request for Personnel Action, and prior to posting the job opportunity announcements (JOA), and
 - (2) upon issuance of the referral lists to hiring officials.
- f. reviews the OHR automated referral lists for vacancies against the B/IO diversity profile and Agency's diversity goals, and consults with managers during the interview phase and prior to selections regarding making reasonable efforts to consider minorities, women, or individuals with disabilities;
- g. requests written justifications from the B/IO when there is disagreement about proposed selections; and
- h. documents findings, retains a copy in OCRD confidential files, and sends a copy to the head of the B/IO concerned with the hiring action. The OCRD Director will send a copy of the findings with recommendations to the Agency's Deputy Administrator, or designee, on a regular basis during the year.

418.3.4.16 Release of Employees for New Assignment

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

OHR/CSP/RS, in consultation with the hiring official, arranges release dates for candidates selected immediately after job offers are made. The release date for promotion shall be two weeks from the beginning of the pay period nearest the date the candidate accepts the job offer. The release date for reassignment is up to 30 days from the date the Bureau or Agency is notified.

418.3.4.17 Additional Referrals

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

If the selected individual: (1) declines the job, (2) once appointed, submits separation papers (i.e., letter of resignation, retirement papers), (3) or separates (i.e., dies, transfers) from the Agency within 120 calendar days of the initial selection, the referral list(s) used to select that individual may be used again by the hiring official to make a subsequent selection.

418.3.4.18 Recordkeeping

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID must adhere to the policies and procedures regarding recordkeeping contained in [5 CFR 335.103](#), **Agency promotion programs, b. 5, Requirement 5**.

418.3.4.19 Program Evaluation

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

USAID has an OPM-approved Human Capital (HC) Accountability System that ensures its HC and human resources management (HRM) programs and practices are efficient, effective, and merit-based. USAID conducts periodic evaluation of its HC programs and initiatives through records audit with OPM participation, workforce surveys, data/trend analyses, metrics, and measures to ensure compliance and to drive continuous improvement.

418.3.4.20 Employment Concerns and Complaints

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

Employees with concerns or complaints about the operation of the merit staffing program shall:

- a. Schedule an appointment with the relevant OHR/CSP Specialist to address questions or concerns about aspects of the merit staffing process in general and/or a specific announcement;

- b. Submit, in writing, a formal request to the Chief, OHR/CS/RS to review the case, if dissatisfied with the explanation provided by the Specialist. At this time, the employee shall specify the relief requested;
- c. Submit, in writing, a formal request to the Chief, OHR/CSP, for reconsideration, if the employee is still dissatisfied with the above response.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this level, the employee may submit a formal grievance or complaint under the applicable grievance or complaint procedures.

NON-SELECTION FOR PROMOTION FROM A GROUP OF PROPERLY RANKED AND CERTIFIED CANDIDATES, OR FAILURE TO RECEIVE A NONCOMPETITIVE PROMOTION, IS NOT GRIEVABLE. ([5 CFR 335.103 \(d\)](#))

418.4 MANDATORY REFERENCES

418.4.1 External Mandatory References

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

- a. [5 CFR 6.7, Movement of persons between the civil service and other merit systems](#)
- b. [5 CFR 300, Employment \(General\)](#)
- c. [5 CFR 310, Employment of Relatives](#)
- d. [5 CFR 315, Career and Career Conditional Employment](#)
- e. [5 CFR 330, Recruitment, Selection and Placement \(General\)](#)
- f. [5 CFR 335, Promotion and Internal Placement](#)
- g. [5 CFR 410.306, Selection and assignment of trainees](#)
- h. [5 U.S.C. Sec 2301, Merit Systems Principles](#)
- i. [Executive Order 12292, Eligibility of Foreign Service Officers for Noncompetitive Appointments](#)
- j. [Executive Order 12721, Eligibility of Overseas Employees for Noncompetitive Appointments](#)
- k. [U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions](#)

- m. [Veteran's Employment Act of 1998 codified as 5 U.S.C. 3304, Competitive service; examination](#)

418.4.2 Internal Mandatory References

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

- a. [ADS 410, Drug Free Workplace](#)
- b. [ADS 418mac, Upward Mobility Program](#)
- c. [ADS 432, Details – Civil and Foreign Service](#)
- d. [ADS 434, Details and Transfers to International Organizations](#)
- e. [ADS 452, Reduction in Force – Civil Service](#)
- f. [ADS 469, Civil Service Recruitment](#)

418.5 ADDITIONAL HELP

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

There are no Additional Help documents for this chapter.

418.6 DEFINITIONS

Effective Date: 07/30/2010

The terms and definitions listed below have been incorporated into the ADS Glossary. See the [ADS Glossary](#) for all ADS terms and definitions.

Agency employees

Direct hire permanent employees with competitive or noncompetitive status for appointment or promotion. (Chapter 418)

all U.S. Citizens

Applicants who are currently working for the Federal Government and those outside of Government in the private sector. (Chapter 418)

area of consideration (AoC)

The area of consideration describes the individuals from whom the Agency will accept applications to compete for the position. The AoC may also be referred to as "Who May Apply" within the vacancy announcement. (Chapter 418)

best qualified candidates

Best qualified candidates are those candidates who rank at the top when compared with other eligible candidates for a position. (Chapter 418)

career ladder position

A position of increasing difficulty in the same line of work through which an employee may progress from a lower or entry level to the level of full performance.

1. Entry Level - The lowest grade level in a career ladder.
2. Full-Performance Level - The ultimate grade reached in a career-ladder position as a result of the original merit staffing action, or as a result of the original competitive appointment. (Chapter 418)

Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAP) for local surplus and displaced employees

Presidential memorandum dated September 12, 1995 entitled "Career Transition Assistance for Federal Employees" sets policy by the U.S. Government to provide services to help surplus and displaced Federal employees affected by downsizing and restructuring to take charge of their own careers and find other job offers either within the Federal Government or in the private sector. When filling a vacancy, an agency must select an employee eligible under these regulations before selecting any other candidate from within or outside the agency; unless the agency can show that another employee would otherwise be separated by reduction in force. (Chapter 418)

competitive service

all civilian positions in the Federal Government that are not specifically excepted from civil service laws by or pursuant to statute, by the President, or by OPM under Rule VI, and that are not in the Senior Executive Service. (Chapter 418)

competitive status

Basic eligibility for noncompetitive assignment to a competitive position. A person on a career-conditional or career appointment acquires competitive status upon satisfactory completion of a probationary period. It may also be granted by statute, Executive order, or civil service rules without competitive examination. A person with competitive status may be promoted, transferred, reassigned, reinstated, or demoted without taking an open competitive examination, subject to the conditions prescribed by civil service rules and regulations. (5 CFR 212.301) (Chapter 418)

demotion

(also called change to lower grader or reduction in grade) A change of an employee to a lower grade or to a position with a lower rate of pay. (Chapters 418, [487](#))

detail

The temporary assignment or loan of a direct-hire employee to a different position within USAID, or an outside organization, for a specified period, with the expectation that the employee will return to the official position of record upon the expiration of the detail. (Chapters 418, [432](#), [434](#))

eligible candidates

Candidates who meet regulatory requirements (e.g., citizenship, time-in-grade) and the Office of Personnel Management qualification standards for the position, including appropriate selective placement factors, by the closing date of the announcement (Chapter 418)

evaluation criteria

Weighted criteria used to measure the value of a candidate's qualifications (e.g., experience and education) against the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) and other characteristics required by the vacant or new position. (Chapter 418)

hiring (or selecting) official

The individual responsible for making a careful analysis of the qualifications of each candidate certified for a vacancy and judging which candidate on the referral list(s) could perform best in the job to be filled. (Chapter 418)

Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan for Displaced Employees (ICTAP)

Presidential memorandum dated September 12, 1996 entitled "Career Transition Assistance for Federal Employees" established a special interagency career transition assistance program for Federal employees during a period of severe Federal downsizing. The regulation established the order of selection in filling vacancies, expected to last over 121 days, from outside the agency's workforce to include in this order, employees eligible under the Agency's Reemployment Priority List, other employees displaced by the agency, displaced employees from other Federal agencies, from the District of Columbia Department of Corrections or displaced employees from the Panama Canal Zone. (Chapter 418)

job analysis

The process of identifying the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics essential to a position in order to provide a job related basis for evaluation and selection for the position (Chapter 418)

local commuting area

The geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities, in which people live and can reasonably be expected to travel, to their place of employment on a daily basis. (Chapters 418, [452](#))

position change

A move by an employee from one position to another position during his or her continuous service within the same agency. The move may establish an employee's eligibility for grade retention (5 U.S.C. 5362). Moves when the employee is not entitled to grade retention are called promotion, change to lower grade, or reassignment. A position change may also involve a change of official headquarters or post of duty within the agency. (Chapter 418)

priority consideration

A noncompetitive opportunity for selection to a new or vacant position granted to a qualified employee who failed to receive proper consideration for selection for an equivalent position under another vacancy announcement. (Chapter 418)

promotion

The change of an employee to a position at a higher grade level within the same job classification system and pay schedule, or to a position with a higher rate of basic pay in a different job classification system and pay schedule. (Chapter 418)

promotion potential

The promotion potential of any position is the highest grade to which a person may be promoted without additional competition for the position, e.g., career ladder promotion. (Chapter 418)

qualification requirements

Education, experience, and other prerequisites to employment or placement in a position. The Office of Personnel Management's Operating Manual for Qualifications Standards for General Schedule Positions or modified Agency standards is used to determine basic qualifications of applicants for a specific position. (Chapter 418)

qualified candidates

Qualified candidates are those being considered for any competitive placement action who meet all established minimum eligibility and qualification requirements for the position. (Chapter 418)

quality ranking factors

Quality ranking factors are knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs); identified on the vacancy announcement for the positions to be filled, that could be expected to significantly enhance performance in a position, but unlike selective factors, are not essential for satisfactory performance. (For example, skill in public speaking might be used as a quality-ranking factor for a position in an organization where policy changes are communicated to the public in several ways.) (Chapter 418)

reassignment

The change of an employee from one position to another without promotion or demotion. (Chapter 418)

reemployment rights

Rehire rights granted to a former Agency employee(s) when hired by another executive agency without a break in service of a full workday by transfer, reinstatement, or by excepted appointment, in a position which the agency is currently authorized to fill with reemployment rights. (Chapters [412](#), 418)

referral list

The form used to send the names of the best-qualified candidates being considered for placement to the hiring official for consideration and to document his or her selection decisions. (Chapter 418)

reinstatement eligibility

Noncompetitive reemployment in the competitive service as a career or career-conditional employee of a person formerly employed in the competitive service who had competitive status or was serving probation when separated. (Chapters [413](#), 418)

selective or screen out factors

Specific knowledge, skills, and abilities essential for satisfactory performance on the job and which represent an addition to the basic qualification standards for a position. (Chapter 418)

special selection priority referral list

A list used to refer candidates qualified under the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan to selecting officials. (Chapter 418)

status applicants (also see competitive status)

One who has completed the probationary period under the career-conditional employment system. (Chapter 418)

temporary promotion

the temporary assignment of an employee to a higher graded position for a specified period of time, with the employee returning to his or her permanent position upon the expiration of the temporary action. Temporary promotions can be used in situations, such as, unanticipated absences, temporary shortage of employees, emergency or project work, or pending permanent fill positions. Promotion lasting more than 120 days must be made competitively. (Chapter 418)

trainee position

A position involving a well-defined training program established for a career or career conditional employee of a definite duration. The training may be on-the-job or formal training. Assigned tasks are performed on a rotating or non-rotating basis and under close guidance and instruction, with promotion scheduled upon satisfactory completion of the training period. A trainee who does not satisfactorily complete the training period will be reassigned to a different position. (Chapter 418)

transfer

The employment of a career or career-conditional employee, when the employee moves from one agency to another (with or without promotion) without a break in service of one full workday. (Chapter 418)

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