

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook
Chapter 20 - Internal Placement**

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20: Revises the following section with no additional changes to the chapter.

21.44d: Removes direction in paragraph 5h and recodes direction to FSH 6109.11, chapter 40.

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21 - Special Placement Situations

21.05 - Definitions

Identified Position. A permanent position that is being eliminated and will result in an employee's being identified under the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System.

First Consideration. The process by which employees identified under the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System are considered before others for vacant positions in accordance with direction in section 21.43d. First consideration means the employee identified under this system can be nonselected only for job-related reasons.

Affected Employee. A permanent employee who is in a position which is unfunded and/or scheduled to be abolished, or who has been identified under the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System according to the criteria in section 21.41.

Like Position. An employee's former position or a position that is clearly a successor to that position. (See the direction on return rights in section 21.43d.)

21.1 - Appointment of Members of Family and Employment of Relatives Restrictions

21.11 - Employment or Advocacy of Relatives by Public Official

A Forest Service manager may not appoint, employ, reassign, promote, or advance any relative to the unit over which that official exercises jurisdiction or control. A public official also may not advocate a relative's appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement anywhere in the Forest Service. A public official may not appoint, employ, reassign, promote, or advance the relative of any other public official in the Department of Agriculture, if that official has advocated the action.

The term "relative," as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3110, includes father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, stepfather, stepmother, stepson, stepdaughter, stepbrother, stepsister, half-brother, or half-sister (5 U.S.C. 3110; 5 CFR part 310).

21.12 - Supervision of Relatives

Forest Service employees may not supervise a relative either directly or indirectly. Direct supervision includes assigning responsibilities, granting leave, evaluating performance, approving training, evaluating for promotion, and taking or recommending adverse action.

Indirect supervision involves sharing supervisory activities with the immediate supervisor of an employee by participating in a substantive way in making work assignments, monitoring performance, and promotion evaluation of the employee. Any instance of direct or indirect supervision of an employee by a relative shall be eliminated at the first reasonable opportunity.

21.13 - Employment of Relatives of Forest Service Officials

1. Employees shall avoid any action, whether or not specifically prohibited, which might result in or create the appearance of:
 - a. Using public office for private gain,
 - b. Giving preferential treatment to any person, or
 - c. Adversely affecting the confidence of the public in the integrity of the Federal Government.
2. To avoid situations that might create the appearance of giving preferential treatment, a close relative of any one of certain Forest Service officials shall not work in the same organizational unit as that official. For this restriction, the term "close relative" includes father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, husband, and wife. The following are examples of situations in which this restriction applies:
 - a. Close relatives of the Chief, Associate Chief, Deputy Chiefs, and Associate Deputy Chiefs should not be employed in the Washington Office.
 - b. Close relatives of Station Directors, Deputy Station Directors, and Assistant Station Directors should not be employed within the jurisdiction of the same Station.
 - c. Close relatives of an Area Director or Assistant Area Director should not be employed within the same Area.
 - d. Close relatives of Regional Foresters and Deputy Regional Foresters should not be employed in the same Region.
 - e. Close relatives of Forest Supervisors and Deputy Forest Supervisors should not be employed on the same Forest.
 - f. Close relatives of District Rangers and Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center Directors should not be employed on the same District or Center.
 - g. Close relatives of Research Work Unit Leaders; research and development program managers; and research, development, and applications program managers should not be employed in the same unit or program.
3. Current situations contrary to this policy, as well as any which occur in the future, shall be corrected at the first reasonable opportunity.
4. The Chief or Associate Chief may approve exceptions to employment of close relatives of Forest Service officials on a case-by-case basis. This approval authority is nondelegable. Requests must be made in writing and show that employment of a relative would be in the best interest of the Forest Service.

21.2 - Details

1. Details Longer Than 30 Days. Every detail in excess of 30 calendar days must be documented in the official personnel folder and requires approval of the servicing human resources office. To document a detail, process Form SF-52, Request for Personnel Action.
2. Details Longer Than 120 Days. Details for more than 120 days to higher grade positions must be competitive as required by the agency and Department merit promotion plans and FSH 6109.41 - DPM 335.
3. Recurring Details. Do not use recurring details in increments of less than 30 days to the same higher graded position to circumvent a temporary promotion.

21.3 - Physical Standards

1. Waiver Authority for Physical Standards. Employment officers shall review medical reports. If Form SF-78, Certificate of Medical Examination, indicates that the individual does not meet established physical standards or that the possibility of the employee's meeting them is questionable, the employment officer may waive (lower) the physical requirements when there is sufficient evidence that an applicant or employee, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential duties of the position without endangering the health and safety of the individual or others.
2. Exception to Waiver Authority. The exception to the waiver authority is for GS-462 Forestry Technician (smokejumper) positions. The Washington Office, Director of Human Capital Management must approve waivers of the physical standards for these positions. If this authority is used, document the case file explaining how the decision was reached.

21.4 - Priority Placement for Employees Identified in Workforce Restructuring

1. The Forest Service has established the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS) to avoid or mitigate reduction in force (RIF). The WRAPS will be used for filling vacancies to provide first consideration to Forest Service employees identified in this system (FSM 6132.03d).
2. All permanent and time-limited assignments expected to last over 120 days are subject to these procedures. Exceptions are appointments of 1039 hours and line officers positions. Exceptions may be made for employees with unique qualification for specific positions.
3. Prior to the identification of positions and employees affected by Workforce Restructuring, a pre-WRAPS noncompetitive placement plan may be developed to accommodate reorganization.

21.41 - Identifying Positions Affected by Workforce Restructuring

1. Positions to be abolished are those which line managers have decided to eliminate:
 - a. Within the current or next fiscal year for lack of funds; lack of work; or,
 - b. Through changes in the organization.
2. Such decisions shall be made through:
 - a. An analysis of workload;
 - b. An assessment of projected program of work, including anticipated budgets; and,
 - c. A workforce analysis that includes the kind of skills in the workforce, the number of positions with those skill needed, and the locations of those positions.
 - d. A Civil Rights Impact Analysis shall be conducted as required by agency regulations (FSM 1730 and FSH 1709.11, ch. 30).

21.42 - Identifying Employees Affected by Workforce Restructuring

When one or more positions have been identified for abolishment within the same competitive area (para. 2), the same competitive level, and the same commuting area (para. 3), the line manager shall identify employees subject to displacement according to the order set forth in paragraph 4.

1. Competitive areas. Competitive areas are defined as follows:
 - a. Washington Office (WO) employees in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area compete within the metropolitan area by Deputy Chief program area or the Chief's program area as applicable to their reporting structure.
 - b. Law Enforcement and Investigations employees located outside the Washington, DC metropolitan area compete regionwide within Law Enforcement and Investigations.
 - c. Job Corps Center employees compete center wide. Job Corps employees in the Denver field office compete field office wide.
 - d. Employees of a regional office compete with other employees of that same regional office who are in the same commuting area.
 - e. Employees of a National Forest compete with other employees of that same National Forest who are in the same commuting area.
 - f. Employees of a research station compete with other employees of that same research station who are in the same commuting area.

g. Employees of the International Institute of Tropical Forestry (IITF) compete with other employees of the Institute who are in the same commuting area.

h. Employees of a State and Private Forestry in the Northeastern Area (NA) compete with other NA employees who are in the same commuting area.

i. When a position or group of positions is detached from its administrative unit (meaning only the following units: WO, RO, National Forest, Station, NA, or IITF), employees in those positions shall compete with other employees in the same commuting area and same administrative unit.

j. Non-traditional organizations that do not readily fit any of the descriptions described in paragraphs a through i of this section may be established contingent on approval by the Washington Office.

2. Commuting area. Commuting area is defined as any population center or two or more neighboring ones and the surrounding localities in which people can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily. The standard commuting area shall be 49 miles. FSH 6509.33, Federal Travel Regulation, provides direction on determining the eligibility for transfer of station reimbursement.

If a change is made to the standard commuting area, designated bargaining units shall follow applicable labor agreements. Changes on non-bargaining units shall be reviewed by the next higher organizational level. For example, the Washington Office would oversee the Regional Office.

3. Order of identification of employees. When a reduction in force (RIF) and WRAPS are being conducted simultaneously within a given competitive area, the order of displacement is in accordance with RIF identification procedures. Use the RIF identification order to identify who goes on WRAPS for potential placement outside the competitive area. Do not use WRAPS for placements of employees in the competitive area when a RIF is also being conducted in that competitive area unless the vacancy will not be filled through RIF, in which case use WRAPS procedures as appropriate.

When WRAPS is being conducted alone, except for non-bargaining unit employees at grades 13 and above, if more than one employee is covered by the category, give preference to employee(s) according to the leave SCD, most service first in categories b, c and f. Employee(s) in category g will be identified according to the leave SCD, least service first. Only employees identified in categories a and d through g will be registered in the WRAPS database for placement.

When one or more positions have been identified for abolishment within the same competitive level and the same competitive area, Management will identify employees subject to displacement in the following order:

a. Grade 13 and above non-bargaining unit employees who are the incumbents of abolished positions.

- b. Employees who formally decide to retire under optional retirement rules. Employees who make a voluntary, irrevocable written decision within 10 days of being notified of Management's decision to abolish a position within their competitive level. Retirement effective dates must be within 75 days of the original notice.
 - c. Employees who make a voluntary, irrevocable written decision to resign or who have accepted in writing an offer of employment outside the Forest Service with an effective date within 75 days from the date of notification of the decision to abolish a position(s) in the employee's competitive level. This written election must be received from the employee within 10 days of notification of management's decision to abolish a position(s). The timeframe may be shorter or longer as may be mutually agreeable between the employee and management.
 - d. Employees who are under a specific RIF separation notice.
 - e. Employees under RIF who are released from the competitive level through demotion.
 - f. Employees who make a voluntary, irrevocable decision to be designated as the affected employee.
 - g. Other employees in the competitive level.
4. Do not use the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System as method of resolving performance or conduct problems. However, employees with performance and conduct issues are not excluded from Workforce Restructuring and Placement System procedures. Managers are expected to continue dealing appropriately with such issues and to provide appropriate information when participating in placement decisions.

21.43 - Pre-Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (Pre-WRAPS)

To facilitate changes to the organization, employees may need to be moved internally through some procedure other than that required for employees subject to displacement in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS). Base this need on current and anticipated budgets as well as shifts in program emphasis. The Forest Service may need to adjust its organization to accommodate change.

The criteria in section 21.43a must be met by all plans developed for the purpose of permitting the reassignments, re-promotions or voluntary change to lower grade of employees in conjunction with changes in the organization prior to using the WRAPS process.

21.43a - Criteria for Establishing a Pre- Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS) Plan

- 1. Any Forest Service unit may develop a "pre-Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS)" internal placement plan. "Units" may be no smaller than a

competitive area defined under section 21.42, paragraph 2. The pre-WRAPS plan at a minimum applies to all employees within the defined unit affected by the planned changes.

2. WRAPS listed employees in the unit may also participate in the pre-WRAPS plan while they continue to be available for placement under WRAPS rules.
3. Reorganizations that result in no requirement to establish a new position description because the position in the new organization is identical to or 80 percent similar to that in the old organization should not be part of a pre-WRAPS plan. Employees in such positions are "moved" with their position into the new organization.
4. Pre-WRAPS plans must be developed in writing. Such plans should be developed jointly by management and union. Local and intermediate plans must be approved by both parties at the intermediate level. Plans involving 2 or more intermediate level parties need the approval of all the intermediate level parties involved.
5. Pre-WRAPS plans are not precedent setting.
6. Pre-WRAPS plans do not require a formal identification procedure. Identify positions to be abolished and affected employees in accordance with provisions of sections 21.41 and 21.42, labor agreement and/or agency reduction in force (RIF) regulations only after placements under pre-WRAPS plan have been made and the pre-established ending date of the plan has passed or the pre-WRAPS plan cancelled. A unit cannot be implementing a pre-WRAPS plan while at the same time as formally identifying which employees will be placed on WRAPS.
7. Pre-WRAPS plans may cover more than one time period, but all such periods must be included in the approved pre-WRAPS plan, or an approved amendment to that plan. For example, a unit may have an approved two phased pre-WRAPS plan, having an initial pre-WRAPS period to effect reassignments in conjunction with reorganization. Then, after the pre-WRAPS period ends, the unit may fill positions using competitive processes for WRAPS. At some point after the positions are filled competitively or from the WRAPS list, creating other vacancies on the same unit, a second phase of the pre-WRAPS plan may go into effect for a defined period of time, permitting additional reassignments.
8. A local pre-WRAPS plan may not be implemented when a national pre-WRAPS plan has been negotiated or is in place.
9. A pre-WRAPS plan must contain all of the following information:
 - a. A general description of the scope and nature of the organizational changes.
 - b. Old and new management approved organization structures or staffing plans that include all of the positions involved.

- c. Plan goals.
- d. Placement procedures under the plan.
- e. Specific beginning and ending dates that encompass the minimum time necessary to achieve the plan goals.
- f. A Civil Rights Impact Analysis regarding the potential impacts of the placement procedures, if required.
- g. A statement about differences in placement procedures (if any) under the plan if both bargaining and non-bargaining employees are covered by the plan.
- h. Employee communication plans.

21.44 - Automated Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS)

The automated Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS) is a servicewide system that includes automated databases containing information on vacant positions and identified employees. The automated WRAPS is designed to provide priority consideration and assist the placement of qualified, suitable, identified Forest Service employees into vacant positions within the Forest Service. The automated WRAPS does not provide competition for positions at a higher grade or with higher promotion potential.

21.44a - Responsibility

1. Washington Office, Director of the Human Capital Management Staff. The Director of the Human Capital Management Staff is responsible for:
 - a. Ensuring the overall management and maintenance of the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System.
 - b. Providing guidance on the policy and implementation of the system.
 - c. Providing technical assistance and guidance on data system support of the system.
 - d. Providing assistance to the servicing human resources offices regarding the matching process within the database system.
 - e. Making final decisions on unit challenges to WRAPS matches.
2. Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, and Job Corps National Field Director. It is their responsibility to approve requests to list employees in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System.
3. Unit Line Officer or Staff Director. It is the responsibility of the unit line officer or staff director to:

- a. Ensure that positions and employees affected by workforce restructuring are properly identified.
 - b. Ensure that selecting officials on the unit use the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System and give first consideration to Forest Service employees identified in this system in filling vacancies.
 - c. Prepare the justification to challenge a placement and submit it to their respective Regional Office, Station or Area Headquarters Office SHRO for concurrence prior to submitting it for a decision.
 - d. Prepare a Workforce Restructuring and Placement System Proposal to Abolish Encumbered Position(s) that includes an analysis of workload; an assessment of the projected program of work, including anticipated budgets; and workforce analysis to include the kind of skills, the number of positions with those skills needed, and the locations of those positions.
 - e. Prepare a Civil Rights Impact Analyses for downsizing and reorganization activities.
4. Unit Servicing Human Resources Office. It is the responsibility of the head of the servicing human resources office to ensure that the following actions are accomplished:
- a. Entering and updating file data on identified employees and vacant positions into the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System, ensuring that identified employees understand the data, and inviting employees to enter optional data on their availabilities.
 - b. Assisting managers in filling positions and making offers.
 - c. Verifying qualifications of employees at the time information is entered into the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System database.
 - d. Informing identified employees of the disposition of vacancies for which they have been considered.

21.44b - Lists of Vacancies and Employees Identified in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS)

Enter information on all vacant permanent and time-limited positions exceeding 120 days (except 1039 appointments) which are to be filled. Enter information for all eligible employees into the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS) database.

1. List of Vacancies.
 - a. List all advertised positions, permanent or time-limited position over 120 days (excluding 1039 appointments) on the WRAPS for the vacancy advertisement period

as required by this plan. WRAPS must be checked for tentative matches at all of the following points:

- (1) Prior to advertising the position.
- (2) Prior to preparing a referral list for the position.
- (3) Prior to offering the position.

If the advertisement period has ended and no match is found after clearing the required check points, the position may be offered to an employee outside WRAPS.

- b. List positions that are being used for reassignment on WRAPS for 5 work days, check for tentative matches and clear the WRAPS list before the position may be offered outside of WRAPS.
 - c. List multiple-grade positions at the highest grade.
 - d. Submit a written justification to the Washington Office WRAPS Program Manager if an exception is needed to the requirement that all units must enter permanent and time-limited vacancies exceeding 120 days into the WRAPS.
 - e. Document the reasons as to why a listed vacancy may be retracted from the WRAPS. Ensure that the position is not filled for 1 year.
 - f. Ensure that the only positions excepted from listing in the WRAPS are line officer positions and those listed in 5 CFR 330.606(d)(2) through (28).
2. List of Identified Employees.
- a. WRAPS does not provide a competitive process; therefore, do not identify employees as available for higher grades or series with promotion potential when that would require competition.
 - b. Only the series for which the employee wishes to be considered shall be entered into WRAPS. The Servicing Human Resources Office must verify that the employee is qualified for each series entered.
 - c. Employees in line officer positions are exempt from the WRAPS.

21.44c - Placement Assistance

Management shall make placement assistance available for affected employees when possible.

1. Placement Support.

- a. Employees should be counseled and afforded with every opportunity to find a new position based on organizational needs and their career goals and personal needs.

- b. In accordance with U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidelines, management may consider retraining the employee or modifying qualification standards, excluding positive education requirements, to allow the employee to meet the qualifications of a vacant position within a specified period up to 365 days of occupying the position.
 - c. The Agency shall pay transfer of station benefits for affected employees who are reassigned as authorized by FSH 6509.33, Federal Travel Regulation.
 - d. Placement efforts shall continue for those affected employees on details. Management should afford employees accommodations to mitigate any adverse effects created by the detail (for example, physical isolation and access to communications).
 - e. Outplacement services may be provided for affected employees, consistent with the Agency Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) policy.
2. Government Placement Programs. Offer identified employees enrollment in and an explanation of placement assistance programs, operated by other agencies, for which they are qualified.
- a. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP)
 - b. The Interagency Career Transition Plan (ICTAP) administered by OPM
 - c. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Reemployment Priority List.
 - d. The *Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) (Public Law 105-220)* programs.

21.44d - Matching Identified Employees to Vacant Positions

The Washington Office Service Center (WOSC) will verify tentative matches and conduct final matches to match employees with vacant positions in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System.

- 1. Match Occurs. When it is determined that the an identified employee is qualified and suitable for a vacant position; that is, the employee meets the Office of Personnel Management qualifications standards for the vacant position, meets the suitability requirements in 5 CFR 731.202, and any special conditions of employment.
- 2. Unit Challenge. A unit line officer may challenge a match by submitting a justification to their respective Washington Office/Regional Office/Station or Area Headquarters/Job Corps Human Resources Office within 5 days of notification of a match. The Washington Office shall make a final decision within 10 days of receiving the challenge.

3. Placement in Time-Limited Vacancies. When an employee has been placed in a time-limited vacancy from Workforce Restructuring and Placement System, their placement priority will remain active if the time-limited position is less than 1040 hours of duration. If the temporary assignment is 1040 hours or more, the employee's placement priority will be inactive until 60 days before the expiration of the time-limited assignment at which time their placement priority will be reestablished in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System database and their 60-day voluntary placement period will start anew. The employee will not receive a new notice, but will have an opportunity to update their registration information. When an employee has been placed in a time-limited position their career tenure and position of record are not affected.

4. Order of Placement. Observe the following order of placement of employees. Except where otherwise noted, make placements from employees qualified for the position to be filled.

a. Commuting Area. When multiple employees are eligible for placement within a subcategory below, break ties in order of leave SCD (most service first.)

(1) Matches within the same nationally established competitive level (without the suffix).

(2) Matches at the same grade level.

(3) Non-competitive, repromotion eligibles.

(4) Voluntary changes to less than full-time year round tours of duty.

(5) Voluntary changes to lower grades.

(6) Other USDA Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) employees who are well qualified for the position.

(7) Employees who do not meet qualifications for the position to be filled, but where management has chosen to waive qualifications.

b. Employee preference for location. When multiple employees are eligible for placement, within a subcategory below, use leave SCD (most service first) to break ties.

(1) Direct matches (reassignments of the employee's job—80 percent or more accuracy standard of the position description--to a new location).

(2) Matches within the same nationally established competitive level (without the suffix).

(3) Matches at the same grade level.

(4) Non-competitive repromotion eligibles.

(5) Voluntary changes to less than full-time year-round tours of duty.

(6) Voluntary changes to lower grades.

c. Locations outside employee preferences. When multiple employees are eligible for placement within a subcategory below, break ties in order of leave SCD (most service first).

(1) Direct matches (reassignments of the employee's job--80 percent or more accuracy standard of the position description--to a new location).

(2) Matches within the same nationally established competitive level (without the suffix).

(3) Matches at the same grade level.

(4) Non-competitive repromotion eligibles.

(5) Voluntary changes to less than full-time year round tours of duty.

(6) Voluntary changes to lower grades.

d. Base non-selection of employees from the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System on legitimate job-related reasons.

5. Offers of Placement.

a. All offers of placement will be made through the employee's home unit and communicated to the employee within 2 days. The communication must include whether it is a contingent offer or a firm offer.

b. Multiple employees may be offered a specific position at the same time on a contingency basis if there is more than one employee on Workforce Restructuring and Placement System who may potentially match the position. The person with the highest assignment rights shall receive the offer as a firm offer. The other employees receive offers contingent upon the availability of the position should employees with higher assignment rights refuse the offer. Contingent offers may only be made to employees if all potential matches are outside the commuting area.

c. If the employee with the highest assignment right refuses the offer, the assignment will then be made in the order of the matching process outlined above for those employees who said they would accept a contingent offer. Only declinations when the employee is reached for the assignment will count against the limit described in paragraph g.

d. An employee may have more than one contingent offer at a given time.

- e. Employees will have up to 3 days to respond to offers within their commuting area.
- f. Employees will have up to 10 days to respond to offers outside their commuting area.
- g. If an employee receives 3 offers outside their commuting area that meet their listed preferences and declines the offers, no further consideration will be given to the preferences of that employee.
- h. Unless otherwise placed, an employee will be given the opportunity to remain on the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System list for a period of not less than 60 calendar days

6. Involuntary Placement by Directed Reassignment: Any employee placed on the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System may be subject to a directed reassignment. When management exercises its right to make directed reassignments to employees from Workforce Restructuring and Placement System, the following procedures will be followed:

- a. Within their commuting area. An employee may be directed to an appropriate position at any time during their Workforce Restructuring and Placement System listing. For the order of these directed reassignments, see paragraph 4a, Order of Placement.
- b. Outside their commuting area. After 60 days on the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System list, all employees identified for displacement placed on the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System may be subject to a directed reassignment. The order of these directed reassignments will be as described in paragraph 4a and 4b(c), Order of Placement, except that voluntary reductions in tour or voluntary changes to lower grade will not be directed.
- c. If the involuntary reassignment is within a forest, job corps center, Washington Office, regional office, Area, station, or technology and development center, a copy of the notification shall be maintained by local servicing human resources office. When the reassignment is between two units a copy of the notification shall be provided to the respective Washington Office, regional office, station, Area or job corps Human Resources Office.
- d. The reporting date for directed reassignments will not be less than 60 days from the notification date unless agreed to by the employee. If the new position is in the same commuting area, the effective date may be less than 60 days.
- e. Employees will have 10 days to accept or refuse a directed reassignment outside of their commuting area.

f. Employees who have been given a directed reassignment to another position within the Forest Service will be given priority placement consideration for a 2-year period following the effective date of their directed reassignment according to the following conditions:

(1) Their former or like position has been reestablished and is announced.

(2) The employee applies to the vacancy announcement of their former or like position.

(3) In accordance with the Order of Consideration as identified in Merit Promotion Plan, there is no one with greater placement rights to the vacancy.

g. Employees will receive written notice of their priority consideration rights when they are given a directed reassignment.

h. Priority consideration applicants must inform the servicing human resources office in writing of their entitlement to priority consideration.

21.45 - Transfer-of-Station Expenses

Transfer-of-station expenses are not an acceptable reason to pass over an otherwise qualified and suitable employee identified in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System to select a non-identified employee (FSM 6132.03e).

When a position would normally be filled from an area of consideration involving relocation, the gaining unit should pay the usual transfer-of-station expenses. When that is not the case, the outplacing and gaining units may negotiate the payment of expenses. (For further direction on transfer of station and relocation allowances, see the Federal Travel Regulation, FSH 6509.33 - FTR 302.)

21.46 - Monitoring

The Directors of the Washington Office, Human Capital Management Staff and the Civil Rights Staff shall monitor the operation and effect of the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System, including statistical data collection and analysis to ascertain possible disparate impacts on employees, assessment of system-related disputes, and invited comment from intermediate level partnerships, locals, and management officials.

22 - Probationary Periods

This section deals with probationary periods for new appointees and new managers and supervisors (5 CFR part 315).

22.1 - New Appointments

The supervisor shall carefully observe the employee's conduct and performance in the actual duties of the position. An unsatisfactory employee may be separated any time during the

probationary period. The reasons for separation shall be for unsatisfactory performance, unacceptable conduct, or for conditions arising prior to appointment. Separation is easier to accomplish during the probationary period than afterwards.

The National Finance Center sends Form AD-507, Probationary or Trial Period Report, approximately 90 days before the end of the 1-year probationary or trial period; it must be used as the official certification document. Other probationary period assessment systems may be used provided they do not contradict or conflict with form AD-507. However, form AD-507 must be used for the final report. Employees shall review form AD-507 and initial next to their name. Supervisors shall forward the report following the instructions on the back of the form.

The probationary period is 3 years for research scientists whose positions are covered by the Research Grade Evaluation Guide.

22.2 - Managers and Supervisors

Supervisors and managers serving a probationary period are subject to a performance appraisal.

22.21 - Length of Probationary Period

The length of the probationary period for managers and supervisors is 1 year, but it may be terminated earlier for unsatisfactory performance.

22.22 - Documentation

Supervisors shall document probationary period performance on Form AD-773, Supervisory or Managerial Probationary Period Report. Other periodic reports are optional during the probationary period, but they may not conflict with or replace the final rating on form AD-773.

Form AD-773 has three parts:

1. An original for the Official Personnel Folder (OPF).
2. One copy for the Human Resources Office.
3. One copy for the employee.

The form is generated by the National Finance Center 90 days prior to the end of the probationary period and sent to employing offices with a control list of covered employees.

22.23 - Determining if Prior Experience Applies

Employees who served in a temporary or career-conditional supervisory or managerial position in the Federal Government prior to August 11, 1979, are not required to serve a probationary period even if that assignment lasted less than 1 year. A former manager is not required to serve either a supervisory or managerial probationary period. However, a supervisor or former supervisor assigned to a managerial position after August 11, 1979, is subject to a probationary period for that managerial position. The supervisory probationary period ends and the

probationary period for the managerial position begins on the effective date of assignment to the managerial position. A probationary period is also required if:

1. A supervisory or managerial position is filled on a temporary basis for 1 year or more; and
2. A temporary promotion, regardless of the length, may become permanent and it is documented that the assignment may become permanent.

22.24 - Training

Training and documentation requirements for probationary periods are in 5 CFR part 410. Each probationary supervisor or manager must receive 40 hours of training before the end of the probationary period. Prior training, education, and experience may meet all or part of this requirement (FSH 6109.13, sec. 23).

22.25 - Failure to Satisfactorily Complete Probationary Period

1. Form AD-773, Supervisory or Managerial Probationary Period Report, shall be completed no earlier than 60 days after appointment to a supervisory or managerial position and no later than 1 month before the end of the probationary period.
2. Successful completion of the probationary period is required to continue in the position. If an evaluation rates supervisory or managerial performance as unsatisfactory, the incumbent shall be returned to a nonsupervisory or nonmanagerial position at a grade and pay level no lower than the one occupied immediately before the supervisory or managerial position. Documentation for removing an employee from a supervisory or managerial position is the same as required for removal from initial appointment (FSH 6109.41 - DPM 315).
3. The action to return an employee to a nonsupervisory or nonmanagerial position is initiated by the immediate supervisor and concurred on by a higher level supervisor or manager. The concurring official shall conduct the necessary placement action. Return an employee to a nonsupervisory or nonmanagerial position within two pay periods after the decision on unsatisfactory performance. If this is not possible, the unsatisfactory employee's supervisory duties must be performed by the next higher level supervisor or manager until placement action is completed. Placement must be completed within the 1-year probationary period.
4. Removal from a supervisory or managerial position shall not preclude the employee from applying and being considered for subsequent supervisory or managerial positions. If selected for a second supervisory or managerial position, a new 1-year probationary period is required.

22.25a - Appeals, Grievances or Complaints

The decision to return an employee to a nonsupervisory or non-managerial position is not appealable to the Merit Systems Protection Board, except under 5 CFR 315.909 if the employee alleges action based on partisan political affiliation or marital status, nor is it subject to negotiated grievance procedures. However, it is subject to agency grievance procedures. Also, if there is an allegation of discrimination, it should be processed under the provisions of 29 CFR part 1614.

22.26 - Crediting Service

If an employee is separated for cause or returned to a nonsupervisory or nonmanagerial position during the probationary period, the service does not count toward completion of a probationary period required under a subsequent assignment. Supervisory or managerial service interrupted during the probationary period is creditable toward completion of the probationary period as follows:

1. Service in the former position is credited unless the former position was supervisory and the new position is managerial. If service in the former position is credited towards completion of the probationary period for the new position, the prior supervisor of the probationer shall complete the appraisal Form AD-773, Supervisory or Managerial Probationary Period Report, for the former position and furnish one copy to the new supervisor or manager and another for the Official Personnel File.
2. Absence in a nonpay status while on the rolls (other than absence because of compensable injury or military duty) is creditable only up to a total of 22 workdays. Any nonpay time in excess of the total of 22 workdays extends the probationary period by an equal number of workdays.
3. Absence (whether on or off the rolls) due to compensable injury or military duty is creditable for employees entitled to restoration rights or priority consideration under 5 CFR part 353.
4. Time on probation in an earlier, interrupted period is creditable if all of the following conditions are met:
 - a. The employee served at least 6 consecutive months of the interrupted probationary period.
 - b. The new probationary position is substantially the same as the earlier position.
 - c. No more than 2 years elapsed since the employee left the former probationary period.
 - d. The former position was in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

22.27 - Supervisor Changes

If the supervisor of the probationer is not available or changes during the probationary period, the next higher level supervisor assumes responsibility for counseling and rating the probationer until the immediate supervisor returns or is replaced.

22.28 - Relationship to Probationary Period for Competitive Appointment

When an employee must simultaneously serve both a supervisory or managerial probationary period and a probationary period for an initial appointment, the latter takes precedence. Completing the probationary period for competitive appointment fulfills the requirements of the supervisory or managerial probationary period. Process termination during the initial appointment probationary period as any other termination action that occurs during an initial appointment probationary period (5 CFR part 315).

23 - Merit Promotion Plan

The Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan provides policy and procedures to ensure competitive selection from among the quality group of candidates, based on job-related criteria, after fair and open competition following merit principles. The Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan complies with applicable laws, regulations, and other authorities as listed in section 23.01 and may not be supplemented or changed except at the servicewide level.

23.01 - Authority

1. The broad authorities for agency personnel programs are:
 - a. Title 5 of the United States Code (5 U.S.C.), Part III Employees.
 - b. Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations (5 CFR), parts 1 to 699.
 - c. The Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures are in 29 CFR part 1607.
 - d. Additional requirements are issued in other U.S.C. and CFR titles and also in the form of Executive orders and in Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and USDA directives or letters.
2. The Department Merit Promotion Plan, in Department Personnel Manual, Chapter 335, Appendix B (FSH 6109.41 - DPM 335, Appendix B) and the USDA Alternative Merit Promotion System (described in the January 4, 1994, letter from the Assistant Secretary for Administration) are the basis for the Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan. Additional authorities include:
 - a. 5 U.S.C. 2301, Merit system principles.
 - b. 5 U.S.C. 2302 , Prohibited personnel practices.

- c. 5 U.S.C. 3329, as implemented by 5 CFR 335.105, Reporting requirements for certain job announcements to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).
- d. 38 U.S.C. 2021-2024, Consideration of employees absent because of military duty.
- e. 5 U.S.C. 3582, Service with international organizations.
- f. 5 U.S.C. 8151, Compensable injury that does not exceed 1 year.
- g. 5 U.S.C. 3362, Due weight for incentive awards and results of performance appraisals.
- h. 5 U.S.C. 5105 and 40 U.S.C. 112, Minimum qualification requirements.
- i. 5 U.S.C. 7106, Management's right to select or not select from among properly ranked and certified candidates and to select from other appropriate sources of candidates.
- j. 5 U.S.C. 7121 and 5 CFR 335.103(d), Employee's right to file grievances.
- k. 5 U.S.C. 7201-7204, as implemented by 5 CFR part 300, subpart a, and Part 720, Employment practices and anti-discrimination policy.
- l. 29 CFR Part 1607, Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures.
- m. 5 U.S.C. 3402(a)(1)(A), Review of vacant positions for potential part-time employment.

23.04 - Responsibility

23.04a - Director of Human Capital Management, Washington Office

The Director of Human Capital Management, Washington Office is responsible for:

- 1. Maintaining an up-to-date Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan to ensure the implementation of a sound merit promotion program in the agency; and
- 2. Ensuring that the review, revision, clearance, and operation of the agency's Merit Promotion Program involves the joint efforts required between managers and Human Capital Management specialists and appropriate coordination with the Forest Service Partnership Council.

23.04b - Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, Institute Director, and Job Corps National Field Director

Regional Foresters, Station Director, Area Director, Institute Director and Job Corps National Field Director is responsible for ensuring that appointments of persons with disabilities caused

by mental retardation or related conditions are the only exceptions that could be filled below the published minimum career ladders.

23.04c - Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors have the responsibility to comply with the provisions of the Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan. In exercising this responsibility, managers and supervisors must be knowledgeable about and comply with the provisions of the Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan. In addition, managers and supervisors have the responsibility to:

1. Identify anticipated staffing needs.
2. Base selection actions on fair and equitable treatment of candidates for promotion without regard to non-merit factors.
3. Provide for fair and open competition.
4. Evaluate and select individuals based on job-related criteria.
5. Notify members of a selection advisory panel of confidentiality requirements.
6. Ensure that all outreach plans follow the policy direction set forth in FSM 1766.6, Employment Outreach.

23.04d - Human Resources Specialists

Human Resources Specialists have the responsibility to serve as advisors and consultants to managers in the implementation of the Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan. These specialists are responsible for advising managers as to options involved in the identification of and selection of applicants and for assisting managers in developing employee awareness and understanding of merit promotion actions.

23.04e - Civil Rights Officers

Civil Rights Officers shall assist supervisors and managers with outreach activities.

23.05 - Definitions

Ability. A present competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product. An ability is evidenced by the performance of an activity or work and should not be confused with an aptitude, which is only a potential for performing an activity.

Area of Consideration. Organizational or geographic boundary in which the agency makes an intensive search for candidates in a specific promotion action.

Career Ladder. The range of grades in an occupational series or specialization within an organization that represents the levels at which employees are given grade-building

experience and to which they may be noncompetitively promoted once initial competition has taken place.

Competency. An observable, measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and others characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.

Crediting Plan. A written document containing specific criteria used to make consistent and job-related determinations about the relative qualifications of applicants for a position.

Evaluation Criteria. Criteria against which applicants are evaluated. The criteria may include knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), competencies, or certifications.

Evaluation Panel. A permanent or ad hoc committee of subject matter experts established to evaluate, and rank employees according to the established crediting plan for placement on a referral list.

Job Analysis. A systematic process of identifying the important duties of a position, and the knowledges, skills, and abilities and the competencies required to perform the work.

Knowledge. An understanding of an organized body of information, usually of a factual or procedural nature, relating to a particular subject matter area.

Minimum Area of Consideration. The area designated by the promotion plan in which the agency should reasonably expect to locate enough quality candidates as determined by the agency to fill vacancies in the positions covered by the plan.

Open-continuous Vacancy Announcements. One type of announcement used to fill multiple vacancies as they occur. Open-continuous vacancy announcements are open up to one year beyond the minimum timeframes outlined in the Merit Promotion Plan.

Organizational Unit. The organizational unit is defined as the location where there is a line officer or equivalent at that geographic location; for example, Regional Forester, Regional Office Staff Director, Forest Supervisor, District Ranger, Nursery Superintendent, Job Corps National Field Office Director, Job Corps Center Director, Assistant Director (Research), Project Leader, Washington Office Staff Director, or Regional Special Agent in Charge. Individuals who are in virtual or detached offices (rather than at their unit's geographic location) would be included in the organizational unit to which they are officially assigned.

Outreach. A pre-recruitment, systematic, on-going search to identify potential applicants for positions.

Outreach Plan. A document outlining management decisions and actions taken to identify a quality and diverse applicant pool for the position to be filled.

Priority Consideration. A consideration given to an employee as a result of special circumstances such as to correct a Merit Promotion Plan error. (For specific examples refer to Appendix A, Guide for Corrective Actions in sec. 23.21, ex. 01, Servicewide Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan).

Promotion Potential. The grade level to which an employee may be promoted noncompetitively. Promotion potential is identified either in the vacancy announcement or by a career ladder defined in this Merit Promotion Plan or in a unit supplement.

Qualified Applicant. An applicant who meets qualification standards that have been established by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for General Schedule (GS) and Federal Wage System (FWS) positions in the Federal Government.

Quality Group. Three or more qualified applicants who meet quality ranking factors that are established for the position.

Repromotion. Promotion to a grade previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service from which an employee was separated or demoted for other than performance or conduct reasons (sec. 23.2, ex. 01, Servicewide Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan, Appendix E, Forest Service Repromotion Plan; (5 CFR 536.301)).

Selection Advisory Panel (Recommending Panel). A committee established to conduct a post-referral list evaluation of candidates that involves additional assessment information beyond the application, such as interviews, reference checks, and so on to make recommendations to the selecting official.

Selective Factor. A knowledge, skill, ability or competency that is in addition to or more specific than the minimum required in the qualification standard, and that is essential to the performance of the position.

Skill. Being able to perform proficient manual, verbal, or mental processes related to data, people, or things. A skill embodies observable, quantifiable, and measurable performance parameters.

Supervisory Unit. Generally the lowest level of a supervisory unit where like work is performed, such as a Ranger District, a Staff Office in a Supervisor's Office, a Branch in a Regional Office, Washington Office or at the Albuquerque Service Center, Project Leader, and so forth.

Term Appointment. An appointment for a period of more than 1 year, but not more than 4 years, when the need is not permanent

Time-limited Promotion. A promotion to temporarily fill positions to accomplish project work, to fill positions temporarily pending reorganization or downsizing, or to meet other temporary needs.

Vacancy Announcement. An advertisement of a vacant position that is open for competition to employees and/or citizens.

23.06 - References

In addition to the authorities listed in section 23.01, the Forest Service, Washington Office Human Capital Management Staff, FSWeb/Intranet web site at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm> ("Employment" on the website menu) provides additional information related to the Servicewide Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan.

23.1 - Procedures

To fill a vacant position, supervisors must submit, at a minimum, the following forms and information to the servicing human resources office:

1. Form SF-52, Request for Personnel Action.
2. Form AD-332, Position Description Cover Sheet.
3. Position Description.
4. Outreach Plan.

23.2 - Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan

The philosophy of the Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan is a flexible and responsive merit promotion system that will ensure equal employment opportunity and enable managers to select from among the quality group of candidates for a position in order to carry out the mission of the Forest Service. Fair and open competition is required in filling vacancies through merit promotion (5 CFR 300.102).

23.21 - Coverage

Legal requirements of merit promotion are primarily in Title 5 of the United States Code (5 U.S.C.) and also in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, part 335 (5 CFR part 335). A detailed listing of applicable authorities is in section 23.01.

1. This plan covers promotions in the competitive service for career and career-conditional employees in grades GS-1 to GS-15 and in similar pay schedules and any prevailing rate schedule (wage grade).
2. This plan also covers the promotions, demotions and reassignments of term employees serving on a given project to another position within the project, which the agency has been authorized to fill by term appointment (5 CFR 335.103(e)).

23.21a - Application of Competitive Procedures

Competitive procedures must be applied to the following actions:

1. Promotion, reassignment, reinstatement, or change to lower grade from a one-grade interval series position to a two-grade interval series position except as provided by section 23.21b, paragraph 12.
2. Promotion, reassignment, or reinstatement to a permanent or temporary position at a higher grade or to a position having higher promotion potential than the target grade of any position occupied under a nontemporary position in the competitive service.
3. Time-limited promotions exceeding 120 days, or a combination of noncompetitive time-limited promotions and details to higher grade positions exceeding 120 days in the preceding 12 months. In some rare instances a time-limited promotion may be made permanent without further competition, provided the time-limited promotion was originally made under competitive procedures and provided the fact that it might lead to a permanent promotion was made known to all potential candidates at the time the position was initially advertised. A statement to this effect must have been included in the vacancy announcement.
 - a. Time-limited promotions for positions at grades 14 and above that are to be advertised with the fact that they might lead to a permanent promotion must be justified by the requesting unit and must be approved by the Chief or Executive Team. When considering advertising a time-limited promotion, take into account the effect of the area of consideration on the applicant pool.
 - b. Time-limited promotions for positions at grades 13 and below that are to be advertised with the fact that they might lead to a permanent promotion must be justified by the requesting unit manager and approved by the respective Deputy Chief, Regional Forester, Station Director, Institute and Area Director or Job Corps National Field Office Director. When advertisement of a time-limited promotion is being considered, take into account the effect of the area of consideration on the applicant pool.
 - c. Initial time-limited promotions may be made for up to 2 years. Extensions may be made for up to a total of 5 years. Any extension beyond two years must be approved, in one-year increments or less, by the next higher organizational level. Extension requests must be documented and requested in writing. Likewise, approvals must be in writing.
 - d. An employee who is selected for a time-limited promotion must be released from the employee's home unit. However, if an exigency of work exists, that is., emergency situation, the employee's release date may be negotiated by management. The employee retains return rights to the position of record, or to a like position at the same grade and location. An exception is that for promotions of 1 year or more from positions at grades 14 and above, if the position of record is located at a region, station, or Area and there are no comparable positions available, the employee may be returned to a comparable position in another duty location, provided that this information was identified in the vacancy announcement.

4. Selection for training which is a part of an authorized training agreement or promotion program required before an employee is qualified for reassignment to a different occupational series or a promotion.

23.21b - Exceptions to Competitive Procedures

Competition does not apply to:

1. Career ladder promotions, when employees meet qualifications, training, and successful performance requirements.

- a. The following chart outlines career ladders for the Forest Service.

Forest Service General Career Ladders

Professional (Scientist)	11
Professional (non-Scientist)	09
Administrative (two-grade interval only)	09
Technical*	04
Clerical and Administrative Support	04
Wage Grade	03

*Except when on a SCEP appointment.

- b. Appointments of persons with disabilities resulting from mental retardation or related conditions, are the only exceptions allowed below the established career ladders.
 2. Promotions resulting from an employee's position being reclassified at a higher grade because of additional duties and responsibilities when all of the following conditions are met, documented, and certified by the supervisor:
 - a. The employee has been performing the grade-controlling functions for an extended period of time (normally 12 months), and will continue to perform the grade-controlling functions that are in the new position on a regular and recurring basis;
 - b. A majority of the key duties of the former position are absorbed into the new position and are planned to continue indefinitely;
 - c. Other positions within the supervisory unit are not adversely affected; no other position in that unit could have been assigned these higher graded duties;
 - d. The expanded duties are within the scope of the work of the organizational unit on which the accretion occurs;

- e. The new position is not a reclassification from nonsupervisory or nonlead to a supervisory or lead position, when the lead or supervisory duties constitute the sole basis for upgrading the position.
- 3. Promotions resulting from the upgrading of a position without significant change in duties and responsibilities due to issuance of a new classification standard, a result of an impact classification, or the correction of an initial classification error.
- 4. Selection of a candidate from the Reemployment or Repromotion Priority List for repromotion to a grade that the candidate had previously held in the competitive service.
- 5. A time-limited promotion of 120 days or less. OPM Qualifications Standards for the series and grade must be met, other than maximum entry age requirements.
- 6. A position change conducted under reduction-in-force regulations.
- 7. Re-promotion of an employee to the target grade of a position previously held by the employee on a permanent basis under a permanent appointment in the competitive service, except when the employee was demoted for reasons related to performance or conduct.
- 8. Placement into a position having promotion potential to the target level of a position an employee held previously on a permanent basis under a career or career-conditional appointment, even though the employee never reached the full performance level of the position. Make placement at the grade level for which time-in-grade and qualification standard requirements have been met.
- 9. A career ladder promotion following noncompetitive conversion of an employee participating in special programs such as the Disability Employment Program or Student Career Experience Program.
- 10. An action taken as a result of an employee(s) receiving priority consideration.
- 11. Extensions of competitive time-limited promotions for up to a total of 5 years.
- 12. Changes from a single grade interval series to a two-grade interval series when the incumbent already occupies the same or higher grade as the career ladder for the new position, and when servicewide action is anticipated regarding a type of class of positions.

23.22 - General Provisions

23.22a - Job Analysis

The official position description and/or validated occupational competencies must satisfy the requirements at 5 CFR 300.103(a).

1. The supervisor and human resources specialist must identify the basic duties and responsibilities of the position and based on those duties, define the evaluation criteria and develop a crediting plan that will provide the basis for determining quality candidates prior to the issuance of the announcement.
2. The evaluation criteria reflect the knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSAs) or competencies required by the position, the factors that are important for evaluating candidates. Generally three to six KSAs/competencies shall be identified.
3. The crediting plan describes how the KSAs/competencies shall be used to determine relative levels of possession of the KSAs/competencies at each grade level.

23.22b - Selective Factors

A selective factor, when used, becomes part of the basic qualification requirements for a position. Applicants who do not meet the selection factor are ineligible for further consideration. Selective factors may not:

1. Be so narrow that they would preclude from consideration applicants who could perform the duties of the position.
2. Require knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) or competencies that could be learned readily during the normal period of orientation to the position.
3. Be so specific as to exclude from consideration applicants without prior Federal experience.
4. Be so restrictive that they run counter to the goal of placing applicants from priority placement lists established to assist in the placement of employees affected by reduction in force (RIF).

23.22c - Multi-grade Vacancy Announcements

1. With the exception of line officer positions at the GS-14 level and above, vacancies should be announced using multi-grade vacancy announcements, when possible (for example, GS-203-4/5/6, GS-486-7/9/11, and so forth).
2. The results of the outreach plan should be used in determining the range of grade levels to be advertised in order to find quality candidates.

23.22d - Specialized Experience

Each announcement must define specialized experience specific to that vacancy, in accordance with the OPM Qualifications Standards Operating Manual for General Schedule Positions, Section II.5.

23.22e - Open-continuous Vacancy Announcements

Employment offices may use open continuous announcements where appropriate: such as advertising similar jobs in a variety of locations; or where high turnover in occupations with a range of grade levels.

1. Specific duty locations, where vacancies are located, must be included in the vacancy announcement and posted in accessible location(s) within the area of consideration.
2. Qualifications determinations may be made and referral lists may be issued at various times during the life of the announcement, by using specific cut-off dates or as needed depending upon the need to fill a vacancy or the volume of applications.
3. A referral list may not be issued prior to the minimum timeframes allowed for the area of consideration or grade level.

23.22f - Confidentiality

Those directly involved in any phase of the merit promotion process shall safeguard the privacy of individual applicants and not identify applicants to individuals not directly involved in the process.

23.22g - Outreach Plan

The supervisor of the position to be filled shall prepare an outreach plan. At a minimum, the plan must document the outreach strategies utilized to identify quality candidates for the position.

23.23 - Vacancy Announcement Provisions and Timeframes

23.23a - Applicant Information

Supervisors, in consultation with human resources specialists, shall identify the information needed from candidates to make a selection decision. The information needed may vary by occupation and shall be used to determine the extent to which candidates meet the specialized experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), and any other competencies required to perform the duties of the position.

23.23b - Area of Consideration

1. Criteria for Setting Minimum Area of Consideration. When setting the minimum area of consideration, all of the following criteria must be met:
 - a. Create fair and open competition.
 - b. Pursue a diverse applicant pool.
 - c. Yield well-qualified applicants.

2. Standard Areas of Consideration. For the Forest Service, the standard areas of consideration are:

- a. Government wide.
- b. USDAwide.
- c. Forest Servicewide.
- d. Regionwide.
- e. Forestwide.
- f. Stationwide.
- g. Institutewide.
- h. Areawide.
- i. Job Corps Centers.
- j. Washington Office.
- k. Law Enforcement and Investigations.

3. Non-Standard Areas.

- a. Units may use non-standard areas of consideration for positions that serve more than one unit (for example, zones, provinces, clusters, Albuquerque Service Center (ASC)), provided the minimum area of consideration in section 23.23b, paragraph 4 and the criteria in section 23.23b, paragraphs 1a through c are met.
- b. The basis for the decision to advertise using a non-standard area must be documented on the Outreach Plan. Examples of non-standard areas include:
 - (1) Zonewide. Units that serve more than one unit (for example, multiple forests, multiple regions).
 - (2) Local commuting area.

4. Minimum Area of Consideration. For permanent positions, the minimum area of consideration is as follows:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Minimum Area of Consideration</u>	<u>Minimum Timeframe</u>
GS-14/15 and all line officer positions	Servicewide	28 calendar days
GS-11 through GS-13 positions	Washington Office/region/station/ Institute/Area/Job Corpswide	14 calendar days
GS/WG-10 and below	Forest/zone/province-wide	14 calendar days

5. Exceptions to Established Minimum Areas.

a. The Regional Foresters, Forest Supervisors, Station Director, Institute Director, Area Director, Job Corps National Field Office Director and the Washington Office Director of Human Capital Management may make exceptions for GS-11, -12, and -13 positions (excluding line officer positions) in unique situations, such as reorganizations and downsizing, as long as the criteria in section 23.23b, paragraphs 1a through c are met.

b. For a time-limited promotion beyond 120 days without a possibility of becoming permanent, Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Institute Director, Area Director, and Job Corps National Field Office Director may modify the area of consideration and timeframes, as long as the criteria in section 23.23b, paragraphs 1a through c are met.

6. Consideration of Applicants.

a. Do not consider applicants from outside the specified area of consideration. Give applicants, who are not required to compete (that is, lateral, change to lower grade, Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA and so forth.), concurrent consideration regardless of the specified area of consideration. Give appropriate consideration to Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) and/or, when a position is advertised Governmentwide, Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) eligibles, when they apply for a specific vacancy and are determined to be well qualified.

b. Applications from non-competitive eligibles are accepted and referred to the selecting official at any time prior to final selection.

c. For any conflict in timeframes, the provisions in existing collective bargaining agreements shall prevail for bargaining unit positions (5 U.S.C. 7114).

23.23c - Vacancy Announcement Provisions

For purposes of consistency, all units should use the vacancy announcement template, which is located at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm> under "Employment." The automated staffing system will be programmed with a standard template.

1. Minimum provisions of a vacancy announcement include:
 - a. Announcement number.
 - b. Opening/closing date and area of consideration. (Vacancy announcements may not open or close on weekends or holidays.)
 - c. Title, series, pay plan, grade, and promotion potential, if any.
 - d. Tour of duty.
 - e. Organization and duty location.
 - f. Summary of the duties and responsibilities, including any fire suppression requirements.
 - g. Qualification requirements, including specialized experience definition and evaluation criteria.
 - h. Selective placement factors, if applicable.
 - i. Method of evaluation.
 - j. Application instructions.
 - k. Bargaining unit status.
 - l. Availability of Forest Service affiliated day care facilities.
 - m. Availability of Government housing.
 - n. Career Transition Assistance Program and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP/ICTAP) provisions, when applicable. (The definition of well-qualified and information on how CTAP and ICTAP candidates may apply, including the proof of eligibility required.)
 - o. USDA statement on Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO)/Civil Rights.
 - p. Forest Service reasonable accommodation statement.
 - q. Information on how to file an informal complaint of discrimination.

- r. Information on eligibility under Veterans' Recruitment Appointments (VRA) or Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA), when applicable.

Relocation expenses shall be paid to an employee selected under merit promotion procedures; therefore, statements concerning relocation expenses shall not be addressed in internal vacancy announcements for permanent positions. For temporary promotions, the vacancy announcement should address the nature of any travel and/or relocation or moving expenses that shall be paid.

23.23d - Required Documents

1. Vacancy announcements shall specify the required documents to be submitted.
2. Applicants shall not be required to submit supporting documentation at the time of application unless specifically required to determine qualifications for a position, except for transcripts that are required to determine qualifications and military preference documents. Applicants will be contacted if they need to provide other documents.
 - a. At the time of selection, supporting documents may be requested.
 - b. Give selected applicants a tentative job offer, pending receipt of supporting documentation required.
3. Vacancy announcements issued using the automated staffing system shall inform applicants of an alternative method for applying, other than on-line. The alternative method guidance shall include:
 - a. How to request a hardcopy application package and where to send their hardcopy application.
 - b. Submission of all required documents must be in the same package in order to receive consideration.

23.23e - Voluntary Document

Request applicants to submit Standard Form 181, Ethnicity and Race Identification, along with their hardcopy application package. Notify them in the vacancy announcement that this form is entirely voluntary and will be used for statistical purposes only. Separate this form from the application package. Ensure that managers and supervisors do not have access to these forms.

23.23f - Transmittal of Applications

1. Transmittal of application by automated application system, personal delivery, fax, e-mail, agency internal mail system, traditional or overnight mail service is permitted in response to vacancy announcements in accordance with the instructions contained in each vacancy announcement.
 - a. Applications electronically transmitted (automated application, e-mail or fax) must be received on or before the closing date stated in the vacancy announcement.

Electronic signatures are acceptable; however, original signatures may be required after the candidate is selected. Applications submitted via an automated application system are accepted up to 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time/Eastern Daylight Time on the closing date.

- b. Hard copy applications must be received or postmarked on or before the closing date stated in the vacancy announcement. Hard copy applications that are personally delivered must be received by the close of the business day. Locations and business day hours may vary.
2. The agency shall not accept from individuals applications received in franked or metered Government envelopes.
3. It is the applicants' responsibility of the applicant to ensure completeness and timely postmark/ transmittal of the application regardless of submission method used. The Forest Service assumes no responsibility for late delivery or nonreceipt of electronic or hard copy applications.
4. Do not accept additions or changes to application packages after the closing date of the vacancy announcement except in situations identified in paragraph 5.
5. In situations where an employee's opportunity to apply is hampered because of an extreme emergency, such as, fire, flood or extenuating personal circumstances, an application may be accepted after the closing date or a vacancy announcement may be extended by the servicing human resources office on a case-by-case basis, but must be officially documented in merit promotion files.
6. In situations where an employee is hampered from applying, the employee may be given an opportunity to apply to a vacancy announcement:
 - a. Pursuant to 5 CFR 352.314, employees on an international assignment shall be considered for all promotions within the area of consideration for which they would have been considered had they not been absent. This situation should be carefully documented because it may determine the reemployment grade when they return from their foreign assignment.
 - b. In cases where a job offer has not already been extended, all other employees absent for legitimate reasons, where they could not reasonably have knowledge of the vacancy announcement, should be given an opportunity to apply.
 - c. Employees on active military duty.

23.23g - Voluntary Application Files

The Forest Service shall not establish a voluntary application system.

23.24 - Candidate Evaluation and Referral

23.24a - Candidate Evaluation

1. When a traditional vacancy (non-automated) announcement is used, human resources specialists shall document the specific basis for placing candidates in the eligible or quality group in relation to the criteria outlined in the vacancy announcement.
2. Establish and document criteria for the placement of candidates in the quality group (crediting plan) prior to announcing the vacancy.
 - a. Eligible group. The eligible group candidates who meet or will meet time-in-grade, time-after-competitive appointment, and the requirements of the OPM Qualification Standards for General Schedule or Wage Grade positions within 30 days after the closing date of the announcement for stand-alone announcements or within 30 days of the issuance of a referral list for open-continuous announcements, along with any selective factors identified in the vacancy announcement.
 - b. Quality group. Candidates who are found to be eligible when further evaluated against the following criteria:
 - (1) Specific job-related work experience that is clearly above the minimum requirements listed in the OPM Qualifications Standards Operating Manual for General Schedule and Wage Grade positions and any selective factors. Examples of experience that would place a candidate in the quality group must be documented by the supervisor of the position, in consultation with the human resources specialist, for each competency or knowledge, skill, and ability (KSA) (evaluation criteria) in a crediting plan; or
 - (2) Evidence of high ability for the work of the position, such as successful completion of an accredited educational (academic or trades) program directly related to the KSAs/competencies required for the position must be documented for each competency or KSA (evaluation criteria) in a crediting plan.
3. Subject matter experts or evaluation panels may be used in the candidate evaluation process as needed.
4. Eligible applicants who may be non-competitively reassigned or demoted to the target grade of the announced position need not be further evaluated against the quality grouping criteria, and shall be referred as non-competitive eligible candidates.

23.24b - Referral

1. Human resources specialists shall refer all candidates who meet the quality group criteria to the selecting official.

2. When there are insufficient (less than 3) candidates for the quality group, then all candidates who are in the quality group and eligible group shall be referred. Refer candidates at the grade level for which they meet basic qualification requirements.
3. A human resources specialist with delegated employment authority shall issue a referral list (Form FS-6100-12, Certificate of Candidates), along with appropriate application material.
4. For multi-grade announcements, refer candidates at all grade levels for which they meet the quality group criteria.

Collectively, for all grades advertised, if 3 or more candidates meet the quality group criteria, then the basic requirement for issuance of a referral list is met. If there are less than 3 quality candidates collectively, then combine and refer the quality group candidates and the basically eligible candidates.

23.24c - Noncompetitive Candidates

Eligible candidates from noncompetitive sources (for example, reinstatement eligibles, lateral reassignments or current Federal employees who previously held or currently hold the same or higher grade as the full performance level (FPL) of the vacancy, as well as employees who now hold or previously held a position with promotion potential to the same or higher grade level of the FPL of the vacancy, including those outside the area of consideration) may be noncompetitively referred to the selecting official by the human resources specialist. Refer these noncompetitive candidates to the selecting official on Form FS-6100-12, Certificate of Candidates specifically marked “Noncompetitive Eligibles.”

23.25 - Selection

23.25a - Right to Select

The selecting official is entitled to make or not make the selection from any of the candidates on the Referral Lists based on judgment of how well the candidate will perform in the particular position being filled, or to select from other appropriate sources, such as reinstatement, transfer, people with targeted disabilities, or Veteran’s Recruitment Appointment (VRA) eligibles, after following the order of consideration detailed in Appendix F, Order Of Consideration When Filling A Vacancy.

23.25b - Selection Methods

Selecting officials, in consultation with human resources specialists, shall determine the best method to evaluate the extent to which candidates possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) or competencies required to perform the duties of the position.

1. The selecting official may personally review the materials submitted by each candidate and make a selection based on personal knowledge of the duties of the position

to be filled and relative importance of the key characteristics required to successfully perform in the position.

2. The selecting official may choose to contact references provided by the candidate and factor that information into the selection decision.
3. Give consideration to performance appraisals and incentive awards. In considering performance appraisals, candidates shall not be placed at a disadvantage solely because of the appraisal system in which they received a rating.
4. The selecting official may assign a selection advisory panel to conduct a post-certificate evaluation of candidates that must involve additional assessment information beyond the application, such as interviews, reference checks, and so on to make recommendations to the selecting official. This must be done in accordance with applicable collective bargaining unit agreements. The selecting official may then consider panel recommendations, review candidate materials as appropriate, and make a selection.
5. The selecting official/selection advisory panel is encouraged to interview the candidates. The selecting official/selection advisory panel may choose to interview all, some, or none of the candidates. Base the decision to interview or not to interview on job-related reasons. Interviews may be conducted by telephone, face to face, use of a panel, or any other pertinent method or combination of methods. The selecting official/selection advisory panel shall then review the results of all information received and make a selection or recommendation for selection.

23.25c - Referral List Timeframes

1. The referral list should be returned to the issuing human resources office as quickly as is reasonable; however the Referral List must be returned not later than 60 days after issuance.
2. In very rare cases when there are extenuating circumstances, a 30-day extension may be requested and approved in writing only by Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, Institute Director, Job Corps National Field Director, and Deputy Chiefs. These requests must also be submitted prior to the expiration date and justification for the extension must be documented. Extensions approved at this level are typically for situations such as local emergencies.
3. Referral lists may be extended beyond 90 days for emergency situations only upon formal written request and approval by the Director of Human Capital Management Washington Office. Extensions approved at this level are typically for situations which involve emergencies of a national scope, such as employee freezes, natural disasters, lapse in appropriations, and so forth. For bargaining unit positions, notify the union of these extensions.

23.25d - Multi-grade Vacancies

For multi-grade vacancies, place candidates selected below the target grade level of the position under a development plan.

1. When a selected candidate does not meet the quality group criteria at the highest level for which basic qualifications requirements are met, then an analysis of their qualifications will be used to determine when the candidate can be promoted. The promotion date shall be no less than 90 days from the effective date of assignment to the new position.
2. Promotions will normally occur upon obtaining a successful performance evaluation of the work of the position and successful completion of the development plan, as well as meeting basic qualification and time-in-grade requirements.

23.26 - Case File Documentation

23.26a - Records and Information

Selecting officials are required to document the reason(s) for candidate selection in all cases.

1. Merit Promotion Requirement. A record of each case file must be sufficient to allow reconstruction of the action, including documentation on how candidates were evaluated. At a minimum, the records must include the items listed in exhibit 01:
2. Noncompetitive Promotion (accretion of duties) Requirements. A record for each noncompetitive promotion based on the assignment of additional duties and responsibilities must be sufficient to reconstruct the rationale for the noncompetitive action. At a minimum, the record must include all of the following:
 - a. Form SF-52, Request for Personnel Action.
 - b. Old and newly classified position descriptions, including evaluation statements.
 - c. Decision documentation. The supervisor is required to document all viable options and the basis for the final assignment of additional grade-controlling duties on the Exception to Competition Form, which is available under the Employment Menu, Merit Promotion Plan Tools section, at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/hrm>.
3. Retention of Records. These records may be destroyed after 2 years, or after the program has been formally evaluated by OPM (whichever comes first), provided no grievance, appeal, or complaint is pending (FSH 6209.11, sec. 41).
4. Employee Rights. Employees may request the following information from their servicing human resources office:
 - a. About the Merit Promotion Plan.

- (1) Explanation of any part of the plan.
- (2) Details of governing regulation(s).
- (3) The qualifications required for a position.
- (4) Details of the evaluation techniques.
- b. About a specific vacancy:
 - (1) If the employee was considered.
 - (2) If the employee was basically qualified.
 - (3) If the employee was in the quality candidate grouping.
 - (4) Who was selected.
 - (5) Feedback obtained from the supervisor of the position being filled on how an applicant may improve chances for selection on future vacancies.
 - (6) Documentation used to evaluate the employee.
 - (7) Other information required by collective bargaining agreements.
 - (8) Number of applications received.
 - (9) Number of candidates referred.

Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook

Chapter 20 - Internal Placement

Amendment: 6109.12-2018-1

Effective date: August 29, 2018

23.26a - Exhibit 01

Merit Promotion Requirements

Document	Traditional	Automated Staffing System	
	Hard Copy Case File	Electronic Case File	Hard Copy Case File
a. Form SF-52, Request for Personnel Action	X		X
b. Form AD-332, Position Description and Cover Sheet and/or automated system PD Cover Sheet, Position Description, and Evaluation Statement	X	X	
c. Outreach Plan	X		X
d. Crediting Plan	X	X	
e. Documentation that Workforce Restructuring and Placement System (WRAPS) and Reemployment Priority Listing (RPL) requirements have been met and that the job has been posted on USA jobs	X		
f. Documentation that CTAP/ICTAP requirements have been met	X	X	
g. Vacancy Announcement	X	X	
h. Applicant qualifications certification	X	X	
i. Form AD-735, Evaluation of Candidates or automated staffing system equivalent;	X	X	
j. Referral List, Form FS-6100-12, Certificate of Candidates or automated staffing system equivalent	X	X	
k. Separate Referral Lists, Form FS-6100-12, Certificate of Candidates for Noncompetitive Eligibles or automated staffing system equivalent, if applicable	X	X	
l. All application packages (*Hard copy applications scannable bubblesheets received for automated staffing system issued vacancy announcements)	X	X	X*
m. Copy of application of selected applicant	X	X	
n. Confirmation letter	X		X
o. Non-select letters	X	X	
p. Interview questions, if applicable; and *interview questions other than those generated by the automated staffing system	X	X	X*
q. Reason(s) for selecting the successful applicant (when a panel is used, the combined panel consensus is documented)	X	X	

23.26b - Corrective Action

If a violation of competitive employment practices occurs, corrective action shall be taken. See Appendix A, Guide for Corrective Actions, for additional information.

23.27 - Appendices

23.27a - Appendix A – Guide for Corrective Actions

(The direction in this appendix has been adapted from adapted from FSH 6109.41 - DPM 751, Appendix A-4.)

A. General

1. Alternative actions. Failure to adhere strictly to laws, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations and instructions, agency policies and guidelines, and agency promotion plans is to be rectified promptly by the OPM or the agency involved. Action to rectify a violation may involve 1) an employee who was erroneously promoted; 2) an employee or employees who were not promoted or considered because of a violation; or 3) officials who caused or sanctioned a violation. It also may involve correction of program deficiencies. The nature and extent of actions to be taken in any case have to be determined on the basis of all the facts in the case, with due regard to the circumstances surrounding the violation, to the equitable and legal rights of the parties concerned, and to the interests of the Government.

2. Types of promotion violations.

a. Procedural. A procedural violation occurs when a promotion action does not conform to the requirements of the applicable promotion plan. It may include, for example:

- (1) Failure to consider an employee entitled to consideration;
- (2) Selection of an employee not in the best qualified group; or
- (3) Failure to give the required weight to an evaluation factor prescribed by the plan.

b. Regulatory. A regulatory violation occurs when the promoted employee did not meet legal requirements or OPM regulatory requirements at the time of promotion. It may include, for example:

- (1) Failure to meet time-in-grade requirements; or
- (2) Failure to meet OPM qualification requirements.

c. Program. A program violation occurs when agency promotion guidelines do not conform to OPM requirements or agency promotion plans do not conform to agency guidelines. It may include, for example:

- (1) Use of inappropriate evaluation methods;
- (2) Establishment of inappropriate minimum areas of consideration; or
- (3) Failure to consult employees and employee organizations when required.

B. Action involving erroneously promoted employee

1. Retention in position.

a. General. The general rule is that an erroneously promoted employee may be retained in the position only if the promotion action can be corrected to conform essentially to all OPM and agency requirements; however, corrective action decisions must be tempered by all the facts surrounding the violation. Under some conditions, it may be permissible to retain the employee in the position even when the general rule does not apply.

b. Procedural violation. In this kind of violation, an employee may be retained in the position only if:

- (1) Reconstruction of the promotion action shows that he or she could have been selected had the proper procedures been followed at the time the action was taken; or
- (2) The OPM office (regional or central) with geographic jurisdiction gives approval.

c. Regulatory violation. In this kind of violation, an employee may be retained in the position only if:

- (1) He or she now meets the necessary qualification or regulatory requirements; and
- (2) The OPM office (regional or central) with geographic jurisdiction gives approval.

d. Program violation. An employee generally may be retained in the position if there was no accompanying procedural or regulatory violation. The OPM is to be notified of the program correction made.

2. Corrective action. If an employee is not retained in the position, they must be returned to their former position or placed in another position for which they are qualified. If the latter position is in a higher grade or level than the position the employee was in prior to the erroneous promotion, the position change is made under competitive promotion procedures as though the employee were still serving at the grade or level from which erroneously promoted.

3. OPM approval. OPM approval for retaining an employee in the position is dependent on the nature, extent, and seriousness of the violations involved in the particular situation. OPM approval takes into account such factors as:

- a. How close the employee was to meeting qualification or regulatory requirements at the time of promotion, if a regulatory violation is involved;
- b. How close the employee was to being in the quality group, if a procedural violation is involved;
- c. How much time has elapsed since promotion; and
- d. Whether employees who were or should have been in the group certified to the selecting official can be identified and whether they have been promoted or have left the agency.

C. Action involving nonselected employees

1. If the action taken to correct the erroneous promotion was to require that the position be vacated, an employee who was not promoted or given proper consideration because of the violation (that is, an employee in the quality group who was not selected or an employee who should have been in this group but was not) shall be considered for promotion to the vacated position before candidates are considered under a new promotion or other placement action.
2. If the corrective action did not include vacating the position, an employee who was not promoted or given proper consideration because of the violation shall be given priority consideration under a new promotion or other placement action. Agencies may make the final determination on how they will handle actions involving nonselected employees, except when actions are mandated by law or regulation.

D. Action involving responsible officials

Violations of the promotion program can have a serious impact on Human Capital Management that goes beyond the particular cases involved. Proper promotion actions are essential to ensure that the agency is being staffed by the best persons available and employees are receiving fair consideration. Thus, management officials have a responsibility to see that violations do not occur either by error or design.

23.27b - Appendix B – Merit Promotion Requirements (5 CFR 335.103)

1. Requirement 1. Each agency must establish procedures for promoting employees which are based on merit and are available in writing to candidates. Agencies must list appropriate exceptions, including those required by law or regulation. Actions under a promotion plan - whether identification, qualification, evaluation, or selection of candidates - shall be made without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or nonaffiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, nondisqualifying physical disability, or age, and shall be based solely on job-related criteria.
2. Requirement 2. Areas of consideration must be sufficiently broad to ensure the availability of high quality candidates, taking into account the nature and level of the

positions covered. Agencies must also ensure that employees within the area of consideration who are absent for legitimate reason (for example, on detail, on leave, at training courses, in the military service, or serving in public international organizations or on Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments), receive appropriate consideration for promotion.

3. Requirement 3. To be eligible for promotion or placement, candidates must meet the minimum qualification standards, using a qualification method approved by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Methods of evaluation for training which leads to promotion (for example, special provisions for qualifications), must be consistent with the CFR. Due weight shall be given to performance appraisal and incentive awards.

4. Requirement 4. Selection procedures will provide for management's right to select or not select from among a group of best qualified candidates. They will also provide for management's right to select from other appropriate sources, such as reemployment priority lists, reinstatement, transfer, disability or Veterans' Recruitment Appointment eligible, or those within reach on an appropriate OPM certificate. In deciding which source or sources to use, agencies have an obligation to determine which is most likely to best meet the agency mission objectives, contribute fresh ideas and new viewpoints, and meet the agency's EEOC MD-715, Model EEO Program.

5. Requirement 5. Administration of the promotion system will include record keeping and the provision of necessary information to employees and the public, ensuring that individuals' rights to privacy are protected. Each agency must maintain a temporary record of each promotion sufficient to allow reconstruction of the promotion action, including documentation on how candidates were rated and ranked. These records may be destroyed after 2 years or after the program has been formally evaluated by OPM (whichever comes first) if the time limit for grievance has lapsed before the anniversary date.

23.27c - Appendix C – Merit System Principles

(The direction in this appendix has been adapted from Title 5, United States Code, section 2301 (5 U.S.C. 2301).)

1. Recruit qualified individuals from appropriate sources to achieve a work force from all segments of society and to select and advance individuals solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills after fair and open competition that assures equal opportunity.

2. Treat employees and applicants for employment fairly in all aspects of Human Capital Management without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or nonaffiliation, race, color, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or nondisqualifying disability, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.

3. Provide equal pay for work of equal value with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition for excellent performance.
4. All employees should maintain a high standard of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
5. Manage the Federal work force efficiently and effectively.
6. Retain employees based on the adequacy of their performance; correct inadequate performance; and separate those who cannot or will not meet required standards.
7. Provide employees with effective education and training when it will result in better organizational and individual performance.
8. Protect employees against arbitrary action, favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes; and prohibit employees from using their official authority or influence to interfere with or affect the result of an election or a nomination for election.
9. Protect employees against reprisal for lawfully disclosing information regarding violations of laws, rules, or regulations, or mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

23.27d - Appendix D – Prohibited Personnel Practices

(The direction in this appendix has been adapted from Title 5, United States Code, section 2302 (5 U.S.C. 2302).)

Any employee who has authority to take, direct others to take, recommend or approve any personnel action shall not:

1. Illegally discriminate. Discriminate for or against any employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or political affiliation.
2. Seek or use improper recommendations. Solicit or consider any recommendation, oral or written, on a person who requests or is being considered for any personnel action unless the recommendation or statement is an evaluation of the person's work performance, ability, aptitude, or general qualifications; or is an evaluation of character, loyalty, and suitability.
3. Coerce political activity. Coerce political activity to require political contributions or service or to retaliate against any employee or applicant for refusal to engage in political activity.
4. Obstruct a person's right to compete for employment. Deceive or willfully obstruct any person with respect to such person's right to compete for Federal employment.

5. Encourage a person to withdraw from competition. Influence anyone to withdraw from competition, whether to improve or injure the prospects of any other applicant.
6. Grant an improper advantage. Grant any preference or advantage not authorized by law, rule, or regulation to a job applicant or employee (including defining the scope or manner of competition or the requirements for any position).
7. Engage in nepotism. Appoint, employ, promote, or advance or advocate for appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement, any individual who is a relative of an employee if the position is in the agency in which the employee is serving as a public official or over which the employee exercises jurisdiction or control as an official.
8. Take reprisal for lawful disclosure. Take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, a personnel action against employees or applicants who lawfully disclose violations of law, rule, or regulation; or gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific damage to public health or safety.
9. Take reprisal for filing an appeal. Take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, a personnel action against employees or applicants who exercise their appeal, complaint, or grievance rights; who testify or cooperate with an inspector general or the Special Counsel; or who refuse to break the law.
10. Unlawfully discriminate for off-duty conduct. Discriminate for or against an employee or applicant on the basis of conduct which does not adversely affect the employee's or applicant's performance or the performance of others.
11. Violate merit principles. Take or fail to take any other personnel action in violation of a law, rule, or regulation directly related to merit system principles.
12. Violate Statutory or Regulatory Veterans' Preference Requirement. Knowingly take or fail to take a personnel action if that action or failure to act would violate statutory or regulatory veterans' preference requirement.

23.27e - Appendix E – Forest Service Repromotion Plan (5 CFR 536.301)

1. Coverage. As required by Title VIII of Public Law 95-454, "Civil Service Reform Act of 1978," incumbents of positions classified in the GS, GM, or similar pay schedules and in any prevailing rate schedule may be repromoted if they were reduced in grade because of:
 - a. An error in the prior classification of a position;
 - b. A change in classification standards without a change in duties and responsibilities;
 - c. A change in the duties and responsibilities caused by a gradual erosion or by management action;

- d. The application of reduction-in-force procedures; or
 - e. A reorganization, when qualifying under FSM 6152.3.
2. Purpose. To provide placement opportunities to covered employees to any position for which they qualify that is equal to the grade or pay of the position from which demoted.
3. Exceptions. Types of actions excepted are:
- a. Promotion to positions filled by career promotion as defined in FSH 6109.41-DPM 335, Appendix B;
 - b. Positions filled by individuals exercising statutory reemployment rights (for example, return from the military, or restoration after being separated due to compensable injury or disability);
 - c. Positions filled by nondiscretionary action directed by a qualified legal or administrative body; and
 - d. Positions filled by demotion or lateral reassignment of an agency employee (position may be filled by demotion, lateral reassignment, or transfer of a non-agency employee if there are no qualified agency employees entitled to placement consideration).
4. Intervening Grades. An employee who has been downgraded more than one grade has placement consideration rights to all intervening grades. For example, an employee downgraded from a GS-12 to a GS-6, has placement consideration rights to all GS-7 through GS-12 positions for which qualified.
5. Higher Grade Positions. Where the vacancy for which the downgraded employee is qualified is in a higher grade or has higher promotion potential than that previously held, the downgraded employee must compete for the position under normal competitive requirements, including following any application procedures (such as those prescribed in a vacancy announcement).
6. Agency Assessment Plan. The agency shall operate the plan in a manner that is consistent with equal employment opportunity principles and in accordance with EEOC MD-715, Model EEO Program.
7. Placement Plan Requirements.
- a. An employee who has been placed in a lower grade position through no fault of the employee, as a result of one of the covered actions, has repromotion placement rights to Forest Service positions within the employee's current commuting area for 2 years.
 - b. Employing offices shall maintain a repromotion placement list of all their downgraded employees, and also establish a repromotion placement file containing notification procedures, an application for each employee, and notification of

repromotion considerations that each employee has received. Records of considerations must be retained for 2 years or until the employee is repromoted, whichever occurs first.

- c. Document the reasons for not placing a downgraded employee in a vacancy. Fully documented reasons must be retained in the repromotion placement file. The reasons must be job-related.
- d. Repromotion job offers must be made in writing, allowing the employee no less than 7 working days to respond.
- e. Downgraded employees who refuse repromotion to a position, the grade and pay of which are equal to or greater than the position from which they are demoted in their commuting area, are to be removed from the placement list and their benefits under grade and pay retention terminated. Employees must be notified of this requirement in the offer of repromotion and again after any refusal.

Note: Additional repromotion requirements specific to units can be found in the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

23.27f - Appendix F – Order of Consideration When Filling a Vacancy

During the recruitment process, managers must be aware that there may be individuals who are entitled to special or “priority” consideration for the vacancy. In some cases, the individual is entitled to be placed in the vacancy (placement rights); in other cases the entitlement falls short of a mandated placement (priority placement consideration). The nature of the special consideration depends upon the program involved. Consider individuals in the following order:

1. Forest Service employee with statutory return rights from military furlough, Workers Compensation, or international assignment.
2. Individual who has been awarded a position as a result of a formal complaint or other dispute or granted a position as a settlement, provided that the settlement does not exceed full relief; or a “nondiscretionary action directed by a qualified legal or administrative body” (for example, Merit System Protection Board (MSPB), Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Office of Special Counsel, courts).
3. A position was abolished and is being reestablished, and an employee received a directed reassignment out of the former position and has a return right.
4. Forest Service employees subject to noncompetitive reassignment or voluntary change to lower grade under a reorganization plan, known as a pre-WRAPs (Workforce Restructuring and Placement System) plan. Offers of placement must be made in the order indicated in the labor agreement for bargaining unit employees, and for nonbargaining unit employees in accordance with agency policy.
5. Forest Service employee listed in the Workforce Restructuring and Placement System. Offers of placement must be made in the order indicated in the labor agreement for

bargaining unit employees, and for nonbargaining unit employees in accordance with agency policy.

6. Surplus or displaced employees in the commuting area who are eligible under the USDA Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP), who have applied and are well qualified for the position. Under the CTAP individuals must be considered in the following order: Forest Service employees with reduction-in-force (RIF) separation notice; Forest Service employees subject to displacement under WRAPS; other USDA eligible employees. CTAP eligibles must be considered and placed in the position unless there is a job-related reason for not doing so.

7. Employee who was not promoted or considered for a position because of a violation of the Merit Promotion Plan. Employees must receive priority consideration as detailed in Appendix A, Guide for Corrective Actions in this Servicewide Forest Service Merit Promotion Plan.

8. An individual awarded a position as a result of an informal complaint or other dispute or granted a position as a settlement, provided that the settlement does not exceed full relief (also known as “discretionary actions directed by an appropriate management official).

9. Forest Service bargaining unit employee with repromotion rights to the vacancy.

10. USDA, including Forest Service, employees with repromotion rights in the commuting area of the vacancy.

11. Former bargaining unit employees with reemployment rights separated from the RIF competitive area of the vacancy. Offers of placement must be made in the order indicated in the labor agreement for bargaining unit employees, and for nonbargaining unit employees in accordance with agency policy.

12. Former USDA employees (including former Forest Service employees) with reemployment rights in the commuting area of the vacancy per the USDA Reemployment Priority List (RPL).

13. When the vacancy is advertised governmentwide or all sources, displaced employees in the commuting area who are eligible under the Intergovernmental Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP).

14. All others not included above including eligibles on the referral list (Form FS-6100-12, Certificate of Candidates) or the Noncompetitive Eligibles referral list can be considered and/or selected.

23.27g - Appendix G – Automated Staffing System Vacancy Announcement Numbering

The following establishes the numbering scheme for vacancy announcements initiated in an automated staffing system.

Agency Announcement Number: The announcement number will identify where the position being filled is located, NOT the location of the Servicing Human Resources Office.

Effective date: August 29, 2018

Required			Fiscal Year		D A S H	WO/Region/Station/Area/IITF/JCCCC Staff Unit or Forest District or Lab (Up to 8 characters, as needed)								D A S H	Sequentially assigned number			Area of Consideration		Space										
A	D	S	0	5	-									-																

The first 3 characters will be ADS.

The next 2 digits identify the fiscal year in which the vacancy announcement is issued.

Enter a dash.

The next 4 characters identify the unit: The Region, Station, Area, WO, JCCCC, or IITF.

The next 4 characters identify the sub-unit within the unit.

Enter a dash.

The next 3 digits are sequentially-assigned numbers starting with 001 at the beginning of the fiscal year.

The next 1 or 2 characters identify the Area of Consideration.

Forest Service Handbook 6109.12 – Employment and Benefits Handbook

Chapter 20 - Internal Placement

Amendment: 6109.12-2018-1

Effective date: August 29, 2018

Character	Means the vacancy is advertised:
DP	Demo Permanent Position
D	Demo Term Position
DT	Demo Temporary Position
G	Governmentwide
U	USDA-wide
FS	Forest Servicewide
R	Regionwide
F	Forestwide
S	Stationwide
I	Institutewide (International Institute of Tropical Forestry only)
A	Area-wide (Northeast Area only)
J	Job Corps Centers-wide
WO	Washington Office
LE	Law Enforcement and Investigations
L	Local commuting area
O	Non-standard area of consideration (for example; zone or province-wide) [O designates other]

For example:

Announcement Number:
ADS05-R3KAI-NK-004DP

ADS05-JC-ANA-012G

ADS05-NE-DEL-003S

ADS05-WO-LANDS-279FS

ADS05-R8-NFNC-004L

Represents:

A DEMO announcement for a permanent position in Region 3, Kaibab NF, North Kaibab RD

A Government-wide announcement for a position on the Anaconda Job Corps Civilian Conservation Center

A Station-wide announcement for a position at the Delaware Lab of the Northeastern Station

A Forest Servicewide announcement for a position in the WO, Lands Staff

A local commuting area announcement for a position in R8, National Forest of North Carolina

24 - Foreign Assignments

Technical assistance from the Forest Service is usually provided at the request and sponsorship of the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) or the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Such assignments, whether under details, transfers, or a participating agency service agreement (PASA) with AID are considered highly beneficial to the Forest Service.

24.1 - Qualifications and Attributes

Qualifications for foreign assignments include appropriate and current technical skills such as required in domestic career positions. Additional desirable attributes are prior overseas experience, relevant language proficiency, and timely availability. The selected person must be able to identify with the needs and adjust to the customs of the country where employed.

24.2 - Program Operation

Foreign assignment opportunities come through various channels, but usually through the International Programs Staff in the Washington Office. If an international organization contacts an region, station, the Area, the Institute, or an individual directly, the International Programs Staff must be contacted prior to any commitments. In every case a release must be obtained from the International Programs Staff. Since each assignment has unique characteristics, both the International Programs Staff and Human Capital Management Staff shall be consulted for proper clearances prior to committing to a foreign assignment.

24.3 - Reemployment and Other Benefits

Requirements on reemployment rights and types of agreements for employees on foreign assignments is in 5 U.S.C. chapter 35 and 5 CFR part 352. Forest Service employees released for international assignments are normally granted the benefits described in sections 24.31 and 24.32.

24.31 - Reemployment Rights

Unless other assignments are made, reemployment rights will be effective back to the region, station, area, or institute from which the employee was assigned.

24.32 - Benefits

Rights to retain coverage under the retirement, health, and life insurance system are normally granted. The employee in some instances must make payment for these directly to the National Finance Center.

25 - Career Enhancement Program [Reserved]

26 - Employment Outreach Procedures [Reserved]

27 - Recruitment Procedures [Reserved]

28 - Exit Interviews [Reserved]