

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

**Forest Service Handbook 6109.16 – Demonstration Project Handbook
Zero Code**

Amendment: 6109.16-1992-1

Effective date: October 21, 1992

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: F. Dale Robertson, Chief

Date approved:

Responsible Staff:

Last Change:

Superseded Document(s):

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

6109.16: The New Demonstration Project Handbook, FSH 6109.16, provides direction on the implementation at Forest Service experimental sites of the USDA demonstration project, which is testing four major innovations in current personnel policy and practice. These four areas are (1) delegations of authority for recruitment and hiring; (2) streamlined candidate assessment and selection process; (3) recruitment incentives; and (4) extended probationary period for scientists. The zero code has exhibits containing the standard operating procedures and the project plan. Chapter 10 covers Recruitment, Candidate Evaluation, and Selection. Chapter 20 covers the Extended Probationary Period for scientists.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

IV. Training

A coordinated and extensive training effort, for managers and personnelists at both experimental and comparison sites, will be conducted prior to project implementation. The purpose of the training is to ensure that the experimental interventions are implemented as originally conceived, and that the intent of all interventions, policies, and procedures developed in connection with the project are clearly communicated to all managers, supervisors, employees, and others affected by project implementation.

Training will be conducted prior to implementation to ensure that managers and personnelists understand not only the internal and standard operating procedures established in connection with the project but also the expanded role of the personnelist in providing management advisory services.

Training and orientation will include the following major elements:

1. An in-depth description of each of the project interventions, including philosophy and expected effects;
2. A detailed outline of the policies and procedures established in support of each intervention; and,
3. An overview of the project evaluation effort, including the methods through which data collection will be accomplished.

More specifically focused and ad hoc training modules will be developed as additional training needs are identified throughout the life of the project.

To the extent that the continuing success of the project is a function of the adequacy of the training effort, periodic refresher training sessions are planned for the purpose of ensuring that experimental interventions continue to be implemented as originally conceived. As the system was designed to increase managerial and supervisory accountability for the integrity as well as the success of the recruitment and hiring program, a training effort particularly directed at managers and supervisors is critical to implementation. A discussion of the

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Department's plan to monitor managerial accountability follows in Section V., below.

V. Managerial Accountability

Managerial accountability will be monitored as follows:

1. The extent to which merit system principles are upheld will be examined during regularly scheduled reviews of agency recruitment and hiring activity conducted as part of the Department's ongoing personnel management evaluation program. The review will include examining case file data which summarizes recruitment sources, whether or not incentives were offered to individual candidates, selections made, and other factors.
2. Agency personnel specialists will be responsible for the technically accurate implementation of project provisions on a day-to-day basis. Managerial reviews will focus on such areas as the modification of X-118 qualification standards, the placement of candidates in quality groups, and the application of veterans preference.
3. OPM will conduct a periodic review of particular authorities delegated under the demonstration project, including the determination of shortage categories and the approval to pass over a preference eligible, as part of each OPM region's ongoing personnel management evaluation program.
4. The Department's overall performance management program requires that senior executives be evaluated on the extent to which they meet the performance standard established for management and organizational effectiveness, as well as that which addresses equal opportunity/civil rights. The former stipulates, among other action items, that senior managers establish and maintain effective management control systems to monitor activities, identify problem areas, and initiate timely corrective action; the latter requires, in part, that Departmental and agency equal employment plan objectives and concepts are part of the total management process.

VI. Cost/Benefit Analysis

The experimental modifications are expected to be budget neutral. Current decentralized policies and procedures regarding the expenditure of agency funds will be retained. No additional funding will be requested specifically for this

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

project; all costs will be charged to available funds through existing appropriations, including those incurred in the areas of project development, training, and project evaluation.

No additional costs are expected to accrue to the operation of the alternative recruitment and hiring system, the extended probationary period, or the recruitment incentive system. In fact, the alternative recruitment and hiring system is expected to reduce the number of staff hours expended testing, examining, and rating applicants, as well as to alleviate some of the administrative burden generated in support of these activities.

VII. Duration of the Project

The project will be implemented no earlier than ninety (90) days from the date of this notice. The project will terminate at or before the end of the five year period beginning on the date on which the project takes effect, unless otherwise extended or terminated at an earlier date in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 4703.(e).

VIII. Evaluation Plan

A. Introduction

An evaluation methodology is established in order to comply with the requirement that the demonstration project be evaluated in terms of the impact of project results against stated objectives as well as to determine whether or not permanent changes in law and/or regulation should be considered or proposed. The Agricultural Research Service has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Pennsylvania State University for the purpose of conducting the evaluation.

B. Methodology

The formal evaluation will be conducted by the Pennsylvania State University and is expected to follow a modified Action Research Model process. The utilization of that model in this situation means that the evaluators, researchers, and research participants share information about the research results to the extent that interventions detrimental to the organization can either be modified or aborted. This is to prevent the continuation of an intervention with obvious and severe impact deficiencies.

The evaluation effort will be carried out in four distinct phases, as follows:

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

1. Design phase - includes the development of the experimental model, selection of test and comparison sites, and the collection of baseline data prior to implementation;
2. Implementation phase - includes actual project implementation, and monitoring to assure that each of the project interventions has been operationalized as originally conceived;
3. Evaluation phase - includes data collection and analysis. Periodic reports and annual summaries will be presented throughout the life of the project; and,
4. Concluding phase - summary evaluation and overall assessment of the impact of the project; conclusions and final recommendations.

C. Model

There are two objectives, five interventions, one constraint, and fifteen related hypotheses. It is operationally not feasible to apply interventions (a), (b), and (e) independently, nor can interventions (c) and (d) be broken into separate experiments. It was further decided to apply all interventions as one experimental design because to do otherwise would create inadequate sample sizes and become too difficult to manage. Hence, all interventions will be introduced at each of the experimental sites, although the authorization of recruitment and retention incentives is discretionary on the part of management. The utilization and results of experimentation with these incentives will be separately identified to the extent possible.

1. Objectives

- (a) Increase the flexibility and responsiveness of the recruitment and hiring system.
- (b) Increase the reliability of the decision to grant career tenure for employees in scientific positions.

2. Interventions

- (a) Decentralize the decision to authorize direct hire in shortage categories.
- (b) Implement an alternative candidate assessment method which uses categorical grouping instead of numeric score.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

- (c) Provide the option of awarding monetary incentives for recruitment purposes.
- (d) Provide the option of reimbursing relocation travel and transportation expenses beyond those currently authorized for travel to first post of duty.
- (e) Extend the one-year probationary period to three years for employees in scientific positions.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Table 1. Expected Effects, Measures, and Data Sources

Overall Project Constraint

Constraint	Measures	Data Sources
Fair representation of protected groups will not be adversely affected	# of women & minorities and individuals with disabilities in the workforce file	Personnel Records (PR)
	# among applicants	Recruitment Case
	File (RCF)	
	# available for selection	RCF
	# offered positions	RCF
	# hired	PR

Objective 1: Increase the flexibility and responsiveness of the recruitment and hiring system

Interventions:

- (a) Decentralize the decision to authorize direct hire in shortage categories.
- (b) Implement an alternative candidate assessment method using categorical grouping instead of numeric score.
- (c) Provide the option of awarding monetary incentives for recruiting purposes.
- (d) Provide the option of reimbursing relocation travel and transportation expenses beyond those currently authorized for travel to first post of duty.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Hypotheses	Measures	Data Sources
A. Managers will perceive the new system as more responsive to local recruitment needs.	Managers' perceptions	Annual Survey of managers (AS)
B. Managers will be more satisfied with the new recruitment and hiring system than with the traditional system.	Managers' attitudes	AS
C. Under the experimental employee intake process, candidates will receive job offers more quickly than under the traditional system.	Time required to fill positions Managers' perceptions New hires' perceptions	RCF AS Pre-employment survey (PES)
D. The experimental employee intake process will require equal or less staff time than the traditional system.	Activities required to fill positions Staff hours required to fill positions	RCF RCF
E. Quality of new hires under the experimental system, as measured by appropriate indicators, will be equal to or greater than that of employees hired through traditional methods.	GPA Education level Year of degree Field of Study Previous Salary Level of experience Relevant experience Competing Offers	PES PES PES PES PES PES PES PES
F. Level of performance of new hires will be equal to or greater than that of those hired through traditional means.	Performance appraisal Performance awards Adverse actions Managers' perceptions	PR PR PR AS

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Hypotheses	Measures	Data Sources
G. Competitive recruitment position will improve for sites using the experimental recruiting and hiring system relative to those using traditional procedures.	Managers' perception of competitive position	AS
	Candidates lost to competition	RCF
	Number of qualified candidates who apply for USDA positions	RCF
	Ability to hire candidates whom the managers perceive as best qualified	AS
H. Recruitment incentives will increase acceptance rates above and beyond any effects of the new recruitment and hiring system.	Declination/acceptance ratio	RCF
	Number, type, and \$ value of incentives	PR
I. Retention will improve for appointees for whom a recruitment incentive is authorized relative to those hired without recruitment incentives.	Rate at which service agreements are met	PR
	Turnover rates	PR
	Number of voluntary separations with outstanding deferred or incremental payments	PR
	Number, type, and \$ value of incentives	PR

Objective 2: Increase the reliability of the decision to grant career tenure for employees in scientific positions.

Intervention:

(e) Extend the one-year probationary period to three years for employees in scientific positions.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Hypotheses	Measures	Data Sources
A. Managers will have more confidence in career tenure decisions with an extended probationary period.	Managers' perceptions	AS
B. Turnover patterns and the reasons associated with those patterns will differ between experimental and comparison sites.	Turnover rates/reasons	PR
C. Recruitment efforts will not be hampered by the extended probationary period for employees in scientific positions.	Managers' perceptions New employees' perceptions Declination/acceptance ratio (scientists)	AS PES RCF
Hypotheses	Measures	Data Sources
A. Supervisory responsibility and accountability for the integrity as well as the success of the recruitment and hiring program will increase.	Managers' perceptions Senior managers' perceptions Documentation of accountability	AS Interviews Performance Standards RCF
B. Management advisory role for personnel specialists will increase.	Personnel Management evaluation Managers' perceptions	RCF review AS Interviews

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Hypotheses	Measures	Data Sources
C. Total operating costs for recruitment and hiring will not increase due to the new recruitment and hiring process.	Administrative costs for recruitment and hiring Amount spent for recruitment incentives	To be identified

D. Procedures

Experimental results will be evaluated annually (1) against baseline data collected before the implementation of the interventions, and (2) between the experimental and comparison populations in each block and in toto. While the introduction of the interventions will continue throughout the five year life of the project, the collection of data and consequent evaluation efforts will continue until reasonably stable results can be identified. It is not necessary to wait until the results of the last experimentally hired employee can be fully evaluated before declaring the evaluation completed if sufficient valid data have been accumulated to draw such a conclusion.

E. Model Evaluations

The evaluation plan shown in Figure 1 represents the consensus of USDA, FS, ARS, and OPM regarding project constraints, objectives, and expectations. USDA has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Pennsylvania State University (PSU) to conduct the evaluation of this project. PSU's efforts will be guided by, but in no way restricted to, the hypotheses, measures, and data sources in this model.

This demonstration project is a complex experiment, to be conducted in a dynamic environment over a 5-year period. Based on OPM experience with previous demonstration projects, we expect that modifications to the evaluation model will be required in response to mid-course project changes; following statutory, regulatory, and policy changes related to project interventions; and based on further exploration of proposed data sources.

All additions, deletions, and modifications to the current evaluation model will be fully documented and explained as part of the evaluation reporting process.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

If at any time during the course of the project, experimental sites are added or deleted, we will publish a notice in the Federal Register explaining the reasons for the change.

F. Implementation Evaluation

The evaluation model presents a framework for evaluating the success of the demonstration project in meeting its stated objectives. An equally important component of the overall evaluation is the description and monitoring of the implementation of the project.

Implementation monitoring will provide a qualitative context in which to understand and interpret evaluation results. This facet of the evaluation will help to answer the "why" questions that are likely to arise, whether the project is a success or failure, and provide the documentation of actual implementation necessary to replicate the results of this demonstration project in other settings.

Through examination of project-related documents, ongoing contact with key players in the participating agencies, interviews with project participants, and case studies of selected units, the implementation evaluation will address such questions as:

1. When are project changes implemented?
2. What training and orientation is delivered to facilitate implementation?
3. What operating procedures/guidelines are developed to manage project implementation? How do these guidelines differ from the project plan?
4. How does actual practice differ from the project plan and/or operating guidelines?
5. To what extent are recruiting and hiring practices being carried out in a manner consistent with the merit principles outlined in 5 U.S.C. 2301?
6. To what extent do users of the new system understand it?
7. What differences in actual practice exist with respect to different types of candidates and/or new appointees?
8. To what extent are discretionary interventions (i.e., recruitment incentives) actually used?
9. How similar are the experimental and the comparison sites? How are they different?

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

10. What other changes occurring at experimental/comparison sites might provide competing explanations for observed changes?
11. What events in the external environment might provide competing explanations for observed changes or lack of change?
12. What unintended consequences of the demonstration project initiative may be observed?
13. What impact does the application of veterans preference under the project have on the examining and selection process? How many preference eligibles are being hired at experimental and comparison sites?
14. To what extent do the project interventions affect perceptions of equity among employees at experimental sites?

IX. Experimental Design

The experimental design uses experimental and comparison groups matched for characteristics but not necessarily for population numbers in ten population blocks. The populations were classified into five occupational categories: scientists, professionals, administrative employees, technicians, and all others (includes clerical and Federal Wage System). Each participating unit of the two agencies, the Agricultural Research Service and Forest Service, appeared in as many of these five blocks as the occupational category distribution represents.

The occupational categories were then further subdivided into two situational categories: difficult and simple. In the difficult situation, the working site or environment, and/or the local personnel supply pool, make it very difficult to attract candidates in a particular occupational category. This situational condition is not necessarily constant for all five occupational categories at any one location. It was postulated that this random assignment to the experimental and comparison groups within these ten groupings would result in ten matched groups. Except for limited administrative pre-selection, the assignments to experimental and comparison groups within each of the ten blocks were by random draw.

A detailed description of the selection process is available upon request.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Appendix A. Required Waivers to Law and Regulation

Waivers to Title 5 United States Code

1104(a)(2)

Delegation of authority for personnel management

3309

Preference eligibles; examinations; additional points for

3312(b)

Preference eligibles; physical qualifications; waiver

3313

Competitive service; registers of eligibles

3317(a)

Competitive service; certification from registers

3318(a),(b)

Competitive service; selection from certificates

5723

Travel and transportation expenses of new appointees and student trainees; manpower shortage positions

5724a, 5724b, 5724c

Relocation expenses

7501(1), 7511(a)(1)(A)

Adverse actions; definitions, "employee"

Waivers to Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations

2.1(b)

Competitive Examinations and Eligible Registers.

315.801

Probationary period; when required.

315.802

Length of probationary period.

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Part 332

Recruitment and selection through competitive examination (except 332.101)

337.101

Rating applicants (except (c))

Part 352

Reemployment Rights

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Appendix B. Experimental and Comparison Sites. Agricultural Research Service:

Experimental Sites	Experimental Sites	Comparison Sites
Akron, CO	Peoria, IL	Gainesville, FL
Albany, CA	Phoenix, AZ	Georgetown, DE
All Hawaiian Islands	Pullman, WA	Greenville, TN
Ames/Ankeny, IA	Raleigh, NC	Headquarters, MD
Athens, GA	Reno, NV	Houma, LA
Beaumont, TX	Riverside, CA	Jackson, TN
Beckley, WV	San Francisco, CA	Kearneysville, WV
Beltsville, MD	Shafter, CA	Kimberly, ID
Bozeman, MT	Sidney, MT	Laramie, WY
Byron, GA	St. Paul, MN	Lewisburg, TN
Canal Point, FL	St. Croix, VI	Lincoln, NE
Charleston, SC	Stillwater, OK	Mandan, ND
Clemson, SC	Stoneville, MS	Mayaguez, PR
Columbia, MO	Suffolk, VA	Mississippi State
Corvallis, OR	Temple, TX	Morris, MN
Davis, CA	Tifton, GA	Newark, DE
Dawson, GA	Tucson, AZ	Pendleton, OR
East Grand Forks, MN	University Park, PA	Poplarville, MS
East Lansing, MI	Watkinsville, GA	Prosser, WA
Fairbanks, AK	Weslaco, TX	Salinas, CA
Fargo, ND	Woodward, OK	Savannah, GA
Florence, SC	Wooster, OH	Stuttgart, AR
Frederick, MD	Yakima, WA	Tuxtla, MX
Fresno, CA		Urbana, IL
Fort Collins, CO	Comparison Sites	Wenatchee, WA
Geneva, NY	Aberdeen, ID	West Lafayette, IN
Grand Forks, ND	Auburn, AL	Winter Haven, FL
Griffin, GA	Baton Rouge, LA	Wyndmoor, PA
Houston, TX	Boise, ID	
Ithaca, NY	Booneville, AR	
Kerrville, TX	Boston, MA	
Lane, OK	Brawley, CA	
Las Cruces, NM	Brookings, SD	
Lexington, KY	Brooksville, FL	
Logan, UT	Brownwood, TX	
Lubbock, TX	Burns, OR	
Madison, WI	Bushland, TX	
Manhattan, KS	Cheyenne, WY	
Miami, FL	Clay Center, NE	
Miles City, MT	College Station, TX	
New Orleans, LA	Columbus, OH	
Orient Point, NY	Coshocton, OH	
Orlando, FL	Delaware, OH	
Orono, ME	Dubois, ID	

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Experimental Sites	Experimental Sites	Comparison Sites
--------------------	--------------------	------------------

Oxford, MS
Oxford, NC
Pasadena, CA

Durant, OK
El Reno, OK
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Forest Service:

Experimental Sites

Comparison Sites

Region 1

Regional Office
(includes MTDC)
Clearwater NF
Custer NF (includes
Helena NF)
Flathead NF
Idaho Panhandle NF
Kootenai NF
Lolo NF

Beaverhead NF (includes
Gallatin NF)
Bitterroot NF
Deerlodge NF
Lewis and Clark NF
Nez Perce NF

Region 2

Big Horn NF
Black Hills NF
(includes Nebraska NF)
Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre,
and Gunnison NF
Pike and San Isabel NF
Rio Grande NF
Routt NF
Shoshone NF

Regional Office
Medicine Bow NF
San Juan NF
White River NF

Region 3

Apache Sitgraves NF
Cibola NF
Coconino NF
Coronado NF
Kaibab NF
Lincoln NF
Santa Fe NF
Tonto NF

Regional Office
Carson NF
Gila NF
Prescott NF

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Experimental Sites

Comparison Sites

Region 4

Regional Office/
Intermountain Station
Targhee NF (includes
Bridger-Teton, Challis,
Caribou, & Salmon NF)

Payette NF (includes
Boise & Sawtooth NF)
Utah-Nevada Cluster:
Fish Lake, Dixie,
Humboldt, Toiyabe,
Uinta, Wasatch-Cache,
Manti-LaSal, Ashley
NF, and Geometronics
Service Center

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Experimental Sites

Comparison Sites

Region 5

Regional Office
Angeles NF
Inyo NF
Klamath NF (includes
Six Rivers and Modoc NF)
Los Padres NF
Plumas NF (includes
Lassen and Mendocino NF)
Shasta-Trinity NF
Sierra NF (includes
Sequoia and
Stanislaus NF)
Tahoe NF/Basin

Cleveland NF
Eldorado NF
San Bernardino NF

Region 6

Colville NF
Deschutes NF (includes
Malheur & Ochoco NF)
Mt. Baker/Snoqualmie NF
(includes Seattle Lab)
Mt. Hood NF
Olympic NF
Siuslaw NF
Umpqua NF
Wallowa-Whitman NF
(includes LaGrande
Lab & Umatilla NF)
Wenatchee NF (includes
Wenatchee Lab &
Okanogan NF)
Willamette NF
Winema NF (includes
Fremont NF)

Regional Office/PNW
Gifford Pinchot NF
Rogue River NF (includes
Siskiyou NF)

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Experimental Sites

Comparison Sites

Region 8

Regional Office
(includes Macon Seed
Lab & Caribbean NF)
Chattahoochee & Oconee
NF (includes Frances
Marion & Sumter NF)
Jefferson NF (includes
George Washington NF)
Kisatchie NF (includes
Texas NF, part of
Alexandria Lab)
Mississippi NF (includes NF's
in Alabama and Florida)

Daniel Boone NF (includes
Cherokee NF)
Ouachita NF (includes
Ozark-St. Francis NF)

Region 9

Regional Office
Allegheny NF
Chequamegon NF
Chippewa NF
Hiawatha NF
Huron-Manistee NF
Mark Twain NF
Monongahela NF
Nicolet NF
Ottawa NF
Superior NF
Wayne-Hoosier NF

Green Mountain & Finger Lakes NF
Shawnee NF
White Mountain NF

06.2 - Exhibit 01 (Project Plan)--Continued

Experimental Sites

Comparison Sites

Region 10

Regional Office
Chatham Area
Chugach NF
Ketchikan Area

Stikine Area

Research Units

Forest Products Lab
Intermountain Station/
R-4 RO
Northeastern Station/Area
Pacific Southwest
Forest and Range
Experiment Station
Southeastern Station (includes
North Carolina NF)
Southern Station

North Central Station
Pacific NW Station/R-6 RO
Rocky Mountain Station
(includes Arapahoe &
Roosevelt NF)

Headquarters

Washington Office

Billing Code 6325-01-M