

TOOL BOX

***Authorities, Programs, and Flexibilities to Help You
Recruit and Retain a Highly Qualified and Motivated
Workforce***

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Note:

The purpose of this tool box is to provide managers and supervisors with information about programs, authorities and flexibilities that exist to help them recruit, hire and develop their employees.

The tools listed herein are not intended to be all-inclusive. Individual bureaus may have other authorities applicable to their programs. Such bureaus may, of course, continue to use those authorities. If such bureaus wish their specific authorities added to the Tool Box, they can be included in updates.

This guide is only meant to highlight possible aids. To find out how these tools can help you, contact your servicing personnel office. The use of some tools requires higher level approval or have other nuances that should be considered with guidance of a specialist.

NON-COMPETITIVE HIRING AUTHORITIES & PROGRAMS

Non-competitive authority allows the agency to appoint an individual under such authority without requiring open competition from the general public. However, there still may be a need to announce the position due to regulations related to downsizing -- but with a more limited area of consideration.

! Appointment of former Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers.

Time limits: Within one year (may be extended under certain circumstances) after the person completes the qualifying service.

Qualifying Service: Peace Corps certification required.

Type of appointment given: Career-conditional appointment.

! Appointment of present and former Peace Corps personnel

Service requirement: 36 continuous months of service as a Peace Corps staff member. **Does not apply to volunteers.**

Time limits: Within 3 years of separation from the Peace Corps staff.

Type of appointment given: Career-conditional appointment.

! Appointment of certain former overseas employees.

Service requirement: 52 weeks of creditable overseas service.

Creditable service: Service in an appropriated fund position performed by a family member under a local hire appointment. The service must have been during the time the family member was accompanying a sponsor (a Federal

civilian employee, a Federal non-appropriated fund employee, or a member of a uniformed service) officially assigned to an overseas area.

Time limits: Within 3 years following the date of returning from overseas to the United States.

Type of appointment given: Career-conditional appointment.

! **Employment under the Veterans' Readjustment Appointment (VRA) Authority.**

Requirements: Must have served on active duty for a period of more than 180 days after August 4, 1964 and received other than a dishonorable discharge.

Time limits: Vietnam-era veterans qualify for 10 years after being discharged or separated from active duty.

Post-Vietnam-era veterans qualify for 10 years after the date of discharge or release from active duty, or until December 31, 1999, whichever is later.

Veterans with a service-connected disability of 30% or more have no time limit.

Conditions of Employment: The VRA authority can only be used to fill positions up to and including the GS-11 level.

Type of appointment given: Excepted service appointment. After two years of service, an employee may be converted to the competitive service.

! **Employment of disabled veterans who have completed a qualifying VA training course.**

Requirements: Must be appointed to the type of position for which trained.

Time limits: Within one year of completing training program.

Type of appointment given: Career-conditional appointment.

! **Appointment of a 30% or more disabled veteran.**

Requirements: Certification from the Department of Veterans Affairs that the person has a service-connected disability of 30% or more. Hired under a temporary appointment. Agency may convert the employee to a permanent position.

Type of appointment given: The initial appointment is temporary, however, the employee may be later converted to a career-conditional appointment.

! **Appointment of Current or Former Interior Employees on the Reemployment Priority List (RPL).**

Requirements: Qualified Department employees who have received a Reduction-in-Force (RIF) notice or a Certification of Expected Separation or who have been separated through RIF; or employees who are fully recovered from a compensable injury after more than 1 year are also entitled to register for the RPL. Eligibility is only applicable to the local commuting area.

Time limits: Generally, employees retain RPL eligibility for 2 years from the date the employee is entered on the RPL.

! **Outstanding Scholar Program.**

A special hiring authority established for entry-level administrative positions at the GS-5 and GS-7 level. (This authority is authorized under the terms of a consent decree and can only be used for specific series and job titles).

Requirements: College graduates with a GPA of 3.45 or better or who have graduated in the upper 10 percent of their class.

Type of appointment given: Career-conditional appointment.

! **Bilingual/Bicultural Appointments.**

This program permits agencies to hire persons who have proficiency in Spanish

and/or knowledge of Hispanic culture, and are otherwise qualified, for positions in which interaction with the public or job performance would be enhanced by having bilingual and/or bicultural skills.

Requirements: Only certain occupational series may be filled using this authority; it may only be used to fill positions at the GS-5 or GS-7 levels where promotion potential exceeds the GS-9 level.

Type of appointment: Career-conditional appointment.

! **Employment of a Student under the Student Education Employment Program (SEEP).**

The Student Career Experience Component of the SEEP provides conversion to the competitive service. This program provides work experience directly related to a student's academic field of study with formal work periods of work and study. The student is required to complete 640 hours of career related work and to have graduated to be eligible for conversion.

Type of appointment given: While in school, the student is on an excepted appointment. Once the student has met the eligibility criteria, he or she can be converted to a career-conditional appointment.

! **Presidential Management Intern Program (PMI).**

The PMI Program was established to attract to the federal service outstanding graduate students from a variety of academic disciplines who have an interest in, and commitment to, a career in the analysis and management of public policies and programs. Graduate students participate in a competitive nomination process devised by their college or university.

Type of appointment given: PMIs receive an initial two-year excepted service appointment. After successfully completing the program, PMIs may be eligible for conversion to a permanent career-conditional appointment.

Grade levels: PMIs are hired at the GS-9 level. After successful completion of the first year, PMIs are eligible for promotion to the GS-11 level. Upon

completion of the two-year internship, PMIs are eligible for promotion to the GS-12 level.

! **Diversity Intern Program.**

The Diversity Intern Program is a recruitment program created by the Department under SEEP authority. This program is aimed at creating a pipeline of qualified and motivated students for entry-level professional positions. Students are selected for this program while still in college. They combine work and studies and are eligible for conversion to permanent career-conditional appointments after completing 640 hours of career related work assignments and after having graduated.

Eligibility: For the first pilot program, eligibility is restricted to students who have participated in the Interior Summer Diversity Intern Program. Applicants to the Department Diversity Intern Program must also be currently enrolled at least half-time in a college or university, have maintained a 3.0 GPA, and submit recommendations and evaluations from their university/summer supervisor.

Grade levels: Undergraduate students selected for the program are generally brought in at the GS-3 or GS-4 level. Graduate students are generally brought in at the GS-5 or GS-7 level.

Types of appointment: Excepted service appointments. Upon conversion, employees are given career-conditional appointments.

! **Solicitor's Honors Program.**

The Solicitor's Honor Program is an entry-level hiring program for attorneys. Eight to ten participants are selected each year.

Eligibility: Third year law students.

Grade level: GS-11 or GS-12, depending upon level of education and experience.

Type of appointment: All attorneys and law clerks are given excepted service

appointments.

! **Alaska Local Hire Program:**

The Alaska Local Hire Program allows for *public land agencies* to employ people who, by reason of having lived or worked in or near public lands in Alaska, have “special knowledge or expertise concerning the natural or cultural resources of the public lands.” Positions filled do not count against FTE allocations.

Types of appointment: Excepted service appointments.

Grade levels: No restrictions.

! **Contiguous Appointing Authority:**

This appointing authority is mainly used to hire people to work in isolated locations. It can be used to fill technical, maintenance, and clerical positions only.

Grade level: Positions may be filled at or below the GS-7, WG-10 or equivalent grade levels.

Eligibility: Employees appointed under this authority must maintain a permanent and exclusive residence within, or contiguous to, a field activity or district, and be dependent for livelihood primarily upon employment available within that field activity.

Type of appointment: Excepted service appointment.

! **Appointing Authority for Filling Positions with Mentally Retarded Persons.**

Eligibility: Must be certified by a State rehabilitation or Veterans Affairs counselor as likely to succeed in the performance of the duties.

Type of appointment: Excepted Service. Conversion to competitive service possible after 2 years of service.

! **Appointing Authority for Filling Positions with Severely Physically Disabled Persons.**

There are two authorities under which this can be accomplished:

1) Temporary appointments of severely physically disabled individuals can be made when needed to demonstrate qualifications for permanent appointment. After successful completion of this trial period, the employee can be converted to a permanent position; or

2) Permanent appointment can be made when filled by severely physically disabled persons who have either demonstrated their ability to perform the duties of the position -- or have been certified by counselors of State vocational rehabilitation agencies or the VA as likely to succeed.

Type of appointment: Temporary or excepted service. Conversion to competitive service possible after 2 years of service.

! **Employment of Students with Disabilities:**

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities organized this new program, whose goal is to place students with disabilities in summer positions.

The purpose of the program is like any other student program - to provide students with exposure to career opportunities and to provide the Department with a pool of qualified and motivated students for entry-level positions.

Conversion rights: May be converted to permanent positions.

! **Worker-Trainee Program:** Aimed at unskilled workers. Provides formal and on-the-job training. The program requires a vacancy announcement but there is no requirement to rate applicants.

Type of appointment and conversion rights: Trainees are given a temporary appointment and after three years of satisfactory performance the trainee may be converted to a permanent appointment.

Grade levels: Workers are hired into GS-1, WG 1 and WG-2 positions. It is designed to provide promising individuals an opportunity to learn marketable skills. During the first 3 years, the worker-trainee may be reassigned or promoted up to GS-3 or WG-4.

! **Youth Conservation Corps Programs:** Is an employment program for young men and women who work on projects that further the development and conservation of the natural resources of the U.S. Although it is not permanent employment, it is a program that helps disadvantaged youth gain valuable work experience and, at the same time, provides managers with needed assistance in accomplishing these types of projects. The hope is that the students will be placed in permanent positions after completion of the program.

! **Indian Employment Preference Policy in the Bureau of Indian Affairs.**

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is required, by law, to give preference to persons of Indian descent in filling positions whether through initial appointment, promotion, reassignment or transfer.

Type of appointment: The initial appointment is in the excepted service. After three years of continuous service and satisfactory performance under this authority, employees are eligible for non-competitive conversion to a career appointment in the competitive service.

TOOLS TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN HIGHLY QUALIFIED EMPLOYEES

! Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses; Retention Allowances.

- ***Recruitment Bonus:*** One-time payment for a newly appointed employee when it is determined that, in the absence of such a bonus, difficulty would be encountered in filling the position.

Amount of bonus: Up to 25% of the employee's base pay.

- ***Relocation Bonus:*** One-time payment for current employees only. Must be relocating to a new commuting area for at least 2 years.

Amount of bonus: Up to 25% of the employee's base pay.

- ***Retention Allowance:*** Payment made to a current employee whose qualifications are unusually high or unique or the agency has a special need that makes it essential that the employee be retained, AND a determination is made that the employee would be likely to leave the Federal service in the absence of the allowance.

Amount of allowance: Up to 25% of the employee's base pay. Payment is included in the employee's bi-weekly salary payments.

! Superior Qualification Appointments:

A new employee's pay may be set at a rate above the minimum rate in situations where a bureau determines they have a special need or the individual has superior qualifications.

Recommendation: When considering a superior qualification appointment, managers must first consider the possibility of using a recruitment bonus.

Justification: Factors to be considered include the candidate's existing pay and the reason for setting pay at a rate higher than that needed to match existing pay; as well as the reasons for the superior qualification appointment instead of a recruitment bonus.

! **Delegated Examining Authority:** The Office of Personnel Management has given agencies the authority to announce their own jobs to the general public and to certify the top three candidates. This provides more flexibility in the process. One such flexibility is the use of direct hire procedures:

Direct Hire Procedures: This is an extremely useful tool which can simplify the recruitment process for hard-to-fill positions. The criteria for direct hire are: 1) an open continuous job announcement; 2) active recruitment for the position; and 3) an insufficient supply of qualified candidates to fill current vacancies.

The advantages of direct hiring are:

1) If a highly qualified applicant is found, they need only submit their application to the open continuous announcement, they are rated and ranked against established criteria (along with other applications previously submitted) and a certificate can be issued rather quickly.

2) Since the announcement is open continuously, when a vacancy occurs, a manager can request a certificate based on those who have applied up to that point. It shortens the process.

! **Use of Selective Factors:**

What is a selective factor? It is a knowledge, skill or ability that is essential to the successful performance of the duties of a position. A selective factor must be tied directly to the duties in the position description of a particular position and included in the vacancy announcement.

How is it used? It is used as an objective, yet mandatory, criteria to narrow the selection process down to only those applicants that have this specific knowledge, skill or ability. Those applicants who do not meet the selective

factor are not given further consideration.

What are examples of selective factors? Examples are: a license or certification required to perform the job, an ability to speak Spanish, a particular emphasis in a field of study, and experience with a specific software program.

TOOLS TO MEET SHORT TERM HIRING NEEDS

- ! ***Term Appointments:*** The value in such appointments is it can be used to hire employees for projects or any situation where the future of the position is uncertain such as budget or FTE allocations. However, this type of appointment requires the same vacancy announcement and selection process as any permanent position.

Time limits: Appointments are made in 1 year increments up to 4 years.

Conversion rights: At this time there are no conversion rights available to term employees to allow them to move into permanent positions.

- ! ***Temporary Appointments:*** To be used to fill a position on a short-term basis. A job announcement is required but ranking is not - which simplifies the process.

Time limits: Appointments cannot exceed 1 year. Extensions can be approved for 1 additional year.

Conversion rights: There are no conversion rights available to temporary employees to allow them to move into permanent positions.

DEVELOPMENTAL TOOLS - OR HOW TO HELP YOUR EMPLOYEES GET AHEAD.

DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

! Upward Mobility Program:

Purpose: An internal career development program that focuses on underutilized or undertrained employees. It is also a tool to help achieve the Departmental goal of a diversified workforce by assisting undertrained employees to begin the process of moving up. As a systematic management effort it creates career opportunities to help develop the skills and abilities of the Department's workforce.

An Upward Mobility Program goes hand-in-hand with a workforce analysis. It is one way of ensuring an organization will be able to meet its critical occupational needs of the future - by tapping into the potential of its current human resources.

! Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP):

Purpose: To develop highly qualified candidates for future Senior Executive Service vacancies within the Department of the Interior. A concerted effort is used by this program to attract a diverse applicant pool to help ensure diversity in our leadership of the future.

Eligibility: Employees at the GS-14 and GS-15 or equivalent level.

Promotion potential: Employees who successfully complete the program are eligible to be considered non-competitively for SES positions.

! Team Leadership Program:

Purpose: To develop the potential of current Interior employees -- to enable them to become effective leaders of the future. The focus is to create leaders who can effectively utilize the strengths of a team approach and who understand

environmental and conservation issues.

Eligibility: Current GS-11 through GS-14 employees.

Promotion potential: Upon successful completion of the program, employees will be awarded a 3-year certificate allowing them a one-grade, non-competitive promotion to any position for which they are technically qualified. Promotions are subject to the provisions of the Department's merit promotion plan.

! **Executive Potential Program (EDP):**

Purpose: To develop mid-level managers.

Eligibility: Employees at the GS-13 and GS-14 levels.

Length: One year, non-residential, trainees remain in their home positions.

! **Women's Executive Leadership Program (WEL):**

Purpose: To provide a management development program which covers supervisory skills, career assessment, leadership, team building, and current management issues.

Eligibility: Employees at the GS-11 and GS-12 levels. (This program is open to both men and women.)

Length: One year, non-residential, trainees remain in their home positions.

TOOLS TO HELP MANAGE AND MOTIVATE EMPLOYEES

! Position Management:

Supervisors are responsible ensuring there is a fair distribution of developmental and career enhancing assignments. They must also make sure that employee position descriptions are accurate and, as duties change, that employees' position descriptions are updated and reclassified, if necessary.

! Performance Management:

Supervisors must provide constructive feedback to employees on how they are performing their assigned duties. Honest feedback is an essential element of career development as well as a tool for helping employees reach their full potential.

! Awards

There are a variety of awards, both monetary and non-monetary, available to supervisors and managers to be used as tools to motivate individual employees, team or organizations to sustain a high level of performance. Some examples of awards and their use follow. Consult your personnel specialist for a complete list of award tools.

- **Monetary Awards**

On-the-Spot Award - A cash award granted for immediate recognition of achievements. Net value between \$50 and \$500.

STAR (Special Thanks for Achieving Results) Award - A cash award of \$925 (gross) or more - commensurate with value of an individual or team accomplishment.

Quality Step Increase - For sustained exceptional performance in achieving critical results with the expectation of continued high-level performance. It is the equivalent of a within-grade increase.

- **Non-Monetary Recognition**

Items of nominal value (up to \$25 cash value) such as coffee cups, pens, paperweights, plaques, T-shirts, etc.

Items of significant value (from \$26 to \$250 cash value) such as pen-and-pencil sets, clocks, desk organizers, jackets, watches, gift certificates, tickets to events, etc.

Time-Off Recognition - an excused absence award to an employee without charge to leave. Minimum amount of time off is one hour, there is no restriction on the maximum amount of time off.

Length-of-Service Recognition - certificates and/or pins are awarded at various milestones in an individual's career.

Informal Honors - letters of commendation, certificates, "thank you" notes, or similar items.

- **Continuous Improvement Incentives** - used to recognize individuals and team members for cost savings, quality improvements, innovation and creativity, and the sharing of ideas.

Productivity Improvement Awards - Cash award or other recognition for cost-savings. The award shares some portion of the cost savings with the employee.

! **Details/Temporary Promotions:**

Both details and temporary promotions are tools that can be used to both provide developmental opportunities for employees as well as an effective

means of gapping positions between employees.

Details may be internal to the bureau or the Department, or they may be to other Federal agencies.

Time limitations: Temporary promotions, or details to positions with known promotion potential, may be made non-competitively if they do not exceed 120 calendar days.

! **IPAs (Intergovernmental Personnel Act)** authorizes the temporary assignment of employees between Federal agencies and State, local and Indian tribal governments, institutions of higher education and other eligible organizations.

Purpose: For the sharing of information and skills in projects or programs of mutual interest or benefit to the two organizations involved.

Time limits: Assignments of Federal employees are made for up to 2 years and may be extended for up to 2 more years. There is a lifetime limit for Federal employees of 6 years.

! **WORK LIFE PROGRAMS**

- **Alternate Work Schedules (AWS) Programs** offer the flexibility to adjust the customary fixed work schedule that typically includes eight hours a day, five days a week, with the same beginning and ending time each day. When utilized properly, AWS can be of great benefit to employees, the Department, our clients and the environment.

Employers may benefit by reduced employee tardiness, attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce, and drawing the best performance from each worker. Employees can benefit by being permitted to structure their work schedules to best attend to their needs outside of the office. Clients can benefit through increased hours of service. On a national and environmental level, traffic congestion and its associated health, pollution and energy problems can be reduced by staggering the traditional rush-hour traffic schedule.

Flexible schedules allow employees to vary arrival and departure times (and lunch breaks), considering “core” hours when employees must be present.

Compressed schedules allow employees to extend their normal work days to reduce the total number of days worked per pay period.

Note: Implementation of any AWS may require union approval.

- **Telecommuting**- Paid employment performed away from the conventional office, either at home or at an alternative office, for an agreed-upon portion of the workweek.

Program Benefits: Telecommuting is an innovative management tool that can help reduce employee absenteeism, accommodate employees with health problems, reduce commuting time and costs, capitalize on peak productivity periods, provide an environment of fewer distractions, and provide the ability to coordinate work priorities with personal and family responsibilities.

This is also a valuable tool that can improve employment opportunities for the disabled and mobility-restricted persons, reduce problems associated with dependent care, reduce traffic congestion and its associated health, pollution and energy problems.

- The **Employee Assistance Program** can be a source of help to employees who are experiencing problems on the job or at home
- **Training** for your employees and yourself can help you accomplish the work of your office. Training in leadership, employee motivation, conflict resolution for managers can help you manage your employees. Training in career skills and effective work practices can help your employees to perform their job better. Consult your local training coordinator for more information.

! **Personnel Authorities Delegated to Bureaus**

Personnel management authorities have been delegated to the bureaus, with limited exceptions, that provide managers and supervisors more flexibility in designing personnel programs that fit their specific needs. The delegations also eliminate the time previously spent in obtaining higher level clearances outside individual bureaus. The result has been more efficient and effective ways of doing business.

Special Tools Requiring Outside Approval

- ! **Higher special rates of pay** may be established by the Office of Personnel Management, upon request by Department headquarters, for an occupation or group of occupations nationwide or in a local area based on a finding that the Government's recruitment or retention efforts are, or would likely become, significantly handicapped without those higher rates. The minimum rate of a special rate range may exceed the maximum corresponding grade by as much as 30 percent. 5USC 5305; 5CFR part 530, subpart C.

- ! OMB, in consultation with OPM, may use a critical pay authority to **increase the rate of basic pay up** to the rate for Executive Level 1 for a position that requires expertise of an extremely high level in a scientific, technical, professional or administrative field or one that is critical to the agency's successful accomplishment of an important mission. 5 USC 5377; OMB Bulletin No. 91-09.

- ! Upon request of an agency, OPM is authorized to **waive the requirement for a reduction in the retired or retainer pay of a military retiree or the civilian pay of a civilian retiree upon reemployment** in a civilian position. Total pay and retirement benefits not subject to the Executive Level 1 aggregate limitation on pay. OPM may approve waivers to meet temporary emergency hiring needs or when the agency has encountered exceptional difficulty in recruiting or retaining a qualified candidate for a particular position, and may specify a time limit for reemployment without penalty. 5USC 5532(g), 8344(i), and 8468(f); 5CFR part 553, subpart B.