



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240



APR 14 2011

## PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO: 11-06

### SUBJECT: Department of the Interior Career Transition Assistance Plan

**1. Introduction.** The Department of the Interior (DOI) administers its human resources management program in accordance with title 5 of the United States Code, and Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). As specified herein, DOI adheres to 5 CFR Part 330.

**2. Purpose.** This Personnel Bulletin formalizes the Department's program for assisting its surplus and displaced employees to find other employment, as required by 5 CFR Part 330, Subpart B, F, and G. Accordingly, this Personnel Bulletin supersedes DOI's Career Transition Assistance Plan, dated September 8, 1997 and implements OPM regulations 5 CFR Part 330, revised March 3, 2011.

**3. DOI Policy.** It is the policy of the Department to assist all employees whose positions have been adversely impacted due to government-wide or DOI management initiatives. To the extent practicable, these employees will be provided career transition services such as retraining for a new occupation, career or retirement counseling, assistance preparing a resume, etc. In accordance with 5 CFR Part 330, Subpart B, F, and G, DOI employees who will or may become "surplus" or "displaced" because of management initiatives, such as de-layering, reorganization, competitive sourcing, transfer of function, downsizing, or other workforce restructuring may receive the following:

- a. Career transition services.
- b. Special selection priority (SSP) for positions within DOI as defined in 5 CFR 330, Subpart F – Agency Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAP).
- c. SSP for positions in agencies outside of DOI as defined in 5 CFR 330, Subpart G – Interagency Career Transition Plan (ICTAP).
- d. Reemployment priority for eligible employees who receive a notice of separation or certificate of expected separation as defined in 5 CFR 330, Subpart B – Reemployment Priority List (RPL).

Note: Special selection priority programs (SSP) provides priority placement to eligible employees under both CTAP and ICTAP. The CTAP program provides special selection priority for displaced/surplus DOI employees and is administered by DOI. Each Federal agency administers the special selection priority placement for displaced employees outside their agency called ICTAP. For the purposes of this Bulletin, SSP may be used interchangeably with CTAP and refers to the program that places displaced/surplus DOI employees within DOI.

**4. Responsibilities:** The Director of Human Resources has the following responsibilities: 1) develop and issue policies, procedures, and guidance to be followed by DOI bureaus and equivalent offices, and Human Resources Officers (HROs) for considering affected employees; and 2) maintain and update agency RPL and SSP listings.

DOI bureaus and equivalent offices have the following responsibilities: 1) notify the servicing HRO, in writing, of employees that will or might become surplus or displaced due to a management initiative as soon as practical; 2) in coordination with the HRO, notify each affected employee in writing that his/her position will or may be affected; 3) provide required information, including documentation, regarding consideration efforts; 4) make every reasonable effort to retrain employees who lack specialized knowledge in a specific program area, but who possess skills or potential to perform in other positions; and 5) provide priority consideration within the bureau or equivalent office for any employee who applies and is found well-qualified for appropriate vacancies in accordance with 5 CFR 330, Subpart F.

Servicing HROs have the following responsibilities: 1) coordinate with management as soon as possible to ensure proper administration of career placement and transition services as well as labor communications; 2) review each affected employee's application and qualifications and ensure they are registered in the agency CTAP and RPL programs, as appropriate; 3) forward employee CTAP and RPL information, to include official notification letters, to the Department for registration and online posting; 4) along with management, coordinate any appropriate career transition services to affected employees such as training, resume writing assistance, retirement counseling, etc, 5) ensure CTAP and RPL programs are appropriately and timely administered, 6) Provide any required reports and documentation to the Director of Human Resources.

Affected employees have the following responsibilities: 1) provide sufficient information to the HRO staff to determine the employee qualifications for other employment in a timely manner and: 2) submit timely applications for positions for which consideration is desired under CTAP or RPL.

**5. Career Transition Assistance:**

- a. **Eligibility.** DOI employees identified as directly affected by management actions referenced in this Personnel Bulletin, including employees in the excepted service and Senior Executive Service, are eligible to receive career transition assistance.
- b. **Access to Assistance.** Eligible employees may be allowed excused absence for reasonable periods of time to use any services and facilities, subject to supervisory approval. In addition, employees will be allowed use of agency equipment to prepare and file vacancy applications in accordance with existing policies.
- c. **Orientation** will be conducted by bureaus HROs and equivalent office and will include:
  - Specific rights and eligibility requirements under the SSP (CTAP and ICTAP) and RPL;

- Information regarding any career transition assistance being made available by the bureaus and equivalent offices; and
  - How to apply for vacancies under both plans as well as information about RPL, if applicable.
- d. **Types of Assistance.** When conducting major workforce force displacements, bureaus should provide their employees the following career transition assistance services:

**Career Counseling and Assessment.** Employees are assisted by identifying new career options, making informed decisions about their careers, and participating in developing a career transition action plan, which may include training needs. Career counseling and assessment services may include:

- Administration and interpretation of a variety of assessments to identify current skills, interests, values, and personal styles;
- Identification of transferable skills, skills gaps, and career options;
- Assistance in developing private and public sector resumes, federal applications, cover and follow-up letters;
- Advice for identifying short and long-term goals;
- Guidance and referral to other services;
- Developing a career transition action plan;
- Career transition workshops; and
- Retirement and benefits counseling.

**6. Special Selection Priority under CTAP.** The Department of the Interior will provide special selection priority to eligible "surplus" or "displaced" employees in their local commuting area under CTAP. Each bureau must give priority consideration to any surplus/displaced Interior employee in the local commuting area. The provisions for granting special selection priority are those described in 5 CFR Part 330, Subpart F.

- a. **Special Selection Priority under CTAP** means that except as provided by 5 CFR 330.609, surplus and/or displaced employees eligible under subpart F must be selected over any other candidate for vacancies in the local commuting area for which they apply and are found well-qualified.
- b. **Coverage.** Coverage under the special selection priority program is available to career and career-conditional employees or excepted permanent or excepted conditional employees who meet the definition of "surplus" or "displaced" found in 5 CFR 330.602. Special selection priority for employees in the excepted service is the same, with respect to positions in the excepted service under the same appointing authority, as the rights of competitive employees for positions in the competitive service.
- c. **Employee Exclusions.** The following employees are not eligible for selection priority under CTAP:

- Schedule C employees;
  - Senior Executive Service appointees;
  - Presidential appointees requiring Senate confirmation; and
  - Employees on time-limited appointments.
- d. Eligibility. To be eligible for special selection priority, covered employees must meet all of the conditions described in 5 CFR 330.602 and 611. Covered employees may only be selected for positions for which they are determined to be "well-qualified" as defined in 5 CFR 330.605.
- e. Notification of Eligibility. Employees who receive a specific reduction in force (RIF) notice, certification of expected separation, notice of proposed separation for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function outside of the local commuting area, or other official DOI certification, will be informed of their eligibility for selection priority under CTAP and career transition services.
- f. Duration of Special Selection Priority. Placement assistance under the Department's special selection priority program expires for eligible employees on the earliest of:
- i. The RIF separation date;
  - ii. The effective date of the employee's resignation, retirement, or separation (including separation under adverse action procedures for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function or similar relocation to another local commuting area);
  - iii. Cancellation of the RIF separation notice, notice of proposed removal for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function outside of the commuting area, or other bureau certification that established special selection priority eligibility;
  - iv. Acceptance of a career, career-conditional, or excepted appointment without time limit in any federal bureau at any grade level; and
  - v. Within DOI, declination of a career, career-conditional, or excepted appointment without time limit, at or below the employee's current grade level, for which the employee has applied and been rated well-qualified.
- g. Notification of Vacancies. DOI bureaus must advertise appropriate vacancies, at a minimum, within the Department. For non-competition actions, they must ensure that no displaced or surplus candidates are available on the CTAP listing maintained by the Department. Eligible employees should monitor vacancy announcements and apply when they are interested and qualified. Each employee must follow the instruction in the vacancy announcement for consideration under CTAP.
- h. Identification of the Well-Qualified. Eligible employees will be considered well-qualified for vacancies in their local commuting area if they:
- Meet qualification standards and other eligibility requirements;

- Meet selective factor(s);
- Meet the definition of "well-qualified" as specified for the particular vacancy. ("Well-qualified" criteria exceed minimum qualifications, but need not meet the requirements for "highly or best-qualified");
- Meet any physical qualifications with reasonable accommodations, where appropriate; and
- Are able to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position upon entry.

If an eligible employee is determined to be not well-qualified, the rater(s) must document the job-related reason for this determination and submit it to the servicing HRO for review. The HRO will conduct an independent second review of this determination. The HRO must advise the employee in writing whether he or she was found well-qualified for the position and, if well-qualified, whether he or she or another well-qualified, eligible employee was selected for the position.

- i. **Order of Selection.** A bureau must select an eligible well-qualified DOI employee who applies for a vacancy at or below his/her current grade level and with no higher promotion potential, in the local commuting area before any other candidate from within or outside DOI, unless doing so would cause another DOI employee to be separated by RIF. If more than one eligible DOI employee is determined to be well-qualified for the vacancy, any of the employees may be selected. If no eligible employees apply, or none are determined to be well-qualified, the Bureau must consider employees who are eligible for priority consideration, if any. In the absence of any of these, the Bureau may consider other DOI employees, or non-DOI applicants, as appropriate. Exceptions to the order of selection are listed in 5 CFR 330.609.

**7. Reemployment Priority List (RPL).** The DOI will provide reemployment priority consideration in the local commuting area for eligible employees who have been displaced. This consideration is provided through maintaining an RPL (through the DOI Priority and Special Selection Priority) for eligible former competitive service employees separated by reduction in force (RIF), or those fully recovered from a compensable injury after more than 1 year.

- a. **Coverage.** Reemployment priority consideration is available to career or career-conditional employees who meet the conditions described in 5 CFR 330.203(a), and to career or career-conditional employees who meet the conditions described in 5 CFR 330.204(a), and register within the required timeframe.
- b. **Notification of Eligibility.** At the time specific RIF notices of separation are issued, each eligible employee must be given information about the RPL, including registration procedures and appeal rights.
- c. **Registration.** An employee eligible due to RIF must register with his/her servicing HR Office on or before the RIF separation date in accordance with 5 CFR 330.206. Employees eligible after recovery from compensable injury must register with his/her servicing HR Office within 30 calendar days after compensation benefits end or date injury compensation benefits cease, in accordance with 5 CFR 330.206

- d. Consideration. Each eligible employee/former employee will receive reemployment priority consideration for available vacant positions in the commuting area for which he/she qualifies and has registered.
- e. Order of Selection. When filling competitive service vacancies from *outside* the Department's workforce, agencies must first select an available RPL eligible before selecting:
- A new appointment (unless the appointment is a 10-point preference eligible);
  - A transfer from another Federal agency outside of DOI; or
  - A reinstatement of a former Federal employee (except for an appointee with restoration or reemployment rights).

However, DOI may fill positions without considering RPL registrants in certain situations in accordance with 5 CFR 330.211.

- f. Method of Selection. When selecting persons on the RPL, HROs should use one of the methods described in 5 CFR 330.213.
- g. Duration of Reemployment Priority Consideration. From the date of entry on the RPL, consideration for reemployment lasts for 2 years for career employees, and one year for career-conditional employees. Eligibility ends earlier if:
- The employee asks to have his/her name removed from the RPL;
  - The employee receives a career, career-conditional, or excepted service appointment without time limit in any bureau;
  - The employee declines a permanent job offer at the current or former grade;
  - The employee declines an interview;
  - The employee doesn't respond to an offer or availability inquiry, or fails to appear for a scheduled interview; or
  - The employee separates for some other reason (e.g., retirement or resignation) before the separation date.

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Director, Office of Human Resources

**Career Transition Assistance Program  
Frequently Asked Questions**

- 1. Does the Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) guarantee jobs for former DOI employees who have been displaced by reduction-in-force (RIF)?**

No, there is no guarantee. The Department recommends all employees affected by RIF or other management initiatives not only rely on the CTAP but also take their own initiative to use all available employment and employment assistance sources and opportunities. This includes OPM's USAJOBS listings, State, local, and private sector employment opportunities.

- 2. What is local commuting area?**

Based on the definition in 5 CFR 351.203, local commuting area is the area surrounding the duty station of the position from which an employee is being or has been separated that the organization has in practice expected employees to travel back and forth to work on a daily basis.

- 3. What is the order of selection when filling vacancies for competitive service positions?**

Bureaus and equivalent offices should refer to 5 CFR 330.607 when applying CTAP selection priority.

- 4. What is the definition of a Certification of Expected Separation (CES) or other official DOI certification?**

The definition of a CES may be found in 5 CFR 351.807. "Other certification" is defined as an official notice signed by the official who is delegated authority to issue reduction-in-force notices; such notice will identify an employee (by name or series) as being in a surplus organization or occupation.

- 5. Who is eligible for career transition assistance training and support services?**

All current DOI career and career conditional employees in the competitive service and any other surplus and displaced agency employees affected by downsizing or restructuring are eligible for career transition assistance training and support services.

**6. What types of career transition services will be provided?**

The following types of transition services may be made available by the bureaus:

- Job search information (how to find a job)
- Job vacancy information
- Workshops and seminars including resume writing, interview techniques, stress management, preparation for retirement
- Employee Assistance Program counseling services

Additional services may be provided based on need for such services and the availability of funds. Given current staffing limitations, bureaus and equivalent offices are not expected to be able to provide all of the above services in-house and may contract with a private vendor. At a minimum, each bureau or equivalent office will provide the career transition services appropriate to its employees' needs.

**6. What is DOI's policy on excused absences for employees to use career transition services and facilities?**

Supervisors are encouraged to be as flexible as possible as the needs of the workplace permit, to allow eligible career employees a reasonable amount of time to participate in activities.

**7. What is a vacancy for purposes of Special Selection Priority (SSP)?**

A competitive service position lasting 121 days or more, including extensions, which the Department is filling, regardless of whether DOI issues a specific vacancy announcement.

**8. When must the CTAP be applied?**

Except as set forth in 5 CFR 330.609, when filling a vacancy, the selecting official must select a well-qualified eligible applicant under the SSP component of CTAP before selecting any other candidate from within or outside the Department, unless doing so would cause another employee to be separated by RIF (this must be documented). CTAP must be applied when the vacancy lasts 121 days or more (including extensions) and is filled by an action not identified in 5 CFR 330.609.

**9. How does an individual receive priority consideration under the CTAP?**

The surplus or displaced employee must meet the eligibility requirements described in 5 CFR 330 Subpart F. The employee must apply within the specified time frames and submit proof of eligibility (the RIF separation notice or notice of propose removal for declining a directed reassignment or transfer of function outside the local commuting area, Certification of Expected Separation or other official notice from DOI indicating that the employee is surplus or eligible for discontinued service retirement, or official

DOI certification identifying the employee as being in a surplus occupation.) The eligibility determination is subject to verification prior to a final offer.

**10. What is meant by “well-qualified” for a vacancy under the SSP component of CTAP?**

OPM defines well-qualified to be generally those applicants whose knowledge, skills, and abilities clearly exceed the minimum qualification requirements but who would not necessarily meet the definition of highly or best qualified.

**11. Must an eligible well-qualified surplus or displaced employee who applies under the SSP component of CTAP for a vacancy within his/her local commuting area and within the specified time frames be hired by the DOI bureau or equivalent office?**

Yes, unless the action being taken to fill the position vacancy is one identified in 5 CFR 330.609.

**12. Can a CTAP applicant appeal a qualification decision?**

An applicant cannot appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board; however, they may request a review of the decision by the servicing Personnel Office.

**13. Must all vacancies be advertised?**

Yes, unless the action being taken is a legitimate exception to CTAP or a determination has been made by the servicing personnel office that no SSP candidates are available.

**14. When is use of Reemployment Priority List (RPL) required?**

The RPL must be cleared before filling any competitive service position, regardless of whether the organization plans to make a permanent or non-permanent appointment. Exceptions to use of RPL are as follows:

- a. When all qualified individuals on the RPL decline an offer of a specific position or fail to respond to an official agency inquiry about their availability.
- b. When filling a position with a current, qualified employee of the agency through:
  - (1) Detail or position change (e.g., promotion, demotion, reassignment, etc);
  - (2) Conversion to competitive appointment of employees currently serving under appointments that carry a noncompetitive conversion eligibility (e.g., Veterans Recruitment Act, 30 percent disabled veterans, disabled employees under Schedule A appointments, Presidential Management Fellows Interns, and student and recent graduates participants);

- (3) Reappointment without a break in service to the same position currently held by an employee serving under a temporary appointment of 1 year or less to another temporary appointment not to exceed 1 year;
- (4) Extension of an employee's temporary appointment up to the maximum permitted by the appointing authority or as authorized by OPM or
- (5) By a 30-day special needs appointment or 700-hour temporary appointment of a severe disability or mentally restored individual, when the agency's staffing policies provide for these exceptions.

**15. What is meant by qualified for a vacancy under RPL?**

An RPL registrant is determined to be qualified for a position if he/she meets the minimum OPM qualification standards and meets all selective factors.

**16. Can an individual on the RPL appeal a qualifications decision?**

Yes; an individual may appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board under the provisions of the Board's regulations.

**17. If a separated individual applies for a position for which they are not registered on the RPL, do they receive priority consideration?**

No, they would only be entitled to consideration with other candidates in accordance with normal merit promotion procedures.

**18. Must an eligible well-qualified surplus or displaced employee from outside of DOI who applies under the ICTAP for a vacancy within his/her local commuting area and within the specified time frames be hired by the DOI bureau or equivalent office?**

Yes, if the position is advertised outside of DOI and no other authorized exceptions apply.

**19. Must the Human Resources Office check and clear ICTAP before procuring private sector employees through temporary help services?**

Yes, ICTAP (and CTAP) must be checked and cleared before procuring private sector employees through temporary help services.

**Special Selection Priority and Reemployment Priority List  
Registration Worksheet**

Instructions: This worksheet is to be completed by the servicing Human Resources Office (HRO) with input from the employee. It is to be used for both Special Selection Priority (SSP) and/or Reemployment Priority List (RPL) registration. The HRO will keep one copy. A copy will be provided to the registrant. The HRO will submit another copy by email or fax (202-219-1513) to the Department's Office of Human Resources for posting on the Department's SSP and/or RPL web pages. More details on registration and processing are contained in NOTICE TO APPLICANTS below. The employee must complete items 3, 4, 9, and 15 on the worksheet. All other items must be completed by the HRO.

Employee is registering for: SSP \_\_\_\_\_ RPL \_\_\_\_\_ Both \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant Data: Part I**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Registrant Name (Last, First, MI)</p> <p>_____</p>   | <p>2. SSN (Last 4):</p> <p>_____</p>                |
| <p>3. Home Address</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>  | <p>4. Home/Office Phone Number</p> <p>_____</p>     |
| <p>5. Date of Specific Notice of Separation or Certification of Notice of Separation</p> <p>_____</p>  | <p>6. Effective Date of Separation</p> <p>_____</p> |
| <p>7. Tenure Group      <input type="checkbox"/> 1    <input type="checkbox"/> 2    <input type="checkbox"/> 3<br/> Subgroup            <input type="checkbox"/> AD <input type="checkbox"/> A   <input type="checkbox"/> B<br/> Indian Preference   <input type="checkbox"/> Yes        <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> |   |

**Employment/Availability Data: Part II**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>8. Current Job Title/Pay Plan/Series/Grade</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> | <p>9. Title Pay Plan/Series/Grade employee wishes to register:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> |
|---|---|

10. Current Duty Station: \_\_\_\_\_
11. Current Appointment Type:  
 \_\_\_ Competitive \_\_\_ Excepted
12. Current Work Schedule:  
 \_\_\_ FT \_\_\_ PT \_\_\_ Seasonal  
 \_\_\_ Intermittent \_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
13. Last Annual Performance Rating of Record: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Veteran's Preference: \_\_\_ None \_\_\_ 5 pt \_\_\_ 10/Disability \_\_\_ 10 pt/Compensable  
 \_\_\_ 10 pt/Compensable 30%
- 

**Applicant Signature: Part III**

15. Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**HRO Information: Part IV**

16. Bureau or Equivalent Office: \_\_\_\_\_
17. Name, Office Phone Number, and Email Address of HRO Contact  
 \_\_\_\_\_
18. Titles, Series, and Grades of positions show in Block 9 for which registrant is qualified and eligible
- |       |       |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

Note: HROs are expected to assist employees in identifying those positions for which the employee qualifies and is interested.

19. Other conditions under the employee will accept employment (e.g., grade, occupation, and minimum hours of work per week, different work schedules, availability for temporary or permanent appointment, etc)

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## Notice to Employees

The DOI Special Selection Priority (SSP) and Reemployment Priority List (RPL) is a program that provides priority hiring consideration for DOI employees who are: 1) pending separation or displacement from their position, or 2) have already been separated from their position. These programs are maintained in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management regulations found in 5 CFR Part 330, Subpart B, F, and G.

With the HRO's assistance, an employee may complete and submit this worksheet to their servicing HRO. For SSP, this should be completed as soon as an "official" written notification of a pending management action is received. For RPL, this should be completed as soon as the employee receives notice of proposed separation. In this case, employees must submit the worksheet no later than 30 calendar days after the effective date of separation. An employee who fails to submit timely information needed for registration will not be allowed to register in RPL. The bureaus or equivalent office must enroll the affected employees no later than 10 calendar days after receipt of this registration worksheet.

This worksheet must be completed and include relevant specified information such as: job series, grade, tenure group, duty station, etc. It should include information on any other conditions under which employment will be accepted.

Employees should also note that in order to be selected for a position, they must meet all identified qualification requirements for the job. As such, employee must be at a minimum qualified (or in the case of SSP, well-qualified) for any position that they are registered. Employees who have questions concerning types of position titles, series and grades for which they are qualified, should seek assistance from their serving HRO.