



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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Memorandum

To: Bureau Human Capital Officers
Bureau Human Resources Directors

From: Jennifer A. Ackerman
Director, Office of Human Capital
Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer

Subject: Determining Normal Line of Progression for Single Grade Wildland Fire Positions

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to Human Resources (HR) Practitioners in support of positions related to Wildland Firefighting when determining the normal line of progression. This guidance is intended to ensure a consistent approach is taken when reviewing for the normal line of progression and case files have the appropriate documentation to support decisions.

Scope

This guidance applies to positions classified as one-grade interval series only (e.g., 0456, 0462).

Background

Normal line of progression is the pattern of upward movement from one grade to another for a position or group of positions in an organization. In accordance with OPM qualifications policy regarding normal line of progression, also known as promotion, there may be instances where there is not an established position one grade lower in the “normal line of progression” to be filled. In such instances, for internal placement actions only, one year of specialized experience equivalent to the second lowest level within the organization is creditable. For external applicants, those outside without current or prior Federal competitive or excepted service, one year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the next lower level is required.

Guidance

For the purposes of determining the normal line of progression, review of the organizational unit/entity is required. The organizational unit/entity is defined as all positions below the first level or direct report supervisor, see Example 1 below.

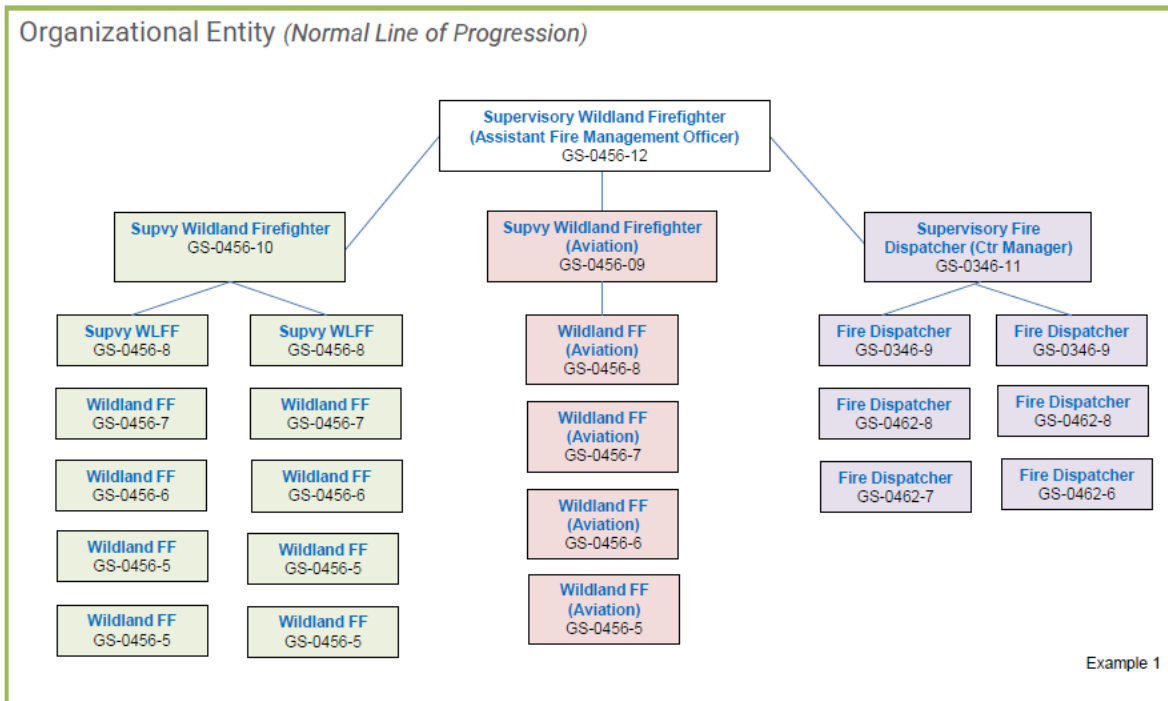
To determine whether there is a position at the next lower level in the normal line of progression, the table of organization must have been approved within the last 12 months and a cursory review by a bureau or agency headquarters Classification Specialist prior to recruitment. The position descriptions used for the supervisory position and highest subordinate positions also need to have been reviewed by a Classification Specialist within the last five years. If an intervening position is vacant, grade skipping is not authorized.

Upon application of the General Schedule Supervisory Guide, a supervisory position that is placed two grades above the highest graded subordinate position, must be graded on grade controlling duties. Additionally, intervening positions such as Leads and Deputies should be considered in supporting the normal line of progression.

A thorough review of the functional areas, along with the knowledge and skills required for positions within an organizational unit, must be conducted to determine qualifying work. Qualifying work should only be credited when a lower-level position is able to successfully meet the qualifications for the position it is intended to fill.

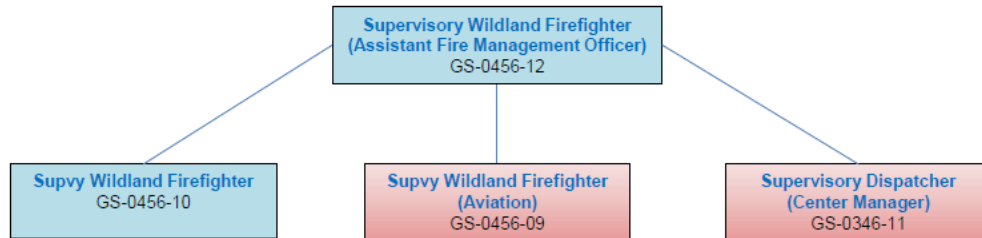
Position management is the responsibility of hiring officials to ensure sound organizational structures and proper position alignment. Managers and supervisors must collaborate with Bureau Servicing Classifiers, who hold delegated classification authority, to ensure that position titles, series, and grades are appropriate and meet regulatory requirements before implementing any organizational changes. Additional guidance is available in the [DOI Position Management and Position Classification Policy Handbook](#).

In 'Example 1' there are three (3) individual organizational units. When the Supervisory Wildland Firefighter GS-0456-10, Supervisory Wildland Firefighter (Aviation) GS-0456-09, or Supervisory Fire Dispatcher (Ctr Manger) GS-0346-11, is vacant, a review of only that organization units under each of these supervisors is required to make the determination of the normal line of progression.



In 'Example 2' When the Supervisory Wildland Firefighter (Assistant FMO) is vacant, only the direct report positions are taken into consideration when determining normal line of progression. In this example, a determination will need to be made if all positions would be considered as qualifying work. Though a position may exist in the next lower level within an organization, such as the Supervisory Dispatcher (Center Manager) GS-0346-11, the position must also be qualifying for the position to be filled. If it is not, then a second lower graded position may be used.

Organizational Entity (Normal Line of Progression)



Example 2

Use the following table to determine if you can qualify applicants 1 or 2 grades below the position to be filled:

1	Within the organizational unit is there any permanent position established below the position identified to be filled?	No – You must apply qualifications one grade lower than the position being filled NOTE: For exception examples see notes 1 and 2 below this table Yes – go to step 2
2	Within the organizational unit, is there a permanent position established at the next lower grade level of the position identified to be filled?	Yes – go to step 4 No – go to step 3
3	Are there classified SPD's or PD's that can be used to create a career ladder announcement (i.e., DOI WLFF Operational SPDs are established at the GS-3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 levels)?	Yes – You must apply qualifications one grade lower than the position being filled and utilize the SPDs/PDs available No – go to step 4

4	Would the position qualify for the position identified to be filled?	<p>Yes – You must apply qualifications one grade lower than the position being filled</p> <p>No – You can apply qualifications equivalent to the second grade lower than the position being filled</p>
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1. When a position is recruited at a GS-9 grade level with a full performance level at the GS-11, and there is no intervening GS-10 level position in the normal line of progression, applicants for the GS-11 can meet the specialized experience using appropriate GS-9 level work. Applicants selected at the GS-9 level may be promoted without further competition to the GS-11 grade level after meeting time-in-grade requirements at the GS-9 grade level and achieving a performance rating of “Fully Successful” (level 3) or higher, per 5 CFR 335.104.
2. When recruiting for positions at the GS-11 level, there are no positions established within the organizational unit at the GS-09 or 10 levels, and a GS-10 position cannot be legitimately classified for the work, a determination of allowing GS-9 level work to be creditable for the GS-11 may be made to ensure an adequate applicant pool.

NOTE: These exceptions are ONLY for situations where a GS-10 cannot legitimately be classified for the work.

Required Documentation for Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) Case Files:

- Current table of organization approved by bureau or agency headquarter level Classification Specialist, which clearly shows where the position is and identify the position it reports to.
- Position descriptions (PD) of established grades desired to be skipped within the organizational unit as shown on the table of organization (i.e., all GS-8 PDs) to clearly show the established positions one grade lower within the organization would not be qualifying for the grade being recruited and not considered the normal line of progression/promotion.

Required JOA Language under Qualifications:

You must clearly show in the JOA the qualification requirements for internal and outside applicants, with clear distinctions at each grade level.

Time-in-grade requirements apply to positions advertised under Merit Promotion (MP) procedures; however, they do not apply when advertising using the Direct Hire Authority for Wildland Fire (DHA).

Below is an example of JOA language that may be used:

Direct Hire Authority or Competitive Examining JOA:

CURRENT AND PRIOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES:

To qualify for the GS-10 grade level:

If you are a current or former federal employee who held a competitive or excepted appointment, your resume must show that you have one year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-08 grade level. Examples of relevant work experience include:
xxxxxx

EXTERNAL APPLICANTS:

To qualify for the GS-10 grade level:

If you have never been a federal employee or are not currently serving in a competitive or excepted appointment, your resume must show that you have one year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-09 grade level. Examples of relevant work experience include: xxxxxx.

Merit Promotion JOA:

CURRENT AND PRIOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES:

To qualify for the GS-10 grade level:

If you are a current or former federal employee who held a competitive or excepted appointment, your resume must show that you have one year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-08 grade level. Examples of relevant work experience include:
xxxxxx

EXTERNAL APPLICANTS:

To qualify for the GS-10 grade level:

If you have never been a federal employee or are not currently serving in a competitive or excepted appointment, your resume must show that you have one year of specialized experience equivalent to at least the GS-09 grade level. Examples of relevant work experience include: xxxxxx.

FEDERAL TIME-IN-GRADE (TIG) REQUIREMENT FOR GENERAL SCHEDULE (GS) POSITIONS:

Merit promotion applicants must meet applicable time-in-grade requirements to be considered eligible. One year (52 weeks) of experience at a minimum of the GS-08 level is required to meet the time-in-grade requirements for the GS-10 level.

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NOTE: Applicants applying as VEOA candidates who are current GS civil service employees or are prior GS civil service employees within the past 52 weeks must also meet time-in-grade requirements.

Inquiries: Any Department employee or employee representative seeking further information concerning this memorandum may contact their respective servicing human resources office. Bureau Headquarters Human Resources staff may contact the OHC Strategic Talent Management division at DOI_Office_of_Human_Resources@ios.doi.gov for questions or additional information concerning this guidance.