



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 23-12

SUBJECT: Shared Certificates Policy under Competitive Examination (for Delegated Examining Unit; DEU)

1. **Purpose.** This Personnel Bulletin (PB) replaces the existing Delegated Examining (DE) Shared Certificates Policy (PB 20-17) for the Department of the Interior (Interior). This policy is being updated for compliance with Executive Order 13988-Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation, and to provide procedural updates to expedite and promote efficient hiring practices throughout Interior.
2. **Scope.** This document serves as official policy to all employees responsible for filling civil service jobs through competitive examination on behalf of Interior. Anyone conducting competitive examination under Interior's Delegated Agreement with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) must maintain a valid Delegated Examining Certification, familiarize themselves with the contents of this policy and advocate the use of shared certificates as a hiring efficiency tool.
3. **Authority.** Competitive Service Act: [Public Law 114-137](#); Shared Use of a Competitive Certificate: [5 CFR § 332.408](#); OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH) – [Chapter 6, Section F](#)
4. **Definitions.**
 - a. See Appendix A – Definitions.
5. **Responsibility.**
 - a. **Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO).** Responsible for developing Interior-wide policy and guidance regarding the Shared Certificates Program consistent with OPM policies and guidance, and all applicable federal laws and regulations. Evaluating program and providing oversight through human capital evaluation.
 - b. **Bureau/Office Human Resources.** Human Resources is responsible for complying with this policy, assisting Selecting Officials/Hiring Managers to understand the provisions of shared certificates, provide operational oversight and evaluation of shared certificate execution within servicing human resources offices and encourage the use of shared certificates and assist SHROs in the

coordination with Receiving SHROs. Bureaus must:

- i. comply with merit system principles and applicable laws, rules and regulations;
- ii. avoid prohibited personnel practices;
- iii. ensure employees with job responsibilities covered under Interior's delegated agreement, maintain valid certification to administer competitive examination;
- iv. promote the use of shared certificates for positions that are commonly filled and are mission critical (Interior and Government-wide), during recruitment consultation;
- v. advise and consult management, subject matter experts and selecting officials/hiring managers about provisions of the law, regulations, and this policy;
- vi. provide procedural guidance not covered by this policy, to ensure operation-level uniformity through practical application;
- vii. safeguard testing and examination materials, examination results, and the names of applicants from disclosure to unauthorized persons;
- viii. assess candidates fairly and equitably (e.g., applying the principles for assessment practices during the selection process; [reference PB-22-04](#)); and
- ix. validate and monitor selections through appointment and onboarding to ensure transactions remains within the scope of Interior policy and timelines.

c. Selecting Officials/Hiring Managers. A Selecting Official/Hiring manager is an individual responsible for making the management decision regarding who is selected for placement in a position. Selecting Officials must:

- i. comply with merit system principles and applicable laws, rules, and regulations to avoid prohibited personnel practices;
- ii. consider use of shared certificates for positions that are commonly filled and mission critical (Interior and Government-wide), as part of a recruitment consultation with human resources;
- iii. understand the provisions of the law, regulations, and this policy;
- iv. assess workforce needs against available hiring authorities and flexibilities to ensure timely and efficient execution of the recruitment and hiring processes;

- v. identify qualifications and justify the use and importance of all factors used to evaluate applicants;
- vi. ensure internal workforce receive appropriate consideration for career advancement; and
- vii. evaluate and select candidates fairly and equitably (e.g., applying the principles for assessment practices during the selection process; [reference PB-22-04](#)).

- 6. Policy.** This policy is effective immediately and must be applied in accordance with OPM procedural guidance, applicable laws, regulations, established collective bargaining agreements, and in consultation with related Interior policy on competitive examination. This policy may be applied to intra-agency hiring activity (Bureau/Office-to-Bureau/Office) under Interior's appointing authority, and/or in careful coordination with external appointing authorities (i.e. another Federal department or agency).

Interior Bureaus/Offices may share competitive service certificate(s) issued under Interior's delegated examining authority and receive and make a selection from competitive service certificate(s) from another Originating SHRO, for an authorized appointment type. Any action(s) taken on an eligible shared certificate must be made within the time limits for selection activity and be done in accordance with all applicable regulations and delegated, competitive examining procedures (5 CFR § 332.408). The provisions of this policy are strictly concerned with shared certificate(s), not shared or out-sourced recruitment activity.

In accordance with 25 U.S.C. § 472, all positions in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and other positions in Interior directly and primarily related to providing services to Indians must follow the provisions in the law and applicable Interior policy.

Prior to implementing this policy, bureaus must review collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and satisfy any labor-management obligations, as applicable. Where the provisions of this instruction differ from the requirements contained in an applicable CBA, the CBA takes precedence.

7. Requirements.

- a. Bureau/Office as Originating SHRO.** A Bureau/Office may share a competitive examining certificate issued under the DOI's delegated authority with one or more Receiving SHRO, provided the Originating SHRO:
 - i. intends to use the certificate for its own hiring. Per, 5 CFR 332.408(b)(1)(v), originating SHRO should expressly state whether a

selection was made or not from the cert and in the event of non-selection, the reason must be properly documented.

- ii. provides appropriate procedures within the JOA/Vacancy file for the original vacancy that the resulting list of eligible candidates may be used by one or more hiring agencies.
 - 1. The Vacancy must contain appropriate metadata (commonly known as Appointing Authority ‘tagging’) indicating ‘Shared Recruitment’.
 - 2. The statement below must be included in each JOA that may result in a shared certificate opportunity.

“More than one position may be filled from this announcement, at the discretion of Federal hiring officials. Department of the Interior may share the list of eligible candidates with other Federal agencies/departments, authorized to appoint new employees under the same hiring procedures if the position is in the same: job series, grade level, promotion potential, and in the same geographic locations (including the same metro/commuting area) provided herein. You will have the opportunity to “opt-in” to appear on a shared list. “Opt-in” does not guarantee your application will be shared, but you will be contacted in the event your application is shared.”

- iii. When a vacancy contains the *Appointing Authority*, ‘Shared Recruitment’ tag, the Originating SHRO must include an unrated assessment questionnaire item, providing an opportunity for applicants to Opt-In or Opt-Out of shared certificates procedures. This assessment questionnaire item is to be used to identify applicants when preparing a certificate for sharing.

Item Text: *More than one position may be filled from this announcement, at the discretion of Federal hiring officials. Department of the Interior may share the list of eligible candidates with other Federal agencies/departments, authorized to appoint new employees under the same hiring procedures if the position is in the same: job series, grade level, promotion potential, and in the same geographic locations (including the same metro/commuting area).*

Screen-Out Question: ‘off’; the item is informational, and not a rated factor.

Link to Competency: ‘none’; the item is informational, and not a rated factor.

Response Type: Multiple Choice, Single Select.

Scale: Item-Specific Response Options.

Add Response:

Response Option A: Opt-in – I choose to have my application materials shared with other Federal agencies/departments for the same job series, grade-level, promotion potential, and in the same geographic locations (including the same metro-commuting area) as a result of this job announcement, if requested of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Response Option B: Opt-Out – I choose not to have my application materials shared with other Federal agencies/departments, from this announcement.

Note: Originating SHROs may create a working applicant list to identify ‘Opt-In’ applicants. Original form, ordering and redaction, applies. (See **6. Policy**)

- iv. all objections to eligibles or requests to pass over preference eligibles on the certificate (5 C.F.R § 332.406 or § 337.304) have been resolved by the delegated examining unit; and
- v. has closed and audited the certificate in accordance with the procedures in the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook.

The Originating SHRO must share the certificate of eligibles in its original form in order to retain the original ordering of the certificate; must safeguard any personally identifiable information (PII) from unauthorized access during the transmission process; and must redact the names of applicants who did not opt-in to the shared certificate, and who therefore may not be considered by the receiving SHRO.

The Originating SHRO must share all documentation pertaining to the creation of that certificate, including but not limited to the job analysis, testing and examination materials, the JOA, and applications, as relevant, and must safeguard any personally identifiable information not needed for effective use of the certificate by the Receiving SHRO.

- b. Bureau/Office as Receiving SHRO.** A Bureau/Office may make a selection from competitive service certificate(s) to fill a vacancy from another Originating SHRO, provided:
 - i. the vacancy is in the same occupational series, at the same grade level (or a corresponding rate or level of pay for a position excluded from the General Schedule), with the same full performance level, and in the same duty location as was listed on the original hiring agency's certificate. If the original hiring agency's certificate is for an interdisciplinary position as described in the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, the receiving agency may use it to fill an interdisciplinary position. The receiving agency must verify through its job analysis that the minimum

qualification requirements (including use of any selective placement factors) and the competencies, or knowledge, skills, and abilities, that were used for the original position are appropriate for the position to be filled.

- ii. in accordance with Interior policy, the Receiving SHRO must ensure that all assessment tools used to determine certified candidates are included for use in their Bureau assessment strategic plan.
 - iii. the Receiving SHRO must notify all candidates on the list of candidates of its receipt of their names and application materials and its intention of considering them for a position. The Receiving SHRO must also inform these individuals of its requirement to consider its own employees as well as other individuals the agency is required to consider before consideration of anyone on the shared certificate. At a minimum, the notification must include the agency, position title, series, grade level or equivalent, and duty location as advertised.
 - iv. the Receiving SHRO has provided notice of its intent to fill the available position(s) to the Interior workforce, including employees and other individuals Interior is required to consider, providing these candidates the opportunity to apply consistent with the provisions of 5 C.F.R Part 335 and Personnel Bulletin No. 20-20 Agency Merit Promotion Plan Policy and Staffing Guidance, and to review the qualifications of the internal candidates.
 - 1. Notice and opportunity for internal candidates to apply is subject to collective bargaining obligations. Interior retains the right to fill a position from any appropriate source under 5 C.F.R. § 330.102 and § 335.103.
 - 2. The receiving SHRO must consider candidates on a shared certificate independently of the actions of any other Receiving SHRO with which the certificate is simultaneously shared.
 - 3. The receiving agency may not reassess the applicants for purposes of rating/ranking.
8. **Veterans' Preference and Pass Over/Objection to an Eligible.** Objections to a non-preference eligible applicant and requests to pass over an individual entitled to veterans' preference must be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis. Each case must be reviewed on its own merits. Therefore, adjudications by the Originating SHRO (or the Office of Personnel Management in the case of a 30 percent or more disabled veteran) sustaining objections or granting requests to pass over do not extend to the Receiving SHRO if a certificate is shared. A Receiving SHRO may object to an applicant or request to pass over an individual entitled to veterans' preference on a shared certificate in accordance with the procedures outlined in the DEOH and the provisions of 5 C.F.R. Part 332.

- 9. Documentation.** The Originating SHRO and all Receiving SHRO using a shared certificate must each maintain case file documentation for that agency's selection(s) sufficient for each agency that used the certificate to reconstruct its own hiring actions, when necessary. Each time a certificate is shared, each Receiving SHRO is responsible for creating a new instance of a case file to document its use. In the event the Originating SHRO determines that an error was made on the original certificate, the Originating SHRO must notify all Receiving SHRO of the details of the error. The Originating SHRO must make available, to any Receiving SHRO that needs it, all relevant case file documents concerning the selection or selections made by the Originating SHRO, as necessary, to make full reconstruction possible. Each Receiving SHRO is responsible for taking appropriate action to address any erroneous actions that it took due to the error by the Originating SHRO.
- 10. Oversight.** All records must be retained in accordance with competitive examining procedures, outlined in OPM's Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, Retention and Disposition Schedule, and reasonably accessible for evaluation at any time. All case-examining certificates covered by this policy are subject to review under Interior's Human Capital Accountability and Program Evaluation.
- 11. Inquiries.** Any employee or employee representative seeking further information concerning this policy may contact their respective servicing human resources office (SHRO). SHROs must confer with Human Capital Policy Offices for clarity on this policy. The Office of Human Capital serves as principal liaison to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Bureau Human Capital Policy offices may contact the Office of Human Capital at DOI_Office_of_Human_Resources@ios.doi.gov.

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

Attachments:
Appendix A – Definitions

References:
[OPM Competitive Service Act Shared Certificates FAQ](#)
[OPM Chief Human Capital Officers Memo – Implementing Policy Guidance for the Competitive Service Act \(Shared Certificates\)](#)
[Delegated Examining Operations Handbook](#)
[OPM USA Staffing Shared Certificates Guide](#)
[OPM USA Staffing Program Office/DOI Shared Certificate Considerations](#)

Appendix A – Definitions

Appointing Authority. Head of a Federal agency or department. While the Competitive Service Act does not define “appointing authority” for the purpose of shared certificates, its clear purpose is to expand current practice to allow an appointing authority to share certificates with an appointing authority in other departments or agencies, not just within the same agency (e.g., the Department of the Interior will now be able to share certificates with other departments of agencies). Consistent with this purpose, Interior refers to the “Originating SHRO” and the “Receiving SHRO” with respect to shared certificates, rather than using the more generic term “appointing authority”.

Authorized Appointment Type. Appointment to either a Permanent or Term basis. Positions filled on a term basis are subject to the provisions of 5 CFR part 316, subpart C. Temporary appointments (i.e., positions not-to-exceed one year) are excluded from these provisions because Interior must first consider individuals from within its own workforce, prior to selecting from a shared certificate.

Calendar Day. Every (continuous) day of the calendar year, including weekends, federal holidays and periods when the government is operating under a shutdown furlough (5 CFR §210.102).

Competency. A measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully. See also “Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSA)”, as these terms are sometimes used interchangeably and serve the same function in the job analysis process.

Competitive Service Act. The Competitive Service Act of 2015 was enacted as Public Law 114-137. The Act allows an appointing authority (i.e., the head of a Federal agency or department) to share a competitive certificate issued under delegated examining procedures with one or more appointing authorities (at different departments or agencies) to make an appointment to a position that is in the same occupational series, grade level (or equivalent), full performance level, and duty location during the 240 calendar day period beginning on the date of issuance of the certificate of eligibles.

Certificates/Certificates of Eligibles. A list of the ranked eligibles in descending score or quality category order, including veterans’ preference entitlement, submitted to a hiring manager for appointment consideration in accordance with the competitive selection laws and regulations.

Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH). A handbook designed to provide assistance to agencies with delegated examining authority granted under section 1104 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.). The DEOH applies to competitive examining only. It does not apply to merit promotion, the excepted service, or the Senior Executive Service. The handbook provides agencies with guidance, options, and, where necessary, specific operational procedures that are designed to ensure that examining programs comply with merit system laws and regulations.

Duty Location. City/Town, County, and State in which the employee works. For most employees, this will be the location of the work site. Work site is the place where an employee works, or more generally, at which the employee's activities are based, as determined by Interior. See also, “Remote Work”.

Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA). (Alternatively, vacancy announcement and/or announcement) A document that informs the public regarding a job vacancy. A JOA describes the requirements of the job and instructs applicants regarding how to apply for the vacancy. JOAs must be posted on USAJOBS as a means of satisfying the public notice requirement.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs). An applicant’s qualifications for a position are often determined with reference to the KSAs that are relevant to successful performance in that position. See also “competency”, as these terms are sometimes used interchangeably and serve the same function in the job analysis process. Knowledge is a body of information applied directly to the performance of a function. Skill is an observable competence to perform a learned psychomotor act. Ability is competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product.

Originating Servicing Human Resources Office (Originating SHRO). An appointing authority (internal or external to Interior) *providing*, for use and selection, the Certificate of Eligibles under competitive examining procedures, provided the elements of this policy apply.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII). information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, either alone or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual. Not all PII is sensitive – for example, your name, official title, official address, phone number and email address are not sensitive. Examples of PII that are sensitive include full or truncated Social Security numbers, dates of birth, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, credit card numbers, financial information, mother’s maiden name, biometric identifiers, medical information, passport number, driver’s license number, and performance ratings. In certain context, non-sensitive PII can become sensitive when combined with other information. For example, a list of names of employees within your office as opposed to a list of names of employees with poor performance evaluations.

Position Description (PD). A statement of the major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships of a position, indicating the work to be performed by the position. The purpose of a PD is to document the major duties and responsibilities of a position, not to spell out in detail every possible activity during the workday.

Priority Placement. In 1995, OPM issued regulations requiring Executive Branch agencies to provide career transition assistance to employees affected by downsizing or restructuring. Interior 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. Selection priority, which is part of career transition assistance plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Assistance Plan (ICTAP), is afforded to employees affected by downsizing or restructuring. DOI’s CTAP includes special selection priority (SSP),

reemployment priority list (RPL), and priority placement list (PRL).

Public Notice. The Originating SHRO must provide public notice via USAJOBS.gov for the position being filled, in accordance with requirements for filling jobs under the competitive examining process. Via the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA), the Originating SHRO must indicate that the resulting list of eligible candidates may be shared with one or more hiring officials, either internal or external to the Department of the Interior. (See Requirements section of this policy, for more information.)

Receiving Servicing Human Resources Office (Receiving SHRO). An appointing authority (internal or external to Interior) *receiving*, for use and selection, the Certificate of Eligibles under competitive examining procedures, provided the elements of this policy apply.

Remote Work. An arrangement under which an employee is scheduled to perform work *within or outside the local commuting area* of an agency worksite and is not expected to report to an agency worksite on a regular and recurring basis. For a remote worker, the approved remote worksite is the employee's official duty station for location-based pay entitlements (e.g., locality payments and cost-of-living allowances), even if that location is their home. Unlike a teleworker, a remote worker is not required to physically report to a Department worksite at least two days per biweekly pay period. Also referred to as "virtual work."

Same Grade Level. The corresponding rate or level of pay under an alternative pay system for a position excluded from the General Schedule. The term "similar grade level" does not mean a higher or lower General Schedule grade than that for which the Originating SHRO advertised and issued its certificate. Use of a shared certificates for a grade level and/or full-performance level other than advertised is strictly prohibited.

Selective Placement Factor (SPF or Selective Factor). A competency/KSA or special qualification without which a candidate could not perform the duties of a position in a satisfactory manner. Selective factors are applied in addition to minimum qualifications. Applicants who do not meet a selective factor are ineligible for further consideration.

Shared Certificate. Under delegated examining procedures, a Certificate of Eligibles used jointly between one or more appointing authority (i.e., servicing human resources offices, bureaus, national program offices, agencies or departments) to select an eligible candidate(s) to a position(s) where certain requirements and conditions apply. In reference to this policy "shared" should be applied as an adjective (not a verb), upholding the intent of the source legislation, where coordination via strategic partnership fulfills common interests and hiring objectives.

Similar Grade Level. The corresponding rate or level of pay under an alternative pay system for a position excluded from the General Schedule. The term "similar grade level" does not mean a higher or lower General Schedule grade than that for which the Originating SHRO advertised and issued its certificate. Use of a shared certificates for a grade level and/or full-performance level other than advertised is strictly prohibited.

Time Limits (Selection). A Receiving SHRO may select from a shared certificate within the 240 calendar day period beginning on the date the Originating SHRO issued the Certificate of Eligibles, 5 U.S.C. §§ 3318(c), 3319(c)(2), not on the date on which the Originating SHRO provided the certificate to the Receiving SHRO. These time limits cannot be extended under any circumstances, including administrative error/oversight.

Veterans Preference. Veterans' Preference in its present form comes from the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, as amended, and is now codified in various provisions of title 5, United States Code. By law, veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over others in hiring from competitive **Certificate of Eligibles**. For this policy, preference applies in any hiring from civil service examinations conducted by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and any agency under delegated examining authority. For more information about Veterans' Preference: [OPM Vet Guide for HR Professionals](#)