



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
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Personnel Bulletin No. 10-10

Subject: Departmental Policy on Category Rating

Purpose: This Bulletin establishes the Department of the Interior policy on category-based rating. This Bulletin replaces Personnel Bulletin 10-09 and incorporates recent changes by the Office of Personnel Management. This bulletin is necessary to implement the President's Memorandum of May 11, 2010, Subject: Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process. The May 11, 2010, memorandum establishes that by November 1, 2010, agencies must adopt hiring procedures that require the use of category rating rather than the rule of three.

Authorities: Public Law 107-296; Title 5, United States Code (U. S. C.) 3319, 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 337, Subpart C, President's Memorandum of May 11, 2010.

Responsibility: The Department of the Interior, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Capital and Diversity, Office of Human Resources, has primary responsibility for this policy.

Policy: The Department of the Interior plans to increase flexibility in selecting quality candidates through a category based rating method. This approach is a way of assessing, rating and selecting job candidates for positions filled through competitive procedures. Effective November 1, 2010, job opportunity announcements filled through the competitive examining process must be announced using category rating procedures. This policy is established in accordance with regulation issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in 5 CFR Part 337, Subchapter C. The DOI policy must be used in conjunction with this regulation.

Heads of bureaus and equivalent offices are responsible for effective administration of this plan.

Coverage: Competitive positions filled through the delegated examining process.

Assessment: Candidates will be assessed against job-related criteria and assigned to at least two previously defined quality categories, for example, Highly Qualified, Well Qualified, Qualified, depending upon the quality and relevance of their qualifications to the job. The categories will be defined through a job analysis conducted in accordance with the "Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures" prior to starting any recruitment activity. The competencies and knowledges, skills and abilities identified in the job analysis will serve as the foundation for the bureau and equivalent offices' assessment strategy. Bureaus and equivalent offices will spend adequate time in the beginning of the process performing a thorough assessment of the needed competencies/knowledges, skills and abilities.

Quality Categories: Bureaus and equivalent offices will use multiple categories to assess each candidate against job related criteria. Applicants who meet the basic qualification requirements

established for the position may be placed in a quality category. Not Qualified may not be used as a category.

The highest category will be used for those candidates who possess the type and quality of experience that substantially exceeds the minimum qualifications of the position, including all selective placement factors and appropriate quality ranking factors as determined by the job analysis.

To be in the highest category, the candidates are considered by the human resources office and the subject matter expert (selecting official) as being highly proficient in all requirements of the job and can perform effectively in the position almost immediately or with a minimum amount of training and/or orientation.

Subsequent categories will be used for those candidates that meet the minimum qualifications of the position and are proficient in some, but not all, of the requirements of the position. Candidates may require extensive training and/or orientation in order to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position.

Exception: When using OPM's Standing Registers, bureaus and equivalent offices must follow OPM's established categories for each register. Bureaus and equivalent offices must coordinate with the Solicitor on implementation of the category rating policy when using numerical scores from the assessment for Administrative Careers with America (ACWA).

Announcement: For each position to be filled, the job opportunity announcement must clearly define the categories each applicant will be assessed against based on the competencies/knowledges, skills and abilities directly related to the job. The human resources offices must use the "How You Will Be Evaluated" section of the job opportunity announcement to communicate to applicants the rating criteria; that is, the categories which will be used to assess all applicants. The announcement must also include how veterans' preference is applied under category rating procedures.

For example: Category rating will be used in the ranking and selection process for this position. The categories are Highly Qualified, Well Qualified and Qualified. Veterans' preference rules for category rating will be applied.

Ranking: Assessed applicants will be placed in the appropriate quality category and ranked according to preference eligibility and non-preference eligibility. Within each category, all qualified preference eligibles are placed ahead of non-preference eligibles. Qualified preference eligibles are listed in alphabetical order group within each preference order (CPS, CP, XP and TP). Selections can be made from any preference eligible group. Qualified non-preference eligibles are listed in alphabetical order below preference eligibles. For scientific and professional positions at the grade 9 level (or equivalent) or higher, qualified preference eligibles with a compensable service connected disability of 10% or more (CPS and CP) shall be listed at the top of their quality category.

For all other positions and grade levels, qualified preference eligibles with a compensable service-connected disability of 10% or more (CPS and CP) are placed at the top of the highest quality category and ahead of non-preference eligibles ranked in the highest quality category (CPS and CP eligibles "float" to the highest quality category.)

Merging Categories: Merging categories is an option that may be used when less than three candidates are in the highest quality category. Merging may take place before issuing a Certificate of Eligibles or before selecting an eligible. When merging before selecting an eligible, candidates can be selected from the highest quality category. When merging categories, preference eligibles from the next lower category will be placed in the highest quality category above the non-preference eligibles in the newly merged highest quality category.

Selection: Bureaus and equivalent offices must make decisions whether to refer only eligible veteran candidates in the highest quality category on the Certificate of Eligibles to the selecting official, or to refer both the veterans and non-veteran eligible candidates in the highest quality category. In making these decisions, bureaus and equivalent offices should consider the likelihood that a nonveteran could be selected given the number of vacancies and the number of highly qualified veterans.

Pass over requests of preference eligibles will be processed as prescribed in 5 U.S.C. 3118 using procedures in OPM's Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, Chapter 6, Section D, Object to an Eligible. Requests to pass over veterans with a 30% or more compensable service connected disability must be submitted to the DOI Director, Office of Human Resources for review. Staff members within the Office of Human Resources will evaluate the merits of the request and determine if the request will be sent to the U. S. Office of Personnel Management for adjudication.


Veterans' preference points as prescribed in 5 U.S.C. 3309 will not be applied to category rating procedures.

The "three consideration" rule embodied in 5 CFR 332.405 does not apply in category rating.

Selecting officials may determine whether to interview applicants, and if so, how many to interview.

Records Retention and Reporting Requirements. Supporting documentation will be maintained in a case file and is neither published in the vacancy announcement nor released to applicants. The record must contain categories designed to differentiate between the qualities of candidates relative to the job; group individuals with similar levels of job related competencies; and provide quality categories definitions needed to reflect the requirements to perform the job successfully.

Bureaus and equivalent organizations will be required to submit an annual report to the Office of Human Resources on the use of their category rating and selection procedures. Specific requirements for the report will be issued when data submission is required. Bureaus and equivalent offices must maintain records on the number of employees hired under category rating; impact category rating has had on hiring of veterans and minorities, including those who are American Indian or Alaska Natives, Asian, Black or African Americans, and native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders; and, ways in which managers were trained in the administration of category rating.


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