

For: FSA Employees

Merit Promotion Process

Approved by: Acting Administrator



1 Overview

A

Background

Notice PM-2217 informed FSA employees of merit promotion process changes in the following areas:

- areas of consideration
- KSA statements
- rating panels
- interviews and interview panels.

These changes were designed to help reduce negative perceptions about the administration of the merit promotion selection process.

B

Purpose

This notice reiterates and extends the process changes in these areas.

C

FSA Policy

Supervisors and managers shall provide fair, equitable, and full consideration to all candidates without discrimination or favoritism.

D

Noncompetitive Actions

Selecting officials still have the option of filling positions noncompetitively through programs such as the Student Career Experience Program and Workforce Recruitment Program.

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<p>Disposal Date</p> <p>October 1, 2002</p>	<p>Distribution</p> <p>All FSA employees; State Offices relay to County Offices</p>
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Notice PM-2268

1 Overview (Continued)

**E
Labor
Management
Obligations**

Where exclusive representation exists, bargaining may be requested to the extent allowed by applicable statutes. Where contract language already addresses these policies and procedures for bargaining unit employees, contract language prevails.

**F
Additional
Information**

If additional information is needed, contact the following.

Office	Contact
National Office	Servicing Employment Specialist in HRD
Kansas City Offices APFO State Offices	Servicing Employment Specialist in KCAO, PD
County Offices	State Office

2 Merit Promotion Consideration Procedures

**A
Areas of
Consideration**

A broad area of consideration:

- increases the applicant pool
- diversifies the applicant pool
- allows employee mobility.

The Department has directed that vacancy announcements for 2-grade vacancies have an “all sources” area of consideration, and have an open period of at least 30 calendar days. In addition, FSA has imposed the requirement that 2-grade vacancies be announced nationwide. The following vacancies are exempted from the “all sources nationwide” requirement:

- 1-grade interval positions
 - vacancies in States that do not have the ceiling for an outside hire
 - Career Enhancement vacancies
 - Farm Loan Manager vacancies
 - Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) vacancies.
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Notice PM-2268

2 Merit Promotion Consideration Procedures (Continued)

**A
Areas of
Consideration
(Continued)**

Determine the minimum area of consideration for 2-grade interval vacancies and for exempted vacancies according to the following.

Type of Vacancy	Minimum Area of Consideration
2-grade vacancies	All sources nationwide
1-grade vacancies	FSA nationwide
vacancies in States with no ceiling for outside hires	FSA statewide
Farm Loan Manager	FSA nationwide
Career Enhancement	FSA local commuting area
CTAP	CTAP eligibles - local commuting area

**B
Knowledge,
Skills, and
Abilities (KSA's)**

KSA's consisting of narrative statements or job related questions must be identified for each position.

Both narrative statements and job related questions are based on an analysis of the KSA's and competencies needed to perform the position.

Agencies have the option of using either KSA statements or job related questions to rank applicants.

KSA's will be:

- standardized for similar positions, except when positions require specific KSA's that are not typical of other positions of that series, or when positions are interdisciplinary in nature because of added functions assigned to the job
- reflected in the official position descriptions
- generic rather than specific, whenever possible.

Job related questions are designed to reduce the burden on applicants when applying for vacancies or promotions by requiring responses to questions instead of narrative KSA statements.

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2 Merit Promotion Consideration Procedures (Continued)

C

Rating Panels

When using narrative KSA statements, either a Merit Promotion rating panel or a HR specialist/subject matter expert may be used to rate and rank applicants.

When using job related questions, an automated ranking of responses is used to rate and rank applicants.

If an automated ranking of responses to job related questions is not used to rate and rank candidates, rating panels:

- are mandatory when there are more than 10 competitive candidates for a particular grade level
- may be used if there are 10 or less competitive candidates
- rate and rank qualified applicants to determine which applicants are best qualified and referred to the selecting official.

HRD and KCAO, PD shall:

- ensure that rating panels include subject matter experts and are diverse
- ensure that rating panel members are at a grade level not lower than the full performance level of the position being filled
- consult with managers and supervisors for suggested panel members
- make final panel member determinations.

Union representatives may suggest panel members.

An EEO observer shall be present during rating panel deliberations. EEO observers serve as observers only and do not rate and rank applicants.

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2 Merit Promotion Consideration Procedures (Continued)

D

**Selection Process
for
Nonsupervisory
Positions**

For nonsupervisory positions, selecting officials may select an applicant either from the:

- competitive certificate, that is, from among applicants seeking promotion
- noncompetitive certificate, that is, from among applicants already at that grade, formerly at that grade, or who hold or held a position with potential to that grade.

Selecting officials shall interview all candidates on the merit promotion certificate used for selection. This does not apply to certificates issued by OPM or Kansas City Delegated Examining Unit.

Selection certificates will be used for the original vacancy only, unless similar new vacancies occur in the same work unit within 30 calendar days of the date the selection certificate is issued.

If no selection is made, the selecting official shall provide justification to the next higher level official for approval of nonselection before returning the certificate to HRD or KCAO, PD.

E

**Interview Panels
for Supervisory
Positions**

Until further notice, interview panels are mandatory for:

- all supervisory grades GS-14 and above in the National Office
- all supervisory grades GS-13 and above in Field Offices.

Note: Administrative Officers and FLM's are considered supervisory/managerial positions.

Interview panels are **not** mandatory for nonsupervisory positions.

Interview panels shall:

- be determined by management
 - consist of at least 3 persons at or above the grade level of the position being filled who have knowledge of the position
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2 Merit Promotion Consideration Procedures (Continued)

E

**Interview Panels
for Supervisory
Positions
(Continued)**

- include an EEO representative or a member of the CR/EEO Advisory Council as an observer for all interview panels

Note: The State Civil Rights Coordinator or Special Emphasis Program Manager may serve as the EEO representative in the field.

- be diverse
- interview **all** competitive **and** noncompetitive applicants on the merit promotion selection certificates

Note: This does not apply to certificates issued by OPM or Kansas City Delegated Examining Unit.

- use standardized questions, based on the position description, and reflecting management and technical areas
- rate applicants high, medium, or low based on their response to the panel questions.

Selecting officials are encouraged to select from the highly ranked applicants, as rated by the interview panel. If a selection is not made from the highly ranked applicants, written justification shall be provided to the next higher level official for approval before final decision.

Interview panel records and scores shall be provided to HRD or KCAO, PD for inclusion in the Merit Promotion case files.

If no selection is made, the selecting official shall provide justification to the next higher level official for approval of nonselection.

Notice PM-2268

3 Roles and Responsibilities

A

HRD Responsibilities

To ensure that employees are knowledgeable about the Merit Promotion Plan and process, and to reduce perceptions of preselection, HRD and KCAO, PD shall:

- provide training on:
 - career counseling, including reinforcing that employees must manage their own careers
 - the Merit Promotion Plan and process
 - supervisory responsibilities
 - evaluate the Merit Promotion Plan and process, and share the results.
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B

Supervisor/ Manager Responsibilities

Supervisors and Managers shall:

- work closely with HRD or KCAO, PD in the recruitment process
 - interview applicants
 - arrange interview panels, as required
 - review and use workforce profiles before making selections
 - support cultural diversity training for all employees
 - guide and assist employees in developing skills and abilities.
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C

Union Role

Union representatives may:

- assist HRD and KCAO, PD in developing training modules
 - encourage members to understand the Merit Promotion Plan and process
 - evaluate and provide input regarding the merit promotion process.
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