

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

DEPARTMENTAL REGULATION		Number: DR 4020-250-002
SUBJECT: Position Management and Vacancy Control	DATE: October 18, 2010	
	OPI: Office of Human Resources Management	

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1. PURPOSE

This directive establishes the Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) policy and framework for managing positions and filling vacancies throughout USDA, with an overall goal of conserving resources, while sustaining the USDA mission and improving the delivery of services to stakeholders. When filling positions, creating new organizations or establishing new missions (with additional staff), supervisors and managers must deliberately consider workforce planning and position management principles together with annual workforce and succession plans. Supporting documentation developed through this process will also provide the framework to justify reorganization of units through the Department Regulation (DR) 1010-001, Organization.

2. BACKGROUND

- a. Through the implementation of this policy, USDA expects to ensure the effective management of resources and increase the quality of services by:
 - (1) Improving the supervisory span of control.
 - (2) Increasing cost savings where functions or the grade level of positions can be changed, or the work adjusted, or redirected.
 - (3) Eliminating duplicative functions or unnecessary layering.
 - (4) Institutionalizing the principles of hiring reform, succession and workforce analysis/planning in USDA operations.
 - (5) Controlling costs for personnel as well as space, equipment, and utilities for those resources.
- b. USDA's priority is to ensure that our workforce is strong, prepared, and motivated to face the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead. We must:
 - (1) Ensure workforce and succession planning efforts result in the most effective organization to support programs.
 - (2) Ensure the recruitment and retention of a high performing workforce.
 - (3) Have active commitment from executive level leaders to create the most efficient organization possible.
- c. Effective workforce and succession planning can also provide the opportunity to develop employees. New skills may allow employees to assume new roles which could provide more productive ways of doing the work.
- d. Workforce and succession planning is core to developing the most effective organization, but agencies must use all the tools available to accomplish their mission while providing quality services to the American public.

3. REFERENCES

- a. Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), Chapters 51 – Classification and 53 – Pay Rates and Systems.
- b. Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 511 – Classification Under the General Schedule, and 532 – Prevailing Rate Systems.

- c. Departmental Regulation 4020-250-1, USDA Human Capital Accountability System.
- d. USDA Strategic Workforce Plan (dated December 2008 covering Calendar Year 2008-2010).

4. DEFINITIONS

Agency. An organizational unit of the Department, other than a Staff Office as defined below, whose head reports to an Under Secretary.

Staff Office. A Departmental Administrative Office whose head reports to the Secretary or Assistant Secretary.

Position Management. Position management is the continuous and systematic process for determining the number of positions needed, the skill and knowledge requirements of those positions and the organizational grouping of positions to carry out the work of an organizational unit.

Workload Analysis. The descriptive baseline of the resource requirements by discipline, priorities, skill sets, and training to perform work in a business unit.

Workforce Analysis. The comprehensive and systematic process for determining the number of people needed with the right skills and competencies necessary to perform the work in an organization. This analysis provides the framework for making staffing decisions based on the mission, strategic plan, and budgetary resources.

Succession Planning. An assessment of the current situation to plan the workforce of the future, including developing a plan to address succession of current workers as they leave the workforce due to retirement, attrition, and other factors.

5. POLICY

- a. USDA policy requires responsible stewardship of resources and accountability for the strategic management of human resources. To achieve this goal, USDA is establishing a system of human resources management that reflects strategic workforce and succession planning, accountable leadership, and performance that is measured and continuously improved. Through this policy, we will develop and maintain a high performing workforce that achieves its mission within budget and with the most efficient organization possible. The Department will accomplish this through sound organizational assessment; task, function and structure reviews (e.g., to eliminate unessential positions and functions; to

redesign the work; to enhance the skills of the existing staff); implementing quality improvement efforts; and validating that new hires are justified.

- b. Annually, each Staff Office/Agency must conduct an analysis of its current workforce, projected mission, workload (to include eliminating unnecessary work), and required workforce and address any gaps or deficiencies. The workforce plan must also consider projected losses (retirements, historical turnover rates, etc.) and identify recruitment strategies that will ensure a diverse and balanced workforce. This plan will serve as the framework for establishing and maintaining organizational staffing plans of position allocations consistent with authorized budgetary ceilings.
- c. To ensure achievement of these goals, and effective immediately, prior to recruiting any (new or existing) position, the hiring manager and his/her supervisor are required to validate the need for filling the position. This validation is based on an assessment of whether the duties can be eliminated, assigned to an existing position, or reengineered within the existing organizational unit. The workforce analysis process for validation is described above in paragraph 5b and must be completed using the Appendix A decision checklist.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. USDA's Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is responsible for:
 - (1) Facilitating accomplishment of the strategic workforce and succession planning process with Staff Office Directors, Agency Heads, and Mission Area Human Resources Directors.
 - (2) Providing advice and assistance to Staff Offices/Agencies on the effective management of resources including their responsibility for selecting, developing, training, and managing a high-quality, productive workforce.
 - (2) Ensuring that Staff Offices/Agencies have established effective procedures to create or fill positions.
 - (3) Verifying through Staff Office/Agency accountability audits and through periodic reviews of Appendix A decision documents that organizations are adhering to this regulation.
- b. Staff Office Directors and Agency Heads are responsible for:
 - (1) Assessing workforce characteristics and needs to align the organization's human resources policies and programs with the agency's mission, strategic goals, and performance objectives.

- (2) Ensuring that sound principles of organization design and position management are followed when evaluating the need for organizational changes and the establishment of positions, and that decisions are validated and consistent with merit principles.
- (3) Conducting workforce analysis and organizational efficiency/effectiveness studies to support sound position management.
- (4) Developing and implementing effective strategies to attract, develop, manage and retain skilled employees as detailed in the organization's annual workforce/succession plan.
- (5) Training personnel and supervisors in the procedures that have been established in this Departmental Regulation.
- (6) Maintaining decision documents regarding the recruiting of vacant positions until the position once again becomes vacant and/or in accordance with retention records for staffing and classification case files.
- (7) Maintaining staffing plans for each organizational unit that document authorized and budgeted position allocations.
- (8) Communicating all policies, practices and business processes in standard operating procedures (SOP's).
- (9) Ensuring proper internal controls are established and documented at all levels of the organization to determine the need for replacement or new staff.
- (10) Continuously reviewing business processes to ensure they are being performed as efficiently as possible.

c. Servicing Human Resources Directors are responsible for:

- (1) Working with senior level staff and managers to provide guidance and assistance to facilitate the process for completion of documents to justify positions.
- (2) Ensuring accountability throughout the process in working with managers to support USDA and OHRM efforts.
- (3) Completing required reports as required in paragraph 11.

7. POSITION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

- a. The authority and responsibility to establish, classify and manage positions resides with each Staff Office Director and Agency Head. Authority may be further delegated to Mission Area and Agency Human Resources Directors and other officials as appropriate. Sound position management achieves an economical and effective position structure that is critical to the proper and responsible use of limited financial and human resources while blending the skills and responsibilities of employees to successfully achieve the organization's mission.
- b. A carefully designed structure will result in reasonable and supportable grade levels and an effective organizational design. The optimum structure provides balance among mission needs, economy and efficiency of operations, sound skill and knowledge utilization, and maximum attraction and retention of employees.
- c. When a classification specialist receives a request to classify a position (new or an update), the specialist must review the checklist (Appendix A), and if the specialist has questions or concerns, these must be resolved with the requesting organization before the specialist may proceed with the classification action. In addition, the specialist must complete an evaluation of the classification action to ensure:
 - (1) Proper position classification and effective position design.
 - (2) That established positions are not over-graded or under-graded.
 - (3) Classification consistency with comparable work and positions.

8. SPAN OF CONTROL GUIDELINES

- a. The primary goals of maximizing the span of control for supervisors, measured as the supervisor-to-employee ratio, are to ensure organizations function effectively and efficiently while ensuring the appropriate level of employee supervision and guidance. In addition, eliminating needless layers of supervision can increase workforce empowerment.
- b. USDA's targeted supervisor-to-employee ratio is a minimum of one supervisor for nine (1:9) employees. When the span of control is lower than nine employees for a supervisor, the Staff Office Director or Agency Head must document the reason for the variation.
- c. When determining an appropriate span of control, the following factors are to be considered:

- (1) Job complexity: subordinate jobs that are complex, ambiguous, dynamic or otherwise complicated may require more management involvement and a narrower span of control.
- (2) Similarity of subordinate jobs: the more similar and routine the tasks that subordinates are performing, the easier it may be for a manager to supervise employees which may result in a wider span of control.
- (3) Diversity of assigned functions: an office having multiple discreet functions and unique skill sets to accomplish those functions may result in a narrower span of control.
- (4) Physical proximity of subordinates and technology: the more geographically dispersed a group of subordinates, the more difficult it may be for a manager to be in regular contact with them which may result in a narrower span of control. Depending on the functions and situation, use of technology such as cell phones, blackberries, email and the use of telework flexibilities may facilitate communication and the exchange of information to alleviate span of control issues.

9. ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Organization assessment and design provides the framework for integrating the mission, functions, people, information, and technology of an organization to accomplish its mission. The organization structure defines the formal reporting relationships among staff members, supporting their roles and responsibilities. Administrative systems within an organization provide the guidelines for how the organization operates. Information and technology support the processes through which members achieve outcomes. Each element must support the other components in order to achieve the organization's mission. Consider the following when contemplating organizational change:

- a. What are the primary goals and objectives that need to be accomplished?
- b. How can the required activities be divided so that the work can be accomplished (related activities; similar tasks)?
- c. What authority and responsibility needs to be assigned to carry out the work?
- d. How and by whom should decisions be made?
- e. How specialized should individual staff roles be?
- f. Who should control the work being performed?

- g. How can communication and coordination among members of the organization be facilitated?
- h. How can job and role descriptions be developed to take into account both functions and accountabilities?

10. PROCEDURES

- a. When a position becomes vacant or when a new position is being considered for creation (and this includes creation of new organizational units) and before an SF-52, Request for Personnel Action (or similar document), is submitted to begin the hiring process, the hiring authority and the hiring authority's supervisor, must validate the need for establishing a new, or filling an existing position. The validation process must include consideration of alternate ways to meet the need. Decisions shall be documented using Appendix A.
- b. If the supervisor decides not to fill the vacancy and not to distribute the associated workload to others, then no further action is required except to maintain the completed Appendix A in accordance with staffing and classification case files.
- c. If the supervisor decides to either fill the vacancy or redistribute the associated workload to others, the completed Appendix A must accompany the SF 52 requesting the classification action. Human resources personnel may not process any recruiting or position change action without a completed Appendix A.
- d. Requests for recruiting career SES/SL personnel must include the checklist in Appendix A and must also address the supervisor-to-employee ratio for the entire organization under the purview of the proposed position. If the span of control is less than one-to-nine (1:9), an explanation must accompany the recruit request.
- e. Staff Offices, Mission Areas or Agencies may establish a Position Management Committee or other such body, as appropriate, to evaluate positions by groups, levels, or individual actions. Completed Appendix A documentation will be prepared and submitted to the Committee for review.
- f. Emergency hiring needs or other extenuating circumstances requiring immediate response such as emergency response positions that are mission critical may be excepted from this policy on a case-by-case basis with the approval of the Staff Office Director or Agency Head.

11. ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT

- a. Biennially, during the self-assessment accountability review of its HR function, each Staff Office or Agency will review a representative random sample of

completed Appendix A decisions to ensure consistency with the HR accountability plan and workforce and succession planning efforts. Staff Office or Agency findings in this review shall be incorporated as part of the Staff Office or Agency annual workforce analysis outlined in paragraph 5b.

- b. In January of each year, the Staff Office or Agency will review a representative random sample of completed appendix A forms from the prior fiscal year to determine if procedures are in place, are effective and are being followed. The Agency or Staff Office will certify the results of this review and submit the findings to the servicing HR office by January 31 using the format in Appendix B. The servicing HR office will report the results of this review to OHRM by February 15 using the Appendix B format. The report must be signed by the Director of the servicing HR office and the Staff Office or Agency Head.
- c. The Staff Office or Agency will further review the supervisor-to-employee ratio for their organization in January of each year and will submit reports to the servicing HR office for review by January 31 using the format in Appendix C. The servicing HR office will report the results of this review to OHRM by February 15 using the Appendix C format.
- d. OHRM may, at its discretion, conduct periodic reviews of completed documentation to verify that procedures are in place.

END

Appendix A

Position Management and Workforce/Succession Planning Checklist

Agency:		Date:
Division /Office:	Supervisor:	
Position Title/Series:	Working Title:	Grade:

Workforce and succession planning provides the means for achieving overarching program goals. Program goals will not be achieved "without the right number of people with the right skills in the right place at the right time." As agencies develop strategies that support the achievement of both long-term and annual program performance goals in their strategic and performance plans, they need to consider other management initiatives, (such as workforce planning, succession planning, position management, effective organization design), as essential components of a broad-based management strategy.

Planning for human capital needs is one of the greatest challenges facing managers and leaders. In order to meet this challenge, a uniform process that provides a disciplined approach for matching human resources with the anticipated needs of the agency is essential. A workforce plan is a fundamental planning tool, critical to quality performance that will contribute to the achievement of program objectives by providing a basis for justifying budget allocations and workload staffing levels.

In order to support the Department's position management initiative, hiring managers will adhere to appropriate position management guidelines and ensure that minimum workforce analysis and succession planning objectives are considered when evaluating vacated position(s). As such, the first step in the decision process is to determine whether or not the hiring manager will fill the vacancy.

STEP 1: DO WE FILL THE VACANCY?

In order to answer this question, hiring managers will need to apply solid position management principles in assessing their options. The following checklist constitutes the appropriate items each hiring manager and his/her supervisor will review in conjunction with their position management review of a vacancy. For each item, you are required to initial in the appropriate Yes/No column your response to the item question:

Item #	Item Description	Yes	No
1.	Have you completed a position management review of your business unit in the past twelve months? If not, complete the position management review using the following guidelines.		
<p>Position Management Review – In completing the position management review, have you considered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What work needs to be completed in your business unit? Only those positions for which there is a valid need based on such considerations as organizational goals and objectives, workload, authorized staffing plans, and funding should be created or continued. • Are business units and positions structured to accomplish mission objectives efficiently and effectively? • Duties and responsibilities may change over time and may affect the type of work being performed or the level of complexity. When assessing the need to fill a position, do any duties need to be added, removed or changed? • Does the position description adequately and accurately reflect currently assigned duties and responsibilities? • If the position is supervisory, have you assessed the appropriateness of retaining the position by looking at the span of control in the organization and considered whether it should be maintained at the same level or whether other adjustments can be made? <p>If you are not sure about acceptable standards for completing a position management review, you should consult with your business unit’s assigned HR (Classification) Specialist.</p>			
<p>Workload Analysis – Workload analysis is a descriptive baseline of the workload requirements by discipline in a business unit. It provides leaders with a process to assist with allocating resources, communicating priorities, identifying skills, and training employees needed to accomplish the workload.</p>			
2.	As part of the position management review and workforce analysis, did you conduct a review of the workload for the business unit to which the vacancy is assigned to determine if the work could be redistributed, or if there was any duplication or overlap of functions?		
3.	Did you benchmark the findings from the workload analysis against the workload/performance of a similar business unit within and/or outside the agency to validate requirements?		

Item #	Item Description	Yes	No
<p>Workforce Analysis – The primary elements of the workforce analysis methodology involve a review of the items listed below.</p>			
4.	Did you determine whether or not the vacant position is a mission critical occupation (MCO), and if the key competencies associated with this position can be shared with another position in the business unit?		
5.	Did you evaluate the current headcount of the organization including anticipated retirements and separations? Did you identify the current skills and competencies of the workforce required for the business unit or your span of control?		
6.	Did you forecast the optimal headcount and competencies needed to meet the needs of the business unit in the future? Did you identify skills and competencies needed in MCO's in the future workforce in your span of control?		
7.	Did you evaluate the gap between the supply and demand of the required skill sets or competencies? (The Gap Analysis identifies headcount and competency surpluses and deficiencies. From the Gap Analysis the future headcount and competency gap can be derived.)		
<p>Balanced Workforce – To achieve the workforce of the future, managers complete the necessary workforce analysis to create a balance between entry-level and mid-level positions, and workforce competence to address future skills gaps.</p>			
8.	Have you assessed what skills are currently vital to the accomplishment of the agency's goals and objectives?		
9.	Have you addressed skill imbalances or gaps due to attrition, including retirement over the next 5 years and the potential impact on mission critical occupations?		
10.	Have you explored training, retraining, relocation, or recruiting options for filling competency gaps?		

Item #	Item Description	Yes	No
11.	Have you considered an effective strategy to address skills gaps through acquiring and developing entry-level employees for vacancies?		

Based on the review of the data and analyses resulting from the position management review, workload and workforce analyses, the hiring manager, in consultation with his/her supervisor and HR specialist is equipped to make an informed decision on whether the vacancy is to be filled. If the decision is not to fill vacancy, this will end the process, and the hiring manager will maintain the documentation of the analysis for future consideration.

STEP 2: Now that the Decision Is to Fill the Position...

If the decision is to fill the position, the following action items are to be considered:

Item #	Item Description	Yes	No
<p>Recruitment Strategy – It is imperative for hiring managers to maintain an active recruitment strategy for future vacancies. Incorporating diversity outreach into your business unit’s workforce planning and succession management is imperative to the agency’s effort to increase diversity and achieve the goals of Part H of MD-715 (EEO Plan to Attain the Essential Elements of a Model EEO Program).</p> <p>The Federal government has a wealth of new and well used recruitment, retention, outreach, communication, and accountability initiatives available for USDA Staff Offices and Agencies to obtain and keep a diverse, high performing workforce.</p> <p>Hiring managers are expected to capitalize on the recruitment initiatives that best identify and attract the top talent and allow agencies to focus on the apprentice-level grades in order to support effective succession management while cultivating an empowered workforce for the future.</p>			
1.	Have you engaged your HR Specialist to ensure your efforts are aligned with the Hiring Reform Initiative?		
2.	If possible, did you conduct an exit interview with the departing staff to better understand the challenges, rewards, how best to manage the work associated with the position, and/or recommendations for retaining individuals in this or similar position(s)?		

Item #	Item Description	Yes	No
3.	Have you conducted on-going recruitment efforts such as college recruiting to develop a pool of likely candidates for the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)?		
4.	If this is an MCO vacancy and it has been a historically hard-to-fill position, did you consider incentives such as the recruitment, relocation and retention incentives (3 R's)?		
5.	If appropriate in this case, did you consider any succession management resources as a viable alternative to filling this position?		
6.	If appropriate in this case, have you networked with other hiring managers/staff of a similar business unit within the agency for possible reassignment in order to reduce the time-to-fill and minimize transition time so as to maintain continuity of the business unit's operations?		
7.	Did you consider employing any of the Veterans' hiring authorities to target veterans in support of the Department's Veterans hiring initiative?		
8.	Did you consider employing persons with disabilities to support the Department's disability hiring initiative?		
9.	The EEO/OCR advisor is an essential resource for hiring managers in navigating the maze of options to achieve the goal of increasing diversity among staff. Did you coordinate with your EEO/OCR advisor to review current and historical demographic data for your business unit?		
10.	What are your workforce goals in support of MD-715? How are you currently supporting USDA's goals for workforce planning and diversity? Please attach a workforce profile for the organization and a statement of efforts to address areas of underrepresentation for Veterans; Disabled Veterans; and persons with disabilities, and goals to address areas of underrepresentation.		
11.	Have you discussed diversity recruitment options with your Staffing Specialist and/or Special Emphasis Program (SEP) Representative?		

Item #	Item Description	Yes	No
<p>Succession Planning – Succession Planning assesses the current situation to plan the workforce of the future, including developing a plan to address succession of current workers as they leave the workforce due to retirement, attrition, and other factors. USDA has engaged in several succession planning initiatives to ensure we build a modern workplace with a modern workforce.</p>			
12.	Did you review the business unit's/agency's succession plan to ensure that your recruitment/workforce strategy relative to the vacant position is aligned with the USDA and Agency succession planning strategy?		
13.	If this is an MCO and/or leadership position, did you consider alternatives such as a leadership development or career development opportunity for staff in the business unit or agency; a long-term detail to develop critical competencies among staff in the business unit or agency; integrating the position's work requirements into a cross-functional team environment to increase developmental opportunities for staff, etc.?		
14.	If appropriate, did you consider retention strategies for the incumbent with highly critical competencies or essential institutional knowledge?		

___ Recruit (This checklist must accompany the SF-52.)

___ Do Not Recruit

I understand the critical need for position management and workforce and succession planning as management tools to maximize use of staff and resources. I certify that I have considered all factors outlined in the checklist and that my responses to each question item is accurate, as I have attempted to exhaust all resources and strategies to ensure the most effective means of position management.

Hiring Manager's Signature

Date

I have reviewed the hiring manager's responses to the question items in the checklist and attest to the accuracy of the responses.

Hiring Manager's Supervisor's Signature

Date

Appendix B

VACANCY/HIRING DECISION MEMORANDUM REVIEW REPORT FORMAT

Complete this report by January 31 of each year and submit to OHRM by February 15.

Staff Office/Agency:

Date:

Point of contact name:

Point of contact address:

Point of contact phone:

Point of contact email:

I certify this agency has conducted a review of vacancy/hiring actions and determined that:

___ Agency procedures are effective and being followed.

___ Agency procedures are not being followed completely (explain).

We reviewed ___ (sample size) decision memoranda. For the same period, there were a total of ___ hiring actions.

Report the number of decisions in each of the following categories:

___ The position is no longer required.

___ The position is required and the position description is accurate.

___ The work can be distributed to other positions. Those positions include (list them).

___ The position can be reengineered at a lower level and the new PD is attached to this memorandum.

Staff Office Director/Agency Head Signature

HR Director Signature

Appendix C

SUPERVISOR-TO-EMPLOYEE RATIO REVIEW REPORT FORMAT

Complete this report by January 31 of each year and submit to OHRM by February 15.

Staff Office/Agency:

Date:

Point of contact name:

Point of contact address:

Point of contact phone:

Point of contact email:

Average Staff Office/Agency supervisor-to-employee ratio (includes all levels of the organization starting with the Administrator down).

List the organization entities that are direct reports to the Agency Head/Staff Office Director and their respective supervisor-to-employee ratio.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
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List the organization entities that are two levels down from the Agency Head/Staff Office Director and their respective supervisor-to-employee ratio.

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
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Staff Office Director/Agency Head Signature

HR Director Signature