

MS 620 PEACE CORPS MERIT SELECTION AND PROMOTION

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Office: Human Resource Management

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1.0 PURPOSE

This Manual Section identifies policies and procedures for processing placement and promotion actions for paid staff following merit selection principles.

2.0 SCOPE

This Manual Section applies to the selection of United States citizens for all Peace Corps positions except:

- Appointments in the Senior Foreign Service except as provided in sub- paragraph 7.1.3. below;
- Employees in confidential, policy making, policy determining, or policy advocating positions designated as serving at the pleasure of the Peace Corps Director in the SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action;
- Country Director positions;
- Appointments with an expected duration of less than 1 year;
- Expert Consultant positions authorized by Section 13 of the Peace Corps Act;
- Participants in student programs; and
- Attorney positions.

3.0 REFERENCES

5 U.S.C. §§ 2301 and 2302.

Negotiated Agreement between Peace Corps and the Peace Corps Employees' Union. Sections 7(a) and (b) of the Peace Corps Act, as amended.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Applicant - An individual who has submitted an application and other required supporting documents, if any, in response to a vacancy announcement.

Area of Consideration - The geographical or organizational area in which the Agency makes a search for eligible candidates in filling a specific vacancy or vacancies through competitive procedures.

Basic Qualifications Requirements - The designated experience and education specified by a hiring office that an applicant is required to possess to be considered for a vacant position.

Career Ladder - A series of positions of increasing responsibility in the same organization and line of work through which an employee may progress from the entry level to the full performance level (definition below). The employee is provided developmental goals and may be promoted without competition each time he or she achieves the performance goal at the next higher level.

Closing Date - The date by which a candidate's application must be postmarked to be accepted by the Office of Human Resources Management to be considered for a vacancy announcement.

Confidential/Policy Making Positions - Positions that are policy determining or involve a close and confidential working relationship with the head of the Agency or other key appointed officials who are involved in policy making.

Detail - The temporary assignment of an employee to perform the duties of a different position or to perform an unclassified set of duties for a specific period, with the employee returning to regular duties when the temporary assignment is concluded.

Full Performance Level - The highest grade level of performance that can be achieved in a particular position's career ladder and to which an incumbent employee may be promoted without further competition.

Opening Date - The earliest date on which applications may be accepted by the Office of Human Resources Management in response to a specific vacancy announcement.

Promotion - The advancement of an employee to a position with a higher grade level.

Qualified Candidates - Those applicants whose experience and education meet established basic qualifications requirements requested for the position.

Reassignment - The movement of a current federal employee from one position to another, at the same grade level, for which he or she qualifies.

Reinstatement - The hiring of a former federal employee to a position, for which he or she qualifies, that has no higher promotion potential than the position formerly held.

Selecting Official - The Agency employee who has been delegated the authority to select a candidate for a particular vacant position. (see MS 114, "Delegation of Authority")

Selection Roster - An alphabetical listing of qualified candidates (definition above) for a vacant position that is submitted to a selecting official (definition above).

Vacancy Announcement - A document used to publicize vacant positions.

Voluntary Application - An application from a person residing outside the area of consideration (definition above).

5.0 POLICY

5.1 Non-discrimination and Affirmative Action

All selections covered by this Manual Section shall be made on the basis of merit. Full consideration will be given to present employees in filling positions to make the best use of their knowledge and skills. All selections shall be made solely on the basis of qualifications and shall be free from discrimination on the basis of: race, color, national origin, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, political or union affiliation or non-affiliation, personal favoritism or any other non-merit factor. It is Peace Corps' goal to promote full realization of equal opportunity through a continuing affirmative action program.

5.2 Selections to Which Competitive Procedures Will Be Applied

The competitive procedures of this Manual Section shall apply to the following selections, unless otherwise exempted by paragraph 5.3:

- Appointments to the Foreign Service for more than one year.
- Promotion to a position at a higher grade or to a position with greater promotion potential than the highest non-temporary position previously held by the employee; and
- Reassignment to a position at a lower grade if that position has greater promotion potential than the highest position held.

5.3. Selections Exempted from Competitive Procedures

Note: See 6.1. and 6.2. for the responsibilities of the Director of Human Resources Management and the selecting official with respect to selections exempted from competitive procedures.

- Reassignments to a position, regardless of grade, having no higher promotion potential than the employee's current position. A reassignment may be from one Peace Corps position to another or from a comparably graded position in another federal agency for which the applicant previously competed.
- Reinstatements of former federal employees, including Peace Corps employees, to a position, regardless of grade, having no higher promotion potential than the position that the person formerly held.
- Re-promotion of an employee to a grade or position from which the employee was removed without personal cause and not at the employee's request.
- Details made at the discretion of the supervisor in increments of 120 calendar days or less not to exceed one year total, provided the individual(s) selected meet(s) the qualifications for the position.
- Any action, including a promotion, directed by an individual or agency with authority that supersedes this Manual Section. These include, but are not limited to, actions resulting from resolution of discrimination complaints, court decisions, or arbitration decisions.

5.4 Promotion Based on Qualifications

An individual may compete for any position for which he or she is qualified regardless of his or her current grade as long as he or she otherwise meets the basic qualification requirements.

6.0 RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Director of Human Resources Management

The Director of the Office of Human Resources Management is responsible for the management and implementation of this Manual Section, including but not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring that all legal and regulatory requirements are met;
- Ensuring compliance with the policies stated in this Manual Section;
- Developing and issuing vacancy announcements;
- Developing recruitment practices, including outreach techniques, to obtain a mix of candidates reflecting the diversity of the population of the United States of America;
- Screening applicants for minimum qualifications;
- Establishing selection rosters;
- Making a salary offer to the selected candidate;
- Notifying applicants of the status of their applications and, upon request, advising applicants on the reasons why they were determined not to meet basic qualification requirements;
- Maintaining merit selection records for a period of two years;

- Providing technical assistance to selecting officials, candidates, applicants, supervisors and employees in fulfilling their responsibilities;
- Evaluating and amending policies contained in this Manual Section; and
- Reviewing non-competitive selections made under the provisions of 5.3., above, before an offer of employment is made.

6.2 Selecting Officials

Selecting officials are responsible for:

- Preparing position descriptions for vacancy announcements;
- Participating with the Office of Human Resources Management in the timely and efficient recruitment of candidates;
- Implementing appropriate selection procedures for both competitive and non-competitive selections;
- Making selections based on merit principles;
- Interviewing candidates and acting expeditiously on selection rosters by notifying the Office of Human Resources Management of decisions made;
- Complying with legal requirements prohibiting nepotism and favoritism;
- Checking and verifying references; and
- Ensuring that the written selection report, required by Section 7.4. below, is prepared before a job offer is made.

7.0 EMPLOYEE SECTION

The provisions of this paragraph apply to selections made competitively.

7.1 Vacancy Announcements

A complete and accurate vacancy announcement is the starting point in the recruitment and selection of the most qualified applicants for vacant Peace Corps positions. The Office of Human Resources Management will develop, along with the selecting office, an accurate and informative vacancy announcement based on a current classified position description.

Each vacancy announcement must include the following information as a minimum:

- Announcement number;
- Application procedures;
- Title, series, grade/class and location (geographic and organizational) of position;
- Salary range;
- Opening and closing dates, if applicable;
- Promotion potential of the position;
- Description of duties;

- Required and desired qualifications; and
- Area of consideration and a statement as to relocation expenses.

Vacancy Announcements must also include the following standardized recruitment information:

- Applicants must be citizens of the United States.
- Applicants will receive consideration regardless of race; color; national origin; marital status; sex; sexual orientation; age; physical disability; religion; political or union affiliation or non-affiliation; and
- Applicants cannot have been associated with certain intelligence activities. All applications must be accompanied by a completed form PC-
- Acceptance of employment with Peace Corps precludes employment by certain intelligence organizations for a specified period of time, determined by the employing agency, after Peace Corps employment ceases.

7.1.1 Time Limitations

Vacancy announcements may either be “time specific” or “open continuous” depending upon the needs of the selecting office and requirements of the vacant position.

A time specific vacancy announcement has a definite opening and closing date. Applications submitted pursuant to a time-specific vacancy announcement will be accepted for at least 14 calendar days after the vacancy announcement has been issued, but must be postmarked or delivered no later than the closing date. Additional selections may be made from time specific vacancy announcements within 90 days after the roster has been issued.

An open continuous vacancy announcement has no definite opening or closing date. Positions may be considered for open continuous posting if:

- Position vacancies occur with such frequency that it is more efficient to avoid announcing each vacancy separately; or
- Recruitment for particular skills is difficult and open continuous posting will aid in attracting applications from applicants with hard-to-find knowledge/skills.

The Office of Human Resources Management will review and screen applications for open continuous postings as they are received. Selection rosters will be provided to the selecting office upon request.

The Office of Human Resources Management will periodically review each “open continuous” posting to determine the continuing need for the “open continuous” designation.

7.1.2 Area of Consideration

Positions will be open to all current Peace Corps employees. Decisions on the area of consideration for non-Peace Corps applicants will be made on a case by case basis based upon the probable availability of applicants with the desired skills in the labor market and other legitimate management considerations. In addition, voluntary applications from outside the area of consideration will be accepted.

Peace Corps will pay relocation expenses for positions located within the United States when mandated by Federal travel regulations, the Civilian Personnel Law Manual and 5 USC 5724. When applications have been solicited or accepted from outside the defined commuting area only for the purpose of affording

employees a chance to compete for a position that provides them with an opportunity to relocate for personal reasons, relocation expenses will not be paid.

7.1.3 Senior Foreign Service (SFS) Announcements

Certain positions classified in the Senior Foreign Service may be recruited competitively. The decision to recruit competitively will in each case be decided by the Peace Corps Director.

7.2 Screening of Applications

The Office of Human Resources Management will review all applications to determine whether applicants possess the basic qualifications requirements. This determination will be based on the level and scope of education, previous paid or unpaid work experience, and any other relevant factors.

7.3 Establishing the Selection Roster

The Office of Human Resources Management will develop and certify the selection roster. There is no minimum or maximum number of candidates that can be certified to the selecting official. The selection roster will include the candidates' names and highest salary grade levels for which they qualify. Returned Peace Corps Volunteers who have non-competitive eligibility will be identified, if applicable.

7.4 Interviews and Selections

Note: Please refer to Section 6.2. for overall responsibilities of the selecting official.

7.4.1 Review of Roster, Interviewing and Reference Checking

Any candidate listed on the selection roster is eligible for selection. The selecting official or his/her designee is required to review all applications on the roster and to determine which candidates, if any, to interview. The decision of whom to interview is at the discretion of the selecting official but should be guided by the relative qualifications of the candidates when compared to the requirements of the position in question. When an in-person interview is not possible, a telephone interview is acceptable. The selecting official is responsible for checking an applicant's references.

7.4.2 Selection Report

Upon making a selection, the selecting office will return the selection roster to the Office of Human Resources Management along with a brief selection report containing the following information:

- screening process;
- which candidates were interviewed;
- which candidate was selected for the position;
- the reasons for the selection;
- a recommended starting date; and
- a recommended salary (if not a current federal employee).
- other information that may be required by the Office of Human Resources Management.

7.4.3 Responsibilities of Human Resources Management

The Office of Human Resources Management will review selection reports to ensure compliance with all personnel policies and procedures prior to determining a starting date and making a salary offer to the selected candidate.

Once a selection has been made, the selection roster will be considered closed. However, that office or any office with a comparable vacancy may choose to make additional selections from this selection roster within 90 calendar days of its issuance.

The Office of Human Resources Management shall ensure that all qualified candidates are notified of the final selection.

7.4.4 Reposting of the Vacancy Announcement

Positions for which no selection was made may be re-posted upon request. HRM will require the selecting official to document the reason for the request for re-posting.

If a vacancy is re-posted, candidates who applied to the original announcement will be considered along with those applying to the re-posted announcement. Such correspondence between the selecting official and the Office of Human Resources Management shall be made part of the merit selection file.

7.5 Documentation, Records and Inquiries

A record sufficient to recreate the critical events and decisions of each recruitment action shall be kept by the Office of Human Resources Management for a period of two years from the selection date. Each record must include:

- A written selection report from the selecting official;
- A copy of the vacancy announcement;
- All applications and resumes submitted;
- A copy of the selection roster; and
- A copy of the position description.

Inquiries regarding the application of the policies contained in this Manual Section should be addressed to the selecting official or the Director of HRM. If the explanation given does not satisfy the matter of concern or answer the question raised, an employee may seek to resolve the matter through the exercise of either the Agency or the negotiated grievance procedure where appropriate. Failure to be selected for a position from a properly certified selection roster is not a basis for a grievance.

8.0 PROMOTION

8.1 Types of Promotion

- **Career Ladder** - The range of a career ladder for a position is stated in the vacancy announcement. To be eligible for the promotion, an employee must meet the qualifications for the higher grade and be performing at that grade level.

A career ladder promotion is a promotion made without competition provided the employee was previously competitively selected for a career ladder position.

In no case does promotion automatically follow completion of an established waiting period.

- Promotion Through Reclassification - If an existing position is reclassified to a higher grade due to a determination that the position has been assigned additional duties and responsibilities, the incumbent employee may be non-competitively promoted to the grade provided the employee meets the minimum education and/or experience requirements for the position as reclassified.
- Competitive Promotion - An employee may compete and be selected at any time for a vacant Peace Corps position that is at a higher grade than the employee currently holds as long as the employee fully meets the minimum basic qualification requirements for that position.

8.2 Pay Upon Promotion

When a federal employee is promoted he or she is entitled to either the minimum pay for the new grade or to a pay increase nearest to but not less than a two step increase above the employee's former pay, whichever is greater.

9.0 EFFECTIVE DATE

This Manual Section shall take effect on the date of issuance.