

STAFFING

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures regarding staffing and recruitment related to implementation of USA Staffing®.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES: This handbook contains mandatory VA procedures on recruitment. The pages in this handbook replace the corresponding page numbers in VA Handbook 5005. Revised text is contained in [brackets]. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management Web site](#). Significant changes include:

- a. Applicants apply online or fax their applications to the USA Staffing Processing Center. Exceptions may be provided for applicants with disabilities and applicants for title 38 pure and hybrid vacancies, when applying outside the system.
- b. Announcements generated in USA Staffing will include a link to assessment questionnaires.
- c. Subject matter experts (SMEs) are involved in the development of the assessment questionnaire. Further review by a panel for rating and ranking is not required.
- d. Assessment questionnaires are considered a form of crediting plan. Characteristics of assessment questionnaires, such as rating scales, are included in this revision. Formats for collecting information from subject-matter experts are also provided.
- e. Excepted and Competitive Service employees may be referred on the same certificate.
- f. Referrals generated in USA Staffing are transmitted and final selections are made electronically in the USA Staffing document viewer.
- g. USA Staffing recruitment system records are sufficient to meet the requirement for documentation. Job analysis records are maintained separately, until USA Staffing system changes make it possible to include this information in the USA Staffing recruitment system record.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.

4. RELATED DIRECTIVE: VA Directive 5005, Staffing.

5. RESCISSIONS: None

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/Stephen W. Warren
Acting Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/Rafael A. Torres
Acting Assistant Secretary for
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CHAPTER 3. GENERAL EMPLOYMENT**SECTION A. APPLICATION FORMS****1. TITLE 5 EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS****a. General**

(1) Individuals not currently employed by VA may choose the written format for presenting their qualification and general eligibility data when applying for VA title 5 positions. Applicants will provide information needed to make suitability determinations separately on a form for that purpose. For positions whose qualification standard requires a credential (i.e., certification, licensure or registration (CLR)), the Federal Government-wide suitability questions may be supplemented by additional VA questions regarding required credential(s). [For USA Staffing recruitments, applicants should submit a résumé. Applicants are responsible for providing the information needed to determine their qualifications for the vacancy. This includes information such as: the vacancy announcement number, position title and grade; how to contact the applicant; descriptions of jobs held, including the name and address of employer, job title, description of duties, beginning and ending date (month/year) of employment, average hours worked per week, and supervisor's name and phone number; education, including name and location of college, dates attended, and type and date of any degree earned; and other information, such as possession of licenses, certificates, etc. Descriptions of duties must be sufficiently detailed to document the applicant's level of experience. Although not mandatory, if the position is (was) with the Federal government (military or civilian), applicants should state the series and grade or pay grade (rank) and the date of last promotion.]

(2) To facilitate compliance with Veterans Health Administration (VHA) credentialing and privileging and other similar requirements, applicants for CLR occupations and other positions in VHA for which clinical privileges may be granted, will be required to respond to related supplementary questions.

(3) VA employees will apply for VA positions using specified application forms.

b. Employment Applications From Outside Applicants

(1) **Employment Applications.** The Standard Form 171, Application for Federal Employment, [and the Optional Form 612, Optional Application for Federal Employment, no longer serve as Federal Government-wide standard employment application forms]. Applicants from outside VA may provide their qualifications and general eligibility background data for title 5 VA positions in a written format of their choosing. Among the acceptable formats are resumes and existing copies of the expired SF 171 [and OF 612. For USA Staffing recruitments, a résumé is preferred. Applicants for USA Staffing recruitments apply online or fax their applications to the USA Staffing Processing Center. Exceptions may be provided for applicants with disabilities and applicants for title 38 and hybrid-title 38 vacancies, when applying outside the system.]

(2) **Federal Employment Declarations.** In developing new application procedures for Federal employment, the Office of Personnel Management has separated qualification information from suitability data. Suitability and various other questions previously on the SF 171 are now contained on the Optional Form 306 [(OF 306)], Declaration for Federal Employment. In VA, the following time frames have been established for an applicant's submission of the OF 306:

(a) Applicants for the following occupations/positions will submit a completed OF 306 with their initial application, except as provided in paragraph 1b(2)(c) below. (An occupation/position may be covered in multiple categories.)

1. All current Testing Designated Positions in VA (see VA Handbook 5021).

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2. All positions whose qualification standard requires a credential, i.e., certification, licensure, or registration (CLR). (See also paragraph 1b(2)(d).) Current CLR positions as of this handbook's issuance are:

Chaplain, GS-060	Diagnostic Radiologic Technician/Technologist, GS-647
Psychologist, GS-180 (VHA only)	Therapeutic Radiologic Technician/Technologist, GS-648
Social Worker, GS-185	Dental Assistant, GS-681
Nuclear Medicine Technologist, GS-601	Dental Hygienist, GS-682
Dietitian and Nutritionist, GS-630	General Attorney, GS-905
Motor Vehicle Operator, WG -5703	Air Conditioning Equipment Mechanic, WG -5306

3. Veterans Health Administration (VHA) positions for which clinical privileges may be granted consistent with medical facility by-laws, such as Audiologist/Speech Pathologist, GS-665, and Orthotist/Prosthetist, GS-667. (See also paragraph 1b(2)(d).)

4. All positions filled by VA delegated examining units.

5. Additional occupations/positions which local officials determine control significant VA funds and/or materiel resources, e.g., Accountant, GS-510; Agent Cashier, GS-530; and positions in other General Schedule series such as 1101, 1102, and 2001.

6. Positions determined to warrant initial receipt of the OF 306 for early review at the discretion of a Central Office Administration/Staff Office Head or designee, or the local facility Director or designee, for those positions within their respective jurisdictions.

(b) Other outside applicants are to submit a completed OF 306 in time to allow for review of the OF 306 and final eligibility determinations prior to referral of a list of candidates to the selecting official.

(c) Exception to early OF 306 Declaration submission as provided in paragraph 1b(2)(a): At the discretion of a Central Office administration/staff office head or designee, or the facility Director or designee, for those positions within their respective jurisdictions, the OF 306 submission can be required from all applicants for a given position vacancy or occupation **subsequent** to the initial application, if determined beneficial to attracting sufficient applicants and provided the requirements of paragraph 1b(2)(b) are met.

(d) A supplemental credentials questionnaire will be submitted with the OF 306 by applicants for CLR positions in VHA and any other VHA positions for which clinical privileges may be granted.

c. Employment Applications From Internal Applicants

(1) **Employment Applications.** [The SF 171 and the OF 612 no longer serve as Federal Government-wide standard employment application forms. Instead of using these application forms, applicants from outside VA may provide their qualifications and general eligibility background data for title 5 VA positions in a written format of their choosing] to the VA Human Resources Management Office responsible for staffing the specific vacancy. [Among the acceptable formats are resumes and

existing copies of the expired SF 171 and OF 612. For USA Staffing recruitments, a résumé is preferred. Applicants for USA Staffing recruitments apply online or fax their applications to the USA Staffing Processing Center. Exceptions may be provided for applicants with disabilities and applicants for title 38 and hybrid-title 38 vacancies, when applying outside the system.] This policy is modified by the following exceptions:

(a) An SF 171 [or OF 612] may [also be submitted] if the employee so chooses.

(b) VAF 4078, Application for Promotion or Reassignment, may be substituted by local facility employees when acceptable at that VA facility. [This form is not required for USA Staffing recruitments.]

(c) Until national union contracts citing the SF 171 are amended, those contract provisions continue in effect for positions of the appropriate bargaining unit(s).

(2) **Federal Employment Declarations.** Upon applying for initial entry into positions covered by paragraph 2, employees will be required to submit the OF 306 and the supplemental VHA credentials questionnaire, as applicable.

d. **References**

(1) *Federal Register* Vol. 59, No. 241, dated December 16, 1994.

(2) 5 CFR, chapter 1, parts 110, 210-4, 250, 293-4, 297, and all 300's.

(3) 5 U.S.C. 1104, 1302, 3301, 3304, 3320, 3361, 3393, 3394 and 8716.

(4) 38 U.S.C., chapters 73 and 74.

2. TITLE 38 EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS

a. **Application Forms.** Candidates seeking employment under 38 U.S.C., chapter 73 or 74, must complete one of the following application forms:

(1) VA Form 10-2850, Application for Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, and Chiropractors;

(2) VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists;

(3) VA Form 10-2850b, Application for Residency;

(4) VA Form 10-2850c, Application for Associated Health Occupations;

(5) Standard Form 171 and 171A, Application for Federal Employment, or Optional Form 612, Optional Application for Federal Employment, and Optional Form 306, Declaration for Federal Employment. These forms are to be used by applicants for whom [] the above forms [are not] appropriate; primarily, this includes applicants for medical support or nonmedical consultant appointments. [The SF 171, 171A, and OF 612 forms are not required for USA Staffing recruitments. In USA Staffing, a résumé is preferred. Applicants for USA Staffing recruitments apply online or fax their applications to the USA Staffing Processing Center. However, exceptions may be provided for applicants with disabilities and applicants for title 38 and hybrid-title 38 vacancies, when applying outside the system.]

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(a) **Field Facilities.** Field facility HRM offices having positions to fill in the excepted service, except positions centralized for appointment and placement purposes to the Secretary or an administration or staff office head, will establish a Board. The Human Resources Management Officer is designated as the chairperson of the Board, with an appropriate staff employee, grade GS-7 or above, as the executive secretary. When the staff employee does not meet this requirement, the Human Resources Management Officer will serve both as the chairperson and the executive secretary. Each organizational element having excepted positions for which the Board examines will be represented on the Board by one or more examining members. The members will serve on examining panels when called for such service by the chairperson. While assigned to rating duties, the members will report to the chairperson.

(b) **Central Office.** The Director, Chaplain Service, or designee will establish a Board which examines and certifies candidates for chaplain positions in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph, 5 CFR 6.3 and part 302. The Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS)/HRM will establish a Board to examine and certify eligibles to Central Office positions and to excepted positions centralized for employment purposes to the Secretary or an administration or staff office head. The DAS/HRM will designate the chairperson of the Board and he/she in turn will designate the executive secretary. Each organizational element having excepted positions for which the Board examines will be represented on the Board by one or more examining members. The members will serve on examining panels, as needed, when called for such service by the chairperson. While assigned to rating duties, the members will report to the chairperson.

(2) **Rating Applications.** Applicants will be rated against the appropriate qualification standard and assigned numerical ratings on a scale of 100, with 70 the minimum eligible rating. Such ratings will be augmented by 10 or 5 points, as appropriate, for applicants entitled to veteran preference. When the number of applicants, following the “rule of three” described in subparagraph (3) below, does not exceed the number of positions to be filled, a rating of “eligible” may be assigned in lieu of a numerical rating. In either case, a notice of the rating must be given to the applicant upon request.

(3) **Certifying Eligibles.** In response to a request (SF 39) from the appointing officer, eligible candidates will be certified (VA Form 4681) by the Board for employment consideration. Generally, the Board will refer sufficient available candidates to permit selection consideration within the “rule of three.” The preference order for referring candidates for professional and scientific positions at GS-9 and higher will follow the pattern described in 5 CFR 302, subpart C. For other positions, either Order A, B, or C described in the above CFR reference, may be selected to refer candidates. Once the order has been selected, it will be consistently used to certify candidates for employment considerations. [NOTE: *The VA Form 4681 is superseded by the referral format in USA Staffing, when USA Staffing is used.*]

(4) **Records.** Applications, examination records, register cards, and records of certification will be maintained in Board files in such a manner that inspection by VA or Office of Personnel Management representatives is possible. VA Form 3959, Application Roster Sheet, may be used in lieu of register cards to show the status of and actions taken on applications. [For USA Staffing recruitment, system records are sufficient to meet the requirement for documentation. Job analysis records can be imported directly into USA Staffing.]

e. Modification of Examining Procedure

(1) **Schedule C Positions.** Modification of the examining procedure above may be made for qualified candidates for Schedule C positions. Such candidates may be given an “eligible” rating by the appointing officer, or representative, and be selected for appointment without regard to the “rule of three.” The

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g. **Applicant and Employee Responsibilities.** Applicants and employees will provide evidence of licensure, registration, certification, and/or other relevant credentials, for verification prior to appointment and throughout VA employment as requested. They are responsible for keeping VA apprised of anything that would adversely affect or limit the credentials discussed in this section, and for advising VA of anything that would adversely affect or otherwise limit their clinical privileges. Failure to keep VA fully informed on these matters may result in administrative or disciplinary action.

h. **Verification of Credentials After Short Breaks in Service.** An applicant who has had a break in VA service of no more than 15 workdays may be reappointed in the same occupation without the full credentialing process required for initial appointment (i.e., verification of education background, licensure status, certifications by professional organizations, references, etc.). The applicant must complete a new employment application form and be recommended by the appropriate board, if action by a board is normally required for the type of appointment being considered. Facility officials will verify any licensure or qualification information that has not previously been documented in the personnel folder or the Credentialing and Privileging Folder, as appropriate. The official designated by the facility Director will note in the appropriate folder the reason that credentials were not reverified. Typically, the reason will be that the break in service was for less than 15 workdays. Reverification of credentials is not required for residents or trainees who rotate for training during the academic year between a VA facility and its affiliate(s). (See paragraph 22 for resident credentialing procedures.)

NOTE: *For those subject to the credentialing and privileging provisions of VHA Handbook 1100.19, any break in service requires the verification of those credentials (time limited) which could have changed since last verified (State licensure, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) certification, board certification, etc.).*

2. APPLICATION

a. **Application Forms.** Candidates seeking employment under 38 U.S.C., chapter 73 or 74, must complete one of the following application forms:

(1) VA Form 10-2850, Application for Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, and Chiropractors;

(2) VA Form 10-2850a, Application for Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists, nurse practitioners, and graduate nurse technicians;

(3) VA Form 10-2850b, Application for Residency;

(4) VA Form 10-2850c, Application for Associated Health Occupations;

(5) Optional Form 612, Optional Application for Federal Employment, and Optional Form 306, Declaration for Federal Employment, are to be used by applicants for whom none of the above forms is appropriate; primarily, this includes applicants for medical support, students, trainees, or nonmedical consultant appointments. [The OF 612 is not required for USA Staffing recruitments. In USA Staffing, a résumé is preferred.]

a. Each application package must include:

(1) Completed Optional Form (OF) 612 - Optional Application for Federal Employment, or resume. A Standard Form (SF) 171 – Application for Federal Employment is also acceptable. (The HRM office should have blank OF 612's available.) [The SF 171, 171A, and OF 612 forms are not required for USA Staffing recruitments. In USA Staffing, a résumé is preferred.]

(2) Copy of degree, diploma, license (if appropriate), or certificate documenting graduation in a health care discipline covered under the provisions of 38 USC 7403(g).

(3) Copy of SF 50-B or FL 10-294 documenting completion of VA affiliated clinical education. (The HRM office would assist with, or advise on, requests for the individual's SF 50-B or FL10-294.)

b. Applications may be accepted from students who will meet all eligibility requirements within 6 months. These applications may be processed and employment commitments made subject to completion of all requirements. The HRM office is responsible for ensuring that selectees meet minimum qualification requirements, including training, education, and necessary credentials, prior to entry on duty.

c. Applicants who wish to be considered for employment at a VA facility other than the one in which they trained may contact the facility of their choice to inquire about prospective openings about 2 months before they are available for appointment. Facility officials may assist applicants by checking the VA Vacancy Database on the VA intranet for appropriate openings for which these individuals are eligible.

8. SELECTION PROCEDURES. The HRM office will forward a certificate of candidates qualified for this noncompetitive appointment to the selecting official. Preference will be given to disabled veterans and other preference eligibles as follows.

a. All eligible, qualified candidates will be assigned a basic score of 70. Extra points will be added to this score for preference eligibles. For all positions, candidates will be referred in the following priority group order:

(1) Disabled veterans who have a service-connected disability of 10 percent or more, who have 10 points added under 5 U.S.C. 3309;

(2) Preference eligibles as defined under 5 U.S.C. 2108(3)(C) through (G), other than those in the preceding paragraph 8a (1), who receive 10 points;

(3) Preference eligibles as defined under 5 U.S.C. 2108 (3)(A) and (B), who receive 5points;

(4) All other candidates.

b. Regardless of preference category, any preference eligible may be selected. However, a preference eligible may not be passed over for selection of a nonpreference eligible.

c. If there are no disabled veterans or other preference eligibles, any candidate may be selected.

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4. EMPLOYMENT APPLICATIONS FROM INTERNAL APPLICANTS. VA employees will apply for VA title 5 vacancies by submitting a completed Optional Form 612, *Optional Application for Federal Employment*, to the VA Human Resources Management Office responsible for staffing the specific vacancy. This policy is modified by the following exceptions:

- a. The former SF-171 may be substituted for the OF 612 if the employee so chooses.
- b. For positions filled through the Centralized Staffing System (CSS), acceptable substitutes from employees for the OF-612 includes the former SF-171.
- c. VA Form 4078, *Application for Promotion or Reassignment*, may be substituted by local facility employees when acceptable at that VA facility.

[d. Employees applying for vacancies announced through USA Staffing must submit a résumé or other application form, a completed assessment questionnaire, and any other documents required in the announcement for internal applicants.]

5. DETERMINING BASIC ELIGIBILITY

a. **Requirements.** Qualification standards used to determine eligibility for position changes will be the minimum OPM requirements contained in the *Operating Manual – Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions* and the *X-118C Handbook* or, when applicable, the minimum requirements established by VA under 38 U.S.C. ch. 74. The OPM supervisory qualification standard must be used in addition to the pertinent standard in determining basic eligibility for all General Schedule supervisory positions. Time-after-competitive appointment and time-in-grade requirements must be met prior to placement in the position. Selective placement factors are to be used only when they have been determined, through an appropriate job analysis, to be critical to the performance of the job. Licensure, registration, certification or organizational membership requirements not required by the appropriate qualification standards shall not be used as selective factors.

b. **Time-in-Grade Restrictions (5 CFR, part 300, Subpart F).** OPM time-in-grade restrictions for filling General Schedule positions in the competitive service are also applicable to filling General Schedule positions in the excepted service in VA. These instructions are to be applied in conjunction with 5 CFR, part 300, subpart F restrictions.

NOTE: *The Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) has ruled that OPM's time-in-grade restrictions, 5 CFR, part 300, subpart F are not appealable as an employment practice to the Board and that the Board is without jurisdiction to hear such appeals. This ruling resulted from two MSPB decisions (Hellman vs. OPM, dated March 29, 1982; and Knowlden vs. OPM, dated March 30, 1982). In the ruling, the board upheld the validity of OPM's time-in-grade restrictions by adopting OPM's distinction between the time-in-grade restrictions covered by 5 CFR, part 300, subpart F and the employment practices covered by 5 CFR 300.101. That is, employment practices measure the qualifications of individual candidates for particular positions, whereas the time-in-grade restriction is an administrative device that applies to all competitive service positions for the purpose of preventing excessively rapid*

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promotions. Information concerning the application of these restrictions to VA positions is contained in Appendix III-B.

6. WRITTEN TESTS. Requirement - Written tests will not be used unless required by OPM or approved by the Director, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service, Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), for inservice placement actions. Requests to use

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sufficient to allow reconstruction of the promotion action, including documentation on how candidates were rated and ranked. These records may be destroyed after 2 years or after the program has been formally evaluated by the OPM (whichever comes first), if the time limit for grievance has lapsed before the anniversary date.

c. **Promotion Plan. Requirements** - Promotion plans will be in writing and will contain a statement identifying the positions covered, exceptions to competitive promotion procedures, the areas of consideration, the methods of locating candidates, the qualification standards to be used, the evaluation procedures and rating/ranking and selection procedures. Each promotion plan must contain a provision which will allow facilities to experiment with alternative selection procedures as part of the Department's efforts to increase the validity of selection procedures. All proposed experiments outside the provisions of the applicable promotion plan must be forwarded through channels to the Director, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059) for approval. **Guidance** - Subject to proper coordination and/or negotiation, referrals for consideration may be those best qualified candidates identified in accordance with the provisions of the applicable promotion plan, those identified under the experimental alternative procedure or those identified in both. **Requirement** - If, however, the experimental procedure results in greater validity or less adverse impact, requirements to reevaluate the existing selection procedure in light of the findings must be imposed. **Guidance** - All candidates must be screened to determine which candidates are to be placed in the best qualified category. **This process must take place regardless of the number of candidates, using an evaluation procedure that is job-related and applied fairly and consistently.** This does not mean that best qualified determinations must be made prior to issuing a certificate when there are fewer than 10 candidates. [] An assessment tool (e.g., position description, crediting plan or structured interview process, etc.) should be used to assist the evaluator(s) in distinguishing between candidates. Selecting officials should uniformly consider each of the best qualified candidates and document on the certificate the basis for his/her selection. All processes used in making the selection determination must be job-related, appropriate to the position being filled, and consistent with merit principles.

d. **Guidance.** When considering candidates for promotion, all application materials should be evaluated on an equal basis. In particular, when references to outstanding performance or performance awards are included, these references should be given due consideration. As mentioned in 5 CFR 335.103(b)(3), evaluation materials should include acknowledgement of outstanding performance or performance awards. This may be accomplished by incorporating language in the crediting plan that gives credit for consistently outstanding performance and/or awards which are directly related to the work of the position to be filled.

NOTE: *The merit promotion plan for competitive positions centralized to the Secretary may be found in appendix III-E.*

4. COVERED PERSONNEL ACTIONS. Requirements - Competitive promotion procedures apply to all promotions under 5 CFR 335.102 and to the following actions:

a. Reassignment or demotion to a position with greater known promotion potential than a position previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service (except as permitted by reduction-in-force (RIF) regulations) (5 CFR 335.103(c)(iv));

Selection Procedures. The evaluation process should not include provisions for deducting points or for negative ranking credit for adverse information concerning a candidate (e.g., adverse and disciplinary actions). Information of this nature should be considered in the annual performance appraisal, the supervisory KSAO assessment, and/or the supervisory appraisal of performance for promotion. Deducting points for inservice placement purposes would constitute a double penalty.

e. **Requirement.** In the interest of fairness and equity to all candidates, crediting plans for GS positions are to be kept secure. Since they are the basis by which point credit is to be granted, they may not be reviewed by potential candidates prior to the announcement of a vacancy or prior to rating and ranking. To do so may give a candidate unfair advantage. This does not preclude:

(1) A review of the crediting plan by the employee and/or a properly designated representative during the informal grievance stage or in conjunction with EEO investigations;

(2) Review and release to authorized officials who have a need to know for the performance of their official duties;

(3) Release for inclusion in EEO or grievance files; or,

[(4) Addition of assessment questionnaires (without scoring criteria) in announcements developed for USA Staffing use.]

10. PROMOTION PANELS

a. **Guidance.** Either human resources staff members or promotion panels may evaluate candidates against the criteria contained in the crediting plan/assessment questionnaire for the position(s). Separate panels may be used for each position or panels may be established for specific categories of positions. Use of promotion panels is strongly encouraged because it provides a base for the justification of the rating and ranking in accordance with the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. [In USA Staffing, subject matter experts (SMEs) are involved in the development of the assessment questionnaire; this ensures compliance with the Uniform Guidelines. Further review by a panel for rating and ranking is not required. However, labor agreement provisions must be followed. Also, for Federal Wage System vacancies, whenever possible agency employees with a thorough knowledge of the trade should be called upon either as raters or as consultants to provide technical advice to raters. As with other merit promotion recruitments, HR Staff may request additional SME assistance during the quality review process in USA Staffing.]

b. **Requirement.** Handbook X-118C requires a panel of one or more raters who know or can quickly learn about both the job and the employees' qualifications (Subject Matter Experts) and a reviewer (usually a HRM Specialist) for trades and labor promotion opportunities. (See subparagraphs c and d below.)

c. **Requirement.** If promotion panels are used to evaluate and rank candidates, the panel members (except the HRM representative) must be subject matter experts (see paragraph 1e of chapter 2, this part), one of which must be at least equal in grade to the job to be filled. All must have a clear understanding of the functions of promotion panel members and clearly understand the crediting plan, the selection procedure being used, and basic human resources management concepts related to qualification and rating

and ranking, preferably at the journeyman level. In performing their functions, panel members are official representatives of management. The selecting official will not serve as a panel member unless there are no other qualified SMEs available. Selecting officials who serve as panel members must understand clearly the difference between the two functions and carefully observe merit principles.

d. **Requirement.** If promotion panels are used, panel members, as part of their official responsibilities, must review certain personal information concerning candidates. Other employees who may be present as observers during the deliberations of the panel are not permitted access to such documents and written information concerning any candidate without the written consent of the subject of the record. All persons present at promotion panel meetings are precluded from revealing information of a confidential or personal

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nature about any candidate which may be gained during the deliberation process and may be disciplined if they do so.

11. REFERRAL AND SELECTION

a. **Referral of Internal Candidates. Requirement** - The best qualified group referred to the selecting official for promotion or promotion potential consideration will consist [] of [] promotion candidates as well as reassignment and/or demotion candidates who are competing for a position with higher potential[. In keeping with the goal of selecting from best qualified candidates, a group of best qualified candidates for selection consideration does not have to be limited to promotion candidates (see paragraph 11b below). Identification of best qualified candidates may be made through assessment questionnaires, determinations of selecting officials, or other assessment methods, so long as the method to be used and the resulting best qualified group is determined prior to selection and is documented in the recruitment record.]

b. Referral of External Non-VA Candidates

(1) **Requirement.** If transfer, reinstatement, and VEOA eligibles are being considered for a higher-graded position than previously held, they must be evaluated and ranked along with competing VA employees to determine the cut-point. Once that has been established, all best qualified candidates will be referred []. VEOA eligibles will be identified on the [] certificate by [annotating VEOA] after their names. In such cases, an inadequate number of best qualified VA promotion candidates is justification for extending the area of promotion consideration to other VA employees.

NOTE: *Normally, the selection official determines if there is an adequate number of best qualified VA promotion candidates. An extension of the area of promotion consideration resulting in additional VA candidates for promotion under these circumstances may cause the cut-point to change and necessitate a redetermination of best qualified candidates for each recruitment source.*

(2) If the competitive service position provides promotion or placement in a position with higher promotion potential, qualified excepted service employees covered by the interchange agreements will be rated and ranked, when a panel is required, to determine which applicants are best qualified for referral. When there are fewer than 10 applicants, no panel is required. However, screening to determine the best qualified applicants must take place before a selection is made. [] Excepted service and competitive service employees [may] be referred on [the same certificate.] (See part III, chapter 3.)

(3) **Requirement.** When a position is announced at multiple grade levels, a best qualified group for each grade level, if available, will be referred for consideration on separate certificates.

(4) **Guidance.** A best qualified group consists of[:] candidates who are competing for promotion and/or for a position with higher promotion potential [(these individuals must be rated and ranked to be placed in the best qualified group);] VA employees who are candidates for reassignment [or] demotion to a position with no higher potential [or who have previously held the full performance level of the position[:] t]ransfer applicants from other agencies[:] and reinstatement eligibles for positions equal in grade to their current or former nontemporary, competitive service positions[.]

d. **Guidance.** In many instances, thorough and complete initial efforts to resolve dissatisfactions are successful. The time and effort involved at the beginning is to the benefit of both employees and management; increasing trust and understanding; providing for early, mutually satisfactory resolution; and reducing expenditure of time, effort and money. Comprehensive, good faith initial efforts cannot be overemphasized.

18. PROMOTION RECORDS

a. **Requirement.** A temporary record of each promotion action sufficient to allow reconstruction of the action, including documentation of how each candidate was rated and ranked, must be maintained for 2 years or until the local promotion program has been formally evaluated by OPM, whichever comes first. If the time limit for grievances or EEO complaints has not lapsed at the time the program is evaluated by OPM, the record must be maintained until it has lapsed. [For USA Staffing recruitment, system records are sufficient to meet the requirement for documentation. In addition, all job analysis records can be imported into USA Staffing to ensure a complete recruitment file is kept within the USA Staffing system.]

b. **Guidance.** To provide for reconstruction the following should be kept in a promotion file:

- (1) A copy of the vacancy announcement;
- (2) A copy of the crediting plan used;
- (3) A copy of each employee's application for consideration;
- (4) A record of each qualification determination, clearly indicating the reasons for any disqualifications;
- (5) A copy of each basically qualified candidate's annual performance evaluation;
- (6) A copy of each basically qualified candidate's supervisory appraisal for promotion;
- (7) Supplemental qualification statements for each basically qualified applicant, if used;
- (8) The identification of the selection procedures used;
- (9) A work sheet for each basically qualified candidate documenting:
 - (a) The basis of basic qualification determination, including what was used to satisfy general experience, specialized experience, and quality level of experience requirements (if applicable);
 - (b) The education which was substituted for experience in determining basic qualification;
 - (c) The basis for determining quality level and the corresponding point credit for that level;
 - (d) Identification of awards, training or self-development which contributed to credit;
 - (e) The total point credit awarded the candidates (if applicable);

APPENDIX C. INTERCHANGE AGREEMENTS

1. PURPOSE. This appendix outlines changes resulting from two interchange agreements between VA and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) negotiated under provisions contained in Executive Orders 9830 and 10577, Civil Service Rule 6.7. Two agreements allow for movement of personnel employed under 38 U.S.C. 7401(1) and 7401(3) in Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the competitive civil service. [] Employees must have at least 1 year of continuous service in order to be covered by the terms of these agreements.

2. INSTRUCTIONS. Following are implementing instructions regarding program areas affected by the agreements:

a. Coverage

(1) Appointments under 38 U.S.C. 7401(1) are limited to physicians, dentists, nurses, nurse anesthetists, podiatrists, optometrists, chiropractors, physician assistants and expanded-function dental auxiliaries employed on a full-time basis. Appointments under 38 U.S.C. 7401(3) are limited to those occupations specifically listed under Section 7401(3) or approved for hybrid status by the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration in accordance with the provisions of part II, chapter 3, section A, paragraph 2 of this handbook. []

(2) Employees involuntarily separated without cause from qualifying positions (described in subparagraph a(1) above) may be appointed non-competitively within 1 year of the separation period.

b. Consideration for Conversion to a Competitive Service Appointment. [Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 employees who are eligible for conversion to competitive service positions under VA interchange agreements and are in the area of consideration for posted vacancies shall be allowed to apply.](#) The following procedures will be used:

(1) If the competitive service position does not provide promotion or placement in a position with promotion potential, qualified excepted service employees covered by the interchange agreements may be selected and converted to the competitive service position without competition. If an increase in pay will result, it is considered a promotion and competition under the appropriate merit promotion plan for competitive service positions will take place as described in the next paragraph.

(2) If the competitive service position provides promotion or placement in a position with higher promotion potential, qualified excepted service employees covered by the interchange agreements will be rated and ranked along with competitive service employees. Excepted service and competitive service employees will be referred on [the same] certificate. [] (See chapter 3 of this part.)

NOTE: *For VHA policy regarding the utilization of title 38 employees (appointment/assignment to non-clinical duties), see appendix III-N.*

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below), as well as any applicable statutory and regulatory requirements such as those covering time-in-grade.

b. When there are special placement factors which are not adequately covered by the minimum qualification standard and which were identified by a job analysis as essential to successful performance in the position to be filled, they become selective placement factors and, as such, constitute a part of the minimum requirements for the particular position. Licensure, registration, certification or organization membership which is not required by the appropriate qualification standard will not be used as selective placement factors.

c. Written tests will not be used in evaluating the qualifications of any applicant unless required by the OPM or approved for use by the Director, [Recruitment and Placement Policy] Service (05[9]).

7. LOCATING CANDIDATES. Specific information for candidates on application procedures will be contained in VA-wide publicity. Candidates may be located by several different methods. Normally, vacancies will be publicized individually by announcements issued in the Weekly Summary Bulletin. Other sources of candidates may include reinstatement eligibles and employees from other agencies. Information regarding other methods for locating candidates, when used, will be communicated through appropriate channels.

8. EVALUATION AND RANKING PROCEDURES

a. Evaluation procedures will meet the requirements of 5 CFR, part 335. See chapter 3 of this part and appendix III-G and III-I. Evaluation criteria used to rate candidates will be expressed in a crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire] resulting from a job analysis of the position, or class of positions, to be filled.

b. When there are 10 or fewer qualified promotion candidates, they may be referred to the selecting official for final consideration without rating or ranking. Before making a selection, however, the best qualified candidates must be identified. The provisions of chapter 3, paragraph 11 of this part must be adhered to.

c. An HRM Office representative will conduct the job analysis using available informational material on the position(s), normally with the assistance of a panel, which will usually consist of at least two subject matter experts (SMEs). [(NOTE: *The panel of experts may meet electronically or respond individually with comments and suggestions.*)] In those few instances in which appropriate SME participation cannot be obtained, the circumstances will be documented as part of the background records for the crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire]. SMEs are persons with direct knowledge of what is done in the job, what KSAOs are required to perform the job, and the general background of persons who are able to do the job successfully. This may include those currently doing the job, recent incumbents, those who supervise or have recently supervised others doing the job, and other acknowledged job experts. SMEs must be (or have been) at least equal in grade to the position being analyzed, or equal to the highest grade if a class of positions is being analyzed. Assignment of SMEs for positions within their organization will be determined by the appropriate Administration Head, Assistant Secretary or Other Key Official.

d. The crediting plan/assessment questionnaire will consist of several rating factors on which applicants are evaluated to distinguish superior or high quality candidates from acceptable ones. The rating factors will consist of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) which: (1) are relevant to successful performance upon entry into the job; (2) are measurable; and (3) are observable.

NOTE: See paragraph 8k(2) below for guidance on the term "high quality."

e. Unless dictated otherwise by the results of the job analysis, the rating factors will be supported by three quality level descriptions. These quality levels will further define the rating factor by giving concrete examples of various proficiency levels in terms of observable behaviors, past experiences, quality of performance, pertinent education and training, etc. Point credit for each rating factor will be awarded as follows:

Level A (Superior)	5 Points
Level B (Average)	3 Points
Level C (Acceptable)	1 Point

However, the above [5-3-1]crediting system does not preclude the weighting of certain rating factors when justified by the job analysis (or other pertinent job-related information), or crediting four (4) points or two (2) points when the promotion panel determines that a candidate falls between two (2) levels on a particular rating factor. [**NOTE:** In the assessment questionnaire in USA Staffing, levels of expertise are identified for KSA criteria, ranging in points from the lowest rating to points for the highest rating. Other scales may be used for qualifications, eligibility, and screen-out factors.]

f. Rating factors or quality level descriptions will not prescribe point credit based on a certain number of points or a certain percentage of points for each source of information, such as supervisory appraisal, experience, education, training, awards, etc. Rating factors or quality level descriptions will not refer to length of service, length of education, licensure, registration, certification or organization membership, unless the job analysis and accompanying documentation show the item to be a valid, job-related factor which enhances a candidate's ability to perform the duties of the job to be filled.

g. Crediting plans[/assessment questionnaires] will be periodically reviewed for both (1) currency of the tasks and KSAOs and (2) effectiveness in distinguishing superior or high quality candidates from acceptable ones for the subject positions. If necessary, based on such job-related review and any needed supplemental SME information, officials of the Central Office Human Resources Service (035) and the appropriate Administration Head, Assistant Secretary or Other Key Official may revise the crediting plans/assessment questionnaires accordingly for future application to better achieve the above two objectives.

h. [Provisions of Part III, Chapter 3, paragraph 10 will be followed when rating and ranking applicants for referral.]

9. REFERRAL AND SELECTION PROCEDURES

a. Following completion of the rating and ranking process, or as vacancies occur, a [] certificate containing the names of the best qualified VA candidates (listed in alphabetical order) will be prepared.

(1) If transfer and/or reinstatement eligibles and/or certain excepted service employees are being considered for higher grade positions, or for positions with higher known potential, they will be evaluated and ranked along with competing competitive service VA employees to determine the cut-score. After the cut-score has been established, those who rank at or above the cut-score will be referred on [the same certificate].

(2) If a position is announced at multiple grade levels, separate certificates will be referred for each grade level.

b. The signed certificates will be forwarded to the nominating official. [(In USA Staffing recruitment actions, referrals are transmitted electronically and final selections are made electronically via the USA Staffing document viewer.)] This official will recommend a selection to the Secretary in accordance with procedures in Central Office Operating Instructions, OI-1, part V, chapter 6. When nominating a candidate who must relocate to accept an assignment, information should be provided regarding cost considerations. Additionally, if the candidate has been in his or her current VA assignment less than 36 months, a justification of the move will be included.

c. Until selections for positions centralized to the Secretary have been approved by the Secretary, candidates nominated for these positions should not be informed of their nominations, and no personnel action will be taken.

d. The Secretary has the right to select or non-select from a [] certificate or from any other appropriate source of candidates. This includes the right to non-select all the [] candidates and return the [] certificate unused. Where multiple vacancies or multiple grade levels are involved, this includes the right to select for one or more vacancies at the same or other grade levels (if applicable) and to return the certificates without selecting for remaining vacancies.

e. The Secretary's final approval will be communicated by the appropriate Administration Head, Assistant Secretary or Other Key Official.

10. EFFECTIVE DATES. Employees will be released to their new assignments within a reasonable length of time.

a. Normally, the effective date of a position change at the same facility will be the first day of the next pay period after the date of administrative approval. Where unusual circumstances justify a period longer than 2 weeks prior to release, either (1) the employee should be informed in writing over the signature of the official responsible for the delay of the reasons for the delay and the expected release date, or (2) the position change action should be effected and the employee detailed back to the former position.

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Step 5 - Measure each qualified applicant's capabilities against the crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire].

c. Content validity can only be used when selection procedures measure directly observable KSAOs. When KSAOs are stated in terms of unobservable characteristics or personality traits, such as dependability or leadership ability, the selection procedure cannot be validated by means of a content validity study. Characteristics and personality traits, however, may often be broken down into directly observable behaviors which may be measured using a content valid selection procedure. For example, dependability might be demonstrated by the ability to complete work assignments within a specified timeframe, or leadership ability might be shown by the ability to delegate work assignments to subordinates. Content validity can then be used to demonstrate the job-relatedness of the selection procedures.

d. OPM requires that promotion procedures meet formal validation requirements. In the past, typically, separate point credit has been given for each of the various sources of information about applicants, such as experience (based on the application, personnel folder, etc.), supervisory evaluation, training, education, and awards. To have valid merit promotion selection procedures, rating and ranking methods which combine the information gathered from these various sources must be used to rate applicants on each KSAO which a job analysis has shown to be important to the job. Figure 1 provides a graphic comparison of past rating and ranking procedures and those procedures which should be used to meet requirements for validity and merit selection. [For USA Staffing, VA Forms 0938a, 0938b, and 0938c should be used to document input from subject matter experts that the crediting plan/assessment questionnaire content is valid.]

e. The following paragraphs of this appendix discuss in detail the steps which must be followed for devising proper content valid merit promotion crediting plans[/assessment questionnaires]. These procedures will require training of human resources staff, supervisors, subject matter experts and selecting officials. (See Figure 1[below.])

3. DEFINITIONS

a. **KSAO.** An acronym standing for the words, "knowledge, skill, ability and other characteristic."

(1) **Knowledge.** A body of learned information used directly on the job.

(2) **Skill.** A present competence to perform a learned psychomotor act. A skill, unlike an ability, typically involves observable, quantifiable, and measurable performance parameters, (e.g., typing, pipefitting, etc.)

(3) **Ability.** The competence to perform an activity at the present time.

NOTE: *Ability should not be confused with aptitude, which implies a likelihood of being able to learn to perform an activity.*

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(4) **Other Characteristics.** Other competencies required of individuals doing the job. Remember that for content validity purposes, personality traits or aptitudes must be directly observable and measurable. This may require further definition of the trait in terms of its directly observable manifestations (see paragraph 2c).

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evaluated. Under the new method the evaluation is based on the applicant's capabilities on each KSAO required in the job. All available sources of information, in combination, are used to arrive at a score – the lines labeled “b” – on each KSAO, not by awarding points for each separate source and then totaling those points. The individual KSAO scores are then added to arrive at an estimation of an applicant's capability to do the whole job.

b. **Rating Factors.** The KSAOs or groups of KSAOs identified in the job analysis and selected for use in the crediting plan (see paragraph 4e, this appendix).

c. **Quality Levels.** Examples of elements in the background of individuals which demonstrate the level of possession of a particular KSAO or rating factor. Many crediting plans show three quality levels for each rating factor. [In USA Staffing, each KSA is typically associated with task statements, and each task statement is measured using quality levels.]

d. **Selection Procedure.** Any measure or combination of measures used as a basis for an employment decision (e.g., hiring, promotion, demotion, selection for training if the training leads to an employment decision, etc.). Selection procedures include the full range of assessment methods such as written tests, qualification standards, scored and unscored application forms, crediting plans[/assessment questionnaires], and formal and informal interviews.

e. **Selective Factors.** A KSAO or group of KSAOs identified in the job analysis as being critical to the job. Selective factors are used in addition to the appropriate qualification standard requirements to determine the basic qualifications of applicants. The minimum level of proficiency required to do the job must be described for each selective factor and applied in basic qualification determinations. The use of a KSAO as a selective factor does not preclude its use as a rating factor when it meets the criteria in paragraph 4e, this appendix.

f. **Subject Matter Experts (SMEs).** Person with direct knowledge of what is done in the job and what [] KSAOs are required to do the job successfully. Included may be recent incumbents who supervise others doing the job. For job analysis/crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire] development panels, one SME must be at least equal in grade to the job to be filled. Since the selecting official often has the most knowledge about the job, that person should ordinarily be included on the SME job analysis/crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire] development panel.

4. JOB ANALYSIS

a. **General.** The first step in developing a content valid selection procedure is the job analysis. The purpose of a job analysis for selection procedure development is to find out what is required of the person who does the job. The duties of the job and the capabilities an individual must have in order to do it are both objectives. In job analysis terminology, identify the tasks performed in the job and the KSAOs (knowledges, skills, abilities and other characteristics) a person must possess to do those tasks.

b. **Approaches to Job Analysis.** There are several approaches to analyzing jobs for the purpose of developing selection procedures: an entire class of positions which are common to a number of VA installations and which do not vary much from location to location can be analyzed; the analysis can focus on a group; or the analysis can zero in on a single job. In the group or class study, emphasis is on

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APPENDIX G****c. Quality Levels**

(1) Each rating factor must be defined in terms of observable behaviors, past experiences, quality of performance, pertinent education and training, etc., which describe several levels of proficiency for the factor. These descriptive quality levels further define the rating factor by giving concrete examples of performance at various proficiency levels.

(2) For critical KSAOs used as selective factors in basic qualification determinations, the minimum level of acceptable competency must be defined as discussed in paragraphs 3e and 4e, above. Quality levels above the minimum level are also developed for a critical KSAO when it is also used for rating and ranking.

(3) Three quality levels should be described for each rating factor, whether critical or important, which is used to distinguish superior applicants. Three is not an absolute requirement but is generally the easiest number to work with. It is important to distinguish between levels of ability that are required as soon as a person begins working in the job (these may be used in the crediting plan) and those which can be acquired after a reasonable time on the job (these generally should not be used). [In USA Staffing, quality levels are used for each task statement.]

(4) Developing quality level descriptions becomes easier as persons become more familiar with it. Valuable information on quality level improvement can be obtained from the promotion panel members who have used the crediting plan. Their observations and suggestions may also help in developing quality levels for similar positions.

[d. Task Statements

(1) In the crediting plans/assessment questionnaires used for USA Staffing, task statements are used to describe each KSAO. The task statements reflect specific assignments and performance of work.

(2) Subject Matter Experts are used to develop, devise, and/or review task statements. Their participation is documented in USA Staffing and in VA Forms 0938a, 0938b, and 0938c.

e.] **Point Assignment.** There are a number of ways in which points can be assigned to rating factors and quality levels. One simple method is to give each rating factor a maximum value of five points. Assuming that three quality levels have been defined, assign values of 1, 3 and 5 points to the quality levels. Applicants whose background is judged to equate to the top quality level would receive 5 points, those rated in the middle would get 3 points, and those rated at the lowest quality level would get 1 point. The 1-3-5 pattern allows raters to assign 2 or 4 points to applicants whose background is judged to fall between two quality levels. There are also other acceptable methods and procedures. [In USA Staffing, points are assigned to a level of proficiency in performing the task.

f.] **Review of Crediting Plan[/Assessment Questionnaire].** The final crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire] should be reviewed by the SMEs and HRM specialist along with information gathered in the job analysis to ensure that all the critical and important KSAOs are covered by the rating factors. Quality levels should be reviewed to make sure they are as definitive as possible and describe elements of employee background and performance which are reflected in available sources of information on applicants.

[g.] **Approval of Crediting Plan[/Assessment Questionnaire].** The completed crediting plan should be signed by each member of the crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire] development panel and by the HRM Specialist before being forwarded for final approval. If the selecting official was not a member of the crediting panel, he or she should also review the plan.

6. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

a. **General.** Applicants are evaluated by comparing the total information on each applicant's capabilities against the quality levels for each rating factor or KSAO in the crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire]. This information can be obtained from a number of sources, discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. The best way to obtain information on the applicants must be determined for each vacancy. The consideration of what sources of information are available and will be used is important at each stage in the development of the selection procedure. In the job analysis stage, it is important in determining which KSAOs can be measured and will become rating factors. In the development of crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire], it is important in determining how the quality level examples are defined. In the evaluation process, the sources of information are the tools used by the promotion panel to arrive at scores for applicants.

NOTE: *Annual performance appraisals and awards must be considered to the extent they are related to the job to be filled. (See paragraph 3d, chapter 3 of this part.)*

b. **Supervisory Appraisals.** This can be a very valuable source of information since it allows someone with firsthand experience in supervising the applicant to give an assessment of the person's capabilities. However, remember that for rating and ranking purposes, the supervisory appraisal is only valuable to the extent that it gives information related to the applicant's capabilities on the KSAOs needed in the job being filled. There are several different styles and forms of supervisory appraisals. They may be designed for a specific job, or they may be more general in nature and used in evaluating applicants for a variety of jobs. They may simply require a supervisor to check a statement which most nearly defines an employee's capabilities. Several styles and forms can be combined in a variety of ways depending on how the appraisal is to be used.

(1) Forms of Appraisals

(a) **Standard Appraisal.** If other sources of information will yield enough information on applicants to enable raters to arrive at an appropriate rating, a general or standard appraisal which can be used for a number of jobs may be sufficient. In this case, only the items on the standard form which relate directly to the [KSAOs] of the job in question [] would be used. If the standard appraisal does not give direct information on a particular rating factor, then it cannot be used in evaluating an applicant on that factor.

Major advantages of the standard appraisal are that it does not have to be individually developed by the HRM Specialist, and it requires little time for the supervisor to complete. The major disadvantage is that it gives little specific information on an applicant's capabilities relative to the requirements of the job being filled; consequently, its value as an evaluation tool is diminished.

(b) **Specialized Appraisal.** A specialized appraisal is developed specifically to evaluate applicants for a particular job or group of jobs. It is keyed to the KSAOs or rating factors established in the job analysis and used in the crediting plan. This form allows the supervisor to address each of the [] KSAOs directly and increases the value of the information that the supervisor provides the promotion panel. Its principal disadvantages are the time required for its development and the additional time required for the supervisor to complete a separate appraisal for each job for which an employee applies.

(2) Appraisal Styles

(a) **Category Rating.** This style consists of a description of the KSAO to be appraised (e.g., ability to present ideas orally), followed by either adjective descriptions (outstanding, average, etc.) or descriptions of performance levels, and provides for relatively easy comparison of appraisals for several applicants. The supervisor simply selects the category which best describes the employee's capabilities. The pitfall is

APPENDIX H. JOB-ELEMENT APPROACH FOR WAGE GRADE JOBS

1. GENERAL. The job-element qualification system and evaluation and ranking procedures for in-service placement for trades and labor occupations are mandatory for use in VA. An in-depth discussion of this procedure is located in Office of Personnel Management Handbook X-118C. In addition, the information in Appendix III-G of this Handbook should be carefully reviewed since it provides valuable information concerning job analyses, crediting plans, sources of information, etc., which should be considered in the job-element approach.

2. PURPOSE. This appendix is intended to provide an overview of the system and focus attention on certain procedures in Handbook X-118C which are critical to successful implementation.

3. BACKGROUND

a. **Job Elements.** Job elements in Handbook X-118C were developed through an analysis of wage grade job families which yielded job elements (abilities) directly related to successful performance. The approved job elements for specific wage grade job families are located in appendix A of Handbook X-118C. Under certain circumstances, explained in the Handbook, additional job elements may be developed for a specific position, some of the predetermined job elements may be combined, or some may be deleted. The screen out element, however, may not be deleted.

b. **Crediting Plans[/Assessment Questionnaires].** The job-element procedure requires development of a crediting plan[/assessment questionnaire] which is used to determine the relevancy of applicants' background to the job being filled. These crediting plans must be developed and used, both for basic qualification determinations and for rating and ranking purposes. .

NOTE: *Chapter V of the Handbook X-118C stipulates that crediting plans are not made available to employees since the guides contain information that might give them unfair advantage in applying for the job. [Crediting plans] may, however, be reviewed and/or released for grievance and EEO complaint purposes as discussed in paragraph 9e, chapter 3 of this part. [In USA Staffing recruitment, assessment questionnaires request information from the applicant and must be made available to all applicants through the merit promotion announcement. Scoring criteria for that assessment are not disclosed.]*

c. **Supplemental Experience Statements.** VA Form 4676, Supplemental Experience Statement for Inservice Placement, and the continuation sheet, VA Form 4676a, are available for securing information from applicants concerning their qualifications for each job element. Statements used on the VA Form 4676 to generate employee responses are extremely important and must be carefully constructed to ensure they are clear, request relevant information and provide for determining the level of experience the employee possesses. Development and use of supplemental experience statements are discussed in the

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OPM Handbook of Wage Grade Supplemental Forms, February 1971. It should be closely observed when developing the VA Form 4676 for employee responses. [In USA Staffing, these forms are replaced by OPM Form 1203-FX.]

d. **Other Sources of Information.** Paragraph 6, Sources of Information, of appendix III-G in this part should be reviewed. Its provisions are applicable concerning supervisory appraisals and options for their use. This includes the option, no longer a requirement, to use current, standardized VA supervisory appraisal forms with a proper rating pattern for the position to be filled. Other information, geared to the KSAO approach for General Schedule positions, is equally valuable for filling wage grade jobs.

e. **Rating Sheet.** VA Form 4677, Job Element Rating Sheet for Inservice Placement, is available for documenting basic qualification determinations and rating and ranking point credit determinations for applicants for trades and labor occupations. A crediting plan must be used in conjunction with this form. [In USA Staffing, use of this form is not required. If a panel wants to use this form to document their findings, they can, but if the panel doesn't want to, or if there is no panel, the form does not have to be used.]

4. RATING AND RANKING CANDIDATES FOR PROMOTION

a. **Supervisor's Appraisal of Performance for Promotion.** To rate and rank basically eligible candidates for promotion, a supervisory appraisal of performance for promotion based on the requirements of the specific job being filled may be useful in addition to those factors in paragraph 3 above. Various supervisory appraisals like those described in appendix III-G, paragraph 6, for the KSAO approach are, however, acceptable.

b. **Annual Performance Evaluation.** Each candidate's annual performance evaluation must also be taken into consideration in the rating and ranking process. (See paragraph 3d, chapter 3 of this part.)

c. **Awards, Training, Self-Development and Outside Activities.** Information concerning these items, which may be secured from the employee responses on VA Form 4676 and/or from the employee's personnel folder, Federal employment application, or other appropriate source, must also be available for consideration in the point crediting process.

d. **Basis for Awarding Points for Promotion.** When rating and ranking for promotion, the panel, which must include a subject matter expert for the job, reviews each piece of relevant information required by the applicable promotion plan (i.e., the employee's supplemental experience statement, the annual performance evaluation, the supervisor's appraisal of performance for promotion and information related to awards, training, self-development and outside activities). Judgment is used to determine how closely the candidate's total background (as indicated by the combination of all the sources of information required by the applicable plan) matches a quality level for each job element. This process is repeated for each separate job element and points awarded accordingly. The result will not only provide for a basic qualification determination but will also yield the relative rank of candidates for promotion.

e. Documentation

(1) **Promotion File.** It is essential that thorough documentation of the panel's decisions include the evidence and rationale used to place the candidate in a certain quality level for each job element. The documentation must be such that a reviewer may easily determine the rationale and judgment used in point credit determinations from the information in the promotion file (see paragraph 18 of chapter 3, this part).

(2) **Selection Procedure.** The documentation requirements of the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures apply to procedures developed for wage grade jobs. Those documentation requirements of paragraph 19, chapter 3, this part, which are applicable to wage grade selection procedure development, must be observed.

5. DETERMINING BASIC QUALIFICATION FOR REASSIGNMENT, DEMOTION, ETC.

Rating and ranking to determine a best qualified group are not necessary for certain actions such as reassignment or demotion to positions with no higher potential, or reinstatement to positions at the same grade with no greater promotion potential than previously held. When only basic qualification determination is necessary, use of the appropriate job elements, a crediting plan, a supplemental experience statement and VA Form 4677 is sufficient. Additional guidance concerning basic qualification determinations and point credit may be found in Handbook X-118C, chapter IV, and in the instructions on VA Form 4677. [In USA Staffing, a résumé, or equivalent documentation, and completion of the assessment questionnaire are normally sufficient.]