HRDG 4413 - Career Enhancement Program - Section B

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Subchapter 4413
Career Enhancement Program
Section B - Filling CEP Positions

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Identifying Positions

Supervisors, in consultation with the SPO, may restructure current positions or establish new positions for use in the CEP. Supervisors may find it helpful to consider the following when identifying opportunities for CEP positions:

- The number and types of positions under his/her control,
- The number of positions in the same general field as the vacancy,
- The possible effect of redistributing duties if the position is restructured,
- Anticipated additional losses in the same line of work, and
- The number of employees who may already have the basic qualifications for entering this line of work.

Establishing CEP Positions

To establish a position for the CEP, supervisors and/or the appropriate administrative office should work with the SPO to establish the entry-level, target, and full performance level (FPL) of the position. The following should be submitted to the SPO so that the position may be classified and announced:

- Request for Personnel Action, Form SF-52, annotated to reflect the CEP position;
- Position Description Cover Sheet, Form AD-332;
- Position description for entry level and target position; and
- Job analysis.

All CEP opportunities are advertised for competition in accordance with established merit promotion procedures (e.g., career ladders, areas of consideration, priority consideration, relocation expenses, etc.). Announcements may be issued for more than one position when there are several positions in the same series using the same evaluation criteria, provided the entry and target position and the promotion potential and/or career ladder of the positions are the same.

CEP Vacancy Announcements

CEP announcements will be similar to regular merit promotion vacancy announcements, but they will also include:

- A statement that the position is being filled under the CEP,
- The job element criteria,
- The entry and target position,
- Promotion potential and/or career ladder of the position,
- A Self-Assessment Qualification Statement, and
- A Supervisory Assessment Qualification Statement.

Refer to Section D for a sample **CEP vacancy announcement** with the Self-Assessment and Supervisory Assessment forms (Exhibits A, B, and C, respectively).

ACTAP Applicants

The Agency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ACTAP) was developed to place qualified surplus or displaced individuals into existing vacant positions. Under the ACTAP, a candidate who is a surplus or displaced USDA career or career-conditional employee in the local commuting area receives priority consideration if he/she meets minimum qualifications, submits the required documentation (as instructed in the vacancy announcement), and is determined to be well-qualified under the appropriate rating criteria. Separate rating criteria which relates to the target level of the position will be used as the basis for the ACTAP applicant being determined as well-qualified for the position.

Evaluating Applicants

Merit promotion procedures are followed in the evaluation and selection of candidates after the announcement has closed. The following table summarizes the steps involved in the CEP applicant evaluation process:

Step:	Who:	Does What:
1.	SPO	Evaluates all applications against the basic eligibility requirements outlined in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Qualification Standards Operating Manual.
2.	SPO	Eliminates from consideration all candidates who already meet the qualification standards for the target position.
3.	SPO	Using the **Supervisory Assessment Qualification Statement** and the **Self-Assessment Qualification Statement** (samples in Section D), evaluates undertrained candidates on their potential to perform or possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) for the target position. Relevant work history, training, education, self-development efforts, awards, and other pertinent activities also may be considered in determining each applicant's potential for success in the target job.
4.	SPO	Forwards the list of applicants to the selecting official.
5.	Selecting Official	Makes selection/tentative offer. Returns selection certificate to servicing personnelist.

Counseling Participants

Promptly after the employee has been selected for the CEP, the supervisor should counsel the employee. The counseling session should result in the employee's thorough understanding of :

- His/her responsibilities as a CEP participant;
- The required personal investment of effort and time;
- The fact that selection into the CEP does not guarantee success (participants must be able to perform at the standards set for the target position);
- The performance standards which will be used (set in place within **30 days** of the employee's assignment in the CEP position);
- Actions that will be taken upon withdrawal from the program or failure to meet the performance requirements;
- The process of progression; and
- The fact that the CEP is designed to develop participants up to the point where they can compete with other employees through regular merit promotion procedures for advancement beyond the target position.

Conditions for Entering the CEP

An employee may enter the CEP through reassignment, promotion, or change-to-lower grade. If an employee fails to meet the performance requirements of the training program, he/she may be released from the program after due process and may be returned to the former position if it has not been filledor to another position of similar duties and grade.

Before entering the program, each participant **must** sign a statement acknowledging the following conditions:

If the employee:	and:	Then the employee may:
Entered the program through promotion, or received any promotions while under the CEP Training Agreement	Failed to complete the entire training program and reach the targeted grade	Forfeit any promotions and be returned to the former non-CEP position after due process. If the former position has been filled, the employee may be assigned to a position of similar duties at the lower grade.
Entered the CEP through voluntary change-to-lower grade		Be assigned to an appropriate position at the lower grade. Return to his/her former grade will be through regular merit promotion procedures.

See Section D for a copy of the **Statement Regarding Promotions**.

Pay Retention

CEP participants requiring position/grade changes for developmental purposes will be authorized pay retention in accordance with 5 **U.S.C**. 5361-5366 or 5 **CFR** Part 536. Contact the SPO for guidance to ensure that participants understand how pay retention will affect their current and future pay.

Promotions into the CEP

An employee may be promoted into the CEP entry-level position or target position (if the entry-level position and the target position are the same) without meeting OPM Operating Manual qualification standards provided the time-in-grade requirements and any minimum educational requirements for that particular series are met.

Entering through the Entry-Level

An employee entering the CEP at a grade below the target position must make up the difference in the qualifications he/she brings to the Program and the qualifications required for the target position as described in the OPM Qualification Standards Operating Manual. Upon successful completion of training and time-in-grade requirements, a participant may be promoted to the target position.

Example: An employee may be placed into the entry-level position as a Management Analyst, GS-343-5, with growth to the target position of Management Analyst, GS-343-7.

Entering through a Bridge Position

An employee entering the CEP by means of a “bridge position” also must make up the difference in the qualifications he/she brings to the Program and the qualifications required for the target position as described in the OPM Qualification Standards Operating Manual. This is a trainee position in a one-or two-grade interval series classified no higher than the GS-7 level. The purpose of the bridge position is to provide the experience and training for the participant to qualify for the target position.

Example: An employee is placed from a Secretary, GS-318-6, into a bridge position as a Veterinary Program Assistant, GS-301-5, with growth to the CEP target position of Veterinary Program Specialist, GS-301-7.

Entering at the Target Position Grade	Participants who enter the CEP at the same grade as the target position will have “Trainee” added to their title when the entry level position and target position are the same series and grade (e.g., Personnel Management Specialist (Trainee), GS-201-7). Upon successful completion of the training, the participant will be fully qualified for the target position and the word “Trainee” will be removed.
Reaching the Target Position	The CEP is designed to develop participants up to the point where they can compete for advancement beyond the target position through regular merit promotion procedures. Since placement in the target position will provide the participant with the opportunity to advance up the career ladder, the employee is no longer in the CEP once he/she is fully qualified for that position.

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