HRDG 4030 - Category Rating - Section D

Last Modified:

Subchapter 4030
Category Rating
Section D - Referral and Selection of Candidates

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Referral

Eligible candidates are referred in the following order:

1. Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) eligibles (Note: ICTAP eligibles must meet the *Well Qualified* category);
2. Eligible candidates who lost consideration due to erroneous certification; and
3. Eligible candidates in the highest quality category, using either option described below. (In accordance with Departmental Regulation 4030-337-2, this determination may be made on a case-by-case basis.)
    1. **All eligible candidates in the highest quality category**, with preference eligibles listed ahead of non-preference eligibles; or
    2. **Only the preference eligibles in the highest quality category** when the number of preference eligibles equals or exceeds the number of positions to be filled.
        1. If there are fewer than three candidates in the highest quality category, candidates from the next lower category may be combined with those in the highest category. (See ***Merging Categories*** below.)

Qualified candidates are referred in the appropriate quality category according to veterans' preference within each category.

MRP will apply veterans' preference as follows:

- Within each quality category, veterans' preference eligibles will be listed ahead of non-preference eligibles in alphabetical order by preference type:
  - Compensable disability of 30 percent or more (CPS),
  - Compensable disability of 10 percent or more, but less than 30 percent (CP),
  - Compensable disability of less than 10 percent, derived preference; and other “10 point” preference eligibles (XP),
  - Other preference eligibles not listed above (TP), and then
  - Non-preference eligibles in alphabetical order.
- Preference eligibles do not receive additional points under category rating procedures.
- For positions other than professional and scientific at the GS-09 level or higher, qualified preference eligibles with a compensable service-connected disability of 10 percent or more (i.e., 30 p **ercent Compensable Disability Preference (**CPS) and **Compensable Disability Preference (**CP)) are placed at the top of the highest quality category.
- For professional and scientific positions at the GS-09 level or higher, qualified preference eligibles with a compensable service-connected disability of 10 percent or more (i.e., CPS and CP) are placed at the top of the appropriate quality category for which they qualify.

The following chart illustrates how to apply veterans' preference under category rating:

Applying Veterans' Preference Under Category Rating	
Step 1	Place qualified candidates in the appropriate quality category
Step 2	Identify preference eligible candidates
Step 3	Apply veterans' preference

The following are examples of applying veterans' preference:

If there are fewer than three candidates in the highest quality category, the two highest categories (e.g., *Best Qualified* and *Well Qualified*) **may** be merged into one category. The newly merged category becomes the new highest quality category. All preference eligibles in the merged category must be placed ahead of non-preference eligibles.

Merging is optional and can only be done when there are fewer than three candidates in the highest quality category. There is no limit to the number of times categories can be merged. The HR practitioner, in conjunction with the hiring manager, may decide to merge categories at two places in the hiring process: (1) before certifying/issuing the Certificate of Eligibles; or(2) before making a selection.

Subsequent mergers may be made if:

Merging Categories

- There are multiple vacancies,
- The highest quality group was properly merged with the second highest quality group and selections were made from that merged group, or
- The first merged group may be merged with the next quality group when fewer than three candidates remain in the first merged group.

Example of merging before certifying/issuing the Certificate of Eligibles:

In this example, the *Best Qualified* category has just two eligible candidates. The SPO consults with the Hiring Manager and they decide to merge categories. The newly merged category becomes the highest quality category and contains all eligible candidates from both categories. The preference eligible from the *Well Qualified* category is now placed at the top of the newly merged category.

Example of merging before making a selection:

Making Selections

- Selection must be made from the highest quality category.
- Within a quality category, an applicant with veterans' preference must be selected over a non-veteran in the same category, unless a written “pass over” request is prepared and sustained based on proper and adequate reasons. (Consult with your servicing HR practitioner for more information.)
- Any veterans' preference eligible in the highest quality category may be selected regardless of the type of preference to which he/she is entitled.
- The “three consideration” rule in 5 CFR 332.405 does not apply under category rating procedures.
- The hiring manager cannot pass over a preference eligible to select a non-preference eligible unless a written objection is submitted to and sustained in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 3318. Objections to preference eligibles will be processed in accordance with the procedures outlined within Chapter 6 of **OPM's Delegated Examining Operations Handbook.**

Applicant Inquiries

The SPO will provide the following information, if requested, by an applicant:

- An explanation of the category rating process, and
- If the applicant was determined to be minimally qualified, the grouping in which the applicant was placed (i.e., *Best Qualified*, *Well Qualified*, or *Qualified*).

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