

## Transformation FAQs

Rev 6-15-05

### Reduction in Force (RIF)

**new!** The mid-April 2005 State of the Center address charts by Dr. Earls showed that we may still lose 700 civil servant jobs (425 Aero and 275 Space) if the proposed GRC funding is not increased or altered. Why has this projected number (700 lost CS jobs) not gone down in view of the recent two rounds of buyouts which resulted in GRC now having less civil servants? If GRC had approximately 100 civil servants take the 2 buyouts, wouldn't our proposed lost FTE number project at around 600 (for lost CS jobs)?

The Center's original estimated number of employees (700) was established at the beginning of the Agency Transformation activities. Our numbers as of May 2, 2005, show that we had 82 separate from the Center in December/January timeframe, plus 43 additional employees signed up for the most recent buyout (18 of them have already left). In addition, we currently have 30 people who are in the process of transferring to other Centers (based on losses since Agency job fairs). These combined numbers reduces the 700 losses originally projected.

**new!** I've had time and age to retire for sometime now. If my PD puts me in a category where I am alone and a RIF comes along is there anyway possible that I could be RIF'd and not allowed to retire?

The simplistic answer is that as long as you are eligible for an immediate annuity, you can retire at any time before or during a RIF (just note that you would not be eligible for severance pay if you are eligible for an immediate annuity and reached for RIF)--so you would not be prevented from retiring. You may be interested in checking out the following publication from OPM, it has more detailed info:  
<http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/egrifben.asp>

**new!** I have heard that if a person is eligible for immediate retirement, they are not eligible for severance pay in a RIF situation. Is this true?

Yes, this is true. An employee who is eligible for immediate annuity (i.e., optional retirement or discontinued service retirement) is not eligible for severance pay in a RIF situation. For further clarification regarding each of these types of retirement, please see the following website: <http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/egrifben.asp> You may wish to make an appointment with GRC's retirement benefits counselor, Carol Mehallick (x2507), to discuss your specific situation.

**new!** Is an employee who is on a term appointment treated any differently than a career employee when a RIF occurs?

RIF is an incredibly complicated process, and there are always "ifs, ands, and buts", so this answer will be fairly simplistic, without addressing every potential scenario.

Employees are grouped by the competitive level code of their position on a retention register. Employee order is further organized by Tenure Groups. Term employees are in Tenure Group III. To put this in context, career employees are in Tenure Group I, and Career Conditional and employees serving on probationary appointments are in Tenure Group II. To complicate this just a bit further, within each tenure group are three subgroups--so veterans with a disability are in the highest subgroup within their tenure group, followed by vets without a disability, and finally by employees with no veterans preference. In a RIF, we always go from highest to lowest tenure/subgroup when releasing an employee from his or her competitive level--so an employee in Tenure Group I can bump or retreat into a position within Tenure Group II or III. (note: the lowest standing employee is released first; standing is determined by tenure, tenure subgroup, and RIF service computation date). Tenure Group III employees have movement only within their own tenure group--and only across or down (so a non-vet can't take a position held by a vet, for example, because they are in a higher subgroup).

Having said all of this, it's not a given that every term will be reached in a RIF situation. It all has to do with which positions are abolished and what each employee's bump and retreat rights are--and there is no way to give a complete snapshot of all of that until a RIF is actually begun.

**new!** **What is being done to be sure NASA as an agency and Glenn Research Center in particular retain the younger Glenn employees who have less tenure? In an earlier answer to this question, you discussed the uncertainties of the RIF process, but did not answer the question asked. Would it be correct to assume that "nothing is being done" or that "nothing can be done"?**

As stated in the last answer on this topic, RIF is very disruptive and there are few certainties associated with the outcome. By regulation, RIF decisions are based on positions, not individual employees. It is not possible or legal to separate out those employees with less tenure to protect them from a RIF situation. We are doing what we can to retain our workforce and particularly our younger employees as we work to avoid a potential RIF, bring in additional work for the Center, and try to maintain the Glenn Research Center as a premier place to work, both for newer and longer-tenured employees.

**I realize that the center director is given wide flexibility in targeting a RIF. Will regard be given to try and avoid targeting those at the top of their field (i.e. the ST's and DCL occupants) since competitive levels can be targeted individually and are delineated by grade? Besides being the proven scientific & technical cream of the crop, the center has the maximum investment in these people. Most of them have dedicated their careers to maximizing their technical expertise to meet NASA's mission. If targeted, they could end up being demoted in grade after bumping or retreating down into their former (larger) competitive level. There would seem to be little point in inadvertently causing the demotion of your best and brightest people, who would most likely remain employed anyway due to their higher retention ranking (years of tenure). The idea of this kind of demotion runs counter**

**to the principles of the DCL. The younger workers with lower retention ranking are generally those who will end up being displaced out of a job anyway during a RIF action.**

As you may know, RIF decisions are based on positions, and not individuals. The questions that must be answered, then, are the types of work the Center will have in the future, and the skills we will need to perform such work. The answers to these questions will drive our organizational structure of the future, and as a result, will heavily influence which positions to retain and which positions to abolish. Any RIF causes a number of inadvertent situations, and once the RIF process is begun, it is impossible to predict or control the outcome.

**You have said that the Glenn's younger employees are its future. What is being done to be sure NASA as an agency and Glenn Research Center in particular retain these younger employees? If a RIF occurs, it seems that --- as tenure is one of the primary factors in determining who will be RIFed --- high performing career and career-conditional civil servant employees hired in the last few years will join poor performing employees at the top of the list of people to be RIFed. Note that, if this issue is not addressed soon, these younger employees may begin to look for and accept jobs elsewhere, both at other NASA centers and outside NASA.**

We continue to believe that our younger employees are our future, and hope that such employees will continue to contemplate a future with us. We understand, however, that if a RIF situation turns out to be unavoidable, every employee must gauge their own level of risk and make a personal decision regarding their future career. Prior to an actual RIF, there are so many variables that it is very difficult to project which specific employees will be impacted. As you point out, tenure and performance are variables, but so are veteran's preference and employee rights to retreat to jobs previously held. Equally important is identification of specific positions to be abolished--so depending on the full mix of variables, it is entirely possible that some employees with less tenure may not be impacted in a RIF.

**During your last speech regarding the transformation issues/efforts at GRC, you mentioned that co-op's who were recently hired will be exempt from a RIF. Is there a policy in place regarding career conditional employees? I was told by a co-worker that during the last RIF in the 1970's, that career conditional employees were exempt from the RIF. I was hired by NASA in November 2003 and am labeled as career conditional. I wondered if this rule would still be in effect for future RIFs? If not, I can only speculate that if there is a RIF, I would potentially be near the top of the list, regardless of my outstanding performance and the fact that my current core competency is in an area that is ineligible for the buy-out. Any information that you can provide regarding this issue would be appreciated.**

I believe during a Town Hall meeting I said that we are committed to retaining our younger employees, who are our future here at Glenn. I cannot promise that co-ops, or any other employee on the lab, will not be adversely affected by a RIF. I'm not aware that there was a special policy in place to exempt career conditional employees in the last

RIF--in fact, such a policy would be counter to OPM rules regarding the RIF process. More information will be forthcoming in an employee forum dedicated to the RIF topic, but in the meantime, if you would like more information on the very complicated RIF process, you may want to reference "The Employee's Guide to Reduction in Force (RIF)," developed by the Office of Personnel Management. You can access this document on the web at: <http://www.opm.gov/rif/general/rifguide.htm>

## **Hiring Restrictions**

**The agency issued a policy regarding hiring restrictions on January 13, 2005. How does this policy affect filling positions using a permanent appointment?**

Only a current permanent NASA employee may be selected for a permanent position at GSFC, JSC, KSC, SSC, and HQ. At ARC, DFRC, GRC, LaRC, and MSFC, only permanent employees from that Center may be selected to fill a permanent position at that center. Any exception to these guidelines must be submitted in accordance with the procedures for submitting requests for exceptions.

**May Centers convert employees from these programs, Cooperative Education Program (COOP) (or other Student Career Employment Program positions), Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP), or Presidential Management Fellows Program (PMF), to permanent and/or term positions?**

Yes. Note that in the case of the FCIP and PMF, the Center must advertise the term opportunity, as these programs do not provide for a non-competitive conversion opportunity to a term appointment.

**May Centers continue to hire under the COOP, FCIP, and PMF programs?**

Yes

**Does the new policy impact internal career promotions or accretions?**

No, these hiring restrictions do not impact career promotions or accretions.

**Can Centers continue to hire temporary or term employees? Can they extend current temporary or term employees or convert them to new temporary or term appointments?**

Centers can make new temporary or term appointments, extend existing temporary or term appointments, or convert such employees to new term or temporary appointments as long as the not-to-exceed date is no later than August 6, 2006. If the proposed appointment has a NTE date later than August 6, 2006, an approved exception is required. There is one general exception to these guidelines: A permanent employee from ARC, DFRC, GRC, LaRC, or MSFC may be converted to a term or temporary position at GSFC, JSC, KSC, SSC, and HQ without regard to the NTE date.

**If an employee from ARC, DFRC, GRC, LaRC, or MSFC is referred for a vacancy at GSFC, JSC, KSC, SSC, and HQ, must the manager give priority consideration to the employee and select that employee?**

Priority consideration does not require the manager to select only employees from ARC, DFRC, GRC, LaRC, or MSFC in filling vacancies. However, if an employee from one of those Centers applies for a position and is referred on the selection list as well qualified, that employee should be provided careful and full consideration. Managers are strongly encouraged to make every reasonable effort to select well qualified employees from the Centers facing uncovered capacity challenges.

## **Transformation Activities**

**new!** The words "training" or "retraining" seem to be missing from the NASA's workforce transformation plans. NASA Civil Servant personnel are highly educated, extremely talented and adaptable, and those whose work is being cut back will need only minimal retraining to be able to carry the new upcoming opportunities in space exploration. It is a much more effective solution then getting rid of them ,or sending the work to outside NASA, or hiring new people. Is retraining NASA employees part of the transformation agenda?

NASA Engineering Training, Program/Project Management and Leadership and Management Development curriculums are being revised to support the transformation and align to the new vision and program drivers. Additionally, training related to career transition assistance is part of the Agency's transformation plan, and a CTAP office will be opening at GRC shortly which will include counsel and assistance in identifying and providing or locating training and development to support career changes. Centers are provided resources to manage for developing and implementing employee and organizations development programs at the operating levels. This includes the joint responsibility of management and employees to assess current capabilities and plan for near- and long-term training and development that enhances performance and supports job requirements. Accordingly, GRC is developing retraining efforts as part of its transformation activities. The curriculum identified by the Engineering Training Committee was developed and prioritized specifically with the new vision and program direction in mind. Plans are underway to enhance systems engineering competencies at the Center as this competency will continue to be a growing need. In addition, we are focusing on business development knowledge and skill along with added emphasis on leadership development. As the future workforce competencies and requirements become more and more defined, training and development activities will continue to be provided that support the targeted competencies and the employees who move into new fields. Still, more work is needed to help identify and guide employees into new areas and to assure the training & development needed is identified and planned.

**What help will be available to support employees and managers through the transformation?**

### **GRC's Transformation Commitment**

- GRC is committed to providing employees the most current information available through postings to Today@Glenn, the official Center-wide communication mechanism, and the OHRWP website at: <http://www-dev.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/workforcetransformation/>
- FAQs will be updated throughout the transition accordingly.
- The Agency is awarding a contract for a one-year Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP); as a result, two full-time Career Counselors will be onsite, hopefully in the March, 2005 timeframe. They will provide counseling, training, resume assistance, job search information, and other needed career transition services.
- Specialists are available to consult with managers regarding opportunities to enhance organizational design, efficiency and flexibility, and well as to advise on optimal position management solutions
- Additional Resume Builder and Interviewing workshops will be offered.
- OD&T offers assistance in developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) which may include items such as cross training (learning to do part or all of a job outside of the scope of one's position), details (temporary assignment of an employee to a different position or set of duties for a specified period of time), shadowing opportunities (brief exposure to other jobs), and informational interviews. The plan may also include recommendations for course work or training to support employees in transitioning to other positions by gaining new skills.
- Workforce planning reports can provide information on anticipated competency needs.
- Information regarding position qualifications is available through the Operations Branch and at <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/sec-iii/a/num-ndx.htm>.
- Workshops, information sessions and coaching for managers will be provided regarding what to expect and how to talk with employees in order to effectively help their employees through transition.
- Continued support and integration with the goals of our culture change effort through workshops for employee/manager work groups that focus on managing transitions are planned for this summer. This will be especially helpful for organizations experiencing rapid change.
- Team Building workshops to improve effectiveness, communication and decision making of groups. This may be especially helpful for work groups experiencing confusion or disruption due to uncertainty during organizational transitions.
- Myers-Briggs workshops to improve teamwork, communications and appreciation of individual differences. This four to six hour presentation can be especially helpful to organizations during times of transformation. The Myers-Briggs indicator can be administered to an individual or an entire work team. The on-line indicator takes only about fifteen minutes to complete.
- Facilitation of and guidance for organizations that plan to restructure work units and positions due to workforce transformation, i.e. help in determining which organizational design and/or position functions may be best to meet each organization's needs.

- Continue to manage the Agency Human Capital transformation action for GRC, e.g. career fairs, buyouts, etc.
- Partner with other concerned organizations to deliver just-in-time training and assistance to employees regarding coping with stress, work life balance issues, and other transformation-related concerns.
- Provide consultation and advisory services to supervisors and senior management regarding employee relations and performance management issues resulting from transformation activities. This may include identifying strategic approaches to individual and systemic problems, developing options to resolve performance problems and employee relations issues, and providing the administrative and technical support necessary to take appropriate corrective actions.
- In partnership with Center management, develop strategies to address labor relations issues resulting from transformation activities, provide advice and assistance to management regarding resolution of labor relations matters (i.e., grievance, unfair labor practices, appeals) associated with the transformation and coordinate and manage transformation-related labor relations activities including information sharing, official notifications, and formal negotiations with the unions.

## **Retirement**

**I am in FERS and not old enough to receive my retirement annuity. If I took the buyout how will my annuity be impacted?**

If you are not eligible for an immediate annuity, you can resign and elect a deferred annuity. This would be payable when you reach retirement eligibility.

**If I am impacted by a RIF and left the government how will my annuity be impacted? Will I receive payments at my full retirement age? Will I be eligible for a reduced annuity?**

To answer the first part of your question, please see the answer above. Yes, you will receive payments at your full retirement age. On a deferred annuity, you must meet retirement eligibility requirements. For more specific answers, and counseling specific to your situation, please contact either Carol Mehallick (2507) or Terry Ross (8550) of OHRWP.

## **Miscellaneous**

**new!** Can you please elaborate on the Reemployment Priority List (RPL)? It seems to be something that would give "surplus" or "displaced" federal employees some slight advantage in seeking employment with other government agencies. I would like to know if all federal agencies are required to use this list. I also would like to know how I may get myself on such a list to further aid my efforts in seeking employment with other government agencies.

The Reemployment Priority List (RPL) is the mechanism an agency uses to provide reemployment consideration to former career and career-conditional employees the agency has separated because of (1) reduction in force, or (2) compensable injury or disability where recovery takes more than one year from the time the employee began receiving compensation. Each Agency keeps their own RPL listings. Only eligible former employees of the respective Agency can be entered on its' RPL listing. Therefore, you would not be considered eligible to apply to another Agency's RPL list. If interested in opportunities at other Federal agencies, visit the following web site for job postings: <http://www.usajobs.gov>

**One rumor regarding jobs at other centers is that the job would only be guaranteed for four years. However, after reading "transfer of function" regulations I see that if there is to be a reduction in work in the gaining organization employees coming in with the function have a right not only to compete among themselves for retention in the function, but also to compete with employees in the organization. In other words the gaining organization must treat the incoming employees as its own in a reduction in force. Thus it would seem to me that you are still have your rights under a reduction in force at the new place and a guarantee of four years of employment besides.**

We can't speak to employment plans at other centers, other than to say that if a career or career conditional GRC employee accepts a career or career conditional appointment at another center, there is no time limit to the appointment (as there would be, for example, if the employee accepted a term or temporary position) unless, of course, the position is abolished due to a RIF. At the moment we are not aware of any agency plan to implement a transfer of function--i.e., moving an entire function to another competitive area. But if there were a transfer of function, you are correct in that the employees that move with the function are part of the gaining organization for RIF purposes. However, in such a situation, keep in mind that there would be no "guarantee" of employment for any length of time.

**The continued outsourcing of many of our job functions here at GRC is beginning to make it very difficult for me to perform effectively. If my job function is being outsourced, it must mean that it is not vital to our agency's goals. Since I still want to continue to work for the government, can you tell me how I may be able to arrange for a transfer to another government agency where I may use my skills to better serve our country?**

For many years Glenn has contracted out non-inherently governmental functions in order to expand the ability of the Center to execute a growing mission. Although the functions contracted out were not inherently governmental in nature, many of the functions contracted out were then vital, and continue to remain vital, to the operations of the Center and the execution of our assigned mission. Clearly, the contracting out of a function has not been an indication of its importance, but a means for the Center to augment its workforce to accomplish its expanded mission objectives.



To search for other Federal job opportunities, check out OPM's USAJOBS website at: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> One of the features of this site is that you may establish profiles (e.g., by location, job type, agency, etc.) so that the system will send an electronic notification every time a job that meets your requirements is posted.

**In James Jennings's Workforce Transformation presentation that was on T@G on 2/17, the slide titled "Involuntary Workforce Realignment" said the date to identify effected positions would be by 2/28 which has now passed. It did say these dates were tentative. What is the current schedule to identify positions that are effected by the transformation? It also says that this entire activity requires 18 months. Please discuss this 18 month requirement.**

The 18 month requirement refers to the time it takes to prepare for a possible RIF, or involuntary workforce realignment. We are currently in the process of assessing the full implications of the FY06 budget on our workforce and resources. Part of this exercise will involve developing a new structure and identifying the remaining positions; only then will we be able to identify affected positions. Although we do know in a broad sense which project and program areas will likely be affected as a result of the current budget projections, we are not yet prepared to identify specific positions.

**Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) -- I have not yet heard of NASA say anything about these programs. What are they and wouldn't it be good to help civil servants make maximum use of these in our current situation?**

The Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) is a program to give priority placement consideration to displaced and surplus employees within an agency, within the commuting area, as well as eligible employees who apply for specific vacancies within the commuting area, and are determined by the agency to be well qualified.

The Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) is a program to give priority placement consideration to displaced employees who apply for vacancies at other agencies within the commuting area and are determined by the hiring agency to be well qualified.

**Why were the job fairs offered so early? It seems that things are being done in reverse order. Wouldn't it help one decide if he/she were a candidate for the job fair by knowing whether his/her job is on the chopping block? When will we be told what positions and how many of these positions are part of the magic 700 transitional number?**

The Center job fairs are a HQ initiative, and while we could not control the timing of them, we were grateful for the opportunity that they represent. We are still in the process

of assessing Center workload requirements and subsequent rebalancing requirements, and therefore are unable at this time to list specific positions potentially affected by the transformation.

**Are there any plans to bring in other governmental agencies ( DOD, DOE, FAA, etc.) to host a job fair here at Glenn that would include not only engineers, but technicians as well.**

It is our intention to host an additional job fair(s) that includes other governmental agencies as well as private sector employers. The Career Transition Assistance Center (CTAP), projected to open at GRC in April, 2005, will be assisting NASA Glenn in this effort.

**Is it possible to move to a part-time work schedule, and how would that affect my benefits?**

Part time work schedules are available, but they are dictated by the needs of the organization. That is, if the volume of the work would allow a part time schedule and the manager supports the change, it is worth exploring with your supervisor. Keep in mind that any schedule of less than 40 hours per week will affect certain benefits. For example, health insurance benefits are pro-rated based on the number of hours worked each week, so the employee pays a higher percentage toward their health benefits with anything less than a full-time (40 hour per week) schedule. Likewise, a part-time schedule will affect an employee's retirement annuity. Employees may contact either Terri Ross (3-8550) or Carol Mehallick (3-2507) of the OHRWP to better understand the impact to their benefits by switching to a part-time schedule.

**Has the Center ever considered job sharing, not between civil servants and SSC, but among each, that is civil servants share with civil servants and contractors with contractors for those employees who would consider working less hours, but enough to still retain benefits? Would this help reduce overhead costs and enable us to compete with other Centers? It seems to work well in private industry, although I have no statistics to prove results.**

Job sharing is a form of part-time employment in which the schedules of two or more part-time employees are arranged to cover the duties of a single full-time position. The Center has utilized job sharing in the past and is open to the use of the job sharing arrangements if it can meet the needs of the organization in addition to the needs of the employee. Because job sharing may not be an appropriate solution for every position and/or organization, employees are encouraged to work with their supervisors to determine whether job sharing opportunities exist within their organization, and to identify other employees who may be interested in such opportunities. Keep in mind that for civil servants, any schedule of less than 40 hours per week will affect certain benefits. For example, health insurance benefits are pro-rated based on the number of hours worked each week, so the employee pays a higher percentage toward their health benefits with anything less than a full-time (40 hour per week) schedule. Likewise, a part-time schedule will affect an employee's retirement annuity. Employees may contact either

Terri Ross (3-8550) or Carol Mehallick (3-2507) of the OHRWP to better understand the impact to their benefits by switching to a part-time schedule. Additional information on part-time and job sharing, including the impact to benefits, can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/pt-employ/pt01.htm>

**It has been said by a few who survived the Reduction in Force 30 years ago, that those that were eligible to retire and were part of the targeted positions pool, could not bump others that were less senior. In other words, those that were eligible to retire were the first to go. Is this still true in RIF procedures of today? Will there be some instructions on RIF procedures, so everyone can better understand their chances if the center did have to implement a RIF. If yes, when? Having a better understanding of this would certainly help us know whether to take the job fair seriously.**

In a RIF an employee's tenure group, veteran's preference, length of service and performance are all considered in determining assignment rights. So while there are several variables that affect which employees are actually released in a RIF, being retirement eligible, in and of itself, isn't one of those variables. The Office of Personnel Management's RIF regulations (5 CFR 351) outline employee assignment rights in a RIF. These regulations are fairly complex and are best understood with the assistance of those with Human Resources RIF expertise. In order to ensure employees have a clear understanding of the complicated RIF process, the Office of Human Resources and Workforce Planning is in the process of putting together information for employees and will sponsor a forum to explain the process and answer procedural questions.

**Could you please direct that a detailed presentation on the financial and fringe benefit merits of the various methods of separation for civil servants from the agency be made? For example, I believe that an involuntary separation includes a severance package that is capped at 1 year's salary rather than the \$25,000 cap on the incentive for a voluntary separation. I think that this presentation (whether a talk, a LINK Channel 13 video, web site, or whatever) should be made widely and repeatedly available so that all employees will have the greatest opportunity to receive the information in order to make informed choices.**

There will be a retirement seminar March 29 - 31, 2005, DEB Auditorium. Retirement options regarding CSRS, CSRS Offset, FERS, as well as involuntary separations and severance pay will be covered. This is timed to occur just prior to our next buyout. It will provide employees with pertinent information that can help them in making informed decisions.

**If the agency is serious about reducing the number of FTE's, why are we only considering reassignments to other NASA centers? If our human resource specialists can establish a means for me to transfer to a non-NASA agency that can make use of my skills, I would gladly leave. In fact, if I can be transferred to an agency that I would like to work for, I would even take a reduction in pay so that I may continue to serve our nation in a different capacity.**

NASA cannot control the hiring practices of other agencies, so although our HR Specialists can suggest other local Federal agencies to apply to, it is not possible for them to establish a means for a transfer. Ultimately, employees must take responsibility for searching for potential opportunities and applying for vacant positions for which they qualify. In case you aren't already familiar with it, OPM's USAJOBS website is a great resource for searching for available positions throughout the Federal government; that website can be found at: <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>

One of the features of this site is that you may establish profiles (e.g., by location, job type, agency, etc.) so that the system will send an electronic notification when a job that meets your requirements is posted.

**I've heard some talk about directed reassignments. When are they used? Would someone be able to displace another person at their Center? If so, under what criteria (e.g. tenure, grade, ratings)? What happens if an employee declines a directed reassignment?**

A reassignment is the change of an employee from one position to another, for which he or she qualifies, without promotion or change to lower grade. An agency may reassign an employee to any vacant position for which the employee is qualified. A directed reassignment is a reassignment directed by management, normally used when other placement options are not available or when the employee's skills or expertise is needed in a specific job. A directed reassignment can be made either within or outside the local commuting area. An employee who does not accept a directed reassignment may retire (if eligible), resign, or be separated under adverse action procedures. Reassignments are not subject to reduction in force procedures as long as employees are not involuntarily reduced in grade or the reassignment does not displace another employee. There is no requirement in OPM's regulations that directed reassignments must be made on the basis of the four reduction in force retention factors (i.e., tenure, veterans' preference, length of service, and performance ratings). Currently, GRC does not intend to consider retention standing in carrying out reassignments.

**Are "rolling furloughs" being considered for GRC?**

While this is an available management option, rolling furloughs are not currently being considered for GRC civil servants.

**Does the NASA Flexibility Act permit the use of larger buy-out incentives and will such incentives be used to address our Glenn workforce imbalance?**

The NASA Flexibility Act of 2004 does not cover the use of buyout incentives. NASA has no authority to offer more than a \$25,000 voluntary separation incentive (buyout), nor do we expect to have such authority in the foreseeable future.

## **Buyouts**

**With pending buyout in the middle of the year (2005) will there be another buyout at the end of 2005 so employees can take advantage of the tax breaks that one gets by retiring at the end of the year?**

We certainly do not expect another buyout in this fiscal year. In fact, there is currently no plan to offer another buyout. The agency plan once the current buyout window is complete is to rebalance the workforce first via voluntary reassignments, then involuntary (or directed) reassignments, and finally, as a last resort if target FTEs are not met, to conduct a reduction in force (RIF).

**What is a "Category Two Buyout"? Discontinuous Service retirement ( Chp.15 benefits handbook), also known as 'job abolishment', how does it work? Is it separate from a RIF? What rules apply?**

Category 2 buyouts may be offered to employees in a competency not identified as a surplus in the buyout plan, who volunteer to take a buyout to create a placement for an employee occupying a position whose competency has been identified as surplus. The Category 2 buyout is contingent on the placement of the employee from the surplus competency.

We believe that the second part of your question refers to a Discontinued Service Retirement due to involuntary separation. The term "involuntary separation" means any separation against the will and without the consent of the employee, other than "for cause" for misconduct or delinquency. The most common cause of an involuntary separation is a reduction in force. Employees who decline reasonable offers of other positions are not eligible for discontinued service annuities. A "reasonable offer" is defined as the offer of another position in your agency and commuting area for which you are qualified and which is no more than two grades or pay levels below your current grade or pay level. "Commuting area" means the geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center (or two or more neighboring ones) and the surrounding localities in which people live and reasonably can be expected to travel back and forth daily in their usual employment. If your agency makes you an offer of reassignment to another position at the same grade and pay in the same commuting area or to another position no more than two grades below your current position and you choose to decline such an offer and resign, you will not qualify for discontinued service retirement. In addition, if your agency separates you by adverse action procedures for not complying with the directed reassignment order, your separation would not be qualifying for discontinued service. If you are involuntarily separated, other than for misconduct or delinquency, and you have at least 25 years of service or are at least age 50 with as much as 20 years of service, you will be entitled to an immediate annuity.

### **Are there any restrictions on who can receive a buyout?**

Yes. The law specifies that you are not eligible to receive a buyout if you:

- Do not meet the requirements outlined by your Center in the application guidelines;
- Are a re-employed annuitant; or serving under an appointment with a time limitation;
- Have a disability on the basis of which you would be eligible for a disability retirement;
- Have not been on-board with the Federal Government without a break in service for 3 continuous years;
- Are in receipt of a specific notice of involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance;
- Have received a buyout before;
- Are covered by statutory reemployment rights from another organization;
- During the 24 months preceding separation you performed service for which a recruitment or relocation bonus was or is to be paid; or,
- During the 12 months preceding separation you performed service for which a retention bonus (or allowance) was or is to be paid.

### **Do we also have voluntary early retirement authority (VERA, or early out)?**

Yes, NASA received VERA authority for the same group of positions/competencies as the buyout.

### **Each Center and Headquarters has been given a “target” number for buyouts. What is the basis for this number?**

The number is based on a projection of separations against the retirement-eligible population.

### **What if more employees sign up in a particular category than the Center has allowed in its plan?**

In such cases, an objective “tie-breaker” will be used. The most common is the Federal service computation date (years of Federal service) or the NASA service computation date.

### **Why did NASA request buyout authority?**

The Agency is transforming both its organizational structure and its workforce composition, in response to a number of factors. A shift in the future mission focus of the Agency also is having its impact on the composition of the workforce. Some program areas have decreased in emphasis, while others have been added or increased in emphasis to align strategically with major program and mission needs.

NASA performed a comprehensive workforce review that began in early 2003, and

continues to evolve today. With the help of NASA's Competency Management System (CMS), managers determine what skills they will need to staff missions and programs, analyze skills inherent in the workforce, and determine where there may be gaps. This process allows managers to rebalance where needed, and plan for future staffing needs.

As a result of these changing emphases and the process of reorganization and skills-gap analysis, NASA has identified numerous excess competency areas, as well as a need to acquire different skills in a number of areas. The effort to rebalance these skills will take a number of forms, including natural attrition, retraining, realigning or redistributing work, and reassignments both within and across organizations. Buyouts are needed to help the Agency to staff its workforce with individuals with competencies aligned to its mission needs.

### **What Centers have buyout authority?**

NASA requested buyout authority Agencywide for two categories of buyouts. Category 1 buyouts may be offered to employees in positions whose competency has been identified as surplus. This category allows managers to rebalance their skills by creating hiring opportunities or to address a reduced need for certain competencies. Jobs vacated by employees taking category 1 buyouts will not be refilled in the same competency area. Ames, Dryden, Langley, Glenn, and Marshall offered this type of buyout late in 2004.

Category 2 buyouts may be offered to employees who volunteer to take a buyout to create a placement for an employee occupying a position whose competency has been identified as surplus. The buyout is contingent on the placement of the employee in the surplus competency. For example, a Goddard employee takes a buyout, and her job is filled by an employee from Marshall whose competency area has been identified as excess.

The first round of buyouts at the five Centers mentioned above did not yield sufficient separations to address the skills imbalances. Therefore, an expanded buyout program will occur in 2005 that will involve all Centers and Headquarters.

### **If NASA is serious about getting employees to take buyouts, why don't we just open it up to everyone who is willing to leave?**

On the surface that sounds like a good idea, and certainly would be the simplest method. However, there are several reasons why NASA cannot take that approach. First of all, the current law, which specifies that buyouts are intended for reshaping (not downsizing) an agency's workforce, requires buyouts to be targeted to positions being eliminated or reduced, as identified by organizational unit, geographic location, occupational series, grade level, and other objective factors. Opening the incentive to all interested employees would not meet the legal requirement. Secondly, we need to be careful about inadvertently creating further skills imbalances. For example, a Center may lose a number of key engineers through a non-restricted buyout offer, forcing managers to seek replacements. That is why managers are asked to specify a limit to the number of

buyouts that may occur within each competency group, and to consider carefully whether they can afford to operate without those positions.

**Do I have to be retirement eligible to receive a buyout?**

The law does not require that you retire to receive a buyout. However, a Center has the discretion to limit the buyout opportunity to retirement eligibles, and if it does so, will announce that information to its workforce.

**How much will I receive if I take the buyout?**

The buyout calculation is based on the formula to compute severance pay. Essentially, it is a combination of years of service, age, and salary. The maximum one can receive is \$25,000 or the severance pay amount, whichever is less.

The amount of severance pay would be 1 week's basic pay for each of the first 10 years of your civilian service, plus 2 weeks' basic pay for each year over 10 years. An age adjustment allowance of 10% is added for each year you are over 40. (No credit is given for military service unless the service interrupted otherwise creditable civilian service and the employee returned to civilian service through the exercise of a legal restoration right.) Your human resources office can help you calculate the amount.

**I have heard rumors that the maximum buyout amount might be increased. Is this true?**

NASA has no authority to offer more than \$25,000, nor do we expect to have such authority in the foreseeable future.

**If I leave with an incentive payment, can I take a job in another Federal agency or with a contractor?**

If you have retired or resigned with an incentive payment, you must repay the entire amount of the incentive if you take a job for pay with the Federal Government within 5 years of your separation date. This repayment requirement covers any kind of employment (for example, permanent, temporary, expert, consultant, re-employed annuitant) as well as personal services contracts. In rare and extraordinary circumstances, waivers may be permitted by the Office of Personnel Management for Federal employment, but not for contractor employment. Refer to 5 USC Section 3524. Questions pertaining to employment with a contractor should be referred to GRC's Office of the Chief Counsel.

**If I don't take a buyout now, will I have another opportunity?**

Decisions on future buyout opportunities will depend on an analysis of the success of the current buyout program and any additional need to rebalance or reduce competencies. There is no guarantee that the same competencies would be identified if additional



buyouts are offered, or that the same Centers would offer the incentive.

**If GRC doesn't get enough people to sign up for the buyouts, what happens then?**

There will be another workforce assessment to determine what additional steps are called for to rebalance the Agency workforce.

**I would like to take the buyout, but I don't want to leave until summer. Can I sign up now and leave later, and still receive a buyout?**

GRC will establish the required separation window. Employees do not have the option to set a later date to separate with a buyout. "Category 1" buyouts after April 3 will be rare and based on critical program needs, due to the cost implications of paying buyouts later in the fiscal year.

Although the buyout deadline is April 3 for Category 1 buyouts, employees may be eligible for early out during the remainder of the fiscal year.