



# ***NASA DESK GUIDE***

***on***

## ***The NASA Competitive Placement Plan for Positions GS-15 and Below (Including Trades and Labor Positions)***

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FOR THE CAREER PLACEMENT PLAN FOR POSITIONS GS-15 AND BELOW  
(INCLUDING TRADE AND LABOR POSITIONS)**

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## Preface

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NASA's implementation of the Federal Merit Promotion Program consists of Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations in Part 335 of Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, NASA's Procedures and Guidelines (NPG) 3335, this desk guide and related Center supplements. The NASA Competitive Placement Plan (CCP), described in this desk guide, establishes minimum agency procedures for filling positions with current or former Federal employees with competitive status at and below the GS-15 level (including trades and labor positions) through competition and on the basis of merit.

Center Personnel Directors are responsible for publicizing its provisions (including changes as they occur) to current employees and to new employees upon entrance on duty. The location and availability of this document for review and reference will be posted where information about competitive opportunities is publicized to employees.

Unless specifically limited, all responsibilities set forth in this plan for a Center Personnel Director may be administered wholly or in part by the Personnel Director's designee.

As provided in Section 701 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978(PL95-454) and 5 U.S.C. 7135, negotiated agreements which contain procedures which differ from the provisions of this plan remain in effect until renegotiated, except where such agreements are specifically superseded by law or applicable regulation. With the exception cited above, any NASA or Center directive in conflict with the provisions of NPG 3335, as amended, is superseded.

## CHAPTER 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS

### 100. PURPOSE

1. This Plan provides the framework for selection based on merit from among the best qualified candidates available.
2. Selections will be made without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or nonaffiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, nondisqualifying disability, or age.
3. This Plan does not guarantee promotion but rather ensures that all qualified available candidates receive fair and equitable consideration for positions filled under these competitive procedures.
4. Announcing a vacancy under this Plan is only one method of locating applicants for a position and can be used in conjunction with other methods. Subject to applicable law and regulation, selection of an individual to fill a position is the decision of management, as is the decision as to the method(s) to be used in identifying candidates.

### 101. COVERAGE

This Plan is applicable to all NASA Centers. It covers all positions in the competitive service at (and below) the GS/GM 15 level (including all trades and labor positions), except positions in the Office of the Inspector General. The requirements herein are not intended to, nor should they be construed to limit in any way, the independent personnel authority of the Inspector General under the Inspector General Act, as Amended.

### 102. BILATERAL CONSULTATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Negotiated labor agreements and other local policy issuances may augment but cannot remove or replace the minimum provisions of the law.

## CHAPTER 2: COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES

### 200. WHEN COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES MUST BE USED

Competitive procedures must be applied in selections for all of the following actions and all other promotions not specifically excluded in paragraph 201:

1. All term and temporary promotions over 120 days. In computing the 120 days, prior service under all details to higher graded positions or temporary promotions during the

preceding 12 months is included. If appropriate, the option to make these promotions permanent without additional competition must be in the announcement.

2. Details of more than 120 days to a higher grade position or to a position with greater promotion Potential. If appropriate, the option of extending the detail without additional competition must be stated in the announcement.
3. Training which is required for promotion.
4. Reassignment, or change to lower grade to a nontemporary position with more promotion potential than a nontemporary position previously held (except when permitted by reduction in force regulations).

#### 201. WHEN THE COMPETITIVE PROCEDURES OF THIS PLAN ARE NOT REQUIRED

1. Promotion resulting from reclassification of a position (without significant change in duties and responsibilities) on the basis of either issuance of a new classification standard or the correction of a classification error.
2. A position change permitted by reduction in force regulations.
3. Any action, including a promotion, directed by an individual or organization with authority which supersedes this Plan. These include but are not limited to actions as a result of discrimination complaint decisions, court decisions, or arbitrators' decisions.
4. A career promotion, when:
  - a. The employee's position is reclassified because of additional duties and responsibilities; or
  - b. Competition was held at an earlier stage (e.g., Office of Personnel Management (OPM) register, NASA Competitive Placement Plan, or other approved competitive processes such as "Direct Hire" or "Delegated Examining" authorities) and the promotion is to a grade at or below the full performance level of the position; or
  - c. Promotion following noncompetitive conversion of a Cooperative Education student, a Veteran's Readjustment Act (VRA) appointee, or other such authorized actions.
5. Selection of current or former Federal employees from another competitive staffing authority, such as "Direct Hire."
6. Movement from a position having promotion potential to a position having the same (or lower) potential.
7. Temporary promotions for periods of 120 days or fewer.

8. Details for 120 days or fewer to higher graded positions or positions with promotion potential.
9. Repromotion, transfer, or reinstatement up to the highest grade previously held on a permanent basis under a career or career conditional appointment, unless demoted for personal cause or unacceptable performance.
10. Selection of a candidate from the Reemployment Priority List.

## 202. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Special Consideration for Repromotion or Reassignment
  - a. Employees who have been demoted in NASA without personal cause are entitled to special consideration for repromotion or reassignment.
  - b. This special consideration applies to positions at the employee's former grade or any intervening grades which are to be filled under the Plan.
  - c. The right to special consideration does not apply to any position with a projected promotion potential higher than the retained grade or the grade held at the time the change to lower grade was effected.
  - d. This special consideration is to be given at the Center where the employee was demoted and is currently employed.
  - e. The entitlement to special consideration will begin as of the effective date of the action on which the eligibility is based and will continue for a 2 year period, unless the employee declines a reasonable offer of a position as defined in OPM regulations. If an employee accepts an equivalent position within the 2 year period, eligibility ends with the effective date of the action.
2. Correction of Procedural Error
  - a. An employee who was not afforded proper consideration due to a procedural error in a previous competitive placement action must be given priority consideration for the next appropriate (i.e., similar) vacancy filled under this Plan. "Appropriate vacancy" is defined in Appendix C.
  - b. Priority consideration means that the employee must be referred to the selecting official for consideration before other candidates are considered under these competitive procedures. If selected on the basis of the priority consideration, the employee may be promoted or reassigned as an exception to the competitive procedures of this Plan.

- c. When an employee is referred for priority consideration but is not selected, this decision must be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.

### 203. AREA OF CONSIDERATION

1. The minimum area of consideration for positions advertised under this Plan will be "Center wide", unless otherwise specified in the announcement. A basis for a decision to use a smaller minimum area must be documented in the Competitive Placement Record.
2. When the minimum area of consideration fails to identify sufficient high quality candidates, the area may be extended.

### 204. RELOCATION EXPENSE

A statement concerning payment or nonpayment of relocation allowances must be included in the announcement if the area of consideration extends beyond the local commuting area.

### 205. POSTING OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

For positions to be filled under the Plan, a written announcement must be posted in a publicized location available to Center employees. As a minimum, the information in Appendix B must be provided.

### 206. APPLICATION PERIOD

1. Specific Vacancies
  - a. Announcements for vacancies with an area of consideration limited to a single Center or component of a single Center shall remain open for at least 6 workdays. When the area of consideration includes more than one Center, vacancy announcements shall remain open for at least 11 workdays.
  - b. When the area of consideration includes more than one Center, the Center advertising the vacancy is responsible for transmitting (for arrival no later than the opening date of the announcement) a legible copy of the announcement to other NASA Center personnel offices within the area of consideration. As a minimum, this announcement must be available at one location at each Installation within the area, and employees must be advised at least annually where vacancy announcements for other Centers can be reviewed.
2. Recurring Vacancies. Vacancy announcements without specific closing dates may be used to advertise recurring vacancies, provided they are reissued at least annually. All employees who file under such announcements will be automatically considered for all covered vacancies.



3. Like Vacancies. A selection certificate may be reissued to fill like vacancies (same title, series, grade, promotion potential, duty location, and essentially similar duties and knowledge, skills, and abilities [KSA's]) if the selection(s) can be made within 120 days of issuance of the original certificate.

## 207. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

### 1. General Procedures

- i. An OF-612, resume, or SF-171 are the typical application forms. This does not, however, prohibit the Center from requiring supplementary information or developing an alternative to the typical forms identified above.
- ii. In addition to the application form, applicants should submit their performance rating of record.

### 2. Acceptance of Applications

- i. Application material must be received by the close of business on the date specified in the announcement at the address shown in the announcement. Applications postmarked no later than the closing date can be considered timely if permitted by local Center procedures.
- ii. The Center Personnel Officer (or designee) may grant an extension of the application deadline if circumstances warrant. All applicants who are known to be in like circumstances must be granted the extension. All decisions to extend the date must be documented in the Competitive Placement Plan (CPP) record.
- iii. It is the applicants' obligation to present their qualifications for the position. Individuals who submit some, but not all, required material may continue to be considered as formal applicants if permitted by local Installation procedures. However, missing or incomplete information could result in ineligibility, a lower evaluation, rating or ranking, or disqualification.

### 3. Supervisory Referrals

- i. As part of their career development responsibility, supervisors may refer employees as candidates for positions announced under the Plan. These referrals will not, however, be used as the sole method of soliciting candidates. Supervisory referrals must be made by the closing date.
- ii. Upon an employee's written request, the supervisor must submit the employee's name (and any application material provided by the employee) for appropriate vacancies announced during an employee's absence.

## 208. CONCURRENT CONSIDERATION OF OUTSIDE APPLICANTS

1. Applicants who are eligible for transfer or reinstatement may, at the option of the Center, be given concurrent consideration with NASA employees under this Plan. Such applicants may be evaluated using the same criteria as NASA employees and may compete with NASA employees for consideration.
2. Applicants who are not transfer or reinstatement eligibles do not compete under the provisions of this Plan.

## 209. DETERMINING BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

1. The minimum qualification standards prescribed or approved by the OPM (including any required written tests and selective factors) will be used to determine basic eligibility of candidates for competitive consideration. These standards are available in the Center Personnel Office for review by candidates.
2. Selective Factors. Selective factors (i.e., KSA's essential for satisfactory performance in the position to be filled) are part of the minimum qualifications standards. Justification for use of selective factors will be recorded in the competitive placement record. Vacancy announcements will identify the minimum qualifications standards (including selective factors).
3. Legal and Regulatory Requirements. Applicants must meet time in grade and time after competitive appointment requirements by the closing date of the vacancy announcement to be eligible for promotion (including temporary promotion).

## 210. EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES

1. General Information
  - i. Candidates eligible for noncompetitive selection need not be rated or referred under this Plan, but may be referred separately, outside of competitive procedures, to the selecting official.
  - ii. Selections made under this Plan will be made from among the best available qualified candidates based upon job related evaluation criteria.
2. Methods of Evaluation
  - i. The KSA's used in evaluating candidates for competitive placement will be identified on the basis of a job analysis and must be supported by the position description.

- ii. The KSA's and the rating schedule must be developed jointly by the Center Personnel Officer and the selecting official (or their designees). The KSA's, including the identification of any KSA's that are "more important," must be included in the vacancy announcement.
- iii. The degree to which applicants possess the KSA's will be determined through an evaluation of pertinent information such as experience, education and training, awards, and appraisals of performance.

### 3. Ranking and Selection

- i. The ranking process is intended to identify the relative degree to which applicants possess the specified KSA's. The Personnel Officer (or designee), after consultation with the selecting official, may waive the normal ranking process if there are 10 or fewer qualified applicants at a given grade level. In such cases, the qualified applicants will be further screened against job related criteria to distinguish well qualified candidates. All well qualified candidates will be placed on the certificate.
- ii. When ranking is performed, applicants who meet the minimum qualifications of the position will be rated on either a numerical scale (e.g., ..88,89,90..), a nominal scale (e.g., Qualified, Highly Qualified, Exceptionally Qualified), or any scale specified by the Center. The rating process must measure all applicants against the same job related criteria (i.e., KSA's).
- iii. Once applicants are rated, they will be ranked in order. The rater (or rating panel,) will determine the point in this order above which all candidates will be referred. This will be the point at which the rater(s) will find some meaningful distinction between the candidates above and below that point. (NOTE: No selecting official or applicant for a given vacancy may serve as a panel member for that position.)

### 211. COMPETITIVE PLACEMENT CERTIFICATES

Candidates will be listed on the certificate in alphabetical order. Any employee listed on the certificate is eligible for selection. If no selection has been made within 90 days of the date the certificate was issued, the certificate will be canceled unless a 30 day extension is approved by the Personnel Officer (or designee).

### 212. INTERVIEWS

Interviews (including telephone interviews) of some or all of the candidates may be conducted by the selecting official and/or designee(s).

## 213. RELEASE

The Center Personnel Officer will arrange for the expeditious release of the selectee from his or her current position.

## 214. TIMELINESS

Each Center will determine appropriate procedures to ensure the timeliness of all activities associated with this Plan.

# CHAPTER 3: OTHER PROVISIONS

## 300. INFORMATION TO CANDIDATES

1. Applicants will be promptly notified of the status of their application.
2. Upon specific request to the Personnel Office, any applicant (or properly designated representative) considered for a vacancy under NASA Competitive Placement procedures will be furnished:
  - a. The name of the individual selected;
  - b. Whether the applicant was found to be qualified; and
  - c. Whether the applicant's name was on the certificate from which selection was made.

## 301. EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS OR GRIEVANCES

1. If an employee has a question or complaint about the Competitive Placement Plan or a specific competitive action, it should first be discussed with the Center's Personnel Office.
2. Formal grievances concerning Competitive Placement Plan actions will be processed through the NASA Grievance System or other grievance procedures negotiated with recognized bargaining units, as appropriate.
3. Not being selected from a properly ranked certificate is not a sufficient basis for a Grievance.

## CHAPTER 4: RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

### 400. PERSONNEL OFFICERS

1. The Center Personnel Officer and his or her staff are responsible for implementing and administering this Competitive Placement Plan. Unless expressly prohibited, all authorities and responsibilities vested by this Plan in the Personnel Officer may be delegated by the Personnel Officer.
2. Specific responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. Determining the minimum area of consideration, approving job analysis (including selective factors), participating in the development of rating schedules, and publicizing vacancies within the area of consideration.
  - b. Screening applicants and evaluating their qualifications in accordance with this Plan.
  - c. Appointing raters, advising them of their duties and responsibilities, and participating in the evaluation and ranking of candidates.
  - d. Ensuring that selections are made in accordance with this Plan and documented as required.
  - e. Establishing and maintaining necessary files and records.
  - f. Ensuring that applicants are notified promptly of the outcome of the consideration accorded them.
  - g. Ensuring that repromotion and special placement eligibles are properly considered.
  - h. Ensuring that any employee not afforded proper consideration in a competitive action is given priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy.
  - i. Keeping employees informed of the provisions of the Plan and providing specific information on these provisions at least annually.

#### 401. SUPERVISORS

Supervisors are responsible for the following:

1. Anticipating personnel needs and, if the position is to be filled through competitive procedures, initiating action in sufficient time to allow for proper selection in accordance with this Plan.
2. Serving as raters.
3. Releasing subordinates to serve as raters.
4. Identifying and providing documented justification for the use of selective factors (and other KSA's) and their relative importance in the evaluation process.
5. Making selections from certificates.
6. Ensuring that subordinates are considered for advancement opportunities arising during their temporary absences on leave, travel, detail, or in training, when such assistance is requested in writing by the subordinate.
7. Ensuring that employees temporarily absent for military service, service with public international organizations, on workers' compensation, or on Intergovernmental Personnel Act assignments are properly accorded advancement consideration.

#### 402. EMPLOYEES

Employees are responsible for the following:

1. Being aware of the provisions of the Plan and complying with its requirements.
2. Properly presenting their qualifications for positions for which the employee chooses to apply.
3. Advising their supervisor in writing, if they wish to be considered for appropriate vacancies which may occur during their temporary absence while on leave, travel, detail, or training.
4. Serving as raters when called upon.

## APPENDIX A

### INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR COMPETITIVE PLACEMENT PLAN RECORDS

As a minimum, the following information is to be maintained for each Competitive Placement Plan action for a period of 2 years from the closing date of the action or until after the Center's CPP program has been evaluated by the OPM, whichever comes first. Closing date means the effective date of the resulting personnel action or the cancellation of the CPP action. In the case of a complaint of discrimination, grievance, etc., the CPP record becomes a part of the complaint or other appropriate file and its destruction or scheduled disposal is modified accordingly.

1. A description of the position.
2. The vacancy announcement.
3. Identification of repromotion, special placement consideration and/or other required priority considerations.
4. Qualification standard(s) used (by reference) and justification for any selective factors.
5. A description of the job analysis process that was used to identify the KSA's, and the names and titles of those participating in it.
6. A listing of the KSA's (and their relative importance) and a description of the way in which these were used to evaluate candidates.
7. The documents used in evaluating candidates.
8. Names and titles of those responsible for evaluating candidates.
9. Names of the applicants as they appeared in the final ranking.
10. The selection certificate(s).
11. Names of those selected.
12. Any other information necessary to completely reconstruct the action.

## APPENDIX B

### INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN NASA COMPETITIVE PLACEMENT PLAN ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.
2. OPENING DATE.
3. CLOSING DATE.
4. AREA OF CONSIDERATION. When the area of consideration is beyond the local commuting area, a statement concerning payment or nonpayment of relocation allowances must be included in the announcement.
5. POSITION (TITLE, SERIES, AND GRADE).
6. DUTY LOCATION.
7. PROMOTION POTENTIAL.
8. DUTIES (including all major job requirements).
9. QUALIFICATION STANDARDS. Qualification standards (including selective factors) that will be used to identify which applicants are at least minimally qualified. The announcement must also state where the standards are available for review.
10. KNOWLEDGES. SKILLS. ABILITIES (KSA's). Factors that will be used to rate applicants for the position and, when applicable, the relative importance of those KSA's.
11. APPLICATION PROCEDURES.
12. EVALUATION. Information concerning the methods used in evaluating and ranking candidates for this position or where this information can be found.
13. NONDISCRIMINATION. A statement concerning selection based on merit without regard to prohibited personnel practices, such as: selection for this position will be made without regard to political, religious, or labor organization affiliation or non affiliation, marital status, race, color, sex, national origin, non disqualifying disability, or age.
14. TESTING DESIGNATED POSITION. If the position is "test designated" according to the Agency's plan for a drug free workplace, that information must be stated on the announcement.



## APPENDIX C

### DEFINITIONS

1. Area of Consideration. The organizational and/or geographical area within which an intensive search is made and qualified candidates are considered.
2. Promotion. The change of an employee to a position:
  - a. At a higher grade level within the same job classification system and pay schedule;  
OR
  - b. With a higher rate of basic pay in a different job classification system and pay schedule.
3. Position with Promotion Potential. A position from which a career promotion may be made because adequate competition was held at an earlier stage. These include, among others:
  - a. Apprentice positions;
  - b. Career ladder positions;
  - c. Trainee positions;
  - d. Understudy positions;
  - e. Positions filled at a grade level below the established or anticipated grade. The target position or full performance level of the position being filled must be documented.
4. Minimally Qualified Candidates. Those who meet the Office of Personnel Management's qualification standards and any selective factors applicable to the position.
5. Screening. The process of identifying those candidates who meet minimum qualification, legal, and regulatory requirements for the position to be filled.
6. Evaluation. The process of assessing the degree to which each applicant possesses the knowledges, skills, and abilities essential for satisfactory performance in the position.
7. Rating. The end product of evaluation. A rating is indicative of the degree to which the candidate's qualifications meet the KSA's identified in the vacancy announcement.

8. **Ranking.** The process of arranging eligible candidates in order of rating scores or relative standing.
9. **Best Available Candidates.** Those who are referred to the selecting official on a competitive placement certificate.
10. **Competitive Placement Certificate.** A list of the best available candidates identified through competitive placement procedures.
11. **Selecting Official.** A NASA employee with authority to select an individual for assignment to a position.
12. **Appropriate Vacancy For Priority Consideration to Correct Procedural Violations.** A vacancy to be filled through competitive placement procedures:
  - a. For which an employee meets the minimum qualifications requirements;
  - b. Which is in the same grade and in a similar, (although not necessarily identical) occupational group to the position for which the violation occurred;
  - c. Is in the same geographic area; and
  - d. Under the same appointing office as the position for which the employee was denied proper consideration.
13. **Job Analysis.** The systematic process of gathering, analyzing and documenting information about a position in order to determine minimum qualification requirements and identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be used in further evaluating qualified candidates.
14. **Competitive Placement Record.** A record, retained for 2 years, of the competitive placement plan action which contains sufficient information to allow reconstruction of an action.