

CARE FUNCTIONAL REVIEW

HUMAN RESOURCES

For information on the interpretation or clarification on the functional questions in this section, please contact Mary Weber (301) 504-1397.

4.0 Employment

- Verify the Location's procedures for receipt of applications. All applications should be either date stamped or the date of receipt of the application should be notated in ink.

Applications for permanent employment (competitive service): These applications must either be forwarded immediately to the servicing Branch, HRD, for response or the Location must return the application by letter informing the applicant to apply for permanent positions in response to specific vacancy announcements. These vacancies are advertised on the OPM web site (USAJobs) and HRD Web site. Verify that the Location does not retain any applications for permanent employment.

Applications for L/A and Student Positions (excepted service positions): If the AO has delegated employment authority, applications for L/A and student positions (nonpermanent positions in the excepted service) may be circulated. Verify that the Location gives "veterans preference," if applicable, to applicants.

Applications for Postdoctoral positions (excepted service positions): may be submitted to the scientist who is the mentor for the position and may be retained until a selection is made. Verify that the Location gives "veterans preference," if applicable, to applicants.

- Verify that the Location obtains proof of enrollment in school on a full-time or part-time basis from employees on student appointments.

This may be done by requesting a copy of transcripts each semester, or by requesting verification of enrollment through the registrar's office. Note: If a student stops going to school at least on a half-time basis as defined by the institution, the Location should initiate an SF-52 to terminate the appointment. [Reference P&P 413.8, Student & Volunteer Programs.]

If volunteers are used at the Location, verify they have a signed Volunteer Service Agreement on file and records of service are being maintained. This includes documentation of days and number of hours worked. [Reference P&P 413.8, Student & Volunteer Programs.]

Verify that HRD has approved the content of employment ads (paid and free) for recruitment. Purchase order files should contain the necessary approvals. [Reference P&P 412.0, ARS Job Advertisements – Print and Online, dated July 23, 2007.]

4.01 Time and Attendance (Ted Nykiel, 301-504-4426)

- Verify all employees (with the exception of intermittents who should not have a regular work schedule) have an established tour of duty approved by the supervisor (example REE-331).
- Verify employees and timekeepers are initialing and that supervisors are signing and dating each T&A, unless determined to be impracticable.
- Verify all credit and/or compensatory time is being recorded on T&A's. Credit hours are initiated by the employee versus compensatory time, which is ordered/required by the supervisor. Compensatory time cannot be forced on an employee earning less than GS-10, step 10 or if these employees are non-exempt from FLSA. These employees, however, may decide to accept compensatory time in lieu of overtime. If so, the statement on the bottom of time sheet should be initialed by both the employee and the supervisor.
- Verify that credit hours accrued (especially on Saturdays and Sundays) were worked on the employee's own initiative. If the work was assigned/ordered/directed/etc., by management, the hours worked must be recorded as overtime or compensatory time, not credit hours. See bullet item above.
- Review T&A information for leave used under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Sick Leave Usage for Family Care, Adoption and Bereavement as follows:
 - FMLA is an entitlement for up to 12 weeks of Leave Without Pay (LWOP) (annual and/or sick leave may be substituted as appropriate) during any 12 month period to care for a family member. LWOP is coded as Transaction Code (TC) 71 for processing and all time must be maintained in a cumulative manual or automated record.
 - Sick Leave for Family Care and Bereavement: Sick leave provision allows employees to use up to 480 hours of sick leave for serious medical conditions (prorated for part time employees) each leave year. TC 62 (sick leave used) with the prefix 62, Sick Leave for Family Care, is used for time and attendance processing. The Sick Leave for Family Care should also be identified by a Transaction Code Descriptor ("03 – General" for a non-serious medical condition and "04 – Extended" for a serious medical condition). A maximum of 104 hours of family sick leave can be used for

non-serious medical situations. The total amount of family sick leave, both serious, and non-serious combined, cannot exceed 480 hours in a leave year.

- Verify in the T&A records for callback overtime work situations. If an employee is called back to work unexpectedly for additional duty later in the workday or on a day that was not originally scheduled as a workday, overtime is credited for a minimum of 2 hours – whether 1 minute or 2 hours is actually worked. After the first 2 hours the individual would earn overtime for the number of hours actually worked. [Reference P&P 402.3, Premium Pay.]
- Verify that Transaction Code 32, with prefix 78 is used for compensatory time for travel earned. And Transaction Code 64, with prefix 78 is used for compensatory time for travel used.
- Verify that timekeepers are keeping track of employee's comp-time for travel. An employee has 26 pay periods to use or lose comp-time for travel. If not used within 26 pay periods the timekeeper must remove the unused comp-time travel hours, because Star-Web will not.
- Verify that timekeepers are keeping track of employee's regular comp-time. An employee has 26 pay periods to use or receive payment for comp-time. If not used within 26 pay periods the timekeeper must remove the unused comp-time from the T&A system and have the employee paid through an AD-581 (Lump Sum Payment).
- Check to see if any employees are listed on the STAR Web Leave Error Report. The timekeeper can provide the report showing the employees in leave error or a report indicating that no leave errors exist. If a leave error(s) exist, inform the timekeeper that an AD-717, Leave Audit (or electronic counterpart) must be completed to resolve the leave error. Note: Leave reconciliation/audits must be conducted when an employee has a discrepancy in leave balances between the NFC database and the STAR database.
- All Leave audits must be prepared from original documentation (Typically from the REE 331). To certify correctness of an audit, the audited employee's supervisor must sign and date the leave audit. The supervisor's signature on the leave audit certifies correctness of the audit consistent with their personal knowledge. Leave audits should also indicate the name of the audit preparer (normally the timekeeper) and her/his phone number. An accurate leave audit includes explanatory notes as necessary. Leave audits should start with pay period 01 or the first pay period of a new employee; through the last pay period which was paid/employee separates. Timekeepers may fax leave audits to the party responsible for making changes to the NFC database (TINQ function).
- Verify that certified T&A reports and their supporting documentation are being

retained for 6 years. [Reference NFC Procedures: Title I, Payroll/Personnel Manual, Chapter 7, Time Procedures, Section 1, Time and Attendance Instructions.]

- Verify with timekeepers and supervisors that changes in types of employment and work schedules are not made in the STAR Web T&A system unless a personnel action (SF-52) requesting the change has been processed.
- Review backup documents for T&A's such as ARS-331, Military or Court orders, Medical Certificates, and approvals to work overtime or earn compensatory time. Military and Court leave should only be used if documented with specific orders. Medical Certificates may be required if sick leave used exceeds 3 consecutive days or if otherwise required by the supervisor.
- In the event of an on-the-job injury or job-related illness, verify the timekeeper understands how to code the T&A. The day of the injury is coded TC-66. Work days missed after that would be coded TC-67 while the OWCP case is being processed.

4.02 Pay and Leave (Ted Nykiel, 301-504-4426)

- Review that employees and supervisors understand the differences between overtime, compensatory time in lieu of paid overtime (work required by management) and credit time (work initiated by the employee) as follows:

Overtime worked and compensatory time in lieu of paid overtime must: Exceed 8 hours in a day or 40 hours in a week; and

1. be officially ordered or approved (employees cannot approve their own overtime);
 2. be actually performed by an employee;
 3. be documented in writing and attached to the T&A log (REE-331).
- Credit hours are:
 - Hours worked in excess of an employee's basic work requirement.
 - The employee elects to work and the supervisor approves so as to vary the length of the workweek or a workday.
 - Must be earned before they can be used.
 - Cannot be earned on a holiday during the hours that correspond to the employee's regularly scheduled hours for that day.
 - Cannot be earned by SES or intermittent employees. [Reference P&P 402.3, Premium Pay, and P&P 402.1, Flexible Work Schedules.]
 - Verify that full time employees only earn 8 hours of administrative leave on a

holiday, even if they are scheduled for more than 8 hours on that day. Verify that part-time employees only earn administrative leave for the number of hours they are scheduled to work on the holiday, (not to exceed 8 hours.)

- Verify with supervisors that they know that advancing leave is at their discretion, it is not an employee entitlement. Advanced sick leave and advanced annual leave must be requested with justification. Advancing sick leave for an employee is limited to 240 hours. Note: Employees with NTE dates are eligible for advance annual or sick leave not-to-exceed the amount of annual or sick leave they will earn in the remaining period of employment. Advancing annual leave is limited to what an employee can earn back by the end of the leave year. If too much annual leave is advanced, the employee will not be paid for those extra hours.

4.03 Performance Management (Theresa Bailey, 301-504-1452, Reference the HRD Web site - topic "Performance Management")

Review the following for employees covered by the Agency appraisal program:

- Verify performance plans were put in place within 30 days of the beginning of the rating cycle or position change,
- Verify performance plans were signed by Rater and Reviewer prior to employees signature,
- Verify there are 3, but not more than 10 performance elements, of which one must be non-critical, but not all,
- Verify performance plans are accurate and relevant to the position,
- Verify performance plans include an alignment statement or otherwise indicate the Agency/organizational goals to which the employee contributes (i.e. ARS Strategic Plan goals, National Program or CRIS project goals, business plan goals or other organizational work plan goals),
- Verify performance plans include specific expectations or specific goals that contribute to the Agency/organizational goals listed,
- Verify a separate critical element addressing EEO/CR is included in each supervisor's performance plan. (Positions classified as supervisor usually include the term Supervisory, Supervisor, Manager, Officer, Director, or Administrator in the title.),
- Verify EEO/CR objectives are incorporated in a critical element (typically communications or customer service) in each non-supervisor's performance plan,
- Verify performance plans of supervisors include a critical element addressing

supervisory responsibilities and expectations. (May be a separate critical element or incorporated in a related critical element.),

- Verify performance plans include a health and safety element where job related or required by the Area,
- Verify Office of Scientific Quality Review (OSQR) objectives are addressed in Category 1 and Category 4 scientist performance plans,
- Verify performance plans are reviewed and approved by a person at a higher Organizational level than that of the Rating Official,
- Verify mid-year reviews are conducted and documented in a timely manner,
- Verify performance plans have been in place at least 90 days (from the date employee signed, after rater and reviewer) before an employee has been given a rating of record,
- Verify annual appraisals are reviewed and approved by a person at a higher organizational level than that of the Rating Official, and
- Verify ratings of record are being conducted and submitted within 60 days of the end of the rating cycle or within timeframes prescribed by the union/labor management agreement.

4.04 Awards (Mary Oxner, 301-504-1368, Reference the HRD Web site - topic “Awards”)

Review awards and hold discussions with Location employees for the following:

- Verify the incentive awards program (including Performance, Spot, Extra Effort, Time-Off, and Non-Monetary awards, and Quality Step Increases {QSIs}) is being used by the Location,
- Verify incentive awards are being initiated after an accomplishment or achievement has occurred,
- Verify true accomplishments and achievements are being recognized,
- Verify employee, managers, supervisors and team/groups are recognized for demonstrating superior equal employment opportunity accomplishments,
- Verify the ARS Delegation of Authority for approval of awards or any other Area approval policy is being followed,
- Verify written justifications are attached to AD-287-2 forms for all monetary awards, Time-Off awards, and QSIs. (Performance accomplishment reports

may be submitted in lieu of the written justification for Performance awards, QSIs, and Time-Off awards given for performance recognition.)

- Verify AD-287-2 forms are signed with two levels of approval. (Must have signatures of the Recommending Individual and the Approving Official.),
- Verify awards are approved at a management level higher than that of the Recommending Individual,
- Verify performance awards are being submitted within 60 days of the end of the rating cycle, and
- Verify through discussions with AO/employees: Is there a pattern in the approval of awards (same employees/higher graded always receiving awards)? Are top performing employees being recognized for their performance and for their accomplishments and achievements? Are there unusual differences in the amounts of awards among awardees?

4.05 Training (Kit Hoyle, 301 504-1470)

- Review a sampling of Individual Development Plans (IDPs), which are required by the Agency. Determine if the IDP is a joint effort on the part of the supervisor and employee and if it is updated annually. [Reference P&P 440.1, Employee Training and Development.]
- Review the employee orientation procedures followed at the Location. Reference P&P 412.2, Appointment and Orientation of New Employees and the New Employee Orientation Program Guide. Ensure that each orientation package includes:
 1. A copy of "Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch" and "Employee Responsibilities and Conduct"
 2. The USDA Handbook on "Workplace Violence Prevention and Response"
 3. A copy of the publication, "Handling Diversity in the Workplace."
 4. A copy of the publication, "Sexual Harassment"

Note: New researchers and research supervisors should be properly oriented to the Research Position Evaluation System (RPES). Verify they been instructed to bookmark the RPES Home Page (<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/rpes/>) and have reviewed the "Tips for First-Timers" section.

4.06 Position Description/Management (Tina Voglesong, 301-504-1407)

- Verify supervisors understand their responsibility for assigning work and for certifying to the accuracy of the position description. Do they know whom to call with questions on writing position descriptions, requesting desk audits, and on appeal procedures? [P&P 431.1, Position Management and Position Classification, 10/02/02]
- Verify the Locations are maintaining the official position description copies certified by Headquarters, and all employees have position descriptions that reflect current duties and responsibilities. Verify collateral duty statements contained in position descriptions when appropriate. [P&P 431.1, Position Management and Position Classification, 10/02/02]

4.07 Employee Relations (Employee Relations, Mary Byrd, 301-504-1418, Ethics, Sue Mutchler, 301-504-1442)

- Verify supervisors, managers and employees understand procedures for addressing conduct and performance issues. Supervisors and Research Leaders are delegated authority to take conduct and performance actions with the stipulation that the Location keeps the Area Office (AO) apprised of all actions.
- Verify the Location follows the USDA Supplemental Standards of Ethical Conduct regarding the prior approval requirement for outside employment or activities for those employees required to file either a public or confidential financial disclosure report (SF-278 or OGE Form 450). Employees seeking to engage in employment/activities for which advance approval is required shall submit form REE-101 to their immediate supervisor and REE Ethics Advisor for approval.
- Verify Ethics Advisor contacts (names and phone numbers) are either posted or readily available to all employees, and are updated at least annually.

4.08 Other

(Exit Clearance Procedures, Bill Duggan, 202-720-7638)
(Occupational Medical Surveillance Program, Ann Lucas, 301-504-1505)
(Telework, Tonya Morris, 301-504-1489)

- Determine if there are any problems with retirement/separation procedures. [Reference P&P 426.1, Employee Exit Clearance Procedures, October 22, 1998.] Specifically,

(1)Verify AD-581's for lump sum payments are forwarded for processing within 2 weeks of the employee's last day of work;

(2)Verify all separating employees are given an SF-8 and a copy of the separating employee's SF-52 is faxed to the Frick Company.

- Determine if the Occupational Medical Surveillance Program (OMSP) is being utilized at the Location? (Employee participation is not required but should be encouraged). Are OMSP results of employee medical examinations being forwarded to the Medical Review Officer (USPHS-DFOH) by the local provider? (P&P 235.0-ARS, ARS Occupational Medical Surveillance Program, April 3, 2002)
- Determine whether all active teleworkers at the location have current, approved agreements on file with the designated Area telework recordkeeper (i.e. Exhibit 1 of P&P 402.5, the REE Telework Program dated January 1, 2005.)