

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE OFFICE OF HUMAN  
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT WASHINGTON,  
D.C. 20250**

**PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO.5 I1-2**

**SUBJECT:** Team Leader Positions

This Bulletin transmits the Department's guidelines for establishing and classifying team leader positions. These guidelines supplement Office of Personnel Management (OPM) classification standards (e.g., *General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide* and *General Schedule Supervisory Guide*) but do not replace or modify the OPM standards. The Department guidelines are meant to be read and applied within the context of the OPM standards.

Agencies having bargaining units are reminded to meet any labor-management obligations that arise as a result of this Bulletin.

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Attachment

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**EXPIRATION DATE:** Retain Until Superseded

## TEAM LEADER POSITIONS

- **Purpose**

Federal agencies have sought to reduce supervisory layers in accordance with National Performance Review requirements. Many agencies have relied on an increased use of team-based organizational structures to achieve these reductions. To bring greater consistency to these various agency efforts, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) developed a new classification framework to clearly distinguish team leaders from supervisors. This Bulletin describes the Department's policies for the most important issues associated with the use of team leader positions.

- o **Background**

In the absence of an OPM framework, a variety of practices for establishing and classifying team leader positions were used in the different Federal agencies. In some extreme cases, true team leader positions were not established. Instead, current supervisors were given a working title of team leader but continued to perform some supervisory duties in order to retain the grade level established as a result of having supervisory responsibilities. The new OPM framework no longer permits this approach.

The new OPM framework makes a distinction between supervisory and team leader duties. Accordingly, properly classified positions are no longer treated as a supervisor for some purposes and a team leader for other purposes. Under the new OPM framework, agency managers and human resource specialists must determine the paramount purpose for which a position exists and must then treat the position consistently as either a team leader or a supervisor for all administrative purposes. Even if a position has been treated in the past as a team leader, it must be reclassified back to its original supervisory status if the incumbent continues to spend 25 per cent of his or her normal work effort on supervisory duties. In order to protect recent gains in the Department's supervisory ratios, Agencies should consider removing supervisory duties from positions now being called "team leader" and reassigning incumbent employees to new, properly classified team leader positions.

- **Departmental Policies for Team Leader Positions**

Labor Relations - Team leaders are not supervisors or management officials. Accordingly, team leader positions are usually included in bargaining units. Team leader positions should not be excluded from bargaining units unless exclusion is required by the labor relations guidelines found in 5 U.S.C. 7103 and the accompanying Federal Labor Relations Authority case law.

Pay Administration - Team leaders are not supervisors or executives and are not automatically exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). No team leader position should be designated as exempt from the FLSA unless the position fully meets exemption criteria described in 5 CFR 55 I, Subpart B.

Organization Design and Position Management - Team leader positions are permanent positions established as part of a conscious effort to reengineer work processes in order to empower front-line employees and eliminate supervisory layers.

A team leader position is not appropriate unless it is part of a team-based organizational structure in which managers have implemented significant changes in work processes and have reduced the number of supervisory positions. Managers should be counseled that requests to establish team leader positions need to be supported by evidence that work processes have been reengineered. Great care should be taken to avoid even the appearance that a team leader position is being established merely to address an individual pay issue or to reward a loyal employee.

Managers should be advised that all positions affected by a change to a team-based structure are subject to review and, if necessary, reclassification. OPM's classification policies (e.g., *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, *Classifier's Handbook*, and classification appeal decisions) make it clear that individual positions cannot be classified in a vacuum. Consistent and accurate classification can only occur if positions are evaluated in the full context of the employing organization. Establishment of a team-based organizational structure can affect the classification of other positions in the affected unit, supervisory and nonsupervisory alike. Both managers and classifiers must recognize and must address any possible negative effects on other positions before establishing or encumbering any new team leader positions.

Management officials should be cautioned that establishing very small teams (e.g., teams having only 3 or 4 members) can adversely affect the grades of team members by reducing their level of responsibility for classification purposes. Team members cannot generally receive higher levels of grade credit in situations where both supervisors and team leaders are available for assistance, even if such assistance is not routinely solicited. This is an especially important consideration where proposed teams would be composed of higher-graded employees (e.g., GS-12 and above).

Relation to Merit Principles - No employee may be promoted into a team leader position noncompetitively (e.g., based on an accretion of duties and responsibilities).

