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**Director for Human Resources Management and  
Chief Human Capital Officer**

**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

**HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BULLETIN #221, FY18**

**SUBJECT:** Delegated Examining (DE) Operations

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Upon release of this HR Bulletin

**EXPIRATION DATE:** Effective until canceled or superseded

**SUPERSEDES:** HR Bulletin #190, FY15, "Delegated Examining (DE) Operations," dated February 26, 2015

**BACKGROUND:** Under Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.) § 1104, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) delegated to the Department of Commerce (Department) the authority to conduct full delegated examining for Title 5 competitive service positions for all series and grade levels nationwide, except for Administrative Law Judges. (This authority was delegated under the Interagency Delegated Examining Agreement, DOC-1.)

The Department does not have authority to use the examining instruments developed by OPM for positions covered by Administrative Careers with America positions.

The memorandum from the Director for Human Resources Management and Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer (Director) dated February 4, 2011, grants all Principal Human Resources Managers (PHRMs) the authority to carry out the Department's Delegated Examining (DE) authority under the Interagency Delegated Examining Agreement, DOC-1 (DOC-1). Although the Director may decide which bureau or Servicing Human Resources Office (SHRO) carries out this authority and the extent to which the activity exercises it, the authority itself may not be re-delegated. All individuals involved in DE activities must comply with the requirements described in the current DOC-1 as well as the current installment of the OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH), "A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices." DOC-1 and the DEOH serve as the foundation for the delegated examining unit (DEU) evaluation program in the Department.

**PURPOSE:** This HR Bulletin provides DE policy and procedural guidance to SHROs and designated staff trained and certified to conduct DE operations authorized under DOC-1.

**COVERAGE:** The following bureaus and operating units are authorized to conduct DE activities for the Department under DOC-1:

- Department of Commerce Human Resources Operations Center (DOCHROC)  
Washington, D.C.
- Bureau of the Census (Census)  
Census Headquarters, Suitland, Maryland  
Census, National Processing Center, Jeffersonville, Indiana
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)  
NOAA Workforce Management Office (WFMO), Consulting Services Division (CSD)  
Silver Spring, Maryland
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), Gaithersburg, Maryland
- Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General (OIG), Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Alexandria, Virginia
- FirstNet
- Enterprise Services Center, Human Resources Services, Washington, D.C.

**POLICY:**

1. OPM DE Certification – All individuals responsible for conducting DE activities, including those conducting the annual audits, must have completed initial OPM DE certification training and be currently certified to perform this work.
2. OPM Online Recertification Training – At a minimum, 90 days before expiration of certification, a request for recertification training should be submitted to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), Office of Accountability (OA), attention DE Program Manager, who will update the Department’s accountability system and forward the request to OPM. Do not submit recertification requests directly to OPM. Once OPM receives a request from the OA DE Program Manager, OPM will establish a user account and issue training access and instructions electronically to each employee. Once this information is received, the training should be completed within 14 calendar days. Failure to maintain DE certification can jeopardize a bureau/operating unit’s authority to conduct DE operations under DOC-1.
3. DEU Updates and Changes – Inform the OHRM OA DE Program Manager when an employee is new to DE operational activities or no longer performs DE activities as a part of his/her official duties. This will allow the OA to keep the DE certification database up-to-date.

Notify the Director, OHRM, of changes in DE offices, including new DE offices, suspensions, terminations, etc. The OA Director will notify OPM.

4. Employee Conflict of Interest – When an employee, a subject matter expert (SME), an employee’s family members (see Title 5, U.S.C. § 3110(a)(3)), or a member of an employee’s household applies for a position that is being handled by the employee’s office, the employee/SME may not be involved in examining and certifying applicants for that position. Each SHRO conducting DE activities under DOC-1 must include in its policy or standard operating procedure (SOP) instructions for employees involved in

DE activities, including SMEs who intend to compete for an open announcement or participate in the development of assessment or ranking of candidates under DE. At a minimum, the policy/SOP should state that an employee must provide written notice to the SHRO designee when:

- The employee or SME intends to apply for a position that is being handled by the DE unit/office in which they work, or
  - The employee knows that a relative or a member of his or her household intends to apply for such a position.
5. Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) – Ensure clearances of CTAP and ICTAP procedures are compliant with the Departmental policy from HR Bulletin #153, FY12 “Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Plan (ICTAP) Evaluation and Clearance Process.” Retain written documentation to verify that CTAP and ICTAP clearance is conducted consistently and can be reconstructed by a third party.
  6. Veterans Preference Adjudication – Apply veterans' preference provisions of Title 5, U.S.C. including, but not limited to:
    - a. 5 U.S.C. § 3305 (competitive service; examinations; when held);
    - b. 5 U.S.C. § 3309 (preference eligibles; examinations; additional points for);
    - c. 5 U.S.C. § 3310 (preference eligibles; examinations; guards; elevator operators; messengers and custodians);
    - d. 5 U.S.C. § 3311 (preference eligibles; examinations; crediting experience);
    - e. 5 U.S.C. § 3312 (preference eligibles; physical qualifications; waivers);
    - f. 5 U.S.C. § 3313 (competitive service; registers of eligibles);
    - g. 5 U.S.C. § 3314 (registers; preference eligibles who resigned);
    - h. 5 U.S.C. § 3315 (registers; preference eligibles furloughed or separated);
    - i. 5 U.S.C. § 3316 (preference eligibles; reinstatement);
    - j. 5 U.S.C. § 3317 (competitive service; certification from registers);
    - k. 5 U.S.C. § 3318 (competitive service; selection from certificates); and
    - l. 5 U.S.C. § 3319 (preference eligibles; ranking under category rating procedures).
  7. Non-Competitive Appointment of Certain Military Spouses – Refer to Departmental policy in HR Bulletin #149, FY12 “Non-Competitive Appointment of Certain Military Spouses.”
  8. Request to Pass Over All Preference Eligibles – All requests to pass over a **less than 30 percent compensable disabled veteran (10-point preference eligible)** or an applicant with derived preference must be submitted to the Director, OHRM, for final approval before the preference eligible can be passed over. Requests to pass over a **30 percent or more compensable disabled veteran** must be submitted to the Director, OHRM, for preliminary approval; if approved, the Director will forward to OPM for final approval.

Only after the pass over of the preference eligible has received final approval from OPM may the 30 percent or more compensable disabled veteran be passed over. Please refer to Departmental policy in HR Bulletin #157, FY14 "Process for Requests to Pass Over All Preference for Competitive Service Positions and Excepted Service Positions Covered Under Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)."

9. Crediting Plan – Crediting plans must be based on reliable rating criteria that are fully documented by the appropriate job analyses and show a direct link to the competencies required for successful performance of the duties in the position description, NOT the performance plan. Each crediting plan should provide clear qualitative distinctions among the competency levels evaluated. In order to promote open and fair competition, please avoid restrictive certification requirements.
10. Advertising of Vacancies – Merit System Principles state that recruitment should be from qualified individuals after fair and open competition. In support of this, it is the Department's policy that Job Opportunity Announcements (JOAs) must remain open for a minimum of 7 calendar days. Waivers to the minimum posting requirement will not be granted. However, the open period may also be defined in terms of a specific number of applications received, with 50 being the minimum. This minimum posting period does not apply to positions filled under the Pathways Program authority, or for CTAP/ICTAP eligible only announcements.
11. Acceptance of Applications – A 10-point preference eligible may file a job application with an agency at any time. If the applicant is qualified for positions filled from a register, the agency must add the candidate to the register even if the register is closed to other applicants. If the applicant is qualified for positions filled through case examining, the application will be accepted and processed up until the time that the certificate is issued. Once the certificate is issued, only at the request of the selecting official will the certificate be amended to include applications from persons entitled to file late. If there is no immediate opening, the agency must retain the application in a special file for referral on certificates for future vacancies for up to three years. These scenarios are not all encompassing, the Office of Personnel Management's Delegated Examining Operations Handbook provides detailed instructions.

It is the policy of the Department to employ only U.S. citizens or persons owing permanent allegiance to the United States, except when qualified citizens are not available or when the services of a particular non-citizen are desired for a brief period because of his or her unusual qualifications or background. A non-citizen may only be employed after he or she has been determined not to be a risk to the Department, and only after the Department's Office of Security (OSY) has conducted a risk assessment. A request to employ a non-citizen must be submitted to the Director, OHRM, for approval. Once approved by the Director, the request must be vetted and approved by the OSY. Please refer to Departmental policy for additional guidance.

12. Four Points of Notification – Applicants who apply through USAJOBS must receive notification through USAJOBS at each of the following points during the application process:

- a. Application received or application incomplete;
- b. Minimum qualification requirement met or minimum qualification requirement not met;
- c. Referred or not referred; and
- d. Selected or not selected.

When all actions and determinations have been completed in the Hiring Management System, no applicant's status should be reflected as "New" within the staging area. SHROs must have a documented SOP in place that describes the process for meeting notification requirements for those applicants who apply using alternative methods.

13. Reconsideration of Ratings – SHROs should include in their SOP an applicant rating appeals process. Please reference HR Bulletin #131, FY11, "Application Acceptance and Processing."

Applicant Responsibility: The applicant's request should be made in writing and should indicate why the applicant believes the original decision is inaccurate.

SHRO Responsibilities:

- a. The office that made the original decision will conduct the review.
- b. A staff member other than the person who made the original decision must conduct the review.
- c. The office that made the original decision must develop a written response to the request with a full explanation of the reasons for the decision, without compromising the rating schedule.
- d. The office that made the original decision must issue a response to the applicant as soon as practicable (e.g., bureaus might consider establishing policy to respond within 30 days).

14. Auditing Certificates – This important accountability process certifies actions taken by hiring managers on returned Certificates of Eligibles are compliant with Department policy as well as legal and regulatory selection procedures. Certificates must be audited **prior to extending a tentative offer** to a selectee and must comply with Department policy and DEOH procedures. In an instance where the vacancy announcement has been cancelled but a certificate was issued, the certificate must still be audited. Certificates should be annotated to reflect candidate declinations or any failed-to-reply actions. Acceptable documentation from the hiring manager can be in the form of a signature on the actual certificate, an e-mail, an electronic signature, or a manager's statement on the system-generated e-mail to the servicing HR Specialist. All

declinations and withdrawals from consideration must be documented in the DE case file or in the Monster Government Solutions Hiring Management System.

15. New Application for 10-Point Veteran Preference Eligibles – In October 2013, OPM released the revised Standard Form 15 (SF-15), Application for 10-Point Veteran Preference. Signatures are no longer required; the form is now PDF-fillable; veterans may file for preference if they have documentation showing they are to be discharged under honorable conditions within 120 days. The SF-15 must be collected at appointment if not before.
16. Direct Hire Reporting and Processing Guidance – In accordance with Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 337.206(c), OHRM may request information from SHROs on the use and implementation of this direct-hire authority. In addition, SHROs must use two authority codes to document personnel actions using this direct-hire authority. The first authority code, “AYM” automatically fills in “Reg. 337.201” on the Notification of Personnel Action, Standard Form (SF) 50. The second authority code identifies agencies’ use of this Government-wide direct-hire authority, based upon occupation, to OPM. Please refer to “The Guide to Processing Personnel Actions,” Table 9-B (Appointment Based on the Use of a Direct Hire Recruiting Authority) for a list of applicable second authority codes.
17. Clearing the RPL – The RPL (Reemployment Priority List) applies when filling all competitive service vacancies, regardless of whether the position is being filled by a temporary, term, or permanent appointment. The RPL must be cleared at the grade/band level at which the position is filled, regardless of the full performance level. If the position is advertised at multiple grade/band levels, the RPL must only be cleared at the grade/band level at which the position is filled. The recruitment case file must annotate the date that clearance was obtained at each point of the recruitment process.

Note: Please reference Title 5, CFR §§ 330.204 and 330.205, as well as HR Bulletin #158, FY13, “The Reemployment Priority List (RPL).”

The SHROs must clear the RPL at the following points in the recruitment process:

- a. Prior to posting a JOA. (If there is an RPL-eligible, then a JOA may only be posted if its area of consideration is “DOC-wide.”)
- b. Prior to issuing a Certificate of Eligibles;
- c. Prior to making a tentative job offer.

Note: RPL eligibles who meet the minimum qualification requirements for a position must be selected over an individual from outside the Department. However, current Department employees may be selected over one who is RPL eligible.

Exceptions to RPL Clearance Requirements: In accordance with Title 5, CFR § 330.211, SHROs may disregard RPL clearance requirements when they:

- a. Fill a vacancy with a current employee of the Department's permanent competitive service workforce through a detail or permanent position change (i.e., reassignment, promotion);
- b. Appoint a 10-point preference eligible appointed through an appropriate appointing authority;
- c. Appoint a current or former Department employee exercising restoration rights under Title 5, CFR, Part 353 based on a return from military service or recovery from a compensable injury or disability within 1 year;
- d. Appoint a current or former Department employee exercising other statutory or regulatory reemployment rights;
- e. Fill a position when all RPL placement priority candidates decline an offer of the position or fail to respond to a written agency inquiry about their availability;
- f. Convert a current Department employee serving under an appointment that provides non-competitive conversion eligibility to a competitive service appointment;
- g. Reappoint a current Department employee, without a break-in-service, to the same position currently held under a temporary appointment of 1 year or less, to another temporary appointment not to exceed 1 year;
- h. Extend a current Department employee's temporary or term appointment up to the maximum permitted by the appointment; or
- i. Appoint an individual under an excepted service appointment.

18. Reporting and Recordkeeping – All offices performing DE activities under DOC-1 must comply with requirements annotated in Chapter 7 of the DEOH and applicable bureau and/or SHRO policy. The certificate case file should be arranged to permit reconstruction or validation of actions in the event of appeal or legal action. For example, all case files, whether hard copy or electronic, should contain a copy of forms SF-52 and/or SF-39, as well as job analysis, position description, rating schedules/plans, and the signed certificate. An electronic signature is acceptable. Note: All files are to be maintained in accordance with DEOH Appendix C – Records Retention and Disposition Schedule.

19. Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) Auditing – The Department's OHRM, Office of Accountability is the centralized accountability unit for the Department's Delegated Examining Unit (DEU) auditing purposes. The OA is responsible for scheduling all DE audits for all bureaus and operating units authorized to conduct DE activities for the Department under DOC-1.

20. Annual Self-Audit – All bureaus and operating units must schedule and conduct an internal, annual self-audit of their DE activities, unless such audits are scheduled to be conducted by the Department's OHRM, Office of Accountability (or OPM). Such self-audits must be conducted using certified staff external to your bureau or SHRO DE operations. Every effort must be made to **complete self-audits by September 30 each fiscal year**. Request for an extension due to unforeseen circumstances will be

considered on a case-by-case basis. (Failure to plan is not a valid reason to request an extension.) The PHRMs must submit a written request (e-mail is acceptable) to the Director of the OHRM Accountability Office.

**REFERENCES:** OPM Interagency Delegated Examining Agreement Number (DOC-1); OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, “A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices”; and the following OHRM HR Bulletins: HR Bulletin #210, FY17, “Creating a Job Opportunity Announcement”; HR Bulletin #131, FY11, “Application Acceptance and Processing”; HR Bulletin #033, FY06, “Job Analysis – Roles and Responsibilities”; HR Bulletin #148, FY12, “End-to-End (E2E) Hiring Model and Reporting”; HR Bulletin #153, FY12, “Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) Evaluation and Clearance Process”; HR Bulletin #071, FY07, “Hiring of Non-Citizens”; and HR Bulletin #157, FY14, “Process for Requests to Pass Over All Preference Eligibles for Competitive Service Positions and Excepted Service Positions Covered Under Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)”; HR Bulletin #158, FY13, “The Reemployment Priority List (RPL).”

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