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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BULLETIN #112, FY 10

SUBJECT: The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon release of this HR Bulletin

EXPIRATION DATE: Effective until canceled or superseded

SUPERSEDES: HR Bulletin #027, FY 06, dated August 1, 2006, and the Supplement to HR Bulletin #027, dated July 20, 2007

BACKGROUND: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) provided guidance to the Department of Commerce (Department) regarding the certification process for individuals in the PMF Program, the length of time required for developmental assignments, and the acceptance of training conducted through non-traditional classroom environments. In addition, OPM updated the “Presidential Management Fellows Program Guide for Agencies” on February 6, 2009.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this HR Bulletin is to revise the certification process for PMF Program completion, eliminate the Training Officer’s Council review, clarify the length of time required for developmental assignments, and define (and allow for) “blended” courses to be credited as formal classroom training.

COVERAGE AND EXCLUSIONS: This policy applies to all Departmental managers, supervisors, and PMF Coordinators and participants.

PROGRAM POLICY: OPM issued final regulations, effective June 20, 2005, implementing Executive Order 13318, modifying the Presidential Management Intern Program, and renaming it the PMF Program. The “Presidential Management Fellows Program Guide for Agencies,” updated February 6, 2009, removed policy regarding the Senior PMF Program, as OPM has never implemented this component of the PMF Program. The revised guide also clarifies the PMF Program policy in regard to applying veterans’ preference; rotational and developmental assignments; individual development plans (IDPs); the PMF Program annual cycle; and the responsibilities of the OPM PMF Program Office (OPM PMF Office), agencies, agency PMF Coordinators, human resources offices, hiring officials/Fellow supervisors, and Fellows.

The Department recognizes the value of the PMF Program as a mechanism for attracting and retaining outstanding women and men with leadership potential. This policy provides for systematic PMF Program practices and procedures to address any competency gaps in the Department's workforce, and to replace the Department's managers and supervisors who are approaching retirement.

A Presidential Management Fellow (Fellow) is an individual appointed at the General Schedule (GS)-9, GS-11, or GS-12 level (or equivalent) in the excepted service. The individual must have completed a graduate course of study at a qualifying college or university, received the nomination of the dean or academic director, successfully completed an OPM-administered assessment, been selected as a Finalist, and appointed by an agency as a Fellow.

The OPM PMF Program Office is responsible for the overall management of the PMF Program, including nationwide recruitment, and PMF orientation training. Those selected as Fellows receive an initial two-year excepted service appointment, and after successfully completing the Program and obtaining certification by the operating unit's Executive Resources Board (ERB) or equivalent, must be converted to a full-time, career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service.

To be eligible for a PMF Program appointment, a candidate must:

- a. Complete or expect to complete an advanced degree from a college or university that meets the accreditation requirements as stated in the General Policies and Instructions section of OPM's "Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions," under Educational and Training Provisions or Requirements, by August 31 of the academic year in which the competition is held;
- b. Receive the nomination of the dean or academic program director of their college or university; and
- c. Successfully complete an assessment administered by OPM and be selected by OPM as a PMF Finalist.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS: Fellows count against personnel ceilings. To hire a Fellow, supervisors must have an approved permanent full-time position available at the time a selection is made. Additionally, OPM requires payment of a reimbursement fee, which covers costs associated with the recruitment, selection, placement, orientation, and graduation of Fellows. Reimbursement fees shall be paid by the operating unit within 30 days of a PMF Finalist accepting a PMF Program appointment. The Department's Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) serves as the Program policy office and is responsible for developing and implementing Program policy and guidance, and for providing accountability oversight. The Department will appoint a Department PMF Coordinator; each operating unit must appoint a PMF Coordinator as well. The designated operating unit PMF Coordinator is responsible for managing and administering all aspects of the Department's PMF Program.

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. The Department is the liaison office between the OPM PMF Program Office and an operating unit PMF Coordinator. The operating unit PMF Coordinator monitors and facilitates recruitment, hiring, and employment policies and procedures across the operating unit. Operating unit PMF Coordinators are responsible for attending OPM's annual PMF Job Fair if their unit is interested in hiring a PMF.

b. Each operating unit PMF Coordinator is responsible for advising on and communicating PMF Program requirements to supervisors, and for their organization's PMF Program recruitment and appointments. In addition, the operating unit PMF Coordinator is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the training and development of Fellows within the operating unit to ensure they receive the training and developmental/rotational assignment(s) set forth by OPM regulations. Upon request from the Department PMF Coordinator, each operating unit PMF Coordinator will advise the Department PMF Coordinator of their operating unit's projected PMF hiring needs for the specified Fiscal Year(s). At the time of a PMF Program appointment, each operating unit PMF Coordinator will immediately complete OPM Form 1616 (Interagency/Intergovernmental Agreement) to pay the required reimbursement fees. Each operating unit PMF Coordinator must immediately notify the Department PMF Coordinator of any PMF hires and provide the appointment dates.

c. Supervisors will identify positions in their organizations to be filled through the PMF Program. Supervisors are encouraged to attend the annual Spring PMF Job Fair to meet the candidates, promote the agency, and conduct interviews. Operating unit PMF Coordinators will notify their servicing human resources office of the PMF Finalist(s) they have selected, in order for an HR Specialist to extend a job offer.

To balance the development of Fellows and enhance their performance, supervisors will:

1. Develop an IDP with each Fellow selected within 30 days of their appointment;
2. Authorize and monitor completion of at least one developmental assignment of four to six continuous months in the occupation or functional discipline in which the Fellow will most likely be placed. This assignment must have full-time management and/or technical responsibility consistent with the Fellow's IDP;
3. Ensure completion of required training;
4. Provide a performance plan and annual performance evaluation in accordance with the Department's performance management program; and
5. Support the Fellow's participation in developmental activities.

d. PMF appointees participate in the development of their IDPs with their supervisors, and mentors if applicable, with oversight from their operating unit PMF Coordinator. Fellows will participate in various OPM, Department, and operating unit sponsored program activities, such as formal and informal orientations; trainings; developmental/rotational and shadowing

assignments; other developmental activities; and graduation. Fellows should assist with planning and organizing other meetings and workshops that will contribute to their development.

e. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall perform the initial PMF Program completion review, using the PMF Program Requirements certification sheet (attached), for successful completion of the PMF Program requirements for Fellows. The operating unit PMF Coordinator must consider whether the Fellow: 1) has demonstrated successful performance according to the individual's performance plan; 2) has achieved the developmental expectations set forth in the IDP; and 3) has met all requirements of the PMF Program as outlined in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 362. The operating unit PMF Coordinator certifies PMF Program completion by signing the certification sheet. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall forward the signed certification sheet, along with the corresponding documentation, to the operating unit's ERB or equivalent for final certification. The result of the ERB or equivalent certification is forwarded to the operating unit PMF Coordinator. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall forward the certification result to the Department PMF Coordinator. The Department PMF Coordinator shall forward the certification results to OPM, as they administer the PMF Program and maintain statistical data, and so they can contact the Fellows and provide them with information regarding the PMF Program graduation ceremony.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY: OPM is responsible for recruiting candidates for the PMF Program. Individuals who meet the requirements of Title 5, CFR § 362.202(b) apply directly to OPM. OPM conducts the assessment process, adjudicates veterans' preference and selects the PMF Finalists for that year's PMF class. Applicants who have been deemed Finalists are considered eligible for the PMF Program during the 12-month period immediately following OPM's official announcement of their selection as a Finalist.

APPOINTMENTS: Fellows are appointed to the excepted service under Title 5, CFR § 213.3102(ii), and must be appointed no later than 12 months after selection as a Finalist. An operating unit must appoint a Fellow at the GS-9 level or equivalent, at a minimum. However, if the operating unit determines that a Fellow meets the requisite qualification requirements, the operating unit may appoint the Fellow at the GS-11 or GS-12 level or equivalent. OPM assesses PMF applicants for general eligibility and initial appointment at the designated minimum grade level or equivalent. To make an initial appointment above the minimum level, the operating unit's servicing human resources office must determine that the PMF Finalist meets the applicable qualification standard for the position at a higher grade level, e.g., GS-11, GS-12 or equivalent. A higher step within the minimum GS pay range may be permissible, in accordance with the highest previous rate rules, under Title 5, CFR § 531.221, if the Fellow had prior higher level Federal civilian service. The operating unit's servicing human resources office will determine the permissible rate of pay. For operating units participating in an alternative personnel management system, the supervisor may set the pay anywhere within the pay band to which the Fellow is appointed.

The superior qualifications authority under Title 5, CFR § 531.212, may be used to grant appointments above the minimum rate for any GS grade level covered by this HR Bulletin as long as the increase does not exceed 20 percent of the candidate's existing pay. Superior qualifications appointments at any rate above 20 percent of the candidate's existing pay may be

effected only with prior approval of the Principal Human Resources Manager or designee and concurrence of their Chief Financial Officer.

RECRUITING FELLOWS: Hiring officials can hire Fellows as capable new staff members, and as investments in succession planning. The OPM PMF Office recruits thousands of candidates, assesses their skills, and selects only the top finalists, saving agencies time and expenses, and ensuring a premium candidate pool. There are several recruitment options that hiring managers may utilize when recruiting Fellows. Hiring managers may post positions on the PMF Projected Positions System (PPS), view finalists' resumes on the PPS, and/or attend OPM's annual Spring PMF job fair. Fellows can be hired at anytime throughout the 12-month period immediately following OPM's official announcement of their selection as a Finalist.

a. Posting positions to the PMF PPS: Operating unit PMF Coordinators are encouraged to post PMF positions on OPM's on-line PPS. When feasible, positions should be posted prior to the annual PMF Job Fair; however, positions may be posted throughout the year. Operating unit PMF Coordinators are responsible for entering positions, editing or deleting existing positions, and for maintaining up-to-date information. Positions should include details regarding the specific skills and abilities the operating unit is seeking. There is no minimum or maximum open period, and postings can be canceled at any time without notice. Operating unit PMF Coordinators and hiring managers must consider all Finalists who express an interest in a particular position posted on PPS. The Department PMF Coordinator can provide access to PPS.

b. Viewing Finalists' Resumes: Operating unit PMF Coordinators and hiring managers may view Finalists' resumes on PPS throughout the 12-month period following the official announcement of their selection as a Finalist. Once the servicing human resources office has determined that a Finalist meets the qualification requirements for a position, operating unit PMF Coordinators and hiring managers may contact the Finalist for an interview.

c. Attending the Annual Spring PMF Job Fair: Operating unit PMF Coordinators and hiring managers may attend OPM's annual Spring PMF Job Fair. During the Fair, hiring managers and HR personnel can receive resumes, interview Finalists, and extend tentative job offers. Operating unit PMF Coordinators must notify the Department PMF Coordinator of their intent to attend the Job Fair and to request an exhibit booth and an interview booth(s). The Department PMF Coordinator is the liaison with OPM and shall register operating units and secure requested exhibit and interview booths.

d. Extending Appointments: Operating unit HR Specialists can extend job offers to Finalists in the PMF Program, for which they must meet OPM's "Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions," at any time during the 12-month period immediately following OPM's official announcement of their selection as a Finalist. **PMF Finalists must actually enter-on-duty within this 12-month time period.**

VETERANS' PREFERENCE: Veterans' preference is adjudicated by OPM during the application review and rating process. Candidates are ranked according to their assessment score with the adjudicated veterans' preference points applied. Compensably disabled veterans go to the top of the list. From this list, OPM designates the PMF Finalists, posts the Finalists' names and on-line resumes on the PMF website in alphabetical (unranked order). PMF Coordinators

and hiring managers who are registered users of the on-line resume bank may access a separate list that indicates the veterans' preference category for the Finalists who have preference. The Department PMF Coordinator can provide access to the on-line resume bank for operating unit PMF Coordinators and hiring managers.

The following methods of consideration are considered separate applicant pools when considering applicants and when applying veterans' preference under Title 5, CFR § 302.304:

a. Finalists Express an Interest: "Express an interest" means an applicant has initiated contact with the operating unit in person, by phone, or other direct communication and has asked for consideration for appointment to a specific position, including providing a resume at the annual Spring PMF Job Fair.

b. Finalists Apply to a Position Posted on PPS: Applicants who apply to a specific position posted on PPS during its posted time period must be considered.

c. Finalists Contacted by Department Personnel: Title 5, CFR § 302.304 must also be applied to ALL candidates who are contacted in reference to the same position. Once contact is made with an applicant and the individual is interested in the position, they are considered part of this applicant pool.

For example: When a preference eligible expresses an interest in a specific position and a non-preference eligible applies to the same position through PPS, the hiring manager may select the non-preference eligible, as the two applicants are considered to be in separate applicant pools.

Applying Veterans' Preference. Hiring managers are required to select from the **highest available preference group**, based upon the applicants' preference designation, within a specific applicant pool. When there are fewer than three preference eligible candidates in the highest preference group of a specific applicant pool, consideration may be expanded to include the next group.

For example: First consideration must be given to the highest preference group, which consists of preference eligibles having a service-connected disability of 10 percent or more (CPS and CP); second consideration is to other 10-point preference eligibles (XP); third consideration is to 5-point preference eligibles (TP); and last consideration is to non-preference eligibles. Once a job offer is extended, accepted, and an enter-on-duty date is established, that specific applicant pool is closed. Preference eligibles who request consideration after a job offer is extended and accepted will become part of a new applicant pool that will be established if/when a new position becomes available.

PASSING OVER/REMOVING A PREFERENCE ELIGIBLE FROM

CONSIDERATION: A preference eligible who is contacted by a hiring manager or other Department personnel, who has expressed an interest in, or has applied to a specific position, may only be removed from consideration upon approval of a formal pass over request. The hiring manager must demonstrate that the individual does not qualify or does not meet the criteria for the position. Prior to removing the preference eligible, the hiring manager must

submit a written request to pass over the preference eligible to their operating unit PMF Coordinator, documenting the reason(s) as to why the individual is not qualified or did not meet the criteria for the position and should be removed from consideration. Upon concurrence, the operating unit PMF Coordinator must submit a written request and justification to the Department PMF Coordinator, who will forward to the Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer and Director for Human Resources Management (Director) for approval. Only upon receiving written approval from the Director can the preference eligible be passed over and removed from consideration in favor of a non-preference eligible.

The documentation and approval process:

a. Ten percent or more but less than 30 percent compensable disabled veterans, and other preference eligibles (CP, XP, TP): All requests must be forwarded by the Department PMF Coordinator to the Director for approval. Only after the pass over of a 10 percent or more (but less than 30 percent) compensable disabled veteran, or other preference eligible has received final approval from the Director, can the individual be passed over. Submission requests must include an Agency Request to Pass Over a Preference Eligible or Object to an Eligible (SF-62); a copy of the job announcement; position description; crediting plan; preference eligible's application; ranking sheet justification for pass over; and any other available information and documents considered pertinent to the case.

b. Thirty percent or more compensable disabled veterans (CPS): All requests must be forwarded to the Department PMF Coordinator, who will forward to the Director for preliminary approval. Upon preliminary approval from the Director, requests for pass over of a 30 percent or more compensable disabled veteran must be submitted to OPM by the Director for final approval. Only after the pass over request has received final approval from OPM can the 30 percent or more compensable disabled veteran be passed over. Submission requests must include an Agency Request to Pass Over a Preference Eligible or Object to an Eligible (SF-62); a copy of the job announcement; position description; crediting plan; preference eligible's application; ranking sheet justification for pass over; and any other available information and documents considered pertinent to the case.

c. Pass over request for all preference eligibles when based on material, intentional false statement or deception or fraud in examination or appointment (CP, XP, TP, CPS): All requests must be submitted to the Department PMF Coordinator, who will submit to the Director for review and preliminary approval. Upon preliminary approval from the Director, requests for pass over of an individual must be submitted to OPM by the Director for final approval. Only after the pass over request has received final approval from OPM can the individual be passed over. Submission requests must include an Agency Request to Pass Over a Preference Eligible or Object to an Eligible (SF-62); a copy of the job announcement; position description; crediting plan; preference eligible's application; ranking sheet justification for pass over; and any other available information and documents considered pertinent to the case.

PROGRAM MENTORS: Mentors for Fellows are not required; however, if assigned, mentors shall be senior-grade volunteers outside of the Fellow's normal chain of command. Mentors should be those who can provide leadership, insight, guidance, and objectivity to the Fellow during their PMF Program and thereafter. Mentors serve as role models and personal advisors to

convey positive information about the Department's mission, policies, rules, and regulations. A Fellow's supervisor and the operating unit PMF Coordinator shall assist the Fellow, if applicable, in identifying appropriate mentors and ensuring that the Fellow/mentor relationship has been established. A Fellow may also be paired with other skilled and experienced employees (for networking and developing other insights and skills) in preparation for managerial and supervisory positions.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (IDP): The IDPs of Fellows shall be completed within 30 days after the effective date of their appointment and should be aligned with the Fellow's performance plan, target position, and career development goals. IDPs are designed for the two-year appointment and set forth the specific developmental activities designed to impart the competencies of the occupation or functional discipline in which the Fellow is most likely to be placed. IDPs should specify how and when the learning objectives will be met, and determine how the Fellow will be evaluated. The target position of a Fellow is a position, occupational series, or program area, as defined by the employing organization in which they may plan to employ the Fellow upon successful completion of the PMF Program. As necessary, IDPs should be updated to include previously unforeseen training and development requirements.

Fellows will prepare their IDP in consultation with their supervisor and with oversight from the operating unit PMF Coordinator. Each IDP should be individually tailored around the following elements:

a. Target Position: A brief description of the target position, and the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to qualify for the target position upon successful completion of the two-year PMF Program.

b. Learning Objective: The learning objective should include general management areas, as well as specific technical skills and experiences that will qualify the Fellow for the target position at the end of the two-year PMF Program.

c. Details and Timeline: The IDP should clearly indicate when and how the learning objectives will be accomplished. It should outline the required developmental assignment as well as the 80 hours of formal classroom training each year of the PMF Program, including OPM's Orientation Program and the Department's Orientation Program.

d. Demonstrated Success: The IDP should include a means for tracking the accomplishment of all IDP objectives at the end of the two-year PMF Program. The supervisor, and mentor if applicable, and the Fellow should be partners in determining if the objectives set forth in the IDP have been accomplished. Should events preclude an individual from attaining specific learning objectives by a particular date, alternative arrangements should be made with their supervisor.

ORIENTATION, TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: Supervisors will provide a minimum of 80 hours per year for each Fellow of formal classroom training that addresses the core competencies required of the occupation or functional discipline in which the Fellow will most likely be placed upon completion. Formal classroom training can be in the form of "blended courses" that combine on-line and in-person learning. Blended courses must combine some form of human instructor interaction with multiple students, either through virtual means or

in person, and any electronic learning component (i.e., webinars). Courses that are only technology-based, such as on-line, virtual instruction, etc., cannot count toward the 80 hours of formal classroom training. OPM-sponsored PMF training counts toward the annual 80-hour requirement. Fellows must attend the following training:

a. OPM's Orientation Training Program (24 hours). Each Fellow should complete this training during the first year of the PMF Program. This orientation session provides Fellows with an overall perspective on the Federal Government and the PMF Program, and includes components on leadership, communications, teamwork, and preparation of IDPs. The session also provides valuable networking opportunities.

b. Department Orientation Training (16 hours) conducted by the Department's OHRM. Each Fellow should complete this training during the first year of the PMF Program. This training covers the Department's mission, organizational structure, and strategic plans.

DEVELOPMENTAL/ROTATIONAL ASSIGNMENT(s): Developmental assignments are required as part of the PMF Program and are intended to broaden the Fellow's perspective on the work of the Department, which can lead to an insightful employee and a more effective leader. Developmental assignments **must** prepare the Fellow for the occupation or function in which he or she is likely to be placed. Rotational assignments are not required; however, can be used to broaden the Fellow's perspective of the Federal Government Executive Branch. Developmental and rotational assignments can range from assignments at a Fellow's home agency (outside of their immediate office), to another agency, or even outside of the Federal Government. The assignments are to be clearly outlined and negotiated in advance with the Fellow's supervisor.

Developmental and rotational assignments under the PMF Program are covered under Departmental policy regarding details and assignments and must follow the applicable approval process.

a. Operating units must provide a Fellow at least one developmental assignment of four to six continuous months in the occupation or functional discipline in which the Fellow will most likely be placed. The assignment must have full-time management or technical responsibilities consistent with the Fellow's IDP.

b. In addition, the supervisor may elect to provide the Fellow with additional rotational assignments from one to six months, to any desired field. Fellows can gain management experience, work in specific occupational fields, or learn about a program function from another agency's perspective. The nature of the rotational assignment should be mutually agreed upon by the supervisor and the Fellow. While rotational assignments do not have to directly relate to the Fellow's present position, current field, or functional area (in which the Fellow will most likely be placed), assignments must relate to the overall career path identified by the supervisor and Fellow in the IDP. Rotational assignments are to be decided by the home organization, and the Fellow's supervisor and host organization must mutually agree on the timing of rotational assignments so that the rotation does not conflict with the Fellow's responsibilities in the home organization.

c. Developmental and rotational assignments must be carefully planned and documented to provide a clear understanding of the expectations, goals, timing of the assignment, and the office where the training will occur, in order to provide maximum benefit for the Fellow. Training objectives should be well defined prior to the effective date of the assignment. Developmental and rotational assignment supervisors are responsible for preparing a written assessment of the Fellow's performance at the conclusion of the assignment, including training received and work accomplished, and must provide the assessment to the supervisor of record. The supervisor of record will use the assessment in completing the Fellow's annual performance evaluation. Upon completion of the developmental or rotational assignment, Fellows will return to their position of record.

The written documentation shall be developed by the host supervisor in coordination with the Fellow, supervisor of record, and the operating unit PMF Coordinator, and must include the following:

1. Dates of the assignment;
2. Duties that the Fellow will perform;
3. Relationship of the developmental or rotational assignment to the Fellow's career goals;
4. How the Fellow's performance will be appraised during the assignment; and
5. Long-term benefit to the Department of the developmental or rotational assignment.

d. Developmental and Rotational Assignments Outside the Department and between Bureaus. Reimbursable and non-reimbursable agreements may be negotiated on behalf of the Department, by the heads of operating units or their designee. All reimbursable and non-reimbursable details or assignments, modifications and extensions to organizations outside the Department must be approved by the Director, prior to the Fellow beginning the detail or assignment. Details or assignments between bureaus in the Department do not need approval from the Director.

Note: Prior to a Fellow beginning a detail or assignment outside the Department or between bureaus, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the parties must be reviewed and approved by the Office of General Counsel. All MOUs must be submitted to the Department PMF Coordinator **unsigned**, who will in turn submit the document to OGC.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES: In addition to formal classroom training, developmental activities may include the following: on-the-job training; mentoring sessions; career management counseling; rotational assignments; educational brown-bag lunches; cross-training; career broadening assignments; and attendance at conferences, workshops, and off-site meetings. Operating units may provide additional informal training and development through participation in other activities, such as:

a. Shadowing Assignments. Fellows may complete shadowing assignments of a short duration, such as one week. By shadowing managers, Fellows gain insight regarding the scope of managerial responsibilities and management approaches.

b. Readings and Seminars. Fellows may meet informally with their supervisors, organizational staff, and other Fellows to discuss books or articles on areas of interest.

c. Meet-the-Manager Sessions. Fellows may meet with other managers outside their operating unit to discuss managerial duties and responsibilities, current Departmental- and bureau-level issues and recommendations regarding the Fellow's career development.

d. Program Impact Paper. At the end of the first and second year of the PMF Program, Fellows may be asked by their operating unit PMF Coordinator, or their supervisor, to prepare a short paper discussing their experiences and observations, which will be used in determining potential improvements to the PMF Program within the operating unit and/or Department.

PROMOTION CRITERIA: Time-in-grade requirements do not apply to the promotion of a Fellow, and individuals may be promoted to the GS-13 level or equivalent provided they meet the following eligibility requirements. Fellows are eligible for promotion after they have served in their current position of record for a minimum of 120 days, as required by the Department's performance management system; have a performance rating of at least Level 3 or equivalent; meet OPM's Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions for the appropriate series and grade level/band; possess the specialized experience equivalent in difficulty to the next lower grade level/band; demonstrate the ability to perform at the higher grade level/band; and meet all of the requirements for promotion as identified in their IDP. The IDP must indicate the competencies required for each grade level/band as well as provide a benchmark identifying the successful acquisition of the needed competencies. Promotions above the GS-13 level or equivalent for a Fellow can only occur on or after the date of conversion to the competitive service and are dependent upon the Department's or operating unit's Merit Assignment Program, the position's career ladder and full performance level, and the Fellow's performance.

PROMOTION APPROVAL PROCESS: PMF supervisors shall provide the following to the operating unit PMF Coordinator: Standard Form (SF)-52 requesting the promotion; the Fellow's current performance plan and appropriate end-of-year performance rating or interim rating; documentation that the Fellow meets all of the requirements of OPM's Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions for the appropriate series and grade level/band, meets the specialized experience equivalent in difficulty to the next lower grade level/band, demonstrates the ability to perform at the higher grade level/band; a copy of the Fellow's IDP for their current grade level/band; and documentation that the Fellow meets all of the requirements for promotion as identified in their IDP. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall review and certify that all criteria for the current grade level/band have been met, and then forward the documentation and certification to the operating unit's ERB for final approval. Upon the operating unit's ERB final approval, the promotion request may be submitted to the appropriate servicing human resources office for processing. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall notify the Department PMF Coordinator of the Fellow's promotion.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: All Fellows are covered by either the Department's 5-Level Performance Management System, Commerce's Alternative Personnel System (CAPS), or the Alternative Personnel Management System (APMS). Under all systems, Fellows must be issued a performance plan that outlines specific elements and standards that the Fellow is expected to accomplish during the appraisal cycle. At the midpoint of the appraisal cycle, Fellows must receive a formal progress review, and at the end of the appraisal cycle, the supervisor of record must evaluate the Fellow's performance against the elements and standards in the performance plan, and assign a rating of record. If a Fellow's performance falls below Level 3 or equivalent, the supervisor should contact their servicing human resources office for guidance and notify their operating unit PMF Coordinator. For additional information on the 5-Level Performance Management System, refer to Department Administrative Order (DAO) 202-430, "Performance Management System," and the Performance Management System Handbook; for CAPS, refer to the CAPS Operating Procedures Manual; and for APMS, refer to the APMS Performance Management Program.

To progress in grades and complete the PMF Program, Fellows must attain a performance rating of Level 3 or equivalent for all critical elements established in their performance plan. Supervisors cannot allow a promotion or a conversion action to occur if the Fellow's performance is less than a Level 3 or equivalent.

During the PMF appointment, a three-way feedback process should be implemented between the supervisor of record, the Fellow, and the operating unit PMF Coordinator to address the Fellow's developmental progress and the adequacy of developmental experiences. Supervisors must monitor the Fellow's work progress and provide feedback on how well the Fellow is meeting the learning objectives of their IDP.

PERFORMANCE BELOW LEVEL 3 OR EQUIVALENT: Fellows will be given assistance in improving whenever their performance rating is determined to be below Level 3 or equivalent. Individuals performing below Level 3 or equivalent are expected to have additional progress reviews.

Failure to meet the minimum standards outlined in the position description and performance plan can lead to warnings, termination, or other corrective action as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the supervisor, with oversight from the operating unit PMF Coordinator, to review and follow established regulations when addressing performance issues. Procedures should take into consideration the Fellow's IDP, performance plan, and performance reviews.

The supervisor and operating unit PMF Coordinator should attempt to resolve performance issues before the end of the two-year PMF Program. Fellows who have demonstrated ongoing performance problems can not be converted.

CONDUCT ISSUES: It is the responsibility of the supervisor, with oversight from the operating unit PMF Coordinator, to review and follow established regulations when addressing conduct issues. Procedures for disciplinary actions should include counseling, rights for veterans, a notification of intent not to certify 30 calendar days before the end of the Program,

and/or notification to the Department PMF Coordinator of the decision to terminate the Fellow within 15 days of the decision.

The supervisor and operating unit PMF Coordinator should attempt to resolve conduct issues before the end of the two-year PMF Program. Fellows who have demonstrated ongoing conduct issues can not be converted.

CERTIFICATION OF COMPLETION: The operating unit PMF Coordinator must begin the certification process with enough time as to complete the entire process so they can notify the Fellow of the operating unit's ERB decision no later than 30 days before the expiration of their appointment.

a. Upon a Fellow's completion of the PMF Program, the operating unit's PMF Coordinator must evaluate and certify in writing (using the appropriate certification sheet) that all requirements of the PMF Program have been met, including developmental expectations set forth in the individual's performance plan and IDP, and that the Fellow has a demonstrated performance rating of at least Level 3 or equivalent.

b. Once the operating unit's PMF Coordinator certifies PMF Program completion using the certification sheet, the signed certification is forwarded to the operating unit's ERB or equivalent, for final review and certification. The appropriate ERB member signs the certification sheet upon determining that the Fellow completed all requirements of the PMF Program and can be non-competitively converted to a full-time, career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service.

c. The operating unit's ERB or equivalent shall return the signed certification sheet to the operating unit PMF Coordinator.

d. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall notify the Fellow of being certified or not certified no later than 30 calendar days prior to the expiration of their appointment in the PMF Program.

e. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall provide the Department PMF Coordinator a listing of the following for each Fellow who has completed the requirements of the PMF Program: name; class year; ERB or equivalent certification date; conversion date to career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service; position converted to; job series/grade; phone number; e-mail; and the ERB or equivalent official's name, number, and e-mail.

f. The Department PMF Coordinator shall forward the information for each Fellow to OPM in accordance with OPM's PMF Program Guide for Agencies, dated February 6, 2009.

g. If a Fellow is not certified by their operating unit, the Fellow may request a reconsideration from OPM of their operating unit's determination. The Fellow must submit a written request that includes their justification to the OPM Director or the Director's designee through the OPM PMF Office within 15 calendar days from the date of the operating unit's determination.

1. The Fellow may continue in the Program pending the outcome of his/her request for reconsideration.
2. The OPM Director's or the Director's designee's determination shall be final and not subject to further review or appeal.

APPOINTMENT EXTENSIONS: Under rare and unusual circumstances, the head of the operating unit may extend the two-year appointment up to 120 days. The operating unit PMF Coordinator shall provide notification to the Department PMF Coordinator that a Fellow's appointment has been extended. The notification must include the reason for the extension and the time period of the extension. Requests for extensions for more than 120 days, and up to one year, must be submitted in writing to OPM through the Department PMF Coordinator and must be received at least 90 days before the end of the appointment. The request must include specific reasons for requesting the extension. At any time during an extension, the Fellow may be converted to a full-time, career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service if their performance is at least Level 3 or equivalent, and certification is granted by the ERB or equivalent.

CONVERSIONS:

- a. Fellows who are certified by the operating unit's ERB or equivalent must be noncompetitively converted to a full-time, career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service.
- b. Conversions are not allowed prior to satisfactory completion of the PMF Program, and the operating unit's ERB or equivalent certification of satisfactory completion.
- c. Conversions must be effective on the date that the two-year service requirement is met unless the appointment has been extended. Conversions can be effective at any point during the extension period once the Fellow has been certified by the operating unit's ERB, or equivalent, as having met all requirements of the PMF Program.

TERMINATIONS: The appointment of a Fellow expires at the end of the two-year PMF Program period if the individual has not been granted an extension or has not successfully completed the PMF Program.

If a Fellow is not appointed at the end of the PMF Program and the initial appointment has not been extended, the appointment expires when the certification for PMF Program completion is denied or when the OPM Director, or the Director's designee, denies the agency's request for an extension. The operating unit PMF Coordinator must immediately provide written notification to the Department PMF Coordinator when a Fellow is terminated, and the reason for termination.

The Department PMF Coordinator will provide written notification to OPM when an individual is terminated, in accordance with Title 5, CFR § 362.208(b).

Either the supervisor or the Fellow can terminate the PMF Program appointment. If a proposed termination is initiated by the supervisor, the basis of the termination must be related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability.

MOVEMENT TO OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES: A Fellow may move to another agency at any time during their appointment in the PMF Program. In order to remain in the PMF Program, the Fellow must separate from the current agency and the new employing agency must appoint the participant without a break in service.

The Fellow does not begin a new two-year time period in the PMF Program upon appointment by the new employing agency. Because there is no break in service, time served under the previous appointment will apply toward the completion of the two-year PMF Program with the new agency.

The operating unit PMF Coordinator must immediately provide written notification to the Department PMF Coordinator when a Fellow leaves the Department. The Department PMF Coordinator will notify OPM when a Fellow moves to another Federal agency, in accordance with OPM's PMF Program Guide to Agencies, dated February 6, 2009. There is no provision in the regulations for either OPM or the gaining agency to reimburse the fee to the original appointing agency that was paid to cover costs associated with the recruitment, selection, placement, orientation, and graduation of a Fellow.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PROGRAM: Fellows may withdraw from the PMF Program at any time by resigning from their appointment. Such a withdrawal will be treated as a resignation from Federal service. Individuals under service agreements for receiving incentives such as recruitment, relocation, student loan repayment, etc., may be indebted to the Department, in accordance with applicable Departmental policy, when the terms of the service agreement are not met.

A Fellow who held a career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service in an agency immediately before entering the PMF Program and withdrew for reasons that are not related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability may, at the Department's discretion, be placed in a career or career-conditional position, in accordance with Departmental policies. The Department's determination in this regard is not subject to appeal.

The operating unit PMF Coordinator must immediately provide written notification to the Department PMF Coordinator when a Fellow withdraws from the PMF Program, in accordance with Title 5, CFR § 362.207(3). The Department PMF Coordinator will in turn notify OPM when an individual withdraws from the PMF Program.

RESIGNATION: Fellows who resign at any time prior to completion of the PMF Program do not have reinstatement eligibility for competitive service positions based upon the PMF appointment.

READMISSION: If a Fellow withdraws from the PMF Program for reasons that are related to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability, as determined by the operating unit PMF Coordinator, they may not be readmitted to the PMF Program.

If a Fellow withdraws from the PMF Program for reasons that are **not related** to misconduct, poor performance, or suitability, they may petition the operating unit PMF Coordinator for readmission and reappointment to the PMF Program. Such a petition must be in writing and include appropriate justification. Upon consideration of the petition, the Department may submit a written request seeking OPM approval to readmit and appoint the individual to the PMF Program. OPM's final determination regarding readmission and reappointment is not subject to appeal.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD: Once a Fellow is non-competitively converted to a career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service, they do not serve a probationary period and acquire competitive status immediately upon appointment (Title 5, CFR § 315.708(c)).

CAREER TENURE: Service under PMF counts toward career tenure in the competitive service if the Fellow is converted to a career-conditional appointment upon completion of the program. To obtain career status, employees in the competitive service must have three years of substantially continuous service without a break in service of more than 30 calendar days (Title 5, CFR §§ 315.201(a), 315.201(b)(1)(xiii), and CFR § 315.201(3)).

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM: Operating units are authorized to repay Federally-insured student loans, in accordance with DAO 202-957, "Department of Commerce Repayment of Student Loan Policy." The PMF Program is not a graduate fellowship program for the purposes of Federal student loan deferment. Borrowers may not defer repayment of their loans based on their participation in the PMF Program. Additional information may be obtained on the Federal Student Aid website at <http://studentaid.ed.gov>.

TRAVEL EXPENSES: Operating units are authorized, but not required, to pay travel expenses for pre-employment interviews and first post duty stations. However, travel expenses incurred to attend OPM- and Departmental-sponsored training are the responsibility of the operating unit.

REDUCTION IN FORCE: Fellows are in the excepted service, Tenure Group II, for purposes of reduction in force, under Title 5, CFR § 351.502.

APPEAL RIGHTS: Fellows are excepted service employees within the meaning of Chapters 43 and 75 in Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.), and have appeal rights as provided therein.

REFERENCES: Executive Order 13318; OPM's "Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions;" Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 362, §§ 362.202(b), 213.3102 (ii), 531.221, 531.212, 302.304; Department Administrative Order (DAO) 202-430, "Performance Management System;" Performance Management System Handbook; Commerce Alternative Personnel System Operating Manual; Alternative Personnel Management System program; Title 5, CFR §§ 362.208(b), 362.207(3), 315.708(c), 315.201(a), 315.201(b)(1)(xiii), 315.201(3); DAO 202-957, "Department of Commerce Repayment of Student Loan Policy;" Title 5, CFR § 351.502; Title 5, United States Code Chapters 43 and 75.

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