

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL
Division of Operations-Management

MEMORANDUM OM 15-35

June 9, 2015

TO: All Regional Directors, Officers-in-Charge,
and Resident Officers

FROM: Anne Purcell, Associate General Counsel

SUBJECT: Bridge Program for the Position of Field Examiner

Pursuant to Article 6 of the collective-bargaining agreement between the General Counsel and the National Labor Relations Board Union (Agreement), the Agency has agreed to announce each year a national posting for up to three Field Examiner Bridge Program positions. This year the national posting for Fiscal Year 2015 will be through a Notice of Vacancy in USA Staffing. The Notice of Vacancies can be accessed through the following links:

[Notice of Vacancy – Labor Management Relations Aide – GS-4](#)

[Notice of Vacancy – Labor Management Relations Aide – GS-5](#)

[Notice of Vacancy – Labor Management Relations Aide – GS-6](#)

[Notice of Vacancy – Labor Management Relations Assistant – GS-7](#)

As in the past, selections for the program may be affected by budgetary restrictions. Applications will be submitted through USA Staffing, processed by the Division of Operations-Management, and the Associate General Counsel for Operations-Management will be the selecting official. Evaluation and selection of candidates for the Bridge Program will be governed by the application of Article 7, Section 16 (d), of the Agreement in conjunction with Section 3 (“Evaluation and Selection”) of the “Bridge Program for Labor Management Relations Examiner Positions, General Schedule Positions, GS-4, 5, 6 and 7,” a copy of which has been posted with this memorandum. Successful applicants will serve in the Regions in which they currently work. Because a trainee is required to take 30 semester hours of college courses during the three year training period, all efforts will be made to make selection(s) by August 1, 2015, so that selectee(s) may register for appropriate courses in the fall college semester.

The Selection Process

Enclosed are memoranda announcing the program that should be distributed to all support staff employees in the Region and posted on the office bulletin board along with a copy of the program. **Employees who wish to be considered for the program must submit their applications via USA Staffing by June 26, 2015.** A determination will then be made as to which of the applicants meet the basic eligibility requirements set forth on pages one and two of the Bridge Program.

Once basic eligibility is determined, the three most recent appraisals will be reviewed by Operations-Management representatives for each eligible applicant. If an appraisal has not previously been prepared for an applicant who meets the basic eligibility requirements for the Bridge Program, the appropriate supervisor should complete it. In addition, an "Appraisal of Potential Based on Job Elements" (copy attached) will need to be completed for each eligible applicant by the Regional Director and the supervisor or manager who is most familiar with the applicant's qualifications. Personal interviews will then be conducted by Operations-Management staff through videoconferencing with eligible applicants. Based upon the interviews, the "Appraisal of Potential," the applicant's annual performance appraisals, and taking into consideration the five factors (work experience, education and training, special achievement, overall performance, and potential), listed in Section 3(b)(1), page three, of the Bridge Program, the Associate General Counsel in the Division of Operations-Management will make a determination as to whether any of the applicants will be recommended for selection as a Bridge Program participant. Upon request, applicants who are not selected for the Bridge Program will be provided with an explanation of the reason(s) for their non-selection.

Grade Level at Assignment to the Program and Promotion during Training

If the person selected for the program is currently in grades GS-5, -6, or -7, he or she will be assigned to the program at his or her present grade level. An individual at GS-8 or above will enter the program at GS-7, but pay retention will apply to such a person.

Trainees who enter the program at one or more grade levels below that of the GS-7 target position will be temporarily promoted to the next higher grade after successful completion of each full year in the program up to and including grade GS-7. Thus:

- A trainee who enters the program at the GS-5 level would, depending on his or her progress, be eligible for a temporary promotion to GS-6 at the end of the first year and to GS-7 at the end of the second year. The individual would remain at GS-7 during the third year of the program. Upon successful completion of the third year, the trainee would be permanently promoted or reassigned to the GS-7 Field Examiner position.
- A trainee who enters the program at GS-6 would, depending on his or her progress, be eligible for a temporary promotion to GS-7 at the end of the first year. The individual would remain at GS-7 during the remainder of the program. Upon successful completion of the third year, the individual would be permanently promoted or reassigned to a GS-7 Field Examiner position.

Promotion upon Successful Completion of the Program:

- Employees who have less than 12 months in grade as a GS-7 while in the Bridge Program are eligible for promotion to GS-9 after 12 months in grade as a GS-7 Field Examiner.
- Employees who have 12 months in grade as a GS-7 while in the Bridge Program are eligible for promotion to GS-9 after 6 months in grade as a GS-7 Field Examiner.
- Employees who have 24 months in grade as a GS-7 while in the Bridge Program are eligible for promotion to GS-9 after 3 months in grade as a GS-7 Field Examiner.
- Employees who took a downgrade to GS-7 to enter the program and have served 36 months in the program as a GS-7 will immediately upon conversion to GS-7 Field Examiner be promoted to GS-9.

Subsequent promotions will follow the Field Examiner merit promotion plan that establishes the journeyman level for Field Examiners at GS-13.

Program Academic Requirements

Section 4(c) of the program provides that each trainee will, at Agency expense, take 30 semester hours of college courses. The academic requirements of the program must be fulfilled by taking classes at accredited institutions. The Regional Director, or his or her designee, will plan the curriculum with the trainee. During the first year, the trainee must take (if available) three semester hours in Speech/Oral Communication, six semester hours in English Composition or college-level Writing, and three semester hours in Logic; and will be encouraged to take three semester hours in accounting. After the first year, the remaining semester hours must be from among the following related fields of study: political science, government, economics, industrial or labor relations, personnel administration, business administration, accounting, or labor law; provided, that if any of the first-year courses, including accounting, were not satisfied in the first year of the program, they must be satisfied in the second year of the program.

The educational institution, the curriculum, and the cost assumed therewith, and schedule of courses, must be approved in advance by the Regional Director in consultation with the Division of Operations-Management. Unless the required course is available only during the day, it should ordinarily be taken at night. Each trainee is required to furnish grade transcripts at the completion of any college course work. If a trainee receives a grade of less than a "C" (or less than 2.0 under a numerical grading scale) in any course, this will be taken into consideration in determining whether the trainee should continue in the program.

A trainee who has already successfully completed any of the college-level courses identified above prior to entry into the program may receive Bridge Program credit for those courses. That determination will be made by the Division of Operations-Management based on a review of the trainee's academic transcript.

On-the-Job Training

A training plan must be specifically developed for each trainee. Attached is a typical training plan covering the normal three year program. Because many of the individuals entering this program will have had little preparation for the type of professional position that they are seeking, it is absolutely essential that the training and development of the participant be given the closest possible attention and supervision.

As set forth in the attached typical training plan, the trainee will perform support staff duties up to 40 percent the first year. The second and third years will be devoted entirely to on-the-job training as a Field Examiner; therefore, no support staff duties will be assigned. On-the-job training is lighter during the first year but is balanced with heavier college course work.

The trainee will retain his or her support staff position throughout the training program. However, during the second and third years, consideration will be given to detailing or temporarily promoting another employee into the position.

Evaluation during the Program by Management

Ninety days after the trainee has been assigned to the program, the supervisor should prepare a written evaluation of the trainee's developmental needs. In addition, the specifically tailored three year training plan should be generally described and the projected three year program of college courses set forth. A copy of this evaluation should be forwarded to Administrative Assistant Victoria Wallace, with a copy to your Assistant General Counsel or Deputy.

In accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement, at the end of the first three months, and quarterly thereafter, except on the employee's anniversary date in the program, the supervisor should prepare a quarterly written performance evaluation of the trainee's work and progress. A copy of the evaluation should be given to and discussed with the trainee. A copy should also be forwarded to Administrative Assistant Victoria Wallace, with a copy to your Assistant General Counsel or Deputy. On an annual basis, the employee is to be provided an Annual Performance Appraisal in accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement.

Evaluation to be Prepared by the Trainee

A trainee under this program is also required to make certain written evaluations. Each trainee is required to make a written assessment, on a quarterly basis, of his or her development. Each trainee must also furnish grade transcripts at the completion of any college course work. Developmental evaluations and academic transcripts should be submitted to Regional management and forwarded to Administrative Assistant Victoria Wallace, with a copy to your Assistant General Counsel or Deputy.

Action upon Failure to Meet Standards

When the Associate General Counsel, Division of Operations-Management, determines that a trainee has failed to meet performance requirements, the trainee will, depending on the availability of suitable position vacancies, be laterally reassigned or returned to his or her former position or to a similar position with equivalent status and grade. The trainee may be placed in a position that carries a lower grade than his or her former position when an action returning the trainee to his or her former grade would constitute a violation of the merit promotion system.

The Bridge Program provides a meaningful way for support staff employees to change careers and perform professional work of a particularly complex and challenging nature. Consequently, great care will be given to the evaluation of applicants to determine whether any have the ambition and the ability to assume the responsibilities of a Field Examiner. Of course, if an individual is selected, we have an affirmative duty to provide training and development with care and attentiveness so as to assist the trainee in reaching the Field Examiner position.

Please distribute this memorandum and the attachments to all support staff employees in the Region and place a copy on your office bulletin board. Any questions should be directed to your AGC or Deputy.

/s/
A. P.

Attachments: Bridge Program and Training Plan
Appraisal of Potential Based on Job Elements

cc: w/Attachments: Angela Wilson, Director of Human Resources