

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL
Division of Operations-Management

MEMORANDUM OM 17-04

November 8, 2016

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

FROM: Beth Tursell, Associate to 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 2016 will be through a Notice of Vacancy in USA Staffing. The Notice of Vacancies can be accessed through the following link:

[Notice of Vacancy for Labor Relations Examiner Trainee \(Bridge Program\)](#)

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 to the 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 6 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-5, , and 7,” a copy of which has been posted with this memorandum and the 2016 Memorandum of Agreement concerning the Bridge Program between the Agency and the National Labor Relations Board Union. 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 December 15, 2016, so that selectee(s) may register for appropriate courses in the winter college semester.

The Selection Process

Enclosed are memoranda announcing the program that should be distributed to all administrative professional 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 November 17, 2016.** 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.

Pursuant to the 2016 Memorandum of Agreement, prior to the interview, each applicant will be asked to address, in writing, six of the questions that had formerly been reserved for the interview. Based upon the interviews, the written responses that the applicants have submitted to above-described questions, 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 to the General Counsel in the Division of Operations-Management will determine whether to accept any applicant(s) for participation in the Bridge Program. 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

To make the program consistent with government-wide classification standards, successful applicants will be placed into the 244 (Labor Management Relations Examiner) series upon entering the program. All employees selected for the program will enter the program as a GS-5 Labor Management Relations Examiner Trainee with pay retention.

Upon the successful completion of the first year of the program, trainees will be placed into the GS-7 Labor Management Relations Examiner Trainee position. All trainees will serve as GS-7 Labor Management Relations Examiner Trainees during the final two years of the program. Upon the successful completion of the final year of the program, trainees will be promoted to the target GS-9 Labor Management Relations Examiner position.

Subsequent promotions will follow the Field Examiner merit promotion plan that is set forth in Article 8, Part B, Section 1 of the collective bargaining agreement.

Pay Retention During Training

Pay Setting for GS-9 selectee's

GS-9 Field administrative staff selected to participate in the Bridge Program will enter at the GS-5, and will be eligible for pay retention for the duration of their participation in the Bridge Program.¹ After one successful year in the Bridge Program, the selectee will be promoted to the GS-7; and will continue to receive pay at the GS-9 level for the duration of their participation in the Bridge Program. Selectees will remain at the GS-7 for two years and must successfully complete all required training to be eligible for the GS-9.

Pay Setting for GS-7 selectee's

¹ If a Bridge Program participant's tenure is extended for a year, the employee will remain at the GS-7.

GS-7 Field administrative staff selected to participate in the Bridge Program will enter at the GS-5, and will be eligible for pay retention during their first year in the Bridge Program. After one successful year in the Bridge Program, the selectee will be returned to the GS-7 and pay will be set at the applicable GS-7 rate for the duration of their participation in the Bridge Program. Selectees will remain at the GS-7 for two years and must successfully complete all required training to be eligible for the GS-9.

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. 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 administrative professional 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 the appropriate 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 the appropriate Assistant General Counsel or Deputy.

Action upon Failure to Meet Standards

When the Associate to the 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 Bridge Program provides a meaningful way for administrative professional 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 administrative professional employees in the Region and place a copy on your office bulletin board. Any questions should be directed to your AGC or Deputy.

/s/
B.T.

cc: NLRBU
w/Attachments: Chonita Young, Director of Human Resources

Attachments:
Bridge Program Memo to Admin Professional Staff Employees
Training Plan for Bridge Program
Appraisal of Potential Based on Job Elements