

PART 2048 - POSITION CLASSIFICATION

Subpart B - Position Management

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§ 2048.51 General.

Position management is the assignment of duties and responsibilities to individual positions (Position Design) and the structuring of those positions to form organizations that effectively and economically accomplish the goals in the mission area Strategic Plan (Organizational Design). This policy supplements Office of Personnel Management (OPM), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) position management policies and principles.

§ 2048.52 Position management objectives.

The primary objective of position management in Rural Development is to make the best use of resources in accomplishing the mission. Management must establish and maintain positions to provide high quality customer service, foster employee satisfaction, and achieve the performance targets in the mission area Strategic Plan. Management must establish and maintain organizational structures that are adaptable in size and composition. Such organizational structures must accommodate changes in mission, technology, and labor markets. Position management is not static. It is a continuous process to ensure the organization has the right number and type of positions as well as the appropriate structure to accomplish the functional assignments of the organizational unit. Incorporating position management principles in the planning process will assist in establishing and maintaining a skilled, diverse, and high-performing workforce to meet current and emerging work demands.

§ 2048.53 Position management principles.

(a) Position design. The following principles govern position design in Rural Development:

- (1) Clearly structure positions to avoid overlapping duties or responsibilities.
- (2) Assign as much of the same kind and level of work as possible to individual positions. Concentrate higher level duties in as few positions as practical.

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- (3) Structure positions to provide for career ladder progression.
- (4) Establish bridge, trainee, and developmental positions to promote Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) objectives.
- (5) Design positions that are satisfying and challenging.
- (6) Design positions with labor market conditions in mind to minimize recruitment problems.
- (7) Write position descriptions (PD's) that accurately reflect assigned duties and responsibilities.
- (8) Properly classify positions in accordance with OPM position classification standards and accepted classification policies and principles.

(b) Organizational design. The following principles govern organizational design in Rural Development:

- (1) Ensure that EEO objectives are incorporated into all organizational planning initiatives.
- (2) Establish the fewest number of positions as practical to provide the highest level of customer service at the lowest possible cost. Redistribute staff from higher organizational levels to front-line service delivery.
- (3) Optimize supervisor to employee ratios. Eliminate unnecessary supervisory positions to avoid narrow supervisory spans of control. There is no one ideal supervisor to employee ratio that fits all work situations. For each work unit, carefully consider the number of employees that can be effectively supervised by one individual. If practical, avoid establishing supervisory ratios less than 1:8 or greater than 1:15.
- (4) Minimize the number of organizational levels. Flatten organizational structures and emphasize delegation and decentralization to the lowest possible working level.
- (5) Limit the number of deputy, assistant, assistant to, and special assistant positions, both in program and staff organizational units.
- (6) Balance the workload of professional, administrative, and technical positions with sufficient support positions.

§ 2048.53(b) (con.)

- (7) Control average grade and ensure there is strong justification for increases in average grade.
- (8) Comply with Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) and budgetary limitations.
- (9) Abolish vacant positions if the duties can be redistributed or eliminated.

§ 2048.54 Position management authority.

Managers and supervisors have broad authority to establish positions and structure organizations. They must exercise position management authority within budget and staff year limitations. They also must exercise position management authority within the limits of the classification authority delegated in RD Instruction 2048-A, to their servicing Human Resources Office.

At any given time, managers and supervisors may be subject to limitations imposed on an ad hoc basis by others within the mission area, USDA, other agencies (e.g., OPM or OMB), Congress, or the President. There also are limitations for certain types of position management actions:

- (a) Open or close Field Offices. State Directors must follow procedures in RD Instruction 2021-A, to establish, close, reclassify, or relocate State or field offices.
- (b) Major organizational changes. Major organizational changes require approval at the Department level. Departmental Regulation 1010-1, "Organization," provides the definition of major organizational change.

§ 2048.55 Position management responsibilities.

- (a) Managers and Supervisors. Managers and supervisors must:
 - (1) Follow position management principles in establishing positions and organizational structures.
 - (2) Certify the accuracy of duties and responsibilities in a position description before a position is officially established.
 - (3) Assign work and ensure it is performed in accordance with duties and responsibilities on the official PD.

(4) Use official details to address temporary needs. Follow established merit promotion procedures when filling details to higher grade positions or positions with higher promotion potential. Details to lower grade jobs should not exceed one year. Details to unclassified duties should not exceed 90 days. Exceptions must be approved by the Assistant Administrator for Human Resources.

(5) Control unofficial details to avoid misassigning employees to duties not covered in the official PD.

(6) Review the need for vacant positions and confirm accuracy of classification prior to initiating requests to fill them. Where possible, redistribute or eliminate duties and recommend abolishment of vacant positions. If possible, initiate action to fill positions before the actual vacancy to minimize work disruption. Short periods of overlap, where two employees occupy the same position, are permitted to allow for training and smooth transition. Such situations should not exceed 30 days. Exceptions must be approved by the Assistant Administrator for Human Resources.

(7) Periodically review the number and types of positions and identify areas for improvement. Submit proposals for change through higher-level management channels.

(8) Contact Human Resources (HR) and other staff specialists for assistance on position management matters. Include EEO representatives in organizational planning initiatives.

(b) Human Resources Specialists. HR Specialists must:

(1) Provide advice and assistance to supervisors and managers in position and organizational design.

(2) Classify PDs in accordance with published OPM position classification standards.

(3) Ensure positions are classified and officially established before employees are assigned.

(4) Review and provide input to mission area officials on proposed organizational structures and other position management matters.

(c) Other staff specialists. Other staff specialists, such as budget analysts, management analysts, and program analysts can provide advice and assistance to supervisors and managers on position management matters. EEO representatives can provide advice and assistance to supervisors and managers on any civil rights impact of organizational proposals.

(d) Employees. Employees should raise concerns about the accuracy of assigned PDs. Employees may provide input to management on design of individual positions and/or organizational structures.

§ 2048.56 Position management committees.

Establishment of position management committees or review boards is optional. Senior management, i.e., Under Secretary, Deputy Under Secretary, Administrator, Deputy Administrator for Operations and Management, and State Directors, may decide if such committees or review boards are needed for their respective organizations. They also may decide if the need is for a permanent or ad hoc committee or review board. The following matters must be considered if a position management committee or review board is established:

(a) Define role. Be specific about what proposals a committee will review. They can range from requests for individual positions to major organizational changes. Requests for individual positions may be restricted to certain grade levels or certain types.

(b) Define responsibilities. Be specific about the scope of responsibilities. Typical responsibilities include review of proposals and recommendations for approval or disapproval. Committees may also suggest alternatives to initial proposals. Committees may determine what must be included in proposals and may provide guidance on preparing proposals.

(c) Designate chairperson and members. Be inclusive in membership. Include wide representation and ensure diversity in membership. Consider inclusion of EEO Advisory Committee representatives as well as labor or employee association representatives.

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