



Approved for Release  
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Date

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

**HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BULLETIN # 047, FY06**

**SUBJECT:** Creating a Vacancy Announcement

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

**EXPIRATION DATE:** Effective until canceled or superseded

**SUPERSEDES:** N/A

**BACKGROUND:** In accordance with 5 CFR 303.707, and the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, reasonable steps should be taken by each Servicing HR Office to ensure that all Department of Commerce's (DOC) vacancy announcements are informative and provide the proper language for applicants. Therefore, it is important to create vacancy announcements that contain sufficient information which is clear and concise for potential applicants to determine whether they want to apply, and provide information that the Servicing HR Office needs in order to consider applicants under the appropriate authority. This will reduce the time and resources needed to identify and select the most qualified applicant for any position. It is recommended that standardized templates be created of external vacancy announcements to improve consistency and make the application process more user-friendly to applicants. Each vacancy announcement must be tailored to include the specifics of a given vacancy.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this HR Bulletin is to provide clarification and guidance to Servicing HR Offices on preparing vacancy announcements properly, and to ensure that deficiencies are corrected.

**PROCEDURES:**

**Content of Vacancy Announcement.** Vacancy announcements shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- Vacancy announcement number;
- opening and closing dates (including the time zone), whether the position is open until closed or open continuously; and any other information dealing with how application receipt will be controlled, such as the use of early cut-off dates;
- title of position, pay plan, series, grade, salary range, appointment tenure;

- tour of duty (hours, special shifts), work schedule (including alternative work schedule options), and any overtime requirements;
- career-ladder potential, if any;
- bureau, organization, marketing information on mission and geographic location of position;
- statement that a position is managerial or supervisory, if applicable
- number of vacancies at time of posting, with a stated reservation by the Servicing HR Office to fill a lesser or greater number of vacancies;
- summary of the duties of the position/essential functions of the job;
- area of consideration;
- eligibility requirements;
- benefits; (i.e., such as, Flexible Spending Accounts, Health Insurance, Leave, Life Insurance, Long Term Care, Retirement Program, Thrift Saving Plan, Transit Benefits, Daycare, Fitness Center, Employee Assistance Program, etc.)
- education, license, or certification requirements, if applicable;
- critical competencies/Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSA's), and other competencies required for the position with clear designation of the critical competencies/KSA's;
- define specialized experience and how used;
- define selective placement factor and how used;
- security clearance requirements, physical requirements, and test requirements, U.S. citizenship, occasional travel, if any;
- reasonable accommodations;
- clearly state the definition of "well-qualified";
- instructions on how to apply, both paper and on-line;
- instructions related to mail delivery;
- a list of documentation required from applicants;
- equal employment opportunity statement;
- Selective Placement Program statement;
- Basis of rating; description of the evaluation process, including the role of critical competencies/KSA's;
- statement regarding relocation expenses;
- statement on probationary period requirements;
- if a vacancy announcement is canceled and later reposted, the first vacancy announcement will be referenced and a statement included that lists the changed requirements, if any, and information on whether or not applicants must reapply;
- contact information (e-mail and telephone) for general and technical questions;
- statement regarding what to do if technical difficulties prevent applicants from submitting their applications prior to the posted deadline;
- provide information on how CTAP and/or ICTAP candidates may apply, including proof of eligibility required, and how they are rated;
- information on how to claim veterans' preference, if applicable; and
- what to expect next once the vacancy announcement closes.

Describing specialized experience: Failure to include specific and informative definitions of specialized experience so that the applicants have a clear understanding of the qualifications in the announcement can negatively affect an applicant's ability to understand what constitutes qualifying specialized experience, the applicant would have a clear understanding of the qualifications needed for the vacancies, and the HR Specialist's ability to make consistent minimum qualification determinations. For example, add task-based statements to the generic occupational language provided in Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Position. In addition, the KSA's required to perform the work may also be described. **Definitions and examples of specialized experience needed to qualify, should not just only contain the generic definition of "1 year at the next lower grade level," must elaborate and give details and descriptions in terms of the levels of the KSA's.**

Use of Selective Factor(s): Selective factors are used where specific qualifications are absolutely required because a person cannot perform successfully in the position without such qualifications. These can include requirements for specific KSA's or Federal or State requirements for licensure or certification. In such instances, it may be appropriate to consider the use of selective factors. A selective factor becomes part of the minimum requirements for a position, and applicants who do not meet it are ineligible for further consideration.

Basis of rating; description of the evaluation process: Include a more descriptive definition in the basis of rating section of the vacancy announcements, describing the type of rating procedure to be used as either numeric or category rating, the type of assessment(s), and, if using an interview process for rating, whether the interview is rated pass/fail or scored.

Reasonable Accommodations: The following statement must be included in all vacancy announcements: "This agency provides reasonable accommodation to applicants with disabilities where appropriate. If you need a reasonable accommodation for any part of the application and hiring process, please notify the agency. Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis."

**Posting Period for Vacancy Announcements.** Vacancy announcements will remain open for a minimum recruitment period of 10 business days unless a longer posting period is requested by the Selecting Official or required by the bureau's Servicing HR Office Recruitment Plan. In the event of a conflict between a provision of the Recruitment Plan and applicable provisions of negotiated collective bargaining agreements, the provision of the collective bargaining agreements will apply.

Closing dates may be extended by the Selecting Official, or extended by the Servicing HR Specialist 1 day or more due to circumstances beyond the DOC's control, such as emergency closings.

**Alternative Procedures.** Providing an alternative means to apply for vacancy announcements must be given to applicants without on-line access or computer literacy.

**Methods of Applying.** Applicants may apply for a vacancy on-line using the DOC's automated system or manually using a "Job Kit" available from the Servicing HR Office. The Servicing HR Office will, upon request, provide applicants with "Job Kit" materials, including a copy of the vacancy announcement, an applicant questionnaire, instructions for completing a resume, and any other supporting documentation.

**Required Application Materials.** Applicants must apply as specified in the vacancy announcement to be considered for a vacancy. All application documents must be legible. Application materials must either be submitted on-line or received by the Servicing HR Office on or before the final closing date and time. Applicants who want to be considered for a vacancy must submit the following materials:

- **On-line Applicants:** a completed electronic application form available through the DOC's automated system, including the applicant questionnaire and supporting narratives. A supplemental resume may be submitted, if desired.
- **"Job Kit" Applicants:** a completed scannable application form, including responses to the applicant questionnaire, resume, and brief narrative statements supporting responses to the applicant questionnaire on supplemental sheets of paper. Each supplemental sheet submitted by an applicant must include his/her name and the vacancy announcement number.
- **Transcripts, licenses, and/or certifications:** Applicants for vacancies with education, licensing, and/or certification requirements must submit copies of their documentation with their application materials. These documents may be faxed, scanned, or mailed to the staffing specialist, if unable to send through the automated system. Applicants who do not submit the required documentation will be disqualified from further consideration. **"Official"** documentation will be required if selected for the position.

Failure to complete all mandatory sections of the on-line or "Job Kit" application form, or failure to submit a resume, and brief supporting narratives with a Job-Kit application will disqualify applicants from further consideration for the vacancy for which they are applying.

**Notification to Applicants.** On-line applicants will receive an electronic confirmation of successful submission of applications. For applicants submitting their applications in hard-copy format using the "Job Kit", the Servicing HR Office will review all documents for completeness and issue a receipt. The vacancy announcement will include contact information for applicants who experience technical difficulties preventing them from submitting a timely application.

**Records:** Bureau's Servicing HR Office will maintain copies of all regulations and records pertinent to vacancy announcements for at least 3 years from the effective date of the entrance-on-date (EOD).

**Responsibility:** Bureau's Servicing HR Office are responsible and accountable for ensuring that the provision of these requirements are applied consistently and equitable, thereby demonstrating commitment to and support for merit selection principles, policies, and practices.

**Accountability:** Vacancy announcements will be reviewed randomly on a quarterly basis by the Department's Office of Human Resources Management to ensure that processes are in compliance with applicable regulations.

**REFERENCES:** 5 CFR, Part 330.707; Delegated Examining Operations Handbook

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