

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL MANUAL SYSTEM

DPM CHAPTER 337.301

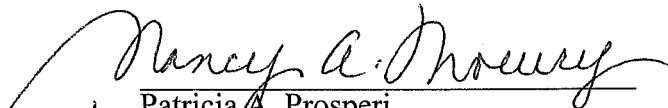
DATE: May 16, 2005

SUBJECT: **Category Rating**

This Chapter introduces the use of Category Rating for Departmental employees with the exclusion of DOT employees within the Federal Aviation Administration and the Office of the Inspector General, and is effective immediately.

Category rating is an excellent method of increasing the number of candidates for an individual position. This additional flexibility is expected to increase the diversity of our applicant pool as well as aid in attracting highly qualified individuals to our workforce.

This Chapter establishes the Department of Transportation's policy with regard to category rating. It is based upon and conforms to the requirements of the Office of Personnel Management implementing regulations in 5 CFR 337.301. This chapter is to be used in conjunction with the Code of Federal Regulations and other applicable laws.



Patricia A. Prospero
Director, Departmental Office of Human Resource Management

Distribution: Human Resource Council Members

OPI: OST/M-15/Deborah Perkins/202-366-9447

DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL MANUAL 337.301 CATEGORY RATING

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SECTION 1. General Information

Coverage

This Departmental Personnel Manual (DPM) contains the guidance for use of the category rating system for assessing and referring applicants for positions in the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

Authority and References

This chapter is based upon and conforms to the requirements and policy set forth in 5 U.S.C. 3319 and Office of Personnel Management implementing regulations in 5 CFR 337, Subpart C. This chapter provides guidance for implementing these references in DOT and must be read in conjunction with these references.

Purpose

Category Rating is one of several hiring flexibilities, under the OPM Delegated Examining Authority, available to agencies in meeting their human capital needs. Operating administrations are encouraged to consider using this flexibility as a tool to manage their workforce strategically.

Delegation of Authority

- a. Selection authority and the determination of the appropriate recruitment avenue is delegated to Heads of Operating Administrations and to the Assistant Secretary for Administration for the Office of the Secretary (OST). These officials are responsible for ensuring that hiring decisions are made in accordance with the guidance set forth in this chapter, as well as applicable law and regulation.
- b. The authority delegated in paragraph "a." may be further redelegated as these officials determine appropriate.
- c. The technical aspects of preparing the vacancy announcement and referring applicants will be carried out by DOT's Executive Agent, operated by the Federal Highway Administration, for all Operating Administrations, except the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).
- d. The FAA, an excepted service agency, does not use the competitive examining process and, therefore, is not subject to this guidance.

Definitions

Category Rating: Category rating is synonymous with alternative rating as described in 5 U.S.C. 3319, and is a process of evaluating eligibles by quality categories rather than

assigning numeric scores. Candidates are assessed against job-related criteria and placed into two or more pre-defined categories.

Quality Categories: Quality categories are groupings of individuals with similar levels of job related competencies or similar levels of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Veterans Preference Groups: 5 U.S.C. 2108 and 3309; 38 U.S.C. 5303A

NV: Candidates without veterans preference. This group includes non-disabled veterans who retire at or above the rank of "Major."

TP: The Defense Authorization Act for FY 1998 (P.L. 105-85) extends veterans' preference to anyone who served on active duty, anywhere in the world, for any length of time between Aug 2, 1990 and Jan 2, 1992, provided the person is otherwise eligible; OR

Veterans preference is granted to veterans who separated with an honorable discharge (or under honorable conditions) from the Armed Forces after more than 180 days of active duty, any part of which occurred after Jan 31, 1955, and before October 15, 1976, or after service during a war or in a campaign for which a campaign badge has been authorized; OR

Veterans who entered active duty after Oct 14, 1976 may be eligible for veteran's preference if they received a campaign badge or expeditionary medal.

CP: A veteran who served at any time and who has a compensable service-connected disability rating of at least 10 percent, but less than 30 percent.

CPS: A veteran who served at any time and who has a compensable service-connected disability rating of 30 percent or more.

XP: A veteran who served at any time and has a present service-connected disability or is receiving compensation, disability retirement benefits, or pension from the military or the Department of Veterans Affairs, but does not qualify as a CP or CPS; or a veteran who received a Purple Heart; OR

The spouse of a disabled veteran who is disqualified for a Federal position along the general lines of his or her usual occupation because of a service-connected disability. Such a disqualification may be presumed when the veteran is unemployed and is rated by appropriate military or Department of Veterans Affairs authorities to be 100 percent disabled and/or unemployable; or has retired, been separated, or resigned from a civil service position on the basis of a disability that is service-connected in origin; or has attempted to obtain a civil service position or other position along the lines of his or her usual occupation and has failed to qualify because of a service-connected disability; OR

The widow or widower of a veteran who was not divorced from the veteran, has not remarried, or the remarriage was annulled, and the veteran either: served during a war or during the period Apr 28, 1952 through Jul 1, 1955, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal has been authorized; or died while on active duty that included service described immediately above under conditions that would not have been the basis for other than an honorable or general discharge; OR

The mother of a veteran who died under honorable conditions while on active duty during a war or during the period Apr 28, 1952 through Jul 1, 1955, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal has been authorized; and she is or was married to the father of the veteran; and she lives with her totally and permanently disabled husband (either the veteran's father or her husband through remarriage); or she is widowed, divorced, or separated from the veteran's father and has not remarried; or she remarried, but is widowed, divorced, or legally separated from her husband when she claims preference; OR

The mother of a living disabled veteran, if the veteran was separated with an honorable or general discharge from active duty performed at any time and is permanently and totally disabled from a service-connected injury or illness; and the mother: is or was married to the father of the veteran; and lives with her totally and permanently disabled husband (either the veteran's father or her husband through remarriage); or is widowed, divorced, or separated from the veteran's father and has not remarried; or remarried but is widowed, divorced, or legally separated from her husband when she claims preference.

Agency Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP), 5 CFR 330 Subpart F

The CTAP program is designed to assist displaced or surplus DOT employees by providing special selection priority to eligible candidates.

Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan for Displaced Employees (ICTAP), 5 CFR 330 Subpart G. The ICTAP program is designed to assist displaced or surplus non-DOT employees by providing special selection priority to eligible candidates.

SECTION 2. Operating Instructions

This section provides instructions on basic staffing procedures. Operating Administrations may elect to vary the procedures to meet their individual staffing needs.

1. Receive the request for hire from the manager and the position description.

2. Clear CTAP (this link may be helpful in determining eligibility
http://www.opm.gov/deu/Handbook_2003/DEOH-Appendix-9.asp)

3. Determine if the category rating procedure is the method preferred for this particular vacancy announcement through discussions with the hiring manager.

4. Collaborate with the hiring manager and/or subject matter expert to complete the job analysis by identifying the major job requirements (duties) and the knowledge, skills, and abilities (i.e. , KSA's and competencies).

5. Develop the job analysis with the hiring manager and/or the subject matter expert that identifies the 3 category levels related to the desired skill. Ensure that the levels clearly differentiate between the competencies of the candidates as they relate to the duties of the job.

Example

Category	Benchmark	Benchmark Definition
Best Qualified (BQ)	3	Communicates or explains <i>complex</i> ideas or information clearly (e.g., Explains new regulations; Presents technical information at conferences).
Highly Qualified (HQ)	2	Communicates or explains <i>moderately</i> complex ideas or information clearly (e.g., Explains changes in regulations; Describes available services to individuals).
Qualified (Q)	1	Communicates or explains <i>basic ideas</i> or information clearly (e.g., Explains non-technical procedures or routine information).

6. Prepare the vacancy announcement and indicate that the category rating process is being used, what factors will be considered in rating the applications, as well as addressing how veterans' preference will be applied.

7. When the vacancy announcement closes, the applications will be initially assessed by an automated staffing system that evaluates experience, education, and training. Candidates must also meet OPM Qualification Standards e.g., quality and length of experience, etc.

8. A Human Resources Specialist certified to conduct competitive examining will review applications to ensure that the program is operating acceptably.

9. Check for ICTAP candidates. Refer to supervisor if they are well qualified. (This link may be helpful in determining eligibility:
http://www.opm.gov/deu/Handbook_2003/DEOH-Appendix-9.asp.)

10. Qualified candidates are placed in the appropriate quality category according to veterans' preference within each category. Veterans' preference is applied by placing preference eligibles ahead of non-preference eligibles within the appropriate quality category. All CP and CPS veterans are referred in the highest category unless the position is in a professional or scientific series, GS-9 and above. If there are less than three candidates in the highest category, the top two categories may be merged.

11. Supervisors select from the highest category (quality group) or merged quality group, but may not by-pass veterans for non-veterans.

12. As with the traditional method, veterans can be eliminated from further competition if the selecting official objects based upon basic qualifications or suitability. Submit a SF-62, Agency Request to Pass Over a Preference Eligible or Object to an Eligible, with justification to the Executive Agent for referral to OPM for approval; OR The candidate declines or fails to submit required documentation.

SECTION 3. Comparison of Traditional and Category Rating Processes

<i>Traditional Rating</i>	<i>Category Rating</i>
Candidates assigned a numerical score	Candidates assigned to categories
Extra points for veterans' preference	No points for veterans' preference
Announcements include KSAs	Announcements describe categories
Candidates referred in score order	Candidates referred in category order
Selection per "rule of 3" and veterans preference	Selection per veterans' preference

Certificate of Eligibles

<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Category (3 levels)</i>
80 CPS	3 (BQ) CPS
95 TP	3 (BQ) CP
90 NV (in top three but not within reach)	2 (HQ) CPS (All CP and CPS float to BQ)
	1 (Q) CP
	3 (BQ) XP
	3 (BQ) TP (can select any vet, TPs don't float to Category 3, but do go to the top of the cert in their category)
	3 (BQ) NV (not within reach until all vets are selected)

SECTION 4. Reporting Requirement

Annually, the Departmental Office of Human Resource Management will solicit information from the Operating Administrations pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3319. The report will be provided to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, along with a copy of the report to OPM on use of this authority. The report must include the following information:

- a. The number of employees hired under the system;
- b. The impact the system has had on the hiring of veterans and minorities, including those who are American Indian or Alaska Natives, Asian, Black or African American, and native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders; and
- c. The way in which managers were trained in the administration of category rating.