

## Excerpt from the Personnel Handbook for the Department of the Interior (DOI) Merit Promotion Plan.

[Link to the complete Handbook at:  
<http://www.doi.gov/hrm/guidance/mpp/mpphtoc.htm>]

\*\*\*\*\*

### As defined in Section 6. Evaluating Candidates of the U.S. Department of the Interior Merit Promotion Plan Handbook --

**Crediting Plan.** Crediting plans are used to rate and rank applications meeting minimum qualification requirements, including any selective placement factors, against the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) identified through the job analysis. The crediting plan is developed prior to applicants' being screened for minimum qualifications. Candidates' experience, education, training, awards, outside activities, self development and supervisory appraisals will be reviewed and evaluated against the crediting plan. (See the following which is Exhibit 6 of the Handbook.)

\*\*\*\*\*

### As outlined in Exhibit 6. Guidance on Devising Crediting Plans of the U.S. Department of the Interior Merit Promotion Plan Handbook --

#### Guidance on Devising Crediting Plans

**A. Crediting Plan.** A crediting plan (or rating schedule/evaluation plan) is a plan developed to rate and rank candidates for a specific position. It is designed to measure the level at which eligible applicants possess the job related knowledge, skills, and abilities that are necessary for successful performance in the job to be filled. This is done through a review of the applicant's total education, training, experience, activities, awards, supervisory appraisals, and background in relation to each knowledge, skill, or ability identified.

**B. Validity.** Validity refers to the accuracy with which the crediting plan identifies the best qualified candidates. Careful construction of the crediting plan based on a job analysis and consistent application of the evaluation criteria developed during that analysis are key elements in the preparation and use of a valid crediting plan.

**C. Job Analysis.**

1. A job analysis is defined as a systematic examination of a position to determine the duties and worker characteristics which are important for successful job performance.
2. To conduct a job analysis, the servicing personnel specialist meets with the selecting official and/or a subject matter expert. Where a face-to-face meeting is not possible, the job analysis may be conducted by telephone or the selecting official/subject matter expert may complete the forms on his/her own.
3. The following guides are useful for preparing the job analysis:
  - (a) Office of Personnel Management Qualifications Standards Handbook;
  - (b) Official position description;
  - (c) Classification standards and evaluation statements;
  - (d) Functional statements;
  - (e) Organization charts;
  - (f) Occupational literature; and
  - (g) Performance standards.

#### **D. Conducting the Job Analysis.**

The first step is to identify and record the major duties of the position.

1. Next to each duty, list the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to perform those duties. A KSA may pertain to more than one duty.
  - (a) Knowledge - A body of information applied directly to the performance of a function. It includes information about persons, places, facts, events, systems, ideas, theories, methods, procedures, principles, concepts, or cases, that a person mentally possesses as a result of formal education, training, or personal experience.
  - (b) Skill - A present, observable competence to perform a task with ease and proficiency. It often requires the use of equipment, machinery, or tools and implies measurable performance.
  - (c) Ability - A present competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that results in an observable product. It is often broader and more abstract than skills or knowledge.
2. After identifying all the KSAs and characteristics, you must further refine them.
  - (a) Which KSAs can be rated from an application and which must be evaluated by another method, e.g., interviews, reference checks, written tests, or assessment centers? Generally, when developing a crediting plan, you should list as rating criteria only those KSAs that can be evaluated from an application or other supplementary written information.
  - (b) Which are necessary to have entering on the job and which may be picked up at a later date after a reasonable amount of training? Those necessary for immediate performance are selective factors. They should not be so stringent that they disqualify all but those people who may already be working in the office. Program knowledge can often be learned on the job. They often are not appropriate selective factors for lower grade positions. Selective factors should not be those things that

can be learned in the position but something that must be brought from outside, for example, knowledge of a language other than English.

(c) Of those KSAs that remain, which are most important to doing the work? How do the KSAs rank against each other? (These considerations are important in order to document weighting.) When determining its importance, you should consider the amount of time a KSA will be used, the difficulty/complexity of the KSA, and the consequences of performing the KSA well or poorly. Importance can be stated by a 1, 2, 3 scale (Most important - least important) with documentation as to why that "rating" was chosen.

3. Once these determinations have been made, you should have left a reasonable number of KSAs (4-6) to use in an actual crediting plan.
4. Make sure your KSAs are properly written. They should start with "Knowledge of..."; "Ability to..."; or "Skill in...".
5. Verify that you are dealing with only one factor in each KSA.

#### **E. Defining Performance Levels or Benchmarks.**

1. A performance level or benchmark is a written, descriptive statement of experience, education, training, awards, appraisal, et cetera, which shows how an applicant could have acquired a KSA at a particular level of competency.
2. Many Bureaus use a three level benchmark system such as; Superior, Good, and Satisfactory. In rare cases, a quality ranking factor may have only 2 levels, (speaking a foreign language may be desirable, but not mandatory. Someone speaking that language could get an extra point.)
3. The use of a numerical system is required. Using a 5-point system allows for interpolation between described levels;

Superior - 5

Good - 3

Satisfactory - 1

If a rater (i.e., personnelist, subject matter expert, or evaluation panel member) feels a person does not quite meet an upper level but is better than a lower level, he/she could give 4 or 2 points. This method allows for some judgment and subjectivity. Other point system may be used.

4. The KSAs should be weighted according to their importance. It is advised that no KSA should be more than triple weighted (example: point spread of 3-15).
5. Benchmarks should be concrete examples: types of experience -- classifying professional, technical, clerical jobs; writing technical reports, analyzing budget documents; education -- course work in statistics, one college level course in English

composition; training -- supervisory training course, OPM course in management analysis.

6. Benchmarks should not be written in terms of years of experience, limited/extensive experience, or specific programs/settings.
7. There should be a progression in the benchmarks. This progression may revolve around an action, an object, a purpose, or any combination thereof.

(a) Action -

**Applying** regulatory material

**Interpreting** regulatory material

**Developing** regulatory material

(b) Object -

Writing **standard letters**

Writing **technical reports**

Writing **regulations**

(c) Purpose -

Preparing budget materials for the office

Preparing budget materials for a major program in the agency

Preparing budget materials for the whole agency

8. In general, avoid benchmarks that go beyond the required level of performance of the job. Example, KSA -- Ability to do simple arithmetical computations:

Superior: Knowledge of calculus. This should not be a KSA because calculus may never be used in the job and is no indication of a person's ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide.

9. There may be many examples for one particular benchmark. Although you may wish to include several, raters must be warned that the benchmarks are not all inclusive. Raters must exercise judgment in applying benchmarks to a candidate's qualifications statement.

---

## Crediting Plan Format

Vacancy No.:

Position Title, Series, Grade:

Organization:

Location:

### Element No. 1

POINTS OR EQUIVALENT

WEIGHTED SCORES

10

6

2

RANKING FACTORS

Superior

Good level

Satisfactory level

### Example

Element: Ability to read and interpret regulatory material.

### Scores

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 10 points | Experience developing regulatory material.   |
| 6 points  | Experience in a position such as a claims examiner where incumbent was required to interpret the applicability of regulations to difficult cases |
| 2 points  | Similar experience to above but regulations are applied to clear-cut cases.  |