

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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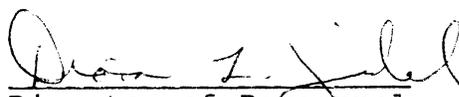
DPM LETTER: 713-2

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
UPWARD MOBILITY PROGRAM PLAN

DATE: JUN 18 1987

This letter transmits the Department of Transportation's Upward Mobility Program Plan. All Operating Administrations are covered by the guidance delineated in this plan. The plan becomes effective immediately.

Attachment


Director of Personnel

File after FPM Chapter 713 Letter (DPM Letter
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UPWARD MOBILITY PROGRAM PLAN

A. INTRODUCTION

1. PURPOSE.

This letter provides Departmental Upward Mobility Program policy and guidelines, delineates program responsibilities, requires the development and implementation of Operating Administrations (OA) Upward Mobility Program Plans, and provides criteria for monitoring and evaluating Upward Mobility Programs throughout the Department of Transportation (DOT).

2. REFERENCES.

- a. Executive Order 11478, Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government, 8/8/69.
- b. Public Law 92-261, The Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, 3/24/72.
- c. Chapter 41 of Title 5, United States Code (formerly Government Employees Training Act).
- d. Federal Personnel Manual Letter (FPM) 713-27, Upward Mobility for Lower Level Employees, 6/28 74.
- e. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Management Directive, EEO-MD 712, March 29, 1983.

3. SCOPE.

The provisions of this letter apply to all units of the DOT including the Office of the Secretary (OST) and Office of Inspector General herein referred to as the OAs.

4. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.

The objectives of the Upward Mobility Program within DOT are:

- a. to increase the opportunities for lower level employees to obtain their fullest employment potential;
- b. to provide the Department an additional means to achieve greater utilization of its employees;
- c. to motivate employees toward greater achievement and create an environment which promotes high morale;

- d. to expand career opportunities for employees appointed under Section 213.3102(u) and Section 213.3102(t) of Schedule A for the severely physically and mentally handicapped and Veterans Readjustment Authority (VRA);
- e. to support the Department's Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) and Equal Employment Opportunity Affirmative Action Plan for Minorities and Women; and
- f. to support the Secretary of Transportation's Initiatives to Improve Opportunities for Women.

5. KEY PROGRAM DEFINITIONS:

- a. UPWARD MOBILITY - is defined by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as a systematic management effort that focuses Federal personnel policy and practices on the development and implementation of specific career opportunities for lower level employees below GS-9 or (Wage Grade (WG) equivalent) who are in positions or occupational series which do not enable them to realize their full work potential.
- b. POTENTIAL - refers to an individual's ability or aptitude to do something or learn to do something. Potential cannot be measured in the abstract but must be viewed in relationship to specific criteria for the position in question.
- c. SELECTION - covers an entire range of procedures and activities which identify individuals with potential who will be considered, develop criteria against which they will be competitively measured, determine the selection methodology and instruments to be used, and place trainees into the target position.
- d. TARGET POSITION - is a current or projected staffing need having known promotion potential which an agency will fill through its Upward Mobility Program. Also, the specific position for which the upward mobility trainee is being trained following competitive selection. The target position or job may be further defined as having a trainee level, a target level, and a full performance level. The trainee level is the entry level for the individual employee. The target level is usually one or two levels beyond the entry level in terms of grade and responsibilities, depending upon whether the target job is in a one or two grade

interval series. The full performance level is the lowest level of a career ladder position at which an employee has learned the full range of duties in a specific occupation. The upward mobility trainee, once having reached the target level receives subsequent promotions in the same manner as employees who entered the occupational series from other sources and is no longer a program participant.

- e. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OR TRAINING PLAN - a schedule of both formal and work-site training and developmental experiences adapted to the needs of the trainee which is designed to provide or enhance the skills, knowledges and abilities needed to assure that the trainee can successfully perform in the target job. Primary responsibility for preparing the plan rests with the supervisor with necessary input from a member of the personnel office staff and/or the Upward Mobility Program Coordinator.
- f. TRAINING AGREEMENT - a negotiated instrument between an agency and OPM which allows for movement of employees into trainee positions in order to qualify them through work experience and training for specified target jobs within a prescribed timeframe.

B. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

1. PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES.

- a. The Assistant Secretary for Administration is delegated overall authority for Departmental policy, direction, coordination, and evaluation of personnel management programs within DOT.
- b. The Office of Personnel in OST is responsible for:
 - (1) establishing requirements and standards for Upward Mobility Programs which will assure that all Upward Mobility Programs meet OPM regulations and contribute to the program objectives of DOT;
 - (2) providing guidance and technical assistance to the OAs in carrying out their Upward Mobility Programs;
 - (3) acting as a clearinghouse for information on all Upward Mobility Programs within the Department; and
 - (4) coordinating OAs' Upward Mobility Training Agreements for OPM approval.

- c. Heads of Operating Administrations are responsible for developing and implementing Upward Mobility Program Plans within these guidelines and those contained in FPM Letter 713-27, Upward Mobility for Lower Level Employees.
- d. Managers and supervisors are responsible for achieving the objectives of the Upward Mobility Program at their respective organization levels. They participate in making assessments of staffing needs, identifying target positions and developing individual training and development plans. They are also responsible for evaluating employees in upward mobility positions and participating in determinations regarding successful completion of program requirements.

2. TRAINING AGREEMENTS.

- a. The minimum qualification standards for upward mobility positions may be modified by use of an OPM approved Upward Mobility Training Agreement. A training agreement makes it possible to substitute intensive, accelerated training for a portion of the normal qualification requirements. OAs are responsible for developing training agreements with OPM to permit waiver of published qualification standards when assigning employees of high potential to positions for developmental purposes. Guidelines for the development of training agreements can be found in FPM Letter 338-9, Elimination of Chapter 271; Revision of Guidance on Training Agreements and Superior Qualifications Appointments.
- b. OAs' training agreements will be coordinated through the Departmental Office of Personnel for OPM approval.

C. TARGET POPULATION AND ELIGIBILITY

1. TARGET POPULATION.

Upward Mobility Programs within DOT are open to white collar and blue collar below GS-9 or WG equivalent employees who are in positions or occupational series which restrict them from realizing their full work potential, and who have the ability to acquire and use skills and knowledges needed to successfully perform higher level work.

ELIGIBILITY.

DOT employees who are serving under career or career conditional appointments or were appointed under the VRA or Section 213.3102(u) and Section 213.3102(t) of Schedule A (severely physically and mentally handicapped) are eligible. To apply for an upward mobility position, an employee must have completed 90 days of service under an appointment that is not time-limited.

D. APPLICATION PROCEDURES AND SELECTION PROCESS

1. Selection procedures and announcement of positions will be in accordance with the OAS' Merit Promotion Plans as well as FPM Chapter 335 which covers Federal Merit Promotion Policy.
2. The vacancy announcement shall: (a) identify the position as an upward mobility opportunity, state the title, series and grade of the target position, cover the duties of the target position, specify the eligibility requirements and selection criteria, specify the approximate length of training, and indicate how and where to apply; (b) indicate that VRA veterans and disabled employees are eligible to apply for announced position(s); and (c) outline the procedures for consideration of applications from handicapped individuals who are employed in the excepted service or seeking an excepted appointment. (NOTE: If an excepted authority is used, a vacancy that has been announced through a merit promotion program may be filled noncompetitively by a handicapped individual.) A general announcement may be used when there are several positions in the same occupational group using similar criteria.
3. Individuals selected should possess the essential basic skills and demonstrate potential for reasonable assurance of success in their proposed assignments. Methods of assessing employee potential may consist of performance appraisals which show transferability of related knowledge, skills, and abilities to the target position; self-rating instruments which show motivation to assume more complex tasks and greater responsibilities; interviews which measure likelihood of success in meeting target job requirements; and assessment centers. Written tests may be utilized only as appropriate and useful for specific job placement purposes.

E. IDENTIFICATION OF TARGET OCCUPATIONS
AND/OR SPECIFIC POSITIONS

1. An assessment of staffing needs is necessary to determine positions which may potentially be filled through Upward Mobility Program procedures. Staffing needs should be determined by reviewing employee loss and hire data, and recognizing changes in mission and program priorities. OAs will identify target occupations based upon an assessment of their individual staffing needs.
2. In establishing upward mobility positions, priority consideration shall be given to occupations for which a determination of underrepresentation has been made by the OA in its FEORP Plan.
3. The following approaches may be used to move employees to target positions.

a. Crossover -

Utilizes vacancies in two grade interval series as target positions. The target job may be scaled down from the full performance level at which it is usually filled, to the trainee level to facilitate entry. Upward mobility trainees can be placed in such positions directly by use of an OPM Training Agreement or by use of a temporary bridge position with ultimate reassignment or promotion into the target job when the qualification standards are met.

b. Bridging -

Examines the workload within the organization through a task analysis relating to the redistribution and reorganization of the work to create a permanent bridge position. This is a long-range activity which results in the creation of technician level jobs by combining lower level tasks from the professional occupation. The new position or bridge position becomes an interim or pre-professional job which has the related two grade interval job as the target position. Trainees enter the bridge position competitively and are reassigned or promoted to the target position without further competition upon successful completion of training in the bridge position. Bridge and target positions are secured through attrition in the professional occupation. If assessment of the work force revealed that employees cannot meet the qualifications of the bridge position, an OPM Training Agreement may be needed to implement this program. Usually, however, a sufficient number of employees with experience qualifying for the bridge position is already present within the work force.

c. Skills Upgrade -

Uses vacancies in the one grade interval occupational series as target jobs to fill in behind those employees who leave through regular attrition. The program must be planned to take advantage of turnover as identified through careful analysis of how jobs become available within the agency. This type of program is most useful for supplementing the existing skills of employees so that they may fully qualify for a target position which is related to their current job (e.g., training clerk typists for secretary or stenography positions). To implement this approach, a formal OPM Training Agreement must be in place.

4. Positions may be secured for the program through either attrition or the establishment of "pools". The following strategies may be implemented through the use of either method.

a. Place Now, Train Later (attrition) -

This strategy uses attrition as the intake mechanism. The position description of the vacancy must be rewritten to show intake at the entry level. A training agreement may be required as this strategy is most frequently used to implement Crossover and Bridge types of Upward Mobility Programs. Employees compete for entry into the training program which then permits the agency to provide training related to the target position without additional competition. This strategy requires identification of the types of positions to be used before an actual vacancy occurs and the rewriting of the position description and development of a training plan. The selection criteria are based on the entry level position. Tasks included in the target job provide the basis for development of the training plan which can later be adapted to the selected trainee.

b. Place Now, Train Later (pool) -

Through this strategy, a number of positions are set aside "off the top" of ceiling allocations from management. These ceiling slots are assigned to the Upward Mobility Coordinator or designee and may be used for a variety of positions in one or several occupations. An employee competes for a position identified by the office to which the trainee will be assigned. The individual trainees selected for the program are actually detailed in the offices which

agree to accept a trainee for subsequent absorption into an anticipated vacancy in the office. An OPM Training Agreement may be required depending upon the type and level of positions used. This strategy is adaptable to any of the types of Upward Mobility Programs. A training plan is developed based on the tasks of the anticipated vacancy which is the target job. Reassignment or promotion to the target job may be with or without further competition upon successful completion of the training plan depending upon how the agency implements this strategy.

c. Train Now, Place Later -

To successfully implement this strategy, a great deal of initial planning must be done based on past and anticipated attrition in specific occupations so that trainees and target jobs become available within approximately the same period of time. This strategy may also be used to meet a projected agency need for certain skills and abilities in an identified occupation based on a change in mission or an anticipated increase in work, in a unit or throughout the agency. Competition initially occurs for entry into the Upward Mobility Program where selectees receive formal training. An OPM Training Agreement is not needed to implement this strategy as the trainees will meet the qualification standards for the entry level to the target jobs upon successful completion of the training plan. When a position vacancy occurs and is to be filled through the agency Merit Promotion Program, all qualified employees compete and receive consideration. To increase the probability of successful use of this strategy, the training provided must be (1) directly related to an occupation utilized within the agency and (2) sufficient in content and length of time to qualify the trainee for the entry level to the target job. This strategy is most adaptable to a skills upgrade type of program; but may also be used with very careful planning for the crossover type of Upward Mobility Program.

5. Before reassignment or promotion to the target position can be effected, trainees must make up the difference in qualifications from what they bring into the program and the qualifications required for the target position as published in Handbook X-118. Training time to make up the difference in such qualifications may be credited at a rate of no more than 1 month of training for 2 months of on-the-job performance.
6. Employees who are reduced in grade for the purpose of participating in the program are entitled to pay retention.

F. CAREER COUNSELING AND TRAINING PROVISIONS

1. COUNSELING.

- a. Inherent to the success of an Upward Mobility Program is the availability of qualified counselors, preferably members of personnel and training offices. Counselors need a good background in personnel management and equal employment opportunity principles, and specific knowledge of employment and educational avenues open within their organizational jurisdictions.
- b. The primary role of the career counselor is to provide the employees with the opportunity to explore their career interests and to assist them in formulating realistic career plans. This involves objective assessment of employees' potential capabilities and mutual agreement on realistic goals.
- c. Counselors must have an understanding of and access to information such as personnel records, merit promotion and performance evaluation procedures, OPM qualification standards, the OPM training catalog, the FPM, and catalogs, brochures, and related material published by area schools, colleges, and universities.

2. TRAINING.

- a. An individual development plan will be prepared for all trainees to assure that they acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities for the target position. Immediately after an employee has been selected for an upward mobility position, the counselor and the employee's supervisor will develop an individual development plan which defines the qualifications needed for the target position, list specific duties of the target position, and identify appropriate training and developmental experiences necessary for the participant to qualify for the target position. The supervisor will discuss this plan with the employee. The duration of training under the developmental plan will vary according to the entry level of the employee and his/her demonstrated performance in the successful accomplishment of the critical job elements of the target position.
- b. Specifically planned educational courses which contribute to the career field may be taken. Such courses may include English composition, oral communication, improving reading ability, business mathematics, statistics, economics, or other formal courses depending upon the needs of the individual and the target position.
- c. On-the-job training assignments which are meaningful and productive and provide for supervised development into the target position should be identified. Special familiarization assignments may be made to other program areas that interface with the target position. The training may also include attending staff meetings and conferences which would familiarize the employee with policies and other activities related to the target position.
- d. To allow for changes in the participants' developmental programs due to unforeseen circumstances, modifications may be made to individual development plans. These modifications may include the following:
 - (1) altering length and intensity of the subject matter to meet the individual needs of trainees, provided they are made within the total scope and overall objective of the training program;

- (2) adjusting elapsed training time to individual cases to cover contingencies such as:
 - (a) sick leave,
 - (b) emergency annual leave, and/or
 - (c) extensions to the Departmental assignment to achieve desired knowledge skills and abilities;
- (3) changing sequence of training schedule to permit learning experiences to coincide with actual work assignments as the individual develops during the training period when conditions or experience indicate the need for such modifications; and
- (4) altering subject matter material requirements to reflect technological changes, the needs of the organization and the trainee, and evaluation of the requisites of the development program.

G. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESSES

1. OAs' Upward Mobility Program Plans will outline specific schedules for periodic evaluations of trainees' progress, along with standard report formats and designation of evaluator(s). Supervisors have the primary responsibility for evaluating trainees progress and performance. Upon completion of the training program, supervisors shall be required to make a final summary evaluation of the achievement and performance of the trainee and certify that the terms and intent of the training agreement were met.
2. Trainees shall be required to make written evaluations at the completion of any formal training provided at Government expense and to periodically make self-assessment of their development.
3. Trainees will have met the qualification requirements established for the target position upon successful completion of the training program and may then be eligible for reassignment and/or promotion to the target position.

4. Unsatisfactory Performance of Trainee - If at any point in the training period there is an indication, as evidenced by the supervisory evaluation or performance in training courses, that the trainee is not performing satisfactorily and will be unable to move into the target position; the agency personnel officer or his/her designee, with the trainee's supervisor and/or counselor, shall review the situation and recommend an appropriate course of action. Options available to management include: (1) reassigning the employee to a non-training position; (2) reassigning the employee to a similar training position under the direction of another supervisor; or (3) extending the employee's training an additional 6 months.
5. Each OA will submit an Upward Mobility Program*Plan to the Departmental Office of Personnel by October 30 of each year. The plan shall consist of guidelines and standards for planning, developing, and implementing the OA's Upward Mobility Program. It must be consistent with OPM requirements, Departmental guidelines, and OA's Merit Promotion and FEORP Plans. In the event that the prior year's plan is still valid without change, a certifying memorandum from the personnel officer may be furnished instead of another copy of the plan.
6. OAs must establish procedures to monitor and evaluate their programs.
7. OAs shall be prepared to make periodic reports to the Departmental Office of Personnel on elements such as: the number of employees selected for upward mobility positions, the number moved into the planned target positions, the number of participants dropped from the program and the reason for their lack of success.