

DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL MANUAL SYSTEM

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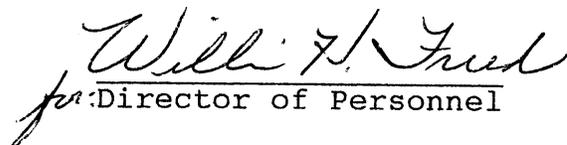
SUBJECT: Department of Transportation
Career Opportunities Training
Agreement

DATE: JUL 21 1983

Attached for use by all Operating Administrations is the Department of Transportation Career Opportunities Training Agreement (COTA). Through use of the COTA, Departmental employees may be selected and trained for careers in different occupations. Individuals who successfully complete training will be eligible for lateral assignments and/or promotion into target positions.

The COTA covers positions through the GS/GM-15 level. Consequently, it can serve as a vehicle for career movement of employees in the mid- and senior-level range, as well as for lower graded employees. While the COTA does not automatically supersede Operating Administration training agreements currently in effect, Operating Administrations may use it in place of those plans if they so choose. The most notable exceptions are training agreements which provide for accelerated promotions. The COTA does not allow for time-in-grade waivers or accelerated promotions.

Questions concerning the use of the COTA should be directed to the Personnel Policy Division, M-16.


for: Director of Personnel

Attachment

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES TRAINING AGREEMENT
FOR GENERAL SCHEDULE EMPLOYEES GS-1-15, GM-13-15
AND
WAGE GRADE EQUIVALENTS

I. PURPOSE

The Department of Transportation's Career Opportunities Training Agreement (COTA) is a career development tool. COTA provides a systematic mechanism for development of employees to meet the organizational and staffing needs of the Department's Operating Administrations and the Office of the Secretary. Through the use of this agreement, employees of the Department may be selected and trained for careers in different occupations. Employees who successfully complete training will be eligible for lateral reassignments and/or promotion into the target series. The Department will benefit by the reassignment of trained personnel whose services are needed in specific occupational specialties. Employees will benefit by entering occupational series where they will have additional opportunities for advancement.

The agreement may also be used to permit employees to serve on rotational assignments (usually by details) and then return to their official position(s), with time on such assignments creditable as specialized experience.

II. OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of this Career Opportunities Training Agreement are to:

- A. Provide managers with a flexible method to train and manage human resources;
- B. Increase the availability of well-qualified employees within the work force;
- C. More effectively utilize the capabilities of employees;
- D. Provide selected employees at all grade levels with the required training and/or education to enter new occupations with additional career opportunities;
- E. Prepare trainees to function effectively in the target positions, including (subject to labor-management agreement) supervisory and management positions;
- F. Facilitate the staffing of positions which are difficult to fill;

- G. Broaden career opportunities for employees appointed under special entry level programs such as Worker Trainee Opportunities and Veterans Readjustment Appointment Authority; and
- H. Assist the Department in meeting Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) goals.

III. ORGANIZATION COVERAGE

This training agreement is Departmentwide in scope. However, when taking action under this agreement, an Operating Administration may limit consideration to employees of the administration, a component such as its headquarters or a region, or other segment of the administration as permitted by the administration's merit promotion plan.

IV. EMPLOYEE COVERAGE

Trainees under this agreement will be selected from Department employees who: 1) are in grades GS-1 through GS-15, GM-13 through GM-15, or wage grade equivalents; 2) have competitive civil service status, or are serving under Schedule A appointments under 5 CFR 213.3102(t) or 213.3102(u); and 3) demonstrate the skills necessary for development and entrance into a clerical, technical, administrative, professional, or craft/trade career. (Coverage of 5 CFR 213.3102(t) and 213.3102(u) is limited only to assigning employees to positions covered by the same Schedule A authority. This agreement cannot give authority for movement into competitive positions.)

Employees hired under the Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA) Authority will also be eligible to compete for career opportunities positions. If selected, VRA appointees will be reassigned to trainee positions, and their initial training agreements (where applicable) under the VRA appointment, if not entirely completed, will be amended to include the new training requirements at that time. They will remain on their VRA appointments until such time as they have completed the required two years of service necessary for conversion to competitive status. If performing satisfactorily at the time, VRA appointees are to be converted, in place, to the competitive service.

V. POSITION COVERAGE

A. Trainee Positions

Trainee positions are those positions in which employees are placed during the training period. If trainee positions are in occupational series which have minimum education requirements, trainees must be placed in

technician or paraprofessional positions until the minimum education requirements have been met. Therefore, where a trainee position has a minimum education requirement, it is prudent to also announce a paraprofessional or technician position so that any selectee who does not meet the minimum education requirement can be placed in the paraprofessional or technician position.

Once the minimum education requirements have been met, trainees may be placed in a trainee position in the series which has the minimum education requirement or, if all training requirements are met, the target position. Also, at the discretion of management, trainees may receive interim promotions while in this status if they meet the time-in-grade restrictions. Under no circumstances can trainees be placed directly into target positions which have minimum educational requirements as prescribed in the Qualification Standards Handbook, unless the minimum educational and other qualifications requirements have been met.

Employees will be placed in trainee positions by reassignment or by voluntary change to lower grade, rather than by promotion or detail. (Exception: In those cases where the agreement is used for a series of rotational assignments with the expectation that the employee will return to his or her original position, the employee may be detailed in 120 day increments to positions to which he or she is rotating.) At management's discretion, trainees may be promoted to a higher level trainee position 90 days after being placed into trainee positions if they meet time-in-grade restrictions and minimum education requirements. They need not meet other Qualification Standards Handbook or Handbook X-118C requirements.

An employee who voluntarily changes to a lower grade to participate in training under this agreement and subsequently is unable to qualify for the target position will typically be reassigned to an appropriate position at the lower grade level. However, repromotion to the employee's former grade level may be made in accordance with the requirements of the Office of Personnel Management and Operating Administration merit promotion plans.

Employees who accept a reduction in grade, and whose pay rate cannot be accommodated within the new pay range, are entitled to pay retention under 5 U.S.C. 5363 and 5 CFR 536.104(b).

B. Target Positions

Target positions are those that employees will be placed in after successful completion of the required training. The target position may be at the same grade level as the trainee position or at the next appropriate grade level in the occupational series for which the employee is being trained. Ordinarily, the next appropriate grade level will be either one or two grades higher than the trainee's present grade or wage grade equivalent, depending upon whether the target position is classified at one-grade or two-grade intervals.

In no case does this agreement authorize exception to the time-in-grade restrictions or probationary time requirements of OPM regulations. Before assignment is made to the target position, the trainee must complete the full program of training as described in this training agreement under Item VII, LENGTH OF TRAINING.

Promotion and/or reassignment to the target position may provide the employee with the opportunity for further advancement in the career field. However, additional development of employees beyond the target positions will follow normal merit promotion and career development procedures.

This training agreement is applicable to a target position in any of the occupational series properly classified at one- and two-grade intervals and any craft/trade and labor occupation. Target positions may fall within any of the following occupational groups:

General Schedule

- GS-000 Miscellaneous Occupations Group
- GS-100 Social Science, Psychology and Welfare Group
- GS-200 Personnel Management and Industrial Relations Group
- GS-300 General Administrative, Clerical and Office Services Group
- GS-400 Biological Science Group
- GS-500 Accounting and Budget Group
- GS-600 Medical, Hospital, Dental and Public Health Group
- GS-700 Veterinary Medical Science Group
- GS-800 Engineering and Architecture Group
- GS-900 Legal and Kindred Group
- GS-1000 Information and Arts Group
- GS-1100 Business and Industry Group
- GS-1200 Copyright, Patent, and Trademark Group
- GS-1300 Physical Science Group
- GS-1400 Library and Archives Group

GS-1500 Mathematics and Statistics Group
GS-1600 Equipment, Facilities and Service Group
GS-1700 Education Group
GS-1800 Investigations Group
GS-1900 Quality Assurance, Inspection and Grading Group
GS-2000 Supply Group
GS-2100 Transportation Group

Wage Grade

WG-2500 Wire Communications Equipment Installation and Maintenance Family
WG-2600 Electronic Equipment Installation and Maintenance Family
WG-2800 Electrical Installation and Maintenance Family
WG-3100 Fabric and Leather Work Family
WG-3111 Sewing Machine Operations Family
WG-3200 Glass Workers Family
WG-3300 Instrument Work Family
WG-3400 Machine Tool Work Family
WG-3500 General Services Support Work Family
WG-3600 Structural and Finishing Work Family
WG-3700 Metal Processing Family
WG-3800 Metal Work Family
WG-3900 Motion Picture, Radio, TV, and Sound Group Operations Family
WG-4100 Painting and Paperhanging Family
WG-4200 Plumbing and Pipefitting Family
WG-4300 Pliable Materials Work Family
WG-4400 Printing Family
WG-4600 Wood Work Family
WG-4700 General Maintenance and Operations Work Family
WG-4800 General Equipment Maintenance Family
WG-5000 Plant and Animal Work Family
WG-5200 Miscellaneous Occupations Family
WG-5300 Industrial Equipment Maintenance Family
WG-5400 Industrial Equipment Operations Family
WG-5700 Transportation/Mobile Equipment Operations Family
WG-5800 Transportation/Mobile Equipment Maintenance Family
WG-6900 Warehousing and Stock Handling Family
WG-7000 Packaging and Processing Family
WG-7300 Laundry and Dry Cleaning and Pressing Family
WG-7400 Food Preparation and Serving Family
WG-7500 Medical Services Family
WG-7600 Personal Services Family
WG-7700 Animal Caretaker Family
WG-8200 Fluid Systems Maintenance Family
WG-8300 Instrumentation Family
WG-8600 Engine Overhaul Family

VI. SELECTION OF TRAINEESA. Source of Eligibles

1. Except as provided in 2. below, trainees will be selected on a competitive basis in accordance with the Merit Promotion Plans of the Operating Administrations.
2. When the target position has no greater promotion potential than the current position, trainees may be selected on a noncompetitive basis by lateral reassignments or change to lower grade (unless competition is otherwise required by a labor agreement). In this case, selection of trainees is to provide for:
 - a. Identifying those work situations in which both the employee and the agency will benefit by the employee's retraining in a new work area;
 - b. Reassigning such employees to positions suitable to the agency's needs and to the employee's potential and career interests; and
 - c. Providing on-the-job experience and instruction together with other training to aid the employee in acquiring the knowledge, skills and abilities pertinent to the new career field and also to enable the employee to acquire the experience needed to meet minimum qualification standards for that area.
3. Selection of all trainees will be made from among Department of Transportation employees without discrimination because of sex, color, handicap, race, religion, age, national origin, or any other non-merit reasons.
4. Announcements under this agreement may be restricted to applicants who do not meet the basic qualification requirements contained in the Qualification Standards Handbook or Handbook X-118C for the target position if, in the past, promotional opportunities have been announced under usual Merit Promotion procedures for positions with the same title, series, or grade as the target position.

B. Evaluation Methods

Competitive selections must be made in accordance with Operating Administration merit promotion plans.

C. Announcement of Opportunities

All announcements made under this training agreement will include not only the required specifics regarding the job element criteria but will also include the identification of title, grade, series of the target position and the promotion potential through the normal career ladder of the target position.

VII. LENGTH OF TRAINING

Before reassignment and/or promotion to a specific target position can be effected, all trainees must make up the difference in qualifications between what they bring into the program and the qualifications required (whether general experience or specialized experience or both) for the target position as published in the Qualification Standards Handbook or Handbook X-118C. When training will be used to qualify an employee for entry into a new occupation, at least 50 percent of the training must be in or directly related to the target occupation. Training time to make up the difference in such qualifications may be credited at the rate of one month of training for two months of experience. For example, if a trainee needs one year of specialized experience and has no creditable qualifying experience, he/she would then need, as a minimum, six full months of accelerated training under the terms of this training agreement before moving into the target position. For wage system positions where there are no specific length of experience requirements, training plans must be designed to ensure that employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities. These plans should take into account rates of progression for other employees in the occupation of the target position.

VIII. TRAINING PLAN

An individual training plan for each trainee will be prepared by the supervisor of the target position (or in rare cases a program coordinator if one has been designated for a particular training program) with the assistance of a representative (Employee Development Specialist, Staffing Specialist, etc.) of the Operating Administration human resource management office. At the discretion of the supervisor, the employee may also participate. The plan will be designed to follow the specific career field/pattern to assure that the trainee acquires the necessary knowledge and skills for the career field at the appropriate level of the target position.

Within 30 days after reassignment of an employee to the trainee position, an individual training plan will be prepared and may include all or any part of the following:

A. Formal Training

Trainees may participate in academic courses offered at local schools, universities, colleges, interagency facilities, or other appropriate sources. These courses, relevant to the target positions, may be taken during or after working hours at Government expense.

B. On-the-Job Training

In accordance with the Training Plan, the trainee will be placed in increasingly responsible and productive work assignments under one or more work assignment supervisors. Supervisors should be chosen not only because of their technical abilities, but also because of their supervisory experience and demonstrated interest and skill in developing employees.

C. Self-Development

Trainees will be encouraged to participate in applicable self-directed developmental activities. These may include reading materials related to the career field, membership in related professional or trade/craft organizations, etc.

IX. CAREER COUNSELING

In addition to counseling provided by supervisors, trainees should receive career counseling at appropriately spaced and designated intervals. This counseling should be done by designated individuals such as line managers, mentors, personnel specialists, training officers, or career counselors. The counselors will consult with the supervisors to suggest additional courses or training to ensure that the trainees are receiving adequate developmental experiences.

X. EVALUATION OF TRAINEE'S PROGRESS

After placement in the trainee position, an assessment of the progress of the trainee will be made upon completion of each training assignment. At that time the Training Plan will also be reviewed to determine the need for modification. This assessment is not intended to be an official performance rating. The performance management system in each Operating Administration should be used to formally evaluate trainees.

Unsatisfactory Performance of Trainees - If at any point in the training period there is an indication, as evidenced by supervisory evaluation or performance in training, that a trainee is not performing satisfactorily and will be unable

to move into the target position, the trainee's supervisor and the human resource management office shall consider: (1) extending the employee's training period up to an additional six months; (2) reassigning the employee to a similar training position under the direction of another supervisor; or (3) reassigning the employee to a non-training position.

Any action taken in connection with unsatisfactory performance must be consistent with the Operating Administration's performance appraisal plan.

XI. FLEXIBILITY PROVISIONS

To avoid the need to make minor amendments to the Training Plan because of changes in concepts or methodology in subject fields or trainee needs, the following modifications may be made by the supervisor and the human resource management office to training programs developed under this agreement, provided the modifications do not extend beyond six months of training:

1. Alter length and intensity of the subject matter to meet the individual needs of trainees, provided they are made within the total scope and overall objectives of the training program.
2. Adjust elapsed training time in individual cases up to a maximum of 6 months to cover contingencies such as:
 - sick leave
 - emergency annual leave
 - trainee's ability to absorb certain skills or knowledge to complete a developmental assignment.
3. Change sequence of training schedule to permit learning experience to coincide with actual work assignments as they develop during the training period, when conditions or experience indicate the need for such modifications.
4. Alter subject matter material requirements to reflect technological changes, the needs of the Operating Administration or the trainee, and evaluation of the requisites of the developmental program.

XII. ADMINISTRATION OF THE AGREEMENT

- A. Director of Personnel, Office of the Secretary. The Director of Personnel will ensure Departmentwide compliance with the terms of this training agreement.
- B. Operating Administration Human Resource Management Offices. Human Resource Management Offices will be responsible for:
1. Developing internal guidelines for administration of this agreement, including provisions of applicable merit promotion requirements and performance management requirements;
 2. Ensuring that each proposed individual training plan will enable the trainee to meet the minimum qualifications requirements for the target position;
 3. Providing counseling for trainees; and
 4. Certifying that the trainee has satisfactorily completed the required training in accordance with the provisions of this agreement. This certification should be made part of the employee's Official Personnel Folder.
- C. Supervisors of Trainees. Supervisors of trainees will be responsible for:
1. Seeking the assistance of the human resource management office in developing an individual training plan for each trainee;
 2. Ensuring that the training is carried out as outlined in the training plan and assessing the trainee's progress; and
 3. Making the final determination concerning the trainee's placement into the target position after reviewing the training plan and the evaluation reports.
- D. Line and Staff Officials. As part of their regular supervisory and managerial responsibilities, line and staff officials will be responsible for systematically identifying and making career opportunities available to employees within their own organizations.

E. Duration of Agreement. This agreement is approved for an indefinite period of time and is subject to all the requirements of FPM Chapter 338 and other applicable Office of Personnel Management directives and regulations.

APPROVED: 
Assistant Secretary for
Administration
JUL 9 1993

DATE:  _____