

GUIDE ON SELECTIVE FACTORS



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GUIDE ON SELECTIVE FACTORS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guide is to: (1) define selective factors^{1/}; (2) distinguish between selective factors and quality ranking factors; (3) discuss the criteria under which selective factors are advisable; and (4) provide guidance in the development of selective factors.

BACKGROUND

Traditionally, agencies have relied, almost solely, on the qualification standards published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (USOPM). However, these standards represent only minimum requirements for a position. In addition, within Indian Health Service (IHS), these standards are continuing to be reviewed and altered for positions in the excepted service by the Preston Steering Committee. With the increased complexity in the duties and responsibilities of certain occupations, especially in the health care field, it is critical that all required knowledges, skills and abilities (KSAs) necessary to assure successful performance on the job be clearly identified before vacancies are announced.

To assure that applicants are fully qualified to successfully perform the duties of a given position, USOPM procedures provide a mechanism which allows agencies to document required job-related KSAs. These job-related KSAs are in addition to the basic qualifications for the position outlined in the Handbook X-118, Qualification Standards for White-Collar Positions Under the General Schedule. These additional KSAs are called "selective factors" and are the basis for requesting selective certification of only those applicants who meet these special requirements for the job.

These additional requirements must be:

1. Job related and reflected in the duties and responsibilities in the official position description or in other official communications, i.e. documentation from subject-matter experts (SMEs), certification requirements, etc.; AND
2. Necessary to assure that applicants referred to selecting officials are adequately qualified to perform the duties of the position involved.

Selective certification is not justified if it is evident that other eligibles could perform the duties adequately after the customary period of training for the job being filled.

Care should be taken to insure that selective factors do not circumvent the spirit or the letter of Indian Preference.

^{1/}The terminology "selective factor" rather than "selective placement factor" is used in FPM Chapter 332 and HHS Instruction 302-1.

DEFINITION OF SELECTIVE FACTOR AND QUALITY RANKING FACTOR

A "selective factor" is a knowledge, skill or ability that is essential for satisfactory performance the first day of the job and represents an addition to the basic qualifications for the position. Selective factors are used in determining eligibility of applicants for the job. As such, they become a part of the minimum qualification requirements for the position and must be stated in the vacancy announcement. Educational requirements in excess of those stated in the X-118 Handbook may not be used as selective factors. A selective factor is a "screen out" element (i.e., an applicant who does not meet the selective factor is rated ineligible and is no longer considered for the vacancy).

A "quality ranking factor," on the other hand, is a knowledge, skill or ability that identifies the better candidates from a group of applicants who have been rated basically qualified for a position. Quality ranking factors are used to distinguish the best qualified applicants from minimally qualified applicants. Quality ranking factors are desirable, but not required for satisfactory performance in the job.

The justification for quality ranking factors must show:

1. How the quality ranking factor is directly related to the duties/responsibilities of the position, and
2. Why possession of the desired knowledge, skill, ability or worker characteristic would be predictive of superior performance.

PROCEDURES

Selective factors apply to:

1. Indian and non-Indian candidates;
2. The excepted service and competitive service.

* In the excepted service both for initial appointments and internal placement, selective factors may be used by local managers and servicing personnel offices (SPOs) without prior USOPM approval. This applies when recruiting through the Excepted Service Examining Plan and the Merit Promotion Plan.

In the competitive service, selective factors must be justified by the agency and accepted by USOPM as being valid. This justification must be obtained when recruiting candidates from USOPM Registers or through Direct Hire Authorities. In most instances, USOPM honors requests for selective factors when sufficient documentation/justification is provided.

3. Merit Promotion Actions:

* Agencies may establish selective factors in merit promotion actions in the competitive service without USOPM approval.

4. Reduction-in-Force (RIF) Actions:

The RIF regulations allow agencies to establish selective factors to be used in determining whether an employee is qualified for assignment in a RIF situation.

* Based on the job analysis, selective factors should be identified by the IHS selecting official and the Personnel Staffing Specialist, with input from SMEs who have extensive knowledge of the position.

Recency and Length of Experience

In identifying selective factors, length of experience should not be used, and careful consideration should be given before using recency of experience. In most instances, recency would not be a valid factor. If recency is determined to be important to the experience, such as in computer experience or other technical laboratory equipment which changes rapidly, then a complete explanation must be made to document why older experience is of lesser or no value. In most cases, the selective factor can and should be written in terms of the particular KSA required, such as knowledge of a particular computer system, as opposed to a specific recency requirement.

Documentation

The job-relatedness of selective factors must be documented through the job analysis process and candidates must meet all basic qualification standards and selective factors to be determined eligible for the position. The job analysis must be documented in writing. For IHS positions in the excepted service, the documentation requirement is found in the "Planning Document for the Review of Qualification Standards for Indians in the Excepted Service," which was developed in June 1984 pursuant to the U.S. Court of Appeals decision in the Preston vs. Heckler case. Attachment 1 to this Guide is to be used for documenting the job analysis process for IHS positions in the excepted service.

In the competitive service, USOPM requirements for documentation of job-relatedness of rating and selection procedures are found in FPM Supplement 271-1(S2-2); FPM Supplement 271-2 (S5-1); and FPM Supplement 330-1(S8-1). This documentation should identify and bear the signature of the SME involved. In most instances, SMEs should be current supervisors or journeyman-level incumbents in the position involved.

Approval

- * Selective factors must be approved by the Servicing Personnel Officer as required in Paragraph X.C.1. of the IHS Area Merit Promotion Plan.

Job Analysis

Justification of selective factors and/or quality ranking factors is accomplished through the job analysis process. A job analysis studies the important work behaviors required for successful performance of a job, as well as their relative importance. The job analysis, therefore, focuses on the observable behaviors that constitute critical and/or important elements of the job. It also investigates the KSAs required for the position, giving special attention to those required of an employee on the first day of the job.

- * The justification for selective factors must show: (1) how the selective factor is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the position; and (2) why possession of the KSA identified is necessary for successful performance the first day on the job.

Essentially, seven basic questions must be answered by a completed job analysis. These are:

1. What are the tasks performed on the job?
2. How are the tasks accomplished, including tools, machinery and/or aids used?
3. What is the importance of each task in the context of the job?
4. What KSAs are required to perform these tasks?
5. Which KSAs must an individual possess the first day on the job?
6. How does the position fit into the organizational context, including the amount of supervision given and received, and the interagency contacts?
7. What need, if any, is there for special training requirements; is there adequate need demonstrated to support licensure requirements?

① The first step of a job analysis is to determine and record in some clear written form the principal duties and responsibilities of the position. The official position description, provided it is accurate and current, will usually serve this purpose.

② The second step of the job analysis is to identify and record the KSAs which are essential to satisfactory performance in the position. The relationship between the KSAs and the duties and responsibilities of the job must be clearly shown.

Justification and documentation of job-related placement factors, including bilingual ability, must be in writing. The sample memos provided as Attachments 2 and 3 may be used for this purpose.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Servicing Personnel Office (SPO)

The SPOs are responsible for informing IHS managers that selective factors can and should be used, where appropriate, to supplement the basic qualification standards in the X-118 Handbook. Due to the complexity of positions at GM/GS-13 and above, a thorough review of the job requirements against the qualification standards should be conducted to determine whether selective factors are needed. Since selective factors must be developed before the vacancy announcement is issued, SPOs will work closely with IHS managers to help determine the need for and to develop valid selective factors.

When requesting a certificate of eligibles from USOPM to fill a position in the competitive service, SPOs must complete Standard Form 39-A, Request and Justification for Selective Factors and Quality Ranking Factors, to accompany the SF-39.

The SPOs are responsible for assuring that selective factors which are requested or approved from USOPM are appropriate for the particular position.

Selecting Officials

The IHS selecting officials are responsible for submitting written requests for selective factors to the SPO. Attachments 2 and 3 to this Guide may be used for this purpose.

EXAMPLES OF SELECTIVE FACTORS

The following selective factors have been developed and used in IHS:

1. Personnel Officer, GM-201-13

Selective Factor 1: Knowledge of staffing, classification, employee relations and labor relations principles and techniques.

Selective Factor 2: Ability to supervise a staff in such a manner that the functions and assignments of the organization are successfully completed in a timely manner.

2. Financial Management Officer, GM-505-14

Selective Factor 1: Ability to analyze, develop and project short and long-term budget plans and schedules and to effectively and efficiently formulate/execute these plans for multiple facilities.

Selective Factor 2: Knowledge of fundamental and diversified accounting and auditing concepts, theories and relationships and the ability to apply them to theoretical and practical financial problems with versatility, judgment and breadth and depth of perception.

Selective Factor 3: Knowledge of the development and derivation of formulas, relationships, accepted accounting practice, the basic assumptions made and the limitations and areas of applicability of established accounting theory and principles.

3. Chief Medical Officer, GM-602-15

Selective Factor: Demonstrated ability or potential to administer and manage a medical program or a major segment of a medical program.

4. Nurse Midwife, GS-610-9/11/12

Selective Factor: A professional knowledge of current normal and abnormal anatomy and physiology of women during pregnancy, including labor and delivery mechanisms, in order to identify and initiate appropriate management of care.

JOB ANALYSIS DOCUMENTATION

I. Using position descriptions, performance plans, SMEs or qualification standards (X-118, X-118C, IHS Excepted Service Qualification Standards) as a source, list the major duties required for the position.

DUTIES	SOURCE (SME, X-118, PD)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	
13.	

Signature

Date

II. Using duties defined on page one, select not more than five most important duties. List knowledges, skills or abilities required to perform each duty.

Duty #1:

KSAs required:

Duty #2:

KSAs required:

Duty #3:

KSAs required:

Duty #4:

KSAs required:

Duty #5:

KSAs required:

III. Eliminate KSAs which are routine or can be learned in a short period of on-the-job training. Review remaining KSAs and determine if any are ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL for satisfactory performance the FIRST DAY ON THE JOB.

List any remaining KSA(s).

KSA:

Justification:

Specify reasons why this KSA(s) is essential for satisfactory performance the first day on the job. If recency of experience is a factor specify why older experience is not acceptable.

Source of Information:

Indicate how the determination will be made whether an applicant possesses the selective factor (e.g., review of application, interview, or appraisal).

Signature of SME

Date

Title

Signature of Personnel Specialist

Date



Memorandum

Date

From

Subject Request for Bilingual Selective Factor

To Servicing Personnel Office

PART A: To be completed by selecting official

1. This is a request for bilingual selective factor in _____ for
(language) _____
_____ for _____
(position/title/series/grade(s)) (number)
vacancy(ies).

2 Service area statistics

- a. Office location: _____
- b. Number in service population: _____
- c. Percentage of that population who are monolingual in this language or whose English is so limited that they must use their native language in order to obtain Departmental benefits/services: _____
- d. Where did you obtain the statistics on the percentage of monolingual population (e.g., 1980 Census, count of walk-in traffic, etc.)? Use "Other" below for additional space to provide this information. _____

3. Office statistics:

- a. Number of persons in this position presently on duty: _____
- b. Number of these individuals who are bilingual in this language: _____

4. Other circumstances which should be taken into account in considering this request (e.g., contact station being manned by the office where bilingual skill is needed, need for bilingual skill on a particular shift, anticipated vacancies which will reduce number of bilingual individuals on board, etc.): _____

5. Other: _____

I certify that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of SME Date

Title

Signature of Personnel Specialist Date

PART B: To be completed by the Servicing Personnel Office

1. Are duties requiring direct public contact reflected in the P.D.?

Yes _____ No _____

2. If not, what other duties demonstrate the need for bilingual skills (e.g., translating written records)?

3. If questions 1 and 2 do not apply, should the PD be modified?

Yes _____ No _____ If "no" and you believe the factor should be approved, state why:

4. Does the percentage of monolingual clientele in the serviced area meet minimum OPM requirements (i.e., 5%)? Yes _____ No _____

5. If not, what special circumstances warrant the need for bilingual skills? (e.g., although the percentage of the total population is smaller than 5%, the selecting official can document that a large percentage of that monolingual population used the Department's services/programs, etc.).

6. Does the total number of staff (including those requested in this memo) match the percentage of the monolingual population serviced?

Yes _____ No _____

7. If the staff number is higher, what special circumstances warrant additional bilingual staff?

Request Approved: _____ Request Disapproved: _____

Signature

Title

Date



Memorandum

ate
From
Subject Request for Selective Factor(s)
To Servicing Personnel Office

PART A: To be completed by selecting official

1. Vacancy to be filled: _____
(Title, Series and Grade[s])

2. What knowledge, skill or ability (KSA) do you propose be cited as a selective factor(s)? _____

3. What important function or duty of the job, as verified by the P.D. or SME, requires this KSA?

4. Can this KSA be learned after placement in the job? Yes _____ No _____

5. If "yes":
 - a. Through what means (e.g., on-the-job training, a specific course, etc.)? _____

 - b. How long (approximately) would it take? _____

6. Without this KSA, can the job be performed satisfactorily? _____

7. Additional comments (if any) _____

I certify that the above statements are true to the best of my knowledge.

(Signature) (Title) (Date)

PART B: To be completed by the Personnel Office

1. Is the factor stated in KSA format? Yes _____ No _____ (If "no," it must be restated.)
2. Is it supported by the current P.D.? Yes _____ No _____ (If "no," PD must be modified or factor dropped.)
3. Is it already covered in the qualification standards? Yes _____ No _____ (If "yes," drop it.)

Request Approved: _____ Request Disapproved: _____

(Signature) (Title) (Date)