



Tips and Tidbits Issue #: 7-2009

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Question: How does an applicant end up on a referral list? What besides qualification requirements must be satisfied?

The vacancy announcement (VA) is the primary tool for recruiting within the Department of Army (DA), whether from internal or external sources*. With each recruitment effort, the goal is to provide the best possible applicant pool via referral lists to managers and supervisors from which to make selections to fill their positions. But how do applicants actually end up on a referral list? What requirements must be satisfied? Need applicants *only* be qualified? Ignorance of the answers to these questions has been the source of frustration for both managers and applicants alike.

There are five, separate criteria that determine whether an applicant will make the referral list. They are, in the order in which they are evaluated, skills criteria, the area of consideration (AOC), time-in-grade (TIG), specialized experience, and education or licensure requirements (if applicable). Each resume is culled for these criteria in the sequence order listed above, and an applicant's inability to meet any one of these automatically disqualifies him/her from further consideration. A full explanation of each follows.

Skills Criteria: Skills associated with each vacancy announcement are identified jointly by management and CPAC staff and capture what applicants will need to successfully perform the duties of the position being recruited. There are two types of skills, required and desired. Required skills are those that the applicant *must* possess upon entrance on duty. Desired skills on the other hand, are those skills that would allow the applicant to better perform but are **not** necessary for the applicant to possess at the time he/she begins work. Management may use any combination of desired and required skills and once this is determined, they are used to determine the best qualified applicants. Applicants scoring highest (i.e. possessing most of these skills) are eligible for further consideration. Those scoring below the cut off score** are coded as not among the best qualified group to be referred.

Area of Consideration: The AOC is the group/set of groups of applicants from whom resumes will be accepted for the vacancy announcement advertised. Management has full discretion to determine the AOC, but it must be within the parameters of the local Merit Promotion Plan; support EEO affirmative action needs; be broad enough an area to ensure high quality candidates are included; and, provide for the acceptance of resumes from current DA employees with competitive status who may be outside the minimum area of consideration. The list below highlights possible groups that may be included.

- a. DA career/career-conditional employees;
- b. Defense Civilian Intelligence System (DCIPS) employees;
- c. Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP)
- d. Veteran's Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998 eligibles;
- e. Executive Order 12721 candidates;
- f. NAF/AAFES interchange eligibles;
- g. Transfer eligibles;
- h. Reinstatement eligibles;
- i. 30% disabled veterans;
- j. VRA eligibles; and
- k. Employment Program for People with Disabilities

Time-in-Grade: The time in grade requirement stipulates that current competitive service General Schedule (GS) employees in grades GS-5 and above must have completed a minimum of 52 weeks in positions no more than two grades lower than (or equivalent) or no more than one grade lower (or equivalent) than the position to be filled when the position to be filled is in a line of work properly classified at a two-grade or one-grade interval, respectively. Even though often confused with specialized experience, TIG pertains only to the minimum length of time that must be spent prior to advancement to the next grade; specialized experience pertains to the “quality” of the duties performed at the next lower level/grade. Accordingly, an employee may meet TIG, but not have the necessary specialized experience needed for promotion.

Specialized Experience: This is unique to each individual position and is defined as experience that equipped the applicant with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to perform the duties of the position [to be filled]. One full year [calculated at 40 hours per week working in the associated duties] at the next lower grade level [or equivalent] of the position being filled is required. Credit for specialized experience for applicants performing those specialized duties less than 40 hours per week is prorated accordingly. Specialized experience is listed in the “Qualifications” section of the vacancy announcement.

Education or Licensure Requirements: If applicable, this pertains to any education and/or licensing requirements called for in the qualification standards of the position being advertised. By way of the resume, applicants must indicate they have obtained these requirements in order to be eligible for referral. If applicants fail to clearly show that they possess these requirements, they will not be referred to management for consideration. Once/if selected, applicants will be required to provide certified copies of that education and/or licenses.

Provided applicants meet each of the criteria above, they will be referred to Management for consideration.

*Recruitment is accomplished via two types of vacancy announcements, internal merit promotion and external delegated examining. This issue exclusively addresses internal merit promotion. Internal merit promotion encompasses the systematic, merit-based placement of competitive [commonly referred to as “in-house” or internal] service employees.

**The cut-off score is determined by one of two methods and is the line of demarcation that identifies best qualified applicants.

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