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SUBJ:HR DESIGN NEWS CORNER: A DISCUSSION OF OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS AND BANDS. THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM DHS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF CLUSTERS AND BANDS ARE FROM THE 16 APRIL 2004 ISSUE OF DHS TODAY.

1. MANY OF YOU HAVE INDICATED THAT YOU'D LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SOME OF THE PAY, PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, AND CLASSIFICATION (PPC) CONCEPTS PRESENTED IN THE PROPOSED HR REGULATIONS. THEREFORE, THIS ISSUE PROVIDES SOME GREATER DETAIL ABOUT A COUPLE OF KEY PPC CONCEPTS.

Q. WHAT IS AN OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTER?

A. CLUSTERS ARE GROUPS OF RELATED JOBS THAT REQUIRE THE PERFORMANCE OF SOMEWHAT SIMILAR WORK, HAVE SOMEWHAT SIMILAR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS, AND HAVE SIMILAR PAY PROGRESSION OR CAREER PATTERNS. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT CURRENTLY USES DOZENS OF OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS AND SERIES TO CLASSIFY JOBS. THE CURRENT CLASSIFICATION PROCESS IS DIFFICULT AND TIME-CONSUMING AND MANY OF THE CURRENT STANDARDS ARE OUTDATED. THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS ENVISION GROUPING MANY OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SERIES INTO A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS, THUS SIMPLIFYING THE OVERALL CLASSIFICATION PROCESS.

Q. WHAT OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTER WILL MY JOB FALL UNDER?

A. WE HAVEN'T DEFINED SPECIFIC OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS YET, SO WE DON'T KNOW AT THIS POINT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO INDIVIDUAL POSITIONS OR JOBS. WE ARE CAREFULLY ANALYZING A WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBLE OCCUPATIONAL GROUPINGS ACROSS THE DEPARTMENT TO IDENTIFY NATURAL CATEGORIES AND/OR CAREER PATHS. SOME EXAMPLES OF POSSIBLE CLUSTERS UNDER THE PROPOSED SYSTEM COULD INCLUDE LAW ENFORCEMENT, BORDER PROTECTION, ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING. CONSOLIDATING SEVERAL SERIES INTO AN INDIVIDUAL CLUSTER SIMPLIFIES THE CLASSIFICATION STRUCTURE AND ENSURES THAT OCCUPATIONAL STANDARDS ARE MAINTAINED.

THE FOLLOWING LIST OF SERIES ILLUSTRATES HOW A NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONAL SERIES CONTAINING SOMEWHAT SIMILAR JOB DUTIES AND KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS COULD BE GROUPED INTO A PROPOSED ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE CLUSTER:

801, 803, 806, 807, 808, 810, 819, 830, 840, 850, 854, 855, 861, 871, 893, 896, 899, 1301, 1306, 1310, 1313, 1320, 1321, 1330, 1350, 1360, 1372, 1386, 1399

Q. WHAT IS A BAND?

A. BANDING IS A METHOD USED TO CATEGORIZE JOBS WITHIN AN OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTER. A BAND REPRESENTS A SALARY RANGE, OR THE MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM PAY RATE FOR JOBS IN THAT BAND. FOR EACH CLUSTER, THERE COULD BE SEVERAL PAY BANDS FOR LEVELS OF WORK REQUIRING VARYING SKILL LEVELS AND REPRESENTING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY. THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS CALL FOR A MINIMUM OF FOUR BANDS: (ENTRY/DEVELOPMENTAL), (FULL PERFORMANCE), (SENIOR EXPERT), AND (SUPERVISORY). DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS COULD VERY WELL HAVE PAY BANDS WITH DIFFERENT SALARY RANGES. A BAND ALSO INDICATES WHAT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION, OR EXPERIENCE IS REQUIRED. UNLIKE THE TRADITIONAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GRADE STRUCTURE (E.G. GENERAL SCHEDULE GRADES 1 THROUGH 15), WHICH PROVIDES RIGID SALARY RANGES, BANDING COMBINES GRADES AND STEPS AND THUS PROVIDES WIDER SALARY RANGES. UNDER THE PROPOSED SYSTEM, BANDS WOULD REPLACE GRADES AND STEPS. THE PROPOSED SYSTEM PRESENTS MANY BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES INCLUDING PAY INCREASES BASED ON PERFORMANCE

OR COMPETENCIES RATHER THAN LONGEVITY AND THE ELIMINATION OF RIGID TIME PERIOD REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION.

Q. WHAT BAND WILL MY JOB FALL UNDER AND HOW WILL MY PAY BE AFFECTED?

A. THE SPECIFIC METHOD FOR DECIDING WHICH JOBS GO INTO WHAT BANDS HAS NOT BEEN DECIDED. UNDER THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS, JOBS COULD BE PLACED IN BANDS BASED ON A NUMBER OF CONSIDERATIONS. THESE INCLUDE COMPLEXITY OF WORK, LEVEL OF RESPONSIBILITIES, VARIETY OF COMPETENCIES OR SKILLS, OR COMPARISON WITH THE JOB MARKET. WE WILL ALSO BE LOOKING AT CURRENT CAREER LADDERS AND CAREER PATHS AND TAKING THOSE INTO CONSIDERATION IN ESTABLISHING THE BANDS FOR EACH OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTER. WE ALSO PLAN TO ADDRESS HOW EMPLOYEES ADVANCE THROUGH A BAND OR TO THE NEXT HIGHER BAND. FOR EXAMPLE, EMPLOYEES COULD ADVANCE TO THE NEXT BAND THROUGH A VARIETY OF METHODS SUCH AS FORMAL ASSESSMENTS, JOB COMPETITION, COMPLETION OF TRAINING, OR ATTAINMENT OF A MAJOR NEW SKILL. THE PROPOSED BANDS WOULD HAVE OPEN PAY RANGES WITH A MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM RATE OF PAY AND NO FIXED STEP RATES.

WE ARE PROPOSING THAT EMPLOYEES BE CONVERTED TO THE NEW PAY RANGE BASED ON THEIR CURRENT SALARY, PLUS A PRO-RATED INCREASE THAT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT HOW CLOSE THEY ARE TO THEIR NEXT STEP INCREASE. THERE WOULD BE NO REDUCTION IN CURRENT PAY OR BENEFITS AS A RESULT OF THIS TRANSITION.

Q. WHY IS DHS PROPOSING A BROAD BANDING SYSTEM?

A. BROAD BANDING, SOMETIMES CALLED PAY BANDING, WOULD HELP DHS INTEGRATE PAY WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S MISSION AND GOALS. IT ALLOWS EMPLOYEES TO INFLUENCE THE AMOUNT OF THEIR PAY BASED ON THEIR PERFORMANCE AND SKILL LEVEL AND ELIMINATES CURRENT RIGID LONGEVITY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROMOTION. FURTHERMORE, BROAD BANDING RECOGNIZES THAT EMPLOYEES LEARN AND GROW AT DIFFERENT RATES AND SOME INDIVIDUALS MAY NEED MORE DEVELOPMENTAL TIME IN A POSITION THAN OTHERS. OUR HR SYSTEM MUST SUPPORT OUR CRITICAL MISSION BY ALLOWING US TO TAKE SWIFT ACTION, ATTRACT AND RETAIN HIGHLY TALENTED AND MOTIVATED EMPLOYEES, AND BE ADAPTABLE TO THE CHANGING NATURE OF OUR WORK. BROAD BANDING WOULD SUPPORT OUR MISSION GOALS WHILE PROVIDING THE PAY FLEXIBILITY NECESSARY TO RECRUIT, RETAIN, AND REWARD EMPLOYEES. BROAD BANDING WOULD ALSO PROVIDE EMPLOYEES WITH MORE FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR CAREER PATHS THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES SUCH AS JOB MOBILITY AND DUAL CAREER TRACKS.

THE U.S. NAVY ORIGINALLY DEVELOPED THE BROAD BANDING CONCEPT IN 1980 THROUGH A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT AT CHINA LAKE IN CALIFORNIA. SINCE THAT TIME, THERE HAVE BEEN SIMILAR PROJECTS SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED THROUGHOUT FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SUCH AS THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA), INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE (IRS), THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE, N.C. BROAD BANDING HAS ALSO EMERGED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS A MEANS TO STAY COMPETITIVE IN THE LABOR MARKET.

2. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN REVIEWING THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS IN THEIR ENTIRETY, THEY CAN BE FOUND AT [WWW.EPA.GOV/EDOCKET](http://www.epa.gov/edocket).

3. PLEASE CONTINUE TO SEND YOUR THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON OUR PROPOSED HR SYSTEM TO THE HR MAILBOX AT HRDESIGN@DHS.GOV.

4. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

5. RELEASED BY RONALD, R. KOGUT, CHIEF, OFFICE OF CIVILIAN PERSONNEL.