



**FISCAL YEARS 1997 - 1998 WORK PLAN
UNDER THE STRATEGIC PLAN
FOR
PERSONNEL ACTION DOCUMENTATION
AND RECORDKEEPING**

**Prepared by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of Workforce Information
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INTRODUCTION

The Office of Personnel Management has developed a [Strategic Plan for Personnel Action Documentation and Recordkeeping](#). This Plan sets the long-term goal and direction for personnel documentation requirements in the Federal workforce. The project numbers and titles in this work plan are taken from the Office of Personnel Management's Strategic Plan for Personnel Action Documentation and Recordkeeping.

This work plan contains the projects the Office of Personnel Management expects to undertake in fiscal years 1997 and 1998. The background information and statement of work expand on the project descriptions in the Strategic Plan¹. The project schedules are estimates; completion of the projects will depend on the resources the Office of Personnel Management and the agencies are able to commit to them.

The Statement of Work for each project includes an opportunity for all stakeholders to review any proposals for changes in policy, guidance, and operational procedures.

The scheduled projects are:

- Flexibility in Processing Requests for Personnel Actions (Project 2);
- Redefinition of Official Personnel Actions (Project 3);
- Alternatives to the Standard Form 50 for Informing Employees of Personnel Actions (Project 5a);
- Reducing the Number of Standard Form 50 Remarks (Project 5b);
- Electronic Transfer of Preliminary Employment Information (Project 6).

¹ Project numbers were taken from the Strategic Plan and are listed for reference. As noted in the Plan, projects were not listed in a strict chronological order but were often arranged to show the interconnected nature of some projects. Project 1 was completed in December 1996; project 4 was completed in January 1997.

Project Number: 2

Title: Flexibility in Processing Requests for Personnel Actions

Objectives:

1. Determine if Governmentwide mandatory use of the [Standard Form 52](#) is justifiable on the basis of cost or other criteria.
2. Determine what, if any, standards should exist for the data element content of an agency-designed personnel action request.
3. Determine Governmentwide policy on control and accountability in processing requests for personnel actions.

Background:

For many and perhaps all agencies, the manual personnel action processing environment no longer exists. Additionally, the Office of Personnel Management is delegating to agencies more human resources management decision-making flexibilities than it has in the past. These changes call into question the assumption that there is an inherent benefit in requiring a standard form and standardized processing system for requesting personnel actions. Any standardization must demonstrate "added value." In this project we will review the need for a standardized personnel action request process.

Statement of Work:

1. Define the Office of Personnel Management's needs for information on agency initiation, approval and certification of requests for personnel action. Select and prepare information gathering methods and techniques such as interview guidelines, questionnaires, and organization of focus group meetings.
2. Gather data from the Office of Personnel Management program offices and legal advisors.

3. Complete a draft proposal on:
 - a. whether to continue or discontinue the [Standard Form 52](#);
 - b. in the absence of a Standard Form 52, whether and what to prescribe as standard data content for a personnel action request;
 - c. Governmentwide policy, if any, on agency control and accountability over the initiation, approval and certification of personnel actions.
4. Circulate the draft to Office of Personnel Management stakeholders.
5. Circulate the draft to other appropriate parties.
6. Prepare the proposal in final as an update to THE GUIDE TO PROCESSING PERSONNEL ACTIONS and if appropriate, as a revision to title 5 [Code of Federal Regulations](#).

Resources: Office of Personnel Management Staff

Schedule:

Tasks	Target Date
1. Define information needs and techniques for gathering that information	Third quarter, fiscal year 1997
2. Gather data from Office of Personnel Management stakeholders	Third quarter, fiscal year 1997
3. Draft proposal for action to be taken	Third quarter, fiscal year 1997
4. Coordinate review of draft with Office of Personnel Management and agencies	First quarter, fiscal year 198
5. Prepare changes, if any, to THE GUIDE TO PROCESSING PERSONNEL ACTIONS	First quarter, fiscal year 1998
6. Prepare amendments and revisions, if any, to the Code of Federal Regulations .	Second quarter fiscal year 1998

Project Number: 3

Title: Redefinition of Official Personnel Actions

Objectives:

1. Identify the employment events that should constitute official personnel actions.
2. Establish requirements that differentiate events reported to the Central Personnel Data File from events documented in the Official Personnel Folder.

Background:

The Office of Personnel Management defines official personnel actions in THE GUIDE TO PROCESSING PERSONNEL ACTIONS. Each personnel action is identified by a nature of action code that describes the employment event (e.g., appointment, promotion). All personnel actions are documented for long-term retention in the Official Personnel Folder and are reported to the Central Personnel Data File. The two requirements are joined; i.e., if the occurrence of an employment event is to be reported to the Central Personnel Data File, it will be identified as an official personnel action and it must also be documented in the Official Personnel Folder. The two requirements serve different purposes. Official Personnel Folder documentation is designed to record events in an individual's employment history that have long-term consequences on his/her rights and benefits, while Central Personnel Data File reporting is designed to meet Governmentwide statistical information needs.

Agency payroll and personnel information systems use personnel actions (nature of action codes) to input data and initiate internal processes such as generating retirement reporting (e.g., Standard Form 2806).

An initial Office of Personnel Management review indicated that some of the events now identified as official personnel actions may not be needed either as long-term Official Personnel Folder documentation or as Central Personnel Data File statistical information. Other events may be needed only for statistical information (Central Personnel Data File) and not for long-term Official Personnel Folder documentation.

Eliminating processing and documentation requirements for events that are no longer properly identified as official personnel actions will improve personnel office operations. Implicit in this project is the assumption that agency payroll/personnel information systems are flexible enough to report actions to the Central Personnel Data File without producing Official Personnel Folder documentation (i.e., Standard Form 50's). If that assumption is inaccurate then the Central Personnel Data File/Official Personnel Folder link must be retained.

Statement of Work:

1. Identify the employment events that are currently defined as official personnel actions.
2. Conduct an internal Office of Personnel Management review to determine whether each event should be part of the long-term Official Personnel Folder documentation, reported to the Central Personnel Data File, both, or neither.
3. Send results of internal review and any proposed changes in the definition of official personnel actions to the agencies for comment from both human resources management and information processing perspectives.
4. Consolidate agency responses into final proposal.
5. Publish procedures to implement proposal.

Resources: Office of Personnel Management staff to coordinate project. Office of Personnel Management and agency officials to review, comment, and provide formal/informal guidance.

Schedule:

Tasks	Target Date
1. Identify current definitions	Third quarter, fiscal year 1997
2. Conduct review within Office of Personnel Management	Third quarter, fiscal year 1997
3. Send review results to agencies for comments	Fourth quarter, fiscal year 1997
4. Consolidate comments and prepare proposed procedures	First quarter, fiscal year 1998
5. Clear proposed procedures within Office of Personnel Management and publish	Second quarter, fiscal year 1998

Project Number: 5a

Title: Alternatives to Standard Form 50 for Informing Employees of Personnel Actions

Objective: Develop Governmentwide policy requirements for using means other than the paper copy Standard Form 50 to notify employees of personnel actions.

Background:

During an employee's career, a number of actions occur that impact on his or her rights, benefits, and working conditions. The actions may be required by legislation, directed by agency management, or initiated by the employee. Although all of these actions may impact the employee, not all of them are "personnel actions" within the context of this project. For example, completion of the initial probationary period confers certain rights under adverse action procedures but it is not a personnel action.

Personnel actions are employment events:

- documented under rules published in The Office of Personnel Management's Operating Manual THE GUIDE TO PROCESSING PERSONNEL ACTIONS;
- recorded on Standard Forms 50, "Notifications of Personnel Action"; and
- maintained as long-term documents in the Official Personnel Folder.

For personnel actions, the Standard Form 50 serves as the official notice to the employee that a specific event occurred, the effective date of that event, and an explanation of how that event changed his/her conditions of employment. The Office of Personnel Management allows agencies to use specified alternatives to the Standard Form 50 for a limited number of personnel actions. These alternatives are used both as Official Personnel Folder documentation and employee notification.

Agencies have identified a need to use alternatives to the Standard Form 50 to notify employees of personnel actions. It is expected that alternative notification methods would improve both operating efficiencies (e.g., greater timeliness) and customer satisfaction (e.g., providing more tailored information on the action taken).

Using means other than the Standard Form 50 to notify employees of personnel actions is one method of increasing agencies' operating flexibilities. It is part of a process that should facilitate automated recordkeeping by reducing mandatory use of standardized forms for all personnel processing. This project is part of that process but focuses solely on means of providing information to employees. It does not directly address recordkeeping requirements.

Statement of Work:

1. Gather and review background information (definitions of personnel actions, Standard Form 50 requirements, agency experience with various methods of employee notification for personnel, payroll, and other events).
2. Group personnel actions according to the character of the event being documented.
3. Develop a matrix defining the information currently given the employee on the Standard Form 50 for each grouping of personnel actions.
4. Determine whether methods other than the Standard Form 50 may be used to notify employees of each grouping of personnel actions and, if so, what requirements the notification must meet (e.g. content and privacy protections).
5. Consolidate determinations into proposed Governmentwide requirements.
6. Submit proposal for review among all stakeholders (Office of Personnel Management, agencies, employee organizations).
7. Analyze comments received in step 6 and revise proposal as necessary.
8. Submit final proposal to the Office of Personnel Management for final clearance and issuance of any necessary policy guidance.

Resources: Agency led work group of 5 to 7 Office of Personnel Management and agency representatives.

Schedule: Begin during fourth quarter, fiscal year 1997. Specific tasks and target dates are to be determined by the work group.

Project Number: 5b

Title: Reducing the Number of Remarks on the Standard Form 50,
Notification of Personnel Action.

Objectives:

1. Identify remarks the Office of Personnel Management no longer requires be on the Standard Form 50 and rescind them.
2. Identify remarks that should be documented for permanent retention on the Standard Form 50, because they are needed to determine employee rights and benefits.
3. Identify remarks that not need not be documented for permanent retention on the Standard Form 50, because they meet transitory information needs which typically alert employees of changes documented elsewhere on the Standard Form 50 or on other documents.

Background:

Some agencies wish to substitute a summary record for the individual Standard Forms 50 filed in Official Personnel Folders. Because of the volume of remarks and the size of their text, the efficiency of such a summary may be defeated (i.e., a summary might occupy as much space as the several Standard Forms 50 it replaces). In this project we wish to review all required remarks to determine how that volume may be reduced.

We expect to find that some required remarks are no longer needed and may be rescinded immediately.

Of the required remarks that are still needed, some may be documented on the Standard Form 50 for permanent retention to provide information or clarification of changes that bear on making determinations about an employee's rights and benefits. Other remarks may be transitory in nature because they function only as an alert, usually to the employee, of a change coded elsewhere on the Standard Form 50 or another document (e.g., Ineligible for life insurance). We will identify and classify needed remarks to one or the other of these categories.

In another project, Alternatives to Standard Form 50 for Informing Employees of Personnel Actions, we will decide whether the Standard Form 50 will be the required form of employee notification for all personnel actions, and, if not, the acceptable alternatives. The employee notification in whatever form will contain all required remarks.

In a future project included in the [Strategic Plan](#), we will establish, as appropriate, formats for documenting personnel actions in the Official Personnel Folder. These formats may include only the remarks required for permanent retention as identified in this project.

Statement of Work:

1. Compile an inventory of required remarks; in that inventory, identify when the remark is used and whether the remark information is captured elsewhere on the Standard Form 50 or other Official Personnel Folder document.
2. Determine how work will be organized (e.g., start with remarks on appointments; categorize remarks as meeting transitory or permanent information needs, etc.).
3. Identify remarks that are no longer needed in any form or format. Coordinate their cancellation within the Office of Personnel Management; issue an update to THE GUIDE TO PROCESSING PERSONNEL ACTIONS.
4. Identify remarks that:
 - a. provide information which may should be retained permanently to make determinations about employee rights and benefits;
 - b. meet a transitional information need by providing the employee with notice of a change documented elsewhere on the Standard Form 50 or another document.
5. Coordinate these findings within the Office of Personnel Management and among the agencies.
6. Issue results of review identifying remarks as required in the Official Personnel Folder documentation (permanent) or not (transitory).

Note: Tasks 3 and 4 may be completed in stages; findings may be released in stages as well, impacting scheduled target dates.

Resources: Office of Personnel Management led with agency officials to review, comment, and provide formal/informal guidance.

Schedule:

Tasks	Target Dates
1. Establish inventory of remarks	Fourth quarter, fiscal year 1997
2. Determine how work will be organized	Fourth quarter, fiscal year 1997
3. Conduct review	First quarter, fiscal year 1998*
4. Coordinate findings within the Office of Personnel Management	Second quarter, fiscal year 1998*
5. Issue updates to THE GUIDE TO PROCESSING PERSONNEL ACTIONS to delete unnecessary remarks	Second quarter, fiscal year 1998*
6. Coordinate determinations on permanent/transitory remarks with agencies	Second quarter, fiscal year 1998*
7. Issue determinations on permanent/transitory remarks.	Third quarter, fiscal year 1998*

* Action may be taken in increments for groups of remarks before review of the entire remarks inventory is completed. Dates reflect first increment in each task.

Project Number: 6

Title: Electronic Transfer of Preliminary Employment Information

Objectives:

1. Define a process for electronic transfer of preliminary employment information among personnel offices.
 - a. Project must define security standards adequate to protect the employee's privacy.
 - b. Project may define information content and format.
2. Test the process and collect information on advantages and disadvantages of the process.

Background:

When an office is hiring someone from another Federal agency or office and does not have the applicant's Official Personnel Folder, they may gather basic information to process the appointment from the losing office. Personnel offices use the Standard Form 75, Preliminary Employment Data, to verify key information and obtain data required to process the appointment in their internal personnel processing systems. Personnel offices can request and receive the information by phone or by mail.

The Standard Form 75 includes information from files other than the Official Personnel Folder - for example, security data, payroll data, and Thrift Savings Plan data. The gaining personnel office may request all of the information on the Standard Form 75, only part of the Standard Form 75 information (indicated by circling the item numbers for the information requested), or more information than usual by making a special request in block 9 of the Standard Form 75.

Some agencies have expressed an interest in receiving preliminary employment information in an electronic format to save rekeying data into their personnel processing systems. Use of electronic transfers would be an additional option for those offices able to create and accept such information. Lessons learned from experience with these transfers would form a basis for electronic transfer of more complete personnel information.

Statement of Work:

1. Gather and review background information (Standard Form 75, Privacy Act notices for the systems of records covering Standard Form 75 data, Governmentwide security requirements for electronic transmission of personal data, current agency practices).
2. Determine the content and format for the request for preliminary employment information and the response. Content and format may follow the Standard Form 75 pattern which allows variations in the request or may require use of a single, predetermined format or may allow agencies to set the format on an ad-hoc basis.
3. Develop security standards for electronic transfer. Standards must ensure both the confidentiality and integrity of the information being transferred.
4. Obtain appropriate reviews of the proposals developed in steps 2 and 3 and develop plans to test electronic transfer under those proposals.
5. Test electronic transfer at several personnel offices. Gather information to evaluate the tests (e.g., accuracy, security, customer satisfaction, cost).
6. Evaluate test results and revise original proposals as necessary to incorporate lessons learned.
7. Submit revised proposals for review among all stakeholders.
8. Consolidate results of review; revise proposals as necessary; submit entire package to the Office of Personnel Management for final clearances and issuance of any required policy guidance.

Resources: Agency led work group of Office of Personnel Management and agency representatives, including operational level personnel staff and those with expertise in computer security.

Schedule: Begin fourth quarter fiscal year 1997. Specific tasks and target dates to be set by workgroup.

