

CEHR-E

Regulation  
No. 690-1-1217

10 July 2017

Civilian Personnel  
HIRING AND RETENTION INCENTIVES

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## CHAPTER 1

### Overview

1-1. Purpose. This regulation defines hiring and retention incentives available for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) recruitment and retention of applicable positions covered under the General Schedule (GS), Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS) and positions in the Laboratory Personnel Demonstration Project (Lab Demo). This ER supersedes the following memorandums:

a. Memorandum, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEHR-E, dated 04 September 2012, subject: Redlegation of Authority for Recruitment, Relocation, Retention and Enhanced Retention Incentives.

b. Memorandum, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEHR-E, dated 20 June 2011, subject: USACE Guidance on Repayment of Student Loans.

c. Memorandum, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEHR-E, dated 30 May 2012, subject: Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience and Certain Military Service for Determining Annual Leave Accrual Rate.

d. Memorandum, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, CEHR-E, dated 30 August 2012, subject: Superior Qualifications Appointment (SQA) and Special Needs Pay-Setting Authority for General Schedule (GS) Employees.

1-2. Applicability. This regulation applies to all USACE organizations.

1-3. Distribution Statement. Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

1-4. References.

a. Title 5, United States Code, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collectionUScode.action?collectionCode=USCODE>.

b. Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/ECFR?page=browse>.

c. Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5400.11, dated 29 October 2014, subject: DoD Privacy Program.

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d. DoD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 531, dated 18 July 2006, administratively reissued 18 May 2009, subject: DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Pay under the General Schedule.

e. DoD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 575, dated December 1996 incorporating through Change 8, 13 October 2000, administratively reissued 06 April 2009, subject: DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses, Retention Allowances, and Supervisory Differentials.

f. DoD Instruction 1400.25, Volume 631, dated 31 August 2009, subject: DoD Civilian Personnel Management System: Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience and Certain Military Service for Determining Leave Accrual.

g. Army Regulation 690-200, Chapter 213, Excepted Service Appointments.

h. Memorandum, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (P&R), dated 30 September 2004, subject: Department of Defense (DoD) Student Loan Repayment Program.

i. Memorandum, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (P&R), dated 21 September 2006, subject: Implementation of Recruitment, Relocation, and Retention Incentives.

j. Memorandum, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (P&R), dated 05 February 2008, subject: Implementation of Enhanced Retention Incentives Authorities.

k. Memorandum, Department of Army, DAPE-CPZ, dated 06 May 2011, subject: Implementation – Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience and Certain Military Service for Determining Annual Leave Accrual Rate.

l. Department of Army Implementing Guidance, dated 03 January 2011, subject: Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience and Certain Military Service to Determine Annual Leave Accrual Rate.

m. USACE Supplement 1 to Army Regulation 690-200, Chapter 213.

n. US Army Corps of Engineers Campaign Plan.

o. Memorandum, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, dated 26 February 2010, subject: Employment of Federal Civilians Annuitants in the Corps of Engineers (USACE) (Reemployed Annuitants).

p. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Delegation of Civilian Human Resources Authorities Matrix.

1-5. Policy. Recruiting and retaining a highly talented workforce is a vital component of USACE's ability to meet its many missions. Winning the war for valuable talent requires a toolkit of flexibilities to attract, recruit and retain highly specialized talent, as well as compete with private industry and other local, state, and Federal Government employers. This regulation consists of recruitment and retention incentives to be considered and offered when circumstances meet all applicable policy requirements. Incentives provide a means to augment financial compensation and leave benefits to candidates who are highly desired for employment in hard-to-fill or special needs positions, thereby ensuring the continued excellence of USACE missions.

1-6. Delegation of Authority. Delegation levels of authority for the approval of recruitment and retention incentives contained in this regulation may be referenced in the 'USACE Delegated Civilian Human Resources Authorities' matrix.

1-7. Resource Implications. Requesting officials must consider the current operating environment and competing requirements for limited resources when exercising the authorities prescribed in this regulation. Approving officials must ensure they stay within any subsequent issued budget limits or any restrictions issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Army (DA) and/or USACE prior to approving these incentives.

1-8. Program Oversight. The Directorate of Human Resources (CEHR-E) is responsible for the oversight and compliance of regulatory and procedural requirements prescribed in this regulation. Compliance will be monitored and evaluated on an annual and/or ad hoc basis to assess impacts on the use of the recruitment and retention incentives. Reviews may be statistical and/or qualitative and include an evaluation of compliance with regulatory guidance, best practices, program impediments and overall cost-effectiveness.

## CHAPTER 2

### Student Loan Repayment

2-1. Overview. The USACE Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) facilitates the recruitment and retention of highly-qualified employees by allowing USACE organizations (i.e., MSC, District or Laboratory) to repay part or all of their outstanding federally insured student loans. The Student Loan Repayment is a mutually beneficial incentive for the organization to recruit and retain mission essential talent while, in return, the employee receives financial alleviation to student loan debt.

2-2. Eligibility. All USACE employees are eligible, excluding those occupying a position excepted from the competitive civil service because of their confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating nature (i.e., Schedule C appointees). Employees approved for student loan repayments must maintain an acceptable level of performance. USACE may not use this authority to recruit current Federal employees from other agencies.

2-3. Criteria for Student Loan Repayment. The requesting official must prepare a written determination prior to authorizing student loan repayment benefits. The determination should describe the extent to which the candidate's declination of a job offer, or departure of the current employee would affect the organization's ability to perform an essential function or otherwise meet an essential mission requirement. Requesting officials must verify the candidate/employee has a qualifying outstanding student loan before authorizing repayment. Once approved by the designated approving official, requesting officials must coordinate with the servicing Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) to submit all required documentation for approved payments.

a. Justification for recruitment purposes must address the difficulty an organization will encounter in filling the position in the absence of student loan repayments. Justification for retention purposes must be based on unusually high or unique qualifications, or when the organization has a special need for the employee's skills making it essential to retain the employee. The justification must also assess the likelihood the employee would leave USACE for employment outside the Federal service in the absence of offering student loan repayments.

b. USACE may not offer to repay a student loan for an employee who is likely to leave for another position within the Federal government, except in the case of Base Realignment and Closure.

2-4. Student Loan Service Agreement. Agreements to repay student loans will require the execution of a minimum three-year service agreement. Student loan repayments may not exceed \$10,000 per calendar year per employee. The total lifetime repayment amount cannot exceed \$60,000 per employee.

a. The designated approving official and candidate/employee must complete the USACE Student Loan Repayment Service Agreement (ENG Form 6103). The service agreement may be signed before the candidate/employee begins serving in the position however, loan payments cannot begin until the service period begins. The service period begins on the date specified in the service agreement. It may not begin earlier than the Entrance on Duty (EOD) date or the date the agreement is signed.

b. A service agreement is only valid within the USACE organization of the designated approving official and may remain in effect if the employee changes positions within that organization. With the exception of moves within HQUSACE, the service agreement automatically terminates if an employee moves to a different USACE organization. The approving official in the gaining USACE organization may approve a new service agreement. A new service agreement would require an additional service requirement of at least three years.

c. The USACE organization and employee may mutually agree to modify an existing service agreement to provide additional student loan repayment benefits for additional service without the need of a new service agreement. An agreement modification may, for example, add one year of additional service subject to the statutory annual and lifetime limits. Modified agreements are only valid within the USACE organization of the designated approving official and remain in effect if the employee changes positions within that organization. In these cases, the service agreement should be updated as needed.

d. Centrally funded Army Civilian Training, Education and Development System (ACTEDS) interns are eligible for student loan repayments at the expense of the USACE organization. When a centrally funded ACTEDS intern has executed a service agreement and is placed into a USACE position at the end of the intern training period, the gaining USACE organization may honor the existing repayment obligation for the duration of the service commitment.

2-5. Termination of Benefits. USACE may terminate the student loan repayment agreement based solely on management needs such as reduction-in-force, insufficient funds or reassignment to a different position. In these cases, the employee is entitled to payments attributable to completed service and reimbursement of the loan payment is not required. USACE employees receiving student loan repayment benefits are ineligible for continued benefits if they voluntarily

separate from USACE, do not maintain an acceptable level of performance as documented by a rating of 'fully successful or equivalent in their last performance appraisal or violate a condition in the service agreement if the agreement specifically provides eligibility is lost when the condition is violated.

2-6. Reimbursement to USACE. Employees must reimburse USACE for student loan repayment benefits received if they fail to complete the service period required in the applicable service agreement, or if any other condition in the service agreement requiring reimbursement is violated.

a. USACE must be reimbursed for previously paid loan payments if the employee voluntarily separates from USACE for another Federal agency before the service requirement is satisfied, unless the losing organization requests a specific waiver (reference paragraph 2-7).

b. Reimbursement of loan payments is not required if the employee is involuntarily separated for reasons other than misconduct, unacceptable performance or a negative suitability determination.

2-7. Waiver Authority. USACE may waive recovery of payment if it is determined to be against equity and good conscience, or contrary to the public interest and take into account consistency, fairness, and the cost to taxpayers of recovering monies owed to the Government. Requests for waivers of repayment will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Employees must submit a written request for a waiver of repayment through their chain of command. Each request must be submitted through the Human Resources Strategic Advisor (HRSA) for endorsement by the Division Commander, or equivalent delegated authority, to CEHR-E for consideration of approval.

a. The Division Commander, or equivalent delegated authority, may consider waived recovery if an employee voluntarily separates from USACE and has completed at least 75 percent of the service agreement.

b. Other situations where USACE organizations support a waiver of repayment, such as separation due to severe illness or to accompany a military spouse who receives a Permanent Change of Station, will be reviewed by the Division Commander, or equivalent delegated authority, on a case-by-case basis.

c. Requests for waivers of repayment should include:

(1) Justification for authorizing student loan repayment benefits as a recruitment or retention incentive;



(2) Justification for waiving recovery of payment and addressing how it would be against equity and good conscience or contrary to public interest;

(3) Conditions of the loan repayment completed by USACE and the employee as stated in the student loan repayment service agreement. The total amount of monies paid by USACE towards the loan and the total period of service completed by the employee should be included. Outstanding payments and service requirements must also be specified; and

(4) Copy of the completed Student Loan Service Agreement and any applicable amendments.

## CHAPTER 3

### Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience and Certain Military Service for Determining Annual Leave Accrual Rate

3-1. Overview. Service credit for prior directly related non-Federal work experience, active duty military service and/or experience in a volunteer position may be granted as a recruitment incentive to credit service not otherwise creditable for the purposes of determining the annual leave accrual rate.

3-2. Eligibility. USACE may grant credit for prior non-Federal work experience and certain military services for candidates receiving their first appointment as a civilian employee of the Federal government, or candidates reappointed to a GS position after a break in service of more than 90 days. Individuals approved for credit of enhanced annual leave will remain creditable unless the employee fails to complete one full year of continuous service within USACE.

3-3. Criteria for Enhanced Leave. Leave service computation credit should be considered only when such credit would serve as an incentive to acquire high quality talent for positions essential to the mission, goal or program activity accomplishment. The requesting official must document in writing the reasons for granting service credit of directly related prior non-Federal work/volunteer experience and certain military experience. Requesting officials must coordinate with the servicing CPAC to determine the appropriate length of creditable service.

a. Applicants must meet the following to be eligible for consideration of enhanced service credit:

(1) The skills and experience must be essential to the position and acquired through performance in a non-Federal, military service or volunteer position having duties directly related to the position which the applicant will be appointed;

(2) The skills and experience must be necessary to achieve an important USACE mission or performance goal; and

(3) The applicant is being appointed to a position covered by the Federal annual and sick leave program per sections 6303 and 6307 of Title 5, U.S. Code.

b. Approving officials must consider the following factors prior to authorizing the service credit:

- (1) Currency and relevancy of experience to be credited to the position being filled;
- (2) Criticality of the position to the organization's mission; and
- (3) Difficulty in filling the position.

3-4. Documentation. The final approved Service Computation Date (SCD)-Leave credit package and supporting documentation must be forwarded to the servicing CPAC prior to the EOD. The SCD-Leave credit package must include:

- a. Position description;
- b. Vacancy announcement (if applicable);
- c. The candidate's resume clearly documenting the nature and length of service to be credited with specific beginning and end dates (month, day and year);
- d. Copy of the DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Service" for credit of directly related military service (if applicable);
- e. Description of how the duties relate to the position being filled for each period of service in which credit is requested;
- f. USACE Service Computation Date Evaluation and Justification Worksheet (ENG Form 6101) completed by the requesting official;
- g. USACE Supporting Justification for SCD Leave Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience of Military Service (ENG Form 6105) and USACE Enhanced SCD-Leave Incentive Statement of Understanding (ENG Form 6102) completed by the applicant.

3-5. Pathways Programs and/or Entry-level Developmental Positions. Candidates for Pathways Program positions, such as Recent Graduates or Pathways Interns, or trainee and/or entry-level developmental positions are unlikely to meet the required criteria to be eligible for this incentive. These candidates typically will not have gained experience essential to the position through prior non-Federal work, volunteer and/or military service. Commanders and hiring managers should exercise caution if considering use of this incentive for these positions, and are encouraged to work with their human resources advisors to determine if use of enhanced leave is practical, appropriate or if any other incentives could be used instead. The delegation authority to approve enhanced leave requests for Pathways Programs and/or developmental positions is maintained at a higher level than normal and can be referenced on the USACE Delegation of Authority Matrix.

## CHAPTER 4

### Recruitment, Relocation, Retention and Enhanced Retention Incentives

4-1. Overview. Recruitment, relocation, retention and enhanced retention incentives (3R's) are a valuable tool enabling USACE organizations to attract candidates to accept positions essential to the mission, goal or program activity accomplishments which would otherwise be difficult to fill in the absence of the incentive.

4-2. Recruitment Incentive. A recruitment incentive may be paid to a newly appointed eligible employee provided the requesting official determines the position is likely to be difficult to fill in the absence of an incentive. A recruitment incentive may only be paid to a candidate who has received a written offer of employment and signed a USACE service agreement.

a. The requesting official must determine if the position is likely to be hard-to-fill in the absence of a recruitment incentive by considering the factors in 5 CFR 575.106(b)(1-8). Justification for paying a recruitment incentive must be documented in writing and address the approval criteria in 5 CFR 575.108(a). Determinations to pay the incentive must be made prior to the candidate's EOD.

b. Recruitment incentives may be authorized for up to 25 percent of the amount of an employee's basic annual pay at the beginning of the service period (to include either locality pay or a special rate supplement). The approved percentage, not to exceed 25 percent, will be multiplied by the number of years in the service period (including fractions of a year), not exceed four years.

4-3. Relocation Incentive. A relocation incentive may be paid to a current, eligible employee who must relocate without a break in service to accept a position in a different geographic area (as defined by 5 CFR 575.205(b)) which is likely to be difficult to fill in the absence of an incentive. The employee must have at least a 'Fully Successful' or equivalent performance rating of record for the position held immediately before the relocation. A residence in the new geographic area must be established by the employee before the relocation incentive is paid.

a. Justification for paying a relocation incentive must be documented in writing and address the approval criteria in 5 CFR 575.206(b) and 5 CFR 575.208(a). Determinations to pay the incentive must be made prior to the employee's EOD in the position to which relocated. Incentives may be approved whether the relocation is permanent or temporary.

b. Relocation incentives may be authorized for up to 25 percent of the amount of an

employee's annual basic pay at the beginning of the service period (to include either locality pay or a special rate supplement). The approved percentage, not to exceed 25 percent, will be multiplied by the number of years in the service period (including fractions of a year), not to exceed four years.

c. A waiver is required if the location of the new position is less than 50 miles from the location of the position the employee held immediately before the move. Requests for waivers must be submitted through the HRSA for endorsement from the Division Commander, or equivalent delegated authority. For HQUSACE positions, the Deputy Commanding General (DCG) has the approval authority to waive the 50-mile requirement. The Division Commander, or equivalent delegated authority, may approve a waiver if the location of the new position is less than 50 miles from the location of the position held immediately prior, however, the employee must relocate (i.e., establish a new residence) to accept the position. The requirement for the employee to actually relocate is non-waivable.

4-4. Retention Incentive. A retention incentive may be offered to a current employee who has unusually high or unique qualifications; or when the organization has a special need for the services of an employee, whom may leave the Federal Service in the absence of an incentive, making retention of the employee essential. Justification for paying a retention incentive must be documented in writing and address the approval criteria in 5 CFR 575.308.

a. Individual retention incentives may be approved for up to 25 percent of an employee's rate of basic pay (to include either locality pay or a special rate supplement).

b. The approving official must establish a single retention incentive rate for each individual, or group of employees, expressed as a percentage of the employee's rate of basic pay. The approved percentage for an individual is not to exceed 25 percent. The approved percentage if authorized for a group is not to exceed 10 percent.

c. A retention incentive may be paid to an employee in a closure or relocation situation when the organization provides a general or specific written notice that the employee's position may, or would, be affected by the closure or relocation of the office, facility, activity, or organization (i.e., the employee's position may, or would, move to a new geographic location or the employee's position may, or would, be eliminated). Incentives under this section may only be authorized when the approving official determines:

(1) The organization has a special need for the employee's services, given the mission requirements and the employee's competencies, making it essential to retain the employee in his or her current position during a period of time before the closure or relocation of the employee's office, facility, activity or organization and;

(2) In the absence of a retention incentive, the employee would be likely to leave for a different position in the Federal service (including a position in another Federal agency, a position in another DoD Component or a different position in the same DoD Component) as evidenced by the employee's affirmation or any additional supporting documentation the authorized approving official determines to be appropriate.

4-5. Incentives Above 25 Percent. Requests for incentives above 25 percent, and up to 50 percent, must provide justification demonstrating a severe shortage of candidates exists for a job or group of jobs. Justification must include information documenting candidates with the required competencies for a specified job cannot be found despite extensive recruitment efforts, extended announcement periods and use of recruitment, relocation and retention incentives. The only official designated to approve requests to increase an incentive for more than 25 percent and up to 50 percent is OPM. Requests for incentives above 25 percent must be endorsed by the USACE Senior Career Program (CP) Functional Chief Representative (FCR) and submitted through the respective HRSA to CEHR-E for approval. Such requests should not include Pathways Program positions, such as Recent Graduates, and/or developmental trainees as these candidates typically possess competencies which can typically be found elsewhere.

4-6. Group Incentives. Requests to approve recruitment, relocation and/or retention incentives for groups of positions which have previously been difficult to fill, or are likely to be difficult to fill in the future must provide justification demonstrating a severe shortage of candidates for a job or group of jobs exists. The request must be endorsed by the USACE CP FCR and submitted through the respective HRSA to CEHR-E for approval.

4-7. Service Agreement. A completed and signed USACE Recruitment or Relocation Incentives Service Agreement (ENG Form 6099) or USACE Retention or Enhanced Retention Incentives Service Agreement (ENG Form 6100) must be submitted to the servicing CPAC prior to the employee receiving any incentive payments.

a. The service period for a recruitment and relocation incentive agreement may not be less than six months or more than four years. Using criteria established by the designated approving official, the requesting official is encouraged to seek agreements requiring service beyond six months, as appropriate.

b. A service agreement for a relocation incentive may provide a shorter minimum service period of employment in cases of a temporary change in duty station for less than 6 months.

c. USACE may begin a relocation incentive service agreement throughout a period of employment established under a prior service agreement from a previously authorized retention

incentive, or for which an employee is receiving previously authorized retention incentive payments without a service agreement under 5 CFR part 575, subpart C, Retention Incentives. The service period under such a relocation incentive service agreement and the service period required by the retention incentive service agreement, as applicable, must be fulfilled concurrently.

d. If the employee is required to complete a probationary period or an initial period of formal training, the employee's service period may be delayed until the beginning of the pay period following completion of the probationary or training period. The service agreement must specify there is no obligation to pay any portion of the incentive if the employee does not successfully complete the probationary period or the training.

e. All documentation must be retained and readily available for review as needed by OPM, DoD, the Assistance Secretary of Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs) or the Department of Army Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff G-1. Documentation supporting the requirements for granting these incentives should be maintained by the authorized approving official for a minimum of 3 years following the date of approval or upon completion of the relevant service agreement or allowance; whichever is later.

#### 4-8. Payment Options.

a. With the exception of positions in support of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO), recruitment and relocation incentives may be paid by any of the following methods as specified in the service agreement:

(1) An initial lump-sum payment at the start of the service period or before the start of the service period once the employee has signed the agreement;

(2) In equal or variable installment payments through the service period; or

(3) As a final lump-sum payment upon completion of the full service period.

b. Retention incentives may not be paid as an initial lump-sum payment at the start of a service period or as installment paid in advance. USACE may pay the retention incentive by the following methods as specified in the service agreement:

(1) Installments after the completion of specified periods of service; or

(2) A single lump-sum payment after completion of the full service period.

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4-9. DFAS Repayments. Employees are responsible for waiver requests of repayment to DFAS. The employee must file a waiver application within 3 years after an erroneous payment was discovered. A debt may be waived in whole or in part. Collection of the debt generally will not be suspended during the waiver review process. A refund will be made to the employee if a waiver is approved by DFAS.

a. Guidance on requesting a waiver is listed in the letter of indebtedness issued to the employee. A waiver request for the repayment of indebtedness to the government, as a result of a breach of service agreement, must provide specific justification which demonstrates the need to submit a waiver request and include why collection of the excess amount would be against equity and good conscience and not in the best interest of the United States. The respective HRSA will coordinate with the USACE Payroll Program Manager and the servicing CPAC to gather information required for the waiver request. Repayment is not required if the employee is involuntarily separated for reasons other than misconduct or delinquency.

b. Requests for USACE support of a repayment waiver of a recruitment, relocation and/or retention incentive must be forwarded through the HRSA for endorsement from the Division Commander, or equivalent delegated authority, to CEHR-E. The HQUSACE DCG retains the authority to approval requests for a repayment waiver. If approved, a memo supporting the waiver of repayment will be provided to the employee for inclusion in his/her waiver request to DFAS.



## CHAPTER 5

### Superior Qualifications Appointment and Special Needs Pay-Setting Authority

5-1. Overview. Superior Qualifications Appointment (SQA) authority affords pay-setting flexibilities by enhancing job offers due to a candidate's superior qualifications or special USACE needs which are essential to the mission, goal, or program activity accomplishments.

5-2. Eligibility. USACE may use this pay-setting flexibility for individuals receiving a first appointment as a civilian employee to a GS position of the Federal government, or individuals reappointed to a GS position after a break in service of more than 90 days. (Exceptions to the 90 day break in service requirement are referenced in 5 CFR 531.212.)

5-3. Criteria for SQA and Special Needs Pay-setting. Individuals hired under SQA must have unusually higher qualifications than those typically required for the position and of other well-qualified candidates. The applicant's skills, competencies, experience, education and/or accomplishments must be relevant to the position being filled and significantly higher than those needed to be minimally qualified. Individuals hired under special needs pay-setting authority must fulfill a special need of USACE relevant to the position being filled which would justify a salary above the first step for the offered grade.

5-4. Procedures. Approving officials must consider the possibility of authorizing Enhanced Annual Leave (Credit for Prior Non-Federal Work Experience and Certain Military Service for Determining Annual Leave Accrual Rate) or a recruitment incentive (5 CFR part 575) prior to authorizing SQA or special needs pay. Pay will be set in line with the candidate's level of knowledge, skills and experience for the offered position and pay range (i.e., GS-09, step 01 through 10). The exercise of SQA and special needs pay-setting authority is not intended to solely match a candidate's existing pay outside the Federal civilian sector. The candidate's relevant and/or current annual salary is only one factor towards the advanced-in-hire rate. All applicable pay rate determinants in 5 CFR 531.212(c) should be considered when determining the advanced-in-hire rate of pay.

5-5. Documentation. The SQA package must be approved by the authorizing official and coordinated with the servicing CPAC prior to the selectee's EOD date. Approving officials must maintain all supporting documentation for SQA and pay-setting approval requests for a minimum of three years. The following is required for justification and approval of SQA/special needs pay-setting:

- a. Description of the candidate's superior qualifications or the USACE special need(s);

b. Description of how the candidate's qualifications are superiorly higher than the minimum requirements of the position. The description should entail how the experience, education and/or other relevant factors directly relate to the position and/or are more specialized in quality than the other well-qualified and available candidates. (For example, if many well-qualified and available candidates showed high-level experience or education directly pertinent to the position, a superior candidate would demonstrate an outstanding reputation in the field through publications, lectures or leadership roles in professional associations/organizations);

c. Statement the individual selected is the only candidate on the referral list who possesses the superior qualifications or meets the special needs criteria;

d. Position description, vacancy announcement, referral list and selected candidate's resume;

e. Statement from the requesting official the authorization of enhanced leave and/or a recruitment incentive has been considered and the reason(s) for authorizing SQA in lieu of or in addition to either incentive;

f. USACE Superior Qualifications or Special Needs Pay-Setting Approval Checklist (ENG Form 6104).

g. If applicable, proof of salary (i.e., copy of leave and earnings statement, the previous year's W-2 form, etc.) if the request includes the candidate's existing or relevant salary as a factor in the decision to authorize SQA. Salary refers to a regularly received predetermined amount of compensation each pay period on a weekly, or less frequent, basis from an employer to an employee. The predetermined amount cannot be reduced because of variations in the quality or quantity of the employee's work; and/or

h. If applicable, copy of a competing job offer containing the salary if the request includes a competing job offer as a factor in the decision.

5-6. Superior Qualifications Appointment for the Federal Wage System (FWS). The use of SQA may be used in recognition of a candidate's superior qualifications for FWS positions (5 CFR 532.403). The criteria of this chapter also applies to SQA or special needs pay-setting of FWS appointments in addition to any other requirements established by OPM, DoD or DA.

5-7. Pathways Programs and/or Entry-level Developmental Positions. Candidates for Pathways Program positions, such as Recent Graduates or Pathways Interns, or trainee and/or entry-level


developmental positions are unlikely to meet the required criteria to be eligible for this incentive. These candidates typically will not have gained experience deemed superiorly higher than those needed to meet the minimum requirements of a position through experience, education and/or other relevant factors. Commanders and hiring managers should exercise caution if considering use of this incentive for such positions, and are encouraged to work with their human resources advisors to determine if use of advance-in-hire pay-setting is practical, appropriate and if other incentives could be used instead. The delegation authority to approve SQA and/or special needs pay-setting requests for Pathways Programs and/or developmental positions is maintained at a higher level than normal and can be referenced on the USACE Delegation Matrix.

a. The use of SQA and/or special needs pay setting for Pathways Program positions, i.e., Recent Graduate, Pathways Intern, and trainee/developmental candidates is not intended to solely match private sector hiring trends. Advance-in-hire requests for this category of candidates should clearly demonstrate the candidate is more qualified than others in the available talent pool. Requests for SQA and/or special needs pay setting authority should clearly describe the candidate's skills, competencies, education, experience, accomplishments, etc. These qualities must be directly related to the position and significantly higher than those needed to be minimally qualified or more specialized in quality compared to other candidates in the field.

b. Criteria which demonstrates a Recent Graduate or trainee candidate meets SQA may include, but is not limited to:

- (1) Professional licenses and/or certifications;
- (2) Internships other related professional experiences related to the recruited position;
- (3) Leadership roles through community groups, school activities and clubs, etc.;
- (4) Completed thesis and/or extended studies in a specialized field/occupation;
- (5) Other relevant factors supporting the candidate is more qualified than the existing talent pool.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

  
JEFFEREY A. ANDERSON  
COL, EN  
Chief of Staff

## GLOSSARY

### Section I. Abbreviations

3R's: Recruitment, relocation, retention and enhanced retention incentives

ACTEDS: Army Civilian Training, Education and Development System

CEHR-E: HQ USACE, Directorate of Human Resources, Employment and Compensation Division

CPAC: Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (Civilian Human Resources Agency)

CP FCR: Career Program Functional Chief Representative

DA: Department of Army

DFAS: Defense Financial and Accounting Services

DoD: Department of Defense

EOD: Entrance on duty date

FWS: Federal Wage System (Wage Grade, Wage Supervisor, etc.)

HRSA: Human Resources Strategic Advisor

OPM: Office of Personnel Management

SCD-Leave: Service Computation Date for Leave purposes

SQA: Superior Qualification Appointment

SLRP: Student Loan Repayment Program

## Section II. Terms

**Advance-in-hire:** Setting pay for an employee newly hired into the Federal government at a rate above the minimum step 01 based on superior qualifications and/or for meeting a special need of the organization.

**Approving official:** An official with authority delegated from the USACE Commanding General to approve and/or grant the hiring and retention incentives contained in this document. The levels of delegated authority to make decisions for these incentives can be referenced in the USACE Civilian Human Resources Delegation of Authority Matrix.

**CP FCR:** Career Program Functional Chief Representatives monitor, plan and evaluate strategic workforce initiatives for an assigned occupational field.

**Delegation of authority:** The authority to execute various civilian human resources management programs is received through a number of statutes, laws, regulations, etc. from higher level entities such as the Office of Personnel Management, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the Army, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) ultimately to the Command level. Based on these delegations, the USACE Commanding General is often delegated authority to make decisions required for the day-to-day execution of such various civilian human resources management programs. In many cases, this authority may be further delegated from the USACE Commanding General to lower levels of authority within the USACE chain of command.

**Human resources advisor:** Human resources professionals who advise and assist USACE officials determine the most advantageous hiring, employment and other HR related decisions and alternatives to meet organizational and mission needs. Advisors may consist of individuals within USACE such as Directorate of Human Resources (CEHR) employees, Division Human Resources Strategic Advisors (HRSAs); or outside of USACE such as Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) specialists, etc.

**Requesting official:** An official, usually at the hiring manager level, requesting to use the hiring and retention incentives contained in this document. This official may or may not possess the authority to approve and/or grant decisions regarding the use of these incentives as delegated from higher levels within the USACE chain of command.

**USACE Delegation Matrix:** Source document containing a list of the USACE Civilian Human Resources authorities and associated levels of delegated authority. The matrix is located on the HR Communities of Practice SharePoint website at:  
<https://cops.usace.army.mil/sites/HR/default.aspx>.