

Information Sheet for Merit Promotion Panel Members

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a USGS merit promotion panel member/subject-matter expert (SME). Careful and objective evaluation of candidates by SME's is an essential component of our merit promotion program. Your participation in the process is welcomed and appreciated.

Your goal as a panel member is to identify the best qualified candidates from among a group of basically qualified candidates. This is done by using a crediting plan to rate each candidate for each Knowledge, Ability, Skill, and other Characteristic (KASOCs). When you review the crediting plan, you will find that it describes three different levels for each KASOC: a 5-point level; a 3-point level; and a 1-point level. You may also use the intervening point levels of 2 and 4. If any KASOC designated as a selective factor (mandatory) is rated as a zero, and all panel members agree on the zero, the applicant is not qualified and no further rating of that candidate is necessary. Candidates with zero ratings on quality ranking factors are not eliminated and you should continue to rate their applications on all other KASOCs.

Candidates will be rated on the basis of the information that he or she has provided in their application package, and only on that basis. Ideally, that would include an application, a supervisory appraisal, and a narrative that relates the candidate's background directly to the KASOCs for the job. In some cases, the KASOCs and/or the appraisal may not have been submitted with the application. In those cases, rate the application based on the information that is available.

Rating each candidate on the basis of the application package is of the utmost importance to the integrity of the merit promotion program. If, when you review the names of the candidates, you have any doubts about your ability to carry out fair and objective evaluations (or if you think others might question your objectivity), contact the human resources specialist and discuss the issue before you begin the rating process. Similarly, any discussion of a candidate must be based on merit factors relating to the job to be filled. Discussions of a candidate's age, sex, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or other nonmerit factor is inappropriate and prohibited. Panel proceedings are confidential and must not be discussed with applicants or other individuals outside the meeting. Questions about the panel should be referred to the servicing human resources specialist/assistant.

Once the rating process has been completed, you will review the scores for each KASOC for each candidate to ensure that there is no more than a 2-point spread between any panel members on any individual KASOC. If you do find more than a 2-point spread exists, please discuss the application and agree, if possible, to reconcile the scores within 2 points. After this process is completed, each panel member or the chairperson will transfer their total scores for candidates to the summary rating sheet. The chairperson will then total all panel members' scores and place them in the "Total Points" column of the summary sheet. Next, compute the average points for each applicant by dividing the total points by the number of the panel members. When this process has been completed,

your servicing human resources specialist or assistant will assist in determining a cutoff point for the best qualified candidates. (The cutoff point can be determined using either total scores or average scores.) The best qualified list will be referred to the selecting official in alphabetical order without numeric scores.