



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Thursday, May 18, 2000

CPM 2000-7

MEMORANDUM FOR: Human Resources Directors

FROM: HENRY ROMERO ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR WORKFORCE
COMPENSATION AND PERFORMANCE

Subject: Special Rate Study for Information Technology Worker

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is studying the possibility of establishing special rate schedules for categories of information technology (IT) workers. We have initiated this study in response to requests for additional compensation flexibility from agency human resource (HR) and IT officials to help resolve IT recruitment and retention problems. This memorandum requests your assistance in providing some of the staffing data and other information needed for this project.

Background

Under 5 U.S.C. 5305, OPM may establish special salary rates to address situations in which the Government's recruitment or retention efforts are, or are likely to become, significantly handicapped. In establishing special rates, OPM considers staffing data (e.g., vacancy rates, offer acceptance rates, quit rates, general labor market conditions), salary data for similar non-Federal employees, other actions taken to address staffing problems, the impact of staffing problems on an agency's mission, and any other relevant factors.

We usually ask agencies that request OPM to establish special rate schedules to take the lead in coordinating the request with other affected agencies. However, for the IT special rate study, we have volunteered to perform the coordination function to expedite the special rate approval process. We have already started to collect and analyze some of the data needed for the study. We now need your help to provide information that will assist in focusing our project, developing the required justification for IT special rates, and providing a basis for designing IT special rate schedules and estimating costs.

Coordination with the CIO Council

This comprehensive special rates study will require HR officials to coordinate with the IT community to properly identify IT staffing problems. In this regard, we are consulting closely with the CIO Council on this project. The Council has endorsed our proposal to conduct a special rates study and provided input on the study's approach and coverage.

We strongly recommend coordinating this special rates data gathering effort with your agency's Chief Information Officer. We are requesting specific staffing information that may not be readily available or easily identified. Your CIO can help provide the expertise and first-hand experience necessary to effectively respond to this request.

Types of Information Technology Employees Included in the Special Rate Study

- Our study will focus primarily on occupational series GS-334, Computer Specialist. However, we are open to including employees in other occupational series (e.g., GS-1550, Computer Science). If you believe other occupational series should be included, please provide data, as directed below, for those additional series.
- Significant distinctions in staffing problems and mission criticality may exist within the IT field. Therefore, we are requesting IT staffing data by skill category using the 11 specialty titles within the IT career field developed by OPM's Classification Programs Division. (See *attachment 1* for a list of specialty titles and their definitions.) While these specialty titles pertain primarily to GS-334 employees, they may also apply to other occupational series. As discussed below, our information collection forms also allow you to identify other specialties, sub-specialties, or certification levels. (We understand that some agencies have not yet implemented the 11 specialty titles and may have difficulty readily identifying these specialties within their IT workforce. If this is the case in your agency, we request that you work with your IT organizations to obtain as much staffing data by specialty as possible.)

Headcount and Staffing Data

- Please provide headcount data for each skill category (listed by specialty title), as requested by *sample form A in attachment 2*. If you want to include employees in occupational series other than GS-334, please fill out a separate form A for each series. Please note that form A also provides a place for data on specialties not otherwise listed. (Note: We will use the Central Personnel Data File (CPDF) to obtain headcounts and turnover rates by occupational series, but the CPDF does not include information on the number of employees by skill category within an occupational series. In addition, depending on the results of our preliminary analysis, we may eventually need to ask you to provide more specific data by skill category, such as grade distribution by geographic location.)
- Please provide any staffing data by skill category that are currently available or that can be readily collected. Include data on vacancy rates, offer acceptance rates, quit rates, and overall turnover rates by grade level for each category. (See *sample form B in attachment 3*.) You may also include data on the quality of job candidates for each category, if relevant. To supplement staffing data, please provide a description of staffing problems by skill category based on the direct experience of IT program managers. Include relevant anecdotal examples of staffing problems and descriptions regarding the extent to which other pay flexibilities have been used but have not been effective in solving staffing problems.

Ranking Skill Categories and Geographic Areas

- Please rank IT skill categories based on the severity and criticality of recruitment problems (i.e., high vacancy rates, low offer acceptance rates, low quality candidates) and retention problems (i.e., high quit/turnover rates) in your agency. Please include the rankings with the headcount data on sample form A. As with the headcount data, please include the rankings for each occupational series on a separate form.
- Please rank geographic areas based on the general overall severity of recruitment and retention problems for IT employees with critical skills. (*See attached sample form C.*)

Survey Data

If you have survey information regarding IT salaries in the non-Federal sector (local or national), please provide a copy. (If the information is voluminous, contact us first to be sure we do not already have a copy of the survey.)

OPM Contact

Please submit the requested information by June 30, 2000, to:

Donald J. Winstead
 Assistant Director
 for Compensation Administration
 Office of Personnel Management
 1900 E Street NW.
 Washington, DC 20415

You may also submit the information by fax on (202) 606-0824 or email at payleave@opm.gov. If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Jeanne Jacobson on (202) 606-2858. We appreciate your assistance in supporting this very important initiative.

Attachments:

- [IT Special Rate Study Questions and Answers](#)
- New Information Technology (IT) for Parenthetical Specialty Titles
- Recruitment and Retention problems for Information Technology Workers (Form A)
- Staffing Data for Information Technology Workers (Form B)
- Recruitment and Retention Problems by Geographic Area (Form C)

IT SPECIAL RATE STUDY

[as of June 13, 2000]

These Qs and As are an addendum to our May 18, 2000, memorandum to agency personnel directors (CPM 2000-7).

1. **Our agency has not yet implemented the information technology (IT) parenthetical specialty titles for the GS-334 Computer Specialist Series. Does OPM expect us to classify our GS-334s by specialty and obtain staffing data for these positions by June 30, 2000?**

We understand that the Office of Personnel Management only recently provided agencies with the IT parenthetical specialty titles and that use of these titles is optional at this time. We are not requiring agencies to assign a specialty title to each of their GS-334 positions for the purpose of the special rate study. If you have not yet implemented the specialty titles, please estimate the number of IT employees by specialty and provide data on their staffing situation as accurately as possible (except for the information requested in Form B, as discussed in question 5, below). This will require working closely with your agency's Chief Information Officer and other IT managers who have the expertise and first-hand knowledge needed to provide staffing data reflective of your IT workforce.

If OPM approves any special rate schedules by specialty title as a result of this study, agencies will be required to specifically identify employees in covered positions at that time.

2. **CPM 2000-7 requests that we provide headcount data for each skill category on Form A (Attachment 2). Do you want us to include vacant positions (by specialty) in the headcount data?**

Please provide data on the actual number of employees on-board (i.e., filled positions) for each specialty. This data will help us estimate the impact of establishing special rates for a particular category.

3. **A number of our IT positions could be identified by more than one specialty title. How should we submit data for such hybrid positions?**

For the purpose of this report, we are focusing on employees' paramount or primary specialty. You should not double-count employees who have more than one specialty. Please include them under their paramount/primary specialty. However, if you have employees for whom one specialty is not paramount but who do not fit in the "General" category, submit the headcount and ranking information for such hybrid employees on page 2 of Form A.

4. **By what grade levels do we define "Entry/Development," "Full Performance Level," and "Supervisory/Managerial" on Form A?**

Form A requests that you rank recruitment and retention problems by specialty and general work level. We hope to obtain an overall picture of where the IT staffing problems primarily

exist from this information. We did not define these work levels by grade because we felt it was not necessary for this purpose. In addition, the grades covered by these work levels could vary between agencies. Form B requests more detailed staffing data by grade level for each skill category.

5. **We are not able to provide the staffing data requested in Form B (Attachment 3 to CPM 2000-7) because we have not yet implemented the IT specialty titles/skill categories. Do you want us to provide estimates?**

On Form B we request very specific staffing data by grade level for each IT specialty/skill category. If you are not able to provide such specific data, please estimate the number of employees at each grade level for each specialty/skill category (page 1 of Form B). This will help us estimate the cost of any future special rate schedules. In addition, please submit a separate Form B with the staffing data requested for all your GS-334 positions in total.

6. **What beginning and ending dates should we use for the staffing data on Form B?**

A 1-year snapshot should adequately reflect the staffing situation for a particular IT specialty. The ending data should be current to within 60 days of your data submission to OPM, if possible. If data are not available for the full year, the snapshot timeframe should not be less than 6 months.

7. **Should we submit a different Form C for each IT specialty?**

We would like you to rank IT recruitment and retention problems by geographic area overall, for all IT specialties, on Form C (Attachment 4 to CPM 2000-7). It is not necessary to submit separate rankings for each specialty unless you would like to highlight that staffing problems are particularly acute for a specific skill category in a given area.

8. **On Form A, does OPM expect us to assign a ranking to each skill category?**

Yes, for all skill categories for which you have employees. Assign a ranking or rating of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 in all columns for each skill category that applies to your agency--with "1" used for categories with the most severe staffing problems and "5" for categories with the least severe staffing problems. (We are not asking you to select the five skill categories in each column with the most severe staffing problems and rank order only the top five.)