Department of Defense Position Management Best Practices

October 2025

The Federal workforce should be used efficiently and effectively

5 U.S.C. Chapter 23

Merit System Principle #5

References

a. 5 U.S.C. § 23 (Merit System Principles)
b. 5 U.S.C. § 51 (Classification)
c. 5 U.S.C. § 71 (Labor Management Relations)
d. 5 CFR § 511 (Classification under the General Schedule)
e. 5 CFR § 532 (Prevailing Rate Systems)
f. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Introduction to the Position Classification Standards, TS-134, July 1995, TS-107, August 1991, Revised August 2009
g. OPM Classifier's Handbook, TS-107, August 1991
h. OPM General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), June 1998, April 1998
i. OPM General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG), June 1998
j. OPM Federal Wage System Job Grading Standard for Leader WL/NL, TS-39, January 1980
k. OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG), September 2006
l. OPM Workforce Reshaping Operations Handbook, March 2017
m. OPM Digest of Significant Classification Decisions and Opinions
n. OMB Circular A-123 - Management's Responsibility for Internal Controls
o. DoD Instruction 5010.40 DoD Enterprise Risk Management and Risk Management and Internal Control Program, December 2024
p. Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service (DCPAS) DoD Supplement to the General Schedule Supervisory Guide,
q. DCPAS Supplementary Guidance for Applying Part II of the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide,
r. Ault, Tom. *"Span of Control: How Many Employees Should Your Supervisors Manage?"* ERC; 8 Dec 2024, https://yourerc.com/blog/span-of-control-how-many-employees-should-your-supervisors-manage/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

This supplement guide was created to help HR practitioners and managers understand and apply the principles of position management in everyday practice. Position management is more than just creating or filling jobs – it is about designing a workforce structure that meets mission needs, supports employees, and uses resources wisely.

In this guide, you will find practical guidance to assist you in reviewing organizational structures, shaping positions, and advising management on workforce decisions. The goal is to make position management approachable and useful, so HR practitioners can confidently partner with managers to build effective organizations.

This is not intended to be a rulebook, but rather a working reference that supplements existing agency policies/guidelines related to position management. By applying the concepts in this guide, HR practitioners can help ensure that positions are well-structured, organizations are efficient, and employees are set up for success.

Introduction

Position management is an essential part of how organizations stay effective, fair, and sustainable. It helps ensure that the right work is assigned to the right positions at the right levels. For HR professionals, it provides a framework to advise leaders on how to structure their workforce in a way that balances mission requirements, employee development, and fiscal responsibility.

Day-to-day, position management matters because it helps:

- **Prevent grade creep** – making sure positions are classified at the correct grade levels and reflect real work requirements.
- **Support career paths** – creating logical position structures that give employees opportunities to grow and progress.
- **Balance workloads** – distributing work fairly across positions and avoiding overburdened or underutilized roles.
- **Use resources wisely** – aligning positions with budget constraints while still meeting mission needs.
- **Adapt to change** – ensuring organizational structures remain flexible enough to respond to new priorities, technologies, and challenges.

By applying position management principles, HR professionals strengthen the link between people, work, and organizational goals. This supplement guide provides established position management concepts and standard best practices to achieve effective organizational structures that will enable DoD to meet its mission through optimal use of resources. It is meant to supplement written guidance promulgated specifically by DoD Components and agencies.

***Note to Reader*:** Any collective bargaining obligations under 5 U.S.C.Chapter 71 must be observed before implementing organizational changes. Appropriate approvals must be obtained before abolishing a position

What is Position Management?

Position management is the systematic process that managers and supervisors apply when designing an efficient and economical organization. Through this process, the following determinations are made:

- how many positions are needed;
- how jobs are designed; and
- the organizational structure that will best accomplish the mission and functional assignments of the unit.

Why do we need position management?

The proper use of position management principles allows the establishment of an overall position structure that will best serve the mission of DoD and optimize efficiency, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. The need to achieve an efficient and economical position structure is critical to the proper and responsible use of limited public, financial, and personnel resources.

The objective of good position management is to establish and maintain an organizational structure and staffing pattern that optimizes a balance between mission needs, economy and efficiency, and employee motivation and incentives. In order to achieve this objective, managers and supervisors shall structure their organizations in a manner so as to:

(1) Provide maximum efficiency and effectiveness of financial, material, and human resources and assure equitable workload distribution.
(2) Attract, develop, and retain a competent work force by enhancing employee motivation and providing for career progression; and,
(3) Streamline organizations by eliminating excessive layering, duplication of work effort, unnecessary positions, “grade creep,” excessive fragmentation, and other wasteful practices.

When Should I Conduct Position Management?

- **Whenever a position becomes vacant or there are multiple vacancies in the organization.** This is an ideal time to conduct a close examination of the organizational structure. As positions become vacant, it is recommended that managers evaluate the position description (PD) and determine if the major duties and the supporting knowledge, skills, and abilities are still necessary for the position and restructure if it makes sense for the organization.

- **Whenever there is a new or revised mission requirement**. Often, new or revised requirements drive the need to review the existing organizational structure. Changes to positions may be necessary to support the new or revised requirements.
- **Whenever there is a need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of operations**. A review of the organizational structure can help managers identify improvements to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their organization.
- **Whenever an organization participates in the staffing planning process.** A review of the organizational structure during the staffing planning process can help the organization determine hiring needs.

Note: It is recommended that managers contact their servicing HR specialist before significantly revising a PD or considering an organizational change for advice and guidance on the classification and position management implications.

Who is responsible for position management?

Each supervisor/manager is responsible for ensuring a sound position structure in the organization they lead because they play a key role in the management and classification of subordinate positions. Effective managers employ measures to:

- Design positions around skills and mission essential tasks rather than the personal qualifications of employees.
- Establish the fewest number of positions to effectively meet assigned missions.
- Ensure that complex work assigned to higher-graded positions is actually performed by those employees the majority of the time.

What role does Human Resources perform in position management?

While determining job content and organizational structure is the prerogative of management, support entities (including HR staff, finance personnel, and manpower analysts) play a key role in advising and assisting management in carrying out these responsibilities in line with sound position management concepts. A full and open partnership should exist between management and HR personnel in weighing the position management and classification impact and consequences of proposals affecting organization, work assignment, and changes in job content. Support personnel provide expertise and guidance, protecting the organization's interests by ensuring position management decisions comply with personnel regulations and use human resources efficiently and economically.

What is position classification?

Position classification is the process through which federal jobs (e.g., positions) are assigned to a pay system, series, title, and grade or band, based on the consistent application of established standards. Under the General Schedule (GS) classification system, individual positions are classified to an occupational group, a series representing a specific occupation within that group, and an appropriate grade which has a salary range provided by law. The same applies to Federal Wage System (FWS) classification except that salary ranges are based on prevailing rates - the rates paid by private employers for similar work in the wage area. The rates are established through geographic wage surveys. Under title 10 authorities, positions are classified to a pay band based on the specific rules for the alternate pay system.

The Position Classification System is based on two fundamental principles:

(1) There shall be equal pay for substantially equal work (see 5 U.S.C. § 2301).

(2) Variations in pay shall be proportionate to substantial differences in the difficulty, responsibility, and qualifications required.

The classification system and standards are valuable tools for management's use to achieve DoD's mission, serve as platforms to design organizations, recruit the necessary expertise to perform the work, and establish performance standards. The position description (PD) serves as the basis to recruit the best qualified person for a position.

Why do we need classification?

Individual positions are classified with the results used to determine the occupational series, title, and grade or band of the positions. This becomes the legal basis for how an employee is paid.

Who is responsible for classification?

Each organization's supervisor and manager is responsible for identifying the work to be performed. They must accurately describe the work in a PD and design organizational structures that are efficient and economical.

What is the relationship between classification and position management?

The classification process begins with position management, the process of establishing and maintaining positions to perform legally assigned work in the most effective and efficient manner. It is the function of position management to maintain and reorganize positions, as needed, in a current organization, or to establish positions in a new organization.

Establishing Position Management Ground Rules

Sound position management within an organization starts with establishing solid ground rules for subordinate managers and supervisors to follow and apply to their organization. The OMB Circular A-123:

- Requires that all operations incorporate effective systems of internal control to eliminate the possibility of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement.
- This requirement includes adequate administrative, financial, and management controls of all physical and human resources over which the organization has jurisdiction.
- Position management, which includes the processes for staffing, evaluating, and managing employee positions, is a critical aspect of a comprehensive internal control system.

It is recommended that organizations at the installation level and above create guidelines requiring the establishment of position management boards or their equivalent; set standards for when it is appropriate to create deputy and/or assistant positions; follow a 50 per cent grade rule for identical additional positions; create career ladders to encourage upward mobility, positive morale and retention of employees; and establish optimum span of control goals for supervisors.

Position Management Boards (PMBs)

What is a PMB?

A position management board is a committee or group within an organization responsible for managing and approving the creation, modification, and elimination of positions, regardless of whether they are currently filled.

PMBs are typically composed of senior management across the organization plus representatives from Human Resources, Manpower, and Budget. They generally meet quarterly, though may meet sooner depending upon the needs of the subordinate management.

What Does a PMB Do?

The PMB's primary function is to maintain a stable and efficient organizational structure by managing positions in a consistent and strategic manner. They are responsible for reviewing requests for new positions, assessing the impact of potential changes, and ensuring that all staffing decisions are aligned with the organization's priorities.

PMBs ensure work is not duplicated across the organization. For example, if there is an Information Technology department responsible for providing services across the organization, then an IT Specialist cannot be established in the Resource Management Office solely to do RMO servicing.

- **Review and approve new position requests:** They assess the need for a new position, ensuring it aligns with the organization's goals and strategic objectives.
- **Analyze and recommend changes to existing positions:** They evaluate the need for adjustments to existing positions, including changes in responsibilities, required qualifications, or reporting structures.
- **Verify funding and budget status:** They ensure that all proposed positions are adequately funded and align with the organization's budget.
- **Manage position transfers and abolishment:** They oversee the movement of positions between departments or agencies, and they make recommendations for abolishing positions that are no longer needed or funded.

What are the benefits of establishing a PMB in my organization?

- **Ensures alignment with strategic goals:** By carefully reviewing and approving position changes, the PMB helps ensure that staffing decisions align with the organization's overall goals and objectives.
- **Optimizes workforce efficiency:** By carefully managing positions, the PMB can help ensure that the organization has the right number and type of staff to effectively carry out its mission.
- **Improves financial management:** By verifying funding and budget status, the PMB helps ensure that staffing decisions are financially sustainable.
- **Maintains organizational structure:** By managing position changes, the PMB helps maintain a consistent and effective organizational structure.

Deputy and Assistant positions

What is a deputy?

The General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG), published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, defines "Deputy" as: "A position that serves as an alter ego to a manager of high rank or level and either fully shares with the manager the direction of all phases of the organization's program and work, or is assigned continuing responsibility for managing a major part of the manager's program when the total authority and responsibility for the organization is equally divided between the manager and the deputy. A deputy's opinion or direction is treated as if given by the chief."

Essentially, a deputy serves as an alter ego to a manager of high rank or level who:

- Shares fully with the manager in the direction of all phases of the organization's program and work; or

- Has continuing responsibility for managing a major part of the manager's program when the total authority and responsibility for the organization is equally divided between the manager and the deputy.

Deputies are part of the supervisory chain of command and impact the span of control ratio. Full deputies are graded one grade lower than the chief or manager they report to.

What is an assistant?

A staff assistant position, regardless of title, is one which aids the immediate manager by performing a consultative or staff support role but does not directly share in directing or supervising subordinate staff.

Why establish a deputy or assistant position?

Deputies and assistants are found at the top of the organization, typically reporting to the chief/commander or most senior person in charge.

The most frequent legitimate use of a deputy or assistant position occurs when there is an unusual span of control situation (e.g., a full 24-hour operation or a very large ratio of nonsupervisory to supervisory personnel). The organization must require considerable program and managerial planning, coordination, and direction of numerous subordinate organizational entities, production control, and considerable follow-up work. In addition, the work of the organization may entail extensive and frequent changes in systems and procedures, or the complexity of the organization's work and the manager's span-of-control (SOC) are such that the manager cannot be expected to perform required special projects and studies.

Careful consideration should be given to the need for a deputy or assistant position.

What are the positives and negatives for establishing a deputy?

Positives for establishing a Deputy include:

- **Enhanced efficiency and productivity:** Reduced administrative burden, improved workflow, streamlined decision making and improved communication
- **Reduced stress and improved work-life balance:** More time for strategic planning, reduced workload, and increased flexibility
- **Continuity and stability:** Reduced risk of disruption, improved continuity of operations, and increased stability

Negatives for establishing a Deputy are that they:

- Tend to confuse lines of communication and leadership authority
- Prevent maximum delegation of authority and responsibility
- Add unnecessarily to the number of organizational echelons or administrative levels
- Impede day-to-day operations and increase costs

What are the positives and negatives for establishing an assistant?

Positives for establishing an Assistant include:

- **Increased efficiency:** Assistants can handle routine tasks, freeing up the assisted individual's time for more strategic work.
- **Streamlined operations:** They can manage calendars, emails, and other administrative duties, leading to a smoother workflow.
- **Improved work-life balance:** By taking on administrative burdens, assistants can help the person they assist maintain a better balance between work and personal life.
- **Focus on key tasks:** The assisted individual can concentrate on core responsibilities and strategic initiatives, rather than getting bogged down in administrative details.
- **Career development opportunities:** Assistants can gain valuable skills and experience, potentially paving the way for future advancement.
- **Hands-on learning:** Assistants often have opportunities to learn new skills and develop a deeper understanding of the organization's operations.

While the negatives for establishing an Assistant include:

- **Increased costs:** Hiring and training an assistant can involve significant financial investments.
- **Potential for role ambiguity:** The assistant's role and responsibilities may not be clearly defined, leading to confusion and conflict with other staff members.
- **Potential for increased conflict:** If the assistant is not carefully selected or integrated into the existing team, they could potentially introduce or exacerbate existing conflicts.
- **Risk of becoming a bottleneck:** If the assistant is not properly managed or trained, they could inadvertently slow down the workflow rather than streamline it.

- **Limited career growth for the assistant:** Depending on the assistant's role, there may be limited opportunities for advancement within the organization.
- **Work-life balance issues:** While the assistant can help the person they assist, the assistant's own work-life balance may be affected by the demands of the role.

What factors should be considered to determine whether a deputy or assistant position is appropriate?

- Will the position enhance the lines of communication?
- Will the position create a "bottleneck" of information or misinformation leading to a loss in productivity?

Note: For more information on establishing deputy positions, see the DCPAS Supplement to the GSSG.

50% Grade rule

Simply stated, if two or more employees work identical positions, they should be working at least 50 percent of the time at the grade-controlling level of the position versus the OPM-mandated minimum of 25 percent. It makes the position more cost-effective and optimizes use of taxpayer dollars.

Higher-graded work should be concentrated in the fewest number of positions needed to accomplish the work of the organization, not distributed to support higher grades for more employees. Before recommending additional senior working positions, there must be a careful analysis to determine what part of the total amount of work available is above the first full-performance level. Then a determination must be made as to what part of this higher-level workload can be absorbed by the higher-graded position/s already available and concentrated in as few additional higher-graded positions as are absolutely necessary.

The assignment of a limited amount of higher-graded work (generally, this will not exceed 20 percent of the direct work time) to lower-graded career ladder positions for developmental purposes is an accepted management practice. Typically, this provides lower-graded employees with an opportunity to demonstrate the potential to perform work at higher level within their career ladder position.

Creation of career ladders

Sound position management principles support the use of career ladders. It is recommended that consideration be given to establishing them when practical. Establishing career ladder positions can optimize efficiency, productivity, and organizational effectiveness and provide hiring managers with flexibility when advertising and filling vacant positions. It provides the opportunity to broaden the pool of applicants. Always employ proper position management principles when utilizing career ladders to ensure there is no adverse impact to budgets as a result of employee concentrations at the higher levels of the career ladder. Follow the normal career pattern outlined in the OPM Introduction to the Position Classification Standards.

- Consider establishing and filling positions at all grade levels in the career ladder.
- All positions filled at the journey level is often a sign of job dilution or other position management problems.
- Establishing and filling positions at lower levels will increase economy and enhance upward mobility opportunities.
- Growth potential positions provide development and promotional opportunities for employees. These may or may not be a part of a formal training program and can exist at almost any organizational level.
- Hiring at the entry or technician level can help ensure a balance between employees who perform at the full performance level and the development of employees who perform more routine and lower-level work.

Creation of re-engineered non-supervisory/non-lead positions
Re-engineering high-grade positions (GS-13/14/15s) for recruitment purposes involves a careful evaluation of the duties, responsibilities, scope, impact and minimum qualifications of the position. This review is essential for ensuring that the new position accurately reflects the required skills and experience. Re-engineered positions must also meet 5 U.S.C. 5104 definitions for full performance level work and not be considered/defined as trainees.

A re-engineered position is typically created and advertised as a GS-13/14 or GS-14/15 and is done to expand the recruitment pool for available candidates. Due to 5 U.S.C. 5104 grade level definitions, the re-engineered position is described as working very independently with limited supervision. It requires a complete, fully developed PD. A statement of difference (SOD) is not sufficient for the lower-graded position.

Span of control

What is span of control or supervisor-to-employee ratio?

The term "span of control" (SOC) refers to the number of subordinates a supervisor is responsible for (the number of people the supervisor oversees). It is a crucial factor in organizational structure, impacting communication, efficiency, and overall effectiveness. Essentially, it is the ratio of managers to employees. A wider span of control means a manager oversees more people.

The formula is:

$$\frac{\textit{Number of managers and supervisors}}{\textit{Number of employees (subordinates) a manager/supervisor is responsible for}}$$

Note: This formula includes civilian employees, military, local nationals, etc. – anyone who is in the formal reporting chain.

Example: If an organization has 100 employees total with 10 of them being supervisors/ managers, the organization's overall span of control would be 1:10 (10 / 100 = 10). This means there is one supervisor for each 10 employees, although the number of subordinates under each supervisor may vary.

Why is knowing span of control important?

Knowing span of control is important because it directly impacts organizational efficiency, employee satisfaction, and managerial effectiveness. A well-defined span of control helps optimize team structure, improve communication, and enable faster decision-making.

- **Increased Efficiency:** Optimizing span of control can lead to reduced overhead, fewer layers in the organization, and faster decision-making, ultimately increasing efficiency.
- **Improved Managerial Effectiveness:** A balanced span of control ensures managers are not overburdened or underutilized, leading to better performance and reduced burnout.
- **Enhanced Employee Satisfaction:** Employees feel more empowered and engaged when they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and have a manager who is able to effectively support them.
- **Reduced Costs:** By streamlining the organizational structure and improving communication, a well-defined span of control can contribute to cost savings.
- **Faster Decision-Making:** With fewer layers of management, decisions can be made more quickly and efficiently, allowing the organization to respond to changes in the marketplace more effectively.
- **Improved Communication:** A balanced span of control fosters better communication within teams and between different levels of the organization, leading to increased collaboration and productivity.
- **Optimal Organizational Design:** Understanding and optimizing span of control is crucial for creating a well-structured organization that can effectively achieve its goals.
- **Employee Development:** When managers have the time and resources to mentor and develop their employees, it can lead to increased skills and knowledge within the organization.
- **Increased Accountability:** Clear spans of control create a sense of accountability among employees, as they understand who is responsible for what.

(See the section on Conducting a Position Management Study, Step 4, for a span of control example.)

What are the guidelines for optimizing supervisory ratios?

The need for and size of groups and teams should be based upon a sound analysis of the supervisor's span of control and the costs and the benefits of the resulting structure in regard to meeting organizational requirements. Organizations will establish and maintain an effective span of control (SOC), with particular emphasis on first-level supervisors. An effective SOC entails, to the extent possible, assigning the maximum number of employees to the fewest number of supervisors while ensuring achievement of organizational goals and program objectives. Effective workforce planning should be pursued to more accurately determine the proper size, composition, and appropriate placement of the workforce. Management is responsible for maintaining appropriate SOCs in accordance with the guidance outlined in this document as well as in line with sound position management and position classification principles.

While no specific supervisor-to-employee ratio is required by either OPM or DoD, a ratio of 1:1 is not appropriate. An individual “supervising” only one individual does not meet the OPM 25 percent threshold to be officially classified as a supervisor.

What should the SOC be for my organization?

Things to consider include:

- Supervisor to employee ratios within the organization and its segments.
- Whether these segments should be separate, OR
- Can they (organizational units) be combined without impairing the mission?
- How available is the supervisor (travel, meetings, other assigned work)?
- **Complexity of work**: More complex tasks may require a narrower span of control.
  - **Senior leaders:** Typically manage 5-9 direct reports due to strategic responsibilities.
  - **Specialized roles:** Complex technical or creative roles require 3-6 reports per manager.
- **Workforce composition:** The experience level and roles of the employees matter.
- **Safety and compliance:** Regulatory standards and safety protocols may dictate ratios in certain sectors (e.g., firefighting, dispatching, etc.,)
- **Context of organization**: The optimal ratio differs greatly based on the field –
  - **Childcare and Youth Organizations**: Lower ratios (e.g., 1:8) are often mandated to ensure safety and development of children
  - **Healthcare:** Requires lower ratios (e.g., 1:8) due to high risk and complexity
  - **Federal Wage System (FWS) Organizations**: Higher ratios are the norm. Common practice in other federal agencies is for FWS organizational entities to contain a minimum of 15 subordinate employees for every first-level supervisor (1:15), where feasible. This may be achieved through consolidation of related operational programs and previously established organizational structures.

General Schedule (GS) Organizations: While no specific supervisor-to-employee ratio is mandated by OPM or DoD, good position management practice is generally to establish, where feasible, a minimum of ten (10) employees for every one (1) first-level supervisor (1:10).

Note: Your component/command/installation will/may establish their own minimum number of employees per supervisor as well as recommended goals.

Optimize Supervisory Ratios

- The number of managers and supervisors should be carefully reviewed and kept to a minimum to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations. Each situation should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as the number of subordinates supervised will vary based on the organization and functional responsibilities supervised.
- Managers and supervisors should supervise the largest possible number of subordinates consistent with accomplishing the overall mission.

First Level Managers and Supervisors

- For classification purposes and in order to meet the 25 percent threshold to be titled as supervisory, supervisors should not have less than three subordinates. OPM illustrates in appeal decision C-0101-12-02 that three subordinates is not sufficient to meet the 25 percent criteria as it is not realistic that supervising one or two subordinates would constitute 25 percent of a supervisor's time. Furthermore, we must consider the higher the grade of the subordinates the more subordinates positions needed to meet the 25 percent criteria. Please note: For position management purposes, a 1:3 ratio is not optimal.
- Managers and supervisors who only supervise employees in higher-graded/banded positions (e.g., GS-13/14/15) with no lower-graded employees should be capable of supervising a greater number of employees.
    - Supervisors should not need to provide regular and recurring supervision to these employees as they operate with a great deal of independence when performing their duties and responsibilities.
    - If regular and recurring supervision is required at these levels, there may be additional issues related to performance that need to be addressed.
- Managers and supervisors who supervise lower-graded clerical/support positions, without the additional responsibility for analytical positions, may also achieve higher supervisor-to-employee ratios. However, this number could be impacted by the need to provide more direct regular and recurring supervision to these employees.
- While there is no prohibition against GS non-professional (i.e., administrative and technical) employees supervising professional employees, careful consideration must be taken to ensure supervisors have the necessary training and experience to perform the level of supervision required of the position.

Note: An employee can still supervise subordinates if they do not meet the 25 percent minimum. While such positions cannot use the official title of "supervisory," they can be coded as a Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) Supervisor if they meet the official definition of a supervisor in 5 U.S.C. 7103(a)(10) or definition of a management official in 5 U.S.C. 7103(a)(11).

While the Government-wide ratio is 1:12, per OPM FedScope, OPM has not mandated a specific supervisor-employee ratio but has addressed this topic indirectly in a few classification appeal decisions:

SOC	Brief Analysis	Source
Ratio of 1:18	Large but okay	OPM Appeal Decision #C-2210-13-03
Ratio of 1:5.5	Narrow but acceptable	OPM Digest Article No. 22-03
Ratio of 1:3.5	Too small	OPM Appeal Decision #C-0101-12-02

The number of deputies, assistants, and supervisors should be minimized and emphasis placed on line (direct mission) responsibilities. The number of employees assigned to an organization, the number of subordinate supervisors assigned to the organization, and whether the organization head is frequently absent from the office due to travel requirements are among the factors to be considered in deciding whether to establish a new deputy or assistant position. Team leaders should be used as alternatives to supervisors as appropriate.

What is the impact of SOC on job satisfaction, communication practices and overall culture?

Narrow Span

For supervisors and managers, a narrower span of control can be beneficial when the work is complex and requires close oversight and guidance to ensure quality. A narrower span of control can also be beneficial for teams that are: inexperienced, spread out geographically, or operating in an environment with frequent changes—all of these situations require more support and coordination to maintain high levels of performance.

Positives	Negatives
Have more reporting levels in the organization, resulting in a more hierarchical organization	More expensive (high cost of management staff, offices, etc.)
Supervisors can spend time with employees and supervise them more closely	More supervisory involvement in work could lead to less empowerment and delegation and more micro-management
Creates more development, growth, and advancement opportunities	Tends to result in communication difficulties and excessive distance between the top and bottom levels in the organization

Wide Span
A wider span of control can be beneficial for supervisors or managers when their team(s) perform routine, standardized, or even automated tasks that require minimal oversight. Additionally, if a team is particularly experienced or self-sufficient, less oversight is needed and thus a wider span of control can be beneficial.

Positives	Negatives
Have fewer reporting levels in the organization, resulting in a more flexible, flatter organization	May lead to overloaded supervisors if employees require a lot of task direction, support, and supervision
Ideal for supervisors mainly responsible for answering questions and helping to solve employees' problems	May not provide adequate support to employees leading to decreased morale or job dissatisfaction
Encourages empowerment of employees by giving them more responsibility, delegation and decision-making power	
Tends to result in greater communication efficiencies and frequent exposure to the top level of the organization	

How do I know if my current span of control is optimal?
Here are some questions you can ask to figure out if span of control in your organization is optimal:

For Managers:
Do you spend less than 60% of your time on administrative/supervisory tasks?
Can you have meaningful one-on-ones with each direct report at least bi-weekly?
Are you able to delegate decision-making authority, not just tasks?
Do you have time for strategic thinking and development work?

For Employees:
Do you receive feedback from your manager at least weekly?
Can you get answers to questions within 24 hours?
Do you feel appropriately challenged without being overwhelmed?
Are you clear on decision-making authority and escalation criteria?

Do the supervisory ratios apply to lead positions as well?
The supervisor to employee ratio applies to GSSG supervisory positions (Code 2). It does not apply to lead positions, nor does it apply to Code 4 non-GSSG supervisors.

What is a Code 4 supervisor?

A Code 4 supervisor is a position that meets the legal definition of supervisor but does not meet the minimum requirements for application of the GSSG nor official titling as a supervisor. Specifically, code 4 supervisors spend 20% or less of their time on supervisory duties.

When is it appropriate to establish a Code 4 supervisory position?

It is appropriate to establish a Code 4 supervisory position only after position management principles have been evaluated and a Code 4 is determined to be supportable.

Code 4 supervisory positions are **<u>not</u>** used:

- to provide an employee with supervisory experience
- to manage a project/serve as a project lead
- to train or mentor junior employees
- to share or relieve a code 2 supervisor of all or some of their supervisory responsibilities
- for nonpermanent positions, or
- any situation where more appropriate position management can be applied

Can I establish lead positions instead of supervisors?

Team leaders may be used as alternatives to supervisors as appropriate. To determine if it is appropriate to establish a position officially classified as a “Lead,” it is recommended that management consider the reporting supervisor’s span of control, the type of work led, and the costs and benefits of the resulting structure relative to providing customer services and meeting organizational requirements. If not used appropriately, leads could exacerbate issues with layering and supervisory ratios.

An official GS team leader meets either part I or part II of the General Schedule Lead Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG). Part I leads oversee the work of 3 or more full performance level GS-08 employees and below. Part II team leads spend 25 percent or more of their time providing the lead duties described below to GS-09 full performance level and above employees. A senior expert, on the other hand, is a highly skilled individual with deep knowledge in a specific area, often contributing technical expertise and guidance within a team or across multiple teams, but not meeting the formal team lead designation of the GSLGEG.

- Lead positions should be established only when an actual need exists in the work situation. They should not be established solely to provide a "stepping stone," give quasi-supervisory experience, or to reward selected employees.
- The level of experience of the employees in the organization is an important indicator of the need to establish a lead position.
- Full performance level positions in two-grade interval occupations (i.e., professional and administrative occupational series for GS) usually function very independently. These employees, having developed expertise in the line of work, are responsible for planning

and carrying out the work. These types of positions may not require or support the establishment of a lead position to oversee the team and work performed.

A team leader position can be very useful when part of a team-based organizational structure where managers have implemented significant changes in work processes and have reduced the number of supervisory positions. The range of duties a team leader may be assigned is very flexible. The duties may be just sufficient to meet the minimum coverage for establishing a leader position, to almost sufficient to warrant a supervisory classification.

For quick reference, the chart below lists examples of some of the more significant differences between team leaders and supervisors. These examples are not intended to be all inclusive:

TEAM LEADERS:	**SUPERVISORS:**
Explain team goals and objectives to assigned team members and assist team in organizing to accomplish work	Set team goals, select team leaders, assign team members and administratively and technically direct the work of subordinates
Coach, facilitate, solve work problems and participate in the work of the team	Plan, assign, review and accept, amend or reject work done by teams and subordinates
Provide information to the supervisor on performance of the team and individuals	Assign performance ratings, approve awards and take performance-based corrective actions
Communicate assignments, milestones and deadlines to the team and individuals based on supervisor's instructions	Make work assignments, set or negotiate deadlines and completion dates
Observe training needs and relay training needs and requests to supervisor	Schedule and approve funding for team and individual training
Inform supervisor of attendance and behavioral problems	Counsel employees on behavior and initiate disciplinary actions if required
Relay requests for resources and supplies	Allocate resources to teams

Team leaders usually also participate in the work of the team by performing work that is of the same kind and level as the highest level of work accomplished by the team led.

Note: See the DCPAS Supplementary Guidance for Applying Part II of the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG) for more guidance on establishing higher-graded team leaders.

Can I establish supervisory, management, or lead career ladders?

No. There is no mechanism within the GSSG or the GSLGEG to classify developmental positions. For example, in the GSSG, a supervisor must fully meet Level 3-2 to be considered a supervisor. The same holds true for lead positions under the GSLGEG.

- Creating a multi-graded supervisory or lead position is inconsistent with the intent of such positions, as well as with performance expectations and sound position classification.

- Supervisors, when hired, are expected to complete a specific supervisory role to include providing technical guidance, running a program, and overseeing its subordinates. In a developmental capacity, the supervisor would not be able to carry out the full functions of the job. The same principle applies to lead positions.
- New supervisors are expected to complete a supervisory probationary period which in effect serves as a "developmental" stage.
- Establishing a supervisory or lead career ladder for the sole purpose of providing an opportunity to a specific employee who would otherwise not meet time-in-grade would be considered a Prohibited Personnel Practice under 5 U.S.C. 2302.
- Management positions are classified based on a combination of factors such as their authority to formulate, determine or influence policy. In general, management positions are classified one or more grades above the base level of technical work performed within the organizational entity they manage. In this context, OPM philosophy and principles hold that "trainee" management positions at whatever level of the management hierarchy are contrary to sound position management considerations. Therefore, these types of positions are not allowed.

Can I establish re-engineered supervisory and/or lead positions?

No, for the same reasons listed in the question above on career ladders.

Can I use an already classified supervisory PD for more than one supervisory position?

No. You should not create Identical Additional (IA) supervisory positions.

When a position will be identical to one or more positions in the same organizational unit, it is an IA position. The IA position has the same major duties, responsibilities, qualification requirements, organizational patterns, and reporting relationships.

It is not appropriate to establish IA positions or standardized PDs for supervisory positions as the mission and subordinate structures, and thus the grades vary based on the organizational unit.

Common Position Management Obstacles & Methods for Addressing Them

A number of common obstacles exist in position management which can impact an organization. These obstacles, also known as "symptoms," are indicators of poor position management. There are tested methods to correct all of these problems. Your HR Servicing team works with supervisors and managers to determine the best solutions to meet the needs of the organization.

The most common obstacles and their respective key considerations to contemplate when designing position structure and classification are described below.

Problem: Fragmentation

Fragmentation is an indication that the organization is split into too many small segments. This requires more supervisors, restricts the development of employees, interferes with communication, and causes over-specialization. Small units can become so specialized they restrict the employee's contribution. Communications between units are restricted and action slows down. The question of who is responsible impedes cooperative effort.

Key Considerations: Ask

- Are all functional areas needed?
- Could the work be consolidated into fewer sections or units, thereby improving workflow and lines of authority?
- Is the increased fragmentation causing a "stovepipe" effect, whereby individual segments within an organization produce products or services without the benefit of leveraging the knowledge and expertise of other staff members?
- Is this approach impacting the lines of communication throughout the organization?
- Are there functions which can be combined to promote efficiency?
- Does the resulting organizational structure require more supervisors than necessary?
- Where is specialization required and where is it a hindrance?

Problem: Overspecialization

Overspecialization refers to becoming excessively focused on a narrow area of expertise, potentially leading to a lack of adaptability and broader understanding. It can manifest in individuals, organizations, or even at a national level. In organizations it can lead to reduced innovation, poor adaptability and increased dependence.

Overspecialization can stifle innovation by limiting individuals' ability to think outside their specific areas of expertise and collaborate across different departments. Overspecialization can lead to increased dependence on specific individuals or departments, making the organization vulnerable to potential disruptions.

Example (Office Situation):

Employee A—Files one type of document
Employee B—Files another type of document
Employee C—Assembles precedent cases from files

Example (Shop Situation)

Employee X—Lays out work
Employee Y—Drills holes
Employee Z—Inspects finished parts

The problem:

- Breaking down work assignments into very small units can destroy employee interest and create poor attitudes.
- Poor attitudes invite dissatisfaction, grievances, and other problems which are time-consuming and hurt production.
- Narrow assignments limit flexibility. If "C" or "Z" were absent, who would be able to fill in?

Key Considerations: Ask –

- Is work designed to attract and motivate capable employees?
- Can duties be arranged to give more variety and improve job interest?
- Can highly routine duties that have no challenge be eliminated or automated?

Problem: Layering

Layering is too many levels in the chain of command. This interferes with communication, restricts the responsibility of lower level supervisors and other employees, and may lead to over-management of employees. In order to minimize the number of organizational levels and promote effective communication between management levels, organizations should strive to avoid unnecessary layering which restricts the free movement of ideas and work products (since they have to be evaluated and restated at each level) and can result in top management being unaware of how decisions were made at lower levels. Additionally, unnecessary levels of review can lead to excessive costs and needless delays in the performance of work.

Establishing technical expert or technical consultant positions solely for the purpose of reviewing work that will be reviewed at higher organizational levels in the normal course of business can add unnecessarily to the cost and time required to perform work. Supervisors should be very cautious about committing resources to support special assistants, technical experts, and technical consultant positions solely for the purpose of additional review. Proposals to establish such positions should be reviewed critically by the HR Specialist, keeping in mind the principle that to the extent practicable, personnel assets are to be used for the accomplishment of direct mission work.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- What is the supervisor-to-employee ratio?
- Is it possible to achieve an increase in productivity with fewer layers of supervision?
- If applicable, does the managerial workload truly support the establishment and maintenance of a Deputy or full assistant position? If so, it would indicate that two full-time managers are required to manage the workload and staff with both managers having full decision-making authority.
- Are supervisors performing supervisory duties and responsibilities for at least 25 percent of their time? Could the supervisory work be consolidated into fewer positions performing supervisory work for a greater percentage of time?
- Has authority been delegated to the optimum level?

Problem: Unnecessary Positions

Unnecessary positions pertain to the use of more staff than is necessary to accomplish the mission. This may be a carryover from a previous organizational structure or duplicate positions. This leads to redundancy in work and is expensive to the organization. Additional positions such as deputies or assistants add another level to the chain of command, creating delays in decision-making and increasing the likelihood of duplication of effort. Unnecessary staff positions tend to cause staff-line conflicts.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- How many supervisory and staff positions are needed?
- Are there any positions that are "carryovers" from previous operating structures or mission requirements that are no longer needed?
- Are there any duplicative positions performing the same work that are not needed?
- Are the staff assistant functions needed, or can they be shifted to another line position?

Problem: Narrow Span of Control

Narrow span of control is marked by deploying more supervisors than necessary. It frequently occurs with fragmentation and/or layering. Narrow span of control can stifle initiative and dampen individual responsibility for work quality. It often means unnecessary overhead expense.

Tip: Recommended supervisory ratios can be found on pages 17-19 of this supplement guide.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- Does the workload call for the number of supervisors employed?

- Are duties and responsibilities appropriately delegated to employees commensurate with their grade levels?
    - There is a direct relationship between the grade levels of the subordinate positions and the number of supervisors within the organization.
    - As subordinate grade levels increase, the number of employees supervised should also increase.

For example, if a supervisor has responsibility for GS-11 and/or GS-12 positions, he or she should be able to supervise a large number of such employees, because positions at these grade levels operate at a very high level of independence when performing their assigned duties and responsibilities.

- Would team lead positions be more efficient versus supervisory positions?

Problem: Job Dilution

Job dilution is marked by the consistent performance of lower-level work performed by higher-graded employees and is a sign of grade creep (i.e., grade inflation). It results in low employee morale, is inefficient, and is excessively expensive.

Example: Are you driving costs up?

			Hours per Week
Employee A: GS-12 –	Analysis	(GS-12 level work)	10
	Preparation	(GS 11 level work)	30
Employee B: GS-12 –	Analysis		10
	Preparation		10
	Preliminary Review	(GS-07 level work)	20
Employee C. GS-12-	Preliminary Review		20
	Analysis		10
	Posting on Web	(GS-05 level work)	10

The problem:

- Spreading high-level duties thinly among several positions increases the number of senior positions and the personnel costs.
- Some skills are scarce and hard to recruit. You should use them in the most efficient way.
- The underutilized employee becomes dissatisfied and his or her skills deteriorate.
- An imbalance between the number of senior and junior positions limits recruiting possibilities and advancement opportunities.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- Are positions established at appropriate grade levels? Sound position management principles indicate that higher-level work should typically be concentrated in as few positions as possible. The overall structure and mix of grade levels is dependent on the mission of the organization.
- Are employees working at their assigned grade level 50 percent or more of the time?
- Does the right mix of clerical or assistant work with technical, administrative, or professional level work exist? A thorough analysis of the organization is required in order to fully understand if the right balance exists.

Problem: Mismatched Strength and Workload

Mismatched strength and workload occurs when the mission can be accomplished with fewer people than are assigned or when too few employees are assigned to meet mission demands. Individual situations may have different requirements, workloads may shift, or varied assignment of duties may result in economies. Although each employee should be kept appropriately engaged with work that matches the grade level of the position held, recurring and excessive overtime, backlogs, or detailing may indicate mismatch problems.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- Is it possible to consolidate the work to reduce the number of unnecessary positions? Can the number of positions and employees be reduced through attrition?
- Are employees performing work consistent with the grade/band level to which they are assigned?
- Can the workload be divided more efficiently and effectively according to the grade level and knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employees?

Problem: Missing Career Progression

Missing career progression exists where there is no path for employees to move from lower level positions grades to higher levels within the organization. This results in low employee morale and may also result in such staffing problems as high turnover and difficulty recruiting.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- Is there a line of career progression from entry level, through journeyman level, to expert level?
- Does the organizational structure support succession planning through its career progression structure?

Problem: Inconsistencies among PDs

Inconsistencies among PDs may develop when positions are revised, one by one, over a period of several years. It can also occur when different departments or hiring managers create PDs independently; there is vague or ambiguous language ; there are missing sections; or there are discrepancies between perceived and actual job demands as well as lack of standardization in how PDs are written. Any of these can result in overlapping functions and is inefficient.

Key Considerations: Ask –

- Is more than one position credited with the same review or inspection task?
- Do the supervisory controls of the workers mesh with the responsibility of the supervisor?
- Do several positions have the "final authority" in the same matter?

Tip: The OPM Workforce Reshaping Handbook provides guidance on strategies managers can use to avoid a reduction in force as a result of reshaping.

Other Problems:

Problem: Grade Creep

Fragmenting organizations in order to establish multiple supervisory, team leader, or other high grade positions, or otherwise structuring organizations to achieve the highest possible grade levels, is inconsistent with organizational economy and efficiency.

Grade creep often occurs due to pressure to upgrade positions and a general disregard for the position classification system. Multiple years of pay freezes, increased oversight of awards programs and elimination of promotion opportunities due to senior people who have delayed retirement, means that the only avenue for getting a raise (other than periodic step increase) is to get your position reclassified to a higher grade, regardless of whether the job has changed and thus deserves a higher grade. This pressure comes from managers as well as employees. Supervisors use constant upgrades as a retention strategy, especially for employees in technical and hard-to-fill positions.

Another common problem is disregard for the position classification system. It's fashionable to say that the "system is broken" in reference to the General Schedule and the government's method of classifying jobs. It is repeated so often that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. The result is that an increasing number of supervisors and employees disregard the basic concept of classifying positions at the proper grade level, even though it is the law. Often, supervisors yield to employee pressures to push for higher graded positions, even though they know – both ethically and legally – that a reclassification to a higher grade might not be warranted.

Problem: Distribution of Potentially Grade-Enhancing (Higher Graded) Work

Higher graded work should be assigned to existing higher graded positions whenever practical. Higher graded work should not be distributed among multiple positions with the intent of upgrading those positions when the work could be effectively and efficiently performed by a single employee.

Before recommending additional senior working positions, there must be a careful analysis to determine what part of the total amount of work available is above the first full performance level. Then a determination must be made as to what part of this higher-level workload can be absorbed by the higher-graded position(s) already available and concentrated in as few additional higher-graded positions as are absolutely necessary.

However, the assignment of a limited amount of higher-graded work (generally, this will not exceed 20 percent of the direct work time) to lower-graded career ladder positions for developmental purposes is an accepted management practice. Typically, this provides lower-graded employees with an opportunity to demonstrate the potential to perform work at higher levels within their career ladder position.

What Other Position Management Recommendations Should I Consider When Restructuring?

Plan logical organizations

Organizations and positions should be planned so they are logical, internally consistent, and systematically fitted into an orderly, productive, and efficient organization that balances mission needs and economy.

Use matrix management, when required

Programs that span two or more DoD organizations generally shall be managed through the use of matrix management design. Matrix management design is an organizational structure in which a program manager has accountability for program success and shares responsibility with functional managers for assigning priorities and for directing the work of key responsible individuals assigned to the program.

Minimize number of organizational levels

The number of organizational levels should be minimized. Authority shall be delegated and centralized to the lowest appropriate working level. Single sub-units (i.e. one division, one branch, one section, one unit) should not be established.

Focus on mission

Positions shall be established consistently with current mission, functions, and levels of work assigned to the organization while assuring full position utilization.

After reviewing the preceding methods for overcoming common obstacles:

Ask "How does your organization shape up?"

- Is there some work being performed that doesn't really need to be done? If so, suggest action to eliminate it.
- Can positions be combined without harming mission accomplishment?
- Has your organization's structure kept pace with mission changes?
- Can we avoid unnecessary distribution of high-level duties?
- Are all vacant positions needed?
- Can some be restructured at lower grades?
- Are work methods and processes as efficient as they should be?
- Can career ladders be developed?
- Is the work arranged to help provide employees with a sense of accomplishment?
- Can deputy and assistant positions that are not really needed be eliminated?
- Is the organization split into many small segments?

Maintain current and accurate PDs

- Perform annual reviews of position descriptions and rewrite immediately as changes are required. As a best practice, it is recommended that reviews are conducted each year before performance objectives are set.
- Strive to keep PDs consistent. Whenever one is changed, it is recommended that all related positions are reviewed.
- Avoid using "incumbent only" classifications to further the continuance of a misclassified position.
- Never use a non-competitive promotion based upon reclassification due to an accretion of duties to circumvent the competitive hiring process and Merit System Principles.

Avoid using classification system as a reward

It is not appropriate to use the position classification system as a reward for exceptional performance. Use the awards and recognition system for this purpose.

Ensure employees understand their position

Ensure employees understand their position by providing their PDs. Ensure they have a clear understanding of their role, duties, and responsibilities within the organization.

Develop and maintain current organizational charts

- Organizational charts are important to the classification process.
    - For supervisory and lead positions, they identify the work led/supervised.
    - For non-supervisory jobs, they provide context for the work performed by the office.
- Keep organizational charts up to date including series, official position title, and grades.

Avoid grade stacking whenever possible

Grade stacking occurs when a subordinate position is established at the same grade as the supervisor. Establishing subordinate positions at the same grade of the supervisor is inconsistent with sound classification and position management principles unless the subordinate positions are classified based on the Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG). A narrative evaluation statement should be prepared including analysis and evaluation of position management implications associated with grade stacking, for example, an explanation of the nature and background of the proposed action, impact on other positions, analysis of organizational alternatives, and evaluation of positions within the organization.

Carefully consider use of deputies

Careful consideration should be given to the need for a deputy position. A position officially titled as a deputy is defined as an alter ego to a manager of high rank or level who:

- Shares fully with the manager the direction of all phases of the organization's program and work; or
- Has continuing responsibility for managing a major part of the manager's program when the total authority and responsibility for the organization is equally divided between the manager and the deputy.
- Per OPM Digest 28-06, if you create more than one deputy, they both must be classified two grades lower than chief.
- For more on deputies, see DCPAS Interpretive Guidance on the GSSG.

Set up sensible career ladders

- Sound position management principles support the use of career ladders. It is recommended that consideration is given to establishing them in organizations, when practical.
- Establishing career ladder positions can optimize efficiency, productivity, and organizational effectiveness and provide hiring managers with flexibility when advertising and filling vacant positions. It provides the opportunity to broaden the pool of applicants.
- Employ proper position management principles when utilizing career ladders to ensure there is no adverse impact to budgets as a result of employee concentrations at the higher levels of the career ladder.
- Consider the normal career pattern outlined in the OPM Classifier's Handbook when establishing career ladders.

Consider establishing and filling positions at all levels

- A single journeyman level position is often a sign of job dilution or other position management problems.
- Establishing and filling positions at lower levels will increase economy and enhance upward mobility opportunities.

- Growth potential positions provide development and promotional opportunities for employees. These may or may not be a part of a formal training program and can exist at almost any level.
- Hiring at the entry or technician level can help ensure a balance between employees who perform at the full performance level and the development of employees who perform more routine and lower-level work.

Avoid abolishing lower-graded positions

- Avoid the tendency to abolish predominantly lower-graded positions when staff reductions are required.
- Staff reductions should be used after a thorough study of the organization, mission needs, and employee impact.

Watch out for grade inversion

- Watch out for the presence of "grade inversion" or the supervision of higher-ranked personnel by lower-ranked personnel.
- The presence of grade inversion can result in the erosion of employee morale and concerns about the application of good position management.

Use technical and support positions, where practical

- Establish technicians and other support type positions such as clerks and assistants rather than professional and specialist positions, where practical.
- Over time, the absence of technical and support positions can dilute the level of work performed by professional and specialist positions. These positions can end up spending 25 percent or more of their time on work that could be done by lower-level personnel.
- By establishing technical and support positions, organizations can concentrate higher level work in the fewest number of positions and reduce overall salary costs.

Avoid overlap when "expert"/"senior" positions are required

- When high grade "expert" or "senior" positions are required to provide special technical or advisory service, establish them at a level that will not cause supervisor grades to increase.
- Be sure such positions do not overlap with the supervisor's position or infringe on supervisory responsibility, which will lead to job erosion.

Avoid use of mixed jobs *

- Determine the most appropriate occupational series for the work performed. The proper occupational series represents the primary work of the position, the highest level of work performed, and the paramount qualifications required.
- Positions performing mixed grade/band level or mixed series work may be an indicator of job dilution.
- Mixed positions present staffing problems because they require qualifications which are not typical amongst the workforce.

*Note: This does not apply to interdisciplinary positions. An interdisciplinary position is a position involving duties and responsibilities closely related to more than one professional occupation. As a result, the position could be classifiable to two or more professional occupational series. The nature of the work is such that people with education and experience in either two or more professions may be considered equally well qualified to do the work.

Movement of employees

Assignments or reassignments of subordinates to supervisors will be based upon sound position management principles, rather than the effect of additional employees on the supervisor's grade. For example, additional higher-grade employees must not be assigned to a supervisor merely to permit the upgrading of the supervisor's position.

The Position Management Study

What is a position management study?

A position management study analyzes and optimizes how an organization structures and uses its roles and responsibilities. It focuses on defining positions, aligning them with organizational goals, and managing them efficiently. This study helps ensure that the workforce structure supports the organization's strategic objectives.

The key aspects of a position management study are:

- **Defining Positions:** Outlining the specific duties, responsibilities, and required qualifications for each role within the organization.
- **Structuring the Workforce:** Organizing positions into departments, teams, and reporting lines to create a clear organizational structure.
- **Budget Alignment:** Ensuring that positions are aligned with budget constraints, considering salary, benefits, and other expenses associated with each role.
- **Workforce Planning:** Identifying current and future workforce needs and how positions can be adapted to meet those needs.
- **Gap Analysis:** Identifying discrepancies between current positions and the ideal roles needed to achieve organizational goals and implementing strategies to address these gaps.
- **Position Classification:** Categorizing positions based on factors like job duties, required skills, and reporting relationships, often using standardized systems.
- **Impact on HR:** Position management studies can significantly impact human resources functions, such as recruitment, compensation, and employee development.

What are the Benefits of a Position Management Study?

- **Improved Organizational Efficiency:** A well-structured workforce with clearly defined roles can lead to better coordination and productivity.
- **Enhanced Employee Accountability**: Clear job descriptions and responsibilities foster accountability among employees.
- **Better Budget Management:** Position management helps in accurately planning and managing labor costs.
- **Stronger Workforce Planning:** Understanding current and future workforce needs allows for better strategic planning and resource allocation.
- **Support for Strategic Goals:** By aligning positions with organizational goals, position management ensures that the workforce is effectively contributing to the organization's objectives.

In essence, a position management study is a strategic process that helps organizations optimize their workforce structure to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment with their strategic goals.

Conducting an Organizational Assessment

In order to achieve the overarching goal of creating a more productive, efficient, and effective organization consistent with sound position management principles, it is important to examine the existing organization with an eye towards the end state, which the organization should reflect following completion of the study. The servicing HR Office will work with each supervisor/manager as they conduct their organizational assessments, providing sound advice and guidance every step of the way.

What to do

- Conduct the review from a functional perspective that aligns to the organization's mission
- Follow position management principles discussed earlier in this supplement guide
- Don't focus on personal knowledge of the individual, employee performance, etc., in the placement of individuals.
- Don't discuss the specific details of a reorganization or realignment of functions until after final approval of the requested actions has been granted.

Pre-Kickoff Meeting Questionnaire

The servicing HR Specialist will provide the following questionnaire to the requesting manager or supervisor prior to the kick-off meeting.

Please summarize the changes requested for the reorganization/realignment.

- Will your organization need to reprogram any funds? If yes, what is the approximate dollar amount?
- How many employees will be moved as part of this change?
- How many new positions will be created?
- How many existing position descriptions will change?
- Are any workers covered by a Bargaining Unit?
- What is the highest level employee that will be affected by this reorganization?

Step 1 – Identify key players

Key players include:

- Supervisors and managers over area to be studied
- Human resources specialists – At a minimum, select a person well versed in position management and classification
- Manpower analysts and/or management analysts
- Union representative (if applicable)
- One or two employees from organization, if possible

Step 2: Identify the mission and functions of the organization

A properly designed organization begins with the mission requirements and cascades downward to functional responsibilities in support of the agency's mission, which in turn cascades down to the positions required to meet mission demands. In conducting your initial examination, answer the following:

- What is the organization's mission?
- How does the organization's mission support the overarching DoD mission?

Once the mission of the organization is identified, look at the functions the organization is responsible for performing. This is a key element in ensuring the office successfully performs its mission. One approach you can take is to divide the functions into three separate categories as described in the table below.

Category 1	**"Must do" functions** that the organization "must do" to fulfill its mission.	These mission critical functions are needed to sustain the larger organization's mission and may be tied to a direct line of funding, as mandated by Congress or the Department, or are central to the overall success of DoD. These functions are not optional.
Category 2	**"Should do" functions** that an organization "should do" to fulfill its mission; however, these may not be tied to a particular line of funding.	These functions should be performed to ensure overall mission success. While these functions are important and should be performed, they do not reach the level of criticality found in Category 1.
Category 3	**"Could do" functions** that the organization "could do" to enhance its mission success should the necessary resources be available.	These types of functions are more in line with optional functions that are consistent with the overall mission of the organization.

Step 3: Consider the impact of the mission and functions on position structure
(look at the current organization)

There are three common ways of looking at the current organization to identify what's working and where problems exist. They are the telescopic view, the microscopic view and the 20/20 hindsight view.

The Telescopic View:

The "telescopic view" in the context of position management refers to a broader, high-level perspective that focuses on the overall organization's structure and how positions fit into it. This approach emphasizes understanding the relationships between different roles, the flow of work, and the overall impact of positions on organizational goals, rather than solely focusing on individual jobs.

- Is the organization split into many small segments?
- Is there a supervisor for every 3 or 4 employees?
- Are there gaps between grade levels so people cannot advance within the organization?
- Are the workload & specific assignments compatible with the functions?
- Is the organization infringing on the work of other areas by performing tasks outside its function?
- Is the structure consistent with that of related activities?
- Are your individual positions generally compatible and consistent with similar positions?

The telescopic view allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the organization's workforce structure, including how different roles contribute to the overall objectives. It emphasizes the connections between different positions, the flow of work between them, and how these relationships impact efficiency and effectiveness. The telescopic view ensures that positions are aligned with the organization's strategic goals, ensuring that the workforce structure supports the achievement of those objectives. By adopting a telescopic view, organizations can identify potential bottlenecks, inefficiencies, and opportunities for improvement in their workforce structure.

The Microscopic View

A microscopic view of position management focuses on the granular details of individual roles and responsibilities within an organization. This involves a deep dive into the specific tasks, workflows, and processes that each position entails. It contrasts with a macro view that focuses on the broader organizational structure and strategic goals.

- Are duty assignments clear-cut or vague and overlapping?
- Are more complex & responsible tasks grouped in the higher-level positions?
- Are more routine support tasks grouped in lower-level positions?
- Is nonessential work being done?

- Is essential work not being done, being delayed, or done poorly?
- Are any vacant positions not really needed?
- Do some positions seem to be a hodge-podge of unrelated duties? (use of mixed positions)

The microscopic view delves into the specifics of each position, considering its individual contributions to the overall work. It involves creating detailed job descriptions, outlining responsibilities, and communicating expectations clearly. Microscopic position management often includes setting specific performance goals, monitoring progress, and providing regular feedback to employees. It can also involve assigning specific resources, budgets, and tools to each position. The microscopic view may also include identifying training needs and providing opportunities for employees to develop skills relevant to their roles.

Contrast with a "telescopic" view which focuses on the overall strategic goals, organizational structure, and broad performance indicators of the organization. While the micro view focuses on individual positions and their contributions, the telescopic view provides the broader context and overall direction for the organization. Both perspectives are important. The telescopic view helps set direction and goals, while the microscopic view helps ensure that individual positions are aligned with those goals and that resources are effectively allocated.

In essence, a microscopic view of position management is about understanding the "how" and "why" behind each position, ensuring that employees are equipped to perform their roles effectively and contribute to the overall success of the organization.

The 20/20 Hindsight View:

The phrase "hindsight is 20/20" is a common expression referring to the fact that it's easier to see the correct course of action after an event has already occurred than it was while making a decision before the event. This can be a helpful way to approach the management of positions, but it's important to remember that it's not always accurate or complete.

- Have there been any mission or function changes?
- Has the volume or nature of the work changed?
- Has organization received new equipment?
- Has the manager developed new or revised procedures?
- Has manager gained or lost authorizations?
- Has manager had problems filling a position or keeping a position filled?
- Did manager develop a new position, restructure a vacant position, or modify a position in anticipation of a change? Is the result not working out as expected?

Analyzing past hiring, promotions, or terminations can reveal patterns, trends, and areas for improvement in the staffing process. By examining employee performance, including accomplishments, areas for growth, and any negative impacts, organizations can tailor training, coaching, and development programs. 20/20 hindsight can help refine job descriptions to better match the skills, experience, and knowledge needed for specific roles. Analyzing the effectiveness of different organizational structures and reporting lines can lead to more efficient and productive work environments. By learning from past experiences, organizations can make more informed and strategic decisions in the future. Identifying potential problems and taking preventative measures can minimize the risk of future failures. By constantly evaluating and refining processes, organizations can improve overall performance and productivity.

In essence, while hindsight can be a valuable tool for learning and improving, it's not a perfect solution for position management. It's crucial to use hindsight in conjunction with other strategies and to focus on learning from experiences rather than dwelling on what could have been.

Regardless of which approach is used, the focus of all three views is to identify workload and workforce inconsistencies as well as inconsistencies among position descriptions.

- Workload and workforce inconsistencies occur when long-term changes in workload or functions are not followed by position or organizational changes or if some employees have frequent idle time while others are always behind, or if some employees are frequently detailed to other positions in the organization or found to be regularly working outside their position description.
- Inconsistencies among position descriptions may develop when positions are revised, one by one over a period of several years. This can include more than one position credited with the same work or authority and may become incompatible with supervisory responsibilities. If one position is updated other similar positions should be reviewed to ensure no overlap. Inaccurate position descriptions can result in misclassification, with the incumbents being over or under graded.

Key considerations to be reviewed should include:

- Budget limitations
- Review of vacant positions
- How the positions & workflow(s) should be organized
- Specific duties & responsibilities to be assigned to individual positions
- How mixed positions are utilized
- Supervisory ratios/span of control
- Use of team leaders & supervisors
- Proportion of support staff, technical and full performance level positions
- Employee challenge & development, i.e., work too repetitive, work too narrow
- Overlapping authority
- Duplication of work
- Incorrect position descriptions
- Career ladder/trainee positions
- Recruiting and retention problem

Now that you have a better understanding of the mission and functions of the organization, consider the impact on the position structure.

Line Office/Staff Office • Mission/Functional Statement

⇩

Division • Mission/Functional Statement

⇩

Branch • Mission/Functional Statement

⇩

Duties and responsibilities required in support of mission/functional requirements

⇩

Competencies required to successfully perform the duties and responsibilities

⇩

Occupational series determination based on duties and responsibilities and competency requirements

⇩

Grade level determinations based duties and responsibilities performed

⇩

Career ladder structure with proper full performance level (FPL)

⇩

Selection system based on fair, consistent, job-related, legally defensible merit promotion/selection criteria

Review each position within the organization (and each employee where several people are assigned to one PD), both individually and in relation to one another.

- Are PDs up to date?
- Are assignments clear-cut or are they vague and overlapping?
- Are the more complex and responsible tasks grouped in higher level position(s) with the higher level work assigned to as few positions as possible?

- Are the more routine/lower level support tasks grouped in the lower level positions?
- Is nonessential work being done?
- Is essential work not being done, being delayed, or being done poorly?
- Are there any vacant positions that are not really needed?
- Do some positions seem to have duties and responsibilities that appear to be unrelated and possibly disjointed?

Step 4: Look closely at supervisory ratios

Organizational information such as the span of control for supervisory positions is also essential to gaining a better understanding of the organization. The sample organization below can be used to illustrate the principles associated with making this type of calculation.

Branch C	
(1) GS 0346-15 Logistics Management Officer (Branch Chief)	
Section A	Section B
(1) GS 0346-14 Supv Log Mgt Specialist	(1) GS 0346-14 Supv Log Mgt Specialist
(4) GS 0346-13 Log Mgt Specialist	(4) GS 0346-13 Log Mgt Specialist
(3) GS 0346-11 Log Mgt Specialist	(3) GS 0346-11 Log Mgt Specialist
(3) GS 0346-09 Log Mgt Specialist	(2) GS 0346-09 Log Mgt Specialist
(2) GS 2005-07 Supply Technician	(3) GS 2005-07 Supply Technician

● **Calculating the Supervisory Ratio**.

The supervisory ratio or span of control is relatively simple to calculate. DCPAS uses the following formula:

_____# supervisory employees_____

# of total employees (non-supervisory)

Using this formula, the supervisory ratios are as follows:

o Branch C = 1:8 (3 supervisors and 24 employees)

o Section A = 1:12

o Section B= 1:12

Step 5: Compare your organization to other functional areas

Comparing your organization to other functional areas can provide a better understanding of other issues that need to be addressed.

- Is the organization split into too many small segments?

- Are there gaps between grade levels so people cannot advance within the organization? Are all the positions in your organization at higher grade levels with the absence of lower grade levels?
- Are the workload and specific assignments compatible with the functions?
- Is the work of the organization overlapping with the work of other areas by performing the same or similar tasks?
- Is the structure consistent with that or related activities or operations within the organization?
- Are the individual positions generally compatible and consistent with similar positions?

Step 6: Brainstorm Improvements based on position management recommendations

Effective position management can help alleviate high turn-over rates; recurring recruiting problems (can't find the "right fit" for the position); employee morale problems; and lack of growth potential.

Step 7: Summarize the obstacles identified

Using the information gathered in Steps 1 – 6 above, summarize the obstacles identified and consider how they've impacted the organization. This will provide a sound basis to justify proposed changes.

Fragmentation	Mismatched Strengths and Workload
Layering	Missing Career Progression
Unnecessary Positions	Workload and Workforce
Narrow Span of Control	Inconsistencies
Job Dilution	Inconsistencies among PDs

Tip: A list of common obstacles, their impacts, and key considerations can be found in Appendix B of this supplement guide.

Step 8: Apply sound position management principles

Now that you have a complete picture of the organization and its issues, you can apply the sound position management principles discussed earlier in this supplement guide to improve your organization.

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Career Ladder Position A position restructured to allow for entry at a lower grade level than the full- performance grade level and which allows for progression to the full performance level. Normally, a position is announced and filled on a competitive basis with promotion to higher grade levels made on a non-competitive basis. The career ladder refers to the range of grades to which the employee may be promoted non-competitively up to the classified full-performance level of the position.

Duties Are assigned work tasks to be performed by an individual?

- Major duties are those that represent the primary reason for the position's existence and which dictate the qualifications requirements and are regular and recurring for the employee. A major duty occupies approximately 25 percent of the employee's time. This is a positive indicator of the appropriate series to which the position should be classified.
- Minor duties are not the primary purpose for which positions were established; they occupy a small portion of time; and typically, do not determine qualification requirements.

Functional Statement A narrative statement of the functional responsibilities assigned to an organization (e.g., Program Office, Division, and Unit).

Grade The numerical designation, GS-1 through GS-15, which identifies the range of difficulty and responsibility, and level of qualification requirements of positions included in the General Schedule

Grade Stacking Grade stacking occurs when a subordinate position is established at the same grade as the supervisor.

Incumbent Only A position is designated as incumbent only to accommodate a particular incumbent (e.g., due to the impact of the person on the job). When vacated, an incumbent-only position should either be abolished or restored to its original classification. It is not acceptable to use "incumbent only" classifications to further the continuance of a misclassified position.

Mission Statement Formal written statement describing the purpose of the organization. The mission statement may contain the goals of the organization; the services offered; the work performed; the organization's primary stakeholders; and the responsibilities of the organization toward those stakeholders.

Mixed Grade Position A position that involves the performance of different kinds and levels of work which, when separately evaluated in terms of duties, responsibilities, and qualifications required, are at different grade levels. The proper grade of such positions is determined by evaluation of the regularly assigned work that is paramount in the position.

Mixed Series Position A position that requires the performance of work in two or more occupational series.

Professional, Administrative, Technical, Clerical and Other (PATCO) These terms are applied to positions classified in the GS pay plan and defined in http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gsintro.pdf - pages 9, 10 and 11.

Pay Plan The pay system or pay schedule under which the employee's rate of basic pay is determined. A pay plan is usually represented by a two digit alphabetical code used to identify Federal civilian pay systems (e.g., GS). OPM approves pay plan codes for agency use.

Position The duties and responsibilities which make up the work performed by an employee.

Position Classification The process, through which federal jobs (e.g., positions) are assigned to a pay system, occupational series, title, and grade level, based on the consistent application of OPM position classification standards for GS and WG positions..

Position Description (PD) The official record of management's assignment of duties and responsibilities to a position.

Position Management Position management is the systematic process that managers/supervisors apply when designing an efficient and economical organization. Through this process they determine how many positions are needed, how jobs should be designed, and the organizational structure needed to accomplish the mission and functional assignments of the unit. The need to achieve an efficient and economical position structure is critical to the proper and responsible use of limited public, financial, and personnel resources. (See the OPM's "Introduction to the Position Classification Standards.")

Position Management Board (PMB) A position management board is a committee or group within an organization responsible for managing and approving the creation, modification, and elimination of positions, regardless of whether they are currently filled.

Realignment The movement of an employee and employee's position when there is an organizational change such as with a reorganization or transfer of function. The employee stays in DOD and there is no change in the employee's position title, grade/band, or pay.

Reassignment A reassignment is when an employee leaves their position of record, and the employee is assigned to a new position description with no change in salary (with the exception of locality pay).

Reorganization Is the planned elimination, addition, or redistribution of functions or duties in an organization.

Responsibilities Represent obligations to carry forward assigned tasks to a successful conclusion. Requirements to meet deadlines, to adhere to specifications, or to administer programs.

Series A subdivision of an occupational group consisting of positions similar to specialized line of work and qualification requirements. Series are designated by a title and number such as the Accounting Series, 0510; the Secretary Series, 0318; the Microbiology Series, 0403.

Span of Control Is defined as the ratio of the number of supervisors or managers to the number of employees.

Supervisor An employee who directs subordinates within their organizational unit and whose supervisory responsibilities meet at least the minimum requirements for coverage under the General Schedule Supervisory Guide. Supervisory duties include evaluating employee performance, selecting or participating in the selection of subordinate employees, reviewing and approving leave requests, resolving complaints and grievances, affecting disciplinary measures, and providing for the training and development of subordinates. (See the OPM's General Schedule Supervisory Guide.)

Team Leader An employee who, as a regular and recurring part of their assignment, leads three or more civil service employees in accomplishing work and whose leadership duties meet at least he minimum requirements for coverage under Part II of the General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide (GSLGEG) to include, but not limited to, ensuring timely accomplishment of assigned team tasks, serving as coach and facilitator, providing advice on work methods and practices, and training or arranging for the training of team members. (See the OPM's GSLGEG.)

Appendix B – Position Management Obstacles, Impacts, & Considerations

Obstacles	Description	Impact	Considerations
Fragmentation	Organization split into many small segments	• Requires more supervisory positions • Restricts employee development • Interferes with communication • Over-specialization	• Are all functional areas needed? • Can functions be reasonably combined? • Can employee skill sets be broadened? • • Is specialization required?
Layering	Too many levels existing in the chain of command	• Interferes with communication • Restricts lower-level management and employee responsibility • May lead to over-management of employees	• What is the supervisor-to-employee ratio? • Is it possible to achieve an increase in productivity with fewer layers of supervision? • Is each supervisor supervising for 25 percent of their time? • If applicable, does the managerial workload support establishment of a Deputy?
Narrow span of control	More supervisors than necessary	• Limits initiative and responsibility • Is very expensive • Are duties and responsibilities appropriately delegated? • See the section on "Layering"	• Would team lead positions be more efficient versus supervisory positions?

Obstacle	Description	Impact	Considerations
Job dilution	Lower level work performed by higher graded employees	• Results in low employee morale • Is inefficient • Is expensive	• Are employees working at their grade level 50 per cent or more of the time? • Are positions established at appropriate grade levels? • Does the right mix of clerical or assistant work with technical, administrative, or professional level work exist?
Mismatched strengths and workloads	Skill sets of employees not matched with the work needed to be performed	• Skill set not aligned with employees • Is expensive • Is inefficient	• Can work be consolidated, reassigned, or changed and positions abolished or added?
Missing career progression	No path of progression from lower-level grades to higher level	• Lower employee morale • Higher attrition rates	• Is there a line of career progression from entry level, through journeyman level, to expert level? • Does the organization structure support succession planning through its career progression structure?

Obstacle	Description	Impact	Considerations
Workload and workforce inconsistencies	Some employees have frequent idle time while others are always behind or some employees are frequently detailed to other positions or found to be regularly working outside of their PD	• Results in low employee morale • Is inefficient	• Are the PDs reviewed annually to ensure that the duties and responsibilities remain current and accurate? • Has there been a change in the KSAs necessary to complete the work of the office? • Do performance standards for the positions match the duties and responsibilities in the PD?
Inconsistencies among position descriptions	May develop when positions are revised, one by one, over a period of several years.	• Results in overlap of functions • Is inefficient	• Is more than one position credited with the same review or inspectcion task? • Do the supervisory controls of the workers mesh with the responsibility of the supervisor? • Do several positions have the “final authority” in the same matter?

Obstacles	Description	Impact	Considerations
Unnecessary positions	Use of more staff than necessary to accomplish the mission	• Leads to redundancy in work • Expensive to the organization	• How many supervisory and staff positions are needed? • Are there any positions that are "carry over" positions from previous operating structures or mission requirements that are no longer needed? • Are there any duplicative positions performing the same work that are not needed? • Are the staff assistant functions needed, or can they be shifted to another line position?

Appendix C – Considerations in Proposing an Organization Structure

When reviewing the organization, it is recommended that managers conduct a comprehensive review to include careful consideration of the following factors when preparing the package documents required in Phase 1 to change the organizational structure.

Organizational mission and functional responsibilities	Organizations should have a clear mission statement and corresponding functional statements for the office and each division in support of the mission. The organization's mission should reflect a cascading effect in support of the larger DOD mission.
Available program dollars, total number of personnel authorized, and grade allocation	The proposed change must be accomplished within the limitation of these ceilings, unless relief can be obtained prior to implementing the change.
Program factors	The proposed change should be based on firm, continuing program requirements and high priority program objectives, not temporary or projected requirements which become moot once they are met or never materialize. While current program requirements must be the basis, it is recommended that the structure is designed to be flexible enough to accommodate forecasted program changes without the recurring need for extensive reorganizations.
Cost Managers	Must compare the new and old structures to determine if gains in program performance will offset increased costs or if operational improvements will result in decreased costs and savings.
Current organizational and staffing structures	Managers must determine the impact upon segments which are to remain unchanged in order to preclude a situation where improvements in one segment of an organization may be offset by problems or workloads generated in another segment.
Span of control / Supervisor to subordinate ratio	The number of managers and supervisors should be kept to a minimum to increase the efficiency

	and effectiveness of program operations. Each situation should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as the number of subordinates supervised will vary based on the organization and functional responsibilities supervised. As a general rule, managers and supervisors should supervise the largest possible number of subordinates consistent with accomplishing the overall mission. While there is no supervisor-to-employee ratio required by OPM, a ratio of 1:1 is not appropriate.
Grade levels	Positions must be structured to provide the necessary skills and competencies at the lowest feasible grade level. The position structure must be predicated upon grades supportable by the work to be accomplished. Grades must be commensurate with the work performed to accomplish the organization's mission and not exceed those grades needed to perform the work of the unit. A carefully designed position structure will result in reasonable and supportable grade levels, as well as a cost-efficient organization.
Career progression	Staffing should provide adequate opportunity for employees to develop and progress in well-defined career ladders in those occupations leading to full performance positions.
Job interest	Work assignments should be challenging and constructed to attract, retain, and motivate employees at the needed level of competence (typically, the full performance level). Employees' time and competencies should be fully utilized.
Workload analysis	This involves the methodology used to determine the time, effort and resources necessary to carry out the organization's operations, resulting in identifying the organization's actual needs of human resources both in terms of quality and quantity, as well as the required training and development of these resources to achieve the goals and strategies that

	the organization wants to achieve in the various work sites.

Credits”

This guide was developed by DCPAS classifier Beth Brown-Pettit with assistance from numerous Federal agencies.

For more information or questions, contact:

dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.list.classification