



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

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## Personnel Bulletin No. 12-15

### Subject: Direct Hire Authority for Resource Assistant Internship Programs

**1. Purpose.** This Personnel Bulletin implements the Direct Hiring Authority (DHA) outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012 within the Department of the Interior (DOI). Although this authority allows for great flexibility in hiring, bureaus must still ensure compliance with human resources law and regulations not excluded by this law. This Bulletin will prescribe as well as clarify matters related to using the DHA within DOI.

**2. Authority.** Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012; PL 112-74; H. R. 2055 Division E Title I Section 121; 16 U.S.C. 1725(a)

**3. Noncompetitive Hiring Status.** Under the DHA the Secretary may appoint directly a candidate(s) without competing in a competitive examination or competing with career and career-conditional employees under internal merit staffing procedures for any position(s) for which they are eligible in a land management agency. Veteran's preference does not apply. Candidates applying under this authority will be considered with other noncompetitive candidates.

**4. Policy.** The Secretary through the Department's Office of Human Resources shall establish a direct hire appointing authority under which policy in this Bulletin applies to the land managing bureaus and offices of the Department of Interior. Consideration will be provided to individuals who are enrolled in an institution of higher education or are recent graduates from an institution of higher education, with particular attention given to ensure full representation of women and participants from historically Black, Hispanic, Asian Pacific Islander and Native American schools or other schools with diverse student populations.

The Secretary can appoint "former resource assistant(s)" as defined in the Public Land Corps Act of 1993 who:

- (a) Completed a rigorous undergraduate or graduate summer internship with a land managing agency,
- (b) Successfully fulfilled the requirements of that internship program; and
- (c) Subsequently earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher learning.

Internship programs may be established in any one or more of the following career fields necessary to the effective management of public lands and resources:

- Park/Refuge/Monument management and administration
- Natural resources management
- Environmental policy and management
- Environmental/civil engineering/urban planning
- Historic and/or cultural resources management
- Business management and administration
- Public policy/administration and management

- Tourism and hospitality services
- Resource Protection

By virtue of its inclusion in the legislation, the National Park Service Business Plan Internship program is an approved internship program for use of this authority. Additional programs may be established as needed.

**5. Delegated Authority.** This direct hire authority is re-delegated from the Secretary of the Interior to Bureau Directors and equivalent office directors. The appointment of an individual Intern to a competitive service position may be re-delegated to bureau Chiefs of Human Resources, through intervening levels of management or directly, without power of further re-delegation.

**6. Bureau Responsibilities.** It is the responsibility of the Bureau to confirm that each resource assistant internship program meets the definition of a rigorous internship program. A rigorous internship program must meet the following criteria: (a) have a clearly defined deliverable or work product with clear expectations and outcomes. (Experience-based internships, such as job shadowing, are not sufficient); (b) include a minimum of 11 weeks of full time work; (c) focus on critical thinking and real-world problem solving; (d) provide presentations on findings to key decision makers; and (e) address certification of high performance in the internship from the internship supervisor. In addition, a qualifying internship should include some or all of the following elements:

- Intense and rigorous projects – focus skills and reveal the work qualities of candidates
- Structured projects – have clear paths to success for candidates and obvious assessment opportunities for managers
- High degree of autonomy – create space to develop or apply personal responsibility
- Defined deliverable – rewards productivity and provides for a clear goal
- Demanding schedule – develops project management skills
- Exposure to multiple stakeholders (internal and/or external) – provides an opportunity to demonstrate communication skills and the skills to navigate organizational hierarchies

Characteristics of interns necessary for success in the Federal Government include the following:

- Demonstrated leadership skills, and experience and strategic thinking abilities
- Presentation and oral data collection skills
- Self-starter/can work independently
- Flexible/resourceful
- Ability to adapt new skills and ideas to the public sector

The Direct Hire Intern program works through a designated partner organization, which is tasked with recruiting and managing candidates, and must support the program with 100% of the costs through a cooperative agreement. Interns hired through a partner organization will not be Federal Government employees, but if hired non-competitively after the successful completion of their internship will be hired into career conditional appointments as a Federal Government employee.

Bureaus must obtain documentation of service from the resource assistant intern that must include number of weeks served, a description of the duties and responsibilities in each resource assistant internship position held,

and a verification of information signed by the non-profit organization's intern supervisor and DOI or Bureau responsible official.

Each Bureau Resource Assistant internship program office will provide a Certificate of Intern Program Completion to participants who have demonstrated satisfactory service and have met the service requirements for non-competitive hiring.

## 7. Crediting Time Served


A former resource assistant may use time satisfactorily served in a rigorous internship program to count toward meeting qualifications requirements for federal employment. The former resource assistant who uses time served to meet job qualifications requirements needs to clearly state the duties performed while working as a resource assistant in his or her application(s) for Federal employment, so that he or she may be afforded credit at the appropriate grade. Although time served as a resource assistant is creditable experience for qualification purposes, it is not creditable for purposes of computations for retirement, time in grade, leave or thrift saving plan. Time served does not count towards probationary period or career tenure.

## 8. Appointment

Former resource assistants must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible for DHA:  
Successfully completed an internship that meets the requirements of paragraph 4 above;  
Meet OPM qualification standards and any other qualification requirement; and  
Earn an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education.

Note: This authority cannot be used after the end of the two-year period beginning on the date the candidate completed his or her undergraduate and graduate degree. This 2-year timeframe cannot be extended. Selectees will be subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service appointments.

**9. Oversight and Review Requirements.** Each bureau or office using this authority must establish written oversight procedures to ensure its proper use. This should include who shall approve the hires and the method of reviewing the appointments. The Department may review the use of this authority under its accountability programs. Human Resource offices must maintain appropriate case files of any individuals hired under this authority. The case file must include: the selectee's resume, a classified position description for the position into which the selectee was appointed, and documentation that establishes that the internship program completed by the selectee meets the requirements of an internship described in this bulletin. Case files will be maintained for three years after initial appointment.

Signed by  
  
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