



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

May 23, 2019

SUBJECT: Updates to Research Position Evaluation System Policy and Manual

TO: Administrator's Council and ARS Research Community

FROM: Simon Y. Liu
Associate Administrator

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is "Simon" and the second is "Liu".

I am happy to announce that policy updates have been made to Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) P&P 431.3-ARS and Manual 431.3-ARS. Major changes were announced previously and have already been implemented.

Some of the major changes are identified below:

- References to the GS-15 regular review cycle as 7 years have been updated.
- Use of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Level F criteria that is only applicable to GS-15s and above has been clarified.
- Guidance on classification appeals has been updated.
- Additional information on Dr. Jacobs-Young's policy regarding ST slot priority has been provided.
- The reference to GS-9 Research Affiliates has been removed because it is no longer in alignment with Agency policy.
- Naming conventions for case writeup documentation have been updated.
- The previously announced policy regarding use of links in writeups has been added.
- Language regarding technology transfer activities as related to RPES has been updated.

Area Directors: please share these updates with laboratory directors, center directors, research leaders, and office professionals so that every researcher and those who support them in this process are aware of them.

cc:
RPES Advisory Committee

ARS □ ERS □ NASS □ NIFA

Manual

Title: RPES Case Writeup Preparation and Guidance for Panelists

Number: Manual 431.3-ARS

Date: August 26, 2019

Originating Office: ARS, Research Position Evaluation System Staff

This Replaces: Manual 431.3-ARS dated 10/20/2010

Distribution: ARS Headquarters, Areas, and Locations (provide a copy to each ARS research scientist)

This manual provides detailed guidance for 1) preparing case writeups for panel review and 2) determining the grade level of positions covered by the ARS Research Position Evaluation System (RPES). This revision incorporates policy decisions made and announced since the 2010 version was published.

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Introduction

Part I of this manual explains information that Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) panelists must have to make fair and equitable classification decisions. Information on individual positions and incumbents will be submitted according to the outline detailed below, which is compatible with the format of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG). The standardized format is an important feature in assuring consistent and equitable evaluation throughout the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Case material will be reviewed for adherence to format. Inaccurate, incomplete, or improperly prepared writeups will be returned for revision.

Note: With the exception of required completion and submission of ARS Form 229, standard panel procedures will apply to Supergrade Panel operations.

Part II of this manual provides detailed procedures and evaluation tools that RPES panelists need to know to serve effectively on mandatory and ad hoc panels. Included are:

- Panel procedures (including report preparation),
- In-depth review(er) (IDR) guidelines,
- The OPM RGEG, and
- Additional guidance on interpreting the RGEG and crediting patents.

Reference: Basic RPES policies are explained in Policies and Procedures (P&P) 431.3-ARS.

Part I - Case Writeup Preparation

Chapter 1: Case Writeup Formats

All instructions in this manual apply only to GS-11 and above positions. Cases are to be prepared in the format shown below. Numbers in parentheses refer to pages in this manual where the topic discussion is to be found.

Factor 1, Research Assignment (p. 7)

- A. Assigned Responsibility (p. 7)
- B. Research Objectives and Methodology (p. 8)
- C. Expected Results (p. 8)
- D. Knowledge Required (p. 8)
- E. Supervisory Responsibilities (p. 8)

All of these headings should be included in the case writeup. If the SY has nothing to report under a section, include the heading and just write "None." under the heading.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls (p. 9)

- A. Assigned Authority (p. 9)
- B. Technical Guidance Received (p. 9)
- C. Review of Results (p. 9)
- D. General Supervision (p. 9)

You can do an outline style with tabs/indentations, or the entire case can be left justified.

Factor 3, Guidelines and Originality (p. 10)

- A. Available Literature (p. 10)
- B. Originality Required (p. 10)
- C. Demonstrated Originality (p. 10)

Factor 4, Contributions, Impact, and Stature (p. 11)

- A. Demonstrated Accomplishments (p. 11)
- B. Stature and Recognition (p. 27)
 - 1. Honors and Awards
 - 2. Special Invitations
 - 3. Offices and Committee Assignments Held in Professional and Honorary Societies
 - 4. Participation in Professional Meetings, Technical Conferences, Workshops, etc.
- C. Advisory and Consultant Activities (p. 29)
 - 1. Professional Advisory and Consulting Activities
 - 2. Special Assignments
- D. Other (p. 31)
 - 1. Educational Background
 - 2. Research Experience
 - 3. Other Significant Information
- E. Publications (p. 32)
 - 1. Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles and Patents
 - 2. Additional Publications

Chapter 2: General Guidance

Before preparing a case writeup, review this manual and the RGEG to gain an understanding of each factor's evaluation objective.

Do not modify, omit, or add section headings or subheadings to the format outlined above. Each element of the format must be included in the case writeup. If there is nothing to report under an element, enter "None."

In writing Factors 1, 2, and 3A–B, use gender-neutral terms and style instead of saying "he," "she," "his," or "her." Begin sentences with action verbs (the subject is understood). Write brief narrative paragraphs following the outline shown above.

Use of websites/hyperlinks are permitted only in Factor 4. For more details, refer to Chapter 6, Factor 4, Contributions, Impact, and Stature.

All pages following the first page of the case writeup must be numbered.

Typing Specifications. Case writeups must:

- Be typed single-spaced;

- Be typed with a minimum font size of Times New Roman 12 or equivalent;
- Have minimum of 1-inch margin on all sides; and
- Adhere to length specified herein for individual elements and subelements.

Caution: No entry at variance with prescribed format will be accepted. Noncompliant writeups will not be accepted by the Area Office.

Note: No information is to be included in RPES case writeups mentioning prior, ongoing, or possible future Equal Employment Opportunity complaints; Merit System Protection Board appeals; position classification appeals; administrative grievances; or other similar complaint, grievance, or appeal processes. Such matters are irrelevant to RGEG application.

Remember: Undue detail, verbosity, and needless repetition will weaken rather than strengthen a case writeup!

Chapter 3: Factor 1, Research Assignment

Note: Factors 1 through 3B constitute the official position description and must not exceed three single-spaced pages in length. They describe the position’s current characteristics (i.e., over the next 3–4 years). Factors 3C and 4 complete the case writeup.

This factor is documented and evaluated via five elements lettered A through E.

A. Assigned Responsibility

Identify the organization, location, general area of work (including scope and research approach), and the specific National Program(s) under which the research is conducted (i.e., “This research is a component of ARS National Program 212, Soil and Air,” or “This research is conducted in support of ARS National Programs 106, Aquaculture, and 108, Food Safety.”) The limits or boundaries of the area of work should be clearly stated. (The specific objectives within the area are covered in the next paragraph.)

If the assignment is new; that is, entered into within the past 4 years, so indicate (i.e., “This assignment is new since October 2017.”). **This entry is not applicable for the first post-hire panel review. This statement is for SYs who have been moved or re-assigned. This is not for new employees.**

When appropriate, state if you are a team member or a team leader.

If you are assigned one of the three formal levels of leadership, explain fully in this paragraph. (The source of these definitions is P&P 100.2-ARS.)

- **Lead Scientists (Level I)** are responsible for the scientific leadership of Level I projects, and report to a Level II Research Leader (RL). In this capacity, the Lead Scientist: coordinates scientific activities of participating scientists; evaluates and recommends—

with the Office of National Programs (ONP) concurrence—changes to the project(s); prepares annual reports; provides technical information and consultation pertaining to assigned project(s), both internal and external to ARS; and ensures that human, fiscal, and physical resources assigned to project(s) are utilized as planned. With RL approval, a Lead Scientist may supervise temporary scientists assigned to the project, e.g., Research Associates. With Area Director (AD) approval, a Lead Scientist may supervise other permanent scientists assigned to project(s).

- **Research Leaders (Level II)** head management units and are responsible for exercising leadership and line authority over scientists and support personnel assigned to the unit. An RL reports to either a Level III Director or to an AD. In this capacity, the RL is responsible for maintaining and enhancing the creativity and productivity of the unit; hiring personnel and managing the human, fiscal, and physical resources assigned to the unit; serving as the unit fund holder; providing technical information and consultation, both internal and external to ARS; and ensuring the proper interpretation and reporting of scientific research results and information.
- **Directors (Level III)** typically exist only where there is an organizational need for research administration to coordinate Level II efforts. A typical Level III assignment would be the director of a large center or laboratory.

B. Research Objectives and Methodology

Describe 1) the specific objectives within the assigned area of responsibility that will be pursued for the next 3 to 4 years and 2) the methodology to be used as agreed upon by you and your immediate supervisor. If leadership is involved, distinguish between the objectives of the research team and those of your personal research assignment.

C. Expected Results

State the expected results and the impact on science or technology that will result from successful completion of the research described in B above.

D. Knowledge Required

Limit to a **brief** list of specific, directly applicable disciplines and skills needed to perform the duties of the **current** assignment. **Do not** list commonly required knowledges such as statistical analysis, experimental design, etc. Example: “The research assignment requires professional knowledge of plant physiology, biochemical engineering, molecular biology, thermodynamics, and transport science.”

E. Supervisory Responsibilities

ONLY ARS positions listed here. ORISE Fellows, RSA students, can be listed in Other Significant Info.

Specific data (i.e., title, grade level) of employees supervised must be included. All positions having formally delegated and continuing technical and administrative supervisory responsibilities over ARS employees must include the following statement:

Provides technical and administrative supervision. Is responsible for making selections for positions, assigning duties, reviewing work, approving/disapproving leave, and evaluating performance. Ensures equal opportunity is extended to all employees supervised and all candidates for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or nondisqualifying handicapping condition. Ensures affirmative implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity plans of action and applicable Civil Rights provisions, which includes full consideration of eligible minority group members and women in filling vacant positions; providing career counseling and orientation; enhancing career opportunities through training and development, job redesign, and/or similar techniques; and ensuring full consideration of these employees in recommending promotions, awards, and other forms of special recognition.

Chapter 4: Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor is documented and evaluated via four elements lettered A through D.

A. Assigned Authority

Summarize your freedom to do research and make decisions within the scope of the assignment. Include a statement about the complexity and/or alternative research approaches when the scope of, and freedom within, the assigned area permits such choices.

B. Technical Guidance Received

Describe the general **technical** supervision received. Technical refers to the theoretical, experimental, and practical aspects of planning specific research activities in the assigned area of responsibility.

C. Review of Results

Describe the supervision received (freedom given) to analyze, interpret, and report results, and the nature and extent of your supervisor's review of manuscripts.

D. General Supervision

Describe the broad supervision received, such as frequency and nature of contact with the supervisor, and your authority to make changes in the program or commit resources (personnel, supplies, equipment, budget, etc.).

Chapter 5: Factor 3, Guidelines and Originality

This factor is documented and evaluated via three elements lettered A through C.

A. Available Literature

Indicate the extent to which literature applies to the assigned area, the specific objectives currently being pursued, and the methodology being used.

B. Originality Required

Indicate the difficulty in identifying specific objectives or hypotheses or expected results, and in converting abstract concepts to easily understood statements or theories. If appropriate, the extent to which new areas of investigation might be opened should be described to help reflect the originality required.

Begin Factor 3C on a new page with the heading shown below.

Factor 3 - Guidelines and Originality

C. Demonstrated Originality

1/2 page means different things to different people, I use the Word doc rulers and estimate this paragraph should not exceed 4"

In a paragraph not to exceed **one-half page**, describe the originality and creativity demonstrated in the research assignment and considered the best evidence of originality related to the **current** assignment. Some specific accomplishments should be cited, but **do not** restate the details of accomplishments described under Factor 4. **Needless details, verbosity, and reiteration of Demonstrated Accomplishments will not strengthen the case.**

Chapter 6: Factor 4, Contributions, Impact, and Stature

This factor is documented and evaluated via five elements lettered A through E.

Factor 4 is the single most important segment of the case writeup. It is double-weighted in terms of point value compared with the other factors because it implements the “person-in-the-job” concept, which underlies the RGEG. Under this concept, research scientists have opened promotion potential based on their personal research and leadership accomplishments, which can change the complexity and responsibility of their positions.

Note 1: Factor 4 is considerably more complex than the other factors, and its elements require correspondingly greater explanation. **Unlettered subheadings in this section are solely to provide clarification or examples of topics under discussion and are not to be used in formatting case writeups.**

Note 2: The discussions and examples that follow are intended both for individual scientists developing a case writeup and for panelists reviewing a case.

General Guidance [H Index would be included here.](#)

You may opt to begin this factor with a **brief** paragraph summarizing your research career by listing total years in research, total number of publications and presentations, and a general statement about your reputation and recognition **if** these are significant and appropriate. If included, limit to **no more than one-third page** and **do not repeat** information in Demonstrated Originality (3C).

Do not submit previous position descriptions as part of the case writeup; summarize the past assignment instead. See “Other Significant Information” under section D3 below.

Use of websites/hyperlinks are permitted in Factor 4; however, 1) it is recommended that researcher verify the accuracy and content of such links; 2) information contained in websites/links does not replace information required in this section; and 3) panelists/IDRs are not required to use/read such links.

A. Demonstrated Accomplishments

Immediately following the optional summary paragraph, select and list—from earliest to latest in chronological order—the most significant research accomplishments over your total career. A limit is imposed on the total number of accomplishments that can be claimed and documented, based on the scientist’s current grade level:

- GS-11, a maximum of three
- GS-12, a maximum of five
- GM/GS-13 and above, a maximum of eight

[You could also have two Additional Accomplishments as stated on pg. 26.](#)

Writing Accomplishment Statements

Impact is the core value of the RPES, and assessment of impact begins with careful selection and documentation of original contributions to a field of science or technology or to ARS programs. Bear in mind that the actual impact of an accomplishment sometimes changes with time—often it is not apparent for some time after an accomplishment has been achieved—so great care and precision in writing are required.

Detailed examples of Demonstrated Accomplishment statements are provided under “Variety of Accomplishments Recognized” below. Each selected significant accomplishment must

summarize the following information in a concise paragraph not to exceed one-half page in length:

This 1/2 page limit is really important to follow.
Two accomplishments should fully fit on one page.

- **What was accomplished?** Emphasize what was done, but not how it was done. **What was your role** in the accomplishment? This is particularly important for accomplishments involving a team effort (see discussion below). RPES is a position classification system and cannot evaluate group activities. It is therefore necessary to describe as accurately as possible what you contributed to the total accomplishment. Finally, and most importantly, **what is the impact** on science, or the degree of adoption or economic or program importance of the accomplishment? Where appropriate, specify the customer(s) who benefited from your work.
- **Note:** Under the “Impact” subhead, relate significance and impact of the accomplishment to achievement of ARS national program goals and objectives whenever applicable, particularly for your most recent accomplishments.
- To ensure that the requisite information is evident, embed the subheadings at the appropriate points in each paragraph, as shown in the examples. Note that the accomplishment and role subheadings may be linked in accomplishments where you acted alone.
- The intention is to keep accomplishment statement paragraphs terse and factual. Remember the caution against verbosity.

Number accomplishments in chronological order.

Identify accomplishments since last promotion (or entry on duty with ARS) with an asterisk.

ORISE time does not count. Adding a new publication to an old accomplishment does not make it a new accomplishment.

Documenting Accomplishments

For each accomplishment, select supporting documentation, termed “exhibits.” Research accomplishments are generally documented with publications (i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles, patents, Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs), technical reports, germplasm releases, review articles, etc.). Other types of accomplishments are more appropriately documented by supporting statements, as discussed below and shown in the accompanying table.

Note: Exhibits are permitted for Demonstrated Accomplishments only.

Accomplishments may be documented by a mixture of publications and supporting statements, provided the maximum of two exhibits is not exceeded.

Whenever an accomplishment is not or cannot be appropriately documented with a publication, concise statements signed by some knowledgeable authority such as a national program leader, technology transfer coordinator, action agency official, industry or commodity group representative, AD, etc., are acceptable as exhibits. **Such statements must contain substantive information.** They must provide evidence to support the summary and particularly the **impact** of

Accomplishments should be listed in chronological order based on the start of the research, but I typically use publication dates to verify that.

the accomplishment. For research accomplishments, the statement(s) must also indicate why the research was not or could not be published.

Note: Impact may also be addressed by attaching a maximum of three supporting statements or reviews to a cover memorandum signed by the AD. The AD’s memorandum must state that “the attachments indicate Dr. _____’s impact with regard to [identify the nature of the accomplishment].” Such memorandum/attachment combinations are counted as a single exhibit. Supporting statements are otherwise counted as individual exhibits. **Please contact Brittney Jones if you need an AD memo.**

Patents are an important means of documenting certain applied research and technology transfer accomplishments. In addition to including a copy of the patent as an exhibit, the writer should summarize information about the significance of the patent (i.e., improved products, economic savings, etc.) in the accomplishment statement.

Exhibits should be listed in chronological order.

Exhibits must be referenced to the particular accomplishment documented and—for publications—to the publications list (e.g., “Exhibit 1, #3; Exhibit 3a, #6; Exhibit 3b, #8; Exhibit 4, #10;” etc.). Publications related to an accomplishment but of lesser importance than the exhibit(s) will only be referenced in the publication list (e.g., “#28, #34, and #40”).

Exhibits should be selected with the following in mind:

- Exhibits must support statements of your role and impact of the work on science, technology, or ARS programs.
- A **maximum** of two exhibits may be used to document each accomplishment.
- There is no requirement to fill the quota with the maximum number of allowed exhibits.
- Full credit for an accomplishment cannot be given when the accomplishment is documented **solely** by abstracts.
- Serial articles (“Part I, Part II,” etc.) are counted as separate documents when used as exhibits.
- **If using a book as an exhibit**, submit only one complete book (hard copy or electronic copy). For the case writeup, the exhibit is to consist of a scanned .pdf set of the table of contents. The RPES Staff will ensure the book gets to the designated IDR for a case. (If a hard copy is provided, the RPES Staff will arrange to have the book returned after the panel meeting as long as they are notified of this ahead of time.)
- **If submitting a data storage device as an exhibit**, be sure to include instructions for accessing the material.
- Submission of **non-English exhibits** is not prohibited, but such exhibits are probably of limited value to panelists. Submission of translated abstracts and tables is strongly recommended.

Typical exhibits for various types of accomplishments include:

Type of Accomplishment	Typical Exhibits
------------------------	------------------

Research	Journal articles, technical reports, germplasm releases, funded grants, supporting statements from user groups/action agencies
Special Assignments or Projects	Supporting statements from ONP and other program authorities
Technology Transfer	Patents, manuals, or data storage device of computer programs, CRADAs, industry/trade journal articles, germplasm releases, and supporting statements from user groups/action agencies, industry partners, and technology transfer coordinators
Systems Research and Integration	Manuals or data storage device of simulation models, journal articles, technical reports, and supporting statements
Leadership (RL and Scientific)	Supporting statements from AD, ONP, and user groups/action agencies
Additional	None permitted

Variety of Accomplishments Recognized

RPES recognizes and credits a wide variety of accomplishments when properly documented: knowledge development, knowledge application, method development, literature review/analysis, technology transfer, leadership (research leadership and scientific leadership), systems integration/modeling, and special assignments. The type(s) of accomplishments a scientist selects will naturally depend upon one's past and present assignments.

RESEARCH

Research accomplishments are expected of research scientists, and the documentation is well understood.

Examples:

Accomplishment: Wheel traffic compaction in no-till may reduce nitrogen fertilizer uptake by corn plants. To address this problem, the incumbent led a team in designing and conducting a field experiment that examined the combined effects of tillage, fertilizer placement, and wheel traffic on corn shoot and root growth, N uptake efficiency, and yield. Wheel traffic from moderate-size farm machinery (4.5 metric tons axle loads) reduced the growth of roots in tracked interrows. As a result, corn roots took longer to reach N fertilizer placed in tracked interrows and this fertilizer was then susceptible to leaching for a longer time. Additionally, placing fertilizer closer to the plant row resulted in more rapid shoot growth prior to anthesis. **Role:** Incumbent

conceived, planned and directed the research, and wrote the manuscript. **Impact:** This research was the basis for three journal articles and two invited presentations and has been incorporated into Iowa State University Extension recommendations on nitrogen fertilizer placement. (Exhibit 1a, #25; Exhibit 1b, #34; and #46)

Accomplishment/Role: The incumbent postulated that direct mechanical inoculation of the vascular tissues in seeds will bypass the need for vectors to transmit maize viruses. This elegant, unconventional, and simple approach resulted in a highly efficient method for transmitting MWLMV and the first mechanical transmission of intractable maize viruses such as maize chlorotic dwarf virus, maize mosaic virus, maize rayado fino virus, maize rough dwarf virus and maize streak virus. **Impact:** Among other benefits, this research provided a unique solution to study viruses without the confounding effect of vectors, eliminated or reduced the intensive labor requirements of insect rearing, expedited tests on infectivity of virus preparations, provided a means to study the mechanism of resistance to systemic virus movement and to study virus resistance independently from vector resistance and facilitated studies that manipulate recombinant viral clones. (Exhibit 8a, #85; Exhibit 8b, #92; and #87)

Note: ARS acknowledges the value of risk taking when appropriate to the mission. This means that negative or partial results are recognized as conceivably having an impact on science as great as positive results in other contexts. Limited impact is more appropriately associated with limited relevance, lack of originality, or poorly planned and executed research.

TEAM RESEARCH

The RGEG—and, therefore, RPES—assess the impact of a scientist’s contributions to science and technology, and the extent of stature and recognition resulting from that impact.

RPES seeks to determine the appropriate level of credit for contributions made as part of a team in the same manner as for individual research achievements. RPES is a system for classifying individual research positions. If your assignment includes being part of a team, you must be specific in showing your contribution to the team accomplishment. Team responsibilities may be assigned formally, or they may develop informally.

Explaining contributions as a team member is sometimes difficult because the team concept emphasizes unity and cohesiveness. In writing the accomplishment statement, you must address your individual participation in and actual contribution to solving the problem in terms of conceiving the study or defining the study objective, defining hypotheses to test the approach, interpreting data, reporting or otherwise transferring the results, or comparable activities.

Impact is the key consideration in describing team research accomplishments. Impact is a question of the value and use made of a given contribution. It is neither measurable by nor synonymous with publication or authorship. IDRs are specifically tasked to determine an incumbent’s relative contribution in team research and student/professor situations. Such

situations are widespread throughout science and not considered unusual by experienced panelists.

Examples:

Accomplishment: In team research, the incumbent and her coworkers determined the mode of action and compared the efficacy of two insect growth regulators (IGRs) on the cat flea. Pyriproxyfen was found to be the most photostable of two juvenile hormone mimics. Both compounds disrupted embryonic development when applied to the adult female flea. In addition, exposure of flea eggs to treated pet fur for as little as only 1 minute disrupted either embryonic or larval development, depending upon the IGR used. **Role:** The incumbent led the histological portions of the studies and participated as a full team member in other aspects of the work. **Impact:** This research demonstrated that the high susceptibility of flea eggs to these products was due to a unique, previously unreported, nonsclerotized chorion in flea eggs that consisted only of a gelatinous material overlaying the developing embryo. The results of this research are important because they suggest new approaches for controlling fleas by attacking the vulnerable egg stage. The data is being used in evaluating this product for registration and commercial use on domestic animals. (Exhibit 7a, #57; Exhibit 7b, #59)

Accomplishment: In cooperative studies with university personnel and his research associate, the incumbent examined the impact of global climate change on hydrology and erosion. Using three climate change scenarios, the impact in increased precipitation and decreasing winter temperatures was evaluated on water resources of a mixed land use basin. Depending on the scenario, water yield increased from 101 percent to 245 percent, whereas the sediment yield increased from 121 percent to 266 percent. In another study, climate change scenarios were developed using trends in the climate data for 14 sites across the continental U.S. and Alaska. Using WEPP and CREAMS models, runoff and soil loss were simulated at each site with and without climate change. Relative impacts of these generated climate changes in soil loss ranged from -35 percent at a site in Alaska to a 40 percent increase at an Oklahoma site. **Role:** The incumbent developed analytical procedures to organize and present the data to demonstrate the impact of climate change on runoff and erosion. **Impact:** Results from these studies demonstrate that small differences in precipitation and temperature trends significantly impact soil loss and sustained agricultural production. (Exhibit 7a, #51; Exhibit 7b, #54)

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS

Such activities are considered related or complementary to assigned research. They are credited when the accomplishments:

- Have impact on science, technology, or Agency programs equivalent to that of the conduct of research; or
- Maintain your level of expertise, allowing full credit to be given for past research accomplishments.

The mission of ARS is to conduct research, solve problems of U.S. agriculture, and effectively communicate its results. Work will be assigned to positions in order to achieve mission goals with maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Accordingly, complementary service projects will be assigned to Category 1 positions when one or more of the following conditions exist: funds or personnel ceilings are not available to hire additional persons; the volume of work is not sufficient to justify establishing an additional position to perform it; the activity is a natural follow-up to the research; or technical requirements prohibit others from doing the work. Specific examples of such activity include 1) structuring, participating in, or co-leading external stakeholder workshops to develop input for national program action plans; and 2) serving as ad hoc or convened panel reviewer for the Office of Scientific Quality Review in evaluating the technical and scientific quality of proposed ARS research projects.

Although ARS allows researchers to impact the classification of their positions, there are some constraints due to the nature of each position. Each position is established **primarily** to perform a part of the ARS mission and, only secondarily, to provide avenues for possible personal advancement depending upon how the position and work can be organized. There is a clear distinction between pursuit of an Agency objective—even if not complete or fully successful—and scientists pursuing their own, or no, goals.

Documentation of research-related activities is **essential** for proper credit. The position description must include a brief paragraph on the duties and responsibilities for ongoing complementary assignments. Factor 4 of the case writeup must mention completed projects and accomplishments. They may be included either as 1) a substitute for a research accomplishment (when impact is comparable to a research accomplishment, or when it fills a gap in recent research accomplishments), 2) an Additional Accomplishment beyond the three to eight Demonstrated Accomplishments, or 3) a statement in Factors 4B or 4C that provides further evidence of acceptance, impact, and recognition.

Examples:

Accomplishment/Role: As a technical consultant, conducted a field study to solve an urgent and critical problem and prepared a handbook of recommendations (Exhibit 7b), which applied methodology developed earlier (Exhibit 7a). **Impact:** This ARS handbook has been distributed widely among the users and has been commended by the industry.

Accomplishment/Role: As project manager for 2 years, established a new location and program for research, monitored completion and acceptance of the new facility, established research programs and position descriptions for six research scientists and six support staff, and interviewed and selected staff. **Impact:** Although no publications have resulted from research at the new facility yet, research is well under way. (Exhibit 8a, letter from AD indicating current appointment as RL now that the project is done; Exhibit 8b, ARS research project progress report)

Accomplishment/Role: At the request of the Department of Defense (DoD), applied techniques to develop new methodology to protect U.S. armed forces from disease-carrying insects. **Impact:** Because this defense project was security classified, no publications were allowed; however, the work was successful. (Exhibit 4a, general description of the project objective; Exhibit 4b, a letter from DoD accepting the results)

Accomplishment/Role: As germplasm curator for the sorghum crop, coordinated evaluation of 275 germplasm accessions and consolidated the data into a report distributed to scientists working with the crop. **Impact:** The report has stimulated increased use of the germplasm to broaden the genetic base of the crop in the United States. (Exhibit 8a, letter from the State Agriculture Experiment Station scientists/director documenting use of the report and of the germplasm lines; Exhibit 8b, letter from plant breeder from Tropical Seed Company documenting utility of the report and the new germplasm in their program)

Accomplishment: Appointed by Area Director (AD) as Research Program Representative (RPR) for 7 years (2004–2010) on the Agency team responsible for design and construction of a \$17 million research facility to house 20 scientists conducting a national research program on biocontrol of plant pests. **Role:** Incumbent fulfilled major responsibilities throughout this complex endeavor, including the feasibility study, predesign and design work, bid process, construction, and postconstruction phases. Assignment required a high level of scientific expertise, a broad understanding of a multidisciplinary research program, and exercise of a high degree of coordination and communication skills. **Impact:** A major ARS design and construction project was completed in assigned time frame and within budget. This has greatly enhanced fulfillment of the ARS research mission by providing the specialized, state-of-the-art facility needed for a multidisciplinary team approach to development of solutions to complex problems in biocontrol. This successful endeavor was due in large part to incumbent's actions, which also resulted in major savings to the Government by reducing design time by 8 months and avoiding over \$130,000 in redesign costs. (Exhibit 8a, letter from AD assessing incumbent's overall performance of the RPR assignment; Exhibit 8b, letter from Director, Facilities Division assessing incumbent's performance of RPR responsibilities with attachment from Manual 242.4ARS specifying RPR duties)

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Technology transfer may constitute a **separate** accomplishment but, more often, is one means of creating impact in other accomplishments. Technology transfer is best explained by stating that the technology was transferred and by summarizing the resultant impact. Supporting documentation may take the form of statements from supervisors, user groups, industry partners or action agencies, technology transfer coordinators, business licensing officer, or supervisory patent advisor.

Technology transfer is a culmination of all ARS activities. It emphasizes the translation of research results into viable products, processes, and services. Scientists' involvement in technology transfer encompasses a variety of activities such as these:

- Communicating research discoveries with industry scientists, extension, and other action agency personnel, producers, food processors, etc.
- Participating in collaborative research with partners that can facilitate getting their research outcomes adopted, such as CRADAs and Material Transfer Research Agreements (MTRAs).
- Publishing manuscripts in peer reviewed journals and other printed media such as trade journals.
- Providing peer-reviewed research results directly to action agencies and regulatory bodies.
- Presenting papers and participating in poster sessions at professional society and industry sponsored meetings and conferences.
- Participating with the Office of Technology Transfer by disclosing inventions and providing scientific input when requested in the preparation and prosecution of patent applications, CRADAs, and licensing agreements.
- Holding technology transfer meetings (e.g., field days, open houses, workshops, conferences, etc.) at ARS locations and/or sponsored by industry or professional societies.
- Preparing interpretive summaries for the ARS-115, which along with the technical abstract, are included in the Technology Transfer Automated Retrieval Systems (TEKTRAN) database.
- Assisting ARS Office of Communications Staff in preparation of articles, news releases, newsletters, videos, etc.

Technology transfer is considered a research-related activity for classification purposes. Crediting such activities for research positions is based on the philosophy that the RGEG assesses a research accomplishment by measuring its impact on science or technology.

Note: Although technology transfer is an ARS mission, it is **not** intended to be the major or sole assignment of any research scientist position. Positions that are **primarily** involved in performing technology transfer duties **cannot** be evaluated by the RGEG. Research positions in which technology transfer duties are performed as an ongoing, permanent assignment must document that fact with a duty statement in Factor 1 of the case writeup.

Examples:

Accomplishment: As team leader, established, developed, equipped, staffed, trained, and directed an ink research program at the request of the American Newspaper Publishers Association and the American Soybean Association, and by Congressional mandate. **Role:** The incumbent with a research associate conducted research in which soybean oil and other representative commodity seed oils were modified to exceptionally light colored, biodegradable (#156), and hydrophobic polymers that are used directly as nonpetroleum vehicle to formulate lithographic and letterpress inks of superior quality and cost competitive with petroleum-based inks (#133, #136, #140, #144, #145). **Impact:** The technology was commercially developed through a Material Transfer Research Agreement with a major ink manufacturer for all four

colors used by the industry. With a potential market of 500 million pounds of soybean oil, the economic impact is extremely significant. The technology has been patented (#147) with foreign rights protected, and numerous national and international companies, expressing interest, have been referred to the ARS Office of Technology Transfer Business Licensing Officer. One nonexclusive license was issued August 2013. The company has sold more than 500,000 pounds of ink to date, and markets are increasing monthly. This research has fostered development of a new market for soybean oil and contributed to lessened demand for petroleum-based ink products. It has been recognized by receiving the team USDA Distinguished Service Award, 2010; the incumbent received the American Soybean Association's Domestic Marketing Award; and has received numerous requests to discuss the research and present lectures. (Exhibit 8a, #136; Exhibit 8b, supporting statement from the American Newspaper Publishers Association)

Accomplishment: Coordinated national project to develop models for analyzing insects as vectors of hardwood disease. **Role:** Solicited participation of ARS and State Agricultural Experiment Station entomologists and foresters, arranged and conducted a workshop, coordinated lead scientists in assembling constituent models, and edited a comprehensive publication on the model. Organized and conducted technology transfer workshops with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), the U.S. Forest Service (FS), and the Agricultural Simulation Systems Institute regarding the model. **Impact:** Development of the model was selected as the most significant research accomplishment in entomology during 2012. Incumbent received a superior service citation for development and technology transfer of the model. Incumbent's personal technology transfer efforts have resulted in widespread acceptance and application of the model by FS, APHIS, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Bureau of Land Management, numerous State universities, consulting firms, and foreign countries. FS uses the model to decide which areas of national forests are under the most disease pressure. Such analyses allow the Agency to target control efforts, thereby saving some \$800,000 annually in control program costs. (Exhibit 4a, #51; Exhibit 4b, #64; and #43, #46, #49, #50-61)

Accomplishment/Role: At the request of APHIS, developed a set of standards and procedures for determining the potency, safety, and efficacy of Marek's disease vaccine. Marek's is a highly contagious disease that negatively impacts chicken production worldwide and causes economic losses to American farmers alone in the hundreds of millions of dollars annually. Vaccines have played a significant role in prevention and control since the 1960s, but no official standard existed for measuring vaccine efficacy. This research involved analysis of related in-house experiments and consultation with officials in ARS, APHIS, and industry. A written proposal was prepared (Exhibit 1a), submitted to APHIS, and subsequently adopted for use with only minor revisions (Exhibit 1b). **Impact:** These recommendations and standards have received the endorsement of industry as documented in correspondence from industry officials. Findings allow standardization of vaccine data and enable APHIS to more aggressively monitor and control the spread of the disease.

Accomplishment/Role: Developed a computer-based indexing system for insect and mite systematics. **Impact:** Greatly enhanced the capability of Federal, State, and private researchers to conduct taxonomic research and to support regulatory and economic entomology. The work also contributed to development of a computer-generated decision model for treating honey bee hives

with varroa mite-killing chemicals. This model is estimated to have saved the honey bee industry more than \$1 million annually, part of which is passed on to Western growers who depend on honey bees to pollinate their crops.

SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND INTEGRATION

Positions in which modeling and systems research and integration constitute a major component of the assignment are classified under the RGEG. Formal aspects of such positions are described in Factor 1 of the position description, and credit is given in that factor and Factor 4 for such activities. Formal modeling accomplishments are best documented in the form of one or more Demonstrated Accomplishments. Supporting exhibits may consist of all types of publications, simulation models, expert systems and statements from the modeling coordinator, national program leaders, and other knowledgeable persons.

Scientists who perform modeling typically develop the means for integrating scientific knowledge of agriculture production, processing, and marketing into systems that optimize resource management and facilitate transfer of technology to users. These positions normally emphasize quantification, simulation, and validation to produce models of individual systems or subsystems, which account for interactions among components of dynamic systems.

“Systems research” is the term often applied to quantification of interactions among components of complex systems. This research may be aimed at predicting system behavior, improving control, or designing new systems that will operate more efficiently. Simulation models based on physical, chemical, and biological processes may be the only means for predicting the impact of alternative management actions in real agricultural systems. Most of the important variables in such systems simply cannot be subjected to independent experimental manipulation or control.

Following are some criteria that are useful in evaluating modeler positions and systems research projects:

- Does the model raise researchable questions? Look for instances where model development identifies knowledge gaps or where testing of the model leads to additional hypotheses.
- Does the model attempt to incorporate current or latest knowledge? Check to see whether the references listed in the model documentation are representative of the most recent research appropriate for meeting the model objectives.
- What is the scope or complexity of the problem addressed by the model? Examine the number of variables, organisms, and mechanisms treated explicitly by the model. Assess how widely the model might be used in terms of climatic zones, soil types, crops, breeds of livestock, or combinations of these and other variables. Check to see whether the model incorporates basic scientifically sound processes that will apply broadly or whether it is based on empirical relationships that have a limited scope of applicability.
- Does the model represent an original scientific idea or approach? Determine whether and to what degree the model is a refinement or extension of earlier work or is entirely new.

Project the scientific impact the model might have in promoting new lines of research or resolving intractable problems.

- To what extent has the model been, or can it be, adopted by users? Determine how many other scientists or people in action agencies, industry, extension, etc., may be using the model. Assess the ease of using the model.
- Did development of the model foster Agency objectives of promoting inter- or multidisciplinary research on regional and national problems? Look for the different disciplines involved in the model development and locations of the scientists.
- To what extent did the model meet the objectives originally stated? This question might be answered in terms of time and/or staff hours required, balance among model components, ease of operation, and testimonials from intended users or other scientists.

Examples:

Accomplishment: Led a national team of 15 scientists that developed the Nitrate Leaching and Economic Analysis Package (NLEAP) model. NLEAP was developed for use nationally to identify potential nitrate leaching hot spots and determine nitrogen management strategies to protect groundwater quality. **Role:** Incumbent was responsible for basic design, selection, and implementation of appropriate simulation algorithms; for design and implementation of user interface and expert system for interpretation of model results; and for model testing and validation. In cooperation with other scientists (incumbent 50 percent), field validated model on 30 plus sites in some 15 States. **Impact:** NLEAP model was published in 1991 by the Soil Science Society of America as part of a nitrogen management book, thus becoming the first computer software to be published by the society. The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and other users such as consultants, conservation districts, State agencies, and universities, have adopted NLEAP as a management, analysis, and/or training tool. SCS is committed to adoption of NLEAP technology in their field offices through the Field Office Computing System and as a tool for developing field office guides. Currently, 90 plus major groups in the United States and other countries are using the model. NLEAP research was recognized in June 2010 by a USDA Unit Award for Distinguished Service (incumbent was group leader). Incumbent's NLEAP research also was recognized by a 2015 Scientist of the Year Award for the Plains Area. (Exhibit 5a, #69; Exhibit 5b, #89; and #66, #67, #70, #71, #83, and #84)

Accomplishment: Developed statistical procedures to facilitate both within-herd and across-herd genetic evaluation from performance data in swine. This procedure integrated past research on breeding objectives and a statistical methodology that has the statistical properties of Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP). **Role:** The incumbent provided leadership on statistical methodology and adaptations and guided the postdoctoral researcher who did most of the computer program development. Others led coordination with breed organizations and development of educational material. **Impact:** A main thrust of this activity was to make the procedures recursive and available on small computers such as the business-type computers used by swine breed associations. In this form, a considerable body of quantitative genetic technology is made available in a practical usable form to swine breeders with limited technical training. All eight swine breed associations in the United States have implemented this collection of

procedures and make it available to their members under the acronym STAGES (Swine Testing and Genetic Evaluation System). More than 200,000 performance records have been processed to date by this software on the breed computers. (Exhibit 6a, #73; Exhibit 6b, #74)

Accomplishment/Role: The incumbent researched plant responses to high carbon dioxide concentrations and modeled the responses. He showed how high CO₂ increases photosynthetic rate and decreases transpiration rate to different extents in various crops, how the increased carbohydrate availability affects the size, weight, and number of each organ, and how CO₂ interacts with other factors to determine yield. **Impact:** Incumbent is often asked to advise the principal investigators of individual projects, Department of Energy (DOE) program managers, and members of ONP about the course and status of the program and about future requirements. Since 2014, incumbent has provided leadership in the USDA/DOE program on crop response to CO₂ by defining the data and experimental work needed to develop the models to simulate crop growth and yield in a future high-CO₂ world. The incumbent is project leader in the Ecosystem Dynamics part of the ARS (special emphasis) Global Change Research Program. This work has resulted in invitations to author 5 book chapters, speak to 6 conferences, and attend 12 planning meetings. (Exhibit 6a, #51; Exhibit 6b, #55; and #27, #32, #35, #36, #37, #38, #41, #45, #48 and #65)

LEADERSHIP **A Certificate of Merit can be used as an exhibit for this type of accomplishment.**

Research scientists who also perform leadership duties are classified by reference to the RGEG when the conduct and leadership of research constitute a major component of the assignment. Formal supervisory and managerial aspects of such positions are described in Factor 1 of the position description, and credit is given in that factor and in Factor 4. Scientists having formal leadership responsibility are **encouraged, but not required**, to list at least one leadership accomplishment as part of their current grade-level quota. Supporting exhibits normally consist of statements from supervisors, national program leaders, and other knowledgeable persons.

Note: In some instances, the supervisory component of a research position may be grade determining. Application of the OPM General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG) is the responsibility of the servicing Human Resources Specialist, not the RPES panel. Grade levels derived from GSSG application are irrelevant for RGEG application.

In some cases, formal leadership responsibilities are not specified in Factor 1, but an individual is truly a leader in the scientific community. In such instances, scientific leadership consists of actions, **apart from supervisory and managerial duties**, that promote research activity on the part of other scientists and lead that activity in the desired directions. Scientific leadership is properly documented and evaluated as part of Factor 4 in the same manner as for formal leadership accomplishments. Scientific leadership accomplishments may be submitted by scientists whose positions are **not** officially designated as supervisors or research leaders. The governing criterion in such instances is that scientists substantiate, by credible documentation, the fact that they did achieve a leadership accomplishment as defined herein.

Formal leaders get credit for leadership responsibilities as soon as they enter the job. Getting credit for leadership accomplishments in Factor 4, however, is another matter. A typical perception by many ARS scientists is that the time required for formal leadership activities prevents them from making personal research accomplishments that they could have made if not in a leadership position; therefore, they may lose or at least not gain additional credit in Factor 4 over time when in a leadership position.

Various types of leadership accomplishments exist. A leader may take actions to maintain program excellence or to improve team performance. A leader may act to redirect research programs as a result of Agency mandates or the leader's initiatives. A leader may take actions to accomplish special projects, such as the acquisition of resources, that promote research. A leader may take actions to coordinate a team of scientists over which the leader has no formal supervisory authority in a way that achieves program excellence or affects national programs or policies. Evaluation of such accomplishments must consider both the actions attributable to the leader and the impact of the accomplishments.

If actions taken by the leader are not very effective or if the impact of the accomplishment is minor, leadership credit should be minimal, even if the leader "tries hard." The situation is no

different than for a personal research accomplishment. Credit is not appropriate just because a scientist tries hard.

The actions taken by the leader are evaluated for innovation and effectiveness, but the level of credit assigned should be proportional to the impact. Innovative actions that result in accomplishments with little impact should receive little credit. Except for the nature of the accomplishment (indirect rather than direct), a leadership accomplishment should be treated no differently from a personal performance accomplishment when assigning level of credit.

Some criteria to assist in evaluating the various types of leadership accomplishments follow. Because leadership can occur at all levels (I, II, III), the word “group” is used as a generic term to describe a team, management unit, laboratory, institute, or other appropriate grouping of personnel.

GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL PRODUCTIVITY/EFFECTIVENESS

Is there a change in the performance of a member(s) of the group? Look for a change in the productivity of the individual(s) as evidenced by such things as publications (quantity or quality), initiation of new research approaches, thrusts or programs, cooperation with other scientists in the group, or acquisition of outside funds.

Is there recognition of the scientists in the group? Look for increased invitations, more advisory and consultation activities, awards for the scientists, an increase in society participation, and other such activities. Is there evidence that the Agency is using the talents of its scientists in research-related activities?

Is there an increase in the productivity of the group? Look for evidence that members of the group receive proper credit for their activities. There should be items such as new programs, publications, development of teams for new projects, or reassignment of individuals to new or old programs. Consider the size and diversity of the group led.

Is there an improvement in the quality of the output from the group? Look for the impact of results from the group. This impact may be an acceptance by other scientists, the Extension Service, other user agencies or industry, for example. Awards to the group may also be indicative of quality research.

If the leader is head of an already productive group, has that individual maintained the high level of productivity over a significant period of time? What specific actions were taken to ensure maintenance of program excellence? It is recognized that maintaining a high level of excellence may demand as much or more good leadership as that required to turn an unproductive group around.

Is the leader acting as a mentor? Look for items such as giving assistance (where needed) to members of the group on specific research programs, providing opportunities for development

(training, sabbaticals, etc.), sharing ideas or helping to set goals (especially for new members of the group).

Has there been recognition of and/or support for the activities of the group by organizations outside ARS? This recognition could be a use of the findings by farmers, action or regulatory agencies, industry, universities, other scientists, or by financial support from these and other groups.

Is the group attracting visiting scientists, graduate students, postdoctoral candidates, sabbaticals, etc.? Look for evidence that other scientists want to work with people in that group.

INITIATION/EXECUTION OF PROGRAM REDIRECTION

Has the leader initiated or implemented a needed or required change in program direction? How responsive was the leader to agency expectations or mandates? Was the disruptive effect minimized? To what extent were negative effects on morale minimized? Look for changes in the number and kind of personnel, facilities, and equipment in the group, and whether the changes improved the effectiveness of the group. The leader must work well with employees at all levels in the organizational structure.

SCIENTIFIC LEADERSHIP

Does scientific leadership extend outside the group? Look for the impacts the individual has had on the programs of other scientists, groups, or agencies. How dependent is the leadership role on the stature of the incumbent? Because of the individual's knowledge and/or stature, the impact may cause a change in direction or an acceleration in effort in a major research area.

Examples of leadership accomplishments:

Accomplishment/Role: The incumbent as research leader has increased productivity of a poorly performing unit through personal initiatives. During the past 7 years, he has replaced three of the eight unit scientists. Difficult disciplinary and deficiency problems were successfully solved in four other cases. **Impact:** These personnel actions resulted in a significant increase in productivity as measured by the number of publications. The high quality of research of the present staff is demonstrated by invitations to present research findings at national and international meetings, election to society fellows, and service as journal editors. In the last 2 years, scientists in his unit have received numerous awards including the Distinguished Service Award. Unit scientists have held leadership positions in various national and international research efforts. At present, the unit has an effective and coordinated research program with an enthusiastic and productive staff. (Exhibit 8a, support statement from National Program Leader; Exhibit 8b, letter from cooperator)

Accomplishment/Role: The incumbent was appointed research leader of the Grain Quality Resource Unit 8 years ago. Before this appointment, the unit was recognized as exceptionally productive and many of the seven scientists had received personal recognition for their research. Since assuming leadership, the incumbent has filled three scientist vacancies, coordinated CRADAs with two international companies that have generated funds to support two graduate students and two postdocs, initiated a new food safety program resulting from the Office of National Programs (ONP) program increase, and developed new collaboration with scientists in 10 different laboratories. She has improved communications between scientists and support staff, which has improved morale throughout the unit. **Impact:** The unit productivity has remained at an exceptionally high level. Technology developed by the unit has been widely used by the Food Quality Council. One of the new scientists received recognition as an Early Career Scientist by ARS. (Exhibit 8a, statement from National Program Leader; Exhibit 8b, statement from the Food Quality Council)

Accomplishment/Role: Upon assuming duties as research leader, the incumbent undertook a number of initiatives to expand and redirect the research effort of a team of highly capable scientists whose work was impacted by a shift in Agency research priorities. **Impact:** The redirection took place without significantly affecting the scientific atmosphere, staff attitude, and team productivity, in spite of unavoidable disruptions caused by needed modification of the physical plant and concomitant safety issues. Through the incumbent's efforts, regional representatives of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) were co-located with the research unit thereby enhancing the redirection of research efforts and facilitating transfer of new technology. The incumbent was awarded a Certificate of Merit for exceptional handling of program changes, and during her leadership tenure, cooperation between the NRCS and ARS staff were significantly streamlined. (Exhibit 8a, statement from Area Director; Exhibit 8b, statement from National Program Leader)

Accomplishment/Role: A poultry vaccine was discovered to contain a passenger virus (R) that was causing detrimental effects. Because of his nationally recognized expertise with R virus, the incumbent was asked to address this issue. He facilitated the transmission of data showing the contamination through the grower to the vaccine company, assisted the vaccine company in validating the status of the questionable vaccine, and assisted APHIS by providing technology and data on detection of the R virus. **Impact:** The incumbent was invited by the National Broiler Council technical committee to lead an informal team in the formulation of recommendations that, when forwarded to APHIS, resulted in the development of new regulations requiring testing of vaccines for R virus. (Exhibit 8a, policy statement issued by APHIS, Veterinary Biologics; Exhibit 8b, statement from National Broiler Council)

ADDITIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Following the selected Demonstrated Accomplishments, list no more than two Additional Accomplishments. Include this section only when selected accomplishments illustrate impact equal to that of Demonstrated Accomplishments. If you opt to include the section, write the

statements in the same format as for Demonstrated Accomplishments, and limit each to one-half page. Exhibits are not permitted for Additional Accomplishments.

There are many sections that cannot exceed 10 or 20 entries.

B. Stature and Recognition

You can use bullets, numbers or letters. Please pick one style and use it throughout.

Begin each subelement with a summary sentence citing total numbers in each entry, followed by a bullet listing of no more than the specified number of those considered most significant from all sources over the incumbent's career. Alternatively, provide only a bullet list if total number doesn't exceed stated maximum.

- 1. Honors and Awards:** List not more than the **20** most significant. Cite with dates and a brief but sufficient description to enable the reader to determine true significance. If a cash award was involved, cite the reason and amount. Differentiate between group and individual awards. Include only science awards. **Do not** include civic or social awards or annual performance rating awards (including Certificates of Merit for annual performance ratings). **Focus on recent awards, no need to include student/graduate awards unless new SY.**

Note: The annual performance rating process is separate from and has no relevance to RPES. Therefore, no reference may be made to annual performance ratings or performance rating awards at any point in the case writeup.

Example:

Have received 26 formal honors and awards, of which the following are the most significant:

- Member, Phi Kappa Phi Member, Sigma Xi
 - USDA Superior Service Award, \$10,000, for mechanical harvesting improvements (group award), 2011
 - Best Paper Award, Soil Science Society of America, 2014 Elected Fellow, American Society of Agronomy, 2016
- 2. Special Invitations:** List not more than the **20** most significant. Entries are to be specific **invitations to you** to present a paper before science oriented or industry groups, write a paper or a chapter for a book, conduct a seminar, etc. These are usually good evidence of professional recognition and standing. **The key word is invitation.** Be selective because the stature of the group issuing the invitation is just as important as the fact that an invitation was received.

If an invitation was declined due to travel restrictions or other reasons, state "**Declined**" in parentheses after the listing. For each entry, list the title, date, location, and organization or purpose of gathering. **If a paper was subsequently published, reference it to the publication list.**

You can also mention if travel expenses were paid.

Examples:

- Served by invitation on the FAO/WHO Pesticides Residues in Food and the Environment Panel from 2008–2009 and 2011–2012 (Chair, 2012). During these periods, prepared FAO monographs with recommendations on residue limits for numerous pesticides such

as heptachlor, dieldrin, and carbaryl. The limits are used by the United Nations to establish international tolerance and have had a significantly favorable impact on acceptance of U.S. agricultural exports.

- b. Selected as Chair for Section II of the International Congress of Livestock Production, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2010.
- c. Invited to present the paper “Metabolism of Organophosphorus Insecticides” at a national meeting of the Entomological Society of America, Miami Beach, Florida, 2013 (#22).
- d. Invited to present the paper “Microencapsulation and Adjuvants” at a symposium “Formulation and Application of Microbial Insecticides” at the national meeting of the Entomological Society of America, Honolulu, Hawaii, 2016. (Declined)

3. Offices and Committee Assignments Held in Professional and Honorary Societies:

List not more than the 20 most significant. Specify and give dates.

Examples:

- a. Member, Board of Directors, Utah Agricultural Chemicals Institute, 1995–present
- b. Chairman of Nominating Committee (2006–2007), and Chairman-Elect of Constitutional Revision Committee (2009), Southwestern Branch, Entomological Society of America
- c. Elected Member of Executive Committee (2011–2012)
- d. Chairman, S-01 Technical Committee, (name of committee), 2015

4. Participation in Professional Meetings, Technical Conferences, Workshops, etc.: List

each specific society separately, state years of membership, total number of meetings attended at all echelons, and total number of presentations made; **do not** list presentation titles. The formatting for this section is different from all other sections. The dates are not dates meetings were attended, but rather years of membership in the organization.

Examples:

- a. Entomological Society of America (2008–present). Attended 25 meetings and made 13 presentations.
- b. Soil Science Society of America (2006–2011). Attended 12 meetings and made 7 presentations.
- c. Crop Science Society of America (nonmember). Attended 2 meetings and made 2 presentations.
- d. Environmental Protection Agency Atmospheric Contaminant Workshops. Attended 5 meetings and made 3 presentations. If membership is not available, no need to mention it.

Note: Cite significant *invited* presentations under Special Invitations.

C. Advisory and Consultant Activities

Begin each subelement with a summary sentence citing total numbers in each entry, followed by a bullet listing of no more than the specified number of those considered most significant over incumbent’s career. Alternatively, provide only a bullet list if total number doesn’t exceed stated maximum.

1. **Professional Advisory and Consulting Activities:** List not more than the **20** most significant. Cite each activity with date(s), name, and type of organization or situation (generally outside ARS), and type and significance of contribution. These need not be on a “paid” basis. **Service as a journal reviewer is reported under this section.**

Examples:

- a. Appointed by the Governor of Oklahoma as the ARS representative to the committee on Water Resources Research to advise the Oklahoma Water Resources Research Institute, 2008.
- b. Incumbent has served on the editorial board of the “Southwestern Entomologist,” 2007–present. Responsible for the review and approval of manuscripts relating to research on cotton pests and for maintaining the quality of publications on that area of research.
- c. Consulted with scientists at the Federal Technical Institute, Zurich, Switzerland, on research approaches for study of genetics and manipulation of apomixis, 2011. Incumbent demonstrated cytological techniques for accurate evaluation for mode of reproduction in plants, studied the recent genetic ratios for control of apomixis, and helped arrive at conclusions relative to its inheritance.
- d. Incumbent has served as a project reviewer for EPA, 2011–present. Responsible for evaluating and making recommendations on proposed research projects that seek funding from that organization.

Note: It may be appropriate to cite **research-related activities** as further evidence of your impact and recognition. Some examples follow:

- a. In cooperation with the ONP, revised and updated USDA Bulletin and Leaflets (e.g., “The Common Liver Fluke in Sheep,” and “Preventing and Controlling Internal Parasites of Dogs”), both 2017.
- b. Served as expert advisor at international conferences, committees, and planning sessions. Specifically: 1) advisor on Sheep Parasitic Diseases in the United States as the USDA Delegate to the International Office of Epidemiology, Paris, France, 2010; 2) consultant and advisor to APHIS on planned anaplasmosis and babesiosis vaccination programs in South America. This type of advisory work may involve a few days a week, one or more times a year.
- c. Served as chair of a nine-scientist committee to develop and finalize the action plan for NP 206. The action plan was used to develop project plans for 2012–2017.

2. **Special Assignments:** List not more than the **20** most significant. **Items should be of a technical and professional nature.** List each, give dates covered, and briefly describe. Include formal technical advisor appointment activities and responsibility for serving as Authorized Departmental Officer. Only publications associated with the assignment are to be referenced. **Unit activities should be reported under Other Significant Info.**

Examples:

- a. At the request of AID/FAS and Australia, was sent on special assignment in Australia June 1–November 8, 2011, to consult with and advise United States and Australian officials on the identification and control of verticillium wilt.
- b. Sponsoring Scientist and Technical Advisor to PL-480 Project IN-SEA-27 to India: “Autecology and Genecological Investigations of the *Cenchrus ciliaris* Complex, Indigenous to India and Growing in America” at Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India, 2011–present. (#23, #50, #53)
- c. Co-chair of Southern Regional Forage and Pasture Research Task Force, 2009.

D. Other

1. Educational Background

List for **undergraduate and beyond**, the name of each institution of higher education and dates attended, majors and minors, and degrees awarded. **List only degree-granting institutions.**

Examples:

2004–2006 Texas Tech Univ.; major, Agriculture; A.A. 2006

2008–2012 Texas A&M Univ.; major, Agronomy; minor, Chemistry; B.S. 2012

2012–2014 Kansas State Univ.; major, Agronomy; minor, Chemistry; Ph.D. 2014

2. Research Experience

List professional jobs held in chronological order giving title, grades, and dates. Include present position.

Examples:

2008, Research Associate, Texas A&M Univ., College Station, Texas

2008–2010, GS-11, Research Soil Scientist, USDA, ARS, Tucson, Arizona

2010–2012, GS-12, Research Soil Scientist, USDA, ARS, Tucson, Arizona 2012–present, GS-13, Research Soil Scientist, USDA, ARS, Temple, Texas

3. Other Significant Information

List a **maximum of 10** significant items pertinent to scientific career not addressed elsewhere in the writeup. **No entry may exceed one-third page.** *You can use bullets/sub-bullets to combine info.*

Present narratively any information **not addressed** in elements A–D considered important in the evaluation of your position. Examples include educational and public relations efforts and nonresearch activities that may be a part of your responsibilities.

Any exceptional or extenuating circumstances that may have affected the quality or quantity of research output, either favorably or unfavorably, should be summarized here if such circumstances have not been covered under other items of the format.

This is the appropriate point to summarize past assignments where recent change in assignment has occurred. (Do not submit former position descriptions.)

Reorg description here.

Former service as Lead SY here.

State total number of funded grants, CRADAs, and cooperative research agreements over your career, followed by a bullet listing of not more than **the 20 most significant**. Do **not** list proposals. **It is impactful to summarize all "Received \$1.5M in grant funding including:" and then provide a list.**

Materials actually submitted for journal review but not yet accepted are to be listed here, not in the publications list. This includes pending patent applications that have not yet received a notice of allowance. Refer to this manual, pages 19–21 and 57–58 for more information. Do **not** list materials in other stages of preparation.

Examples:

- a. The incumbent is a member of the Graduate Faculty at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, and has served as Committee Chairman for numerous M.S. and Ph.D. candidates.
- b. The incumbent's rice quality research program serves as a model system for the establishment of similar laboratories in other countries. He has informally trained and assisted several researchers and technologists from Latin America, Europe, and Asia in rice quality evaluation, in planning and equipping their laboratories, and in programming their work for productive, efficient, and reliable operation.
- c. The incumbent is a Registered Professional Engineer (#12340) in the State of Texas.
- d. The incumbent holds an appointment as Adjunct Professor of Food Technology at Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia.

Often a scientist is required to perform nonresearch duties vital to ARS operations. When classifying a research position having mixed duties, direct credit cannot be given for nonresearch activities such as some location coordinator duties, Equal Employment Opportunity counselor, safety officer, etc. A brief description of the intended role in meeting organization goals and objectives, how well this role is fulfilled, and how effective the individual is in cooperating with others when this is necessary or desirable in the total program, can be indicated.

Panels may determine that an incumbent's research progress is being slowed because of excessive nonresearch activities. Panels should call such situations to the attention of management in the panel report or in a separate memorandum to the supervisor. Management can then take action by assigning the activities to someone else, providing necessary support assistance, discontinuing the activities, or other feasible means. In some situations, it is necessary to reassign an incumbent to a nonresearch position and classify the position accordingly.

Note: Continuing nonresearch activities which take 25 percent or more of your duty time should be reported in Factor 4.

E. Publications

Start this segment on a separate page. Attach the entire listing at the end of the case writeup. With regard to scientific journal articles, **list only those already published or accepted by the publishing agent**, citing acceptance date for the latter.

Subdivide the publications list into two sections. Under the heading “Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles and Patents,” list **only** research that has been published in peer-reviewed journals and accepted patents. **All other** work not meeting this definition—including peer-reviewed proceedings articles and peer-reviewed books—must be listed under the heading “Additional Publications.” Do not include talks, radio, or other presentations, unless they have actually been published.

Note: Subdividing the publications list is not intended to legitimize mere “pubs counting,” or to detract from the necessity of making a comprehensive assessment of impact, stature, and recognition of each Demonstrated Accomplishment. Subdivision is merely a convenient grouping and does not establish tiers of publication value. For guidance on electronic publications, see the definition in P&P 113.1-ARS, Publishing (Print and Electronic Material).

Note: Items meeting the definition of “electronic publication” are to be included in the Publications List. Items not meeting the definition are to be listed under Other Significant Information.

List publications in chronological order, all authors in proper order. Give full references including journal, volume, and complete pagination.

For multiauthor documents, **bold** incumbent’s name and **italicize** the names of graduate students, postdoctoral associates, or visiting scientists supervised. Identify co-first, co-corresponding, or corresponding authorship at the end of citation in parentheses.

In both sections of the list, delineate by a dashed line across the page those materials published or accepted for publication since last promotion. (The delineation line is not required for scientists undergoing their first post-hire panel review.)

To avoid confusion, ensure that titles in the publications list conform with **actual** titles as published.

Note: Materials submitted but not yet accepted are to be shown in Factor 4-3D), Other Significant Information, **NOT** as part of the publications list.

Examples: **Granted Patents go in this list. Any patent application/provisional will go in Other Significant Info. International applications (WO) will go in Other Significant Info.**

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles and Patents

Any citation style is acceptable as long as the entire list is consistently formatted.

1. *Emerson, R.W. and Jones, K.C.* Observations of *Eimeria mohavensis* from the kangaroo rat. *J. Parasitol.* 2010;36(59):117–124.

You can include DOI links or not, but must be consistent throughout.

2. **Jones, K.C.** and *Eliot, T.S.* Inheritance and control of obligate apomixis in breeding buffelgrass, *Pennisetum ciliare*. *Crop Sci.* 2011;6(2):473–476.
3. Griswold, C.W., **Jones, K.C.**, and Smith, S.G. Coccidiosis in the pocket gopher. *J. Wildlife Biol.* 2014;7(12):918–920. [co-corresponding author]
4. Jones, K.C. Systems for rearing horn flies. *Trans. ASABE.* 2016;10(2):112–115.
5. **Jones, K.C.** and Griswold, C.W. U.S. Patent Number 5,999,999. System for plastic materials application in dryland irrigation canals. September 2016.

Additional Publications Database/repository citations can go in this section (i.e. Bitbucket)

6. Jones, K.C. Soil and wind erosion in West Texas. Texas Tech Univ. 94 pp. 2012. (Thesis)
7. Jones, K.C. Narrow rows increase dryland grain sorghum yields. *Tex. Agric. Exp. Stn. Misc. Publ. #1238.* 2 pp. 2012 (Technical Bulletin)
8. Jones, K.C. Cotton Crops of Texas, pp. 78–94. In Brown, D.F. and Black, J.R. (eds.) *Cotton of the South.* New York: Simplex. 328 pp. 2015. (Book Chapter)
9. Jones, K.C. Rabbit feeding on demand. (Accepted by *Rabbit Growers’ J.* on Nov. 17, 2015.) (Popular Publication)
10. **Jones, K.C.** and Eliot, T.S. Dryland storm abatement concepts. *Proc. Southwest. Scientific Conf.* 2015;507–510. (Peer-Reviewed Conference Proceedings)

Note: Number publications sequentially throughout the list. Do not start renumbering under the “Additional Publications” heading.

Inclusion of **abstracts** in the Publications list is not permitted. If you submit an abstract as an exhibit for a Demonstrated Accomplishment, cite it by exhibit number: “Exhibit 5a, #10; Exhibit 5b (abstract).”

Chapter 7: Case Writeup Preparation, Review, Approval, and Submission Procedure

The procedures for preparing, reviewing, approving, and submitting a case writeup consist of 11 steps.

1. Research Position Evaluation System (RPES) Staff members schedule panel reviews and issue formal notices to Area Offices and establish official Area Office and RPES Staff cutoff dates for final writeup.

2. Area Office notifies scientist and establishes date for submission of **draft** writeup for preliminary review (no later than 30 calendar days before official cutoff date).
3. Researcher drafts case writeup, adhering to format and content specifications in this manual.
4. Research leader reviews draft for format adherence, completeness, and accuracy, and returns to researcher for revision.
5. Researcher revises draft and returns to RL, who forwards draft through line management to Area Office.
6. Area Office staff reviews draft for format and administrative compliance, then AD or designee reviews the draft for technical content/accuracy and makes recommendations for improvement or directs changes in the event of noncompliance with specifications in this manual.

Note 1: Major disagreement over writeup content will be resolved by the AD as provided in P&P 431.3-ARS, Section 8.

Note 2: No entry at variance with the prescribed format will be accepted. Noncompliant writeups will not be accepted by the Area Office. Delays due to improper case preparation may cause cutoff dates to be missed and result in panel review being rescheduled.

7. Area Office returns draft through line management to the RL, who supervises finalization by the researcher.

Note: The steps outlined above may be accomplished using any media (hard copy or electronic) the Area Office desires.

8. Incumbent and RL sign ARS-514 certifying completeness and accuracy, RL signs AD332, then forwards with writeup through line management to the AD for approval and ARS-514 signature.
9. Area Office Contact uploads final, approved case materials to RPES Staff via SharePoint using the following procedures:
 - a. Area Office Contacts have been granted access to the Area upload SharePoint site and may upload case materials at any time.
 - b. Case materials are to be uploaded to individual (named) folders under specific Area folder. To accomplish upload:
 - (1) Except as noted below, before uploading, **convert or scan all documents to .pdf format.**
 - (2) Save all case documents to the specific named folder within the Area folder.

- (3) Documents can be added via the “click and drag” feature into the destination folder.
- (4) Before exiting SharePoint, revisit the folder to be sure all documents have been saved accurately and completely.

File Naming Conventions Do not name "Version 1, date, etc. Simply use naming listed below.

SharePoint has features that limit file naming and will simply refuse to upload improperly named files. To avoid such problems, please observe these naming conventions:

File	Naming Convention	Note(s)
General: Except as noted below, all files must be converted or scanned into .pdf format before uploading.		
AD-332	LastnameFirstInitial AD-332.pdf	If electronic signatures are used, do not lock, so that further signatures can be accepted
ARS-514	LastnameFirstInitial ARS-514.pdf	N/A
ARS-570	LastnameFirstInitial ARS-570.pdf	N/A
Position Description	LastnameFirstInitial PD.docx	These are the first three pages (Factors 1–3B) of the case writeup
Case Writeup	LastnameFirstInitial Case Writeup.pdf	N/A
Standard convention	LastnameFirstInitial Ex 1A 18.pdf	CRITICAL: Do not use special characters such as pound (#), ampersand (&), or slash (/ or \) symbols in numbering exhibits; SharePoint will refuse to upload files containing such symbols. Leave a space between the exhibit number and Publications list number. Do not distinguish <i>type</i> of exhibit (patent, supporting statement, etc.) in the file name.
Single exhibit	LastnameFirstInitial Ex 3 25.pdf	Scientist submitted only one exhibit for a Demonstrated Accomplishment. Do not use “3A” if there is no “3B.”
Supporting statement	LastnameFirstInitial Ex 8A.pdf	There is no citation to the Publications list.
Executable (.exe) file	LastnameFirstInitial Ex 5B 44.zip	SharePoint will refuse to upload .exe files. Change the file name extension to .zip.

Exceptions to Uploading

The following materials cannot be uploaded and must be mailed to RPES Staff:

- Book exhibit for IDR (supply scanned table of contents as a case package exhibit)
- Digital video storage device

Questions or Problems

If you have any questions about or problems with file naming or the uploading process, please contact RPES Staff. Discuss technical problems with an Area IT Specialist.

Instructions for Preparing ARS-514

- Enter scientist's name, title, **present** series and grade, research unit, duty station, immediate supervisor's name and working title, peer group (**use only current alpha code** shown in P&P 431.3-ARS), and dated case writeup is signed.
- Employee, immediate supervisor, and AD sign the form; intermediate supervisor(s) may initial.

Instructions for preparing ARS-570 **Include Mr. Jay Johnson within the first three entries.**

- Designate (by number) which accomplishment(s) from Factor 4A for which each contact has knowledge.
- If the contact is a general (multi-accomplishment or career long) contact, enter the word "General" rather than accomplishment number(s).
- Be sure to include an immediate supervisor.
- Ensure the telephone number for each contact is **current**.
- If the contact has an email address, include it with the telephone number and ensure that it is **current**. This information can facilitate arranging interviews and reduce "telephone tag."
- List a wide variety of contacts; do **not** restrict contacts to ARS personnel. Possible selections are national program leaders, area directors, technology transfer coordinators, cooperating scientists, etc. At least some persons from USDA and other action agencies, State agencies, user groups, academia, and others outside of ARS, should be listed.

10. RPES Staff reviews case materials for completeness and compliance with the specifications in this manual and notifies area office by email of noncompliant section(s) requiring revision.

Note: The Associate Administrator for Research Operations and Management (AA-ROM) will hold area offices strictly accountable for writeup compliance with specifications in this manual.

11. RPES Staff members consolidate all case materials for a given panel, upload them to a panel SharePoint site, and email a notification with the link to the site to panelists. Any hard copy exhibits (books, videocassettes, etc.) are mailed directly to the IDR.

Part II - Evaluation Guidance

Chapter 8: Panel Operating Procedures Before the Meeting

Panelists will be given a copy of each case writeup (with exhibits) to be reviewed. The IDR will prepare an ARS-516, Research Position Evaluation Worksheet, for each case assigned by the panel chair. Panelists other than the IDR may use the ARS-516 for initial scoring and to note questions and comments for clarification during panel deliberation.

The chair makes in-depth review assignment(s) to individual panelists **within 1 week** of receipt of case material.

Designated IDRs schedule timely contacts with the people they intend to interview. IDRs must contact a minimum of five individuals, one of whom must be the immediate supervisor of the person whose position is under review. There is no maximum number of additional contacts. IDRs must use ARS-232, In-depth Review Contact Notes, to record relevant information gleaned during fact-finding interviews.

All panelists review, evaluate, and score each case in accordance with criteria of the RGEG (Chapter 11) using the following approach:

- Begin scoring with Factor 4, which is the most important factor in the RGEG. For each of the three to eight significant accomplishments submitted by the scientist, review the statement **and** the accompanying exhibits (publications or other documentation).
 - Determine the relative impact level for each accomplishment and
 - Select the most significant accomplishments (maximum of three) representing the incumbent's "best work."
- Consider incumbent's role in each Demonstrated Accomplishment when judging the appropriate overall level. Sound judgment must be used in deciding the level most representative of the total quality, significance, and role of the incumbent in the accomplishments.
- Evaluate Factor 4 using RGEG criteria. Compare the position/incumbent facts to the RGEG, determine which level best characterizes the facts, and record the level on the ARS-516.

Note 1: If you are *not* the IDR, you may use "+" or "-" symbol to show ratings between levels, leaning in a direction, pending the IDR's findings. IDRs are expected to perform complete factfinding and bring a firm scoring recommendation to the panel for consideration. IDRs therefore may **not** use the +/- convention in their scoring.

Note 2: The case should be examined carefully to determine whether documented **evidence of recency** is sufficient to give full credit for Factor 4. If a lack of recent documented accomplishments has apparently jeopardized maintenance of research competence, **reduce the level assigned for Factor 4** and mark the appropriate block on the ARS-516.

Recency of accomplishment is important. For Factor 4, the RGEG states: “This factor focuses on the researcher’s total contributions, impact, and stature as they bear on the current research assignment. It is not restricted to present and immediate past accomplishments and achievements. However, recency of accomplishment is important. Recent research or similar activity is essential to receiving full credit.” If there is no documented evidence of recent productivity, the possibility exists that the position is not performing research and is therefore excluded from RGEG coverage, perhaps warranting a **Grade/Category Problem (GCP)** decision. Another possibility is that the incumbent has failed to maintain the level of contribution and impact necessary to sustain the position’s current grade level (perhaps warranting a GCP decision).

For RPES purposes, “recent” is defined as the interval since the last panel evaluation. An asterisk next to an accomplishment is not intended to identify recency. An asterisk in the case writeup accomplishments is intended to identify those since the last promotion (refer to page 12).

- Evaluate the remaining three factors (1–3) by reference to the RGEG using the general approach discussed above. **In scoring Factors 1–3 you must carefully consider the interaction of Factor 4 with these factors.** This is particularly true if a research assignment is described in Factor 1 but there is no evidence that the incumbent is actually performing research. Such situations should be investigated for a possible GCP decision.
- For each of the four factors, decide the overall level to assign to the factors, assign corresponding points for the levels as shown in the RGEG, and record the points on the ARS-516. If there is great variation among the levels assigned for the factors, carefully review the RGEG criteria and identify significant issues for resolution during panel deliberation. Ideally, there should be a positive correlation between the levels assigned to the factors.
- When scoring cases, **bear in mind a basic classification principle:** the full intent of level criteria must be substantially met to warrant credit at the defined levels. If criteria of the defined levels are not fully met, assignment of the undefined Levels B and D is appropriate.

A. Instructions for IDRs: Preparing an ARS-516

ARS-516 is available from the ARS electronic forms site. Prepare a separate ARS-516 for each case for which you have been assigned IDR responsibility. Do **not** complete the ARS-516 by hand.

For each factor, the ARS-516 provides a standardized format for recording position/incumbent facts gleaned from the case writeup and your IDR fact finding. Use the blank spaces and boxes as guides to ensure that you capture all relevant information during your fact finding and to facilitate report preparation.

The completed ARS-516 constitutes a “first draft” of the panel report if the panel reaches a consensus **Remain in Grade** decision. The panel will edit the ARS-516 to produce a detailed narrative position evaluation report. See page 47 for procedure when the panel reaches a consensus **Upgrade (UPG)** or **Refer to Supergrade (REF)** decision.

To simplify the panel’s editing task, **complete the ARS-516 in whole sentences**. The ARS-516 is purposely formatted to ensure collection of information essential to the classification process. Note that **it is neither necessary nor desirable** to generate lengthy, detailed statements when preparing the ARS-516. Simply complete the worksheet **within established space limits** with concise, factual information. Do not feel compelled to fill the worksheet—doing so will unnecessarily lengthen the draft report and require additional panel time to edit out extraneous text.

For Factor 4:

- Rate each Demonstrated Accomplishment as described above,
- Select the most significant (maximum of three), and
- Summarize the significance/impact of these highest rated accomplishments and explain incumbent’s role in each, in brief sentences. Also, **be sure to identify situations where recency of accomplishment or diminished stature/recognition/consultation may be a problem.**

Note: Some information requested under each factor is intended to prompt the capture of critical information. Complete each entry, even though some information from the entries may prove marginal or irrelevant and may be deleted when editing the worksheet to produce the final report. For example, if recency of accomplishment (Factor 4) is **not** a concern, this statement would obviously not be included in the final report. Where **it is** a concern, the “prompt” statement applies. You must summarize information relevant to the “prompt” on the ARS-516.

At the bottom of each page, compose a **brief** factor rationale summary for each factor stating why a given level has been assigned. This statement must be phrased **in relation to RGEG criteria** for the appropriate level. **An additional statement will be required to summarize a Level B or D rating.** Sample statements, illustrating intent, are listed below. You are to use these samples as models to tailor the facts of the specific position to the factor rationale summary.

Caution: Statements relevant to Levels B/D are shown where appropriate in the samples. If the IDR neglects to include Level B/D statements in the draft summary sentence (or if the panel reaches consensus on such levels and the IDR had different levels assigned initially), the personnel representative must ensure that the panel agrees with the terminology when either Level B or D is the consensus decision for a given factor.

FACTOR 1

The panel assigned Level A for this factor because Dr. Sample is responsible for research of limited scope with readily definable objectives, requiring mostly conventional techniques. Publishable additions to scientific knowledge or improved methodology are expected.

The panel assigned Level B for this factor because Dr. Sample is responsible for all phases of an area of research, objectives are hard to define, and conventional methodology is required. This exceeds Level A criteria but falls short of Level C.

The panel assigned Level C for this factor because Dr. Sample is responsible for an area of research requiring a systematic attack. Sophisticated and standard methods of plant pathology are followed, and successful research will result in a series of documentable additions to knowledge of considerable interest to the scientific community.

The panel assigned Level D for this factor because Dr. Sample is responsible for leading a team of scientists in conducting exceptionally difficult research. Existing techniques must be modified before substantial progress can be made, and the research is expected to provide significant benefits that will result in documentable modifications of existing theories. This exceeds Level C and approaches but does not fully meet Level E.

The panel assigned Level E for this factor because Dr. Sample is responsible for leading a team of scientists and is independently conducting exceptionally difficult research on critical problems. Existing hypotheses and techniques must be significantly extended before substantial progress can be made, and significant documentable information on dietary and physiological factors controlling mineral absorption and use is expected.

FACTOR 2

The panel assigned Level A for this factor because a specific problem is assigned, and the supervisor provides general instructions on study scope and objectives and confers on problem definition and development of a plan of attack. Dr. Sample then pursues projects to completion with occasional reference to the supervisor. The supervisor reviews completed work for adequacy of method, completeness, and results, and approves significant changes in research.

The panel assigned Level B for this factor because Dr. Sample has substantial freedom to select specific problems and decide the approach and execution within a defined area. This exceeds Level A criteria but does not fully meet Level C.

The panel assigned Level C for this factor because Dr. Sample has considerable freedom in problem selection and in planning and conducting research. Only overall results are reviewed, and approval is required only for major changes in research.

The panel assigned Level D for this factor because the area is broad and complex. Approach is decided by Dr. Sample, very little technical guidance is received, and execution of work and interpretation of results are incumbent's responsibility. Results are accepted, subject to validation

by the scientific community, and only broad changes in work direction require the supervisor's approval. This exceeds Level C but falls short of Level E criteria.

The panel assigned Level E for this factor because a broad area is assigned, and general approach is decided by Dr. Sample. Supervision is primarily consultative due to her high level of technical expertise, her technical judgments and interpretations are considered authoritative, and she is under general supervision with full responsibility for formulating and executing research.

FACTOR 3

The panel assigned Level A for this factor because existing theory and methods are generally applicable. Dr. Sample must develop a complete and adequate research design for the assigned problem and select from among or adapt appropriate available methods. Only limited innovation is required. The panel judged that Dr. Sample's past work demonstrates the requisite originality.

The panel assigned Level B for this factor because there is useful literature available, but it requires new application to areas researched. Originality is required in defining problems and in applying new combinations of physical techniques required to resolve the presence of thionitrites in protein-containing materials. Dr. Sample's work has shown her ability to isolate critical aspects of problems, and to adapt existing principles into new combinations. Level A is exceeded but not sufficiently to meet Level C.

The panel assigned Level C for this factor because relevant literature is lacking for significant portions of the research. A high degree of originality is required (particularly in defining problems and developing hypotheses), and the panel judged that Dr. Sample's past work reflects the ability to adapt existing principles into new combinations.

The panel assigned Level D for this factor because relevant literature on polyploid quantitative genetics is limited, and originality is required to study new areas and interpret results. Dr. Sample has demonstrated originality by applying statistical techniques to problems in quantitative genetics of autotetraploids and has significantly modified existing technology. This exceeds Level C but falls short of Level E criteria.

The panel assigned Level E for this factor because literature and methodology are lacking for major portions of the research, and creative extension of existing theory or methodology is necessary. Dr. Sample has extended her chemical findings to virus classification, which represents a creative extension of existing theory and methodology.

FACTOR 4

The panel assigned Level A for this factor because Dr. Sample has demonstrated, through satisfactory planning and execution of a few research studies, an ability to define problems, plan and execute research, and report findings, with some guidance as to objectives and occasional

consultations. He has authored minor papers or reports of limited scope and serves as a source of information within the unit or on similar projects elsewhere.

The panel assigned Level B for this factor because Dr. Sample has authored technical publications at least one of which is of considerable importance to the assigned research situation. His work is beginning to be recognized as evidenced by recent invitation to present his work in a poster session at the American Chemical Society, and he shares his expertise in *Rhizobium* genetics with others. Level A is somewhat exceeded, but not sufficiently to meet Level C.

The panel assigned Level C for this factor because some of Dr. Sample's accomplishments have been of considerable interest to science or technology. He has demonstrated his ability as a mature, competent, productive worker, and deals responsibly with others in the area of seed pathology. He serves on several technical committees and is sought for consultation.

The panel assigned Level D for this factor because Dr. Sample has developed products (varieties) that have had a major impact in the United States and abroad. He has received several prestigious awards, is recognized as an expert in the field, and has been in leadership roles in the Crop Science Society. Level C criteria are exceeded but not sufficiently to meet Level E.

The panel assigned Level E for this factor because the accomplishments have had a significant impact on the field of nematology. Dr. Sample has demonstrated outstanding stature and received significant recognition in nematology and has made important contributions to that field. He is constantly sought for consultant purposes in his area of expertise and has contributed significantly to several professional societies.

Other considerations to bear in mind when preparing an ARS-516:

- Do not report that a certain score was assigned but “points were deducted for lack of recency.” The consensus decision will be at the lower level, and the panel will never have actually assigned the higher score.
- Panels will assign only the full levels and corresponding point values established in RGEN Levels A, B, C, D, and E, or in USDA Level F.
- USDA Level F is applicable only to current GM/GS-15s or above.
- Maximum points creditable by a “regular” panel when scoring a GM/S-15 case at Level F are 12 points for Factors 1–3, and 24 points for Factor 4. (It is, however, rare for a GM/S15 position to warrant Level F for all four factors.) Also, because splitting Factor 4 is not permitted, 22 points cannot be assigned for Level F.
- Reports should contain only remarks pertinent to the current classification decision. It is especially important to **avoid comments that could lead to false expectations**.
- “General Comments” are to be used only when necessary to document emerging deficiencies requiring correction to preclude future evaluation difficulties. Use a variation of one of the following statements, or a comparable statement, tailored to the incumbent's specific circumstances:

- “The panel is concerned about the dearth of senior-authored publications in refereed journals [or other evidence of independent research or research-related activity.]”
- “Minimal participation in scientific meetings is severely limiting incumbent’s stature and recognition.”
- “Incumbent’s nonresearch activities—specifically,_____—appear to be interfering with research productivity.”
- To facilitate reporting of initial scores, transfer initial factor/total points to the space provided at the top of page 1 of the worksheet.
- To facilitate discussion and editing during the panel meeting, **the IDR must bring:**
 - A copy (paper or electronic) of the writeup and exhibits for each case assigned by the panel chair (for possible reference), and
 - Seven paper copies of each completed ARS-516.
- To facilitate editing and timely issuance of panel reports, the IDR must email a copy of each completed ARS-516 to the personnel representative **no later than the Thursday before the panel meeting.**

B. During the Meeting

During panel meetings, the RGEG is used to help identify points of disagreement among panelists and focus discussion on such points. The procedural sequence for each case follows.

The meeting opens with a review of procedures by the chair and personnel representative. The chair stresses the necessity of maintaining confidentiality of deliberations.

Consideration of each case begins with the panelists each reporting the one to three highest-rated accomplishments and initial factor scores. These data are recorded onto the Research Evaluation Score Sheet (ARS-517) by the personnel representative and will be displayed to panel on either an overhead projector and/or white board.

The chair identifies points of difference among panelists. Significant differences among initial scores will indicate where discussion should be focused.

The IDR then distributes the completed ARS-516 and presents to the panel a brief oral report of the major points from the factfinding process, to include:

- Rationale for levels initially assigned to each factor.
- Observations (if any) on writeup content, weaknesses, and other relevant considerations. These views are strictly advisory information to the panel.
- Major discrepancies (if any) between the case writeup and actual position/incumbent facts that must be corrected. The case writeup must support the panel's consensus decision.

Note: If after discussion the panel determines that such discrepancies cannot be resolved and that failure to resolve them would prevent a fair evaluation, an **Insufficient Factual Basis (IFB)** decision is appropriate.

General panel discussion follows the IDR report. Specific questions may be directed to the IDR or other panelists to obtain additional or clarifying information. IDRs must bring their notes from contact discussions to the meeting to facilitate answering questions.

The chair then leads a factor-by-factor discussion and evaluation of the case, usually beginning with Factor 4 and proceeding to Factors 1–3. The panel reaches unanimous agreement (consensus) on each factor and overall decision, except when review results in a **Split Decision (SPL)**.

When the panel cannot reach consensus within a reasonable time:

- The case may be “tabled” and brought up again later after other cases have been decided. If appropriate, additional clarifying information will be sought by telephone during the intervening period. Tabled cases must either be decided by the conclusion of the meeting or resolved as previously discussed.

- The case may be returned for revision and submission to another panel if additional information/clarification is needed before a decision can be reached (an IFB decision). **The panel report must specify the needed information/clarification.**
- If consensus cannot be reached, a SPL is recorded. The panel divides into majority/minority groups. The majority finalizes its version of the panel report in the usual manner (see below). The factor or factors in dispute are identified and the minority drafts its version of those factors to reflect its view. **Both majority and minority reports must be finalized before the meeting adjourns** and given to the personnel representative.
- Within 2 weeks of the panel meeting the personnel representative has both reports typed in final form and forwards them (along with one complete copy of the case writeup and exhibits) to the RPES Staff. The Staff transmits the package to the AA-ROM for resolution. The AA-ROM will render a final decision (from among the authorized options) as quickly as possible.

Panelists are not authorized to retain any case materials (except exhibits) on positions they review. Other materials will be disposed of at the conclusion of the panel meeting **except** ARS516, ARS-517, and ARS-232 forms. The latter documents will be collected by the personnel representative for retention by RPES Staff.

Note: The creation of oral report notes to facilitate IDR presentation to the panel is a matter of individual IDR preference and not required. However, when such oral notes have been prepared, they must be collected by the personnel representative for retention in the same manner as the aforementioned forms.

Producing the final report is an essential step in the panel process. The IDR's statements—as recorded on the ARS-516—are edited as necessary to reflect the views of the panel as a whole, with any agreed upon changes being recorded by the personnel representative.

Note: The final report is to be a “full-panel” product and is not to be left to the personnel representative to complete.

The panel report serves several purposes:

- To document the results of the position classification review for official personnel purposes.
- To provide classification feedback to the incumbent. Panels cannot make statements binding on future panel decisions, so reports will not explain what a scientist needs to do to achieve a promotion. Reports will, however, identify grade-threatening deficiencies that should be addressed before the next cyclic review.
- To provide management an additional measure of progress of the incumbent's research program and to alert management to potential problems.

Classifying a position using the “person-in-the-job concept” requires judging the incumbent's research career. This process touches on the incumbent's professionalism, judgment, capabilities,

motivation, and accomplishments in relation to the research assignment. The process is thus a highly personal matter to the incumbent.

Those preparing the panel report must be sensitive to the probable difficulty of the incumbent—and to a lesser extent, of the supervisor(s)—in being objective about the evaluation. The report must therefore be factual and carefully worded. When shortcomings or suggestions from a classification point of view are made, they must be clearly and concisely stated. **Highly subjective, personal, or controversial information has no place in the report.**

To provide additional time for panel deliberation on other cases under review, two types of decisions do not require preparation of panel reports:

- **For UPG decisions:** The panel will not edit the ARS-516. The personnel representative will note the consensus scores and any remarks the panel believes appropriate. The ARS516 will be discarded.
- **For REF decisions:** Reports are not issued when a “regular” panel reviewing a GM/S-15 position reaches a REF decision (i.e., assigns 56 or more points). The ARS-516 will be discarded and the personnel representative will simply note that a consensus REF decision was reached, and the appropriate AD will be notified by the RPES Staff. The Staff will also issue notices to referred scientists to prepare their cases for submission to the Supergrade Panel. (Supergrade Panels will issue narrative reports for each position reviewed.)

Caution: The above procedures regarding UPG and REF decisions affect action only **after a panel reaches such consensus decisions.** The IDR must complete an ARS-516 for each position assigned to them, regardless of how they initially score the case. An IDR’s failure to prepare an ARS-516 does not relieve the panel of its responsibility to generate a report when a consensus decision other than UPG or REF is reached.

Through the panel chair, RPES Head, or Evaluation of Panel Operations survey on the panel SharePoint site, panelists may send comments, memoranda, or email (separate from the panel report) to the ADs expressing concern over case preparation or perceived long-standing or emerging worksite problems.

However, panels are not research managers, and neither the panel report nor any separate communication should infringe on management responsibilities and authority.

C. After the Meeting

Panel Ratings. Chairs rate panelist performance, and panelists rate panel operation via surveys on the panel SharePoint site. These ratings relate strictly to panel performance and, except for personnel representatives, are not considered in the employee’s annual performance appraisal. The evaluations are intended to assist in identifying training needs and in determining the acceptability of panelists and chairs for continued panel service.

Final Panel Report. For decisions other than UPG and REF, the personnel representative will incorporate panel edited reports into final form for email issuance to the scientist's immediate supervisor through the appropriate AD.

For UPG and REF decisions, the personnel representative will follow procedures explained above.

Note: For UPG decisions when a promotion is to be processed, the promotion must be effective within two pay periods of the date of the panel. One exception to this policy is when a withingrade increase is due the employee. Servicing human resources specialists are responsible for establishing an effective date of the panel promotion to the best advantage of the employee.

The supervisor is required to provide a copy of the panel report to the scientist.

All questions regarding panel decisions and determinations must be referred to the personnel representative.

Chapter 9: Ad Hoc Panels

Ad hoc panels are usually convened to determine—using RGEN criteria—the final grade level of Category 1 vacancies being filled by selectees from various sources, generically referred to as New Hires. New Hire panels are required for most selections at and above GM/S-13 and may also be convened in other situations (see P&P 431.3-ARS). Ad hoc panels may occasionally be convened to handle other noncyclic review situations.

There are a few minor differences between ad hoc and cyclic review panels. Ad hoc panels usually review only one position, only five (rather than seven) panelists are required, and ad hoc panels are conducted via teleconference.

Note: Ad hoc panel IDRs are required to make a minimum of five fact-finding contacts. The IDR must contact the ARS selecting official but should not contact the selectee's current supervisor unless identified on the ARS-570.

A procedural summary follows:

- An RPES Staff member secures panelists and schedules a teleconference.
- RPES Staff member sends a memorandum with panel arrangements, case materials, ARS-516, and ARS-517 to panelists at least 10 calendar days before the scheduled meeting date. (Scoresheets are provided for panelist convenience in recording other panelists' scores as they are reported.)
- RPES Staff selects the IDR using information from the Panelist Data Verification form completed by each peer scientist. IDRs follow normal fact-finding procedures, including preparation of the ARS-516. To facilitate editing and timely issuance of the panel report, the IDR must email a copy of the completed ARS-516 to all panelists before the teleconference.

- As with a cyclic review panel, all panelists and the chair must evaluate the case, with particular attention to the research accomplishments. Panelists other than the IDR may use the ARS-516 for initial scoring and to note questions and comments for clarification during panel deliberation.
- The panel applies standard RPES policy and procedures in evaluating the position. Once the panel reaches consensus on factor points and overall score, the IDR will read the ARS-516 to ensure panel concurrence. The personnel representative notes any consensus changes and finalizes the report for issuance.

Chapter 10: Conducting an In-depth Review

The primary responsibilities of an In-depth Reviewer (IDR) are 1) to be able to clarify for other panelists information that is in written case materials, and/or 2) provide information that is lacking in the written material, but that is required for a panel to make an equitable classification decision. This information will relate primarily to the scientist's accomplishments, the impact of those accomplishments, and the scientist's stature in his or her field.

An IDR serves as a fact finder and an investigator, but especially a confirmer of facts and their significance as claimed by the incumbent. An IDR must avoid becoming either the advocate or the prosecutor of the scientist whose case is being reviewed. Serving as IDR is the single most important role on a panel. The quality of fact finding has a direct impact on the quality of the panel decision and, therefore, on the scientist's career.

Here are some pointers which will help an IDR do a good job:

- Be familiar with the criteria relevant to classifying Category 1 positions. These are presented in the RGEG and in this manual.
- Understanding what information to **expect** in a writeup is best learned by examining Part I of this manual, which explains both format and content requirements. If a writeup answers all topics called for in Part I, the IDR's task becomes the simpler one of verifying the information. If all topics are not addressed in the writeup, the IDR has the additional task of finding that information, so the panel will have the fullest possible knowledge about the position/incumbent facts.
- Ask contacts only for information relevant to RGEG application. Be guided by the instructions provided with the ARS-232 and ARS-516. If contacts volunteer irrelevant information, do not record such information or pass it along to the panel in your oral report or by any other means.
- As a matter of courtesy, inform contacts that it is ARS policy to retain IDR fact-finding interview notes.
- In conducting fact-finding interviews, focus on unanswered or unclear writeup discussion of topics from Part I. Also take advantage of people's inherent tendency to like to talk. A contact will frequently offer valuable information or perspectives if the contact is given the opportunity to respond to general questions such as "How would you rate Dr. Jones on a scale of 1 to 10?" Do not ask what grade level the contact believes the scientist

should be. **In situations where an accomplishment was achieved via team research, it is especially crucial to pin down the incumbent’s relative contribution to the overall team achievement. This may also be important when there is a question about the roles of multiple authors of a paper.**

- Agency policy requires that IDRs contact a minimum of five individuals, one of whom **must** be the immediate supervisor of the position under review. There is no maximum number of additional contacts. Use common sense; a few contacts might be adequate for a relatively straightforward case at the lower grades but would almost certainly be totally inadequate when evaluating a more complex, higher-graded position. Seldom, however, will an IDR need to make more than 8 or 10 contacts. An IDR is authorized to contact anyone who can provide needed information. IDRs are not restricted to names listed by the scientist on the ARS-570. Many IDRs have obtained the best results by following leads outside the contact sheet—for example, previous supervisor(s), coauthors, past or present coworkers, and others familiar with the research area such as national program leaders or industry and university cooperators.
- Use email **only** to arrange mutually convenient times for personal interviews with contacts or to interview a contact that has requested such form of communication to accommodate a disability. **Do not** use email for substantive factfinding purposes.
- Experience suggests that IDRs should **not** contact the incumbent. Most experienced panelists believe the negatives of doing so far outweigh the positives. When should you as an IDR stop fact finding? When you believe you have enough information to answer all questions the panel is likely to pose.

Note: If case materials appear to be incomplete, please notify the personnel representative or the RPES Staff rather than contacting the incumbent, which would break panel confidentiality. The RPES Staff will request the documentation from the employee directly and share with the panelists.

- Ideally, but not always, primary review responsibility will be assigned to a panelist who has competency in the discipline area of the case. However, objectivity is more critical than specific discipline knowledge. This is an important concept. Your job as an IDR is to **get** the necessary information, not necessarily to **be** the original source of information.
- Some scientists complain that “the IDR didn’t know anything about my field.” This implies that only “true peers” can make valid judgments. But as experienced panelists and chairpersons will be quick to point out, true peers often have the most difficulty in being objective and may be more reluctant to follow up (and report) leads that do not agree with their personal views. Bear in mind: objectivity **is** more critical than specific discipline knowledge when it comes to doing a quality in-depth review.
- Begin fact finding as soon as possible after the chair assigns in-depth reviews. Do not put yourself as an IDR in the position of missing vital information, because the person you needed to talk to “just left the country and won’t be back for 2 weeks!”
- Remember that the task is to seek information in an **unbiased** manner. Resist the temptation to reveal personal opinions or evaluation of the case. What matters in RPES is the panel’s **consensus** decision.

- Be wary of using social media sites (such as ResearchGate) to conduct investigations. Some social media sites may compromise your identity.
- **Do not** ask questions such as “Should this person be promoted?” “Is he/she doing a GS14 job?” “How does he/she get along with his/her coworkers?” If people being interviewed volunteer such information, ignore it and above all do **not** report it to the panel! IDRs are certainly in the position of having to exercise discretion, good judgment, and common sense in reporting their observations to the full panel. **Do not** reveal to contacts your tentative classification decision. The panel may very well disagree and the final (consensus) may be very different.
- Assure persons contacted that the information they provide will be held in confidence by the panel. IDRs should also request, in turn, that the contact maintain confidentiality concerning the IDR’s identity. A website has been established to assist IDRs in communicating this to the contacts and IDRs are encouraged to share it with them when setting up your meetings: <https://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/rpes/for-idrs-external-site-to-share-with-contacts/>.
- Do not call a supervisor and say something like, “Hi! I’m the IDR on Joe’s case. I need as much help as I can get on this case because this stuff is way out of my field.” Saying this sets the stage for a potentially disastrous interview and a lingering doubt as to the quality of the entire panel review. Remember that as an IDR you are performing an entirely legitimate, essential fact-finding, and fact-confirming function. There is no need to be apologetic either for intruding on someone’s time or for not being a subject matter expert. An IDR does not need to be performing the same or even closely related research in order to perform an effective in-depth review.
- If as an IDR you learn that the case is a reevaluation or an early review, or that the last panel decision was a GCP, or that the incumbent appealed the last panel decision, remember that such facts are irrelevant for RGEG application. Therefore, do not let such facts influence your scoring and do not convey such facts to the other panelists.
- If you encounter problems as an IDR, inform the panel chair. The chair is an experienced panelist and may be able to suggest useful actions to resolve the problem. Because the chair is ultimately responsible for the panel operation, he or she has a natural interest in overcoming obstacles to panel success.
- Contact the personnel representative serving on the panel with policy or procedural questions. Answering these questions is one of their principal roles on the panel. If as an IDR you discover information that indicates the scientist may be a poor performer subject to formal performance improvement, be sure to notify the personnel representative immediately. The representative will check this information with the servicing employee relations specialist.
- Outline an oral report of significant findings. Be sure to identify each person actually contacted. Although there is no prescribed format for an oral report, the most common approaches are to: 1) state who was contacted, then summarize the gist of their collective comments and observations; or 2) briefly summarize what each individual had to say. The first approach is useful when all or most of the comments are similar; the second, when greater divergence is encountered. Keep an oral report succinct and on target. Anticipate questions fellow panelists might raise. Be prepared to address these in either the oral report or the subsequent deliberations.

- The final step in conducting a first-class in-depth review is to bring a solid draft panel report to the meeting. Details about completing the ARS-516 are provided earlier in this manual. The main points here are to 1) keep the fact statements and rationales concise and responsive to factor criteria, and 2) remember to include the required summary statements for each factor (including those scored at either Level B or Level D). Just remember that the better the draft an IDR brings to the meeting, the quicker the panel can edit the final report and finish its job.

Caution: Panelists who are not the IDR on a given case may **not** make any fact-finding contacts. Contacts from several persons on a panel can be confusing and irritating to supervisors and other contacts. If you have unresolved questions after initial scoring, either refer them to the designated IDR for investigation or record “+” or “-” scores and adjust during the panel meeting based on the IDR report and subsequent discussion.

A parting thought: It is no secret that service as an IDR is **the most critical role** in the entire RPES process. Doing a good job as an IDR is not difficult but is admittedly a bit time-consuming and requires organization, perception, good judgment, wisdom and—above all—common sense. Dedication and good work as an IDR are absolutely essential in ensuring that the system works accurately and fairly, and that it is perceived to be such by ARS scientists.

Chapter 11: RGEN and Additional Evaluation Guidance

The RGEN is posted on the OPM website at <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gsgesch.pdf> and is incorporated herein by reference. This chapter provides additional ARS-specific interpretative guidance for applying the RGEN to Category 1 positions.

A. RPES Grade Conversion Table

The Grade Conversion Table on page 7 of the RGEN shows 46–50 points as the GS-15 point range. Using criteria provided in the RGEN, it is not possible to score a position greater than 50 points. The Department has established an ST evaluation plan to permit scoring current GS-15 positions as ST. See “ST (Supergrade) Evaluation Criteria” below. The following tables depict GS-15 and ST point ranges for RPES purposes:

Factor Level Point Values		
Level	Factors 1–3	Factor 4
A	2 points	4 points
B	4 points	8 points
C	6 points	12 points
D	8 points	16 points
E	10 points	20 points
F	12 points	24 points

Scoring Options for through GS-14 positions RGEN Levels A–C	
Point Range	Grade Conversion
8–14	GS-11
16–24	GS-12
26–34	GS-13
36–44	GS-14

Scoring options for GS-15/ST positions using RGEN/USDA Levels D–F	
Point Range	Grade Conversion
46–54	GS-15
56–60	ST

46-50	GS-15
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B. Interpretation of the RGEG

The RGEG is used in classifying positions involving a researcher's personal performance either individually or as a team member, and leadership of a research team or organizational unit where the primary basis of selection is research competence and capability rather than supervisory or administrative ability. Whenever the size of a team or organizational unit or other management concerns dictate the need for marked supervisory and administrative ability in a position, other classification standards may be appropriate.

The RGEG is based on the premise that an incumbent's stature can greatly expand a given research position in depth and/or scope. Thus, a research position cannot be classified without considering an incumbent in the position. It is important to remember that the RGEG aims at assessing the impact and quality of an employee's scientific contributions. Quantity of publications is discussed as being (at best) of secondary significance as an indicator of contribution.

Interpretation of several extremely important RGEG concepts is critical when using the RGEG. Interpretations relevant to ARS are discussed in the following sections. Other issues that sometimes become involved in application of the RGEG are also discussed.

Appropriateness of the RGEG

When using the RGEG, a major concern is whether a position involves research for which the RGEG is the appropriate classification standard. The research environment is described in Part I of the guide.

When an incumbent is not performing responsibly in the complete research process, or when a position's primary activities fall outside of the research boundaries, the position is a nonresearch one and the RGEG is not the appropriate position classification standard.

Some scientific positions are intended to provide professional support to research positions in carrying out the program work of ARS. Their incumbents perform responsibly in a complete research process but are involved in a support role. To illustrate, a person might be receiving training and perform in all activities of the research process, but with extremely close supervision. Use of the RGEG thus would be appropriate. On the other hand, a person might be heavily involved in planning and executing experiments and analyzing data, but not be substantively involved in other activities of the process. Such a position is a research support position and the RGEG is not appropriate. Regardless of grade level, a support position will generally have limited (if any) involvement in the problem definition and results interpretation phases of the research process.

Other types of scientific nonresearch positions (involving neither responsibility for nor participation in all activities of the research process) also require performing program work for ARS where the work is service in nature. The RGEG is not appropriate for these positions.

Another way to determine whether the RGEG is an appropriate classification standard is to examine the end product of an incumbent's work. This can be done by evaluating the expected results stated in the research assignment to determine whether a research accomplishment may result. If it is determined that no significant accomplishments will result when measured in Factor 4, the RGEG is not an appropriate classification standard.

Changing Assignments (see Factor 4 introductory discussion)

Assessing qualifications when an incumbent changes his or her research assignment is sometimes a concern. The RGEG points out that the total qualifications of a researcher must be considered as they bear on the dimensions of the current research situation and work performance. On the other hand, the RGEG states "A researcher in one field may move into a related field. Such a move does not change Factor 4 credit if the researcher will perform research work in the new field at substantially the same level of competence as before after a reasonably short period."

How far expertise can be stretched or how quickly new expertise can be acquired must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. When a panel determines that an incumbent can be expected to make the transition, full credit should be given. However, if the panel determines that the employee's expertise cannot reasonably be expected to fully meet the minimum requirements of the new assignment, full credit for past accomplishments should not be given.

C. Long-Term vs. Short-Term Research

Long-term research projects such as watershed research, fruit tree genetic studies, or large animal research, often require several seasons or generations in order to conduct a single experiment. By contrast, short-term research may require only a few weeks to complete an experiment. Some scientists engaged in long-term research feel this time differential places them at a disadvantage in terms of RGEG criteria—presumably because of undue concerns about numbers of

publications. If panelists avoid the fallacy of giving undue weight to quantity (such as mere number of papers), and instead assess quality and impact, this disadvantage is a misperception because:

- Short-term, quickly completed experiments generally yield only partial solutions to a larger problem. A series of short-term experiments is normally required to generate a significant accomplishment.
- Usually, more than one long-term experiment can be conducted simultaneously by a single scientist and, in addition, research programs can be a mixture of long- and short-term projects.
- The amount of effort and time required to produce an accomplishment is weighed, as is the impact of the accomplishment, in evaluating research positions.
- Factor 4 also considers peer recognition and consultation activities. These facets are more dependent on competence and informally recognized contributions than on mere numbers of publications. Thus, if panels follow the intent of the RGEG in evaluating Factor 4 (count quality accomplishments and consider professional standing and recognition in a scientific field to cross-check), the issues of basic vs. applied, long-term vs. short-term, or any other classification comparison of research are irrelevant. The RGEG only attempts to distinguish quality and impact.

D. Patents, Licenses, and RPES

This information was jointly developed with the ARS Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) to clarify consideration of patents in the RPES.

Flow of Patent Documents:

1. An ARS scientist prepares an Invention Disclosure in the Agricultural Research Information System, which along with related documentation, is submitted through line management to the supervisory patent advisor who assigns the disclosure to a patent advisor.
2. The ARS patent advisor performs preliminary prior art review of Invention Disclosure to make an informal assessment of patentability. This assessment is reported to an ARS patent committee if it is not a CRADA invention. CRADA inventions undergo a committee review.
3. The ARS patent committee reviews the Invention Disclosure based on prescribed criteria and recommends disposition of the case. The patent committee may recommend the case be approved for patenting or suspended. The ARS scientist receives a letter by email within 12 hours of the committee meeting with the decision of the ARS patent committee. This is followed by a strategy call within 24 hours of the patent committee to discuss the committee decision and obtain input from the ARS inventors. After the strategy call, the patent committee decisions may be appealed by the ARS scientist to the Assistant Administrator, OTT.

4. The ARS patent advisor prepares and files a patent application that has been approved by the committee. or is a CRADA invention disclosure, with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) and is responsible for patent prosecution.
5. The USDA patent attorney in the Office of General Counsel reviews all patent applications and patent prosecution after filing.

Other Relevant Information

The term “pending patent application” means that the USPTO has received, logged, and issued a patent application number. No technical review of any sort (other than within ARS and USDA) can be inferred from this term.

Like a publication that is not cited in other publications, a patent without a license(s) has limited impact. A license can be negotiated and signed during the “pending patent application” period or after the patent is issued. Licenses are of two types: nonexclusive, which means that any number of firms may receive the right to make, use, or sell the invention; or exclusive, which restricts these rights to one or a limited number of firms. Exclusivity may be necessary to encourage a firm to make the investment required to make the invention commercially available and useful to the public.

U.S. law provides an incentive award (a portion of license revenue collected on royalty-bearing licenses) to inventors who are Federal employees. Licensees are required to submit annual reports explaining the use being made of the invention. Twenty years after the patent application was filed, the patent expires, and the invention enters the public domain. The patent does, however, remain as prior art in its field.

Under U.S. patent law, a patent applicant has 1 year from the date of publication or other public disclosure or use to file for a U.S. patent covering the invention. After that, or if the patent application is not pursued, anyone may use the technology. Foreign patent rights are lost if a written or oral disclosure occurs before a U.S. or foreign patent application is filed.

Key Points of RPES Credit Policy

Patents are a mechanism of transferring technology.

As with publications, the number of patents is not as significant as the impact of the invention. For ARS patents, impact is measured largely in terms of technological, economic, social, or commercial impact.

Consider these three points when deciding when a patent should be considered for credit under RPES procedures:

- The award of a “notice of allowance” by the USPTO is comparable to acceptance and publication of a manuscript by a refereed journal.

- A scientist can document significant application of the invention in terms of new products, improved products, lower cost to consumers, stimulation of investment, or some other form of demonstrable impact. This may include licensing of the application or patent and subsequent progress toward commercial use.
- The Demonstrated Originality (Factor 3) segment of the case writeup may cite patents, CRADAs, or licensing agreements as evidence of a scientist's originality.

Patents are of equal value as manuscripts in terms of documenting accomplishments, but both manuscripts and patents are usually significant only in terms of their subsequent impact.

To determine the status of a patent or a patent application, contact the patent advisor assigned to the case.

E. Grants and RPES

Funded grants may be considered as another exhibit to demonstrate research, technology transfer, and systems research/integration Demonstrated Accomplishments.

When a grant document is submitted as a Demonstrated Accomplishment exhibit, it will consist of a minimum of essential materials. This is comparable to the existing policy on using books as exhibits. Specifically:

- The exhibit should consist of the approval memorandum/letter from the granting authority, with the peer reviewing body's analysis of the proposal and the initial proposal attached, if combined package does not exceed 25 pages.
- If combined package exceeds 25 pages, only the technical summary should be submitted, along with one full-length paper copy which the RPES Staff will deliver to the IDR.

Funded grants are to be listed under Other Significant Information.

Grant **proposals** are not to be listed. They have the same relative (and limited) value as a manuscript not yet accepted for publication, an Invention Report, or a pending patent.

F. ST (Supergrade) Evaluation Criteria

The September 2006 RGEF revision eliminated formerly available criteria for evaluating positions above GS-15 and required agencies to develop their own ST criteria subject to their department's approval. The criteria in Exhibit 1 have been approved by the Department for use by regular panels in evaluating current GS-15s for possible Referral to Supergrade Panel, and for use by Supergrade Panels in submitting cases to the Department for allocation as ST.

Chapter 12: Glossary

AA-ROM. Associate Administrator for Research Operations and Management

AD. Area Director

AD-332. Position Description Cover Sheet

Area Office Contact. The individual(s) in the Area Office granted access to the designated SharePoint site for uploading final, approved case materials submitted to RPES Staff.

ARS-229. Special Form - Factor 4, Level F Criteria

ARS-232. In-depth Review Contact Notes

ARS-514. Research Position Evaluation Case Writeup (Cover Sheet)

ARS-516. Research Position Evaluation Worksheet

ARS-517. Research Evaluation Score Sheet

ARS-570. In-depth Reviewer Contact Sheet

Case Writeup. The research position description (see definition below), Factor 4, exhibits, ARS514, and ARS-570, and (for current GS-15s) ARS-229, considered as a package.

Category. An ARS system of administrative designations for groups of positions having generally similar characteristics, primarily for personnel and budgetary tracking purposes. Category has no legal or administrative significance outside of ARS. Some positions may perform duties from more than one category. ARS categories established for professional scientific positions are as follows:

- **Category 1 (Research Scientist).** Permanent scientific and engineering positions in which the highest level of work, for a major portion of time, involves personal conduct or conduct and leadership of investigations that have one or more of the following objectives: to determine the nature, magnitude, and interrelationships of physical, biological, psychological, social, and other comparable phenomena and processes; to create or develop empirical, theoretical, or experimental means of investigating such phenomena and processes; or to develop principles, criteria, methods, and data of general applicability. Such positions meet the Research Responsibility criteria outlined in the RGEG or are in a designated developmental career ladder to such positions. Category 1 positions are SY positions.
- **Category 2 (Nonpermanent Research Scientist).** For RPES purposes, professional research scientific positions which are established on a nonpermanent basis and filled through temporary or term appointments (i.e., research associate).

CD. Center Director

Chair. An ARS official designated to lead (but not direct) panel deliberations. The chair also acts as the management representative on the panel.

CRADA. Cooperative Research and Development Agreement

Electronic publication. Material distributed as a finished product in a digital format, including CD-ROM, electronically readable/viewable/transmittable files (via the Internet or other telecommunications medium), and so on, is considered a publication if it would be considered a publication in print. Software and digital databases (including simulation models and expert systems) distributed as products with user and/or technical documentation or other user aids such as tutorials are regarded as publications. Routine contributions to existing datasets are not publications.

GCP. Grade/Category Problem

GM. General Schedule employees in the former Performance Management and Recognition System

GS. General Schedule

GSSG. OPM General Schedule Supervisory Guide

IDR. In-depth Review or Reviewer

IFB. Insufficient Factual Basis

In-depth Reviewer. A panelist designated to conduct the fact finding for one or more cases to be considered by a given panel.

Leadership. For RPES purposes, is either formally recognized leadership—Level I, II, or III, as defined herein—**or** scientific leadership (apart from any supervisory or managerial duties) that reflects a researcher's personal stature and promotes research activity on the part of other scientists.

MTRA. Material Transfer Research Agreement

Mixed Position. A position performing duties classifiable by two or more standards, such as the RGEG and GSSG.

New Hire. For RPES purposes, a selectee for Career or Career-Conditional appointment to a Category 1 position. Persons serving in an ARS position on other than Career or Career-Conditional appointment are therefore considered new hires regardless of length of service under such other appointment.

OPM. U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Panel. A group of RPEC members chosen to review and determine the proper category and grade level of positions currently designated as Category 1, using criteria of the RGEG. Panels exercise delegated classification authority and render final (not advisory) grade level decisions.

Panelist. A member of the RPEC (chairperson, peer scientist, or personnel representative) assigned to serve on a particular panel.

pdf. Portable Document Format

Peer Group. A group of research scientists in similar fields of research who can make valid judgments on research methodology, available literature, and the significance and impact of research findings in their respective fields. Research scientists self-affiliate with the peer group most appropriate for their research discipline and may change their affiliation at any time by notifying the RPES Staff.

Peer Scientist. A research scientist assigned to serve on a panel.

Personnel Representative. An ARS human resources specialist assigned to serve on a panel.

Position Description. For RPES purposes, the position description consists of Factors 1 and 2, and Factor 3A and 3B of the case writeup. Factor 3C and Factor 4 are not part of the position description.

REF. Refer to Supergrade Panel

Research Associate (Postdoctoral). A Category 2 position funded one of two ways: 1) by the Office of the Administrator for a period of 2 years, filled by a professional scientist who was awarded a Ph.D. degree within the last 4 years; or 2) funded locally for a period of 2 years or less, filled by a professional scientist who was awarded a Ph.D. prior to appointment. Incumbents of such positions serve on a nonpermanent appointment to perform projects of a limited nature that are segments of broader projects assigned to senior ARS research scientists.

RGEG. OPM Research Grade Evaluation Guide

RL. Research Leader

RPEC. Research Position Evaluation Committee

RPES. Research Position Evaluation System

SPL. Split Decision

ST. Scientific or Professional Pay Plan

SY. Scientist Year (Category 1 or 4 position)

UPG. Upgrade

Signature for approval:

Date of approval:

_____/sd/_____

__August 26, 2019_____

Chavonda Jacobs-Young
Administrator
Agricultural Research Service

Exhibit 1 - ST (Supergrade) Evaluation Criteria

USDA Classification Guide for Evaluation of Senior Research Positions

Introduction

This guide is intended to supplement the Office of Personnel Management's Research Grade Evaluation Guide (RGEG) as revised on September 7, 2006.

Unlike earlier editions of the RGEG, the September 7, 2006, revision provides criteria only up to the GS-15 grade level (e.g., Level E). This guide continues policies and procedures that were in place before the RGEG revision and uses the former In Excess of Degree E criteria as the USDA criteria. For consistency with RGEG progression patterns, these criteria are now labeled as Level F. Criteria and point values are shown in the following paragraphs.

Level F Definitions

Factor 1, Research Assignment (12 points)

The research situation is characterized by:

- Responsibility as a team leader for formulating and guiding a broad scale attack on problems in frontier areas of critical importance to major national programs. The project is of such complexity and scope that it must be subdivided into a number of separate experimental and theoretical research phases, several of which are typical of Level E of this factor in the RGEG; or
- Responsibility for attacking basic research problems of such fundamental interest, extraordinary difficulty, and resistance to attack that:
 - There have been numerous attempts by highly competent scientists to explore the area and to gain a fundamental understanding of the processes or phenomena; new hypotheses, concepts, and techniques must be developed for attack, and interpretation; and
 - Successful performance of the work will lead to the major modification or important extension of current theory.

In either of the above situations, the assignment and leadership exercised influence the shaping of agency program goals, advancement of programs and understanding in the total field, and the planned activities of numerous scientists in Government, academic institutions, and private industry.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls (12 points)

The supervision received is characterized by:

- A degree of confidence in and reliance on the researcher's productivity, competence, and judgment such that there is an unusual level of support of their recommendations and their most novel and as yet seemingly fruitless investigations;
- Responsibility such that interpretations, recommendations, and conclusions having major impact on matters of great urgency and significance are furnished other agencies and the professional community without reference to or knowledge of higher authority in the agency; and
- A supervisory relationship that fully reflects recognition of the researcher as both a top technical authority in the field in the agency and a distinguished and brilliant scientist.

Factor 3, Guidelines and Originality (12 points)

The work is characterized by the application of such unusual productivity, creativity, and depth of insight into the fundamental nature of phenomena and their relationships as to produce a substantial variety of new methods and techniques, of new approaches to formerly intractable problems, of identification of new problems to be attacked, and of important new concepts and discoveries, inclusive of the type described in Level E of this factor in the RGEG. New areas are opened up for exploration, the findings have widespread applicability to other fields of science and technology, and there is likely to be a major stimulus to scientific and technological effort and achievement in the field of endeavor.

Factor 4, Contributions, Impact, and Stature (24 points)

The scientist is a nationally recognized authority and leader in an area of widespread scientific interest and investigation. The scientist will typically have received honors and awards from major national or international organizations for his or her accomplishments. The scientist is sought as an advisor and consultant on scientific and technological programs and problems that extend well beyond his or her own field. The researcher's reputation as a scientific leader is such that he or she serves as a recruiting attraction for recent graduates or visiting scientists who seek opportunities to work under his or her inspiration and guidance in order to benefit from the scientist's imaginative fire, critical judgment, and advanced research technique. The scientist's personal competence is likely to be a major consideration in parent Service, Department, or other governmental agency sponsorship of programs in his or her field.

Scoring

The Agricultural Research Service and the Forest Service may establish minimum scoring patterns. For example, a minimum score of 56 points may be required before a scientist may receive further consideration for promotion beyond the GS-15 grade level. If a minimum score is established, an evaluation panel must ensure that Factor 4 fully satisfies Level F (i.e., Factor 4 must be scored 24 points; a score of 12-12-12-20 does not meet the required minimum score).

ARS Scoring Policies

Implementing the above, ARS has opted to continue Agency scoring policies established in February 2005.

USDA Level F is available for consideration and application only to current GS-15s or above.

A minimum score of 56 points is needed for a “regular” panel to reach a Refer to Supergrade Panel (REF) decision. In reaching this score, the panel must ensure that Factor 4 fully satisfies Level F, i.e., Factor 4 must be scored 24 points. A score of 1212-12-20 is *not* acceptable for REF.

- The minimum score for area director referral to a Supergrade Panel is 54 points (the top of the GS-15 point range).

If the Supergrade Panel assigns a total of 54 or fewer points, the position remains classified at GS-15.

If the Supergrade Panel assigns a total of 56 or more points, the case will be forwarded to the Department for official allocation as ST.