ADS Chapter 468

Foreign Service (FS) Personnel Recruitment

Functional Series 400 – Personnel
ADS 468 – Foreign Service (FS) Personnel Recruitment
POC for ADS 468: See ADS 501maa, ADS Chapters and Point of Contact List

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ADS 468 – Foreign Service (FS) Personnel Recruitment

468.1 <mark>**OVERVIEW**</mark>
<mark>Effective Date: 12/20/2022</mark>

This chapter provides the policy directives and required procedures that govern the recruitment and selection of applicants for appointments as Foreign Service (FS) career candidates in USAID.

This chapter **does not apply** to recruitment conducted by the Office of the Inspector General, which has personnel authority under the Inspector General Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-452). This chapter also **does not apply** to the recruitment of individuals for the Senior Foreign Service (SFS); Foreign Service National (FSN) <mark>direct-hire</mark> positions; Civil Service (CS)-to-FS appointments; or to U.S. citizens hired abroad. Policy directives and required procedures for recruitment under those authorities are located in the following Automated Directives System (ADS) chapters:

- **ADS 415, Civil Service-to-Foreign Service Appointment Program**;

- **ADS 422, Personnel Operations: Senior Foreign Service**;

- **ADS 495, Foreign Service National Direct-Hire Personnel Administration**; and

- **ADS 499, Overseas Employment Program**.

468.2 <mark>**PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES**</mark>
<mark>Effective Date: 12/20/2022</mark>

a. The **Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO)** <mark>**in the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM)**</mark> is responsible for oversight and evaluation of all aspects of the Agency's personnel recruitment.

b. The <mark>**Director, Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, Foreign Service Center (HCTM/FSC)**</mark> is responsible for administering FS personnel policies and operations.

c. The <mark>**Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, Foreign Service Center (HCTM/FSC)**</mark>:

- Handles all operational aspects of the application and selection process;

- <mark>Assists in the development of USAID workforce plans that articulate projected FS staffing requirements; and</mark>

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- Works with the Backstop Coordinator and alternate coordinator from each primary backstop Bureau/Independent Office (B/IO) throughout the recruitment and selection process.

d.   The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, Office of Workforce Planning, Policy, and Systems Management (HCTM/PPSM)** is responsible for developing USAID workforce plans that articulate projected staffing requirements for all U.S. direct-hire hiring categories, including FS.

e.   The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, Office of External Outreach and Strategic Recruitment (HCTM/XOSR)** is responsible for administering special employment programs and conducting diversity outreach and recruitment to source candidates for USAID employment opportunities.

f.   The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, Center for Professional Development (HCTM/CPD)** is responsible for developing and administering new entrant orientation and other training for new entrants in coordination with HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff, and coordinating foreign language testing for FS applicants.

g.   The **Office of Human Capital and Talent Management, Office of Employee and Labor Relations (HCTM/ELR)** is responsible for notifying a candidate, in writing, of adverse information uncovered during the Office of Security's (SEC) personnel security investigation, which could potentially affect a candidate's suitability for employment.

h.   **Backstop Coordinators,** designated by B/IOs, are responsible for assisting with recruitment plans and processes, including writing the selection criteria for positions in their backstops (occupational categories) and providing HCTM/FSC with representatives for Technical Review Panels and Technical Selection Panels.

i.   The **Technical Review Panel (TRP)** is responsible for reviewing applications submitted in response to FS vacancy announcements and determining which applicants are sufficiently well qualified to be invited for interviews.

j.   The **Technical Selection Panel (TSP)** is responsible for conducting the applicant assessment and interviewing process for candidates recommended by the TRP and scoring the candidates on each aspect of the assessment.

k.   The **Special Review Panel (SRP)** is responsible for reviewing issues arising from a reference or other factors that may adversely affect a tentative offer of employment to a candidate.

l.   The **Office of Civil Rights (OCR)** is responsible for working with HCTM and the TRPs and TSPs to ensure that the selection process is conducted fairly and equitably in compliance with applicable equal employment opportunity (EEO) laws and contributes to a fully diverse FS workforce.

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m. The **Office of Security (SEC)** is responsible for conducting and adjudicating personnel security investigations to determine the security eligibility of USAID employees and employment candidates.

468.3 **POLICY DIRECTIVES AND REQUIRED PROCEDURES**
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

USAID endeavors to fill FS positions with the best-qualified applicants available who are willing to make a long-term career commitment to international development as USAID Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). USAID recruits from both within the Agency and outside the Agency. Applicants are considered without regard to race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identification, color, age (except as indirectly limited by **Section 812 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended**), religion, national origin, genetic information, physical or mental disability (except when disqualified for overseas duty by the Medical Division of the Department of State), reprisal for participation in the EEO process, marital and family status, or political affiliation.

USAID, through OCR, in accordance with **section 101 of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended**, fosters the development and vigorous implementation of policies and procedures that will facilitate and encourage entry into, and advancement in, the FS by people from all segments of American society, as well as equal opportunity and equitable treatment for all. USAID also strives to have diversity among the staff who participate in recruitment and candidate selection activities.

Pursuant to section **301(c) of the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended**, the fact that an applicant is a veteran or disabled veteran is considered an affirmative factor in the selection of FS career candidates.

The Agency recruits entry-level career candidates for Junior Officer positions in selected technical and administrative areas (**backstops**) to address critical ongoing skill needs that may arise at any given time. To meet other critical staffing needs, USAID may also recruit a limited number of mid-level candidates, (e.g. for Legal Officer positions that cannot generally be filled by entry-level candidates). Before initiating mid-level hiring, HCTM/PPSM must conduct an analysis of the current members of the backstop at and below the level for which mid-level hiring is proposed. If the backstop already has a sufficient number of existing FSOs who would be qualified to fill positions at the higher level, mid-level hiring will generally not be initiated. The minimum qualifications for officers hired at different grade levels are outlined in **ADS 415maa**.

The vacancy announcement for each position specifies the salary range to be offered. A candidate's salary is set in accordance with **ADS 470, Pay Under the Foreign Service**.

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468.3.1 Workforce Planning
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

HCTM/PPSM develops workforce plans and manages the Agency's workforce planning process. The planning process employs a data-driven approach that enables decisions based on existing (supply) and projected (demand) staffing needs and funding. As such, it increases the Agency's ability to respond deliberately and strategically to both anticipated and unanticipated changes and events that require workforce shifts. As needed, HCTM/PPSM and HCTM/FSC work together to develop FS staffing requirements that include the classes (grade levels), occupational specialties (backstops), and number of individuals the Agency should recruit. USAID recruits based on the approved staffing requirements.

468.3.2 The Recruitment Process
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

HCTM/FSC recruitment staff manages all recruitment operations and processes, from analyzing workforce data provided by HCTM/PPSM to issuing vacancy announcements to final selection and hiring of candidates. HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff manages the following steps in the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding process:

● Coordinating with Backstop Coordinators (BSCs) in B/IOs to develop vacancy announcements and to identify officers to serve on TRPs and TSPs that assess and select the candidates best suited to meet the Agency's FS personnel needs;

● Coordinating the establishment and oversight of all TRP and TSP activities, including review of applications and selection of candidates for interview who successfully match the technical qualifications and other standards established for the positions advertised;

● Arranging travel, when necessary and authorized, for applicants selected for interviews;

● Reviewing and/or requesting B/IO assistance to update rating and ranking criteria and materials used by the TRPs and TSPs, as necessary;

● Coordinating the completion of reference checks and foreign language tests on candidates;

● Keeping systematic records of all recruitment processing events and dates from beginning to end of the application process;

● Establishing salaries per guidance in **ADS 470, Pay Under the Foreign Service** and initiating clearance processes (i.e., medical and security clearances, official transcripts);

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- Keeping candidates informed of their status during the clearance and hiring process;

- Partnering with HCTM/XOSR to develop and implement strategic recruitment strategies to source diverse candidates for FS careers;

- Providing selection information to OCR to assess the effectiveness of recruitment materials and strategies to ensure a diverse pool of applicants for various skill areas; and

- Coordinating the onboarding of new career candidates.

HCTM/FSC may also conduct recruitment through targeted or special programs, such as the Congressionally-established Donald M. Payne International Development Fellowship program, which is managed by a USAID implementing partner. This program is designed to increase access to the FS for talented individuals from underrepresented groups. Utilizing a rigorous, country-wide annual application process, the fellowship provides funding for a two-year graduate degree, including internships and professional development. Upon successful completion of the degree program and other FS entry requirements, Payne Fellows become eligible for employment in the FS. Payne Fellows are required to commit to a minimum five-year service agreement with the Agency.

468.3.3 General Requirements for Employment
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

In addition to meeting the educational and other requirements listed in the vacancy announcement for each position (or in the Payne Fellowship Program announcement), all applicants must meet the following general requirements for employment consideration and/or appointment in the FS:

a. **Age.** An applicant must be at least 21 years of age on the date of appointment as a FS career candidate and must be appointed on or before their 60th birthday, unless the applicant is a preference-eligible individual, in which case they must be appointed before their 65th birthday. Chapter 8, Section 812(a) of the **Foreign Service Act** sets the mandatory retirement age at 65. The maximum age for appointment under these regulations is based on the requirement that all career candidates must be able to complete the requisite eligibility periods for tenure consideration and for receiving retirement benefits (i.e., five years) before reaching the mandatory retirement age.

b. **U.S. Citizenship.** Candidates must be U.S. citizens at the time of application (see **22 U.S.C. 3941**).

c. **Suitability Determination.** Following a background investigation by SEC, candidates must be determined to be suitable to be appointed to the FS (see **468.3.6.6**).

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d. **Security Clearance.** Following a background investigation by SEC, candidates must be granted a Top Secret security clearance (see **468.3.6.6**) prior to appointment. <mark>HCTM may offer the opportunity to onboard with an interim Secret clearance, conditional upon receipt of the Top Secret clearance prior to departure for their first overseas assignment. Candidates choosing to accept this option must acknowledge that their employment will be terminated if the Top Secret clearance is not granted.</mark>

e. **Medical Clearance**. Prior to appointment, each candidate must have received from the U.S. Department of State's Office of Medical Services (State/MED) an unlimited (Class 1) medical clearance, qualifying the candidate without limitation for worldwide assignment and service (see **16 FAM 100, Medical and Health Program**). Under certain circumstances, a candidate who has been denied a Class 1 medical clearance may be granted a waiver by the CHCO per guidance in **ADS 414mab, Waiver Process for Medical Clearance Requirements for Initial Appointments, Tenure Review and Overseas Assignments in the Foreign Service**. All eligible family members who expect to accompany the candidate to the overseas post must also receive medical clearances or they will not be allowed to travel with the employee.

f. **Drug testing.** All candidates selected for USAID positions are subject to drug testing (see **ADS 410, Drug Free Workplace Program**).

g. **Selective Service Registration.** Selected <mark>male</mark> candidates must complete question 14 of the **SF-86, Questionnaire for National Security Positions**, pertaining to their Selective Service Record. The registration number will serve as proof of registration. Otherwise, candidates must consult the Selective Service System to get information on registration requirements. Information and online registration is also available on the Selective Service System website at **www.sss.gov**.

An individual cannot be appointed to a position in an Executive agency (see **5 U.S.C. 3328**) if that individual:

(1) Was born after December 31, 1959, and is or was required to register under section 3 of the Military Selective Service Act (**50 U.S.C. App. § 453**); and

(2) Is not registered or knowingly and willfully did not register before the requirement terminated or became inapplicable to the individual.

h. **Worldwide Availability.** Selected career candidates must certify their availability for worldwide assignment and service.

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468.3.4 Position Advertisements and Initial Application Process
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

Prior to issuing a vacancy announcement,HCTM/FSC and the relevant B/IO develop, review, and update, as necessary, the evaluation and selection (rating and ranking) criteria to be used in the announcement (and later in the applicant assessment process). The criteria include the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOCs) that must be demonstrated in an individual's application and resume. **ADS 415maa** specifies minimum qualifications for each backstop and grade. Once the criteria have been determined and a vacancy announcement has been written, the announcement is posted on **USAJOBS**.

Applicants must apply online and must meet the qualifications of the position at the time of application. Applicants requiring reasonable accommodation for any part of the application or hiring process are instructed in the vacancy announcement to contact the USAID Reasonable Accommodation Manager (RAM). Determinations on requests for reasonable accommodation are made on a case-by-case basis in accordance with **ADS 111, Procedures for Providing Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities**. Applications are accepted only for the announcement posted and must be submitted, along with all the required documentation, by the deadline stated in the announcement. Certain persons may be entitled to submit late applications in accordance with page 4-6 of the **Delegated Operating Examinations Handbook** published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

The online system receives and screens applications to determine if the applicants meet the eligibility requirements and the minimum education and experience qualifications as defined in the vacancy announcement using applicants' online responses to standardized questions established for the particular backstop. Each applicant who meets the eligibility requirements (e.g., age, citizenship, selective service registration, worldwide availability) and the minimum qualifications for the position (e.g., academic degree and relevant work experience, as evidenced by the information provided by the applicant) is assigned a numerical raw score between 70 and 100. Veterans' preference points are applied to the raw score, as applicable, to obtain the applicant's total score.

HCTM/FSC will use the online system to update the application status for applicants who, based on their responses, are either ineligible or fail to meet the minimum qualifications.

HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff and the B/IO BSC (or designee) determine the number of minimally qualified applicants who will receive further review by a TRP based upon the estimated size of the pool of applicants required to meet projected hiring needs.

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468.3.5   Technical Review Panels (TRPs)
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

HCTM/FSC recruitment staff work with the B/IO BSC (or designee) to initiate a TRP to assess the applications referred by the online application system for positions in that backstop. The TRP members review the referred candidates' online applications to confirm that the information submitted by the applicants substantiates their self-assessments, and to determine the best qualified applicants who will be invited for further assessment, either in-person or virtually. This process is described further in section **468.3.5.2**.

The TRP evaluates the applications using a standard review process. HCTM/FSC oversees this process. Panel members recuse themselves from the review of any applicant for whom they have a conflict of interest. To that end, before beginning their review, the TRP members are provided guidance by HCTM/FSC on the rules for reviewing the applications.

468.3.5.1   Composition of TRPs
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

The HCTM/FSC recruitment staff asks the appropriate B/IO BSC to propose qualified and responsible representatives to serve as TRP members and alternates. HCTM/FSC reviews the B/IO recommendations and determines the final composition of the panels.

Each TRP consists of at least two Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), one of whom currently is or has been a career FSO and serves as the Panel Chair. All TRP members must be qualified in the technical area for which the position was advertised and must be at least two grades above the level at which the position was advertised (at least one grade above for mid-level applicants). Civil Service employees and employees in other hiring categories [e.g., Participating Agency Service Agreements (PASAs), Cooperating Country National Personal Services Contractor (CCNPSC)] may serve as TRP members provided that:

- Their equivalent position grade exceeds the FS grade levels under recruitment by at least two grades for junior officer candidates and one grade for mid-level officer candidates (Note: these grade requirements do not apply to FSN or CCNPSC panel members); and

- Their participation is recommended by the Assistant Administrator/Deputy Assistant Administrator or Independent Office Head for the B/IO for which the position is being recruited.

All TRP members must sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement, an Oath of Office form, and a SME Background form to receive access to the applications that will be reviewed. To ensure that appropriate steps are taken to avoid any appearance of loss of impartiality in the performance of official duties, panel members must recuse themselves from the review of any applicant for whom they have a potential conflict of interest. HCTM/FSC's

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recruitment staff provides guidance on recusals to panel members prior to the reviews. In cases where a TRP member has a conflict of interest, HCTM, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel (GC), has the authority to remove them from the panel. The online application system provides TRP members access to applications.

468.3.5.2   The TRP Review Process
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

The TRP uses a four-step process to determine which applicants will be invited for the face-to-face assessment, either in-person or virtually.

(1)   The TRP members review applications to determine which applicants are best qualified and will be invited to be interviewed. The panel reviews applications against the qualification requirements in the solicitation. The panel members first review a random sample of applications and discuss their review of each applicant in the sample to confirm that they are reviewing the applications consistently.

(2)   The TRP members look at each applicant's complete application package to verify that the applicant does in fact meet the minimum qualifications in the vacancy announcement. This verification ensures that the numerical scores assigned to each applicant by the online application system based on the applicant's self-assessment are accurate. If an applicant's documented experience and education do not support the score assigned by the online system, the applicant is removed from the pool.

(3)   The TRP members independently review the academic and experience qualifications of the applicants against the criteria, including the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOCs), specified in the vacancy announcement.

(4)   Panel members compare their determinations and discuss any discrepancies until a consensus is reached on whether each applicant should be referred for an interview. The panel then develops a list of all the candidates reviewed with a written explanation for any applicants not referred for an interview. HCTM/FSC reviews the list to ensure that the explanations are adequately documented. TRP members enter their results into the online application system. The candidates deemed not best qualified are notified and that outcome is reflected in the online application system. The best qualified candidates are invited for an interview and supplemental assessment.

468.3.6   Technical Selection Panels (TSPs)
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

TSPs, which are organized by backstop, conduct the assessment of the best qualified candidates approved by HCTM/FSC based upon the TRP's recommendations.

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468.3.6.1   Composition of TSPs
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

The TSPs consist of a Chairperson, who must be or have been a career FSO, and at least two other members, one of whom may be an experienced FSN or CCNPSC employee, from the technical area of the specific position being filled. TSP members must not be the subject of an ongoing administrative inquiry or a completed inquiry with a negative finding from SEC, OCR, Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and HCTM. The HCTM/FSC Director designates staff to serve as Chairpersons and alternates, if needed, and approves the final selection of TSP members. The TSP composition is based on the same criteria for the TRP (see **468.3.5.1**), and ideally would be the same members as those of the TRP. Any TSP member who was not on the TRP for the position must sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement, an Oath of Office form, and a SME Background form.

To ensure that appropriate steps are taken to avoid any appearance of loss of impartiality in the performance of official duties, TSP members should recuse themselves from the assessment of any applicant for whom they have a potential conflict of interest. HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff provides guidance on recusals to panel members prior to the reviews.

OCR is invited to send a representative to attend the proceedings to help ensure that the selection process occurs without discrimination, inequity, or prejudice.

468.3.6.2   Candidate Assessment
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

The purpose of the face-to-face candidate assessment—in-person or virtual—is to gain supplemental information from the applicant to assist the TSP in determining if the applicant is best qualified to perform the duties stipulated in the job description.

This assessment consists of:

      a. A written exercise;

      b. A group discussion exercise; and

      c. An individual interview, conducted by the TSP members.

In addition, applicants who demonstrate a predefined level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and understanding foreign languages that are useful in countries where USAID operates (see **ADS 438maa, USAID Tenuring Languages**) are given the opportunity to test for bonus points that will be added to their final interview score. Foreign language testing is conducted via telephone and/or in person. (Note: Foreign language ability has no effect on whether or not an applicant is selected for an interview.)

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This assessment methodology was designed especially for USAID by OPM's Center for Talent Services. USAID's B/IOs prepare for this assessment process by developing case studies that are used in the written exercise and group exercise, and by assisting HCTM with the development of standard interview questions and related scoring sheets.

No career candidate applicant can be hired by the Agency without this assessment. In the assessment process, the TSP will consider those characteristics and requirements necessary to succeed under USAID's FS appointment, tenure, and performance evaluation system, focusing on the technical, professional and managerial qualifications needed for the relevant backstop. HCTM oversees the assessment process, and an HCTM/FSC representative is present during all phases to ensure consistency in the process and compliance with the policy directives outlined in this ADS chapter.

468.3.6.3   TSP Scoring
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

Panel members numerically score each applicant separately on each phase of the assessment and then hold discussions to reach consensus on final scores for each candidate. The TSP final score sheets and any written notes from panel members are submitted to the HCTM/FSC staff member assigned as the point of contact for the panel. The staff member then adds any bonus points for applicants who were tested and demonstrated foreign language proficiency and any bonus points for veterans (as needed); tabulates the scores for all applicants who were assessed by the panel for that backstop; and prepares a list of applicants ranked from highest to lowest total score. The ranked list is provided to the HCTM/FSC recruitment coordinator to be checked for mathematical, typographical, or other errors.

Once the list has been determined to be accurate, the HCTM/FSC recruitment coordinator meets with the TSP Chair and the B/IO BSC (if the BSC is not the TSP Chair) to determine a cut-off total score, based on the hiring targets established by HCTM/PPSM's data-driven workforce planning approach and the applicants that the TSP deems qualified for hiring. The TSP may recommend a smaller or larger number of applicants than the hiring target. Those applicants with a total score above the cut-off are notified that they have passed the assessment and advance to reference checks. Applicants with a total score below the cut-off are notified of their non-selection.

468.3.6.4   Reference Checks
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

To receive an offer of employment, an applicant must have a minimum of three completed positive references. The HCTM/FSC recruitment staff checks references for each applicant with a total score above the cut-off, utilizing the prescribed reference check questionnaire or other approved means. The HCTM/FSC recruitment staff sends the completed reference checks to the B/IO BSC who reviews them and determines whether each applicant will advance to the clearance process.

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If negative information (e.g., information that pertains to the individual's technical or communication skills, character, attitude, interpersonal skills, adaptability, or tolerance) is uncovered in an applicant's reference checks, the B/IO BSC may recommend that the applicant not be selected. The HCTM/FSC recruitment staff may also make such a recommendation.

Upon such a recommendation by the B/IO BSC or HCTM/FSC recruitment staff, the HCTM/FSC Director convenes a Special Review Panel (SRP), consisting of senior HCTM officials, who determine whether the reference checks contain negative information sufficient to support non-selection. Based on that determination, the SRP concludes whether the applicant should remain in the group of applicants with a total score above the cut-off or be non-selected.

At the completion of the reference check process, HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff finalizes the list of the applicants recommended for employment (i.e., those above the cut-off score who have positive references or a positive SRP determination). The final list includes each panel member's scores with written comments and the completed reference check questionnaires as supporting documentation. The applicants on the final list advance to the clearance process.

468.3.6.5   Clearance Process
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

The HCTM/FSC recruitment staff sends each of the applicants on the final list a letter that explains the requirements related to each step of the clearance process, as follows:

- Receipt of a Top Secret security clearance (see **468.3.6.6**);

- Receipt of a Class 1 medical clearance (i.e., they are medically fit for worldwide service) or a waiver per **ADS 414mab**; and

- Receipt by HCTM/FSC of official transcripts from their university/institution.

The letter states that an appointment into USAID's Foreign Service is not guaranteed and is contingent upon successful completion of these clearance requirements.

The HCTM/FSC recruitment staff maintains close contact with the selected applicants to ensure they have met all the requirements for employment. If a candidate fails to successfully complete any of the requirements, HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff must notify the applicant that they are no longer under consideration for appointment into the FS.

468.3.6.6   Suitability Determination and Security Clearance
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

Each applicant selected following the TSP must undergo a personnel security investigation by SEC to determine their suitability to be appointed to the FS and their

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eligibility for a security clearance. Further information about suitability determinations and security clearances can be found in **ADS 566, Personnel Security Investigations and Clearances**.

a. Suitability Determination

To assess an applicant's suitability, USAID uses the criteria in **3 FAM 4130** and **OPM's Suitability Processing Handbook**. Factors that may constitute grounds for disqualifying an applicant include, but are not limited to, issues such as misconduct in prior employment; criminal activity; dishonesty; false statements, deception, or fraud in the application process; and trafficking in or abuse of narcotics, drugs, or controlled substances.

If SEC's personnel security investigation reveals adverse information potentially affecting an applicant's suitability for employment, SEC refers the matter to HCTM/ELR. If HCTM/ELR agrees the information impacts suitability, they notify the applicant, in writing, of the information uncovered during the SEC's investigation. The applicant has 30 days to respond to the adverse information and provide supporting documentation. Following the 30-day period, HCTM/ELR reviews the information provided, if any, and makes a decision on the candidate's suitability. An applicant who is determined to be unsuitable must be notified that they are no longer under consideration for appointment into the FS.

b. Security Clearance

SEC's personnel security investigations are designed to develop information that is utilized in determining an individual's eligibility for access to classified national security information. The investigation seeks to obtain verifiable information (whether positive or negative) about the subject of the investigation.

SEC conducts personnel security background investigations in accordance with the Federal Investigative Standards pursuant to guidance from the Security Executive Agent (Office of the Director of National Intelligence) and the Suitability Executive Agent (OPM) under **Executive Orders 10450** and **12968**. The scope of background investigations is based on the security clearance requirements, the public trust designation of the position, the National Security sensitivity level, and the requirement for access to federal facilities and/or information systems.

SEC adjudicates the personnel security investigation for award or denial of a security clearance consistent with **ADS 566**. A Top Secret security clearance is required for all FSOs. SEC will review an individual for an interim Secret clearance to allow onboarding while the Top Secret investigation is in process. An applicant who is determined to be ineligible for a Top Secret security clearance must be notified that they are no longer under consideration for appointment to the FS. An FSO who was granted an interim clearance and who is subsequently determined to be ineligible for a Top Secret security clearance will have their appointment terminated. Any candidate provided the

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opportunity to onboard with an interim Secret clearance must agree and acknowledge in writing they understand their employment will be terminated if they are found ineligible for a Top Secret clearance.

SEC will hold in abeyance a security clearance decision on an applicant whom SEC has referred to HCTM/ELR for a suitability determination during the pendency of that determination.

468.3.7   Placement on a Hiring Roster
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

Applicants who successfully complete the clearance process are placed on a hiring roster for the backstop for which they were selected. Applicants can remain on the roster for up to two years. HCTM/FSC will advise applicants that their names will remain on the roster for two years, and that after that date they must reapply.

HCTM/FSC will use the backstop rosters to onboard candidates, based on Agency priority and number of vacancies identified for hiring in the Agency's workforce plan. HCTM/FSC, in consultation with HCTM/PPSM, determines the size and composition of classes of new FSOs based on workforce planning needs.

468.3.8   Salary Offer
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

HCTM/FSC sends salary offers to applicants when a decision is made to hire off the backstop hiring rosters. HCTM/FSC recruitment staff determines the starting salary that will be offered, in accordance with the policy directives and required procedures outlined in **ADS 470, Pay Under the Foreign Service**. Candidates must accept a salary offer in writing before HCTM/FSC will issue an appointment letter.

468.3.9   Employment Offer and Entry on Duty
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

HCTM/FSC's recruitment staff sends each candidate an appointment letter with an invitation to join a class, with the effective date of the appointment and instructions for reporting for duty. An appointment as a FS career candidate is effective on the date the employee begins duty and is available to perform a federal function. USAID generally onboards career candidates in groups through orientation "classes," whose members begin duty on the same effective date. All candidates begin duty at the beginning of a pay period.

468.4   MANDATORY REFERENCES

468.4.1   External Mandatory References
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

a.   **3 FAM 4130, Standards for Appointment and Continued Employment**

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b.   **5 U.S.C. 2108(3), Definitions, preference eligible [Veterans]**

c.   **5 U.S.C. 3328, Selective Service registration**

d.   **16 FAM 100, Medical and Health Program**

e.   **22 U.S.C. 3941, General Provisions [U.S. Citizenship]**

f.   **Executive Order 10450, Security Requirements for Government Employment**

g.   **Executive Order 12968, Access to Classified Information**

h.   **Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, sections 101, 301 and 812**

468.4.2   Internal Mandatory References
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

a.   **ADS 111, Procedures for Providing Reasonable Accommodation for Individuals with Disabilities**

b.   **ADS 410, Drug Free Workplace Program**

c.   **ADS 414, Foreign Service Appointments**

d.   **ADS 414mab, Waiver Process for Medical Clearance Requirements for Initial Appointments, Tenure Review and Overseas Assignments in the Foreign Service**

e.   **ADS 415, Civil Service-to-Foreign Service Appointment Program**

f.   **ADS 422, Personnel Operations: Senior Foreign Service**

g.   **ADS 470, Pay Under the Foreign Service**

h.   **ADS 495, Foreign Service National Direct-Hire Personnel Administration**

i.   **ADS 499, Overseas Employment Program**

j.   **ADS 566, Personnel Security Investigations and Clearances**

468.5   ADDITIONAL HELP
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

a.   **ADS 415maa, Minimum Qualifications for Backstops and Grades for Foreign Service Hiring**

Text highlighted in yellow indicates that the material is new or substantively revised.

b. **ADS 468saa, List of Foreign Service Backstops**

468.6 **DEFINITIONS**
Effective Date: 12/20/2022

See the **ADS Glossary** for all ADS terms and definitions.

Career Candidate
A career candidate is an employee hired for a time-limited appointment (not to exceed five years) that is intended to lead to a full career with the Agency. Appointments are appropriate for persons who aspire to a long-term USAID Foreign Service (FS) career and whose qualifications meet a continuing requirement. (**Chapters 414**, **415**, **459**, **468**)

Career Candidate Program
USAID's mechanism for recruiting entry and a limited number of mid-level career candidates into the Foreign Service (FS). The program seeks the best qualified junior professional candidates who are willing to make a long-term commitment to the FS and international development. (**Chapters 459** and **468**)

Special Review Panel (SRP)
An SRP consists of senior-level officials in the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) who convene to review issues arising from a reference or other factors that may adversely affect an offer of employment to a candidate. (**Chapter 468**)

Technical Review Panel (TRP)
A TRP is a technically competent decision-making group gathered from the Agency's Foreign Service (FS) ranks that reviews written applications for FS career candidate vacancy announcements and recommends those applicants who should be brought in for interviews. (**Chapter 468**)

Technical Selection Panel (TSP)
A TSP is a technically competent decision-making group whose members ideally are the same as the Technical Review Panel (TRP). The TSP completes the assessment and interview of candidates recommended by the TRP and prepares a list of candidates recommended for hiring by the Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM). (**Chapter 468**)

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Text highlighted in yellow indicates that the material is new or substantively revised.