

Position Management Handbook

August 2021



**Office of
Human Capital Services**

People focused. Mission driven.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Office of Human Capital Services (OHCS) works with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) senior leadership to strengthen efforts to attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce. A key goal to ensure agency success is our continued commitment to promote organizational efficiencies in support of the larger mission. Effective organizational structure design and position management are critical aspects that help NOAA meet its mission.

This Handbook serves as guidance to assist Line Offices and Staff Offices with reviewing their organizational designs and structures to optimize mission demands and to enhance organizational efficiencies. OHCS will work with each Line Office and Staff Office to provide sound advice and guidance to implement organizational changes or realignments where improvements are necessary.

I look forward to working with you to bring about positive changes that strengthen NOAA's ability to achieve its overarching goals to understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts; to protect life and property; to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources; and to share our knowledge and information with others to the benefit of the economy and our nation.

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Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide detailed and specific guidance to managers who are considering changes in their organizational structure due to a new or revised mission, a program change(s), a desire to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations, or to change an organizational name(s). Effective organizational structure design enables NOAA to meet its mission through optimal use of resources.

Organizational changes must be based on sound principles of organizational design and functional requirements as defined by the organizational mission.

Scope

The guidelines of this Handbook apply to NOAA Line and Staff Offices (LO/SOs) nationwide. It does not apply to Wage Mariner (WM) positions as the number and mix is determined by the mission and operational profile of specific ships that account for limitations in ship design characteristics.

References

- [5 U.S.C. 51](#)
- [5 U.S.C. 2301 \(Merit System Principles\)](#)
- [5 CFR §511](#)
- [Federal Register Notice 62 FR 67434](#)
- [Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) Introduction to Position Classification Standards, TS-134, July 1995, TS-107, August 1991, Revised August 2009](#)
- [OPM Classifier's Handbook, TS-107, August 1991](#)
- [OPM General Schedule Supervisory Guide, HRCD-5, June 1998, April 1998](#)
- [OPM General Schedule Leader Grade Evaluation Guide, HRCD-5, June 1998](#)
- [OPM Federal Wage System Job Grading Standard for Leader WL/NL, TS-39, January 1980](#)
- [OPM Workforce Reshaping Operations Handbook, March 2017](#)
- [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\) Circular A-76](#)
- [Department Administrative Order \(DAO\) 202-511, Position Classification](#)
- [Department of Commerce \(DOC\) Alternative Personnel System Operating Procedures Manual, May 28, 2010](#)
- [DOC Office of Human Resources Management Guide to Position Classification for Managers and Supervisors, CAPS, September 2018](#)
- [DOC HR Bulletin #252, FY21 on Reorganization Requests](#)
- [NOAA Administrative Order \(NAO\) 200-7, Initiating and Processing Organizational Changes](#)

When Should I Use this Handbook?

Managers should use this Handbook in the following situations:

- **Whenever a position becomes vacant or there are multiple vacancies in the organization**

This is an ideal time to conduct a close examination of the organizational structure. As positions become vacant, it is recommended that managers evaluate the PD and determine if the major duties and the supporting knowledge, skills, and abilities are still necessary for the position and restructure it if it makes sense for the organization.

Managers must abide by their respective LO/SO requirements and practices on position management and applicable law in accordance with 5 U.S.C. Section 71 before implementing any organizational changes. Appropriate approvals must be obtained before abolishing a vacant position.

- **Whenever there is a new or revised mission requirement**

Often, new or revised requirements drive the need to review the existing organizational structure. Changes to positions may be necessary to support the changing requirements.

- **Whenever there is a need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of operations**

A review of the organizational structure can help managers identify improvements to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their organization.

- **Whenever a LO/SO participates in the staffing planning process**

A review of the organizational structure during the staffing planning process can help LO/SO determine hiring needs.

NOTE: It is recommended that managers contact their [servicing Human Resources Business Advisor \(BA\)](#) before classifying a position description (PD), updating a PD, or considering an organizational change. The BA will engage the appropriate personnel within OHCS to provide advice and guidance on the sound principles of position classification and position management.

What is Position Management?

Overview

Position management is the systematic process that managers and supervisors apply when designing an efficient and economical organization. Through this process the following determinations should be made: how many positions are needed, how jobs should be designed, and the organizational structure needed to accomplish the mission and functional assignments of the bureau. The need to achieve an efficient and economical position structure is critical to the proper and responsible use of limited public, financial, and personnel resources.

Why do we need position management?

The proper use of position management principles will allow the establishment of an overall position structure that will best serve the mission of NOAA in accordance with the organization's official mission and functional statements; optimize efficiency, productivity, and organizational effectiveness; and support the goals and objectives of the DOC.

Who is responsible for position management?

Each LO/SO supervisor/manager is responsible for ensuring a sound position structure in the organization they lead. They play a key role in the management and classification of subordinate positions.

When is position management performed?

- Position management is a continual process and must take the current and future mission into account.
- It is recommended that each organization is reviewed with an emphasis on improving overall position management whenever one or more of the following is true:
 - A position becomes vacant or there are multiple vacancies in the organization,
 - There are new or revised mission requirements,
 - There is a need to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, or
 - A LO/SO participates in the staffing planning process.
- Position management includes:
 - Ensuring that positions are properly classified by confirming the accuracy of the duties and responsibilities to be performed; and
 - Validating that the position is necessary to carry out the mission of the organization and that the organizational relationships created as a result of established positions are current and accurate.

What are the advantages to practicing sound position management?

- Mission accomplishment in an efficient and effective manner
- Properly classified positions
- Streamlined work operations and an increase in employee productivity
- A carefully designed position structure, which blends the knowledge, skills, and assignment of employees with the organization's mission
- Clear delineation in the duties and responsibilities assigned, in line with established mission and functional responsibilities
- Greater support of equal employment opportunity, upward mobility, and competitive merit placement programs and principles by establishing effective organization structures
- Increased opportunities for employees to reach their full potential
- Improved employee morale and motivation
- Increased retention through the creation of an internal pipeline of lower level positions that lead to higher level/more complex work

What are indicators of poor position management?

- No existing mission and/or functional statements
- Outdated mission and/or functional statements and PDs
- Lack of delegated authority
- Employee grievances
- High turnover rate
- Low productivity
- Increased costs to the agency
- Poor customer service
- Work backlogs
- Low employee morale
- Employee disciplinary problems
- Poor span of control
- Interrupted or missing career ladders
- Duplication of effort
- Fragmentation
- Unnecessary positions
- Too many or too few employees to accomplish the mission
- Job dilution

What is Position Classification?

Overview

Position classification is the process through which federal jobs (e.g., positions) are assigned to a pay system, series, title, and grade or band, based on the consistent application of established standards. It is a way to ensure equal pay for substantially equal work. The classification system and standards are valuable tools for management's use to achieve NOAA's mission, serve as platforms to design organizations, recruit the necessary expertise to perform the work, and establish performance standards. The position description (PD) serves as the basis to recruit the best qualified person for a position.

Why do we need position classification?

Position classification is required by law (5 U.S.C. 51). The law provides for the fair and consistent treatment of employees in levels of responsibility and in pay. Individual positions are classified with the results used to determine the occupational series, title, and grade/band of the positions. This becomes the legal basis for how an employee is paid.

Who is responsible for position classification?

Each LO/SO supervisor and manager is responsible for identifying the work to be performed. They must accurately describe the work in a PD and design organizational structures that are efficient and economical. For CAPS positions, supervisors are delegated classification authority.

What is the relationship between position classification and position management?

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

Tip: Guidance on categorizing activities performed by government personnel as inherently governmental or commercial can be found on the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) website in [OMB Circular A-76](#).

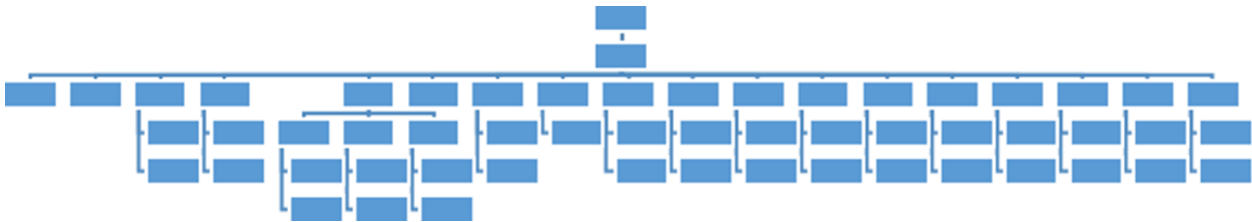
Key Position Management Issues

Common Obstacles and their Impact

A number of common obstacles exist in position management which can impact an organization. These obstacles, also known as “symptoms,” are indicators of poor position management.

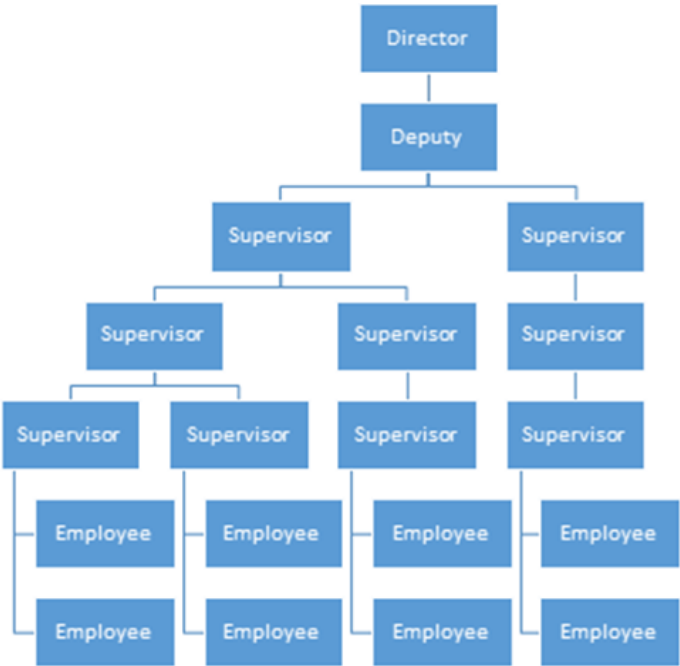
Fragmentation

Fragmentation is an indication that the organization is split into too many small segments. This requires more supervisors, restricts the development of employees, interferes with communications, and causes over-specialization.



Layering

Layering is too many levels in the chain of command. This interferes with communication, restricts the responsibility of lower level supervisors and other employees, and may lead to over-management of employees.

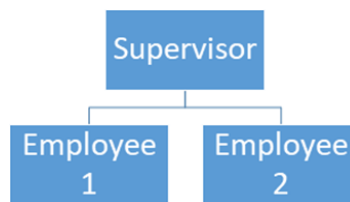


Unnecessary Positions

Unnecessary positions pertain to the use of more staff than is necessary to accomplish the mission. This may be a carryover from previous organization structure or duplicate positions. This leads to redundancy in work and is expensive to the organization.

Narrow Span of Control

Narrow span of control is marked by deploying more supervisors than necessary. It frequently occurs with fragmentation and/or layering. It limits initiative and responsibility and is excessively expensive.



Tip: Recommended supervisory ratios can be found on pages [16](#) – [17](#) of this Handbook.

Job Dilution

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

Mismatched Strength and Workload

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

Missing Career Progression

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

Inconsistencies among PDs

Inconsistencies among PDs may develop when positions are revised, one by one, over a period of several years. This can result in overlap in functions and is inefficient.

Methods for Addressing Common Obstacles

There are tested methods to correct all of these problems. OHCS works with supervisors and managers to determine the best solutions to meet the needs of the organization. Key considerations to contemplate when designing position structure and classification are described below.

Fragmentation

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

Layering

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

Unnecessary Positions

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

Narrow Span of Control

- Does the workload call for the number of supervisors employed?
- Are duties and responsibilities appropriately delegated to employees commensurate with their grade/band levels?
 - There is a direct relationship between the grade/band levels of the subordinate positions and the number of supervisors within the organization.
 - As subordinate grade/band levels increase, the number of employees supervised should also increase. For example, if a supervisor has responsibility for GS-13/14 or Band IV positions, he or she should be able to supervise a large number of GS-13/14 or Band IV positions, because positions at these grade/band levels operate at a very high level of independence when performing their assigned duties and responsibilities.
- Would team lead positions be more efficient versus supervisory positions?

Job Dilution

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

Mismatched Strength and Workload

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

Missing Career Progression

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

Inconsistencies among Position Descriptions

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

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

Position Management Guidelines

NAO 200-7 Requirements

[NOAA Administrative Order \(NAO\) 200-7, Initiating and Processing Organizational Changes](#), provides broad requirements to facilitate the achievement of an effective and efficient organizational design.

Plan logical organizations

Organizations and positions shall be planned so they are logical, internally consistent, and systematically fitted into an orderly, productive, and efficient organization.

Ensure proper balance between mission needs and efficiency and economy

Staff resources shall be utilized in accordance with a sound position management program providing proper balance among mission needs, efficiency and economy of operations, and systematically fitted into an orderly, productive, and efficient organization.

Use matrix management, when required

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

Minimize use of deputies, assistants, and supervisors

The number of deputies, assistants (i.e. incumbent who shares fully with a higher level supervisor in all phases of work direction, contractor oversight, and delegated authority over the subordinate staff), and supervisors shall be minimized and emphasis placed on line responsibilities. Team leaders shall be used as alternatives to supervisors as appropriate*.

Minimize number of organizational levels

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

Avoid overlapping and fragmentation

Functional overlap or fragmentation shall be avoided.

Focus on mission

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

Tip: Refer to the [OHCS Fact Sheet](#) for information on the differences between Team Leads and Supervisors.

Recommendations – Basic Guidelines

In addition to the broad requirements set forth in NAO 200-7, OHCS recommends that managers and supervisors follow several other basic and general guidelines. As no two organizations are identical, the application of these principles may differ.

Follow these Basic Guidelines closely unless deviation is justified.

Optimize Supervisory Ratios

- The number of managers and supervisors should be carefully reviewed and kept to a minimum to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations. Each situation should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as the number of subordinates supervised will vary based on the organization and functional responsibilities supervised.
- Managers and supervisors should supervise the largest possible number of subordinates consistent with accomplishing the overall mission. In 2020, the average supervisory ratio across NOAA was approximately 1:6.
- While no supervisor-to-employee ratio is required by OPM or DOC, a ratio of 1:1 is not appropriate. Per [DOC HR Bulletin #252, FY21](#), an individual “supervising” only one individual does not meet the 25 percent threshold to be officially classified as a supervisor.

First Level Managers and Supervisors

- At a minimum, it is recommended that every effort is made to ensure first level managers and supervisors achieve a supervisor-to-employee ratio of at least 1:3.
- In order to meet the 25 percent threshold to be titled as supervisory, supervisors generally should not have less than three subordinates.
- Managers and supervisors who only supervise employees in higher-graded/banded positions (e.g., GS-13/14/15, ZP and ZA Band IV/V) with no lower-graded/banded employees should be capable of supervising a greater number of employees.
 - Supervisors should not need to provide regular and recurring supervision to these employees as they operate with a great deal of independence when performing their duties and responsibilities.
 - If regular and recurring supervision is required at these levels, there may be additional issues related to performance that need to be addressed.
- Managers and supervisors who supervise lower-graded/banded clerical/support positions, without the additional responsibility for analytical positions may also achieve higher supervisor-to-employee ratios. However, this number could be impacted by the need to provide more direct regular and recurring supervision to these employees.
- While there is no prohibition against GS non-professional (i.e., administrative and technical) employees supervising professional employees, careful consideration must be taken to ensure supervisors have the necessary training and experience to perform the level of supervision required of the position.

- While there is no prohibition against ZA positions from supervising subordinates in a ZP career path or ZP positions from supervising subordinates in a ZA career path, each situation must be analyzed on a case-by-case basis to make the appropriate determination.
 - OHCS’s interpretation of the Automated Classification System standards, confirmed by DOC’s Office of Human Resources Management, is that at Band IV, if a ZA position supervises a mix of ZA positions performing “administrative work” and ZP positions performing “scientific and engineering work,” only the ZA positions may be used when determining if the 25 percent minimum is met to be officially titled as a supervisor. Alternatively, if a ZP position supervises a mix of ZP positions performing “scientific and engineering work” and ZA positions performing “administrative work”, only the ZP positions can be used when determining if the 25 percent minimum is met to be officially titled as a supervisor.

NOTE: An employee can still supervise subordinates if they do not meet the 25 percent minimum. While such positions cannot use the official title of “Supervisory,” they can be coded as a Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) Supervisor if they meet the official definition of a Supervisor in [5 U.S.C. 7103\(a\)\(10\)](#) definition of a Management Official in [5 U.S.C. 7103\(a\)\(11\)](#).

Second Level Managers and Supervisors

At a minimum, it is recommended that every effort is made to ensure second level managers and supervisors achieve a supervisor-to-employee ratio of 1:3 direct reports.

Carefully Consider Use of Leads

- Per NAO 200-7, team leaders may be used as alternatives to supervisors as appropriate. To determine if it is appropriate to establish a position officially classified as a “Lead,” it is recommended that management consider the reporting supervisor’s span of control, the type of work led, and the costs and benefits of the resulting structure relative to providing customer services and meeting organizational requirements. If not used appropriately, leads could exacerbate issues with layering and supervisory ratios.
- Lead positions should be established only when an actual need exists in the work situation. They should not solely be established to provide a "stepping stone," give quasi-supervisory experience, or to reward selected employees.
- The level of experience of the employees in the organization is an important indicator of the need to establish a lead position.
 - Full performance level positions in two-grade interval occupations (i.e. ZP and ZA for CAPS, professional and administrative occupational series for GS) usually function very independently. These employees, having developed expertise in the line of work, are responsible for planning and carrying out the work. These types of positions would not usually require or support the establishment of a lead position to oversee the team and work performed.

Avoid Supervisory and Lead Career Ladders

- Creating a multi-graded/banded supervisory or lead position is inconsistent with the intent of such positions, as well as with performance expectations and sound position classification. Developmental or trainee positions are typically established for non-supervisory and non-lead positions.
- Supervisors, when hired, are expected to complete a specific supervisory role to include providing technical guidance, running a program, and overseeing its subordinates. In a developmental capacity, the supervisor would not be able to carry out the full functions of the job. The same principle applies to lead positions.
- Establishing a supervisory or lead career ladder for the sole purpose of providing an opportunity to a specific employee who would otherwise not meet time-in-grade/ band would be considered a Prohibited Personnel Practice under 5 U.S.C. 2302.

Avoid Identical Additional (IA) Supervisory Positions

- When a position will be identical to one or more positions in the same organizational unit, it is an Identical/Additional (IA) position. The IA position has the same major duties, responsibilities, qualification requirements, organizational patterns, and reporting relationships.
- It is not appropriate to establish IA positions or standardized PDs for supervisory positions as the mission and subordinate structures vary based on the organizational unit.

Maintain Current and Accurate PDs

- Perform annual reviews of position descriptions and rewrite immediately as changes are required. As a best practice, it is recommended that reviews are conducted each year before performance objectives are set.
- Strive to keep PDs consistent. Whenever one is changed, it is recommended that all related positions are reviewed.
- Avoid using “incumbent only” classifications to further the continuance of a misclassified position.
- Never use a non-competitive promotion based upon reclassification due to an accretion of duties to circumvent the competitive hiring process and [Merit System Principles](#). Ensure the guidelines in [HRGB 1002-1, FY21](#) are followed.

Avoid Using Classification System as a Reward

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

Ensure Employees Understand Their Position

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

Develop and Maintain Current Organizational Charts

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

Carefully Consider Use of Deputies

- Careful consideration should be given to the need for a deputy position. A position officially titled as a deputy is defined as an alter ego to a manager of high rank or level who:
 - Shares fully with the manager the direction of all phases of the organization's program and work; or
 - Has continuing responsibility for managing a major part of the manager's program when the total authority and responsibility for the organization is equally divided between the manager and the deputy.

Who is excluded from the definition of a position officially titled as a deputy?

- Positions, informally referred to as a "deputy" in a working title, which require expertise in management subjects but do not include responsibility for directing either the full organization or an equal half of the total organization.
- Administrative, personal, or general staff assistants to managers, and positions at lower organizational or program segment levels that primarily involve performing supervisory duties.

Why should I avoid creating more than one deputy position?

- Avoid creating more than one deputy position to maintain clear lines of supervision, promote the use of open communication, and reduce conflicting direction and oversight of programs and staff.
- In organizations where more than one deputy exists, employees may have a tendency to seek the advice and counsel of both deputies in order to select the most favorable direction.

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

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

Recommendations – General Guidelines

You may apply these general guidelines with a degree of flexibility consistent with the needs of your organization.

Set Up Sensible Career Ladders

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

Consider Establishing and Filling Positions at All Levels

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

Avoid Abolishing Lower-Graded / Banded Positions

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

Watch out for Grade Inversion

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

Use Technical and Support Positions, Where Practical

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

Avoid Overlap When “Expert” / “Senior” Positions are Required

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

*Avoid Use of Mixed Jobs**

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

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

The Position Review

Conducting an Organizational Assessment

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

What to do

- Conduct the review from a functional perspective that aligns to the organization's mission
- Follow position management principles discussed earlier in this Handbook

What to avoid

- Don't focus on personal knowledge of the individual, employee performance, etc. in the placement individuals.
- Don't discuss the specific details of a reorganization or realignment of functions until after final approval of the requested actions has been granted.

Step 1: Identify the mission of the organization

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

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

Step 2: Identify the functions of the organization

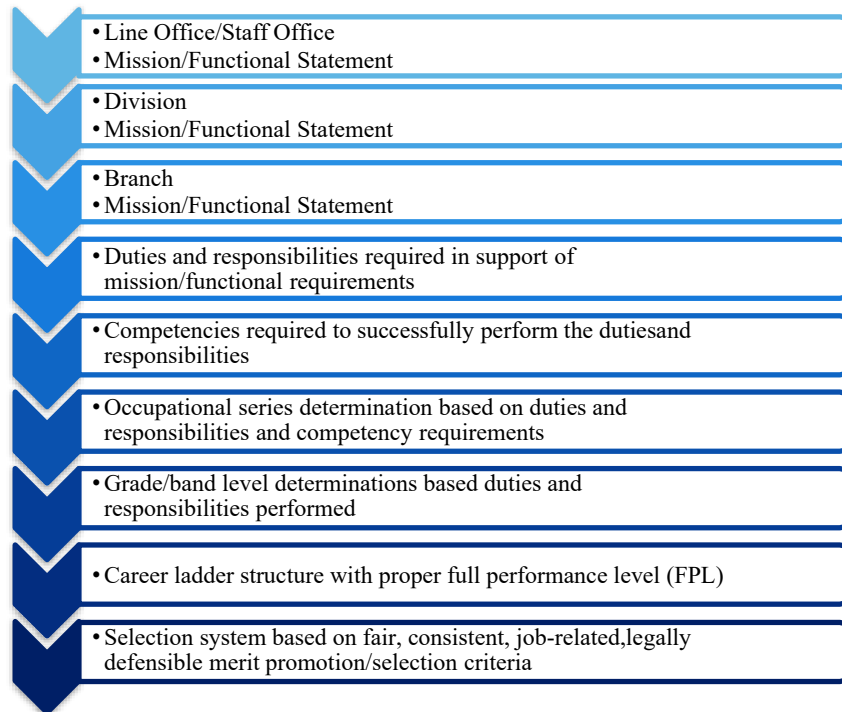
Once the mission of the organization is identified, look at the functions the organization is responsible for performing. This is a key element in ensuring the office successfully performs its mission.

One approach you can take is to divide the functions by dividing them into three separate categories, as described in the table below.

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

Step 3: Consider the impact of the mission and functions on position structure

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



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

- Are PDs up to date?
- Are assignments clear-cut or are they vague and overlapping?
- Are the more complex and responsible tasks grouped in higher level position(s) with the higher level work assigned to as few positions as possible?
- Are the more routine/lower level support tasks grouped in the lower level positions?
- Is nonessential work being done?
- Is essential work not being done, being delayed, or being done poorly?
- Are there any vacant positions that are not really needed?
- Do some positions seem to have duties and responsibilities that appear to be unrelated and possibly disjointed?

Step 4: Look closely at average grades/bands and supervisory ratios

Organizational information such as the average grade/band level and span of control for supervisory positions is also essential to gaining a better understanding of the organization. The average grade/band can be computed for any pay plan or other sample within an organization; however, when calculating this information, it is inappropriate to mix pay plans as the results of the information will be skewed. Each pay plan must be averaged separately to obtain meaningful results.

The sample organization below can be used to illustrate the principles associated with making this type of calculation.

Branch C	
(1) GS 1102-15 Supervisory Contract Specialist (Branch Chief)	
Section A	Section B
(1) GS 1102-14 Supv Contract Specialist	(1) GS 1102-14 Supv Contract Specialist
(4) GS 1102-13 Contract Specialist	(4) GS 1102-13 Contract Specialist
(3) GS 1102-11 Contract Specialist	(3) GS 1102-11 Contract Specialist
(3) GS 1102-09 Contract Specialist	(2) GS 1102-09 Contract Specialist
(1) GS 1105-07 Purchasing Agent	(2) GS 1105-07 Purchasing Agent

Grade Level	Number of Positions		Grade Level =	Grade Points
15	1	X	15	15
14	2	X	14	28
13	8	X	13	104
11	6	X	11	66
09	5	X	09	45
07	3	X	07	21
Total				279
Number of Positions	25			
Average Grade Level	279/25= 11.1600			

- **Calculating Average Grade Level.** Multiply the number of positions by the grade level to find the grade points. Now total the number of grade points (279). Divide the grade points by the number of positions (25) to get the average grade. This figure is usually carried to four decimal places. The average GS grade for Branch C is 11.1600. Now find the average grade of each Section (A & B) separately. Be sure to count the GS

supervisors in Sections A and B. The average grade level for Section A is 11.0833, while the average grade level for Section B is 10.9166.

- **Calculating the Supervisory Ratio.** The supervisory ratio or span of control is relatively simple to calculate. OHCS uses the following formula:

$$\frac{\# \text{ of total employees (supervisory and non-supervisory)}}{\# \text{ supervisory employees}}$$

Using this formula, the supervisory ratios are as follows:

- Branch C = 1:8.3
- Section A = 1:12
- Section B = 1:12

NOTE: To calculate the average band level for CAPS positions, replace “grade” with “band” in the chart above. Multiply the number of positions by the band level to find the band points. Now total the number of band points. Divide the band points by the number of positions to get the average band level.

Step 5: Compare your organization to other functional areas

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

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

Step 6: Compare your organization to previous years

It may also be relevant to compare your organization to that of previous years. This may reveal changes that should have been made.

- Have there been any mission or function changes?
- Has the volume or nature of work changed?
- Has the organization received any new equipment that has impacted the operation?
- Have there been any revisions to existing legislation, regulations, policies, or procedures; or has any new legislation, regulations, policies, and procedures been developed or issued?
- Have there been additional authorizations for positions, or has there been a reduction in authorizations with the organization?
- Has the organization experienced any problems filling a position or keeping a position filled?
- Have any new positions been developed, or any existing positions restructured or changed? What is the impact of the changes?

Step 7: Summarize the obstacles identified

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

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

Tip: A list of common obstacles, their impacts, and key considerations can be found in [Appendix B](#) of this Handbook.

Step 8: Apply sound position management principles

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

The next section of this Handbook provides a brief overview of the reorganization process.

The Reorganization Process

The Four Phases of Reorganization

[NAO 200-7, Initiating and Processing Organizational Changes](#), outlines the procedures to request and approve a reorganization.

The first step is to contact your [servicing HR Business Advisor](#).

The four phases are summarized below.

<p>Phase 1: Consultation</p>	<p>OHCS’ servicing Business Advisor, Reorganization Program Manager, and the Position Design Program Manager (i.e. Chief Classifier) conduct a consultative meeting with the LO/SO. It is recommended that an ELR Specialist is involved in this meeting as well. Appendix C of this Handbook contains a list of considerations that managers can refer to in designing their organization. Appendix D contains a pre-kickoff meeting questionnaire that OHCS recommends that managers complete for discussion at the consultative meeting.</p>
<p>Phase 2: Design</p>	<p>LO/SO create a reorganization package based on sound position management principles in accordance with NAO 200-7, Initiating and Processing Organizational Changes. Managers can refer to the checklists in the NAO 200-7 Supplemental Handbook for the specific documentation requirements.</p>
<p>Phase 3: Approval</p>	<p>Organization changes are finalized once all clearances and approvals are completed. Approved organization changes are announced via NOAA Circular. The effective date will be contained in the body of the Circular. Organization changes cannot be implemented prior to the effective date indicated in the Circular. In determining the effective date, it is recommended that careful consideration is given to the impact on the performance appraisal cycle as employees must be under an approved performance plan at least 120 days to be rated.</p>
<p>Phase 4: Implementation</p>	<p>OHCS will realign/reassign employees to the new organization based on the personnel action requests or the approved organization change package. If supervisory relationships have changed, Line Offices and Staff Offices need to ensure the appropriate updates to WebTA are addressed and complete any required performance appraisal actions.</p>

NOTE: Implementation may not occur until all applicable Labor-Management Relations obligations have been met. If you have any questions regarding the Labor clearance process, please contact [OHCS Employee/Labor Relations](#).

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms

Career Ladder Position

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

Duties

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

Functional Statement

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

Grade

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

Incumbent Only

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

Mission Statement

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

Mixed Grade/Band Position

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

Mixed Series Position

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

Professional, Administrative, Technical, Clerical and Other (PATCO)

These terms are applied to positions classified to the GS pay plan and defined in <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gshintro.pdf> - pages 9, 10 and 11.

Pay Band

Applies only to CAPS positions. Pay bands are designed to parallel the typical career patterns for occupations in a career path. Each career path is divided into five bands, which replace GS grades.

Pay Plan

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

Position

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

Position Classification

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

Position Description (PD)

The official record of management's assignment of duties and responsibilities to a position.

Position Management

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

Realignment

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

Reassignment

A reassignment is when an employee leaves their position of record and the employee remains in NOAA or any Department component and is assigned to a new position description with no change in salary (with the exception of locality pay).

Reorganization

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

Responsibilities

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

Series

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

Span of Control

Is defined as the ratio of the number of employees to supervisor or manager.

Appendix B – Position Management Obstacles, Impacts, & Considerations

Obstacle	Description	Impact	Considerations
Fragmentation	Organization split into many small segments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires more supervisory positions • Restricts employee development • Interferes with communication • Over-specialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are all functional areas needed? • Can functions be reasonably combined? • Can employee skill sets be broadened? • Is specialization required?
Layering	Too many levels existing in the chain of command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interferes with communication • Restricts lower- level management and employee responsibility • May lead to over-management of employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the supervisor-to-employee ratio? • Is it possible to achieve an increase in productivity with fewer layers of supervision? • Is each supervisor supervising for 25 percent of their time? • If applicable, does the managerial workload support establishment of a Deputy?
Unnecessary positions	Use of more staff than necessary to accomplish the mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads to redundancy in work • Expensive to the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many supervisory and staff positions are needed? • Are there any positions that are “carry over” positions from previous operating structures or mission requirements that are no longer needed? • Are there any duplicative positions performing the same work that are not needed? • Are the staff assistant functions needed, or can they be shifted to another line position?
Narrow span of control	More supervisors than necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits initiative and responsibility • Is very expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are duties and responsibilities appropriately delegated? • See the section on “Layering” • Would team lead positions be more efficient versus supervisory positions?

Obstacle	Description	Impact	Considerations
Job dilution	Lower level work performed by higher graded employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in low employee morale • Is inefficient • Is expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are employees working at their grade/band level 50 percent or more of the time? • Are positions established at appropriate grade/band levels? • Does the right mix of clerical or assistant work with technical, administrative, or professional level work exist?
Mismatched strengths and workloads	Skill sets of employees not matched with the work needed to be performed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill set not aligned with employees • Is expensive • Is inefficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can work be consolidated, reassigned, or changed and positions abolished or added?
Missing career progression	No path of progression from lower level grades/bands to higher level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower employee morale • Higher attrition rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a line of career progression from entry level, through journeyman level, to expert level? • Does the organization structure support succession planning through its career progression structure?
Workload and workforce inconsistencies	Some employees have frequent idle time while others are always behind or some employees are frequently detailed to other positions or found to be regularly working outside of their PD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in low employee morale • Is inefficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the PDs reviewed annually to ensure that the duties and responsibilities remain current and accurate? • Has there been a change in the KSA necessary to complete the work of the office? • Do performance standards for the positions match the duties and responsibilities in the PD?
Inconsistencies among position descriptions	May develop when positions are revised, one by one, over a period of several years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results in overlap of functions • Is inefficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is more than one position credited with the same review or inspection task? • Do the supervisory controls of the workers mesh with the responsibility of the supervisor? • Do several positions have the “final authority” in the same matter?

Appendix C – Considerations in Proposing an Organization Structure

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

Organizational mission and functional responsibilities

Organizations should have a clear mission statement and corresponding functional statements for the office and each division in support of the mission. The organization's mission should reflect a cascading effect in support of the larger NOAA mission.

Available program dollars, total number of personnel authorized, and grade/band allocation

The proposed change must be accomplished within the limitation of these ceilings, unless relief can be obtained prior to implementing the change.

Program factors

The proposed change should be based on firm, continuing program requirements and high priority program objectives, not temporary or projected requirements which become moot once they are met or never materialize. While current program requirements must be the basis, it is recommended that the structure is designed to be flexible enough to accommodate forecasted program changes without the recurring need for extensive reorganizations.

Cost

Managers must compare the new and old structures to determine if gains in program performance will offset increased costs or if operational improvements will result in decreased costs and savings.

Current organizational and staffing structures

Managers must determine the impact upon segments which are to remain unchanged in order to preclude a situation where improvements in one segment of an organization may be offset by problems or workloads generated in another segment.

Span of control / Supervisor to subordinate ratio

The number of managers and supervisors should be kept to a minimum to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of program operations. Each situation should be reviewed on a case by case basis as the number of subordinates supervised will vary based on the organization and functional responsibilities supervised. As a general rule, managers and supervisors should supervise the largest possible number of subordinates consistent with accomplishing the overall mission. While there is no supervisor-to-employee ratio required by OPM, a ratio of 1:1 is not appropriate.

Grade/band levels

Positions must be structured to provide the necessary skills and competencies at the lowest feasible grade/band level. The position structure must be predicated upon grades/bands supportable by the work to be accomplished. Grades/bands must be commensurate with the work

performed to accomplish the organization's mission and not exceed those grades/bands needed to perform the work of the unit. A carefully designed position structure will result in reasonable and supportable grade/band levels, as well as a cost efficient organization.

Career progression

Staffing should provide adequate opportunity for employees to develop and progress in well-defined career ladders in those occupations leading to full performance positions.

Job interest

Work assignments should be challenging and constructed to attract, retain, and motivate employees at the needed level of competence (typically, the full performance level). Employees' time and competencies should be fully utilized.

Workload analysis

This involves the methodology used to determine the time, effort and resources necessary to carry out the organization's operations, resulting in identifying the organization's actual needs of human resources both in terms of quality and quantity, as well as the required training and development of these resources to achieve the goals and strategies that the organization wants to achieve in the various work sites.

Appendix D – Pre-Kickoff Meeting Questionnaire

The OHCS Reorganization Program Manager will provide the following questionnaire to the LO/SO prior to the kick-off meeting.

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