



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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PERSONNEL BULLETIN 21-08

SUBJECT: Direct Hire Authority for Resource Assistant Internship Program

1. **Purpose.** This Personnel Bulletin establishes and implements the Direct Hiring Authority for Resource Assistant Internship Programs (DHA) outlined in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act within the Department of the Interior (DOI). Although this authority allows for great flexibility in hiring, bureaus must still ensure compliance with human resources law and regulations not excluded by this law. This Bulletin accounts for updates from Public Law 116-9, which expands use of the DHA to all bureaus and offices within DOI. This Bulletin supersedes PB 12-15.
2. **Scope.** This Personnel Bulletin applies to all bureaus and equivalent offices of the Department.
3. **Authority.** Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2012; PL 112 -74; H. R. 2055 Division E Title I, § 121; John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act; Pub. L. 116–9, title IX, § 9003(d)(2), Mar. 12, 2019, 133 Stat. 834; 16 U.S. Code § 1725a.
4. **Definitions.**
 - a. **Former Resource Assistant** - as defined in the Public Land Corps Act of 1993, a former resource assistant is a candidate who:
 - i. Completed a rigorous undergraduate or graduate summer internship with the Secretary (Interior); as so defined; 16 U.S. Code § 1722
 - ii. Successfully fulfilled the requirements of that internship program; and
 - iii. Subsequently earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher learning.

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

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

- Resource Protection

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

- b. **Rigorous Resource Assistant Internship** - A rigorous internship program must meet the following criteria: (a) Have a clearly defined deliverable or work product with clear expectations and outcomes. (Experience -based internships, such as job shadowing, are not sufficient); (b) Include a minimum of 11 weeks of full-time work; (c) Focus on critical thinking and real -world problem solving; (d) provide presentations on findings to key decision makers; and (e) address certification of high performance in the internship from the internship supervisor. In addition, a qualifying internship should include some (or all) of the following elements:
- Intense and rigorous projects - focus skills and reveal the work qualities of candidates
 - Structured projects - have clear paths to success for candidates and obvious assessment opportunities for managers
 - High degree of autonomy - create space to develop or apply personal responsibility
 - Defined deliverable - rewards productivity and provides for a clear goal
 - Demanding schedule - develops project management skills
 - Exposure to multiple stakeholders (internal and /or external) - provides an opportunity to demonstrate communication skills and the skills to navigate organizational hierarchies

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

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

The Direct Hire Intern program works through a designated partner organization, which is tasked with recruiting and managing candidates. Participating nonprofit organizations shall contribute to the expenses of providing and supporting the resource assistants, through private sources of funding, at a level equal to 25 percent of the total costs of each participant in the Resource Assistant program who has been recruited and placed through that organization. Interns hired through a partner organization will not be Federal Government employees, but if hired non-competitively after the successful completion of their internship will be hired into career conditional appointments as a Federal Government employee.

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

6. Policy.

- a. **Bureau Responsibilities.** Bureaus must comply with Human Resources laws and regulations not excluded by the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act. Appointments will be made in accordance with Merit Systems Principles.

Bureau HR Offices must establish written procedures and maintaining oversight of this authority within their bureaus; ensuring appointments are made within the guidelines of this personnel bulletin and in compliance with human resources law and regulations; and that appointments are appropriately documented and maintained.

Bureau must validate that each resource assistant internship meets the definition of a rigorous internship program, defined in Section 4, above. Validation must include, obtaining documentation of service from the internship that must include number of weeks served, a description of the duties and responsibilities in each resource assistant internship position held, and a verification of information signed by the non-profit organization's intern supervisor and DOI or Bureau responsible official.

- b. **Implementation.** Under the delegated authority, Bureaus may appoint a candidate directly, without competitive examination or competing with career and career-conditional employees under merit staffing procedures to any position and grade level for which the candidate meets Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualification standards. Direct-hire authority permits hiring without regard to Veteran's preference.

Consideration will be provided to individuals who have earned an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher learning which represents underserved communities, as defined by [Executive Order 13985 - Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#), dated January 25, 2021.

- i. **Appointment.** Appointments under this authority may be made without regard to the provisions of 5 U.S.C. Chapter 33, Subchapter I, other than Sections 3303 (Recommendations of Senators or Representatives) and 3328 (Selective Service registration) of that title, a former resource assistant intern of a John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act who:
1. Successfully completed an internship that meets the definitions outlined in Section 4, above;
 2. Meet OPM qualification standards and any other qualification requirement; and

3. Earn an undergraduate or graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education.

Appointments are subject to DOI's Reemployment Priority and Special Selection Priority Lists, Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP), and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) provisions.

Appointees are subject to a probationary period consistent with other competitive service appointments.

This authority cannot be used after the end of the two -year period beginning on the date the candidate completed his or her undergraduate and graduate degree. This 2 - year timeframe cannot be extended.

- c. **Crediting Time Served.** A candidate may use time satisfactorily served in the resource assistant intern program to count toward meeting qualifications requirements for Federal employment. The candidate who uses time served to meet job qualifications requirements needs to clearly state the duties performed while working in the resources assistant internship in their application(s) for Federal employment, so that they may be afforded credit at the appropriate grade. Although time served in an internship is creditable experience for qualification purposes, it is not creditable for purposes of computations for retirement, time in grade, leave or thrift saving plan. Time served does not count towards probationary period or career tenure.
- d. **Appointing Authority.** The following must be used when processing personnel actions under this direct-hire authority:

Nature of Action Code:	101 Career-Conditional Appointment
Legal Authority Code:	ZLM-P.L. 116-9 (Table 9-B of the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions)
- e. **Oversight and Review Requirements.** Human Resource offices must maintain appropriate case files of any individuals hired under this authority. The case file must include: the selectee's resume, a classified position description for the position into which the selectee was appointed, and documentation that establishes that the internship program completed by the selectee meets the requirements of an internship described in this bulletin. Case files will be maintained for three years after initial appointment. Appointments are subject to review, under DOI's Human Capital Accountability and Program Evaluation and Bureau accountability programs.

Bureau policy leads may reach out to the DOI, Office of Human Capital at [DOI Office of Human Resources@ios.doi.gov](mailto:DOI_Office_of_Human_Resources@ios.doi.gov) with any questions.

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