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CAREER LEVEL COUNCIL • ANNUAL REPORT 1980

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CAREER LEVEL COUNCIL

FISCAL 1980

ANNUAL REPORT

August 1980

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CHAPTER 1

REPORT OVERVIEW

The Career Level Council continued during fiscal 1980 to expand its role in commenting on and participating in management decisions of the General Accounting Office. The Council commented on numerous issues throughout the course of the year, including:

- Career ladder promotion system
- Competitive selection for career ladder vacancies
- Competitive selection procedures for filling positions at GS-13 and above
- Training
- Equal Employment Opportunity goals
- Disciplinary offenses and penalties
- GAO Evaluator series
- GAO internal history project
- Travel funding

It also transmitted the views of the Council on:

- The Division Directors' Group paper on Teams.
- The first set of draft regulations implementing the GAO GAO Personnel Legislation.

A summary of the management issues responded to in fiscal year 1980 appears in chapter 2. Copies of all Council correspondence during the year can be found in the appendices.

In addition, the Council addressed:

- Career planning and development
- Computation of Competitive Selection Scores

- Sub-team leader titles and roles
- Rotation policies
- Maxi-flex program
- Specialist career track

The Council's concerns related to these issues are discussed in chapter 3.

In an effort to improve its efficiency, the Council developed a streamlined process for commenting on and approving documents between its regularly scheduled meetings.

The Council also compiled a brief history of the Career Level Council since its creation in 1969.

Late in the year, the Council assisted the organizers of the GS-13/14 Management and Policy Advisory Group in drafting the charter and by-laws of that new organization.

SUMMARY OF COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summarizes the Council's major recommendations for fiscal 1980.

Career Ladder Promotion System

The GAO still has no formal standards by which to evaluate and promote career ladder staff. The Council continues to recommend the development and implementation of such standards. The Council has been informed that the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales System (BARS) is intended to provide some promotion criteria for career ladder staff. In addition, results oriented performance standards are being developed. The Council withholds judgement on these systems until they are tested.

Competitive Selection for Career
Ladder Vacancies

Personnel is revising its procedures for filling vacancies at the GS-2 through 12 levels and asked the Council to comment on the proposed revision. The Council has recommended that all members of the competitive selection panels for these specialized vacancies be knowledgeable in the subject matter related to the vacancies. The Council also encouraged personal interviews of the final candidates whenever possible and the release of persons selected for a vacancy as soon as possible after they are selected.

Competitive Selection Paperwork

Regional staff have a time disadvantage in submitting CSP applications. Regional depositories should be established with the same deadline that headquarters staff have for submitting their paperwork to Personnel in headquarters.

Training

Training has been an ongoing concern of the Council. This past year, the Council recommended that (1) GAO eliminate the \$300 per semester limit on evening college courses, (2) Division directors and regional managers give serious consideration to allocating travel funds for training when travel funds are limited, and (3) GAO provide some type of consistent training in the application of PPMA.

Disciplinary Offenses and Penalties

There is a need within the organization to promote uniformity in administering disciplinary actions and to establish guidelines

for managers. In commenting on the proposed Table of Disciplinary Offenses and Penalties, the following points were made: (1) the document is vague and the penalties severe, (2) there may be inconsistent interpretation and application of disciplinary action from manager to manager, and (3) the proposed system would require a tremendous monitoring effort by Personnel.

GAO Evaluator Series

Several times during fiscal 1979 the Council commented on the proposed Evaluator series. The Council had no additional comments on the qualification standard when comments were requested last fall. The Council believes, however, that the concerns first raised during fiscal 1979 (see page 16) should be addressed when the GAO finalizes its classification system.

Travel Funding

GAO employees who travel expressed increasing concern about using their own salaries to help pay for officially mandated travel. The General Service Administration (GSA) proposed that the maximum allowances for per diem and for actual expenses be increased. The Council requested that Mr. Staats support this GSA proposal.

Draft Local Travel Regulations

In late 1979 the GAO proposed changes to the local travel regulations. Council comments on the proposed changes were (1) the proposed regulations would unnecessarily increase administrative costs and paperwork, (2) the proposed regulations would not adequately reimburse staff for costs incurred from local travel,

and (3) the proposed regulations appeared to deal with problems faced in the Washington, D.C., area and not the variety of other conditions in the 14 regions and numerous suboffices located outside of Washington.

Activities Related to GAO
Personnel Legislation

The Council suggested adding two organizations to the list of those the Comptroller General might consult when soliciting names of individuals to serve on the GAO Appeals Board. In commenting on the draft order establishing a Senior Executive Service (SES) in the GAO, the Council was concerned with the standards used to evaluate executive performance rather than the mechanics of SES. Council comments on the Level I regulations were mostly technical. The Council did suggest that (1) performance appraisals be given at least annually, (2) all employees should have the right to appeal the final decision of the grievance procedure to the GAO Appeals Board, and (3) "underrepresentation" in the Equal Employment Opportunity section of the regulations should be defined.

Division Directors' Group Paper

The Council responded to the Division Directors' Group paper dealing with Teams and the role of regional offices. The major recommendation of the Council was that GAO management should determine whether GAO's current organizational structure is compatible with the Teams approach. This should precede any new modifications to Teams. The Council supported the proposals to (1) expand regional office participation in program planning, (2) develop

greater subject matter expertise in the regions, and (3) modify the Job Scheduling and Staffing System to provide more flexibility.

Career Planning and Development

The GAO does not have a comprehensive career planning and development system. Although some divisions and regions are beginning to develop some aspects of such a system, the GAO should do a great deal more if staff are to set realistic goals and expectations for themselves and judiciously select from the various opportunities available to them.

Computation of CSP Scores

The Council's constituents raised concerns about Personnel's procedures for identifying and correcting errors in computing CSP scores. Although the Council found no errors in the random sample it selected, it was not able to do a complete review of all steps in the score tabulation process. Personnel should insure that its current procedures for validating certification scores are followed.

Sub-team Leader Titles and Roles

There is a lack of consistency among divisions and regions in assigning the title of sub-team leader. Direct supervision of staff should not be a requirement for a sub-team leader title.

Rotation Policies

The GAO's current policy on personnel above the career ladder returning from overseas duty is that only those returning to a unit other than their previous home unit will be counted toward the 20 percent outside promotion requirement. All returning staff above the GS-12 level should be counted toward the 20 percent

requirement because no one is guaranteed a place in their home unit upon their return. Further, the Council recommends that GAO consider reinstating a field/headquarters rotation policy as a mechanism for career development.

Maxi-flex Program

The maxi-flex alternative work schedule program has received an overwhelming favorable staff reaction, has been a morale booster, and has improved the quality of life for GAO employees. In order to insure that a few abusers of the system do not ruin it for all, the draft GAO order on maxi-flex should clarify what constitutes an abuse and what disciplinary actions are available when abuses occur.

CHAPTER 2
SUMMARY OF ISSUES
RESPONDED TO DURING FISCAL 1980

The Council dealt with numerous issues during fiscal 1980.

These issues included the following:

- Career ladder promotion system
- Competitive selection for career ladder vacancies
- Competitive selection procedures for filling positions at GS-13 and above
- Training
- Equal Employment Opportunity goals
- Disciplinary offenses and penalties
- GAO Evaluator series
- GAO internal history project
- Travel funding
- Regulations for GAO Personnel Act
- Division Directors' Group paper on the "Teams" concept

To aid future Career Level Councils, this Council prepared a brief history of its past activities.

PROPOSED AUDITOR/EVALUATOR
CAREER LADDER PROMOTION SYSTEM

The establishment of standards by which to evaluate performance and promote personnel within the career ladder has been of great concern to the Council. In order to minimize the subjective element involved in promotions and to eliminate the artificial

time-in-grade promotion criteria which managers rely upon, GAO must establish uniform promotion criteria.

In late 1979, the Council conducted a preliminary study to determine what promotion criteria are presently used in regions and divisions. Of the 20 regions and divisions that responded, no division said they used formal promotion criteria and only 7 regions said they based their promotions on written procedures which they had developed.

In a memorandum dated January 23, 1980, the Director of Personnel requested the Council's comments on a "Proposed Auditor/Evaluator Career Ladder Promotion System." The Council provided comments in a February 22, 1980, memorandum (see app. I) and requested clarification of the following points in the document: the role of the supervisor/resource manager in the evaluation process, the details of the "unique critical job elements," the universe included in "performance standards," the assurance of consistent application of the standards, and the timing of evaluations and re-evaluations.

The Council asked to be kept advised of the status of the proposed system so that this information could be passed on to our constituents. As of the issuance of this report, no other actions have been reported; however, the Council understands that the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales System (BARS) is intended to provide some promotion criteria for career ladder staff and that results-oriented performance standards are also being developed.

COMPETITIVE SELECTION PROCEDURES
FOR CAREER LEVEL VACANCIES

In a June 12, 1980, memorandum, Personnel requested the Council's comments on a "Proposed Amendment to GS-2 through 12 Competitive Selection Procedures," used for filling vacancies at the career ladder level. This amendment was designed to reduce turnaround time in processing requests, reduce the need for division and office assistance in the selection process, and decrease the probability of procedural error.

The Council's comments, provided in a July 16, 1980, memorandum, (see app. II) dealt with subject matter expertise and EEO representation of panel members, interviewing procedures for applicants, and release dates for selectees. The Council also commented on GAO Order 0825.1 on competitive selection. These comments dealt with rehiring policies, vacancy postings, and selection of time frames.

COMPETITIVE SELECTION PROCESS
FOR GS-13 AND ABOVE

The Council focused on several specific aspects of the Competitive Selection Process (CSP) during the year.

Consideration of Time-In-Grade

CSP is intended to be a system that promotes the most qualified people without consideration of race, sex, or age. The Council received allegations that lengthy time-in-grade was being considered as a negative factor by some CSP panelists.

To address this allegation, the Council polled CSP panel members in the regions and divisions. Out of 17 regions and divisions that

responded, 1 region had examples of panelists being advised to consider lengthy time-in-grade negatively. These incidents occurred over 1-1/2 years ago.

The Council discussed the allegation with Personnel and found that Personnel had also investigated but found no support for the charge. They assured the Council that such a discriminatory policy would not be communicated to or by panelists. (See app. III, page 2.)

Suggested Changes to CSP Procedures

In response to constituents' suggestions, the Council explored the possibility of (1) establishing a regional depository for CSP paperwork and (2) posting the names of individuals "making the certification".

These ideas were proposed to the Director of Personnel (see app. IV). Concerning the first point, he stated that using regional offices as focal points for collecting applications would result in "bunching" paperwork submissions. The Council believes that allowing regional receipt of applications to satisfy the same deadlines as headquarters receipt would offer field office applicants the same filing advantages already enjoyed by headquarters staff. Furthermore, regional offices could forward applications as received, thus providing a flow of paperwork and avoiding "bunching."

On the second point, the Director of Personnel stated only those with a "need to know" should be officially advised of who qualified for the certification list. (See app. III.)

Revisions to Employment Applications
(GAO Form 537) After Submission

The Council believes it had an affect on changing the policy prohibiting revisions to Form 537's within 90 days after they are submitted to the Competitive Selection Unit. Council representatives met in October with the Director of Personnel and expressed concern regarding this policy. Several Council members stated that they felt applicants should be permitted to add information about later accomplishments such as awards or additional training.

Subsequently, the February 5, 1980, Management News stated that "In the event an award is received, or a degree is conferred during this time (the 90-day period after submitting the paperwork to the CSU) an addendum to the GAO Form 537 may be provided to Personnel to update the copy on file and may be submitted with subsequent application material."

TRAINING

Several Council members were asked by their constituents to examine GAO's training programs and policies, both external and internal.

External Training

Constituents expressed concern that GAO's External Training Order 0835.1 did not allow sufficient reimbursement of tuition for evening college courses. During the Council's January meeting it discussed this issue with the Chief, Training Branch, and in a subsequent memo communicated its concern that rising tuition costs have made it difficult for GAO staff to continue their professional development. The Council recommended that GAO eliminate the \$300 per semester maximum currently allowed for reimbursement of evening

college courses and replace it with a yearly maximum ceiling. (See app. V.) The Council believes this would be an equitable way to increase tuition support for GAO staff.

The Chief, Training Branch, responded that the GAO Order on External Training is being revised and that the Council will have an opportunity to comment on the draft. (See app. VI.) As of July, the draft order was not ready for comment; however, the Council was informed that the \$300 per semester maximum had been deleted.

Internal Training

Recognizing the concern that GAO's internal training courses are limited and do not adequately address the needs of the staff--especially entry level staff--the Council invited speakers from Personnel to its January meeting to discuss current in-house training policies and courses.

The Chief, Training Branch, stated that in October 1978, a moratorium was placed on internal training for two reasons: (1) auditors' training needs were to be assessed and (2) there was a lack of travel funds for training. During this moratorium, courses were designed and an Audit and Professional Staff Core Curriculum was developed. The Core Curriculum has three parts: (1) Entry Level; (2) Journey Level; and (3) Electives. Some courses have now been implemented and others are still in the pilot stage. In August, the Training Branch plans to publish a catalog of courses available to the professional staff for fiscal 1981.

Although internal training appears to be back on track, the Council is concerned about whether the present shortage of travel

funds will affect training. Because of this concern, the Council expressed its desire, through a memorandum to division and office directors, that management continue to consider training when allocating travel funds. (See app. VII.)

PPMA Training

Concerns were raised during the Council's October 1979 meeting about differences in the implementation of the Project Planning and Management Approach (PPMA). The Council expressed its support for a proposed training course, to be given to all GAO staff, which was designed to insure comparability in implementing PPMA.

Although the course was subsequently cancelled, the Council issued a memorandum reaffirming the need for PPMA training. (See app. VIII.) The Director of Personnel responded that PPMA will be incorporated into two existing training programs. (See app. IX.)

FIFTY PERCENT PROMOTION GOAL FOR WOMEN AND MINORITIES ABOVE THE CAREER LADDER

The Career Level Council supports the GAO's efforts in seeking equal opportunity for its employees and recognizes the need for affirmative action. It also agrees that the GAO's EEO profile at the middle and upper levels needs improvement. However, a majority of Council representatives do not agree with the Comptroller General's approach presented in the April 8, 1980, issue of Management News which called for a 50 percent hiring goal for women and minorities above the career ladder, and external certificates for many mid- and upper-level management positions. Council members expressed their diverse opinions on this in an April 29

memorandum to Mr. Staats. (See app. X.) The Executive Committee also discussed the issue with Mr. Pin on May 1, 1980. According to Mr. Pin, reasons for implementing the policy included the recognition that there would be an overall drop in the number of promotions and slow progress in promoting women and minorities to grades 13 to 15. Mr. Pin said that the need for continuing this policy would be reassessed in October.

TABLE OF DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES AND PENALTIES

As requested by Personnel on June 13, 1980, the Council reviewed a proposed "Table of Disciplinary Offenses and Penalties" for use in the GAO and provided written comments on July 17. (See app. XI.) The Council agreed that there is a need to promote uniformity in administering disciplinary actions and establishing guidelines for managers. In the Council's opinion, however, the draft document was vague, the proposed penalties were severe, inconsistent interpretation and application of disciplinary actions from manager to manager was likely, and a tremendous monitoring effort by Personnel would be necessary if the Table was adopted as a guideline.

EVALUATOR SERIES

In September 1979, the Council was asked to comment on a proposed qualification standard for the new job series, "GAO Evaluator." The Council provided no substantive comments because it felt that the concerns it summarized in the 1979 Annual Report were still valid.

The Council realizes that since the 1979 Annual Report was published, the new GAO personnel legislation has been enacted. However, the Council believes many of its concerns still apply to any new personnel series the GAO develops, and restates these concerns as follows:

1. The effect this standard may have on the ability of GAO evaluators to obtain positions in other agencies.
2. The ambiguity of the series title and the fact that this may affect
 - the ability of staff to obtain CPA certificates in other States,
 - the GAO's image within the Federal Government, and
 - the recruitment of accountants for evaluator positions.
3. The fact that the conversion process and its effect on the staff are still undefined.
4. The continued lack of communication about the qualification standard from management.
5. The impact this standard may have on other personnel-related subsystems such as BARS, CSP, and Teams.

The Council has received little response since it raised these concerns and believes the issues should be addressed as GAO finalizes its classification system.

GAO INTERNAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Council's Special Studies Committee met in January 1980 with Roger Sperry, Special Assistant to the Comptroller General, and discussed the Council's possible assistance in the internal history project (a narrative history of the GAO during the 15-year term of Mr. Staats). The Committee agreed to read and comment on

the draft history. As of July, members had read chapters of the draft and met with Mr. Sperry. Their reactions and comments were few and dealt with noncontroversial areas.

CAREER LEVEL COUNCIL HISTORY

The Special Studies Committee also developed an internal history of the Council itself. The history--which will be updated annually--provides a perspective on what the Council has accomplished in the past and its relationship to current issues. (See app. XII.)

TRAVEL

Several issues were raised during the year concerning travel. We have commented on the inadequacy of current travel allowances and the proposed local regulations.

Increased Travel Expense Allowances

The Council expressed concern that the current expense allowances are often insufficient to cover the entire cost of required GAO travel. Inadequate allowances cause financial inequities as well as morale problems. In a January memorandum the Council asked the Comptroller General to actively support proposed legislation to increase the per diem rate and the maximum actual expense rate. (See app. XIII.) The proposed legislation has passed the House (H. R. 7072) and is now pending in the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on Civil Service (S. 2213). In response to the Council's memorandum, Mr. Staats stated that legislation to increase the per diem and actual expense allowances would be supported by the GAO. (See app. XIV.)

Revised Local Travel Regulations

In January 1980, the Council commented to General Services and Controller on proposed changes to the GAO's local travel regulations. The Council's position was that the proposed regulations would unnecessarily increase administrative costs and paperwork and would not adequately reimburse staff for costs incurred from local travel. (See app. XV.) The proposed regulations have not yet been implemented.

REGULATIONS PURSUANT TO GAO PERSONNEL LEGISLATION

The GAO Personnel Act (P.L. 96-191) was signed February 15, 1980. It included two items specifically recommended by the 1979 Career Level Council: appeals board provisions and "save pay/save grade" provisions. GAO management officials assured the Council that employees and employee groups would have an opportunity to comment on regulations pursuant to the Act. The Council established an ad hoc committee to monitor progress of the legislation and draft comments on the implementing regulations.

Mr. Clifford Gould, Special Assistant to the Comptroller General, announced plans to implement the GAO Personnel Act by issuing three levels of regulations:

- Level I, an overall regulation--part of the Code of Federal Regulations (4 CFR Parts 2 through 9).
- Level II, implementing regulations--orders for the GAO Operations Manual.
- Level III--detailed operating procedures, handbooks, instructions, etc.

The Council commented on the Level I regulations at its July meeting. Due to the general nature of the overall regulations, the comments were brief and mostly technical. (See app. XVI.) The Council also received copies of 29 draft GAO orders (Level II regulations) covering recruitment, examining, appointment, and placement for review and comment. However, Council comments on these draft orders had not completed before the publishing of this report.

Later this fiscal year the Council will comment on certain other Level II regulations. Draft regulations covering the following topics are expected:

- Equal employment opportunity
- Labor-management relations
- Disciplinary action and the grievance process
- Merit system principles and prohibited personnel practices
- GAO Appeals Board

During fiscal 1981 the Council expects to comment on additional Level II regulations concerning: performance appraisal, merit selection, classification and compensation, and rewards.

The Council also responded to special requests for input on topics related to the personnel legislation. The Council suggested adding two organizations to the list of those the Comptroller General might consult when soliciting names of individuals to serve on the GAO Appeals Board. (See app. XVII.) It also reviewed and commented on the draft order establishing a Senior Executive

Service (SES) in the GAO. As noted in its comments, however, the Council's concern was not with the mechanics of SES, but rather with the standards used to evaluate executive performance. (See app. XVIII.) The Council hopes to comment on the SES performance standards when they become available.

DIVISION DIRECTORS' PAPER

In July, the Council was asked to comment on the Division Directors' Group paper. The paper responds to the Comptroller General's June 4 memorandum to that group concerning the role of regional offices, proposed revisions in the Team approach, the Job Scheduling and Staffing System (JSSS), the Competitive Selection System, and performance evaluation systems for the staff. The Council provided comments on July 18 (see app. XIX). A summary of these comments follows.

The division directors did a good job of identifying some of the problems the GAO has encountered in "forcing" jobs to Teams. The Council had already been working on many of the issues involved --particularly the project teams concept, program planning/subject matter expertise, and the JSSS. The Council agrees with the division directors that not enough attention has been given to tailoring job management to the specific needs of the job and personnel capabilities. It also concurs with the conclusion that the implementation of the Teams concept has been too rigid, and supports the recommendation for greater flexibility in structuring the management of new jobs.

However, the Council believes that there are far more fundamental issues involved that transcend and vitally affect those raised in the directors' paper--issues that go to the heart of Teams and GAO operations. Two basic questions must be answered: (1) Can a matrix management system work in the GAO? and (2) if so, what changes to the organization are needed to insure efficient operations? If there is an irreconcilable conflict between the matrix system and effective job management, then the GAO must move away from that system. If the GAO concludes that Teams can work, it must decide what changes are needed in the GAO's current method of implementation or organizational structure.

The Council felt these questions must be resolved before changes are made to Teams like those suggested in the directors' paper. The GAO must recognize the conflicts inherent in matrix management as contrasted with traditional lines of authority and responsibility and develop its subsystems to minimize those conflicts. The Council also provided specific comments on the issues in the Division Directors' Group paper.

Role of Regional Management/Draft Order

The Council felt that the draft order reaffirming the role of regional management was lacking in an important aspect. It failed to address the regions' difficulty in assuming a technical assistance role when they do not have sufficient control over resources and accountability for products. Regional management needs a more definitive statement on the extent to which monitoring, control, and accountability can be accomplished in

light of the matrix management system which exists in the project team approach.

Proposed Adjustements in the
Project Team Approach

It would be difficult to argue with the objectives sought by Teams of (1) clearly defining lines of responsibility and authority, (2) minimizing levels of supervision and review, and (3) insulating the project team staff to the extent necessary and feasible while maintaining the desired level of quality. However, concerns have been expressed that Teams, as implemented, has resulted in a lack of adequate day-to-day supervision at the expense of long-term work quality.

The role of the regional office has been greatly diminished. As a result, staff have been cut adrift from regional management and left without necessary supervision. It is infeasible for a team leader separated by vast geographic distance to provide the supervision necessary for further development of team staff. As a result, the region must fulfill this monitoring role, including guidance and supervision of the staff assigned to a team, which is one of the assigned responsibilities in the draft FOD order.

Regional responsibility for monitoring staff and assuring the quality of regional products also requires resource managers to be familiar enough with each job to identify problems and bring their concerns to the team leadership. An assumption underlying the move to Teams was that regional review of products caused unnecessary delay. There is little evidence to show that eliminating

regional review has significantly speeded job completions and it is unlikely that unnecessary additional delays will occur if regional management carries out its monitoring responsibilities properly.

The Council felt that the Division Directors' Group preferred option appeared to be a selective audit manager concept, even though the paper made considerable effort to show otherwise. Further, the option would not provide clearly defined lines of authority and responsibility and that assigning titles to people who function only part-time in that capacity was not consistent with the Team concept. In addition, the Council felt that that option would lead to diminishing roles for GS-12's and 13's.

The Council believes that, given organizational constraints, option five of the Directors' paper would permit the most flexibility and yet allow supervision necessary to achieve quality products.

Regional Office Participation
in Program Planning and Developing
Subject Matter Expertise

The Council agrees with the division directors that regions should be more formally involved with program planning and that the subject matter knowledge/expertise developed and maintained by the regional offices is an invaluable resource to the GAO. Such knowledge is critical to effective program planning, coordination of ongoing assignments, and the successful, timely completion of jobs. The Council began work on subject matter expertise in the Fall of 1979. It considers such expertise a prerequisite to effective input for program planning.

Council discussions with regional management, issue area coordinators, and staff during the year revealed a widespread feeling that maintenance and use of subject matter expertise was lacking and adversely affecting the quality, timeliness, and relevance of GAO work. It was felt that the great wealth of on-site experience, knowledge, and perspective present in the field has been only haphazardly tapped by headquarters.

The Council recommended that the JSSS be changed to allow more discretion and control over staff continuity and assignment --in other words, letting managers manage. Further, the role of regional management in program planning should be supported by every GAO office and explicitly internalized into operating procedures.

Relationship of the Job Scheduling
and Staffing System to Office Planning

The Council was studying the JSSS before the Division Directors' Group asked for its comments. Basically the Council's concern is that modifications are needed because in many instances people are not assigned where they can best be used. Staff perceive rigidities in the current assignment process as forcing less than ideal management decisions. A major rigidity is the requirement that the staff assigned must be available on a specific date--the "30-day window."

Management's efforts to provide career development opportunities for staff can be frustrated by limitations in the assignments on which an individual can be placed. The Council believes these

limitations can be reduced and management can better meet its goals if steps are taken to build more flexibility into the JSSS. The JSSS should be modified to give greater emphasis to

- retaining functional expertise and allowing the people who propose an audit to work on it,
- avoiding travel costs, especially in starting up jobs where extensive travel is required to a sublocation city, and
- allowing managers greater flexibility in providing their staff with developmental experiences.

The Council believes these modifications should include increasing the current 30-day consideration period for assigning staff to a more extended period. Staff could be effectively utilized during these periods by

- working on a short segment of another assignment until the desired audit is initiated,
- performing planning work on a discretionary code,
- referencing other reports,
- giving or receiving training, and
- community development activities.

Such duties have been and are now being conducted on a limited basis. The Council suggests greater emphasis be placed on interim, short-term assignments in an effort to maintain issue area expertise, minimize travel costs, and enhance staff developmental experiences.

Other Issues Discussed by
Division Directors' Group

The Council agreed with the directors that competitive selection, nonteam roles, and performance evaluations need additional management attention. Accordingly, the Council offered its assistance

in any effort to reevaluate the Competitive Selection Process, and encouraged the directors to stress the importance of nonteam roles as career development experiences that should be recognized in the CSP. The Council reaffirmed the need for a good performance appraisal system--but cautioned that such a system must not overburden the organization.

CHAPTER 3

COMMENTS NOT PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED

In addition to those described in chapter 2, the Council pursued several other concerns of its constituents. Prior to this Report the Council has not formally commented on these concerns which include:

- Career planning and development
- Computation of CSP scores
- Sub-team leader titles and roles
- Rotation policies

Throughout the year, there were also numerous areas about which the Council felt its constituents would be interested in having more information. On an ongoing basis, the Council has provided its constituents with information on most of these areas. However, the following areas have not been reported on prior to this Report:

- Maxi-flex program
- Specialist career track

CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Council explored the status of career planning and development in the GAO. It was concerned that GAO staff training, experience, performance appraisal, and other needs are not being adequately met. It was also concerned that staff members are not always provided with sufficient resources and information to plan their long-range career goals.

In November 1979, each Council representative tried to obtain information on the long-range career development and planning which actually existed in his or her division or region. Although the Council found that some components of career development exist in varying degrees throughout the GAO, there is a lack of comprehensive planning and development systems.

A comprehensive career planning and development system should embody at least the following:

- The development of individual short- and long-range career goals.
- The provision of feedback from managers on the extent to which the organization can accommodate those goals.
- The provision of information on the steps the employee should take to achieve realistic career goals.
- The provision of pertinent training and job experiences to enhance the achievement of goals.
- Valid and timely appraisals of employees' performance.
- Criteria for promoting employees during their initial developmental years (those within a career ladder).

In March 1979, the GAO established the Career Development and Counseling Branch within Personnel to provide career planning and development assistance to employees as well as to assist divisions and regions in carrying out their career planning and development responsibilities.

The Council was pleased to hear that several divisions and regions are attempting to formalize career development. In addition, the Field Operations Division has oriented regional managers and assistant regional managers to the concept of career planning.

The orientation points out that it is in the interest of both the employee and the GAO to have active individual and organizational career planning. It further notes that the organization and the employee share responsibility for career planning.

Notwithstanding the initiatives just discussed, employee development in the GAO is very inconsistent. For example:

--Job assignments are frequently made without consideration of employees' experience needs.

--Since beginning their careers with the GAO, many career ladder employees have lacked the formal training they need to prepare them for some aspects of the work they are expected to do.

--Staff members resent artificial time-in-grade criteria placed on promotions in the career ladder by different organizational units.

--Some staff members have gone for long periods without their performance being appraised. Thus, they have missed valuable input to help them improve.

The individual office's involvement in employee career planning, except for the initiative in FOD noted earlier, is virtually absent. It seems as if managers who are accessible to employees in the career ladder are not in a position to provide information about realistic career opportunities. Furthermore, managers are not able to provide adequate or consistent information on activities and accomplishments which will or will not be rewarded by the office. The managers seem to be as confused as career ladder staff because of the frequent and far-reaching changes that have affected the organization.

In summary, the Council feels that the lack of career planning and development has had a negative effect on employees' satisfaction

with their careers and perhaps on the ability of the GAO to perform its missions in the future.

Recommendation

The Council recommends that GAO divisions and offices implement career planning and development systems which provide adequate information on the career opportunities available to employees and the best means for achieving realistic individual goals. Also, any career development system should include such crucial employee development aspects as training, appraisals, and necessary experience.

COMPUTATION OF COMPETITIVE SELECTION
PROCESS (CSP) SCORES

At the Council's April meeting, concerns were raised regarding the accuracy of the computation of CSP scores. The perception was that errors were being made in calculating individual CSP scores and that current procedures were inadequate for insuring that these errors were identified and corrected.

In response to these concerns, the Council asked to examine a random sample of the scoresheets of CSP applicants to verify the score translations and calculations. Specifically, the Council wanted to examine the scoresheets from 10 percent of the GS-13 job opportunity announcements (JOA's) in the last 6 months. From each of the announcements in the sample, 10 applicants would be randomly selected and their score computation verified. The Council's request was approved and the survey was conducted.

Because there were 96 JOA's at the GS-13 level in the 6 months prior to the Council's survey, 10 JOA's were sampled. The original

individual scoresheets were available for only one of these JOA's because the rating sheets are normally destroyed after the selection certificate is finalized. For the other nine JOA's, composite worksheets were available which showed the scores that Personnel had transferred from the individual rating sheets. For each of the 10 JOA's, the Council selected 10 applicants, using a random number table. This resulted in a sample of 100 applicants. Council representatives checked the score tabulations for each of those applicants and found no errors.

Recommendation

Although the Council found no errors in its random sample, it was not able to verify the translation of individual scores from the original rating sheets for most of the applicants. It recommends that Personnel insure that its current procedures for validating certification score translation and computation are followed.

SUB-TEAM LEADER TITLES AND ROLES UNDER TEAMS

Although the Council touched on this issue in its comments on the Division Directors' Group paper, it believes some further discussion is warranted. The Council is concerned about the lack of consistency among divisions and regions in assigning the title of sub-team leader to various roles under the Team concept/approach. In some instances, there appears to be a limited relationship between level of responsibility and job title. Some individuals are called sub-team leader but have little responsibility for a final product. In other instances, individuals are responsible

for major segments of a job but are called team members. Since job titles are very important in the competitive selection process, the Council feels that consistency in titles and role definition is needed. Some managers have made efforts to deal with this problem; however, the Council feels that GAO-wide action is needed.

The Council discussed this with some members of GAO management at its January meeting and found that management was also concerned about this issue. Since that meeting, the Council has determined that, in some cases, the awarding of sub-team leader titles appears to be arbitrary and largely dependent on team structure and size--not level of responsibility. The Council also found that, in some instances, the operating division and the regions determine the titles of the various members of the team after they are assigned to the job rather than before.

Further, the Council found that GAO policy on the role and responsibility of sub-team leaders--outlined in Management News, April 16, 1979--is being implemented differently among regions and divisions. The description/definition states that "a Sub-Team Leader will be a team member who has supervisory responsibility for a clearly defined major segment of an assignment which can be either geographical or functional." The Council found that some regions' policy is that most assist work will have at least a sub-team leader, regardless of whether or not staff are supervised. These regions interpret supervisory responsibility to include supervising a work segment. In other regions, however, a team member must directly supervise staff to receive the sub-team leader title.

Recommendation

The Council feels that direct supervision of staff should not be a requirement for a sub-team leader title and that all team members with lead responsibility for a major segment (whether geographical or functional) should have a sub-team leader title. Further the Council recommends that the policy stated in the Management News be changed to reflect this position.

ROTATION POLICIES

The Council discussed current rotation policies with the Directors of the International and Field Operations Divisions and offers comments as follows.

Rotation from Overseas Branches

The Council supports the new rotation policy that allows GS-13's and above returning from overseas to return only to those regions or divisions that can absorb them. The Council, however, feels that all returning overseas staff should be counted toward the 20 percent outside promotion requirement.

The GAO overseas duty policy has recently been modified so that it no longer guarantees a first choice for returning employees. In past years, the majority of staff were granted their first choice of permanent duty reassignments. However, under the new policy GS-13's and above will choose only from regions or divisions which have slots available at those grade levels. The Director, FOD, informed us that GS-12's and below will still usually be granted their first choice of assignment since they are more easily absorbed than GS-13's and above.

Under the new policy, overseas personnel above GS-12 and returning to a unit other than the previous home unit will be counted toward the 20 percent outside promotion hire requirement. However, overseas personnel above GS-12 who return to their home unit will not be considered outside promotions even though they are no longer guaranteed a place in their home unit.

Rotation between FOD and Headquarters

The Council believes a policy allowing a career option of rotation between field locations and headquarters, and vice versa, is in the best interest of the GAO. The Council realizes that redefinition and reestablishment of this policy may not occur for some time. However, due to the continued interest in gaining additional experience with the option of returning to the home unit, the Council encourages the reinstatement of a rotation policy.

Recommendations

All personnel GS-13 and above returning from overseas should be counted toward the 20 percent outside promotion requirement. GAO management should consider reinstating a field/headquarters rotation policy.

MAXI-FLEX PROGRAM

The Council actively supports the maxi-flex alternative work schedule program. The program has received an overwhelmingly favorable staff reaction--it has been a real morale booster and improved the quality of life for GAO employees.

The Council decided to monitor maxi-flex implementation to help management analyze the results of the experiment. The Council

talked with regional/division management, career ladder staff, and officials from Personnel and OIR. This revealed that

- responsibility for evaluating the program and measuring its impact on GAO operations needs clarification and
- in some offices, implementing procedures are limiting the convenience of flexi-time programs.

Recently the Council provided oral comments on a draft GAO maxi-flex order, suggesting the order could be clarified by giving supervisors the responsibility to deal effectively with those few employees who abuse the program.

The Council believes the impact of maxi-flex on GAO operations is difficult to accurately measure, partly because of the numerous other changes in the organization. While no productivity declines were reported, some officials expressed concern about the impact maxi-flex has had on the organization. For example, some complaints about a lack of coverage at certain times were reported. These concerns, however, were generally vague.

Personnel, the divisions, and the Office of Internal Review (OIR) share responsibility for gathering facts and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the maxi-flex program. Personnel is responsible for developing sufficient information to report through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to the Congress on the results of the 3-year experiment. (The Act requires OPM to submit a preliminary report in October, 1981, and a final report in March, 1982.) Ultimately, however, division management is responsible for evaluating program progress and for assuring that the program operates effectively. OIR also has oversight

responsibility and has been monitoring the program's implementation for the Comptroller General.

The Council believes that factual information is important to justify the program and commented orally to Personnel that the draft GAO order should clearly spell out these responsibilities. Management should insure that adequate resources are devoted to the effort.

The Council also noted some significant variations in maxi-flex implementing procedures among the regions/divisions. Some procedures limit the flexibility of the local programs. For example, some regions/divisions require employees to take annual leave when they "flex" on a day during which core hours are established. The Council's review of GAO policy statements and its discussions with officials from Personnel revealed that such a practice is not in agreement with the intent of GAO policy. Personnel officials said the intent of this provision was to allow employees to make up this time during the same period without charging annual leave. The maxi-flex work schedule policy statement in the September 26, 1979, Management News stated that an employee may be excused from core time or a portion of core time with supervisory approval. The policy said the absence could be made up by the employee during noncore time or by charging annual leave. Personnel officials also confirmed that an approved form 14 showing scheduled time off during core hours constitutes prior supervisory approval.

The draft GAO maxi-flex order clarifies the policy and, in fact, states that even unplanned absences during core time can

be made up by the employee during the pay period in which the absence occurred without charge to annual leave.

The Council also noted wide variances in the core hours established by some regions/divisions. Given the basic maxi-flex objective of providing maximum flexibility for employees, there seems to be no need for such wide variation. Regions/ divisions with a large number of core hours, therefore, could unnecessarily restrict the program's flexibility.

Finally, the Council was made aware of only a few instances of staff members abusing maxi-flex. In those cases where abusers were identified, management dealt with the problems individually as they occurred. The Council supports management action to insure that those few individuals who abuse the program are dealt with effectively to prevent the actions of a few from adversely affecting the maxi-flex program.

The Council believes the draft GAO order should clarify what constitutes an abuse and what disciplinary actions are available to supervisors when abuses are identified. In this respect, the Council provided oral comments to Personnel suggesting that the order be revised to give supervisors the authority and the responsibility to limit an employee's active participation in the maxi-flex program if the employee abuses the requirements of the program.

CAREER TRACK FOR SPECIALISTS

The Council continued its efforts to monitor the establishment of career tracks for specialists. During fiscal 1979 its

constituency expressed the need for career tracks for specialists and a clear definition of a specialist in GAO. An FOD task force was formed to study this matter.

In April 1980, the task force briefed the Council on its efforts and conclusions and made tentative recommendations. Although the Council endorsed neither of the options proposed by the task force, it was encouraged by the task force's effort and approach to the problem. The task force's recommendations are now being considered by regional managers and division directors.

The Council would like to comment on any formal proposals the GAO develops as a result of this study.

CHAPTER 4

FOLLOW-UP ON PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS

In its fiscal 1979 report, the Council made several recommendations about

- GAO task forces and study groups
- The Teams concept
- Career Management System
- Career placement program
- Health care plan analysis

Appendix XX contains the Deputy Comptroller General's reply to those recommendations and to other issues raised by the Council.

In response to the Council recommendation on GAO task forces and study groups, the Council received a copy of Mr. Pin's January 15, 1980, memorandum on the status of work projects in GAO staff offices. The Council had recommended that: (1) GAO should designate one office to maintain an inventory of all task forces and study groups and (2) all staff should be advised, at least semiannually, on how critical management issues are being addressed. The January 15, 1980, memorandum provided such an inventory, but the Council determined that no office now has permanent responsibility for the preparation of the inventory and recommends that this responsibility be assigned. The Management News has contained

information on how critical management issues such as the personnel legislation and the establishment of the GS-13/14 Management and Policy Advisory Council are being addressed. The Council hopes that management will continue to provide such information to the staff.

In its fiscal 1979 report, the Council made several recommendations concerning the Teams concept. The areas of concern were: (1) inconsistent implementation plans, (2) minimal use of GS-12's as team leaders, and (3) absentee ratings. The response to the 1979 report indicated that since the system has been in effect for a while, managers have had the opportunity to better define the role of team leaders and to monitor the system. The situation can now be studied to see if GS-12's are being used properly. The Council will continue to monitor the overall Teams situation.

In responding to the Council recommendation that the proposed new performance appraisal system provide for greater involvement by a team member's home unit, the Deputy Comptroller General said that this was being studied by a group of division directors and regional managers. A report was issued listing several alternatives, but no real progress has been made since that report was issued.

The division directors' report recognizes that for a rating system to have credibility it must be jointly performed by team supervisors and an individual's home unit. They state

that the WRO-30 rating form must be discontinued and an appraisal form developed which highlights those objectives most essential to the Teams concept. They do not see this as a difficult task. The Council's responses on this issue can be found in appendix XIX.

The Council recognizes that the rating process is an integral part of the Career Management System. Therefore, the Council recommends that GAO devote the necessary resources to insure that the rating system is changed to correct the weaknesses caused by the Teams concept.

The Council's recommendations on the Career Management System focused on improving the performance appraisal system, staff training, and the career counseling and development system. The Council's concerns regarding the performance appraisal system have not been resolved, but have been identified as an issue in the Division Directors' Group paper. Although additional training programs have been instituted, training for the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales System is yet to be implemented. The Council is aware that a 1-day training class on BARS for all audit staff GS-7 and above is scheduled for September, October, and November with full implementation of this process standard to follow. In addition, the San Francisco Regional Office is working on a results based standard for all staff. The Council looks forward to the implementation of BARS and the results

standard as well as the future development and implementation of a performance standard for non-audit staff. The Council is pleased that a Career Resources Center has been established and is hopeful that the Counseling and Career Development Branch will be successful in assisting managers to institute meaningful career counseling.

GAO has established the Career Resources Center mentioned above to provide employees with assistance in the various stages of the career planning process. Regional managers have been informed of the Center's services. Information packets have been developed for those individuals seeking job placement assistance.

In fiscal 1979, the Council recommended that the GAO insure that health care plans are adequately publicized and available to employees. The Council also suggested that the GAO provide a data sheet whereby an individual could systematically compare various health care plans. Subsequently, Personnel prepared and distributed a Health Care Plan Analysis worksheet, and next year plans to insure that comprehensive health plan information and worksheets are distributed to eligible employees.

The completed Rewards Task Force Report--presented to the Comptroller General in April 1979--has still not been released. The Council has been, therefore, unable to comment on it.

6. Consideration for promotion should occur shortly before an individual has one year in grade so that, when warranted, the promotion occurs as close to the eligibility date as possible.

7. The draft states "At least 3 months must elapse between one unsuccessful evaluation and a reconsideration." However, no time limit is given as to when the manager must complete an evaluation.

8. What measures will be taken to ensure consistent application of these standards, once developed?

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to respond to this draft, and hope you will consider us in the future, as the proposed system moves to a completed system.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

February 22, 1980

TO : Director, Personnel - Felix R. Brandon, II

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council - Mark T. White

SUBJECT: Career Level Council Comments Regarding Auditor/Evaluator
Career Ladder Promotion System.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the "Proposed Auditor/Evaluator Career Ladder Promotion System." As you know, consistent Career Ladder Promotion Criteria has been an issue of great concern to us. Because of past interest, we undertook determining what is presently used at some Regions/Divisions. If you are interested, we would be happy to discuss the results of our preliminary effort.

As for commenting on your proposed system, we are pleased that Personnel is moving toward developing uniform means by which people are promoted in the Career Ladder. At this point, we wish to raise the following substantive concerns:

1. An individual's career goals and interests should be an integral part of job planning and staffing decisions. The proposed system should give more attention to this.

2. We would appreciate it if you would explain more fully how opportunities for experience and training will be linked to individual performance.

3. The document as it now stands does not explain the role of the individual's supervisor in the evaluation process. In some cases, the Resource Manager may not have direct knowledge of an individual's performance. Also, will guidance be provided as to who the "designated Resource Managers" will be?

4. We are assuming the "Unique Critical Job Elements" are samples and not the actual criteria by which a person will be evaluated. The draft, as it stands, does not explain what will be the basis for the "established task and performance standards."

5. When establishing performance standards, will consideration be given to those individuals classified as "evaluators," but do not perform traditional auditing tasks?

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

July 16, 1980

TO : Deputy Director, Personnel - Patricia A. Moore

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council - *Kay Baker*
Kay BakerSUBJECT: CLC response to the Proposed Amendment to GS-2 through 12
Competitive Selection Procedures

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the "Proposed Amendment to GS-2 through 12 Competitive Selection Procedures". CLC recognizes the need to expedite the process of filling vacancies within the agency. Unnecessary delays in processing applicants severely jeopardizes the quality of individuals acquired. We have reviewed the proposed amendment and feel this document will reduce processing time and efforts. We would, however, like to raise the following concerns:

1. Ref: Attachment 1 Change 5.

The recommendation to reduce the size of the panel will expedite the rating process. However, all panel members should be knowledgeable in the subject matter to assure the highest degree of expertise in the selection process.

2. Ref: Attachment 1 Change 5.

Regarding the minority and female composition of the rating panels, it might be more explicit to state: "The teams will assure that in the aggregate, a fair panel representation of women and minority members is achieved".

3. Ref: Attachment 1 Change 6.

This section is unclear. Could you please explain further a "job-element examining system". What criteria is used to establish one?

4. Ref: Attachment 1 Change 8.

For any candidate located in the geographic area, a personal interview is preferable. Personal interviews afford the interviewing official the opportunity to assess professional traits and conduct not transferrable on paper. These characteristics are of vital importance to GAO work. For candidates outside the geographic area, travel arrangements should be instituted where possible.

5. Ref: Attachment 1 Change 9.

An employee selected within GAO should be released for the new assignment at the beginning of the biweekly pay period. This is especially

important where a promotion is involved. Where exceptions occur, a reasonable time period, acceptable to both supervisor and employee, should be established.

In addition we would like to comment on the following points in GAO Order 0825.1:

6. Ref: GAO Order 0825.1 (November 5, 1979) page 4-1 para. 14.
Ensure that the candidate is eligible for the "higher grade" at the time of reentry.

7. Ref: GAO Order 0825.1 (May 19, 1977) page 11 para. 1a.
What is the rationale behind posting GS-13, 14, 15 positions on an intermittent quarterly basis? Is there a problem with posting all positions "as vacancies occur"?

8. Ref: GAO Order 0825.1 (May 19, 1977) page 13 para. 6b.
This still leaves the selection a bit open-ended. The selecting official should be given a specific time frame to make a selection. Officials should request and justify any needed extensions to the time frame.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to respond to this proposed amendment and hope you will consider us if any questions or changes occur.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

MAR 10 1980

TO : Career Level Council Executive Committee - Mark T. White

FROM : Director of Personnel - Felix R. Brandon, II



SUBJECT: Recommended Improvement in the Competitive Selection Process (CSP)

This responds to your February 6, 1980, memorandum, subject as above. As we discussed, I believe that your recommendation that field personnel be permitted to submit applications to their regional offices for resubmission to the Competitive Selection Unit (CSU) has merit but, unfortunately, the disadvantages to such a system presently outweigh the advantages. Specifically, we in Personnel must make qualifications determinations for each person applying for a specific vacancy, and this is done upon receipt of the applications within the CSU. Our ability to spread these determinations over a 30-day announcement period provides for a more steady flow of work through the Unit, but bunching the applications throughout the regional structure could result in our receiving large numbers of applications at infrequent times (e.g., weekly, biweekly). Also, the number of applications for a specific vacancy allows us to indicate the approximate period of time a panel will meet on a specific vacancy, and with that information we can provide to panel members indications as to the length of time they may have to make hotel accommodations or be away from their work sites.

Your recommendation that the names of applicants appearing on each certificate be posted in the appropriate division or regional office is a bit troublesome. The CSP is based on the understanding that the selecting official is one of the few persons with a "need to know" who is on a certificate. Other persons have no official need for the names of persons on a certificate. I recognize that staff does spend an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to determine whose names are on certificates, but many persons who apply for vacancies prefer that neither the fact that they applied nor that they were not selected be open to review by others. Therefore, at this time, I feel that it is inappropriate to change this particular facet of the system.

As you know, I share your concern about various elements of the Competitive Selection Program and look forward to constructive changes to that process. Therefore, I will insure that these recommendations you submitted are considered when the Personnel Task Force is set up to review the CSP. This will possibly be in connection with the new personnel legislation since CSP is one of the driving issues within GAO.

I want to take this opportunity to respond to another matter that has been of concern to your committee and myself, and that relates to the issue of time in grade. As you recall, we were advised that some panelists (and others) claim to have received the impression that persons with over 5 years in grade at GS-12 should be considered at a career dead end. I have attempted to determine whether this alleged statement has been made to panelists or others, but to no avail. I do want to assure you that we have no such discriminatory policy, and will attempt to assure that such an erroneous impression is not communicated to or by panelists. Also, we do have specific guidelines that each personnelist who serves as a panel representative is required to set forth for the panel before entering into the review process but, as you know, a personal perspective can frequently creep into any process. Therefore, to insure that we have a consistent indoctrination program for persons who serve on CSP panels we are planning to develop a video taped orientation of CSP that will be provided to all panel members. Also, this tape will be forwarded to all regional offices so that prospective panel members will have an opportunity to review the tape before they actually serve. This should guard against the problem of inconsistent application of criteria and assure that each person who serves on a panel begins with the same base of information

I appreciate the Council's interest in improving our programs and encourage you to continue to submit suggestions.

cc: Mr. Pin, OCG

Mailed
2/7/80

February 6, 1980

Director, Personnel

Career Level Council Executive Committee - Mark T. White

Recommended Improvements in the Competitive Selection Process (CSP)

Previously, we discussed with you two improvements we feel are needed in the CSP, and at this time we wish to make recommendations for these improvements. First, we recommend that field personnel be permitted to submit applications to their regional offices by the announcement closing date, instead of requiring that applications be received in headquarters by that date. Second, we recommend that the names of applicants appearing on each certificate be posted in the appropriate division or regional office.

The first recommendation stems from the fact that, because of travel requirements, field personnel often fail to receive timely notification of openings, have less time to prepare their applications, and are concerned that their applications will be delayed in the mail, thereby missing an announcement closing date.

The second recommendation stems from the fact that interested staff spend an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to find out who is or is not on a certificate. The fact is that eventually this information usually becomes general knowledge anyway.

We know that management is contemplating other revisions to the CSP. We would appreciate consideration of these additional recommendations as necessary and reasonable measures which could be implemented immediately.

We would appreciate your response on these matters when a decision is made.

MTW:pb

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

February 29, 1980

TO : Chief, Training Branch, PERS - H. Rosalind Cowie

Beth Shultz
for

FROM : Career Level Council, Executive Committee - Mark T. White

SUBJECT: Eliminating the Maximum Amount Allowed for Evening Courses
Under External Training Order 0835.1

The Council strongly urges you to eliminate the \$300 per semester maximum currently allowed for reimbursement of evening college courses under Chapter 2, Section 2f of the External Training Order 0835.1. Rising tuition costs have made it difficult for GAO staff to continue their professional development without increased financial burden. We believe the elimination of the maximum semester amount in favor of a yearly maximum ceiling for external training would be an equitable means of enabling GAO staff to continue their professional development in these times of rapidly increasing costs.

Your comments on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

JH/gcc

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

MAR 14 1980

TO : Career Level Council, Executive Committee - Mark T. White

FROM : Chief, TRNG/PERS - H. Rosalind Cowie
RC

SUBJECT: External Training Order 0835.1

Thank you for your recommendation regarding the \$300 per semester limit on reimbursement for college courses in the Order. The Career Level Council view appears to be quite widely held in GAO and in our revision of the Order we will give serious consideration to this recommendation.

The revised Order will be circulated to regional managers and division directors and to special interest groups such as yours for comment before it is finalized.

Please thank the Executive Committee for their interest in this matter.

cc: David Schwandt
Ruth King

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

JUN 5 1980

TO : Directors, CED, EHD, FPCD, FOD, FGMSD, GGD, UGC, GS&C,
HRD, ID, LCD, PERS, PSAD, PAD

FROM : Career Level Council, Executive Committee - Beth Shoults *Beth Shoults*

SUBJECT: Travel Funds

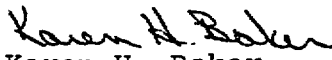
In the past, management has believed, as we do, that training is essential to GAO's long-term goals. Considering the present shortage of travel funds, however, we are concerned that training which involves travel will be severely limited. Because of this concern, we felt that we must express our hope that management will continue to consider training as it relates to the agency's goals when allocating travel funds between training and auditing activities.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

TO : Director, Personnel--Felix Brandon

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council,  Karen H. Baker

SUBJECT: Provision for PPMA Training

The Council recognizes the need for PPMA as a systematic method of planning GAO assignments. However, the Council is aware of variation in the implementation and use of PPMA. The Council believes that communicating PPMA policy, principles, and techniques is critical to its acceptance, uniform application, and effective use throughout GAO.

We recommend that GAO management reemphasize its support for PPMA and reinforce this through adequate training on the use and implementation of PPMA to all professional audit staff.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

JUL 25 1980

TO : Chairperson, Career Level Council - Karen H. Baker

FROM : Director of Personnel - Felix R. Brandon, II 

SUBJECT: PPMA Training

In response to your memo of June 18, 1980, we would like to inform you of the actions taken by the Employee Development Group, Personnel, regarding PPMA Training.

The Training Branch has incorporated PPMA into two of its training programs; "Entry Level Training," and "Auditing and Job Management Skills." These courses discuss the use and implementation of PPMA through lectures and case studies. In addition, the division directors are working on a proposal for the Comptroller General that will present their position on certain aspects of the PPMA program. Once approved, this paper will be given to GAO employees.

If additional information is needed, please feel free to contact Rosalind Cowie, Chief, Training Branch, at 275-6056.

cc: Ms. Moore (Pers)
Mr. Schwandt (Pers)
Ms. Cowie (Pers)

April 29, 1980

Comptroller General - Elmer B. Staats

THRU : Assistant Comptroller General for Administration - Clerio Pin

Career Level Council, Executive Committee - Mark T. White

Fifty Percent Promotion Goal for Women and Minorities
Above the Career Ladder

Your message in the April 8, 1980, Management News, which called for a 50 percent hiring goal for women and minorities above the career ladder, and external certificates for mid- and upper-level management positions, has resulted in strong reactions among career level employees. Opinions on this newly adopted approach to achieve EEO objectives are diverse, ranging from advocacy to resentment. Taking note of this strong staff reaction, the Council felt an obligation to present a number of their views:

- Actions on EEO are long overdue; every effort should be made to enforce the 50 percent promotion goal. It is clear that management has paid lip service to improving GAO's EEO profile and that specific direction from the top was needed.
- The promotional goal recognizes GAO's past failures in affirmative action and its need to improve in this area.
- GAO should use outside certificates to attract upper-level hires. This will immediately improve the Office's EEO profile and provide the opportunity for a much needed outside influence on the organization. However, if that potential benefit is to be realized, GAO must provide adequate training and indoctrination to upper-level hires.
- Upper-level hires may create resentment among the existing staff. The staff is of the opinion that qualified minorities and women already employed by GAO should receive consideration prior to accepting external applications.
- The 50 percent goal implies that our mid-level profile will change immediately. It is, therefore, perceived as an attempt to satisfy numbers rather than to select the best possible candidates. This is creating morale problems and staff resentment, and may ultimately affect the quality of our work.

- The 50 percent goal is perceived to be a quota and, consequently, illegal. This perception may create adverse repercussions, such as reverse discrimination suits.
- Such a procedure is detrimental to EEO. Any promotion of a minority or woman will be questioned and this type of undercurrent cannot foster a proper EEO environment. Some women and minorities feel that the legitimacy of their promotions will be questioned by the staff.
- Our work is very complex and, as reflected by the need for a single agency classification standard, unique. Seeking external applications for mid-level positions implies to the staff that any individual is capable of doing GAO work with very little or no applicable expertise. There is also the perception that experienced GAO staff will carry the load while upper-level hires "learn the ropes."
- The policy appears to be a meat-axe approach to a long existing problem.
- White males feel that their promotion potential has been damaged and that they are bearing the brunt of management's past inaction.

The Career Level Council supports the Office's efforts in seeking equal opportunity for its employees and recognizes the need for affirmative action. However, as previously indicated, career level staff have had varied reactions to the most recent methods used to achieve these goals. The Council believes this memo communicates the reactions of many career level staff and hopes this information will be useful to you in fully considering this policy both now and at the end of the fiscal year, when the policy is scheduled to end.

MTM:bd

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

July 17, 1980

TO : Marie Kliefoth, LMER, Personnel

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council - Karen H. Baker

Karen H. Baker

SUBJECT: Table of Disciplinary Offenses and Penalties

The CLC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the table of disciplinary offenses and penalties. We agree that there is a great need within the organization to promote uniformity in administering disciplinary actions and to establish such guidelines for managers.

However, our constituents find that the document is vague and the penalties severe. They foresee inconsistent interpretation and application of disciplinary action from manager to manager without an appeals process. Also, they believe that the system will require a tremendous monitoring effort by Personnel.

Lack of Background

The CLC feels that further definition and examples of offenses should be provided to managers and supervisors to eliminate any possible misinterpretation. These concerns are best described by the following questions raised by our constituents.

- Does the document apply to managers as well as staff?
- When does the organization start counting offenses; where does counseling fit into the table?
- Will unexcused or unauthorized leave penalties consider emergencies?
- How will Personnel monitor managers and supervisors to insure consistent penalty application?
- What criteria will GAO use to determine the extent an offense affects the image of GAO and who will make that decision?

Penalties

The CLC realizes that the listed offenses are, for the most part, previously stated GAO policy. However, the CLC has difficulty with the

apparent prioritization and severity of the offenses. For example:

- Returning late from lunch four times results in the same punishment--termination--as four fraudulent travel voucher claims, without consideration of the associated costs.
- Insubordination for any work related situation carries a first offense penalty ranging from a reprimand to a 10-day suspension; discrimination penalties range from a reprimand to a 3-day suspension; and sexual harrassment penalties range from a reprimand to a 1-day suspension.

We also question the severity of penalties. Punishment should correspond to the offense and the listed penalties appear harsh. For example the first offense penalty associated with unexcused leave or absence is from oral admonishment to a reprimand. In addition, this document raises legal questions in that the penalty associated with criminal conduct charges or indictment--a 10-day suspension to removal without conviction--may violate due process procedures.

Inconsistent Interpretation and Application

There is a perception among CLC members that inconsistent application of the disciplinary system may result because supervisors and managers are advised, but not required, to contact the appropriate Personnel Team prior to proposing or taking disciplinary action other than oral admonishment. These inconsistent applications will be recognized, questioned and could lead to morale problems.

We also feel that infractions committed by any GAO employee, whether staff or management, should be dealt with in a consistent manner. Deviations, particularly when staff is disciplined and managers are not, would contribute to morale problems.

We believe that any such penalty system should incorporate an employee appeals procedures to further insure consistent application.

Other questions were raised relating to consistency: how do these penalties compare with other agencies and how were the penalties developed and matched with the offenses.

Monitoring

Monitoring by Personnel is necessary to assure consistent application and avoid abuses. But attempting to control disciplinary actions from Washington may result in the same problem GAO is experiencing with staff evaluation under Teams. The organization

recognizes the problem under Teams and we hope monitoring at the regional and headquarters audit site level is being considered to assure fair and consistent enforcement.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment and we hope that the above will aid you in implementing disciplinary actions.

cc: Mr. Pin, OCG

BRIEF REVIEW OF YAC/CLC PROCEDURAL HISTORY AND LIST OF TOPICS STUDIED ANNUALLY

GAO's Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) came into being in response to a memorandum from President Johnson (October 1968) which instructed each federal department or agency to create a committee through which young trainees and professionals would represent various aspects of the systems through which they became a part of the federal system. Because of the political climate and the increasing talk of the "alienation of youth" the President apparently felt a need to provide additional channels for input from young people in the federal service. The President charged these committees with examination of the following:

1. Through what channels does the agency insure that the ideas and suggestions of young employees are solicited and considered by managers with the authority to act?

2. To what extent do career trainees participate directly in the design of their training programs and in the structure of their work assignments?

3. To what extent can young people working in the federal service serve as a link between the government and the student community?

4. How can minority group participation in career trainee programs be increased?

Comptroller General Staats established the GAO YAC in February 1969 in response to the President's memo. The Committee originally worked under the auspices of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM; not to be confused with the current OPM which is government-wide) of GAO and it consisted of 17 professional staff members, GS-7 through 13 and 35 or younger, and 2 advisers from management. Committee members were selected by division management.

During the first meeting held in March 1969, the Committee members established specific objectives which they proposed to accomplish:

"To provide a direct method for career staff members to inform top management of their ideas for improving or implementing practices for accomplishing the purposes inherent in our system (the General Accounting Office system) for recruiting, selecting, placing, training, and utilizing career staff members."

(From The Creation of the General Accounting Office Youth Advisory Committee by James R. Rhodes).

In subsequent meetings, however, the accomplishment of these objectives was further clarified to the extent that the Committee was not to assume an internal audit function.

This later point was frequently emphasized by the management advisers to the Committee. The following is from a June 28, 1971 memo from one of the advisers to Committee members:

"From the Committee's inception, the stated objective has been to offer suggestions or express their (sic) opinions to management, based on their own personal experiences, on various topics within the scope of OPM activities. Also the Committee was not to assume an internal audit function and no audit work or gathering of information to supplement the opinions of the Committee members was to be undertaken."

As a result of such definitions, the way YAC performed its work in the early years was much different than today. The Committee met irregularly (usually 4 times per year) for 2 days at a time to discuss a preselected topic or topics. Committee members were informed of the discussion topic(s) in advance. Minutes

of the meeting were then submitted for approval to the Comptroller General (later^{to} the Deputy CG) in order to advise him and management of Committee views and opinions on the topics discussed.

Because of the discussion-group format, few concrete products (reports or annual reports) other than the minutes, or definitive suggestions, were issued. Committee members apparently frequently expressed frustration with this approach and questioned the Committee's role:

"On a number of occasions Committee members took upon themselves to expand their scope and to conduct audits or reviews within their own divisions and offices and each time met resistance from some of the GAO officials. Each time this happened Committee members were reminded of the scope of their activities.

"The above channeled directions...have caused some of the Committee members to express the view that the Committee is too narrowly focused on matters of interest to the Office of Personnel Management.

"There was also some question on the part of the Committee members whether the Comptroller General desired to obtain the views of the Committee. I assure you that Mr. Staats does seek and welcome your views as has been evidenced by his comments, and by his participation at the Committee meetings." (From memo of June 28, 1971, cited above.)

As a result of the Committee members' questions about the YAC's role, Mr. Staats requested that they examine that role and ways to make YAC operate more efficiently. Based on this examination, and on the process of change that any new organization undergoes, the YAC went through several reorganizations (1971--1974) which resulted in:

- Meetings firmly assigned 4 times per year (1972)
- Officers elected (1972)
- Charter completely rewritten (1974) to delete role of management advisers and expand membership
- YAC to report through the Deputy CG (1974)
- A gradual broadening of YAC's role to include study brought up by committee members and to study such matters more thoroughly (1971-1974).

By the end of 1974, the YAC under its new charter was taking on more comprehensive examinations of problems and offering substantial solutions. The Committee continued to expand its role from 1975 on:

- Minutes of meetings no longer submitted to Deputy CG. Instead, an annual report would be issued; first annual report issued on August 6, 1976 for FY '76 (November 1975)
- Name changed to Career Level Council in FY '77 in recognition of expanded role
- First newsletter issued (January 1978)
- Comprehensive by-laws adopted (April 1979)
- Council increasingly asked to provide representation to GAO Task Forces (i.e., Career Management System Task Force--1977)
- Council testifies on GAO Personnel Legislation (1979)

With this background, a brief summary of topics covered by the YAC/CLC each year follows.

TOPICS

Part of the reason for summarizing procedural history is to make the reader aware that the listing of a topic does not indicate how deeply the YAC/CLC examined it or what, if anything, was recommended in regard to it. In the early years of the discussion-group format, the Committee issued few reports but rather advised management through the minutes of the meetings. Topics were frequently suggested or assigned by management. Particularly in the early years, therefore, although a topic may have been discussed, there may be only scant information in the files on it. Furthermore, the only substantive information on such topics would be in the minutes and since meetings were held irregularly, we cannot easily determine if we have all the minutes and hence information on certain topics. In short, this list may well be incomplete.

FY '70--'71 (includes February--June of FY '69)

- a) Career Counseling--determined there was a lack of professional development coordinator in some regions/offices; problems with career counseling discussed.
- b) Promotions--major problem was Office's failure to communicate what the program for promotions is.
- c) Recruiting--discussed effectiveness of GAO's recruiting program
- d) Staff Evaluations
- e) How to do a better job and do it faster
- f) Use of Audit Technicians at GAO (upward mobility program)

FY '72--'73

- a) Improving the recruiting brochure
- b) Ratings/Appraisals/ Counseling (carryover from lase year)

- c) CG's Task Force on Upward Mobility--a discussion

FY '74

- a) Promotion criteria--differences between regions/offices/divisions
- b) Ratings--criteria lacking, how are these tied to promotions
- c) Travel--examined division/office travel procedures/peculiarities

FY '75

YAC held only 3 meetings in FY '75 due to restrictions in travel funds. In addition, at one of the other meetings, attendance was limited to Washington staff only.

- a) Promotions--policies and procedures; unreasonable time-in-grade criteria; lack of uniformity
- b) Ratings--lack of standard criteria; counseling inadequate
- c) Recruiting--poor information given out on job responsibilities, travel (amount and fact that per diem doesn't cover all expenses)
- d) Travel--weekend return a concern; commented on GAO's revised travel policy
- e) Training--no uniformity of policy; poor allocation of funds by office/division/region
- f) First Year Orientation and Work--too irrelevant (orientation); lack of diversity/opportunities in first and second year assignments

FY '76

- a) Utilization of upper-level hires
- b) Ratings Forms--how used, appropriate?; comments on proposed GS-7 to 13 Performance Appraisal and Promotions Potential System
- c) Recruiting and Orientation--continued work

d) Internal operating policies and objectives--development, communication, and application

e) Information Requests about Employees--how handled

FY '77

a) Employee Training and Development--lack of uniformity in implementation

b) Career Ladder Promotion Criteria

c) Weekend Return

d) Work Environment--examined local awards programs; rotation between HQ divisions and offices; flexible working hours

e) Council Legitimacy--this was an issue either officially or unofficially addressed each year; however, attention it received this year was particularly strong

f) Career Management System--representative provided

FY '78

a) Training--collection and complete review of division/office data on training; urging management to establish official training policy

b) Employee Liability Protection--while using government cars for business

c) Awards--representative on GAO Rewards Task Force; review of unequal distribution of GAO meritorious service awards

d) Improving GAO's Effectiveness--monitoring efforts in several areas: TEAMS (questionnaire on effectiveness); BARS; PPMS--workshops held

e) GAO Personnel Files--survey of policies on official/unofficial personnel files; access, disclosure, disposal of file

f) Employee Suggestion Awards Program--lengthy final disposition time; other problems

g) Job Planning and Staff Assignments-- review and suggestions; review of regional office staff assignemtn systems

FY '79

a) Comments on Papers--comments made by Council on Revised Single Agency Series; OIR Study on Competitive Selection; Issue papers from CSP Task Force; GAO's Personnel Legislation

b) GAO's Task Forces and Study Groups

c) TEAMS

d) Career Management System

e) Career Placement Program

f) Health Care Plan Analysis

Mailed 1/22/80

Comptroller General, Elmer B. Staats

THRU : Deputy Comptroller General, Robert F. Keller

Career Level Council, Mark T. White - Chairman

Need for increased per diem and actual expense allowance

We request your strong support for the General Services Administration (GSA) proposal increasing current per diem and actual expense allowances. GAO employees who travel are expressing increasing concern about using their salaries to pay for officially mandated travel. The GSA proposed over one year ago that the maximum allowances be increased to \$50 for per diem and \$75 for actual expenses. However, the Office of Management and Budget has not yet submitted the GSA proposal to the Congress for the necessary approval.

In addition to the obvious financial inequities, morale can be hurt when staff incur personal expenses for travel. GAO staff recently had to pay over \$50 for hotel rooms in New York City. Washington hotel rates regularly exceed \$40.00 daily. In many rural areas where the per diem rate still applies, hotel rates often exceed \$20.00 leaving less than the amount needed for subsistence.

We have discussed our concerns with GAO staff auditing travel reimbursements (Review of Productivity of Payment Center Travel Processing, 910300) and find no conflicts with their potential recommendations. We do not believe your support for GSA's proposal will affect any potential GAO recommendations for reducing the administrative burdens associated with paying travel expenses.

MTW:dcd

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

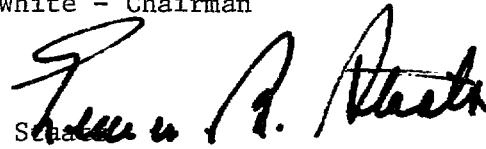
GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

119

TO : Career Level Council, Mark T. White - Chairman

FROM : Comptroller General - Elmer B. Steinhilber



SUBJECT: Need for increased per diem and actual expense allowance

Reference is made to your memorandum of January 22, 1980, asking for my support for the GSA proposal to increase per diem and actual expense allowances for Government employees.

To my knowledge no proposal has been submitted to Congress by GSA. In the event legislation is proposed to increase per diem and actual expense allowances it will be supported by this Office. I am aware of the personal cost borne by many of our staff in performing travel for the GAO.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

TO : Staff Director, SPAS - Joel Dwyer

FROM : Career Level Council, Mark T. White - Chairman

SUBJECT: Draft local travel regulations

The Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft local travel regulation forwarded to us. We have examined the draft and have problems with many parts of the regulation. We believe the proposed regulation will unnecessarily increase administrative costs and paperwork, and will not adequately reimburse staff for costs incurred from local travel. In addition, the proposed regulations appear to be dealing with problems faced in the Washington, D.C. area and not with the variety of other conditions in the 14 regions and numerous suboffices located outside of Washington.

Failure to reimburse staff for costs incurred

We believe a basic principle involved in travel is that a traveler should neither be financially rewarded nor penalized because of the travel assignment. The proposed regulation would, in many cases, penalize the GAO staff. For instance, if a person travels by POV to a temporary audit site, mileage to the official duty station would be deducted from the reimbursement. If common carrier is used, the traveler would deduct common carrier fares to the official duty station from the fares paid. In most GAO offices a large percentage of the staff take public transportation or carpool to the office, at costs substantially less than if they drove their POV. Unfortunately, for many locations outside major cities where GAO offices are located, public transportation is non-existent or totally inadequate, requiring the staff to use a POV to get to the temporary audit site. Requiring a mileage deduction for those who normally take public transportation or carpool to the headquarters office would result in the staff not being paid for the additional costs incurred when the Office is actually benefitting by having the staff members use a POV. We believe a deduction for "normal commuting costs," a concept currently recognized by GAO, is the most equitable method and should be continued.

The draft regulations also provide that the "reimbursable area" covers all locations outside the corporate limits of the official duty station. We disagree with this definition. In many regions, it is common to have a temporary audit site within the corporate limits of the headquarters office, but still quite a distance from the office. It would seem unfair not to reimburse staff members when they are required to drive 25 or 30 miles to a temporary site when they normally take public transportation or carpool to their official duty station. Further, it would

seem that the governing factor for local travel reimbursement would be the additional costs incurred, not where the audit site is located. The same principle should apply to costs incurred to attend training courses and meetings, as well.

Payment of per diem in local travel area

The draft regulations are unclear as to whether per diem or actual subsistence can be paid in the local travel area except in those situations where "temporary duty requires the presence during such hours that makes it impracticable to travel daily between the temporary audit site and residence". As we interpret this provision, only in rare instances could per diem or subsistence be authorized when travel is within 50 miles of the official duty station. We believe this is unreasonable and could force employees to commute long distances daily. We believe local managers should have the option of authorizing staff per diem, especially during the winter months when driving long distances can be hazardous.

We suggest that the draft regulations be modified to give more flexibility in determining when to authorize per diem or actual subsistence.

Use of carpools

The current local travel regulations provide that when staff members carpool to a temporary audit site, no deduction is made for normal commuting costs. We understand this provision was made to encourage carpooling and thus save energy. This is not covered in the draft regulations. We believe that the present regulations in this regard have merit and should be continued.

Excessive travel orders

Under the draft regulation, staff would be required to write travel orders for travel to any temporary audit site located within 50 miles of the corporate limits of their official duty station. Since a lot of our work is done in metropolitan areas but outside the corporate limits of the major city, the number of travel orders written would substantially increase. Further, staff would be required to unnecessarily write many travel orders with no benefit to GAO or the staff.

Lastly, the regulations would have an adverse impact on the morale of both the administrative and audit staff. The increased number of travel orders will result in increased work load for already overburden travel clerks in most offices. Further, time currently used for processing travel vouchers and obtaining hotel and airlines reservations for necessary travel will be used to process local travel orders. As a result, auditors will experience greater time delay in getting their voucher processed and travel arrangements made.

Memorandum

23 JUL 1980

TO : Special Assistant to the Comptroller General - Clifford I. Gould

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council - *Kay Baker*
Kay Baker

SUBJECT: GAO Personnel System

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed rules published in the July 2, 1980, edition of the Federal Register. Since these rules are very general, we only wish to make limited technical comments at this time. However, we expect to offer more extensive comments on the implementing regulations and related procedures. We offer the following comments on the draft regulation:

Section 4.2(a)

--Insert the word "objective" between the phrases, ". . .basis of" and, "job-related criteria," to assure consistency with the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

Section 4.2(b)

--Add at the end of this paragraph, "and the evaluation of the employee's performance as measured against these standards at least annually." This change reflects CLC's July 20, 1979 testimony before the Subcommittee on Civil Service, U.S. House of Representatives.

Section 7.2(b)

"Underrepresentation" should be defined as in 5 USC 7201.

Section 7.6(b) (2)

--Insert the phrase, "but not less than 7 days", between the phrases, "A reasonable time" and, "to answer orally and in writing." This change would be consistent with 5 USC 7513 (b) (2).

Section 7.7

The Comptroller General should promulgate regulations establishing employee grievance procedures. All employees should have the right to appeal the final decision of the grievance procedure to the GAO Appeals Board. This recommendation would be consistent with the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 and reiterates some of CLC's concerns on the GAO personnel legislation.

We hope you will find our suggestions useful. Review of these proposed rules has raised many questions relating to specific features of the new personnel system. The Council recognizes the general regulations are not an appropriate place to address the more detailed questions we have. Therefore the Council has a particular interest in commenting on the implementing regulations and related formal procedures. If we can provide you with any additional information, please feel free to contact me in the San Francisco Regional Office at FTS 556-6200 or Jeff Hart, our ad hoc personnel legislation committee chair in the Denver Regional Office at FTS 327-4621.

cc: Mr. Pin, OCG

April 30, 1980

Special Assistant to the Comptroller General - Clifford I. Gould

Chairperson, Career Level Council - Mark T. White

GAO Personnel Appeals Board Members

This is in response to your memorandum of March 26 requesting the Career Level Council's suggestions on which organizations the Comptroller General should consult when making his selections for the GAO Personnel Appeals Board.

We have reviewed the tentative listing of organizations noted in your memorandum and are pleased that such a broad spectrum of groups will be presented for the Comptroller General's consideration.

The Career Level Council would like to recommend that in addition to the groups listed, the Comptroller General should also consider the American Society for Personnel Administration and the International Personnel Management Association. Both of these organizations are widely respected within the field of personnel management and would permit the Comptroller General a wider and more diverse field from which to make his selections.

We look forward to working with you during the consultation process on the selection, nomination, and appointment of individuals to the GAO Appeals Board. If we can provide you with any additional information, please contact me in the Dallas regional office at FTS 729-2020.

MTW:bd

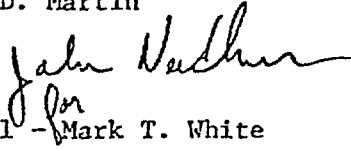
UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

MAY 1 1980

TO : Chairman, SES Committee - James D. Martin

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council -  Mark T. WhiteSUBJECT: Council Comments on Draft Order Establishing GAO's
Senior Executive Service

Thank you for providing the Council with the opportunity to comment on the draft order establishing GAO's Senior Executive Service.

The draft order as written provides a clear framework for implementing the Senior Executive Service. However, the Council's principal concern is not with the mechanics of SES, but rather, with the standards that will be used to evaluate an executive's performance. Since the draft contains little detail on these standards, the Council feels that it cannot provide meaningful comments at this time, but welcomes the opportunity to comment on the SES performance standards when they become available.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Memorandum

TO : Director, HRD

FROM : Chairperson, Career Level Council - *Karen H. Baker*
Karen H. Baker

SUBJECT: Comments for the Division Directors' Group

The Career Level Council welcomes the opportunity to provide comments for consideration by the Division Directors' Group in responding to the Comptroller General's June 4 memorandum. Since late in 1979, the Council has been working on many of the issues involved, particularly project teams concept, program planning/subject matter expertise, and Job Scheduling and Staffing System. Our comments are contained in the attachments, which correspond to the organization of the Group report.

However, we believe there are far more fundamental issues involved that transcend and vitally affect those raised in the report; issues that go to the heart of Teams and GAO operations. Before GAO makes further changes to operating procedures, the Council feels two basic questions must be answered: Can a matrix management system work within GAO 1/ and, if so, what changes to the organizational structure or methods are needed to ensure efficient operations?

In answer to the first question, there is much evidence suggesting that matrix management has not worked: underutilization of staff at all levels, a decline in morale, and a belief that our job product quality has slipped. Have these occurred because Teams has not been correctly implemented or because there is a fundamental conflict within the matrix when authority lines diverge and responsibilities are split between two masters?

If there is an irreconcilable conflict between the matrix system and effectively running jobs, then we must move away from the matrix system. If we conclude that teams can work, we must answer the second question of what kind of changes are needed in our current implementation of teams or in our basic organizational structure. In other words, how can our organization be adapted to meet team needs rather than the reverse? The Division Directors recognized this problem when they wrote

1/We have defined matrix management as the division of technical responsibilities and resource management responsibilities among units.

in a draft paper: "We did not believe our charter permitted us to examine alternatives involving reorganization and/or changes in the personnel structure of GAO . . . such changes may offer more promise for meaningful improvement than the options we considered . . . the division of responsibility for the technical aspects of our work and the personnel function will probably continue to present management problems."

GAO has been in a continual state of change for several years. We have tried to superimpose a matrix management system over the existing organization structure without full recognition of its affect on the operating subsystems such as the performance evaluation system and the staff development and supervision requirements. We have then tried to forcibly fit Teams into those existing structures by using a piecemeal approach to problem solving, failing to recognize the inter-relationships among subsystems (i.e., that a change to one subsystem necessarily affects them all).

To properly perform a resource management role, regional management requires the control necessary to monitor staff and guarantee job quality and the resources to properly carry out those functions; and regional management must be held accountable for the results. The crucial questions become, How much control is needed and to what extent does that control impinge upon the insulation of the Team and the accomplishment of job objectives?

The Council believes these questions must be resolved before substantive changes like those in the Group report are made. The Council recognizes that the Directors' Group consciously chose not to address these more fundamental questions because of the impending appointment of a new Comptroller General. We believe that the Group should study the implications of these questions and develop alternate plans of action for the new Comptroller General's consideration. GAO must recognize the conflicts inherent in matrix management as contrasted with traditional lines of authority and responsibility, and develop its subsystems to minimize those conflicts.

If Teams has not been implemented correctly, the effective implementation of the draft GAO order and the Directors' option 5 with some modifications appear to offer the most promise for improvement given the current organizational constraints.

Attachment

cc: Mr. Pin, OCG

Part 1

Draft Order on the
Role of Regional Offices

The proposed draft order is a positive step towards clarifying the role of regional management under Teams. Accordingly, a GAO order describing this role should be comprehensive enough to address the real underlying issues which cause the Project Teams Approach to be less effective, or even troublesome, from a regional viewpoint.

We believe the draft order is lacking in some areas. It fails to address regional management's difficulty in assuming a technical assistance role when it does not have sufficient control over resources and accountability for products. These constraints, we feel, need to be recognized more fully.

There is also a perception by some FOD staff that regional management inconsistently monitors the work of their teams. Their involvement ranges from little or no job-related activities to being an "overactive" participant. And, conversely, the regions cannot be expected to assume responsibility for the quality of work, as specified in paragraph 7, when they are not provided the means to do so. Providing the staff who can "perform the work at the right time and the right place" will not always guarantee product quality. Regional management needs a more definitive statement on the extent to which monitoring should be accomplished.

Part II

Proposed Adjustments in the Project Team Approach Concept/Rules

The Council agrees with the Division Directors Group's opinion that not enough attention has been given to tailoring job management to the specific needs of the job and personnel capabilities. We concur with the conclusion that the implementation of Teams has been too rigid and support the recommendation for greater flexibility in structuring the management of new jobs. As stated previously, however, the Council has reservations about whether Teams and our current organizational structure are compatible; nevertheless, the Council sought an option which would permit the most flexibility given GAO's present organizational structure.

It would be difficult for anyone to argue with the objectives sought by Teams of (1) having clearly defined lines of responsibility and authority, (2) minimizing levels of supervision and review, and (3) insulating the project team staff to the extent necessary and feasible while maintaining the level of quality desirable. There are concerns, however, that Teams, as implemented, has resulted in a lack of adequate day-to-day supervision at the expense of the quality of our work in the long term. (Since the Division Directors' Group focused on the regions, and the problems discussed appear more acute for the regions, our comments refer primarily to the regional offices. However, staff in the divisions are also affected by remote supervision and, where appropriate, our comments apply to divisions as well.)

Teams has sometimes resulted in absentee supervision. The role of the regional office has been greatly diminished and, as a result, staff have been cut adrift from regional management and left without necessary day-to-day supervision when needed. It is infeasible from a management and quality-of-life point of view to expect a team leader, separated by vast geographic distance, to provide the supervision necessary for further development of team staff. As a result, regional management must include in its monitoring role, as defined in the draft FOD order, the provision of guidance and supervision to its staff assigned to a team.

Regional responsibility for monitoring staff and assuring the quality of regional products also requires resource managers to be familiar enough with each job to be able to identify problems and to bring their concerns to the team leadership. An assumption underlying the move to Teams was that regional review of products caused unnecessary delay. There is little evidence to show that officially removing the regions' responsibility has significantly speeded job completions, and it is unlikely that unnecessary additional delays will occur if regional management carries out its monitoring responsibilities properly.

It is the Council's opinion that all of the options, option five (with some modification) offers the most promise for improvement. Given organizational constraints, option 5 retains, and in some cases enhances, the good points listed for the Directors' chosen option. And, most importantly, it overcomes the bad points of the prior options. In particular, option 5 retains the use of the Teams concept on all jobs.

Concerning the "bad" points of option five as presented by the Division Directors' Group, we have the following comments:

- The Group noted that it creates a situation of ambiguity in which the team leader doesn't really know who his/her master is. We would point out that this situation will always exist with a matrix management approach, and complete alleviation would require an organizational restructuring. It is our opinion that option five will do the most to reduce the ambiguity if specific criteria are developed outlining the monitoring role of the regional offices as presented in the draft FOD order.
- The Group noted that criteria necessary for establishing monitorship are not spelled out. Because resource managements' monitoring responsibilities are inherent ones, we do not see these responsibilities as peculiar to this option. We believe Regional management should be able to call on GS-14's to assist in fulfilling this function as needed. The degree of involvement should be decided by regional management, who has the most knowledge about the capability of its staff.
- The Group noted that option five limits maintenance of the subject matter expertise needed for useful input into program planning and job performance. We feel that this limitation can be eliminated by assigning a GS-14 in a monitoring role to teams working in areas which were the issues areas of the GS-14 concerned, and thereby permit the GS-14 the opportunity to continue developing his/her subject matter expertise by functioning as team leader in the area. The achievement of this objective will require less rigidity in the JSSS to allow assignment as a supervisor in one's issue area.
- The Group noted that the option limits capability to make equitable merit pay decisions or credible staff evaluations. We disagree with this conclusion: regional management will be responsible for making the merit pay decisions, and they need to be close enough to the job and the people to have a basis for making these decisions. If regional management cannot adequately assess the performance of the staff without being "in the line," the Teams concept should be scrapped.

The Council has many concerns about the option proposed by the Division Directors Group. The following are our major concerns about this option:

--It appears to be a selective audit manager concept. Our constituents overwhelmingly believe that the proposed option differs little from the old audit manager concept even though the paper makes considerable effort to show otherwise.

--As mentioned in the Group's Paper, some definitive, documentable criteria must be developed to be used as guidance as to when a job should be done under a team or modified team approach. Our constituents feel that this will result in GS-14's being placed in the line more often than necessary, since to do otherwise would be a public pronouncement that a GS-13 or 12 could not handle a particular assignment (even though they were promoted to these levels based on their capabilities). As a result, the role and responsibilities of GS-13's and 12's will be diminished.

--It will not provide clearly defined lines of responsibility and authority. Further, assigning titles, whether at the team leader or sub-team leader level, to people who only function part time in that capacity is not consistent with the team concept and seriously adds to confusion regarding responsibility.

--It essentially duplicates the resource management function provided by Section 6 of the GAO order. The regions will be responsible for monitoring jobs and staff development needs and for identifying and surfacing problems. If the regions do this properly, there should be no need for adding part-time supervisors.

--It will continue and probably increase the problem associated with inconsistencies in the use of titles under teams. In the example in the document, the roles of team leaders and sub-team leaders vary dramatically depending on which job a person worked on or which region or division an individual is from. These inconsistencies will pose a real problem for the competitive selection process.

--It does not provide any clear solutions related to problems of remote supervisors and the interrelationship of the home unit and team.

--Finally, under this option it is possible that individuals inserted in the Team chain to provide both job quality assurance and employee development functions may be mostly concerned with the job quality function because of the limited amount of time they will be devoting to the job.

Part III

Regional Office Participation in Program Planning and Developing Subject Matter Expertise

We agree with the Division Directors that regions should be more formally involved with program planning and that the subject matter knowledge/expertise developed and maintained by the regional offices is an invaluable resource to GAO. Such knowledge is critical to effective program planning, coordination of on-going assignments, and the successful, timely completion of jobs. The Council began work on subject matter expertise in the fall of 1979. We consider subject matter expertise to be a prerequisite to effective input for program planning, and this part incorporates our comments in both areas.

However, discussions with regional management, issue area coordinators, and staff revealed a widespread feeling that the maintenance and use of subject matter expertise was lacking and adversely affecting the quality, timeliness, and relevance of GAO work. It was felt that the great wealth of on-site experience, knowledge, and perspective present in the field has only been haphazardly tapped by headquarters.

There are many institutional as well as personal factors constraining the full use of subject matter expertise. The major roadblocks seem to be:

- Management Support. The operating divisions vary significantly in their acceptance and use of the field's knowledge base. Personal relationships seem to be major factors in determining which regions provide input, in what areas, and to what degree. Regional office management also vary in their support of subject matter expertise due to job constraints and their perceived roles in program planning.
- Job Scheduling and Staffing System. The demands of JSSS in many instances work against the ability to develop, maintain, and use subject matter expertise. Cascading priorities, staff year allocations by lines-of-effort, staff availability, lack of administrative codes, etc. limit the ability of both regions and divisions to control and manage staff time for planning and studying issue areas.
- Project Teams Concept/Rules. Teams diminishes the ability to develop issue area expertise. It requires 100 percent dedication of time and reduces regional involvement in staff management, job planning, and technical assistance. It also mandates performance evaluations based solely on job products rather than job contributions.
- Competitive Selection Process. CSP may discourage staff from spending time on non-team roles and also may discourage continuous

participation in a chosen area. The connection between specialized knowledge and promotion potential is unclear.

Currently, each region has formally or informally adopted its own approach to developing and maintaining knowledge, including: (1) establishing and supporting issue area coordinators in major workload areas, in subjects of interest, or because of geographical considerations; (2) dedicating a certain percentage of staff time to be spent on maintaining knowledge, coordinating on-going jobs, and program planning; (3) developing core groups and specialization; and, (4) using ARMs and ARM assistants as primary issue area managers. All four approaches have some merits and some drawbacks within the present organizational structure.

The Council believes that continued development of expertise and strong organizational support and direction is needed to effectively incorporate subject matter expertise into the way GAO does business. Specifically,

--The regional role in maintaining and using expertise for program planning and job accomplishment should be acknowledged and actively supported by every office and explicitly internalized into operating procedures.

--The Teams approach should provide for team leader participation in issue area planning and scoping and maintenance of subject matter expertise. 1/

--JSSS should have increased flexibility to allow more discretion and control in staff continuity and assignment ("letting managers manage"). See also p. 7 of this report for more recommendations on JSSS.

--CSP and career development activities should acknowledge and encourage staff to develop special skills and knowledge. If this is done, however, it is even more critical to ensure each division and regional office is equally involved in the process, or competitive disadvantages may occur.

The Council believes these and other actions taken to strengthen regional office subject matter expertise will contribute to a more effective GAO.

1/The modification to the Teams approach suggested by the Council permits a regional TL/TD to divide between job and issue area responsibilities.

Part IV

Relationship of the Job Scheduling and Staffing System to Office Planning

The Career Level Council has been studying the Job Scheduling and Staffing System (JSSS) prior to the Division Directors' Group's request for our comments. We believe that modifications are needed since we have observed many instances where people are not assigned where they can be best used. Staff perceive that current rigidities in the assignment process force less than ideal management decisions. A major rigidity in the staffing process appears to be the requirement that the staff assigned must be available on a specific date, i.e., the 30 day window.

This rigidity results in reduced morale and staff who do not perform at their maximum potential. Assignment of staff with limited experience, but who are available, may delay audit completion until they obtain the needed background. If a mismatch results in staff assigned to a city where other GAO staff already live, audit costs are increased. If management is limited in its flexibility in making staffing assignments, then staff may not receive needed developmental experiences. Thus, staff morale deteriorates, report completion is delayed, and costs increase.

The CLC feels that it is desirable to have some staff continuity in certain issue areas in the regions as well as in the divisions. JSSS does not give enough emphasis to the importance of maintaining existing subject area expertise in the field. Because regional staff currently do not know what issue areas will have continuous on-going work in their home unit they cannot make informed decisions as to what expertise to pursue. This results in (1) the failure to develop potential expertise in the regions and (2) morale problems for field staff who have developed expertise but then have not been able to work in their issue area. We would like to see some more opportunities for field staff, both supervisors and experienced journeypersons, to develop and maintain issue area expertise. Such expertise can reduce the time needed to identify issues and complete audits by months for a long, complex audit.

Travel assignments, particularly long ones in cities where other GAO auditors live, can seriously hurt morale and increase overall audit costs. Extensive travel can add substantially to the completion date. The quality-of-life impacts of extended travel, which affects attrition, can be significant. Such delays and additional costs may negate any benefits from starting the audit earlier.

Management's efforts to guarantee staff career development opportunities can be frustrated when they are limited in the assignments an individual can be placed on. Needed opportunities to supervise, perform initial scoping work, audit technically challenging subjects, or participate in writing a final report may be lost in the practical constraints of our staffing system.

The CLC believes these problems can be reduced and management better meet their goals if steps are taken to build more flexibility into the JSSS. The JSSS should be modified to give greater weight for:

- retaining functional expertise and allowing people who propose an audit to work on it,
- avoiding travel costs, especially when extensive travel is required to locations having permanently assigned GAO staff, and
- allowing managers greater flexibility in providing staff developmental experiences.

The rigidities in the staffing process have been reduced in the past. For example, the recent travel fund crisis served to indicate that management can assign greater priorities towards avoiding travel unless absolutely necessary. However, these recent efforts were only temporary. We believe efforts such as those resulting from the travel fund crisis should be used to assure better matching of staff and assignments.

We believe such efforts would include increasing the consideration period for assigning staff from the current 30 days to a more extended period. Staff could be effectively utilized during these periods by:

- working on a short segment on another assignment until the desired audit is initiated,
- performing planning work on a discretionary code,
- referencing other reports,
- giving or receiving training, and
- participating in community development activities.

Such duties have been, and are now being, conducted on a limited basis. We suggest that greater emphasis be placed on interim, or short term, assignments in an effort to assure that issue expertise be maintained, travel costs minimized, and staff developmental experiences enhanced.

Part V

Other Issues

We agree with your concerns that competitive selection, non-team roles, and performance evaluations need additional management attention.

Competitive selection concerns

We are very interested in being involved in any re-evaluation of the Competitive Selection Process. During the last few years we have contacted personnel with a number of related concerns, including that:

- CSP is title sensitive. Many Panel members judge applicants based on job-titles, not necessarily on the complexity of the job.
- CSP involves excessive paperwork and high travel and staff costs.
- The CSP, as it now functions, creates prolonged stress for a large percentage of applicants.
- Many vacancies are perceived as preselected.

Recognition for non-team roles

We agree that there is a problem in recognizing non-team roles of staff. We would like to point out that this applies to career ladder staff as well as grades 13 through 15 (see page 3 of Division Directors' "note to respondents"). In the opinion of the CLC, non-team roles can refer to either a full-time position (e.g., training coordinator) or part-time (e.g., CLC or Mid-Level Forum representative). The importance of these roles as career development experiences should be stressed by management and there should be formal recognition of these roles in the competitive selection system.

Team and home unit performance appraisals

We recognize the need for the combined input of both team and home unit management into employees' performance appraisals. We hope that any system providing for input from both parties avoids being so burdensome on the organization as to blur lines of responsibility and authority and add unnecessary layers of supervision and review.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

January 29, 1980

Memorandum

TO : Chair, Career Level Council -- Mark White

FROM : Deputy Comptroller General -- Robert F. Keller

SUBJECT: Update to Career Level Council Annual Report for
Fiscal Year 1979

Since our meeting in the fall of 1979 to discuss your annual report, there have been further developments in some of the areas addressed.

The present status of these matters follows:

Teams

Since the teams concept has been in operation for some time now, managers have had the opportunity to better define roles of team leaders. Job Assignment Criteria were established and officially implemented in the fall of 1979, and have been used both to determine grade level of team leader assignments and to monitor and evaluate frequency and patterns of team leader grade structures. Studies made prior to the implementation of the Criteria package and data resulting since its use show that the most frequent grade levels for team leader positions are GS-13 and GS-14, depending on the relative scope and complexity of the project. The use of the GS-12 level for team leader has been found to be limited. Usually GS-12's operate in a subordinate leadership role (e.g., sub-team leader) for a small segment of a project, or as a senior member of a team.

However, division directors are now giving even closer attention to the use of GS-12 team leaders to determine if they are being utilized as originally intended and to ensure that such assignments are equitably made, to the extent possible.

Absentee Supervisor

Mr. Elmer Taylor, Cincinnati Regional Office, has briefed all division directors on the problem of absentee ratings by supervisors. As a result of this meeting, a subcommittee was formed made up of the following people: Clerio Pin, Frank Fee, Bill Martin, Elmer Taylor, Dick Gutmann, Henry Eschwege and Phil Bernstein. The subcommittee has had several meetings to discuss alternative approaches to address this problem. A meeting is now planned in February 1980, to discuss the alternatives with division and office directors and to make recommendations.

Career Management System (CMS)

The program plan for the Career Management System is being developed and when that is completed, there will be a special issue of the Management News to inform the GAO workforce of the major components of the system.

The audio-visual portions of the 1-day Performance Appraisal Training package have been scripted. The video portion of the training program is just now being developed as delays occurred due to the Audio-Visual staff's work on the Project Planning and Management Approach (PPMA) taping project. The training will be delivered to trainers shortly after this taping is completed, currently scheduled for April 1980. All supplemental materials for the Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) system, including task and performance standards, as well as the rating form itself, have been finalized.

The Skills for Performance and Career Development (SPCD) program implementation has begun in all regions and 11 divisions. As of February 1980, approximately 80 sessions have been held, training over 1,000 GAO staff members.

Although quantitative analysis of the SPCD evaluations is incomplete, written and verbal responses from the participants indicate that the program is being well received by all levels of staff. The first computerized results are expected in February.

Currently, plans are being made to adapt the SPCD program for GAO's non-auditing populations. SPCD for non-auditors is expected to be on line within 6 months. Plans are also being made to develop a follow-up program to reinforce the SPCD skills.

The draft report on the findings of the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for clerical/secretarial employees will be delivered to the Task Force on January 30. Shortly thereafter, this document will serve as the basis for the redesign and development of a more comprehensive, needs-based training program for clerical employees. Work continues on the redesign and development of training programs based on the TNA for auditors. To date, the Entry Level Training, Elements of Supervision, and Power courses have been redesigned and are being delivered throughout the agency. A complete TNA based redevelopment of the Operational Auditing course and Upper Level Orientation is now in progress.

Career Placement Program

The Counseling and Career Development Branch (CCD) has set up a number of programs which have been implemented in addition to individual counseling. One of the major programs has been the establishment of a Career Resource Center which provides assistance to employees in the various stages of the career planning process. Information on the Center was presented in the November 1979, issue of "The Bulletin," a quarterly newsletter put out by Personnel on all Employee Development activities. Brochures on the Center have been prepared and will be mailed out during the 2nd quarter of FY 1980. We are also planning to have an official opening of the Center in February 1980. Information on the Center has been packaged and will be delivered to all regions in the near future.

Also, CCD has developed two career development workshops. The Career Development Workshop helps employees understand and apply the principles of the career planning process, and the Career Development Orientation for Managers assists managers in understanding and using the career planning process with their employees. These programs were also advertised in the November 1979 issue of "The Bulletin."

In addition to these activities, the branch has set up a liaison program with all divisions and offices. Staff members in the branch have contacted all of our divisions, offices and regions to inform them of the assistance available on matters relating to counseling or career development activities.

Outplacement Assistance

We have developed information packets that are available in the outplacement office and they are being brought to the attention of individuals seeking outplacement assistance.

Health Care Plan Analysis

Personnel distributed, during the first week of Open Season, a work sheet which employees could use in assessing the relative merits and demerits of plans in which they were interested. We believe that health care plan pamphlets were distributed in a more timely manner in 1979 than they had been in 1978. Washington headquarters employees received their pamphlets before Open Season began. Employees at Washington metropolitan area audit sites and regional offices should have received their pamphlets either a few days before or a few days after the start of Open Season, and it is possible that employees in some remote field locations received their material up to a week or 10 days after Open Season began.

We purchased several copies of the Washington Checkbook's comparative study of health plans applicable to Federal employees in the Washington metropolitan area and made them available for review in the Labor Management and Employee Relations Branch, and we "advertised" this service in the Management News.

Next year, Personnel plans to insure that comprehensive plans are distributed to eligible employees and to distribute the work sheet as part of the Open Season package.

Employee Suggestion Awards Program

In the near future, we plan to evaluate the impact of recent changes to the Employee Suggestion Awards Program, giving particular attention to processing time. A system for follow-up on suggestions being evaluated was effected, is being actively pursued, and has proven to facilitate prompt processing. Credit should also be given to the Office of Administrative Services (OAS) which has been extremely supportive of our efforts to respond to suggestions in a more efficient and timely manner.

GAO Personnel Legislation

The House approved our bill on October 15, 1979. On December 20, 1979, it was favorably reported by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee with Senate approval expected prior to February 1, 1980. By February 15, 1980, we anticipate that the House will approve the Senate version of the bill. Therefore, a plan to implement our own personnel system is currently being developed and will subsequently be communicated to all employees. There will be an opportunity for contribution to the design of the personnel system by employee groups, managers, employees, and supervisors.

Employee Liability Protection

A revised GAO order on Employee Liability Protection is now being reviewed in Personnel and by early February should be forwarded to the Office of Administrative Services for printing and distribution.

Hopefully, this update will prove useful to the Council and we appreciate the interest and support shown by all of you.

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