

# Reduction in Force RIF Mechanics Part 2

March/April 2025



## The Reduction in Force (RIF) Learning Series

RIF Policy Advisory Team

Workforce Policy and Innovation

U.S. Office of Personnel Management

# Housekeeping Items

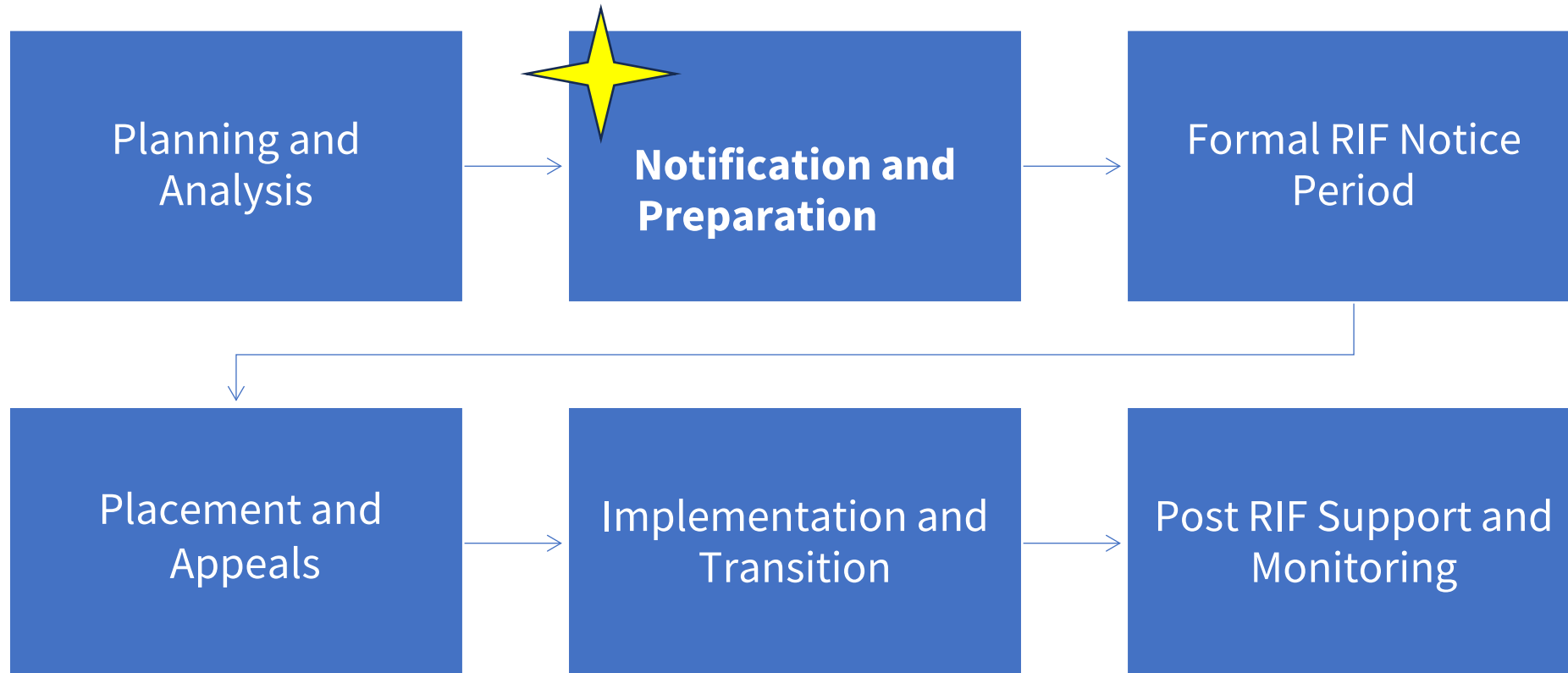
- A copy of the presentation will be posted on OPM's [Reductions in Force \(RIF\)](#) Resources and Templates page.
- Ask questions in the Q&A, but please wait until a topic is covered so you're not posting a question that's already been answered. We have built in time at appropriate points to take questions.
- We'll respond to as many questions as we can; however, we cannot answer agency-specific scenario questions.
- We are recording today's session and will post the recording at a later date on OPM's [Reductions in Force \(RIF\)](#) Resources page.

# Agenda

- Key Terms
- Retention Factors and Retention Registers
- Assignment Rights (Bump and Retreat)
- RIF Notices
- Wrap-up: Final Questions & Resources

# Key Terms

# RIF Process



# Key Terms in RIF (1 of 2)

- These terms apply mainly to RIF:

Competitive area (\*\* *Organizational or Geographical*)

Competitive level

Retention factors

Retention register

- Positions in the competitive area are organized by competitive levels
- Retention factors are then applied to each potentially affected employee in that competitive area to create a retention register.

\*\*Organizational- a subdivision of the agency under separate administration. Geographical – by commuting area (could be local commuting area or nationwide)

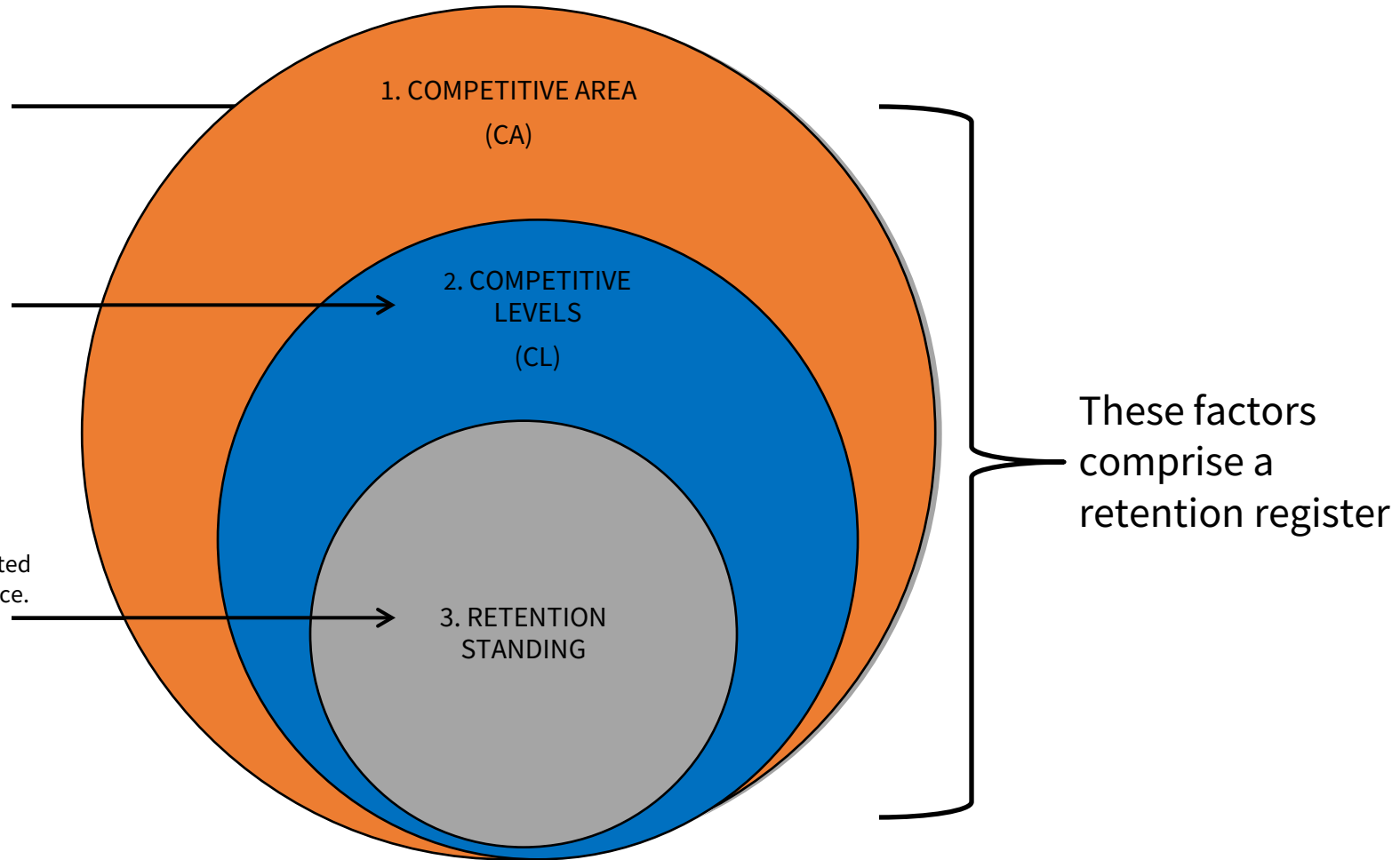
# Key Terms in RIF (2 of 2)

Scope of RIF competition

Within the CA, positions are grouped by pay plan, series, grade, similar quals, work schedule, and type of service\*

\*for excepted service, levels are further separated by appointment type within the excepted service.

Within each CL, employees are placed in retention standing order



# The Mechanics of RIF – Part 2



# Retention Factors and Retention Register

# Retention Factors

Within a Competitive level, in a Competitive Area, employees are arranged in order of four retention factors:

1. Tenure (e.g., career, career-conditional)
2. Veterans' Preference
3. Length of Service
4. Length of service as adjusted for Performance Credit

# 1. Tenure Groups

## **Competitive service**

I = Career

II = Career-conditional

III = Term, Indefinite

## **Excepted service**

I = Permanent

II = Serving trial period

III = Time-limited, Indefinite

Note: Most temporary employees are in Tenure Group 0 (no RIF rights)

## 2. Veterans' Preference for RIF

Veterans' preference for RIF requires release or discharge from active duty from the armed forces under honorable conditions, **and:**

Served during the period 04/28/52 to 07/01/55;

Served for more than 180 consecutive days during the period 01/31/55 before 10/15/76; or between 09/11/01 and 08/31/10;

Served between 8/2/90 to 1/2/92;

Received a campaign badge or expeditionary medal;

Has a service-connected disability;

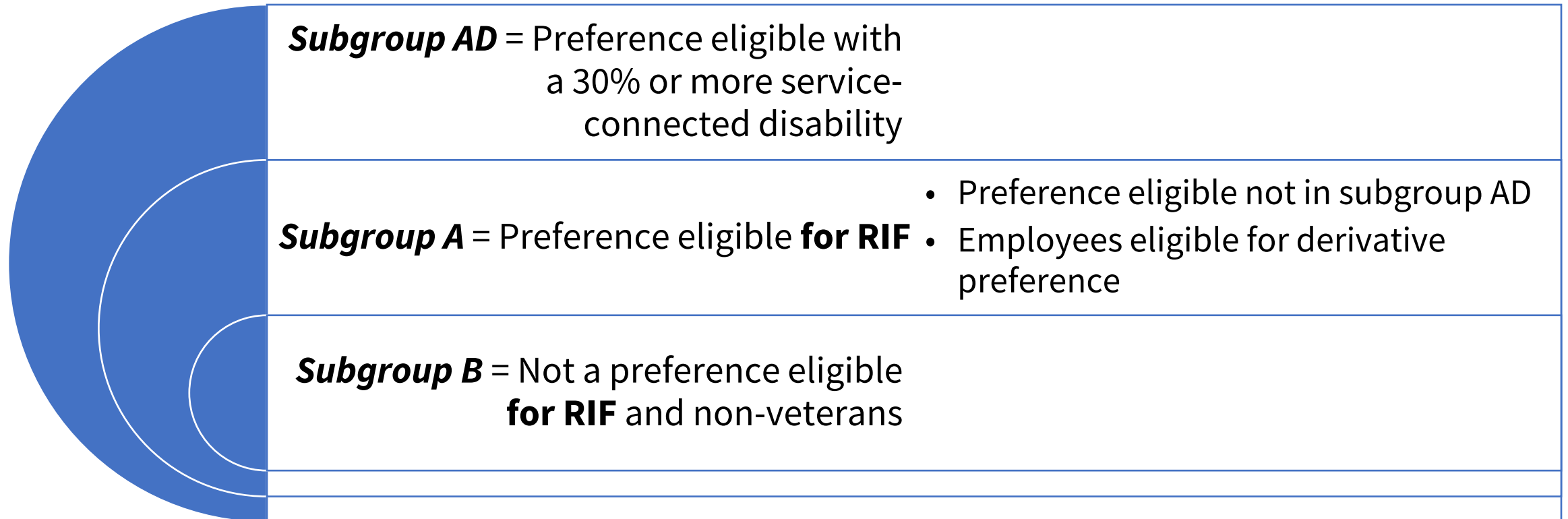
Is entitled to derived preference (spouse, widow, widower, and parent); **or**

Is entitled to Sole Survivorship preference per 5 U.S.C. 2108(3)

## 2. Veterans' Preference for RIF (2 of 2)

- A military retiree below the rank of major is not a preference eligible **for RIF** unless:
  - Retirement was based on combat disability; or
  - Retirement was based on less than 20 years of service; or
  - Retiree has been a Federal employee continuously since 11/30/64
- A military retiree at/above the rank of major is not a preference eligible **for RIF** unless:
  - They are disabled veterans as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2108(2) (includes XP, CP, and CPS); and
  - Meet the criteria above for those retired below the rank of major

# Veterans' Preference Subgroups



# Questions

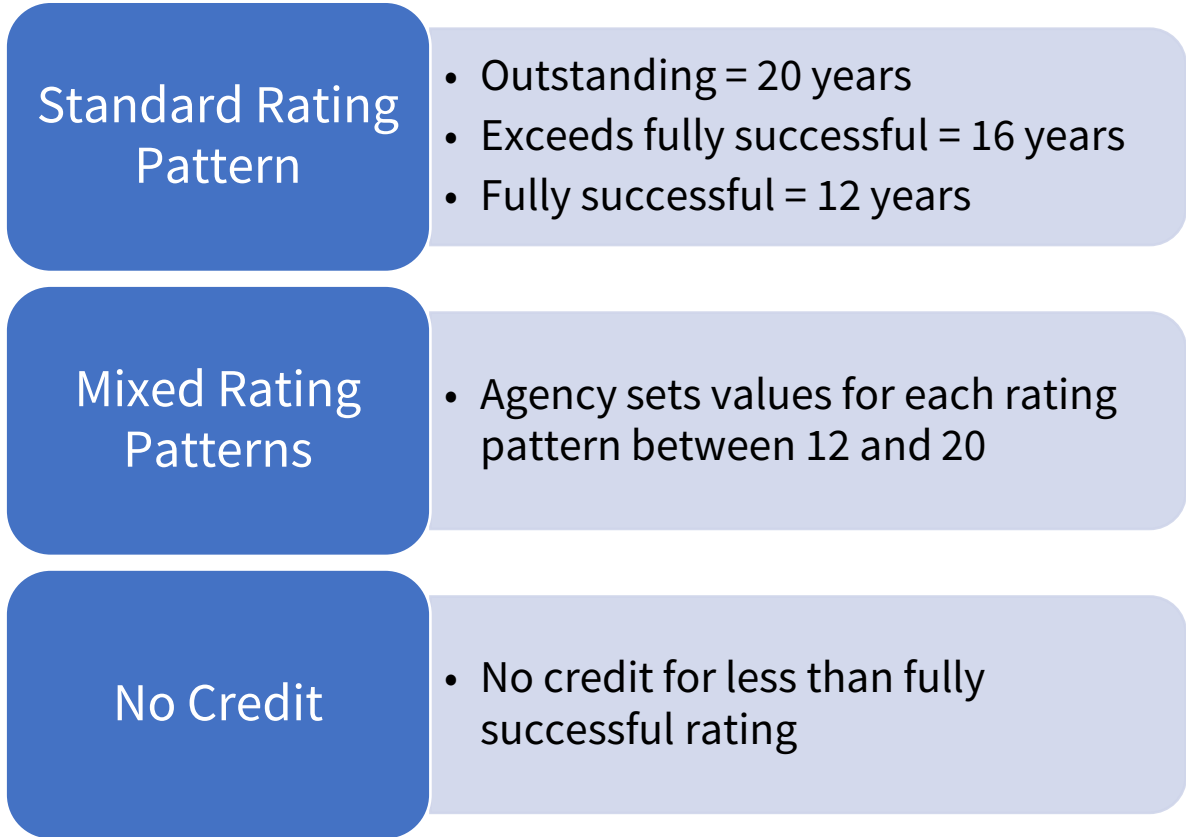
### 3. Length of Service – Creditable for RIF

- **Total** Federal and military service (not just service in the current agency)
  - Retired military service is limited to only service in a war or campaign or expedition
- Service Computation Date (SCD)
- “Length of Service” is sometimes referred to informally as “seniority”



# 4. Performance Credit

- Credit assigned to the three most recent ratings of record received within the previous 4 years.
- Each rating equals a number of years' credit.
- Rating credits are averaged and rounded up to the next whole number.



# Performance Credit – Patterns of Summary Levels

Pattern	Summary Level				
	1	2	3	4	5
A	X	-----	X		
B	X	-----	X	-----	X
C	X	-----	X	X	
D	X	X	X		
E	X	-----	X	-----	X
F	X	X	X	-----	X
G	X	X	X	X	
H	X	X	X	X	X

Source: 5 CFR 430.208(d)

# Example of Establishing Service Credit with Multiple Patterns of Summary Levels

	Level 1 (Unacceptable)	Level 2 (Minimally Satisfactory)	Level 3 (Fully Successful)	Level 4 (Exceeds Fully Successful)	Level 5 (Outstanding)
Rating Pattern A	0	n/a	16 years	n/a	n/a
Rating Pattern B	0	n/a	14 years	n/a	18 years
Rating Pattern C	0	n/a	14 years	17 years	n/a
Rating Pattern D	0	0	16 years	n/a	n/a
Rating Pattern E	0	n/a	12 years	16 years	20 years
Rating Pattern F	0	0	14 years	n/a	18 years
Rating Pattern G	0	0	14 years	17 years	n/a
Rating Pattern H	0	0	12 years	16 years	20 years

**Provided as an example.** Agencies have the discretion to set the number of years of service credit for each rating pattern, A-G, which must be uniformly and consistently applied within a competitive area.

# Performance Credit – Missing Ratings

## *Less Than Three Ratings of Record.*

If an employee received one or two, but not three ratings of record during the applicable 4-year period, the agency gives credit for performance on the basis of the actual rating(s) of record divided by the number of actual ratings received.

- Example

Rating 1: Fully Successful = 12 years

Rating 2: Exceeds Fully Successful = 16 years

Average rating will be calculated as 14 years  
(12 + 16 = 28 divided by 2)

# Performance Credit – No Ratings-Modal Rating

- **Modal Rating.** If an employee **did not receive any ratings** of record during the applicable 4-year period, the agency gives retention credit on the basis of a single "Modal Rating" for the employee's summary level pattern.
- The modal rating is the most frequently-occurring rating given in the competitive area (or larger subdivision) during the appraisal cycle immediately preceding the RIF.
- The agency determines the modal rating on the basis of its most recently completed available ratings.

# Performance Credit – Modal Rating Example

Within the competitive area, assume that 100 employees received ratings during the most recent performance cycle, and the results were as follows:

Outstanding = 20 ratings

Exceeds Fully Successful = 38 ratings

Fully Successful = 30 ratings

Minimally Successful = 12 ratings

The modal rating (most frequently occurring) in this case is **Exceeds Fully Successful**.

*Any employees who had no performance ratings would receive credit for 16 years (the value of an Exceeds Fully Successful rating) for performance.*

Standard Rating  
Pattern

- Outstanding = 20 years
- Exceeds fully successful = 16 years
- Fully successful = 12 years

# Performance Credit – Multiple Rating Patterns

If an employee has ratings of record under more than one pattern of summary levels during the applicable 4-year period, the agency gives retention credit on the basis of the established credit set for each summary level pattern. (See example on slide 22.)

# Performance Credit – Multiple Rating Patterns-Example

Example: An employee was under a pass/fail program and received a passing rating for year 1. The employee moved to a 5-level program and received Fully Successful in year 2 and Exceeds Fully Successful in Year 3.

Rating 1: Passed = 16 years (based on how agency set credit years in example on slide 22)

Rating 2: FS = 12 years

Rating 3: EFS = 16 years

Average rating will be calculated as 15 years

( $16+12+16 = 44$  divided by  $3 = 14.6$ , rounded up to 15)



# Questions

# Retention Standing

- Retention standing is a formula applied to each employee
- Combines the four retention factors
  1. Tenure
  2. Veterans' preference
  3. Length of service
  4. Performance
- Ranks each competing employee in relation to others

# Retention Factors - Example

- **Tenure:** Career
- **Veterans' status:** non-veteran preference
- **Service Computation Date:** 6/27/97
- **Performance Credit** = 15

Rating 1: Fully Successful = 12 years

$12+16+16 = 44$

Rating 2: Exceeds Fully Successful = 16 years

$44/3 = 14.6666$

Rating 3: Exceeds Fully Successful = 16 years

Round up to 15

- New SCD is 6/27/97 – 15 years = 6/27/82
- On a retention list, shows up as **IB: 6/27/82**

I= Career

B= Not a preference eligible  
**for RIF** and non-veterans

# Questions

# Retention Register

- A retention register is a list of all competing employees in retention standing order.
- May be listed two ways:
  - By competitive level
  - By competitive area, often called a Master Retention Register

# Master Retention Register (example)

- IAD = Career, preference eligible with 30% or more service-connected disability
- IA = Career, preference eligible **for RIF**
- IB = Career, not preference eligible **for RIF**
- IIA = Career-conditional, preference eligible **for RIF**
- IIB = Career-conditional, not preference eligible **for RIF**

Tenure Group/ Subgroup	Name	RIF-Adjusted SCD (SCD-RIF)	Position	Competitive Level
IAD	Alton	01/04/02	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IA	Reginald	07/07/96	GS-201-11	(0-CLS)
IA	Barbara	02/02/99	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IA	Devon	09/09/06	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)
IA	Carla	03/03/10	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IB	Ian	06/06/93	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)
<b>IB</b>	<b>Patricia</b>	<b>04/04/98</b>	<b>GS-201-12</b>	<b>(0-STA)</b>
IB	Tamara	08/08/98	GS-301-12	(0-PRG)
<b>IIA</b>	<b>Edward</b>	<b>05/05/18</b>	<b>GS-301-11</b>	<b>(1-PRG)</b>
IIB	Joe	02/02/17	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)

**Bold** = position abolished in “Round 1”

# Round 1 RIF Competition

- Abolished positions are noted on the retention registers in affected competitive levels
- Competition rules determine who stays in the competitive level and who is released
- Most released competitive service employees go on to Round 2 competition

# “Round 1” Competition

Release from Competitive Level

Competitive Level GS-0201-12 (0-STA)	Name	RIF-Adjusted SCD (SCD-RIF)	Position	Schedule	Appt. Type
IAD	Alton	01/04/02	GS-201-12	FT	CS
IA	Barbara	02/02/99	GS-201-12	FT	CS
IA	Carla	03/03/10	GS-201-12	FT	CS
<b>IB</b>	<b>Patricia</b>	<b>04/04/98</b>	<b>GS-201-12</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>CS</b>

Competitive Level GS-0301-11 (1-PRG)	Name	RIF-Adjusted SCD (SCD-RIF)	Position	Schedule	Appt. Type
<b>IIA</b>	<b>Edward</b>	<b>05/05/18</b>	<b>GS-301-11</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>CS</b>

**Bold** = position abolished in “Round 1”



# “Round 2” Competition

**Assignment Rights -- Competitive** service employees released in Round 1 with at least a minimally successful rating may:

**Bump:** Displace an employee in a lower tenure group or a lower subgroup within the same tenure group, IF qualified

**Retreat:** Displace an employee in the same tenure group and subgroup with less service IF held the job before

# Assignment Rights

- In determining if the employee is “qualified” apply the “undue interruption” standard, i.e.,:
  - “...a degree of interruption that would prevent the completion of required work by the employee 90 days after the employee has been placed in a different position under this part...” (see full definition at 5 CFR 351.203).
- Excepted service and tenure group III employees have assignment rights **only** if granted by the agency

# Assignment Right Requirements

- Assignment rights are to an “available” position, which means the position:
  - ✓ Will last at least 3 months
  - ✓ Is in the competitive service and in the same competitive area
  - ✓ Is the same work schedule (full-time, part-time)
  - ✓ Is within 3 grades or intervals
    - Subgroup AD can retreat 5 grades or intervals

# Bump

Displace an employee -

- In a *lower* tenure group
  - For example, a Tenure Group I can bump anyone in Group II **or** III; **or**
- In a lower subgroup (but same tenure), e.g.:
  - IAD can bump IA **or** IB
  - IA can bump IB
  - IIAD can bump IIA **or** IIB
  - IIA can bump IIB

## Tenure Groups

- I Career
- II Career Conditional
- III Term, Indefinite

## Subgroups

- AD = Preference eligible with a 30% or more service-connected disability
- A = Preference eligible not in AD
- B = not a preference eligible for RIF

- Can bump to a position no more than 3 grades (or intervals) below position from which released

# Bump Example

- Edward (**IIA** 5/5/18), a GS-301-11 (1-PRG), can
- Bump Joe (**IIB** 2/2/17), a GS-201-9 (0-SYS) because:
  - Ed’s IIA subgroup is higher than Joe’s IIB subgroup
  - Ed **qualifies** for Joe’s GS-201-9 job (based on a review by HR of Ed’s work history)
- It doesn’t matter that Joe has more service

Tenure Group/ Subgroup	Name	RIF- Adjusted SCD (SCD-RIF)	Position	Competitive Level
IAD	Alton	01/04/02	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IA	Reginald	07/07/96	GS-201-11	(0-CLS)
IA	Barbara	02/02/99	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IA	Devon	09/09/06	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)
IA	Carla	03/03/10	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IB	Ian	06/06/93	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)
<b>IB</b>	Patricia	04/04/98	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IB	Tamara	08/08/98	GS-301-12	(0-PRG)
<b>IIA</b>	Edward	05/05/18	GS-301-11	(1-PRG)
IIB	Joe	02/02/17	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)

**Bold** = position abolished in “Round 1”

# Questions

# Retreat

- Means to displace an employee:
  - In the same tenure group and subgroup
  - With less service
  - If held the same job, or an essentially identical one, on a permanent basis in the Federal service

# Retreat Example

- Patricia (**IB** 4/4/98), a GS-201-12 (0-STA), can
- Retreat into Tamara’s (**IB** 8/8/98), GS-301-12 (0-PRG) position because:
  - Patricia’s SCD-RIF 4/4/98 is earlier than Tamara’s 8/8/98
  - Patricia **qualifies** for Tamara’s GS-301-12 job (based on a review by HR of Patricia’s work history)

Tenure Group/ Subgroup	Name	RIF- Adjusted SCD (SCD-RIF)	Position	Competitive Level
IAD	Alton	01/04/02	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IA	Reginald	07/07/96	GS-201-11	(0-CLS)
IA	Barbara	02/02/99	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IA	Devon	09/09/06	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)
IA	Carla	03/03/10	GS-201-12	(0-STA)
IB	Ian	06/06/93	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)
<b>IB</b>	<b>Patricia</b>	<b>04/04/98</b>	<b>GS-201-12</b>	<b>(0-STA)</b>
IB	Tamara	08/08/98	GS-301-12	(0-PRG)
<b>IIA</b>	<b>Edward</b>	<b>05/05/18</b>	<b>GS-301-11</b>	<b>(1-PRG)</b>
IIB	Joe	02/02/17	GS-201-9	(0-SYS)

**Bold** = position abolished in “Round 1”



# Questions

# Qualifications in Bump and Retreat

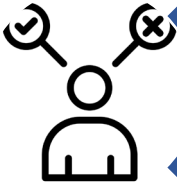
Only qualified employees have assignment rights. Qualified means:

1. Meets OPM-established requirements for the position (minimum educational requirement, and selective placement factors )
2. Is physically qualified, with reasonable accommodation where appropriate
3. Meets any OPM-approved special qualifying condition for the position; and
4. Clearly demonstrates, the ability to successfully perform the duties of the position upon assignment to it without undue interruption to the activity

# Positions with Physical Qualifications



If an agency determines a preference eligible employee with a 30% or more service-connected disability is unable to perform the physical requirements of a position the agency must notify OPM and the employee of the proposed disqualification



OPM must make a final determination before the agency may select any other person to the position



The employee has 15 days to respond

# Positions with Physical Qualifications- Qualifications Determinations

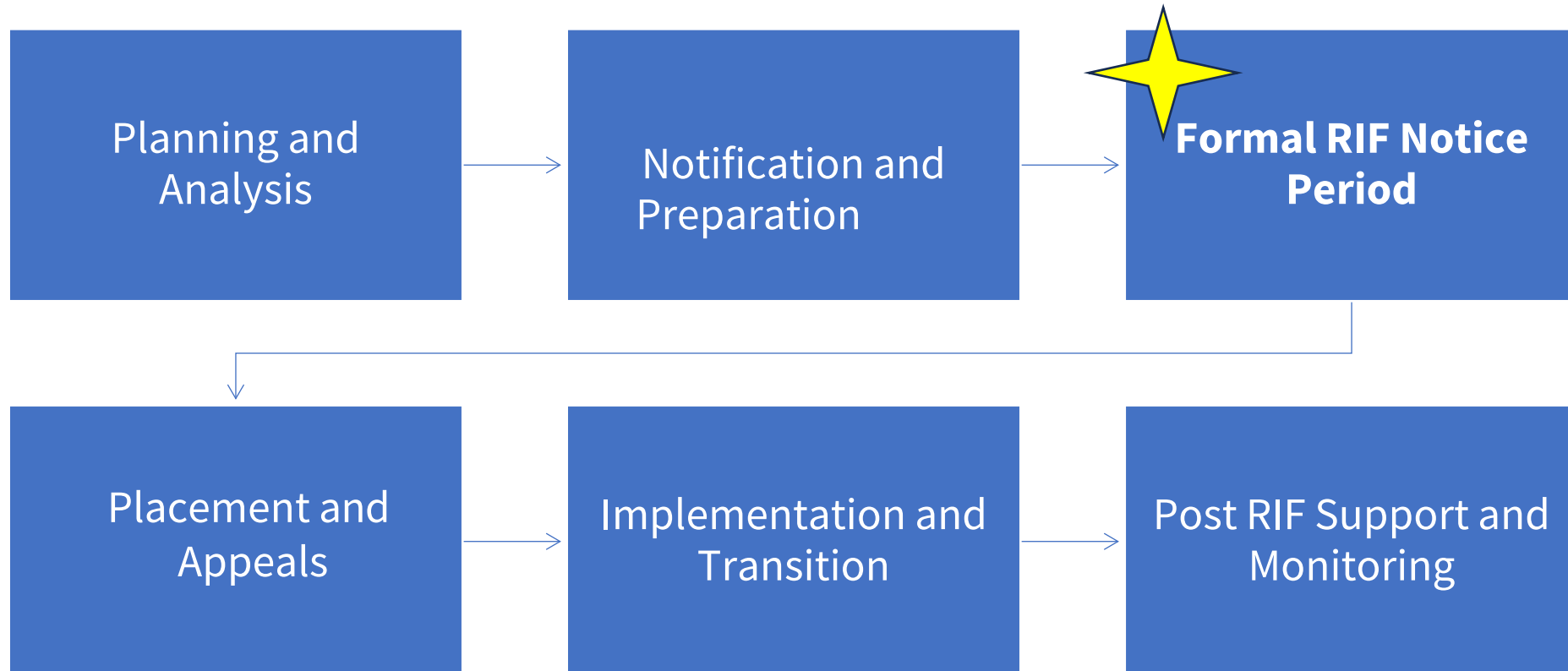
- The agency must submit reasons for the determination to OPM including medical information on which the agency determination was based.
- The agency is required to comply with OPM findings.
- The agency sends the case to:

U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
Workforce Policy and Innovation  
Talent Acquisition, Classification and Veterans Programs  
1900 E Street, Rm 6500  
Washington, DC 20415  
Phone: 202-606-4209; Fax: 202-606-0864

# Questions

# RIF Notices

# RIF Process



# Employee Notifications

## Informational Notices

- Optional
- Does not count toward the mandatory notice period
- Alerts employees that a RIF may be necessary

## Specific Employee Notice

- Required 60 days before RIF action
- Must include information required by 5 CFR 351 Subpart H



# Content of Employee RIF Notices

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The action to be taken, the reasons for the action, and its effective date;

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The employee's competitive area, competitive level, tenure group, subgroup, service date, and three most recent ratings of record received during the last 4 years;

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The place where the employee may inspect the regulations and records pertinent to this case;

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The reasons for retaining a lower-standing employee in the same competitive level under [§ 351.607](#) or [§ 351.608](#);

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Information on reemployment rights and career transition information, except as permitted by [§ 351.803\(a\)](#);

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Information on applying for unemployment benefits and a severance pay estimate (if eligible);

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The employee's right, as applicable, to appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board under the provisions of the Board's regulations or to grieve under a negotiated grievance procedure. The agency shall also comply with [§ 1201.21 of this title](#).

# Questions

# Wrap Up: Resources and Final Questions

# On-line Tools for Agencies

- RIF law - [5 U.S.C. 3501 – 3504](#)
- RIF regulations - [5 CFR part 351](#)
- [Reductions in Force \(RIF\)](#) pages on OPM's website - various policy guides, including new, updated resources and templates
- [Workforce Reshaping Operations Handbook](#)

# The Reduction in Force (RIF) Learning Series

## RIF Policy Advisory Team

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) invites Federal HR practitioners to learn about Reduction in Force (RIF) procedures and best practices.

A free, government-wide learning series available on [Eventbrite](#)\* for all Federal HR practitioners.  
**\*must have a .gov or .mil to register**



**Upcoming Events - Check back at our series collection for updates!**

**April 2 – Introduction and RIF Mechanics Part 1:** Learn the basic mechanics (part 1) of how to conduct a Reduction in Force from OPM’s subject matter experts.

**April 3 – RIF Mechanics Part 2:** Learn the basic mechanics (part 2) of Reduction in Force from OPM’s subject matter experts.

***These learning series do not advise on individual employment matters.***

# Thank You

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**Please take a moment to complete a short survey** to provide your feedback on today's session:

<https://surveys.opm.gov/se/5B5534D4227C9D4F>



**The Reduction in Force (RIF) Learning Series**  
**RIF Policy Advisory Team**