

Understanding Excepted Service



This Fact Sheet outlines the differences between Excepted Service and Competitive Service in the Federal government and explains the employment status of Architect of the Capitol employees.

Excepted Service

The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is an *Excepted Service* Federal agency in the Legislative Branch of government. It is excepted from *Competitive Service* under the merit system in the Executive Branch administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). This means that AOC has its own hiring system based on merit, and has established its own evaluation criteria to fill position vacancies. However, the AOC has adopted the qualification and classification standards for its positions as determined by OPM. Although the AOC has adopted most of these standards, the AOC, under its statutory authority, has also established unique qualification standards for certain positions.

AOC's Career Staffing Plan delineates the Agency's hiring policies and practices, under the authority of Title 2 U.S. Code 1831, Human Resources Program. This authority also outlines the provisions for performance management; discipline and separation actions of AOC employees. AOC's policy for Exempt Personnel provides guidance concerning appointments to AOC's exempt positions. These senior-level employees serve at the pleasure of the Architect and are referred to as Senior Rated (SR).

Generally, members of the general public may apply for most AOC position vacancies. There is usually no requirement for candidates to have been employed with the Federal government. The area of consideration is noted on the first page of AOC's vacancy announcements under "Who May Apply."

Competitive Service

The Competitive Service refers to Federal agencies who are subject to OPM's competitive hiring processes to evaluate and rank job candidates. Under the Competitive Service, Federal employees with competitive status may be considered for positions without having to compete with members of the general public in an open competitive process. Competitive status is attained only upon satisfactory completion of a probationary period with a competitive service agency.

Employees transferring from a competitive service agency who have already fulfilled a probationary period with their initial appointment are still required to serve another probationary period under AOC authority.

Because AOC is not in the Competitive Service, AOC employees who do not have competitive status may not compete for many position vacancies in the Executive Branch. Further, AOC employment does not confer competitive career status. While AOC's SR positions are considered SES-equivalent, they are not a part of the Senior Executive Service and do not have competitive career status.

Federal employees with competitive status who are hired by the AOC will receive credit for AOC Federal service toward their retirement benefits subject to OPM's rules regarding creditable service for retirement purposes. These employees may also return to Competitive Service subject to the respective Competitive Service agency application procedures, its requirements and the availability of position vacancies.

Pay and Benefits

The AOC applies the General Schedule and Wage Grade pay tables as established by OPM and the Department of Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, respectively, in determining pay for most of its employees, with the exception of SR personnel. It also applies its own special rate pay for certain wage grade positions in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements.

With regard to benefits, AOC employees receive the same standard Federal employee benefits (health and life insurance, retirement, Thrift Savings Plan, leave accruals and other benefits) as employees in the Competitive Service.

Employees entering into Excepted Service, even if they are coming from a Competitive Service position, must work 1,250 hours before becoming eligible for leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Questions

Contact the Human Capital Management Division at 202.226.7000