

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration

VBA - AFGE Memorandum of Understanding

Construction and Valuation Redesign Initiative

The following constitutes an agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, National VA Council #53 regarding Veterans Benefits Administration, Construction and Valuation Redesign Initiative.

The following procedures will be followed for the orderly and timely filling of C&V positions in VBA:

1. VBA will first fill the outbased C&V jobs that will be remotely managed from the Regional Loan Centers by reassigning existing C&V GS-12 staff currently working at Regional Offices (RO). VBA will honor the appropriate sections of the Master Agreement concerning areas of consideration and the prior MOU signed between the NVAC and VBA on remote management of Loan Guaranty. New outbased positions in Construction and Valuation will be part of the bargaining unit of the Regional Office within the area of jurisdiction where the outbased employee works.
2. VBA will seek volunteers nationwide from non-RLC C&V employees who are currently working at Regional Offices for reassignment or change to a lower graded position that are available at a RLC within C&V. Management will authorize the payment of relocation expenses in accordance with VA regulations. Employees will be permitted to relocate voluntarily to any RLC not just the one that will assume their work.
3. At the time VBA seeks volunteers for reassignment, VBA will survey all Construction and Valuation employees asking them which RLC they would prefer employ them should directed reassignments become necessary. Completion of the survey does not mean that employees will receive a directed reassignment.
4. After the reassignment process is completed, VBA will post existing C&V jobs at the RLC with the bargaining unit being the first area of consideration. VBA will honor the appropriate sections of the Master Agreement concerning expanding the areas of consideration.

5. Management will authorize the payment of relocation expenses in accordance with VA regulations. If VA authorizes the payment of relocation bonuses to any employees willing to voluntarily relocate, it will advise the Mid-Term Bargaining Committee on distribution criteria and methodology.
6. When employees volunteer for reassignment or a change to a lower grade, should more employees volunteer than there are positions available, senior qualified employees will be chosen first. Seniority will be defined for this purpose as time spent in the employment of the Department of Veterans Affairs.
7. Employees who volunteer and are selected for a change to a lower grade at an RLC will receive pay retention in accordance with government wide rules and regulations.
8. VBA and NVAC agree that after the GS-12 outbased positions are filled and the GS-11 volunteers are solicited and relocated, there will be a 45-day period before directed reassignments notices are issued. During that period, Management will seek available alternatives to place as many of the potentially displaced employees in positions within their current facility, unless the positions are in the professional bargaining unit.
9. At the end of the 45-day period, if a facility has been unable to reassign all its C&V employees to other jobs within the Regional Office presently employing them, VBA may seek directed reassignments. Directed reassignments may occur only at the same grade level the employees now possess.
10. Should employees be subject to directed reassignment, they will receive at least 14-calendar days advance notice. Should they refuse the reassignment, the employees will be subject to involuntary separation for failure to accept the reassignment.
11. Employees who accept directed reassignments will be notified as soon as possible and will normally have 60 days from the acceptance of directed reassignments to relocate unless extenuating circumstances exist. Additional time may be provided to better coordinate workload transition.
12. Employees receiving directed reassignment outside their commuting area will receive information on relocation benefits as well as information on the new community. To assist in making a decision, employees will also receive full information on benefits and options available should they decline the reassignment.
13. Special selection priority will be given to displaced C&V

employees who apply for VA vacancies in their local commuting area, at their current grade or at a lower grade with no higher promotion potential than their current grade, and who are determined to be qualified. This provision is applicable until the employee's separation date. C&V employees who are not selected will be afforded employment assistance for other Federal employment opportunities within the commuting area.

14. Displaced C&V employees may be reassigned at the same or lower grade level into other occupational groups. In accordance with government-wide rules and regulations and depending on performance of the individual employee, qualification standards may be waived (Standards for occupations with education requirements cannot be waived.) Other tools and options available include but are not limited to Special Placement Priority, transition assistance, including the possibility of a buyout, discontinued service retirement, voluntary placement in a lower graded position with pay retention, as well as other placement assistance.
15. Should the only positions available for displaced C&V employees at a facility be at a lower grade than their present grade, those employees will be given pay retention in accordance with government wide rules and regulations.

Should C&V employees decline relocation and there are no available positions for them at their facilities, the Department will assist them in outplacement activities. These activities will be conducted onsite and will assist employees in finding both private sector and public sector jobs. VBA will assist by contracting with specialists in career transition. Employees in this situation will be allowed to access personal computers and the internet and use government phones and faxes to perform job search activities. This will occur on duty time. The displaced employees will be able to schedule and participate in job interviews while on duty time. Any employee scheduled to be displaced will be entitled to the full benefits of the Department of Veterans Affairs and Federal Transition Assistance Programs.

/S/ Crystal D. Wiggins
For VBA
For AFGE

/S/ Alberta Franklin

Date: May 23, 2002



Reviewed/Updated: May 28, 2002