

CHAPTER 22

WITHIN-GRADE INCREASES

Refer to the collective bargaining agreement with AFGE Local 1770 for additional provisions pertaining to bargaining unit employees.

22-1. GENERAL.

a. Within-Grade Increases are periodic increases in an employee's rate of basic pay. The waiting periods are as follows:

(1) General Schedule (GS) Employees:

(a) Steps 2, 3, and 4: 52 calendar weeks of creditable service.

(b) Steps 5, 6, and 7: 104 calendar weeks of creditable service.

(c) Steps 8, 9, and 10: 156 calendar weeks of creditable service.

(2) Federal Wage System (FWS) Employees:

(a) Rate 2: 26 calendar weeks of creditable service in rate 1.

(b) Rate 3: 78 calendar weeks of creditable service in rate 2.

(c) Rate 4 and 5: 104 calendar weeks of creditable service in each of rates 3 and 4.

b. Waiting periods will be extended in cases where an employee has been in a non-pay status in excess of that which is allowed by regulation.

22-2. PROCEDURES.

The determination as to whether an employee is performing at an acceptable level of competence for within grade salary increase purpose will be based upon an evaluation of current performance.

a. An FWS employee will be automatically advanced to the next higher rate of his/her grade at the beginning of the first applicable pay period following completion of the required waiting period if his/her current performance is Fully Successful or better. Because of the automatic nature of the increase, supervisors must be knowledgeable of when FWS employees are eligible for rate increases so that such increases can be stopped if the employee's current performance is not Fully Successful or better.

b. In the case of GS employees, the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center will send a notice to the employee's supervisor approximately 60 days before the step increase is due. The supervisor will sign the notice approving the increase if the employee's most recent performance is Fully Successful or better for the most recent completed rating period. When an acceptable level of competence determination is not consistent with the employee's most recent rating period, a more current rating of record must be prepared. If an employee is not performing at acceptable level of competence for the within-grade increase, the supervisor will follow the procedures listed in paragraph 22-2d. (Contact with Labor Management Office is required prior to initiating the denial of a within-grade increase).

c. A within-grade increase will be denied if the employee's current performance is unacceptable with respect to any major job responsibility/objective, or if his/her performance is at the minimum level (level 4) required for retention in the position, but below a fully acceptable level of competence.

d. When it is determined that an employee's performance is not at an acceptable level of competence and may lead to a denial of a within-grade increase, the employee will be provided the following information in writing, normally 30 calendar days before eligibility for the increase:

(1) An explanation of each aspect of performance which falls below an acceptable level.

(2) A statement of acceptable level of performance on each aspect.

(3) Advice as to what must be done to bring his/her performance up to an acceptable level.

(4) A statement that he/she has a period of 30 calendar days in which to bring his/her performance up to an acceptable level and still receive his/her within-grade increase at the completion of the current waiting period.

e. If the supervisor decides to withhold the within-grade increase (makes a negative determination), the following procedures apply:

(1) An employee may request reconsideration of a negative determination by filing a written response setting forth the reasons the negative determination should be reconsidered, not more than 15 calendar days after receiving the notice of determination.

(2) The employee shall be provided a prompt written final decision.

f. If reconsideration is favorable to the employee, the within-grade increase will be approved and effective on the original due date.

g. When a negative determination is sustained after reconsideration, an employee shall be informed in writing of the reasons for the decision and his/her appeal rights.

h. A new determination will be made at any time the employee's performance reaches an acceptable level of competence, but in no event later than 52 weeks from the end of the waiting period of the original due date for the within-grade increase. In this case, the within-grade increase will be effective the beginning of the next pay period, which begins after the favorable decision, is made.