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**Career Development Program Playbook**

**For Special Agents**

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# INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the dialogue on career development between the Director General and the Foreign Service in August 2004, many cables and notices have been written about the Career Development Program (CDP). Many more meetings and informal discussions have been held. This “playbook” explains all elements of the CDP in a form accessible to Foreign Service employees. As its name suggests, this manual is intended first and foremost as a tool for employees to use as they develop assignment strategies to meet CDP requirements. Employees will discover that they can meet the objectives of the Career Development Program in a variety of ways. We hope that the playbook will serve as a useful starting point for employees in reviewing their careers to date and in subsequent assignment planning.

For HR professionals as well as clients, the playbook is a reference guide to the requirements of the CDP. It also contains useful background on the thinking behind the development of specific CDP elements to better inform a CDO’s advice to his or her clients. It also includes frequently asked questions that address common themes from the comments received from Foreign Service employees to date.

This edition of the playbook applies specifically to Special Agents. Other editions apply to generalists and other specialist categories. For all Foreign Service categories, however, the goals of the CDP are the same; i.e., to develop and maintain a cadre of Foreign Service employees with enhanced language and technical skills, management and leadership skills, and demonstrated ability to serve in challenging environments.

As always, we welcome your comments. If there are issues you would like to see addressed in subsequent editions of the playbook, email your suggestions to the Career Development Help Desk.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2006, the Department implemented arguably the most far-reaching reform of human resources management in the Foreign Service since the Foreign Service Act of 1980. For the first time, Foreign Service employees had a formal structure of professional development to guide their decisions regarding both assignments and training. In the past, we in essence acquired professional skills and progressed through our careers often more by chance than design.

With the January 2006 implementation, employees were expected to plan their careers around a series of training and assignment milestones calculated to develop the essential skills of an accomplished member of the Foreign Service. In 2009, however, the Director General suspended the implementation of the CDP requirements for specialists in order to conduct a comprehensive review of the Specialist CDPs. The review process, which involved subject matter experts from all specialist functions, exposed shortcomings that needed to be resolved before full implementation could commence. For example, it became clear that portions of each plan addressing both required and elective training courses were too specific and would soon become dated. Since the purpose of the program is for employees to design a long term career development plan, it was necessary to adjust the CDPs in order to make sure that the requirements met the needs of the Department both today and in the years ahead. Despite changes made to the Specialist CDPs, the core principles of the program remain intact. Since many of the changes broadened the scope of certain requirements and electives, the employee will find that these alterations are not only more flexible, but more advantageous.

If you still have questions on the CDP once you have reviewed your plan and this playbook, please contact your CDO or our special online mailto:Career Development Help Desk.

**Why Now?**

Our responsibilities in the world continue to expand in two broad categories: the traditional functions of foreign affairs that we have always had and the new international challenges of the twenty-first century. The world remains a difficult and dangerous place, with nearly half of our posts overseas carrying a 15% or greater hardship differential and more than a dozen posts now unaccompanied. In the current foreign policy environment, the Department of State must be proactive and prepared to lead the overseas interagency community. We cannot wait until an event occurs to start organizing ourselves to respond. We need to be prepared to engage quickly and capably wherever we are needed. The new policy challenges we face are becoming ever more complex, technological, and global in nature. To meet these new responsibilities, we have taken four significant steps.

First, we put online a new skills database called Employee Profile + (EP+) that provides a richer inventory of the talent our people have, drawn from their experience both inside and outside the Department. Second, we set up the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) - now the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations - to ensure effective civilian recovery efforts in crisis states. By Presidential authority, the State Department now has the lead responsibility for the interagency coordination of our civilian response in failing, failed, and post-conflict states. Third, in recognition of the changing needs and expectations of Foreign Service families, we are reinforcing efforts to help family members who want to work overseas. And, finally, to take advantage of our new assets and to respond to new and future responsibilities, we implemented the Career Development Program to encourage Foreign Service employees to diversify their regional and/or functional expertise, to heighten their language and technical capabilities, to serve and be specifically trained in difficult and crisis management circumstances, to become better leaders, and to deploy more quickly and more effectively when crises occur.

**What Is It?**

The CDP is built on four principles of performance that all employees must demonstrate over the course of their Foreign Service career, regardless of whether they ultimately join the ranks of the Senior Foreign Service. These principles apply to all Foreign Service employees. They are: 1) operational effectiveness - including a breadth of experience over several regions and functions; 2) leadership and management effectiveness; 3) sustained professional, technical, and language proficiency; and 4) responsiveness to Service needs.

To ensure that our employees become capable leaders and managers and acquire the leadership, language, and functional skills necessary to tackle tomorrow’s foreign policy challenges, we developed a set of mandatory career requirements around these principles that will be fulfilled primarily during the mid-level segment of an employee’s career. The incentive to comply with these requirements is that they must be met for an employee to be eligible for promotion to the senior rank of their specialty. There are unique sets of mandatory and elective requirements tailored to each specialist skill code.

To prevent disadvantaging those already well along in their careers, there is a phase-in implementation schedule by grade and tenure date. For a full list of the CDP’s requirements and its implementation schedule, see the Career Development Plan document on Career Tracker at [HR-OnLine](https://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hronline/%20).

**Tracking Your Progress**

For the Career Development Program to work, it is important to keep adequate records of an employee’s progress through the CDP - to which end, we have an online application to enable continuous tracking and easy self-certification of the employee’s experience. This tool, the Career Tracker, will also be available to your Career Development Officer (CDO) to advise you during the assignments process.

**What Hasn’t Changed?**

Performance will remain the standard by which an employee will progress through his or her Foreign Service career. Quick or robust fulfillment of the CDP requirements will not determine your assignments or promotions – your performance will. That said, CDP requirements will be reflected in the Procedural Precepts that instruct Selection Boards as they review employee performance.

Better Foreign Service career development is vital if we are to meet the objectives set out for us. The intention is to enhance our flexibility, responsiveness, and leadership, and to ensure the Foreign Service’s central role in the formulation and execution of U.S. foreign policy in the years to come.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## **The Employee**

The CDP explicitly states that the employee is responsible for his/her career development. The employee’s principal responsibilities are twofold: thorough self-education on the purpose and goals of the CDP and fulfillment of its requirements to the best of the employee’s ability while documenting this through the self-certifying process. Career Tracker, the HR Online application that employees use to document the fulfillment of CDP requirements, has been developed for this purpose. The employee should ensure that their work requirements statements and EERs accurately and thoroughly reflect all the work the employee performs.

## **The CDO**

The CDO’s role as advisor/advocate in the assignments process does not change. The client/CDO relationship is shaped to a great degree by the individuals themselves. Employees decide how much contact they wish to have with their CDO. The CDO will inform clients of all relevant requirements, deadlines and opportunities, and will follow up to obtain necessary information from clients for assignment processing and transfer. CDOs are fully cognizant of CDP requirements and can provide insight and guidance in devising strategies to meet the requirements. At assignment panels, the CDOs will be aware of the CDP element as they consider individual client assignments. They will be happy to discuss and provide counsel regarding the CDP, but they will not certify that an individual assignment meets a particular CDP criterion. They will also review with employees the information that has been entered into Career Tracker.

## **The Selection Board**

As in the past, the Selection Board will be charged with evaluating the files of those employees who are competing for promotion to the senior rank of specialty. The employee’s self-certification of CDP compliance must take place before the employee is eligible to compete for promotion.

The Board will use the information in the performance file components (such as the Official Performance Folder including EERs, awards, letters of commendation/ discipline) to rank-order candidates for promotion to senior rank of specialty. Employees should review their OPF online periodically to confirm that all relevant documentation is present.

The Board will **not** independently verify an employee’s compliance with the CDP. As always, promotions will be based upon demonstrated performance and potential. The stronger the file, the more competitive the employee.

## **The Career Development Help Desk**

As we announced details of the Career Development Program in 2006, your comments and questions helped us realize that it would be best to have a central repository of questions and answers. The Career Development Help Desk serves as a repository of questions and answers related to the Career Development Program. The Help Desk handles questions referred by individual CDOs and provides answers (shared with all CDOs) that have been fully vetted with HR leadership, reducing the risk of misunderstandings and creating a knowledge base of the full range of Q&As from clients, which CDOs can share as appropriate.

# SPECIAL ISSUES

## **Waivers**

One of the mandatory requirements of the CDP is service at a 15% or greater hardship differential/danger pay post (one tour, after tenure or two directed entry-level tours). The Selection Board will consider for promotion only those employees who have fulfilled the hardship service requirement as described above, or who are exempt under phasing-in of the CDP. A waiver of this CDP requirement is based on the following exceptional criteria: the employee’s limited medical clearance or that of an eligible family member (spouse, same sex domestic partner, or child).

The waiver provisions emphasize that employees have an affirmative obligation to manage their careers so as to meet the CDP hardship requirement. Even when the employee has the best of intentions, however, there will be exceptional cases when the employee is not able to fulfill this requirement due to medical issues or needs of the Service. The Director General will consider waiver applications based on the recommendation of the Director of the Office of Career Development and Assignments. You should contact your CDO for more information or click here for [waiver procedures](http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/offices/cda/Documents/B-23.pdf).

## **Non-Traditional Entrants**

In recent years there have been various programs for mid-level entry (at grade FP-03 or higher), each with different entry requirements. These have included Civil Service to specialist conversions, changes in specialist skill codes, and mid-level entry programs in effect for limited periods for non-State entrants.

CDP requirements for these entrants will be phased in using the same guidelines in effect for other Diplomatic Security Special Agent specialists. That is, those at the FP-03 rank on January 1, 2014 will be required to fulfill all the mandatory requirements under three of the four principles and two of the eight elective requirements, regardless of whether they entered as entry-level or mid-level specialists. Special Agents who entered at the FP-02 rank prior to January 1, 2014 will continue to be governed by previous requirements in place for Special Agents in effect prior to the advent of the Career Development Plan, in order to be considered for promotion to FP-01.

However, to ensure equity with their specialist colleagues who joined the Foreign Service at the entry level and who, therefore, most likely have more tours and years in service with which to meet the requirements, the following considerations will apply:

-- assignments after entry on duty at the mid-level will be considered “from tenure” for CDP purposes, regardless of the tenure status of the employee, and thus can be used to satisfy any and all mandatory/elective requirements.

-- prior Department of State work may be used to satisfy “from entry” requirements; i.e., service at 15% or greater differential/danger pay posts, operational/crisis response experience, and service at an unaccompanied post.

# DEVELOPING YOUR OWN CDP STRATEGY

As employees begin to consider how best to meet the requirements of the Career Development Program, they should keep in mind the following:

-- there is flexibility in terms of the number of requirements that need to be satisfied, depending on one’s grade as of January 1, 2014;

-- the electives present a broad array of opportunities, with a number of potential “fits”;

-- one assignment can potentially satisfy more than one mandatory/elective requirement; and

-- generally speaking, the majority of members of the Foreign Service will not have difficulty meeting these requirements.

It can seem a little daunting to try to “plan” how to meet the requirements within the context of a dynamic assignment system with numerous variables. Below are some suggestions for ways to approach CDP planning. The examples are based on real employee profiles to illustrate how an assignment history can be interpreted in relation to the CDP.

For all employees, it will be critically important to ensure that work requirements statements accurately and thoroughly reflect the work being done. The same goes for the EER narrative. When an employee self-certifies that a particular assignment or experience fulfills a mandatory/elective requirement, the only corroborating evidence will be what is written in the EER.

## **Entry-Level Issues**

Untenured Special Agents are subject to all the mandatory CDP requirements under the four principles, and four of the eight elective requirements. While they have more requirements to fulfill than tenured Special Agents, they also have much more time to do so. They also have the benefit of knowing up front what will be required to compete for promotion to the senior rank of their specialty. Although the first two tours typically are directed by the Entry-Level Division in the Office of Career Development and Assignments in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR/CDA/EL), employees can and should develop their bid lists with the Career Development Program in mind.

The entry-level career perspective can be seen as akin to building a foundation. It matters less which is the first building block than how and where the subsequent blocks are placed. The goal of an entry-level member should be to develop broad knowledge of the Department and its operations while learning and refining the skills needed for success.

For many entry-level members of the Foreign Service, the early career years are the years of greatest personal flexibility. To the extent that personal flexibility exists at the entry level, it provides the opportunity to serve at some posts that may be more problematic later in one’s career -unaccompanied posts, for example. The vast majority of first-tour assignments are to hardship posts, so employees may wish to consider “seizing the moment” when possible, to fulfill the hardship requirement by serving at two EL-directed hardship tours of 15% or more. Entry-level members of the Foreign Service may also use their initial tours to meet the Service Need elective of serving at an unaccompanied post.

The entry-level period may also permit progress on the elective language proficiency requirement.

In keeping with the goals of the CDP, employees should thoroughly investigate training opportunities and be sure to enroll in the required leadership and management training.

While entry-level specialists can begin work on their CDP requirements from their first assignment, it is important for them to remember that their first goal must be to meet the requirements for tenure.

## **Mid-Level Foreign Service Specialists**

Mid-level specialists have the opportunity to look at each assignment in light of CDP requirements. For others, CDP planning will involve a careful review of their assignment history with a view to fully consider how the requirements have been met and how to plug any remaining gaps.

One approach may be to consider assignments that fulfill more than one criterion (e.g., service in a critical needs assignment and significant and substantial supervisory responsibility).

Mindful of health, schooling, and family member employment issues, employees may want to demonstrate that they have made a maximum effort to meet the hardship requirement.

## **Assignment History**

The following assignment history is based on a real employee and is meant to illustrate one way in which the CDP requirements – both mandatory and electives – may be fulfilled and how an employee may move to fill the gaps. For purposes of these illustrations, we are assuming that the employee either has taken the required leadership and management training or will be able to do so, thus fulfilling one of the mandatory requirements. This example does not include any service against electives or requirements that is not evident from the employee profile (e.g., TDY in support of Presidential visits or supervisory experience). Therefore, one may assume that in most cases, this employee has fulfilled other electives.

Special Agent Grade: FP-03

EOD 2000

DS/I/NYFO 2 years Special Agent

San Salvador 2 years Assistant Regional Security Officer

DS/FLD/WFO 2 years WFO Unit Supervisor

Montevideo 3 years Regional Security Officer

DS/TIA/PII Current Division Chief

Possible CDP Strategies:

Mandatory Requirements:

Operational Effectiveness: Employee has completed the overseas service requirement with tours in San Salvador and Montevideo. The Montevideo tour also counts towards the RSO tour requirement. DS/TIA/PII assignment fulfills the DS HQ tour requirement; participates in wellness program

Leadership Effectiveness: Employee has likely completed Basic Leadership Skills training, and will need to take Intermediate Leadership Skills upon promotion to FP-02.

Professional, Technical, and Language Proficiency: Completed DS Special Agent in-service and RSO in-service training to fulfill this requirement.

Responsiveness to Service Needs: Employee served in a directed EL assignment in San Salvador, which does not fulfill this requirement. Employee should seek an assignment at a 15% or greater differential post to fulfill the requirement.

Electives:

Operational Effectiveness: Fulfills supervisory tour elective with tours in field office and headquarters (DS/FLD/WFO and DS/TIA/PII).

Leadership Effectiveness: Fulfills significant and substantial supervisory responsibility elective with tours as RSO Montevideo, DS/FLD/WFO Unit Supervisor, and DS/TIA/PII Division Chief.

Professional, Technical, and Language Proficiency: Employee should seek a language designated position in order to complete the language elective.

Responsiveness to Service Needs: Employee should seek another tour at a 15% or greater differential post and/or an unaccompanied post to complete one or two electives.

Employee has completed two out of four mandatory requirements (three out of four are required under the implementation plan) and at least two out of eight electives (as required under the implementation plan).

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **General**

**Q. Why do we need the Career Development Program?**

A. The CDP was developed to strengthen the Foreign Service, to better meet worldwide staffing needs, to enhance the skills of Foreign Service employees, and to develop the capability to respond more quickly as changing diplomatic circumstances dictate.

**Q. What has changed with the implementation of the CDP?**

A. The requirements that must be met before a member of the Foreign Service can be considered for promotion to senior rank of specialty/Senior Foreign Service have changed. We have revised and added to the mandatory prerequisites and added a menu of electives, as well as implementation dates, which are dependent on your grade as of January 1, 2014.

Q. If I fulfill the requirements, will I be promoted to the senior rank of my specialty?

A. Not necessarily. Promotion at all grades is based on performance and potential. But you must fulfill the requirements necessary to be considered eligible for promotion. The Career Development Program for all Foreign Service employees outlines the requirements to reach the highest rank of each career specialty; it varies for specialists, and depends on the number of individuals in the specialty as well as the grade structure within that specialty. Promotions are based on demonstrated potential to perform at the next highest level. Also, promotions will depend on performance, not merely fulfilling CDP criteria. The criteria must be fulfilled to be eligible for consideration for promotion.

**Q. What if I don’t want to compete for promotion to the senior rank of my specialty? What, if any, requirements will I have to meet?**

A. We recognize that a small number of employees may opt not to compete for promotion. We also recognize that not everyone who wants to will achieve that rank. You will still need to be mindful of grade-specific mandatory leadership training, time-in-class restrictions, performance standards, and bidding requirements, including fair share, as long as they remain in operation.

**Q. What is the relationship between CDP and the requirements to cross the Senior Threshold that apply to current FP-01s?**

A. Employees must have served in a 15% or greater hardship post after tenure (or 5% if promoted to FP-01 in 2004 or before), and must have completed the required leadership and management training (which is identical to a CDP requirement).

**Q. Why is the senior rank for Special Agents set at FP-01**?

A. Wherever a given specialty’s career ladder had enough depth to allow for another promotion after reaching the senior rank, the program developers set the CDP level one step lower than the highest grade in the career ladder. As there are Special Agent positions at the FE-OC level, the threshold rank was set at FP-01.

**Q.** **Why are there differing numbers of mandatory and elective requirements for different specialties?**

A. Each specialty has unique qualities about it that needed to be reflected in the CDP requirements. A great deal of thought and consultation with subject matter experts went into devising the CDP requirements for each specialty, with equity among the specialties a major consideration.

**Q. To what extent will the CDP factor into my promotions through the mid-grades?**

A. It will not be a direct factor. Employees will, of course, be developing skills and demonstrating achievements in their assignments and will be evaluated against the core precepts for their grade, following guidance issued yearly in the Procedural Precepts which govern the work of the Selection Boards**.**

**Q. I was an FP-02 as of January 1, 2014. How can I fulfill these requirements at this stage of my career?**

A. You do not have to. Special agents who were FP-02s as of January 1, 2014, will continue to meet the requirements in place for promotion to FP-01 before the advent of the CDP.

Q. What if I exceed the CDP requirements by fulfilling more electives? Will that increase my promotion chances?

A. The Career Development Program for all Foreign Service employees outlines the requirements to reach the highest rank of each career track; it varies for specialists, and depends on the number of individuals in the specialty as well as the grade structure within that specialty. Meeting CDP requirements are the gateway that allows you to be considered for promotion to the Senior Foreign Service. Merely fulfilling the requirements (or exceeding them) does not guarantee promotion. Promotions will continue to be based on demonstrated potential to perform at the next highest level, and will depend on performance, not merely fulfilling CDP criteria.

**Q. A couple of the CDP requirements stipulate that service must be done “after tenure.” What is the exact definition of when we were tenured?**

A. For purposes of the CDP, the date of tenure is defined as the date the cable goes out announcing the results of the tenure board. If you do not have that information you may contact HR/PE to find out. If you are/were tenured during an Entry-Level-directed tour, that tour doesn't count as post-tenure, no matter when during that tour the tenure occurred.

**Q. What is the rationale behind not allowing all mandatory requirements and electives to be fulfilled from entry on duty rather than from tenure?**

A. We need our employees to have professional development and hardship experience in the mid-grades. We need experienced people to work in difficult posts and we want to maximize the benefit of training/professional development by delivering it just when it is needed most.

Q. In the case where the fit between my experience and the CDP requirement is not clear, will there be a process for making the case that certain experiences fit the categories?

A. Yes. You should use the online application called Career Tracker, available through [HROnLine](https://hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hronline/) alongside your Employee Profile, EP+, your performance files, and other HR applications. This application enables employees to confirm or add information regarding their assignments or experiences that meet a particular CDP requirements. Your CDO will have access to help advise you during the assignments process.

**Q. Will the Selection Board see my Career Tracker?**

A. No. They will, however, know that to compete, you will have had to certify that you have completed your requirements under the plan. The stronger your file, as demonstrated in your EERs, the more competitive you will be.

**Q. Some tours are officially one year. Will that count as a tour?**

A. Yes. The only exception is that negotiated tours of one year at Historically Difficult to Staff posts will not count toward the service needs requirement.

**Q. Can a tour fulfill more than one requirement?**

A. Yes. As long as all conditions are met, a tour may fulfill several requirements. Service at an unaccompanied post, for example, also would meet the requirement for a 15% differential post. It might also count toward the significant and substantial supervisory elective.

Q. What is the purpose of the Career Development Help Desk? Can’t my CDO answer my questions directly?

A. The Help Desk has access to all the questions previously handled by individual CDOs and can provide answers (shared with all CDOs) that have been fully vetted with HR leadership. This should reduce potential misunderstanding and give the CDOs the benefit of the full range of Q&As from clients, which they can share as appropriate.

Q. Will the Career Development Help Desk and/or my CDO “certify” that I have met the CDP requirements?

A. The CDP is based on the principle of self-certification; i.e., the employee is in the best position to document his/her experience and attest to their compliance with the program’s requirements. The mechanism to do that will be the [Career Tracker](file://esocomsntap101/hrpublic%24/Office%20Shares/HR%20CDA/Mid-Level%20Division/CDP%202012/CDPs%20to%20Karen%20Krueger%20-%20FINAL/FM%20-%20Facilities%20Manager%20-%20as%20of%20Apr%2014/%28https%3A/hrweb.hr.state.gov/prd/hronline%29), which your CDO will use to vet those mandatory and elective requirements that can be objectively verified via existing records.

There are two reasons for self-certification: first, we did not want to create another administrative hurdle and second, we wanted to underscore the principle that career development is primarily the responsibility of the individual employee. That said, if an employee has questions about whether a specific assignment meets either the letter or the spirit of CDP, he/she may consult with the Career Development Help Desk and/or the CDO.

Q. With only 1/3 of total DS assignments overseas, won’t it be difficult for all who want to compete for promotion across the threshold to have the opportunity to serve overseas?

A. You will need to factor that into your assignment strategy and make sure you are examining all possible opportunities to fulfill that requirement. For its part, HR/CDA will consider the necessity of meeting CDP requirements in its assignment decisions.

**Q. Do out-of-cone assignments interfere with this requirement?**

A. Yes, that is possible. Consult with your CDO before accepting an out-of-cone assignment, as it may also affect LEAP status.

## **Operational Effectiveness**

**Q. Does the term “designated RSO position” under the mandatory operational effectiveness requirement include assistant and deputy RSO positions?**

A. It includes officially paneled RSO and deputy RSO positions (not TDYs). ARSO slots are not included as they typically have little management leadership responsibility.

Q. The CDP path can be completed without an agent ever having served in a domestic field office or ever having completed a domestic criminal investigation. Was this intentional, and if so, why?

A. Agents are likely to serve initial tours in field offices. The requirements for the Career Development Program do not explicitly include a tour in a field office – the authors wanted to strike a balance between spelling out every single assignment and highlighting the key skills/experiences needed to advance.

**Q. Why doesn’t MSD count for the elective of “one tour in operational, management or professional development”? The examples include protection, training center but not MSD or a non-supervisory field office position?**

A. The examples are not meant to be all inclusive or exclusive; therefore, not all assignments are listed.

## **Leadership Effectiveness**

**Q. I am an FP-02 who did not have the training at the FP-03 level which is now required. Do I need to worry about that as far as qualifying for the mandatory leadership effectiveness requirement?**

A. You may still claim the leadership effectiveness requirement provided you take the appropriate course or its equivalent while you are an FP-02. See the help page on Career Tracker for more details.

Q. What constitutes “significant and substantial” supervisory experience?

A. There is no single definition. Supervision, whether of FSNs, direct hires, or others, counts. Supervision is more than directing and evaluating work. It includes developing and setting priorities, resolving disputes, and enforcing discipline.

**Q. The definition of “Significant and Substantial Supervisory Responsibility” seems a little vague. Will the Help Desk or my CDO certify that I meet the threshold for substantial supervisory experience?**

A. The self-certification process is based on the premise that the employee is in the best position to document and clarify the nature of the supervisory experience. While it would give the client a higher comfort level to have the help desk or CDOs "certify" that a particular assignment met the threshold for substantial supervision, it is in fact the responsibility of the promotion panels to make that judgment. They will do so on the basis of the work requirements and the examples given in the EER narrative. Therefore, if an officer is making the case that he/she has the requisite supervisory experience; it should be clearly evident from the file.

The Selection Board is evaluating officers in relation to their peers. If the Board finds that the supervisory experience is weak, the result may be placement lower in the rank order. Supervisory credentials are one factor that the Specialist Threshold Board will be considering. CDOs are not members of the Selection Board. While they may have their own opinions of clients' claims, it would be unfair to expect them to render a definitive judgment – that is the responsibility of the Selection Board.

A great deal of thought and discussion preceded the decision for self-certification. Ultimately, we opted against rigid definitions of "supervision" that relied on numbers of people supervised, EERs written, etc. that might not capture varied experiences, and might unintentionally give short shrift to genuinely meaningful supervisory experience.

**Q. Why is supervision of contract employees not eligible for fulfilling the supervisory elective?**

A. The authors of the CDP felt it was important for future DS leaders to have demonstrated experience supervising agents. This was not meant to denigrate the importance of supervising contractors, but rather to emphasize the importance of supervising agents.

## **Professional, Technical, and Language Proficiency**

**Q. Who is responsible for determining the “equivalent” of FSI’s leadership and management courses?**

A. FSI

Q. What’s the rationale for the elective for DS agents to have language proficiency?

A. Language proficiency will allow an RSO to conduct interviews, obtain threat information, meet government officials, and deal with emergencies in real time by not having to rely on an interpreter.

**Q. Does a 2/2 in a world language fulfill the elective language requirement?**

A. Yes. A 2/2 in a world language will fulfill the elective for DS agents tenured after

January 1, 2014.

**Q. What steps will be taken to ensure we have the opportunity to get a language?**

A. If you have a foreign language in which you can demonstrate proficiency at 2/2 or higher, you may test at FSI at any time. For those who need to acquire a language, the Department is committed to ensuring that each agent has the opportunity to meet this requirement.

## **Responsiveness to Service Needs**

**Q. What comprises service in “operational/crisis response”?**

A. Service in DS Command Center or Line/Watch/Crisis Management positions, crisis task forces, posts in evacuation status, during and in the aftermath of armed conflict/major disaster, in support (including TDY) of a Presidential or Secretary of State visit or a major conference, Crisis Support teams, Olympics security coordination, or Mobile Security Division deployment. In order for a TDY to a High Threat Post (HTP) to count towards this elective, the TDY must be 120 days or longer.

Q. How should I count experience, for example, serving in a country after a disaster (e.g. tsunami or earthquake), coup, or service involving a Presidential or SecState visit, or major international conference?

A. There is some flexibility as to the counting of these types of experiences. Clearly, the time during which you are fully engaged should count, whether that be a week, a month, or more. Determining just how to count follow-up work may be more difficult, though if it continues to be a substantial part of your workload, you may count it. In any case, as the Career Development Program is self-certified, you will have the opportunity to explain why any given time period should fulfill this elective. TDYs to HTPs must meet the minimum 120 days length to count towards this elective.

**Q. Will there be anything like a waiver for an employee who genuinely sought an assignment, hardship or not, and, either for lack of availability or for other needs of the service, was assigned elsewhere?**

A. The waiver regulations will apply only to the hardship requirement, and there will be extremely limited qualifying criteria. Click here for [waiver procedures](http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/offices/cda/Documents/B-23.pdf).

Q. It seems unfair that serving at a hardship tour before tenure doesn’t “count” for CDP. Doesn’t that penalize agents who volunteer early on for these assignments?

A. There are actually two instances where hardship tours before tenure will “count”: if it is a danger pay post and if it is one of the first two Entry-Level directed tours. The requirement specifies “after tenure” because we need experienced employees to serve at hardship posts in the mid-grades. Fairness dictates, though, that we reward having done two hardships back to back, or serving at a danger pay post.

**Q. What happens when the differential of a post I am assigned to is raised, say from 10 to 15% after I am assigned or arrive at post? Will it count?**

A. If you serve at least 10 months of a 12 month tour, 20 months of a 24 month tour, or 30 months of a 36 month tour at the higher level, then you may claim the service need requirement (after tenure).

**Q. What happens when the differential of a post I am assigned to is lowered, after I am paneled but before I arrive? Or after I am at post? Will it count?**

A. Yes. What counts is the differential rate when you were assigned.

**Q. What’s the mechanism for proving that an agent completed a 45-day TDY at a danger post?**

A. This elective, like all of CDP, is self-certified and we are relying on the integrity of the Department’s employees to honor that intent. That said, the employee should certify via Career Tracker and could also have it noted under special circumstances in the EER. He/she might also request a memo from the TDY supervisor for inclusion in the OPF.

**Q. What is an “Officially Designated Critical Needs” position?**

A. All mid-level positions at posts with a combined differential (hardship and danger pay) of 25% or greater will be designated as critical needs positions. There are no domestic critical needs positions.

Q. Do I have to serve in a Critical Needs position to be eligible for consideration for promotion to FP-01?

A. Critical Needs service is one of the elective components of the Career Development Program for agents. Depending on your grade and/or tenure status as of January 1, 2014, you will be asked to complete two, three, or four of the eight elective requirements. Even if you have fulfilled other electives, service in a Critical Needs position demonstrates your adherence to the career development principle of responsiveness to Service needs and is strongly encouraged.

Q. What if I bid on a two-year Critical Needs assignment and the post’s TOD later changes to one year?

A. As long as you complete the normal tour of duty for your position or post, you will receive credit for fulfilling the Critical Needs requirement. If the post’s TOD changed, then you would still be serving a “normal” tour.

Q. What if the reverse happens; i.e., I bid on a position with a “normal” one-year TOD and once I’m paneled, the TOD changes to two or more years?

A. As long as you complete your tour as assigned, you will receive credit for fulfilling the Critical Needs requirement.

Q. I am interested in bidding on a Critical Needs position at a post that is Historically Difficult to Staff, but I want to negotiate a one-year tour, not the usual two years. Does that fulfill the Critical Needs requirement?

A. No. Negotiated tours are not considered “normal” tours as they do not coincide with the regular tour of duty at the post and thus do not fulfill the requirement for Critical Needs service.

**Q. I served in Nigeria five years ago, which was a Hard-to-Fill post then. I see positions there are now on the Critical Needs list. Does my old service there count?**

A.Critical Needs designations are not retroactive. However, your service in Nigeria would fulfill the requirement to serve at a 15% or greater hardship post, provided you completed your tour as assigned.

**Q**. **Some of us served in the Middle East post-9/11 and endured long-term evacuation of family members. Can that time in unaccompanied status be accumulated to reach a year for purposes of the Service need?**

A. If, after you begin your tour, the post shifts to authorized departure and/or unaccompanied status, you may claim the unaccompanied requirement if in a 12-month tour, you served 10-months while the post was in authorized/ordered departure status; 20-months of a 24-month tour; and 30-months of a 36-month tour. Service under these conditions will count towards the requirement regardless of family status.

GLOSSARY

**Career development—**the process by which employees manage their assignments to meet the requirements of the Career Development Program.

**Career Development Program—**a series of requirements, both mandatory and elective, that must be met for promotion to Senior Foreign Service/senior rank of specialty.

**Career development principles—**the four broad areas in which employees must demonstrate competence in order to be considered for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service/senior rank of their specialty i.e., operational effectiveness, leadership and management effectiveness, sustained professional language proficiency, and responsiveness to Service needs.

**Career Tracker—**an online application in which employees document how they have fulfilled the requirements of the Career Development Program.

**Crisis management**—experience or assignments which encompass service on, inter alia, crisis task forces, at post in the aftermath of a disaster or major armed conflict, or when a post is in evacuation status.

**Critical needs positions**—All mid-level positions at posts with a combined differential (hardship and danger pay) of 25% or greater will be designated as critical needs positions. There are no domestic critical needs positions.

**Cross-conal experience—**service in an assignment outside an employee’s primary skill code.

**Cross-functional experience—**experience in management of resources/people for those who generally work in reporting/policy analysis; or experience in reporting/policy analysis for those who generally work in management of resources/people.

**Cumulative—**added together, i.e., for purpose of fulfilling the professional development and crisis response electives, a series of short training courses/crisismanagement experiences may be added together to reach the time requirements for those electives.

**Fair Share**—a bidding requirement currently in effect which employees must bid on a differential post if they have not served in one for at least 18 months in the last 8 years.

**FEST—**Foreign Emergency Support Team-an interagency group with State Department membership which may be dispatched to posts in crisis on short notice.

**Hard to fill**—posts which are designated at a certain point in the assignments cycle when it has been determined that there are so few bids that they may be opened up to Civil Service employees on excursion.

**Hardship—**a category of assignments in which an employee receives additional pay because of the difficult nature of living/working at that post. For purposes of the Career Development Program Service Needs requirement, the qualifying percentage can be a combination of hardship differential and danger pay.

**IROG**—designation of domestic jobs for which all career tracks are considered qualified.

**Language Proficiency—**one of the four principles of the Career Development Program, with mandatory or elective requirement(s), or both.

**Leadership Effectiveness**—one of the four principles of the Career Development Program, with mandatory or elective requirement(s), or both.

**Leadership and Management Training—**courses that must be completed in fulfillment of the Leadership Effectiveness requirement of the Career Development Program. The specific courses and their equivalents are listed in the Career Development Plan document.

**Negotiated Tour—**a tour that is shorter than the established tour for a particular post.

**Operational Effectiveness—**one of the four principles of the Career Development Program, with mandatory and elective requirement(s), or both.

**Operational Readiness Reserve—**an umbrella designation for the Department’s employees, whose self-identified skills are maintained in a database which can be accessed quickly on an as-needed basis to respond to a crisis.

**Operational response**—a category of assignments/experiences including, inter alia, service in line/watch positions, support of Presidential or SecState overseas visits. Such service may be applied to the Operational Effectiveness elective.

**Professional development—**one of the elective requirements under the operational effectiveness principle of the CDP-includes training and details as well as employment in a non-public sector environment in a career-related field.

**Secondment**—an assignment to a position in an outside entity—e.g., the UN or its agencies. An assignment to another USG agency is a detail.

**Self-certification**—the process by which an employee documents in the Career Tracker application that he/she has met the Career Development Program requirements for consideration for promotion into the Senior Foreign Service/senior rank of specialty.

**Service Needs—**one of the four principles of the Career Development Program, with mandatory and elective requirements.

**Superhard languages—**Chinese, Arabic, Korean and Japanese—those languages for which two years is allotted to reach the 3/3 level.

**Supervisory Experience**—for CDP purposes, encompasses assigning work, developing and setting priorities, counseling employees and evaluating performance. It also includes resolving disputes, effecting minor disciplinary measures, interviewing and recommending candidates for positions within a unit, and/or supervising those that do.

**Tour**—an assignment of a specified length. Domestic tours are normally two years. Initial overseas tours can be twelve, twenty- four or thirty- six months. For purposes of fulfilling CDP requirements, an employee must serve 10 months of a 12 month tour, 20 months of a 24 month tour, and 30 months of a 36 month tour.

**Unaccompanied tour**—an assignment in which family members are not permitted at post. Posts in evacuation status may become unaccompanied.

**Waiver—**an official dispensation from the CDP hardship service requirement, under very limited criteria, granted by HR/CDA.