

Part 304 – Geological Services Unit (GSU) Administrative Procedures

304.0 Purpose

This instruction provides information on the Geological Services Unit (GSU) administrative procedures.

304.1 References

- A. DR 4040-410 Creating Individual Development Plans (IDP)
- B. DR 4040-430 Employee Performance and Awards
- C. National Staffing Distribution Model
- D. FPAC FY 2021 Performance Management Awards Guidance
- E. U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Pathways Program Handbook

304.2 Background

- A. GSU geologists provide geological services to the nation and territories. GSU geologists are located within host State organizational structures, typically under the supervisory chain of the State Conservation Engineer (SCE). The National Staffing Distribution Model accounts for a GSU geologist position as non-modeled staff in the host State.
- B. The Deputy Chief for Science and Technology (S&T) directly provides funding for salary and benefits, awards, travel, field equipment, and other technical resources for GSU geologists. Funds are managed by the National Geologist, who serves as the GSU Program Coordinator.
- C. Subject to the National Staffing Distribution Model, States may use their own State allocations to fund geologists outside of the GSU program. In the instance that a State recruits and hires a geologist outside the GSU program, the State is responsible for all costs associated with that employee, and no funds are available through the GSU.
- D. Because of the shared responsibility between States and the S&T Deputy Area, there are processes and procedures to follow to manage the GSU program regarding travel of GSU geologists, hiring requests, and award requests.

304.3 Staffing and Hiring Requests

- A. To fill vacancies allocated as non-modeled staff on the National Staffing Distribution Model, or to hire GSU geologist recent graduates or interns through the Pathways Program, State Conservationists (STC) will send requests through the GSU Coordinator to the Deputy Chief for S&T.
- B. The Deputy Chief for S&T will manage recruitment in coordination with FPAC Human Resources (HR).
- C. The host State hiring manager, first line supervisor, and second line supervisor will work with HR on completing the signature for the SF-52 and supporting classification or staffing details needed for the position announcement.
- D. The host State must provide the Personnel Office Identifier (POI), Department ID, Organizational Code, supervisory structure, and an updated position description to the GSU Coordinator upon submittal of their request.
- E. The GSU Coordinator may reach out to STCs to coordinate recruitment of vacant GSU geologist positions in areas of critical need.
- F. STCs who do not host a GSU geologist should contact the GSU Coordinator to request hosting a GSU geologist. The GSU Coordinator may request that the requesting State perform a workload analysis to support their recruitment request.

304.4 Salary and Benefits

GSU Time and Attendance

- (1) In order to account for salary and benefits expended, GSU geologists charge their working hours to accounting codes that are specifically identified and provided to them in the official FPAC time and attendance software. Timekeepers within the host State will provide assistance to the GSU geologist if the appropriate accounting codes are not immediately available.
- (2) GSU geologists are the only employees authorized to charge time to accounts identified for the GSU geologists. Corrected timesheets are required to be completed for employee time charged incorrectly to GSU-specific accounts.

304.5 Awards

A. Monetary Awards

- (1) STCs or their designees may send requests to give monetary awards to GSU employees in the form of spot awards, extra effort awards, time off awards, and Quality Step Increases (QSIs) to the GSU Coordinator.
- (2) The GSU Coordinator and Director, Conservation Engineering Division, will verify funds are available for awards requested for GSU employees.
- (3) The Deputy Chief for S&T approves awards requests submitted for GSU employees.
- (4) States will follow current FPAC awards guidance using provided funding codes to process awards.
- (5) The GSU program cannot reimburse States for awards that were paid using State funds.

B. Non-Monetary Awards

Presentation of non-monetary awards will follow agency policy, using the normal process. The GSU Coordinator will be consulted regarding the availability of funds supporting these purchases.

304.6 Support Funds

A. Field Equipment and Technical Resources

- (1) The GSU Coordinator manages shared field equipment and technical resources utilized by GSU geologists. GSU geologists requiring the use of GSU owned agency equipment must make a request to the GSU Coordinator. The GSU Coordinator maintains an inventory and scheduling log to prioritize equipment use and maintenance. The equipment is typically stored at a scheduled location, where it remains and then shipped or transported once a new request is received. Normal operational procedures within the States will be followed for shipping equipment.
- (2) If surplus funds are available at the end of the year, the GSU Coordinator will manage its disbursement to support high priority equipment purchases.
- (3) Special funding requests in excess of \$1,500 require a request approved by the Deputy Chief for S&T. GSU geologists, SCEs, and STCs will communicate specific needs for field equipment and technical resources to the GSU Coordinator, who will coordinate any special funding requests. Technical resources can include subscription services or other services to support the GSU employees.

B. GSU Travel

- (1) STCs will report anticipated travel needs to the GSU Coordinator in order to ensure adequate travel funds are available.
- (2) The host State SCE prioritizes all intrastate travel.
- (3) Some GSU geologists are assigned multiple States to support providing nationwide geological services. The SCE in the host State and requesting State coordinate and prioritize work, including the relevant STCs and GSU Coordinator on correspondence.
- (4) Geologists charge travel expenses to accounting codes provided by the GSU Coordinator. If the travel codes are not immediately available in the agency's official travel system, employees will contact the Travel team in the FPAC Business Center to obtain the appropriate codes.
- (5) The host State SCE is responsible for approving all official travel for Geologists in the agency's official travel system.

C. Training

GSU geologists will discuss individual development goals with their supervisor to create an IDP in accordance with DR 4040-410, following normal State operational procedures for approval of training within and outside NRCS. Host State SCEs will coordinate with the GSU Coordinator on the availability of funding for any training for GSU geologists requiring travel, tuition, or other expenses.

304.7 Responsibilities

A. State Conservationists

- (1) GSU Geologists are supervised within the chain of command of the State where they are housed and fall within said State's organizational structure.
 - (a) Activities not specifically addressed in this national instruction will follow standard operating procedures and processes used for State and agency functions.
 - (b) The host State provides office space, computing equipment, access to leased and/or owned fleet vehicles, including ability to purchase fuel and maintenance services.
- (2) Host States must coordinate with and request approval for GSU recruitment actions, GSU equipment needs, GSU awards, and GSU travel through the GSU Coordinator.

B. Deputy Chief for S&T

- (1) The Deputy Chief for S&T is the Allowance Holder responsible for approving the use and expenditure of all GSU program funds for any purpose.
- (2) The Deputy Chief for S&T approves all recruitment actions for GSU Geologists.

C. Director, CED

The Director, CED oversees the work of the GSU Program Coordinator in—

- (1) Program Management (tracking travel funds / budget / execution).
- (2) Facilitation and coordination of geologic support for States.
- (3) Mentoring.
- (4) Supporting the national staffing allocation in collaboration with the Deputy Chief – Management and Strategy.

- D. The GSU Program Coordinator may reach out to individual GSU geologists as needed to support updating agency handbooks, manuals, and practice standards. The GSU Coordinator will coordinate any support with the relevant SCEs and the specific availability of the GSU geologists.

304.8 Program Contacts

For questions or concerns about any of the information contained in this National Instruction, contact the GSU Program Coordinator.