

SECTION 32—ESTIMATING EMPLOYMENT LEVELS, COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND  
RELATED COSTS

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**Summary of Changes**

Updates information related to calculating the Government's full share of pensions and post-retirement health benefits for Federal employees (section 32.5).

**32.1 What terms do I need to know?**

**Employee**, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2105, means an officer or individual who is appointed under a delegated authority, is engaged in the performance of a Federal function, and is subject to the supervision of an officer or employee of the Federal Government.

**Full-time equivalent (FTE) employment** means the total number of regular straight-time hours (i.e., not including overtime or holiday hours) worked by employees divided by the number of compensable hours applicable to each fiscal year. Annual leave, sick leave, compensatory time off and other approved leave categories are considered "hours worked" for purposes of defining full-time equivalent employment that is reported in the personnel summary (see section [86.1](#)). This definition is consistent with guidance provided by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in connection with reporting FTE data as part of the SF 113G reporting system. A list of compensable days (with associated hours) for fiscal years 2002 through 2008 is provided in section [32.3\(b\)](#).

**32.2 What should be the basis for my personnel estimates?**

(a) *Personnel*.

(1) *Staffing requirements*. Base estimates for staffing requirements on the assumption that improvements in skills, organization, procedures, and supervision will produce a steady increase in productivity. Personnel should be reassigned, to the maximum extent, to meet new program requirements. Reductions generally should be planned where the workload is stable. Where information technology systems are installed or enhanced, gains in productivity should result in lower personnel requirements after the first year.

Where appropriate, use calculations converting workload to required personnel that include an estimate of available workhours per employee. Exclude annual leave, sick leave, administrative leave, training, and

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other non-work time in these calculations. Base estimates of available time on current data, reflect steps taken to improve the ratio of available time to total time, and recognize differences in available time by organization, location, or activity. Base exclusions for annual and sick leave on current experience of actual leave taken rather than leave earned. Employment levels should reflect budget proposals and assumptions with regard to workload, efficiency, proposed legislation, interagency reimbursable arrangements, and other special staffing methods. Employment intended for proposed legislation, or for carrying out proposed supplemental appropriations, cannot begin until the additional funds become available by congressional action. Employment proposed for activation of new facilities or start-up of new programs cannot begin until the new activity begins. Employment under estimated reimbursable arrangements also cannot begin until such arrangements have been negotiated and justified.

(2) *Personnel resources.* Just as estimates of employment are based on workyears/person hours, you should base estimates of personnel resources on the total number of regularly scheduled straight-time hours (worked or to be worked) in the fiscal year (see section [32.3\(c\)](#)). Note that, although budgetary resources must be sufficient to cover any extra compensable days in a fiscal year, some of the corresponding outlays may not occur until the following year.

(3) *Requirement for data in terms of FTEs.* Wherever entries in schedules or materials required by this Circular pertain to personnel requirements or total employment levels, state such entries for all years in terms of FTEs, as defined in section [32.1](#), unless another measure is explicitly required.

(b) *Personnel compensation.*

(1) *Pay scales.* Unless instructed otherwise by OMB, base estimates on compensation scales in effect at the time of submission of the estimates, adjusted for pay raises contained in the Mid-Session Review economic assumptions.

The Mid-Session Review pay raise assumptions will apply to the statutory pay systems (General Schedule, Foreign Service, and Veterans Health Administration), the Executive Schedule, the Senior Executive Service (SES), and wage grade employees. The pay raises encompass both the Employment Cost Index (ECI)-based national schedule adjustment and locality pay without assumption as to how the total increase will be distributed between the two. Use pay scales that reflect the most recent locality pay rates in preparing your estimates.

You may need to adjust your estimates when final pay assumptions for the budget are released. You should be prepared to provide supporting detail on calculating pay costs, including separate identification of the pre-pay raise wage base reflected in the submission. You must explicitly justify any increases in average compensation for the budget year, other than those due to changes in pay scales.

(2) *Hourly rates.* Base compensation for all employees (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 5504(b)) on hourly rates of compensation determined by dividing the annual rate of basic pay by 2,087, in accordance with section 15203(a) of the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 (Public Law 99–272).

(3) *Within-grade increases.* Additional resources for within-grade increases are normally not allowed. Offset the net cost, if any, of within-grade salary increases (i.e., costs after turnover, downgrades, and other grade or step reducing events are taken into account) by savings due to greater productivity and efficiency.

(4) *Vacancies.* Base estimates related to vacancies expected to be filled in the budget year on the entrance salary for the vacancies involved.

(5) *Savings in personnel compensation.* Give full consideration to savings in personnel compensation due to personnel reductions, delay in filling vacant positions, leave without pay, lag in recruitment for new positions, filling vacancies at lower rates of pay, part-time employment, and grade reduction actions. Identify terminal leave payments, including those for SES, as offsets against such savings.

(6) *Positions above grade GS/GM-15.* Reflect these positions, including SES, only to the extent that positions have been authorized in those grades by OPM or other authority, or are specifically authorized in substantive law.

(7) *Awards.* Estimates should include amounts for all cash incentive awards. Upon request by OMB, be prepared to provide detailed information on your cash incentive awards program, including a narrative explanation of the basis on which your agency distributes awards and how that relates to its overall performance management program.

(8) *Executive selection and development programs.* Include in your estimates provisions for reasonable amounts for such programs, as required under Title IV of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 and by implementing guidelines issued by the Office of Personnel Management.

(9) *Premium pay and overtime.* Fully justify increases over amounts for the preceding year for premium pay. In preparing estimates for overtime, you should analyze the use of overtime to ensure that it is used in a prudent and efficient manner; explore all reasonable alternatives to overtime (such as improved scheduling); and ensure that adequate approval, monitoring, and audit procedures are in place to avoid overtime abuses.

(10) *Special rates for experts and consultants.* Authority to pay special rates for experts and consultants may be requested only when your agency demonstrates that the type and caliber of services required cannot be obtained at the maximum daily rate payable for grade GS-15 under the Classification Act. When such authority is justified and specifically authorized, special rates may not exceed the maximum rate for senior level positions under 5 U.S.C. 5376.

(11) *Severance pay.* Estimate severance pay at the amount needed for the fiscal year. However, obligations will be incurred on a pay-period by pay-period basis, notwithstanding the fact that a liability arises at the time of an employee's separation. Your estimates must include changes in severance pay and personnel compensation that would occur upon the application of instructions covered in OMB Circular No. A-76.

(12) *Physicians comparability allowance.* Reflect in your estimates approved plans to pay bonuses to physicians in accordance with the Federal Physicians Comparability Allowance Amendments of 1987 (Public Law 100-140) and the Federal Employees Health Care Protection Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-266). Instructions for reporting on the physicians comparability allowance program are issued separately.

(13) *Bonuses and allowances.* Reflect in your estimates approved agency plans for paying recruitment and relocation bonuses and retention allowances. You should be prepared to supply information on planned and actual expenditures upon request by OMB.

(14) *Retirement costs.* Reflect in your estimates the cost effects of changes in the distribution of employees between the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS). (See section [32.5](#) for retirement cost factors.)

### **32.3 What do I need to know about FTE budgeted levels?**

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(a) *Policy.*

Consistent with the general policy of making the most effective use of Government resources, each agency head will ensure close management of budgeted FTE levels for his or her agency. Agencies should not convert the work of their employees to contractors unless they first undertake cost comparisons that demonstrate that such a conversion is of financial advantage to the Government.

(b) *Determining FTE usage.*

You must prepare budget estimates relating to personnel requirements in terms of FTE employment, as specified in this Circular.

To determine FTE employment, divide the total number of regular hours (worked or to be worked) by the number of compensable hours applicable to each fiscal year. This calculation standardizes the FTE work year for purposes of setting total FTE estimates, so that OPM's SF 113G reporting mechanism will consistently measure the resulting FTE figure. The following list of compensable days and hours for fiscal years 2002 through 2008 should be used to compute FTE employment.

**COMPENSABLE DAYS AND HOURS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2001–2007**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Hours</b>
2002.....	261	2,088
2003.....	261	2,088
2004.....	262	2,096
2005.....	261	2,088
2006.....	260	2,080
2007.....	260	2,080
2008.....	262	2,096

FTE employment levels apply to straight time hours only. Department of Defense indirect hire employees are not included in FTE employment totals. FTEs funded by allocations from other agencies will be included with the performing agency where the employees work and are payrolled.

Be sure to include in FTE employment estimates all Federal employees, including persons appointed under the Worker Trainee Opportunity Program, Federal Cooperative Education Program, summer aids, Stay-in-School Program, and the Federal Junior Fellowship Program. You are encouraged to participate fully in the student employment and other special employment programs and to ensure that these programs are not disproportionately reduced when agency-wide reductions are required.

The FTE estimates must take into account both seasonal variations in personnel requirements and employment trends (increasing or decreasing personnel levels) for each agency. Therefore, these levels will be related to, but not identical with, end-of-year data in the Monthly Report of Federal Civilian Employment, which is reported to OPM on the SF 113A and reflects a headcount of employees. Measure current year FTE estimates using information compiled from the SF 113G reports submitted to OPM.

(c) *Justification of FTE usage.*

The FTE estimates for each agency are determined at the time of the annual budget review, for the fiscal year in progress and for the succeeding fiscal year. You must ensure that the FTE estimates are consistent with all applicable laws. In particular, some statutes providing agencies with authority to use voluntary separation incentive proposals or buy-outs stipulate that agency-wide FTE levels must be reduced one-for-one for each buy-out. Further, FTE estimates must represent an effective and efficient use of resources to meet program requirements (see section 51.3).

Actual FTE usage reported in the PY column of the budget must equal the year-end FTE usage reported on the SF 113G to OPM.

Current year FTE estimates should be consistent with PY actuals, should be fully funded, and should be very close to the actual usage reported at the end of the fiscal year. For example, the 2003 estimate in the FY 2004 Budget should be very close to the 2003 actuals to be published in the 2005 Budget.

*(d) FTE transfers between agencies.*

Prior to entering into new or expanded agreements to perform work for other agencies on a reimbursable basis, you must prepare a cost justification in accordance with OMB Circular No. A-76. As part of this agreement, you may transfer FTEs on a one-for-one basis, provided that you notify OMB prior to making such a transfer. You may proceed with the FTE transfer fifteen days after notification to OMB unless OMB objects.

*(e) Adjustment requests.*

Send all requests for adjustments in employment levels, including agreements to transfer FTEs between agencies, to the Director of OMB.

**32.4 How do I treat agency benefit payments under the Federal Employee Compensation Act?**

For accounts subject to appropriations action, include in your budget year estimates the amount billed by the Employment Standards Administration of the Department of Labor for benefits paid on behalf of employees of your agency in the past year under the Federal Employee Compensation Act.

For accounts not subject to appropriations action, you must pay the bill in the current year.

**32.5 How do I estimate Federal employee pension and health benefit costs?**

Your estimates should reflect the pension costs for Federal employees under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS), the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS), the Foreign Service Retirement and Disability System (FSRDS), and the Central Intelligence Agency Retirement and Disability System (CIARDS). Your estimates should also include active and retiree health benefit costs under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB). Estimates should also reflect pension and health benefits costs of the Military and Commissioned Corps systems.

The Administration has proposed legislation to require agencies to pay the full normal cost of providing CSRS and other retirement system benefits (see specific guidance below). Your estimates should assume enactment of this proposal. Depending on the status of the legislation at the time the Budget is prepared, you may be required to separately identify the amount associated with the proposal. In addition, you may be required to present the impact of this proposal on a three-year basis (i.e., as if the legislation had been enacted and implemented in 2002). Additional guidance will be provided later.

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- **CSRS.** Your agency's cost is 8.51 percent of basic pay through FY 2002, except for law enforcement officers, firefighters, certain judges, congressional staff, and Members of Congress, as noted in 5 U.S.C. 8334(a). Under current law, the agency contribution rate for most or regular employees will revert to 7.5 percent for the first quarter of FY 2003, and to 7.0 percent in the following January. Basic pay is defined at 5 U.S.C. 8331(3).

Based on the current actuarial valuations, your agency's full cost is calculated as a percent of basic pay. The Office of Personnel Management periodically revises its valuations. Should this occur, OPM would notify your agency.

Use the following table to calculate your agency's costs:

**AGENCY CONTRIBUTION RATES**

<b>Category of CSRS Employee</b>	<b>Current Law</b>	<b>Increment</b>	<b>Fully-Funded</b>
Regular	7.0%	10.4%	17.4%
Regular offset	7.0%	11.0%	18.0%*
Law enforcement officers	7.5%	23.9%	31.4%
Law enforcement officers offset	7.5%	25.6%	33.1%*
Air traffic controllers	7.0%	18.4%	25.4%
Air traffic controllers offset	7.0%	19.8%	26.8%*
Members of Congress	8.0%	11.6%	19.6%
Members of Congress offset	8.0%	15.5%	23.5%*
Congressional employees	7.5%	18.1%	25.6%
Congressional employees offset	7.5%	19.0%	26.5%*

\* Rate applicable up to the maximum social security wage base. Because the employee contribution increases by 6.2% for basic pay above the maximum social security wage base, there is an offsetting 6.2% reduction in the agency contribution for basic pay above that amount.

- **FERS.** Your agency's cost is comprised of the costs for the FERS basic benefit, social security, and the thrift savings plan (TSP). The FERS basic benefit is 10.7 percent of basic pay, except for law enforcement officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, certain CIA employees, congressional employees, and Members of Congress. For these employees, use the normal cost percentage provided in the *Federal Register* of May 9 2002, and reduce it by the employee contribution of 1.3 percent. Base your TSP estimates on your agency's actual experience, which should fall between one and five percent of the FERS basic payroll.
- **FSRDS, CIARDS, and the three Commissioned Corps (Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).** Use the following tables to calculate your agency's costs:

AGENCY CONTRIBUTION RATES

FSRDS Retirement System	Current Law	Increment	Fully-Funded
Regular	7.0%	13.7%	20.7%*
Regular offset	7.0%	13.8%	20.8%*
Law enforcement	7.5%	23.5%	31.0%*
Law enforcement offset	7.5%	23.7%	31.2%*

\* These factors are subject to change.

Other Retirement Systems	Current Law	Increment	Fully-Funded
CIARDS	7.0%	21.0%	28.0%
US Coast Guard	0%	35.2%	35.2%
NOAA Commissioned Corp	0%	32.9%	32.9%
PHH Commissioned Corp	0%	30.0%	30.0%

- *FEHB*. Under current law, your agency pays the Government contribution for current health benefits coverage for your active employees on a pay as you go basis. Funds appropriated to OPM out of the General Fund of the Treasury are to pay the Government contribution for annuitants (5 U.S.C. 8906). The Administration has proposed legislation to require agencies, beginning in FY 2003, to pay currently the future cost of providing post-retirement health benefits to their active employees. As a result, in addition to your agency's cost for current year health insurance premiums, you should include in your submission a separate and additional amount to reflect the post-retirement cost of health benefits for your current employees. For the FY 2004 Budget, the agency contribution is \$3,976 per participating employee whether full or part-time.
- *For Uniformed Services post-retirement medical care*. Post Retirement Medical care for "Medicare-eligible" retirees and their dependents/survivors will be funded on an accrual basis beginning in FY 2003. The Administration is proposing legislation that would extend this accrual funding to all retirees and families—not just those who are Medicare-eligible—beginning in FY 2004. Budget estimates in the FY 2004 budget submission must assume inclusion of all retirees and families (both medicare-eligible and non medicare-eligible). Agencies must calculate the following estimates for their budget submission:
  - ▶ Accrual contribution to the Uniformed Services Health Accrual Trust Fund (see below)
  - ▶ Estimate of the health care dollars to be expended in FY 2004 for all retirees
- *Accrual contribution to the Uniformed Services Health Accrual Trust Fund*. To develop appropriate accrual contribution estimates, agencies must use the per-capita rates provided below. Agencies must multiply these rates by the estimated average number of current uniformed service personnel for FY 2004. The resulting calculation is the agency-specific accrual contribution, which should be budgeted in the agency's personnel account.

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▶ Active duty per-capita rates, DOD and Coast Guard .....	\$ 9,301
▶ Reservist per-capita rates, DOD and Coast Guard .....	\$ 2,177
▶ NOAA and PHS per-capita rates.....	\$11,964

(Note: NOAA and PHS rates are higher because these Services are solely comprised of full-time officers)

- *Estimate of the health care dollars to be expended in FY 2004 for all retirees.* Agencies must estimate the FY 2004 expenditures for retiree health care. (Separate estimates must be provided for Medicare-eligible retirees and non Medicare-eligible retirees). These estimates are needed to develop the total amount that the Trust Fund will outlay for uniformed service health care during FY 2004. To prevent double counting, each agency must ensure that their health care account request does not include any amount for retiree health care.

During the preparation of the President’s Budget, OMB will provide additional instructions on accrual estimates.

**32.6 How do I reflect the effects of pay raises?**

For the following three types of budget accounts, reflect the effects of the increased agency contribution to employee retirement and of civilian and military pay raises using the pay raise assumptions specified for these accounts in the Mid-Session Review:

- Governmental receipt accounts containing Federal employee contributions to Federal employee retirement.
- Offsetting receipt accounts (employer share, employee retirement) containing employing agency contributions to Federal employee retirement.
- General fund contributions to Federal employee retirement.

Major agencies with accounts in these categories include DOD, State, Treasury, and OPM.

**32.7 How do I budget for unemployment compensation?**

In general, you should not budget for the costs of unemployment compensation for former Federal civilian and military personnel. The congressional intent is that such unemployment compensation be paid from appropriations available to the employing agencies. The liable agencies must absorb these reimbursements when they are required to be paid.

If you do not employ large numbers of temporary employees or other personnel expected to lead to significant unemployment compensation claims, your estimates for the current and budget year will not contain any special provisions for the costs of reimbursing the unemployment trust fund for such payments.

If you employ large numbers of temporary employees to meet part-year workload, you may request approval from OMB to budget for unemployment compensation costs for your temporary employees. OMB will consider such requests if you can demonstrate that you have a sound administrative control system for unemployment compensation claims.