

# U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service

## **2018 Open Assignments Cycle**

## **Guidelines for Bidders**

*Open Cycle Begins October 2017 (subject to change)*

# Contents

Introduction	1
Eligibility to Bid	1
On-Cycle Bidders	2
The Full Bid List	2
Bidding on LDPs	4
Year-Out Off-Cycle Bidders	5
Limited Appointees and Other Bidders	5
Urgent Vacancy Positions	6
Service Needs Differential Positions and Tour of Duty	6
New Vacancies	6
Assignments Panel Procedures	6
Extensions	7
Early Extension Panel	7
Tours-of-Duty	8
Curtailments	9
Appeals	9

## Guidelines for the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle

### Introduction

Welcome to the “Guidelines for Bidders” for the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle. The 2018 cycle is currently scheduled to begin in October 2017, with the release of the open cycle vacancy list. The computerized bidding program, “I-BID,” will be open for officers to submit their bids when the Director General launches the cycle. The first deadline for bids is to be determined and will be after the Selection Board results are announced.

The following pages outline the bid procedures and paneling process used to determine assignments of Foreign Commercial Service Officers due for onward assignment in 2018.

Rotational onward assignments for officers are determined through a bidding-and-paneling process that culminates with an assignment. The objective of the process is to assign officers to positions for which they are *qualified* and *available*, in reasonable anticipation of vacancies, in a manner that is responsive to the needs of the Service and takes into account the career needs and personal preferences of the officers.

“I-BID,” the intranet-based bidding and interactive data system, gathers and processes all bids. A new version of I-BID was rolled out during the 2015 Open Assignments Cycle and has the advantage of greater security and enhanced accessibility for officers. I-BID is located on ITA Central under the “Applications” tab, “Data Resources,” and it runs 24/7/365. I-BID has these Guidelines for Bidders as well as a wide variety of tools that will help officers and their families plan their bidding strategies and submit bids during the cycle. Programs like the “Bid Distribution Matrix” can be accessed in real time. The Career Development and Assignments Officer may provide alternative arrangements for bidding in the event that an officer is having an access problem with I-BID.

The Office of Foreign Service Human Capital’s (OFSHC) Career Development and Assignments Officer manages the bidding-and-paneling process and is responsible to the Director General (DG) and the Deputy Director General (DDG) for maintaining the integrity of the assignments process and procedures. Questions or concerns about the guidelines or procedures should be addressed to Career Development and Assignments Officer.

### Eligibility to Bid

In order to bid during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle, an officer must be **eligible** to transfer to a new post and, at the same time, be able to meet the language and/or language training requirements by the start-date of the positions made open for bid during the cycle. Career and career-candidate officers whose current end-of-tour dates end at any time during calendar year 2018 are considered “on-cycle” officers for the purpose of bidding in the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle, if they have not been previously assigned. Career and Career-Candidate officers who are currently serving in the first year of their required domestic service assignment will have the option to be considered “on-cycle” for the purpose of bidding.

On-cycle officers **must** bid during the cycle. All other officers, including limited appointees, are considered “off-cycle,” in general terms. However, some off-cycle officers may be available for jobs on the list and able to bid under certain circumstances (e.g., on extensions, as “year-out” bidders, or on UVPs) described below.

**Question 1: Am I on-cycle or off-cycle?** If you are a career or career-candidate officer and the end of your current tour-of-duty falls between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018, you are “on-cycle” and **must** bid during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle. Officers who are currently serving in the first year of their required domestic service assignment will be given the choice to be considered “on-cycle” for the purpose of bidding. All other officers are “off-cycle” for the purposes of bidding and may bid under certain circumstances but are not required to bid.

**Limited appointment officers may bid as described under ‘Limited Appointees and Other Bidders’ below.**

## On-Cycle Bidders

All on-cycle officers must submit a full bid list via I-BID by the bidding deadline announced by the Career Development and Assignments Officer for their bids to be considered for onward assignment during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle. All previous bid submissions are void. The full bid list may include a combination of available positions from the "Assignments Vacancy List" including 2018 Non-Language-Designated Positions (NLDP), 2018 Language-Designated Positions (LDP) for which the officer can qualify, Urgent Vacancy Positions (UVP), or any available domestic-based and/or hardship position that is required. Every bidder must submit a maximum of 8 bids, of which four **must** be core bids (see below).

An on-cycle Officer may bid on any position that is advertised as available during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle as long as the start date of the position does not require the officer to curtail by more than 6 months from his/her current tour of duty. An on-cycle officer is not required to bid on any position that would constitute a curtailment from the end of his/her current tour-of-duty by more than six months.

On-cycle Officers who provide insufficient bid lists, or who fail to meet bid deadlines, may be directly assigned to any position for which they qualify during the cycle. Officers whose mandatory retirement date does not allow them to complete at least a two-year tour in an onward assignment should contact the Career Development and Assignments Officer at the start of the assignment cycle for further instruction.

## The Full Bid List

A full bid list must include four bids, ranked in order of preference. When bidding during an Open Assignments Cycle, an on-cycle officer:

- must submit a minimum of four "core" bids at his/her current personal grade, if available;
- may submit up to four additional bids on positions that are at the grade of, one grade higher than, or one grade lower than his/her current personal grade;
- may submit one (and only one) stretch bid on a position that is no more than two grades higher than his/her current personal grade in place of one of the aforementioned additional bids.
- may not submit double-stoop bids (e.g., FO-01 Officer may not bid on FS-03 graded positions).

## OTHER REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the core requirements, the following requirements may apply to some officers:

- **HARDSHIP:** If the officer has not served in a hardship assignment in the past 8 years, s/he **MUST** submit a minimum of **two** bids on hardship positions. For assignment purposes, *hardship* positions are defined as overseas positions that have a post differential of 5% or higher.
- **15 YEARS OVERSEAS:** If the officer has served 15 years without a domestic assignment, s/he must submit a minimum of **one** bid on any advertised domestic-based position at grade or at one grade higher or lower than his/her current personal grade, if available. *Domestic-based* positions include those in advertised USEAC offices, positions at HQ, and other U.S.-based positions (e.g., in development banks) listed on the vacancy list. Regardless of length, time spent in language training in the U.S. is not considered a domestic assignment.
- **DOMESTIC TOUR RULE:** New employees entering the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service as career-candidates who do not have at least one year of experience as a trade specialist in a U.S. Export Assistance Center (USEAC) or other qualifying domestic position within the preceding five years will normally be directly assigned to such a position for a two-year tour of duty upon appointment. If: 1) the new employee is residing overseas immediately preceding appointment and for the needs of the service, is assigned to an overseas position or 2) for the needs of the service, a first tour career-candidate is assigned to an overseas position to fill a critical vacancy, the career-candidate will begin a two-year domestic assignment upon completion of the first overseas tour. Any exception to this policy shall be handled on a case by case basis. Career Officers and Career

Candidates will have the option to submit bids with on-cycle bidder status during the first year of their two-year USEAC assignment. Based on the needs of the service, CS management will determine whether the officer should complete the two-year tour or be assigned to an onward assignment after completion of one year domestic assignment. All career-candidate/career employees who do not have at least one year of experience as a trade specialist as outlined above are required to have completed or begun USEAC tour in order to be eligible for subsequent promotion to the FS-01 class at some point during their career.

The Hardship, 15-Year, and Domestic Tour bids, if required, may either be 'core' bids (at grade) or stretch/stoop bids.

## **LIMITED MEDICAL CLEARANCES**

If an officer (or officer's family member) has a limited (e.g., Class 2) medical clearance, the officer must only bid on positions where s/he and the family member are eligible to serve, as determined by State MED. As this can vary depending on the type of medical condition or education requirement/need, officers with less than full clearances (or with family members with less Class 1/Worldwide Available) **must** have received Post Approval from State Med **before** bidding to determine which posts are eligible. This process can be lengthy so officers subject to this process are strongly encouraged to start the process early.

**The Post Approval process is distinct from the standard medical clearance or medical clearance update.**

### **A. Pre-Bidding**

The employee **obtains a current medical report** from the healthcare provider who has been treating or monitoring his/her or family member's limiting medical or mental health condition. The report should include the following information:

- Current Diagnosis
- Current Status, including any medications
- Current Treatment Plan, including Type and Frequency of follow-up prescribed for the next two years.

**Note: The treatment plan for future care and monitoring is the key criterion.**

The employee **submits the current medical report** by FAX to:

- Office of Medical Services/Medical Clearances @ (703) 875-5414
- FAX Coversheet (for Report) should note - "Post Specific (Class 2) Medical Clearance Update for Bidding"

**The employee is strongly encouraged to fax the report personally to ensure MED's timely receipt.**

### **B. Bidding**

- Final bid list (wish list) for post approval requests are submitted to OFSHC, Attn: Allison Smith
- OFSHC will submit bid list to Medical Clearance for post approval.
- Medical Clearances will research its database for medical resources overseas.
- Medical Clearances may discuss the issues with the medical staff at the proposed post before making final determinations.
- OFSHC and/or State Medical Clearance will notify employee of approval/disapproval.

The Officer supplies information to State MED regarding their medical conditions. However, OFSHC is the ONLY POC for State MED regarding post clearances.

## **CHANGING BIDS**

Officers may remove or change bids during the cycle as long as four core bids, and other requirements, if applicable, are met. Changes are made by submitting revised bid lists via I-BID. A core or required bid that is removed must be replaced by another core bid.

Using I-BID, officers are able to use the “Save As Draft” function to develop and save their bid lists as they contemplate their final choices. Draft bid lists are reflected in the “Bid Distribution Matrix.” Officers should use the “Submit” button only to submit their final list. In the event that bids are inadvertently submitted, prior to the deadline officers can contact the Career Development and Assignments Officer to reset a submitted list. After the deadline, bids cannot be changed.

Between bidding rounds in the Assignments Cycle, officers will have short spans of time (usually two weeks) between scheduled Assignments Panel meetings during which they can revise or update bids. Once an officer is paneled to an assignment, he or she cannot change or submit new bids during the cycle.

#### **“REFRESHING” Core and Required Bids**

In the event that one or more of an on-cycle officer’s core bids have been assigned to someone else during the Open Assignments Cycle, the unassigned officer **MUST** ‘refresh’ his or her bid list to fill out the core list. If an officer’s required bids (e.g., hardship or domestic) are assigned to someone else, the officer **MUST** refresh his or her list with the required bids, if available at his/her grade or at one grade higher or lower, until the officer is assigned or no more hardship/domestic positions are available.

Officers may submit additional bids at any time before being assigned, up to the 8 maximum bids, to update his/her bid list.

**Question 2: Do my four core, at-grade bids have to be listed as my first four preferences on my bid list?** Not necessarily. If you are only submitting the minimum 4 bids, they must all be at-grade (core) bids. If you are submitting 5-8 bids, your 4 core bids can be priority ranked in any order on your bid list.

**Question 3: Can a hardship bid or domestic bid be a core bid?** Yes, as long as it is also at your personal grade. Hardship or domestic position bids can be part of your core bid list or in addition to your core bid list. However, they must be a part of your maximum 8 bids. USEAC and headquarters domestic positions are advertised as both FS-04 and FS-03 so officers have the flexibility of counting a domestic bid as one of their four core at-grade bids. Officers may bid on a domestic position only once (i.e. Officers are not allowed to bid on the same position at both the FS-04 and FS-03 grades) and each domestic position will be assigned to only one officer.

**Question 4: What if there are only 3 positions available at my grade on the bid list?** In this case, your core bid list would include those three positions and your minimum bid list for submission is 3 core at-grade bids. Your maximum bid list remains at 8 bids.

#### **Bidding on LDPs**

An on-cycle bidder who can meet the speaking and reading language requirements of any Language-Designated Position (LDP) advertised during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle may consider bidding on that position. In order to meet the language requirements of an LDP, an officer must have a **valid** language test score (test scores are generally valid for 5 years) or be able to obtain a valid language test score (per Subchapter 800-2) by the start date of the position. Please see the ‘Language Training Expectations Table’ under ‘user information’ in I-BID to determine how long it takes to improve various language scores.

**An on-cycle bidder who does not have a valid language test score for an LDP and who is interested in bidding on that LDP should test or re-test to attain a valid score.** Testing for bidding purposes can be done over the phone and is arranged by the OFSHC Training and Development Branch. Please contact Barbara Earman via e-mail at [Barbara.Earman@trade.gov](mailto:Barbara.Earman@trade.gov) or tel. 202-482-4521 for more information or to schedule a test. OFSHC advises bidders to test well before the cycle starts.

Additionally, an on-cycle officer may bid on an LDP only if an assignment to that position does not require a curtailment of more than six months from his/her current end-of-tour date.

**Question 5a: I'm on-cycle to bid in the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle and have a 2/2 in Spanish that is valid through June 2018. Can I bid on Spanish LDPs for 2018 and 2019?** Yes, you can bid on the 2018 Spanish positions because according to the Language Training Expectation tables you can reach a 3/3 in just 12 weeks, so you would not need a curtailment of more than six months. You may also bid the 2019 positions since there will be plenty of time to study and reach a 3/3. But, you should also re-test for Spanish as early as possible to establish a benchmark score for additional training purposes.

**Question 5b: I'm an on-cycle bidder in the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle and have a 3/3 in Spanish that is valid. Can I bid on Spanish LDPs for 2019?** No, because although you are *qualified* for the position (in terms of the language), you are not *available* for the position when it is open – you are available a year early. However, if it is a hard-to-fill position or there are few or no bidders on the position, it may be made a UVP and an exception may be made. In this case, the Career Development and Assignments Officer would work with Management to find a one-year bridge assignment for you.

Subject to the parameters of Subchapter 800-2, which details the procedures for language training, for the purposes of bidding:

- a language test score of S4/R4 or lower is valid for five years from the date of the test;
- two language test scores two-or-more years apart of S4/R4 are valid indefinitely;
- a language test score of S5/R5 is valid indefinitely;

Standard Commercial Service language training timetables (Subchapter 800-2, Appendix B) will be used to determine the lengths of curtailment needed to meet the language requirements of a position. Additional training may be required for an officer to meet an LDP requirement. In order to receive additional training in a language, an officer must 1) have a valid score or 2) test in the language and receive a valid score to determine the amount of training necessary.

#### **“Year-Out” Off-Cycle Bidders**

During the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle, a career or career-candidate officer who is up to a year away from being on-cycle (i.e., an officer whose current end-of-tour date is in calendar year 2019) may consider bidding on any advertised 2019 language-designated position for which he/she has the requisite language. However, to be eligible to bid on a position as a “year-out” bidder, the officer must be able to meet the required level of the language with a valid test score on the start-date of the position. A year-out bidder who can meet this requirement may bid on that position assuming that an assignment to that position does not require a curtailment of more than six months from his/her current end-of-tour date.

Where an eligible year-out bidder is bidding to curtail to an LDP advertised during the cycle, the officer must provide a confirmation of supervisor (e.g., SCO, Chief of Mission) concurrence to the curtailment. I-BID will prompt for this confirmation. If the officer is then assigned to that LDP position, the curtailment is approved as a condition of the assignment.

**Question 6: I'm a year-out bidder in the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle and have a 3/3 in Spanish valid through 2018. Can I bid on Spanish LDPs for 2018 and 2019 advertised during the cycle?** To bid on 2018 Spanish LDP positions, you must first be curtailed to get on-cycle, before submitting any bids on 2018 LDPs (see page 10). In order to bid on 2019 Spanish LDPs, you must first re-test to receive a new Spanish language score. If additional training is necessary and can be accomplished with less than a six-month curtailment from your current end-of-tour date, you can bid on the position.

**Question 7: If I am a year-out bidder and have a valid language score for Spanish, for example, can I bid on any 2018 Spanish language position?** No, only on those positions which don't require a curtailment from your current end-of-tour date by more than 6 months.

Year-out bidders are not eligible to bid on standard non-language designated positions (NLDPs) during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle. However, year-out bidders are eligible to bid on designated Urgent

Vacancy Positions (UVPs) that have no language requirement, and one-year extensions, if their position is advertised on the vacancy list during the cycle.

## **Language Training**

The Washington, DC (WDC) area is the default location for language training. Officers must bid with the assumption they will relocate to WDC to undertake their language training. For rare and exceptional cases, officers may apply to complete language training outside WDC. Assignments will not be made contingent to studying outside WDC. Application for language training outside WDC is made AFTER an assignment is confirmed.

Limited government-paid housing options are available in the Washington, DC area for officers in language training. Officers should contact their OFSHC Point of Contact for more information.

If applying for language training outside WDC, it is incumbent on the officer to solicit three quotations from vendors (excluding Berlitz) and to provide proof that each has demonstrated their ability to train to the relevant Interagency Language Roundtable (FSI/ILR) proficiency standards. These applications are reviewed for needs of the service on a case-by-case basis. The Director of OFSHC has final authority to approve language training with an outside vendor.

Officers with a 2/2 in Mandarin Chinese bidding on positions requiring a 3/2 score will be offered the option to study at the State Department's institute in Beijing provided space is available in that program. Please contact Barbara Earman to learn more about this option.

**Question 8: I'm an on-cycle officer departing post in July of 2018. I am bidding on a position that requires six months of Italian training. What will I do between July and January 2, 2018 when my language training begins?** The period between July and January 2, 2018 will be filled with a combination of Home Leave (if eligible), other leave, training, and a short-term detail assignment in HQ.

## **Limited Appointees and Other Bidders**

Officers, including those serving on limited appointments, may bid on one-year extensions, if their position is advertised on the vacancy list (see "Extensions" below). Any officer in the Service, including any limited appointee who has at least two years remaining on his/her five-year maximum tour, may bid on any advertised Urgent Vacancy Position (UVP), per the guidelines below.

## **Urgent Vacancy Positions (UVPs)**

A vacancy that is highlighted as an Urgent Vacancy Position (UVP) during the 2018 Open Assignment Cycle is available for bid by any officer in the Service who is interested in the position, including officers serving on limited appointments. To allow for more flexibility in the paneling of language-designated UVPs, and to expedite the paneling process given the urgency of filling certain positions, non-language qualified officers are allowed to bid on language-designated UVPs. The language requirement for a designated position is still a requirement unless the Assignments Panel suspends (for that tour only) the Urgent Vacancy Position's language requirement. Please be aware that the suspension of the language requirement is not always guaranteed. However, it is possible for the language requirement to be suspended. Therefore, all interested officers should apply for UVP positions, regardless of their language abilities.

UVPs, by their nature, may require a curtailment of the assigned officer from his or her current tour. Officers are eligible to bid on any UVP regardless of the length of the potential curtailment. If an officer would need to curtail to start a UVP, the officer must provide a confirmation of supervisor (e.g., SCO, Chief of Mission) concurrence with the curtailment. I-BID will prompt for this. If the officer is then assigned to that UVP, the curtailment is approved as a condition of the assignment.

Where a curtailment of an officer is required to fill a UVP, the position may or may not be assigned to that officer based on the needs of the Service. On-cycle officers who have bid on a UVP will be given first consideration for the position.



## Service Need Differential Positions and Tour-of-Duty

The Service Need Differential (SND) is a special allowance designed to attract bidders to hard-to-fill posts. It is a 15% differential on top of the hardship or danger pay, not to exceed a total of 40%, paid in a lump sum at the end of each year of service. The catch is that an officer must agree to serve a **3-year tour** at that post before receiving the differential.

Most SND posts, because of their hardship status, are two-year tours. Therefore I-BID lists most SND posts two ways: as a two-year and a three-year tour. Any officer bidding on the SND post with the expectation of collecting the SND **MUST** bid on the three-year option. Even though the job is listed twice, only one officer will be selected for the position.

## New Vacancies

New positions (including new UVPs) and/or new vacancies may arise at any time during an Open Assignments Cycle. All new positions must be listed on the Vacancy List in I-BID for a minimum of ten business days before they can be filled. With regard to new UVPs, the usual intent is to fill them quickly for the needs of the Service. As such, a new UVP may be assigned at any time during the paneling process, following the ten business days.

## Assignments Panel Procedures

Following the collection and qualification of bids, eligible bidders are placed on an Assignments Panel agenda for consideration at an appropriate Assignments Panel meeting. Agendas for Panel meetings are normally structured around the personal grades of on-cycle officers. Organized by grade, panel agendas include all positions bid by on-cycle officers at each grade as well as the bids of any other qualified bidders on those positions (e.g., year-out LDP bidders, extension bidders).

During the 2018 Open Assignment Cycle, Assignment Panel meetings will be held to consider agendas structured around on-cycle Senior Foreign Service (CM/MC/OC) officers first followed by 01's, 02's, 03's, and 04's in descending order of seniority.

- The Assignments Panel normally seeks to assign UVPs before other positions.
- The Assignments Panel normally seeks to assign hardship positions at each grade level before non-hardship positions.
- The Assignments Panel normally seeks to assign positions to all at-grade on-cycle officers before moving on to assign officers at the next lowest grade.
- An on-cycle officer will normally be assigned before an off-cycle officer is assigned to a position that the on-cycle officer has bid on.
- In most cases, an off-cycle officer who is bidding on a position that is above or below his/her personal grade will not be assigned to that position until all on-cycle officers at-grade for that position have been assigned.

**Question 9: I'm an on-cycle FO-02 officer bidding on a FS-01 position. When will I be considered for it?** When it comes up on an agenda as a result of an on-cycle officer's bid, at any grade level including your own, until the position is assigned. For example, if a FS-01 position you have bid on is under consideration for assignment to an FO-01 officer during a 01 level Panel meeting, your bid will also be considered at that time.

Assignments Panel agenda items may include other actions for the needs of the Service as well as proposed "directed" assignments. As career and career-candidate officers are available for worldwide assignment, an officer may be directly assigned to any position to which the officer is eligible. If there are no eligible career or career-candidate officers available for assignment to an overseas position that must

be filled for the needs of the Service, the position may also be advertised to non-career candidates, including trade specialists, and filled with a non-career limited appointee.

## Extensions

Any officer whose position is listed on the vacancy list during the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle may bid on a one-year extension in that position. On-cycle officers bidding on an extension must submit the extension bid as a part of their full bid list.

**Question 10: My 2019 LDP has come up on the vacancy list for the 2018 Open Assignments Cycle. Do I have to bid on an extension or can I wait?** No, you don't have to bid, but if you don't bid, someone could be assigned to it. If you want to extend, you need to bid on it during the current cycle.

When applicable, an officer serving on a non-career limited appointment may bid on a one-year extension of his/her tour-of-duty in an assignment as long as the extended tour-of-duty does not exceed the five-year maximum for limited appointments.

An SCO seeking an extension should consult with his/her Chief of Mission before submitting an extension bid.

An officer may be administratively extended in an existing tour-of-duty by up to six months in order to facilitate transition during the assignment process or to facilitate language training for an onward assignment to a language-designated position. The need for an administrative extension is determined, in cooperation with the officer, by the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. With the concurrence of the Director General, the Career Development and Assignments Officer will revise an officer's tour-of-duty accordingly.

## Tours-of-Duty

For assignment purposes, a "tour-of-duty" is defined as the amount of continuous time an officer serves on an assignment, or in consecutive assignments, in a given country. Continuous time served in consecutive assignments to separate positions or posts in the same country, or in the United States, is combined to form one tour-of-duty.

The maximum amount of continuous time an officer can serve on any tour-of-duty overseas is normally five years. An officer may serve up to five years of continuous service in a position overseas, if successive one-year extension bids are assigned.

**Question 11: I'm an on-cycle officer currently finishing my four-year tour in Osaka, Japan, and I would like to bid on a position in Tokyo. Would my bid be accepted?** Normally, no. However, in rare circumstances, a one-year tour could be assigned for the needs of the Service. Any bid to extend beyond the five-year maximum amount of continuous time in a given country would have to be approved by the Director General.

Tours-of-duty in the United States vary from two to four years in length. This includes positions in headquarters, the domestic field, non-traditional positions in other agencies or associations as well as the two DC-based development banks (World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank). Officers may serve in up to three consecutive standard two-year assignments in the United States, for a combined tour-of-duty of six years. An officer can bid to receive up to two one-year extensions during a tour-of-duty in the United States for a maximum tour-of-duty of eight years in the United States, as allowed under the Foreign Service Act of 1980.

**Question 12: Why the variable lengths of tour in HQ?** Tours in HQ vary from two to four years. In general, the higher ranked the position the longer the assignment. Positions below Senior Foreign Service and Advisor positions remain two years. Because of the complexity of the position and need for continuity, our senior leadership positions are three years for the Deputy Director General as well as Regional Bureau Executive Directors and four years for Deputy Assistant Secretaries.

Officers seeking to extend beyond the maximum amount of continuous time allowed for a tour-of-duty, whether domestic or overseas, must receive the written approval of the Director General before bidding.

New employees entering the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service as career-candidates who do not have at least one year of experience as a trade specialist in a U.S. Export Assistance Center (USEAC) or in a qualifying headquarters position within the preceding five years, will normally be assigned to a two-year domestic tour of duty upon appointment. If a first tour career-candidate is assigned to an overseas position to fill a critical vacancy, the career-candidate will likely begin a two-year domestic assignment upon completion of the first overseas tour.

### **Curtailments**

An officer can request a voluntary curtailment from their current assignment for health and/or compassionate reasons. If a request for curtailment is approved, the officer will be immediately detailed to the training complement and then either detailed to a temporary assignment or considered for leave without pay (LWOP). The Officer will then be required to submit a full bid list for consideration toward an onward assignment during the next assignments cycle, including applicable domestic and hardship positions. Requests for curtailment for bidding purposes will not be considered.

#### Curtailment Procedures

- A request for curtailment is made in writing to the SCO at post.
- If the SCO concurs with the request, the SCO forwards written concurrence to the corresponding Regional DAS or Executive Director for consideration by the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) for Global Markets.
- Following the PDAS's review of the request and consultation with the Office of Foreign Service Human Capital, the PDAS makes a recommendation on the requested curtailment to the Director General.
- If the DG supports the curtailment request, the Career Development and Assignments Officer will either prepare a direct assignment or contact the officer with a request for a full bid list.
- The direct assignment or the officer's bid list will be considered during an appropriate Assignments Panel agenda.

An SCO seeking a curtailment should consult with his/her Chief of Mission before submitting a written request for curtailment to the Regional DAS or Executive Director. Officers serving in domestic USEAC and HQ assignments should make the request through their immediate supervisors.

***Question 13: If I am due to rotate to an onward assignment in 2019, can I bid on a 2018 position and then curtail if I am assigned to the position?*** No, you must first request and receive a curtailment before you can submit a bid. If you are curtailed, you will then become on-cycle and must submit a full bid list.

An officer may be administratively curtailed from an existing tour-of-duty normally by no more than six months in order to facilitate transition during the assignment process or to facilitate language training for an onward assignment to a language-designated position. The need to administratively curtail an officer is identified by OFSHC in cooperation with the officer. With the concurrence of the DG, the Career Development and Assignments Officer will revise an officer's tour-of-duty accordingly.

Should the DG lose confidence that an officer's continued assignment to a position serves the best interests of the Service and the Department, the Director General may, under delegated authority, involuntarily curtail an officer's tour-of-duty. Procedures for an involuntary curtailment are outlined in 3 FAM 2440. In the event that an officer is curtailed without an onward assignment, the officer may serve on a detail until further action is taken or a suitable onward assignment can be determined.

## Appeals

If an officer wishes to object to an assignment, s/he must submit a written appeal to the DG within five business days of being informed of an assignment decision. The appeal, which is submitted through the Career Development and Assignments Officer, should provide reasons for the officer's objection to the assignment.

The Assignments Panel will consider the appeal and make a recommendation to the DG to either consider alternative action including, if applicable, an alternative assignment, or stay with the original assignment. In the event that the Assignments Panel recommends an alternative assignment, an assignment normally will be proposed as a part of the recommendation.

If the appeal is not sustained, the officer may request the DG to forward the appeal to the Secretary of Commerce for a final review. Upon review, the Secretary can return it to the DG for alternative action, or can deny the appeal. If the appeal is denied, the assignment is made. Should the officer then refuse the assignment, appropriate disciplinary action may be taken pursuant to 3 FAM 4300. An officer may not appeal the fact that s/he was not assigned to a particular position.

### **Questions?**

Phone or email...

Steve Green  
Career Development and Assignments Officer  
Tel: 202-482-5208  
E-mail: [Steve.Green@trade.gov](mailto:Steve.Green@trade.gov)