APPENDIX B-1

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

BOOZ ALLEN INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR
DEMONSTRATION GROUP INTERVIEWEES

Spring 2003

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INTERVIEWEE'S NAME: _____

INTERVIEWEE'S TITLE: _____

INTERVIEWER'S NAME: _____

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

My name is _____ and this is _____. We're from Booz Allen Hamilton in Virginia. We are here today to talk about the Department of Commerce's Personnel Management Demonstration Project (Demo Project).

As you probably know, DoC initiated the Demo Project in March 1998 as a means of testing whether a series of alternative personnel practices could be more successful than traditional personnel practices in helping DoC achieve its goals. A series of HR interventions were implemented in a subset of the organization. DoC contracted with Booz Allen to conduct a comprehensive program evaluation of the Demo Project's performance in meeting its objectives.

(INTERVIEWER: Provide the following information if you think that the interviewee needs it.) *The Demo Project includes two groups and our assessment compares human resource practices in these two groups. The first group is made up of those work units within DoC where a series of human resources practices have been implemented under the Demo Project. We call this the Demo Group. The second group consists of DoC work units similar to those participating in the Demo Project but who have maintained the traditional human resources practices. We call this the Comparison Group.*

*The purpose of today's interview is to get your perspectives on how the Demo Project has been operating, now that five years have passed. We are interested in talking to you because of your role as a [NAME THEIR ROLE]. [*INTERVIEWER: Determine whether the person is involved with only the Demo Group, or also has an opportunity to view activity in the Comparison Group.]

Any information you share with us today will be held confidential. We will be aggregating results from all interviews and focus groups (held across the nation) and will not be attributing any findings to any individuals or any locations. Booz Allen will then use the interview data, plus information from our focus groups, survey, and objective data analysis, to evaluate the fifth year of the Demo Project.

We anticipate that this interview will take about 30-45 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

II.   INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Interviewers: Select the appropriate set(s) of questions based on your understanding of the interviewee's role.

QUESTIONS FOR HR DIRECTORS AND STAFF

(Interviewers: These questions can also be addressed to Admin. Officers who are closely involved with HR functions.)

Recruitment

1. *Which of these recruitment interventions (*INTERVIEWER: SHOW LIST OF RECRUITMENT INTERVENTIONS*), if any, have been successful in the past five years in your organization's efforts to attract and hire high quality <u>candidates</u>?*
2. *Has the employee-position fit of new hires improved since the Demo Project started? Is this attributable to any of the Demo Project interventions? If so, which ones and why?*
3. *Has the hiring process—the time from application to offer made—been faster since the Demo Project started? If so, which steps have been more efficient?*
4. *Have you changed your methods of hiring in the past five years? If so, which methods are working best?*
5. *Have you tried using paid advertising for attracting candidates? If so, has it been successful?*
6. *Have you used the flexible starting salaries as a tool to recruit desirable candidates? If so, has it been successful?*

Retention

7. *To what degree is performance-based pay increases encouraging retention?*
8. *To what degree are bonuses encouraging retention?*
9. *In what ways, if any, has offering flexible pay increases with promotions encouraged retention among high performers?*
10. *How have supervisors reacted to the supervisory performance pay intervention?*
11. *Do you believe that pay levels are competitive with other public sector organizations? Are they competitive with private sector organizations?*

HR Management

12. *How have supervisors reacted to their increased involvement in classification since the Demo Project began?* [INTERVIEWER: Supervisors now use the automated classification system to process their own classifications.]
13. *For HR staff, is the delegated authority for classification <u>easier</u> than the previous system? In what ways?*
14. *For HR staff, does the delegated authority for classification allow classification decisions to be made <u>faster</u> to use then the previous system? In what ways?*
15. *What methods are in place to ensure the accuracy of the classification decisions?*
16. *Does the broad-banding classification system require fewer resources to operate?*
17. *Have there been fewer classification decisions under the broad-banding classification system? [*INTERVIEWER: The hypothesis is that fewer resources would be used. Broad banding grouped several GS grades together into a pay band; in the traditional GS system, HR would do a classification action to promote the person from one grade to another; in the Demo, movement through the pay band does not require a classification action.]
18. *Has anything happened in this organization or in the geographic area that had an effect on your ability to hire, pay, and retain staff?* [INTERVIEWER: Examples could be a hiring

freeze, a reorganization, a RIF or other downsizing, a major employer in the area laying off lots of employees that then become available as candidates to DoC.]

Workforce Diversity

19. Have there been any challenges with ensuring that the Demo Project interventions are consistent with workforce diversity objectives?

20. Have employees raised any concerns regarding the Demo Project?

QUESTIONS FOR PAY POOL MANAGERS

Process

1. *Please describe the process that rating officials go through for determining employees' performance scores. Please discuss how they evaluate employees against the performance elements and contribute to decision-making about performance-based increases and bonuses.*
2. *In what ways, if any, could this performance appraisal process be improved?*
3. *What challenges have you faced in arraying data on performance scores across rating officials and across the pay pool (rather than ranking) to maintain the linkage between scores and pay actions?* (INTERVIEWERS: Be aware that because many employees felt that the assignment of numerical rankings created a competitive environment, the Demo Project has since eliminated the individual rankings and now arrays the data in score order to maintain the linkage between scores and pay actions without assigning a numerical rank.)
4. *What challenges have you faced in using the performance pay table?*
5. *How do you make determinations regarding the distribution of performance-based bonuses?*
6. *What is the extent of your communication (frequency, mode) with rating officials regarding performance scores and pay issues?*
7. *What mechanisms are in place to ensure consistency in scores across rating officials?*
8. *What is the extent of your communication (frequency, mode) with other pay pool managers regarding performance scores and pay issues?*
9. *What mechanisms are in place to provide employees with performance feedback or otherwise involve them in the performance management process?*
10. *Did you feel sufficiently prepared or trained to perform as a pay pool manager when you took on these responsibilities? How do you feel now?*

Pay-for-Performance Link

11. *In what ways do the interventions implemented under the Demo Project encourage supervisors to perform better as supervisors?*
12. *In what ways do the interventions implemented under the Demo Project encourage employees to perform better?*
13. *Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve the link between performance and pay?*

Recruitment

14. *Which of these recruitment interventions (*INTERVIEWER: SHOW LIST OF RECRUITMENT INTERVENTIONS*), if any, have been successful in the past five years in your organization's efforts to attract and hire high quality <u>candidates</u>?*
15. *Has the employee-position fit of new hires improved since the Demo Project started? Is this attributable to any of the Demo Project interventions? If so, which ones and why?*
16. *Has the hiring process—the time from application to offer made—been faster since the Demo Project started? If so, which steps have been more efficient?*
17. *Have you changed your methods of hiring in the past five years? If so, which methods are working best?*
18. *Have you tried using paid advertising for attracting candidates? If so, has it been successful?*

19. Have you used the flexible starting salaries as a tool to recruit desirable candidates? If so, has it been successful?

Retention
20. To what degree is performance-based pay increases encouraging retention?
21. To what degree are bonuses encouraging retention?
22. In what ways, if any, has offering flexible pay increases with promotions encouraged retention among high performers?
23. How have supervisors reacted to the supervisory performance pay intervention?
24. Do you believe that pay levels are competitive with other public sector organizations? Are they competitive with private sector organizations?

QUESTIONS FOR RATING OFFICIALS

Performance Management

1. *What are the benefits and drawbacks of the 100-point performance appraisal system?*
2. *Please describe the process you go through for determining employees' performance score. Please discuss how you evaluate employees against the performance elements and make decisions about performance-based increases and bonuses.*
3. *In what ways, if any, could this process be improved?*
4. *What is the extent of your communication (frequency, mode) with other rating officials?*
5. *Are there mechanisms in place to ensure consistency in performance scores across rating officials?*
6. *What is the extent of your communication (frequency, mode) with the pay pool manager regarding performance scores and pay issues?*
7. *What mechanisms are in place, if any, to provide employees with performance feedback or otherwise involve them in the performance management process?*
8. *How effective are the mid-year reviews with employees?*

Pay-for-Performance Link

9. *In what ways do the interventions implemented under the Demo Project encourage supervisors to perform better as supervisors?*
10. *In what ways do the interventions implemented under the Demo Project encourage employees to perform better?*
11. *Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve the link between performance and pay?*

Classification

As a manager, I assume that you have used the automated classification system? I would like to ask you a few questions about your experiences.

12. *To what degree is the broad-banding classification system easy to use?*
13. *To what degree is the broad-banding classification system time-consuming?*
14. *How do you feel about your increased involvement in the classification process?*
15. *Did you feel sufficiently prepared or trained to perform the classification function at the beginning of the Demo Project? How do you feel now?*

Recruitment

16. *Which of these recruitment interventions (*INTERVIEWER: SHOW LIST OF RECRUITMENT INTERVENTIONS*), if any, have been successful in the past five years in your organization's efforts to attract and hire high quality <u>candidates</u>?*
17. *Has the employee-position fit of new hires improved since the Demo Project started? Is this attributable to any of the Demo Project interventions? If so, which ones and why?*
18. *Has the hiring process—the time from application to offer made—been faster since the Demo Project started? If so, which steps have been more efficient?*
19. *Have you changed your methods of hiring in the past five years? If so, which methods are working best?*
20. *Have you tried using paid advertising for attracting candidates? If so, has it been successful?*

21. Have you used the flexible starting salaries as a tool to recruit desirable candidates? If so, has it been successful?

Retention

22. To what degree is performance-based pay increases encouraging retention?

23. To what degree are bonuses encouraging retention?

24. In what ways, if any, has offering flexible pay increases with promotions encouraged retention among high performers?

25. How have supervisors reacted to the supervisory performance pay intervention?

26. Do you believe that pay levels are competitive with other public sector organizations? Are they competitive with private sector organizations?

QUESTIONS FOR DIRECTORS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

1. *Which of these recruitment interventions (*INTERVIEWER: SHOW LIST OF RECRUITMENT INTERVENTIONS*), if any, have been successful in the past five years in your organization's efforts to attract and hire high quality <u>candidates</u>?*
2. *Which of these retention interventions (*INTERVIEWER: SHOW LIST OF RETENTION INTERVENTIONS*), if any, have been successful in the past five years in your organization's efforts to retain high performing <u>employees</u>?*
3. *Have managers performed effectively as pay pool managers? Have there been any challenges to acclimating them to this role?*
4. *Have managers performed effectively as rating officials? Have there been any challenges to acclimating them to this role?*
5. *Have you noticed improvements in <u>individual</u> performance* since *the Demo Project began? If yes, do you think this is attributable to any of the interventions? If so, which ones and how?*
6. *Have you noticed improvements in <u>organizational</u> performance* since *the Demo Project began? If yes, do you think this is attributable to any of the interventions? If so, which ones and how?*
7. *Have there been any challenges with ensuring that the Demo Project interventions are consistent with workforce diversity objectives?*
8. *In hindsight, would you do anything differently in terms of how the objectives and processes of the Demo Project were initially communicated to employees and supervisors?*
9. *Has the Demo Project caused any issues for management that were not foreseen?*
10. *Have there been any unanticipated benefits of the Demo Project?*
11. *Do you have any suggestions for ways in which the Demo Project interventions could be improved, should they be applied longer term or in other parts of DoC?*
12. *Has anything happened in this organization or in the geographic area that had an effect on your ability to hire, pay, and retain staff?* [INTERVIEWER: Examples could be a hiring freeze, a reorganization, a RIF or other downsizing, a major employer in the area laying off lots of employees that then become available as candidates to DoC.]

QUESTIONS FOR EEO STAFF OR REPRESENTATIVES

1. *Do you feel that any of the Demo Project interventions have had a <u>positive</u> impact on minorities, women, or veterans in the Demo Project? If yes, how?* (INTERVIEWER: SHOW LIST OF INTERVENTIONS)
2. *Do you feel that any of the human resource practices implemented as part of the Demo Project have had a <u>negative</u> impact on minorities, women, or veterans in the Demo Project? If yes, how?*
3. *What are the biggest challenges with ensuring that the Demo Project interventions are consistent with workforce diversity objectives?*
4. *Have employees raised any concerns regarding the Demo Project?*
5. *Are there any differences in how the nine Merit System Principles are followed under the Demo Project versus how they are typically followed elsewhere in DoC? If yes, how?*
6. *Are there any differences in how the twelve Prohibited Personnel Practices are avoided under the Demo Project versus how they are typically avoided elsewhere in DoC? If yes, how?*
7. *Overall, does the Demo Project promote building and maintaining a diverse workforce?*
8. *Under the Demo Project, are the contributions of all employees respected and maximized?*

III.   CLOSING

This brings us to the end of our questions. Before we leave, is there anything we haven't covered, or anything you would like to add? (Interviewers: track these closing comments as well.)

Thank you for participating in this interview session. The information we discussed will be very useful in helping us evaluate the Demo Project. As we stated earlier, all information collected today will be held confidential and your results will be aggregated with those of other interviews. The results from all the interviews, and other data collection efforts, will be included in our Year Five evaluation report that we will submit to DoC and the Office of Personnel Management later this summer.