

# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Presentation to MAPAC

May 13, 2005

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U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

*U.S. Department of Homeland Security was formed on March 1, 2003.*

- *“... this new merger of 180,000 people and 22 agencies, what has amounted to a full-scale government divestiture, merger, acquisition and startup, all at once ... and, undoubtedly, the biggest "change management" challenge of all time.”*
  - *Secretary Tom Ridge, February 23, 2004*



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## How the Customs Service and Immigration and Naturalization Service Were Affected

- These agencies were split up and recombined to form three new bureaus:
  - Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
  - Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
  - Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS)
- CBP provides Human Resources shared services on a reimbursable basis to ICE and CIS



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Mission Critical Occupations

### Customs and Border Protection

- Border Patrol Agent (10,800 incumbents)
- CBP Officer (18,000 incumbents)
- Agriculture Specialist (1,500 incumbents)

### Immigration and Customs Enforcement

- Special Agents (6,000 incumbents)
- Detention and Deportation Officers (<1,000 incumbents)

### Citizenship and Immigration Services

- Adjudications Officers (3,900 incumbents)
- Asylum and Refugee Officers (<1,000 incumbents)



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Competency Definition

- Measurable work behaviors and individual characteristics that when reliably assessed, predict outstanding performance in a job.

## Supervisory/Managerial Competency Model

- Leadership
- Management
- Thinking
- Communication



# Supervisory/Managerial Competency Model

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## Leadership

- Leading Others
- Teaching Others
- Fostering Ethical Conduct
- Teambuilding
- Flexibility

## Management

- Performance & Results Management
- Planning & Resource Management
- Managing & Organizing Information
- Self-Management
- Technology Application

## Thinking

- Decision-Making
- Problem-Solving
- Knowing the Job
- Knowing the Organization
- Innovation
- Continual Learning

## Communication

- Negotiating
- Coordination
- Interpersonal Skills
- Oral Communication
- Written Communication



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# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Goals of Assessment Programs for Selection

- Valid, Reliable Assessments
- Fair and Objective Measurement
- Highly Defensible
- Efficient
- High Customer Acceptance (paramount importance in a promotional assessment program)
- Diagnostic Feedback on Training Needs



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## **Toolbox of Competency-Based Assessments for Promotion**

- Critical Thinking Skills Exercises
- Writing Skills Exercises
- In-Basket Job Simulations
- Job Knowledge Assessments
- Structured Interviews
- Job Experience Assessments



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Assessment Programs

- Border Patrol
  - Operational since 1997
  - Coverage (GS 12-15 supervisory/managerial positions)
  - Over 3,900 participants
  - Assessments:
    - ✓ Job Knowledge Test (1<sup>st</sup> line supervisory only)
    - ✓ Critical Thinking Skills Assessment
    - ✓ Managerial Writing Skills Exercise
    - ✓ In-Basket Job Simulation (2<sup>nd</sup> line and above only)
    - ✓ Automated Experience Inventory (online)



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Assessment Programs

- Inspections (CBP Officer/Agriculture Specialist)
  - Newly implemented in October 2004
  - Coverage (GS 12-14 supervisory/managerial positions)
  - Over 4,100 participants (7% Ag. Specialists)
  - Assessments:
    - ✓ Critical Thinking Skills Assessment
    - ✓ Managerial Writing Skills Exercise
    - ✓ In-Basket Job Simulation (2<sup>nd</sup> line and above only)
    - ✓ Automated Experience Inventory (online)



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## Assessment Programs

- Investigations (Special Agents in ICE)
  - Target implementation early fall 2005
  - Coverage (GS-14 supervisory/managerial positions)
  - Assessments:
    - ✓ Job Knowledge Assessment
    - ✓ Critical Thinking Skills Assessment
    - ✓ Managerial Writing Skills Exercise
    - ✓ In-Basket Job Simulation
    - ✓ Structured Interview



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Modular Approach to Core Competency-Based Assessment Development

- Scores of candidates on the core assessments (Critical Thinking, Writing, In-Basket) are transportable to other program's core assessments
  - For example, a Border Patrol Agent can use core assessments score to apply for Supervisory CBP Officer position if eligible
- Candidates do not have to “sit” over and over again for multiple-choice assessments measuring the same competencies
- Eases test development burden
- Eases burden on operations/staffing in the field



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# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Core Competency-Based Assessments

- Critical Thinking Skills Assessment
  - Candidates read real-world scenarios and evaluate conclusions based on information presented in the scenarios.
  - Logic-based assessment
- Managerial Writing Skills Exercise
  - Candidates review and edit documents collected from the field to ensure that the information is presented in a well-organized, clear, coherent, and grammatically correct manner.
- In-Basket Job Simulation
  - Candidates play the role of a supervisor or manager at a fictitious office. Candidates first review documents that deal with the personnel, operational, budgetary, and administrative issues, and then answer questions about how they would delegate, prioritize, make decisions, and solve the problems.



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## Implementation

- Test Opportunity Bulletin
  - Candidates apply to take the multiple-choice assessments and complete the Automated Experience Inventory online.
- Preparation Materials Available on Intranet/Internet
- Nationwide Testing Conducted
  - Over 100 sites and 300 sessions plus overseas testing for CBP Officer/Agriculture Specialist
- Detailed Competency-Based Feedback Report and Developmental Resource Guide Sent to Each Participant
- Scores (70 – 100) are used to fill competitive vacancies under merit promotion rules



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Validation

- Identify critical tasks and competencies for target positions and link duty areas or tasks to competencies (SME panels)
- Develop scenarios and questions from job-related materials and events (documents, training manuals, and critical incidents from incumbents)
- SME panels assist in developing question content and keying
- Link each question directly back to critical tasks and competencies
- SME panels rate questions for relevance and appropriateness



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## How Do We Know the Assessments Are Effective?

- Advancement into management is a recognized measure of success in business and industry.
- The promotional assessments can be shown to be a strong predictor of succession into management.

### Cohort Study: Border Patrol

- ✓ Agents Hired in the 1980's: Agents scoring 80 or above were 4 times more likely to have become GS-13's or GS-14's than agents scoring below 70 (n=446).
- ✓ Agents Hired in the 1990's: Agents scoring 80 or above were 5 times more likely to have become GS-13's or GS-14's than agents scoring below 70 (n=2,155).



# Promotion Assessment at U.S. Customs and Border Protection

## Future Plans and Direction

- Online testing
- Additional accumulation of validity evidence
- Update return on investment and utility analyses
- Completion and implementation of core assessment module for administrative/managerial positions
- Expansion to additional mission critical occupations (e.g., Detention & Removal, Federal Protective Service, Air Marshals)

