

FEMA Qualification System Guide for Incident Management and Incident Support Positions

Fall 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR: All FEMA Employees

FROM: Richard Serino
Deputy Administrator

SUBJECT: FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Guide

I am pleased to announce the release of the FEMA Qualification System (FQS) Guide for Incident Management Positions. This guide details a new training and qualification system designed to ensure that our Agency is providing the best possible customer service to disaster survivors and their communities.

The central feature of this new system is you, our employees. FQS will clearly define the requirements and expectations of the incident management position you fill so that each employee has a clear understanding of how to be successful in their job. The system was developed to:

- Provide clear expectations for your work;
- Identify and provide the training and mentoring you need to meet those expectations; and
- Help you develop a career path for your advancement within the FEMA Qualification System.

In short, FQS will ensure that you have the critical skills and competencies needed to perform your duties, so that our Agency is better equipped and prepared to meet our important mission.

This new system was developed as part of a multi-faceted disaster workforce transformation effort that we discussed with all of you in a series of Town Hall Meetings. When fully implemented, this transformation will allow all of our employees – including our Reservists, CORE employees, and our full-time workforce – to quickly and efficiently deploy to disasters, and FQS will ensure that you have the training, resources, and experience needed to be deployed and effectively integrated into on-going disaster operations.

I thank you for your commitment to service and look forward to working with each of you as we support our citizens and first responders in building, sustaining, and improving our Nation's capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

If you have any questions regarding this guide, please contact the Training, Exercise, and Doctrine Office, Response Directorate, at FEMA-IWMO-Program@fema.gov.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This document is intended to guide Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel in the use of the FEMA Qualification System (FQS). FQS establishes the system for qualification and certification for the FEMA incident workforce through experience, training, and demonstrated performance.¹ FQS requires FEMA employees who work in these incident management and support positions to be formally certified for these positions.² Qualification and certification processes provide consistent standards for every field position at FEMA while also professionalizing the entire emergency management workforce. By establishing qualification standards that are consistent across the Agency, FQS helps to ensure that FEMA employees have the knowledge, skills, and experience to perform in their incident management and incident support positions. FQS also helps employees by providing a pathway for career development and goal achievement.

The *FQS Guide*:

- Establishes and explains qualification requirements for incident management and incident support positions³
- Defines the concepts used in the qualification process
- Outlines the process for evaluating and documenting successful accomplishment of required competencies
- Establishes the process for obtaining certification/credentials
- Describes the roles and responsibilities for all participants in FQS
- Explains how employees can progress to incident management and incident support positions with greater responsibility

1.2 Background

A performance-based qualification system is the most fair and equitable system for use by FEMA. FQS is based on a set of guiding principles that support FEMA incident management and incident support doctrine⁴ and builds upon previous credentialing efforts. Input from the Incident Workforce Management Office (IWMO) (formerly the

¹ The FQS standards do not apply to temporary employees hired locally at disaster locations. Local hires are subject to the required mandatory Agency training and any other training required by the position for which they are hired.

² Incident Support position task books and qualification sheets are currently being developed.

³ “Incident management” and “incident support” refer to the categories of work that FEMA employees perform in conjunction with incidents. Incident management work is performed at the incident or field level, while incident support refers to all incident-related work that is done elsewhere, such as in a FEMA Regional Office or at FEMA Headquarters. For specific explanations of incident management and incident support, refer to *Appendix C—Glossary*.

⁴ Specifically, the FEMA Incident Management and Support Keystone Doctrine.

Disaster Workforce Division), the National Integration Center (NIC), the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), and subject-matter experts (SMEs) helped build FQS along with the guiding principles. These guiding principles:

- Support the development of knowledge and skills to be implemented at the Agency level through performance-based training
- Ensure that FQS complements and supports the IWMO's efforts to prepare FEMA staff for disaster assignments
- Are consistent with the FEMA *Incident Management and Support Keystone* document and other pertinent guidance as well as FEMA's national credentialing and resource typing program

FQS is a performance-based qualification system that gives employees the opportunity to demonstrate and document their knowledge and skills in their specific incident management or incident support position. Performance-based training refers to incident-related performance (at a disaster, incident, or scheduled exercise) that demonstrates the employee's knowledge, skills, and actual performance, as documented in the position task book (PTB) for the specific position, during these types of situations. To become qualified for a position, each employee is evaluated on the job. FQS standardizes the qualifications for positions across the Agency so that an employee who is qualified to perform in a given disaster position in one FEMA Region will be prepared to perform in the same position in another Region.

1.3 Applicability and Scope

FQS requirements apply to all FEMA employees who work on disasters and emergencies in incident management and incident support positions. These include Cadre of On-Call Response/Recovery (CORE) employees and Reservists (formerly known as Disaster Assistance Employees, or DAEs) appointed under the Stafford Act; employees who are part of the Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs), the Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS), and the Federal Coordinating Officers (FCOs); and other permanent full-time (PFT) and temporary full-time (TFT) employees covered under the provisions of Title 5, United States Code, who are required or volunteer to work in incident management and incident support activities during disasters and emergencies.

1.4 Foundational Documents and Authorities

The following foundational documents guide FQS:

- Presidential Policy Directive 8
- Homeland Security Act of 2002 § 510, 6 U.S.C. § 320
- National Response Framework, January 2008
- National Incident Management System, December 2008
- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Pub. L. No. 93-288, as amended, 42 U.S.C. § 5121-5207

- Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-295
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 44, Emergency Management and Assistance (2009)
- Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, Management of Domestic Incidents
- Incident Management and Support Keystone, January 2011
- FEMA National Credentialing and Resource Typing Program Charter
- FEMA Incident Management Handbook, FEMA B-761/Interim
- FEMA Publication 1, November 2010
- FEMA Strategic Plan—Fiscal Years 2011-2014, FEMA P-806, February 2011

1.5 Review and Revision

FQS documents, including this guide, the PTBs, and other supporting guidance, will be reviewed annually during the first 2 years following FQS implementation (and every 3 years thereafter) and revised and updated as necessary.

2 Qualification Requirements

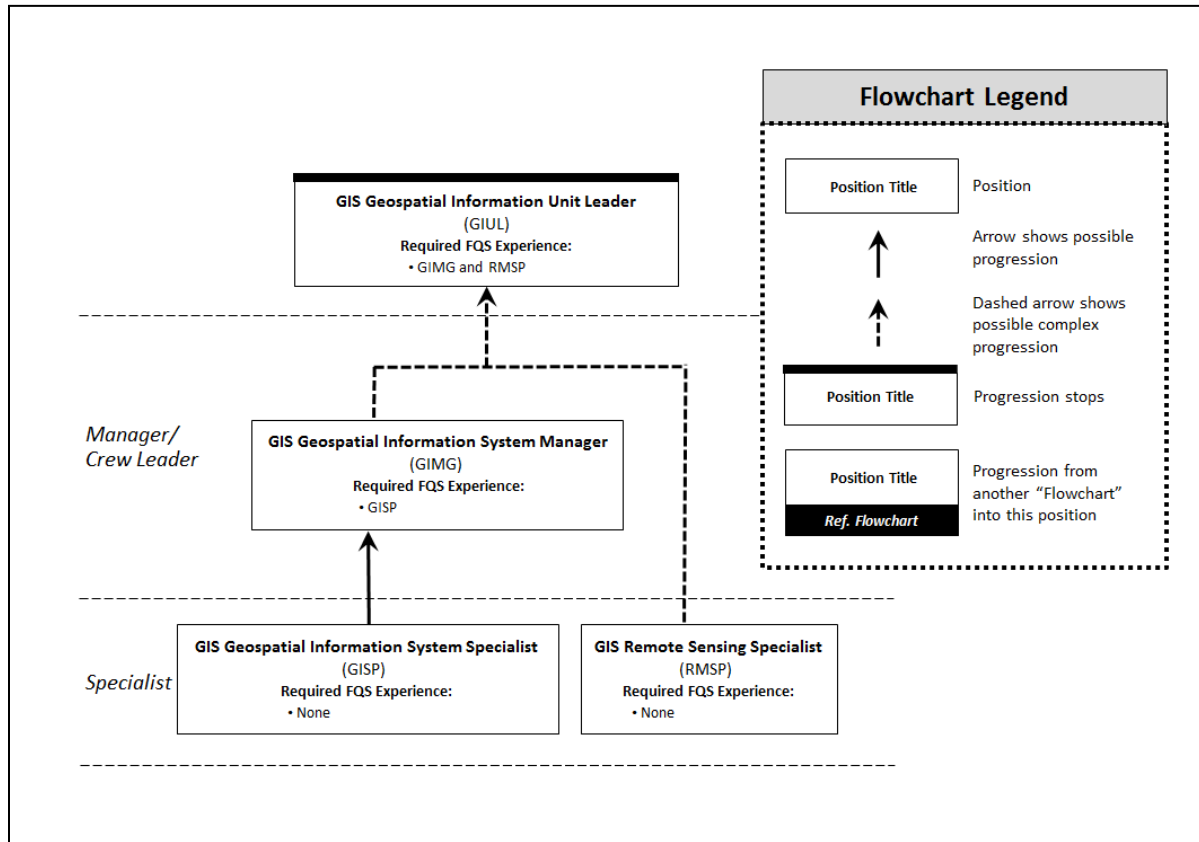
2.1 Charting Career Paths

The dedication, motivation, knowledge, and skill sets of FEMA's incident workforce make a tremendous difference in FEMA's ability to effectively respond to disasters and serve the needs of citizens. In order to support and grow the workforce, FQS provides a framework to allow employees to align their career goals and aspirations with the needs of the Agency.

Each FEMA incident workforce program has a career progression path so employees may progress from the specialist level up to the highest level position within that program. Once an employee meets the qualifications for a given position, he/she is deemed "qualified" in that primary position and may request consideration to advance to other levels along his/her career path within FQS. As the employee advances to other levels in his/her FQS career path, the employee holds the primary job title and may hold a subordinate job title. A subordinate job title is an FQS title that falls under the employee's primary title in the career progression chart.

Advancement to higher levels within career paths is not automatic, and employees should evaluate their interests, values, work styles, and skills. They may decide to remain at their current level or request consideration for advancement through their Reservist Program Manager (RPM). The following is an example of career progression:

Figure 1: Geospatial Information Systems Flowchart⁵



2.2 Steps for Qualification

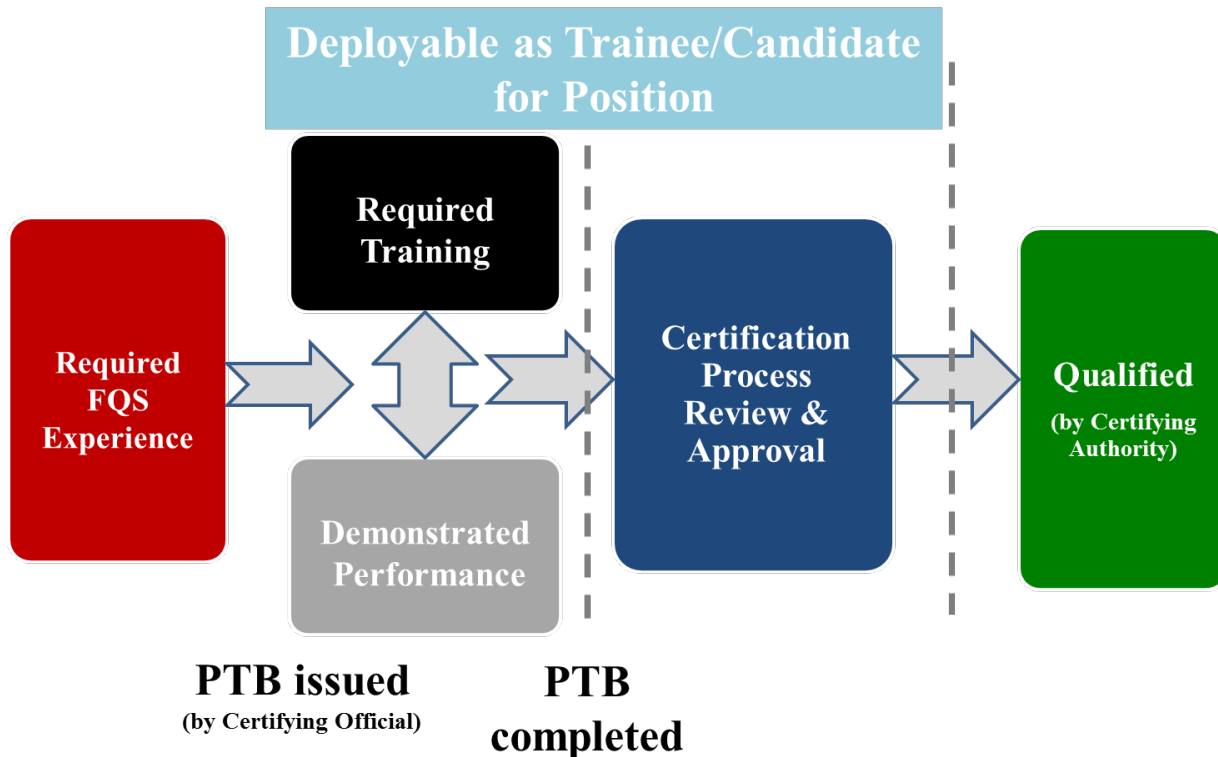
The FQS qualification process requires employees to complete three steps in order to be certified as qualified for a given position.

- **Step 1:** Complete any qualifying experience required for the position
- **Step 2:** Complete any mandatory training required for the position, establish external certification as delineated in the qualification sheets⁶, and demonstrate successful performance in the required activities (listed in the pertinent PTB)
- **Step 3:** Undergo and pass the certification process for the given position, including review, approval, and currency validation

⁵ Cadres have been replaced by programs in FQS.

⁶ FEMA will only be responsible for the external certification listed in the qualification sheet for any given FQS position. Any prerequisite certifications for the given FQS position will be the responsibility of the employee under FQS.

Figure 2: Steps in the FQS Process



The three FQS status definitions are:

- **Trainee:** Individual who has an open PTB for an entry-level position. A trainee does not hold any FQS qualification.
- **Qualified:** An individual who has completed the process for qualification and has received a qualification letter from his/her Certifying Authority (CA).
- **Candidate:** An FQS-qualified individual who has been selected by the Certifying Official (CO) to open a new PTB for a higher FQS title. The individual remains a candidate until he/she completes the entire process and receives a new FQS qualification letter.

2.2.1 Step 1: Complete the Required FQS Experience

The experience required for FQS positions is reflected on the position qualification sheet for each FQS position.⁷ Not all positions have experience requirements. For those that do, this experience generally reflects the FQS position at the next lower level for which an

⁷ Position qualification sheets are included in Appendix B.

individual must be qualified prior to being issued a PTB for the target position. The trainee/candidate must have accomplished the required experience within the preceding 4 years.

2.2.2 Step 2: Complete the Required Training, Establish any Required External Certification, and Demonstrate Successful Performance

Step 2 has three possible components based on the particular position:

- **Complete Required Training:** Specific training listed on the position qualification sheet for the target position reflects the knowledge and skills a trainee/candidate must have in order to perform the tasks of the position successfully. Note some positions require periodic refresher training to maintain qualification.
- **Establish External Certification (for certain positions):** Any certification(s) awarded and governed by authorities outside of FQS that are required for the position are listed on the position qualification sheet. Examples include contracting officer’s representative (COR) certification, contracting warrants, and professional certifications.⁸

Some positions have a positive education requirement⁹ and/or a professional licensing requirement that must be fulfilled prior to assigning an FQS position task book for that position to an employee. FEMA will not be responsible for any positive education or professional licensing requirements. Only training identified in FQS will be provided by FEMA. Items not identified within FQS will not be paid for by FEMA.

Position Qualification Sheet
SAMPLE
 Contracting Manager

Position Category: Incident Management

Required FQS Experience

- Contracting Specialist

Required Training

- Disaster Contracting

Recurring Training

- Forty hours of continuous education, annually

External Certification

- Attain Federal Acquisition Certification – Contracting (FAC-C) Level II

Other Positions That Will Maintain Currency

- Procurement Unit Leader
- Contracting Specialist

Other Training That Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills

- Procurement Clerk

- **Demonstrate Successful Performance:** Trainees/candidates must complete their PTBs before they can be considered for certification.

⁸ Some external certifications may require signing a Continuing Service Agreement (CSA) as per 5 CFR § 410.309.

⁹ The term “positive education requirement” refers to an Office of Personnel Management definition that states that duties of a scientific, technical, or professional position cannot be performed by an individual who does not have the prescribed minimum education.

2.2.3 Step 3: Undergo the Certification Process

Certification is the process that formally qualifies an employee for a specific incident management or incident support position. Qualifications are based on standards established for the position and documented in the PTB and the position qualification sheet.

Successful completion of a PTB does not guarantee that a trainee/candidate will be certified for a position. Certification and recertification decisions also involve professional judgment regarding the quality of the trainee/candidate's experience. In making certification and recertification decisions, COs or Qualification Review Boards (QRBs) consider a number of factors including the variety of incidents worked (e.g., floods, tornadoes, hurricanes), their size and complexity, and the number of assignments.

Each trainee/candidate's assessment is based on reviews of tasks documented in the PTB and the quality of the trainee/candidate's experience.¹⁰

2.2.4 Completion

When all three steps are successfully completed and the trainee/candidate is certified as "qualified" for the target position, the employee will receive a letter formally documenting that his/her status has been changed from "trainee" or "candidate" to "qualified" for the target position.

2.2.5 Reconsideration

An employee may request reconsideration of a qualification decision by submitting a written request within 60 days after receipt of a decision. The request should include supporting documentation that clarifies or amplifies documents originally submitted and/or any new documentation that supports the employee's claim of competency for the targeted position.

The request will be reviewed for reconsideration by a QRB, which will either affirm the original decision or reverse the original decision. Once a determination has been made, the decision will be communicated through the appropriate RPM to the employee.

Decisions on reconsideration requests are final.

Position Task Books (PTBs)

- PTBs are the nucleus of a performance-based qualification system.
- PTBs describe all the activities (behaviors) and the minimal critical competencies (skill sets) and tasks that are necessary for successful performance in a given position.
- PTBs are designed in a format that allows documentation of a trainee's performance by an assigned evaluator.

¹⁰ Every FQS employee will undergo a performance evaluation as a result of his/her deployment; however, this section discusses PTB evaluations, which are conducted only for those individuals with an open PTB. Employee evaluations and PTB evaluations are separate processes.

2.3 Work Experience Equivalency

A CO may examine a trainee/candidate's past experience against standards and requirements for a position that the trainee is seeking. The trainee/candidate's past experience enables COs to equate experience gained in FEMA functional areas or from other agencies/organizations to the FEMA-based knowledge and skill requirements for a designated incident management and incident support position. For example, personnel qualified by another agency or organization in an Incident Command System (ICS) position may receive immediate equivalency at a similar level within FQS without having to obtain the appropriate FEMA equivalent experience. COs, with input from SMEs when required, review a trainee/candidate's experience to see whether it may meet FQS experience requirements on the qualification sheet within FQS.

2.4 Course Equivalency

The learning objectives of non-FEMA courses are compared to the objectives of required FEMA courses when considering course equivalency from outside organizations. In collaboration with the RPM and with input from SMEs when required, COs evaluate the training completed by trainees/candidates and determine the equivalency to training required for FQS positions. The goal of the course equivalency review process is to minimize redundancy of training, expedite the qualification process, and avoid repetitive costs due to duplication of curriculum delivery. Course equivalency may not be used to certify employees for Type I positions.

2.5 Timeframe for Maintaining Requirements

Training and performance requirements define how recent an employee's experience or task performance must be in order to retain the requisite knowledge and skills to perform in the target position. The FQS standard currency requirement is 4 years.

Employees are current in their position if in the last 4 years they have:

- Successfully performed in the position for which they are qualified
- Successfully performed in a position identified as "Other Positions That Will Maintain Currency" listed on the specific position qualification sheet (see Appendix B).

Example: Currency for a Resource Unit Leader (RESL) can be maintained by successfully performing in any one of the following positions within the last 4 years, provided the individual was previously qualified in that position:

- Situation Unit Leader (SITL)
- Planning Support Unit Leader (PLSL)
- Documentation Unit Leader (DOCL)
- Demobilization Unit Leader (DMOB)
- Resource Specialist (RSSP)

- Status/Check-in Recorder (SCKN)

2.6 Recertification

When an employee's certification for a given FQS position is no longer valid (e.g., due to lack of current experience, substandard performance, or lapse in recurrent training, licensure, or certification), the QRB or CO is responsible for the evaluation of the employee for recertification. Recertification requirements are determined individually based on such things as the length of time an employee was qualified in the position, number of successful assignments in the past, level and complexity of the position, and performance appraisals, if available.

When recertification is necessary because the employee has not worked in the position in the last 4 years, the employee should train on the job for a minimum of 30 days¹¹ under the supervision of an individual qualified in the position before being recertified. Employees also need to prove that they are proficient in any recent—within the last 4 years—technology or techniques that may be necessary for the position. The QRBs determine recertification of management positions under FQS, and COs determine recertification in the place of a QRB for non-management positions in each program area. The QRB and CO document recertification determinations in the Agency-wide system for tracking qualifications under the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) and conduct their review process in a fair and equitable manner.

2.7 Other Training That Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills

Other training that supports the development of knowledge and skills may be listed on the position qualification sheets. Such training is not required in order to qualify for the given position; however, the courses may provide knowledge or skills that might improve the trainee/candidate's performance of the PTB tasks. An example is training on Agency-standard productivity software such as Microsoft Office programs.

2.8 Medical Readiness

FEMA personnel often face severe conditions during disaster incident deployments. Protecting the workforce is vitally important. The Agency will ensure that all incident workers are assigned to positions where they can best fulfill the mission of FEMA and still be safe.

FEMA Occupational Safety and Health officials have developed a Medical Readiness Program for all FEMA incident workers. Once implemented, this evaluation process will be incorporated into FQS to enable the system to reflect the physical requirements of each position.

¹¹ Not all situations or individuals require the same updating. Starting a PTB from the beginning may not be necessary, but recertification should, at minimum, require a number of operational periods under observation.

3 Position Typing

3.1 Position Typing Based on Incident Complexity Levels

FEMA incidents are categorized into three levels (I, II, and III) based on actual or anticipated impact, size, complexity of the incident, and Federal assistance required.

- **Level I:** An incident that, due to its severity, size, location, or actual or potential impact on public health, welfare, or infrastructure, requires an extreme amount of direct Federal assistance for response and recovery efforts. A Level I incident requires extraordinary coordination among Federal, State, tribal, and local entities due to massive levels and breadth of damage, severe impact, or multi-State scope. Major involvement of FEMA (full activation of the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) and National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)) and other Federal agencies (all primary ESF agencies activated) and deployment of initial response resources are required to support requirements of the affected State.
- **Level II:** An incident that, due to its severity, size, location, or actual or potential impact on public health, welfare, or infrastructure, requires a high amount of direct Federal assistance for response and recovery efforts. A Level II incident requires elevated coordination among Federal, State, tribal, and local entities due to moderate levels and breadth of damage. Significant involvement of FEMA (RRCC activation, possible NRCC activation) and other Federal agencies (some ESF primary agencies activated to support the RRCC) and possible deployment of initial response resources are required to support requirements of the affected State.
- **Level III:** An incident that, due to its severity, size, location, or actual or potential impact on public health, welfare, or infrastructure, requires a moderate amount of direct Federal assistance. Typically this is primarily a recovery effort with minimal response requirements, and existing Federal and Regional resources will meet requests. A Level III incident requires coordination among involved Federal, State, tribal, and local entities due to minor-to-average levels and breadth of damage. Federal assistance may be limited to activation of one or two ESF primary agencies.

Federal Coordinating Officers (FCOs) and Command and General Staff positions are typed at the appropriate levels (Type I, II, and III) to support and coincide with Level I, II, and III incidents. Branch Directors are typed at the I and II level. Individuals occupying typed positions that require certification must meet all required qualifications and demonstrated capability to manage at the commensurate incident level, with Level/Type I being the most complex and Level/Type III the least complex. An employee certified as qualified under FQS for a typed position may work in any incident at or below his/her Type level. For example, employees qualified for Type III positions may serve only on Level III incidents, while Type I staff members may serve on Level I, II, or III incidents.

3.2 Incident Management Assistance Teams

IMATS are typed as follows:

- Type I National IMAT members must be qualified as Type I for their positions prior to performing their duties at a Level I incident.
- Type II Regional IMAT members must be, at a minimum, qualified as Type II or Type I for their positions prior to performing their duties at a Level II incident.
- Type III Regional IMAT members must be, at a minimum, qualified as Type III, Type II, or Type I for their positions.

Incident-level designations may be adjusted over time as the magnitude and complexity of the incident changes. This may result in the assignment of higher or lower types of IMATs.

4 Qualification Review Boards

QRBs are convened to evaluate employees' qualifications against established standards and provide recommendations for certification or re-certification that are fair and consistent. A QRB, in accordance with the board's level of authority, reviews trainees/candidates' completed qualification or re-certification packages, and recommends what action the CA should take.

FEMA leadership will establish two QRBs to impartially review an individual's training, experience, and qualification prior to certification or recertification. One QRB will review incident management candidates in General Staff FQS positions, and the other QRB will review incident management candidates in Command Staff positions. The purpose of the QRB is to determine the individual's qualification against standards and provide a fair, objective, and consistent evaluation process. The QRBs' membership includes experienced incident management and/or incident support personnel. When Regional staff members are evaluated, a senior member of that Region may participate in an advisory capacity on the QRB.

Additional information regarding QRB operations can be found in the FQS *QRB Guide*.

5 Roles and Responsibilities of Participants Implementing FQS

A number of individuals and organizations play key roles in administering FQS. An executive oversight committee and a national working group provide strategic guidance for FQS and ensure its efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity. Also, four key positions are responsible for the actual operation of the system. RPMs, COs, CAs, and mentors/evaluators each perform functions that are essential to qualifying employees to perform important FEMA incident positions.

5.1 FEMA Executive Oversight Committee

The FEMA Executive Oversight Committee directs and approves all aspects of FQS program development, review, and revision. The committee also provides direction, reviews materials, and approves recommendations from the FQS Working Group. The Committee provides executive decisions on issues that the FQS Working Group cannot resolve. In its role, the Executive Oversight Committee supports the implementation of FQS, to include outreach and provision of necessary resources. The committee includes the following agency representatives:

- Associate Administrator, Response and Recovery (co-chair)
- Deputy Administrator, Protection and National Preparedness (co-chair)
- United States Fire Administrator
- Associate Administrator, Mission Support
- Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administrator
- Associate Administrator, Policy, Program Analysis, and International Affairs
- Director, External Affairs
- Federal Coordinating Officer
- Regional Administrator (annual rotation)

5.2 FQS National Working Group

5.2.1 FQS National Working Group Chair

The FQS National Working Group supports the Executive Oversight Committee in the development, implementation, use, and maintenance of FQS. The Chief of the FQS Unit, IWMO, chairs the FQS National Working Group and serves as a non-voting member. The chair works with FEMA managers to staff the working group. The chair convenes meetings, schedules agenda items, delegates work assignments, and represents the working group in presenting recommendations to the Executive Oversight Committee.

5.2.2 FQS National Working Group Members

The FQS National Working Group is comprised of the chair and FEMA employees representing the following areas:

- Regional Response Division Directors (FQS-qualified Operations Section Chief)
- Regional Recovery Division Director (FQS-qualified at the Branch level)
- Individual Assistance (program representative)
- Public Assistance (program representative)
- Hazard Mitigation (program representative)
- Finance and Administration (program representative)
- Federal Coordinating Officer (program representative)
- Logistics (program representative)
- Planning (program representative)
- External Affairs (program representative)
- Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS representative)
- National Incident Management Assistance Team (National IMAT representative)
- Regional Incident Management Assistance Team (Regional IMAT representative)
- National Response Coordination Center (NRCC representative)
- Labor-Management Partnership Council representative

5.2.3 Responsibilities of the FQS National Working Group

The FQS National Working group is specifically responsible for:

- Developing a charter for the group
- Meeting quarterly during the first 2 years following the implementation of FQS
- Reviewing FQS proposals, addressing issues, and ensuring that the system is consistent with other FEMA policies and guidance
- Reviewing and analyzing the development, implementation, use, and maintenance of FQS annually for the first 2 years following the implementation and then every 3 years
- Establishing subcommittees as needed to address specific topics and assigning expected outcomes and timelines to the subcommittees
- Recommending courses proposed for course equivalency to the Executive Oversight Committee
- Working with RPMs and the Response Directorate's Training, Exercises, and Doctrine Office, Training Unit, to prioritize training requirements

5.2.4 Advisors to the FQS National Working Group

Staff from the following FEMA elements support and advise the FQS National Working Group:

- Office of the Chief Component Human Capital Officer
- Office of Equal Rights
- Office of Chief Counsel
- Office of External Affairs

- Labor Management Partnership Council
- National Integration Center
- Training, Exercise, and Doctrine Office, Response Directorate
- Incident Workforce Management Office, Response Directorate
- Emergency Management Institute

5.3 Reservist Program Managers¹²

RPMs have the responsibility of overseeing the management of their overall program area.¹³
RPMs:

- Revise the PTB technical tasks within their program, ensure that PTBs are uniformly applied across the Agency, and ensure that all stakeholders are notified when changes are made
- Review proposed changes to PTBs and submit recommendations (through the appropriate certifying official) to the FQS National Working Group
- Review proposed changes to FQS guidance and submit recommendations (through the appropriate Certifying Authority) to the FQS National Working Group
- Recommend course equivalencies to the FQS National Working Group
- Support training, in conjunction with Regional training managers (RTMs), through the development of innovative training and exercises and recommending the elimination of obsolete training
- Maintain deployment records for program personnel
- Maintain training records for program personnel in collaboration with EMI
- Analyze the status and progress of all trainees/candidates within the program at least annually and use the results to identify training and deployment priorities
- Collaborate with RTMs to communicate training needs and priorities to EMI and/or the FQS National Working Group
- Prioritize training and deployment requirement for individual program members in consultation with the appropriate Certifying Authority/Official
- Establish and maintain a central recordkeeping system

5.4 Certifying Authority

A CA is a FEMA official authorized by the FEMA Administrator to certify that employees are qualified for certain FQS positions. Each program will have a single CA. The CA will be the highest ranking FEMA official in each of the programs. CAs may delegate certification authority to individuals who report directly to the CA when these subordinates directly oversee the positions(s) in which trainees/candidates are being evaluated. CAs are responsible for:

¹² Reservist Program Management is subject to change in accordance with the new FEMA Reservist Program.

¹³ RPMs may consult with each employee's supervisor of record to perform the tasks listed above.

- Administering FQS for all employees who have assigned disaster roles within the CA's area of responsibility
- Certifying employees as qualified for positions when the employees have met pertinent FQS standards

5.5 Certifying Official¹⁴

COs also play a key role in FQS. COs are designated by the CA at Headquarters to manage the day-to-day operation of FQS. The CO designation cannot be held by a member appointed as an RPM or a member of a QRB. COs help guide the personal and individual goals of the trainee/candidate. COs:

- Identify trainees/candidates based on the agency's disaster staffing requirements and strategic goals
- Authorize employees to become trainees/candidates for specific incident management and support positions (and be issued PTBs)¹⁵
- Explain the purpose of PTBs and the qualification process to trainees/candidates and ensure that trainees/candidates have opportunities to acquire the abilities, knowledge, and skills they need to perform in the target position
- Track the progress of trainees/candidates and ensure that deployments, other pertinent experience, and training are entered into the FQS official system of record
- Confirm trainees/candidates' successful completion of PTB requirements
- Certify trainees/candidates as qualified for positions falling within the official's certification authority
- Recommend certification of trainees/candidates for those positions not falling within the official's certification authority

5.6 Mentor and Evaluator¹⁶

The evaluator is an individual certified under FQS who is qualified in the position being evaluated and has completed the required FQS Evaluator training (E/L/B 823). The evaluation process provides trainees/candidates the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of specific qualifications through coaching and assessing their performance against a standard. Effective evaluation is important to the success of the trainee/candidate; therefore, the evaluator must assess a trainee/candidate's performance thoughtfully, accurately, and honestly.

¹⁴ COs will be tracked in the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) to ensure consistency and continuity.

¹⁵ PTBs can only be initiated by FQS COs.

¹⁶ Every FQS employee will undergo a performance evaluation as a result of his/her deployment; however, this section discusses PTB evaluations, which are conducted only for those individuals with an open PTB. Employee evaluations and PTB evaluations are separate processes.

A mentor may be assigned to a trainee/candidate at the incident to coach the individual through his or her position tasks. For example, a mentor may instruct a trainee/candidate in a task such as “assembling an incident action plan.” For tasks that trainees/candidates demonstrate in simulated environments (training classes, exercises, or simulations), performance is assessed and documented by the instructor or assigned exercise/simulator evaluator.

A mentor and evaluator (who is most likely the supervisor of the trainee/candidate at the incident site) may be the same person. The mentor/evaluator may perform the dual role of instructing trainees/candidates as a “mentor” and assessing their performance as an “evaluator.” While many of the responsibilities of the mentor are similar to those of an evaluator, the *roles* of mentoring and evaluating must remain separate. When the trainee/candidate appears to have mastered the tasks, a mentor may become an evaluator and observe, evaluate, and record successful performance of the task. It is similar to instructing in the classroom and administering a test. The two functions are separate. They can be performed in sequence, but not at the same time.

The mentor will:

- Meet with the trainee/candidate and determine the objectives of the assignment
- Review the tasks in the PTB with the trainee/candidate and explain the procedures that will be used in the training assignment and the objectives to be met during the assignment

The evaluator will:

- Observe and evaluate the trainee/candidate performing tasks and initial in the PTB all tasks that the trainee/candidate has successfully performed without assistance. This is the evaluator’s most important responsibility; it provides for the integrity of the performance-based qualification system
- Complete the appropriate evaluation record in the back of the PTB

6 External Workforce Support

During the response to major incidents, FEMA may use the services of personnel who are not members of FEMA's regular disaster workforce. The vision of FEMA encompasses the concept that every employee is an emergency manager. FEMA employees and members of the Whole Community are committed to the support of our citizens and first responders during incident response and recovery. As FEMA Publication 1 states, "FEMA's fundamental goal, and the inspiration and motivation for many FEMA employees, is to serve the Nation by helping its people and first responders, especially when they are most in need." While we use personnel from the FEMA workforce, other personnel also support the mission of FEMA. They are referred to as external workforce support and generally fall into one of the following categories:

- **FEMA Local Hires:** Temporary FEMA employees hired at incident locations to support FEMA field operations.
- **Surge Capacity Force:** Employees designated by any Federal department or agency to augment the FEMA disaster workforce when responding to a major disaster or catastrophic incident that exceeds the capacity of the FEMA disaster workforce to execute its missions.
- **FEMA Corps:** A FEMA-devoted unit of the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) trained for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery missions. Through the partnership between FEMA and the Corporation for National and Community Service, the volunteers are a part of the agency that administers the AmeriCorps program. FEMA Corps is organized within the AmeriCorps NCCC.
- **Technical Specialists:** Individuals with specialized skills that can be used anywhere within the ICS organization. They normally perform the same duties during an incident that they perform in their everyday jobs and are typically certified in the field or professions (e.g., structural engineers, architects, plumbers, electricians).

In general, external workforce support personnel are not covered by FQS and, therefore, are not issued PTBs and have no minimum qualifications prescribed in this guide.¹⁷ Supervisors of external workforce support personnel and local hires are responsible for ensuring that the individuals perform their assignments proficiently and safely.

¹⁷ In some cases, external support personnel may be issued PTBs (e.g., FEMA Corps).

7 Procedures

7.1 Force Structure

The purpose of establishing force structure is to have the appropriate number of personnel trained, exercised, and equipped to accomplish FEMA's disaster mission. The objective is to identify the number of personnel by position needed to respond to and manage Level I, II, and III incidents. Force structure also allows for efficiencies of training since FEMA will only train the number of personnel needed to fill each position.

7.2 Identification of Trainees/Candidates

The decision to offer/appoint an individual to an FQS position is based on the needs identified by force structure and a need at the entry-level specialist position of a particular program. CAs regularly assess their disaster workforce requirements to determine Regional and national disaster response, recovery, and support needs. CAs focus on identifying shortages of qualified personnel in critical positions which, in turn, determines the need for trainees/candidates to meet mission requirements. Other factors related to Agency strategic goals and objectives are also considered during this process. Selecting trainees/candidates for positions that are already oversubscribed is not cost effective and may distract from efforts to have a balanced and experienced disaster workforce.

7.3 Issuance of PTBs

Based on the needs identified by force structure, COs authorize the issuance of appropriate PTBs. The number and types of positions needed for each disaster are limited by the Agency's force structure requirements; therefore, not every employee will be issued a PTB for the next job in his/her FQS career progression.

COs must select the employee to receive the PTB for a specific position based on the criteria listed below. While COs are ultimately responsible for the selection, programs with Regional components shall use a three-member panel of impartial SMEs (FQS-qualified at or above the position being reviewed) appointed by the CO to recommend PTB issuance to the CA.

1. Tenure of the employee's previous FQS appointment in the given FQS position
 - a. How broad the potential trainee/candidate's disaster experience is (Level III, II, or I)
 - b. Timeframe of disaster (start-up phase vs. fully activated incident vs. deactivation)
2. Meet the required minimum days of availability as outlined in FQS
3. History of satisfactory incident performance

COs document and apply the same systematic selection criteria for every potential trainee/candidate.

7.4 Time Limits for Completion of PTBs

A trainee/candidate must complete an assigned PTB within 4 years, beginning with documentation of the trainee/candidate's first completion of a task in the PTB. If the trainee/candidate does not complete the PTB within 4 years, the PTB will no longer be valid. If a new PTB is initiated, all current qualification standards will apply.

ADDENDUM

As part of Phase 1 of the Hiring Process for the Reservist Program, selectees were offered an appointment into the Reservist Program that became effective on September 23, 2012. Some applicants, in order to meet the requirements of the Agency's Incident Workforce Structure, were offered a different appointment position, at or below the position for which they were FQS qualified. As a result of their FQS qualification, they will receive selection priority for the position for which they were FQS qualified should an appropriate vacancy subsequently arise in the workforce structure. This selection priority is subject to each Reservist's continued satisfactory performance and conduct, and terminates with his/her appointment.

APPENDICES
