

**Montana Department of Natural Resources and
Conservation**

*Evaluating Applicants for NWCG Qualifications
Using Recognition of Prior Learning*

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES



Record of Changes

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Forward

Much of this document is based on *Administrative Guidelines for Position Credentialing Using Recognition of Prior Learning - Report for the FEMA/BLM Recognition of Prior Learning Project; #HSFE20-12-X-0127*. As some of the terminology in the FEMA report may differ from what we're used to in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) world it may be of use to refer to the RPL Glossary at times. For instance, the term "credentialed" is used in many places we would normally use "certified" or "qualified".

Recognition of Prior Learning and NWCG Qualification

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and the principles behind it, has gained some level of acceptance by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). That is evidenced within the NWCG's PMS 310-1 and the inclusion of the Skills Crosswalk showing the comparison of NWCG to Structural Qualifications from Firefighter 2 to Strike Team Leader (Engine).

The Goal of the DNRC Recognition of Prior Learning Project

The goal of the DNRC Recognition of Prior Learning Project is to make qualifying for NWCG position qualification more efficient for some individuals who have already acquired relevant knowledge, skills and abilities. The efficiency is achieved through a reduction in or release from what would otherwise be redundant training and experience requirements. The NWCG standard applied through an RPL evaluation is no different. The performance bar is exactly the same.

Through the RPL process, finding an applicant "Competent" instead of "Not Yet Competent" will be the exception. However, for many of those who are found to be "Not Yet Competent", the Position Development Plan and some position task book task completions may result in less time in training and/or fewer position performance assignments required as a Trainee to become qualified.

Section 1 Introduction

Federal agencies with responsibilities under the National Response Framework are required to ensure that emergency response providers, incident management personnel, and any other personnel responding to a disaster declaration are credentialed and typed in accordance with 6 U.S.C. 320. Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 also sets minimum standards that emergency responders must meet.

Although local, state, tribal, and private sector partners are not required to be credentialed under these standards, as the primary first-responders to any national disaster they are strongly encouraged to be fully credentialed. Many of these local first-responders already hold some level of qualification in their current position. Recognition of Prior Learning



(RPL) is a tool that provides a means of achieving the more universal “all risk” credentialing of local and state-level responders and managers currently credentialed within their own agencies, potentially enhancing the numbers of “all risk” nationally credentialed resources available for FEMA deployment. The benefit of having nationally credentialed local and state resources throughout the nation assures greater efficiency and effectiveness of multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional coordination when disasters occur.

The current process for credentialing is performance-based where emergency managers and first responders are required to complete one or a series of training courses from the credentialing authority. This training is often followed by a period of on-the-job experience as a trainee during an emergency incident. Very often this training and experience are similar to skills already possessed by the candidate.

RPL is a formal competency-based qualification process that allows any credentialing authority to recognize and account for competence acquired through life-long learning and experience. RPL is “a process that evaluates an individual’s formal and non-formal learning to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required competencies to perform effectively in a specific emergency management or responder position.”

RPL is used to assess competencies for professional trades and higher education in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Canada, and other nations. A similar program managed by the Council of Adult and Experimental Learning (CAEL) is used in many colleges and universities across the United States to assess for course or unit knowledge credit.

RPL can also be used to evaluate the competency of individuals who are not first-responders or incident-response personnel and yet have acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities through other trainings and experiences that transfer over to incident-response positions.

Section 2 National Disaster Response

September 11, 2001, demonstrated to America that, as emergency responders and emergency managers, we must plan, train, and exercise to respond together, thus assuring a coordinated, efficient and effective response to all threats. A coordinated and effective response requires the multiple disciplines of our emergency management and emergency response systems, federal to state to local, be credentialed to a single standard, position by position.

Section 3 National Incident Management System

Mandated by Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5), Management of Domestic Incidents, and as outlined in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) FEMA P-501, NIMS provides a consistent nationwide template to enable federal, state, tribal, and local governments, and the private sector to work together to respond to and recover from the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity. HSPD-5 requires NIMS training for all federal emergency responders working in support of the National Response Framework (NRF).



To ensure unity of effort, NIMS advocates standards to include training, experience, credentialing, validation, and physical and medical fitness. Federal, state, tribal, and local certifying agencies, and professional and private organizations with personnel involved in emergency management and incident response, are encouraged to credential those individuals in their respective disciplines or jurisdictions. RPL recognizes the NIMS requirements for specified training for the purpose of “all-hazards” response.

Section 4 Definition of Credentialing

The Department of Homeland Security/FEMA refers to the definition of credentialing provided by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. This language provides:

“The terms ‘credentialed’ and ‘credentialing’ mean having provided, or providing, respectively, documentation that identifies personnel and authenticates and verifies the qualifications of such personnel by ensuring that such personnel possess a minimum common level of training, experience, physical and medical fitness, and capability appropriate for a particular position...”

The credentialing process entails the objective evaluation and documentation of an individual’s competence or proficiency to meet nationally accepted standards. This can take the form of current certification, license, degree, training, or experience.

Section 5 Qualification

Personnel qualifications (education, training, experience, certification/licensure, and medical/physical fitness) are typically position-specific. Determining the qualifications essential for a position should be part of a job-task analysis. This analysis normally incorporates input from job incumbents, managers, industry, and others with knowledge of the position requirements.

Section 6 RPL Defined

RPL is a competency-based process that evaluates an individual’s formal and non-formal learning and experiences to determine the extent to which that individual has achieved the required competencies of an emergency response position.

RPL is a qualification process used to determine a person’s competency to do a job at a prescribed level for the basis of credentialing. RPL measures the candidate’s demonstrated knowledge, skills, and experience (the overall performance) against national standard competencies established for specific jobs. The evaluation process focuses on candidates’ ability to meet the established standards, rather than the manner by which they acquired the knowledge, skills, or abilities. Candidates may have acquired their skills in another emergency response/services discipline, through formal training in a particular field, in the military, or through a combination of career employment experiences. Candidates should not be judged on where or how they learned to do a job, but rather their ability to do the job.



Section 7 Competency versus Performance-based Qualifications

- 7.1 In a performance-based qualification system, qualification is based on completion of required training and demonstrated successful position performance by completing a Position Task Book (PTB). The primary criterion for qualification is the individual's performance as observed by a qualified evaluator. The PTB contains all critical tasks required to perform the job. The process of demonstrating the abilities to perform the position is completion of a PTB. Many of the tasks being evaluated may require they be observed during an actual incident.
- 7.2 In a competency-based system for credentialing, a candidate demonstrates to qualified evaluators the competencies required to adequately perform the job. Skills are evaluated holistically using the combined knowledge, skills and abilities required to demonstrate the level of competency in performing the job. A competency-based assessment process is an "outcomes-based" tool; it is designed to assess the candidate's ability to perform the duties of the position.

Section 8 Basic Tenets of RPL

- 8.1 RPL is a valid method of allowing candidates applying for a credential to claim credit for knowledge, skills, and abilities, regardless of how the individual acquired those skills.
- 8.2 RPL processes, procedures, and decisions must be consistent, reliable, and fair to ensure that users are confident of the results.
- 8.3 RPL candidates should be offered advice on the development of their portfolio, and the types of evidence considered appropriate, to support a claim for credit through RPL.
- 8.4 The RPL assessment process must meet the same quality assurances and monitoring standards as any other valid form of assessment.
- 8.5 Using RPL as the assessment tool for credentialing will produce results of equal status to any other accepted assessment method. The award of credit through RPL will not be distinguished from any other credentialing process.

Section 9 Nationally Developed Competencies

- 9.1 All positions for which RPL will be available as a credentialing tool must have a nationally accepted set of competencies. These are baseline competencies composed of knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the emergency response function.
- 9.2 The RPL process must adhere to the national competencies. These standards may be augmented to meet specific needs within an agency, but the augmentation may not reduce or lessen the skill sets identified within the competencies.
- 9.3 DNRC's RPL process evaluates an applicant against the competencies, behaviors, and tasks in the associated NWCG-recognized position task book.



Section 10 Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ)

For the purposes of these Guidelines and the Recognition of Prior Learning process the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is the primary AHJ; however in some cases the RPL process will be used to make a recommendation for Chief certification to a local AHJ.

Section 11 AHJ Responsibilities

For the purposes of these Guidelines and the Recognition of Prior Learning process the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is the primary AHJ; however in some cases the RPL process will be used to forward a recommendation for Chief certification to a local AHJ.

- 11.1 The AHJ is responsible for providing potential candidates with information about the credentialing process. This should include the function and need of the various positions, and if RPL is a valid credentialing process for a specific position.
- 11.2 The AHJ will brief potential candidates about the RPL process, what it is, what support is available, and initial competency-related information.
- 11.3 The AHJ must ensure that nationally accepted competencies exist for the desired position.
- 11.4 The AHJ will determine if the required expertise is available to staff an Assessment Panel.
- 11.5 The AHJ is responsible to establish RPL policy and procedures.
- 11.6 The AHJ has the responsibility to ensure that the RPL process is conducted in accordance with accepted standards.
- 11.7 DNRC's organization for administration of an RPL assessment:
 1. Initial contact will be the most local DNRC **Fire Training person** whether at a DNRC Unit or Area Office.
 2. The **Area Office Assistant Fire Management Officer (AFMO) or Training Working Team member (TWT)** will be the primary point of contact for an individual who would like to pursue NWCG qualification through the RPL process. The AFMO/TWT's role, working with the relevant Unit Fire Training person, if applicable, will be to provide "a coarse initial screen" to determine if RPL appears to be a valid tool to evaluate the individual's acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities. The AFMO/TWT will also provide information and guidance to the individual seeking qualification. See Section 12 below. The AFMO/TWT will inform the other Board members of the RPL evaluation request.
 3. **RPL Board** – The Board will be made up, at a minimum, of the Fire and Aviation Management Bureau Training Officer (Training Officer), the FAMB Training and Development Specialist (Training Specialist), and the relevant AFMO/TWT. The Board may also include an additional expert on the RPL process. The Board will assemble an appropriate Evaluation Panel. The Board will make the final



- determination (see Section 22), communicate with the applicant, assure that documentation is complete (see Section 23) and manage appeals (see Section 24).
4. **Evaluation Panel** – Panel of 3 or 5 individuals selected by the Board to review the applicant’s application and portfolio, interview the applicant, sign on individual tasks in the applicable PTB, and makes a recommendation to the Board as to the applicant’s competence. See Section 15.
 5. **Certifying Official** – The Certifying Official has the authority for reviewing, and evaluating documentation, and confirming the completion of relevant position requirements, and determining if the trainee should be granted certification.

Section 12 Initiating the Use of RPL in the Credentialing Process

- 12.1 RPL evaluation can be requested by individuals employed by:
- DNRC or other state agencies
 - Local Government - for DNRC-certified positions and for Chief-certified positions
 - Other applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Area Office and Bureau.
- 12.1a An applicant should be prepared to discuss specific training they’ve completed and experiences they’ve had that relate to the qualification of interest.
- 12.2 The RPL process should begin with discussions between the applicant and their most local DNRC Qualifications Administrator (Quals Admin) at the appropriate Unit or Area Office.
- 12.2a The applicant will complete an RPL Application Form. If contact is first made at the Unit level and the Quals Admin supports an RPL evaluation of the applicant, the application will be sent on to the DNRC Training Officer at the relevant Area Office (AFMO/TWT).
- 12.3 Upon receipt of an RPL Application the AFMO/TWT should initiate an RPL Process Record.
- 12.4 The AFMO/TWT should designate a designee if desired or continue the discussion himself/herself with the applicant about the competencies required of the position, if the applicant appears to have acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) which relate to the duties of the desired position, and if the acquired KSAs would appear to provide a reasonable basis for RPL evaluation.
- 12.5 Based on information provided through discussions with the applicant and the completed RPL Application, the AFMO/TWT will decide if RPL is the best tool for the credentialing process.
- 12.5a Factors for consideration should include the applicant’s experiences, the level of need for additional individuals to be qualified in the target position, availability of subject matter experts experienced in RPL, and the cost of hosting an Assessment Panel verses an alternate credentialing process.



- 12.5b An additional consideration toward deciding whether RPL is a valid tool in a credentialing process is the nature of the position the applicant wishes to apply for. Typically it will be more appropriate to consider an applicant for a position closer to entry level in the NWCG qualification system rather than a higher level position. Also, certain ICS functions above a certain level in Operations or Command, where insufficient training and experience can have devastating consequences, may have definite restrictions when it comes to RPL results. (A short list of positions that will tend to be more appropriate to pursue through RPL assessment is available in Appendix A.)
- 12.5c An applicant may apply for RPL of one position at a time. However, evaluation of competency for subordinate positions within ICS may be considered by the Evaluation Panel. For instance, an individual applying for an RPL toward Resource Unit Leader may also be considered for Status/Check-in Recorder.
- 12.5d The AFMO/TWT may request that the applicant provide a letter to the AFMO/TWT that states their Chief or applicable Supervisor's support of the individual's application for RPL evaluation.
- 12.5e The AFMO/TWT may contact references listed in the RPL Application Form to gather additional information about the applicant and assist in making the decision if RPL is a viable route toward qualification.
- 12.6 **If the AFMO/TWT decides that RPL evaluation will not be conducted for a specific applicant, regardless of the reason, the decision is final and cannot be appealed.**
- 12.7 Once the AFMO/TWT is satisfied that RPL is a good fit for the applicant, the AFMO/TWT should issue the "RPL Applicant's Handbook" and the "RPL Applicant Self-Assessment and Portfolio Worksheet" to the applicant as well as additional resources – see 13.2.
- 12.8 The AFMO/TWT will alert the other Board members of the possibility of an RPL evaluation.
- 12.79 The AFMO/TWT or designee will work with the other Board members to decide on members of the Evaluation Panel.

Section 13 Application for the use of RPL in Credentialing

- 13.1 The "Applicant Self-Assessment and Portfolio Worksheet" will serve as the application for the applicant's entry into the RPL credentialing process. The Self-Assessment is an evaluation performed by the applicant documenting their knowledge, skills, and abilities that lead them to believe they should be evaluated for acquired competencies in a specific position. This requires the applicant to systematically detail the experiences and learning that they believe match position competencies.
- 13.2 The AFMO/TWT has a responsibility to mentor and guide the applicant through the Self-Assessment and Portfolio development phases. This should include: providing information to the applicant about RPL assessments in general and his/her RPL assessment in particular; give advice and support to the applicant in preparing,



organizing, and presenting evidence; and evaluate and give feedback on the applicant's evidence.

The applicant will be provided:

- Applicant Self-Assessment and Portfolio Worksheet
- Applicant's Handbook
- A copy of these Administrative Guidelines
- A copy of the NWCG PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide qualification criteria for the position.
- Position task book for the position for which the applicant is applying, including subordinate position(s) if applicable.
- Description of the position from NWCG Wildland Fire Incident Management Field Guide PMS 210, FIREScope's Field Operations Guide ICS 420-1, or FEMA's Emergency Responder Field Operations Guide.

13.3 The applicant is required to compile and submit a professional Portfolio with the Self-Assessment as part of the RPL application package. Applicants may base their RPL application on any combination of formal or informal training and education, work experience, or general life experiences.

Section 14 Applicant's Portfolio

14.1 A portfolio will be developed by the applicant that accurately reflects his/her experiences that meet the competencies, behaviors, and/or tasks as listed in the NWCG position task book (PTB) for the position. The portfolio is a collection of documentation supporting the applicant's claim of meeting some or all of the position performance requirements.

14.2 The responsibility for providing evidence documenting the applicant's knowledge and experience rests entirely with the applicant. All evidence must be sufficient to satisfy the Evaluation Panel of the applicant's competency in one or more of those required for qualification in the desired position.

14.3 Documentation must be:

- Valid and applicable to the position being assessed.
- Current enough to demonstrate up-to-date competence. Receiving the most weight will be training and experience within the last 5 years.
- Sufficient enough to clearly show competence.
- Authentic and relating to the applicant. Original certificates should be retained by the applicant but available during the interview and only copies included as part of the portfolio.

14.4 The portfolio should include copies of documents that demonstrate the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities relating to the position competencies, behaviors, and/or tasks.



For more information on the types of evidence, documents, or other information that should go into a applicant's portfolio, please reference the **RPL Applicant's Handbook**.

- 14.5 Falsification or forgery of documents used in the RPL process will be grounds for dismissal from the certification process and may result in disciplinary action.

Section 15 Evaluation Panel

- 15.1 The Evaluation Panel is typically composed of three or five subject matter experts assembled to assess the applicant's competency to perform the job.
- 15.2 The evaluators' job is to review the applicant's documentation and materials, participate in an interview, and to come to consensus as to whether the applicant meets the minimum competency to perform in the position.
- 15.3 The panel makes a recommendation as to the applicant's competency in the position. This recommendation is then forwarded to the Board for a final decision.

Section 16 Evaluator Qualifications

- 16.1 Each evaluator must be able to contribute to the RPL assessment. Each evaluator should be knowledgeable of the duties and requirements of the position the RPL applicant is pursuing. It is important that each evaluator regards the RPL process as a valid method to evaluate and determine competency toward qualification. Considerations for Evaluator/Panel Members could include:
- 16.1a At least one member of the panel should possess a background in training, qualifications, and be capable of preparing a Position Development Plan for the applicant.
- 16.1b At least one member of the panel should have knowledge beyond the orientation level and be an RPL process subject matter expert.
- 16.1c An evaluator might be qualified in a position that supervises the applicant's target position in an ICS organization – for instance a qualified Incident Commander Type 3 might be on a panel evaluating an applicant for Planning Section Chief Type 3.
- 16.2 A non-voting ex officio member of the Evaluation Panel who has subject matter expertise may be consulted prior to the evaluation interview, be present for the interview itself, or consulted after the interview.
- 16.3 An aptitude in interpersonal dynamics and listening skills will aid in becoming an effective evaluator.
- 16.4 All evaluators should be provided RPL orientation training. (See DNRC RPL Orientation Training)

Section 17 Evaluation Process

- 17.1 The DNRC RPL process is an evaluation of past performance against the NWCG-recognized position task book (PTB). NWCG-recognized PTBs list Competencies,



Behaviors and Tasks (CBTs). NWCG recognizes some FEMA PTBs as well as NWCG PTBs.

17.2 The DNRC AFMO/TWT or designee will provide the applicant the correct PTB.

17.3 NWCG defines CBTs as follows:

- Competency - A broad description that groups core behaviors necessary to perform a specific function.
- Behavior - An observable activity or action demonstrated by an individual in a particular context.
- Task - A unit of work activity that is a logical and necessary action in the performance of a behavior; how the behavior is demonstrated or performed in a particular context.

17.4 Demonstration of the acquisition of general competencies and behaviors are good but will not, in itself be sufficient for PTB completion. Completion of a PTB requires successful demonstration of all the Tasks.

17.5 Evaluating competence is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments about whether an applicant has achieved any or all of the minimum competencies expected for a specific position.

17.6 Fully competent means having the knowledge, skills, and abilities to safely and correctly perform the duties of the position.

17.6a Competence differs from task completion. For instance, many task books include a task of assembling an appropriate kit for the applicable position. That task could be considered “completed” by simply gathering and assembling the items in the kit list. But, in the NWCG performance-based qualification system what we ultimately want to know is whether the Trainee knows how to use the references, supplies, tools, and equipment in an appropriate way on a wildfire incident for the NWCG position being pursued. If the applicant can demonstrate that they have assembled a kit from a list (regardless of the nature of the work) that might be considered as one level of competency; however, it would not fully satisfy the intention of the task in the NWCG PTB.

17.7 The evaluation process must be:

- Fair so as to not disadvantage any applicant.
- Flexible to give credit for all sources of learning and experience.
- Valid and relevant in demonstrating the applicant meets the competency.
- Reliable in providing consistent results.

Section 18 Assessing the Portfolio

18.1 The evaluators will review the portfolio and compare it with the competencies, behaviors, and tasks in the position task book as well as the PMS 310-1 requirements for qualification.

18.2 If the evaluators do not gain sufficient information to make a judgment about the applicant’s competence, more evidence may be obtained during the interview.



Section 19 Evaluation Interview

- 19.1 The interview may be the evaluator's most valuable tool in making a conclusion as to an applicant's competency.
- 19.2 An interview provides the evaluator an opportunity to ensure they are satisfied with the quality of the evidence provided in the portfolio.
- 19.3 The interview with the applicant will allow the evaluator to delve into the applicant's relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- 19.3a The interview will be based on the individual's unique set of training, education, and experience as documented in their portfolio. Thus interview questions, and how an interview progresses, will be different for each individual.
- 19.4 Evaluators should utilize a combination of competency based evaluation methods, such as;
- Evidence of prior learning
 - Interview questions
 - Direct observation
 - Simulations
- 19.5 Evaluators should look for consistency in multiple categories of evidence.

Note: For more information on conducting an evaluation interview, reference the **RPL Evaluator's Handbook**.

Section 20 Check References

- 20.1 The evaluators should be prepared to check and verify references.

Section 21 Determination of Competency

- 21.1 The evaluators will confer and compare all evidence gathered against the position task book and the 310-1 qualification requirements.
- 21.1a Competency and qualification are not the same thing. Competency correlates specifically to skills. Qualification includes skills but can also include required training, fitness requirements, and other factors.
- 21.1b RPL evaluations can determine competencies and relate those competencies to training courses, in some cases, but will not necessarily assess all the qualification requirements as listed in the 310-1. For instance, RPL Evaluation Panels will not be conducting Work Capacity Tests for positions that require them.
- 21.2 Waivable qualification requirements from the 310-1 can include some experience and training requirements.
- 21.2a Some "Required Experience" – for instance, previous qualification requirements. For example, the 310-1 lists Status/Check-In Recorder as a required experience for



Resources Unit Leader. An RPL Evaluation Panel can recommend that this requirement be waived for an individual pursuing qualification as an RESL.

- 21.2b In most cases 310-1 required training will not be waived or customizable to the applicant's specific situation.
- 21.2c Some specific trainings that are required by the 310-1 (e.g. ICS training, IS700, and or IS800 to be "NIMS compliant", for instance) will usually not be waived; unless:
- There is sufficient evidence that equivalent training was completed (see Training Equivalency in the 1100 manual).
 - The applicant has provided sufficient evidence that they have met the training objectives of a course through past experience.
- 21.2d In most cases DNRC will not be able to design a custom training program that would best fit the needs of the RPL applicant's Position Development Plan. In most cases it will be necessary for applicants to take whole recommended courses and not just individual units.
- 21.3 The panel has two choices, either "Competent" or "Not-Yet-Competent".
- 21.4 A panel recommendation of "Competent" must be a unanimous decision of all the Evaluation Panel members. A "Competent" determination will be the exception, not the rule.
- 21.4a If the recommendation is "Competent", it will be noted on the **RPL Evaluation Panel Recommendation** form and the panel will complete the **RPL Assessment Form**.
- 21.4b A panel member with the appropriate qualifications may complete an RPL Evaluation Record and a draft copy of the PTB with "sign off" on PTB tasks. The qualified evaluator's "sign offs" on tasks will use the designator "RPL" not an evaluation record number. The qualified evaluator will enter final sign offs in the applicant's official PTB once the RPL board has approved the Panel's recommendations.
- 21.4c A panel member with the appropriate qualifications can fill out the Final Evaluation portion of an applicable PTB at such time as the Panel's recommendation of "Competent" is approved by the Board.
- 21.5 If the recommendation is "Not-Yet-Competent", it will be noted on the **RPL Evaluation Panel Recommendation** form and the panel will complete the **Position Development Plan** section of the **RPL Assessment Form**.
- 21.5a A panel member with the appropriate qualifications may complete an RPL Evaluation Record and a draft copy of the PTB with "sign off" on PTB tasks. The qualified evaluator's "sign offs" on tasks will use the designator "RPL" not an evaluation record number. The qualified evaluator will enter final sign offs in the applicant's official PTB once the RPL board has approved the Panel's recommendations.
- 21.6 Panel members should not discuss the results of the evaluation with the applicant.



Section 22 Decision Process

- 22.1 The RPL Board is the agent for the DNRC. For positions that the DNRC certifies, the appropriate DNRC person (see the 1100 manual) is the final authority (Certifying Official) in awarding certification.
- 22.1a For Chief-certified positions, the RPL Board passes on its recommendation to the applicant's associated chief officer.
- 22.2 The RPL Board has a responsibility to ensure that the entire evaluation process is conducted properly and fairly; and to either endorse the recommendations of the evaluation panel, make position development recommendations, or ask for further review of the applicant by the panel.
- 22.2a The RPL Board will thoroughly review the applicant's self-assessment and portfolio as well as the Evaluation Panel's Assessment Form and Position Development Plan and any other documentation supporting the Evaluation Panel's recommendation. If after a careful review there are lingering questions about an RPL assessment the Board may choose to discuss the questions with one or more Evaluation Panel members. Or the Board may deem the evaluation incomplete – turning it back to the Panel and the Applicant to either discontinue the RPL process, gather additional documentation, or do further interviewing of the applicant. In such a case one of the Board members will work with the Evaluation Panel on further assessment.
- 22.3 The RPL Board has the authority to overrule a finding by the Evaluation Panel of "Competent" in which case the Board must be unanimous; but does not have authority to overrule a finding of "Not-Yet-Competent".
- 22.4 The RPL Board will make the results of the evaluation available to the applicant, and/or supervisor as appropriate, but may not make individual Panel member comments available.

Section 23 Documentation

- 23.1 The DNRC will use established guidelines on RPL documentation requirements.
- 23.2 The following will be documented and retained:
- RPL Process Progress Report - the applicant's progress through the RPL process including if a decision is made anywhere along the way that RPL will not be continued for the applicant. Completed by AFMO/TWT (designee)
 - Applicant's self-assessment and portfolio. Completed by Applicant.
 - RPL Assessment Report including Position Development Form and Panel Recommendation Form. Completed by Panel.
 - Draft PTB. Entries made or completed by Panel.
 - RPL Board Recommendation Form. Completed by Board.



Section 24 Appeal Process

- 24.1 The applicant has a right to appeal the assessment if they believe it has not been conducted according to these **RPL Administrative Guidelines**. However, if the AFMO/TWT has determined that the RPL process is not appropriate for an applicant – that case is not appealable.
- 24.2 To appeal, a applicant shall file a written document detailing the complaint(s) to the attention of the RPL Board within thirty days of the evaluation.
- 24.3 All appeals will be evaluated by the RPL Board for merit. The RPL Board may:
- Deny the appeal.
 - Order a new Evaluation Panel and assessment.

Section 25 Qualification Process After RPL

- 25.1 If an RPL Evaluations is approved as Competent by the RPL Board the applicant must return completed documents to the AFMO/TWT or Certifying Official for review and/or certification.
- 25.1a If an applicant is found competent through an RPL process and then certified in a position, recurrency requirements, as listed in the 310-1, will stand and must be met to retain qualification.
- 25.2 If an RPL Evaluations is approved as Not-Yet-Competent by the RPL Board the applicant must return completed documents to the AFMO/TWT or Certifying Official for review and/or certification.
- 25.2a The applicant should work with the AFMO/TWT, Quals Admin, and/or Certifying Official to plan out the recommended requirements as listed in the RPL Position Development Plan.
- 25.2b No further RPL evaluation will be conducted for the individual for the same position. Rather, certification/qualification should be given based on completion of the recommended requirements.
- 25.3 If an RPL applicant is certified immediately or eventually by completing a Position Development Plan they must meet all the PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide requirements for subsequent positions higher in the function , for a higher type, or for positions in a different function. For instance an individual qualified as:
- A Resource Unit Leader must meet 310-1 for qualification as a Planning Section Chief 2.
 - A Planning Section Chief 3 qualified through RPL must meet the 310-1 for qualification as a Planning Section Chief 2.
 - A Resource Unit Leader may pursue Engine Boss (different function) through a separate RPL process.



Appendix A Allowable Qualification Targets for RPL Assessment

The following NWCG qualification positions can be considered for RPL assessment.

Critical Positions Based On Risk

The following 3 positions play a critical role on incidents by managing many of the risks encountered by the personnel they supervise. The consequences of poor decisions by these positions can have dire consequences. Thus, RPL assessment for the three positions listed below will always result in a finding of “Not Yet Competent”. Position performance and completion of the position task book on at least one incident will always be required.

Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS)
Incident Commander Type 3 (ICT3)
Operations Section Chief Type 3 (OSC3)

Incident Command System Positions

Base/Camp Manager (BCMG)
Claims Specialist (CLMS)
Commissary Manager (CMSY)
Communications Unit Leader (COML)
Compensation/Claims Unit Leader (COMP)
Compensation-for-Injury Specialist (INJR)
Cost Unit Leader (COST)
Demobilization Unit Leader (DMOB)
Documentation Unit Leader (DOCL)
Equipment Manager (EQPM)
Equipment Time Recorder (EQTR)
Facilities Unit Leader (FACL)
Finance/Administration Section Chief Type 3 (FSC3)
Food Unit Leader (FDUL)
Ground Support Unit Leader (GSUL)
Incident Commander Type 4 (ICT4)
Incident Commander Type 5 (ICT5)
Incident Communications Technician (COMT)
Liaison Officer (LOFR)
Logistics Section Chief Type 3 (LSC3)
Medical Unit Leader (MEDL)
Ordering Manager (ORDM)
Personnel Time Recorder (PTRC)



Planning Section Chief Type 3 (PSC3)
Procurement Unit Leader (PROC)
Public Information Officer (PIOF)
Receiving/Distribution Manager (RCDM)
Resources Unit Leader (RESL)
Safety Officer, Line (SOFR)
Security Manager (SECM)
Situation Unit Leader (SITL)
Staging Area Manager (STAM)
Status/Check-In Recorder (SCKN)
Strike Team Leader Crew (STCR)
Strike Team Leader Engine (STEN)
Strike Team Leader Heavy Equipment (STEQ)
Supply Unit Leader (SPUL)
Task Force Leader (TFLD)
Time Unit Leader (TIME)

Wildland Fire Positions

Crew Boss, Single Resource (CRWB)
Crew Representative (CREP)
Engine Boss, Single Resource (ENGB)
Felling Boss, Single Resource (FELB)
Field Observer (FOBS)
Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO)
Firefighter Type 1 (FFT1)
Heavy Equipment Boss, Single Resource (HEQB)
Helicopter Crewmember (HECM)
Structure Protection Specialist (STPS)