

ARTICLE 55
PILOT PROGRAMS AND
DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Section 55.01 - Purpose. The parties agree that quality improvement programs, pilot programs and demonstration projects in the personnel management area, may result in more efficient operations, and thereby contribute to more effective accomplishment of the Department's missions.

Section 55.02 - Definitions.

- (1) **Pilot Program** A planned activity or test program which affects work place conditions, policies or procedures which are proposed for a finite period of time, designed to evaluate its effectiveness and being considered for a permanent change.
- (2) **Demonstration Project** - A project conducted by the Office of Personnel Management, or under its supervision, to determine whether a specified change in personnel management policies or procedures would result in improved Federal personnel management, as defined in 5 CFR 470.103.
- (3) **Quality Improvement Programs**- A participative process which directly involves employees, at the work level, in the identification, analysis, and solution of product quality and work process problems. It is a joint effort between Management and employees to develop ideas for improving the product of the organizational unit and implementing these improvements once approved by Management and concurred by the Union.

Section 55.03 - Employee Participation and Performance.

- (1) Employee participation in pilot and demonstration programs may be voluntary. Employee participation may be recognized by the Department under the provisions of Article 31 of this agreement.
- (2) It is recognized that activities covered under this article are unique and untested. Employee performance must be evaluated accordingly. Ratings will comply with the performance requirements covered in this agreement.

Section 55.04 - Obligation to Bargain. In accordance with statutory provisions, Management shall not enter into any pilot program, quality improvement program or demonstration project which may affect the working conditions of unit employees without first meeting its obligations under Article 49 of this Agreement.

If recommendations resulting from the above activities require a modification of this Agreement, they shall be subject to the provisions of the Mid-term Bargaining Article of this Agreement.

Section 55.05 - Quality Improvement Program.

- (1) Once Management determines to start a quality improvement program, the program shall be presented to the Union. The Union may recommend employees and participate on any quality improvement program and or planning committees that are established.
- (2) Quality improvement programs shall meet during regular duty hours and on official time. Additional topics or problems for study can be suggested by the Union or employees in the program. Management shall consider these suggestions in determining whether additional efforts should be undertaken.
- (3) When feasible, a portion of any documentable savings which results from the implementation of quality improvement programs recommendations may be utilized for special cash awards to all employee participants of the contributing program.
- (4) Quality improvement programs may be terminated at any time by Management, when the activity continuation is found to be completed, nonproductive or disruptive to the work of the unit with notice to the Union.
- (5) Quality improvement programs, by their nature, create an environment where supervisors or managers interact with their employees on improvements in work processes, organization, and procedures that shall hopefully improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the work unit. The Union may monitor the activities of the program by keeping in touch with bargaining unit employees participating in the program and/or by attending meetings.
- (6) When changes in personnel policies, practices, working conditions, or general conditions of employment result from the quality improvement program activity, the Union shall be given an opportunity to review the results and request impact bargaining where appropriate.

Section 55.06 - Pilot Programs.

- (1) The Department agrees not to enter into any pilot programs affecting bargaining unit employees without first meeting its obligations under Article 49 or of this Agreement.
- (2) If the pilot program or any part of the pilot program is to become permanent the Department agrees not to implement the program without first meeting its obligations under Article 49 of this Agreement.

Section 55.07 - Demonstration Projects.

- (1) The Department agrees not to enter into any demonstration projects affecting bargaining unit employees without first meeting its obligations under Article 49 of this Agreement.
- (2) Demonstration projects will be carried out in accordance with 5 CFR Part 470.

Section 55.08 -Reports

The Union will be provided copies of any reports generated on demonstration or pilot projects as they are available upon request and provided an opportunity to submit its views in a separate report.