



Overview of Reduction in Force (RIF)

When an agency must abolish positions due to reorganization, shortage of funds, or lack of work, the RIF regulations establish procedures for determining how employees are released and whether an employee has retention rights to a different position. The regulatory requirements governing RIF, which Federal agencies must adhere to, are contained in [Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 351](#).

RIF Procedures

There are six phases to implementing a RIF. The actual timing of the process may vary based on agency-specific requirements, collective bargaining agreements, and workforce considerations. Specific operational procedures are found in the [Workforce Reshaping Operations Handbook | OPM](#).

Phase 1: Planning & Analysis

- Conduct workforce analysis to identify affected positions.
- Engage legal counsel and human resources (HR) for compliance review.
- Determine if alternatives (e.g., hiring freezes, reassignments, buyouts) can mitigate the need for a RIF.

Phase 2: Notification & Preparation

- Define competitive areas – organizational units and geographic locations.
- Review PDs for accuracy.
- Validate competitive levels.
- Verify employee retention data – veterans' preference, service computation dates (SCD), etc.
- Update employee qualifications data.
- Create RIF registers; run mock RIFs, especially in large RIFs.

Phase 3: Formal RIF Notice Period

- Issue formal RIF notices to affected employees (minimum 60 days' notice).
- Provide affected employees with information on appeal rights, career transition assistance (RPL, CTAP, ICTAP), and federal/state reemployment resources.
- Offer Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP), if applicable.

- Conduct employee briefings, town halls, and one-on-one meetings.
- Notify relevant stakeholders (agency leadership, Congress, OPM, State and local government, etc.) as required.

Phase 4: Placement & Appeals Process

- Offer reemployment priority and career transition assistance to eligible employees.
- Process employee appeals and grievances through MSPB or negotiated grievance procedures.
- Finalize separation, reassignment, or downgrade actions in HR systems.

Phase 5: Implementation & Transition (RIF Effective Date)

- Officially implement RIF separations, reassignments, and downgrades.
- Provide final separation notices, benefits counseling, and exit processing.
- Update agency workforce data and notify OPM of personnel actions.

Phase 6: Post-RIF Support & Monitoring (1-3 Months After RIF)

- Continue providing transition assistance and monitoring impacted employees.
- Assess the RIF's impact on agency operations, morale, and productivity.
- Conduct lessons learned review for future workforce reshaping efforts.