

Scientist Category Career Development Profile: Promotion Year 2017

Contributors:

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Purpose:

Officers continue to have many questions surrounding the process of developing a promotion package and how packages are evaluated by promotion boards. To augment promotion resources available to officers, SciPAC launched the Promotion Panels Initiative (PPI) under the Career Development Subcommittee to generate data-driven insight into factors that may relate to success or non-success of promotion-eligible Scientist officers. This report represents the Career Development Subcommittee's continued efforts to identify and document critical aspects of professional progression.

Methods:

The data collected for this report were from U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps Officers in the Scientist Category selected for temporary promotion for Promotion Year (PY) 2017 (n=13 for temporary O-5 (T O-5) and n=7 for temporary O-6 (T O-6)). All Scientist officers selected for temporary promotion to T O-5 and T O-6 were contacted via email by a team member of the PPI team between March 9 to 19, 2018 asking the officer to complete an anonymous survey. The survey closed on May 1, 2018. The survey contained 31 questions and was primarily designed to be consistent with the 2018 Scientist Category Promotion Benchmarks. Topics included demographics; career progression and potential; performance rating and reviewing officer's statements (performance); mentoring; deployments; professional contributions; and service to the USPHS. All officers were asked to provide answers consistent with information submitted in their promotion packages. The data collected from the surveys were recorded and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. Note that all questions were optional and denominators were adjusted to account for unanswered questions.

Limitations:

This report only includes information from Scientist officers selected for temporary promotion in PY 2017 and who responded to the survey. Scientist officers not selected for promotion were not invited to complete the survey. As a result, no correlational conclusions should be made from the data presented. Promoted officers who did not participate in the survey may possess different career development characteristics from officers that responded to the survey. Their responses may affect the findings in this report had their information been collected and included. Finally, the findings presented in this report were self-reported by the promoted officers and cannot be validated.

Results:

Participation:

Eleven of thirteen (85%) officers promoted to T O-5 and seven of seven (100%) officers promoted to T O-6 completed the survey.

Number of years in the Corps:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 7.8 years (range: 6–9 years) in the Corps at the time of promotion; officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 10.7 years (range: 7-15 years) in the Corps at the time of promotion.

Number of attempts prior to achieving promotion:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 3.1 attempts before achieving promotion (range: 1-6 attempts); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of two attempt before achieving promotion (range: 1-3 attempts).

Exceptional Proficiency Promotion (EPP):

Zero officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 in 2017 reported receiving an EPP.

Agency affiliation:

		RANK	
		T O-5	T O-6
AGENCIES	ACF	1	0
	CDC	4	1
	DOD	0	3
	FDA	4	2
	HRSA	1	0
	IHS	0	1
	NIH	1	0

Discipline within Scientist category:

		RANK	
		T O-5	T O-6
BILLETS	Administrative	1	0
	Clinical	0	4
	Epidemiology	3	0
	Laboratory/Research	3	1
	Programmatic	1	0
	Regulatory	3	2

Billet grades:

All officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 reported holding O-6 billets at the time of their promotion package submission.

Supervisory billet:

Six of eleven (55%) officers promoted to T O-5 and four of seven officers (57%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported being in a supervisory billet. Representative disciplines for T O-5 officers in supervisory billets included Laboratory/Research (three officers), Epidemiology (two officers), and Programmatic (one officer). Representative disciplines for T O-6 officers in supervisory billets included Clinical (two officers), Laboratory/Research (one officers), and Regulatory (one officer).

Prior military service:

Two of eleven (18%) officers promoted to T O-5 and three of seven (43%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported prior military service.

Role of publishing research-/scientific-based material as part of position:

Five of eleven (45%) officers promoted to T O-5 and one of seven (14%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported publishing research/scientific based material while in their position.

Programmatic transfers:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 2.3 programmatic transfers (range: 0-5 transfers); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 2.6 programmatic transfers (range: 1-3 transfers).

Geographic transfers:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 0.5 geographic transfers (range: 0-2 transfers); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 0.9 geographic transfers (range: 0-3 transfers).

COER Scores:

Nine of eleven (82%) officers promoted to T O-5 and five of seven (71%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported receiving an overall COER score of seven. An overall COER score of six was the lowest score reported by the remaining officers.

Highest level individual PHS honor award received:

Of the officers promoted to T O-5, eight (73%) reported receiving a Commendation Medal (CM), two (18%) reported receiving an Outstanding Service Medal (OSM), and one (9%) reported receiving an Achievement Medal (AM).

Of the officers promoted to T O-6, four (57%) reported receiving an OSM, two (29%) reported receiving a CM and one (14%) failed to report their highest individual PHS award. Two officers noted that they also received a Defense Meritorious Service Medal (DMSM).

Total number of individual PHS honor award received:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 3.9 total individual PHS awards (range: 1-10 awards); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 4.3 total individual PHS awards (range: 2-8 awards).

Total number of unit PHS honor award received:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 5.5 total unit PHS awards (range: 0-9 awards); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 7.7 total unit PHS awards (range: 3-14 awards).

Level of participation in writing ROS:

Of the officers promoted to T O-5, seven (64%) reported that they drafted the ROS and the remaining four (36%) reported that drafting of the ROS was a collaborative effort between themselves and a mentor or the Reviewing Official.

Of the officers promoted to T O-6, four (57%) reported that they drafted the ROS and the remaining three (43%) reported that drafting of the ROS was a collaborative effort between themselves and others.

Level of involvement in the official Scientist category officer mentoring program:

Of the officers promoted to T O-5, five (45%) reported participation in the mentoring program as a mentee; one officer (9%) reported participation as a mentor; and one (9%) officer stated that they served as both a mentee and mentor. Four officers (36%) stated that they did not participate in the mentoring program.

Of the officers promoted to T O-6, one (13%) reported participation in the mentoring program as a mentee; two officers (29%) reported participation as a mentor; and two (29%) officer stated that they served as both a mentee and mentor. Two officers (29%) stated that they did not participate in the official SciPAC mentoring program.

Review of promotion material prior to submission:

Nine (82%) officers promoted to T O-5 reported that their promotion materials were reviewed by other officers prior to submission. Six of these officers indicated their materials were reviewed by more than one officer.

Six (86%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported that their promotion materials were reviewed by other officers prior to submission. Five of these officers indicated their materials were reviewed by more than one officer.

Many officers noted that senior officers, officers serving in other agencies, and/or recently promoted officers reviewed their promotion material.

PHS deployments:

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 2.3 PHS deployments (range: 0-4 deployments); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 4.7 PHS deployments (range: 0-8 deployments).

Other deployments (non-Corps/agency deployments):

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 1.8 non-PHS deployments (range: 0-5 deployments); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 2.1 PHS deployments (range: 0-6 deployments).

Deployment team membership:

Seven of eleven (64%) officers promoted to T O-5 and six of seven (86%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported being a member of either a Tier 1 or Tier 2 deployment team. Officers promoted to T O-5 reported being members of the following deployment teams: RIST, NIST, RDF and APHT. Officers promoted to T O-6 reported being members of the following deployment teams: MHT and RDF.

PHS Professional group participation:

Ten (91%) officers promoted to T O-5 reported participation in at least one professional group. Of these officers, SciPAC and JOAG were the most frequently cited groups. Most officers described having leadership roles within their affiliated professional groups.

Seven (100%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported extensive participation in at least one professional group. SciPAC and PsyPAG were the most frequently cited groups and most officers described having leadership roles within their affiliated professional groups.

PHS Scientific and Training Symposium attendance:

Nine of eleven (82%) officers promoted to T O-5 and six of seven (71%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported attending at least one PHS Scientific and Training Symposium. Most officers who attended also noted participating in the symposium. Examples include presenting material or organizing events.

Continuing education standards:

All officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 reported meeting the continuing education standards as described in the benchmarks.

Additional certifications or educational degrees beyond the commissioning degree:

Six of eleven (55%) officers promoted to T O-5 and five of seven (71%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported additional certifications or educational degrees beyond the commissioning degree.

Reason for promotion:

The following common themes were noted among officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 when they were asked to describe the reasons they thought they achieved promotion:

- Career progression with increased responsibility
- Strong performance within their position
- Large scope and significant impact of accomplishments
- Well-written promotion documents with a consistent/unifying narrative
- Meeting or exceeding benchmarks
- Deployments and deployment roles
- Roles in professional groups
- Awards
- Unknown reasons were also cited by officers promoted to both T O-5 and T-O6

Changes made to promotion package if not successful on first attempt which were believed to lead to success:

The following common themes were noted among officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 when they were asked to describe the changes they made to their promotion package which were believed to lead to success, especially if they were not successful on first attempt:

- Re-writing promotion documents to highlight accomplishments and streamline content
- Career progression with increased responsibility and/or promotions to positions with higher billets
- More involvement in PHS-related activities (professional groups, deployments, etc.)
- Higher-level awards
- Unknown reasons as officers promoted to both T O-5 and T O-6 indicated they made very little changes to their promotion material between promotion attempts.

Summary of Results:

The number of years in the Corps, programmatic transfers, geographic transfers, highest level of awards, number of awards, deployments, deployment team membership, certifications/educational degrees, and leadership roles within professional groups increased as an officer's career progressed.

The following includes but is not limited to topics where a majority response was noted for both T O-5 and T O-6 respondent groups:

- Billet grades: all respondents regardless of being promoted to T O-5 or T O-6 reported being in an O-6 billet.
- Supervisory billet: most officers reported being in a supervisory billet.
- COER Scores: most officers reported an overall COER score of seven.

- Programmatic transfers: most officers reported at least one programmatic transfer.
- Deployments: most officers reported participating in at least one deployment.
- Deployment team membership: most officers reported being a member of a Tier 1 or Tier 2 team.
- Awards: most officers promoted to T O-5 reported receiving a CM and most officers promoted to T O-6 reported receiving an OSM as their highest individual PHS award.
- PHS Professional group participation: most officers reported participation in a professional group with leadership responsibilities.

The distribution of officers within agencies varied among T O-5 and T O-6 officers responding. FDA and CDC tied for the most representative agencies among the T O-5 respondents while DOD was the most representative agency among the T O-6 respondents.

Job discipline was not consistent among the T O-5 and T O-6 groups. Over half the respondents in the T O-6 group reported being in a clinical billet. The responses for the T O-5 group varied with no majority noted.

Less than half the officers in the T O-5 and T O-6 group reported military service, however respondents in the T O-6 group were more than two times as likely to report prior military service compared to the T O-5 group.

Most officers offered reasons for promotion success which included but were not limited to career progression with increased responsibility, strong performance within their position, large scope and significant impact of accomplishments, and well-written promotion documents with a consistent/unifying narrative. A few officers stated that they could not pinpoint the factors which led to their success.

Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of approximately three attempts before achieving promotion compared to the officers promoted to T O-6 who reported an average of two attempts before achieving promotion. Most officers not promoted on their first attempt attributed their promotion success upon subsequent attempts to career advancement, rewriting promotion documents to highlight accomplishments and streamline content, more involvement in PHS-related activities, and higher-level awards. Some officers noted that they made no significant changes to their promotion documentation and attributed their success to variation among promotion boards.

Concluding Remarks:

The Career Development Subcommittee continues to support the professional development and career progression of Scientist Category officers. The PPI team is tasked with identifying factors that may relate to success or non-success of promotion-eligible officers and is proud to provide this resource to our fellow officers. We remind its readers that the limitations of this report should be carefully considered before drawing conclusions about the findings. Future iterations of this report should consider ways to

streamline data collection and improve the information's accuracy, as well as ways to publicize the findings.

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