



The Director

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies

FROM: Vince Haley, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy
Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

DATE: May 29, 2025

RE: Merit Hiring Plan

The American people deserve a Federal workforce dedicated to American values and efficient service. Yet, Federal hiring criteria long ago abandoned any serious need for technical skills and adherence to the Constitution. Instead, the overly complex Federal hiring system overemphasized discriminatory “equity” quotas and too often resulted in the hiring of unfit, unskilled bureaucrats. The American people, who deserve a government that works for them, have suffered.

In his January 20, 2025 Executive Order 14170, [*Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*](#) (“*Restoring Merit*”) President Trump directed that “recruitment and hiring processes” become “more efficient and focused on serving the Nation” and that hiring be based on “merit, practical skill, and dedication to our Constitution.” These changes will “ensure that the Federal workforce is prepared to help achieve American greatness, and attract the talent necessary to serve our citizens effectively.”

President Trump directed the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy to “develop and send to agency heads a Federal Hiring Plan that brings to the Federal workforce only highly capable Americans dedicated to the furtherance of American ideals, values, and interests.” President Trump stated that this Merit Hiring Plan must achieve seven goals:

1. Prioritize recruitment of individuals committed to improving the efficiency of the Federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution;
2. Prevent the hiring of individuals based on their race, sex, or religion, and prevent the hiring of individuals who are unwilling to defend the Constitution or to faithfully serve the Executive Branch;
3. Implement, to the greatest extent possible, technical and alternative assessments as

required by the Chance to Compete Act of 2024;¹

4. Decrease government-wide time-to-hire to under 80 days;
5. Improve communication with candidates to provide greater clarity regarding application status, timelines, and feedback, including regular updates on the progress of applications and explanations of hiring decisions where appropriate;
6. Integrate modern technology to support the recruitment and selection process, including the use of data analytics to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities in hiring, as well as leveraging digital platforms to improve candidate engagement; and
7. Ensure Department and Agency leadership, or their designees, are active participants in implementing the new processes and throughout the full hiring process.

Finally, the Merit Hiring Plan must provide specific best practices for the human resources (HR) function in each agency, which each agency head shall implement. These HR best practices are included as Appendix 1.²

The key elements of the following Merit Hiring Plan are:

1. Reforming the Federal recruitment process to ensure that only the most talented, capable and patriotic Americans are hired to the Federal service;
2. Implementing skills-based hiring, eliminating unnecessary degree requirements, and requiring the use of rigorous, job-related assessments to ensure candidates are selected based on their merit and competence, not their skin color or academic pedigree;
3. Streamlining and improving the job application process; and
4. Reducing time-to-hire to under 80 days by emphasizing the use of talent pools and shared certificates and streamlining the background check process.

I. Reforming the Federal Recruitment Process

This Merit Hiring Plan provides the process, technology, and policy tools to allow the Federal government to hire the most talented, capable, and patriotic Americans—at scale, with drastically improved cost, speed, and quality.

¹ Pub. L. 118-188, enacted in 2024.

² President Trump directed that the Merit Hiring Plan must include specific agency plans to improve the allocation of Senior Executive Service (SES) positions to best facilitate democratic leadership, as required by law, within each agency. Such plans have already been developed pursuant to several previous OPM guidance memos, most notably OPM’s February 24, 2025 guidance memo [*Guidance on Career Reserved SES Positions and Agency Redesignation Requests*](#). A new SES hiring plan and Executive Core Qualifications are being issued concurrently with this memorandum.

A. Ending All Racial Discrimination in Federal Hiring, Recruiting, Retention and Promotion

A bedrock principle of the Merit Hiring Plan is that all Americans must be hired, recruited, and promoted in Federal jobs without regard to race, sex, color, religion, or national origin. Racial quotas and preferences in Federal hiring, recruitment and promotion “deny, discredit, and undermine the traditional American values of hard work, excellence, and individual achievement.”³ Illegal, demeaning, and immoral “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI) programs in hiring, recruiting, interviewing, training, professional development, internships, fellowships, promotion, and retention must end immediately.⁴

Agencies must conduct Federal hiring, recruitment, retention, and promotion consistent with Executive Orders 14173 and 14151, the Department of Justice’s implementation guidance,⁵ guidance from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM),⁶ and guidance from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).⁷ Agencies may not directly or indirectly discriminate based on race, sex, color, religion, or national origin in the design or implementation of any hiring, recruitment, retention, or promotion programs. They must ensure that all hiring, promotion, and advancement decisions are based solely on merit, qualifications and job-related criteria—not race, sex, color, religion, or national origin. An asserted interest in “diversity” or “equity” cannot justify discrimination based on race, sex, color, religion, or national origin.

To implement these requirements, agencies should take the following steps:

- Do not use statistics on race, sex, ethnicity or national origin, or the broader concept of “underrepresentation” of certain groups, in any hiring, recruiting, retention or promotion decisions, or in the design or implementation of any technical or alternative assessments;
- Cease disseminating information regarding the composition of the agency’s workforce based on race, sex, color, religion, or national origin;
- End all Special Emphasis Programs and other agency initiatives in the areas of hiring, recruiting, interviewing, training, professional development, internships, fellowships, promotion, or retention that discriminate based on race, sex, color, religion, or national

³ See Executive Order 14173, [Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity](#) (Jan. 21, 2025).

⁴ Executive Order 14151, [Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing](#) (Jan. 20, 2025).

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, *Implementation of Executive Orders 14151 and 14173: Eliminating Unlawful DEI Programs in the Federal Operations* (March 21, 2025).

⁶ See OPM, [Further Guidance Regarding Ending DEIA Offices, Programs and Initiatives](#) (Feb. 5, 2025); OPM, [Initial Guidance Regarding DEIA Executive Orders](#) (Jan. 21, 2025).

⁷ EEOC, [What You Should Know About DEI-Related Discrimination at Work](#) (March 19, 2025).

origin; and

- Take prompt and appropriate disciplinary action against any hiring manager or other agency employee who engages in the unlawful race preferential discrimination described in this Merit Hiring Plan.

B. Leveraging OPM and Agency Talent Teams

The Chance to Compete Act allows agencies to establish “Talent Teams” to improve examinations, facilitate the writing of job announcements, share high-quality certificates of eligible applicants, and facilitate hiring for the competitive service using examinations. 5 U.S.C. § 3304(e). It similarly allows OPM to establish talent teams to facilitate hiring actions across the Federal Government, provide training, create tools and guides to facilitate hiring, and develop technical assessments. *Id.* § 3304(e).

To implement the Merit Hiring Plan, OPM will stand up a Talent Team whose core mission is to drive the planning, execution, and ongoing monitoring of this Plan across all agencies. This includes a government-wide recruitment strategy to attract patriotic Americans with critical skillsets. It also includes ensuring the adoption of reforms such as skills-based assessments, pooled hiring via shared certificates within and between agencies, subject matter expert (SME) led resume and interview evaluations, and incorporating agency leadership interviews and sign-off as part of the hiring process. OPM’s Talent Team will monitor success metrics related to cost per hire, speed of hire, and quality.

OPM’s Talent Team will coordinate the creation of agency Talent Teams. Agency Talent Teams will be selected by each agency’s leadership and Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) from current staff. Each Agency Talent Team will drive on-the-ground implementation of the meritocratic and efficiency driving recruitment process reforms outlined in this document.

C. Recruiting Patriotic Americans for Federal Service

OPM’s Talent Team, working with agency Talent Teams, will launch a government-wide recruitment effort to attract “individuals committed to improving the efficiency of the Federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution” to Federal service.⁸ Three areas (Early Career, STEM and Veterans) are highlighted below as examples of this recruitment strategy. Additional best practices for recruitment in each of these areas are included in Appendix 1.

1. Early Career Recruitment

The Federal government struggles to recruit qualified early career talent. In addition, Federal hiring too often focuses on elite universities and credentials, instead of merit, practical skill, and commitment to American ideals. Going forward, agencies shall ensure that early career recruitment focuses on patriotic Americans who will faithfully adhere to the Constitution and the

⁸ *Restoring Merit*, §2(b).

rule of law. OPM's Talent Team will partner with agency Talent Teams to build and maintain a strong talent pipeline of students, recent graduates and other early career talent. They will do so by targeting recruitment at state and land-grant universities, religious colleges and universities, community colleges, high schools, trade and technical schools, homeschooling groups, faith-based groups, American Legion, 4-H youth programs, and the military, veterans, and law enforcement communities. Agency Talent Teams, led by their CHCO, shall set early career hiring targets and track annual early career hires.

2. STEM Recruitment

The Federal government struggles to recruit and retain top STEM talent. To improve recruitment of candidates for STEM roles, OPM's Talent Team will facilitate regular meetings with Agency Talent Teams, the Federal Chief Information Officer, the White House Office of Science & Technology Policy, cross-agency councils (e.g., Chief Information Officer Council, Chief Data Officer Council) and functional communities to drive STEM hiring across the Federal government. OPM will also update, modernize and centralize STEM position descriptions and job titles across the Federal government, including the use of functional job titles.

3. Veterans' Recruitment

To improve recruitment of qualified veterans, OPM's Talent Team will own a strategic government-wide veteran recruiting roadmap, defining target occupations with agency leadership, and partnering with agency veterans' program leaders to find opportunities to match the talents of individuals exiting the military with skills in demand at agencies.

D. Expanding the Use of Standardized Position Descriptions, Candidate Inventories, Talent Pools, and Shared Certificates

All job announcements should use a descriptive, organizational, or functional job title that resonates with jobseekers in announcements for recruitment and when posting job announcements. Job announcements should be in plain language, using available tools to ensure understanding by job seekers outside of government. And they should accurately convey the position and skills sought by the government.

In consultation with agency talent teams, OPM's Talent Team shall write standardized position descriptions for the most common Federal occupations that tie to the 135 job series⁹ and grades currently covered by USA Hire assessment batteries.¹⁰ This will facilitate the use of validated assessments, talent pools, and shared certificates. And it will support the transition to skills-based hiring tied to assessments that accurately measure the knowledge, skills and abilities

⁹ Appendix 4 lists the 135 job series for which USA Hire currently has validated assessments.

¹⁰ OPM has already begun this process by centralizing hiring actions for common occupations such as Budget Analysts, HR Specialists, and IT Product Managers positions. This allows applicants to apply once for roles at many agencies and allow agencies to select qualified candidates from a single shared certificate.

required of positions.

Agency Talent Teams should expand the use of shared certificates. They should do so both within their respective agency and across the Federal government, to streamline hiring. Agencies should collaborate with OPM to identify hiring actions that will use shared certificates or lists of eligible candidates external to the agency as both the originating and receiving agency (such as pursuant to the Competitive Service Act of 2015 (5 U.S.C. §§ 3318-19) and other hiring authorities), so that OPM can assist in connecting agencies for the purposes of certificate sharing.

Working with OPM, agencies should also use of talent pools to share certificates of qualified candidates for like roles across agencies, candidate inventories to share qualified candidates within an agency or department, and resume mining to enable recruiting teams to discover leads. Doing so will reduce the time to hire. That is because hiring managers can select from pre-existing candidate pools rather than posting an announcement for each new position.

E. Expanding OPM Talent Analytics Capabilities and Increasing Agency Use

Agencies should use OPM's Talent Acquisition solutions (USAJOBS and USA Staffing) to improve hiring transparency, the user experience for job seekers, and Federal hiring data. This will give agencies access to a robust data and reporting capability.

OPM will also expand its data analytics capabilities. It will add dashboards, reports, and other data systems to enable agencies to track agency compliance with merit reform efforts through clear performance metrics (e.g., time to hire, assessment usage, candidate and hiring manager satisfaction, conversion rates, headcount target vs. actual).

II. Reforming the Candidate Ranking, Assessment and Selection Process to Emphasize Merit and Competence

A. Implementing Skills-Based Hiring and Eliminating Unnecessary Degree Requirements

At present, Federal hiring practices rely heavily on educational credentials, job titles, and years of experience. These metrics can overlook talented people who gained their skills through alternative pathways. Skills-based hiring shifts the focus from what applicants say on a resume to what applicants can do, demonstrated through proven, competency-based assessments.

President Trump's Executive Order 13932, [*Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates*](#) (June 26, 2020), directed OPM to realign Federal hiring to a skills-based system by updating and integrating classification, qualifications and assessment practices and policy, and to remove unnecessary degree requirements. OPM will continue doing so. In addition, agencies shall revamp position descriptions so that they delineate eligibility and qualification criteria and eliminate any requirements that are not relevant (such as degree requirements).

B. Implementing the Final Rule, *Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring Through*

Candidate Ranking in the Competitive and Excepted Service (Rule of Many)

Implementing the proposed OPM Final Rule *Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring Through Candidate Ranking in the Competitive and Excepted Service (Rule of Many)* is a key foundational step in effectively implementing merit-based hiring using validated, skills-based assessments and rigorous candidate ranking. The Rule of Many enables agencies to evaluate candidates based on their relative ability, skills, and knowledge using a numerical ranking system. By certifying a pre-determined number of candidates in score order, the Federal government is returning to the core principles of merit-based hiring as existed during the era of the Civil Service Exam. This ensures that the most highly qualified candidates are certified for consideration by hiring managers, while upholding veterans' preference.

Crucially, under the Rule of Many agencies will be able to establish minimum passing scores for assessments (i.e., cut scores) to certify a sufficient number of candidates to the hiring manager. The cut scores may be established based on the assessment used (as validated by job analysis data), based on business necessity (for efficiency), or based on a set number or percentage of eligible applicants. The flexibility to use cut scores will allow rigorous, merit-based pre-certificate ranking of candidates.

C. Requiring Technical or Alternative Assessments in the Federal Hiring Process, and Ending Self-Assessments

The Chance to Compete Act requires agencies to “incorporat[e] skills-based and competency-based technical assessments” into the Federal hiring process. Senate Report 118-250, 1. Specifically, agencies must “maximally adopt the use of technical assessments and phase out the use of occupational questionnaires (or self-assessments)” by 2027. *Id.*

To ensure that Federal jobs are filled based on merit and competence—not skin color or academic pedigree—every hiring process across the competitive service, or that is otherwise subject to competitive hiring processes **must** include at least one technical or alternative assessment before issuance of the certificate. Such assessments can be developed internally by the government or outsourced to private sector experts. Appendix 5 provides an overview of technical and alternative assessments that agencies can adopt.¹¹

Agencies will continue to include in their job announcements which assessments they will be using for each position. Agencies must inform applicants on how they will be assessed and identify the methodology to determine the number of applicants to be referred for selection.

Agencies are additionally strongly encouraged to use at least two assessments throughout the hiring process to ensure a multi-hurdle process that produces a rigorously ranked and validated certificate. And agencies are strongly encouraged to use a USA Hire assessment. USA Hire currently offers validated, skills-based assessments for 135 job series (65% of positions posted on

¹¹ In addition, Appendix 6 includes OPM resources for agencies to maximally adopt technical and alternative assessments.

USAJOBS).¹² One best practice is to pair an initial USA Hire assessment with a structured resume review, interview, or writing sample review to create both “screen out” and “screen in” mechanisms pre-certificate.

As part of this Merit Hiring Plan, agencies will **immediately** phase out the use of self-assessments (e.g., occupational questionnaires) for rating or ranking. Self-assessments may only be used for minimum qualification and eligibility determinations, as described in Section III. Any further use of self-assessments for ranking candidates in connection with any job vacancy, other than seasonal work or positions graded at GS-01 through GS-04, or equivalent, will require express permission from OPM with an explanation of the compelling need for the use of a self-assessment.

D. Realigning Roles and Responsibilities in the Federal Hiring Process

1. The Hiring Manager

Hiring Managers are critical to defining current and future talent needs. They should be involved with and accountable for hiring strategy to ensure the right talent is hired for the right roles. Along with agency leadership, and in partnership with agency HR professionals, Hiring Managers should have the authority to evaluate candidates and make selections. Hiring Managers should review candidate resumes as part of a structured resume review, conduct structured interviews with candidates and, along with agency leadership, have ultimate ownership of hiring decisions.

2. HR Professionals

Strategic Human Capital Management has been cited by the Government Accountability Office as a governmentwide high-risk area for a quarter century. Yet little has been done to strengthen the skills of the Federal HR workforce to address these risks. There is an urgent need to upgrade the skills and capabilities of Federal HR professionals to implement President Trump’s long-overdue plans to reform the Federal workforce.

To drive governmentwide change in alignment with President Trump’s workforce policies and deliver high-quality Federal HR services, OPM will take a greater role in overseeing and delivering a high-quality training and development regimen for federal HR professionals. It will also lead efforts to maximally consolidate and coordinate Federal HR services and Federal HR IT platforms governmentwide to create efficiencies, enhance quality, and reduce redundancies.

3. Agency Leadership

President Trump has directed that the Merit Hiring Plan “[e]nsure Department and Agency leadership, or their designees, are active participants in implementing the new processes and

¹² Appendix 7 provides a primer on USA Hire.

throughout the full hiring process.”¹³ As part of the Merit Hiring Plan, agency leadership, or their designees, will be involved throughout the full hiring process. In particular:

- Agency leadership will develop a data-driven plan at the start of the Fiscal Year, and each quarter, to ensure that new career appointment hires are in the highest-need areas.
- Agency leadership must approve the opening of new role.
- Agency leadership, or designee(s), may be involved in the candidate selection and ranking process, including by determining which assessments to use in connection with a particular role and participating in interviews, resume reviews, accomplishment record reviews, and writing sample reviews.
- Agency leadership, or designee(s), should function as a hiring committee in the candidate selection process:
 - Agency leadership, or designee(s), must approve the selectee’s candidate packets (resume, answers to application questions, interview feedback, job description for role) prior to offers being extended,
 - Agency leadership, or designee(s), should conduct a final “executive interview” to confirm organizational fit and commitment to American ideals. The level of agency leader that conducts this interview depends on the level of the position being filled.

Agency leadership will also be involved at the implementation level. The Merit Hiring Plan will utilize the President’s Management Council (PMC), comprised of the Deputy Secretaries or Chief Operating Officer for the 24 CFO Act agencies, to facilitate participation of agency leadership in the implementation of new processes. The Merit Hiring Plan will utilize the Small Agency Council as an engagement mechanism for non-CFO Act agencies.

III. Improving the Job Application Process

USAJOBS will add standard language in the job opportunity announcement template emphasizing that candidates should be committed to improving the efficiency of the Federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution. And all job opportunity announcements will state that candidates will not be hired based on their race, sex, color, religion, or national origin.

Going forward, to implement Executive Order 14170, all Federal job vacancy announcements graded at GS-05 or above will include four short, free-response essay questions:

¹³ In this context, “agency leadership” includes the agency’s political leadership (including Department and Agency Heads, Deputy Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Undersecretaries, Chiefs of Staff, and Senior Advisors), its CHCO, and its Chief Operating Officer (COO).

1. How has your commitment to the Constitution and the founding principles of the United States inspired you to pursue this role within the Federal government? Provide a concrete example from professional, academic, or personal experience.
2. In this role, how would you use your skills and experience to improve government efficiency and effectiveness? Provide specific examples where you improved processes, reduced costs, or improved outcomes.
3. How would you help advance the President's Executive Orders and policy priorities in this role? Identify one or two relevant Executive Orders or policy initiatives that are significant to you, and explain how you would help implement them if hired.
4. How has a strong work ethic contributed to your professional, academic or personal achievements? Provide one or two specific examples, and explain how those qualities would enable you to serve effectively in this position.

Applicants will be required to certify that they are using their own words, and did not use a consultant or AI (such as a large language model [LLM]). To reduce the burden on candidates, the responses cannot exceed 200 words per question.

This Merit Hiring Plan will prohibit the current longform Federal resume structure. Instead, there will be a 2-page limit on resume length. This will make resume review easier and make it easier for employees to move between the private and Federal sectors.

OPM and agencies will improve applicant user experience during the job search by encouraging applicants to make their resumes searchable in their USAJOBS.gov profile. This will allow Federal hiring specialists and hiring managers to find their resumes as part of agency recruitment campaigns or staffing searches. Agencies should re-post links to their USAJOBS announcements to third-party recruitment sites such as LinkedIn, Handshake, and Indeed to reach a wider job seeker audience.

Agencies may use a short eligibility questionnaire as part of the initial job application for screening purposes only. These may include initial, job-specific questions such as requiring candidates to certify, for example, that they are U.S. citizens, are willing to carry a firearm in performance of their job duties, or hold certifications that are required to perform the role. As set forth above, agencies must require at least one technical or alternative assessment for candidate ranking.

To improve communication with candidates throughout the hiring process, OPM will require automatic generation of USAJOBS and USA Staffing notifications for applicants at key stages of the hiring process, instead of relying on agency HR professionals to send notifications. And OPM will merge USAJOBS and USA Staffing to create a more streamlined applicant experience and reduce duplication and redundant requirements.

IV. Reducing Time-to-Hire to 80 Days

Executive Order 14170 directs that government-wide time-to-hire be reduced to under 80 days. This goal refers to time to initial offer, though the Merit Hiring Plan will also seek to reduce delays associated with personnel vetting requirements.

Fully implementing practices like pooled hiring and shared certificates through USAJOBS Talent Pools and Talent Programs and USA Staffing's Candidate Inventory will significantly improve the Federal hiring time average. Implementing the Final Rule, *Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring Through Candidate Ranking in the Competitive and Excepted Service* (Rule of Many) will reduce hiring time significantly. It will allow agencies to better manage the number of applicants certified to the hiring manager based on business necessity.

In addition, expanding system integrations between OPM's Talent Acquisition solutions and other systems with a role in the pre-employment process will improve consistency and efficiency. These include NBIS (aka eQIP), E-Verify, USAccess, pre-employment testing providers (medical, drug, fitness) and credentialing systems.

A key factor in accelerating time to hire and [strengthening the suitability and fitness of the federal workforce](#) is streamlining and improving the personnel vetting process. The Merit Hiring Plan requires agencies to prioritize personnel vetting reforms under the Administration's Trusted Workforce 2.0 initiative. This includes ensuring positions are properly designated and only the appropriate level of vetting is conducted. Agencies should also fully utilize available capabilities such as preliminary determinations and electronic adjudication. And agencies should enroll employees in continuous vetting, which routinely checks for post-appointment conduct that may impact their continued trustworthiness.

Agencies should seek to meet the end timeliness goals established in the Personnel Vetting Performance Management Standards—21 days for low-risk positions; 25 days for non-sensitive moderate risk, and 45 days for top secret.

Reducing governmentwide time-to-hire will require improved reciprocity of security clearances across agencies for public trust positions to reduce delays in transferring workers and to allow previously-vetted individuals to more quickly return to the workforce. Agencies should seek to complete vetting within 3 days when reciprocity applies. When an individual departed the Federal service within three years with no known unresolved derogatory information and is returning to the same level of position or lower, agencies should similarly seek to complete vetting within 3 days.

V. Reports and Implementation

Beginning on June 30, 2025 and continuing on the last business day of each month, each agency CHCO, working with the agency's Talent Team, will prepare a report to update OPM and OMB on the progress of implementation within each agency. The initial report shall identify the members of the agency's Talent Team and their expected roles (including the Talent Pool Manager and Shared Certificate Coordinator), along with the agency's specific plans for recruitment in the areas of veterans, early career, and STEM. Each monthly report will also include the agency's report on:

- Its progress in eliminating DEI in hiring, recruitment, retention and promotion;
- Its progress in building recruitment programs in alignment with this Merit Hiring Plan to attract highly-skilled, patriotic Americans to join the Federal service;
- Its progress in implementing technical assessments and cut scores, including policies around the use of cut scores;
- Metrics on the agency's use of shared certificates, talent pools, and resume mining; and
- Its progress in reducing time-to-hire.

All reports shall be sent to merithiring@opm.gov and workforce@omb.eop.gov.

To ensure accountability, OPM will develop a Federal dashboard to track agency compliance with merit reform efforts. OPM's Office of Merit Systems Accountability and Compliance (MSAC) will monitor government-wide compliance with the Merit Hiring Plan, including the 80-day time-to-hire goal, and to maintain the compliance dashboard. In addition, the CHCO Council Executive Director, in consultation with MSAC and OPM's Talent Team, shall prepare a report each month on government-wide implementation of the Merit Hiring Plan. OPM's Talent Team and Office of HR Solutions will also host government-wide trainings with agencies on the use of assessments and compliance with this Merit Hiring Plan.

cc: CHCOs, Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors, and Chiefs of Staff

Appendices:

1. HR Best Practices That Agencies Must Adopt
2. Primer on Custom Job Postings
3. Table of Current Federal Hiring Authorities
4. The 135 Job Series for Which USA Hire Currently Has Validated Assessments
5. Overview of Technical and Alternative Assessments
6. OPM Resources for Agencies to Maximally Adopt Technical and Alternative Assessments
7. Primer on USA Hire

Appendix 1: HR Best Practices That Agencies Must Adopt

I. Reforming the Federal Recruitment Process

A. Ending All Racial Discrimination in Federal Hiring, Recruitment, Retention and Promotion

- Do not directly or indirectly discriminate based on race, sex, color, religion, or national origin in the design or implementation of any hiring, recruitment, retention, or promotion programs.
- Ensure that all hiring, promotion, and advancement decisions are based solely on merit, qualifications and job-related criteria, not race, sex, color, religion, or national origin.
- Cease using statistics on race, sex, ethnicity or national origin, or the broader concept of “underrepresentation” of certain groups, in any hiring, recruitment, retention or promotion decisions, and in the design or implementation of any technical or alternative assessments.
- Cease developing or disseminating information regarding the composition of the agency’s workforce based on race, sex, color, religion or national origin.
- End all Special Emphasis Programs and other agency initiatives in the areas of hiring, recruiting, interviewing, training, professional development, internships, fellowships, promotion, or retention that discriminate based on race, sex, color, religion, or national origin.
- Take prompt and appropriate disciplinary action against any hiring manager or other agency employee who engages in unlawful DEI-related discrimination in violation of this Merit Hiring Plan.

B. Leveraging OPM and Agency Talent Teams

- Create and sustain empowered agency Talent Teams to enable strategic recruitment and innovative hiring actions, including the use of assessments, pooled hiring via shared certificates within and between agencies, subject matter expert (SME) led resume and interview evaluations, and incorporating agency leadership interviews and sign-off as part of the hiring process.
- Appoint the agency CHCO to head the agency’s Talent Team.
- Ensure that the agency’s Talent Team has strong buy-in from agency leadership to drive on-the-ground implementation of the reforms outlined in the Merit Hiring Plan.

- Ensure that agency Talent Teams are constructed with proven, strong performers with key functional and occupational expertise and are committed to making merit hiring reform a reality in the agency.
- Specifically designate a Talent Pool Manager and a Shared Certificate Coordinator (may be the same individual) responsible for building agency-wide familiarity with and awareness of shared certificates.
- Track agency hiring metrics and keep agency leaders and OPM's Talent Team updated on progress towards meeting the Merit Hiring Plan requirements.

C. Recruiting Patriotic Americans for Federal Service

- In coordination with OPM's Talent Team, develop and implement a recruitment outreach program to attract individuals committed to improving the efficiency of the Federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution to Federal service.

1. Early Career Recruitment

- Ensure that early career recruitment focuses on candidates who will faithfully adhere to the Constitution and American ideals.
- Build and maintain a strong talent pipeline of students, recent graduates and other early career talent via proactive in-person and virtual recruitment activities targeting state and land-grant universities, religious colleges and universities, community colleges, high schools, trade and technical schools, homeschooling groups, faith-based groups, American Legion, 4-H youth programs, and the military, veterans, and law enforcement communities.
- Set early career talent hiring targets and track annual early career hires.
- Use the Pathways Intern Talent Program and the Recent Graduates Talent program, available as part of the USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal, which connect interns and recent graduates who meet program requirements for conversion to permanent or term employment in the civil service but are not able to be converted at their employing agency, with other federal agencies.¹⁴
- Leverage Pathways Program custom USAJOBS postings to support targeted recruitment of students, recent graduates, and other early career talent.¹⁵

¹⁴ See OPM, [New Pathways Intern and Recent Graduate Talent Programs](#) (October 23, 2024).

¹⁵ Appendix 2 contains a primer on how to use custom job postings, and Appendix 3 contains a model timeline for Early Career hiring.

- Require the integration and use of assessments in the Pathways Program hiring process to ensure strong, skills-based vetting of candidates.
- Identify occupations that are strong candidates for Federal apprenticeship programs and partner with OPM to implement.
- Use the Pathways Program to hire interns, with appropriate use of assessments to ensure high-quality candidates.
- Use the USAJOBS Talent Programs feature to identify qualified Pathways candidates and recent graduates.
- Use OPM's [Internship Portal](#) and [USAJOBS Internship Portal](#), which provide a clearinghouse to match Federal internship opportunities with early career talent.
- Utilize hiring authorities for college graduates and post-secondary students. *See* 5 C.F.R. § 315.614; 5 C.F.R. § 316 subpart I.

2. STEM Recruitment

- Use pooled hiring and shared certificates when filling STEM positions.
- Tag STEM positions to ensure they are easily viewable by job seekers on USAJOBS branded search pages (i.e., tech.usajobs.gov; ai.usajobs.gov; stem.usajobs.gov) and refer to these pages in agency STEM recruitment efforts.
- Take advantage of governmentwide [direct hire for technical positions](#).
- Use Schedule A(r) hiring authority under 5 C.F.R. § 213.3102(r) to build fellowship programs and professional/industry exchange programs that connect government employers with top private-sector talent.
- Leverage term appointment and expert/consultant hiring authorities to bring in top private sector talent on a project/term basis.
- Take advantage of hiring flexibilities under the [Intergovernmental Personnel Act](#) to obtain details of employees from Federal and non-Federal organizations, including state, local and Tribal governments, as well as non-profit organizations and educational and research institutions that meet eligibility criteria and advance the core principles stated in Executive Order 14170.¹⁶
- Use OPM's [Federal Rotational Cyber Workforce Program](#).

¹⁶ Appendix 3 contains a full list of available hiring authorities.

3. Veterans' Recruitment

- Leverage partnerships with relevant state and local veterans' workforce programs and Veterans Service Organizations, including Hiring Our Heroes, the American Legion, Student Veterans of America, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America.
- Utilize the USAJOBS Resume Mining feature to identify and connect available veteran applicants with roles for which they may be qualified.
- Conduct outreach to veterans and military spouses and encourage them to create USAJOBS profiles with searchable resumes that can be easily leveraged by agency recruiters to generate leads for open roles.
- Maintain lists of qualified veterans and military spouses from which they can quickly make selections.
- Utilize non-competitive special hiring authorities such as Veterans Recruitment Appointment Authority, the hiring authority for 30% or more disabled veterans, the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), the military spouse hiring authority, and the Schedule A authority for individuals with certain disabilities.
- Use the Department of Defense – Operation Warfighter (OWF) and SkillBridge Program, the Department of Veterans Affairs – Non-paid Work Experience Program (NPWE) and Disabled Veterans in a Training Program (OJT) to help meet mission critical occupations need.

D. Expanding the Use of Standardized Position Descriptions, Candidate Inventories, Talent Pools, and Shared Certificates

- When posting a new position, use standardized position descriptions developed by OPM for the 135 job series and grades currently covered by USA Hire assessment batteries
- Empower hiring managers to use the full range of hiring authorities and assessment strategies available to them, particularly those that relate to critical, specialized, or hard-to-recruit skills, and that they are aware of allowable recruitment activity in accordance with merit system principles and lawful personnel practices.
- Identify positions, through the workforce planning process, including those that require critical and specialized skills, needed across multiple agencies for which recruitment actions, certificates, or lists of eligible candidates could be shared within the agency or with other agencies as part of a governmentwide pooled hiring strategy.
- Collaborate with OPM to identify hiring actions that will use shared certificates or lists of eligible candidates external to the agency as both the originating and receiving agency, and use the Talent Pools feature in the USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal to share the candidates across agencies.

- Operationalize use of talent pools to share certificates of qualified candidates for like roles across agencies, candidate inventories to share qualified candidates within an agency or department, and resume mining to enable recruiting teams to discover leads.
- Use Resume Mining on USAJOBS to reach active job-seekers for specialized needs and to identify well-qualified Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) candidates.

H. Expanding OPM Talent Analytics Capabilities and Increasing Agency Use

- Use OPM's Talent Acquisition solutions (USAJOBS and USA Staffing), or platforms of equivalent quality, to improve hiring transparency, the user experience for job seekers, and Federal hiring data.
- Use the USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal and USA Staffing Candidate Inventory to ensure hiring managers have innovative talent acquisition tools to access searchable resumes, talent pools, talent programs, and candidate inventories. This will allow agencies to actively cultivate talent pipelines and facilitate active recruitment through communications that encourage candidate engagement.
- Review hiring manager satisfaction surveys and other hiring metrics on a quarterly basis to drive continuous improvements to the hiring process.

II. Reforming the Candidate Ranking, Assessment and Selection Process

- Use any rating and ranking method allowed by law and regulation and appropriate for the given hiring action when initiating a competitive recruitment action, giving hiring managers more control in designing hiring processes relevant to their talent needs.
- Include at least one technical or alternative assessment before issuance of the certificate. Agencies are strongly encouraged to use at least two or more assessments throughout the hiring process to ensure a merit-based process that produces a rigorously ranked and validated certificate.
- Do not use self-assessment questionnaires for rating and ranking, other than seasonal work or positions graded at GS-01 through GS-04, or equivalent, unless specifically authorized by OPM due to a compelling need. Self-assessments may only be used for minimum qualification and eligibility determinations.
- Identify SMEs who can improve and support agency qualification processes (e.g., through the use of structured resume reviews, developing specialized assessments) in accordance with merit system principles and lawful personnel practices (5 U.S.C. §§ 2301-02).
- Create, update, and use skills-based and multi-hurdle assessments (to include agency-developed and off-the-shelf assessments like USA Hire) to align with leading practices.

- Allow hiring managers to allocate time within standard responsibilities for subject matter experts to participate in processes, such as supporting HR professionals in identifying and assessing technical skills and tasks for position descriptions and job announcements.
- Allow hiring managers to ask applicants to provide a short description of their technical skills or showcase their technical ability for the position as part of a structured interview.
- Train HR professionals on the end-to-end assessment process designed to provide a list of highly qualified candidates for hiring manager review, which includes conducting a job analysis and screening applicants for needed competencies. As part of conveying assessment requirements, emphasize to HR professionals the need to be familiar with the passing score assessment process under which applicants must score a passing grade to be deemed eligible for advancing to the next level of the hiring process.
- Invest in assessment measurement expertise (e.g., hiring or contracting for industrial-organizational psychologists) to train HR professionals to create and continuously update skills-based assessments in partnership with hiring managers.
- Ensure active participation in the hiring process by Department and Agency leadership.

III. Reforming the Job Application Process

- For each job application graded GS-05 or above, include four short, free-response essay questions in all Federal job vacancy announcements:
 - How has your commitment to the Constitution and the founding principles of the United States inspired you to pursue this role within the Federal government? Provide a concrete example from professional, academic, or personal experience.
 - In this role, how would you use your skills and experience to improve government efficiency and effectiveness? Provide specific examples where you improved processes, reduced costs, or improved outcomes
 - How would you help advance the President's Executive Orders and policy priorities in this role? Identify one or two relevant Executive Orders or policy initiatives that are significant to you, and explain how you would help implement them if hired.
 - How has a strong work ethic contributed to your professional, academic or personal achievements? Please provide one or two specific examples, and explain how those qualities would enable you to serve effectively in this position.
- Limit resume length to 2 pages and prohibit the present longform Federal resume.
- Use a descriptive, organizational, or functional job title in the job announcement that resonates with job seekers (referencing the official title in the body of the announcement).
- When writing a job announcement, use plain language that accurately conveys the position and skills sought by the hiring manager, is supported by analysis of the nature of the job and promotes understanding by job seekers outside of or new to government.

- Encourage and educate applicants on the advantages of opting to make their resume searchable in their USAJOBS profile, which allows Federal HR professionals and hiring managers to find their resumes as part of agency recruitment campaigns or staffing searches.
- Send timely communications to applicants about their application status. Applicants should receive notifications for each applicable stage of the hiring process, including application acceptance, determination of qualifications, issuance of certificates to the hiring manager, and selection or cancellation of announcement. Agencies should use data analytics to verify applicant notifications were sent.
- Provide clear communication to applicants and develop improved application processes that are user-friendly, accessible, transparent, efficient, and responsive to the public.

IV. Reducing Time-to-Hire to 80 Days

- Use pooled and shared recruitments and certificates to the fullest extent possible to reduce redundancy and realize significant savings in the time to hire rather than posting an announcement for each new position.
- Enhance and streamline internal coordination across HR, personnel vetting, facility security, and any additional administrative functions and processes to support efficient onboarding of new hires (i.e., new Federal employees or transfers of existing Federal employees across agencies).
- Prioritize personnel vetting reforms under the Administration's Trusted Workforce 2.0 initiative. This includes ensuring positions are properly designated and only the appropriate level of vetting is conducted.
- Fully utilize available capabilities such as preliminary determinations and electronic adjudication.
- Enroll employees in continuous vetting, which routinely checks for post-appointment conduct that may impact their continued trustworthiness.
- Seek to meet the end timeliness goals established in the Personnel Vetting Performance Management Standards—21 days for low-risk positions; 25 days for non-sensitive moderate risk, and 45 days for top secret.
- Seek to complete vetting within 3 days when reciprocity applies.
- When an individual departed the Federal service within three years with no known unresolved derogatory information and is returning to the same level of position or lower, agencies should similarly seek to complete vetting within 3 days.

Appendix 2: Primer on Custom Job Postings

OPM issued the final rule to align the Pathways Program with the Federal Government's need for recruiting and hiring interns and recent graduates, effective June 11, 2024. It allows agencies to meet public notice requirements when filling positions by 1) posting a searchable announcement on www.usajobs.gov or 2) posting job information with a link to a USAJOBS custom job announcement on the agency's public facing career or job information web page. This allows agencies the discretion to recruit for positions in a manner that best supports and implements their agency work plans.

USAJOBS is the federal government's official career portal, connecting job seekers with federal employment opportunities across the United States and worldwide. The [USAJOBS website](#) is the starting point for job seekers seeking employment with the federal government. USAJOBS is integrated with agency Talent Acquisition Systems (TAS) where applicants complete the job application process.

Custom Job Postings:

USAJOBS offers Custom Job Postings to support agencies' targeted recruitment activities when they choose to not use the standard USAJOBS search experience for public notice. A Custom Job Posting is a USAJOBS announcement that may only be accessed using a unique link or URL and is not searchable on USAJOBS. After creating the custom announcement in their Talent Acquisition System (TAS), the agency receives a unique URL to the job posting and can share it with a targeted talent group or link the URL to another job board. Custom job postings are stored within USAJOBS but are not searchable on USAJOBS.

Agencies should contact their Talent Acquisition System for specific information on how to create a Custom Job Posting.

Appendix 3: Table of Current Federal Hiring Authorities

| Authority | Competitive Appointments | Pay Grades |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Competitive Examining | This is the traditional method for making appointments to competitive service positions and requires adherence to Title 5 competitive examining requirements. Hiring needs are filled through the competitive examining process that is open to the public. More information is available in the https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/competitive-hiring/deo_handbook.pdf . 5 CFR 332, 5 CFR 337. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL |
| Senior Level (SL) | Most Senior Level employees are in non-executive positions whose duties are broad and complex enough to be classified above GS-15. SL positions in an agency not subject to the Senior Executive Service may include supervisory, managerial or executive functions. 5 CFR 319. | SL (Pay Range same as SES) |
| Scientific or Professional (ST) | Positions above the GS-15 level that involve high-level research and development in the physical, biological, medical, or engineering sciences, or a closely-related field. STs are in the competitive service but do not require competitive examining. May not be used for an SES position. 5 CFR 319. | ST (Pay Range same as SES) |
| Term Employment | The agency can fill a term appointment for situations like project work, extraordinary workload, reorganization, or uncertainty of future funding. Term appointments are for a non-permanent need of more than one year but not more than 4 years. 5 CFR 316 Subpart C. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL or ST |
| Temporary Limited Appointment | If the agency has a short-term need that is not expected to last longer than one year, it can use a temporary limited appointment. It may extend the appointment for up to a maximum of one year. 5 CFR 316 Subpart D. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL or ST |
| Authority | Senior Executive Service | Pay Grades |
| Senior Executive Service (SES) | If the agency needs executive level staff, please visit http://www.opm.gov/ses/ for complete information on recruiting, hiring, and reassigning executives in the SES. Types of SES Appointments: Career: An individual appointed through SES merit staffing and certification of his/her executive core qualifications by an OPM administered Qualifications Review Board (QRB) or subsequently reassigned, transferred, or reinstated based on prior QRB certification and career service. Noncareer and limited appointments: Competitive procedures are not required to make non-career and limited appointments. Limited Term: An individual appointed under a nonrenewable appointment for a term of 3 years or less to a position of a project nature. Limited Emergency: An individual appointed under a nonrenewable appointment not to exceed 18 months to meet a bona fide, unanticipated, urgent need. Noncareer: An individual who is not a career appointee, a limited term appointee, or limited emergency appointee. Agencies may make SES noncareer appointments to general (not career reserved) SES positions. 5 CFR 317 | The SES Pay Range – from 120% of GS-15 step 1 to EX-III (or EX-II in an agency with a certified performance appraisal system.) |
| Authority | Noncompetitive and Excepted Service Appointments | Pay Grades |
| Political Appointees | Agencies may appoint individuals to positions of a confidential or policy-determining nature in the excepted service upon authorization by the OPM. 5 CFR 213 Subpart C | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL |
| Schedule A and B Appointments | The agency may make appointments without regard to competition when OPM has determined that competitive examining is not practical. This is most commonly used for persons with disabilities; attorneys, law clerks; positions in remote/isolated locations; internship or fellowship programs (other than Pathways Programs); SES career development programs (CDPs); and students assigned to a medical facility; physicians, surgeons, and dentists. Can apply to SL where appropriate, e.g., non-supervisory attorney positions classified above GS-15. 5 CFR 213 Subpart C. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL |
| Schedule D - Student Interns | To be eligible for this work experience program, students must be enrolled and seeking a degree on a full or half-time basis at an accredited educational institution or other qualifying career or technical education program. Students who successfully complete the Intern Program may be eligible for conversion to a term or permanent position. 5 CFR 362 Subpart B | Generally, up to GS-09 |

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| Schedule D - Recent Graduates | To be eligible for this developmental experience program, recent graduates must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion (except for certain eligible veterans). The Recent Graduate Program lasts for 1 year (unless the training requirements of the position warrant a longer and more structured training program). 5 CFR 362 Subpart C. | Up to GS-11; Up to GS-12 for certain positions |
| Intergovernmental Personnel Act | This program helps the agency access expertise from outside the Federal government and provide its staff with developmental opportunities. It provides for temporary assignments of personnel between the Federal government and state and local governments; colleges and universities; Indian tribal governments; Federally funded research and development centers; and other eligible organizations. More information at https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/intergovernment-personnel-act/ . 5 CFR 334. | |
| Authority | Noncompetitive and Excepted Service Appointments, Continued... | Pay Grades |
| Temporary, not Full-time - Critical Hiring Need | When the agency just needs to get something done, it can make 30-day emergency appointments to fill a critical hiring need. An agency may extend these appointments for an additional 30 days. This authority may be used to fill senior-level (SL) positions as well as positions at lower grades. 5 CFR 213.3012(i)(2). | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL pay grades |
| Noncompetitive Hiring Authority for Certain Military Spouses | By marketing the agency's hiring needs to military installations, the agency can reach eligible military spouses who can be noncompetitively appointed for a temporary, term, or permanent job. Special conditions—spouses of service members who are 100 percent disabled or who were killed while on active duty—have lifetime eligibility starting from the date of the documentation verifying the service member's disability or death. Candidates must qualify for the job. 5 CFR 315.612. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent |
| Post-Secondary Students | Agencies may make a noncompetitive, time-limited appointment to a position in the competitive service for which the student is qualified. Eligible students must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an institution of higher education in pursuit of a baccalaureate or graduate degree on at least a part-time basis. Students who complete their degree requirements and who successfully complete their employment programs may be eligible for conversion to a permanent position. 5 CFR 316, Subpart I. | Up to GS-11 or equivalent |
| College Graduates | Agencies may appoint qualified college graduates noncompetitively to professional or administrative positions in the competitive service. An eligible college graduate must have received a baccalaureate or graduate degree from an institution of higher education and can apply for positions within two years of receiving a degree (except for certain eligible veterans). 5 CFR 315.614. | Up to GS-11 or equivalent |
| Authority | Veterans' Appointments | Pay Grades |
| Veterans with a 30 Percent or More Disability | This appointment authority can be used to market opportunities to veterans' organizations to leverage noncompetitive appointments leading to conversion to career or career-conditional employment of an eligible disabled veteran who has a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more. Initial appointment must be a temporary appointment of more than 60 days or a term appointment. An agency may convert employee to permanent status at any time during the initial temporary or term period. 5 CFR 316 subparts C or D, 5 CFR 315.707. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent |
| Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) | The agency can hire certain veterans using noncompetitive appointments leading to conversion to career or career-conditional employment. A veteran can be converted to a career-conditional appointment in the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service. 5 CFR 307. | Up to GS-11 or equivalent |
| Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 | The VEOA is a special authority that allows eligible veterans to <i>apply and compete</i> for positions announced under merit promotion procedures when the agency is recruiting from outside its own workforce. For preference eligibles or veterans with 3 years continuous active duty service. 5 CFR 335.106, 5 CFR 315.611. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL |
| Authority | Other Hiring Flexibilities | Pay Grades |
| Direct Hire Authority | A request for direct hire authority must be submitted by the agency to OPM when there is either a severe shortage of candidates or a critical hiring need for a particular position or group of positions. More information at www.opm.gov/directhire/index.asp . 5 CFR 337 Subpart B | Up to GS-15 or equivalent |

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| Governmentwide Direct Hire Authority | OPM has authorized a number of Governmentwide Direct Hire Authorities that agencies may utilize to fill critical positions. More information at https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/direct-hire-authority/#url=Governmentwide-Authority . | See Link for Grade Levels |
| Delegation of Direct-Hire Appointing Authority for IT Positions | Executive Order 13833, <i>Enhancing the Effectiveness of Agency Chief Information Officers</i> , delegates to agencies the authority to determine whether the conditions justifying direct hire authority (DHA) for Information Technology (IT) positions exists. More information at https://www.chcoc.gov/content/delegation-direct-hire-appointing-authority-it-positions . | See Link for Grade Levels |
| Reemployment of Civilian Retirees to Meet Exceptional Employment Needs | The agency may want to bring back recently retired experts to help with specific types of needs. Agencies may reemploy civilian retirees for emergency hiring needs; shortage due to severe recruiting difficulty; need to retain a uniquely qualified individual for a specific project; and other non-emergency, unusual circumstances. OPM approval is required for an annuity offset waiver. 5 CFR 553. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SES, SL or ST |
| Merit Promotion, Reinstatement, and transfers | The agency may be the best source of talent, or the agency may need expertise from across the Federal government or from former Federal employees. Merit promotion of permanent employees based on merit system principles is a key part of the Federal service. 5 CFR 335. Reinstating former employees or transferring employees between agencies is another viable option for hiring talent. 5 CFR 315. | Up to GS-15 or equivalent and SL |
| Experts and Consultants | The agency may hire experts or consultants to perform temporary or intermittent work. When using this appointment, the expert or consultant cannot perform managerial or supervisory work. 5 CFR 304 | Up to GS-15 or equivalent |

Appendix 4: The 135 Job Series for Which USA Hire Currently Has Validated Assessments

| Series | Title | Grades | Series | Title | Grades |
|--------|------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 0018 | Safety & Occupational Health Management* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 0342 | Support Services Administration | 7,9,11-14 |
| 0020 | Community Planning | 11-13 | 0343 | Management & Program Analysis* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 |
| 0023 | Outdoor Recreation Planning* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 0344 | Management Clerical & Assistance | 4-9 |
| 0025 | Park Ranger* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 0346 | Logistics Management | 9,11-13 |
| 0028 | Environmental Protection Specialist | 9,11-13 | 0391 | Telecommunications* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 0080 | Security Administration* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 | 0399 | Administration and Office Support Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0086 | Security Clerical and Assistance | 4-9 | 0401 | General Biological Science | 7,9,11-13 |
| 0089 | Emergency Management Specialist | 9, 11-15 | 0404 | Biological Science Technician | 4-11 |
| 0090 | Guide | 4,5 | 0462 | Forestry Technician | 6-11 |
| 0099 | General Trainee | 3-10 | 0499 | Biological Science Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0101 | Social Science* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 0501 | Financial Admin. & Programs* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 |
| 0107 | Health Insurance Administration* | 9,11-15 | 0503 | Financial Clerical & Assistance | 4-9 |
| 0110 | Economist | 9,11-13 | 0510 | Accountant □ | 5,7,9,11-15 |
| 0130 | Foreign Affairs | 11-13 | 0511 | Auditor | 7,9,11-13 |
| 0150 | Geography | 11-13 | 0525 | Accounting Technician | 4-9 |
| 0170 | History | 9,11-13 | 0544 | Civilian Pay | 5-7 |
| 0180 | Psychology | 9,11-13 | 0545 | Military Pay | 4-7 |
| 0185 | Social Work | 9,11-14 | 0560 | Budget Analysis* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 |
| 0193 | Archeology | 9,11-13 | 0570 | Financial Institution Examining | 9,11-13 |
| 0199 | Social Science Trainee | 3-10 | 0599 | Financial Management Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0201 | Personnel/HR Management* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 | 0640 | Health Aid and Technician | 3-11 |
| 0203 | Personnel Clerical & Assistance □ | 3-10 | 0675 | Medical Records Technician | 4-7 |
| 0260 | Equal Employment Opportunity | 7,9,11-15 | 0679 | Medical Clerk | 3-8 |
| 0299 | Human Resources Management Trainee | 3-10 | 0685 | Public Health Program Specialist | 9,11-13 |
| 0301 | Misc. Administration & Programs* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 0699 | Medical and Health Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0303 | Miscellaneous Clerk & Assistant □ | 3-10 | 0799 | Veterinary Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0304 | Information Receptionist | 4-5 | 0801 | General Engineering | 9,11-13 |

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|------|----------------------------------------|-------------|------|---------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 0305 | Mail & File | 3-7 | 0802 | Engineering Technician | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 0306 | Government Information Specialist | 7,9,11-14 | 0810 | Civil Engineering | 7,9,11-13 |
| 0308 | Records & Information Management | 9,11-14 | 0830 | Mechanical Engineering | 7,9,11-15 |
| 0318 | Secretary □ | 3-10 | 0854 | Computer Engineer | 12-15 |
| 0326 | (OA) Clerical & Assistance | 3-7 | 0855 | Electronics Engineer | 11-15 |
| 0335 | Computer Clerk & Assistance | 3-9 | 0856 | Electronics Technician | 7, 9, 11-13 |
| 0341 | Administrative Officer* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 0861 | Aerospace Engineering □ | 7,9,11-15 |
| 0899 | Engineering and Architecture Trainee | 3-10 | 1499 | Library and Archive Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0901 | General Legal and Kindred Admin* | 5,7,9,11-12 | 1515 | Operations Research | 7,9,11-15 |
| 0950 | Paralegal Specialist* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 1599 | Mathematics and Statistics Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0962 | Contact Representative □ | 3-10 | 1699 | Equipment, Facilities, and Services Trainee | 3-10 |
| 0965 | Land Law Examining* | 5,7,9,11 | 1701 | General Education and Training* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 0986 | Legal Assistance Series | 5-9 | 1702 | Education and Training Technician | 5-9 |
| 0991 | Workers' Compensation Claims Examining | 11-13 | 1712 | Training Instruction | 7,9,11-14 |
| 0996 | Veterans Claims Examining* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 1715 | Vocational Rehabilitation | 9,11-12 |
| 0998 | Claims Clerical | 4-7 | 1720 | Education Program | 11-12 |
| 0999 | Legal Occupations Trainee | 3-10 | 1750 | Instructional Systems | 9,11-14 |
| 1001 | General Arts & Information* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 1799 | Education Trainee | 3-10 |
| 1015 | Museum Curator | 9,11-13 | 1899 | Investigation Trainee | 3-10 |
| 1035 | Public Affairs* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 1910 | Quality Assurance Specialist* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 1082 | Writing and Editing | 9,11-13 | 1999 | Quality Inspection Trainee | 3-10 |
| 1083 | Technical Writing and Editing* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 2001 | General Supply | 9,11-12 |
| 1099 | Information and Arts Trainee | 3-10 | 2003 | Supply Program Management* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 1101 | General Business & Industry* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 2005 | Supply Clerical & Technician | 3-9 |
| 1102 | Contract Specialist* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 | 2010 | Inventory Management | 9,11-13 |
| 1103 | Industrial Property Management* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 2030 | Distribution Facilities and Storage Mgmt* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 1104 | Property Disposal* | 5,7,9,11-12 | 2032 | Packaging | 9,11-12 |
| 1109 | Grants Management | 7,9,11-14 | 2099 | Supply Student Trainee | 3-10 |
| 1130 | Public Utilities Specialist | 9,11-13 | 2101 | Transportation Specialist | 9,11-13 |

| | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| 1140 | Trade Specialist | 11-13 | 2102 | Transportation Clerk & Assistance | 4-6 |
| 1150 | Industrial Specialist | 9,11-13 | 2130 | Traffic Management* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 1160 | Financial Analysis | 11-13 | 2150 | Transportation Operations* | 5,7,9,11-13 |
| 1165 | Loan Specialist* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 2199 | Transportation Trainee | 3-10 |
| 1170 | Realty* | 5,7,9,11-13 | 2210 | Information Technology* □ | 5,7,9,11-15 |
| 1171 | Appraising | 9,11-13 | 2299 | Information Technology Trainee | 3-10 |
| 1173 | Housing Management* | 5,7,9,11-13 | <p>NOTE: These USA Hire Standard Assessments may only be used for non-supervisory positions. The USA Hire Federal Supervisor Assessment should be used for supervisory positions.</p> | | |
| 1176 | Building Management* | 5,7,9,11-12 | | | |
| 1199 | Business and Industry Trainee | 3-10 | | | |
| 1299 | Copyright and Patent Trainee | 3-10 | | | |
| 1301 | General Physical Science | 7,9,11-15 | | | |
| 1311 | Physical Science Technician | 5-11 | | | |
| 1316 | Hydrologic Technician | 6-11 | | | |
| 1399 | Physical Science Trainee | 3-10 | | | |
| 1412 | Technical Information Specialist* | 5,7,9,11-13 | | | |
| 1420 | Archivist* | 5,7,9,11-13 | | | |
| 1421 | Archive Specialist* | 5,9-12 | | | |

* Available as an alternative to the Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) written exam and rating schedule.

□ Cut score utilized. For Additional Information:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/index.php/USA_Hire_Resource_Center

Appendix 5: Examples of Technical and Alternative Assessments

The Chance to Compete Act of 2024 defines a “technical assessment” as a position-specific tool that allows for the demonstration of job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies; is based upon a job analysis; and does not solely include or principally rely upon a self-assessment for an automated examination. 5 U.S.C. § 3304(a)(9). The Act allows for alternative assessments if appropriate rationale for their use is provided. *Id.* at (c)(2)(B). Technical and alternative assessments can measure skills applicable to many jobs or job-specific skills such as cybersecurity, information technology, finance, or law enforcement.

Examples of technical and alternative assessments that agencies may use include:

- **Situational Judgment Test:** Measures knowledges, skills, abilities, or competencies by presenting work-related scenarios and asking applicants to evaluate various courses of action.
- **Reasoning Assessment:** Measures knowledges, skills, abilities, or competencies through questions in which candidates solve problems or determine correct conclusions from given information.
- **Job Knowledge Test:** Measures knowledges, skills, or competencies through questions or scenarios in which specific technical facts, rules, or knowledge must be applied to be successful.
- **Work Sample/Simulation:** Measures knowledges, skills, abilities, or competencies by having candidates demonstrate their proficiency in performing a sample of job requirements.
- **Structured Interview.** This can be conducted by the Hiring Manager or SME. Structured interviews may additionally involve asking applicants to showcase their technical ability for the position, which may take the following forms:
 - **Case Study Presentation:** A prompt with instructions is provided to the candidate over email some number of days before the interview. Candidates present their work on the prompt during an interview and answer questions from the interviewer(s) in a one-on-one or panel setting.
 - **Live Exercise:** Candidates are given a live challenge to complete during the interview.
- **Accomplishment Record:** Measures knowledges, skills, abilities, or competencies by asked candidates to provide written descriptions of their prior achievements or work activities.
- **Structured Resume Review:** The structured resume review can be conducted by the Hiring Manager or an SME. The structured Resume Review Tool facilitates SME

review of resumes to determine those meeting the minimum requirements for a position.

- **Structured Writing Sample Review:** This can be conducted by the Hiring Manager or an SME. This exercise should require certification that the candidate is using their own words (not a consultant or AI), and that the sample has not been edited or drafted by someone else. Agencies may consider using platforms with proctoring functionality for this exercise

Appendix 6: OPM Resources for Agencies to Maximally Adopt Technical and Alternative Assessments

OPM has assessments, tools, and trainings available to help agencies transition to maximal use of technical and alternative assessments as required by EO 14170 and the Chance to Compete Act. As noted above, agencies are strongly encouraged to use USA Hire skills-based assessments to meet this requirement.

Assessments currently available to agencies:

- USA Hire Standard Assessments cover 135 job series and include general competencies that are specific to job series and grades. All USA Hire Standard Assessments and the Federal Supervisor Assessment (FSA) are mobile enabled. Applicants may use a wide variety of devices (smart phone, tablet, laptop, or desktop computer) to complete these assessments.
- USA Hire Specialized assessments, including:
 - Leadership assessments such as the Federal Supervisor Assessment, Supervisory Situational Judgement Test, and Executive Assessment.
 - Critical Skills assessments for writing and program/project management.
 - Specialized assessments for competencies required in the general investigation and compliance inspection job series (1801/1802 series).
- Structured Interviews (questions and scoring benchmarks) for Human Resources Specialists in 6 functional areas – benefits, classification, employee relations, information systems, labor relations, and recruitment and placement.

Additional assessment development underway:

- Data Skills Assessment – Expected to be available September 2025
- Structure Interviews (questions and scoring benchmarks) for IT Specialist positions – Expected to be available September 2025
- Budget and Accounting Group occupations – Pending contract award

Trainings and Tools:

- The [Federal Hiring Assessment and Selection Outcome Dashboard](#) examines assessment usage in competitive service hiring actions to help identify best practices across agencies and job occupations using government data and trends.
- Subject Matter Expert-Qualifications Assessment (SME-QA) – Train the trainer sessions and implementation support to agencies. Contact HX@opm.gov for more information.
- [Designing an Assessment Strategy and Use of SME-Based Assessments](#): free, self-paced, online training available to all agencies.
 - Course 1: Designing an Assessment Strategy: Fundamental Concepts, Processes and Applications
 - Course 2: Use of Hiring Assessments: A SME-Based Approach: Fundamental Concepts, Processes and Applications
- [Structured Resume Review Training](#) - Free, self-paced, web training on implementing structured resume reviews in any agency's hiring process.
- [Structured interview training](#) validated for common general and technical competencies.

Appendix 7: Primer on USA Hire

OPM's USA Hire Program can help address requirements of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024 and Executive Order 14170, Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service (January 20, 2025). Both the Chance to Compete Act of 2024 and Executive Order 14170 call for reforms to the Federal hiring process that focus on merit, increasing efficiency of process and quality of hires, decreasing time to hire, and incorporating high-quality skills-based assessments. USA Hire offers a broad range of assessment capabilities including 1) centralized assessments that cut across Federal agencies and/or jobs and 2) targeted assessments designed specifically for an agency or a particular job or set of jobs.

USA Hire Overview:

USA Hire is an online assessment program managed by OPM to provide Federal agencies with access to high quality, skill-based assessments designed to identify top talent for Federal mission-critical and mission-support jobs. USA Hire includes off-the-shelf assessments developed for hiring across the Federal government and custom assessments designed to meet the unique needs of Federal agencies. USA Hire is a core feature within USA Staffing (OPM's Talent Acquisition System for agencies) and offers online assessments including computer adaptive tests, job simulations, and online interviews. Through USA Staffing and USA Hire, OPM ensures proper test administration, validity, and legal defensibility.

Key Benefits of USA Hire:

- Flexible, applicant friendly process – USA Hire assessments are administered online, proctored or unproctored.
- Added efficiency and decrease in time to hire – Agency HR professionals can easily implement USA Hire assessments to help Hiring Managers accurately assess a candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities through professionally developed, competency-based assessments.
 - USA Hire can incorporate passing scores (and other cut scores that effectively reduce the applicant pool) for any assessments delivered on the platform. Passing scores allow for the identification of applicants who do not meet minimum requirements for success on the job.
 - Incorporating USA Hire assessments into agency hiring processes can result in decreases in the amount of time it takes to process and hire applicants and help drive higher selection rates. A smaller number of applicants are eligible and referred to the hiring manager and a higher number of applicants are ultimately selected in cases where USA Hire assessments are used.

USA Hire Resources for Agencies:

Agencies have multiple options for using USA Hire, including leveraging current access to USA Staffing, optimizing pooled hiring, and sharing certificates through the Competitive Service Act, and working directly with OPM staffing specialists to incorporate USA Hire into announcements. For additional information, please contact: USAHire@opm.gov.

USA Hire Resource Center: [USA Hire Resource Center - USA Staffing Resource Center](#)

USA Hire FAQs: [USA Hire FAQs_v3_09.06.2024.pdf](#)