# A TIME FOR TALENT

## IMPROVING FEDERAL RECRUITING AND HIRING

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

# Executive Summary

As our nation works to stop the spread of the deadly coronavirus and blunt the pandemic's economic fallout, the need for an effective and efficient federal government has never been clearer. Indeed, there may be no institution more important to the health, safety and financial wellbeing of the nation than the federal government.

To deliver for the American people now and in the future, and competently respond to inevitable crises, the government must be able to recruit and hire a world-class workforce. Yet the federal recruiting and hiring process is in drastic need of repair.

The federal government has long struggled to attract the talent it needs, handicapped in part by a General Schedule pay system that makes it difficult to compete with the private sector. Too often, the applicant experience is miserable, plagued by confusing job announcements, a USAJobs platform that is difficult to use, and a cumbersome hiring process that can take months to complete. Even after collecting resumes, agencies rely too frequently on outdated methods to evaluate candidates, causing them to overlook the most qualified.

While there are a number of well-documented steps that Congress and the Office of Personnel Management could take to reform the recruiting and hiring process, agencies can do a great deal on their own.[1]

Made possible by generous support from the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation and informed by interviews with human resources leaders in government and the private sector, this report describes approaches that agency leaders and human resources specialists can take right now to strengthen the federal workforce.

Particularly as new staff are added to deal with a range of issues stemming from the coronavirus pandemic, agencies should:

- Strategically identify their talent needs for both today and tomorrow.

- Recruit more effectively and efficiently by being proactive, promoting their brand, keeping in touch with former employees and targeting young people.

- Ensure that they hire the best applicants by creating a better candidate experience and using innovative techniques to identify who is most qualified.

- Look inward for the next generation of talent.

This report describes what these strategies look like in practice, sharing replicable examples from across the federal government.

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1  Most recently by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, "Inspired to Serve," March 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/31MwIfP

# Introduction

In March 2019, the Government Accountability Office unveiled its "High Risk List," a biannual assessment of the federal programs and operations most vulnerable to waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement, or in need of broad reform.

For the 10th consecutive time dating back to 2001, human capital management appeared on the list.

GAO described the problem this way:

"Mission-critical skills gaps both within federal agencies and across the federal workforce pose a high risk to the nation because they impede the government from cost-effectively serving the public and achieving results ... Additionally, the changing nature of federal work and the high percentage of employees eligible for retirement could produce gaps in leadership and institutional knowledge, and could threaten to aggravate the problems created from existing skills gaps."[2]

GAO's stark warning about the health of the federal workforce is borne out by data.

The federal workforce is aging, with a wave of retirements threatening to further stretch staffing capabilities. In June 2019, there were seven times more federal employees older than 50 than under 30 (44.8% vs. 6.3%), and roughly one-third of employees onboard at the beginning of fiscal 2019 will be eligible to retire by the end of fiscal 2023. The age disparity is even more striking among the mission-critical federal IT workforce, with 19 times more employees over 50 than under 30.[3]

The data also show that the federal government struggles to identify its talent needs and recruit and hire as effectively as it could. According to Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® data, produced by the Partnership for Public Service and Boston Consulting Group, just 42% of federal employees believe their work unit can recruit people with the right skills, and it takes government an average of 98 days to bring new talent on board—more than double the time in the private sector.[4]

And while the federal workforce is mission-driven, many employees are not equipped to do their jobs. In 2019, Best Places to Work data revealed that 89% of federal employees believe their work is important and 95% say they are willing to put in extra effort to get the job done. Yet only 48% believe they have the resources

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2   Government Accountability Office, "High-Risk Series: Substantial Efforts Needed to Achieve Greater Progress on High-Risk Areas," GAO-19-157SP, March 2019, 75. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2DcPt1Q

3   Office of Personnel Management, "FedScope June 2019 Employment Data." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2PWI6OW

4   Office of Personnel Management, "OPM Issues Updated Time-to-Hire Guidance," February 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3dZS3oE

they need to do their jobs—including staff support—compared to 72% of employees in the private sector.[5]

As the COVID-19 pandemic has swept across the country, it has become quite apparent that government and the workforce matter. Yet the state of federal recruiting and hiring, the key to building and sustaining a vibrant workforce, is in crisis. Ultimately, the competency of our government will depend on leaders rethinking how talent needs are assessed and how to effectively recruit, hire, develop and retain a skilled workforce.
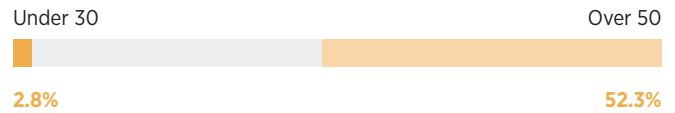
This report describes practical steps agencies can take to attract mission-critical talent and strengthen the federal government, working within an existing system that is saddled with many cumbersome and complex rules and procedures. Our corresponding data dashboard included in this report proposes how agency leaders can measure whether they are meeting the workforce challenges.

Ensuring that government brings diverse and highly qualified people onboard must be a top priority. That responsibility not only applies to HR specialists and agency leaders, but should be top of mind for those in the Trump administration planning for a second term and for the transition team planning for Democratic presidential nominee Joseph Biden's first term.

Our hope is that this report and the dashboard inspire all stakeholders to think creatively about recruiting and hiring, and take bold action to ensure that the federal workforce, on which the American people rely so heavily, is up to the task.

## Age of Federal Employees in Mission-Critical Occupations

**IT Specialist**

Under 30      Over 50

**2.8%**      **52.3%**

**HR Specialist**

Under 30      Over 50

**4.1%**      **46.4%**

**Auditor**

Under 30      Over 50

**5.5%**      **38.8%**

**Contract Specialist**

Under 30      Over 50

**6.6%**      **38.8%**

**Economist**

Under 30      Over 50

**8.1%**      **36.4%**
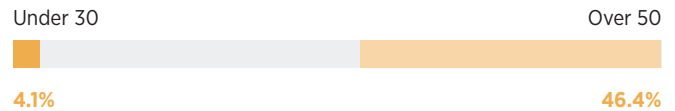
**Data source:** FedScope, Office of Personnel Management. Full-time, nonseasonal, permanent employees (June 2019). "Under 30" refers to employees aged 20-29.

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5   Best Places to Work in the Federal Government, "Overall Findings and Private Sector Comparison." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3dYAaGN

# Strategically Evaluating Talent Needs



**A**gencies that are most effective at fulfilling their missions have "the right people with the right skills in the right places at the right time," yet success eludes much of the federal government.[6] According to research conducted by the Office of Personnel Management in 2018, 83% of CHCO Act agencies (24 major federal departments and agencies) struggled with staffing shortages and 63% reported gaps in the knowledge and skills of their employees.[7]

To ensure that it has the talent it needs to respond to a wide range of domestic and national security challenges, government must become more strategic in how it hires and develops employees. Agencies should assess the skills their employees possess, determine how those skills align with the work that needs to be done today and into the future, forecast attrition and make hiring decisions accordingly.

## Determining Today's Hiring Requirements

Often, when someone leaves a job, an agency will backfill the vacant position without evaluating whether there is a need to do so. One federal HR leader described the tendency this way:

"Historically, hiring has not been very strategic. We've been on autopilot. 'I lose one, I get one. I lose one, I get one.' It's reactionary hiring; it's not strategic hiring."

To hire smarter, some agencies have developed workforce plans. These plans, which can range from a few months to several years, identify an organization's priorities, spell out how many employees are in each type of role, how many are needed, and what skills the workforce must possess if the organization is to accomplish its goals.

While there's no one-size-fits-all approach to workforce planning, and the complexity of workforce plans can vary based on the scope of an agency's mission and the makeup of its workforce, they are valuable tools that organizations of all types should develop and use to inform their staffing needs.

In 2019, the Bonneville Power Administration, a component of the Department of Energy with roughly 3,000 employees, completed a comprehensive workforce study. Over the course of one year, the HR staff consulted with every work unit in the agency to understand what they do, the services they provide, the amount of effort the work requires and the resources they need to do the job. After the workforce study was complete, BPA developed a one-year staffing plan for every work unit—the first time the agency had done so. The staffing plans inform hiring decisions, helping BPA's work units bring the right people onboard to fill the necessary positions.

"BPA has evolved and become more mature in the way we identify our hiring needs," said Brian Carter, the agency's human resources director. "We've moved away from the mindset that 'somebody left, so now we have a vacancy, so now we have a hiring need.' We've become more sophisticated than that."

To make sure hiring is done strategically, some agencies have adopted another path that requires subcomponents to get approval before trying to bring new staff onboard. While a centrally managed approach to hiring might not be appropriate for every agency, it can help ensure that limited personnel dollars are spent where they are needed most.

At the National Institutes of Health, every request to fill a position must be approved by a Hiring Control Committee. The committee is composed of three executive officers, two scientific directors and two institute directors—some of NIH's most senior leaders. When an NIH component wants to fill a position, it must convince the committee that there's a need. Many requests are approved quickly—for example, to backfill a junior-level position, or to fill a position related to patient care or safety—but others require more scrutiny.

To inform its decisions, the committee reviews a host of information including organizational charts, the length of time the position has been vacant, and workforce productivity data, if it's available. If an organization receives sign-off from the committee, it may begin to recruit for the open position. If the committee cannot validate the need to hire, an organization may appeal the decision.

"It took time to socialize the new approach across NIH and explain why we were doing it," explained Julie Berko, director of NIH's Office of Human Resources. "But it really has helped us identify hiring needs and validate the need to hire."

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6   National Institutes of Health, "Workforce Planning." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3gAgRFv

7   Office of Personnel Management, "2018 Federal Workforce Priorities Report," February 2018, 18. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2ZLPGki

## Identifying Who Will Do Tomorrow's Work

A lot can influence an agency's future talent needs, including retirements, changes to the mission, new ways of doing work and even major crises like a pandemic. Identifying those talent needs early—using strategic plans, attrition projections and workforce skills assessments—can help agencies ensure they have the people with the right abilities onboard when needed.

Thinking critically about the work they will be doing, rather than just what has been done in the past, is the first step agencies should take to identify their future talent needs.

Angela Bailey, chief human capital officer at the Department of Homeland Security, cited border security to make the point:

"It's very important to be forward-looking. If we're going to rely more heavily on technology to secure our borders—using drones, AI and voice and facial recognition—then you must ask yourself: Do you need more agents who can ride horses and speak Spanish? Or do you need people who can work a joystick and are good with technology? These are the things that we have to think about."

At the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, agency priorities are projected five years out and are used to predict future workforce needs.

NRC's process, repeated annually, begins with an assessment of the trends that are expected to affect the agency's work during the next five years, developed by the executive director for operations. Every NRC office has an opportunity to review the executive director's assessment and provide feedback. Once finalized, offices use the assessment to forecast what their work will look like over a five-year period, identify the positions and skills they will need to complete the work, and compare the talent they have onboard with what they will eventually need. Then, working with the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, offices develop plans to get the right people with the right skills in the right positions at the right time.

Predicting attrition is another key piece of evaluating future talent needs, since part of knowing whom you'll need is knowing whom you're going to lose. If a position is filled by an employee who is expected to retire in five years, an agency might hire and develop an entry-level worker or train a current employee. On the other hand, if the forecast indicates that a full-performing employee will be required in short order, an office will know that it might be wise to determine whether an internal candidate has the skills to assume the role, or whether it should begin recruiting outside the agency.

The Department of State produces a yearly "retirement profile" for its civil service bureaus, predicting how many employees are likely to leave in the next 12 months. The profiles tell each bureau when employees typically retire—including at what age, tenure and number of years after they've become eligible—and how many employees are onboard who meet or exceed those numbers. Bureaus receive aggregated retirement projections for their total workforce as well as breakouts for their mission-critical occupations.

And at the FBI, a sophisticated attrition model helps the agency understand when it should begin to recruit new talent for specific occupations, significantly reducing the amount of time between when a position becomes open and when it is filled.

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# Using an Attrition Model to Keep Mission-Critical Positions Filled

When an employee leaves, it can take months to recruit and hire a replacement. Lengthy vacancies can overwhelm staff and jeopardize an agency's ability to deliver on its mission.

By forecasting attrition and beginning to recruit before a position becomes vacant, agencies can minimize how long positions remain unfilled.

In December 2019, the FBI's HR team created a model that forecasts vacancies in every occupation during a nine-month period. To do so, the model estimates how many people are likely to leave, how long it takes to bring a new employee onboard and what percentage of job offers result in a new hire.

That information helps the bureau understand when it should begin to recruit new talent and how many offers it needs to make to ensure it remains fully staffed.

At the FBI, a field office supervisor can check the model to see how many IT specialist positions are currently vacant and how many are projected to be vacant in three, six and nine months. If the model shows one vacancy now but none in three months, it signals that there are candidates completing their background investigations and the position is on its way to being fully staffed. However, if the model shows vacancies in six or nine months, it tells the manager that there are not enough candidates in the pipeline and to begin the hiring process now, given how long the background investigation can take.

The model also considers the percentage of candidates who do not successfully complete the background investigation, helping supervisors understand how many people they need to interview and how many provisional offers they need to make to fill a single position.

When the FBI's HR team rolled out the model, offices were slow to adopt it and did not always trust what it was telling them.

"We put it out there and the field offices did not know how to use it," said Peter Sursi, senior executive for recruitment and hiring at the FBI. "Hiring ahead of attrition was so alien to everybody's experience and everything they had ever been told."

Gradually, the HR team gained buy-in by making the model more user-friendly, teaching the field offices how to use it, and demonstrating how it can help them keep their mission-critical positions filled—a longstanding challenge for the FBI.

"Now divisions can look at their nine-month attrition forecast and say, 'Well, I don't have a vacancy now, but the model says that I'm going to need a nurse and two evidence techs and three IT specialists in nine months," explained Sursi. "So let me conduct interviews and put those candidates in background now, and they should be landing right about the time those vacancies are being realized."

# Recruiting More Effectively and Efficiently

**T**oo often, government relies on antiquated and inefficient ways of finding and attracting employees rather than experimenting with new approaches. Many agencies struggle to reach the talent they need, including young people and highly qualified candidates to fill mission-critical positions.

According to government data from fiscal 2018, just one in 10 new hires was younger than 25 and roughly 75% were older than 30.[8] While some positions require candidates with years of experience, agencies should give more thought to posting positions and hiring at the entry level and developing employees over time, according to experts who were interviewed.

Further, in a sign that some agencies struggle to recruit top talent, more than half of all competitive examining certificates—the list of applicants presented to hiring managers for consideration—saw no selection made.[9]

The government must think creatively about how it can attract the next generation of talent and be willing to try new approaches. This includes recruiting proactively, promoting its brand, keeping in touch with former employees and making inroads on college campuses.

## Being Proactive

Agencies should proactively seek out and court top-tier candidates rather than posting a job announcement online and hoping people find it and apply. That's especially true for harder-to-fill jobs where government competes with the private sector for talent.

Gwen DeFilippi, assistant deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services at the Air Force, put it this way:

"To get the talent we need, we should really be pursuing people rather than passively accepting applications. As we recruit for data scientists, doctors, nurses, pilots, psychologists or other positions where we're competing head-on with industry, we need to adopt a different strategy. We need to market the fact that you can do cool work

and make a difference in government. To get that message across, we're recruiting proactively."

At the National Institutes of Health, search committees made up of NIH senior leaders and outside experts in the field help the agency recruit for its most senior-level positions. The committees, composed of institute directors and volunteer experts from outside the agency, brainstorm a list of ideal candidates and reach out and encourage them to apply. NIH has found that personal outreach from fellow luminaries can be very effective. Sometimes, even if a candidate initially decides not to apply, a second search committee member will reach out on NIH's behalf and successfully convince them to reconsider.

The FBI has made great strides reaching prospective employees, particularly for its harder-to-fill positions. The agency advertises its openings on social media platforms, searches for candidates at professional conferences and mines resumes on LinkedIn. When the bureau locates a strong resume, a recruiter contacts the author, shares information about the opening, and puts them in touch with the hiring manager.

A few years ago, the FBI collaborated with LinkedIn to understand how its job announcements were resonating with its target audience. It discovered that the way an advertisement was worded appealed to people differently, depending on the industry they were in. The FBI also tested multiple advertisements targeting women for special agent positions to determine which words and images are most effective. Drawing on this new knowledge, the FBI refined and improved how it reaches out to job candidates, and saw the share of female applicants for special agent positions increase by 14 percentage points over the last three years.

"It used to be that a division would create a job announcement, put it online for two weeks, there would be no advertising and whoever hated their job enough and searched our website might apply, but we were not consistently getting good candidates," said Peter Sursi, senior executive for recruitment and hiring at the FBI. "We're doing none of that now, and that's a huge win."

At the Department of Homeland Security, interactive webinars have been an effective way to reach passive jobseekers. The sessions, led by employees from across DHS, introduce people to the department, its mission and

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8   Office of Personnel Management, "FedScope September 2018 Employment Data." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2VObYk8

9   National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, "Inspired to Serve," March 2020, 64. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/31MwIfP

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Peter Sursi
Senior Executive for Recruitment and Hiring
Federal Bureau of Investigation

its current job opportunities. Some webinars are targeted at specific populations, like students or veterans, and the sessions are scheduled during the day and evening to allow potential candidates with varied work schedules to participate. While the webinars are typically scheduled to last between one and two hours, they often go well over time due to a high volume of questions from the audience. Webinars can be an especially effective way to reach candidates while social-distancing and teleworking due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Building and Promoting the Brand

Building brand awareness is an integral part of an effective recruiting strategy.

According to a 2018 survey by the job site Glassdoor, candidates are 40% more likely to apply for a job if they have heard of the company and understand what it does.[10]

A problem facing the federal government is that its reputation is not strong.

In a 2019 Gallup poll, just 25% of Americans reported having a positive view of the federal government.[11] Since

Gallup first began asking the question in 2003, the number has never been higher than 41%. And in a 2019 Axios-Harris poll that asked Americans to rate the reputations of 99 major companies and the federal government, the government ranked dead last, including on issues such as trustworthiness and ethics. Notably, the federal government even trailed Philip Morris, a tobacco company.[12] Just 9% of respondents agreed that government shares their values.

Fortunately, although the federal government writ large is viewed unfavorably, it's possible for agencies to distinguish themselves and build their own brands. In a 2019 Pew Research Center survey, 86% of U.S. respondents reported a favorable opinion of the National Park Service, 81% had a favorable view of NASA and 70% felt positively about the FBI. In fact, of the 16 agencies included in Pew's survey, 14 were viewed more favorably than unfavorably.[13]

Some agencies have tried clever ways to increase their own brand awareness, publicize the essential work they do for the American people, and clear up misperceptions about what it means to work for the government.

The Bonneville Power Administration regularly discusses its work at utility industry trade events and even attends junior high school science fairs to introduce itself to young people.

At the Transportation Security Administration, the agency puts a human face to its work with a section of its website called "Employee Stories."[14] The website tells the stories of employees who have behaved heroically in the line of duty, neutralizing threats at airports or combatting human trafficking. There are also lighthearted stories, including profiles of staff who volunteer at food banks in their free time, dress up as superheroes and visit children in the hospital, and even two TSA canine handlers who got married with their service dogs in attendance.

And to develop the Department of Defense civilian employer brand, the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, which is the DOD civilian human resources policy guidance component, has started to hire more people with skills not traditionally associated with human resources. That includes industrial and organizational psychologists, social media experts and marketing professionals.

One goal is to make sure that jobseekers are aware of all they can do at DOD.

10 Glassdoor, "Glassdoor Survey Finds Candidates are 40 Percent More Likely to Apply for a Job If They Are Familiar with the Company Brand," April 2018. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2BJnxSP

11 Gallup, "Government." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2NV1Q4E

12 Axios and The Harris Poll, "The 100 Most Visible Companies," 2019, 4. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2N7QMku

13 Pew Research Center, "Public Expresses Favorable Views of a Number of Federal Agencies," October 2019. Retrieved from https://pewrsr.ch/3jUDEyb

14 Transportation Security Administration, "Employee Stories." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/31KZBHA

"Our research found that people associate working at DOD with putting on a uniform and carrying a weapon," said Desiree Seifert, associate director for employment integration at DCPAS. "In reality, there are around a million of us who are in the civil service, wear jeans on Friday and support incredibly important missions doing really exciting work that you won't find in the private sector. We want people to know who we are, and we're actively working to take control of our brand."

## Keeping in Touch With Former Employees

One under-tapped source of talent for government might be its former employees.

According to interviews with two private sector companies, Amazon Web Services and Ernst & Young LLP (EY), former employees who left in good standing are often great options when the need to fill a position arises. Not only are former employees known entities, but they are already familiar with the workplace culture and what it takes to thrive on the job.

Alumni events are one way that EY keeps in touch with former employees. Held throughout the country, the gatherings provide an opportunity for old colleagues to reconnect, and for EY's recruiters to engage with alumni who might have good contacts to recommend, or who might like to return to the company themselves.

At Amazon Web Services, the company proactively maintains relationships with alumni, nurturing those connections while also encouraging recommendations for other qualified candidates.

"We already know our alumni have met the Amazon hiring bar, so this talent has proven a strong recruiting source for us," said Bill Beaver, director of talent at Amazon Web Services.

In the federal government, agency alumni groups exist in pockets but could become more widespread and better used. The Food and Drug Administration Alumni Association, launched in 2001, was created to help former employees stay in touch with each other and with the agency. Membership in the association is open to FDA alumni and current employees nationwide, has the support of FDA leadership, and includes among its goals to "assist FDA in recruiting alumni with specialized expertise and institutional knowledge during critical situations."[15]

## Reaching Young People

The federal government often struggles to recruit young people, but some agencies are making inroads.

At the Government Accountability Office, most new entry-level hires are recent college graduates. To maintain a robust talent pipeline, the oversight agency actively engages with colleges and universities.

GAO staff, including senior leaders, maintain relationships with more than 60 schools, conducting on-campus information sessions with students, serving as guest lecturers in the classroom and engaging with campus student groups. To ensure that it's recruiting from diverse talent pools, GAO pays particular attention to campus organizations with members from underrepresented populations. Sometimes, groups of college students will visit GAO headquarters to learn about its work, meeting with the head of the agency, senior executives, and GAO employees who are alumni from their school. This has been an especially effective way for GAO to appeal to young people.

"I can just see the transformation on people's faces when they participate in these sessions," said Deborah Eichhorn, GAO's recruitment program manager. "They walk into the building skeptical about what GAO is and what we do, but they leave feeling energized about our mission and how they can apply the skills they're developing in school."

Like GAO, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation works hard to build relationships on college campuses. The FDIC has a "Corporate Recruitment" program that enlists more than 300 employees to engage with over 600 schools. Interested employees apply to participate in the program, receive training and are assigned to be in contact with a college or university for a period of two to three years. In that time, the corporate recruiters build relationships with professors and career center staff, and attend events on campus or online.

To make it as easy as possible for students to learn about careers at the FDIC, all corporate recruiters have scannable QR codes on their business cards that direct to a private landing page on the FDIC careers website. If there are no vacancies when students scan the code, they can enter their contact information and the agency will reach out when positions become available. While serving as a corporate recruiter, employees continue to perform their regular jobs. To ensure that the responsibility placed upon corporate recruiters is not too great, they are asked to commit no more than 40 hours a year to recruitment-related work.

According to multiple people interviewed, more leeway to hire directly, rather than require candidates to apply through USAJobs, would help agencies bring recent graduates on board. One HR leader put it this way:

"It would allow us to do targeted recruiting, develop better relationships with career counselors, and even collect resumes and interview people on campus. Now, you go to a job fair or hiring event and have to say, 'I can tell you

15  Food & Drug Administration Alumni Association, "About FDAAA." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3f630Fw

about the department, but there's no guarantee I can hire you.' Some colleges have even told us to stop coming."

As part of the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, the DOD obtained the authority to directly appoint a limited number of college students and recent graduates into competitive service positions—an opportunity that was extended to other agencies by the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. Regulations for the civilian agencies, however, have not yet been implemented.

So far, DOD has found the direct hire authority to be helpful in attracting and hiring young people. For example, the Air Force has used this hiring authority to bring its interns onboard full-time once they graduate, and to make on-the-spot offers to highly qualified candidates at job fairs.

"The Air Force is using direct hire authority to compete more effectively with the private sector, especially for employees with science, technology, engineering and math skills," explained Gwen DeFilippi, the agency's assistant deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services.

While college campuses can be a great place to find the next generation of talent, government should consider other sources as well.

In June 2020, President Trump signed an executive order requiring agencies to remove education requirements from job postings unless a degree is required by law (e.g., to practice medicine).[16] The purpose of the executive order is to help government reach candidates who have the skills to do a job but lack a degree—for example, someone who taught themself to code, but never went to college.

The Department of Homeland Security actively and creatively recruits young talent from a variety of backgrounds.

To reach veterans, DHS has a presence on six DOD military installations. The agency's goal is to develop relationships with service members early, even making job offers before they are discharged. And at the Coast Guard Yard, a shipyard operated by the Coast Guard, Baltimore-area high school students participate in summer internships where they learn a variety of skills like welding, metalwork, and even how to repair and install a ship's deck.[17]

"Quite frankly, we're more interested in candidates' aptitude to do the work than whether they have a college degree," explained DHS chief human capital officer Angela

Bailey. "We don't just go to the universities. Our recruiting mentality has been, 'DHS has a job for you, whether fresh out of high school, college or the military. We are looking for dedicated, talented people with lots of potential to grow, rather than a piece of paper.'"

## Recruiting and Hiring More Efficiently

Agencies should strive not only to identify and attract top talent, but to do it as efficiently as possible. Unfortunately, too many agencies rely on antiquated recruiting and hiring practices that overburden HR staff, slow down the hiring process and potentially result in poorer-quality hires.

One way that agencies can be more efficient is by recruiting in bulk, hiring multiple candidates from a single job announcement. Indeed, the practice could be particularly helpful for agencies rushing to add staff in response to COVID-19.

The National Institutes of Health has 27 institutes and centers with unique missions, yet there is some overlap in their talent needs. For example, all or most employ mission-critical staff including contract and IT specialists. Rather than post a job announcement every time an institute or center needs to fill one of these positions, NIH tries to recruit at fixed intervals throughout the year. The agency tells its institutes and centers when it's planning to recruit for a position and asks if they have a need.

By knowing which units might like to make a hire, NIH can tailor the job announcement to include a description of the institute or center and the type of work they do. After the posting closes and the applicants are evaluated, a list of qualified candidates is shared with all 27 institutes and centers, and they are encouraged to schedule interviews and make hires as needed.

Julie Berko, director of NIH's Office of Human Resources, explained the agency's approach this way:

"We hire around 1,200 people a year and it would be silly to do 1,200 separate recruitments. We had to learn to become more efficient than that."

Another way that agencies can recruit more efficiently is to get started sooner, even before there's a vacancy.

At the Air Force, installations are encouraged to keep their position descriptions current, saving valuable time in the event of an unexpected departure.

Other agencies use data to predict which positions will need to be filled in the near-term, and then they post a job advertisement, collect and evaluate applications, and maintain a list of qualified candidates who can be interviewed as soon as a position becomes vacant.

Earlier this year, the FBI launched "Candidates on Demand," a new way to recruit for its non-agent, professional staff positions. Every quarter, the bureau posts job announcements for approximately 20 positions in which some turnover is expected—for example, administrative

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16 The White House, "Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates," Executive Order 13932, June 26, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3g98px1

17 Tina Irgang, "Building a Pipeline of Talent: New Era Academy Students Learned Valuable Skills at Coast Guard Yard This Summer," Port of Baltimore, September/October 2017. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2CSAKtc

assistant—and invites the public to apply. The FBI's HR team reviews the applications, identifies who is qualified and shares that list with divisions across the bureau. If a need arises, hiring managers can review the list of qualified applicants and quickly set up an interview. Qualified applicants who are not selected within three months receive an email asking if they would like to remain on the list. These applicants also have an opportunity to update their resumes to ensure their applications are current.

While getting a head start on recruiting can help agencies narrow the gap between when a position becomes vacant and when it is filled, it's an underutilized practice in government, according to the experts we interviewed. Resistance to change can stand in the way, as can the fear of being punished for trying something new.

"Most organizations will not start the recruiting process until someone walks out the door," said Gwen DeFilippi of the Air Force. "There's a lot of fear that, 'If I start too early, I'm going to get in trouble.' And because of that, we have long gaps ... We should be using the data to become more proactive. If I know I always have three people in a particular position leave every quarter, I should always be prepared to fill three jobs."

Finally, if government is to recruit more efficiently, human resources and program offices must invest time and effort to work better together. HR should learn as much as it can about the program offices, including the work they do and the challenges they face, so it can provide better service. And program offices should take more ownership of talent management, with HR playing a supporting rather than a leading role.

At the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, HR invested in the development of interactive dashboards that help managers identify their future talent needs. The dashboards show each work unit's demographic data, including retirement eligibility by GS level.

"We've tried to equip and empower our supervisors to be more proactive in managing their workforces," said Miriam Cohen, the NRC's chief human capital officer. "We want supervisors to be able to look at the data and say, 'I lead a branch with 10 employees and half of my GS 14s and 15s are eligible to retire. I'd better start planning for my future needs.'"

During the last year and a half, the director of human resources and her deputy met with every scientific director at NIH. The purpose was to learn about the work they do and remind them that the Office of Human Resources is available to help. OHR staff also make the rounds, dedicating a few days each year to visiting other offices and labs. The experience helps NIH's HR professionals do their jobs more effectively.

"Now, when we recruit for a position, we have a better understanding of the work they're going to be doing," said Berko, the OHR director. "We're not just posting words on a piece of paper. We understand it. I think spending that additional time to really understand your customer makes all the difference."

At the Bonneville Power Administration, the human resources team found that it recruited better-quality candidates when hiring managers were engaged in the recruiting process—something that does not always happen in government. Given their familiarity with the job, hiring managers may have ideas about where to find talent. As part of its formal recruitment checklist, BPA's HR specialists ask hiring managers to suggest professional associations, trade groups or other organizations that should receive the job announcement.

> **"Most organizations will not start the recruiting process until someone walks out the door. There's a lot of fear that, 'If I start too early, I'm going to get in trouble.' And because of that, we have long gaps."**

**Gwen DeFilippi**
Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for
Manpower, Personnel and Services
U.S. Air Force

# Developing a Data and Evidence-Based Approach to Recruiting New Talent

In early 2020, the Department of Homeland Security launched its Strategic Marketing, Outreach, and Recruiting Engagement tool, also known as SMORE.

SMORE is a user-friendly platform, developed in-house, which enables DHS and its components to track their recruitment activities in real-time and evaluate the return on investment.

Anytime a DHS component plans to participate in a recruitment event—for example, a career fair on a college campus—it adds the event to a master calendar in the SMORE platform. Components also include information about the event, such as location, target audience and event type.

The calendar has made recruiting at DHS more transparent, efficient and cost-effective. For example, if Customs and Border Protection is registered to attend a career fair in San Diego, Secret Service might notice it on the calendar and ask to join.

After each recruitment activity, components enter additional information into SMORE, including the cost of the event, the promotional material that was distributed and how many people attended. To minimize data entry errors and ensure standardization, SMORE relies on drop-down menus and predetermined response options when possible.

In addition to helping DHS components coordinate more effectively, SMORE provides them with a snapshot of all their recruitment activities over a period of time.

Components can see how many recruitment events they attended in each state or at each school in a quarter or fiscal year. They can track those recruitment activities by event type (e.g., career fair, a professional conference or an informational session), target audience (e.g., interns, cyber professionals, veterans or people from underrepresented groups), and they can see how much money was spent on the events. All the data is visualized in user-friendly interactive dashboards.

"It's all about analytics," said Angela Bailey, the chief human capital officer at DHS. "You can urge components not to limit recruiting to Texas and California, but it can fall on deaf ears. But showing them a map with Texas and California colored dark blue [indicating heavy recruiting] and the rest of the country very pale blue [indicating light recruiting] really drives the point home."

Ultimately, DHS hopes the tool will help it recruit more effectively, yielding better-quality hires.

"Eventually we'll be able to say things like, 'When we recruit and hire from X university, people stay five years. But when we recruit and hire from Y university, they only stay three months,'" Bailey said. "Then we can dig in and find out why. Maybe we're sending the wrong recruiters, or maybe we're targeting the wrong talent pool."

# Selecting the Most-Qualified Candidates and Bringing Them Onboard

If the federal government is to build a workforce with the best talent, it has to do more than persuade top-tier candidates to apply for federal jobs. Government must also select the most-qualified applicants and bring them onboard as quickly and efficiently as possible. Unfortunately, reliance on outdated and poorly designed applicant assessment tools often stands in the way, as does a hiring process that's needlessly cumbersome and lengthy.

## Choosing the Best Applicants

Government can struggle to identify the most qualified candidates from a large pool of applications.

While an executive order released in June 2020 requires agencies to move away from self-assessments, federal job applications have often asked applicants to rate their own knowledge, skills and abilities on a 0-to-5-point scale, and agencies use those self-evaluations to determine which applications advance and which do not.[18] Applicants who overstate their abilities are rewarded while those who answer honestly or conservatively are penalized. Many HR professionals also say that veterans' preference rules as currently designed make it difficult to bring the most-qualified candidates onboard, an issue recently addressed in a report by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service.[19]

To ensure that they're hiring the best candidates, agencies should critically assess how they evaluate their job applicants, change course if necessary, and not be afraid to try something creative and new.

Recently, some agencies experimented with new ways of appraising applicants, generating higher-quality shortlists while continuing to adhere to regulations that give certain candidates preference, such as veterans.

In 2019, the departments of Health and Human Services and Interior participated in a pilot program developed by the Office of Personal Management and the U.S. Digital Service. Rather than asking applicants to assess their own abilities, two subject matter experts independently reviewed each resume and identified which ones adequately reflected the position's required competencies. Next, the subject matter experts conducted phone interviews to further winnow the group. Interview questions were jointly developed by the subject matter experts and human resources. After a list of qualified candidates was compiled, human resources applied veterans' preference and generated a list of applicants for the hiring manager to consider further. The hiring managers could either conduct their own interviews or select candidates based on the interview notes provided by the subject matter experts.[20]

By using subject matter experts rather than self-assessments to evaluate the qualifications of applicants, hiring managers were presented with a list of truly qualified candidates. And because special hiring preference points were applied later in the process, and only after a list of qualified candidates had been compiled, there was less risk that a minimally qualified candidate would leapfrog a much better-qualified candidate.

## Improving the Candidate Experience

The federal government takes an average of 98 days to make a hire—more than twice the time it takes the private sector. In some instances, the process is slowed down by background checks, mandatory medical exams and security clearances. In other cases, bottlenecks and poor communication between hiring managers and HR lead to delays. No matter the reason, a lengthy hiring process is burdensome for job applicants and puts government at risk of losing its best candidates to the faster-moving private sector.

Fortunately, there are steps agencies can take to reduce the time it takes to hire. For example, the Air Force developed a dashboard that shows the status of every job search that's underway, who is responsible for taking the next action, and by what date. The transparency holds staff accountable and helped Air Force cut its time-to-hire by over 40 days.

18 The White House, "Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates," Executive Order 13932, June 26, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3g98px1

19 National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, "Inspired to Serve," March 2020, 64-72. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/31MwIfP

20 U.S. Digital Service, "Subject Matter Expert Qualification Assessments." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2BFydSk

# Improving the Hiring Process With an Interactive Data Dashboard

The Air Force fills between 30,000 and 40,000 positions across 92 installations every year. To bring talent onboard faster and more efficiently, the department created a dashboard to track its open positions.

The dashboard, built with the data visualization software Tableau, shows work units the progress of every open position in the recruiting and hiring process, and identifies who is responsible for taking the next action. That has fostered greater transparency and accountability, and made it easier for the agency to identify and resolve bottlenecks.

For example, a hiring manager can look at the dashboard, see that an open position has yet to be posted on USAJobs, and follow up with human resources. Similarly, a staffing specialist can quickly determine that a hiring manager has taken too long to select candidates to interview and reach out to the hiring manager with a reminder.

"A big reason it takes so long to hire is that people don't have visibility into where things are or who is responsible," said Gwen DeFilippi, assistant deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services at the Air Force. "The dashboard allows us to see where each action is, how long it's been at that stage and when it's supposed to move. And then we can dive in when it's not moving the way it's supposed to."

The dashboard has also enabled the Air Force's human resources team to be more strategic in how it does its work. If the dashboard shows that there is a backlog of positions waiting to be posted on USAJobs, or many positions that have closed and are awaiting resume review, HR managers can assign their staff to prioritize those tasks.

By bringing more transparency, accountability and efficiency to the recruiting and hiring process, the Air Force reduced the average time it takes to fill a position from 120 days to under 80 days as of October 2019.

As with many new initiatives, some staff were initially reluctant to use the tool. Additionally, Air Force officials had to remind its teams that they must update the dashboard every time they complete a step in the recruiting and hiring process. But despite some early resistance, the dashboard has been received favorably. One reason is that it's easy to use.

"Once the tool was launched and people learned how to use it and realized that it's very intuitive, they really began to embrace it," explained DeFilippi. "I'm proud that our staff has become so comfortable using the data to help them do their jobs more effectively."

Other agencies maintain close contact with applicants and move them through the hiring process as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

At the Department of Homeland Security, the hiring process for law enforcement and border protection positions can be arduous, with candidates required by law to take polygraph, medical, hearing and vision exams. To help navigate the process, DHS assigns a staff person to each candidate. Staffers remind candidates to schedule their exams and complete their paperwork, offering to help if needed. The personal touch has paid big dividends, with significantly fewer candidates dropping out of the hiring process. While it once took an average of 300 applicants to find one Border Patrol agent, now it takes approximately 100.

The Air Force is also trying to simplify the applicant experience, allowing candidates who receive tentative job offers to take a drug test, submit their fingerprints, complete a background check and fill out security clearance paperwork during a single visit to an Air Force base. Previously, candidates had to complete the tasks on different days, returning to the base multiple times.

And a couple years ago, the FBI began to periodically email candidates waiting for their background investigations to conclude, reassuring them that they are still being considered for the job and encouraging them to continue to wait.

"Every single person applying to government jobs is also applying to private sector jobs," said Peter Sursi of the FBI. "If the private sector offers an easy and engaging applicant experience and ours stinks, that's a problem. It doesn't kill us to tell people they're still in background, we know it takes forever, please hang in there, and in the meantime here's a video about the FBI that you can watch and something you can read."

Due to COVID-19, the federal government had to rethink how it hires, as social distancing and widespread telework made traditional approaches infeasible. In step with guidance issued by the Office of Personnel Management, many agencies pivoted to online job interviews and virtual onboarding, administering the oath of office and allowing new staff to submit their identification documents electronically rather than in person.[21] In some instances, employees have been permitted to come onboard in a limited capacity before background procedures were completed, such as taking a drug test or providing fingerprints. While made necessary by the pandemic, these changes have helped government streamline and expedite the hiring process and agencies should evaluate what they can make permanent.

At the Veterans Health Administration, the need to quickly hire additional medical professionals to combat COVID-19 forced the agency to shorten the time it takes to bring new staff onboard. Like other agencies, the VHA moved many of its onboarding activities to the virtual realm, but it also thought creatively about how to safely expedite the background investigation process so newly hired employees could begin work sooner. For example, the VHA confirms that its incoming medical professionals have an active license and no history of criminal activity in the healthcare field, and the agency contacts one reference. However, practitioners are permitted to start work before the VHA collects fingerprints, conducts a drug test and a physical exam, and contacts all the new hire's references. The impact of these changes on the time it takes the VHA to hire has been profound. Between the end of March and mid-June 2020, the VHA hired more than 20,000 employees and saw its average time-to-hire drop from 94 days to just 10 to 12 days. Importantly, the VHA has yet to report any malfeasance attributed to its streamlined hiring process.[22]

"[The pandemic] pushed our thinking so hard," said Jessica Bonjorni, VHA's chief officer for workforce management, in an interview with Federal News Network. "Our private sector counterparts are able to onboard very quickly. This pushed us to get to a very similar point to our private sector counterparts. It's going to change the way we hire forever."[23]

21  Office of Personnel Management, "OPM Memorandum On-Boarding Processes for New Employees During the COVID-19 Emergency." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2Cp3HwA

22  Statement of Steven Lieberman, M.D., Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3feUlki

23  Nicole Ogrysko, "VA Says Onboarding Changes Made During the Pandemic Will 'Change the Way We Hire Forever,'" Federal News Network, May 19, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2EDtLVz

# Looking Inward for the Next Generation of Talent

Hiring experienced, full performance-level employees from outside government is one way for agencies to close skills gaps and ensure they have the talent they need to deliver on their missions. But growing talent internally is another approach that agencies should consider. To that end, some agencies have invested in reskilling or upskilling their employees, and others have encouraged staff to develop new skills by doing rotations elsewhere in their agencies, or even in the private sector.[24]

Internships, while underutilized in government, are another effective way to develop the next generation of talent. According to the 2020 federal budget, the number of newly hired student interns fell from about 35,000 in 2010 to approximately 4,000 in 2018.[25] Despite the decline, some agencies recognize the value of bringing interns onboard and have invested heavily in their internship programs.

At the Government Accountability Office, close to half of the agency's new staff are hired as entry-level auditors and analysts, and many were former interns. Of the 749 people GAO hired between 2017 and 2019, 52% were brought on as entry-level auditors and analysts. Of that group, about half had internships with the agency. GAO's internship program serves as an effective talent pipeline because it gives interns an opportunity to do substantive work. Interns are embedded on project teams and work side-by-side with permanent staff. By doing the type of work they would be assigned as entry-level auditors and analysts, interns acquire an unvarnished view of the job, and GAO can evaluate whether the interns would be a good fit.

"Our intern program is an excellent way to bring people into the organization and for everyone to have some assurance that it's a good match," said Jennifer Grover, managing director of GAO's Professional Development Program. "After the interns have worked 10, 12, 14 or 16 weeks at GAO, they have a good understanding of what we do and how we do it, and we also know them very well. That's so important for effective hiring."

Successful programs not only ask interns to do high-value work, but they offer a nurturing work environment. No agency wants to invest in an intern and try to convert them, only to see them accept a job elsewhere.

"We have to remind supervisors that when you hire new employees coming out of school, you can't just say, 'Go read this manual and come back in six weeks and tell me what you've learned.' We need to pair them with good supervisors. We really have to engage them," explained Miriam Cohen of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

At the Air Force, interns work during the summer, are put on leave-without-pay during the academic year and may be brought back and converted once school ends. To persuade interns to return to the agency, the Air Force pays close attention to culture. This includes placing interns with engaging supervisors, and even reminding supervisors to reach out to them during the school year to say happy holidays or good luck on final exams.

Sometimes, interns will perform well but organizations won't have the budget to convert them into permanent employees right away. Interns might also wish to do different work in another part of the organization. To help retain its high-quality talent, the State Department maintains a database of Pathways interns and recent graduates who are eligible for conversion and shares it across the department. If a bureau is looking to hire at the entry level but does not want to participate in a lengthy recruiting process, it can select a candidate from the list, convert them, and quickly fill its hiring need.

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24  Department of Defense, "Inaugural DOD Public-Private Talent Exchange Participants Meet with Under Secretary of Defense," April 25, 2019. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2VQ799Y

25  Office of Management and Budget, "Budget of the United States Government Fiscal Year 2020: Analytical Perspectives." 77. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/33PEIO5

# Bringing Entry-Level Talent Onboard Through Internships and Innovative Hiring Events

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation hires approximately 200 entry-level bank examiners each year, staffing nearly 80 offices across the country. To fill these positions, the FDIC draws heavily on its interns who are part of the Pathways Programs, a federal initiative that provides an often overlooked source of talent for agencies. The agency also hosts innovative hiring events, inviting candidates to FDIC headquarters, providing an overview of the agency, and conducting interviews and assessments before making offers to the top performers.

### Pathways Internship Programs

The FDIC has two Pathways internship programs, one lasting 12 weeks and another that's active year-round. Pathways is a government-wide initiative designed to help agencies recruit and hire well-qualified students and recent graduates by streamlining processes and providing applicants with clear paths to internships and full-time employment, as well as meaningful training, mentoring and career-development opportunities.

The Financial Management Scholars Program is a paid 12-week summer internship. College students majoring in economics, business administration, finance, accounting and related fields attend a one-week orientation at the FDIC's Arlington, Virginia campus before going to work in one of the agency's field offices. Interns team up with experienced FDIC employees and get hands-on training. At the end of the program, interns return to Arlington to present on their work and complete a skills assessment. Interns who perform well may be converted into full-time employees.

The agency also runs the Financial Institution Intern Program, a regional internship that places students from colleges and universities across the country in nearby FDIC field offices. Interns work part- or full-time, depending on their class schedules, often for up to one and a half years, and are eligible to be converted once they graduate.

Both programs have been robust sources of entry-level talent for the agency. Between 2014 and 2018, 54% of FMS interns and 46% of FII interns were converted into entry-level examiners. In the last six years, nearly 40% of all entry-level examiners hired by the FDIC were former interns.

### Innovative Hiring Events

The FDIC also hosts approximately five hiring events each year, another way for the agency to bring entry-level bank examiners onboard.

In the months leading up to a hiring event, the FDIC posts an announcement for bank examiners online through USAJobs. Human resource officials evaluate the applications and identify qualified candidates. A writing assessment is administered and candidates who pass may be invited to the FDIC's headquarters to participate in the hiring event.

Hiring events at the FDIC are more than just an interview. Candidates meet with hiring managers, receive an overview of the bank examiner position and what it's like to work at the FDIC, complete assessments in math and financial analysis, and make an oral presentation.

During the sessions, administrative staff compile interview notes and assessment scores for each candidate. At the end of the hiring event, hiring managers meet with the executive team to review the candidates and decide who will receive job offers. Often, more than 40 selections are made at each event. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FDIC has hosted hiring events virtually, enabling the agency to continue to meet its staffing needs.

# Conclusion

**T**he federal government is at a crossroads. An aging workforce and yawning skills gaps in mission-critical positions underscore the need for government to attract new talent, but it has long struggled to identify its talent needs, recruit effectively and efficiently, hire the best candidates and grow those staff once they are onboard.

As our country works to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, minimize its economic damage and deal with a host of domestic and foreign policy challenges, an effective federal government with a highly competent and skilled workforce is essential.

This report lays out a path forward, describing how agencies should strategically identify their talent needs and recruit more effectively and efficiently by being proactive, promoting their brand, keeping in touch with former employees and targeting young people. It also identifies ways for agencies to hire top-tier applicants by creating a better candidate experience, by using innovative techniques to identify who is most qualified, and by looking inward for the next generation of talent.

The report highlights best practices that agencies can replicate, including the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's comprehensive workforce planning process, the FBI's attrition model, the Department of Homeland Security's interactive webinars targeting passive job seekers, the FDIC's "Corporate Recruitment" approach to reaching college students, NIH's initiative to recruit and hire in bulk, a pilot run by the U.S. Digital Service to better evaluate the applicant pool, and a first-rate intern program at the GAO.

The strategies described in this report can be adopted by agencies today without new regulations or legislation. But targeted action by the Office of Personnel Management and Congress could help even further.

For example, to help agencies build the next generation of talent, OPM should issue regulations as soon as possible so agencies can begin using the direct hire authority for students and recent graduates granted in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act. Congress should expand the authority by eliminating the cap on how often it can be used.

To equip agencies to hire faster and more efficiently, OPM could help agencies share information about their Pathways interns who are eligible for conversion, as well as other individuals with noncompetitive eligibility or competitive status for federal employment. And OPM should issue a final regulation as soon as possible allowing former federal employees to noncompetitively return to federal service at the GS level they are qualified for rather than the level they had attained when they left.

Human capital management should be prioritized throughout the government, with OPM, Congress, HR specialists and agency leaders at all levels making workforce recruitment and hiring a high priority. It should be on the agendas of those in the Trump administration planning for a second term as well as Democrat Joseph Biden's presidential transition team.

Our hope is that this report and the accompanying talent pipeline data dashboard inspire stakeholders to think differently about management of the federal workforce and try new approaches, adopt innovative practices and regularly measure their performance.

By acting today, agencies can ensure that they will have a world-class workforce onboard that will deliver for the American people for years to come.

# Appendix I
## Talent Pipeline Dashboard

As agencies think creatively about human capital management and how to bring the next generation of public servants onboard, we recommend they develop and implement talent pipeline dashboards. Dashboards are easy to read, provide data in relatively real-time, chart important trends and enable users to make informed decisions.

While the Office of Personnel Management currently supplies some hiring data to agencies on an annual basis, dashboards can be owned by agency human resources offices. While many agencies have not invested in such systems, this report helps make the business case and demonstrate the need.

A talent dashboard can be reconfigured for different human resource stakeholders. For instance, an agency deputy secretary may want to receive a version that is updated monthly with such items as the time to hire, the intern conversion rate and diversity data, while a hiring manager may want selected information updated quarterly.

The federal government is a large organization with diverse talent needs and challenges. Our proposed dashboard presents items that are most critical and replicable across the government, and the majority of the measures can be retrieved from human resources information systems.

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### Recommended Dashboard

1. **Overall vacancy rate.** This should measure full-time equivalent employees onboard/full-time equivalent employees authorized.

   *Frequency of updates:* Monthly.

   *Why this measure:* A high vacancy rate may indicate a problem with an agency's pipeline. The agency could be struggling to attract high-quality candidates, or its hiring cannot keep up with turnover.

   a. Optional: Senior Executive Service vacancy rate.
   b. Optional: Mission-critical occupations vacancy rate.

2. **Time to hire.** Defined by the date the hiring need is validated to the acceptance date of the tentative offer.

   *Frequency of updates:* Monthly.

   *Why this measure:* While speed should not be sacrificed over all other metrics, the length of time it takes to hire an employee is often far too long, making this metric hard to ignore.

   a. Optional: Time to hire is defined by the date the hiring need is validated to the entrance-on-duty date.

3. **Turnover before one year.**

   *Frequency of updates:* Monthly.

   *Why this measure:* This is an indicator of the quality of hiring, particularly since in most cases the employee has not completed the probationary period before one year.

4. **Percentage of all unfilled job announcements.**

   *Frequency of updates:* Monthly.

   *Why this measure:* This metric not only indicates that limited resources have been wasted on preparing and posting unfilled positions, but it also means the agency has not met its implicit promise to job seekers—that a job posted on USAJobs is a job worth applying for and will be filled.

   a. Optional: Percentage of all unfilled external job announcements.
   b. Optional: Percentage of all unfilled merit promotional (internal to the government) job announcements.

5. **Hiring manager's satisfaction with the hiring process using question No. 1 [CHCO Manager's Satisfaction Survey](#)**

   *Frequency of updates:* Monthly.

   *Why this measure:* Hiring managers are a key human resources customer and their satisfaction with the process must be considered.

6. **Results of FEVS question No. 21:** "My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills."

   *Frequency of updates:* Annually.

   *Why this measure:* This measure is a way to understand how a broader range of customers perceive the outcome of the recruitment and staffing process.

7. **Percentage of interns compared to full-time equivalent employees and intern conversion rate.**

   *Frequency of updates:* Biannually.

   *Why this measure:* Internships are a key talent pipeline for most organizations. It's important for an organization to know, as a percentage of its overall workforce, how many interns it currently employs as well as how many interns it converts to full-time jobs.

8. **Percentage of employees under 30 compared to full-time equivalent employees.**

   *Frequency of updates:* Biannually.

   *Why this measure:* The federal workforce is aging, with a wave of retirements threatening to further stretch staffing capabilities. For more detailed information, please see the report.

9. **Diversity of new hires.**

   *Frequency of updates:* Biannually.

   *Why this measure:* The federal government should reflect the country's diverse backgrounds. Diversity expands perspective, improves decision-making, and ultimately leads to better organizational performance.

   a. Ethnicity and race.
   b. Gender.
   c. Disability.
   d. Veteran status.

10. **Does your organization have at least one employee devoted full-time to active recruitment activities such as building employee value propositions, attending career fairs or building relationships with colleges?**

   *Frequency of updates:* Annually.

   *Why this measure:* Our research reveals a striking difference in the extent to which agencies actively recruit candidates. While recruitment can be done by employees as a collateral duty, we strongly advocate that each organization have at least one employee devoted full-time to this activity.

**Model Dashboard**

# Agency Name

**Overall Vacancy Rate**

## ##%

**Results of FEVS question No. 21**

**Time to Hire**

## ##

**Interns**

Interns        Full Time Staff

Intern Conversion Rate: ##%

**Turnover Before One Year**

## ##

**Employees Under 30**

Under 30        50 and Over

**Unfilled Job Announcements**

## ##

**Diversity of New Hires**

White        People of Color

**Hiring Manager's Satisfaction**

## ##
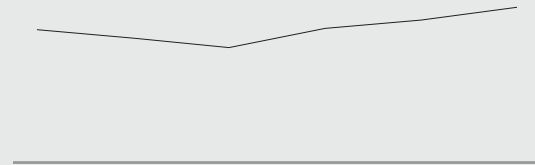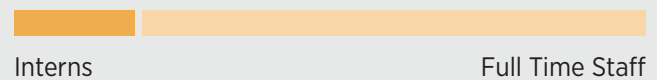
**Does your organization have at least one employee devoted full-time to active recruitment activities such as building employee value propositions, attending career fairs or building relationships with colleges?**

YES / NO

# Appendix II
## Acknowledgments

The individuals listed below generously offered their input on this study. We greatly appreciate their time and counsel. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the views of those with whom we spoke. Additionally, the views of participating federal officials do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the federal government or its agencies.

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