



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

OUR VISION FOR A BETTER GOVERNMENT

Our reform agenda outlines five foundational reforms to improve government performance, support the federal workforce and rebuild public trust. In these documents, we'll dive deeper into the five priorities.

Read the full agenda at: bit.ly/3SWWxnd



PRIORITY 2

MAKE IT EASIER TO HIRE AND KEEP GREAT PUBLIC SERVANTS

The 2 million federal employees who work across the country to serve the public are the backbone of our federal government. Hired based on their qualifications and skills, they design, develop and deliver services that connect agencies with the people they serve and ensure our government fulfills its mission to make our country safer, healthier and more prosperous.

However, the federal government struggles to recruit, hire and retain this talent, hamstringing agencies' ability to meet public needs.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH FEDERAL HIRING?

Solving the complex demands of our nation requires a professional workforce filled with highly skilled individuals who have diverse backgrounds and experiences. Unfortunately, federal recruitment is hamstrung by a difficult hiring process that is not user-friendly, causing federal agencies to miss out on qualified individuals who want to serve their country.

Agencies and applicants alike run into barriers throughout the hiring process. To start, the system itself is broken—outdated hiring laws and many workarounds with numerous exceptions make it difficult to understand and implement a good hiring process.

It's also slow, taking an average of roughly 101 days for agencies to hire someone—more than twice the time it takes in the private sector. Applicants typically do not receive clear communication about what the process entails or where they stand. This keeps applicants in limbo, increasing the likelihood they will accept other job offers, and leaves agencies with key talent gaps.

Finally, the application process asks the wrong questions—many agencies assess applicants based on how they self-rank their own skills and abilities, which often results in candidates portraying themselves as experts in everything even when they are not. This causes human resource managers to waste time on sifting through applicants and forces hiring managers to consider unqualified applicants.

Recommendations for Improving the Hiring Process



Make hiring a top priority for agencies and their leaders

THE CHALLENGE

Fixing the federal hiring process requires a culture change at all levels of the federal government. Decades of inadequate investment in federal human resources has stymied innovation, causing agencies to rely on ineffective and manual processes that slow hiring.

SOLUTIONS

People are the most important part of an organization—and this should be prioritized by leaders in strategic planning efforts, budgeting and agency performance evaluations. Leadership support should be backed by investments in agency human resource offices, the foundation of agency hiring and human capital management. Effective resourcing, training, evaluation, technology improvements and automation for these offices would signal a priority shift and lead to better overall experiences for all involved in the hiring process. Agency leaders should also direct customer experience specialists to evaluate current hiring processes to create a more effective system that works better for applicants, hiring managers and HR specialists.



Prioritize recruiting early-career talent

THE CHALLENGE

The federal workforce is aging and the government needs an infusion of younger, highly qualified workers – but recent data makes clear it is struggling to hire them. Today, just 7.5% of the full-time federal workforce is younger than 30 and 42% of federal workers are older than 50, compared with 20% and 33% in the broader labor market, respectively.

SOLUTIONS

Strategies to recruit and retain younger talent include increasing the caps on direct hire authority for students and recent graduates, building an ROTC-like program for federal service, and expanding the use of term and temporary appointments. Agencies should also work with educational institutions, apprenticeship programs and other nondegree programs to recruit a broad range of talented early career individuals. In addition, agencies, the Office of Personnel Management and Congress should work together to increase participation in the Pathways Programs, build a database of conversion-eligible interns for agencies to select from and create a new hiring mechanism that permits conversion of high-performing interns from qualified third-party internship providers to full-time service.



Implement skills-first hiring

THE CHALLENGE

The federal hiring process is hampered by an inefficient skills-by-proxy system, built upon self-assessments and reliance on four-year college degrees. This results in unnecessary layers of additional work for HR and hiring managers, who must sift through potentially unqualified candidates, slowing the hiring process further—and it negatively impacts applicants who will not have an opportunity to showcase their skills.

SOLUTIONS

Agencies should transition away from self-assessments and focus on determining if a candidate has the right skills for the job. Agency HR offices should work with hiring managers and subject matter experts to create and use assessments that allow candidates to demonstrate their relevant skills. Approved assessments should be placed in a cross-agency database for use in future hiring actions. Once agencies hire a candidate, they should share the remaining applicants with other agencies so that mission-critical positions are filled and qualified talent isn't left on the table. Greater attention must be given to implementation, as transitioning to a skills-first approach to hiring requires investment from agency leaders, collaboration between hiring managers and HR offices, and consistent guidance from OPM.

Additional Reforms

USE TELEWORK AND REMOTE WORK TO RECRUIT A QUALIFIED AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE

Congress and agencies should work collaboratively to establish a modern framework that provides remote and teleworking opportunities for federal employees, one that is driven by productivity, data and mission delivery. This framework should distinguish telework from remote work, set remote work protections, build in employee accountability and establish interactive training for managers and supervisors on how to manage remote employees and teleworkers.

SET THE RIGHT STANDARD FOR DIRECT HIRE AUTHORITY

The standard for justifying direct hire authority—the ability to bypass many of the steps required during the regular hiring process—should be lowered to a “shortage of highly qualified” candidates. Additionally, agencies—who know their workforce needs best—should have latitude to use direct hire authority without prior OPM permission, although OPM should maintain its ability to audit how agencies use the authority and revoke permission if they misuse it.

CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE SECURITY CLEARANCE PROCESS

Applicants are often in the dark about where they stand in the security clearance process. Hiring reform efforts should prioritize simplified processes and data sharing so that HR and security offices are constantly communicating an applicant's status throughout the hiring action. Also, reciprocity—whereby the agency hiring an individual recognizes a clearance granted by another agency—should be fully implemented.

UPGRADE USAJOBS

OPM, in coordination with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council, should prioritize agency job posting requirements that mandate accurate job titles, plain language position summaries and details on the expected hiring timeframe. Agencies should also focus on enabling automated notifications to candidates, updating them on their status throughout the hiring process.

Research and Resources

- [A Time for Talent: Improving Federal Recruiting and Hiring](#)
- [Rapid Reinforcements: Strategies for Federal Surge Hiring](#)
- [Post and Pursue: Improving federal hiring using data and targeted recruitment](#)
- [Opening Doors, Building Ladders: How Federal Agencies Can Hire and Retain Californians Who Do Not Have a Four-year Degree](#)
- [Renewing America's Civil Service](#)
- [The Weakest Link: How Strengthening Assessment Leads to Better Federal Hiring](#)
- [Tech to Hire: Transforming Federal HR: Beginning with Recruiting and Hiring](#)