

Chance to Compete Act of 2024 Consolidated Report to Congress

Public Law 118-188



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Introduction

The *Chance to Compete Act of 2024* (Public Law 118–188) (the *Act*) requires the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to submit reports to Congress beginning in 2025. This consolidated report satisfies the Act’s reporting requirements and is organized into three parts:

1. **Feasibility Study on the Sharing and Customization of Assessments** (Section 3(d)(2))
2. **Minimal Educational Requirements for Competitive Service Positions** (Section 4(a) and (b))
3. **Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report**, including the **Implementation Report** (Section 5(a) and (b))

Together, these sections provide a comprehensive overview of OPM’s implementation of the Act and its efforts to strengthen fairness, efficiency, and merit-based practices in Federal hiring.

Since enactment, Federal agencies have continued the shift from degree-based qualifications to skills- and competency-based hiring, consistent with both the Act and vision established under the Trump Administration through Executive Order (E.O.) 13932, “*Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates*.” E.O. 13932 marked a significant reform in Federal hiring by directing agencies to evaluate applicants based on job-related knowledge, skills, competencies, and abilities rather than educational credentials. Early implementation has improved General Schedule qualifications policy by integrating assessment use and leveraged validated tools such as USA Hire Standard Assessments, which measure general competencies to support merit-based hiring decisions. The next phase, aligned with E.O. 14170 “*Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*,” emphasizes that agencies implement, to the greatest extent possible, technical and alternative assessments as required by the Act that are grounded in rigorous job analysis and that can be applied consistently across agencies.

On May 29, 2025, the White House Domestic Policy Council and OPM issued the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) as directed by E.O. 14170. The Merit Hiring Plan operationalizes the Chance to Compete Act and both aforementioned Executive Orders by restoring accountability, reinforcing adherence to merit system principles, and modernizing recruitment to remove outdated barriers. It reaffirms that Federal employment must be based on skills, integrity, and service to the American people. OPM continues to advance this effort through targeted resources, complimentary training, and implementation guidance that promote the consistent use of valid, job-related assessments across agencies.

While many agencies have made measurable progress in eliminating self-report assessment questionnaires, there is a need for sustained investment in the development, validation and sharing of technical and alternative assessments. OPM will continue to coordinate implementation of the Merit Hiring Plan to ensure that E.O.s 13932 and 14170, together with the Act, collectively achieve their shared goal: A Federal workforce selected on true merit and equipped with the skills needed to deliver excellence in service to our nation.

Chance to Compete Act and Merit Hiring Plan Crosswalk

The Merit Hiring Plan (MHP) operationalizes the statutory requirements of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024. Where the Act establishes statutory mandates, the MHP provides government-wide implementation timelines, procedures, and accountability mechanisms to ensure agencies meet those mandates.

Chance to Compete Act Requirement	How the Merit Hiring Plan Implements It
Section 3(c)(1) – 18-Month Transition Plan	Establishes the government-wide transition plan and milestones for shifting to technical assessments.
Section 3(c)(2) – Preference for Technical Assessments	Directs agencies to immediately prioritize technical and alternative assessments.
Section 3(c)(3) – Mandatory Technical Assessments	Requires one validated technical/alternative assessment for all competitive hiring processes.
Section 3(c)(4) – Waiver Process	Outlines justification and OPM oversight for any exceptions.
Section 3(d)(2) – Feasibility Study	MHP actions on shared certificates and standardized assessments will inform feasibility requirements.
Section 3(e) – Agency Talent Teams	Requires establishment of Agency Talent Teams across all agencies.
Section 3(f) – OPM Federal Talent Team	Establishes OPM Talent Team for government-wide leadership and oversight.
Section 4(a) – Review of Educational Requirements	Reinforces reduction of unnecessary degree requirements and adoption of skills-based criteria.
Section 4(b)(1) – Findings & Recommendations	Drives modernization of 600+ qualification standards aligned with Federal Workforce Competency Initiative models.
Section 5(a) – Annual Report Requirements	Mandates quarterly reporting and supports OPM’s annual assessments report to Congress.
Section 5(b) – Implementation Report	Establishes metrics needed for the required implementation report.
Section 5(c) – Public Transparency	Supports dashboards and public reporting on hiring and assessment outcomes.

Part I. Feasibility Study and Sharing Technical Assessments for Positions in the Competitive Service

Pursuant to Section 3(d)(2) of the Chance to Compete Act of 2024, OPM has developed a preliminary framework for the required feasibility study and plans to undertake the cross-agency coordination necessary to complete this work in parallel with ongoing Merit Hiring Plan implementation activities. The feasibility study requires substantial government-wide engagement, technical analysis, and assessment of the feasibility, cost, and resource requirements associated with developing an online platform to enable the sharing and customization of technical assessments across Federal agencies. OPM remains fully committed to meeting the requirements of the Act and to advancing merit-based hiring practices across the Federal Government. OPM will continue to keep Congress apprised of its progress and will submit the results of the feasibility study in the next annual report.

Part II. Minimal Educational Requirements for Positions in the Competitive Service

Reducing Reliance on Educational Credentials, Advancing Skills-Based Hiring and Report on Hiring Practices

In accordance with Section 4(a) of the Act, OPM continues to lead government-wide reforms that replace degree-based qualification standards with skills- and competency-based hiring practices. Since enactment of the Act and E.O. 13932, OPM has conducted systematic reviews of existing qualification standards to reevaluate or revalidate positive education requirements, ensuring that education is required only when legally necessary for job performance or professional licensure.

OPM has implemented significant updates across multiple occupational series and has revised the General Schedule (GS) Qualifications Operating Handbook to emphasize competency-based assessments. Through the Federal Workforce Competency Initiative (FWCI), OPM has updated general competency models for more than 200 occupational series and developed technical competency models for the Information Technology Management (2210) series. The completed qualifications pilot for 2210 positions integrates classification and assessment policy with FWCI data. OPM is developing technical skills-based assessments and structured interview materials to support consistent evaluation of applicants for these positions. OPM is also leveraging artificial-intelligence-enabled tools to enhance the accuracy and objectivity of classification and qualification development.

These initiatives establish a scalable framework for skills-based hiring across the Federal workforce. To advance this modernization, OPM has set the following milestones:

- By the end of FY 2026: Complete the first phase of updates to more than 300 occupational series in the GS system, aligning qualification and classification standards with a skills-based approach.
- By the end of FY 2027: Complete a second phase updating an additional 300+ series across the GS and Federal Wage System.

Looking ahead, OPM is undertaking further efforts to simplify and clarify the hiring process to better meet the needs of agencies and applicants. These efforts include modernizing the definition of “competitive examination” to reflect skills identification and competency-based hiring, encouraging

greater use of shared certificates to streamline hiring and expand access to qualified applicant pools, and removing artificial barriers that limit effective talent management.

In implementing these reforms, OPM is ensuring that qualification standards and hiring practices remain fully consistent with Section 4 of the Act by grounding employment decisions in demonstrated skills, knowledge, and competencies. These actions strengthen the merit system and improve the Federal Government's ability to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce.

Recommendations

In accordance with Section 4(b) of the Act, OPM offers the following recommendations based on its review of minimum educational requirements and its assessment of government-wide hiring practices. Consistent with the findings of OPM's review under Section 4(a), OPM recommends removing or revising minimum educational requirements in occupational series where job analysis does not demonstrate that formal education is necessary for successful job performance.

OPM further recommends expanding the use of technical and competency-based assessments as alternatives to degree requirements and aligning qualification standards with demonstrable skills, knowledge, and abilities. These actions will strengthen the transition to skills-based hiring and reinforce the merit system principles.

1. Modernize Qualification Standards

- Complete the review and revision of outdated qualification standards to remove unnecessary education requirements and emphasize practical, job-related skills and competencies. Updated standards will support the government-wide transition to skills-based hiring by the end of FY 2027, promoting consistency and transparency in assessing and hiring talent through validated, job-relevant competencies rather than traditional proxies.
- Update classification standards for more than 600 occupational series across the General Schedule (GS) and Federal Wage System (FWS) by the end of FY 2027.

2. Accelerate Development and Deployment of Technical Assessments

- Agencies adopt readily available USA Hire Standard Assessments for job-related general competencies that complement technical, job-specific assessments. This will promote government-wide efficiency, standardization, and quality control for assessing fundamental competencies across occupational series.
- Agencies adopt the USA Hire platform to deliver technical job-specific assessments and work with OPM to evaluate potential technical assessments for validity and appropriate use.
- OPM develops and/or procures valid, technical skill assessments for targeted occupational series, including high-volume occupations such as information technology, human resources, and program management, to promote efficiency and consistency government-wide.
- OPM develops additional assessment-related technology tools to support wider deployment of technical skill assessments (e.g., technology for scalable delivery and scoring of Accomplishment Records and structured interviews).

3. Strengthen Agency Capacity and Expertise

- OPM and agencies increase technical expertise—particularly Industrial-Organizational Psychologists—to support the development, validation, and implementation of assessments.

- OPM and agencies continue to provide training for HR professionals, subject-matter experts, and hiring managers in the valid application of structured assessment methods (e.g., structured interviews, structured resume reviews).
 - OPM expands the Subject Matter Expert Qualification Assessments (SME-QA) Train-the-Trainer program to ensure every agency can maintain a cadre of SME-QA Master Trainers to train HR Professionals across their agency in including subject matter experts (SMEs) as part of the assessment method(s) used for hiring.
 - Agency Talent Teams and the OPM Talent Team continue to coordinate closely to share best practices and strengthen cross-agency collaboration.
4. Enhance Data Transparency and Accountability
- Develop a comprehensive Merit Hiring Plan Dashboard to monitor implementation progress and complement the Federal Hiring Assessment and Selection Outcome Dashboard.
 - Continue quarterly publication of hiring assessment data to track agency progress and encourage consistent use of valid assessments.
 - Monitor agency Merit Hiring Plan (MHP) reports on assessment outcomes to enable evidence-based policy and oversight.
5. Sustain Leadership and Strategic Coordination
- Strengthen collaboration through the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, interagency working groups, and Communities of Practice.
 - Secure the necessary funding, staffing, and analytics capacity to support ongoing development of assessments, modernization of qualification standards, and operation of Talent Teams across Government.

Part III. FY 2025 Annual Report and Implementation Report

FY 2025 Assessment Usage in the Competitive Service Summary

In May 2025, OPM established the [Federal Hiring Assessment and Selection Outcome Dashboard](#), a public-facing dashboard that tracks assessment use across 23 of the 24 Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act agencies¹. This Federal Hiring Dashboard is sourced from Monster Government Solutions and USA Staffing for competitive service announcements posted on USAJOBS.gov and OPM is continually working with both Monster and USA Staffing to provide quarterly updates and other relevant data. Consistent with E.O.s 14173, *Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity*, and 14151, *Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing*, and the Merit Hiring Plan, this dashboard does not include applicant demographic indicators; the dashboard does provide comparability and trendline comparisons through the various filter options available for vacancy type, appointment type, agency and bureau, job series, job title, pay plan/grade, and selection outcomes for the various assessment method(s).

¹ The Federal Hiring Assessment and Selection Outcome Dashboard provides data for hires into the Competitive Service (Delegated Examining (DE) and Merit Promotion (MP)), which represents a slice of overall agency data. This dashboard includes 23 of the 24 CFO Act agencies and their sub-agencies/bureaus (Note: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and other sub-agencies/bureaus (e.g., the Transportation Security Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration) are excluded as 100 percent of their positions are in the excepted service).

Key Insights:

- **Predominant Use of Self-Report Assessments in FY 2025:** Across both Delegating Examining (DE) and Merit Promotion (MP) processes, self-report questionnaires remained the principal tool for applicant evaluation, accounting for more than 84 percent of announcements and selections in both categories.
- **Gradual Growth in Alternative Assessments:** Both DE and MP processes demonstrated measurable increases in the use of additional assessments: 8.23 percent for DE and 5.52 percent for MP, reflecting a growing emphasis on skills-based evaluation methods.
- **Shift Toward Competency-Based Hiring:** The increased use of structured interviews, technical assessments, and structured resume reviews indicates agencies are aligning hiring practices with the Act, which mandates the use of job-relevant technical and alternative assessments.

Delegated Examining (DE) Announcements:

- In FY 2025, the self-report assessment questionnaire remained the dominant evaluation tool in Federal hiring through Delegated Examining announcements. Approximately 91.23 percent (41,386) of DE announcements relied solely on self-report questionnaires, and 92.5 percent (44,156) of selections were made from these postings.
- In FY 2025, 8.77 percent (3,977) of DE announcements incorporated additional assessments, and 1.36 percent (619) did not use self-report questionnaires at all. Approximately 7.5 percent (3,604) of selections were made from announcements that included other forms of assessments.
- From FY 2025 Q1 (October–December 2024) to Q4 (July–September 2025), the use of additional assessments increased by 8.23 percent overall and 5.52 percent specifically for Structured Resume Reviews. Structured interviews, job knowledge tests, and work-simulation interviews were the most frequently used alternatives, reflecting early adoption of competency-based evaluation tools and a shift toward more structured, skill-focused methods for assessing candidate qualifications.

OPM will continue to monitor progress and develop guidance for agencies to help them achieve full compliance and provide access to high quality technical assessments that will push reform momentum across the federal hiring landscape. OPM expects to phase out self-assessments for rating and ranking (except for narrow categories of jobs such as seasonal, temporary, Federal Wage System, and below GS-5) in Q2 of FY 2026, and to move to much greater usage of technical and alternative assessments by Q2 of FY 2026.

OPM and Agency Talent Teams

In alignment with 5 U.S.C. § 3304(e) under the Act, agencies established Talent Teams to enhance examinations, improve the hiring experience, share high-quality certificates of eligible applicants, and facilitate hiring for competitive service positions. OPM also created a central Talent Team to lead and coordinate agency efforts, provide complimentary training, develop tools and guides, and support the development of technical assessments.

As of September 30, 2025, the number of Agency Talent Teams expanded from 24 CFO Act agencies to 154 agencies, representing more than 1,000 members across government. Key FY 2025 accomplishments include: conducting *Talent Team Community of Practice* meetings, hosting multiple webinars on hiring modernization topics, developing new hiring resources, delivering SME-QA Train-the-Trainer sessions to 53 agency master trainers all to help with successful implementation of the Merit Hiring Plan.

Agency Examination Practices for Filling Positions in the Competitive Service

In accordance with Section 5(a) of the Act, OPM surveyed Federal agencies in 2025 to evaluate progress in implementing skills-based assessment practices and to identify challenges and opportunities for improvement. These survey results established a baseline of agency activity prior to full implementation of the Merit Hiring Plan.

The survey found that 68 percent of responding agencies used more than one assessment method in their hiring processes. Agencies employed a range of assessment types, including custom technical-skills assessments, off-the-shelf tools such as those available in USA Hire, and subject-matter-expert (SME) evaluations. Usage varied by agency type:

- 90 percent of CFO Act agencies reported using multiple assessments;
- 61 percent of non-CFO Act agencies did so; and
- 69 percent of Offices of Inspector General (OIGs) reported using multiple assessments.

Of the 117 agencies that responded, more than one-third reported that they did not use pooled hiring or shared certificates during FY 2024. Agencies cited several challenges to expanding their use of technical or alternative assessments, pooled hiring, and shared certificates. The most frequently reported challenges were:

- Identifying appropriate assessment types for specific hiring actions (21 percent of agencies); and
- Determining when to use pooled hiring or shared certificates (21 percent of agencies).

These challenges were most pronounced among CFO Act agencies, where 38 percent reported difficulty identifying suitable assessments, and 43 percent cited uncertainty about applying pooled hiring or shared certificates.

In addition to the challenges above, agencies do not have the expertise in house to develop defensible technical assessments. Based on agency self-reported data, as of FY 2025 Q4, 15 percent of the 117 agencies participating in the Merit Hiring Plan implementation have Industrial and Organizational Psychologists on staff dedicated to development and implementation of assessment tools necessary to expand the use of valid assessments in the hiring process.

This survey provides the baseline data required under Section 5(a) to evaluate agency progress in adopting skills-based and competency-based assessments. The findings demonstrate meaningful advancement toward the Act's objectives. OPM continues to oversee and assist agencies to ensure that every agency can implement validated, job-related assessment methods consistent with merit system principles.

Pooled Hiring and Shared Certificates

OPM continues to expand the use of pooled hiring through shared certificates using OPM-led Cross-Government hiring and agency-led Competitive Service Act of 2015 (CSA) hiring to drive economies of scale and increase efficiencies in the hiring process.

- Since FY 2024, OPM has conducted 13 Cross-Government hiring actions, resulting in 53 selections across 11 occupations.
- Using hiring process flexibilities granted through the CSA, agencies have shared 27 certificates with other agencies, resulting in 65 selections.
- In FY 2026 and beyond, these enterprise hiring strategies will be OPM's main approach to streamline and reduce time-to-hire and administrative burden, resulting in faster onboarding of qualified candidates and improved support for agency workforce needs.

Use of Assessments

The Act mandates that Federal agencies incorporate skills-based and competency-based technical assessments into all competitive hiring processes. In FY 2025, OPM developed an assessment strategy for advancing the Merit Hiring Plan.

- Directed agencies that by September 30, 2025, self-evaluation assessments may no longer be used for rating and ranking candidates. Self-evaluation assessments are allowed only for minimum qualification and eligibility checks (except for GS-01–GS-04 or with explicit OPM approval).
- Each hiring process must include at least one technical or alternative assessment prior to issuing a certificate of eligibles.

OPM has strongly encouraged agencies to use USA Hire for skills-based assessments. USA Hire Standard assessments integrate with USA Staffing, covered 135 job series in FY 2025, and will be expanded in January 2026 to provide technical assessments of general competencies for all occupational series in the General Schedule. USA Hire is an OPM program offering content and capability to implement:

- Standard Assessments (general competencies such as Reasoning, Interpersonal Skills, Decision-Making, Teamwork by grade/series)
- Specialized Assessments (e.g., Federal Supervisor Assessment for Federal supervisor and manager hiring; Executive Assessment for Senior Executive Service hiring; Writing Skills Assessment, Program/Project Management Assessment, Data Skills Assessment, Wage Grade Apprentice Assessment)
- Custom Assessments tailored to agency missions
- Structured Interviews

In addition, OPM encourages the use of the Structured Resume Review function integrated into USA Staffing. Agencies can either use existing validated OPM assessment instruments such as those referenced above or develop/procure their own compliant assessments.

Through sustained leadership, data transparency, and agency collaboration, OPM will continue to advance the principles of fairness, accountability, and excellence in public service envisioned by the *Chance to Compete Act of 2024*.



U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Workforce Policy and Innovation
1900 E Street NW, Washington DC 20415

[OPM.gov](https://www.opm.gov)