

Chance to Compete Act of 2024 Governmentwide Implementation Plan for Transition to Technical Assessments



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I. Introduction

The Federal Government's transition to skills-based hiring reflects sustained, bipartisan efforts to modernize hiring practices. Initial reforms to expand the use of skills-based assessments began in prior Administrations and have since been advanced through the [Chance to Compete Act of 2024](#) (Public Law 118-188) (Act) and the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) (MHP) issued on May 29, 2025.

The Act requires federal agencies to incorporate skills- and competency-based technical assessments into the hiring process. In accordance with Section 3(c)(3)(A) of the Act, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is submitting this government-wide implementation plan to transition federal hiring practices from predominant reliance on self-reported assessments (i.e., occupational questionnaires) to the expanded use of technical assessments by the end of 2027.

This plan addresses three statutory requirements:

1. prioritization of job classifications
2. timeline for full implementation
3. identification of resource requirements

The MHP serves as the primary implementation framework for this effort, supported by broader government-wide hiring modernization initiatives. It advances skills-based hiring by reinforcing job analysis, providing agencies with assessment guidance, and strengthening subject-matter expert (SME)-driven evaluation of candidates. The MHP also prioritizes high-volume and mission-critical occupations (MCOs), builds agency capacity, and establishes milestones for phased implementation. Interagency coordination is supported through established governance structures such as the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council and OPM and Agency Talent Teams, with oversight maintained through hiring metrics and workforce analytics.

Agency staffing plans, as required by [Executive Order 14356](#) “*Ensuring Continued Accountability in Federal Hiring*,” and submitted to OPM annually, are a core mechanism for operationalizing implementation. Through the annual staffing plan process, agencies identify priorities, assessment strategies, and workforce needs, establishing a shared understanding of hiring demand government-wide. Staffing plan reviews create a structured forum for OPM to engage agencies on technical assessment adoption, interest in shared certificates and cross-government hiring, barriers to USA Hire adoption, and alignment with merit-based hiring requirements. Information gathered through staffing plans informs OPM's prioritization framework, resource planning, training efforts, and ongoing implementation guidance. Monthly agency reports on actual hiring enable OPM to monitor progress towards skills-based hiring goals and adjust implementation support accordingly.

OPM's implementation strategy leverages government-wide assessment tools, such as USA Hire, to enable agencies to implement technical assessments at a scale. In addition to government-wide assessments, agencies may develop or procure off-the-shelf and third-party assessments for highly




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technical roles such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and data science. These efforts integrate policy, existing infrastructure, and governance to support consistent adoption of technical assessments across the Federal Government over the three-year transition period.

II. Prioritization of Job Classifications

OPM, in consultation with agencies, developed a government-wide prioritization framework that grouped occupations into three priority tiers based on government-wide impact, workforce size, mission criticality, and readiness. This approach enables OPM to focus initial implementation on occupations with the greatest government-wide impact, leverage existing assessment tools and data where available, and phase implementation in a scalable and efficient manner.

Government-wide Job Classifications Prioritization Framework

Priority Level	Criteria	Example Job Group/Families
 HIGH PRIORITY TIER 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad government-wide use Workforce populations exceeding 10,000 Mission-critical occupations across multiple agencies Directly tied to Executive Order, Congressional mandates, or Office of Management and Budget's guidance Requested by multiple agencies Existing assessment readiness Series with existing draft materials or recent research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22xx-Information Technology 02xx-Personnel Management & Industrial Relations 05xx-Accounting & Budget 09xx-Legal & Kindred 11xx-Business & Industry
 MEDIUM PRIORITY TIER 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate workforce size (2,500 -10,000 employees) Series used in 3-5 agencies Requested by 1-2 agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 04xx-Natural Resources Management & Biological Science 17xx-Education 21xx-Transportation 20xx-Supply 13xx-Physical Sciences
 LOWER PRIORITY TIER 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited workforce size or use (less than 2,500 employees) Series used in 1-2 agencies Series requiring full rebuild or lacking foundational data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10xx-Information & Arts 16xx-Equipment, Facilities, Services 19xx-Quality Assurance, Inspection, Grading 12xx-Copyright, Patent, Trademark 14xx-Library & Archives

As reflected in the framework above, Tier 1 (High Priority) occupations — including Information Technology, Accounting and Budget, and Legal and Kindred series — are the focus of initial implementation efforts given their broad government-wide use, workforce populations exceeding 10,000, and existing assessment readiness. Tier 2 (Medium Priority) occupations, including Natural Resources Management, Transportation, and Physical Sciences series, will be addressed in the subsequent phase as Tier 1 implementation matures. Tier 3 (Lower Priority) occupations — those with smaller workforce populations, limited multi-agency use, or series requiring substantial

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assessment development — will be incorporated in the final phase, consistent with the FY 2028 full-implementation target.

Classification standards that encompass multiple occupational series may intersect across priority tiers. OPM will address these through coordinated updates aligned with the prioritization framework.

III. Implementation Plan and Transition to Technical Assessments

Transitioning from Self-Assessment to Skills-Based Hiring

Historically, agencies relied heavily on self-assessment questionnaires to evaluate applicants' qualifications, particularly following the [Hiring Reform Initiative](#) in 2010. Applicants were asked to self-report their own experience and proficiency, and the responses were used in qualification and ranking determinations. While this approach improved processing efficiency, it relied on mostly self-reported information and did not consistently provide an accurate measure of applicants' demonstrated skills and competencies. Traditional proxies, such as degrees or tenure, similarly may not accurately reflect an individual's ability to perform the duties of a position and can unnecessarily limit access to qualified talent.

The Act and the MHP shift federal hiring toward objective, skills- and competency-based technical assessments to ensure hiring decisions are grounded in demonstrated merit. The Act defines a technical assessment as a position-specific tool that allows for the demonstration of job-related skills, abilities, knowledge, and competencies; is based on job analysis; and does not solely or principally rely on self-assessment questionnaires from an automated examination. As of September 30, 2025, agencies may use self-assessment questionnaires only to determine minimum qualifications and eligibility requirements. Exceptions to the use of self-reported assessments for rating and ranking apply to seasonal work and positions between GS-04 level and below, or when OPM authorizes their use..

Examples of technical assessments, provided in the MHP, that agencies may use include:

- Situational Judgment Test
- Reasoning Assessment
- Job Knowledge Test
- Work Sample/Simulation
- Structured Interview
- Accomplishment Record
- Structured Resume Review
- Structured Writing Sample Review

The above list is not exhaustive, and agencies may use other technical assessments that align with the MHP.

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Implementation Approach and Timeline

OPM is implementing a government-wide strategy that leverages existing infrastructure, including USA Hire and USA Staffing, to support the scalable, cost-effective adoption of technical assessments across the Federal government. This integrated approach aligns infrastructure, policy, and governance to enable consistent implementation while allowing agencies the flexibility to address mission-specific hiring needs.

Where government-wide assessment tools are available, agencies are encouraged to use them. Additionally, OPM is expanding the availability of standardized assessment tools and developing additional technical assessments to meet agency needs, including mission-critical and specialized occupations.

Agencies may also develop or procure additional assessments, as needed, to support mission-specific requirements. This approach promotes consistency in assessment practices while allowing flexibility to address agency-specific hiring needs. Through its reimbursable Human Resources Solutions (HRS) group, OPM also offers agencies the ability to contract with OPM to develop agency-owned assessments.

OPM provides policy guidance, shared tools, and oversight to support implementation, while agencies are responsible for incorporating technical assessments into their hiring processes. OPM is supporting this effort through training, tools, and technical assistance for human resources practitioners, SMEs, and hiring managers to ensure effective and consistent use of assessments.

Key milestones already achieved include issuance of the Merit Hiring Plan (May 2025), the policy transition requiring agencies to cease using self-assessment questionnaires for rating and ranking (September 30, 2025), and the USA Hire expansion to full GS series coverage (March 2026).


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CHANCE TO COMPETE ACT IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

Three-Year Phased Transition to Technical Assessments (FY 2026–2028)

	FY 2026 PHASE 1: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION	FY 2027 PHASE 2: CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION	FY 2028 PHASE 3: FULL IMPLEMENTATION & OPTIMIZATION
OPM ACTIONS <i>(What OPM Will Deliver)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand USA Hire assessments to 412 GS occupational series (Wave 1) Launch Assessment Decision Tool (ADT) in USA Staffing Deliver SME-QA Train-the-Trainer and Structured Resume Review training Add Federal Supervisory Assessment (FSA) to USA Hire Release Wave 2 assessments (additional grade levels) in Q3 FY26 Provide implementation guidance, tools, and technical assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand assessment offerings, including Financial Management assessments Expand third-party and specialized technical assessments Enhance USA Hire and USA Staffing capabilities Provide ongoing policy guidance, training, and technical assistance Monitor progress and share best practices governmentwide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and optimize USA Hire and USA Staffing infrastructure Update competency frameworks and job analysis data Support continuous improvement of assessments and tools Monitor governmentwide outcomes and report results Refine guidance and training based on data and agency feedback
AGENCY ACTIONS <i>(What Agencies Must Do)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin using technical assessments for rating and ranking Discontinue use of self-assessment questionnaires for rating and ranking Train HR practitioners, SMEs, and hiring managers Incorporate technical assessments into hiring actions Update staffing plans and hiring procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase use of technical assessments across more occupations and grades Adopt shared certificates and governmentwide hiring tools Implement assessments for mission-critical and specialized occupations Address barriers and build internal assessment capacity Report implementation progress through monthly reports and annual staffing plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use skills-based or competency-based assessments for all applicable hiring actions Institutionalize skills-based hiring practices and policies Continuously improve assessment use and hiring processes Report outcomes and share lessons learned to drive ongoing improvement

This roadmap reflects shared responsibilities. OPM provides the tools, guidance, and support; agencies implement technical assessments in hiring.



CHANCE TO COMPETE ACT – IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

THREE-YEAR PHASED TRANSITION TO TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS (FY 2026–2028)

44%

OVERALL PROGRESS
TOWARD FULL IMPLEMENTATION
as of June 2026

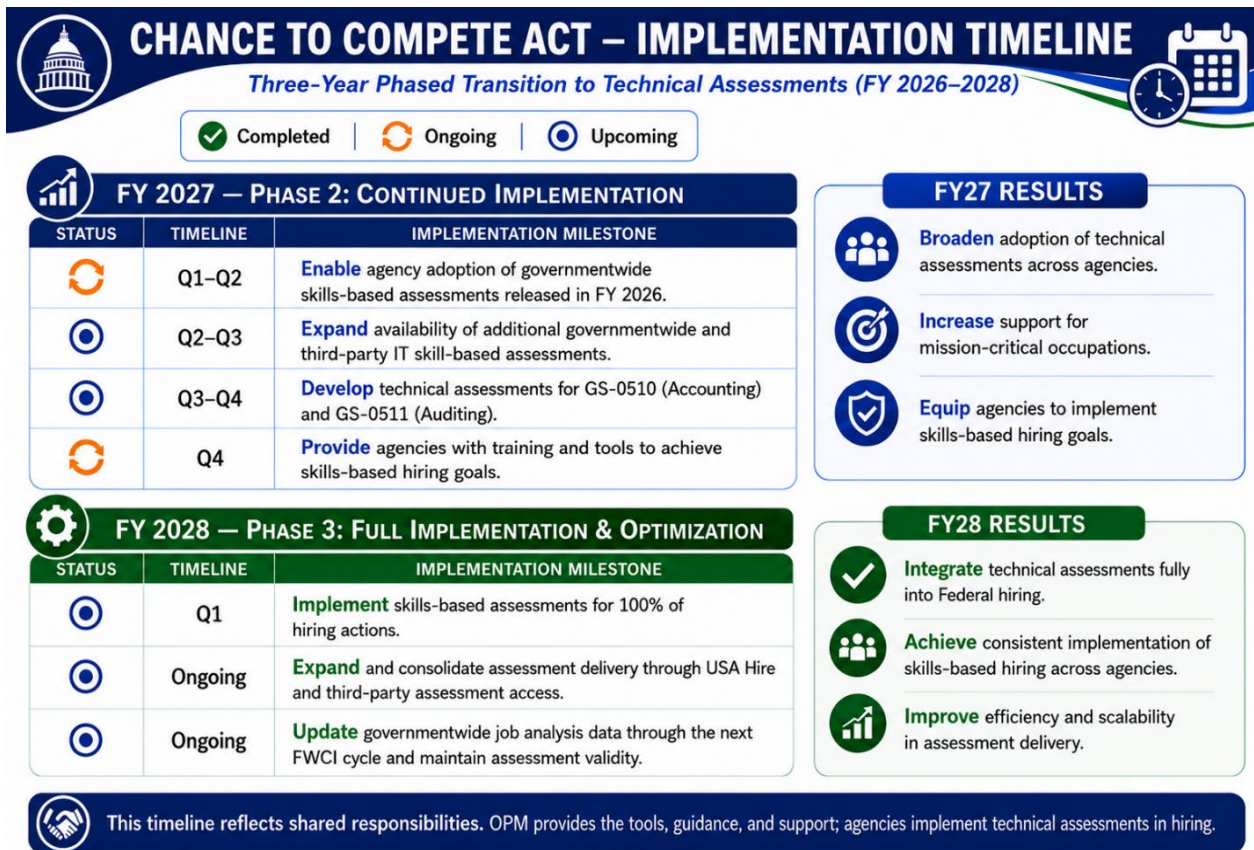
FY 2026 — PHASE 1: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

STATUS	TIMELINE	IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONE
✔	Feb 2026	Issued guidance on use of self-reported assessments and direct-hire authority
✔	Mar 2026	Released Wave 1 USA Hire expansion — all 412 GS occupational series covered using PATCO-based assessment batteries
✔	Apr 2026	Launched Assessment Decision Tool (ADT) in USA Staffing
✔	Apr 2026	Published IT Management (2210) competency framework through FWCI
✔	May 2026	Launched Structured Resume Review training and FWCI governmentwide survey
🔄	ONGOING	Delivering SME-QA Train-the-Trainer sessions and expanding access to third-party IT assessments through USA Hire
✔	Jun 2026	Federal Supervisory Assessment becomes available through USA Hire
🕒	Q3 FY26	Release Wave 2 USA Hire expansion covering additional grade levels across GS occupational series

FY 2026 RESULTS

- INITIAL DEPLOYMENT** OF TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS ACROSS AGENCIES
- TECHNICAL ASSESSMENTS AVAILABLE FOR **412 OCCUPATIONS**
- EXPANDED ASSESSMENT COVERAGE** ACROSS GS OCCUPATIONS AND GRADE LEVELS
- INCREASED AGENCY CAPACITY** THROUGH TRAINING AND IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

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Expansion of Government-wide Standardized Assessments

On March 25, 2026, OPM completed a major expansion of government-wide standardized assessments through the USA Hire platform, increasing coverage from 138 to 412 GS occupational series. OPM scaled USA Hire Standard assessments by aligning job analyses and assessment batteries to the Professional, Administrative, Technical, Clerical, and Other (PATCO) job categories. These assessment batteries measure the general competencies (e.g., reasoning, reading, interpersonal skills) required across GS occupations and are available for non-supervisory hiring actions. As a result, USA Hire Standard assessments now provide coverage across all occupational series in the GS classification system.

OPM is developing “Wave 2” of the expansion, which will extend assessment coverage to additional grade levels within covered occupational series. These assessments are expected to become available in FY 2026. These expansions enable agencies to meet the requirements of the Act and the MHP by incorporating technical assessments into the hiring process.

IV. Required Resources and Funding to Support Transition

Section 3(c)(3)(A) of the Act requires OPM to identify the resources necessary to support the government-wide transition to technical assessments. Successful implementation will require that

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agencies have a combination of subject matter expertise, assessment development capabilities, technology infrastructure, training, and technical assistance.

Workforce and Assessment Expertise

Implementation relies on collaboration among human resources professionals, SMEs, and I/O psychologists, who support job analysis, assessment design, and validation. These roles are critical to ensuring technical assessments are job-related, legally defensible, and aligned with mission requirements. Additionally, OPM and agencies will require funding and resources to develop new technical assessments not covered by USA Hire, expand existing assessment batteries, and conduct validation studies to ensure the effectiveness and reliability of assessment tools.

Technology Infrastructure

Technology infrastructure is a key enabler of this effort. Agencies may leverage existing government-wide platforms, including USA Hire and USA Staffing, to administer and integrate assessments into the hiring processes. These platforms provide online testing infrastructure, secure testing environments, and system integration to ensure efficient and scalable implementation across agencies. USA Hire operates on a fee-for-service basis, and agencies should anticipate associated costs in their budget planning. OPM's emphasis on the use of government-wide assessment tools such as USA Hire is designed to minimize redundant assessment development and promote consistency across agencies.

Agency-level Resources

Agencies may need to develop or procure additional assessment tools beyond what USA Hire provides to support mission-specific requirements that may be unique and not appropriate for a government-wide assessment tool. Additionally, agencies may need resources beyond what OPM provides to support training to subject matter experts and hiring managers on local job analysis efforts that supplement OPM government-wide efforts.

HR Workforce Development

A trained and capable HR workforce is foundational to successful implementation. Consistent, effective use of technical assessments depends on HR practitioners who understand assessment strategy, selection, and appropriate application — including how to conduct job analyses that supplement OPM government-wide efforts where needed.

V. Stakeholder Engagement

Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council

OPM engaged the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council throughout the development and implementation of the assessment strategy, using monthly meetings and targeted sessions to gather agency input and address implementation challenges. Key findings from these engagements

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include: agencies face barriers to adoption primarily related to resource and expertise constraints rather than policy barriers; gaps remain in assessment coverage for highly technical and specialized occupations; and demand for shared certificates and cross-government hiring tools is growing. Several agencies have developed internal assessment capabilities supported by SMEs and I/O psychologists, while others require additional OPM support to scale implementation. These findings directly informed the prioritization framework, resource requirements, and implementation strategy outlined in this report.

In early 2026, OPM conducted additional engagements with CHCOs and human resources experts through agency staffing plan reviews, which further assessed agency readiness and identified opportunities to expand the use of government-wide tools such as USA Hire.

Office of Management and Budget

OPM and the Office of Management and Budget jointly developed the Merit Hiring Plan, which operationalizes the Chance to Compete Act, and OPM coordinated with OMB in developing this implementation plan.

Employee Representatives

In June 2025, OPM shared the Merit Hiring Plan, which serves as the primary implementation framework for the Chance to Compete Act, with employee representative organizations and provided an opportunity for comments and engagement on its implementation.

External Experts

OPM engaged a range of internal and external experts to inform the development of the government-wide assessment strategy, including I/O psychologists, SMEs, and private-sector vendors. These efforts included a survey of USA Staffing customers launched in March 2026, an industry Request for Information, and market research involving extensive engagement with private-sector assessment providers and technology vendors. Key findings from these engagements include growing private-sector investment in AI-assisted assessment tools, best practices in competency-based hiring design, and scalable solutions for high-volume hiring. These efforts ensured that the strategy reflects current best practices and supports the effective, government-wide implementation of technical assessments.

VI. Early Adoption and Progress

Early implementation data indicates strong agency adoption of expanded USA Hire assessments, demonstrating readiness for continued government-wide implementation. Within the first two weeks of release, agencies posted 224 vacancies using the new assessment batteries on USAJOBS, generating 8,622 applications. Adoption has been strongest among occupations in the professional, technical, and administrative categories.

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The U.S. Census Bureau and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission were among the first agencies to implement these new assessment batteries, announcing vacancies for Peripheral Equipment Operator (GS-0350-5/6) and Equal Opportunity Investigator (GS-1860-7/9) on the first day of availability. Several agencies have demonstrated particularly strong early adoption. The Veterans Health Administration posted the largest number of vacancies (95), attracting more than 1,400 applicants, primarily in administrative and technical roles, including medical-related occupations. The U.S. Marshals Service generated the highest applicant volume, with five vacancies in the Criminal Investigation (1811) series attracting more than 4,200 applicants.

Governmentwide hiring data shows continued progress toward implementation of the Act and the MHP. Since OPM's December 2025 report to Congress, agencies have increased the use of technical and off-the-shelf assessments while reducing reliance on self-assessment questionnaires as the sole method for rating and ranking applicants. As of FY 2026 Q2, 34.3 percent of Delegated Examining announcements incorporated technical and/or off-the-shelf assessments, while reliance on self-assessment questionnaires alone declined by 16.3 percentage points.

These results demonstrate strong demand for and adoption of technical assessments, reinforcing OPM's implementation strategy to scale adoption across the Federal government.

VII. Metrics

OPM will track implementation progress using performance metrics aligned with [OPM's Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2026-2030](#) to assess the integration of technical assessments into competitive service hiring.

Metric	FY 24 Baseline	FY 26 Target	FY 28 Target
Percentage of positions in the competitive service using competency-based assessments	20%	75%	100%
Reduction in the use of self-assessment questionnaires	Predominant	Reduced	Eliminated above GS-04
Time-to-hire	101 days	80 days	80 days

OPM is also developing a quality-of-hire metric to assess whether technical assessments are producing the intended outcomes — ensuring that implementation progress is measured not only by adoption rates but by whether the assessments are resulting in better-qualified hires.

VIII. Conclusion

This implementation plan provides a clear, government-wide framework for meeting the requirements of the Act and transitioning federal hiring to the expanded use of technical

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assessments. The plan addresses all three statutory requirements: a tiered prioritization of job classifications based on government-wide impact and readiness; identification of the resources — including expertise and technology — necessary to support the transition; and a phased timeline for achieving full implementation by the end of FY 2028.

Through a phased approach that combines government-wide assessment tools, agency implementation, workforce planning, and stakeholder engagement, OPM will support agencies in adopting skills-based hiring practices that evaluate applicants based on demonstrated capabilities and merit. By leveraging existing infrastructure, prioritizing high-impact occupations, and building agency capacity, OPM and agencies will work together to achieve full implementation by the end of FY 2028 and strengthen the quality, fairness, and effectiveness of Federal hiring.



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