



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of Departments and Agencies
FROM: Scott Kupor, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management
DATE: February 24, 2026
RE: Ending Use of Administrative Careers with America Assessments

As part of its efforts to ensure merit-based hiring using high-quality technical and alternative assessments, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is formally retiring use of Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) assessments in Federal hiring.

The ACWA assessments were developed in response to the *Luevano* consent decree as an alternative to the previous Professional and Administrative Career Examination. ACWA had two variants: a written examination and a self-rating schedule. From their inception, both variants of ACWA have met with dissatisfaction from both hiring managers and job applicants.¹ Further, both the Merit Hiring Plan and the Chance to Compete Act require that agencies cease using self-assessment questionnaires, like the ACWA self-rating schedule, for rating and ranking applicants in competitive hiring actions above GS-4.²

In 2000, the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) noted, with approval, OPM's goal to "make available a test or set of tests that can be used under the control of the employing agency" which would "provide[] valid information about candidates' potential almost instantaneously."³ The MSPB stated that when such tests became available, it "would encourage

¹ See, e.g., U.S. General Accounting Office, [Testing for Administrative Positions Falls Short of Expectations](#) (March 1994) (noting widespread dissatisfaction with, and limited use of, the ACWA written examination); MSPB, [Restoring Merit to Federal Hiring: Why Two Special Hiring Programs Should be Ended](#) (January 2000) (noting that "many agencies reported to us their managers['] dissatisfaction with the quality of candidates referred by OPM" from the ACWA rating schedule and concluding that the ACWA rating schedule was an adequate examining tool "only for the short term").

² See White House Domestic Policy Council & OPM, [Merit Hiring Plan](#), at pp. 7-8 (May 29, 2025), [Chance to Compete Act](#), Pub. L. 118-188 (Dec. 23, 2024).

³ MSPB, [Restoring Merit to Federal Hiring: Why Two Special Hiring Programs Should be Ended](#), at p. 25.

their introduction into the Federal inventory of hiring tools, and the concurrent withdrawal of the ACWA instruments.”⁴

In the ensuing years, OPM has developed just such a library of validated assessment tools via the [USA Hire platform](#), which can be used for a wide variety of occupations and is administered via an online assessment platform.⁵ The development of these state-of-the-art assessment tools means that agencies need no longer use ACWA.

Therefore, effective immediately, OPM will no longer host the ACWA rating schedule in USA Staffing and will discontinue other resources relating to ACWA.⁶ Agencies should cease using ACWA assessments in hiring. Agencies are reminded that, consistent with the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) and Chance to Compete Act, they must incorporate validated assessments into all competitive hiring actions above GS-4.⁷

For additional information and support, agency headquarters-level human resources offices may email:

- HX@opm.gov for implementation assistance or questions.
- MeritHiring@opm.gov for questions on the Merit Hiring Plan.
- Employ@opm.gov for questions concerning hiring policy.
- USAHire@opm.gov for questions concerning USA Hire.
- Assessment_Information@opm.gov for questions on assessment policy.

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors, Chiefs of Staff

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See MSPB, [Improving Federal Hiring Through Better Assessment](#) (July 2018) (noting that “USA Hire appears to address most of the 10 factors we have identified as important for agencies to consider when developing and administering assessment programs”). Appendix 7 to the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) contains more information on USA Hire.

⁶ OPM is not aware of any agency using the ACWA written examination since 2008.

⁷ Such assessments may include USA Hire competency-based assessments, structured interviews, structured resume reviews, structured writing sample reviews, work sample exercises, or accomplishment records. Appendix 5 to the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) lists examples of technical and alternative assessments that may be used by agencies.