

Government-Wide Recruitment Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2026-2028



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Message from the OPM Director

To Our Federal Partners:

Federal agencies rely on a highly capable workforce to deliver on their missions for the American people. In alignment with [Executive Order \(EO\) 14170, Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service](#),¹ the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) (MHP),² the [Federal Merit System Principles \(5 U.S.C. § 2301\)](#),³ and applicable hiring statutes and regulations, this Government-wide Recruitment Strategic Plan establishes a whole-of-government plan for strengthening strategic recruitment and outreach across the Federal Government.

Merit is the foundation of everything in this Plan. Aligned to the Trump administration's workforce management agenda, Federal agencies should hire patriotic Americans and make hiring decisions based on merit, not proxies. A college degree, or years of tenure, may or may not tell us whether someone is the best fit for a job. Demonstrated skills do. That is why we are working with agencies to eliminate unnecessary degree and tenure requirements and assess applicants on what they can do. These recruitment efforts will seek to attract the best and brightest patriotic Americans to federal service. Agencies will emphasize lawful, fair, and open competition, grounded in job-related competencies and merit-based skills assessments.

Nowhere is this more urgent than in early career recruitment. The federal government is exponentially under-indexed on early career talent. Today, roughly seven percent of the Federal workforce is early career, compared with more than 20 percent in the private sector. Our goal, with your help, is to fix that.

Through EarlyCareers.gov, U.S. Tech Force, and other recruitment avenues available to agencies, our goal is to make sure that one third of all new hires are early career. I believe that early career Americans want to build their careers, learn from smart people, and be recognized for their results. Federal service can offer recently graduated, talented, patriotic Americans exactly that, whether for a few years or for a lifetime. Building this pipeline is essential to the future of the Federal workforce.

¹ [Executive Order \(EO\) 14170](#), Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service

² [Merit Hiring Plan](#), A federal initiative issued by OPM in 2025 to reform federal hiring by emphasizing merit-based recruitment, skills-based assessments, and streamlined hiring processes to attract qualified candidates and reduce time-to-hire

³ [Federal Merit System Principles \(5 U.S.C. § 2301\)](#), Statutory principles that govern federal personnel management, requiring fair and open competition, selection based on merit, and equal opportunity in federal employment

This Plan focuses on:

- Expanding access to Federal careers,
- Strengthening skills-based recruitment practices,
- Ensuring full compliance with veterans' preference and merit system requirements, and
- Improving measurable recruitment outcomes.

Success requires disciplined execution by all agencies, not just OPM. OPM will partner with senior agency leadership, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), hiring managers, and HR professionals to modernize recruitment strategies, strengthen talent pipelines, and ensure agencies are equipped to compete effectively for mission-critical talent. This Plan provides high-level guidance to support agency-level execution while preserving merit and public trust.

Scott Kuper
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management

Executive Summary

The Federal Government is committed to restoring merit-based hiring and strengthening its ability to attract and retain top talent through strategic recruitment and outreach. This Government-wide Recruitment Strategic Plan (the Plan) operationalizes E.O. 14170 and [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 14356, Promoting Competition in the American Economy](#),⁴ the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) (MHP),⁵ and the [Chance to Compete Act of 2024](#),⁶ ensuring that recruitment practices are fair, skills-based, and accountable.

This Plan moves beyond traditional recruitment practices to build sustainable talent pipelines, expand access to Federal careers, and modernize recruitment processes. It emphasizes outreach to priority talent segments, including early career professionals, youth in or transitioning out of foster care, veterans, military spouses, Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) specialists, attorneys and law enforcement.

These reforms will benefit applicants through a more efficient hiring process and help agencies fill mission-critical positions more quickly, so the Federal government can deliver on its obligations to the American people and tap into a broader spectrum of skills and perspectives from across the nation.

Five strategic goals guide this transformation over FY 2026-2028

1. Institutionalize Merit-Based and Skills-Driven Recruitment Practices
2. Expand Access to Federal Career Opportunities and Build Sustainable Talent Pipelines Nationwide
3. Strengthen Strategic Outreach and the Federal Government Branding
4. Advance Government-wide Coordination and Shared Recruitment Execution
5. Modernize Data-Driven Accountability and Leadership Oversight

Success will be measured through growth in qualified applicant pools, increased hiring in priority segments, skills-based hiring adoption, and quarterly compliance reporting. Agencies will use standardized, government-wide metrics and quarterly reporting to track progress, identify barriers, and drive continuous improvement in hiring outcomes. Federal service can offer recently graduated, talented, patriotic Americans exactly that, whether for a few years or for a lifetime. Building this pipeline is essential to the future of the Federal workforce.

⁴ [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 14356](#), Promoting Competition in the American Economy

⁵ [Merit Hiring Plan](#), A federal initiative issued by OPM in 2025 to reform federal hiring by emphasizing merit-based recruitment, skills-based assessments, and streamlined hiring processes to attract qualified candidates and reduce time-to-hire

⁶ [Chance to Compete Act of 2024](#), Federal law requiring agencies to use job-related technical or skills-based assessments rather than primarily self-assessments to evaluate applicants for competitive service positions

How to Use This Plan

This Plan provides a government-wide recruitment framework for senior agency leaders, Chief Human Capital Officers, human resources leaders, and hiring managers. Agencies are expected to incorporate these goals, actions, and measures into their agency staffing plans and recruitment strategies, consistent with Merit System Principles and applicable hiring statutes and regulations. OPM will support implementation through guidance, tools, data, and technical assistance, while agencies are accountable for executing this Plan within their organizations.

Mission

To lead a government-wide transformation in recruitment and outreach by advancing merit-based, skills-driven practices, expanding access to Federal career opportunities, and delivering the tools and data agencies need, with defined accountability measures to track success in attracting and engaging top talent.

Vision

To build a mission-ready Federal workforce of patriotic Americans grounded in merit, dedicated to service, strengthened by talent, and committed to government efficiency and upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution.

Strategic Goals

Establish consistent, government-wide standards that help agencies in achieving five strategic goals through a unified and coordinated approach. Agencies are responsible for implementing the strategies outlined in this plan, which reinforces merit as the foundation of federal hiring, while bringing together recruitment, outreach, assessment, shared execution, and accountability into a single process that broadens access to public service.

Goal 1: Implement recruitment processes grounded in Federal Merit System Principles, promote consistent and effective use of hiring authorities and flexibilities, and prioritize demonstrated skills and competencies

Actions

1. Align recruitment strategies with validated workforce planning data to target mission-critical skill gaps, ensuring hiring efforts are driven by current and future capability needs, using agency staffing plans as the foundation for recruitment prioritization.

2. Standardize application requirements by adopting the [two-page resume format](#) and [five short essay questions](#)⁷ for covered announcements government-wide, in alignment with the MHP and [Merit Hiring Plan Resources](#), to ensure applicants present relevant experience clearly and consistently.
3. Use job-related assessments including technical exercises, structured interviews, and competency-based evaluations to measure candidates demonstrated skills and abilities, consistent with the Chance to Compete Act and Merit System Principles.
4. Implement a structured review and approval process for job opportunity announcement (JOA) qualifications to ensure they are based on demonstrated skills and competencies, eliminate unnecessary degree requirements, and are applied consistently across similar occupations
5. Provide ongoing training for HR specialists and hiring managers on merit system principles, skills-based hiring practices, and Federal hiring authorities and flexibilities, including participation in OPM's Merit Hiring Plan Learning Series.

Indicators of Success

- All agencies develop strategic staffing plans that align with Administration goals, and all recruitment and hiring are approved by an agency's Strategic Hiring Committee.
- 100% of job announcements incorporate skills-based qualifications and eliminate unnecessary degree requirements.
- One-third of all new hires are early career roles designated by the agency's strategic hiring committee.
- 100% of all job announcements used a skills-based assessment.
- [Time to hire](#) is under 80 days⁸
- 100% of all covered job announcements incorporate the five questions.

⁷ [Merit Hiring Plan Revised Essay Questions](#), OPM guidance issued September 18, 2026, revises the Question 3 language effective September 19, 2026, and adds an agency-specific Question 5 addressing mission priorities beginning in FY 2027.

⁸ [Guidance on Time-to-Hire Under the Merit Hiring Plan](#). In accordance with [EO 14170, Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service](#), and the Merit Hiring Plan, this guidance supports agencies in meeting the Government-wide hiring efficiency standard.

Goal 2: Expand recruitment and outreach to increase awareness of Federal career opportunities, promote the value of public service, and broaden access across geographic regions and priority talent segments through sustainable, merit-based talent pipelines

Actions

1. Establish and sustain coordinated partnerships with educational institutions (state and land-grant universities, religious colleges and universities, community colleges, high schools, trade and technical schools, homeschooling groups), military transition programs, and professional associations and non-traditional recruitment channels (e.g., faith-based groups, 4-H youth programs, and skills-based talent communities) to expand awareness of Federal careers and create consistent pathways into Federal service through [early career talent programs](#) such as Pathways, internships, fellowships, apprenticeships, and the Semester of Service Student Volunteer program.
2. Expand and promote government-wide and agency specific talent pipelines for mission-critical occupations (e.g., STEM, [attorneys](#), law enforcement, and [technical fields](#)) by leveraging coordinated recruitment strategies, shared certificates, and approved hiring flexibilities.
3. Increase targeted recruitment for military-connected families by leveraging transition assistance programs (e.g., [Department of War SkillBridge](#), [Hiring Our Heroes](#), [Operation Warfighter](#), [Military Spouse Employment Partnership](#), [Student Veterans of America \(SVA\)](#), and [VA Non-Paid Work Experience \(NPWE\)](#) etc.) and applicable hiring authorities to improve access to federal employment opportunities.
4. Conduct coordinated regional and nationwide outreach campaigns and hiring events to broaden geographic access and increase public awareness of federal career opportunities, utilizing enterprise tools such as the [USAJOBS Events Page](#) and [Agency Talent Portal](#) to promote events and track engagement.

Indicators of Success

- Active participation by agencies in outreach and recruitment engagements (e.g., campus events, career fairs, information sessions) to generate sufficient candidate interest to meet the target goal of one-third of all new hires being early career roles.
- Hiring through Pathways Programs, internships, fellowships, apprenticeships, veterans hiring authorities, military spouse hiring authority, and other targeted hiring authorities increases to 10,000 hires annually in FY 2028 from the FY 2026 baseline, with at least 85% of these early-career hires successfully promoted from probationary status to permanent employees.
- 60% of all government hiring through shared/pooled certificates.

Goal 3: Strengthen the Federal Government's position as an employer of choice by implementing a unified marketing brand, modernizing digital recruitment strategies, and ensuring clear, timely, and transparent communication with applicants throughout the hiring process

Actions

1. Develop and implement a standardized recruitment messaging framework, coordinated by OPM and the Recruitment Community of Practice, that attracts patriotic applicants committed to improving the efficiency of the federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution; Framework establishes consistent branding, a compelling value proposition, and common messaging standards across federal agencies, including guidance on how agencies may adapt messaging to reflect their specific missions while maintaining brand cohesion.
2. Lead and execute coordinated digital recruitment campaigns, with OPM orchestrating government-wide efforts and agencies enhancing their use of USAJOBS and agency career platforms to expand digital outreach, improve searchability, and engage priority talent segments with targeted, mission-driven content.
3. Standardize the use of plain-language in job announcements, clearly define required skills and competencies, and adopt public-facing job titles that improve understanding and accessibility for applicants.
4. Establish consistent, timely, and transparent communication with applicants at key stages of the recruitment process to build trust, reduce applicant attrition, and improve the overall applicant experience.
5. Increase the use of virtual recruitment events and digital applicant support resources to broaden geographic access, reduce barriers to entry, and improve engagement throughout the application process, with OPM coordinating government-wide virtual events and agencies hosting mission-specific digital outreach.

Indicators of Success

- 100% of CFO Act agencies have implemented OPM's standardized recruitment messaging framework, as verified through annual agency certification and OPM assessment.
- 100% of job announcements meet plain-language and skills-based standards.
- Net Promoter Score (NPS) score of + 30 from job applicants
- Number of virtual recruitment events and applicant support engagements increases by 25% by end of year FY 2027.

Goal 4: Enhance coordinated, government-wide recruitment efforts through shared campaigns, cross-agency applicant sharing, and expanded use of enterprise tools and data systems to reduce duplicative hiring processes and accelerate recruitment for mission-critical positions

Actions

1. Plan and execute coordinated government-wide recruitment campaigns targeting mission-critical and high-demand occupations to improve hiring outcomes.
2. Expand and standardize the use of shared certificates, pooled hiring, and cross-agency applicant sharing as enterprise-wide practices, leveraging tools to accelerate hiring and promote cross-agency collaboration such as access to qualified candidate pools by other agencies ([Competitive Service Act](#)⁹)
3. Advance the integration of enterprise data systems, including source-of-hire tracking, to enable data-driven decision making and improve visibility into cross-agency recruitment outcomes.
4. Ensure human resource specialists and hiring managers have access to and effectively use enterprise tools such as the [USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal](#) to identify talent, conduct outreach, and leverage hiring flexibilities, including non-competitive hiring authorities.
5. Establish occupation-based, cross-agency hiring coalitions for mission-critical job families (e.g., medical, STEM, law enforcement), enabling agencies with shared workforce needs to conduct joint outreach, share recruitment resources, and coordinate hiring strategies. OPM will facilitate coalition formation and provide enterprise tools, guidance, and data support.

Indicators of Success

- 100% of CFO Act agencies participating in coordinated recruitment campaigns.
- 60% of hiring actions using shared certificates, pooled hiring, or OPM-led cross-government hiring authorities.
- 70% of all HR specialists and hiring managers with actively using the USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal.
- Reduction in average time-to-hire from 101 days to 80 days.

⁹ [Public Law 114-137, Competitive Service Act](#), Federal law allowing agencies to share competitive service certificates of eligibles with other agencies to fill similar positions within 240 days, helping reduce duplicative hiring processes

Goal 5: Institutionalize government-wide recruitment metrics, integrate data systems, and embed leadership accountability into agency performance management processes to ensure transparent reporting, accountability and continuous improvement in hiring outcomes across the Federal Government

Actions

1. Establish and implement consistent government-wide definitions, methodologies, and data standards for core recruitment metrics, including applicant flow, conversion rates, hiring authority utilization, and priority talent segment, to enable comparability and transparency across agencies.
2. Deploy and enhance enterprise system for source-of-hire tracking and recruitment reporting to provide accurate, timely, and comparable data across agencies.
3. Embed recruitment performance metrics into agency leadership review processes, requiring agency heads and Chief Human Capital Officers to conduct annual and quarterly reviews of standardized recruitment data to drive accountability, inform decision-making, and support continuous improvement in hiring outcomes. OPM will provide a standardized review template and aggregate government-wide data for cross-agency benchmarking.

Indicators of Success

- Standardized Government-wide recruitment metrics and reporting methodologies are implemented across all CFO Act agencies by the end of FY 2026, with broader Federal implementation reaching 70% of non-CFO Act agencies by the end of FY 2027.
- Percentage of agencies utilizing enterprise source-of-hire tracking and integrated recruitment reporting systems reaches 80% by FY 2027.
- All CFO Act agencies submit complete and comparable recruitment data through Government-wide reporting systems annually.
- Annual leadership reviews consistently use standardized recruitment metrics, with documented actions that lead to measurable improvements in key hiring outcomes (e.g., time-to-hire, quality of hire, or applicant satisfaction).

Next Steps

OPM will lead implementation of the Plan by issuing formal guidance, establishing implementation timelines, and providing standardized tools, framework, and technical assistance to support agencies in carrying out recruitment reforms. Agencies are responsible for cascading this plan across their components and ensuring implementation is consistent with merit system principles and applicable hiring authorities.

To drive coordinated execution, OPM will leverage existing governance structures, including senior agency leadership, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) Council, OPM Talent Teams, the Recruitment Community of Practice, and interagency working groups. These forums will facilitate collaboration, enable the sharing of leading practices, and address implementation challenges to ensure consistency and scalability across agencies.

OPM will monitor progress through regular, data-driven performance reviews, including quarterly reporting on recruitment outcomes, hiring performance, and implementation milestones. Standardized metrics and reporting processes will be used to assess progress, identify risks, and inform continuous improvement.

In addition, OPM will also provide ongoing training and capacity-building support, including the Merit Hiring Plan Learning Series and targeted technical assistance. Continued engagement through Agency Talent Teams and other Communities of Practices will ensure agencies receive timely guidance, share innovations, and remain aligned with evolving policy, regulatory, and legislative developments.



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