



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

MEMORANDUM

To: Chief Human Capital Officers

From: Veronica E. Hinton, Associate Director for Workforce Policy and Innovation

Date: September 30, 2026

Re: Guidance on Time-to-Hire Under the Merit Hiring Plan

In accordance with Executive Order (EO) 14170 [Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service](#) (“Restoring Merit”) and the [Merit Hiring Plan](#), the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is issuing the attached Guidance on Time-to-Hire to support agencies in meeting the government-wide hiring efficiency standard. Agencies should read this guidance alongside OPM’s March 2026 memoranda on [personnel vetting](#) and [streamlining vetting](#) processes, which provide additional strategies for improving personnel vetting in support of the Merit Hiring Plan.

Governmentwide Time-to-Hire Standard

Agencies must manage all hiring actions within an overall 80-calendar-day timeframe. Under the End-to-End (E2E) Hiring Roadmap, this encompasses 66 calendar days from validated hiring need to tentative job offer, acceptance of the tentative job offer within 2 days, and Entry on Duty (EOD) within 14 days of acceptance. Agencies should integrate personnel vetting into hiring timeline management and monitor performance against these milestones.

Agency Leadership

Meeting the 80-day standard requires coordinated action across agency leadership, Human Resources (HR) offices, hiring managers, and personnel vetting offices:

- Agency Leadership should establish accountability for timely hiring outcomes, leverage the Strategic Hiring Committee for oversight, set clear goals, and remove barriers that delay hiring without improving outcomes or merit-based processes.
- Human Resources Offices should conduct operational planning at least annually, engage early with hiring managers, leverage governmentwide data and resources to

reduce duplication, and ensure hiring actions remain consistent with merit system principles and applicable law.

- Hiring Managers and Program Offices should participate early in workforce planning, define requirements and assessment needs in advance, and engage promptly in applicant review and interviews.
- Personnel Vetting Offices should engage early to identify risk and sensitivity levels, applicable investigation types, reciprocity opportunities, and interim credentialing options to minimize delays between tentative job offer, vetting initiation, and entry on duty.

Hiring Models and Strategies to Improve Timeliness

OPM provides multiple hiring models to help agencies match assessment rigor to position complexity and mission need. These include single-assessment (approximately 46 days), multiple-assessment (approximately 59 days), the Subject Matter Expert Qualification Assessment model (approximately 66 days), and pooled/shared certificate approaches. Agencies should select models based on occupational requirements, candidate supply, and assessment needs.

Agencies are encouraged to improve timeliness while preserving merit-based standards by leveraging validated, skills-based assessments early in the hiring process; streamlining job opportunity announcements; using cross-government or shared certificates where appropriate; applying appropriate hiring authorities; and integrating personnel vetting planning as early as practicable.

Oversight, Targets, and Reporting

Agencies should designate an office or official responsible for tracking time-to-hire performance, analyzing trends, and driving continuous improvement. Agencies should establish measurable time-to-hire targets as part of workforce planning, with particular attention to mission-critical occupations, high-volume hiring, and hard-to-fill positions. Targets should be data-informed, calibrated to the complexity of hiring actions, and reviewed at least quarterly.

Agencies must continue reporting time-to-hire and Mission Critical Occupation (MCO) data using existing reporting processes. Reporting should cover all applicable hiring activities, including Delegated Examining, merit promotion and external hires, Direct-Hire Authority actions, pooled or shared certificate hires, open continuous announcements, non-Title 5 actions, and other applicable hiring authorities or flexibilities. Reported data should be

timely, accurate, and comprehensive enough to support performance monitoring and process improvement.

Agency headquarters-level Human Resources offices may direct policy questions to workforce@opm.gov. Questions related to the Merit Hiring Plan may be directed to HX@opm.gov.

Attachments: [Time-to-Hire Merit Hiring Plan \(MHP\) Guidance](#), [MHP Hiring Models](#), and [Modernized MHP Models](#)

cc: Deputy CHCOs, Human Resources Directors