



The Director

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads of Departments and Agencies
FROM: Scott Kuper, Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management
DATE: July 30, 2026
RE: Guidance on Annual Staffing Plans

I. Purpose

This guidance is meant to assist agencies in preparing their Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Annual Staffing Plans (ASPs) and the detailed hiring forecast required as part of each ASP. It implements the workforce planning cadence established by Executive Order (E.O.) 14356, [Ensuring Continued Accountability in Federal Hiring](#), and prepares agencies to meet the requirements of proposed 5 CFR 250.205, Annual Staffing Plans and quarterly updates, published July 2, 2026 (91 FR 40435).

Agencies should use the E.O. 14356 process to conduct rigorous, bottom-up workforce planning that reserves billets and budget for mission-critical, technology, and early-career hires.

II. Background and Authorities

E.O. 14356 establishes an annual cycle in which agencies¹ develop ASPs at the beginning of each fiscal year to ensure hiring is directed to the highest-need areas, provide quarterly updates to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) demonstrating progress, and adjust their plans during the year in coordination with OPM and OMB. The EO also requires each agency to maintain a Strategic Hiring Committee—including the Deputy Secretary or equivalent and the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO)—to review and approve position creation and hiring actions against mission criticality, cost effectiveness, and alignment with strategic goals.

On July 2, 2026, OPM published a proposed rule ([Personnel Management in Agencies: Strategic Human Capital Management](#), 91 FR 40435) that would replace Human Capital

¹ E.O. 14356 defines “agency” to include all executive departments and agencies, regardless of their sources of operational or programmatic funding. While E.O. 14356 does not apply to positions related to national security, immigration enforcement, or public safety, for visibility and planning purposes, such positions should be accounted for in the agency’s ASP and quarterly updates to the greatest extent practicable. See OPM & OMB, [Guidance on Executive Order 14356, Ensuring Continued Accountability in Federal Hiring](#), at p. 4 (Nov. 5, 2025). Agencies should similarly account for non-career positions in their ASP and quarterly updates. *Id.*

Operating Plans with ASPs, replace Human Capital Reviews with Annual Staffing Reviews (ASRs) conducted by OPM and OMB, and replace HRStat with Quarterly Staffing Plan Performance Reviews. Although the rule is not yet final, agencies should plan now to meet the requirements of proposed § 250.205, which are reflected in Section IV of this guidance, so that FY 2027 ASPs are compliant upon finalization. This guidance also helps implement E.O. 14170, [*Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service*](#), and the [*Merit Hiring Plan*](#), which seek to assist agencies in recruiting “highly capable Americans dedicated to the furtherance of American ideals, values, and interests.”

E.O. 14356 requires agencies to comply with their ASPs throughout the fiscal year but allows agencies to update their plans during the course of the year based on enactment of relevant appropriations or authorizing legislation, or otherwise amend their plans in coordination with OPM and OMB.

III. Bottom-Up Workforce Planning and Reserved Budgets and Billets

Each agency should use the E.O. 14356 process to conduct bottom-up workforce planning. Planning should begin at the component, bureau, and program level, where managers identify the positions, skills, and staffing levels genuinely required to execute the mission in a modern technology-enabled operating environment, and should ultimately lead to an agency-level plan validated by the Strategic Hiring Committee and the CHCO. Top-down allocation of last year’s staffing levels does not satisfy this requirement. As part of this process, each agency should:

- 1. Reserve specific billets and budget for mission-critical hires.** Identify mission-critical occupations and skill gaps that align with the President’s Management Agenda and set aside a defined number of billets and associated payroll budget in the FY 2027 operating plan for these hires, protected from reallocation absent Strategic Hiring Committee approval.

- 2. Reserve specific billets and budget for technology talent.** Reserve billets and budget for modern technology positions—including AI, data science, software engineering, cybersecurity, and digital service delivery roles—sufficient to build the technical capacity needed to deliver mission-aligned and efficient services. Agencies should identify where adoption of modern technology impacts the number and type of positions needed, and plan hiring accordingly.

Tech Force. In doing so, agencies should, where applicable, leverage the U.S. Tech Force program and its agency-specific extensions (such as NASA Force and War Force), through which OPM conducts pooled recruitment and rigorous technical assessment of software engineering, AI, data science, forward deployed engineers, cybersecurity, and technical product management talent and issues shared certificates of prequalified candidates from which agencies may select.

Scholarships for Service. Agencies should also leverage the CyberAICorps Scholarship for Service (CyberAI SFS) program as a pipeline for early-career AI and cybersecurity talent. CyberAI SFS supports students pursuing education that integrates AI and cybersecurity, including the use of AI in cybersecurity and the security and resilience of AI systems. Scholarship recipients complete a post-graduation service obligation in an AI- or cybersecurity-related position with a

government organization for a period at least equal to the length of their scholarship. Through the program, agencies may recruit from a pool of qualified scholars and graduates who have been prepared for federal service and are seeking positions that satisfy their service obligations.

Agencies should identify in the ASP the technology billets they plan to fill through Tech Force shared certificates, the Early Career Talent Network, and CyberAI SFS recruitment. Agencies should also identify their Tech Force and CyberAI SFS points of contact in the plan and submit the portions of the ASP pertinent to Tech Force recruitment to USTechForce@opm.gov and the portions pertinent to CyberAI SFS recruitment to sfs@opm.gov. To the extent agencies have additional needs that are not covered by existing Tech Force or other early career shared certificates, agencies should identify these gaps and work with OPM to determine whether additional targeted recruitment programs should be developed.

3. Reserve specific billets and budget for early career talent. Reserve billets and budget for early career hiring—including Pathways interns and recent graduates, intern-to-permanent conversions, and other entry-level hiring needs—sufficient to meet the 33 percent early career hiring target in Section V. Agencies should identify in the ASP the Early Career billets they plan to fill through the Early Career Talent Network. Agencies should also identify their Early Career recruitment point of contact in the plan and submit parts of the ASP pertinent to Early Career recruitment to EarlyCareers@opm.gov.

4. Position the agency to maximally leverage modern technology. Explicitly address in the ASP how the agency’s staffing strategy—its mix of technology hires, reskilling and upskilling of the current workforce, and restructuring of roles—will enable the agency to use modern technology, including AI-related technologies, to improve the quality, speed, and cost of service delivery. Agencies are encouraged to use the optional, fee-for-service, AI Governance and Adoption Program (AI GAP) to accelerate their AI programs. By leveraging AI GAP, agencies can improve mission delivery, increase workforce productivity, and ensure responsible AI adoption in alignment with federal policy. Agencies seeking AI assessment support, implementation guidance, or additional information should contact AIGAP@opm.gov.

5. Prioritize hiring outside the Washington, D.C. metro area. Consistent with the Administration’s priority of bringing the Federal Government closer to the American people it serves, agencies should locate new positions outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area wherever mission requirements permit, including by filling customer-facing, field, and technology roles in lower-cost duty stations and in the communities where agency services are delivered. Prioritizing hiring outside the D.C. metro area reduces payroll and real property costs, broadens the available talent pool, and strengthens agency presence in the communities agencies serve.

IV. Annual Staffing Plan Content Requirements

Each ASP should satisfy the following requirements, which agencies should treat as the operative standard for the FY 2027 submission:

1. **Alignment.** The ASP should align with the Agency Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan, Agency Budget, the President's Management Agenda, and the Human Capital Framework (HCF), and should identify workforce priorities, hiring goals, and staffing strategies necessary to support mission accomplishment.

2. **Metrics and targeting.** The ASP should include metrics, frameworks, and criteria for evaluating current and future workforce and staffing needs, and should target hiring to address skills gaps, enhance service delivery, enable succession planning, and ensure new appointments in the upcoming year are in the highest-need areas. The ASP should identify plans to measure the effectiveness of these activities. It should also include specific plans and goals for improvements across each of the four HCF systems and standards, including measurable performance targets:

- Strategic Planning and Alignment
- Talent Management,
- Performance Culture, and
- Evaluation.

3. **Efficiencies.** The ASP should consider potential efficiencies from:

- Organizational restructuring;
- Elimination of unnecessary management layers;
- Elimination of duplicative or nonessential functions and positions;
- Consolidation of administrative functions;
- Reduction of unnecessary or low-value contractor positions, particularly where contractor engagements can be more effectively and more efficiently performed by full-time employees;
- Performance management of employees;
- Internal reassignments;
- Redistribution of workload across positions with similar duties and skill sets;
- Process improvement; and
- Adoption of technology.

4. **Preparation and updates.** The ASP must be prepared at the start of the fiscal year in coordination with OPM and OMB and may be updated during the year—based on enactment of appropriations or authorizing legislation, or where otherwise warranted—in coordination with OPM and OMB (proposed § 250.205(d)).

5. **Quarterly updates.** The agency should submit updates to OPM and OMB at the beginning of each quarter showing progress in implementing the ASP and explaining any significant variances.

V. Detailed Hiring Forecast Requirements

Each ASP must include a detailed hiring forecast projecting, by quarter and by mission area or component: total projected hires; external hires versus internal placements; mission-critical occupation hires; technology hires; and early career hires, with the associated billets and budget reserved under Section III.

The hiring forecast should include specific, actionable plans—including specific target locations, hiring strategies, milestones, and accountable officials—to achieve the following governmentwide targets for FY 2027:

Hiring Forecast Metric	Governmentwide Target	Applies To / Measurement Basis
Selections made from shared certificates (including OPM-led pooled hiring actions and agency certificates shared under 5 U.S.C. 3318(b))	At least 60%	All new external competitive-service hires; measured as a share of external selections during the fiscal year
Early career hires (e.g., recent graduates, interns, Pathways Programs participants, and other entry-level talent)	At least 33%	All new external hires; measured as a share of total external hires onboarded during the fiscal year
External hires assessed using a validated technical assessment or an OPM-approved alternative assessment (beyond a self-assessment questionnaire alone)	100%	All external hires; every competitive hiring action must incorporate at least one validated technical or alternative assessment, including Direct Hire Authority actions, consistent with the Merit Hiring Plan

1. **Shared certificates (60 percent target).** The forecast should identify the occupational series and grade levels the agency will fill through pooled announcements and shared certificates, the pooled hiring actions the agency will lead or join (including

governmentwide and cross-component pools), and how the agency will track selections from shared certificates (if using a staffing system other than USA Staffing).

2. **Early career hiring (33 percent target).** The forecast should specify planned Pathways intern cohorts and conversion rates, recent graduate hiring by component, campus and technical talent outreach strategies, and how reserved early career billets map to succession needs in mission-critical and technology occupations.

3. **Validated assessments (100 percent target).** The forecast should describe the agency's plan to ensure every competitive hiring action uses a validated technical assessment or an approved alternative assessment—such as structured interviews, work samples, subject-matter-expert-driven technical evaluations, or USA Hire assessments—rather than reliance on self-assessment questionnaires alone. The plan should identify the assessment inventory by occupation, gaps in assessment coverage, and the schedule for closing those gaps (including working with OPM to help develop appropriate assessments), consistent with E.O. 14170 and the Merit Hiring Plan.

4. **Variance reporting.** Agencies should be able to report performance against each target in their quarterly updates. Where an agency projects that it cannot meet a target in FY 2027, the ASP should include a written justification, a corrective trajectory with quarterly milestones, and a description of the specific barriers for which OPM or OMB assistance is requested.

VI. Governance, Submission and Timeline

1. **Governance.** The CHCO is responsible for preparing the ASP and detailed hiring forecast; the Strategic Hiring Committee, including the Deputy Secretary or equivalent, should review and approve the submission and thereafter ensure that all hiring actions during FY 2027 are consistent with the approved plan.

2. **Coordination.** Agencies should coordinate with their OPM and OMB points of contact throughout ASP development to confirm that:

- The ASP and detailed hiring forecast fit within enacted and anticipated appropriations and the agency's budget submission;
- Reserved billets and budget for mission-critical, technology, and early career hires are affordable within the agency's topline and consistent with out-year budget planning; and
- Agency hiring goals align with governmentwide hiring priorities, including the shared certificate, early career, and validated assessment targets in Section V, the President's Management Agenda, and governmentwide pooled hiring efforts.

3. **Submission instructions.** All agency, board, and commission ASPs must be submitted to OMB and OPM through [Collect.opm.gov](https://collect.opm.gov) (Collect) no later than September 30,

2026. Collect is an authorized portal designed for secure use within OPM and participating federal agencies. It is intended to streamline the structuring and collection of OPM data calls. The following requirements apply to all submissions:

- Each agency will submit one submission inclusive of the agency and its Office of Inspector General (OIG). OIGs will not submit separately from their agency.
- Boards and commissions are required to submit. Non-executive branch agencies are not required to submit.
- To access [Collect.opm.gov](https://collect.opm.gov), agencies, boards and commissions must establish and use Entra ID. Agencies and commissions should ensure Entra ID credentials are established in advance of the submission deadline.

4. **Submission timeline.**

Date	Milestone
August 2026	Agencies complete bottom-up data calls to components and bureaus; Strategic Hiring Committees validate mission-critical, technology, and early career billet reservations and associated budget set-asides.
Early September 2026	CHCO consolidates the agency-level ASP and detailed hiring forecast; Deputy Secretary (or equivalent) and Strategic Hiring Committee review and approve. Agency coordinates with OPM and OMB on draft content.
September 30, 2026	Final Annual Staffing Plans, including the detailed hiring forecast, due to OMB and OPM. No extensions are anticipated.
Start of each FY 2027 quarter	Agencies submit quarterly updates to OPM and OMB; CHCOs conduct Quarterly Staffing Plan Performance Reviews (replacing HRStat) with the PIO and Strategic Hiring Committee, showing progress against ASP targets and explaining any significant variances.
Annually	OPM and OMB conduct the Annual Staffing Review (ASR), replacing the Human Capital Review (HCR), to evaluate ASP

Date	Milestone
	implementation and progress toward workforce goals, including performance against hiring forecast targets.

5. **Submission contacts.** Headquarters offices should contact OPM at staffing@opm.gov and OMB at workforce@omb.eop.gov with any questions or for access to Collect; component offices should contact their headquarters office with questions. Detailed instructions for using Collect will be distributed to agencies separately.

Questions regarding portions of the ASP related to Tech Force recruitment should be sent to USTechForce@opm.gov. Portions pertaining to early career recruitment should be sent to EarlyCareers@opm.gov. Agencies seeking AI adoption support should contact AIGAP@opm.gov.

cc: CHCOs, Deputy CHCOs, Chief Information Officers, and Human Resources Directors

Attachment 1: [Agency Planning, Budget, Performance, and Workforce Alignment Timeline](#)

Attachment 2: [Agency Planning, Budget, Performance and Workforce Alignment Framework](#)