



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

January 13, 2026

MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICERS

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

SUBJECT: **Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring through Candidate Ranking**

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) published the final rule titled “*Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring through Candidate Ranking in the Competitive and Excepted Service*” in the [Federal Register](#) on September 8, 2025. Commonly referred to as the “Rule of Many,” this change modernizes federal hiring by replacing the outdated *Rule of Three* selection method with a more flexible, merit-focused approach.

The Rule of Many provides agencies with a broader pool of qualified candidates for competitive and excepted service appointments, ensuring selections are grounded in practical skill and merit as measured through skills-based assessments. This new process uses a numerical ranking system. Applicants are assigned scores (augmented for veterans’ preference) and placed in rank order. Agencies then make selections from a pre-determined number of the highest-ranked qualified candidates. In doing so, the Rule of Many combines the strengths of the *rule of three* and *category rating* procedures. It enables agencies to make finer distinctions among candidates based on their relative qualifications, while also broadening the range of applicants from which hiring managers may select.

To help agencies implement this process, supplemental guidance in a question-and-answer format and a sample Rule of Many policy for agencies to implement in order to use this new method of ranking are attached to this memorandum.

For additional information, agency headquarters-level human resources offices may contact Talent Acquisition, Classification, and Veterans Programs at employ@opm.gov.

Attachments:

- [Rule of Many Federal Hiring FAQ](#)
- [Rule of Many and Skills Based Hiring](#)
- [Rule of Many and Three Considerations](#)
- [Rule of Many and Veterans’ Preference](#)
- [Rule of Many Compared to Category Rating](#)
- [Rule of Many Shared Certificates Amongst Agencies](#)
- [Sample Rule of Many Policy 5 CFR 332.402](#)