



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT  
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

May 19, 2022

**Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies**

From: Kiran A. Ahuja,  
Director

Subject: Guidance Release - E.O. 13932; Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates

As stated in the President's Management Agenda, "Federal agencies must attract, hire, develop, and empower talented individuals who are well suited and well prepared to face the challenges the Government faces, both in the near and long term."

[Executive Order \(EO\) 13932 - Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates](#), issued on June 26, 2020, directs important, merit-based reforms that will increase the use of valid, competency-based assessments as an alternative to the reliance on education credentials in determining qualifications for Federal jobs. These reforms will expand the use of competency-based hiring across the Federal Government with the increased use of valid assessments that carefully measure candidates' ability to perform the job.

The Biden-Harris Administration fully supports expanding "skills-based" hiring for Federal jobs. Skills-based hiring helps hiring managers focus on what candidates know how to do, not where they learned it. It values **all** relevant skills for the role at hand, whether they are learned in the classroom, on the job, or on one's own.

Especially in light of today's booming labor market, the Federal government must position itself to compete with other sectors for top talent. A skills-based approach to hiring advances this objective by:

- Making it easier for those who do not have a four-year degree to demonstrate that they have the skills to compete for Federal jobs, thereby expanding pools of potential applicants and removing any barriers for underrepresented communities;
- Helping hiring managers accurately assess a candidate's knowledge, skills, and abilities by relying more on professionally-developed competency-based assessments and less on occupational questionnaires only where applicants are asked to score themselves on competencies necessary for the job;
- Improving the hiring process for both applicants and managers by providing hiring managers with the skilled candidates they need to hire the first time around, avoiding the wasteful need to re-post positions when the initial pool lacked candidates with sufficient skills.
- Positioning the government for success as agencies prepare for the future. As technology changes the economy, it is also changing the skills necessary for success in jobs more quickly than ever before. By helping agencies to understand and articulate these skills, through a skills-based approach, can improve satisfaction of agencies, current employees,

and prospective employees and can help agencies develop more effective strategic planning, training, upskilling, and onboarding practices;

- Helping prospective applicants shift between sectors as they can emphasize their transferrable skills; and
- Assisting current employees as they chart a professional development journey that keeps them in jobs and growing.

Finally, a skills-based hiring approach also improves applicant and manager satisfaction. Applicants have a clearer understanding of what the job requirements are and how their skills align to them. Hiring managers are more satisfied with the quality of the candidates they are considering for positions.

The guidance we are issuing today is an important step forward in implementing this work. In issuing this guidance, the Federal government joins a broader, nationwide trend that includes leading employers, state governments, and more.

Under EO 13932, agencies have identified occupations that they will prioritize transitioning to a skills-based approach. This guidance provides agencies with the tools necessary to carry out this transition and, hopefully, to build upon and expand their goals. Specifically, this guidance includes:

- Updated [General Schedule Qualifications Operating Manual](#) to improve the hiring of talent applying minimum qualification requirements and the use of passing grade assessments.
- Qualifications, Assessment, and Hiring Frequently Asked Questions
- The new [Guide to Better Occupational Questionnaires](#) will improve the rigor of occupational questionnaires used by agencies to meet professional standards.

In addition, in support of the expansion of skills-based hiring in the Federal government, OPM will provide sessions and further policy guidance and tools on competency-based qualifications and assessments as a part of the Federal Assessment Strategy Initiative.

We look forward to continuing to work with you throughout the year on this transition to a skills-based hiring approach. If there are any questions about the updated policy and guidance, please contact Kimberly Holden, Deputy Associate Director, Talent Acquisition, Classification, and Veterans Programs at [Kimberly.Holden@opm.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Holden@opm.gov) or email [Fedclass@opm.gov](mailto:Fedclass@opm.gov).

Cc: Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Deputy CHCOs, HR Directors and Chief Executive Officer Councils

Attachments