

Frequently Asked Questions Extended Federal Civilian Hiring Freeze

On January 20, 2025, the President issued a Presidential Memorandum (PM) titled, “Hiring Freeze” to be applied by all executive branch agencies, accompanied by joint implementing [guidance from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\) and the Office of Management and Budget](#). On July 7, 2025, an updated PM titled, “Ensuring Accountability and Prioritizing Public Safety in Federal Hiring” was issued extending the Hiring Freeze until October 15, 2025. This document provides guidance through the frequently asked questions below to assist agencies in implementing the hiring freeze extension. Agencies must implement the PM and associated guidance in accordance with any collective bargaining obligations that may apply.

Hiring Freeze Coverage

Q1. What is covered by the hiring freeze?

A: The hiring freeze applies to all Executive departments and agencies regardless of the sources of funding and all types of Federal civilian appointments, regardless of the length of the appointment. No Federal civilian position that is presently vacant may be filled, and no new position may be created, except as otherwise provided for in the [memo](#) or required by applicable law. In addition, any hiring shall be consistent with the [Merit Hiring Plan](#) that was issued by the OPM on May 29, 2025, pursuant to Executive Order 14170 of January 20, 2025 (Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service).

Exemptions from the Hiring Freeze

Q2. What is exempted from the Hiring Freeze?

A: The freeze does not apply to the following:

1. Military personnel of the Armed Forces;
2. Positions related to immigration enforcement, national security, or public safety;
3. Positions in the Executive Office of the President or the components thereof;
4. Positions requiring Presidential appointment or Senate confirmation;
5. Appointment of officials to non-career positions in the Senior Executive Service (SES) or to Schedule A or Schedule C positions in the Excepted Service;
6. Appointment of officials through temporary organization hiring authority pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3161, or the appointment of any other non-career employees or officials, if approved by agency leadership appointed by the President; AND
7. Positions that impact the provision of Social Security, Medicare, or veterans’ healthcare or benefits.

Positions that fall within these categories do not require review by OPM. The Director of OPM may continue to grant exemptions from this policy where those exemptions are otherwise necessary.

Agency Head Approval Process

Q3. What is the process for executive departments and independent agencies to handle exemptions?

A: The agency exemption approval process shall apply as follows:

- (1) Each executive department and (2) each independent establishment that is authorized by OPM to use the following process:
 - Hires that have been approved in writing by the executive department or independent establishment head, the executive department or independent establishment chief of staff, or an officer appointed by the President may proceed one business day after such official has transmitted a copy of such approval to OPM at tracking@opm.gov.
 - Exemptions previously granted by OPM shall remain in effect unless withdrawn by OPM.
 - For the purposes of this guidance, the term “executive department” means a department listed in section 101 of title 5, United States Code, and “independent establishment” has the meaning given that term in section 104(1) of title 5, United States Code.
 - In addition to the monthly hiring reports, beginning with their July hiring report, each agency must include a cover sheet signed by their Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) attesting to adherence to the Merit Hiring Plan (MHP) and that all new hiring is in compliance with the [memo](#).

Agency Inspector General Process

Q4. What is the process to be used by Agency Inspector Generals (IGs)?

A: For IGs at a Cabinet Agency, the Agency Head (presidential appointee) must approve, in writing, the hiring exception. One business day after the appointee transmits a copy of that approval to OPM at tracking@opm.gov, the agency may proceed with that hiring action. IGs at independent or non-cabinet agencies will continue to follow the same process of working with OPM to determine the extent of the national security/public safety exemption per the January 20, 2025, PM.

Senior Executive Service

Q5. Is agency placement of OPM referred SES members affected by RIF allowed during the hiring freeze?

A: These hires should follow the same level of scrutiny as any other hire during the hiring freeze, following the procedures outlined in Question 3 of this document. When an agency identifies an SES member for placement, the agency’s leadership must certify in writing that the identified position for placement is vacant, mission essential, and the SES member meets the qualifications of the position.

Q6. How does the hiring freeze extension affect submission of Qualification Review Board (QRB) packages to OPM for SES QRB review and certification for agency career SES selectees?

A: Agencies may continue to submit packages to OPM provided they have an approved position-specific exemption from the agency head, or OPM, prior to submission. Documentation of the exemption must be provided to QRB@opm.gov.

NOTE: Open agency recruitments for cases that were not submitted to OPM prior to the January 20, 2025, hiring freeze (i.e., prior to January 10, 2025) and which have not already been processed (by OPM) due to position-specific (identified under Question 2 above) or OPM exemption must be closed and a new recruitment initiated.

Q7. Will agency-specific QRB moratorium exception requests continue to be processed by OPM?

A: Yes, provided the agency has an approved position-specific exemption from the agency head, or OPM. The process for submitting a QRB Moratorium exception request is listed in [existing guidance](#).

Q8. Are the criteria used to request an exemption from the hiring freeze, noted earlier in this document (see Question 3), also the criteria that will be used to request an exception to the Governmentwide QRB Moratorium?

A: No. Agencies requesting an exception to a QRB Moratorium should use the existing guidance (and template), specific to moratorium exception requests.

Q9. Will OPM continue to process QRB packages submitted under Criterion B, for an individual completing his/her OPM-approved SES Candidate Development Program?

A: Yes.

Miscellaneous

Q10. Can agencies take personnel actions (e.g., reappointments, reassignments, promotions) when such actions are needed to comply with decisions mandated by an appellate entity during the hiring freeze?

A: Yes. Agencies must comply with any actions required by a settlement agreement, court order, Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) decision, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) decision, arbitration award, or other appellate entity.

Q11. Can agencies take personnel actions when needed to regularize an improper appointment?

A: Yes, agencies can follow the usual [processes](#) to regularize an improper appointment.

Q12. Does the hiring freeze impact the placement rights of displaced or surplus employees who have Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) or Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) eligibility?

A: Agencies can only fill vacant positions that are otherwise exempt from the hiring freeze. When doing so, they must follow the usual [CTAP/ICTAP/Reemployment Priority List \(RPL\) provisions](#).

Q13. Is the memorandum intended to restrict agencies' ability to enter service contracts or grant activities?

A: Contracting outside the Federal Government to circumvent the intent of the PM is prohibited.

Q14. Can agency heads delegate the exemption determination responsibilities to component heads?

A: No, delegation of agency head responsibilities under the hiring freeze to other agency officials is not permitted, unless that designee is a Presidential appointee.

Q15. Can agencies continue to request approval from OPM for hiring-related actions (e.g., selective service waivers, veteran's pass overs, and medical qualifications determination)?

A: Yes, OPM will continue to process these requests. However, any appointments related to or resulting from these requests will be subject to the requirements of the hiring freeze.