Merit Hiring Merit Hiring Plan Overview & Guidance August 2025

The Merit Hiring Learning Series

Hiring Experience (HX) Group
Workforce Policy and Innovation
U.S. Office of Personnel Management



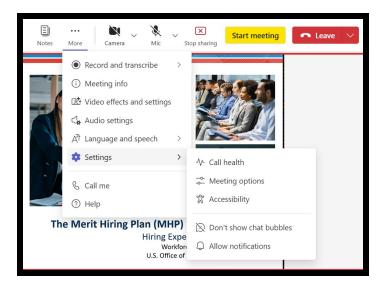
Enabling Live Captions (Closed Captioning)

A recording of this session with ASL interpreters will be posted at https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/merit-hiring-plan-resources/#url=Training-Learning-Series.

During a meeting: Go to your meeting controls (at the top of the screen) and:

- Select "More"
- 2. Choose "Language and speech" to select "Show live captions"
- Choose "Settings" and select "Accessibility" to toggle on the options

To stop using live captions, select "Hide live captions" under "Language and speech"







Housekeeping Items

- A copy of this slide presentation is posted on OPM's Merit Hiring <u>Plan Resources</u> page.
- Ask questions in the Q&A, but please wait until a topic is covered so you're not posting a question that's already been answered.
- We'll respond to as many questions as we can; however, we cannot answer agency-specific or individual-specific questions.
- A recording of this webinar may be found on <u>OPM's Merit Hiring</u>
 <u>Plan Resources</u> page.



Agenda

- Hiring Experience Group, OPM
- Agency Talent Teams
- Overview of Merit Hiring Plan
- Reporting & Compliance
- Wrap-up: Final Questions & Resources



Strategic Approach to Improving the Federal Hiring Experience

- HX serves as the hub for aligning HR policy and operations while driving innovation
- Agencies drive strategic hiring outcomes through individual Talent Teams
- Together, as a community, we:
 - Share best practices & lessons learned to streamline and innovate
 - Use SMEs to identify common job requirements across agencies
 - Maximize selections through pooled and shared hiring





OPM (Federal) Talent Team – HX+

Building Agency Capacity

- Agency Talent Teams
- Pooled hiring and shared certs
- The Merit Hiring Learning Series, Structured Resume Review Training, Subject Matter Experts-Qualifications Assessment (SME-QA) Train-the-Trainer
- Governmentwide assessment development

Enabling Change with Technology

- Structured Resume Review Tool
- ATP Talent Pools
- Federal Hiring Assessment and Selection Outcome Dashboard

Providing Guidance, Strategy and Support

- Talent Team CoP and 1:1 meetings to help inform and support agency strategy
- Roundtable discussions with Shared Cert Coordinators and Master SMEQA Trainers
- Convene an integrated OPM team to support agencies' implementation of innovative practices and processes



Agency Talent Teams: Innovation Beyond Compliance

Empowered to:

- Drive adoption of successful practices (pooled hiring, SME Structured Resume Review, shared certificates)
- Use hiring selection outcome data to inform assessment strategies
- Execute hiring assessment pilots (passing score assessments, off-the-shelf behavioral assessments)
- Identify and implement automation tools
- Put the applicant experience at the forefront

Structure:

Avg. team - 7.5 FTE

- HR Specialists (staffing/recruitment)
- I/O Psychologists (measurement/ assessment expertise)
- HR policy experts
- Data Analyst
- Project Manager (facilitation coordination/user research)



Merit Hiring Plan



Seven Goals of the Merit Hiring Plan

- Prioritize recruitment of individuals committed to improving the efficiency of the Federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution;
- 2. Prevent the hiring of individuals based on their race, sex, or religion, and prevent the hiring of individuals who are unwilling to defend the Constitution or to faithfully serve the Executive Branch;
- **3. Implement**, to the greatest extent possible, **technical and alternative assessments** as required by the Chance to Compete Act of 2024;
- Decrease government-wide time-to-hire to under 80 days;
- **5. Improve communication with candidates** to provide greater clarity regarding application status, timelines, and feedback, including regular updates on the progress of applications and explanations of hiring decisions where appropriate;
- 6. Integrate modern technology to support the recruitment and selection process, including the use of data analytics to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities in hiring, as well as leveraging digital platforms to improve candidate engagement; and
- 7. Ensure Department and Agency leadership, or their designees, are active participants in implementing the new processes and throughout the full hiring process.



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

he Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies

FROM: Vince Haley, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management

DATE: May 29, 2025

RE: Merit Hiring Plan

The American people deserve a Federal workforce dedicated to American values and efficient service. Yet, Federal hiring criteria long ago abandoned any serious need for technical skills and adherence to the Constitution. Instead, the overly complex Federal hiring system overemphasized discriminatory "equity" quotas and too often resulted in the hiring of unfit, unskilled bureaucrats. The American people, who deserve a government that works for them, have suffered.

In his January 20, 2025 Executive Order 14170, <u>Reforming the Federal Hiring Process</u> and <u>Restoring Merit to Government Service</u> ("Restoring Merit") President Trump directed that "recruitment and hiring processes" become "more efficient and focused on serving the Nation" and that hiring be based on "merit, practical skill, and dedication to our Constitution." These changes will "ensure that the Federal workforce is prepared to help achieve American greatness, and attract the talent necessary to serve our citizens effectively."

President Trump directed the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy to "develop and send to agency heads a Federal Hiring Plan that brings to the Federal workforce only highly capable Americans dedicated to the furtherance of American ideals, values, and interests." President Trump stated that this Merit Hiring Plan must achieve seven goals:

- Prioritize recruitment of individuals committed to improving the efficiency of the Federal government, passionate about the ideals of our American republic, and committed to upholding the rule of law and the United States Constitution;
- Prevent the hiring of individuals based on their race, sex, or religion, and prevent the hiring of individuals who are unwilling to defend the Constitution or to faithfully serve the Executive Branch:
- 3. Implement, to the greatest extent possible, technical and alternative assessments as

Four Key Elements of the Merit Hiring Plan

- 1. Reforming the Federal recruitment process to ensure that only the most talented, capable and patriotic Americans are hired to the Federal service;
- 2. Implementing skills-based hiring, eliminating unnecessary degree requirements, and requiring the use of rigorous, job-related assessments to ensure candidates are selected based on their merit and competence, not their skin color or academic pedigree;
- 3. Streamlining and improving the job application process;
- 4. Reducing time-to-hire to under 80 days by emphasizing the use of talent pools and shared certificates and streamlining the background check process.



I. Reforming the Federal Recruitment Process



A. Ending All Racial Discrimination in Federal Hiring, Recruiting, Retention, and Promotion



B. Leveraging OPM and Agency Talent Teams



C. Recruiting Patriotic Americans for Federal Service



D. Expanding the Use of Standardized Position Descriptions, Candidate Inventories, Talent Pools, and Shared Certificates



E. Expanding OPM Talent Analytics Capabilities and Increasing Agency Use



Expanding Use of Standardized Position Descriptions, Candidate Inventories, Talent Pools, and Shared Certificates

- All job announcements should use a descriptive or functional job title
 - For example, Software Developer rather than IT Specialist
- OPM will be developing standard Position Descriptions for the most common Federal jobs that tie to the 135 job series and grades covered by USA Hire standard assessment batteries
- Agency Talent Teams should expand use of pooled hiring/shared certificates
 - Internal sharing of certificates or inventories of candidates
 - External sharing of certificates or use of another agency's certificate or an OPM-run cross government pooled hiring certificate



Expanding OPM Talent Analytics Capabilities and Increasing Agency Use

- The Federal Hiring Assessment and Selections Outcome Dashboard
- Hiring Experience Metrics

Applicants



Metrics:

- Applicant satisfaction survey scores
- Net number of external hires to Government
- Employee transfer rates within functional/professional communities

Hiring Managers



Metrics:

- Hiring manager satisfaction survey scores
- Percent of vacancies using assessments to replace or augment the self-report assessment questionnaire

HR Professionals



Metrics:

- Number of pooled hiring actions where multiple agencies make selections
- Selection to action ratio



II. Reforming the Candidate Ranking, Assessment and Selection Process to Emphasize Merit and Competence



Implementing Skills-Based Hiring and Eliminating Unnecessary Degree Requirements



Implementing the Final Rule, Reinvigorating Merit-Based Hiring Through Candidate Ranking in the Competitive and Excepted Service (Rule of Many)



Requiring Technical or Alternative Assessments in the Federal Hiring Process, and Ending Self-Assessments



Realigning Roles and Responsibilities in the Federal Hiring Process



Implementing Skills-Based Hiring and Eliminating Unnecessary Degree Requirements

June 26, 2020

Executive Order 13932 Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates: "This order directs important, merit-based reforms that will replace degree-based hiring with skills- and competency-based hiring and will hold the civil service to a higher standard."

January 20, 2025

Executive Order 14170 Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service: "By making our recruitment and hiring processes more efficient and focused on serving the Nation, we will ensure that the Federal workforce is prepared to help achieve American greatness and attracts the talent necessary to serve our citizens effectively."

May 29, 2025

OPM Merit Hiring Plan: Completes the shift to skills-based hiring by requiring technical assessments and phasing out occupational questionnaires.

Requiring Technical or Alternative Assessments in the Federal Hiring Process, and Ending Self-Assessments

- End use of self-assessments (occupational questionnaires) for rating and ranking by September 30, 2025.
 - Occupational or assessment questionnaires may still be used for screening eligibilities and qualifications.
 - Exceptions: Positions graded GS-01 through GS-04 and seasonal positions
- Include at least one technical or alternative assessment before issuance of the certificate of eligibles.



Assessment Options



Structured Resume Review - Subject matter experts review resumes to determine which applicants meet established job qualifications requirements.



Structured Interview - Panel interview where all candidates are asked the same job-related questions (often competency-and behavioral-based). Interviewers use detailed rating scales, evaluating all candidates according to the same standards.



Writing Assessment - Applicants receive a writing prompt and have a set amount of time to write about the topic. Scored by raters using professionally-developed benchmarks or by complex automated protocols.



Assessment Options (cont.)



Work Sample/Practical Exercise/Simulation - Candidates demonstrate their proficiency in performing a sample of job tasks/requirements.



Biodata - Items about past events and behaviors that predict overall performance for a given occupation. Items scored using a research-based scoring key.



Accomplishment Record - Applicants provide a written description of a situation to illustrate their proficiency in critical job-related competencies. Evaluated by a panel of trained raters against competency-based benchmarks.



Assessment Options (cont.)



Cognitive Ability Test - Applicants are asked to solve questions to estimate their potential to use mental processes to solve job-related problems or acquire job knowledge; can also measure aptitude for job-related skills.



Job Knowledge Test - Comprised of specific questions developed to determine how much the candidate knows about particular job tasks or responsibilities.



Situational Judgment Tests - Presents applicants with a description of a work problem or critical situation and asks them to identify how they would deal with it (can be paper, computerized, or video-based format).



USA Hire Standard Assessments

Note: Assessments used and competencies measured depend on the job series and grade.



Interaction

- Accountability
- Attention to Detail
- Customer Service
- Flexibility
- Influencing/Negotiating
- Integrity/Honesty
- Interpersonal Skills
- Learning
- Self-Management
- Stress Tolerance
- Teamwork



Judgment

Decision making



Mathematical Reasoning

- Arithmetic
- Mathematical reasoning



Reading

Reading



Reasoning

Reasoning

Realigning Roles and Responsibilities in the Federal Hiring Process

The Hiring Manager

HR Professionals

Agency Leadership

Agency Talent Team



Four Short Essay Questions

- All competitive service job announcements GS-5 and above
 - Except for announcements for teachers, wage grade positions, and seasonal positions
- Agencies may exempt other positions at their discretion, where they deem appropriate
- Agencies are encouraged to use these questions for competitive merit promotion hiring (both internal and external), however, it is not a requirement



Four Short Essay Questions (cont.)

- Answers to these questions are not scored or rated
- These responses should be treated similar to a cover letter
 - Used to provide more information about an applicant's background and dedication to public service
- These responses are not used as a means of determining qualifications for a position
- If an applicant does not answer the questions, they are not disqualified or screened out



Four Short Essay Questions (cont.)

- Responses to the questions are reviewed only by the hiring manager and agency leadership (or a designee), as part of an application packet forwarded to the hiring manger and later to agency leadership if the candidate is recommended for selection
- Agencies should work with the talent acquisition system representatives to add these questions to their application processes



Four Short Essay Questions (cont.)

Applicants should be provided with the following instructions:

The following four narrative questions provide an opportunity for you to highlight your dedication to public service for the hiring manager and agency leadership (or designee(s)). While your responses are not mandatory and will not be scored, we encourage you to thoughtfully address each question. Please provide a response of 200 words or less to each question. You will be asked to certify that you are using your own words and did not use a consultant or artificial intelligence (AI) such as a large language model (LLM) like ChatGPT or Copilot.



2-Page Limit on Resume Length

 This will be applied at the time of application in USAJOBS – more guidance to come from OPM soon



IV. Reducing Time-to-Hire to 80 days

- Executive Order 14170 directs the governmentwide time-to-hire be reduced to under 80 days.
 - Validate Need to time to Initial or Tentative Job Offer
- Successful practices include:
 - Pooled hiring and shared certificates
 - System integrations between OPM's talent acquisition system and other systems in the pre-employment process
 - Streamlining and improving the personnel vetting process (Trusted Workforce 2.0)



Merit Hiring Plan Reporting Requirements

Lexi Hess, Acting Accountability Program Manager, Merit System Accountability and Compliance (MSAC) merithiring@opm.gov



Reporting RequirementsMerit Hiring Plan, Section 5

- Monthly progress updates (Agency)
 - Talent Team members
 - Recruitment plans
 - Eliminating DEI
 - Reforming recruitment programs
 - Implementing technical assessments
 - Use of shared certificates
 - Reducing time-to-hire
- Federal Merit Hiring Compliance Dashboard (MSAC)

V. Reports and Implementation

Beginning on June 30, 2025 and continuing on the last business day of each month, each agency CHCO, working with the agency's Talent Team, will prepare a report to update OPM and OMB on the progress of implementation within each agency. The initial report shall identify the members of the agency's Talent Team and their expected roles (including the Talent Pool Manager and Shared Certificate Coordinator), along with the agency's specific plans for recruitment in the areas of veterans, early career, and STEM. Each monthly report will also include the agency's report on:

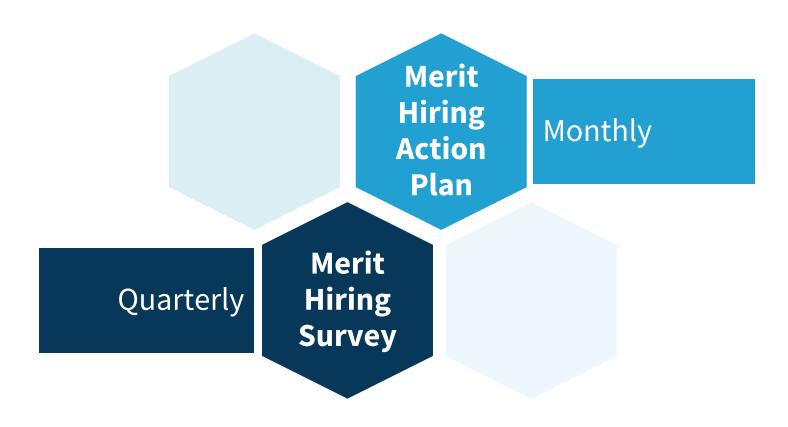
- Its progress in eliminating DEI in hiring, recruitment, retention and promotion;
- Its progress in building recruitment programs in alignment with this Merit Hiring Plan to attract highly-skilled, patriotic Americans to join the Federal service;
- Its progress in implementing technical assessments and cut scores, including policies around the use of cut scores;
- · Metrics on the agency's use of shared certificates, talent pools, and resume mining; and
- · Its progress in reducing time-to-hire.

All reports shall be sent to merithiring@opm.gov and workforce@omb.eop.gov.

To ensure accountability, OPM will develop a Federal dashboard to track agency compliance with merit reform efforts. OPM's Office of Merit Systems Accountability and Compliance (MSAC) will monitor government-wide compliance with the Merit Hiring Plan, including the 80-day time-to-hire goal, and to maintain the compliance dashboard. In addition, the CHCO Council Executive Director, in consultation with MSAC and OPM's Talent Team, shall prepare a report each month on government-wide implementation of the Merit Hiring Plan. OPM's Talent Team and Office of HR Solutions will also host government-wide trainings with agencies on the use of assessments and compliance with this Merit Hiring Plan.



Reporting Requirements Reporting Mechanisms





Reporting Requirements Merit Hiring Action Plan

Sheet 1:

			Merit Hiring Plan - Action	Plan					
								Date	Monthly Progress
Phase	MHP Memo Section #	Action Item	Success Measure(s)	Owner	Due Date	Status	Start Date	Complete	Comments
Phase 1	: Reviewing Current Practic	es and Preparing for Skills-based Hiring Systo	em (6/1/2025 - 12/30/2025)						
	I.A. Ending All Racial	1. Immediately end illegal, demeaning, and	Ensure hiring, recruitment, retention						
	Discrimination in Federal	immoral "diversity, equity, and inclusion" (DEI)	and promotion align with the Merit		6/30/2025	Not Started	1	1	NO PROGRESS
1	Hiring, Recruiting, Retention	programs in hiring, recruiting, interviewing,	Hiring Plan and are based solely on		0/30/2023				INO PROGRESS
	and Promotion and Appendix	training, professional development, internships,	merit, job-related criteria, and						
	I.A. Ending All Racial	2. Take prompt and appropriate disciplinary action							
	Discrimination in Federal	against any hiring manager or other agency	Compliance with EO 14170, EO 14151,		6/30/2025	Not Started			NO PROGRESS
1	Hiring, Recruiting, Retention	employee who engages in the unlawful race	and the Merit Hiring Plan.		0/30/2023				NO PROGRESS
	and Promotion and Appendix	preferential discrimination described in the Merit							

Sheet 2:

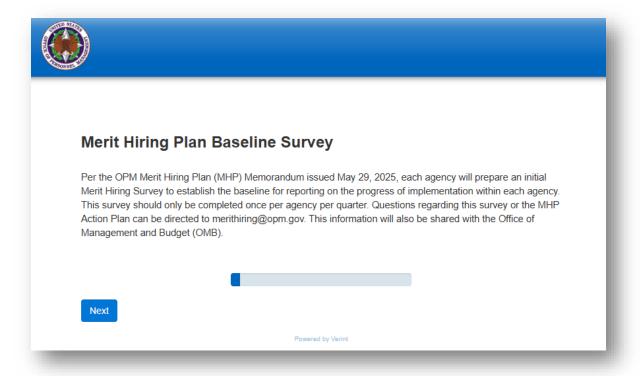
Merit Staffing Plan - Agency Talent Team								
Department/Agency:	Component (if applicable)	Last Name 🔻	First Name	Email address 🔻	Position/Title 🔻		Are you part of a	(Small agencies) Which agency(ies) are you clustered with?
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Reporting RequirementsMerit Hiring Survey



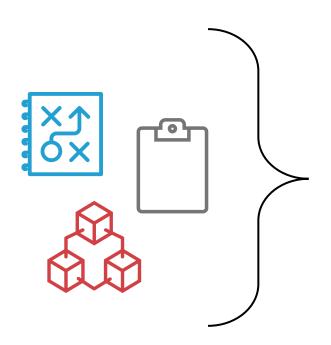
- Last survey completed June 30, 2025 (FY24 data)
- Next iteration October 31, 2025 (FY25 data)
- Quarterly data going forward
- One survey per agency





Reporting Requirements

Merit Hiring Compliance Dashboard





Merit Hiring Plan (MHP) Compliance Dashboard

DRAFT

This report exists to inform stakeholders of agencies' progress against the goals laid out in the Merit Hiring Plan.

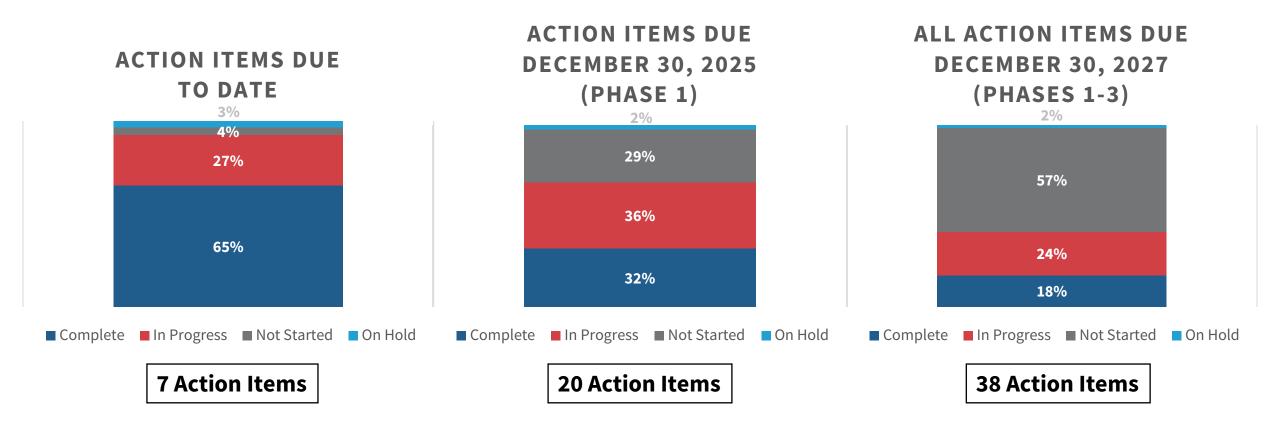
Through the products and services provided to agencies across government, the Office of Personnel Management builds and maintains rich datasets that can be used to inform HR policy and improve the experience of the Federal workforce and public.





Merit Hiring Plan Implementation

Governmentwide as of July 31, 2025





Resources



Online Resources for Agencies

- Merit Hiring Resources Page
 - o Merit Hiring Plan
 - o Fact Sheet: OPM Launches Merit Hiring Plan to Modernize Federal Workforce and Restore Accountability
 - o Guidance on Using the Four Short Essay Questions
- Executive Order 14170 Reforming the Federal Hiring Process and Restoring Merit to Government Service
- Public Law 118-188 Chance to Compete Act
- OPM Delegated Examining Operations Handbook



Assessment Resources

- Assessment Decision Guide
- Assessment Tools Considerations
- Structured Interview Guide
- <u>Federal Hiring Assessment and Selection Dashboard</u>
- Federal Workforce Competency Initiative
 - OPM's MOSAIC Studies critical competencies and tasks employees need to perform successfully in nearly 200 Federal occupations, as well as for leadership positions.

Training:

- <u>Designing An Assessment Strategy: "Fundamental Concepts, Processes and Applications" and</u> <u>"Use of Hiring Assessments: A SME –Based Approach"</u>
- Structured Resume Review Training



The Merit Hiring Learning Series OPM Talent Team

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is pleased to provide a free, government-wide learning series to support HR professionals, Talent Team members, hiring managers, and agency leaders in effective implementation of the Merit Hiring Plan.

Must have a .gov or .mil email to register on **Eventbrite**.



Upcoming Events - Check back at our series collection for updates!

August 21 – OPM Tools: Learn about OPM system features and tools that will help agencies implement the Merit Hiring Plan.

September 15 – Pooled & Shared Hiring (including Candidate Inventory): Overview of pooled hiring, such as the benefits, the authorities that allow pooled hiring and the OPM tools that facilitate pooled hiring.

September 16 – USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal Overview: Learn how to access and navigate the Agency Talent Portal (ATP) to use features, such as resume mining, campaigns, events, Talent Programs and Talent Pools.

Virtual events are hosted on MS Teams Townhall. Depending on your agency's network, the Teams Townhall features may not be available to you.



Thank You

Please take a moment to complete a short survey to provide your feedback on today's session:

https://surveys.opm.gov/se/5B5534D43552383D



The Merit Hiring Learning Series
Hiring Experience (HX) Group



HX@opm.gov

USA Hire Standard Assessment Batteries

XX99 Student Trainee (23 series) 0018 Safety & Occupational Health Management 0020 Community Planning 0023 Outdoor Recreation Planning 0025 Park Ranger 0028 Environmental Protection Spec. 0080 Security Administration 0086 Security Clerical and Assistance 0089 Emergency Management Specialist 0090 Guide 0101 Social Science 0107 Health Insurance Administration 0110 Economist 0130 Foreign Affairs 0150 Geography 0170 History 0180 Psychology 0185 Social Work 0193 Archeology 0201 Personnel/HR Management 0203 Personnel Clerical & Assistance 0260 Equal Employment Opportunity	0304 Information Receptionist 0305 Mail & File 0306 Government Information Specialist 0308 Records & Information Management 0318 Secretary 0326 (OA) Clerical & Assistance 0335 Computer Clerk & Assistance 0341 Administrative Officer 0342 Support Services Administration 0343 Management & Program Analysis 0344 Management & Clerical Assistance 0346 Logistics Management 0391 Telecommunications 0401 General Biological Science 0404 Biological Science Technician 0462 Forestry Technician 0462 Forestry Technician 0501 Financial Administration & Programs 0503 Financial & Clerical Assistance 0510 Accountant 0511 Auditor 0525 Accounting Technician 0544 Civilian Pay	0570 Financial Institution Examining 0640 Health Aid And Technician 0675 Medical Records Technician 0679 Medical Clerk 0685 Public Health Program Specialist 0801 General Engineering 0802 Engineering Technician 0810 Civil Engineering 0830 Mechanical Engineering 0854 Computer Engineer 0855 Electronics Engineering 0856 Electronics Technician 0861 Aerospace Engineering 0901 General Legal and Kindred Admin 0950 Paralegal Specialist 0962 Contact Representative (Clerical) 0965 Land Law Examining 0986 Legal Assistance 0991 Worker's Comp Claims Examining 0996 Veterans Claims Examining
0301 Misc. Administration & Programs	0545 Military Pay	Note: Cut scores have been implemen
	0EC0 Decilent Annilosia	_

0560 Budget Analysis

Note: Cut scores have been implemented for the 13 core occupations in bold.

0303 Miscellaneous Clerk & Assistant

USA Hire Standard Assessment Batteries cont'd

1420 Archivist
1421 Archive Specialist (Professional)
1515 Operations Research
1701 General Education & Training
1702 Education & Training Technician
1712 Training Instruction
1715 Vocational Rehabilitation
1720 Education Program
1750 Instructional Systems
1910 Quality Assurance Specialist
2001 General Supply
2003 Supply Program Management
2005 Supply Clerical & Technician
2010 Inventory Management
2030 Distribution Facilities & Storage Management
2032 Packaging
2101 Transportation Specialist
2102 Transportation Clerk & Assistant
2130 Traffic Management
2150 Transportation Operations
2210 Information Technology

Note: Cut scores have been implemented for the 13 core occupations in bold.