White Paper: Tour of Duty

"You can do this too. We are not special snowflakes; these are hiring authorities that are available to every agency in government." Jennifer Anastasoff, Founding Member at U.S. Digital Service [in- person interview, 9/9/2016]

## Overview

The purpose of this white paper is to provide an overview of tour of duty, including its benefits and implementation guidelines within Federal agencies. This paper highlights the diverse hiring authorities available to Federal agencies. The information in this paper is largely based on relevant literature, including articles from journals, news, and other outlets, as well as interviews with agency managers, or those in similar roles, across the Federal Government. Appendixes describe narratives of six tour of duty programs or uses (Appendix A), supporting policies (Appendix B), and additional resources (Appendix C) for readers interested in reading and learning more about tour of duty—their role, development, and impact.

### Introduction

The caliber of the people that Federal departments and agencies are able to recruit, hire, and retain has a decisive impact on public sector performance. Agencies already draw on the efforts of a diverse and talented workforce, but many could gain additional benefits by actively recruiting individuals who can help build a more effective, efficient, and innovative government. Framing employment opportunities as temporary “tours of duty” can tap into a new class of talent that is willing to temporarily pause their private sector careers to answer the call to serve their country. Flexible hiring authorities allow agencies to recruit executives, entrepreneurs, technologists, and other innovators for a short period of time for government service. Drawing in fresh, outside talent is an important avenue for infusing new, innovative thinking into Federal work. Tour of duty hiring approaches can help agencies rapidly address technical skill gaps and tackle emerging challenges.

This guide lays out the rationales and use cases for tour of duty hiring. Instances where tour of duty stints have been impactful for agencies are highlighted. Agency leadership and human resource officers can find information regarding:

* How to use flexible authorities, including the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), Direct Hire Authority (with permission from OPM), Schedule A Part R hiring authority, and Expert and Consultant Pay
* How to pitch to talent in the private sector with a “call to serve”
* How to effectively recruit top talent into government by adopting private-sector best practices
* How to recruit for both technical expertise and cultural fit
* How to build collaborations between innovators and career Federal employees so that the influx of new talent serves as a “force multiplier” for the entire Federal workforce
* How to ensure that innovators are supported during their tenure for maximal impact.

### Why

Tour of duty appointments can be useful for recruiting top-class talent with specialized skills. By drawing upon an additional talent pool from the private sector, tours of duty help to infuse new technologies and innovative practices into agencies. Programs like the Presidential Innovation Fellows (PIF), 18F, and the United States Digital Service (USDS), which focus on building capacity and developing digital service and technologies, have used tours of duty to recruit technical and design talent. Agencies can reap similar benefits from using tour of duty authorities to bring in domain experts in other areas besides digital technology, including process improvement, data science and data-driven decision-making, finance, legal, and contracting. The advantages of detailing world-class talent can extend beyond filling critical skills gaps and can including helping agencies define frontier problems and goals.[[1]](#footnote-2)

For agencies, tour of duty hiring can help mitigate specific challenges in traditional hiring authorities. Specifically, tours of duty authorities can provide agencies with flexibilities to:

* Reduce the time to hire
* Source applicants with skill sets better aligned to temporary agency needs
* Strengthen innovative methods and problem-solving frameworks

#### Faster time-to-hire

The process for flexible hiring authorities can be considerably accelerated compared to traditional vacancy announcements. The traditional Federal hiring process is built around an 80 day hiring model.[[2]](#footnote-3) This timeline is at odds with the rapid pace required to hire top talent: for a strong chance at landing competitive talent in the private sector, hiring organizations need to move from first contact to formal offer within 30 to 60 days. A longer timeline increases the risk of losing a candidate to another opportunity. Generally the more competitive the candidate, the higher the risk of losing them if hiring is delayed. Though many flexible hiring experts caution that “rapid hiring” still entails a process that is not instantaneous, it is possible to complete hiring in weeks instead of months. After the U.S. Digital Service (USDS) invested in building a streamlined hiring process, their average time-to-offer decreased from 150 business days to 34 business days.[[3]](#footnote-4) Decreasing time-to-hire metrics is critical for sourcing talent for short term needs, and it can directly impact the quality of hired candidates.

#### Sourcing of applicants with skill sets aligned to agency need

Because flexible hiring authorities give agencies more options in how they advertise and recruit for talent, agencies can select and onboard the candidates who are best-suited for an agency’s priority needs. For example, in a February 2016 study conducted by the National Academy of Public Administration and ICF International, 31% of the surveyed Federal leadership reported that a lack of employees with current digital skills was a significant barrier to realizing the full potential of digital technology in their agency.[[4]](#footnote-5) Several agency leaders and staff have observed job applicants they may have deemed the most qualified are not always selected through the traditional hiring process, in part due to applicants’ lack of familiarity on how to optimize applications through USAJOBS (i.e. tailoring resumes for keyword matches). Disconnects between human capital offices and program offices can also result in misalignments between posted job requirements and the actual programmatic needs for domain experts.

When framed as a public appeal or call to serve, the use of flexible hiring authorities – coupled with active recruiting measures that seek out top talent – can help agencies more quickly find ideal candidates and bring them aboard to solve challenges. The increasing use of tour of duty approaches has already brought a significant amount of top talent into the government to solve pressing problems. Since the inception of the Presidential Innovation Fellows in 2012, the U.S. Digital Service, and 18F, both in 2014, these programs have brought more than 450 engineers, designers, data scientists, and product managers to serve a tour of duty in over 25 agencies alongside dedicated civil servants.[[5]](#footnote-6) This is helped immensely by a dedicated talent team, which includes experienced technical recruiters who source candidates through events and direct outreach and act as their advocate throughout the hiring process.

#### Infusion of innovative methods and problem-solving frameworks

Outside talent should be seen as a vehicle for helping to realize career staff’s goals. At HHS, Susannah Fox describes using the Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR) program to graft entrepreneurs onto teams that have great ideas, but need specific skill set augmentation to execute them.

### How

Each federal agency may have their own specific personnel authorities that allow for tour of duty hires. Examples of flexible hiring authorities that can facilitate tour of duty stints include the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), Direct Hire Authority (with permission from Office of Personnel Management (OPM)), Schedule A(r) hiring authority, and Expert and Consultant Pay.

Tour of duty hiring method may be an attractive option for agencies looking for specific talent to join on a temporary basis to address a new or challenging issue. It is a complement -- not a replacement -- to traditional competitive hiring practices. Understanding and properly using all available flexible hiring authorities can help each agency's human capital team meet agency hiring needs more efficiently. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) offers additional guidance on different hiring authorities and recruitment approaches that agencies may use to meet hiring needs.[[6]](#footnote-7) Federal employees may wish to consider discussing options for tour of duty hiring with their human resource or other relevant officials at their respective agency.

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| Human Resources Flexibilities and Authorities in the Federal Government  “Selected flexible hiring authorities allow agencies to:   * Bring in temporary assignees from state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, and eligible not-for-profit organizations under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program. Assignments should be made for the mutual benefit of the Federal Government and the non-Federal entity, and are for 2 years. Assignments may be extended for an additional 2 years, allowing for a maximum term of 4 consecutive years. Assignees are either temporarily appointed to the Federal agency or serve while on detail. Cost-sharing arrangements for mobility assignments are negotiated between the participating organizations. The Federal agency may agree to pay all, some, or none of the costs associated with the assignment. Such costs may include basic pay, supplemental pay, benefits, and travel and relocation expenses. (5 U.S.C. 3371- 3375; 5 CFR part 334) * Use temporary appointments for short-term needs not expected to last longer than one year. Recruitment is accomplished through the competitive process. (5 CFR part 316, subpart D) * Use term appointments for more than one and up to four years in circumstances where the need for the employee's services is not permanent, including but not limited to: project work; extraordinary workload; scheduled abolishment, reorganization, or contracting out of the function; uncertainty of future funding; or the need to maintain permanent positions for placement of employees who would otherwise be displaced from other parts of the organization. Recruitment is accomplished through the competitive process. (5 CFR part 316, subpart C) * Employ experts or consultants for temporary or intermittent employment. The excepted service appointment is used to hire experts and consultants under 5 U.S.C. 3109, to perform temporary (not to exceed one year) or intermittent expert or consultant work. (This differs from employing experts and consultants through procurement contracts, which are covered by regulations issued by the Federal Acquisition Regulation Council.) Under 5 CFR part 304, an expert is someone who is specifically qualified by education and experience to perform difficult and challenging tasks in a particular field beyond the usual range of achievement. A consultant is someone who can provide valuable and pertinent advice generally drawn from a high degree of broad administrative, professional, or technical knowledge or experience. (5 U.S.C. 3109; 5 CFR part 304; agency specific legislation) * Use commercial temporary help services for brief periods (120 days, with extension of additional 120 days) for short-term situations. This option may be used only when regular recruitment and hiring procedures are impractical, and the commercial service is purchased through the Federal procurement system. (5 CFR part 300, subpart E)”   Excerpted from: Office of Personnel Management, August 2013, <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/reference-materials/handbooks/humanresourcesflexibilitiesauthorities.pdf> |

How can agencies attract top talent on a temporary basis? Domain experts and outside leaders can be drawn by an active recruitment strategy framed around a “call to serve,” explains Jennifer Tress, the Director of Talent at 18F.[[7]](#footnote-8) An effective public service appeal tells prospective hires that they have tremendous skills that are valuable to the government and asks them directly to use those skills to serve their country. With the use of fellowship authority, Schedule A (r), talent can be hired under 2 year appointments with the option of being extended another 2 years.[[8]](#footnote-9) The tour of duty model can be especially alluring to talent with technical expertise who might not otherwise have considered public service. Tress explains: “These [2-year] terms actually do a good job of saying [to recruited hires], ‘We want you here for a focused period of time, and we want you here to disrupt in a respectful way.”[[9]](#footnote-10)

## Background

Competitive examining is open to everyone and was intended to serve as the primary method to bring new hires into the civil service the federal government. Competitive service appointments require individuals to go through a competitive hiring process which may consists of a written test, evaluation of the applicant’s education and experience, or other attributes successful for performing the position. Positions within the Federal government are categorized as permanent or nonpermanent. Permanent positions are within the traditional competitive service and does not have a proscribed end date. In contrast, nonpermanent positions are classified as temporary, term, and indefinite, may have a specified end date (See Figure 1).

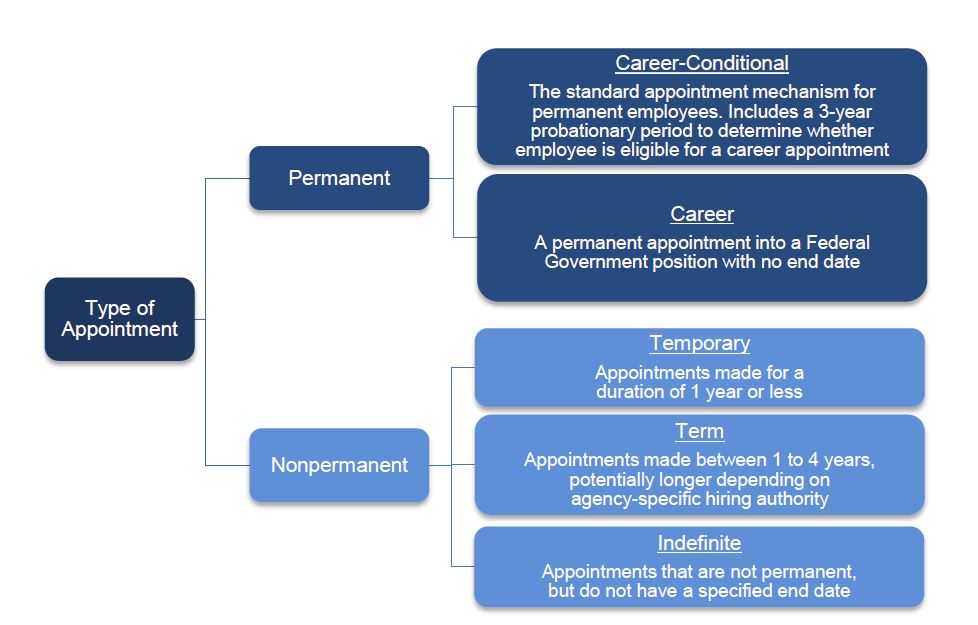


Figure 1. Categories of Permanent and Nonpermanent Federal Appointments

Tour of Duty models use can consist of a combination of temporary, term, or indefinite appointments depending on the agency. A benefit of tour of duty is its ability to bring onboard new hires. Flexible hiring authorities are granted to agencies to accelerate and streamline the hiring process and create additional temporary positions.

Various hiring authorities provide agencies with flexibilities to hire job applications for short term and long-term assignments.[[10]](#footnote-11) All Federal agencies have the authority to hire term and temporary employees under Title 5.[[11]](#footnote-12) However, temporary positions are limited to 1 year with an extension of one additional year and term appointments are between 1 and 4 years. Agency specific supplementary hiring authorities exist that can provide additional term flexibilities not available through Title 5, such as longer term length, extending term appointments, and converting term appointments to permanent positions in the competitive service.[[12]](#footnote-13) (See Appendix B) for further detail.

### Expedited Hiring

The competitive service ensures that applicants and employees receive fair and equal treatment in the hiring process. Special non-competitive appointing authorities permit agencies to hire outside of the competitive hiring process. Veterans, persons with disabilities, many current and former federal employees, and returning Peace Corps volunteers are examples of individuals eligible for non-competitive appointment. OPM can also grant government-wide authority for hiring outside of the competitive process, such as the Direct Hire Authority 5 CFR 337 (B).

The Chief Human Capital Offer Act of 2002 provides agencies with the authority to appoint candidates directly if OPM determines a severe shortage of candidates or a critical hiring need exists. (Used for permanent and non-permanent positions). A severe shortage of candidates for a particular position or group positions means that an agency is having difficulty identifying candidates possessing the competencies or the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to perform the job requirements despite extensive recruitment, extended job announcement periods, and other incentives such as relocation. A critical hiring need is a position that an agency has a need to fill the position to meet mission requirements brought by an exigency, such as a national emergency, potential threat, environmental disaster, or mission requirement.

## Considerations for Use

Tours of duty may be suitable options when an agency has well-defined objective and has a limited period in which to meet that objective. Agencies may also find tour of duty model beneficial for solving short-term staff shortages or filling critical need positions.[[13]](#footnote-14) While tour of duty hiring approaches have frequently been used for digital and technical talent in the last few years, they are not limited to recruiting for technologists. For example, agency objectives may include acquiring employees with specialized skills or knowledge for specific projects or issues. Tour of duty approaches can be a valuable way to acquire expert talent from a range of domains, including:

* Executives who can provide senior agency leadership (e.g. Chief Innovation Officers)[[14]](#footnote-15)
* Entrepreneurs who can help deploy innovative advances[[15]](#footnote-16)
* Domain specialists who have expertise in human centered design and other user-centered approaches[[16]](#footnote-17)
* Academic experts who have deep subject matter expertise.[[17]](#footnote-18)

A constant rotation of employees can bring a unique perspective and innovative ideas to Federal Agencies to solving governmental problems.[[18]](#footnote-19) Tour of duty may also be a mechanism to attract talent candidates who may wish to work in a Federal agency for only a few years before returning to or starting a career elsewhere.

## Implementation Guidelines

* Review of hiring authorities
* How to pitch to talent in the private sector with a “call to serve”
* How to create a fellowship program – template memo and example for establishing a Schedule A(r) Fellowship Program
* Additional advice on active recruiting and talent management

### Review of hiring authorities

Several flexible hiring authorities exist, including the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA), Direct Hire Authority (with permission from OPM), Schedule A Part R hiring authority (fellowship programs), and Expert and Consultant Pay. The first step is to assess the type of program that fits your agency’s hiring needs:

* Internship or fellowship programs that provide developmental or professional experiences to individuals who have completed their formal education; -
* Training and associateship programs designed to increase the pool of qualified candidates in a particular occupational specialty;
* Professional/industry exchange programs that provide for a cross-fertilization between the agency and the private sector to foster mutual understanding, an exchange of ideas, or to bring experienced practitioners to the agency;
* Residency programs through which participants gain experience in a Federal clinical environment;

In the evaluation process, agencies can work with their human resource officials to understand options for hiring candidates. As an example, the questionnaire in to Resource Box 1: Hiring Decision Tool can be used to match potential hiring flexibilities with an agency's needs.[[19]](#footnote-20)

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| Resource Box 1. Hiring Decision Tool  1) Do you have a need for talent with technical skills in the areas of: information technology, acquisitions, cyber security, or medical occupations and…  a) A critical hiring need?  b) Practical workforce experience?  2) Are you seeking candidates with a track record of Federal Government service?  3) Could the position be filled with an applicant who has a severe physical disability, psychiatric disability, or intellectual disability?  4) Do you have positions that could be filled through formal training/developmental programs and…  a) Do you have the time to develop your workforce by hiring students or recent graduates?  b) Are these entry-level positions?  5) Do you have a need to bring in talent from state government, academia, or non-profits, for cross-fertilization of ideas?  6) Is the position to be filled at the expert level with responsibility for mentoring junior level staff?  7) Are you looking for candidates with advanced degrees (masters, doctorate, or professional) to help the Federal Government take the lead with solving scientific and technological challenges?  8) Do you have a critical need to fill a short-term job or need to fill a continuing job pending completion of examining, clearances, or other procedures?  9) Are you looking for candidates with international experience or cross-cultural understanding on issues ranging from health, education to business development?  10) Are you looking for tech talent/digital services experts to work on forward facing, high tech projects?  11) Do you have a need to fill non-permanent positions to work on projects of limited duration?  12) Does the candidate have superior qualifications or does the agency have a special need for the candidate’s services?  13) Does the candidate have a Federal rate of pay that could be used to set pay above his or her entitlement?  14) Is the position you are recruiting for likely to be difficult to fill in the absence of an incentive?  15) Has a current Government employee applied for a position that is likely to be difficult to fill in the absence of an incentive and the employee must relocate to accept the position?  16) Does the highly-qualified candidate for the position you are filling have a Federally insured student loan?  17) Are the skills and experience that the candidate possesses necessary to achieve an important agency mission or performance goal?”  Excerpt: “Hiring Decision Tool”, https://hru.gov/Studio\_Recruitment/HT\_Hiring\_Decision\_Tool.aspx |

### Attracting Top Talent with a “Call to Serve” Message

A “21st century call to serve your country” is a recruiting message that may resonate with talent interested in public service.[[20]](#footnote-21) “There are many people in the private sector who really glom on to that,” notes Jennifer Tress.[[21]](#footnote-22) Those in the private sector and in Silicon Valley may have tremendous skills, but “the work that they’re doing -- the algorithms they’re creating, the product visions – are often to make people money or generate ad sales. That just isn’t as meaningful as the mission of the government.” The call to serve, Tress says, is “such a *powerful* message to people: ‘Wait. I can be coding to help eradicate homelessness, to help serve veterans, to help ensure refugees are coming in and welcomed into our country through a strong vetting process? I’m all in for that.’” People are eager to serve; the obstacle is often demonstrating to prospective talent that real change can be possible. Tress says: “From the outside looking in, and from a recruitment message, government has this connotation of being very staid, very traditional, and disruption is not welcome.”

Effective messages can integrate a three-pronged structure:

* Focus on the **mission**, with an emphasis on outcome-driven goals.
* Highlight the amount of **impact** an individual can make through the position.
* Point to **specific examples** **of similarly skilled people** who have already created widespread impact. (An early example for technologists was healthcare.gov, where tour of duty technologists were able to have an immediate impact on 10 million Americans.)

For further on framing messages, refer to Resource Box 2. Messaging to Top Talent: On Extraordinariness.

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| Resource Box 2. Messaging to Top Talent: On Extraordinariness  “’Go where you are rare.’ That’s US CTO Megan Smith’s advice to people from what Todd Park calls ‘metaphysical Silicon Valley.’ Those five simple words belie a deceptively difficult and brave choice made by those who left careers in Silicon Valley to work in government, in Federal agencies, at the United States Digital Service, 18F, the Presidential Innovation Fellows, and similar efforts at the state and local level. The plays you ran every day in your consumer tech job are very difficult to run on the government playing field. Things work differently. When you go where you are rare, you realize you’re working from a set of assumptions that most of your colleagues don’t share, and you have to step back–sometimes way back–and try to justify, explain, convince, win over dozens or hundreds of people in order to do what you came to do. I have some personal experience with this. It’s hard.  But in government, though your skills may be rare, you have something very much in common with your fellow public servants. Of course you are a talented, entrepreneurial, 21st century doer and thinker. Of course you work with data and technology in ways that change the world. Of course you spread the gospel of user-centered, iterative and data-driven approaches to problem-solving. You would not have been selected for your position otherwise. But (as you already know), it’s not your talent that makes you extraordinary. What makes you extraordinary is the same thing my friend saw in his partner at that federal agency, delaying retirement to keep a critical system running despite all odds: it is your empathy, and your desire to serve. Keep honoring that, and the service of those around you, and you will do more good for the American people than the most extraordinary talent this country has to offer.”  Source: Jen Pahlka (Founder of Code for America), Code for America Blog, August 2016. <https://medium.com/code-for-america/on-extraordinariness-c48a2a5e955c#.o8493mfcs> |

### Using Fellowship Programs to Recruit Tours of Duty Under Schedule A(r) Authority

Use of the Schedule A(r) authority (Schedule A- 5 CFR 213.3102 (r))can be a powerful tool for agencies to source talent, but, according to Jennifer Tress, it may be underutilized and its implementation can be misunderstood.[[22]](#footnote-23) A template memo for establishing a Schedule A(r) Fellowship Program is provided as an example for interested agencies.[[23]](#footnote-24)

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| **“Fact Sheet: Fellowships and Industry Exchange Programs Hiring Authority**  **5 CFR 213.3102 (r)**  **What is the *Fellowships and Industry Exchange Programs* hiring authority**?  The Fellowships and Industry Exchange Programs hiring authorityis a Government-wide excepted service hiring authority under 5 CFR 213.3102(r) that can be used to hire for fellowships and similar programs when recruitment is from limited applicant pools. It is sometimes referred to as the ‘r’ authority.  **What positions can be filled under this Authority?**     * Agencies may use this authority for positions in support of fellowship or professional/industry exchange programs. Fellowship programs are programs that provide developmental or professional experiences to individuals who have completed their formal education. Professional/industry exchange programs are programs that provide for cross fertilization between industry and the private sector to foster mutual understanding, an exchange of ideas, or bring experienced people into Government. * Positions may be filled at any grade level up to the GS-15 level, as well as Senior Level (SL) positions.   **How does it work?**   * Agencies may make appointments lasting up to 4 years. * No public notice (posting on USAJOBS.gov) is required; however, agencies can advertise if they choose and should use other appropriate recruiting activities. * Veterans’ preference applies. * Applicants must meet qualification standards developed by the agency which employs them (i.e., no Government-wide qualification standard). * Agencies must have excepted service policies in place prior to using this (or any) excepted service authority, which govern the process for receiving/processing applications; making qualification determinations; rating and ranking applicants; and the application of veterans preference.   **Are employees hired under this Authority eligible for benefits and leave?**  Employees hired on appointments that are expected to last for at least 90 days are generally eligible for health insurance coverage and also earn annual and sick leave.  Employees hired for periods longer than 1 year are eligible for the following benefits:   * Health Insurance * Annual and Sick Leave * Long Term Care Insurance * Life Insurance * Flexible Spending Accounts * Retirement and Thrift Savings Plan   **What else do I need to know?**   * Individuals hired under this authority are subject to the same suitability/background investigation process as other employees. * Agencies may this Government-wide hiring authority without additional approvals from OPM. * Appointments under this authority do not lead to permanent employment.”   Quote: https://hru.gov/Studio\_Recruitment/documents/Fact%20Sheet%20R%20Authority%20Final.pdf |

## Lessons Learned

Lessons learned for the implementation of tour of duty hiring include:

* Navigating hiring authority landscape within
* Finding talent outside
* Investing agency resources into recruitment infrastructure
* Anticipate cultural tensions and build collaborative environments between short-tenure hires and career Federal employees
* Support tour of duty employees during their tenure and institutionalize change

### Navigating the hiring authority landscape

Agency officials sometimes report hearing from their human capital officers that their agency lacks authority to carry out flexible hiring (typically under Schedule A (r)), that OPM needs to approve the use of such authority, or that some other unspecified rule prohibits it. The truth is that any agency can leverage flexible hiring mechanisms, like fellowships, to bring in extra support to address high priority initiatives. Agency leadership should work collaboratively with HR officers on the deployment of these approaches; human capital officers are critical to the mission success of Departments, and they may need additional funding and staff support and encouragement to incorporate new hiring approaches into their work.

### Finding talent outside

The opportunity to engage in public service and work on hard problems at scale has been a compelling recruitment pitch for both technical and non-technical top talent. Contrary to common perception, "Recruitment hasn't been an issue,” reports Jennifer Tress of 18F. “It's been a pleasant surprise to see how many people have answered the call, and in large numbers.”[[24]](#footnote-25) USDS reports that in its first two years, it has received thousands of applications for less than 200 positions. [[Source](https://shift.newco.co/hands-off-the-keyboard-innovation-lessons-from-inside-the-us-government-1c9f592f8e5e#.aozinyrvx)] The challenge is not in motivating or exciting domain experts to join for “tours of duty.” The challenge for agencies is to commit to active efforts to identify ideal candidates and build out the necessary hiring infrastructure to bring them onboard quickly. Program staff report that substantial effort is also needed to build awareness through press, online engagement, and in-person programming. [Crosslink: See more on how to do active recruiting]

### Investing agency resources into recruitment infrastructure

When USDS first began, the selection process (from first application to offer) took 150 days. Now the hiring process takes 34 days – though security procedures still take place after that, the reduced hiring cycle represents a huge improvement. What changed? It took intensive investment in building the right team. Getting to rapid hiring required significant investment in USDS’ hiring infrastructure, Anastasoff explains – there were no quick shortcuts to success. At the same time, she emphasizes, there is no secret sauce for realizing efficiency gains in the hiring process. With commitment and some knowledge, other agencies could achieve similar results. ”You can do this too,” she stresses. “We are not special snowflakes; these are hiring authorities that are available to every agency in government."[[25]](#footnote-26)

### Anticipate cultural tensions and build collaborative environments between short-tenure hires and career Federal employees

Tour of duty hiring can cause tension, especially if long-time career staff perceive new hires’ presence as “swooping in” to fix a problem while devaluing the contributions of civil servants who work day in and day out. Directed efforts by leadership are important to build collaborations between innovators and career Federal employees, which can help to lessen any frictions. To maximize impact, short-term hires and career staff must work together in support of the common mission. It is also important that tour of duty hires bring an attitude of humility and spirit of collaboration to their work; agencies report that prioritizing “emotional intelligence” (EQ) measures in the interviewing process helps ensure that hires are both technically skilled and well-positioned to make an impact. Career staff must also be open to the value of an outside perspective that can reframe challenges in new ways.

### Support tour of duty employees during their tenure and institutionalize change New hires may not be familiar with Federal regulations and procedures, particularly how the work of government is carried out in areas of hiring, budgeting, and contracting. Thus, to maximize their impact and institutionalize innovations, it is important to make sure that short-tenure hires are placed with willing partners or receptive teams of embedded career staff. Some early lessons underscored the importance of building a grounding connection with the existing workforce. In several instances, Presidential Innovation Fellows worked only with senior leadership and lacked connection to the broader organization. After their tenure, their projects ceased because the value and goals hadn’t been clearly communicated within the organization.[[26]](#footnote-27)

At the outset of collaborations, 18F has found that a new perspective can bring many questions, like why a process is run a certain way, or why a particular proposal for a new approach was rejected. “It’s either a rule or a regulation, or the answer is, ‘We’ve just done it like this for so long,’” explains Jennifer Tress.[[27]](#footnote-28) Developers are not thrown into the deep end to navigate this landscape alone. Taking a holistic, team-based approach helps ensure that innovative work can get greenlit. “If it’s a policy issue, then we bring policy experts from our human resources office, who can help figure out the path forward. If it’s a change management issue – then we bring those folks in, too,” she adds.

A structural element of the hiring engagement can also help to address this concern. Since hires classified as expert consultants or under fellowship authorities are by statute not permitted to manage or supervise, they need to work closely alongside agency staff. This “forcing mechanism” for collaboration should be seen as a feature, not a bug, according to hiring experts. Other essential support for outside innovators includes providing them with clearly defined goals and outcomes, executive sponsorship (including direct connection to leadership), and formal orientation to the way government works (e.g. Schedule C training).[[28]](#footnote-29)

The most significant challenges to deploying tour of duty approaches are common misunderstandings on the legal boundaries of what is and is not permitted.

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| Mythbusting on Hiring from OPM  “Myth #1: Hiring managers should refrain from getting too involved in their hiring actions to avoid any appearance of impropriety in the hiring process.  Fact: There are many ways that hiring managers can and should be involved in the hiring process to help ensure a great outcome. This includes working closely with HR before the job opportunity announcement (JOA) is even posted to: ensure the position description is accurate and up-to-date; complete a job analysis to identify the critical competencies needed in the job; participate in identifying/developing the assessment tool (e.g., structured interviews, writing samples, tests) that will be used to evaluate candidates; develop a recruiting strategy; and ensure that the JOA accurately describes the duties of the job and competencies and experience required in an easy-to-understand and appealing manner. After the applicants are assessed and the referral list is issued, the hiring manager should actively engage in interviewing top candidates and making the selection.  Myth #2: I am using a standard Position Description (PD) and I am not allowed to include specialized skills in my Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA).  Fact: You can include specialized skills in your JOA. Position descriptions outline the major duties and other factors necessary to determine the occupational series and grade level of a position in accordance with OPM classification standards. It’s the job analysis, however, that identifies the critical competencies and defines the specialized experience and any special skills needed to perform the work of the position. HR and the hiring manager should collaborate to conduct the job analysis, and use the results to develop the requirements in the JOA.  Example: HR in Agency A has classified a standard PD for Budget Analyst, GS- 5019/14 and has recently updated the job analysis. When a hiring manager seeks to fill this position; using the updated job analysis, HR works with the hiring manager to determine the specialized experience needed for the job at the required grade level and defines it in the JOA.  Myth #3: Hiring managers are not allowed to engage in active, strategic recruitment for their open positions.  Fact: Managers are permitted and encouraged to actively recruit for their open positions. Public notice, or simply posting a job announcement, is not a substitute for more focused recruiting. Strategic recruitment focuses your resources in areas most likely to yield results and does NOT violate Merit System Principles. Fact: You can invite individuals to apply for job openings. Fact: When using competitive examining, as a hiring manager, you may notify HR when you have identified a specific candidate through active recruiting. This is called a “named request.” (note: Veterans’ preference still applies.)  Example: At a college job fair focused on computer science jobs, you provide a job opportunity announcement for an open position to interested candidates, inviting them to apply for the position upon graduation.  Myth #4: Referral lists (certificates) cannot be shared within an agency.  Fact: In most agencies, HR can share certificates of qualified applicants with other managers in their agency when filling similar jobs. [TIP: JOAs should include language that gives candidates an opportunity to opt out of the sharing of their application for other positions.] For example, add a statement near the end of the JOA to notify the applicants that applying to the JOA certifies that the applicants give permission for the agency to share their applications with others in their agency for other similar positions. Also, add a check-box that applicants can check to authorize the sharing of their applications for other similar positions within the agency. Consult with your HR Office for more information.  Myth #5: When making any appointment under Schedule A of the excepted service, veterans’ preference is applied as far as administratively feasible (i.e., apply preference if it makes sense to do so).  Fact: Veterans’ preference must be applied fully when making Schedule A appointments, in accordance with the provisions of 5 CFR part 302. Veterans’ preference applies as administratively feasible (i.e., using a methodology not prescribed in 5 CFR 302) only for certain positions filled under Schedule A (e.g., attorney positions), or when OPM and an agency with a specific Schedule A hiring authority agree (through written agreement).”  Excerpt: “Hiring Excellence Mythbusters”, OPM, https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-excellence/tools-resources/hiring-excellence-mythbusters.pdf. |

## Future Considerations

Existing hiring authorities offer considerable flexibility that many agencies could leverage further to fill their talent needs. There are also several frontier possibilities for further transforming tour of duty hiring processes, including (in increasing order of ambition):

* Targeted expansion of fellowship programs, aimed at under-recruited segments of the potential hire population
* Cross-agency investment into active recruiting infrastructure
* Development of a single recruitment point, available to agencies, where qualified candidates are pooled, and hiring selections can occur from a list of qualified candidates

### Fellowship expansion

Fellowship programs, authorized under the Schedule A(r) authority, have a considerable track record of success in bringing in top talent for stints of Federal service. Several targeted programs like the Jefferson Science Fellowship exist, but more could be done to extensively recruit the “middle layer” technical professionals (e.g. senior engineers, senior biologists, senior finance associates – neither early career nor executive leadership).[[29]](#footnote-30) With the current Presidential Executive Fellows serving as a potential pilot model for further program iterations, future fellowship programs could target middle and upper-middle career technical leaders with deep expertise in critical skill areas, like process improvement, business management, operations, and finances.

Partnering with outside organizations could further enrich the talent pipeline for fellowship programs. It is a model used through several professional societies – including the [American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)](http://www.aaas.org/). In this framework, the processes of candidate recruitment and initial selection can be managed by an outside partner, supported by Federal funding. Several exemplar non-governmental organizations (including [FUSE Corps](http://www.fusecorps.org/), [Atlas Corps](http://atlascorps.org/), and [Ashoka](http://www.ashoka.org)) demonstrated outcomes that illustrate the potential for using more such a models to support Federal fellowships.

### Shared recruiting infrastructure

OPM provides [webinar training](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/videos/BuildingTalentPipelines/11.2.4_BTP_NM/) to clarify for agencies that [active recruiting is permitted;](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-excellence/tools-resources/hiring-excellence-mythbusters.pdf) to go from permission to execution, agencies could consider developing cross-agency agreements to invest in a shared infrastructure for active recruiting, which could include cost sharing for the use of external recruiters. Developing ready templates for inter-agency agreements and MOUs that are needed for sharing resources could facilitate greater cross-agency sharing. Externally positioned entities could assist with recruitment, and agency hiring managers could be deeply embedded in the process to ensure that actual needs are matched with candidates. (Past experiments, which include attempts to develop shared certifications, underscore the importance of closely engaging hiring managers in the enumeration of specifics.)

### Highly integrated recruiting and hiring platform

High level hiring experts report their subjective assessment that the hiring process is deeply fragmented across government, resulting in a fractal problem. When each agency conducts its own search and hire process for each position, the process is not being conducted at scale. “I’m not suggesting that we establish civil service exam,” commented one expert, “but we're competing against ourselves all over the place. And when you segment into smaller candidate pools, the result is lower quality and less diverse pools of applicants.” Current efforts – where five identical job openings may be posted five separate times – only further fragments the candidate pool. “There’s no evidence at all that’s successful as a hiring strategy,” Kluger elaborated.[[30]](#footnote-31)

One frontier solution is the development of one seat for administrative support to aggregate common hiring elements like marketing, managing resume review, maintaining a global view of the roster of projects and initiatives, and advising on what is permissible. Centralized advising in particular could help standardize repeatable processes and reduce the “mythic folklore” effect that brings confusion. With resume sharing, highly qualified talent not selected at one agency could potentially be referred to other relevant openings. By enhancing the technical capabilities of agencies – and reducing reliance on the random circumstance that the right applicant will stumble upon the right posting – a higher quality pool of candidates is likely to emerge. At the same time, the delegated examining process created by the reforms in 1996 makes it difficult to share resources across government. Specifically, it prevents OPM from directing agencies to collaborate. Agencies are not precluded from collaboration, but such efforts need to be agency-initiated and driven.[[31]](#footnote-32)

###### Narratives

# Tour of Duty Examples

Tour of duty hiring approaches augment the capabilities of agencies to address their top priorities. A few (non-comprehensive) snapshots of success stories illustrate the impact that agencies, fellowship programs, small teams, and individuals can have.

**Case Studies:**

Agencies using tour of duty approaches to increase recruiting and hiring efficiency:

* 18F at the General Services Administration (GSA)
* United States Digital Service (USDS)
* Food and Drug Administration (FDA):  [Entrepreneurs-in-Residence](http://www.hhs.gov/idealab/eir-program/)

Fellowship programs

* Presidential Innovation Fellows (PIF)
* Presidential Executive Fellows (PEx)

## Jennifer Tress, Director of Talent Team at 18F (General Services Administration)[[32]](#footnote-33)

### Background

18F is a digital consultancy for the government housed inside of the General Service Administration (GSA). Created in 2014, 18F works inside the government to enable agencies to rapidly deploy tools and services that are easy to operate, cost efficient, and reusable. [[33]](#footnote-34)18F’s philosophy focuses on collaborating to solve the “problem space” confronting agencies by providing “agile coaching, modular contracting expertise and technical advice to Federal agencies at cost-recovery prices.”[[34]](#footnote-35) This includes improving digital public-facing service, like websites and applications, and digitizing and streamlining internal systems to reduce risk and save time. 18F does not receive congressionally appropriated funds, but instead recovers costs from Agencies that contracts their services.

### Key Accomplishments (Impact)

Recognizing the current federal hiring process is time consuming, 18F used its own open, agile, and user centered model from its projects to improve the efficiency of its hiring process. In two years, 18F grew from 15 to 178 employees working in 31 cities.[[35]](#footnote-36) 18F also reduced its time to hire by 70 percent and decreased the time to deploy new software by 80 percent.[[36]](#footnote-37)

* Revamped [Beta.FEC.gov](https://beta.fec.gov/), a website for the Federal Election Commission, to improve the public’s ability to search its data.[[37]](#footnote-38)
* Partnered with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to design resources and forms for [MyUSCIS](https://my.uscis.gov/), a new service that helps users navigate the immigration process.[[38]](#footnote-39)
* Created [eRegulations, an open source platform](https://eregs.github.io/) that makes it easier to find, read, and understand regulations.[[39]](#footnote-40)
* Collaborated with the Department of Education to create the [College Scorecard](https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/), a national clearinghouse provides reliable data on college costs, graduation rates, debt and post-college earnings, to help students assess colleges and universities.[[40]](#footnote-41)

### How it works

Employees at 18F typically serve a tour of 2 years. 18F developed a streamlined process for hiring, with sub-processes to coordinate and clear role delineations among the hiring team. Recruiters and hiring managers work together directly to create job listings. Recruiters are essential for 18F’s hiring process. They play a key role in “sourcing the right individual and then building the relationship with them to convince them that the Federal government is an employer of choice,” explains Jennifer Tress.[[41]](#footnote-42) Recruiters can also work directly with the agencies 18F serves to better clarify the specialized experience that is sought. Agencies have found in talking with 18F recruiters that the role they were envisioning is not necessarily the role that they truly needed. Collaboration with the recruiting specialists can lead to reimagining and redefining the agency’s hiring goals, helping them better pinpoint the skill set or technical gap they are targeting. For more details on the 18F hiring process see the Hiring Process Guide.[[42]](#footnote-43)

Once recruiters understand the problem space that agencies are trying to solve, the path forward for sourcing talent becomes clearer. Recruiters can connect with the right individuals and organizations to directly link agencies to prospective candidates. Tress cautions that even for 18F, rapid hiring is often a three to four month process from candidate identification to start date. At the same time, because time has been invested in sourcing the best fit candidate for the agency need, the resulting hires are able to perform quickly once brought on board.

Flexible hiring authorities available to the organization allow for rapid hiring and short term rotation of digital experts. Most employees at 18F are hired through term appointments under the Schedule A direct hiring authority. Under this authority, 18F employees’ initial period of employment is limited to two years, however the option to renew for an additional two years is permissible.[[43]](#footnote-44) 18F also uses Schedule A hiring authority sub clause R, Fellowship authority, and term appointments as a hiring authority.

### Key learning insights

In order to continue tackling these problems after an 18F tour is complete, 18F works with agencies to institutionalize progress with succession planning. An explicit goal is to eventually replace staff roles with permanent agency employees to help ensure the sustainability of initiatives.While the tour of duty helped to attract talent with a specific skillset, it also helped to increase the retention of former 18F employees in the Federal government. 18F can potentially be a gateway for longer term government service. A majority of 18F’s employees have remained beyond their two-year terms, and many have gone on to new terms or career service at other agencies.

### Additional Resources

## U.S. Digital Services[[44]](#footnote-45)

### Background

The U.S. Digital Service (USDS) was created in 2014, to improve the performance and cost-effectiveness of the Federal Government’s public-facing digital services by bringing top technical talent into public service. USDS staff collaborate with Federal Agencies to provide solutions to technical challenges. However, USDS found it a challenge to recruit talent with the technical skills in order to meet the organization’s mission. A challenge for USDS was attracting and identifying qualified applicants for technology positions, while also competing with the private sector. USDS addressed these shortcoming in their application process by:

* addressing recruiting strategies to include active recruitment and outreach
* incorporating technical subject matter expert in the evaluation selection
* prioritizing the candidate experience through frequent communication and processing applications quickly
* using data to identify bottlenecks in the selection process and drive decisions.[[45]](#footnote-46)

### Selected accomplishments (Impact)

From its inception in 2014 through the fall 2016, the U.S. Digital Service has hired over 160 professionals with expertise in software, design, and other technical skills.[[46]](#footnote-47) To improve the overall candidate experience USDS worked to improve their recruitment times from initial contact to offer from an average of 180 days to 34 business days and shortened the personnel security process from 67 days to 20 days.[[47]](#footnote-48) Below are specific projects where USDS has made a significant impact:

* USDS staff partnered with CMS to provide technical support for the HealthCare.gov website relaunch. Using best practices from the private sector, USDS used “performance tracking of the system and application process, building an improved identity management solution with an uptime of 99.99%, increasing the conversion rate in the new application workflow from 55% to 85%, and building new systems with industry standard open source software”.[[48]](#footnote-49)
* A combined team from USDS and 18F collaborated with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) to modernize the Veteran Affairs disability claims system.[[49]](#footnote-50) The result was a streamlined single platform for veterans trying to navigate the VA’s system in search of information on education benefits or disability benefits. [[50]](#footnote-51) The redesign was based on user research; experts in UX design physically sat down with veterans and engaged them online to understand what their experience was and incorporate their needs into the design.

### Additional Resources

“[Technically speaking: How we built a new health care application for Veterans](https://medium.com/the-u-s-digital-service/technically-speaking-how-we-built-a-new-health-care-application-for-veterans-bfc77a457f71#.rfam1kb4s)” (USDS)

### How it works

USDS has captured what they learned so far from the iterative development of their recruitment process in an in-depth case study analysis to share with other agencies how they have iterated their hiring process and what lessons they have learned on recruitment.

USDS first identified the skill set that is most desirable for working at USDS. They then built a diverse network of professionals who are able to refer candidates with these attributes. Relevant subject matter experts are included at every stage of the selection process to evaluate candidates’ level of knowledge. “Top technologists are attracted to teams that have deep knowledge in their field, therefore exposing candidates to strong technologists and designers on our teams also helps to close candidates.” Additionally, USDS created structured interview process that includes description of core competencies, consistent behavioral and situati0onal interview questions, and provide interview training for subject matter experts.

USDS realized the length of time to hire candidates compared to the tech industry. In order to keep applicants in the candidate pool, USDS increased their staffing to 6 people who review and process applications, analyze income application data, and ensure an overall positive candidate experience. A member of the selection team communicates with candidates at least one a time per week updating them on the application status. Additionally, candidates are sent all security and background requests at one time to mitigate the potential of a delay.

USDS uses existing hiring tools, like tour of duty through [Schedule A Hiring Authority](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div5&node=5:1.0.1.2.22#sg5.1.213.c.sg0), or [Intermittent Consultants](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div5;node=5:1.0.1.2.34) to attract talent. USDS uses Tour of Duty to as a selling one point applicants who may not want to dedicate their entire career to the Federal government. Housed in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Schedule A “pilot” authority allows for USDS to hire technical experts for two years, with the opportunity to renew for another two years. (See 5 U.S.C. 3109; 5 CFR part 304.) [Intermittent Consultants](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div5;node=5:1.0.1.2.34), which allows a temporary appointment for less than 1 year, regardless of technical need is also used by USDS. While hiring authorities have created an effective pathway for hiring, USDS has also focused on proactively recruiting the best product and technical talent, including those that are not seeking jobs.

### Key learning insights

USDS’s knowledge on developing a streamlined hiring process can be distilled into four elements:

1. Recruiting: Actively recruit qualified individuals to apply, with a variety of targeted communication and outreach activities.
2. Selection: Build a selection process that uses technical subject matter expert evaluation at every single stage of the applicant assessment.
3. Candidate Experience: Prioritize candidate experience by making it easy to apply, quickly processing incoming applications and hires, and frequently communicating with applicants.
4. Data driven decisions: Collect relevant data throughout each of these three areas, benchmark it against industry, and use the data to identify bottlenecks and hold ourselves accountable.[[51]](#footnote-52)

### Additional Resources

[The First 2 Years of USDS](https://medium.com/the-u-s-digital-service/two-years-of-the-u-s-digital-service-e14af5ce713b#.vr7qzb5af)

[Star Spangled Geeks](https://backchannel.com/inside-the-obama-tech-surge-as-it-hacks-the-pentagon-and-va-8b439bc33ed1#.ytvpswx9a)

## Federal Drug Administration: Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIR)

### Background

The Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIR) established in 2012 is housed in the HSS’ Idea Lab. The program, uses Tour of Duty hiring to create collaborations for high-risk and high-reward projects with skilled innovators and internal career employees. The goal of EIR is to deliver transformational change by finding unique skillsets needed to solve the nationals most critical challenges in health, healthcare, and the delivery of human services.[[52]](#footnote-53) Tours for EIRs are typically no more than 13 months.

An early discrete pilot of Tour of Duty hiring occurred at the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) in 2011, where the EIR program created collaborations between world-class entrepreneurs and innovators and highly qualified career employees. The goal was to deliver transformational change by combining the best internal and external talent in testing, validating, and scaling what works [[crosslink EBG or EBP]]; the result, through three separate rounds of the program from 2011-2016, was the development of new operational procedures to advance innovation. Former U.S. CTO Todd Park commented that the FDA EIR program was “phenomenal” for using tour of duty hiring approaches to connect internal innovators with outside entrepreneurs.[[53]](#footnote-54)

### Selected accomplishments (Impact)

The EIR has supported 15 projects since its inception, including 56 HHS career staff and 21 EIRs.[[54]](#footnote-55)

* “As part of another project for the [**Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)**](http://www.cms.gov/), an EIR with experience in agile and open-source software development created a prototype for new, flexible architecture and APIs for the CMS [**National Plan and Provider Enumeration System**](https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do) in 9 months. CMS estimates that the EIR completed the work in half the time and at one-thirtieth of the cost of the traditional approach of hiring outside contractors.”[[55]](#footnote-56)
* “One project is modernizing the paper-based system for tracking organs in the [**National Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network**](http://optn.transplant.hrsa.gov/) overseen by the [**Health Resources and Services Administration**](http://www.hrsa.gov/index.html). An EIR developed a prototype (including a tablet, scanner, and hand-held printer) within 6 months and tested it on 194 organ procurements in five states.”[[56]](#footnote-57)
* The [FDA’s Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH),](http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/CentersOffices/OfficeofMedicalProductsandTobacco/CDRH/CDRHInnovation/ucm456456.htm) recruited EIRs to help create and streamline new devices, bring new, breakthrough devices to market more quickly and at lower cost. Entrepreneurs and internal movers-and-shakers jointly advanced solutions to enable patient access to safe and effective medical devices. In the first program cohort, the CDRH EIR program recruited 20 outside entrepreneurs and innovators The Innovation Pathway contributed to new technology being fast tracked, specifically for End-Stage Renal Disease (ERSD). In 2012, three ESRD technologies emerged from a competitive process and would move on for the chance for regulatory approval. The Center’s director at the time, Dr. Jeff Shuren, commented that the EIR pilot “demonstrates that there is a desire from developers of innovative technologies for earlier and more collaborative agency interaction.” [[Source](http://www.govexec.com/magazine/features/2014/05/project-innovation/84115/)] Originally intended as a temporary six-month pilot, the Innovation Pathway was so successful that CDRH continued its operations until 2014, when a subsequent program [(Expedited Pathway Program)](http://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/DeviceRegulationandGuidance/HowtoMarketYourDevice/ucm441467.htm) was introduced to build upon the Innovation Pathway’s accomplishments. [[Source](http://www.govexec.com/magazine/features/2014/05/project-innovation/84115/)]

### How they did it/How it Works

HHS used Schedule A(r) hiring authority to create a program designed to bring healthcare innovators from the private sector into HHS to work on new initiatives. The FDA’s EIR brought in talented people from diverse backgrounds for no more than 12 months at a time to work on complex projects in a specific division. Flexible hiring authorities enabled the recruitment of exceptional world-class talent. The program created groups of thinkers and doers that were able to accomplish mission objectives with remarkable agility. The defined time-frame of the “residency” was integral for motivating fast progress, and the hiring structure also attracted talent who otherwise would not have come on board for a public service stint.

### Key Learning Insights

### Additional Resources

[Making a Difference: Innovation Pathway and Entrepreneurs in Residence](http://blogs.fda.gov/fdavoice/index.php/2012/04/making-a-difference-innovation-pathway-and-entrepreneurs-in-residence/)

## Fellowship Programs

### Background

Fellowship programs are one talent pipeline for deploying proven leaders on high priority initiatives. Using existing authorities and expertise, fellowship programs are positioned to immediately reach back into their pool of exceptional recruits to accelerate the staffing of priority challenges. Like other flexible hiring models, fellowships complement -- not replace -- existing hiring methods. Agencies may consider:

* Participating in existing Presidential fellowship initiatives to source their talent needs
* Spinning up – with support – agency-specific fellowship programs

Several agencies have used presidential fellowships in recent years as one avenue for achieving agility in hiring and deploying talent. Prestige is an additional factor in attracting proven, senior leaders who may not have otherwise considered a tour of duty in the Federal government. Among the ranks of recent fellows are former top executives from Google, GM, Accenture, Pepsi, and Goldman Sachs. Although small in scale, Presidential fellowship programs, such as Presidential Innovation Fellows and Presidential Executive Fellows, have had outsized impact in recent years. Fellows have provided leadership on major initiatives including:

* [HealthCare.gov](http://healthcare.gov/) relaunch[[57]](#footnote-58)
* [Build America Bureau](https://www.transportation.gov/buildamerica) of DOT -- $10 billion in financing for 21 projects
* [Rural Infrastructure Opportunity Fund](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=2015/07/0218.xml) -- $10 billion placed for rural investment
* [PROMESA](https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/2328/), the response to the Puerto Rico financial crisis

The creation of agency-specific fellowship programs is another potential avenue for sourcing top talent. How-to guidance provides a template agencies can use in the development of their own fellowship programs under Schedule A(r) authority.

#### Nathan Olson, Director of Operations for the Presidential Innovation Fellows (PIF) Program[[58]](#footnote-59)

The Presidential Innovation Fellows (PIF) program brings the principles, values, and practices of the innovation economy into government. Begun in 2012, this highly competitive 12-month program pairs talented, diverse technologists and entrepreneurs with top civil servants to collaborate during focused “tours of duty.” These teams of government experts and PIFs take a user-centric approach to the intersection of people, processes, products, and policy. PIFs have leveraged the power of open data to create new products and jobs, improved the ability of the Federal government to respond effectively to natural disasters, designed pilot projects that make it easier for startup companies to do business with the Federal government, and more.[[59]](#footnote-60)

##### Selected accomplishments (Impact)

Because Fellows are on time-bounded assignments, they are often tasked with developing discrete products or platforms that can be the starting point for continued discussion and partnership. At the same time, Fellows have also worked with agencies on problem discovery and definition, culture transformation, and change management issues. Selected projects include:

* With the support of PIFs, the FDA launched openFDA to provide easy access to public FDA datasets. The portal makes several valuable FDA public datasets—including millions of adverse event and medication error reports on FDA-regulated drugs—available to the public for the first time, via application programming interfaces (APIs) and raw structured files.[[60]](#footnote-61)
* RFP-EZ is an online platform developed by the U.S. Small Business Administration and PIFs in only six months, making it easier for innovative small tech businesses to bid on government contracts, while also making it easier for Federal agencies to identify the bids that offer the best value for taxpayers.[[61]](#footnote-62)
* PIFs assisted HHS in expanding the reach of the Blue Button Initiative to over 150 million consumers across the country, providing secure, electronic access to their personal health records in order to make more informed decisions about their health care.[[62]](#footnote-63)
* At Veterans Affairs, PIFs helped develop an online GI Bill Comparison Tool that makes it easier for Veterans, service members, and dependents to calculate their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and learn about VA’s approved colleges, universities, and available education and training programs across the country.[[63]](#footnote-64)

##### How it works

PIFs are embedded within a Federal agency to collaborate on challenges with innovators inside government. Fellows, whose salaries are funded by their agency partners, operate with wide latitude for individual initiative in planning and executing solutions to problem, and they spend a significant portion of their time co-working and collaborating with other Fellows. Throughout the program, Fellows receive structured support from partners in the White House and change-agents across various Federal agencies. Agency leaders interested in obtaining a Fellow must first propose a project, with a problem statement and goal.[[64]](#footnote-65)

PIF uses a flexible staffing model: Project submissions from agencies are not time-bounded, and hires are continuously recruited and onboarded. The program’s structure allows an unusual degree of fluidity and responsiveness for agency needs; when a project fit is identified, PIFs can be preliminarily deployed to an agency while framework arrangements are formalized.

##### Key learning insights

PIF’s experiences have found that agency champions are key for successful collaborations. Time should be invested upfront in adequately scoping projects beforehand, with the goal of building support and buy-in with agency collaborators. Frictions are further lessened when senior leadership (like a CIO/CINO/CTO) is continually engaged in supporting the collaboration.

##### Additional Resources

[Meet the Presidential Innovation Fellows](https://medium.com/the-white-house/meet-the-presidential-innovation-fellows-194dec20442b#.k8dx1gpqp)

[Innovation Fellows talk about their projects](https://presidentialinnovationfellows.gov/assets/videos/andrea-ippolito-video.webm) [1:28]

#### [Presidential Executive Fellows (PEx)[[65]](#footnote-66)](https://leadership.opm.gov/index.aspx)

##### Background

The Presidential Executive Fellows (PEx) program identifies and recruits exceptional leaders from private and non-profit sectors into Federal agencies to serve alongside senior leadership in addressing challenges of national importance. Fellows serve as advisors, strategists, and problem solvers, providing unique perspective and transforming how government serves the American people.[[66]](#footnote-67)

##### Key accomplishments (Impact)

Since early 2015, PEx has partnered with 9 Federal agencies to place top talent via temporary appointments to work alongside Federal executives to solve our nation’s most challenging problems. The program’s initial cohort consisted of five fellows with executive-level finance expertise in support of Federal public-private partnerships. The Program’s focus has since expanded to non-financial initiatives, including service to veterans, biosecurity preparedness, cybersecurity, and health care. PEx fellows have been placed at eight agencies, with a growing pipeline of agencies seeking new talent. PEx has expanded its targeted executive “skill set” to include information technology and lean management.

##### How they did it

Hosted at the Federal Executive Institute (FEI), PEx is administered by a permanent program office. Program managers identify and recruit applicants, assist host agencies to identify appropriate appointment authorities, support Fellows in their transition into Federal service to maximize impact, and provide developmental opportunities to Fellows in order to build their understanding and appreciation for public sector mission and operations. The underlying hiring authority varies based on specific need, as each appointment is unique and often for senior positions. PEx provides technical assistance so that each agency can use the full range of hiring authorities at their disposal to make the appointment.

##### Key learning insights

PEx has built upon the prior experiences of Presidential fellowships, like the Presidential Management Fellows. Leveraging the experience and knowledge of existing programs has helped tailor the fellowship segmenting and lower the program’s cost. PEx is interested now in partnering with agencies to help support the creation of agency-specific fellowships under the PEx brand.

###### Appendix B. Examples of Supporting Policies

Policies (legislation and authorities, regulations, and others) that provide Federal agencies with hiring authorities and flexibilities, such as expediting hiring and time limited appointments, that encourage tour of duty practices. Federal employees should consult with their Human Resources office for agency-specific guidance on the use of these and other hiring and pay authorities.

## Authorities

### Accelerated Hiring

Examples of authorities to that allow Federal agencies to accelerate the overall hiring process include:

* Direct Hire Authority. [Governed under 5 U.S.C. Section 3304 and 5 CFR Part 337, Subpart B] Allows Federal agencies to appoint candidates into positions without regard to 5 U.S.C Section 3309 through 3318.[[67]](#footnote-68) Government-wide direct hire authorities include those for information technology management and acquisition positions, among others.
* Fellowships and Industry Exchange Programs (R Authority). [Governed under 5 CFR 213.3102(r)] Allows Federal agencies to hire fellows and similar programs that provide developmental or professional experiences for up to four years when recruitment is from limited applicant pools.[[68]](#footnote-69)
* Schedule A and B Appointments. [Governed under 5 CFR 213 Subpart C] Allows Federal agencies to make appointments without regard to competition when the use of the traditional competitive examination methods is not practical.
  + Veterans Recruitment Appointment. [Governed under Schedule A, 5 CFR Part 213.3102(u)] Allows Federal agencies to non-competitively hire disabled persons leading to conversion to career or career-conditional employment.[[69]](#footnote-70)

### Time-limited Appointments

Example of authorities with time-limited appointments include:

* Term Appointment. [Governed under 5 CRF 316 Subpart C] Allows Federal agencies to fill non-permanent positions for more than one year but not more than four years.[[70]](#footnote-71)
* Temporary Limited Appointment. [Governed under 5 CRF 316 Subpart D] Allows Federal agencies appointment individuals for a maximum of one year to meet a short-term need.
* President Management Fellowship. [Governed under Schedule D, 5 CFR 362]. Allows Federal agencies to appoint individuals with a qualifying advanced degree for two years.[[71]](#footnote-72)
* Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program. [Governed under 5 USC Sections 3371 through 3375 and 5 CFR Part 334] Allows Federal agencies to temporarily hire skills personnel from state and local governments, institutions of higher education, Indian tribal governments and other eligible organizations.[[72]](#footnote-73)

## Recent Policy Guidance

“[Institutionalizing Hiring Excellence to Achieve Mission Outcomes](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2017/m-17-03.pdf)." OMB M-17-03. Nov 1 2016

## Legislation

Congress enacted a number of important new hiring flexibilities as part of the [Chief Human Capital Officers Act of 2002](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107https:/www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ296/pdf/PLAW-107publ296.pdf), and reinforced the strategic role played by human capital officers in the [Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111hr2142enr/pdf/BILLS-111hr2142enr.pdf).

Competitive Services Act of 2015 (P.L. 114-137)

## Executive orders

[Executive Order 13704—Presidential Innovation Fellows Program](https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2015-08-20/pdf/2015-20801.pdf): 2015 order made the PIF program permanent.

###### Appendix C. Additional Resources

## Community of Practice

Federal agencies interested in participating in communities of practice may wish to learn more about or participate in the follow groups:

* Fellows in Innovation: A coalition of fellows across the executive branch of the federal government, who have an opportunity to contribute to priority initiatives and pitch innovative ideas, while building skills and connecting with new partners across the Federal government.[[73]](#footnote-74)
* CIO Council’s Workforce Committee: Addresses the challenges of CIOs by creating resources and tools for an exemplary IT workforce, in addition, to identifying and coordinating effective solutions for hiring, training, and professional development in the IT workforce.[[74]](#footnote-75)
* Chief Human Capital Officers Council: The Chief Human Capital Officers Council serves the Nation by advising and collaborating with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and other stakeholders to create human capital management strategies that attract, develop and retain a high performing, engaged and diverse federal workforce.[[75]](#footnote-76)

## Contact

Agencies interested in learning more about incorporating tour of duty hiring approaches into their process can contact:

* Bernie Kluger, Deputy Performance Improvement Officer, OPM - [Bernhard.Kluger@opm.gov](mailto:Bernhard.Kluger@opm.gov)
* Jennifer Anastasoff, USDS, Digital Service Leadership, OMB - [Jennifer\_Anastasoff@omb.eop.gov](mailto:Jennifer_Anastasoff@omb.eop.gov)

## Key Resources

[OPM’s Hiring Excellence](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-excellence/tools-resources/) points to an array of existing resources and tools, including the following:

* The [Hiring Toolkit](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/HT_Hiring_Toolkit.aspx)[[76]](#footnote-77)
* The [Hiring Decision Tool](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/HT_Hiring_Toolkit.aspx)[[77]](#footnote-78)
* The [Recruitment Policy Studio](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/Studio_Recruitment.aspx)[[78]](#footnote-79)
* [Hiring Excellence Mythbusters](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/hiring-excellence/tools-resources/hiring-excellence-mythbusters.pdf)[[79]](#footnote-80)
* [Human Resources Flexibilities and Authorities Handbook](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/reference-materials/handbooks/humanresourcesflexibilitiesauthorities.pdf) (2013)[[80]](#footnote-81)
* [Delegated Examining Authorities Handbook](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/competitive-hiring/deo_handbook.pdf) (Refer to Chapter 2, Section A for a review of hiring flexibilities.)[[81]](#footnote-82)
* “[Institutionalizing Hiring Excellence to Achieve Mission Outcomes](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2017/m-17-03.pdf)." OMB M-17-03. November 1, 2016. (Refer to Appendix E for quick overview of hiring authorities) [[82]](#footnote-83)

## Additional specific resources for flexible hiring include

* Howieson, S. et al. “Federal Personnel Exchange Mechanism, Institute for Defense Analyses, November 2013. (Refer to Section C for overview of [Intergovernmental Personnel Act)](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/HT_05_Intergovernmental_Personnel_Act.aspx#pnlToolkit)[[83]](#footnote-84)
* [Schedule D – Pathways Programs](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/HT_05_Schedule_D_-_Pathways_Programs.aspx#pnlToolkit)[[84]](#footnote-85)
* [Excepted Service Hiring](https://hru.gov/Studio_Recruitment/HT_04_Schedules.aspx#pnlToolkit), which includes how-to steps for:[[85]](#footnote-86)
  + Making 30-Day Critical Hiring Need Appointment
  + Using OPM-approved Schedule A hiring authority for Digital Services
  + Appointing individuals under an Agency-specific Schedule A or Schedule B authority

## Other guidance on hiring authorities

* Basco, D. et al, “[Federal Term Appointment Hiring Authorities for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Personnel”, Institute for Defense Analyses, April 2014 –](https://www.ida.org/idamedia/Corporate/Files/Publications/STPIPubs/2014/ida-d-5148.ashx) Provides an overview of using time-limited appointments to promote STEM.
* “[Cybersecurity Hiring, Pay, and Leave Flexibilities](https://www.chcoc.gov/content/cybersecurity-hiring-pay-and-leave-flexibilities)”, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), 2016 – Provides an overview of flexibilities in the Federal Government that can be used to recruit and retain civilian cybersecurity professionals.
* “[Other Strategies to Meet Hiring Requirements”, U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), September 2005](https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/human-capital-management/reference-materials/talent-management/strategies.pdf) –Provides an overview of hiring flexibilities available to Federal agencies.
* Smarter Information Technology (IT) Delivery Hiring Authority. [Governed under 5 Schedule A, CFR 213.3102(i)(3)] Allows Federal agencies to appoint technical positions needed to carry out the Smarter IT Delivery Initiative for up to one year. No appointments may be made under this authority after September 30. 2017.[[86]](#footnote-87)

## Further Reading

* GAO-16-521, “Federal Hiring: OPM Needs to Improve Management and Oversight of Hiring”, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), August 2016 – Report encourages agencies to make further use of the full range of available hiring authorities.
* “Federal Leaders Digital Insight Study”, National Academy of Public Administration and ICF International, February 2016 – Highlights the challenges of applying new technology to existing government processes.
* Hoffman, R., “How to organize Modern Employment,” LinkedIn, October 23, 2014 Provides information on the use of Tours of Duty in the private sector.
* Reid, H. et al., “Tour of Duty: The New Employer-Employee Compact”, Harvard Business Review, June 2013 – Provides information on the use of Tours of Duty in the private sector.

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16. Information Technology Exchange Program U.S.C. §§ 3701-3707 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
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