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Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

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Subject: **Improving the Federal Hiring Experience**

The strength of any organization rests in its people. Ensuring a Government that delivers results for all Americans requires supporting the civil servants who do Government's essential work. Improving the Federal hiring experience is essential to recruit, hire, and retain the workforce needed to respond to the full range of opportunities and challenges facing this country, from once-in-a-generation investments in the Nation's infrastructure, competitiveness, and communities to managing the promise and peril of artificial intelligence.

This memorandum is the next step in a range of actions the Administration has taken to help agencies better compete for the talent they need to perform their complex missions. A comprehensive set of policy, operational, and technical Office of Personnel Management (OPM) initiatives under the President's Management Agenda related to talent continues to yield results improving the end-to-end hiring process.

To sustain and build on this momentum, however, requires constant attention by agency leaders. Accordingly, this memorandum identifies critical steps to:

1) Strengthen strategic workforce planning, recruitment, hiring, and data analytics at the enterprise level, taking advantage of the scale of the Federal workforce;
2) Design and build an improved applicant experience;
3) Improve the hiring manager experience by ensuring applicants who are referred are appropriately qualified; and
4) Empower human resources (HR) professionals and minimize HR burden by simplifying processes and advancing hiring policies that increase the number of selections made from hiring actions using effective assessments.

There remain opportunities to increase efficiency, eliminate complexity, promote coordination, and embed prioritization such that highly qualified individuals can more effectively encounter, apply for, and obtain jobs in the Federal Government. There are also opportunities for agencies to more expertly and efficiently secure the talent they need to deliver for the American people. This memorandum sets forth strategic priorities around which agencies should align their resources to drive improvements in the hiring experience for applicants, agency hiring managers, and agency HR professionals. Doing so will support the Government's efforts to inspire talented individuals to pursue Federal service and recruit, hire, and retain the Federal workforce necessary to carry out agency missions.

Strategic Workforce Planning and Prioritization

As part of the President's Management Agenda, Federal agencies pledged to dedicate time, energy, people, and resources to strengthening and empowering the Federal workforce and ensuring those working on these efforts have ample support to succeed. Federal agencies can make every effort to improve internal processes or modernize technology, but ultimately it is people—Federal employees and the people they serve—who make the work of this great nation possible. Hiring managers, applicants, and human capital personnel—as well as the American people—benefit when agency human capital strategies are prioritized, resourced, and internally aligned with strategic initiatives.

As the agency's Chief Operating Officer (31 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 1123; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-23-15), an agency's Deputy Secretary or equivalent is accountable for ensuring that their agencies' programmatic, human capital, and resource teams are engaged in robust, data-driven strategic workforce planning. They will ensure broad communication and distribution of this memorandum and associated tools and resources to agency leadership, talent, resource, and functional teams at all levels, i.e., Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCOs), Chief Financial Officers (CFOs), Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs), HR workforce, supervisors and hiring managers, and other sector and functional communities and management councils.

Agencies' strategic and enterprise-wide workforce efforts, driven by agency Deputy Secretaries or equivalents, should include:

Strategic Workforce Planning:
- Completing and regularly updating agency strategic workforce plans (5 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) part 250, subpart B). Strategic workforce plans should be informed by agency strategic plans and associated needs assessments and should be integrated with agency human capital operating plans and agency budget planning. Such efforts should be coordinated across CHCO, CFO, and functional teams to ensure that resources, billets, and work needs are aligned in support of strategic priorities; and

- Defining and socializing annual and ongoing hiring objectives and strategies, informed by data-driven workforce planning and succession planning and utilizing, when appropriate, the OPM Workforce Planning Guide (2022).

Strategic Recruitment & Outreach:
- Building broad, diverse, and inclusive outreach and recruitment practices and applicant evaluation processes aligned with skills needs, supported by technology and data analytics; and

- Driving strategic and active candidate recruitment for agency hiring actions, incorporating collaboration with community outreach and equal employment opportunity Special Emphasis Program managers (29 C.F.R. § 1614.102(b)(4)) and, Selective Placement Coordinators as appropriate, to build long-term relationships with a wide range of institutions and reach an applicant pool of qualified talent that is drawn from the diversity of our Nation.

Expanding Access to Hiring Actions Across Agencies:
- Maximizing access to talent and enhancing hiring coordination across agency units by supporting hiring managers and HR professionals as they:
  - Review currently available shared certificates before launching new hiring actions;
  - Expand the adoption of pooled hiring practices, including OPM-led cross-government hiring actions and agency-led actions; and
  - Share certificates broadly under the Competitive Service Act of 2015 (5 U.S.C. §§ 3318-19) while maintaining privacy protections for applicants.

Data Collection, Use, and Investment in HR Information Systems:
- Promoting the collection, analysis, and utilization of data within existing authorities on the overall time to hire, including by improving and standardizing collection of metrics on the time required for each step of the hiring process through onboarding, in support of aligning with standard times to hire for positions requiring similar skills in the broader economy;

- Investing in a cohesive HR information systems implementation plan to adopt services that are aimed at improving the experience of applicants, hiring managers, HR professionals, and agency employees involved in onboarding new employees; and

- Ensuring the effective use of human capital evaluation systems to document, measure, track, and report progress on implementing the requirements of this memorandum; for example, evaluating recruitment, retention, and performance data across all hiring initiatives and priorities and incorporating exit surveys, to the extent allowable, to evaluate and improve the agency's overarching recruitment strategy.

1. The Federal Job Applicant Experience

As the country's largest employer, the Federal Government has an extensive and complex hiring process, which can hamper efforts to recruit and onboard needed talent. Federal agencies hire over 350,000 personnel annually, and process over 22 million applications from individuals every year seeking the opportunity to serve their country. Adapting recruitment and hiring processes today is crucial to meeting the talent needs of tomorrow. Agencies should prioritize

improving the experience of applicants throughout the hiring process to attract and hire from a qualified and diverse applicant pool, including through such steps as:

- Providing clear communication to applicants and developing improved application processes that are user-friendly, accessible, equitable, transparent, efficient, and responsive to the public;

- Using a descriptive, organizational, or functional job title that resonates with jobseekers in announcements for recruitment and when posting job announcements (referencing the official title in the body of the announcement). Job announcements should be in plain language, using available tools to ensure understanding by jobseekers outside of government, that accurately conveys the position and skills sought by the hiring manager and is supported by analysis of the nature of the job;

- Expanding strategic recruitment efforts and continuing to hire individuals who bring diverse skills and experiences to their jobs, consistent with Executive Order 14035 of June 25, 2021 (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Federal Workforce), Executive Order 13985 of January 20, 2021 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), Executive Order 14091 of February 16, 2023 (Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government), and Executive Order 14100 of June 9, 2023 (Advancing Economic Security for Military and Veteran Spouses, Military Caregivers, and Survivors);

- Adding mission critical occupation tags to job announcements as a valuable tool for attracting top talent to essential roles within Government;

- Improving applicant user experience during the job search by encouraging and educating applicants on the advantages of opting to make their resume searchable in their USAJOBS.gov profile to allow Federal hiring specialists and hiring managers to find their resumes as part of agency recruitment campaigns or staffing searches;

- Sending timely communications to applicants about their application status with notifications for each applicable stage of the hiring process, including application acceptance, determination of qualifications, issuance of certificates to hiring manager, and selection or cancellation of announcement and using data analytics to verify applicant notifications were sent;

- Supporting expeditious onboarding of new hires (i.e., new Federal employees or transfers of existing Federal employees across agencies), including enhancing and streamlining internal coordination across HR, personnel vetting, facility security, and any additional administrative functions and process; and

- Utilizing OPM's Talent Programs via the USAJOBS Agency Talent Portal (ATP) to connect individuals such as pathways interns who will not be converted at their current agencies with employment opportunities at other agencies.

2.   The Hiring Manager Experience

Federal hiring managers are talented individuals who manage complex Federal programs, processes, and infrastructure every day and provide invaluable expertise that protects and benefits the American people. They are critical to defining current and future talent needs and should be involved with and accountable for hiring strategy to ensure the right talent is hired for the right roles. Federal agencies should improve the experience of hiring managers, including by:

- Encouraging hiring managers to work with HR professionals to identify subject matter experts who can improve and support agency qualification processes, e.g., through the use of structured resume reviews, and develop specialized assessments in accordance with merit system principles and lawful personnel practices (5 U.S.C. §§ 2301-02). Hiring managers should allocate dedicated time within standard responsibilities for subject matter experts to participate in those processes, such as by supporting HR professionals in identifying and assessing technical skills and tasks for position descriptions and job announcements;

- Allowing HR and hiring managers to decide when it is appropriate to ask applicants to provide a short description of their technical skills or showcase their technical ability for the position as part of the initial application;

- Encouraging the use of any rating and ranking method allowed by law and regulation and appropriate for the given hiring action when initiating a competitive recruitment action, giving hiring managers more control in designing hiring processes relevant to their talent needs;

- Appropriately training HR professionals on the end-to-end assessment process designed to provide a list of highly qualified candidates for hiring manager review, which includes conducting a job analysis and screening applicants for needed competencies, and, as part of conveying assessment requirements, emphasizing to HR professionals the need to be familiar with the passing grade assessment process under which applicants must score a passing grade to be deemed eligible for advancing to the next level of the hiring process;

- Creating, updating, and utilizing skills-based and multi-hurdle assessments (to include agency-developed and off-the-shelf assessments) to align with leading practices and transition away from using solely self-assessment questionnaires, pursuant to Executive Order 13932 of June 26, 2020 (Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates);

    o When assessment strategy justifies use of self-assessment questionnaires for certain occupations based on business necessity and demonstrated effectiveness, implementing the best practices set forth in the OPM Guide to Better Occupational Questionnaires. Agencies should also update policies and systems, as needed, to ensure application reviewers adjust scores or disqualify applicants, as appropriate, when self-assessments do not align with submitted documentation;

- Investing in internal assessment measurement expertise (e.g., hiring industrial-organizational psychologists) to train HR professionals to create and continuously update skills-based assessments in partnership with hiring managers;

- Limiting resume reviews to a pre-determined number of pages, when appropriate, and notifying applicants in the job announcement of any page limits for resume reviews;

- Updating hiring managers' access to and engagement with USAJOBS' ATP to ensure they have appropriate permissions to access searchable resumes, Talent Pools, and Talent Programs;

- Encourage hiring managers and HR professionals to leverage the ATP and other tools to actively cultivate talent pipelines and facilitate active recruitment through communications that encourage candidate engagement; and

- Reviewing onboarding and training materials for hiring managers to reflect model hiring experience practices, including model uses of USAJOBS in alignment with this memorandum.

3.   The HR Professional Experience

To build and sustain the Federal Government's role as an employer of choice, Federal agencies need to build personnel systems and support that enable them to recruit, retain, and advance talent required to effectively deliver on a broad range of agency missions. Agencies should prioritize efforts that minimize the burden on HR professionals while empowering them with the data, tools, access, and guidance they need. Efforts may include:

- Creating and sustaining empowered agency Talent Teams to enable strategic recruitment and innovative hiring actions, including the use of assessments and shared hiring actions, and to recommend additional hiring tools to effectively recruit and assess candidates with critical, specialized, or hard-to-recruit skills. Agencies should designate a shared certificate coordinator responsible for building agency-wide familiarity with and awareness of shared certificates as a part of their Talent Teams to facilitate this work;

- Incentivizing and creating expectations for collaboration between hiring managers and HR professionals in the hiring process, from the initial requirements of hiring needs (e.g., position needs, skills, and timeline) through the determination of the best options to meet those requirements (e.g., assessment strategy and selection options, single or pooled hiring, hiring authorities, and flexibilities);

- Ensuring that HR professionals make hiring managers aware of and empowered to use the full range of hiring authorities and assessment strategies available to them, particularly those that relate to critical, specialized, or hard-to-recruit skills, and that they are aware of allowable recruitment activity in accordance with merit system principles and lawful personnel practices;

- Investing in modern, standardized human capital systems and automated tools (e.g., workflow management solutions) for HR professionals to use to complete routine tasks more efficiently and to expedite administrative elements of the hiring process;

- Identifying positions, including those that require critical and specialized skills, needed across multiple agencies for which recruitment actions, certificates, or lists of eligible candidates could be shared within the agency or with other agencies as part of the workforce planning process;

- Collaborating with OPM to identify hiring actions that will use shared certificates or lists of eligible candidates external to the agency as both the originating and receiving agency (such as pursuant to the Competitive Service Act of 2015 (5 U.S.C. §§ 3318-19) and other hiring authorities, as appropriate), so that OPM can assist in connecting agencies for the purposes of certificate sharing while maintaining applicant privacy; and

- Using USAJOBS' ATP (or other compliant tools) to recruit qualified talent proactively, advertise agency recruitment events on the USAJOBS Events page, and create efficiencies in hiring through leveraging Talent Pools, lists of qualified candidates who are already on approved shared hiring certificates.

Guidance and Resources for Implementation

In recent years, OPM has made significant investments in new tools and resources to improve the hiring process across Government. OPM will continue to produce resources to support agency adoption of the practices outlined in this memorandum and, along with OMB, will engage regularly with stakeholders to ensure alignment with economy-wide leading practices. Embedding these practices in agencies is essential to improving the experience of hiring for applicants, HR professionals, and hiring managers alike. OPM is poised to partner with agencies to help drive these improvements and innovations through its Hiring Experience (HX) Group. The HX Group serves as an innovation hub to help agencies establish and support Talent Teams to lead innovation at their agencies and drive the use of more rigorous applicant assessments and pooled and shared certificates.

To assist agencies in implementing this memorandum, below are Frequently Asked Questions to provide further guidance and information on leading practices. Additionally, OPM has a number of resources available to support agencies, organized by Regulations, Policies, and Guidance; Analytics and Automation; and Training and Support Services; and is launching a series of trainings for hiring managers and HR departments to help improve their skills.

Going forward, OPM and OMB will work together to:

- Prioritize initiatives designed to reduce administrative burden in the Federal hiring process for members of the public and hiring managers. Particular emphasis will be placed on those burden reduction measures aimed at recruiting and improving the experience of those applying for their first job in Government;

- Conduct research on the applicant phase of the Federal employee experience across the talent acquisition process;

- Complete an analysis of any barriers inhibiting agencies' adoption of key practices outlined in this memorandum, with recommendations for surmounting such barriers; and

- Identify opportunities to collaborate with cross-agency councils and functional communities in support of the adoption of hiring experience leading practices.

Additionally, OPM will:

- Define circumstances when OPM should review agency assessment strategies and outcomes for program effectiveness;

- Take additional steps to implement the Competitive Service Act of 2015 and continue to strategically support flexibility and improvements to the Federal hiring process;

- Assess the current OPM End-to-End Hiring Roadmap to identify potential adjustments to how timeliness and quality are measured to align with directives in this memorandum and communicate any adjustments to agencies;

- Develop automation tools to streamline sharing of information regarding applicants within and between agencies, to the extent allowable;

- Prioritize resources that aid agency strategic hiring efforts by providing timely, accessible analytics, including with regard to the use of agency-led assessments other than through applicant self-assessment and the use of shared certificates to streamline recruitment, to the extent allowable; and

- Continue to expand, update, and communicate to agencies information on guidance, tools, automation, resources, and training available from OPM to implement this memorandum, and provide a user-friendly repository of relevant resources.

Agencies will be asked to track and share their progress on improving the hiring experience and present results on the implementation of this memorandum at the quarterly Workforce meetings of the President's Management Council. Additionally, OPM will be monitoring progress through key Hiring Experience metrics (see Metrics for Success).

If you or your staff have questions or need more information, please contact OPM's HX Group at HX@opm.gov.

Supporting Resources
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Regulations, Policy, and Guidance Resources
- Automation and Analytics Resources
- Training and Support Services
- Metrics for Measuring Success