Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Closing Skills Gaps
FY 2013 Q2 Status Update

Cross-Agency Priority Goal Statement

Close critical skills gaps in the Federal workforce to improve mission performance. By September 30, 2013, close the skills gaps by 50 percent for 3 to 5 critical Federal Government occupations or competencies, and close additional agency-specific high risk occupation and competency gaps.

Goal Leader

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About this document

The Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goals were a key innovation introduced in the FY2013 Federal Budget. These goals focus on 14 major issues that run across several Federal agencies. Each of these historic goals has a Goal Leader who is a senior level White House official and is fully accountable for the success and outcomes of the goal.

Historically, areas of shared responsibility for multiple government agencies have been resistant to real progress. Success in these areas requires a new kind of management approach – one that brings people together from across and outside the Federal Government to coordinate their work and combine their skills, insights, and resources. The CAP Goals represent the President's priorities for which this approach is likeliest to bear fruit. Taken together, they comprise the Federal performance plan.

This report discusses one of these CAP Goals, the Closing Skills Gaps Goal, in detail, describing the plan for achieving the goal and the current status of progress. To see the full list of CAP Goals and to find out more about them, we encourage you to visit performance.gov.

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Overview

In response to the critical need for ensuring that the federal Government possesses the Human Capital required to meet 21st Century, mission-related challenges, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) designated closing skills gaps as one of its key management initiatives. The Chief Human Capital Officers Council, which is co-chaired by the Director of OPM, established a government-wide inter-agency working group led by the Department of Defense (DoD) and OPM to identify, measure and close high risk staffing gaps. High risk skills gaps are defined as the 3-5 mission critical occupations or competencies where staffing gaps could jeopardize the ability of the government or specific agencies to accomplish its mission.

Strategies

Under the direction of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Chief Human Capital Officers Council (CHCOC) and the Department of Defense (DoD), agencies are intensifying their efforts to reduce current and emerging skills gaps across the federal Government. First, agencies focused on identifying skills gaps government-wide and within agencies is to determine where common, high priority gaps exist. Once skills gaps are measured and reported, the government is able to design and implement appropriate corrective actions through a collaborative planning process. The Administration has taken targeted action to address skills gaps.

OPM identified that a primary area of concern within the Strategic Management of Human Capital was the need to address current and emerging critical skills gaps, such as strategic workforce development. OPM, the CHCOC and DoD developed an inter-agency working group (known as the Integrated Product Team or IPT) to identify the government-wide Mission Critical Occupations (MCOs).

OPM established the Cross Agency Priority (CAP) goal to close critical skills gaps in the Federal workforce to improve mission performance. By September 30, 2013, skills gaps will be reduced by 50 percent for 3 to 5 critical Federal Government occupations or competencies, and additional agency-specific high risk occupations and competency gaps will be closed.

OPM, in coordination with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), designated IT/Cybersecurity, Acquisition and Economists as the priority occupations for closing skills gaps. In addition, OPM and the CHCO Council identified Human Resources, Auditors, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) occupations as mission critical within the Federal government.

These occupations' leaders and managers have unique insight into the opportunities and challenges we face in recruiting, developing and retaining a world class workforce. OPM designated senior Federal leaders from within these occupations to serve as Sub Goal Leads (SGLs) to design effective strategies for skills gap closure in their occupations.

As part of OPM's strategy to close skills gaps, SGLs convened with counterparts across government to conduct a needs analysis and develop ideas for immediate and long term actions and pilot projects to close skills gaps. The SGLs are:

- **Sub Goal Leader: Acquisition**
    - Honorable Katrina McFarland, Assistant Secretary for Acquisition, Department of Defense
    - Joanie Newhart, CPCM, Associate Administrator for Acquisition Workforce Programs, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President.

- **Sub Goal Leader: IT/Cybersecurity**
    - Tim Polk, Assistant Director, Cybersecurity, Office of Science Technology Policy (OSTP).
    - Ernest McDuffie, Ph.D., Chair, National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE), Department of Commerce/National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

- **Sub Goal Leader: Economist**
    - Alex Gelber, Acting Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy.

In collaboration with these Sub Goal Leads, OPM has identified four areas of opportunity:

1. **Recruitment** –analyze future talent requirements and build pipelines for new employees to enter government service.

2. **Retention** – understand who is leaving, who is staying, and why; and build services and programs to retain the best employees.

3. **Development** – understand training and/or retraining needs and identify the most effective methods to close skills gaps.

4. **Knowledge Management** – find creative ways to capture and transfer the information future employees will need to get up to speed quickly.

OPM's partnership with SGLs for Acquisition, IT/Cybersecurity, and Economist has led to the creation of innovative strategies to recruit, develop and retain employees within the respective occupations. In designing the gap closure strategies, OPM and the Sub Goal Leaders are deploying three levels of innovation to pilot test selected strategies:

Level 1: Project ideas that can be implemented immediately.

> **Example**: Build a pipeline through partnerships with academic institutions.

Level 2: Projects that can be implemented after planning and describing desired outcomes.

> **Example**: Establishing a government-wide inter-agency Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) process.

Level 3: Projects we think can and should make a difference to the Federal workforce, but further evidence is needed and regulation or law may need to be changed.

> **Example**: Seek additional flexible term appointments.

Progress Update

The Cybersecurity Sub Goal Leader has implemented an integrated recruitment strategy that leverages processes from several inter-agency working groups (CXOs), such as the Chief Information Officers (CIO) Council and the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE). These CXOs continuously focus on identifying areas for improving the cybersecurity workforce. The NICE coalition of more than 20 federal agencies, including OPM, recently redefined the definitions of cyber work and this lexicon will provide a threshold using a common language for skills sets which have rapidly evolved for this work function. These updated work definitions and skill sets will improve agencies' capability to recruit for and develop the skill sets needed in this unique workforce segment.

The CIO Council's FY2013 survey of cybersecurity skills provides a preliminary workforce assessment; the results enable agencies and the SGLs to design strategic recruitment and development strategies. An initial outcome is the joint agency effort to host Regional and National cybersecurity competitions at the high school and community college levels to market the federal cybersecurity job opportunities as well as to recruit and hire intern level Cybersecurity employees for immediate and future workforce needs. The Cybersecurity metric assesses the effectiveness of these outreach efforts by measuring the quality of Cybersecurity applicants.

The Cybersecurity metric is to increase outreach to Cybersecurity Competition Participants. The baseline is zero and the target is to increase Federal outreach to competitions with greater than 200 total participants in FY13.

The Sub Goal Leader will use the Chief Human Capital Officers Council's government-wide Manager Satisfaction Survey to determine whether managers are satisfied with Cybersecurity applicants, as an indicator that outreach efforts enable the Federal government to recruit the most qualified applicants.

The survey is currently being revised to include specific Cybersecurity occupational data; therefore, the baseline will be established during the quarter starting July 1st.

Additional strategies extending into FY14 will focus on the quality of new hires after their first six months on the job.

The Acquisition workforce is closing skills gaps by increasing certification rates of all GS-1102 Contract Specialists. The goal includes civilian and DoD contracting professionals. The baseline metric is 75%, and the target is to increase the certification rate to 85%.

The Economist Sub Goal Leader is engaging in a strategic recruitment process to recruit Economist Doctoral candidates and experienced Economists. In addition, OPM is partnering with the Sub Goal Leader to provide Federal managers who hire Economists with the human resources information and tools they can use to recruit and hire the most qualified candidates for their positions.

The Economist Sub Goal Leader intends to use the Manager Satisfaction survey to measure the manager's satisfaction with Economist applicants. The baseline for the metric is a 67% satisfaction rate with economist applicants, and the target is 70% satisfaction. Additional strategies extend into FY14 to focus on the quality of hires.

Next Steps

Upcoming milestones include the following:

- June to September 2013: Continue to implement strategies to close gaps while monitoring progress.
- August, 2013: Report agency progress on Performance.gov.
- September 2013: The CAP Goal Leadership Team (which is comprised of OPM's Acting Director and all Sub Goal Leaders) will assess progress towards closing skills gaps at the conclusion of the reporting cycle.

Contributing Programs and Other Factors

This is a government-wide effort which encompasses the twenty-four Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO) Council agencies. DOD and OPM co-chaired the CHCO Executive Steering Committee charged with developing and implementing this strategy.

Additional References

Chief Human Capital Council (CHCOC):
http://www.chcoc.gov/

GAO report: Strategic Human Capital Management
http://www.gao.gov/highrisk/strategic_human_management#t=0

OPM's website:
www.opm.gov

Certification Program for Contract Specialists:
http://acquisition.performance.gov/initiative/workforce/home