

Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Closing Skills Gaps

FY 2013 Q1 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.

Contents

Overview	1
Strategies	1
Progress Update.....	3
Indicators	4
Next Steps	4
Contributing Programs and Other Factors.....	5
Additional References.....	5

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 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.

In June of 2012, agencies submitted information about identified staffing gaps to OPM, which determined the baseline for establishing agency targets. End of year results will be submitted in February of 2013.

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. The key to identifying and reducing skills gaps government-wide and within agencies is to determine where gaps exist so strategies can be developed to close the identified gaps. Once skills gaps are measured and reported, the government is able to design and implement appropriate corrective actions. 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. 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 occupation 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, working with the CHCO Council, identified human resources, auditors, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) functional occupations as mission critical occupations within the Federal government. Further analysis will be done on these three occupations over the next several months to determine the appropriate workforce strategies needed to close any existing skills gaps in these occupational areas.

Director Berry identified and convened renowned subject matter experts from various agencies to as Deputy Goal Leaders for the priority MCOs. The group discussed current practices for addressing challenges within their occupations while sharing best practices.

Each focus area will explore four areas of opportunity:

1. **Recruitment** –analyze the pipelines that bring new employees into government to make sure they are sufficiently robust.
2. **Retention** – analyze retention rates, and understand who is leaving and who is staying, why, and how we can retain the best employees.
3. **Training and Development** – understand training and/or retraining needs and identify the most cost effective training resources to close skills gaps, and confirm the training is appropriately preparing current and future employees to execute their responsibilities.
4. **Knowledge Transfer** – develop strategies to share relevant information between the retiring generation to the incoming workforce.

As part of OPM's strategy to close skills and staffing gaps, Deputy Goal Leaders 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 following Deputy Goal Leaders have been identified:

- **Deputy Goal Leaders: 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.

- **Deputy Goal Leaders: IT/Cybersecurity**

- Lauren VanWazer, 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).

- **Deputy Goal Leader: Economist**

- Honorable Jan Eberly, Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy, Department of the Treasury.

OPM is partnering with the Deputy Goal Leaders for Acquisitions, IT/Cybersecurity, and Economists to design and implement gap closure strategies that address how to recruit, develop and retain employees within the respective occupations. In designing the gap closure strategies, OPM and the Deputy Goal Leaders are deploying three levels of innovation to pilot test selected strategies:

Level 1: Project ideas that have potential of immediate implementation.

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

Progress towards meeting the government-wide milestones for closing staffing and competency gaps in FY 13 will measure strategies in the areas of recruitment, development and retention. The gap closing strategies, designed and implemented by the Deputy Goal Leaders, intend to close skills gaps by reducing staffing and competency gaps, by increasing the proficiency levels of incumbents and by recruiting applicants who possess the needed knowledge and skills.

To measure the extent of gap closure, agencies will submit updated resource chart information in February, 2013 that will include staffing numbers, projected attrition and staffing targets for out years to compare against the June, 2012 baseline.

Progress continues to be made towards closing skills gaps within Acquisitions, IT/Cybersecurity, and Economists. The Deputy Goal Leaders have established inter-agency working groups that include Subject Matter Experts within the respective fields to define metrics and supporting action plans for goals and activities to will produce significant outcomes.

The Acquisition community continues to close skills gaps by measuring certification rates. The CAP goal metric is to improve certification rates over the prior fiscal year. FY12 serves as the baseline and the FY13 target is currently being established.

The Deputy Goal Leader for IT/Cyber intends to implement a strategic recruitment and outreach strategy to increase awareness of the Federal Cybersecurity profession and the awareness of Federal employment opportunities for prospective applicants. The metric is to capture the number of applicants OPM reaches at CyberChallenges and other recruitment events. The IT/Cyber community will sponsor recruiting events at several Cyber Challenge events in coordination with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

The Economist Deputy Goal Leader will target their efforts to increase the quality of applicants to Economist positions; therefore, the focus is on recruiting post-graduate Economists to achieve mission objectives. To measure the efficacy of their efforts, the Economist Deputy Goal Leader will measure success through the percent increase of manager satisfaction with the quality of Economist applicants. The Economist Deputy Goal leader is embarking upon an aggressive recruitment process to attract and recruit PhD level Economists, beginning in January, 2014. To prepare for this period, the outreach process will include the use of the Pathways program.

Indicators

OPM expects to receive current estimates of skills and staffing gaps from agencies for Acquisition, IT/Cybersecurity, and Economist in mid-February. Those estimates will continue to be used by each Deputy Goal Leader to further support strategies for action while gauging progress.

Next Steps

Upcoming milestones include the following:

- March 2013: Deputy Goal Leaders will finalize the strategies and actions, to begin implementation to close skills gaps. OPM will continue to support to Deputy Goal Leaders with their efforts to implement strategies to close skill gaps. In addition, progress will be captured through quarterly reporting from the Deputy Goal Leaders and progress updates generated by the government-wide working group.
- April-May 2013: Implement strategies to close gaps while monitoring progress.
- May 2013: OPM will convene the CAP Goal Leadership Team to assess progress towards closing skills gaps.
- For Acquisition, major milestones include:
 - (1) identify minimum certification rate standard by end of Q2 in FY 13
 - (2) identify which agencies are below the certification standard in Q2 FY13;
 - (3) Work with agencies to develop an action plan and milestones for improving the certifications rates by end of Q2 FY 13 (4) measure certification rates (on-going).
- For Cybersecurity, major milestones include:

- (1) collect information on Federal Cybersecurity job opportunities (Q2) disseminate information at CyberChallenge and other recruitment events (Q3) explore additional initiatives to close skills gaps in Cyber (ongoing).
- For Economists, major milestones include:
 - (1) create/conduct training/orientation for Economist hiring managers by end of Q3;
 - (2) develop specific outreach plans targeted to PhD-producing institutions by end of Q4;
 - (3) conduct outreach in FY14 Q1;
 - (4) recruit and offer positions to Economists in FY14 Q2.

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>