

Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Closing Skills Gaps

FY 2013 Q3 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

Elaine Kaplan, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

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. The key to identifying and reducing skills gaps government-wide and within agencies is to determine where gaps exist so that 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 three to five 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 – working with 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**
 - Vacant
 - Senior Economist Sub Goal Leader Advisor: Jason Brown, Director, Office of Microeconomic Analysis, U.S Treasury Department

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 continued to implement 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). Their continued efforts are focused upon implementing comprehensive strategic recruitment strategies that were created in response to the identified needs that resulted from a Cybersecurity workforce assessment.

A key initial strategic recruitment strategy is the joint agency effort to attend Regional and National Cybersecurity competitions at the high school and community college levels to market the Federal Cybersecurity job opportunities. In addition, the Cybersecurity competitions serve as a mechanism to recruit and hire intern level Cybersecurity employees to fulfill immediate and future workforce needs.

To measure the effectiveness of these outreach efforts, the Cybersecurity metric is to increase outreach to Cybersecurity competition participants. The baseline is zero and the target is to increase awareness of Federal Cybersecurity and nondefense Federal Cybersecurity employment programs and opportunities. The goal will be accomplished by initiating and conducting employment outreach directly to participants involved in Cybersecurity challenges and competitions in FY 2013.

Progress to date in growing more awareness of Federal cybersecurity employment programs is that our outreach efforts have touched 600 participants during Quarter 3 and; overall, more than 1,675 participants have learned about Federal Cybersecurity employment programs at these Cybersecurity challenges and competitions during this fiscal year through June 2014.

Subsequently, in FY 2014, the Cybersecurity 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 the skills and quality of applicants, as this will serve as an indicator that outreach efforts enable the Federal government to recruit the most qualified applicants. The survey was revised on July 1st.

The Acquisition (Contracting Specialist) Sub Goal Leader and working group has been working diligently in support of their efforts to increase the certification rates of all GS-1102 Contracting

Specialists (which includes civilian and DoD contracting professionals). The target continues to increase the certification rate to 85%, a 10% increase over the baseline of 75%.

In support of their efforts, the Acquisition (Contracting Specialist) Sub Goal Leader has supported the efforts to expand access to the required training by leveraging training across agencies while improving agencies abilities to report training completion. In addition, the SGL has worked to expand the availability of the required training by expanding the Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS) system to access training provided by the online learning platform, the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI). Because agencies are using FAITAS to obtain and register for acquisition-related classroom and online training, which includes granting access to over 300 online courses from the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) and continuous learning modules from other agencies, such as the GSA, Small Business Administration (SBA), and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), agencies can use FAITAS to apply for Federal Acquisition Certifications (FACs), track progress in meeting their continuous learning requirements, and prepare individual development plans to enhance skills and capabilities.

The Acquisition (Contracting Specialist) Sub Goal Leader is on track towards meeting the established goal.

The Economist Sub Goal Leader continues to engage in a strategic recruitment process to recruit Economist Doctoral candidates and experienced Economists. To support their efforts, the Economist Sub Goal Leader, in collaboration with Economists across the Federal government, and Federal Human Resource (HR) professionals, established partnerships to gather information on several human resource hiring flexibilities to support robust strategies that would enhance their recruitment efforts. In addition, the Economist working group is leveraging government-wide best practices in the area of recruitment to identify strategies that can support the government-wide gap closure efforts.

The results of this partnership has enabled the Economist community and hiring managers (to include HR professionals that evaluate economist positions) to become better informed about the Federal hiring process which has resulted in a 80% satisfaction with Economist applicants per the Quarter 3 results of the Manager's Satisfaction Survey with the quality of applicants. The group has well exceeded their 70% target and 57% baseline.

Next Steps

Upcoming milestones include the following:

- 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 for the Q3 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>