

## Qualifications Ranking System [25]

NOTE: The content of this document has not been reviewed by legal counsel, nor does it represent a consensus view of the Design Team or indicate any kind of preference among options presented to the Senior Review Committee.

### Summary Description:

This is a plug & play that addresses the qualifications evaluation process. Under this system, the Department would discontinue use of OPM minimum qualification standards. Job candidates would be screened for basic eligibility, based on clear-cut, objective criteria. Candidates would then be ranked into one of three categories: eligible, fully qualified, and highly qualified. Selection for positions would be made based on category ranking of employees.

### Key Features:

#### Coverage:

This option is designed to cover all DHS employees who are now covered by chapter 53 of title 5. Additionally, it could be applied to TSA employees under the authority provided by law to the TSA Administrator.

- No minimum qualifications standards.
- Eligibility requirements based on completely objective criteria such as citizenship, positive education requirements, age restrictions, or licensure or certification.
- All eligible candidates would be ranked in one of three categories (eligible, fully qualified, or highly qualified), based on pre-established competencies. These would be reflected in crediting plans that would outline desired competencies for each position, and benchmarks for rating candidates at each level.
- The method of evaluating candidates would depend on the position to be filled, but would include one or more components such as: review of application form(s), structured interviews (written or oral), written statements about competencies, assessment centers, written examinations, etc. Managers and human resource professionals would jointly determine the method of evaluation.  
For new appointment, selection would be made based on category ranking procedures, with veterans receiving hiring preference before non-veterans within each category.
- For merit promotion actions, selection would be made based on category.

### Sub-Options:

- Allow the use of some selective factors related to quality of experience in screening candidates for eligibility.
- Allow the ability to continue using OPM minimum qualifications for some positions.
- Add an additional ranking level above "Eligible" (e.g., Eligible, Highly Qualified, Best Qualified)

### Relation to Other Options:

This option is a plug in play. It could work with any other systems selected.

**Implications** (This section contains "possible advantages/benefits" and "possible problems/challenges" and "other implications" suggested by design team members. The views expressed in these "implications" represent the opinions of one or more members of the design team and therefore reflect sometimes opposing points of view. These opinions do not reflect the collective judgment of the entire design team on any of the issues addressed, nor have they been reviewed by legal counsel.):

#### Possible Advantages/Benefits

- Allows the use of a wider range of examining techniques to improve the overall quality of candidates ultimately referred for consideration.

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- Preserves veterans preference through category ranking process.
- Could simplify the hiring process by avoiding the labor intensive process of making minimum qualifications determinations.
- Might make the hiring process more transparent for internal and external job candidates.
- Could result in simpler vacancy announcements.

### Possible Problems/Challenges

- To the extent that this option would require managers and supervisors to spend time evaluating a larger pool of potential employment candidates, this could take time away from their regular work.

### Other Implications

- As managers employ more flexibility, they must ensure that selection is consistent with the *Uniform Guidelines on Employment Selection Procedures* (1978), ([29 CFR Part 1607](#)) ([www.uniformguidelines.com](http://www.uniformguidelines.com)).
- If the classification system retains the concept of "career ladder promotions," then criteria for these promotions will need to be developed.
- This system would work with existing automated staffing programs.
- Would need to fully educate current DHS employees and managers about system, to ensure full understanding of a process that represents a significant departure from the current hiring process.

### Cost

- The cost of implementing this system would be limited to re-training HR staff and managers. Some resources also may need to be invested in revision of crediting plans that assume candidates have already been screened against OPM minimum qualification standards, and therefore may not evaluate the full range of knowledge, skills and abilities desired for the position.
- The system would save resources by eliminating the often time-consuming step of evaluating applications to determine minimum qualifications. It should also result in a faster, streamlined hiring process.

## **Evaluation in Terms of Guiding/Design Principles:**

### Mission Centered

- Hiring process for mission critical occupations could be tailored to best meet the needs of the Federal government.
- Hiring process may be more expeditious.

### Performance Focused

- Since qualifications determinations could be based on multiple rating sources, the ranking of candidates would be more reliable than the current process, which relies primarily on the applicant's initial application form. This should result in better qualified candidates being ultimately hired.

### Contemporary and Excellent

- The process may be easier for managers and applicants to understand, and more responsive to the needs of line managers. At the same time, the process should result in more accurate determinations of the relative quality of applicants.

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### Generate Trust and Respect

- Since the process may be easier to understand, it should promote trust and respect. Hiring decisions based directly on the needs of the organization should be easier to explain to employees and other applicants.

### Based on Merit System Principles and Fairness

- The system, since it does not rely solely on a single document, but allows input in rating from multiple sources, is designed to be effective in identifying the best candidates. As such, actual merit, versus quality of initial application paperwork, should drive hiring decisions.

### **Transition & Implementation:**

- This system would not result in any direct costs for DHS costs, after initial re-training of HR staff and managers. Further, since the system essentially eliminates one step in the hiring process, without adding any, re-training should not present any substantial difficulties. In the long run, this process should result in a cost savings by eliminating the time consuming process of determining minimum qualifications.

**Detailed Description  
By System Component and System Element**

C Classification System		
System elements:		Summary description:
1	Functions	N/A
2	Categorization of type of work	N/A
3	Work valuation method	N/A
4	Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This system eliminates the use of minimum qualification standards. As such, it could work with any classification/pay system.</li> <li>• In place of qualification standards, basic eligibility standards would be established for each position. These standards would reflect basic screening factors on completely objective matters, such as positive education requirements, licensure, certification, citizenship, maximum entry age (for law enforcement or firefighting work).</li> <li>• Eligible candidates would be evaluated against a crediting plan, based on their qualifications relative to other candidates. (Note that crediting plans are already used to determine the ranking of candidates under merit promotion plans and delegated examining authorities. Components may, however, need to revise existing crediting plans with the elimination of minimum qualification requirements.)</li> <li>• Evaluation against the crediting plan could include input from multiple sources, e.g., the application forms, written or oral interviews, tailored resumes, assessments centers, etc., as appropriate for the position.</li> <li>• Eligible candidates would be rated as "Eligible" or "Highly Qualified," and veterans in each group would be referred for consideration by the selecting official ahead of non-veterans. (10 point veterans would receive preference over 5 point veterans.) For example, if 12 candidates apply for one vacancy, with the following ratings:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1 veteran Highly Qualified</li> <li>○ 3 non-veterans Highly Qualified</li> <li>○ 2 veterans Fully Qualified</li> <li>○ 1 non-veteran Fully Qualified</li> <li>○ 2 non-veterans Eligible</li> <li>○ 3 Not Eligible</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Highly Qualified veteran would be considered first for the position. Unless there was a legitimate reason for a Passover based on existing OPM rules on passing over veterans, that candidate would have to be selected. If the candidate were passed over, the 3 non-veteran Highly Qualified candidates could be considered. The Fully Qualified candidates in this situation would not receive consideration, unless all Highly Qualified candidates were passed over.</li> <li>• For merit promotion actions, selection would be made based on category alone, without regard to veterans preference.</li> </ul>
5	Applying system	N/A
6	Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determinations of basic eligibility could be appealed to the appointing officer.</li> </ul>

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7	Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• After one year in operation, the system should be evaluated to determine its effectiveness. The system should be measured comparing relative qualifications and performance of candidates in major occupations hired under the old and new systems.</li></ul>
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