

USDA Workforce Planning & Succession Planning Guidance

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

FY 2008-2013

Updated: April 2008

A. Objective

Institute and maintain an Agency practice of conducting workforce planning (timed with the Budget Cycle) that enables the Agency to efficiently and effectively recruit, develop, retain and deploy the workforce, to reduce the number of future and current Mission Critical Occupations with competency gaps and increase the leadership talent pool through succession planning which, in turn, drives the **Recruitment Strategy** / Agency Annual Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Plan and the **Training & Development Strategy** / Agency Annual Plans. The mission supporting human capital strategies addressed are:

- Improve the Acquisition and Utilization of Talent
- Sustain a Learning Environment and Leadership Continuity

Definitions:

- Mission Critical Occupations (MCO): Occupations that most directly have an effect on the agency's ability to accomplish its mission.
- Mission Critical Support Occupations are defined as occupations that provide support to MCOs.

B. Background

Workforce planning provides the means for achieving overarching program goals. Program goals will not be achieved "without the right number of people with the right skills in the right place at the right time." As Agencies develop strategies that support the achievement of both long-term and annual program performance goals in the strategic and performance plans, they need to consider other management initiatives, (such as workforce planning, competitive sourcing, e-government, etc.), as essential components of a broad-based management strategy.

Planning for human capital needs is one of the greatest challenges facing managers and leaders. In order to meet this challenge, a uniform process that provides a disciplined approach for matching human resources with the anticipated needs of the Agency is essential. A workforce plan is a fundamental planning tool, critical to quality performance that will contribute to the achievement of program objectives by providing a basis for justifying budget allocation and workload staffing levels.

The Workforce Planning Model used by the Agency supports the OPM and USDA models and incorporates the following steps:

- Step One – Set Strategic Direction for the Workforce
- Step Two – Assess Supply, Demand, and Skills Gap of the Workforce
- Step Three – Develop Action Plan to close Competency Gap
- Step Four – Implement Action Plan to close Competency Gap
- Step Five – Monitor, Evaluate, & Revise the Workforce Plan

C. Purpose

The following are common reasons to conduct workforce planning:

- Ensures a low Competency Gap for Mission Critical Occupations.
- Ensures an adequate supply of capable replacements for Leadership positions (the Leadership Talent Pool).
- Helps meet the organization's current and future competency skill needs.

- Provides focus for workforce demographics, retirement projections, and succession planning.
- Provides a clear rationale for linking expenditures and investments for recruitment, training, employee development, retention, and other human resource programs to the Agency's long-term goals and objectives.
- Provides managers with tools to address changes in program direction that may affect the type of work being performed.
- Assists managers in creating a high performing, diverse workforce capable of continually growing and changing.
- Assists managers in identifying restructuring, partnering, competitive sourcing, e-government, de-layering, and reorganizing opportunities.
- Provides timely and critical information for inclusion in budget requests and Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) strategic and annual performance plans.
- Supports Department initiatives and the Human Capital Plan.

D. Responsibilities and Timeframe

Successful workforce planning requires the commitment and leadership of top management. Senior-level managers must:

- Lead the planning process
- Assure that workforce plans are aligned with strategic direction
- Hold subordinate managers accountable for carrying out workforce planning and for using its products.

The analysis and determination of the Workforce Plan shall be completed by the end of the fourth quarter of each fiscal year. The workforce data for a five year period will be queried, formatted and presented to Human Resources Operations. The Worksheet in Appendix A shall be used when collaborating with management to analyze the workforce.

Figure 1 provides a flow diagram of the major components of the Recruitment Strategy that influence the development of the Annual Agency Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Plan (FEORP).

Figure 2 identifies the steps to implement the FEORP.

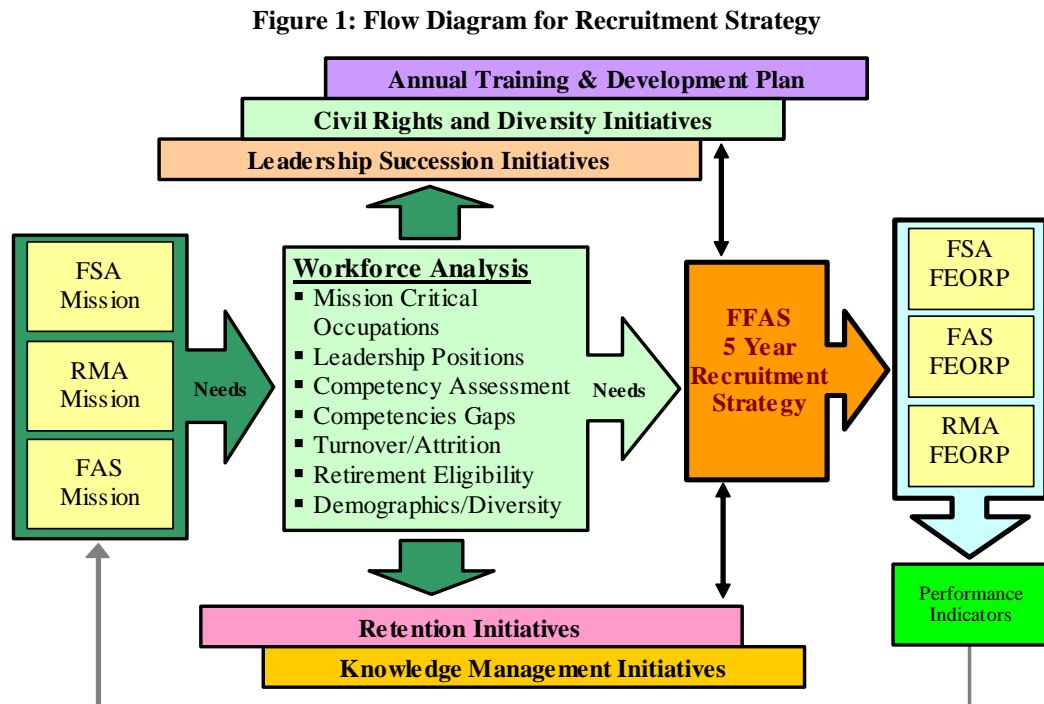


Figure 2: SUMMARY of the WORKFORCE PLANNING STEPS to IMPLEMENT THE AGENCY ANNUAL FEORP

Step 1: Review Agency Mission and Strategic Plan

- Review the USDA Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan, the USDA Strategic Plan and the Agency Strategic plan and its mission, goals and performance indicators to determine workforces objectives and needs to support the accomplishment of the Agency mission
Link to USDA Budget Summary and Annual Performance Plan:
<http://www.usda.gov/agency/obpa/Budget-Summary/2007/FY07budsum.pdf>
Link to USDA Strategic Plan:
<http://www.ocfo.usda.gov/usdasp/sp2005/sp2005.pdf>
- Identify Mission Critical Occupations (MCO) and Competencies needed to support the workforce objectives and needs

Step 2: Examine Workforce Analysis Results (turnover, retirement projections, competency gaps, demographics, trends, etc.)

- Evaluate Workforce Analysis results (USDA Workforce Planning and Succession Planning Guidance) to:
 - Forecast future vacancies with in the MCO's and identify the competency proficiency levels needed
 - Assess current workforce MCO's and competency levels to identify competency gaps to meet workforce objectives and needs
 - Forecast future leadership vacancies and the competency proficiency levels needed
 - Plan

Link to USDA Workforce Planning and Succession Planning Guidance:

http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/wfp_succession_guidance.doc

Note: Highlight link to open. If link does not open copy and paste into the web browser to open

Step 3: Review Outcomes of Recruitment Programs

- Analyze and evaluate previous recruitment plans, performance outcomes, lessons learned, barriers, and best practices
- Identify improvement opportunities to enhance recruitment and placement effectiveness. Assess previous outcome data re: job placement follow-up data, exit interview data, days to fill vacancies, diversity of new hires and reduction of competency needs
- Identify specific recruitment sources, e.g., universities, associations, advertisement locales, internal pools (Student Programs, Disability Programs, etc.)

Step 4: Develop and Execute the Agency Annual FEORP

- Develop Agency Annual FEORP and evaluate the following major elements;
 - Effective and efficient utilization of the Regional Recruitment Teams
 - Performance outcomes / indicators
 - Data analysis and reporting requirements
 - USA Staffing and other e-Gov and process improvement initiatives
 - Marketing initiatives
 - Hiring / retention flexibilities utilization
 - Relationships with professional organizations, colleges/universities, vocational rehabilitation, outplacement organizations
 - MD-715 implications; and diversity initiatives
 - Departmental and Government-wide initiatives, e.g., e-Gov, recruitment fairs, career patterns etc.
 - Specific team and individual accountabilities

Step 5: Consider justification of overall Recruitment investments for a period two years out from the current FY

- Identify specific human capital management and recruitment objectives, key activities, and associated resources / investments (see OMB Circular A-11, section 31.11)

Figure 3 provides a flow diagram of the major components of the Training & Development Strategy that influence the development of the Agency Annual Training & Development Work Plan.

Figure 4 identifies the steps to implement then Agency Annual Training & Development Work Plan.

Figure 3: Flow Diagram for Training & Development Strategy

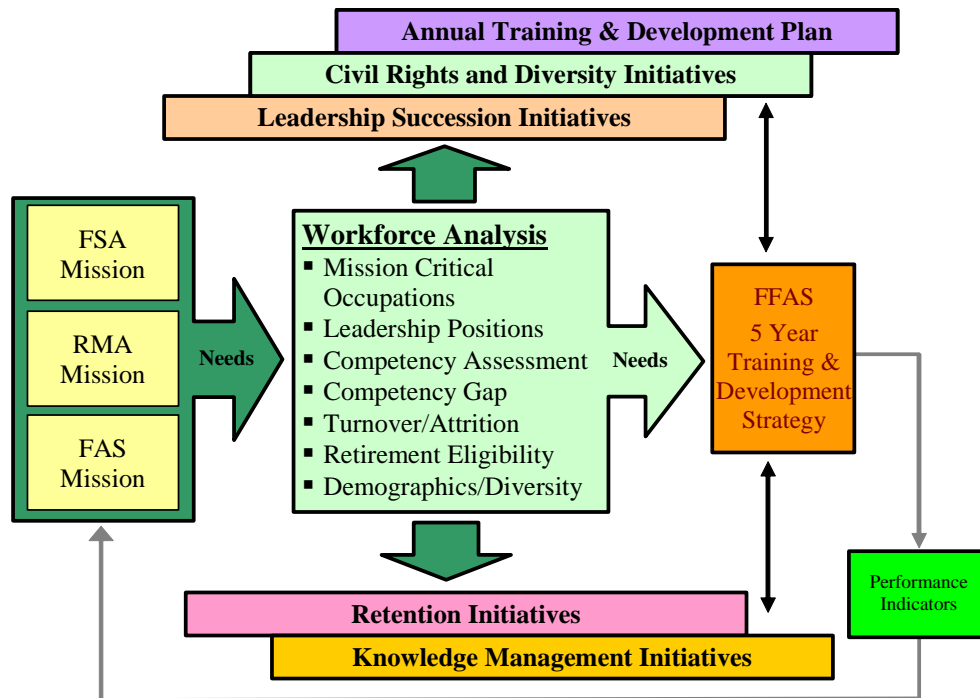


Figure 4: SUMMARY of the WORKFORCE PLANNING STEPS to IMPLEMENT THE AGENCY ANNUAL TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT WORK PLAN

Step 1: Review Agency Mission and Identify Training & Development Implications

- Review the Agency Strategic and Budget Performance Plans, the Annual Performance Report of its mission, goals and performance indicators. Determine possible training & development activities and resource needs required to support the accomplishment of the Agency mission.

Step 2: Examine Workforce Analysis Results (turnover, retirement projections, competency needs, demographics, trends, etc.) with Agency Management

- Evaluate Workforce Analysis results (per USDA Workforce Planning and Succession Planning Guidance provided by HRD Director's office) to:
 - Review existing T&D programs to ensure they address MCO Competency Gaps and Leadership Talent Pool needs.
 - Revise/upgrade existing T&D programs to improve competencies and/or add 'new' ones
 - Develop new T&D Programs to identify necessary or additional resources (outside vendors, partnering arrangement with other agencies, budget/resources needs and availability, etc.)
 - Work with other organizations or units, i.e., DAFO, HR, etc., to balance economies of scale in other agency initiatives, e.g., E-Gov.

Step 3: Evaluate Impact / Outcomes of Training and Development Programs

- Analyze and evaluate previous T&D plans, performance outcomes, lessons learned, barriers, and best practices; and identify improvement opportunities to improve T & D effectiveness. Assess previous outcome data re: leadership talent pool ratio, retention rate, participation in MCO oriented programs, and reduction of mission critical occupations with competency needs (gaps).

Step 4: Develop and Execute the Agency Annual Training and Development Work Plan

- Develop Agency Annual Training & Development Work Plan and consider the following major elements;
 - Effective and efficient utilization of available resources (e.g., budgets, FTEs, etc.)
 - Mandated and elective training courses
 - Consideration or application of the Core Competencies identified by OPM
 - Performance outcomes / indicators; data analysis and reporting requirements
 - Agency-wide competency development needs from employee IDP's
 - AgLearn and other e-Gov initiatives
 - Agency and Government-wide leadership programs
 - Web based systems, on-line collaboration tools, web meetings, on-line degree work, 24/7 training and development activities access
 - Relationships with professional organizations, colleges/universities,
 - Diversity initiatives
 - Departmental and Government-wide initiatives and scheduled events
 - Specific T & D team and individual tasks and accountabilities

Step 5: Consider justification of overall Training and Development investments for a period two years out from the current FY

- Identify specific human capital management and training and development objectives, key activities, and associated resources / investments (see OMB Circular A-11, section 31.11)

E. Step One: Set Strategic Direction for the Workforce

- 1. Managers** - Identify the organization's direction and configuration 2 to 5 years from now. Consider the following:

- USDA and Agency mission, programs, strategic plans and annual performance plans.
- Budget, trends and patterns.
- Do projected funding levels support positions and objectives?
- Are there any changes to your philosophy or approach to budgeting?
- Impacts of internal and external environment (legislative changes, Departmental initiatives, social and economic trends.)
- Planned FTE reductions or increases (what career fields, how many, etc.)
- Labor force trends, Diversity goals
- Shifting skills/competencies
- New technology innovations, e-government initiatives
- Changes in organizational structures (including de-layering, reorganizing / restructuring)
- Outsourcing (A-76) implications
- Partnering opportunities

F. Step Two: Assess Supply, Demand, and Skills Gap of the Workforce

- 1. Managers and Human Resources** – In analyzing the workforce data, e.g., retirement forecast, diversity profile, turnover, etc., identify current and future workforce requirements (resources, skills and/or competencies). Consider the following:

- What are the mission critical occupations, skills or competencies (include Leadership positions) essential to the accomplishment of the agency's goals and objectives, especially those identified on the retirement forecast?
- What changes are expected in the work of the agency (e.g., due to changes in mission/goals, technology, new/terminated programs or functions, competitive sourcing implications and shifts to contracting out)?
- How will this affect the agency's human resources?
- The number of FTEs needed in what organization and with what skills and competencies and by when?
- Number and kinds of skills/competencies needed at each level of expertise (full performance, mid-level, trainees)
- What skills will no longer be required and what new skills will the agency need in the future? (Next year? Two years out? Three years out? Four Years out? Next five years?)
- What Leadership Succession Strategies are in place?
- What recruitment, training, and retention strategies are being implemented to help ensure that the agency will continue to have a high-quality, diverse workforce?
- How is the agency addressing expected skill imbalances due to attrition, including retirement over the next five years?
- What challenges impede the agency's ability to recruit and retain a high-quality, diverse workforce?
- Where has the agency successfully delegated authority or restructured to reduce the number of layers that a programmatic action passes through before it reaches an authoritative decision point. (e.g. procuring new computers, allocating operating budgets, completely satisfying a customer's complaint, processing a benefits claim, and clearing controlled correspondence)?
- Where can the agency improve its processes to reduce the number of layers that a programmatic action passes through before it reaches an authoritative decision point?
- What barriers (statutory, administrative, physical or cultural) has the agency identified to achieve workforce restructuring?

NOTE: Utilize the OPM defined leadership competencies and specify job specific competencies / skills as identified in the specific job analysis to ensure a common source of mission critical skills or competencies.

G. Step Three: Develop Action Plan to close Skills Gap

1. **Managers and Human Resources** - The results of the skills analysis will help establish the focus of recruiting and training / retraining efforts. Review and consider the following issues when developing strategies or action plans:

- The cost associated with the strategies for addressing competency or skill gaps
- How to keep corporate knowledge (Knowledge Management) from being lost?
- What skills are currently vital to the accomplishment of the agency's goals and objectives?
- How is the agency addressing skill imbalances due to attrition, including retirement over the next 5 years?
- Are there ways to maximize recruitment in order to minimize training needs of new employees?
- Explore training, retraining, relocation, or recruiting options for filling skills / competency gaps.
- What retention strategies are necessary and most feasible?
- What are the costs of these retention strategies?
- Are there alternative training mechanisms (training, education, rotation/mentoring assignments)?
- Can needed skills be obtained through sharing of resources?
- Cost-effectiveness of contracting, outsourcing or using volunteers.
- What are the Leadership Succession Strategies, i.e., high potential individuals have documented IDPs, Leadership Competencies are documented, and specific Leadership Development Programs are in place?
- What are the costs of these Leadership Succession Strategies?
- Implementation of career development programs.
- Are there ways to restructure by using E-Gov; de-layer; move employees closer to customers?

H. Step Four: Implement Action Plans to close Skills Gap

1. **Managers and Human Resources** - When implementing action plans, these are examples of some issues to consider:

A. Strategy: Addressing Gaps considering redundant or over-populated positions

Review the list of positions on your gap analysis. Then, review the skills of each of those positions. Once you have completed the analysis, determine which positions can transition into the gaps in other positions to be filled. Consider:

- Are these skills transferable to the positions/work requirements to be filled?
- Can any of the positions to be filled by retraining employees (career development)?

After you have identified positions to be filled and 'excess' positions, identify and document:

- positions that can be converted into trainee positions
- positions with the same skills needed;
- positions that can be easily reclassified to the positions needed.

B. Strategy: Partnership with academic institutions with high minority enrollments

This action item(s) could indicate that you would establish a memorandum of understanding with a Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) or the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, etc., institution as a means to develop a minority pool of candidates.

C. Strategy: Use Intern Programs to recruit

The Department has a systematic way for acquiring and developing entry-level employees for mission-critical career fields. These programs may include:

- Information Technology (IT) Development Program
- Acquisition Intern Program
- Biological Sciences Development Program
- Office of the Secretary Management Intern Program

D. Strategy: Increase use of appointing authorities for recruitment

These programs may include:

- Presidential Management Intern Program (PMI Program)
- Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)
- Severely Physically Handicapped and Mentally Retarded Persons
- Disabled Veterans
- Veterans Readjustment Appointments (VRA)
- Outstanding Scholar Program

E. Strategy: Use a variety of incentives/mechanisms to recruit and retain staff

- Development of a formal mentoring program for trainees and junior employees
- Use of volunteers
- Other agency agreement (contractual)
- Recruitment and relocation bonus
- Creative compensation packages (special salary rates)
- Expanded outreach efforts (e.g. job fairs, advertising, internet posting, employee referrals)
- Special hiring authorities (on the spot hiring, etc.)
- Augmentation of work/family programs (e.g. flexible and varying work schedules; telecommuting as appropriate; student loan repayment)
- Automated hiring systems

F. Strategy: Use a progressive retention plan

- Determine those employees who are critical to accomplishment of organizational goals.
- Develop an infrastructure to provide constant feedback between these critical employees and Supervisors / managers to determine what they want and need to become long-term assets to the organization.
- Develop a means of providing incentives and/or working conditions designed to retain valued employees. This system must provide an accurate measurement of the actual return on invest concerning the retention of valued employees.

G. Strategy: Ensure continuity of Leadership

- Workforce analysis related to supervision/leadership is conducted.
- Formal succession planning or talent management program is in place and its impact is measured.
- Written leadership development strategy tied to analysis and strategic plan.
- Documented leadership competencies are tied to the Executive Core Qualifications.
- Documented and communicated leadership skill training program that includes all levels of supervisors, managers and potential leaders.
- A merit-based system assesses leadership competencies (e.g., identification of high-potential candidates for candidate development programs or identification of development needs to be incorporated into individual development plans).
- Individual development plans for leaders and managers include formal and informal training.
- Agency conducts analysis of leadership development program usage and impact.
- Policy and methodology for managing high-potential employees are documented.
- Measures of success are documented and tracked.
- Percentage of women, minorities and people with disabilities in career ladders (GS 5-7-9 or similar) is tracked and assessed.

- Analysis of workforce demographics (including SES) helps inform succession plans. Analysis includes data such as average grade/age/length of service, distribution of the workforce (by series, grade, gender, race/national origin, supervisory status), turnover rates, and retirement eligibility.

I. Step Five: Monitor, Evaluate, & Revise the Workforce Plan

1. **Managers and Human Resources** - Examples of questions to ask in order to determine whether the strategies and action items are effective include:
 - Were the actions and strategies completed and do they close the skills gap or increase the leadership pool?
 - Have the organization's strategies upon which the plan is based changed?
 - Were there other factors preventing the obtainment of the goal?
 - Are the assumptions of the need and supply models still valid?
 - Have the conditions changed such that the strategies need to be revisited?
 - Is there a need to modify the action items?

2. **Human Resources** – The following representative reports will be developed by Human Resources and reviewed with Agency Leadership each fiscal year after completion of the Workforce Analysis. Consider the use of the Agency internet and various share drives to communicate and market these reports and associated data.
 - Mission Area Workforce Planning & Deployment Executive Summary
 - FAS, FSA and RMA Workforce Planning & Deployment Agency Summary
 - Agency Annual Recruitment Work Plans
 - Agency Annual Training & Development Work Plans

3. **Managers and Human Resources** – The following performance indicators will be reported quarterly and monitored to minimize the number of future and current Mission Critical Occupations with skill needs (gaps) and to ensure Leadership positions are supported with a ready supply of capable replacements:

Strategies and Performance Outcomes / Indicators

To Improve the Acquisition and Utilization of Talent

- % reduction of mission critical occupations with skill needs (current and **future**)
- % increase # of high quality new hires
- % decrease of 'voluntary' terminations (retention)
- % decrease in days to fill vacancy (high customer sensitivity)
- % increase in FTE utilization rate
- % increase of diversity of new hires

Sustain a Learning Environment and Leadership Continuity

- % reduction of mission critical occupations with skill needs (**current** and future)
- % increase of participation in MCO (skill gap closure) training programs
- % increase of the leadership talent pool (succession planning)

USDA Workforce Planning & Succession Planning Guidance

WORKSHEET

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

Drivers

- Government-wide Initiative – Strategic Management of Human Capital
- USDA Strategic Plan – Improve Human Capital Management
- USDA / Agency Human Capital Plan – Workforce Planning and Deployment
- Agency Strategic Plan and Annual/Budget Performance Plans

Agency Performance Measures (from HR Logic Model)

To Improve the Acquisition and Utilization of Talent

- % reduction of mission critical occupations with skill needs (current and **future**)
- % increase # of high quality new hires
- % decrease of 'voluntary' terminations (retention)
- % decrease in days to fill vacancy (high customer sensitivity)
- % increase in FTE utilization rate
- % increase of diversity of new hires

To Sustain a Learning Environment and Leadership Continuity

- % reduction of mission critical occupations with skill needs (**current** and future)
- % increase of participation in MCO (skill gap closure) training programs
- % increase of the leadership talent pool (succession planning)

Workforce Planning Objective

- Institute and maintain an Agency practice of conducting workforce planning (timed with the Budget Cycle) that enables the Agency to efficiently and effectively recruit, develop, retain and deploy the workforce, prevent skills gaps in Mission Critical Occupations and ensure continuity of Leadership.
- Identify Recruitment and Training & Development initiatives 1 to 5 years out
- Justify and amend any Recruitment and Training & Development Plans for the next FY cycle.

Contents

- Agency Retirement Projections (include actual retirement trends where available) – Graph
- Organization unit Retirement Projections – Detail Report
- Workforce Planning & Succession Planning Guidance – Worksheets
- **Agency Workforce Planning & Deployment Summary** (prior year)

Next Steps

- Analyze collective data to identify trends and challenges of our future workforce
- Enter significant data onto applicable WORKSHEET or update **Agency Workforce Planning & Deployment Summary** (prior year)
- Identify Skills Gaps of Mission Critical Occupations (current and future)
- Identify Leadership continuity or succession challenges; assess Leadership Skills Gaps
- Collaborate with management to identify GAP Closure Strategies or Leadership Development / Continuity Strategies and ensure they are effectively addressed through:
 - Recruitment Strategy and Annual Work Plans
 - Training & Development Strategy and Annual Work Plans
 - Retention Initiatives
 - Civil Rights and Diversity Initiatives
 - Leadership Succession Initiatives
 - Knowledge Management Initiatives
 - Re-structuring Initiatives
 - Human Capital Investments
- Monitor Agency Performance Measures

Mission Critical Occupations

Occupations that most directly effect the agency's ability to accomplish its mission. Mission Critical Support Occupations are defined as occupations that provide support to MCOs.

1. Review Retirement Forecast for five years out. Respond to the following questions:

- A. Identify/Review the Mission Critical Occupations, with a high retirement projection, that may affect the successful accomplishment of the Agency's strategic goals?
- B. Identify/Review any "new or future" Mission Critical Occupations that are required to meet the Agency's strategic goals. Consider the result of new programs, re-structuring activities, competitive sourcing impacts, etc.
- C. Identify/Review the critical competencies/skills needs of each Mission Critical Occupation; or identify one of the expert incumbents. Utilize occupational competencies defined by OPM (via HR Manager) or operational defined knowledge, skills and abilities identified in the specific job analysis to ensure a common 'library' of mission critical skills or competencies.
- D. Identify/Review the major recruitment source, if any, which is used or should be used to replenish each Mission Critical Occupation. Consider internal/external, academic, geographical sources, etc.
- E. Identify/Review the major Training & Development activities, programs, etc. that can be applied to enhance the current and future critical skills / competencies.

Mission Critical Occupation (Series/title/grade level)	Critical Competencies Needs (skills, knowledge and abilities)	Major Recruitment Source and/or Training & Development Activity

Leadership Positions

2. Review Retirement Forecast for the Leadership Positions for five years out.

Respond to the following questions:

- A. Identify/Review the Leadership Positions that DO NOT have a ready back-up pool of possible candidates.
- B. Identify/Review the critical competencies / skills needs of each Leadership Position identified. Utilize the OPM defined leadership competencies and specify job specific competencies / skills as identified in the specific job analysis to ensure a common source of mission critical skills or competencies.
- C. Identify/Review the major sources of qualified candidates, if any, that are used or should be used to ensure a continuity / succession of Leadership Positions. Consider internal occupational series from which to draw likely candidates; specific academic / industry sources, other external sources, etc.
- D. Identify/Review the major Training & Development activities that can be applied to enhance the current incumbent critical competencies/needs; or specify the Training & Development activities, programs, etc. to prepare individuals for future leadership positions.

Leadership Position (Series, title, grade level)	Critical Competencies Needs (skills, knowledge and abilities)	Major Candidate Source or Training & Development Activity