



Approved for Release

William J. Fleming

Director for Human Resources Management and  
Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer

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Date

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) BULLETIN #144, FY11

**SUBJECT:** Creating a Vacancy Announcement

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** April 1, 2011

**EXPIRATION DATE:** Effective until canceled or superseded

**SUPERSEDES:** HR Bulletin #126, FY11 "Creating a Vacancy Announcement," dated October 20, 2010

**REVISIONS:** This HR Bulletin revises the Department of Commerce's policy on the minimum area of consideration when advertising positions and revises the category rating and merit assignment vacancy templates.

Revisions to both templates include the following:

- 1) Under the *How You Will Be Evaluated* section, the term "scored occupational questionnaire" replaced the language "self-assessment questions" in order to provide consistent language,
- 2) Under the *Required Documents* section, special instructions were added for foreign education, and
- 3) Website links were updated throughout both templates.

Revisions to the Category Rating Template include:

- 1) Under *Required Documents: Veterans' Preference documentation*, the requirement to submit a "Member 4 Copy" was removed.

Revisions to the Merit Assignment Template include:

- 1) Under *Who May Be Considered*: a statement was provided reminding HR Practitioners to exclude VEOA eligibles if recruiting for limited time or excepted service positions,
- 2) Under *Key Requirements*: a statement was added on time-in-grade requirements, and
- 3) Under *Required Documents: Documentation supporting eligibility for non-competitive appointment*, the term "certain military spouses" was added.

**COVERAGE:** This bulletin applies to all competitive service positions through GS-15 or equivalent levels when public notice is provided and rating and ranking procedures are applied.

**BACKGROUND:** The Presidential Memorandum dated May 11, 2010, “Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process,” is part of the Obama Administration’s comprehensive initiative to address long-standing impediments to recruiting and hiring top talent into the Federal civilian workforce. The President’s initiative calls for the elimination of essay-style questions during the initial application process, making it easier for individuals to apply for Federal jobs. To ensure that the Department of Commerce (Department) is in compliance with the President’s Hiring Reform agenda and is attracting the best-qualified candidates with the most appropriate skill sets, vacancy announcements should be carefully written in plain, easy-to-understand language.

Vacancy announcements are the underpinnings of an effective recruitment and hiring process that allow potential candidates to understand what the job entails and what qualifications are required. With minimal effort, individuals should be able to ascertain whether the job is a good fit and whether the job requirements match their skill sets and interests. All information pertinent to the position should be included in the vacancy announcement.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this HR Bulletin is to provide guidance to servicing human resources offices (SHROs) on how to write vacancy announcements in a simple and straightforward manner that is easy to understand, to ensure the best-qualified candidates are attracted and recruited, and to meet the requirements of the President’s Hiring Reform objectives, as well as regulatory requirements of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 330.707. This HR Bulletin is to be used in conjunction with the generic Department vacancy templates (category rating and merit assignment). The two attached generic vacancy templates can be found at the end of this bulletin. The use of these vacancy templates is mandatory for both mission critical and non-mission critical occupations to ensure Department-wide consistency. However, language may be added in order to clarify bureau specific issues.

**PROCEDURES:** It is the policy of the Department to use available hiring flexibilities when filling positions. However, when a position is advertised the following policy applies:

Vacancy announcements must remain open for a minimum of seven calendar days. Waivers to the minimum posting requirement will not be granted. However, the open period may also be defined in terms of a specific number of applications received.

HR practitioners, in consultation with hiring managers, have the flexibility to advertise positions for longer periods of time, but the OPM’s 80-day hiring timeline requirement still needs to be met.

NOTE: It is recommended that vacancy announcements not close on a holiday or weekend.

In the event of a conflict between a provision of the Recruitment Plan and applicable provisions of negotiated collective bargaining agreement, the collective bargaining agreement will apply.

Minimum Area of Consideration:

One-Grade Interval Jobs

Vacancy announcements for one-grade interval positions at the GS-7 through GS-10 (or equivalent) levels can be advertised under merit assignment, competitive examining, or both (all sources). Vacancy announcements for one-grade interval positions at the GS-6 level (or equivalent) or below, must be advertised under all sources procedures.

#### Two-Grade Interval Jobs

Vacancy announcements for two-grade interval positions at the GS-11 level (or equivalent) or above can be advertised under merit assignment, competitive examining, or both (all sources). Vacancy announcements for two-grade interval positions at the GS-9 level (or equivalent) or below must be advertised under all sources procedures.

SHROs requesting an exception to the “area of consideration” policy must submit a written request to the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) with a detailed justification for the waiver. SHROs must receive approval in writing from the Director for Human Resources Management and Deputy Chief Human Capital Officer prior to posting the vacancy announcement.

**VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT REQUIREMENTS:** In accordance with Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.) §§ 3327, 3330; Title 5, CFR, Part 330; and the Presidential Memorandum, “Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process,” the following information must be included in all vacancy announcements.

- Overview: Agency name, vacancy announcement number, and location (bureau or organization, including geographic location); title of position (state if managerial or supervisory); series, grade/band, pay plan, and salary range; opening and closing dates; whether the position is open until closed or open continuously; number of vacancies at the time of posting; type of appointment; appointment tenure; promotion potential; probationary/trial period requirements; travel requirements, if necessary; citizenship requirements; Selective Service requirements; and physical requirements, if any.

Make sure to draw attention to your vacancy announcement with a concise and appealing summary that promotes the unique aspects of working at the Department.

- Duties: Responsibilities and essential functions of the job.
- Qualifications/Evaluations: Education, if applicable; informative definitions and examples of specialized experience needed to qualify at each grade level; Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) and other competency/selective placement factors required for the position (long essay-style questions cannot be required at the time of initial application); requirements for licensure or certification; college transcripts, if applicable; security clearance requirements; and test requirements.

An explanation for the basis of rating must include a description of the evaluation process for the scored occupational questionnaire, as well as a brief description of category rating for competitive examining. The Department’s category rating policy provides general guidance on the score ranges for the gold, silver, and bronze categories. SHROs can make exceptions

to these ranges on a case-by-case basis prior to the opening date of the announcement. Documentation justifying the modified score ranges must be maintained in the case file. The Department's category rating policy may be found at:

[http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/prod01\\_009474.pdf](http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/prod01_009474.pdf)

- How to Apply: Clear, step-by-step instructions for on-line applications; contact information for applicants wishing to submit their application using alternative methods; a list of documentation required from the applicant; contact information (e-mail and telephone) for general or technical questions; a statement regarding steps to take if technical difficulties prevent the applicant from submitting an application prior to the posted deadline.

Applicants are not required to submit official documents as part of their application package; copies are sufficient. Once selected, and prior to appointment, applicants will be required to provide official documentation.

- Veterans' Preference: Information on how to claim veterans' preference, if applicable.
- Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan Consideration (ICTAP): Information on how well-qualified CTAP and ICTAP candidates may apply, if applicable.
- Agency's Definition of "Well-Qualified": "Well-qualified" for job purposes includes those candidates who have been determined to exceed minimum qualifications for the position by attaining at least a rating of 85, but otherwise may or may not be among the highly- or best-qualified candidates.
- Benefits: Health insurance, life insurance, long-term care, retirement program, thrift savings plan, transit benefits, flexible spending accounts, credit union, leave (vacation, medical, family, etc.), employee assistance program, development and training opportunities, incentive award opportunities, recruitment or relocation incentives if applicable. In addition to the required public notice items, you may include work/life incentives, such as:

Quality of Work/Life Programs: Flexible arrangements include telework and alternative work schedules, daycare, fitness center, and proximity to public transportation and restaurants.

- What to Expect Next: Notification to applicants through USAJOBS; information regarding official documentation submission.

**OVERSIGHT:** Periodic accountability compliance reviews will be conducted by the Office of Human Resources Management, Office of Accountability and Strategic Recruitment, in accordance with the statutory authority and responsibility under Title 5, U.S.C. § 1104. Additionally, OPM will conduct intermittent reviews of agencies' vacancy announcements to ensure compliance and public notice requirements.

**REFERENCES:** Presidential Memorandum dated May 11, 2010, “Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process”; 5 U.S.C. 1104; 5 CFR 330.707; Delegated Examining Operations Handbook, HR Bulletin #126, FY11 “Creating a Vacancy Announcement”

**OFFICE OF POLICY AND PROGRAMS:** Pamela Boyland, Director, [PBoyland@doc.gov](mailto:PBoyland@doc.gov), (202) 482-1068

**PROGRAM MANAGER:** Farhan Qureshy, [fqureshy@doc.gov](mailto:fqureshy@doc.gov), (202) 482-0149

## Generic DEU Template – Category Rating



**AGENCY:**

**JOB ANNOUNCEMENT NUMBER:**

**JOB TITLE:**

**SALARY RANGE:**

**OPEN PERIOD:**

**SERIES/GRADE/BAND:**

**POSITION INFORMATION:** *(type of appointment, number of vacancies, and promotion potential, if any)*

**LOCATIONS:**

**WHO MAY BE CONSIDERED:**

- All qualified United States citizens

*If the position is restricted to preference eligibles, state whether applications will be accepted from non-preference eligibles, and, if so, that they will not be considered if veterans are available.*

**Marketing Statement:**

*(Insert bureau logo, optional)*

*Insert bureau's branding/marketing/mission information – highlight the reasons an applicant would want to work in this department.*

**Job Summary:**

*Insert general information about the position and how it relates to the Department.*

- A one-year probationary/trial period may be required.

**Key Requirements:**

- U.S. citizen
- Suitable for Federal employment
- Registered for Selective Service if applicable ([www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov))

*Insert additional items as necessary, such as physical requirements, travel requirements, minimum/maximum entry age, etc.*

**Major Duties:**

*List specific job responsibilities in a clear and concise manner.*

## Generic DEU Template – Category Rating

*The individual selected for this position will...*

- X
- X
- X

### **Qualifications Required:**

General/Specialized Experience:

*Include competencies and selective placement factors for each grade level.*

*(Optional)* If you are invited for an interview, you will be required to provide a writing sample.

*(Optional)* If you are invited for an interview, you will be asked to bring a copy of your most recent performance appraisal.

Education, if applicable:

### **How You Will Be Evaluated:**

We will review your resume, optional cover letter and supporting documentation to determine if you meet the minimum qualifications for the position. If you meet the minimum qualifications stated in the vacancy announcement, we will compare your resume, optional cover letter and supporting documentation to your responses on the scored occupational questionnaire (True/False, Yes/ No, Multiple Choice questions) and place you in one of three pre-defined categories. These categories are “gold,” “silver,” and “bronze.” However, your resume and/or optional cover letter must support your responses to the scored occupational questionnaire, or your score may be lowered. Candidates placed in the “gold” category will be identified for referral to the hiring manager and may be invited for an interview.

How you will be evaluated for preference eligibility: Within each category, those entitled to veterans’ preference will be listed at the top of the pre-defined category for which they are placed. Preference eligibles with a service-connected disability of 10% or more will be listed at the top of the highest quality category (gold) depending on the position and grade level of the job.

The scored occupational questionnaire will evaluate you on the following competencies; please do not provide a separate written response:

*(Insert competencies)*

For more information on category rating, please go to:

[http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/prod01\\_009474.pdf](http://hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/prod01_009474.pdf)

### **How to Apply:**

Your complete application, including required documents, must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on the closing date of this announcement.

To apply on-line, you must complete and submit an application by accessing the USAJOBS website at <http://www.usajobs.gov/>. To begin, click the Apply Online button near the bottom of this screen and follow the prompts to register into your USAJOBS account, answer the questions, and submit all required documents.

## Generic DEU Template – Category Rating

To return to your saved application, log in to your USAJOBS account at <http://www.usajobs.gov/> and click on “Application Status.” Click on the position title, and then select Apply Online to continue.

If you have problems completing your on-line application, including problems submitting your supporting documents, please contact the Help Desk by e-mail at [mgshehelp@monster.com](mailto:mgshehelp@monster.com) or by phone at 866.656.6831. The help desk is available Monday–Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET.

For instructions on submitting your application in another format, please contact:

*(Insert HR Practitioner contact information)*

### **Required Documents:**

A complete application consists of the following:

- **Resume showing relevant experience; cover letter optional.** Your resume must indicate your citizenship and if you are registered for Selective Service if you are a male born after 12/31/59. Your resume should also list your educational and work experience including the dates (mm/dd/yy) of each employment along with the number of hours worked per week. Your resume may be used to validate your responses to the assessment tool(s).
- **Veterans’ Preference documentation.** Please indicate on your resume the type of veterans’ preference you are claiming and provide the appropriate supporting documentation (DD-214 stating disposition of discharge or character of service, VA letter, SF-15, etc.) to validate your claim. For more information regarding eligibility requirements, please go to: <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx>
- **Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) documentation**, if applicable (see other information).
- **Education.** If this position requires proof of higher education, you must submit an unofficial transcript or a list of courses that includes the following information: name of accredited institution, grades earned, completion dates, and quarter and semester hours earned. Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet the requirements. Please refer to <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/policy/ApplicationOfStds-04.asp> for more information.

You are not required to submit official documents at this time; copies are sufficient.

Special Instructions for Foreign Education: Qualifying education from colleges and universities in foreign countries must be evaluated in terms of equivalency to that acquired in U.S. colleges and universities. Applicants educated in whole or in part in foreign countries must submit sufficient evidence, including transcripts, to an accredited private organization for an equivalency evaluation of course work and degree. A listing of these accredited organizations can be found on the Department of Education's website - <http://www.ed.gov/international/usnei/us/workrecog.doc>. You must provide a copy of the letter containing the results of the equivalency evaluation with a course by course listing along with your application. Failure to provide such documentation when requested will result in lost consideration.

*(Insert any additional required documents needed)*

### **Benefits:**

*(Insert agency name)* offers a comprehensive benefits package. Explore the benefits offered to most Federal employees at <http://www.usajobs.gov/EI/benefits.asp#icc>.

*(Insert any additional benefits)*



## Generic DEU Template – Category Rating

### **Other Information:**

ICTAP candidates will be eligible if it is determined that they have exceeded the minimum qualifications for the position by attaining at least a rating of 85 out of 100. Information about ICTAP eligibility is on the Office of Personnel Management's Career Transition Resources website at: <http://www.opm.gov/ctap>

ICTAP applicants MUST submit the following documents:

1. A copy of your RIF separation notice, notice of proposed removal for failure to relocate, notice of disability annuity termination, or certification from the National Guard Bureau or Military Department that you are eligible for disability retirement.
2. A copy of your SF-50 "Notification of Personnel Action", documenting your RIF separation, noting your positions, grade level, and duty location, and/or Agency certification of inability to place you through ROL, etc.;
3. A copy of your latest performance appraisal including your rating; and
4. Any documentation from your agency that shows your current promotion potential.

*(Insert any additional agency-specific information here)*

The following links provide information on how you may be eligible for various hiring authorities:

- [VRA](#)
- [VEOA](#)
- [30% or more disabled veteran](#)
- [Persons with disabilities](#)
- [CTAP](#)
- [ICTAP](#)

### **What to Expect Next:**

You will be notified of your application status through USAJOBS at four points during the hiring process, as applicable. You can check the status of your application by accessing the USAJOBS website at <http://usajobs.gov/> and clicking on "Track Your Online Application." The four points of notification are:

1. Application Received or Application Incomplete;
2. Minimum Qualification Requirement Met or Minimum Qualification Requirement Not Met;
3. Eligible (Application Referred to the Selecting Official) or Eligible (Application Not Referred to the Selecting Official); and
4. Selected or Not Selected

By submitting your application, you are certifying the accuracy of the information contained in your application. If you make a false statement in any part of your application, you may not be hired; you may be terminated after you begin work; or, you may be fined or jailed. After making a tentative job offer, we will conduct a suitability/security background investigation.

You will be required to submit official documentation prior to appointment. The agency will then verify the information provided on your application (i.e., degree, veterans' preference, disability, etc.).

# Generic Merit Template



**AGENCY:**

**JOB ANNOUNCEMENT NUMBER:**

**JOB TITLE:**

**SALARY RANGE:**

**OPEN PERIOD:**

**SERIES/GRADE/BAND:**

**POSITION INFORMATION:** *(type of appointment, number of vacancies, and promotion potential, if any)*

**LOCATIONS:**

**WHO MAY BE CONSIDERED:**

- Current Federal employees serving under a career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service;
- Former Federal employees with reinstatement eligibility;
- CTAP/ICTAP eligibles;
- Applicants eligible under special hiring authorities;
- Veterans who are preference eligible, or separated from the U.S. Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 3 years or more of continuous active service, may apply under the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act (VEOA). *(If recruiting for a limited time or excepted service position, eliminate the VEOA statement)*

## **Marketing Statement:**

*(Insert bureau logo, optional)*

*Insert bureau's branding/marketing/mission information – highlight the reasons an applicant would want to work in this department.*

## **Job Summary:**

*Insert general information about the position and how it relates to the Department.*

- A one-year probationary period may be required.

## **Key Requirements:**

- U.S. citizen
- Suitable for Federal employment
- Registered for Selective Service if applicable ([www.sss.gov](http://www.sss.gov))
- Time-in-grade requirements must be met

## Generic Merit Template

*Insert additional items as necessary, such as physical requirements, travel requirements, minimum/maximum entry age, etc.*

### **Major Duties:**

*List specific job responsibilities in a clear and concise manner.*

*The individual selected for this position will...*

- X
- X
- X

### **Qualifications Required:**

#### General/Specialized Experience:

*Include competencies and selective placement factors for each grade level.*

*(Optional)* If you are invited for an interview, you will be required to provide a writing sample.

*(Optional)* If you are invited for an interview, you will be asked to bring a copy of your most recent performance appraisal.

#### Education, if applicable:

### **How You Will Be Evaluated:**

We will review your resume, optional cover letter and supporting documentation to determine if you meet the minimum qualifications for the position. If you meet the minimum qualifications stated in the vacancy announcement, we will compare your resume, optional cover letter and supporting documentation to your responses on the scored occupational questionnaire (True/False, Yes/No, Multiple Choice questions). However, your resume or optional cover letter must support your responses to the scored occupational questionnaire, or your score may be lowered. Candidates in the "gold" category will be identified for referral to the hiring manager and may be invited for an interview.

The scored occupational questionnaire will evaluate you on the following competencies; please do not provide a separate written response:

### **How to Apply:**

Your complete application, including required documents, must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on the closing date of this announcement.

To apply on-line, you must complete and submit an application by accessing the USAJOBS website at <http://www.usajobs.gov/>. To begin, click the Apply Online button near the bottom of this screen and follow the prompts to register into your USAJOBS account, answer the questions, and submit all required documents.

To return to your saved application, log in to your USAJOBS account at <http://www.usajobs.gov/> and click on "Application Status." Click on the position title, and then select Apply Online to continue.

If you have problems completing your on-line application, including problems submitting your supporting documents, please contact the Help Desk by e-mail at [mgs-help@monster.com](mailto:mgs-help@monster.com) or by phone at 866.656.6831.

## Generic Merit Template

The help desk is available Monday–Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. ET.

For instructions on submitting your application in another format please contact:

*(Insert HR Practitioner contact information)*

### **Required Documents:**

A complete application consists of the following:

- **Resume showing relevant experience; cover letter optional.** Your resume must indicate your citizenship and if you are registered for Selective Service if you are a male born after 12/31/59. Your resume should also list your educational and work experience including the dates (mm/dd/yy) of each employment along with the number of hours worked per week. For work in the Federal service, please include the grade level for the position(s). Your resume may be used to validate your responses to the assessment tool(s).
- **SF-50, “Notification of Personnel Action,”** supporting your eligibility.
- **Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) documentation,** if applicable. For more information, please go to <http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp#6>.
- **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) documentation,** if applicable (see other information).
- **Education.** If this position requires proof of higher education, you must submit an unofficial transcript or a list of courses that includes the following information: name of accredited institution, grades earned, completion dates, and quarter and semester hours earned. Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet the requirements. Please refer to <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/policy/ApplicationOfStds-04.asp> for more information.
- **Documentation supporting eligibility for non-competitive appointment,** (severely disabled, eligible veterans, certain military spouses, etc.)

You are not required to submit official documents at this time; copies are sufficient.

Special Instructions for Foreign Education: Qualifying education from colleges and universities in foreign countries must be evaluated in terms of equivalency to that acquired in U.S. colleges and universities. Applicants educated in whole or in part in foreign countries must submit sufficient evidence, including transcripts, to an accredited private organization for an equivalency evaluation of course work and degree. A listing of these accredited organizations can be found on the Department of Education's website - <http://www.ed.gov/international/usnei/us/workrecog.doc>. You must provide a copy of the letter containing the results of the equivalency evaluation with a course by course listing along with your application. Failure to provide such documentation when requested will result in lost consideration.

### **Benefits:**

*(Insert agency name)* offers a comprehensive benefits package. Explore the benefits offered to most Federal employees at <http://www.usajobs.gov/EI/benefits.asp#icc>.

*(Insert any additional benefits)*

## Generic Merit Template

### **Other Information:**

CTAP candidates will be eligible if it is determined that they have exceeded the minimum qualifications for the position by attaining at least a rating of 85 out of 100. Information about CTAP eligibility is on the Office of Personnel Management's Career Transition Resources website at: <http://www.opm.gov/ctap>.

CTAP applicants MUST submit the following documents:

1. A copy of your RIF separation notice; notice of proposed removal for failure to relocate; a Certificate of Expected Separation (CES); or certification that you are in a surplus organization or occupation (this could be a position abolishment letter, a notice of eligibility for discontinued service retirement, or similar notice).
2. A copy of your SF-50 "Notification of Personnel Action", noting current position, grade level, and duty location;
3. A copy of your latest performance appraisal including your rating; and
4. Any documentation from your agency that shows your current promotion potential.

*(When the area of consideration includes applicants from outside of the Department's workforce)*

ICTAP applicants MUST submit the following documents:

1. A copy of your RIF separation notice; notice of proposed removal for failure to relocate; notice of disability annuity termination; certification from your former agency that it cannot place you after your recovery from a compensable injury; or certification from the National Guard Bureau or Military Department that you are eligible for disability retirement.
2. A copy of your SF-50 "Notification of Personnel Action", documenting your RIF separation, noting your positions, grade level, and duty location, and/or Agency certification of inability to place you through RPL, etc.;
3. A copy of your latest performance appraisal including your rating; and
4. Any documentation from your agency that shows your current promotion potential.

*(Insert any additional agency-specific information here)*

### **What to Expect Next:**

You will be notified of your application status through USAJOBS at four points during the hiring process, as applicable. You can check the status of your application by accessing the USAJOBS website at <http://usajobs.gov/> and clicking on "Track Your Online Application." The four points of notification are:

1. Application Received or Application Incomplete;
2. Minimum Qualification Requirement Met or Minimum Qualification Requirement Not Met;
3. Eligible (Application Referred to the Selecting Official) or Eligible (Application Not Referred to the Selecting Official); and
4. Selected or Not Selected

By submitting your application, you are certifying the accuracy of the information contained in your application. If you make a false statement in any part of your application, you may not be hired; you may be terminated after you begin work; or, you may be fined or jailed. After making a tentative job offer, we will conduct a suitability/security background investigation.

You will be required to submit official documentation prior to appointment. The agency will then verify the information provided on your application (i.e., degree, veterans' preference, disability, etc.).