



Department of  
Veterans Affairs

*A Guide for VA managers and supervisors  
to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse,  
high-performing workforce to best  
serve our Nation's Veterans*

# Recruitment & Selection

## Best Practices Guide

*Avoiding  
Equal Employment Opportunity  
Pitfalls To Create A Diverse Workforce*

April 2010







## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Diversity and Inclusion  
Washington DC 20420

Dear Colleagues:

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) is proud to present the *Recruitment and Selection Best Practices Guide—Avoiding EEO Pitfalls to Create a Diverse Workforce*. The Guide, developed with the assistance of key stakeholders, is designed to provide hiring officials, managers and supervisors with effective best practices to ensure VA is a fair, diverse, and high-performing organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

This Guide provides VA hiring officials, managers and supervisors with best practices for conducting a fair recruitment and selection process consistent with equal employment opportunity (EEO) principles. It offers practical tips, checklists, and related resources for your reference as you conduct your recruitment and selection processes. It also identifies common EEO pitfalls and recommended strategies for avoiding them to ensure equity in hiring practices in order to maintain a diverse and inclusive workforce. The Guide is offered as recommended guidance only and should not be construed as regulation or required procedure. For an electronic copy, please visit <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/Recruitment.pdf>.

ODI would like to thank the numerous colleagues and stakeholders for their invaluable contributions to this Guide. This document would not be as rich in information if it were not for the outstanding input from several entities, including Office of General Counsel, Office of Resolution Management, various VA Human Resources offices, Veterans Employment Coordination Service and the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication.

We hope this Guide serves as a valuable tool to assist you in eliminating barriers to equal opportunity in the hiring process so that VA remains a fair, diverse, and inclusive workplace. If you have any questions about this Guide, please contact Tinisha Agramonte, Director, Outreach and Retention, ODI, at (202) 461-4030 or via e-mail at [Tinisha.Agramonte@va.gov](mailto:Tinisha.Agramonte@va.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georgia Coffey".

Georgia Coffey  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for  
Diversity and Inclusion



*This guide is not to be construed as policy or providing legal advice  
or to be cited as legal authority.*

*The contents herein are solely intended as general best practices  
and, therefore, are limited in content and scope.  
You should contact the appropriate designated personnel within your  
organization for advice and/or guidance regarding any specific situation.*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Guide is the result of true collaboration with VA stakeholder organizations. It would not be as rich in information if it were not for the outstanding input from several entities, including Office of General Counsel, Office of Resolution Management, various VA Human Resources offices, Veterans Employment Coordination Service and the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication. ODI thanks you for your invaluable contributions, time, and expertise.





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## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to fostering a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment free from unlawful employment discrimination and without barriers to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) has developed this *Recruitment and Selection Best Practices Guide—Avoiding EEO Pitfalls To Create A Diverse Workforce*, with the assistance of key stakeholders, to assist managers and supervisors with ensuring there are no barriers to EEO in the recruitment and selection process, in order to best serve our Nation's Veterans.

This guide lists key EEO pitfalls and provides practical EEO information and strategies for avoiding them. It is designed to provide best practices for conducting a fair hiring process that ensures equity in internal placement actions and external hiring practices. The hiring process includes any measures, practices, policies, and procedures used to arrive at a hiring or promotional decision, including but not limited to recruitment, interviewing, rating and ranking candidates, and final selection.

Our vision is to help VA become an employer of choice and a leader in the Federal community in the area of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Ensuring EEO in the workforce recruitment and selection process is a cornerstone of Federal human capital management and is essential to recruiting, developing, and retaining a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that provides high-quality service to Veterans and their families.

We hope this guide provides hiring managers and supervisors with effective practices to ensure VA remains a fair, diverse, and high-performing organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If you have any questions about this guide, please contact ODI at (202) 461-4131 or [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

## TIPS FOR USING THIS GUIDE

This document is structured to guide hiring officials, managers and supervisors through the selection process and offers tips, checklists, best practices, and relevant information concerning this process. It addresses each of the main steps involved in the selection process: job analysis, outreach and recruitment, the interview process, and the selection decision.

Please note that throughout the hiring process, hiring officials, managers and supervisors should consult the requirements of all applicable laws, Union contracts and merit promotion principles to ensure compliance.

### VA'S COMMITMENT TO EEO AND DIVERSITY

VA is committed to ensuring EEO, promoting diversity and inclusion, and resolving workplace conflict constructively in order to maintain a high-performing workforce in service to our Nation's Veterans. As our Nation and our Department face unprecedented challenges and opportunities, never has it been more important that we reaffirm our pledge to protect and empower our most valuable asset—our employees. The Department will vigorously enforce all applicable Federal EEO laws, regulations, Executive Orders, Management Directives and applicable policies to ensure equal employment opportunity in the workplace and full protection of all VA employees.<sup>1</sup>

VA's EEO program is committed to ensuring that all employees and applicants for employment have equality of opportunity in the Federal workplace. Specifically, the policy of VA is to:

- (1) Provide equal opportunity in employment for all qualified persons.
- (2) Allow program accessibility so that employees can fully apply all of their talents in carrying out VA's mission.
- (3) Prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, national origin, gender, age, color, religion, disability, sexual orientation<sup>2</sup>, parental status, or reprisal for engaging in protected activity.
- (4) Maintain a work environment that is free of harassment or reprisal for engaging in protected activity.
- (5) Promote a positive, continuing affirmative employment program designated to eradicate barriers to employment.
- (6) Eliminate barriers to full participation of the Nation's workforce.
- (7) Manage the diversity of the work environment by improving communication and the acceptance of individual difference, and by removing institutional and attitudinal barriers that inhibit individuals from advancing as far as their talents will take them.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policies — February 27, 2009  
[http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/09EEO\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/09EEO_Policy.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Discrimination based on sexual orientation is not covered under Title VII; it is prohibited by way of Executive Order (E.O.13087) and under VA's EEO, Diversity, No FEAR Policies — February 27, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity Directive, Directive 5975. [http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/policies/Directive\\_5975.pdf](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/policies/Directive_5975.pdf).

# VACO EEO, DIVERSITY, AND HR RESOURCES

### **Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI)**

The mission of ODI is to foster a diverse and inclusive work environment that ensures equal employment opportunity through Departmental policy development, workforce analysis, outreach, retention, and education to best serve our Nation's Veterans. ODI advises and supports the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration in workforce diversity issues. The office also supports the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretaries, and Assistant Secretaries in their actions to achieve and sustain a diverse workforce. Web site: <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/index.asp>.

### **Office of Resolution Management (ORM)**

The mission of ORM is to promote a discrimination-free work environment focused on serving Veterans by preventing, resolving, and processing workplace disputes in a timely and high quality manner. Web site: <http://www4.va.gov/orm/>.

### **Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication (OEDCA)**

OEDCA is an independent VA component, created by Congress in 1997, that issues objective, timely and high quality final agency decisions and orders adjudicating employment discrimination claims filed by VA employees and applicants for employment. Web site: <http://www.oedca.va.gov>.

### **Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM)**

OHRM provides policies, programs, automated systems, toolboxes, and other best practice resources in the areas of benefits-worklife, classification, compensation, employee relations, human capital development, staffing, and workforce planning, to enable VA to attract, develop, and retain the people who provide quality services to Veterans.

Web site: <http://vaww1.va.gov/ohrm/index.htm>.

### **Veterans Employment Coordination Service (VECS)**

VECS was established in OHRM to advance efforts to attract, recruit, and hire Veterans into VA, particularly severely injured Veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Web site: <http://www4.va.gov/vecs/>.

### **Office of General Counsel (OGC)**

The mission of OGC is to identify and meet the legal needs of VA. Its primary objective is to ensure the just and faithful execution of the laws, regulations, and policies that the Secretary has responsibility for administering, and by so doing enable the Department to accomplish its mission of service to our Nation's Veterans. Web site: <http://www4.va.gov/OGC/>.

### EEO LAWS

All personnel actions must comply with Federal EEO laws, Merit Systems Principles, the foundation of the Civil Service, and not constitute a Prohibited Personnel Practice.

#### *Federal Laws That Prohibit Workplace Discrimination*

The following laws are enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC):

- Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The law also protects individuals from retaliation if they complain about discrimination or participate in the EEO process.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/titlevii.cfm>.
- The Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which amended Title VII to make it illegal to discriminate against a woman because of pregnancy, childbirth, or a medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/pregnancy.cfm>.
- The Equal Pay Act of 1963, which makes it illegal to pay different wages to men and women if they perform equal work in the same workplace. The law also protects individuals from retaliation if they complain about discrimination or participate in the EEO process.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/epa.cfm>.
- Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person with a disability in private companies and state and local governments. The law also protects individuals from retaliation if they complain about discrimination or participate in the EEO process.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/ada.cfm>.
- Sections 501 and 505 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which makes it illegal to discriminate against a person with a disability in the Federal Government. The law also protects individuals from retaliation if they complain about discrimination or participate in the EEO process.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/rehab.cfm>.
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), which protects people who are age 40 or older from discrimination because of age. The law also protects them from retaliation if they complain about age discrimination or participate in the EEO process.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/adea.cfm>.

- The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA), prohibits the improper use of genetic information in health insurance and employment; bars employers from using individuals' genetic information when making a hiring, firing, job placement, or promotion decision.  
Web site: <http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/gina.cfm>.

The following workplace laws are enforced by other Federal agencies:

- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), protects the job rights of individuals who voluntarily or involuntarily leave employment positions to undertake military service or certain types of service in the National Disaster Medical System. USERRA also prohibits employers from discrimination against past and present members of the uniformed services, and applicants to the uniformed services.  
Web site: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/main.htm>.
- The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA), makes it illegal to discriminate against a federal employee or job applicant on the bases of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. The CSRA also prohibits discrimination on the bases of certain other factors that don't adversely affect employee performance, such as marital status, political association, and sexual orientation. The CSRA makes it illegal to fire, demote, or otherwise "retaliate" against a federal employee or job applicant for whistle-blowing or for exercising the right to file a complaint, grievance, or an appeal.

The Office of Special Counsel and the Merit Systems Protection Board enforce the CSRA. For more information, contact the Office of Personnel Management at (202) 653-7188 or visit <http://www.opm.gov/>.

### MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

The Merit System Principles listed below are adapted from the statutory language that appears in section 2301(b) of Title 5, United States Code.

- Recruit qualified individuals from all segments of society and select and advance employees on the basis of merit after fair and open competition.
- Treat employees and applicants fairly and equitably, without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or disability condition.
- Provide equal pay for equal work and reward excellent performance.
- Maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
- Manage employees efficiently and effectively.
- Retain or separate employees on the basis of their performance.
- Educate and train employees when it will result in better organizational or individual performance.
- Protect employees from improper political influence.
- Protect employees against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information in "whistleblower" situations (i.e., protect people who report illegal and/or wasteful activities).

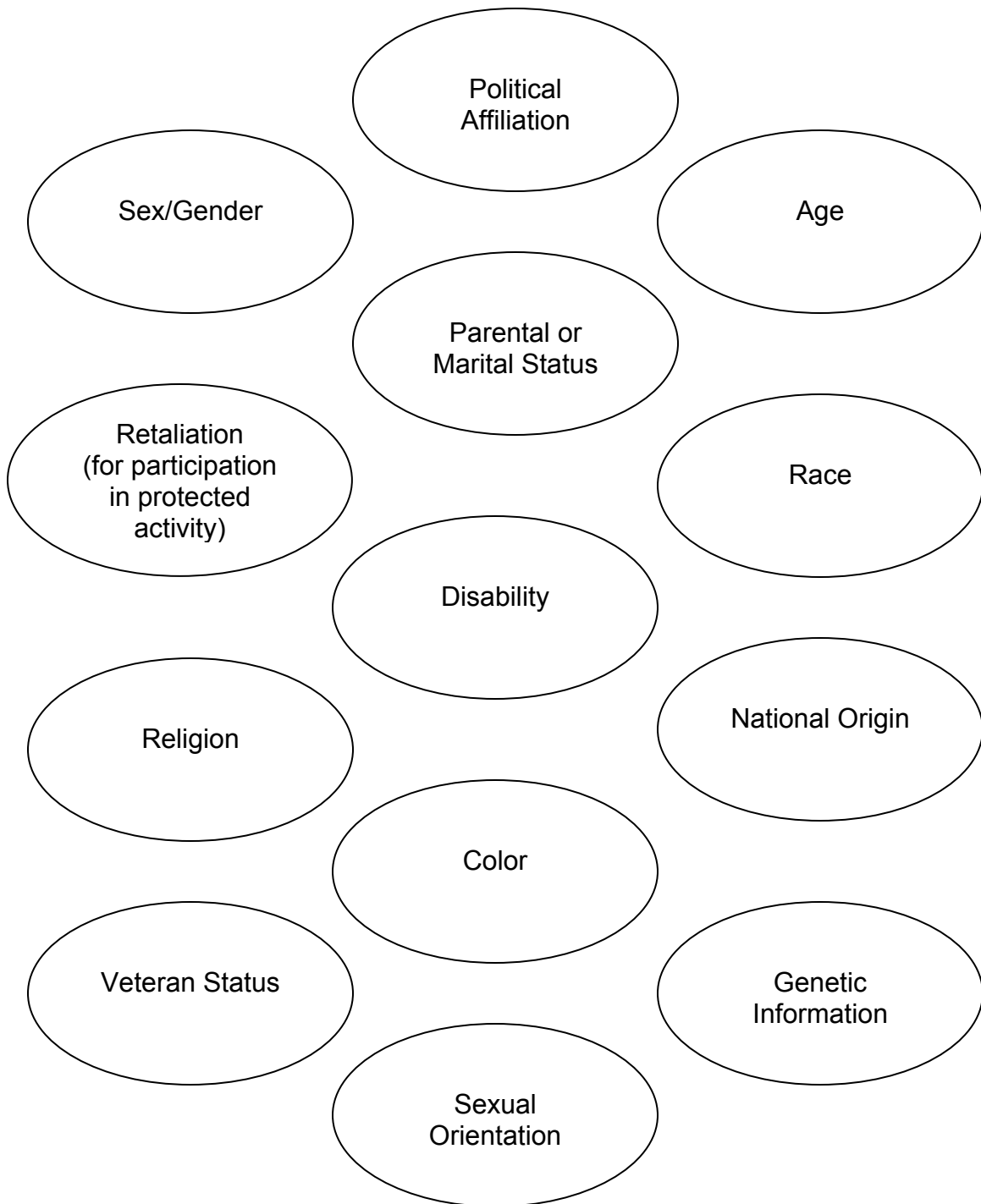


### PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES

The prohibited personnel practices listed below are adapted from the statutory language that appears in section 2302(b) of Title 5, United States Code. It is a prohibited personnel practice to:

- Discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or political affiliation.
- Solicit or consider employment recommendations based on factors other than personal knowledge or records of job-related abilities or characteristics.
- Coerce an employee's political activity.
- Deceive a person or otherwise obstruct his or her right to compete for employment.
- Influence any person to withdraw from competition for a position to improve or injure the employment prospects of any other person.
- Give unauthorized preference or advantage to any person to improve or injure the employment prospects of any particular employee or applicant.
- Engage in nepotism (i.e., hire, promote, or advocate the hiring or promotion of relatives).
- Retaliate against whistleblowers, whether an employee or an applicant.
- Retaliate against employees or applicants who exercise their appeal rights, testify or cooperate with an Inspector General or the Special Counsel, or refuse to break a law.
- Discriminate based on personal conduct that is not adverse to on-the-job performance of the employee, applicant, or others.
- Violate Veterans' preference requirements.
- Violate any law, rule, or regulation which implements or directly concerns the merit principles.

## PROTECTED CATEGORIES



Hiring Officials must be mindful of the above listed categories regarding EEO and other protected categories throughout the selection process to ensure equal employment consideration is given to all applicants.

## JOB ANALYSIS

A job analysis sets the foundation for outreach, recruitment, and selection actions and should be the first step in the recruitment process. It is a systematic procedure for gathering, documenting, and analyzing information about the content, context, and requirements of the job to identify the essential functions of the position and the necessary competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required. With the assistance of human resources (HR) and subject matter experts (SMEs), managers and supervisors are required to perform a complete job analysis, identifying the critical duties, functions, and intended outcomes of the position. This information is critical for several reasons: 1) it leads to an accurate vacancy announcement, which will yield a list of candidates with the required qualifications; 2) it assists outreach efforts; and 3) it aids the development of interview and selection documents. Note: Consult job analysis requirements of applicable Union contracts.

**Job Analysis EEO Pitfall:** Job analysis is not conducted prior to issuing a vacancy announcement.

**Job Analysis Best Practice:** Perform a thorough job analysis under the guidance of HR, prior to issuing a vacancy announcement and periodically review it to ensure it is current before later vacancy announcements.

**EEO Implication #1:** This information will be critical for developing objective, job-related, structured interview questions and rating and ranking criteria. This will minimize the potential for considering biased, non-meritorious factors during the interview process.

**EEO Implication #2:** Additionally, in cases of reasonable accommodation requests, the deciding official for the request must review the essential functions of a position to determine if the individual can perform them, with or without an accommodation. If the assessment is accomplished after the request is made, versus before, and the individual is deemed unable to perform the duties, it may appear as if the manager deliberately identified essential functions that would render the individual as unqualified for that particular position.



# OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

Diversity is the cornerstone of effective human capital management in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In order to become a high performing organization in this millennium, VA must tap into the rich diversity of talent, skills, and perspectives of our increasingly global community. It is the policy of the executive branch to have a workforce that looks like the face of America drawn from all segments of society. To assist in this effort, hiring officials are encouraged to proactively engage in recruitment outreach to cast a wide net, including utilizing varied recruitment sources, and considering special hiring authorities/appointments and internship programs when filling positions. These recruitment and hiring options allow managers to expedite selections and streamline the hiring process.

### Targeted Outreach

Targeted Outreach, also referred to as Focused Outreach or Special Outreach, is a diversity management strategy that can be utilized to broaden standard outreach and recruitment efforts to attract qualified applicants from identified groups with low participation rates in VA's workforce.

As part of our efforts to establish and maintain effective affirmative programs of equal employment opportunity, in compliance with Section 717 of Title VII, and effective affirmative action programs, in compliance with Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, we want to make sure that we cast a wide net to reach, encourage, and include applicants who may not be reached through standard outreach and recruitment methods. The ultimate goal is to achieve a qualified, diverse applicant pool.

Targeted outreach strategies include advertising career opportunities in publications, media outlets, at job fairs or other events that serve minorities, women, and people with disabilities. Also, networking and partnering with internal and external customers, including, but not limited to: minority serving colleges and institutions; professional and community organizations; affinity groups; faith-based organizations; community centers; military transition programs; Veterans Employment Coordination Service; Center for Minority Veterans; and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment. For additional resources, please refer to the *Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention* guide contained in the appendix.

See *Appendix I: Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention* guide  
Web site: <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/guide.pdf>.

### Special Hiring Authorities/Appointments

- **Schedule "A"**. Schedule "A" is an appointing authority, or hiring authority. It is an Excepted Service appointment for persons with disabilities.

The regulations guiding the Excepted Service – Appointment of Persons with Disabilities, Career, and Career-Conditional Appointments – are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The citation is 5 CFR § 213.3102(u). These individuals may have a certification of job readiness issued by a VA vocational rehabilitation official or other State/Federal agency may certify disability and employability. Disabled Veterans may also be eligible for appointment under Schedule “A”. (See following paragraph regarding Disabled Veterans.)

- **Disabled Veterans.** Disabled Veterans enrolled in a VA vocational rehabilitation program and those with 30% or higher service connected disabilities have special appointment eligibility (and may also be eligible under the other Veterans hiring authorities listed below).
- **Please note** that Federal Agencies must comply with Executive Order 13163 that mandates “Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities to be Employed in the Federal Government.” Selecting officials are strongly encouraged to consider disabled Veterans or candidates under Schedule “A,” as well as the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)—an annual employment program consisting of qualified college students with disabilities. Accommodations may be obtained through programs such as DoD’s Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) at no cost to the hiring agency. For more information regarding reasonable accommodations consult with your Local Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator, EEO, or HR staff.
- **Veterans Preference.** Some Veterans seeking federal civilian employment are eligible based on their military service to receive consideration for selection before applicants not entitled to Veteran’s preference. Applicants must submit a DD-214 as proof of qualifying military service, and if separated, a letter from the appropriate branch of the armed services or VA. Web site: <http://www.opm.gov/staffingPortal/Vetguide.asp>.
- **Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) Authority.** Agencies have the authority to appoint Veterans in the excepted service under the VRA. This is a special authority under which agencies can appoint an eligible Veteran up through the GS-11 or equivalent grade level without competition. The candidate must meet specific eligibility requirements along with the applicable qualification requirements. The agency must convert the appointment to career or career-conditional after two years of satisfactory service (5 CFR part 307). Agencies may also hire VRA eligibles on temporary and term appointments (5 CFR Part 316).
- **Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA),** as amended. Veterans with three years military service and anyone eligible

### OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

for Veteran's preference may be appointed if determined to be among the best qualified candidates under merit promotion announcement open to applicants outside of VA (5 CFR 315.611).

Web site: <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/shav/index.aspx#veoa>.

- **Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP or Interagency CTAP).** Consult with HR for guidance.  
Web site: [http://www.opm.gov/rif/employee\\_guides/career\\_transition.asp](http://www.opm.gov/rif/employee_guides/career_transition.asp).
- **Direct-Hire.** This authority allows agencies with delegated examining authority to hire individuals without regard to sections 3309-3318 of Title 5, United States Code. Web site: [http://www.opm.gov/Strategic\\_Management\\_of\\_Human\\_Capital/fhfr/FLX\\_03010.asp](http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfr/FLX_03010.asp). Requests for direct-hire authority must be submitted by the agency's Chief Human Capital Officer (or equivalent) at the agency's headquarters level (5 CFR 337.201). Agency requests may be addressed to the Associate Director for Strategic Human Resources Policy. Agencies can expedite OPM processing by faxing the request to the Division for Strategic Human Resources Policy at (202) 606-2329.  
*Note: VA Central Office has no direct hire authority.*

### Internship Programs

Internship programs are the means by which VA can recruit, train, and develop talent to fill important VA roles. Internship programs can provide both short and long-term benefits to students and employers. Many of these programs can also help VA meet its goal of hiring a workforce that is diverse and culturally represented.

- **Nontraditional Internships:** These programs target groups that have been historically underrepresented in the Federal workforce. VA has partnered with several nonprofit organizations that are committed to educating students on the importance of career choices, academic studies, and public service. These organizations include the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education on behalf of Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Washington Internships for Native Students, The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars, Workforce Recruitment Program, and the International Leadership Foundation for Asian American Pacific Islanders. For an updated list of these programs please visit ODI's Web site. Web site: <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/spi/internships.htm>.
- **Student Educational Employment Program:** This program provides the authority to appoint students in the excepted service under the Student Educational Employment Program. There are two components to this

program: the (1) Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and (2) Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). These are special authorities under which agencies can appoint students who are enrolled or have been accepted for enrollment in at least a part-time schedule at an accredited institution. Appointment in the STEP program is not to exceed one year and may not be converted to a term or permanent position; however, they may be converted to a SCEP appointment. Individuals in the SCEP program may be non-competitively converted to term or career/career-conditional appointments within 120 days of academic requirement completion. Students hired under SCEP may be granted tuition assistance by the hiring agency. (5 CFR 213.3202).

Web site: <http://www.opm.gov/employ/students/intro.asp>.

- *Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP)*: This program helps agencies recruit and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of occupations. It was created under Executive Order 13162 and is for positions at grade levels GS-5, 7, and 9 or other trainee positions. In general, individuals are appointed to a 2-year internship. Upon successful completion of the internships, the interns may be eligible for permanent placement within an agency (5 CFR 213.3202(o)). Web site: <http://www.opm.gov/careerintern/>.
  - *Technical Career Field (TCF)*: This VHA intern program recruits journeyman-level staff from colleges and universities to fill vacancies in technical career fields where current and future shortages are expected. Each intern is placed with an experienced preceptor in a VHA facility. Within VHA, the FCIP authority is used for the TCF.
- *Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program*: A forerunner of the current program was originally established by Executive Order in 1977 and revised in 2003. Outstanding graduate students (Master's and doctoral-level) from a wide variety of academic disciplines who have an interest in, and commitment to, a career in the analysis and management of public policies and programs are attracted to Federal service by this program. PMF may be appointed at the GS-9, 11, or 12 level (or equivalent) (Executive Orders 12364 and 13318, and 5 CFR part 362). Web site: <https://www.pmf.opm.gov/>.
- *VA Advanced Fellowships*: These post-residency fellowships—which number about 160 to 200 per year—are awarded to licensed and board certified or board eligible physicians to undertake study in emerging health specialties of particular importance to VA (for example, spinal cord injuries).

For additional resources, please refer to the *Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention* guide contained in the appendix.

### OUTREACH AND RECRUITMENT

See Appendix I: *Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention*

Web site: <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/guide.pdf>.

**Recruitment EEO Pitfall:** Recruitment efforts fail to reach broad audiences, limiting the applicant pool.

**Recruitment Best Practice:** Announce job vacancies to broad and diverse recruitment sources; employ targeted outreach strategies to reach groups that have historically had a less than expected participation rate in VA's workforce; and utilize special hiring authorities and/or internship programs to fill vacancies.

**EEO Implication:** Promotes VA's efforts to be a model Equal Employment Opportunity employer of choice and to foster a diverse, inclusive workforce.





### CHECKLIST

- Perform a job analysis that identifies the major job duties and essential functions of the position
- Review, create, modify, or update a Position Description (PD) to accurately reflect duties and responsibilities of the position to be filled
- Develop the position crediting plan identifying the rating criteria
- Develop proactive, strategic outreach/recruitment plans to attract a diverse applicant pool, visit <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/index.asp>
- Consider utilizing Special Hiring Authorities, such as Schedule "A"; VRA; 30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans. Find out about the various rules regarding "selection priority" for qualified applicants who have Veterans Preference or who are covered by a Career Transition Assistance Plan or Reemployment Priority List. Ensure you clear these lists with HR
- Consider filling positions utilizing intern programs
- Consult the ODI's Web site for additional resources under Outreach and Retention, including Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention
- If the position is difficult to fill because of special skills requirements, utilize incentives to attract candidates, including travel for interview, relocation costs, recruitment and relocation bonuses or higher step in grade based on superior qualifications  
(See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/html/SQAFacts.asp>)
- Budget is a consideration; make sure funds are available and hiring Incentives are approved in advance
- Work closely with HR at all stages of the recruitment process to ensure that your needs and expectations are articulated accurately

*See Appendix A: Sample Job Analysis Worksheet (Summary)*

*See Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Action Plan Template*

*See Appendix F: Schedule "A" Frequently Asked Questions*

## THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Interviews provide information that can be used during the selection process. They can be especially useful in evaluating such skills as oral communication and interpersonal skills that are not otherwise easily measured in writing. The interview also provides an opportunity for a face-to-face information exchange, affording the applicant an opportunity to learn about the organization.

Managers reserve the right to interview or not interview when making a selection. However, if a manager chooses to interview some but not all candidates, or select without interviewing, they must perform a review of applications that is based on the job criteria to justify the decision. This is often referred to as the Best Qualified rating process. The selection process must give equal consideration to each candidate. Managers or selecting officials conducting the interview shall only ask job-related questions sufficient to elicit information to determine the candidate's qualifications. It is unlawful or violates an Executive Order to ask questions that probe race, national origin, sexual orientation<sup>4</sup>, religion, age, marital status, family situation, or disabilities. The interviewer may not ask about the health or medical condition of a candidate prior to offering him/her the position; or ask any question that might lead an interviewer to learn about any of the above protected groups. This may be interpreted as a violation of the candidate's rights. Managers must treat all individuals consistently the same. This is most easily accomplished by adopting a standardized assessment through a structured interview format and decision-making process.

**Interviewing EEO Pitfall:** Preparing interview questions after application materials are received and posing questions that elicit non job-related information.

**Interviewing Best Practice:** Prepare interview questions in advance that elicit ONLY job-related information relative to the KSAs of the position. The same questions should be asked of each candidate. However, follow-up questions may be used to obtain additional or clarifying information.

**EEO Implication:** Preparing interview questions after reviewing application packages may lead one to unconsciously construct and pose questions that give one candidate an advantage over another. Additionally, questions that elicit information related to protected categories may result in costly litigation and adversely impact VA's ability to attract diverse candidates.



<sup>4</sup>Discrimination based on sexual orientation is not covered under Title VII; it is prohibited by way of Executive Order (E.O. 13087) and under VA's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policies — February 27, 2009.

### AN EEO CASE

**Unless otherwise noted, all of the EEO Cases cited are ones involving VA.**

*The interviewer got it **WRONG**: posing illegal questions.*

The following case illustrates how improper questions can violate EEO laws. The complainant in this case, who was receiving VA benefits for some service-connected medical conditions involving his back, legs, and feet, had applied for a temporary clerical position. The interviewer, who was aware of the applicant's medical conditions, explained the physical conditions of the job and asked the applicant if he thought he was capable of performing those essential functions. The applicant responded "yes." That question is legal. Unfortunately, the interviewer did not stop at that question. He followed-up with, "What makes you think you can really do this job if you're drawing disability?" The EEOC concluded this was a technical violation of The Rehabilitation Act.

### PREPARATION TIPS

- The hiring official, manager, or supervisor may conduct the interview or may designate another person or a panel with subject-matter knowledge to conduct the initial interview. It is strongly recommended to incorporate diverse panel members when using interview panels;
- Managers, supervisors, and hiring officials must ensure the rating tool is based on an up-to-date job analysis and is supported by strong valid evidence;
- Before interviewing the candidate(s), the manager, supervisor, or hiring official should once again consider Special Hiring Authorities, including Schedule “A” and Veterans Preference;
- Ensure all persons involved in the selection process (e.g., administrators, interviewers, and assessors) understand their roles and responsibilities;
- Establish job-related criteria (using criteria reflected in the PD and vacancy announcement) for selecting best qualified candidates for interview off the Certificate of Eligibles;
- Prepare standardized, job-related interview questions and avoid questions that may elicit personal/family/medically-related responses;
- Establish an objective, quantifiable scoring or ranking process to identify best qualified candidates who advance within the process;
- Develop uniform note-taking formats related to standardized questions and distribute to panel members in advance of interviews; and
- Consider using performance based interview questions.

*Appendix C: Effective Interviewing Tips;*

*Appendix D: Lawful and Unlawful Interview Questions;*

*Appendix D-1: Sample Performance-Based Interview Questions;*

*Appendix D-2: Sample Interview Questions Rating Sheet;*

*Appendix D-3: Sample Interview Matrix;*

*Appendix D-4: Sample Interview Ranking Matrix;*

*Appendix D-5: Best Qualified Candidate Rating Worksheet; and*

*Appendix F: Schedule “A” Frequently Asked Questions*

### INTERVIEWING TIPS

- Allow a consistently designated amount of time for each interview;
- Rotate questions among panel members;
- Take appropriate, job-related notes during the interview (do not consider or notate factors unrelated to the job criteria);
- Treat individuals with respect, sensitivity, and impartiality during the process;
- Provide applicants the opportunity to ask questions about the job and the selection process;
- Provide feedback about all hiring decisions in a timely and courteous manner; and
- Record notes and scores on interview sheets as appropriate; it is also helpful to note the date, time, place, and length of the interview. A copy of interview questions and the name of individual(s) who conducted the interview must be on file. This information is very critical in the event that an EEO complaint is filed and such information is requested.

### INTERVIEW PANEL TIPS

If a panel is used, before referring candidates to the selecting official, the interview panel should:

- Review notes and convene to rank candidates in accordance with predetermined scoring process;
- The panel may use a scoring matrix identifying relative ratings of candidates based on rating criteria; and
- Forward the names of top-ranked candidates to the selecting official for interviews/selection.

### DOs AND DON'Ts

- **DO** write down notes as you listen to the candidate to remind you of what you perceived as a good, excellent or poor response, based upon the established criteria, skills, and qualities desired.
- **DON'T** write anything down that isn't pertinent to the discovery of how the candidate meets the desired criteria, skills and qualities. **DON'T** write any comments on the documents other than those required by the selection process, and submit any and all notes you made to be included with the official records that will be maintained, pursuant to the Privacy Act (P.L. 93-579, 5 USC 552a). This information is used to determine qualifications for employment, and is authorized under Title 5, USC, Section 3302 and 3361.
- **DO** be outgoing and honest. Treat all candidates with consideration and enthusiasm. Remember that the candidate is interviewing us as well as we are him/her. Smile!
- **DO** be aware of BIAS...we know that interview teams tend to select people who "are like them." Research shows that we try to avoid candidates who may demonstrate that they may ask us to stretch and grow. We tend to avoid people who don't look like us (i.e., socio-economic status, race, color, wearing a suit we don't like, having brightly colored nails, etc.).
- **DON'T** express your personal preferences to others during the selection process.
- **DON'T** share data about the candidates with those outside the selection process. Remember that most of the information shared while (or learned through) the interviewing process is confidential.
- **DON'T** be tempted to learn about an applicant's protected status while making conversation during "down time," such as after the interview, during a tour, or as you are greeting the applicant or saying good-bye.
- **DON'T** make a general assumption that individuals with disabilities will always require an accommodation.

### THE SELECTION DECISION: HIRING

The GOAL of a selection process is to find the best qualified candidate to do the job based on pre-established criteria, required KSAs, and desired qualifications.

#### **IMPORTANT NOTE CONCERNING EEO, DIVERSITY, WORKFORCE STATISTICS, and EMPLOYMENT DECISIONS:**

EEO means that all qualified individuals have fair access and equal consideration when competing for job opportunities, irrespective of race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation<sup>5</sup>, age, or disability. It is a key component for achieving workforce diversity, which is essential to a high performing organization.

It is unlawful or violates an Executive Order to make selection decisions based on protected categories such as race, gender, and ethnicity, even for the purpose of increasing workforce diversity. A 1995 Supreme Court ruling found that preferential treatment based on race almost always is unconstitutional, even when it is intended to benefit minority groups that suffered injustices in the past.

To achieve EEO and a diverse workforce, employers must proactively identify and eliminate barriers in recruitment and selection practices that tend to limit opportunities for groups or individuals for reasons unrelated to merit. Those barriers are typically identified through workforce analysis, which is useful for identifying employment anomalies which merit further review. While the numbers may indicate or even uncover a barrier, they should never play a role in ultimate employment decisions. Rather, they should prompt action to eradicate the practice or procedure to ensure equal and fair opportunities.

Lawful ways to achieve workforce diversity include advertising jobs broadly to diverse populations, casting a wide net and ensuring that selection criteria are job related and consistent with business necessity.

#### **One Exception—Bona Fide Occupational Qualification**

Bona Fide Occupational Qualification (BFOQ) is the rare, limited exception to the prohibition against discrimination in hiring and employing on the basis of gender, national origin and religion. A BFOQ, as outlined in Title VII, is only lawful “in those certain instances where religion, sex, or national origin is a BFOQ reasonably necessary to the normal operation of that particular business or enterprise. It is NEVER allowed for race-based hiring practices and must meet the stringent requirements set forth by Supreme Court cases, including multi-part tests that assess: 1) whether “all or substantially all’ in that group would be

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<sup>5</sup> Discrimination based on sexual orientation is not covered under Title VII; it is prohibited by way of Executive Order (E.O. 13087) and under VA's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policies — February 27, 2009.

### THE SELECTION DECISION: HIRING

unable to fulfill the requisite job duties; 2) whether the “essence of the business” operation would be undermined by not hiring members of one group exclusively; and 3) whether no other reasonable, less discriminatory alternative exists, especially in cases where privacy is at issue. The defenses for a BFOQ generally are only successful in three main contexts: privacy, safety, and authenticity.

**Selection EEO Pitfall:** Selecting a candidate based on non-meritorious factors and failing to establish and utilize an objective, job-related, quantifiable scoring or ranking process.

**Selection Best Practice:** Develop and utilize fair selection procedures, including objective, job-related interview questions; quantifiable rating and ranking processes; and consideration of ONLY meritorious factors.

**EEO Implication:** Illegal selection practices, such as considering non-meritorious factors (protected EEO categories), along with failing to develop and utilize specific and documented selection procedures, will most likely result in costly litigation and adversely impact VA’s ability to attract and retain diverse candidates.





## EEO CASES

*Selecting Official got it **WRONG**: considered non-meritorious factors for selection.*

- 1) EEOC found that a complainant was subjected to age discrimination when he was not selected for a position. VA chose a candidate under 40. The selecting officials' notes indicated that they liked the selectee's energy and that she was "young" and "flexible." Additionally, they testified that she was "from the younger generation" and could "speak with the talk of new Veterans." Also, they described the complainant as a "long term counselor," who would "probably not fit our mode." EEOC noted that the record was replete with references and stereotypes of age. Further, the EEOC rejected management's assertion that the selectee and other candidates possessed superior qualifications with regards to their "outreach skills and ability to relate to recent Veterans," when the record showed the complainant and selectee received almost identical scores for questions pertaining to those competencies.
- 2) EEOC found race and national origin discrimination in a case where an individual was not selected for a position because management had concerns about his communications skills and whether he could "hit the ground running to establish a compliance program." Management's assertion that the complainant did not have sufficient compliance experience and would require "extensive training" and that the agency needed to fill the position "right away" were deemed "implausible" by EEOC, given one of the selecting official's testimony that anyone hired would require continued training and evidence showed that it took almost a year before the position was re-advertised. As far as the communications skills, the complainant testified that selecting officials objected to the fact he is Chinese and speaks with an accent, and thus concluded he would not be able to communicate with his peers, in spite of the fact he had over 20 years of presenting research results and teaching.
- 3) VA's OEDCA issued a Final Agency Decision (FAD) finding discrimination when VA failed to hire the complainant because of the assertion that her disability presented a direct threat to herself and others. While employed with VA, the complainant's disability flared up and she took a disability retirement from VA. However, approximately a year later when her condition stabilized, she reapplied for the same position she previously held. She was tentatively selected for the position pending results of a pre-employment physical. The physical revealed the complainant had some limitations impacting her fingers and hands, her balance, coordination and ability to walk and that she may require the use of a scooter at times, may tire more easily, and may need more frequent rest breaks. As a result of the physical, the complainant's job offer was

### THE SELECTION DECISION: HIRING / EEO CASES

rescinded. The VA selecting officials argued that the complainant would be a “direct threat” to herself and others because she could fall and hurt herself and that patient safety would be impacted because she may not be “100%.” Based on case law, OEDCA concluded that the reasons proffered by VA that a complainant was a direct threat were insufficient because there was no showing that there was high likelihood that harm would occur to the complainant or to others if she was hired. Also, VA officials failed to conduct a thorough “direct threat” risk assessment, relying more on assumptions.

### THE SELECTION DECISION: REPRISAL

Discrimination based on reprisal is prohibited by EEO laws. Reprisal occurs when employees are treated differently because they are, or were, involved in a protected EEO activity; e.g., seeking or participating in EEO counseling, providing testimony in an EEO investigation or at an EEO hearing, filing a discrimination complaint, or speaking out against discriminatory activities. VA officials involved in the hiring process should not discuss or consider a candidate's prior EEO history.

### AN EEO CASE

*Selecting Official got it **WRONG**: reprised against the complainant for prior EEO activity.*

EEOC found reprisal because the selecting official and interview panel members were aware of the complainant's prior EEO activity and chose the selectee even though he had less experience with the agency than the complainant. One of the selecting officials testified that while the complainant and the selectee were equally qualified, he preferred the selectee because he was "better dressed." The EEOC found the agency witnesses were not "credible" and determined that the agency selecting officials did not want the most qualified candidate preferring the selectee because he had no history of prior EEO activity.

### MORE SELECTION BEST PRACTICES

#### **Reference Check:**

Prior to making a selection, the selecting official (or his/her designee) should perform reference checks on the top candidate(s). This is a critical part of the process. Remember that not acting quickly on a certificate of candidates may cause you to lose qualified candidates. If possible, make your selection decision within 30 days of receiving the list of candidates.

*Appendix G: Sample Reference Check Questions*

*Appendix H: Useful VA Web Resources*

#### **Selection Justification Memorandum:**

Once a selection is made, the selecting official (or his/her designee) should prepare a selection justification memorandum citing the rationale for the selection. This memorandum should be in accordance with VA's Merit Promotion Plan and summarize the job-related reasons that the selectee was chosen. In some cases where approval must be obtained from a higher authority before a selection decision is final; please consult HR for guidance in this area. The selection memorandum should cite evidence of the selectee's:

- Technical knowledge
- Experience
- Management or leadership experience, as appropriate
- Other job-related reasons justifying the selection

*Appendix E: Sample Selection Justification Memorandum*

### CLOSURE AND RECORDKEEPING

The hiring official should maintain all interview notes and documents related to the application and selection process in a secure, centralized location for two years, or until a case has been closed in the event of a challenge to the selection decision, whichever is later. Selection documentation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Vacancy Announcement (internal and external recruitment, if applicable);
- Position Description;
- Application material submitted by the top-rated candidates;
- Rating plan;
- Interview questions;
- Interview Matrix;
- Referral list;
- Ranking Matrix;
- Selection memorandum; and
- All notes provided by panelists (in the case of a panel).

### EEO CASES

*Selecting Official got it **RIGHT**: effectively documented the selection process and retained the records.*

The EEOC ruled in favor of the agency when the selecting official successfully defended his decision to hire the candidate by detailing the selection process, which included a three-person selection panel, individual ratings of the candidates' responses to a pool of questions, and scoring in various categories. The candidate selected had the highest scores in most categories justifying the selecting official's assertion that the candidate had superior qualifications.

*Selecting Official got it **WRONG**: Inability to produce documentation outlining a fair and objective selection process.*

- 1) EEOC found that the complainant was subjected to race discrimination when she was not referred for a position. The position required

### CLOSURE AND RECORDKEEPING / EEO CASES

completion of various educational coursework. Of the sixteen applicants for the position, two were referred as qualified. Complainant was informed that she failed to document four of the additional five education requirements for the position. While the agency stated that the two candidates who were referred met four of the five additional requirements, the record showed that the candidates met only two to three of the criteria. Further, neither the complainant nor the two referred candidates submitted information with their applications to clarify the courses listed on their transcripts, and the agency official who reviewed the applications did not testify at the hearing to explain any discrepancies in the application screening process. Thus, the commission concluded that the agency's articulated reason for the action was pretext for race discrimination.

- 2) EEOC found race and national origin discrimination when the complainant was not selected for a supervisory position with the Department of Agriculture. The evidence of record showed that the complainant appeared similar to or better qualified than the selectee. In addition, the selecting official made only vague statements as to why he made his selection. The Commission further noted that the records of the selection process were missing, and there was no reliable documentation explaining the method used by the selecting official to rank the applicants.

# RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION 18 KEY STEPS CHECKLIST

### Pre-recruitment

- 1. Work closely with HR at all stages of the recruitment process
- 2. Perform a job analysis that identifies the major job duties and essential functions of the position
- 3. Review, create, modify, and/or update a position description to accurately reflect duties and responsibilities of the position to be filled
- 4. Develop the position crediting plan identifying the rating criteria
- 5. Develop proactive, strategic outreach/recruitment plans to attract a diverse applicant pool (See Appendix I)
- 6. Consider or utilize Special Hiring Authorities, such as Schedule A; VRA; 30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans (See Appendix F)
- 7. Consider or fill position(s) using intern programs (See Appendix I)
- 8. Research the plausibility of using incentives to attract qualified candidates for difficult to fill position(s) because of special skills requirements (See <http://www.opm.gov/oca/pay/html/SQAFacts.asp>)

### Prior to vacancy announcement closing date

- 9. Prepare standardized, job-related interview questions - avoid questions that may elicit personal/family/medically-related responses (See Appendix D-1)
- 10. Establish an objective, quantifiable scoring or ranking process to identify best qualified candidates (See Appendix D-3)
- 11. Develop uniform note-taking formats related to standardized questions (See Appendix D-2, D-5)
- 12. Coordinate diverse panel to conduct interviews – advise them of their roles and expectations, and provide them with all required interview documents in advance of the interview

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION 18 KEY STEPS CHECKLIST

### **After receiving referral certificates**

- 13. Conduct interviews - (If the decision was made to not interview all candidates, ensure a Best Qualified rating process was conducted)
- 14. Based on predetermined rating criteria, panel members record applicants' scores on scoring matrix, rank them and provide to hiring official (See Appendix D-4)
- 15. Perform reference checks on the top ranked candidates(s) (See Appendix G)

### **After making a final selection**

- 16. Prepare a justification memorandum (See Appendix E)
- 17. Ensure all interview related material is collected and stored in a secure, centralized location
- 18. Provide name of potential selectee to HR for further action



### THE WAY AHEAD

In order to comply with our recruitment and hiring obligations, it is imperative that we create inclusive recruitment plans designed to broaden the applicant pools of qualified individuals and attract individuals from groups that have less than expected representation in VA. It is critical that we have and maintain accurate records that document these efforts.

Please consult with HR to ensure that the appropriate rules and procedures are correctly applied and that you have taken advantage of all hiring flexibilities available to you. The responsibility for complying with applicable laws and regulations regarding EEO is a shared responsibility of the hiring managers, supervisors and HR.

Managers, supervisors, and other hiring officials are strongly encouraged to devote some meeting time to brainstorming about possible sources for recruitment, to include national publications, regional publications, professional journals and newsletters, e-mail lists. We must cultivate, accommodate and advertise the broad range of opportunities and arrangements that will characterize Federal careers in the years to come. VA's workforce success will be achievable if managers throughout VA take a proactive, fair and EEO compliant approach in hiring qualified individuals, enabling all of us to accomplish the mission of caring for our Nation's Veterans and their families.

For more information, please visit ODI's Web site at <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov> or contact ODI at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).



## APPENDICES

Appendix A:	Sample Job Analysis Worksheet (Summary)
Appendix B:	Sample Recruitment Action Plan Template
Appendix C:	Effective Interviewing Tips
Appendix D:	Lawful and Unlawful Interview Questions
Appendix D-1:	Sample Performance-Based Interview Questions
Appendix D-2:	Sample Interview Questions Rating Sheet
Appendix D-3:	Sample Interview Matrix
Appendix D-4:	Sample Interview Ranking Matrix
Appendix D-5:	Sample Best Qualified Candidate Rating Worksheet
Appendix E:	Sample Selection Justification Memorandum
Appendix F:	Schedule “A” Frequently Asked Questions
Appendix G:	Sample Reference Check Questions
Appendix H:	Useful VA Web Resources
Appendix I:	Best Practices in Recruitment Outreach and Retention Guide



**SAMPLE JOB ANALYSIS WORKSHEET (SUMMARY)**

**DELEGATED EXAMINING UNIT**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION NAME: HUMAN RESOURCES ASSISTANT PD#12345A  
 PAY PLAN-SERIES-GRADE: GS-203-8  
 POSITION LOCATION: OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT  
 CENTRAL OFFICE HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICE

HR SPECIALIST'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 SME/NAME/PHONE#/TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Job Analysis Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Full Job Analysis Stored at: \_\_\_\_\_

The following table represents a summary of the job analysis conducted at your facility for the above position. Please fill in the appropriate boxes below and sign/date at the bottom. Include this worksheet with your completed SF39 recruitment package or directly to the DEU staff member assigned this position.

List the major duties (functions/activities)

<b>SELECTIVE PLACEMENT FACTOR or QUALITY RANKING FACTOR</b>	<b>RELATED REQUIREMENT IN JOB DESCRIPTION</b>
1. None	

Factors which comprise the job (usually four or five); for each major duty, list the most significant KSA(s) required to perform that work activity. Duplications or overlaps in the KSA(s) should be eliminated.

<b>KSA or JOB ELEMENT</b>	<b>RELATED DUTIES IN THE POSITION DESCRIPTION</b>
1. Knowledge of the regulations, principles, and procedures of recruitment, staffing, and placement practices in the Federal service and the interrelationship between various personnel programs (i.e., position classification, processing, and records management, etc.)	Performs work in support of a placement and recruitment function such as minimum qualifications determinations. Reviews applications/resumes to determine minimum qualifications requirements. Applies the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions in order to complete accurate personnel actions. Makes determination of a variety of recurring issues based on knowledge of the interrelationship of the nature of action, eligibility, departmental requirements, and prior or creditable service rules and regulations. Provides copies of the SF-75 information and other necessary documents to the E-Qip Program Assistant for appropriate action. Requests Official Personnel Records from the Record Center.

**APPENDIX A**

**SAMPLE JOB ANALYSIS WORKSHEET (SUMMARY)  
(Continued)**

<b>KSA or JOB ELEMENT</b>	<b>RELATED DUTIES IN THE POSITION DESCRIPTION</b>
2. Ability to research, analyze and evaluate human resources issues, problems, and related documents	Assists with the handling of complaints on qualification ratings and related merit promotion actions. Provides research for supporting documentation/precedents and analyzes the situation/problem. Resolves HR problems as they arise, and uses standard placement and staffing techniques needed to analyze and resolve problems.
3. Ability to meet and deal with others in performing human resources work	Provides managers and employees with information on the organization HR recruitment and placement policies, procedures, and guidelines for administrative and standard positions to include appropriate application procedures in both the competitive and excepted services. Provides the customer with consistent HR information according to established policies and procedures. Coordinates with other Federal HR and related offices for the exchange of information.
4. Ability to organize, prioritize, meet deadlines, coordinate multiple projects and manage time to accomplish assigned tasks	Codes all assigned Requests for Personnel Action, SF-52s. Closes promotion case files. Works with the HR staffing specialist for work that is outside of routine actions. Follows up with HR offices as needed to forward or receive information as quickly as possible.
5. Ability to perform HR work in the context of oral and written communication	<p>Responds to walk-in and call-in customers interested in obtaining employment. Provides advice on employment requirements and procedures. Identifies and explains the relevance of sources of information to customers. Consistently communicates and treats customers in a courteous, tactful, and respectful manner. Handles conflict and problems in dealing with customer constructively and appropriately.</p> <p>Develops and prepares vacancy announcements from templates of existing announcements for lower graded clerical positions. Prepares and types appointment letters. Prepares requests for SF-75 information.</p>

APPROVED BY (HR SPECIALIST): \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature/Date)

APPROVED BY (SME): \_\_\_\_\_ (Signature/Date)

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Action Item	Timeline	Target Date	Actual Date
Complete recruitment package, (i.e., SF-52 and classified PD, received in HR).			
<i>HR and hiring manager discuss staffing timeline. Should occur within 1 work-day of receipt of complete package.</i>			
Draft announcement issued to manager for review and approval.			
Approval received from manager to post vacancy announcement on USA JOBS.			
Announcement opens.			
Announcement closes.			
Applications reviewed by HR for minimum qualifications determination.			
Qualified applications rated and ranked by (circle one): HR Specialist, subject matter expert, or panel.			
Certificate issued to manager.			
Interviews conducted by manager.			
Certificate with selections received in HR.			
Job offer(s) made by HR and entrance on duty date determined. All other applicants are notified.			

## **APPENDIX C**

### **EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING TIPS**

#### **A Practical Guide for Hiring Officials**

Anyone with hiring authority within the Federal government should be aware of sound and effective interviewing techniques. The first step a hiring official must take is to develop an interview strategy. For your convenience attached is a quick reference guide on what you should keep in mind when hiring or promoting.

#### **Vacancy Announcement**

Before the interview itself, an integral part of the hiring process is the vacancy announcement. The vacancy announcement should only contain job-related criteria and no additional requirements that would exclude anyone for non-job-related reasons. For instance, women are still being asked about marital status and family planning, which are not viable criterion and ill-conceived limitations. Any such misperceived obstacles that do not fall within the realm of legitimate job requirements may discourage certain minority groups or persons with disabilities from applying, as well as raise the possibility that a discrimination complaint will be filed. It is important that hiring officials consult with Human Resources and make sure that they are working from an accurate and up-to-date position description.

#### **Interview Strategy**

The interview is an information-gathering process in which everyone on the interview panel should be aware of the position requirements, candidate profiles, and should be using the same criteria to evaluate all of the candidates. Ultimately, the interview process will help form a clear impression about the candidates, their abilities and aptitude for performing the job requirements, and their contribution to the organization. It would also be helpful to create a standard form for the interviewers to complete with their evaluations of each candidate's responses.

#### **Interview Style**

The interviewer/panel should formulate a set of standard questions, which are an amalgam of both controlled and predetermined inquiries that will give the interview structure as well as broader questions, which will allow a candidate wider latitude with his/her responses. In addition to the selecting official, there should also be a recommending panel of interviewers who will ensure that an objective selection decision is made.

#### **Preparation for the Interview**

The interviewer/panel should make sure that she/he has read all documents on the applicant, including current position description, cover letter, resume, writing samples, completed application and make notes based on the application package. The interview itself should be conducted in a business location free of interruptions.



**EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWING TIPS  
(Continued)**

In addition to putting together effective interview questions, the interviewer(s) may consider establishing a tone for the interviews by way of the seating arrangement as well as the actual setting where the interviews are held. Most importantly, however, the interviewer(s) (selection panel) should be consistent with the questions they ask to ensure integrity and uniformity in the selection process. Moreover, if a selection panel is used the same panel members should be present at each interview.

**During the Interview**

Regardless of what sort of approach the interviewer adopts, it is important to retain a measure of professionalism, cordiality and forthrightness to make the interview a success for both parties. Further, the interviewer may want to identify how his or her job relates to the position the interviewee is applying for. If the interviewer takes notes s/he may want to explain the reason for their note taking. The interviewer should explain the organization's structure, and keep questions consistent, clear, concise, and work-related. Lastly, the interviewer may only ask questions that are directly related to the knowledge, skills and abilities that are necessary to successfully perform the job and when taking notes on each candidate, the interviewer(s) should remember to limit their notes to job-related information.

**Avoid Discrimination**

Hiring officials should ask open-ended questions to obtain answers that will help determine the suitability of the applicant to a particular job. Further, hiring officials must be aware that Equal Employment Opportunity laws and regulations prohibit discrimination against applicants and employees on the bases of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation, physical and or mental disability, and retaliation. Any questions asked by hiring officials must be legal and formulated to obtain only job-related information. Personal opinions, biases, and/or prejudices must be kept out of the interview.

## APPENDIX D

### LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Subject of Question:	Lawful	Unlawful
Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether applicant has ever worked under a different name.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any questions about the origin of an applicant's current or previous name.</li> <li>The original name of an applicant whose name has been legally changed.</li> <li>The ethnic association of applicant's name.</li> <li>The applicant's maiden name.</li> </ul>
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If applicant is older than 18.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is your age?</li> <li>How old are you?</li> <li>What year did you graduate from high school?</li> <li>What is your date of birth?</li> <li>Requests for birth certificate</li> <li>Questions which tend to identify the age of an applicant over the age of 40.</li> </ul>
Residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's place of residence.</li> <li>Alternate contact information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous address.</li> <li>Birthplace of applicant's parents.</li> <li>How long have you lived at this address?</li> </ul>
Race or Color	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's race or color of skin.</li> <li>Applicant's complexion, height, weight, or life style.</li> </ul>
National Origin and Ancestry	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, parentage or nationality.</li> <li>Nationality of applicant's parents or spouse.</li> <li>Applicant's maiden name.</li> </ul>
Creed	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's religious affiliation.</li> <li>What holiday's applicant observes.</li> <li>What school(s) applicant attends or attended.</li> </ul>
Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether the applicant is a U.S. citizen or has current permit/visa to work in the U.S.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where were you born?</li> <li>Questions regarding the birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse or other relatives.</li> <li>Questions as to the nationality, lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent or parentage of applicant, applicant's spouse, parent or relative.</li> <li>Whether applicant is a citizen of a country other than the U.S.</li> <li>Date of U.S. citizenship.</li> </ul>
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What language applicant speaks and/or writes fluently, IF JOB- RELATED.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's native language.</li> <li>Applicant's language commonly used at home.</li> </ul>

**LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
(Continued)**

<b>Subject of Question:</b>	<b>Lawful</b>	<b>Unlawful</b>
Arrest Record and Convictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If applicant has ever been convicted of a crime.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever been arrested?</li> <li>Whether applicant has ever been arrested.</li> </ul>
Reference Checking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous work contacts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name of applicant's religious leader.</li> <li>Applicant's political affiliation and contacts.</li> </ul>
Relatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Names of relatives already employed by employer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name and/or address of any relative of applicant.</li> <li>Whom to contact in case of emergency.</li> </ul>
Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's membership in any professional, service, or trade organization that, are relevant to his/her ability to perform the job.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List of all clubs and/or social organizations the applicants is affiliated with.</li> </ul>
Physical Limitations or Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether applicant has the ability to perform the duties of the job for which she/he is applying.</li> <li>All post job offer questions or inquiries into the employee's condition must be job-related and consistent with the business necessity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you have a disability?</li> <li>Have you ever filed for worker's compensation?</li> <li>Have you ever been injured on the job?</li> <li>How much sick leave did you use at your previous job?</li> <li>The nature or severity of an illness or physical condition.</li> <li>Whether applicant has ever filed a workers' compensation claim.</li> <li>Any recent or past operations or surgery and dates.</li> <li>Whether applicant has ever had prior work-related injuries.</li> <li>Whether applicant has ever requested a reasonable accommodation.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training applicant has received if job-related.</li> <li>Highest level of education attained, if certain background is necessary to perform the job.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Date of high school or college graduation.</li> <li>What school(s) applicant attends or attended.</li> </ul>

**APPENDIX D**

**LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS  
(Continued)**

<b>Subject of Question:</b>	<b>Lawful</b>	<b>Unlawful</b>
Financial Status	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you own a car?</li> <li>• Do you own a home?</li> <li>• Have you ever filed for bankruptcy?</li> <li>• Applicant's debt or assets.</li> <li>• Garnishments.</li> </ul>
Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of training, education, and work experience the applicant received in the military.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's type of discharge.</li> <li>• Applicant's type – enlistment or commissioned.</li> </ul>
Credit Report	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's credit rating.</li> <li>• Any report which would indicate information which is otherwise inappropriate to ask, e.g., marital status, age, residency, etc.</li> </ul>
Marital Status	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's marital status; (e.g., Are you married?)</li> <li>• Do plan to have a family? When?</li> <li>• Do have children?</li> <li>• What are your childcare arrangements?</li> <li>• Do not ask questions regarding pregnancy, child birth, or birth control.</li> </ul>
Gender	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's gender.</li> </ul>
Religion	<b>None</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What religion do you practice?</li> <li>• What is your religion?</li> <li>• Do your religious beliefs prevent you from working certain days of the week?</li> <li>• What day(s) applicant observes.</li> <li>• What school(s) applicant attends or attended.</li> </ul>

**SAMPLE PERFORMANCE-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Share with me a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stress at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- What did you do in your last job to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- Describe a situation in which others within your organization depend on you.
- Describe your most recent group effort.
- Describe the worst customer or co-worker you have ever had and tell me how you dealt with him or her.
- Can you tell me about a job experience in which you had to speak up and tell other people what you thought or felt?
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem; tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision.
- Tell me about a time when you could not participate in a discussion or could not finish a task because you did not have enough information.
- Tell me about a specific occasion when you conformed to a policy even though you did not agree with it.

**APPENDIX D-2**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RATING SHEET**

**Applicant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position Applied For:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date/Time of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Interviewer Completing This Form:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Record your notes on the candidate's responses to the following questions in the spaces provided. Next, rate the quality of each response by circling a number from 1-4, with 1 being the lowest and 4 being the highest.

**Questions**

**Rating**

1. Please discuss your experience in...

1 2 3 4

2. Describe a situation in which you...

1 2 3 4

3. Please describe some best practices and current strategies in...

1 2 3 4

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS RATING SHEET  
(Continued)**

**4. How have you demonstrated your knowledge in... 1 2 3 4**

**5. How would you achieve results in... 1 2 3 4**

**6. How have you motivated employees to... 1 2 3 4**

**APPENDIX D-3**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW MATRIX**

<b>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</b>	<b>Applicant 1</b>	<b>Applicant 2</b>	<b>Applicant 3</b>	<b>Applicant 4</b>	<b>Applicant 5</b>
<b>Question 1:</b>					
<b>Question 2:</b>					
<b>Question 3:</b>					
<b>Question 4:</b>					
<b>Question 5:</b>					
<b>Question 6:</b>					
<b>Question 7:</b>					
<b>Question 8:</b>					
<b>Question 9:</b>					
<b>Question 10:</b>					
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>					

**INSTRUCTIONS: To be completed by the Selection Official or each Panel Member.**

Assign each applicant a score 1-4 for each question. **(1 - LOW to 4 - HIGH)**. Place your score in the appropriate columns under the applicant's name. Total the sum of the points.

**IMPORTANT:**

Interview questions must be prepared in advance and should be job related. Interviews may be conducted in face-to-face meetings or over the telephone. All interview proceedings should be well documented. Interview results should not be given undue weight in determining the best-qualified candidate for selection. Rather, interview results should be combined with the results of other selection information to determine a candidate's final position relative to other competitors. Interview questions should not be VA specific. Questions should be structured to allow the candidate to answer with whatever his/her experience may be. Proper questions will result with the selection official or panel members being provided with meaningful information. No candidate will be offered a position without a reference check.



SAMPLE INTERVIEW RANKING MATRIX

Rating Elements	Applicant 1	Applicant 2	Applicant 3	Applicant 4	Applicant 5
More directly related experience					
Superior related education (if listed as requirement)					
Higher level related experience					
Superior performance in the interview					
Demonstrated knowledge of critical procedures					
Stronger administrative background					
Stronger managerial background					
Better performance evaluations					
Superior experience in planning					
More experience in formulating and managing budgets					
More experience in managing a team					
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>					
<b>RANK ORDER</b>					

**INSTRUCTIONS: To be completed by the Selection Official or each Panel Member.**

Select the appropriate job-related Rating Elements for the position(s) to be filled. Assign each applicant a score 1-4, (1 - LOW to 4 - HIGH) on each of the job-related Rating Elements. Place your score in the appropriate columns under the applicant's name. Total the sum of the points and rank the applicants accordingly.

**NOTE: The above job-related Rating Elements are for DEMONSTRATION PURPOSES ONLY. Selection Official/Panel Members are to develop job-related Rating Elements based on the vacate position.**

**APPENDIX D-5**

**SAMPLE BEST QUALIFIED CANDIDATE RATING WORKSHEET**

**BEST QUALIFIED CANDIDATE RATING WORKSHEET**

Name of Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Position (Title and Grade): \_\_\_\_\_

Announcement Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Availability Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Selection Process:

Application/Resume review only    Personal Interview    Phone Interview

If application/resume review only, why? \_\_\_\_\_

**SELECTION EVALUATION**

**Instructions:** For each KSA listed on the announcement, evaluate the applicants resume and mark the appropriate level.

**KSA #1:**

Superior (5 points)    Average (3 points)    Acceptable (1 point)

Other ( \_\_\_ points)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**KSA #2:**

Superior (5 points)    Average (3 points)    Acceptable (1 point)

Other ( \_\_\_ points)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**SAMPLE BEST QUALIFIED CANDIDATE RATING WORKSHEET (Cont.)**

**KSA #3:**

Superior (5 points)  Average (3 points)  Acceptable (1 point)

Other ( \_\_\_ points)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**KSA #4:**

Superior (5 points)  Average (3 points)  Acceptable (1 point)

Other ( \_\_\_ points)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**KSA #5:**

Superior (5 points)  Average (3 points)  Acceptable (1 point)

Other ( \_\_\_ points)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**SUMMARY OF EVALUATION**

\_\_\_ Total points \_\_\_ Failed to show \_\_\_ Withdrew from consideration

Date of withdraw, how advised and reason(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Selecting Official Name and Title

Selecting Official Signature and Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**THIS FORM MUST BE MAINTAINED BY THE SELECTING OFFICIAL FOR TWO YEARS FROM THE DATE OF HIRE OR DATE THE CERT IS RETURNED TO HR WITH NO SELECTION.**

**APPENDIX E**

**SAMPLE SELECTION JUSTIFICATION MEMORANDUM**



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Date:**

**From: Selecting Official** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Full Name)

**Subj: Rationale for Selection Memorandum**

**For the position of** \_\_\_\_\_, **I recommend**  
(Position Title, Series, and Grade)  
**the selection of** \_\_\_\_\_.  
(Print Full Name)

**Rationale for the Selection:**

All candidates on the Merit Promotion Certificate were interviewed; Ms. Doe's experience included 7.5 years as an Administrative Technician prior to becoming an Administrative Officer with her current employer. She has extensive experience in procurement, coordinating a wide range of procurement actions. She uses all the current software and hardware, and is an approving official with Level II procurement certification. She initiates and reviews domestic, foreign, local and sponsored travel; is a lead travel technician; and coordinates the travel plans for the agency. She serves as property coordinator, has experience tracking budget expenditures, and is currently reviewing annual accounting reports and developing budget forecasts. Her facility management experience includes total coordination of jobs that entail modifications to the Director and Executive Officer's offices, other employed staff in the administrative office, and the central conference room.

While other candidates demonstrated experience in several of the key areas mentioned above, Ms. Doe was selected for her extensive relevant experience in all of the administrative functional areas that surpasses all other candidates.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Selecting Official's Signature & Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approval Signature & Date

**Approve**       **Disapprove**

SCHEDULE “A” FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. *What is Schedule “A”?*

A. Schedule “A” is an appointing authority, or hiring authority. It is an Excepted Service appointment for persons with disabilities. The regulations guiding the *Excepted Service - Appointment of Persons with Disabilities and Career and Career-Conditional Appointment* are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The citation is 5 CFR § 213.3102(u).

Q. *Why should agencies consider using this hiring authority?*

A. Agencies should use this hiring authority for a number of good reasons

- Individuals with disabilities are an untapped source of excellent applicants;
- No public notice is required. In fact, many of the usual HR-related stumbling blocks are avoided, which could result in significantly reducing the time necessary to hire a well-qualified candidate;
- Doing so can support an agency's Career Patterns initiative. Technological advances and growing emphasis on telework may dovetail with the needs of many applicants with disabilities; and
- Agencies don't have to clear ‘surplus employee’ lists prior to using Schedule “A”.

Q. *What about accommodations? Aren't they expensive and a hassle?*

A. No! More often than not, providing accommodations is simple and *usually* free! Moreover, you are not alone in trying to work through accommodation requests. Your agency's Disability Program Manager or Selective Placement Coordinator can help you. Your agency may also have a person who serves as the Local Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator, to help with accommodation needs. There are also several resources outside of your agency that can help.

Also important to remember – just as we all need assistance at some point in the work place, accommodations may be necessary for an individual with a disability. You want all of your employees to be at their best at work, and accommodations play a role in reaching that goal. Providing accommodations, however, does not have to be a difficult, expensive, or time-consuming process.

Q. *Is this appointment to a permanent position?*

A. It can be. Agencies may self-determine what type of placement to make, based on the needs of the position, as well as the qualification level of the candidate. A hiring agency may make a temporary appointment, a time-limited appointment when the duties of the position do not require it to be filled on a permanent basis,

## APPENDIX F

### SCHEDULE “A” FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Continued)

or a permanent appointment. Permanent appointments are strongly encouraged, unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.

Q. *What about a probationary period?*

A. Depending on the type of appointment, probationary periods typically last up to two years. Schedule “A” candidates should be held to the same performance standards as all other employees. Once the employee’s accommodation needs, if any, have been met, then you should expect no more and no less from a Schedule “A” employee than you would from any other employee. Once the probationary period has been successfully completed (2 years), employees should be converted from non-competitive to competitive status.

## APPENDIX G

### SAMPLE REFERENCE CHECK QUESTIONS

- Q: In what capacity did you work with the candidate (e.g., peer, colleague, or supervisor)?
- Q: Could you give me a brief description of the duties the candidate performed?
- Q: How well did the candidate know the work? How well did the candidate perform on the job?
- Q: How well did the candidate manage the workload?
- Q: What were the candidate's strengths?
- Q: What were the candidate's weaknesses or areas where the candidate could improve?
- Q: How would you describe the candidate's relationships with co-workers, subordinates, and supervisors?
- Q: Is there anything else you can tell me about the candidate's ability to perform his/her job?
- Q: What kind of work-related training, certificates, education, or other qualifications does the candidate have?
- Q: Is the candidate eligible for re-hire in your organization? (If 'no', stop here)
- Q: Would you recommend him/her for this position? Why or why not?

## **APPENDIX H**

### **USEFUL VA WEB RESOURCES**

#### VA ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

<http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin/docs/vaorgchart.pdf>

#### VA HR DIRECTIVES AND HANDBOOKS

[http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/Direct\\_Hand.htm](http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/Direct_Hand.htm)

#### HR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

<http://vaww1.va.gov/ohrm/Classification/PolicyandProc.htm>

#### RETENTION INCENTIVES

<http://vaww1.va.gov/ohrm/Directives-Handbooks/Documents/5007a.doc>

#### STUDENT EDUCATIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, Q&A

<http://www.opm.gov/employ/students/QSAS.asp>

#### SUPERVISOR TOOLBOX, EMPLOYEE EDUCATION SYSTEM (EES)

[http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/supervisor/supervisor\\_toolbox/section1.htm](http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/supervisor/supervisor_toolbox/section1.htm)

#### VA CLASSIFICATION TEAM CONTACTS

<http://vaww1.va.gov/ohrm/Classification/ConferCall/ClassiContacts.doc>

#### HIGH PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

<http://vaww4.va.gov/hpdm/>

#### VA LEARNING CATALOG

<http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/vacatalog/>

#### VA LEARNING UNIVERSITY (VALU)

[http://vaww1.va.gov/valu\\_lrn](http://vaww1.va.gov/valu_lrn)

#### VA OFFICE OF RESOLUTION MANAGEMENT

<http://www4.va.gov/orm/>

#### VA OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT ADJUDICATION

<http://www4.va.gov/orm/oedca.asp>

### **VA Office of Diversity and Inclusion Links**

#### BEST PRACTICES RECRUITMENT OUTEACH AND RETENTION GUIDE

<http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/guide.pdf>

#### DIVERSITY RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

<http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org/index.htm>

#### DIVERSITY RELATED EVENTS CALENDAR

<http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/calendar/index.htm>



## APPENDIX I

Note: APPENDIX I that follows appears in its entirety as it was originally published.  
An electronic version can be found at <http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/guide.pdf>.



# BEST PRACTICES IN RECRUITMENT OUTREACH AND RETENTION



*Strategies for VA supervisors and managers  
to recruit, develop, and retain a  
competent, committed, and diverse workforce*



Office of Diversity and Inclusion (06)  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-4131  
[www.diversity.hr.va.gov](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov)





## INTRODUCTION

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) is committed to partnering with you in fostering a diverse, inclusive, and fair work environment in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Our vision is to help VA become a leader in the Federal community in the area of diversity and inclusiveness. There is more than a legal and ethical imperative to championing diversity and inclusion; there is a compelling business case. Empirical studies have shown a quantifiable positive correlation between workforce diversity and performance outcomes. Conversely, barriers to equal opportunity in the workplace result in costly attrition, liability, and low productivity.

VA faces significant challenges in the coming years from the changing demographic profile of our Nation and the related transformation of our labor force. To remain a high performing organization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, agencies will be aggressively competing for the best talent and intellectual capital in a global market. We need to plan our recruitment and retention strategies creatively now in order to provide the best service to our veterans and their families.

In an effort to assist you in making meaningful progress in our diversity and human capital goals in VA, ODI met with the Administrations' EEO managers and compiled this compendium of "best practices" in recruitment outreach and retention from our own diversity community. This compendium reflects the recruitment outreach and retention strategies that have proven to be effective in advancing VA's strategic objective to "recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that provides high quality service to veterans and their families" (*VA Strategic Plan FY 2006-2011, Enabling Goal E, Objective E-1*).

We hope this guidance is helpful as you develop your individual plans. We genuinely hope to be partners and resources for you as we pursue our common aims of fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce to better serve our veterans and their families. If you have any questions, please contact Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office Of Diversity and Inclusion at 202-461-4131 or by e-mail at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).





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## Recruitment Outreach

### *General External and Internal Recruitment Strategies*

- Contact faith-based organizations, such as local churches, and alliance groups in the area. These organizations have access to a large number of people, are in every community, are free, and will most likely welcome any information that can be offered to their congregation. Many faith-based organizations hold job fairs, health fairs, and informational fairs; set up a booth to share information about VA.
- Identify areas where the targeted applicant visit (i.e. nurses: uniform store or medical equipment store; caretaker: heavy equipment stores, Home Depot, gardening centers; etc.) and establish partnerships.
- Create a VA Recruitment and Outreach Coordinator position, which could monitor and share recruitment information with all three administrations and VACO.
- Create a national “recruitment and hiring manual” for field distribution that details how to recruit and outlines procedures and policies within VA relating to recruitment.
- Hold internal and external job informational fairs; oftentimes people within the organization are unaware of the needs of their workplace. These informational fairs help to inform the employee and encourage them to be informal recruiters for the organization. Sometimes shopping malls will allow agencies to set up an informational table.
- VA-wide acknowledgement of facilities that have excelled in recruitment; create a non-monetary “Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity Recruitment Award” tailored to the needs of each facility.
- Have local EEO teams (EEO Manager, Supervisors, HR Specialists) participate in job and career fairs at local colleges and universities, military bases, and other establishments throughout the year.
- Partner with Healthcare providers. For example, Recruiting Military Healthcare Providers is a Healthcare Retention and Recruitment Office (HRRO) initiative which aims to increase VA’s ability to recruit healthcare providers, such as physicians, when they leave military service.
- Participate in local internship networking events.
- Partner with VA Public Affairs to help reach out to both VA and local communities.
- Provide VA visibility at career development centers within colleges and universities.
- Develop an internal recruitment tracking system.





## **Recruitment Outreach (CONT.)**

- Update and provide monthly diversity hiring metrics to appropriate staff.
- Provide workforce planning training.
- Expand use of employment referral program.
- Provide special hiring authorities training and periodic updates for Human Resources staff, managers, and supervisors.
- Participate in military transition assistance programs.
- Awareness Training – Provide VA leaders, managers, and supervisors with meaningful training that increases their awareness of the business, cultural, demographic, and legal frameworks for understanding and managing diversity. Include such training in leadership development programs and provide training to all employees in an effort to improve their understanding of diversity issues. Concentrate supervisory training on communications, interpersonal relations, and teambuilding skills.
- Conduct focus groups and exit surveys to assess the pulse of the workforce so as to implement proactive steps to diversity and recruitment success.
- Recruit current employees to counsel and coach other employees on career advancement, and also include a component on functional and geographic diversity.



## **Recruitment Outreach (CONT.)**

### ***Strategies for Recruitment within the Veteran Community***

- Send vacancy announcements to recruitment programs at local military facilities and installations. For example, the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) at Fort Hood is able to post vacancy announcements on their bulletin board and distribute them to interested walk-ins.
- Attend and participate at local veteran recruitment job fairs.
- Work with the VA Veterans Employment Coordinator Service (VECS) in establishing advance efforts to attract, recruit and hire veterans into VA.

### ***Special Hiring Authorities for Veterans:***

- 30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans
- Veterans Preference
- Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)
- Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA)
- National Defense Authorization Act of FY2006 (Public Law 109-163)

### ***Employment Training Opportunities for Homeless Veterans***

- Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) – The All Faith Consortium has been selected to work with VA and the VA Grant and Per Diem Office to establish a 56-bed Transitional Housing Program for homeless veterans in the Washington, DC area. The program offers employment-focused training through a continuum of supportive services in the HVRP. This program is one of 34 in the nation and is anticipated to act as the model for all other programs of its type and employs a “bridge program” model that develops the homeless veterans skill set prerequisites for entry into and successful completion of a structured training program supported by an aggressive career services component.



## **Recruitment Outreach (CONT.)**

### ***Strategies for Recruitment of Individuals with Disabilities***

- Provide training to all managers and supervisors in reasonable accommodation and selective placement, which would include how to effectively utilize special hiring authorities as a hiring vehicle.
- Establish a hiring goal for individuals with targeted disabilities by area VISN and MISN. Remember, VA's goal is to reach 2 percent of the employee population.
- Fully utilize the Workforce Recruitment Program as a vehicle to permanently employ qualified individuals with disabilities.
- Establish a collateral duty selective placement coordinator responsible for achieving the selected hiring goal in every Veterans Integrated Service Network, Memorial Integrated Service Network, and Area throughout the VA system who would have a responsibility of working with prospective applicants.
- Work with one-stop state vocational rehabilitation agencies, Social Security Administration's Local Ticket To Work Program, disabled student services offices at local universities, and local VBA VR&E Programs to identify additional qualified individuals with targeted disabilities.
- Partner with the facilities' local workers' compensation program manager to identify individuals currently receiving workers compensation who may be able to return to work.
- Participate and/or attend National Diversity Conferences, for example: Perspectives on Employment for Persons With Disabilities Conference, which is held annually during the month of December in Washington DC.
- Participate at EARN—Employment Assistance and Recruiting Network events.

### ***Special Hiring Authorities for Individuals with Disabilities:***

- Excepted Service Appointment of Persons with Disabilities  
New Regulation: Schedule A Authority, 5 CFR 213.3102 (u)
- VA Human Resources Management Letter No. 05-07-04 (HRML 05-07-04)



## Recruitment Outreach (CONT.)

### *Recruitment Strategies for less than accepted represented*


- Establish a partnership with the chapters of national organizations such as the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC); National IMAGE, Inc.; Federally Employed Women (FEW); and Blacks In Government (BIG) by forwarding a general letter identifying the local facility and point of contact. As vacancies are announced, include the chapters or organizations on the mailing list and visit their sites yearly or attend one of their functions.
- Place ads in publications that focus on special emphasis groups (e.g., Hispanic serving newspapers such as 'Hoy' and CAREERS & the disABLED magazine) to reach out to targeted groups. Reach out to other Hispanic medium such as local Hispanic television networks.
- Coordinate with Career Development Counselors and Veteran Employment Counselors at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and other Minority Serving Institutions.
- Participate in career fairs and site recruitment fairs for special emphasis groups. Reach out to associations, such as the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO); American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC); and Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) which support HBCUs, TCUs, and HSIs.
- Utilize other non-traditional internship programs, such as the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP). For a complete guide and description of non-traditional internship programs, visit [www.diversity.hr.va.gov](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov) and select internships on the main page.



## Recruitment Outreach (CONT.)

### *Internships, Fellowships, and Other Work-Study Opportunities*

- **Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)** - Provides a combination of work experience and formal study directly related to the participant's academic field. SCEP participants are considered interns and may be eligible for non-competitive conversion to permanent positions when they complete their schooling.
- **Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP)** - Provides temporary jobs for students, but these positions are not necessarily related to their course of study.
- **Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP)** - This intern program is designed to help agencies recruit and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of occupations. FCIP was created under Executive Order 13162, and is intended for positions at grade levels GS-5, 7, and 9. In general, individuals are appointed to a two year internship. Upon successful completion of the internship, the intern may be eligible for permanent placement within an agency.
- **Technical Career Field (TCF)** - This intern program recruits journeyman-level staff from colleges and universities to fill vacancies in technical career fields where current and future shortages are expected. Each intern is placed with an experienced preceptor in a VHA facility.
- **Presidential Management Fellows (PMF)** - This program is intended to create a flexible, customer-focused method for the recruitment and retention of top talent into the federal civil service, targeting the best and the brightest graduate programs from many of the nation's top colleges and universities.
- **VA Advanced Fellowships** - These post-residency fellowships—which number about 160 to 200 per year—are awarded to licensed and board certified or board eligible physicians to undertake study in emerging health specialties of particular importance to VA (for example, spinal cord injuries).
- **VA Learning Opportunities Residency** - This is a paid intern program to develop a well-trained talent pool from which to draw future employees.
- **Graduate Health Administration Training Program** - This program provides practical work experience to students and recent graduates of healthcare administration master programs.
- **Cemetery Director Management Intern Program** – The Cemetery Director Management Intern Program offers individuals interested in becoming a Cemetery Director the opportunity to gain both technical and managerial skills to start them on their career path. The Cemetery Director Management Intern studies under the guidance and supervision of a Cemetery Director designated as a program Preceptor. This program is only the beginning of the learning process in the career development of a cemetery director.



## Retention Strategies

### *General Retention Strategies*

- Implement/expand mentorship programs within the organization.
- Expand the pool of upward mobility candidates to provide a cohort available to rapidly replace retiring senior employees and to address diversity issues.
- Develop metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of selected retention strategies.
- Examine attrition data to identify additional retention challenges to inform the development of long-term strategies.
- Update and provide monthly diversity hiring metrics to appropriate staff.
- Build on success of the High Performance Development Model by expanding its scope beyond VHA.
- Special Pay Rates and Other Flexibilities - VA hospitals conduct frequent salary studies in their respective area to keep pace with their local competitors.
- Flexible Work Schedules - innovative work schedule which includes allowing employees to work various work schedules during the biweekly pay period to assist in balancing work and family responsibilities.
- Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) - This is a competitive program designed to create qualified candidates for SES positions. The SESCO DP includes a variety of activities that prepare candidates for success as an SES and advances the goal of a "corporate SES," a diverse corps of career executives who share a Government-wide perspective. These executives share values and a common identity that reach beyond their individual professions or agencies and are well positioned to lead change both within their agencies and throughout Government.



## Retention Strategies (CONT.)

### *VA Training and Retention Programs*

- **Leadership VA Program** – This program is designed to identify leaders in VA who exhibit leadership talent and potential and to provide an enrichment of their career development through an intense leadership training experience.
- **Employee Incentive Scholarship Program** - This scholarship is open to employees who have been with VHA for at least one year and who are pursuing degrees or training in hard-to-fill healthcare occupations.
- **VA Nursing Education for Employees Program (VANEED)** - VANEED provides salary replacement dollars and funds to cover the cost of tuition, books and certain fees for employees enrolled in nursing education programs.
- **National Nursing Educational Initiative (NNEI)** - The target audience for NNEI is VA’s registered nurses. NNEI provides funding so that RNs with associate degrees can obtain bachelor’s degrees in nursing. This credential is necessary to advance beyond the entry nurse position.
- **VA Nursing Academy** - Established in April 2007, the VA Nursing Academy addresses the nationwide shortage of nurses. Under the program, qualified VA nurses are appointed to the nursing school faculties.
- **Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP)** - The Education Debt Reduction Program, implemented in 2002, is the title 38 version of the student loan repayment program available elsewhere in the federal government. EDRP allows VA to repay education loans for newly appointed employees in difficult to fill positions.
- **VA Cadet Program** -The VA Cadet Program has the goal of getting high school students interested in healthcare careers. This newly developed program, is designed to allow VA to “grow” future employees.
- **VHA Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program (ECFCDDP)** - This program provides developmental opportunities for high-potential employees, grades GS-13-14/Nurse IV/ Physician Tier 2, preparing them to apply for executive vacancies. ECFCDDP is a two-year program with a program development plan, mentor and preceptor components, and includes a wide variety of educational and experiential learning opportunities.



## Retention Strategies (CONT.)

- **VHA Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability, Development (LEAD)** - Anticipating shortages in leadership at all levels, VHA developed a framework based on the High Performance Development Model (HPDM) to identify a pool of high potential candidates at the VISN and facility levels to participate in leadership development programs. At the VISN level, candidates are selected at the GS 11-13 or Title 38 equivalent grade levels, and at the GS 7-11 or Wage Grade Supervisors/Title 38 equivalent grade levels at the facility level.
- **VBA Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD)** - Designed to help identify and develop the skills and talent of high-performing employees and enhance their preparation for leadership responsibilities in the future.
- **National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Leadership Institute** – This training initiative was developed as a means of providing in-house leadership development training to NCA staff members. The NCA Leadership Institute is modeled after VHA’s LEAD – based programs and linked to the High Performance Development Model.
- **NCA Supervisory Training** – This program provides a comprehensive curriculum to new supervisors with an emphasis on HR policies and practices, EEO/Diversity issues and important initiatives that align with organizational goals and priorities.







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