



OFFICE OF FEDERAL
PROCUREMENT POLICY

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
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**MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF ACQUISITION OFFICERS
SENIOR PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVES**

FROM: Daniel I. Gordon
Administrator 

SUBJECT: Attracting Talent to the Acquisition Workforce

The Federal Government relies on its acquisition workforce to negotiate and administer contracts for over \$500 billion a year in goods and services, and to ensure that these contracts provide maximum value and benefit to the taxpayers. It is critical that the Federal Government attract talented individuals to this profession so that agencies can continue to achieve cost savings, reduce risk in their contracting practices, and improve acquisition and project management given the anticipated level of retirements in coming years.

Determining effective hiring strategies is a shared responsibility of the Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO), the Chief Acquisition Officer (CAO) and those designated by their agencies to strengthen the acquisition workforce. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide civilian agency acquisition and human capital officials with additional information about the many special hiring authorities and strategies which are available for the acquisition profession. Some of these same authorities are available to the Department of Defense (DoD), but DoD officials should check with their human capital partners to determine what specific authorities are available to them.

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OFPP) has worked with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to develop a guide to available hiring flexibilities, which is at Attachment 1. To further assist you, OPM has a Federal Hiring Flexibilities Resource Center,¹ which includes an online tool to help determine which potential hiring flexibility is appropriate for your situation. We encourage you to work closely with your CHCO in using these hiring authorities.

In addition to relying on these flexibilities, agencies should also consider hiring strategies that improve the visibility of acquisition jobs, target specific skill sets, and reduce, wherever possible, the administrative burden on the agency and the applicant. OFPP worked with agency Acquisition Career Managers (ACMs) to identify successful hiring strategies and practices, and these are included in Attachment 2.

¹ http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfrc/default.asp

I would like to highlight that OFPP and OPM are partnering to present a “Hiring Flexibilities and Successful Hiring Strategies” seminar in Washington, DC. Once the date and location are finalized, we will publicize the seminar through the Chief Acquisition Officers Council listserv. We encourage you to attend and also encourage wide attendance by your hiring managers and your human resources support staff. We will also invite your information technology, finance and human resource colleagues, who will also benefit from the information.

Planned Improvements

New tools and resources will soon be available to help agencies build their workforce:

Applicant Assessments – OPM is developing new online applicant assessment tools. These assessments will use state-of-the-art Computer Adaptive Testing which adjusts the level of difficulty of the questions based on an applicant’s previous responses. Animated situational judgment assessments will present applicants with occupation-specific scenarios and ask them to respond. Together, these tools will measure an applicant's proficiency in a variety of general competencies, such as interpersonal skills, math, reading comprehension, and logical reasoning.

Assessments for three financial occupational series (i.e., 0501, 0510, and 0560) will be piloted this month for a group of OPM partner agencies using USAStaffing. As system validation continues, assessments will be implemented in the spring for the contracting profession (GS-1102) and eight additional occupational series. Many of you have participated in OPM’s efforts to develop appropriate questions and scenarios for these assessments and we appreciate your contributions. The rollout of these assessments will coincide with the rollout of USAJOBS 3.0 Phase 1 so that all agencies may take advantage of the OPM-developed assessments. These assessments are a key component of Federal hiring reform; they will assist agencies in identifying top quality applicants and also reduce the burden on applicants, who will be able to reuse their scores when applying for a variety of government positions.

USAJOBSRecruit.gov - USAJOBSRecruit.gov will be a one-stop recruiting site for those involved in hiring the best talent for the government and is expected to go live in March 2011. This site will offer a unique federal community, a place where human resources professionals, hiring managers, and federal employees interested in recruiting can connect, discuss challenges and opportunities, and seek solutions together. Key features include a recruiting toolkit with checklists, training modules, job aids, and templates. The site will include blogs and discussion forums by and for federal employees, a recruiting event calendar, and a webinar series featuring federal best recruiting practices. When combined with the information the Federal Acquisition Institute (FAI) developed specifically for hiring new contracting talent (available at <http://www.fai.gov/FAIC>), agencies will have a set of helpful tools to assist them in hiring high quality applicants.

An agency’s acquisition workforce is critical to ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely. Attracting talented individuals to this profession is a shared responsibility that requires close collaboration among agency senior leaders. Please encourage those responsible for these efforts to maximize the use of existing hiring flexibilities.

Please contact Joanie Newhart at 202-395-4821 or jnewhart@omb.eop.gov if you have any questions.

Attachments

cc: Chief Human Capital Officers
Agency Acquisition Career Managers

Hiring Flexibilities

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Quick Hiring Guide

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Want to hire a Veteran?

Preference in hiring applies to permanent and temporary positions in the competitive and excepted services of the executive branch. For more information, go to

<http://www.opm.gov/staffingPortal/Vetguide.asp>.

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Veterans' Hiring Authorities

What are Veterans Hiring Authorities?

There are three authorities specific to veterans: Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA), authority to hire 30% or more disabled veterans, and authority under the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA), as amended. All three provide streamlined opportunities to hire veterans, some noncompetitively. In addition, agencies can consider disabled veterans under the Schedule A authority for people with disabilities (see page x).

What is the legal authority for the Veterans' Hiring Authorities?

The authorities are available at
[http://www.opm.gov/Strategic Management of Human Capital/fhfr/FLX02030.asp](http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfr/FLX02030.asp).

How are these authorities used?

- VRA: This authority allows appointment of eligible veterans up to the GS-11 or equivalent. Veterans are hired under excepted appointments to positions that are otherwise in the competitive service. After the individual satisfactorily completes 2 years of service, the veteran must be converted noncompetitively to a career or career-conditional appointment. Agencies are not required to issue vacancy announcements for these appointments; however, veterans' preference applies.

The agency must develop a training or education program for any veteran appointee with less than 15 years of education.

Eligible veterans are those who served on active duty and who meet at least one of the following:

- Are disabled;
 - Received a medal for service in a campaign or expedition (including Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal);
 - Received an Armed Forces Service Medal (including Global War on Terrorism Service Medal); or
 - Recently separated from active duty within the past three years.
- Disabled Veterans Authority for 30% or more Disabled Veterans: This authority allows a hiring manager to appoint an eligible candidate to any position for which he

or she is qualified, without competition. Unlike the VRA, there's no grade-level limitation. Initial appointments are time-limited, lasting more than 60 days; however, the agency may noncompetitively convert the individual to a career or career-conditional appointment at any time during the time-limited appointment. Agencies are not required to issue vacancy announcements for these appointments.

- VEOA: This flexibility gives eligible veterans access to jobs that otherwise only would have been available to status candidates. Under the VEOA, veterans are not accorded preference as a factor, but they are allowed to compete under an agency's merit promotion process for job opportunities that are not offered to other external candidates. A VEOA eligible who is selected is given a career or career-conditional appointment.

Eligible veterans are:

- Preference eligibles or
- Veterans who separated after three or more years of continuous active duty service performed under honorable conditions

More information is available at

http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfr/FLX02010.asp.

A list of agency Veterans Employment Program Office contacts is available on the OPM website at <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/AgencyDirectory/index.aspx>.

Links to organizations providing assistance in locating veteran applicants are available on the Department of Labor website at <http://www.dol.gov/vets/Employment/main.htm>.

Direct Hire Authority for Acquisition Positions

What is direct hire authority for acquisition positions?

Direct hire authority for acquisition positions allows heads of civilian agencies (other than the Department of Defense) to determine whether there is a critical shortage or critical need of candidates for acquisition positions covered under title 41, U.S.C., section 1703(g)(1)(A) (available at

http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/html/uscode41/usc_sec_41_00000433---000-.html).

If they can demonstrate a critical shortage or need., then the agency can streamline the recruitment process to hire candidates directly and more quickly.

Note: When determining the existence of a critical shortage or need of highly qualified individuals, agencies are required to use the supporting evidence prescribed in 5 CFR 337.204(b). The supporting evidence must be kept in a file for documentation and reporting purposes. OPM may request information from agencies on their use and implementation of this authority.

A severe shortage of candidates means an agency is unable to identify candidates possessing the competencies required to perform the job requirements despite:

- Extensive recruitment efforts
- Extended announcement period
- Use of available hiring flexibilities

Information used to support justification for severe shortage of candidates can be from sources such as:

- Extensive recruitment efforts
- Employment trends
- Labor market data
- Workforce planning analyses
- Use of other appointment authorities
- Availability and quality of candidates

What is the legal authority for this direct hire authority?

The legal authority is Section 1413(a) of Public Law 108–136, as amended by section 853 of Public Law 110–181.

What are the effective dates of this direct hire authority?

The authority went into effect on September 30, 2007 and expires on September 30, 2012. HR offices may not appoint an individual using this authority after September 30, 2012.

What jobs can be filled using direct hire authority?

Agencies are authorized to fill critical resource gaps in 1102 series positions at entry and senior levels, 1105 positions, and other members of the acquisition workforce, such as program managers, contracting officer’s technical representatives, and any others with significant acquisition responsibilities as identified in OFPP Policy Letter 05-01, *Improving the Acquisition Workforce*,¹ and identified by the Chief Acquisition Officer. Positions at the GS-05 to GS-07 levels of the 1102 series positions can only be filled through using the Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) examination or an agency-developed examination.

¹ http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/procurement_policy_letter_05-01

How is this direct hire authority used?

This Government-wide direct hire authority permits agencies to hire without regard to veterans' preference, the "rule of three," and category rating/ranking procedures, but requires agencies to comply with the public notice requirements. Public notice means informing the public of the positions via announcing them on USAJOBS.gov.

More information is available at

http://www.opm.gov/Strategic_Management_of_Human_Capital/fhfr/FLX03010.asp.

Student Employment Authorities

What are Student Employment Authorities?

The student employment authority commonly used: Student Career Experience Program (SCEP), as well as the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program.

What is the legal authority for these Student Employment Authorities?

SCEPs are authorized by 5 CFR 213.3202(b); PMFs are authorized by 5 CFR 213.3102(ii).

How are these authorities used?

- **Student Career Experience Program (SCEP):** This program allows appointment of students to positions that are related to their academic field of study. Employment as a student is in the excepted service and public notice is not required. Participants who meet all the requirements of the program may be noncompetitively converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments.
- **Presidential Management Fellows (PMF):** This program aims to attract outstanding graduate-level men and women from a variety of academic disciplines who have an interest in and commitment to public service.

NOTE: The Pathways Program will replace the SCEP with an internship program, and add a recent graduates program. OPM is developing regulations for these programs. For more information, see the December 10, 2010 Executive Order at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/27/executive-order-recruiting-and-hiring-students-and-recent-graduates>.

Schedule A Excepted Service Appointing Authority for Persons with Disabilities

What is the excepted service appointing authority for persons with disabilities?

The legal authority is an Executive Order as implemented in 5 CFR 213.3102(u).

How is this authority used?

This authority provides a way to hire persons who have been certified as having severe physical, psychological, or intellectual disabilities. The authority improves the Federal Government's ability to hire persons with disabilities and is designed to remove barriers and increase employment opportunities for these individuals. Eligible persons may be appointed to a temporary, time-limited, or permanent position.

Certifying entities can be:

- A licensed medical professional (e.g., a physician or other medical professional certified by a State, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory to practice medicine);
- A licensed vocational rehabilitation specialist (i.e., State or private); or
- Any Federal agency, State agency, or agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits.

A person appointed under this authority may be noncompetitively converted to a permanent competitive service appointment upon two years of satisfactory service.

More information is available at <http://www.opm.gov/disability/>.

What program is available to help you in using this authority?

In support of the Executive Order regarding Federal Employment of People with Disabilities, OPM, in collaboration with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council has a contract with a vendor to populate a shared register of individuals with disabilities who have an interest in working for federal agencies and satisfy the requirements of positions federal agencies are frequently required to fill. On a monthly basis, the vendor recruits, screens, and directs a minimum of 50 individuals with disabilities to the shared register. Candidates are individuals who satisfy the requirements of entry-level positions, including contracting, finance/accounting, human resources, information technology, administration, engineering, legal and any other areas as directed by OPM. General candidate information is documented in a spreadsheet that lists all active candidates, including position and geographical interests, as well as qualifications, including completion of 24 hours of business classes. Additionally, a skills profile for each candidate is prepared that lists additional information, including academic background and skills/experience highlights. Agency representatives may access candidates within the register by contacting Joanie Newhart of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy at jnewhart@omb.eop.gov or 202-395-4821.

Other Excepted Service Appointing Authorities

Schedule A authorities include:

Positions for which a critical hiring need exists - 5 CFR 213.3102(i)(2) (also called a 30-Day Special Needs Appointment):

- May not exceed 30 days;
- May be extended up to an additional 30 days;
- May not be used to extend the service limit of any other appointing authority; and
- May not be used to employ the same individual for more than 60 days in any 12-month period.

Fellowship and similar programs – 5 CFR 213.3102(r)

- May not exceed 4 years;
- For positions that are filled from a limited applicant pool; and
- Operate under requirements established between a Federal agency and a non-Federal entity.

Non-Competitive Hiring Authority for Military Spouses

What is the hiring authority for military spouses?

The hiring authority and criteria are in 5 CFR 315.612.

What is the legal authority for this appointment?

The legal authority is Executive Order 13473.

How is this authority used?

This authority facilitates the entry of military spouses into the Federal Civil Service, minimizes disruption when military families move due to permanent relocations, and recognizes and honors service members who become disabled or die during active duty service.

This is a noncompetitive hiring authority to positions in the competitive service for qualified military spouses. Qualified spouses may be appointed to a temporary, term, or permanent appointment after public notice is provided via USAJOBS. These applicants are considered with other noncompetitive applicants.

Who is eligible under this authority?

Eligibility is based on a Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move, 100% disability of a service member, or death of a service member while on active duty.

Spouses are eligible for noncompetitive appointment for a maximum of 2 years from the date of the:

- Service member's PCS orders,
- Documentation verifying the service member is 100 percent disabled, or
- Documentation verifying the service member was killed while on active duty.

Eligible spouses must apply to a job announcement, must meet the qualification requirements for the position, and meet the same conditions (e.g., suitability) as are required of other applicants. There is no grade-level limitation.

More information is available at <http://www.fedshirevets.gov/hire/hrp/qaspouse/index.aspx>.

Reemploying Annuitants into Acquisition Positions

Agencies may reemploy retired Federal employees based on their eligibility for reinstatement to the competitive service. All reemployed annuitants serve at the will of the appointing official; they may be terminated at any time. Usually, a reemployed annuitant is subject to dual compensation offset, meaning the salary is offset by the amount of the annuity. Without a specific authority, agencies require OPM approval to reemploy an annuitant without salary offset.

Through December 31, 2011, agencies are authorized to waive salary offset when reemploying annuitants in the acquisition workforce.

What is the authority for waiving salary offset for acquisition positions?

Public Law 109-313 amended title 41, section 1703(k), to provide agencies with this authority.

How is this authority used?

The agency must develop and submit a plan on the use of the authority to OPM for approval.

The agency must clear placement assistance programs before reemploying an annuitant by announcing the job on USAJOBS.gov.

OMB issued a memo on September 4, 2007, outlining the statutory requirements. This memo is available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/omb/procurement/workforce/090407_reemployed.pdf.

NDAAs Salary Offset Waivers

Through October 27, 2014, the head of an agency has authority under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2010 to grant dual compensation (salary off-set) waivers on a temporary basis under certain specified circumstances. Agencies must adhere to the conditions specified in the law:

- Appointments are limited to one-year or less;
- Hours worked by any annuitant reemployed under this provision are limited to 520 during the first 6 months of retirement, 1,040 during any 12-month period, and 3,120 for total hours worked during any period; and
- Reemployment may not exceed 2.5 percent of the full-time workforce at any time, and if 1 percent is exceeded agencies are required to provide an explanation and justification to the Congress and OPM.

Agencies report to OPM on their use of this authority no later than February 1 of each year through 2015.

Other Available Salary Offset Waivers

Agencies may request OPM to waive the dual compensation offset if the circumstance meets one of the specified regulatory criteria in 5 CFR 553 for a waiver. Templates for submitting a dual compensation waiver request to OPM are available on OPM's website at <http://www.opm.gov/StaffingPortal/DCWTemplates/Index.asp>. Each template lists the criteria OPM must consider when reviewing the request.

Hiring and Recruiting Strategies

Planning Ahead

OPM recommends that hiring managers create a recruiting team (e.g., HR, Hiring Manager, Recruiter, Others Who Play a Role in the Process) to discuss, determine, and develop:

- Accurate job descriptions
- Required qualifications
- Desired experience, education, certifications
- Ideal candidate profile
- Anticipated size of the applicant pool
- Career path
- Assessment strategy
- Job announcement describing the job opening, written in plain language
- Selling Points
- Budget
- Where to source, how to advertise

Best Practice: NASA is currently piloting the use of standardized contract specialist position descriptions, vacancy announcements and skills/competencies for each grade level to reduce hiring lead times..

Recruiting Strategies

- Select schools for internship recruitment efforts. Select specific target schools for recruitment efforts based on a variety of factors, such as the school's program and curriculum relevance, past success with interns, diversity, and geographic proximity. Create a year-round presence on campus through sponsoring on-campus events (e.g., information sessions, seminars, career workshops, career fairs) and communications with newly hired interns as well as faculty and career counselors. Keep track of the number of hires from each source and adjust your recruiting activities accordingly. The Defense Acquisition University has developed strategic partnerships with many universities that offer degrees relevant to acquisition. More information can be found at <http://www.dau.mil/aboutDAU/Pages/partnerships.aspx>.
- Leverage professional networks - network with related professional organizations to identify potential applicants and additional recruitment sources. Two professional organizations focused on government procurement include the National Contract Management Association (www.ncmahq.org) and the National Institute of Government Purchasing (www.nigp.org).
- Integrate diversity into the recruitment strategy. Use the same strategies as above and target them at the recruitment sources that expand minority, women, veterans and

disability applicant pools. OPM worked with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council to provide a shared register of individuals with disabilities who have an interest in working for the federal government and who meet the requirements for contracting positions. To access this register, contact Joanie Newhart at jnewhart@omb.eop.gov.

- Utilize the Department of Labor's workforce recruitment database for college students with disabilities. The database has over 2000 candidates representing all academic backgrounds that have been interviewed by federal recruiters at various agencies. Visit www.wrp.gov to register and gain access to the database.
- Visit and partner with military transition centers. A listing of military transition centers can be found at <http://www.careeronestop.org/militarytransition/findTransitionCenters.aspx>.
- Market Federal employment opportunities through the CareerOneStop network and reach out directly to local veterans and individuals with disabilities at no cost. The added benefit of being able to establish relationships at the local level will help agencies gain access to candidates in any geographic location. To find a CareerOneStop and representatives to assist you go to www.servicelocator.org and look up one of the more than 3,000 CareerOneStop centers.

Best Practices:

- The Department of Education conducts informational interviews throughout the year even if it does not have a current vacancy. It has separate open and continuous 1102 postings for GS9, 11, 12 and 13. The hiring managers identify the top candidates, let them know that the Department is very impressed with them, keeps in touch, and then reaches out to them as soon as a vacancy opens. Since the initial interview and review of the writing sample has been completed, they can be hired quickly.
- HHS has had success with the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities. More information on this program is available at <http://wrp.gov/LoginPre.do?method=login>.
- DHS has a recruiter on staff in the Office of the Senior Procurement Executive that interfaces with component acquisition offices on staffing needs. This recruiter performs tasks such as working career fairs for the entire Department and performing job recruitment via various print and online publications. This allows for a Department-wide focus on recruiting with qualified candidates being provided to the component most in need.

Advertising Strategies

- Advertise full-time positions and internships on agency career website. EPA has an agency career website at <http://www.epa.gov/careers/> that covers both.
- Advertise on USAJOBS for all positions, not just those advertised through the competitive process.

- Distribute job opportunity announcements to employees so they can share the opportunities with their formal and informal networks. Consider including information that will help them explain the hiring process to prospective applicants.
- Use open continuous announcements to reduce the time-to-hire.
- Broadly market job announcements through avenues such as CareerBuilder, Military specific websites, professional organizations, newspaper ads, and include social networking options.
- Target advertising in publications and on websites whose focused readership include individuals with the knowledge and skills identified.
- Advertise through colleges' and universities' career sites, and leverage available alumni networks.

Hiring Strategies

- Use a centralized hiring approach that allows both Department-level and component-level hires from vacancy announcements.

Best Practices:

- Many agencies have been successful in developing career ladder positions to attract good candidates. Career ladder allows for entry at a grade level lower than the full performance level and a path for the new hire to the full performance level. Normally, the position is filled on a competitive basis with advancements in grade up to the full performance level without further competition.
- NASA has found that many colleges and universities have online resume books which are ideal for recruiting for entry-level positions.

Additional Resources

- USAJOBS Manager’s Toolkit for Recruitment and Hiring:
http://www.usa.gov/Federal_Employees/Managers_Toolkit.shtml#Recruitment_and_Hiring
- The Public Manager, “Federal Agencies are Using New Strategies, Programs, and Techniques to Attract the Next Generation of Civil Servants,” Spring 2009, available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0HTO/is_1_38/ai_n35527507/.
- OPM’s Federal Hiring Flexibilities Resource Center:
http://www.opm.gov/strategic_management_of_human_capital/fhfr/AZindex.asp
- Partnership for Public Service report, “America Has Talent: Breaking the Mold for Federal Recruiting,” December 9, 2010, available at <http://ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/viewcontentdetails.php?id=153>
- U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, “Managing Federal Recruitment: Issues, Insights, and Illustrations,” September 2004, available at <http://www.mspb.gov/netsearch/viewdocs.aspx?docnumber=253626&version=253913&application=ACROBAT>.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, The ABCs of Schedule A for the Hiring Manager website,
http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/initiatives/lead/abc_hiring_manager.cfm.