

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2010

Memorandum on Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process
May 11, 2010

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process

To deliver the quality services and results the American people expect and deserve, the Federal Government must recruit and hire highly qualified employees, and public service should be a career of choice for the most talented Americans. Yet the complexity and inefficiency of today's Federal hiring process deters many highly qualified individuals from seeking and obtaining jobs in the Federal Government.

I therefore call on executive departments and agencies (agencies) to overhaul the way they recruit and hire our civilian workforce. Americans must be able to apply for Federal jobs through a commonsense hiring process and agencies must be able to select high-quality candidates efficiently and quickly. Moreover, agency managers and supervisors must assume a leadership role in recruiting and selecting employees from all segments of our society. Human resource offices must provide critical support for these efforts. The ability of agencies to perform their missions effectively and efficiently depends on a talented and engaged workforce, and we must reform our hiring system to further strengthen that workforce.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 3301 of title 5, United States Code, I hereby direct the following:

Section 1. Directions to Agencies. Agency heads shall take the following actions no later than November 1, 2010:

(a) consistent with merit system principles and other requirements of title 5, United States Code, and subject to guidance to be issued by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), adopt hiring procedures that:

- (1) eliminate any requirement that applicants respond to essay-style questions when submitting their initial application materials for any Federal job;
- (2) allow individuals to apply for Federal employment by submitting resumes and cover letters or completing simple, plain language applications, and assess applicants using valid, reliable tools; and
- (3) provide for selection from among a larger number of qualified applicants by using the "category rating" approach (as authorized by section 3319 of title 5, United States Code), rather than the "rule of 3" approach, under which managers may only select from among the three highest scoring applicants;

(b) require that managers and supervisors with responsibility for hiring are:

- (1) more fully involved in the hiring process, including planning current and future workforce requirements, identifying the skills required for the job, and engaging actively in the recruitment and, when applicable, the interviewing process; and

- (2) accountable for recruiting and hiring highly qualified employees and supporting their successful transition into Federal service, beginning with the first performance review cycle starting after November 1, 2010;
- (c) provide the OPM and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) timelines and targets to:
 - (1) improve the quality and speed of agency hiring by:
 - (i) reducing substantially the time it takes to hire mission-critical and commonly filled positions;
 - (ii) measuring the quality and speed of the hiring process; and
 - (iii) analyzing the causes of agency hiring problems and actions that will be taken to reduce them; and
 - (2) provide every agency hiring manager training on effective, efficient, and timely ways to recruit and hire well-qualified individuals;
- (d) notify individuals applying for Federal employment through USAJOBS, an OPM-approved Federal web-based employment search portal, about the status of their application at key stages of the application process; and
- (e) identify a senior official accountable for leading agency implementation of this memorandum.

Sec. 2. Directions to the OPM. The OPM shall take the following actions no later than 90 days after the date of this memorandum:

- (a) establish a Government-wide performance review and improvement process for hiring reform actions described in section 1 of this memorandum, including:
 - (1) a timeline, benchmarks, and indicators of progress;
 - (2) a goal-focused, data-driven system for holding agencies accountable for improving the quality and speed of agency hiring, achieving agency hiring reform targets, and satisfying merit system principles and veterans' preference requirements; and
- (b) develop a plan to promote diversity in the Federal workforce, consistent with the merit system principle (codified at 5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1)) that the Federal Government should endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society;
- (c) evaluate the Federal Career Intern Program established by Executive Order 13162 of July 6, 2000, provide recommendations concerning the future of that program, and propose a framework for providing effective pathways into the Federal Government for college students and recent college graduates;
- (d) provide guidance or propose regulations, as appropriate, to streamline and improve the quality of job announcements for Federal employment to make sure they are easily understood by applicants;
- (e) evaluate the effectiveness of shared registers used in filling positions common across multiple agencies and develop a strategy for improving agencies' use of these shared registers for commonly filled Government-wide positions;

(f) develop a plan to increase the capacity of USAJOBS to provide applicants, hiring managers, and human resource professionals with information to improve the recruitment and hiring processes; and

(g) take such further administrative action as appropriate to implement sections 1 and 2 of this memorandum.

Sec. 3. Senior Administration Officials. Agency heads and other senior administration officials visiting university or college campuses on official business are encouraged to discuss career opportunities in the Federal Government with students.

Sec. 4. Reporting. (a) The OPM, in coordination with the OMB and in consultation with other agencies, shall develop a public human resources website to:

(1) track key human resource data, including progress on hiring reform implementation; and

(2) assist senior agency leaders, hiring managers, and human resource professionals with identifying and replicating best practices within the Federal Government for improving new employee quality and the hiring process.

(b) Each agency shall regularly review its key human resource performance and work with the OPM and the OMB to achieve timelines and targets for correcting agency hiring problems.

(c) The OPM shall submit to the President an annual report on the impact of hiring initiatives set forth in this memorandum, including its recommendations for further improving the Federal Government's hiring process.

Sec. 5. General Provisions. (a) Except as expressly stated herein, nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(1) authority granted by law or Executive Order to an agency, or the head thereof; or

(2) functions of the Director of the OMB relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

(d) The Director of the OPM, in consultation with the OMB, may grant an exception to any of the requirements set forth in section 1 of this memorandum to an agency that demonstrates that exceptional circumstances prevent it from complying with that requirement.

Sec. 6. Publication. The Director of the OPM is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

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NOTE: This memorandum was published in the *Federal Register* on May 14.

Categories: Communications to Federal Agencies : Federal recruitment and hiring process, improvement efforts, memorandum.

Subjects: Government organization and employees : Recruitment and hiring process, improvement efforts.

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