

**MRPBS HRD
Human Resources Operations**

**Hiring Manager
Handbook**

Marketing and Regulatory Programs

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Table of Contents

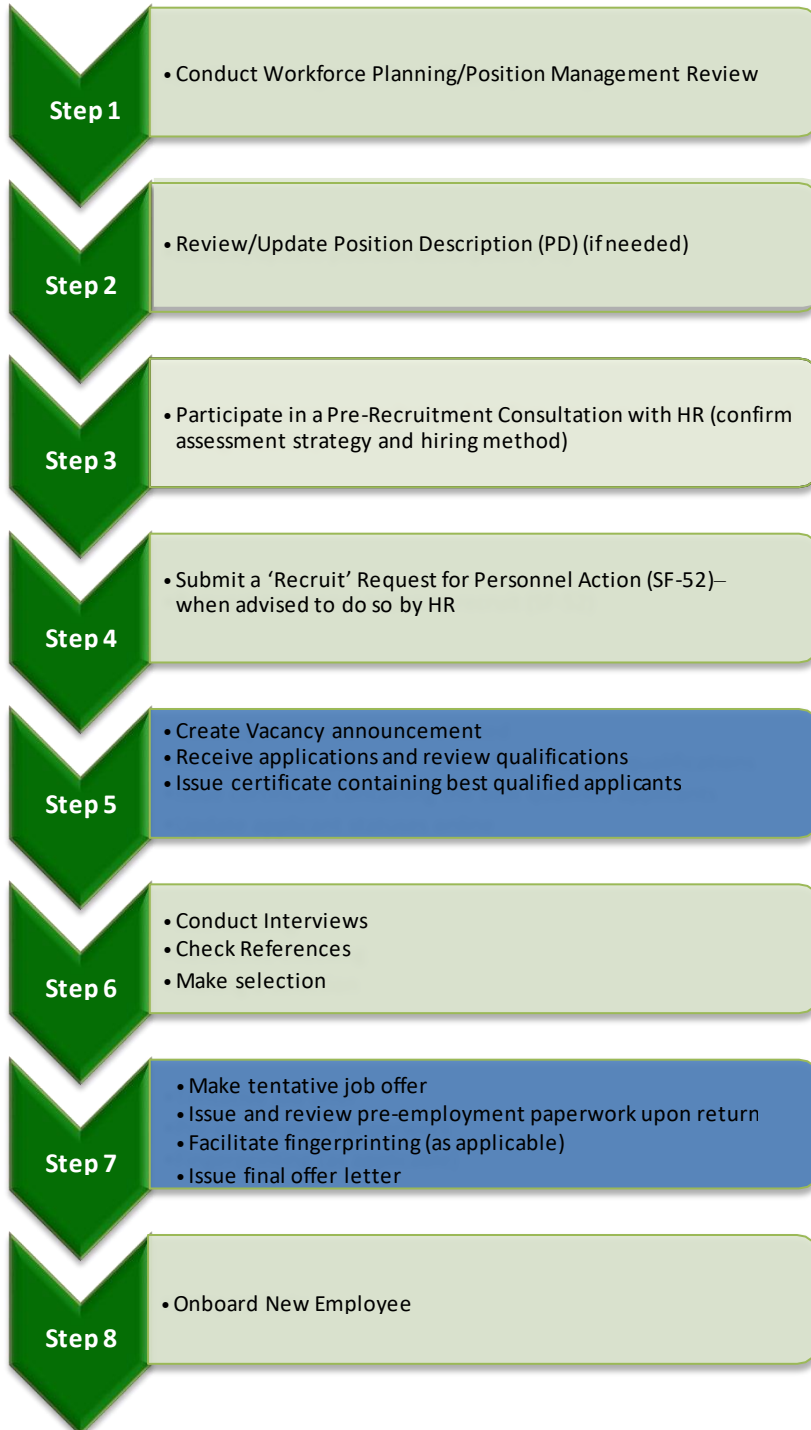
Overview of Hiring Process	3
STEP 1 – Position Management/Workforce Planning	5
Noncompetitive Recruitment	5
Short Term Staffing Options.....	6
Recruitment Methods.....	9
Case Examination	9
Direct Hire Authority (DHA).....	9
Merit Promotion	11
Pathways Programs (Internships, Recent Graduate, PMF)	12
STEP 2 – Review and Update Position Description (PD).....	12
STEP 3 – Pre-Recruitment Consultation	13
STEP 4 – Request Recruit SF-52 Personnel Action... ..	14
STEP 5 – Job Opportunity Announcement/Review of Applications/Certificate Issuance... ..	15
STEP 6 – Conduct Interviews/Check References/Make Selection.....	16
STEP 7 – Tentative Job Offer & Pre-Employment Paperwork.....	19
STEP 8 – Onboarding - Entry on Duty (EOD)	20
Appendix A – Merit Systems Principles and Prohibited Personnel Practices.....	21
Appendix B – Non-competitive Hiring Resources	24
Appendix C – Preparing for the Strategic Hiring Conversation.....	25
Appendix D – Hiring Manager Checklist.....	26
Appendix E - Recruitment Incentives.....	27
Appendix F – Specialist Experience Guide for Hiring Managers.....	28

Overview of Hiring Process

This guide was created to help Marketing and Regulatory Program (MRP) supervisors, managers and selecting officials understand the MRP hiring process and the important role selecting officials have in each phase. The information below describes each step of the hiring process after the hiring manager has identified the need to fill a vacant position.

Hiring Model Overview:

The chart below provides an overview of the steps in the hiring process detailed more thoroughly in this guide. Blue steps are performed by Human Resources (HR).



- Step 1:** **Conduct Workforce Planning/Position Management Review** Once you (as the hiring manager) identify the need to fill a position, consult your program's hiring plan. Participate in any program specific approvals/procedures.
- Step 2:** **Review/Update Position Description (PD)** Consult with your classification specialist to identify or develop/revise the PD (if needed.)
- Step 3:** **Participate in Pre-Recruitment Consultation** Your staffing specialist will contact you to discuss how you would like to fill your position and work with you and/or a subject matter expert (SME) to develop a job analysis. This includes identifying competencies and developing the assessment questions for the vacancy announcement, or using an established evaluation mechanism.
- Step 4:** **Submit 'Recruit' Request for Personnel Action (SF-52)** When prompted by the staffing specialist, you will need to submit the 'Recruit' Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) to initiate the hiring process.
- Step 5:** **Create Vacancy Announcement/Receive and Review Applications/Issue Certificate** Based upon information provided by the specialist from the consultation, the staffing assistant creates the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) and sends you a courtesy copy of the vacancy announcement. The completed JOA will then be posted to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) USAJOBS website: www.usajobs.gov/
- Step 6:** **Conduct Interviews/Check References/Make Selection** HR will send you a certificate of eligible candidates. You will need to interview candidates, check references, make a selection, and return the certificate to the staffing assistant.
- Step 7:** **Make Tentative Job Offer & Issue Pre-Employment Paperwork** HR reviews the selection to confirm validity and issues a tentative offer letter. The selectee completes all required pre-employment paperwork as indicated in his or her tentative offer letter. Assuming that all pre-employment requirements are met, the official effective date will be set and a final offer letter issued.
- Step 8:** **Onboard New Employee**
On the employee's first day, the employee should attend a New Employee Orientation (NEO) to receive and complete additional forms. Hard copy NEO forms must be forwarded by the NEO facilitator to the servicing processing assistant in HR for filing in the eOPF.

Before beginning the hiring process, if you have not done so recently, please review the Merit Systems Principles and the Prohibited Personnel Practices in **Appendix A**.

STEP 1 - Conduct Workforce Planning/Position Management Review

Workforce planning and position management are essential for an effective, efficient hiring process, which will then result in hiring the right person for the right job in a timely manner. Once you determine the need to fill a position, whether it is new or existing, you will need to engage in your program's internal approval process to fill your position.

After receiving approval to fill your position, you should consider whether you might fill the position by lateral reassignment. If so, that may mean that there is a different resulting vacancy to be announced later on. If that is not an option, then you should consider noncompetitive hiring authorities which can expedite the hiring process, especially for entry and mid-level positions.

Noncompetitive Recruitment – There are authorities that can be used as an alternative to posting a competitive vacancy announcement. Consider noncompetitive recruitment options before beginning the competitive recruitment process, to avoid duplication of efforts and allow for a more streamlined recruitment strategy. The following are some common authorities you may consider. Discuss details of using these authorities and processes with your Staffing Specialist.

Peace Corps and AmeriCorps VISTA

Former Peace Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) are granted a one-year period to be non-competitively appointed to a competitive service federal position. The hiring agency may extend the non-competitive eligibility period for 2 additional years for a total of 3 years if the individual, after the qualifying service, is in the military service; is studying at a recognized institution of higher learning; or has been involved in another activity which, in the agency's view, warrants an extension.

Upon completing service with the Peace Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA, volunteers or participants are provided a certification of non-competitive eligibility for Federal jobs. Former volunteers indicate their Peace Corps or AmeriCorps VISTA service on their resumé and provide the Description of Service as an attachment. This should be referred to HR to review for eligibility and qualification determination.

Jobs can be posted on the Peace Corps site for collection of applications, but the Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) must be cleared by posting notice on USAJOBS before a candidate can be hired.

Veterans Hiring and Employment

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA) is an excepted authority that allows agencies, to appoint eligible veterans without competition. The candidate must either be:

- in receipt of a campaign badge for service during a war or in campaign or expedition, OR
- a disabled veteran, OR
- in receipt of an Armed forces Service Medal for participation in a military operation, OR
- a recently separated veteran (within the last 3 years), **AND** separated under honorable conditions (this means an honorable or general discharge).

30% or More Disabled Veteran Appointment

The 30% or More Disabled Veteran authority allows any veteran with a 30% or more service-connected disability to be non-competitively appointed. The candidate must be either:

- retired from active military service with a service-connected disability rating of 30% or more; OR
- have a rating by the Department of Veterans Affairs showing a compensable service-connected disability of 30% or more, **AND**
- separated under honorable conditions (this means an honorable or general discharge).

Schedule A Appointing Authority for People with Disabilities

The Schedule A authority for people with disabilities, 5 CFR 213.3102(u), is an excepted authority that can be used to appoint individuals who have a severe physical, psychological, or intellectual disability. To be eligible the candidate must:

- Show proof of disability. Documentation may be from any 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 or State agency, or agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits.

*Resources/Contacts to obtain qualified applicants can be found in **Appendix B**.

Once you have considered these options, if they do not meet your needs, following are various methods you may use based upon program unit need and/or the type of position to be filled:

Short Term Staffing Options**Temporary Appointments (1 year or less)**

Temporary appointments in the competitive service may be used to fill a short-term position that you expect to last 1 year or less. The appointment may be extended up to a maximum of one additional year (24 months total.) These appointments are filled competitively through case examining procedures (5 CFR 316, subpart D)

Term Appointments (more than 1 year, up to a total of 4 years)

Term appointments may be used when the need for the employee's service is not permanent, including, but not limited to: project work; extraordinary workload; scheduled abolishment, reorganization, or contracting out of the function; uncertainty of future funding; or the need to maintain permanent positions for placement of employees who would otherwise be displaced from other parts of the organization. To recruit for Term appointments, you will normally use the case examining process, but you also have some noncompetitive options. You can discuss these options with your Staffing Specialist.

Temporary Promotions*

Noncompetitive temporary promotions can be made for up to 120 days. Prior service during the preceding 12 months under noncompetitive temporary promotions or noncompetitive details to higher graded positions count toward the 120-day limit. The candidate must still meet time-in-grade and qualification requirements. Temporary promotions lasting more than 120 days (up to a maximum of 5 years) must be announced through merit promotion procedures. The announcement can include a provision that the action can be made permanent without further competition. (5 CFR part 335.102(f) and 335.103(c)(1)(i))

Details*

Employees may be detailed to positions at the same or lower grade level or unclassified duties in increments of 120 days or less and may be extended. Details to higher graded positions or to a position with promotion potential are limited to 120 days without competition (prior service during the preceding 12 months under noncompetitive temporary promotions or noncompetitive details to higher graded positions counts toward the 120 day limit). (5 CFR part 335.103(c)(1)(ii)). Also see: [HR Fact Sheet: Detail Assignments and Requirements for Reimbursement](#)

**Managers should follow-up with any employees who were interviewed/considered and were not selected for non-competitive temporary promotions and details to notify them that a selection has been made and respond to any questions they may have. Because these are not announced by HR, we have no way of notifying candidates.*

Experts or Consultants

This appointment may be used to hire individuals to perform expert or consultant work that is temporary (not to exceed one year) or intermittent. (This differs from employing experts and consultants through procurement contracts, which are covered by regulations issued by the General Services Administration (GSA).) An expert is someone who is specifically qualified by education and experience to perform difficult and challenging tasks in a particular field and is regarded by other persons as an authority in the field. A consultant is someone who can provide valuable and pertinent advice generally drawn from a high degree of broad administrative, professional, or technical knowledge or experience. (5 U.S.C. 3109; 5 CFR 304)

Commercial Temporary Services

This option may be used for brief periods (120 days, with extension of an additional 120 days) for short-term situations when regular recruitment and hiring procedures are impractical, and the commercial service is purchased through the Federal procurement system. (5 CFR part 300, subpart E) Please contact the MRPBS-AAMD staff to pursue this option. They will coordinate with HR to clear CTAP if need is for 120 days or more.

Critical Hiring Need

A program with a critical hiring need may employ an individual under this authority in any series/grade level for 30 calendar days with one 30-day extension. You cannot employ the same person under this authority for more than 60 days in a 12-month period. You also cannot use this appointing authority to extend the service limits of any other authority. (5 CFR 213.3102(i)(2))

Agency Specific Excepted Service Authorities

These authorities exist to meet specific needs of MRP programs outside of the competitive examining process. Specific authorities and their requirements are listed below.

APHIS

Schedule A 213.3113 (a)(1)

- o Cooperatively funded field positions, authorized for APHIS, Wildlife Services
- o May be used to make temporary, term-equivalent and indefinite appointments

Schedule A 213.3113 (a)(5)

- o Temporary, intermittent, or seasonal field positions
- o Limited to GS-7 and WG-10 and below sub-professional occupations (excluding clerical jobs)
- o Employment is limited to 180 days in a service year
- o Any amount of time/hours worked in a day counts as 1 day worked

AMS

Schedule A 213.3113 (f)(1) - Livestock and Poultry, Dairy, and Tobacco Programs

- o Agricultural Commodity Grader (GS-1980), and Technician (GS- 1981) positions at GS-9 and below for the tobacco, dairy, and poultry commodities
- o Meat Acceptance Specialists at GS-11 and below
- o Clerks, OA Clerks, and Computer Clerks at GS-5 and below
- o Laborers under the Wage System
- o Employment is limited to either 1,280 hours or 180 days in a service year
- o May also be used to make term-equivalent or indefinite appointments

Schedule A 213.3113 (f)(2) - Cotton and Specialty Crops Programs

- o GS-1980 and GS-1981 at GS-11 and below in the cotton, raisin, peanut, and processed and fresh fruit and vegetable commodities
- o Clerks, OA Clerks, and Computer Clerks at GS-5 and below in support of those commodities
- o HVI Operators and Leaders at WG/WL-2 and below
- o Instrument Mechanics/Workers/Helpers at WG-10 and below, and Laborers
- o Employment is limited to 180 days in a service year and up to 240 days in a service year due to unforeseen conditions (approval required)
- o May also be used to make term-equivalent or indefinite appointments

Schedule A 213.3113 (m)(1) - FGIS

- o Part-time, seasonal, or intermittent positions
- o Employment is limited to 1280 hours in a service year
- o 150 Agricultural Commodity Aids (GS-1981) GS-2 through 4
- o 100 Agricultural Commodity Technicians (GS-1981) GS-4 through 7

Recruitment Methods

Competitive Recruitment – you may use only one option unless your Program authorizes a waiver. (*see* Hiring Transformation Guidance at the end of this guide)

Case Examining

Case examining (also known as Delegated Examining (DE)) has been granted to USDA by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and enables recruitment from outside of the Federal workforce. Certificates of qualified candidates are valid for 90 days.

Eligibility Requirements:

All U.S. Citizens may apply under Case Examination procedures. Consideration cannot be limited by geographic area.

Types of Appointments:

Career/Career Conditional
Temporary
Term

Case examining announcements are conducted in accordance with Category Rating policies and procedures.

Category Rating

Category Rating is used to assess applicants for positions placing them in quality categories. The intent of Category Rating is to increase the number of eligible candidates from which a selecting official can choose while preserving veterans' preference rights.

For more information on Category Rating (e.g., referral of candidates, merging certificates), please visit: [Category Rating Process and FAQ](#)

For more information on how veterans' preference is applied in DE announcements and certificates, see [Category Rating - Application of Veterans' Preference](#)

Direct Hire Authority (DHA)

Direct Hire Authority (DHA) may be authorized by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for filling vacancies in specific occupations, grade levels, and locations. DHA is granted when it can be proven that there is a critical hiring need or a severe shortage of candidates. It expedites the hiring process by eliminating veterans' preference adjudication, rating (i.e., assessment questions or panels) and ranking (category rating), as well as other typical selection procedures.

Although there is increased flexibility, public notice is still required. Announcements must be posted on USAJOBS and be open to the public for a minimum period of 5 business days. All applicants who file a timely application and meet the basic eligibility and qualification requirements for the position are referred to the hiring manager for consideration and may be selected. Certificates of qualified candidates are valid for 90 days.

Appointment Options

Agencies may use any of the DHAs listed to make competitive service career/career conditional, term, or temporary appointments.

Current Government-wide Direct Hire Authorities:

Scientific, Technical, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Occupations – Direct hire authority has been granted and applies nationwide for the specific occupations/grade levels listed below. This authority expires October 11, 2023.

Position Title	Occupational Series	Grade Levels
Economist	GS-0110	GS-11 through 15
Biological Science	GS-0401	GS-11 through 15
Fishery Biologist	GS-0482	GS-11 through 15
General Engineer	GS-0801	GS-11 through 15
Civil Engineer	GS-0810	GS-11 through 15
Physical Sciences	GS-1301, 1306, 1310, 1320 only	GS-11 through 15
Actuary	GS-1510	GS-11 through 15
Mathematics	GS-1520	GS-11 through 15
Mathematical Statistician and Statistician	GS-1529, 1530	GS-11 through 15
Acquisitions	GS-1102	GS-11 through 15

Cybersecurity and Related Occupations – Direct hire authority was also approved and applies nationwide for the specific occupations/grade levels listed below. It may be used indefinitely or until OPM terminates the authority.

Position Title	Occupational Series	Grade Levels
Computer Engineers (Cybersecurity)	GS-0854	GS-12 through 15
Computer Scientists (Cybersecurity)	GS-1550	GS-12 through 15
Electronics Engineers (Cybersecurity)	GS-0855	GS-12 through 15
IT Cybersecurity Specialist**	GS-2210	GS-12 through 15

**These positions must require IT knowledge and IT competencies, the work must include cybersecurity functions as supported by the job codes in the Guide to Data Standards and the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) Workforce Framework, 2017, and the cybersecurity work must be performed the majority of the time.

Information Technology Management (Information Security and Cybersecurity)

– This authority applies to the GS-2210-9 and above in all geographic locations. This authority may be used indefinitely or until terminated by OPM.

Veterinary Medical Officer – Applies to GS-0701-11 and above in all geographic locations. This authority may be used indefinitely or until terminated by OPM.

Medical Occupations – Applies to all grade levels in all locations for Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist, GS-0647; Medical Officer, GS-0602; Nurse, GS-0610, GS- 0620; and Pharmacist, GS-0660. This authority may be used indefinitely or until terminated by OPM.

Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Occupations - This authority may be used nationwide for the grade levels specified below. It became effective on September 25, 2019, and will expire September 30, 2021.

Position Title	Occupational Series	Grade Levels
Agricultural Commodity Graders (all specialties)	GS-1980	GS-5/7
Agricultural Commodity Aids/Technicians (all specialties)	GS-1981	GS-3/4/5

Note: Probationary/Trial Period Requirements

Individuals selected for permanent appointments will be required to complete a 1 year probationary period and selectees for term appointments will be required to complete a 1-year trial period. However, there may be situations where the selectee has prior service that is creditable toward completion of the probationary/trial period which may mean the probationary/trial period is completed. The probationary period does not guarantee that the selectee will not have appeal rights. Check with your servicing specialist if you have questions.

Merit Promotion

Merit Promotion recruitment targets Federal employees with competitive status (already on a career or career conditional appointment), and may also include reinstatement-eligible individuals (previously employed under a career or career conditional appointment), and individuals who can apply under special hiring authorities.

For complete information on merit promotion requirements that are required for MRP and agencies and USDA see: [USDA Merit Promotion Plan](#)

Eligibility Requirements: The following individuals may apply under merit promotion announcements:

- Status candidates (within the Area of Consideration (AOC))
 - In APHIS, the Area of Consideration (AOC) must be at least APHIS wide. In AMS, the Hiring Manager may limit the AOC to agency specific programs, the agency, and/or a geographic location.
- Additional candidate pools and authorities if indicated on the vacancy announcement: Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA), Disability appointments and Reinstatement eligibles may be included in ‘Who May Apply’ in addition to the AOC
- The candidate must also meet the qualification requirements for the position being filled. Only “best qualified” candidates are referred on a certificate under merit promotion. There is no category rating, or veterans’ preference applied. You may do your own evaluation of candidates after receiving the certificate to determine those you will interview.

Types of Appointments:

Career/career conditional

Excepted appointments (special hiring authorities)

Temporary promotions (for career/career conditional employees)

Pathways Program**Interns**

The Internship program provides students in high school, college, trade school and other qualifying educational institutions with paid opportunities to work in agencies and explore Federal careers while completing their education. Students must be enrolled at least half-time.

Recent Graduates

The Recent Graduates program provides career entry into the civil service for those who, within the previous two years, graduated from qualifying educational institutions with an associates, bachelors, masters, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from qualifying educational institutions. To be eligible, applicants must apply within two years of degree or certificate completion, except for veterans precluded from doing so due to their military service obligation.

Veterans who meet that criteria will have up to six years after degree or certificate completion to apply.

Presidential Management Fellows (PMF)

The PMF program is the Federal Government's premier leadership development program for advanced degree (e.g., masters or professional degree) candidates. This program is administered by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM.) There is an annual offer of candidates, and there is a fee that must be paid to OPM to hire.

Type of Appointment:

Excepted Service appointment eligible to convert to a Competitive Service (Career Conditional) appointment upon completion of all program requirements.

STEP 2 - Review and Update Position Description (PD)

A current Position Description (PD) is essential for an accurate vacancy announcement. If this isn't addressed at the start of the hiring process it can cause delays when the announcement does not accurately reflect the position. If you have a PD that is five years or older, we recommend reviewing the PD and working with your Classification Specialist to make any necessary updates. This is especially true if there has been a supervisory change in the work unit and/or there has been a reorganization within the program unit. The updates can range from minor – cosmetic organizational language – to major – substantive additions and/or deletions of job duties. If you are unsure if your PDs are current, need help updating them, or simply want copies for your files, contact your servicing classification specialist.

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/contact_us/hrd/hrdservices/contact_us/hrd/hrd

For more information on classification, please visit the following link: [Classification Guide](#)

STEP 3 – Pre-Recruitment Consultation

Review the *Preparing for the Strategic Hiring Conversation* guidance in **Appendix C** and the Hiring Manager (HM) Checklist in **Appendix D**. Below you will find a summary of what you will need to provide for a complete recruitment package:

Hiring Process Documents	Required Document	What is this Document?	Why is this Document Step Needed?	Owner
1. Position Description (PD) and Coversheet	AD-332	This form certifies that the position description is accurate. Not required for previously established position descriptions that are currently up-to-date.	The PD defines the duties, responsibilities, and tasks associated with the job. It serves as the official record upon which most personnel actions are based. This ensures that managers and employees are clear on what competencies are required within that position to accomplish the Organization/division goals. It also aids HR in making appropriate qualification determinations.	HM/ Classification Specialist
2. Vacancy Assessment Questions	Occupational Series Question Library(s)	Job Analysis that contains competencies related to the series and questions related to those competencies.	The question library serves as the assessment method to assign an automated score to each applicant based on his or her experience and skills related to the position.	HM/Staffing Specialist (Staffing Specialist provides the established library and/or works to establish new questions.)
3. Examples of Specialized Experience (see Appendix F for guidance on creating)		Listing of 3-5 examples of specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade level.	This information provides applicants with a better understanding of the type of specialized experience needed at each grade level to qualify and identifies necessary qualifications for use by HR staff.	HM/Staffing Specialist
4. Relocation Addendum	APHIS Form 348	Certification of whether or not relocation expenses are necessary to recruit a sufficient applicant pool.	This document asks the hiring manager whether or not relocation expenses are authorized by the program.	Hiring Manager (HM)
5. Signed Request for Personnel Action (SF-52)	SF-52	The SF-52 is the official request for personnel action. It initiates the hiring process.	First and second line managers' approval on this document authorizes HR to proceed with the hiring action.	Hiring Manager (HM) <i>*Do not submit until requested by Staffing Specialist</i>

Job Analysis

A job analysis establishes the rating criteria used to determine which applicants will be referred for selection and should be based upon an in-depth analysis of the job. The staffing specialist will work closely with the hiring manager or the SME to determine the major job duties and identify the duties that are most important. Analysis of the job entails a review of the position description, classification standard, performance plan, qualification standard, etc., to ensure the duties are fully understood.

Once the major duties have been identified through the job analysis, the staffing specialist will work with the Hiring Manager and/or an identified SME to identify the competencies candidates need to successfully perform major duties. Candidates who do not have the outlined competencies will not be qualified and referred for the position.

Question Library

Your staffing specialist will provide you with already developed assessment questions to select from or will work with you to develop new assessment questions, as necessary. You will select 8-12 questions from the question library that assess or measure the competencies of the applicants to determine if they match those needed for the position.

The question library is fillable, allowing you to fill in the necessary information on the Competency Table. The Competency Table asks you to provide a brief explanation of the duties that support using that particular competency and then list the competency questions you would like to use in the vacancy announcement.

Specific instructions are included within the individual question libraries.

Specialized Experience

Well written specialized experience statements let applicants know what types of experience they need to possess and demonstrate in their resume to meet minimum qualifications. Specialized experience statements must be job related, based on essential duties and competencies required of the position, and meet any requirements listed in the qualifications standard for the occupational series.

For additional information on creating effective specialized experience examples see **Appendix F**.

[STEP 4 – Submit Request for Personnel Action \(‘Recruit’ SF-52\)](#)

The ‘Recruit’ SF-52 is the official request for action to be taken by HR. Your staffing specialist will verify when he or she has received all required recruitment material and is ready to have you submit your Recruit SF-52. First and second line managers’ approval on the SF-52 authorizes action and confirms the position is approved to fill.

Submit SF-52s to the MRP Human Resources Operations office via [eTracker](#), an electronic system specific to USDA, Marketing & Regulatory Programs. Typically, office administrative support personnel initiate the SF-52 forms. The first or second line supervisor will then need to log into the system to review the SF-52 information and agree to/authorize release of the SF-52 form. Please contact your administrative support staff if you have additional questions about submitting a personnel action through eTracker.

STEP 5 – Create Vacancy Announcement/Receive and Review Applications/Issue Certificate

Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA)

Using the materials supplied, HR will create a Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA.) You will receive a courtesy copy from the USA Staffing system and will have a brief opportunity to review the JOA and approve the information or make suggested changes.

Please click on the link below to access the Hiring Manager Resource page for USA Staffing. For an overview of the system, as well as information on how to review a vacancy preview, access “A Quick Start Guide for Hiring Managers” at the bottom of the screen:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/HiringManager/index.php?title=Hiring_Manager

After the review, return the JOA to HR through the USA Staffing system. The vacancy announcement will be posted on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) USAJOBS website: <https://www.usajobs.gov/>

If employees or applicants ask about the application process or the status of their application, advise them to contact the applicant help line listed on the vacancy announcement. Applicants are also able to view current status information for an application by logging into their USAJOBS account.

Qualification Determination

OPM Qualification standards outline the necessary basic eligibility requirements for occupations and for each grade in the occupation. They specify the minimum quality level and amount of experience required and often allow education as a substitute for experience.

HR uses the OPM Operating Manual: Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions, classified position description, and specialized experience examples (if applicable) to determine the basic qualifications of each applicant. We review applications for basic education requirements and minimum qualifications (related experience and/or education substitution).

For Case Examining and Pathways recruitments that follow category rating procedures, applicants will be assigned an assessment score based on their responses to the assessment questions you’ve selected. Only those candidates who score in the Best Qualified category (95-100) will be reviewed for qualifications initially. For Merit Promotion or any recruitment without a scored assessment (e.g. Direct Hire), we will review all applicants for eligibility, basic education requirements and minimum qualifications.

Preparing for your certificate

Once the announcement closes, a certificate is typically issued within 15-20 calendar days. Depending on the size of the applicant pool or current recruitment workload, more time may be necessary.

The hiring manager should prepare for receipt of the certificate during this time by:

- Preparing (review/update) interview questions
- Identifying the members of the interview panel (if you plan to have one)

Once issued, you will have 15 calendar days to make a selection. Additional extensions of the certificate may be available and must be discussed with HR on a case-by-case basis.

STEP 6 – Conduct Interviews/Check References/Make Selection

Reviewing Resumes

When you receive your certificate you, or your delegated panel of subject matter experts, should thoroughly review all candidate applications and determine which candidates to interview. If anyone else needs to be added to the certificate review, please contact your servicing Staffing Specialist: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/HRD/Contact_Us

Interviewing Applicants

As the hiring official, you will likely be the one who conducts the interviews. However, you may designate another person or a panel with knowledge of the position to participate in the interview. We recommend considering diversity when determining the panel make up.

Although not required, conducting interviews is highly recommended, as they give you an opportunity to gather additional information from the applicant and verify the skills and competencies listed in their application package. An interview will provide you with more support in determining and justifying your selection. The interview can be especially useful in evaluating oral communication abilities and interpersonal skills that are not otherwise easily measured in writing.

If a panel is used, all members should be at or above the full performance level of the position being filled and typically include subject matter experts with knowledge of the position. Facilitators and/or EEO observers are not required, however, your program may have internal guidance requiring the use of these individuals during your interview process.

Number of Interviews Required

Case Examining (public announcement) certificates do not require a particular number of candidates be interviewed. However, veterans' preference applies and those applicants listed at the top of your certificate with an identified veteran's preference (CPS, CP, XP, TP, etc.) must be considered before you can consider any non-veteran candidates listed below them on the certificate. Therefore, you may want to consider only contacting/interviewing the veterans initially. You will need to either select them or receive a declination before you consider the non-veterans on your certificate.

Merit promotion (internal status candidates, reinstatement eligibles, and special hiring authorities) certificates are covered by the USDA Merit Promotion Plan (MPP) and are subject to certain interview requirements. Your certificates will be listed as either Competitive Merit Promotion (competitive) or Merit Referral List (noncompetitive). If you will be interviewing from a Competitive Merit Promotion certificate, then the USDA MPP requires that you interview at least five candidates (or all those referred, if fewer than five) from that same certificate. Noncompetitive merit promotion certificates do not require a minimum number of interviews.

If any of the candidates you contact for an interview decline further consideration, they would count toward the requirement to interview at least five candidates.

Interviewing Techniques

Interview questions should elicit job-related information relative to the competencies of the position for which the candidate is applying. Prepare questions in advance to ensure that all candidates are treated in the same manner. Generally, ask the same questions of each candidate. However, you or the panel may ask follow-up questions to obtain additional or clarifying information in order to assess an individual's specific qualifications for the position. Allot the same amount of interview time for each applicant, with time allowed for the applicant to ask questions of the interviewer(s).

We recommend taking notes in order to record key points from the interview. It is also helpful to note the date, time, place, and length of the interview. Keep a record of the interview questions, any notes made regarding their responses, and the name of individual(s) who conducted the interview on file. This will be helpful if candidates ask for feedback. This information also can be critical in the event that a candidate files an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint.

You may ask all candidates to bring writing samples, such as reports, publications, or technical articles to the interview. Asking applicants to take a writing or other work sample test at the time of interview must be documented upfront in the vacancy announcement. You should work with your staffing specialist to ensure any work samples and simulations (e.g., writing test, proofreading test, presentation) follow OPM's assessment guidance and does not create disparate impact for any applicants.

Please see the following link for the complete guidance on work sample assessments:

<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/reference-materials/assessmentdecisionguide.pdf>

For supplemental guidance on interviewing, please see our [Interviewing, Reference Checking, and Selection: A Guide for Selecting Officials](#).

Documenting a Candidate's Failure to Respond

1. E-mail and call the candidate to arrange the interview and include a deadline of at least 24 hours for a reply; when calling, record the date and time and a summary of the conversation or the details of the message that was left. The two methods should be used to ensure the candidate receives the message as soon as possible.
 - a. If the candidate responds and accepts the opportunity to interview, confirm the interview by e-mail and state that not showing up for the appointment will be considered a declination.
 - b. If the candidate declines, retain a copy of the e-mail (if applicable) or create a written record of the telephone conversation, including the date and time of the call.
2. If there is no response by the deadline, please send the following e-mail and allow the candidate 2 business days to respond:

I recently contacted you by e-mail and telephone regarding your application for our (Position Title) vacancy, announcement number (XXXXXX). I have not received a response to my inquiries regarding your availability for an interview. As a reminder, you replied affirmatively to the question in the applicant questionnaire about understanding that correspondence would be through e-mail and the need to keep your e-mail address current. Failure to respond by (time/date-2 business days) will be regarded as a declination and you will not receive further consideration for the position.

- a. If the candidate responds and accepts the opportunity to interview, confirm the interview by e-mail and state that not showing up for the appointment will be considered a declination.
- b. If the candidate declines, retain a copy of the e-mail (if applicable) or create a written record of the telephone conversation, including the date and time of the call.
- c. If the candidate does not respond, make a written record that a response was not received.

3. Send copies of all correspondence to HR for inclusion in the announcement case file and keep a copy for your records.

Checking References

The USDA Merit Promotion Plan requires selecting officials to complete reference checks prior to making a final selection from a merit promotion certificate. It is highly recommend that you conduct reference checks for all other selections (e.g., Case Examining, Pathways, noncompetitive hiring authorities).

For specific guidance on conducting reference checks, please see our [Interviewing, Reference Checking, and Selection: A Guide for Selecting Officials](#).

Extending Certificates

If you need an extension of your certificate, send the request for an extension of the certificate in USA Staffing.

Submitting a tentative selection

Once you have made your tentative selection(s), document the certificate and submit the selection(s) to HR using USA Staffing. Annotate your top selection(s) by marking them as selected in the system. Select at least one and no more than three alternate selections, in order from first to third choice. If necessary, HR will contact the hiring manager prior to proceeding with an alternate selection in first to third choice order. Do not discuss job offers or selections with any potential candidates. Please review the USA Staffing Hiring Manager Making Selections guidance for more information.

https://my.aphis.usda.gov/myportal/myaphis/employeeresources/human-resources/staffing_recruitment/hiring_managers

Please click on the link below to access the Hiring Resource Manager for USA Staffing. For an overview of the system, which includes information on how to return a selection, access “A Quick Start Guide for Hiring Managers” at the bottom of the screen:

https://help.usastaffing.gov/HiringManager/index.php?title=Hiring_Manager

Notifying candidates of your decision

Once HR has completed the pre-onboarding process and issued a final offer letter to your selectee, you should follow-up with all of the other interviewed candidates to notify them of your decision and respond to any questions they may have.

Please note that 5 CFR 330.502 restricts movement of employees (e.g., promotion, transfer, reinstatement, reassignment, or detail to a different position or different geographical area) within the first 90 days of competitive appointment to protect competitive principles. This applies to competitive hiring under Case Examining/Delegated Examining. We strongly recommend using the same 90 day window for appointments made through Merit Promotion to ensure there is no perceived or actual adverse impact on any other candidates.

STEP 7 – Make Tentative Job Offer & Issue Pre-Employment Paperwork

Once we have received your selection in USA Staffing, we will send a tentative offer letter to the candidate via email in USA Staffing Onboarding. As the hiring manager, you will be copied on the tentative offer email. If you wish to contact the selectee personally about the tentative offer, you may do so after receiving the email.

Pre-Employment Paperwork

Your selectee will be asked to complete a variety of pre-employment forms and be fingerprinted (if applicable) based upon the type of appointment and any unique position specific documents will be requested (e.g. official transcripts when qualifications require education, applicant drug testing, etc.) The majority of the information and forms needed from the selectee are completed in the USA Staffing Onboarding system.

Projected effective dates may be provided to a selectee, but a final effective date cannot be set until all pre-employment paperwork has been completed and reviewed by HR. Once that has been done, we will provide your selectee with a final offer letter confirming the effective date of their appointment. We recommend that the effective date for new hires (not currently MRP employees) be set at least one pay period (2 weeks) out. This provides the lead time needed for equipment to be obtained and access accounts to be established. Without sufficient time before the effective date you can expect delays in establishing the selectee's access and you may need to take additional steps to alert the USDA-Client Experience Center (CEC) that you have a new employee needing computer setup and access.

What if a candidate declines a tentative offer?

When the candidate receives the tentative offer letter from USA Staffing, they will be instructed to log into the system to take further action. Upon logging into USA Staffing, they will either accept the offer, request to be contacted, or decline the offer. If the candidate requests to be contacted or declines the tentative offer, the Staffing Specialist will reach out to you with further instructions.

If the candidate contacts you directly and declines the position, please complete a [Verbal Declination Record Form](#)

Recruitment Incentives

If you believe you need to offer a recruitment incentive to attract the best qualified candidates or your selectee has declined their tentative offer, consult your HR Specialist about the appropriateness of using incentives in **Appendix E**.

STEP 8 – Onboard New Employee

After we have completed working with your selectee on their pre-employment paperwork, your critical role of welcoming and onboarding your new employee begins.

Onboarding integrates employees into their new work environment. It starts before their first day, goes beyond the orientation process and follows the employee through their first year of employment.

Effective employee onboarding serves three purposes. First, it ensures that the employee feels welcome, comfortable, prepared and supported. Second, effective onboarding increases the new employee's ability to be productive and successful, both immediately and over time. Finally, successful onboarding leads to satisfaction and retention, which allows the Agency to continue to fulfill its mission.

Your role is to welcome the new employee, introduce them to the culture and values of the Agency, explain what is expected of them, and enhance their experience. Supervisors play a vital role in making their transition into the agency as smooth and successful as possible.

On the employee's first day, please ensure they participate in a New Employee Orientation (NEO) session within your program. In addition to providing further employment information and instructions, the NEO facilitator and/or you as the supervisor will assist the employee in completing their 'First Day' forms. You can find additional resources and information at the following link: [New Employee Orientation - Supervisor Resources](#)

Upon completion of the Day 1 forms, please ensure those forms are forwarded to the servicing processing associate in Human Resources Operations. To identify your service provider or for questions, please visit the following link: https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/business-services/contact_us/hrd/hrd

Appendix A

Merit System Principles (5 USC § 2301)

1. Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
2. All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
3. Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.
4. All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
5. The Federal work force should be used efficiently and effectively.
6. Employees should be retained on the basis of adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.
7. Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.
8. Employees should be--
 - A. protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and
 - B. prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.
9. Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences--
 - A. a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or
 - B. mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

Prohibited Personnel Practices (5 USC § 2302(b))

Any employee who has authority to take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action, shall not, with respect to such authority—

1. discriminate for or against any employee or applicant for employment—
 - A. on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, as prohibited under section 717 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ([42 U.S.C. 2000e—16](#));
 - B. on the basis of age, as prohibited under sections 12 and 15 of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 ([29 U.S.C. 631, 633a](#));
 - C. on the basis of sex, as prohibited under section 6(d) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 ([29 U.S.C. 206 \(d\)](#));
 - D. on the basis of handicapping condition, as prohibited under section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ([29 U.S.C. 791](#)); or
 - E. on the basis of marital status or political affiliation, as prohibited under any law, rule, or regulation;

2. solicit or consider any recommendation or statement, oral or written, with respect to any individual who requests or is under consideration for any personnel action unless such recommendation or statement is based on the personal knowledge or records of the person furnishing it and consists of—
 - A. an evaluation of the work performance, ability, aptitude, or general qualifications of such individual; or
 - B. an evaluation of the character, loyalty, or suitability of such individual;
3. coerce the political activity of any person (including the providing of any political contribution or service), or take any action against any employee or applicant for employment as a reprisal for the refusal of any person to engage in such political activity;
4. deceive or willfully obstruct any person with respect to such person's right to compete for employment;
5. influence any person to withdraw from competition for any position for the purpose of improving or injuring the prospects of any other person for employment;
6. grant any preference or advantage not authorized by law, rule, or regulation to any employee or applicant for employment (including defining the scope or manner of competition or the requirements for any position) for the purpose of improving or injuring the prospects of any particular person for employment;
7. appoint, employ, promote, advance, or advocate for a appointment, employment, promotion, or advancement, in or to a civilian position any individual who is a relative (as defined in section [3110\(a\)\(3\)](#) of this title) of such employee if such position is in the agency in which such employee is serving as a public official (as defined in section [3110\(a\)\(2\)](#) of this title) or over which such employee exercises jurisdiction or control as such an official;
8. take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, a personnel action with respect to any employee or applicant for employment because of—
 - A. any disclosure of information by an employee or applicant which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences—
 - i. a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or
 - ii. gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, if such disclosure is not specifically prohibited by law and if such information is not specifically required by Executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or the conduct of foreign affairs; or
 - B. any disclosure to the Special Counsel, or to the Inspector General of an agency or another employee designated by the head of the agency to receive such disclosures, of information which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences—
 - i. a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or
 - ii. gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety;
9. take or fail to take, or threaten to take or fail to take, any personnel action against any employee or applicant for employment because of—
 - A. the exercise of any appeal, complaint, or grievance right granted by any law, rule, or regulation—
 - (i) with regard to remedying a violation of paragraph (8); or
 - (ii) other than with regard to remedying a violation of paragraph (8);
 - B. testifying for or otherwise lawfully assisting any individual in the exercise of any right referred to in subparagraph (A);
 - C. cooperating with or disclosing information to the Inspector General of an agency, or the Special Counsel, in accordance with applicable provisions of law; or
 - D. for refusing to obey an order that would require the individual to violate a law;

10. discriminate for or against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of conduct which does not adversely affect the performance of the employee or applicant or the performance of others; except that nothing in this paragraph shall prohibit an agency from taking into account in determining suitability or fitness any conviction of the employee or applicant for any crime under the laws of any State, of the District of Columbia, or of the United States;
11.
 - A. knowingly take, recommend, or approve any personnel action if the taking of such action would violate a veterans' preference requirement; or
 - B. knowingly fail to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action if the failure to take such action would violate a veterans' preference requirement;
12. take or fail to take any other personnel action if the taking of or failure to take such action violates any law, rule, or regulation implementing, or directly concerning, the merit system principles contained in [section 2301](#) of this title; or
13. implement or enforce any nondisclosure policy, form, or agreement, if such policy, form, or agreement does not contain the following statement: "These provisions are consistent with and do not supersede, conflict with, or otherwise alter the employee obligations, rights, or liabilities created by existing statute or Executive order relating to (1) classified information, (2) communications to Congress, (3) the reporting to an Inspector General of a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety, or (4) any other whistleblower protection. The definitions, requirements, obligations, rights, sanctions, and liabilities created by controlling Executive orders and statutory provisions are incorporated into this agreement and are controlling."
14. access the medical record of another employee or an applicant for employment as a part of, or otherwise in furtherance of, any conduct described in paragraphs (1) through (13).

Appendix B

HIRING OPTION	DESCRIPTION	RESOURCES
DISABILITY HIRING Schedule A Hiring Authority	This excepted service authority is used to appoint individuals with physical, psychiatric and intellectual disabilities to any position and grade level. Such individuals may be eligible for conversion to a permanent position after two years of satisfactory service.	Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP): https://wrp.gov/LoginPre.do?method=login Complete the steps to request a password: https://wrp.gov/EmployerUserRegisterFormPre.do
PEACE CORPS Returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Staff	Agencies can appoint applicants who have successfully completed qualifying service in the Peace Corps for up to 1 year following completion of the service to any position and grade level. *must clear ICTAP through an announcement on USAJOBS.	Employer Resources: https://www.peacecorps.gov/returned-volunteers/careers/employer-resources/ Post vacancy to the free Peace Corps' interactive job board: https://www.peacecorps.gov/returned-volunteers/careers/career-link/ Attend a career fair: https://www.peacecorps.gov/events/
VETERANS HIRING	Allows you to appoint eligible veterans without competition to positions up to and including the GS-	Veterans Employment Toolkit: https://www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/resources.asp
Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)	11 grade level (the full performance level may be higher).	VA Vocational & Rehabilitation Employment (VR&E) Coordinators: https://www.benefits.va.gov/VOCREHAB/docs/EmploymentCoordinators.xlsx
VETERANS HIRING 30% or More Disabled Veteran	Allows you to noncompetitively appoint eligible disabled veterans to any position and grade level.	
VETERANS HIRING Spouses and Widows/Widowers of Certain Military Members	Allows eligible spouses and widows/widowers of certain military members to be appointed without competition to any position and grade level. *must clear ICTAP through an announcement on USAJOBS.	
VETERANS HIRING Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) Program	A work training program that provides eligible veterans with the opportunity to obtain training and practical job experience. At the end of the training program, you can place the NPWE participant in a permanent position through special hiring authorities.	Dept. of Labor resource to contact local Veteran Employment Representative: https://www.dol.gov/veterans/employers/local.htm NPWE Resource: https://www.benefits.va.gov/VOCREHAB/docs/Non-paidWorkExperience.pdf

Appendix C

Preparing for the Strategic Hiring Conversation - Topics to discuss during pre-recruitment consultation regarding

Organization's Mission and Goals

- Have there been, or will there be any changes to the organization's mission or goals which could impact recruitment (new skillsets needed?)
- What are the critical challenges facing the organization in the short-term and long-term?

Position and Role

- What are the major responsibilities, duties, and tasks this person will perform?
- Approximately what portion of the person's time would be spent on each of these key duties?
- How does this position contribute to the mission of the organization?
- What is the professional development potential for this position? (career progression to which this position may lead?)

Skills, Competencies and Experience

- What skills and competencies are needed to be successful on the job?
- How do these skills rank in terms of critical importance for success in this position?
- What does a candidate need to know to be successful in this position?
- What level of knowledge is required? (rank each area basic, intermediate, expert)
- What questions might the hiring official ask to gauge a candidate's knowledge in these key areas?
- What kind of professional experience is required and/or preferred for the position?
- What degrees/certifications/clearances are required and/or preferred?
- Who are the SME(s) in the hiring official's organization who might be helpful in the job analysis, resume screening and interviewing processes?

Other Requirements

- Are there specific requirements that candidates should know about this job, including: travel requirements, overtime, seasonal peaks, and so forth?

Recruitment Strategies

- Were you satisfied with prior recruitment efforts? If not, why?
- Were there sufficient candidates in prior recruitment efforts? If not, why?
- Where would you find the best candidates?
 - For what other organizations might potential candidates currently work?
 - Where have good candidates been found in the past?
 - To what associations might good candidates belong?
 - Are there contractor organizations who have the desired talent?
- Is it difficult to recruit qualified candidates? If so, what flexibilities should be used in this hiring process? Should there be:
 - A recruitment or relocation incentive?
 - Paid relocation expenses?
 - Student loan repayment?
 - Other incentives/offerings?
- Are you considering using additional hurdles to assist with selection/interview process as follows:
 - Conduct a presentation on a leadership, technical, or non-technical topic (up to 15 minutes)
 - Complete a writing sample and/or writing exercise
- How can the diversity of the organization be improved and enhanced through this recruitment?
- Are there special considerations or processes that must be considered in this hiring process?
 - Budget concerns
 - Special approvals

Appendix D

Hiring Manager Checklist

- Validate position to be filled against workforce, succession and recruitment plan
- Verify accuracy, update, or develop a new position description
Consult with your Classification Specialist (if needed)
- Develop recruitment strategy - Discussed with Staffing Specialist: Talent pool and recruitment activity
 - Recruitment method: Case Exam, Merit Promotion, Pathways, Non-Comp Options, and other recruitment alternatives (see Staffing Alternatives)
 - Grade level(s) to recruit
 - Determine assessment tool and complete any necessary job analysis
 - Recruitment/relocation incentives
- Initiate the Request for Personnel Action (SF-52) through e-Tracker when requested
- Develop or review interview questions & coordinate panel members
- Review instructions for hiring managers, sent by Human Resources
 - Schedule and conduct interviews
 - Check references
- Return the certificate and notify Human Resources (Staffing) of your selection

Appendix E

Incentive or Pay Option	Maximum Amount	Duration	Which employees are eligible?	Service Agreement Required?	Required Forms	Approval Level
Recruitment Incentive Reference-HRDG 4500 Sec. E	25% of salary	Lump sum payment at time of appointment or series of payments after specified periods of service	Competitive and Excepted Service - <u>New</u> Perm/Term/Temp appointments	Yes	AD-1073 AD-1074 Checklist	Agency Administrator
Relocation Incentive Reference-HRDG 4500 Sec. E	25% of salary	Lump sum payment after a residence is established in the new location	Competitive and Excepted Service - Current employees who must relocate to accept a new position	Yes	AD-1073 AD-1074 Checklist	Agency Administrator
Retention Incentive Reference-HRDG 4500 Sec. F	25% of salary/10% for categories of employees	One year- may be renewed with approval	Competitive and Excepted Service - Perm appointments with at least one year of service	No, if the incentive is paid in equal biweekly installments	AD-1073 AD-1074	USDA Asst. Secretary for Administration
Student Loan Repayment Reference- HRDG 4537	\$10,000/year \$60,000 career limit	At discretion of the agency based on availability of funds each fiscal year and subject to regulatory limits on annual and total amounts that may be paid	Competitive and Excepted Service - Perm/Term appointments	Yes	MRP-250-R MRP-251-R MRP-252-R	APHIS: Manager or Supervisor who is at least one level above recommending official AMS: Administrator or Associate Administrator
Superior Qualifications and Special Needs Pay Setting Authority Reference-HRDG 4500 Sec. D	Step 10 of the GS grade level to which appointed and not more than 20 % of existing salary, if applicable	Permanent once employee is appointed and is used to set pay for subsequent personnel actions within the employing agency.	Competitive and Excepted Service- <u>New</u> Perm/Term/Temp appointments under the GS pay plan	No	MRP-145-R MRP-147-R MRP 149 AD-3077	MRP HRD Director- if position filled at full performance level
						USDA Chief Human Capital Officer- if position filled below the full performance level
Annual Leave Service Credit for Non-Federal Work Experience and Uniformed Service (retired members) Reference-HRDG 4500 Sec. M	No maximum- but no benefit for credit beyond 15 years	Permanent after completion of one full continuous year of service with the appointing agency	Competitive and Excepted Service- <u>New</u> Perm/Term/Temp appointments Reappointment after 90 day or more break in service	Yes	Documentation of service from employee and written justification from recommending official-on official form (HR completes SF-144A)	Manager or Supervisor who is at least one level above recommending official

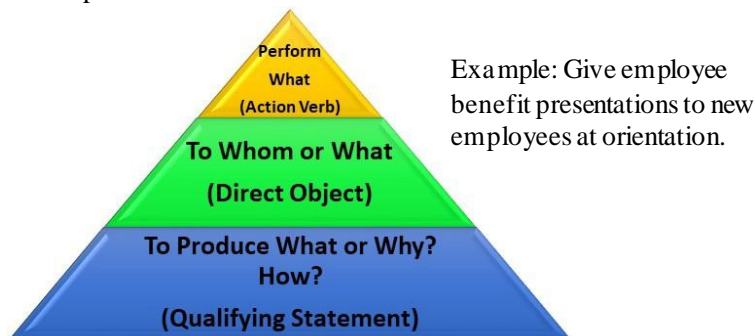
Appendix F - Specialized Experience Guide for Hiring Managers

Having accurate specialized experience on your vacancy announcement could be the difference between filling your job with a quality candidate and not filling your job at all.

To ensure you have the right specialized experience on your job announcement, collaborate with your HR Staffing Specialist to follow these basic guidelines....

Remember that specialized experience defines the skill set(s) of a qualified applicant -- not the best qualified applicant.

- Assessment questions provide an initial ranking of candidates against the experience relevant to your position.
- Candidates are then assessed against the specialized experience and OPM standards.



Do's and Don'ts of Creating Specialized Experience:

Do's:

- Be directly related to the position and reflected/supported by the position description
- Be able to be demonstrated in a resume
- Include experience that is an absolute necessity for the position
- Reflect experience needed to prepare a candidate to perform the duties of the position without more than normal supervision of the grade level being filled
- Be different for each grade level
- Exercise caution when using "must" or "may"

Don'ts:

- Contain lists or too many activities or functions that make the statement too cumbersome or detailed
- Be written as a knowledge, skill, ability, or competency nor contain adjectives that cannot be measured (i.e. exceptional, superior, extensive)
- Be too restrictive for the targeted applicant pool
- Contain additional requirements beyond the basic qualifications
- Contain acronyms/Federal acronyms on case exam announcements
- List the duties of the current position description being announced

Specialized experience statements should be specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant to the position and grade level being announced.

Specific

- The examples should be specific, especially at higher grade levels. Avoid generalized examples when possible.

Measurable

- The examples must be measurable on a resume or cover letter. Avoid examples that are typically measured through observation (e.g., Attention to Detail, Presentation Skills).

Attainable

- The examples must be attainable or realistic for the position. Write examples that are appropriate for the grade level. While specific is good, we cannot be restrictive.

Relevant

- The examples must be relevant to the position and the occupational series. Avoid examples that do not have a nexus to the position.

Definition of specialized experience is at the next lower grade or equivalent to that in the Federal Service, NOT at the grade the position is being recruited for.

For example, if you are recruiting for a GS-14 that would require experience briefing senior executives as a project manager in an organization, your specialized experience would include statements that reference briefing middle management as a project member at the GS-13 level or equivalent.

Do not include too many requirements - because applicants must demonstrate their experience on their resume in order to meet the definition of specialized experience.

3-5 statements is a good "rule of thumb" to describe your CORE qualifications.

You may need to provide more in some cases, but critically evaluate if that is necessary with your HR Staffing Specialist... and don't be afraid to edit.

