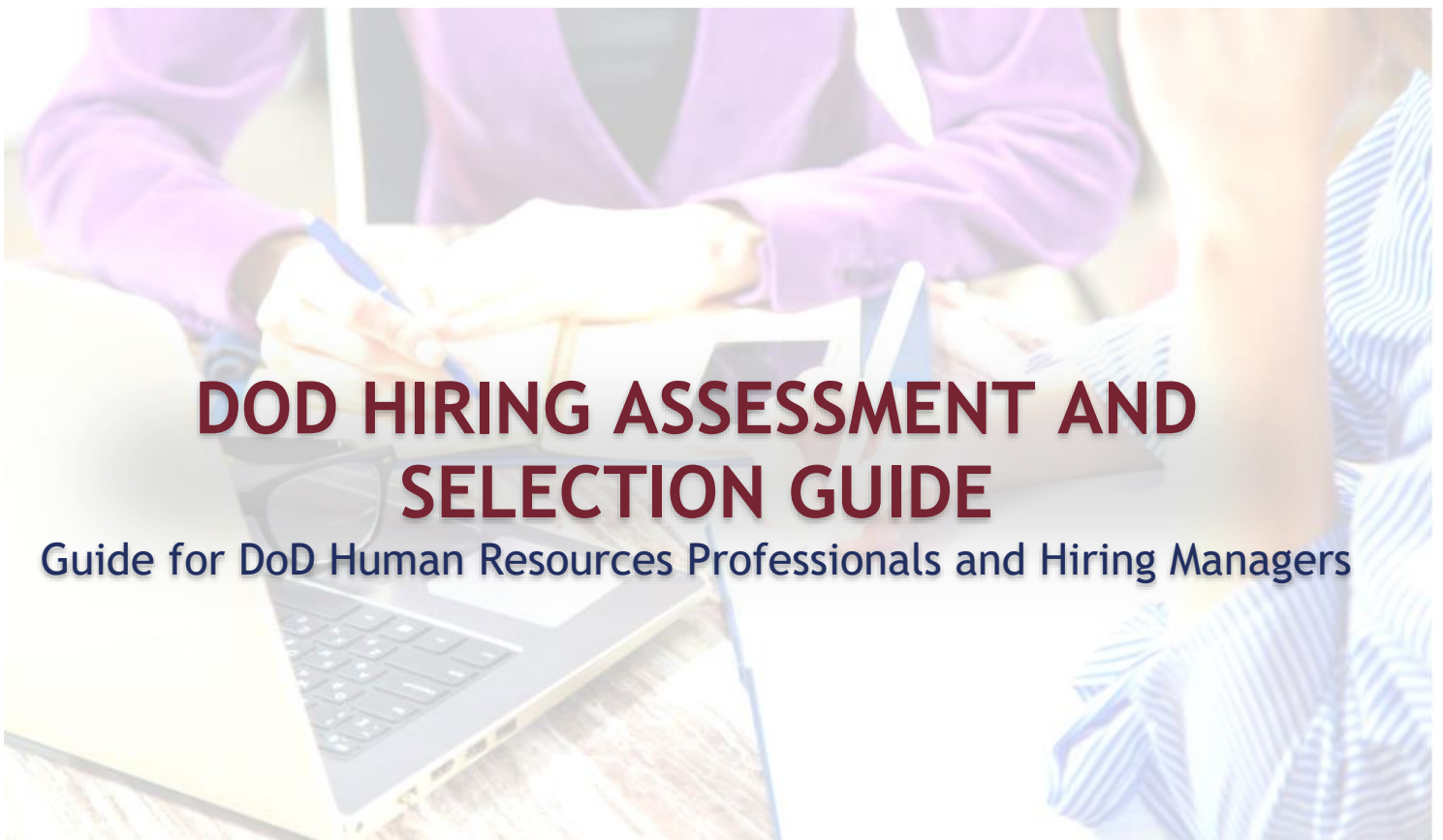DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

DCPAS
Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service

DOD HIRING ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION GUIDE
Guide for DoD Human Resources Professionals and Hiring Managers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

This guide is a resource for assessment strategies and provides information on best practices within the Department of Defense (DoD), developed as a result of Executive Order (E.O.) 13932 issued on June 26, 2020. The E.O. mandates modernizing and reforming the assessment and hiring of Federal job candidates, and commits the Federal government to improving identification of skills requirements and making effective assessments of the skills job candidates possess.

The E.O. also directed agencies government-wide to: 1) refrain from relying solely on candidate self-assessments of their qualifications (e.g., occupational questionnaires) in assessing candidates - applicants are to clear other assessment hurdles to be considered qualified in examinations and thus eligible for preference and referral; 2) continually evaluate the effectiveness of different assessment strategies to ensure the quality and integrity of their hiring process; and 3) be reminded that the application of education will be a prerequisite to Federal employment only when a minimum educational qualification is legally required (section 3308 of title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)) for the performance of the position's required duties. Merit-based reforms will replace degree-based hiring with skills and competency-based hiring, ensuring that candidates most capable of performing the duties of a specified position are hired.

Further, this guide is designed to aid Human Resources (HR) professionals who assist hiring managers in determining the most effective recruitment strategies to meet the unique mission and workforce needs in the DoD. This guide gives DoD a variety of assessments options that may be utilized for multiple positions which will support DoD in developing and implementing agency assessment strategies. The information on personnel assessment, assessment methods, samples and best practices provide sufficient, but not all-inclusive, information to use in conjunction with DoD Component Headquarters and field-level policies and procedures.

2.0 COVERAGE

This reference guide covers competitive service positions, as defined by section 2102 of title 5, U.S.C., in DoD and is designed for use by DoD HR professionals and hiring managers.

3.0 QUALIFYING CANDIDATES

In accordance with section 338 of title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Federal agencies use the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) policy for General Schedule (GS) (or equivalent) white collar occupations in the Federal Government. Under this authority, agencies are responsible for conducting all competitive examining functions from posting job opportunity announcements to evaluating candidates and notifying them of their results. Currently, many qualification standards permit candidates to qualify based on education/training, experience, or a combination of the two. Federal agencies analyze work and apply OPM qualification standards to determine the education, training,

experience and/or other requirements (e.g., licensure) that a candidate must possess in order to be considered for a position or occupation (5 USC 5112, 5 USC 5105, USC 5102 (5)(b)). At present, most agencies use federal resumes and an occupational questionnaire to screen candidates for minimum qualifications. Additional assessment is necessary to address the actual competencies needed to perform work successfully.

Education shall be a prerequisite to Federal employment only when a minimum educational qualification is legally required (5 USC 3308) for the performance of the position's required duties. Education shall be an allowable substitute for required experience in qualifying for a position only where education directly reflects the specific skills or competencies necessary to perform the job. Position descriptions and job postings published by agencies will be based on analysis that emphasizes the specific skills and competencies required to perform the work of the position successfully. Agencies' analysis of work should follow the guidelines included in the Delegated Examination Operations Handbook, 2019 (Chapter 2).[1]

Currently, candidates for Federal employment may qualify for employment by holding formal educational credentials or by obtaining relevant experience (e.g., training). In accordance with E.O. 13932 Sec.2(a)(i)-(ii), OPM is updating General Schedule Qualifications Policy so that candidates will now be able to qualify for employment on the basis of competency-based assessments when there are no legal educational requirements.

When preparing a list of qualified candidates, currently the most common considerations are education and experience. With implementation of E.O. 13932, agencies will now utilize assessments at the pre-certification stage as a third co-equal path[2], and not rely solely on candidate self-evaluation of their qualifications (resumes and occupational questionnaires). Developing competency-based assessments will benefit DoD by generating a wider talent pool of highly skilled job candidates from which DoD Components may select workers with non-traditional educational paths to serve and support current and emerging DoD mission requirements.

4.0   PERSONNEL ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION

Personnel assessment is a systematic approach to gathering information about individuals. HR professionals use this information to make employment or career-related decisions about candidates and employees. Assessments may measure an individual's ability, skill, work style, work values or vocational interests for the purpose of selection, placement, promotion, career counseling, or training. Assessments can predict job performance, managerial potential, career success, job satisfaction or tenure and are administered in various formats (e.g., paper and pencil, work-sample, or computer simulation). Not unlike many other organizations, DoD wants to be able to identify and hire, efficiently and fairly, the best candidates; and a properly developed and applied assessment tool may yield successful results.
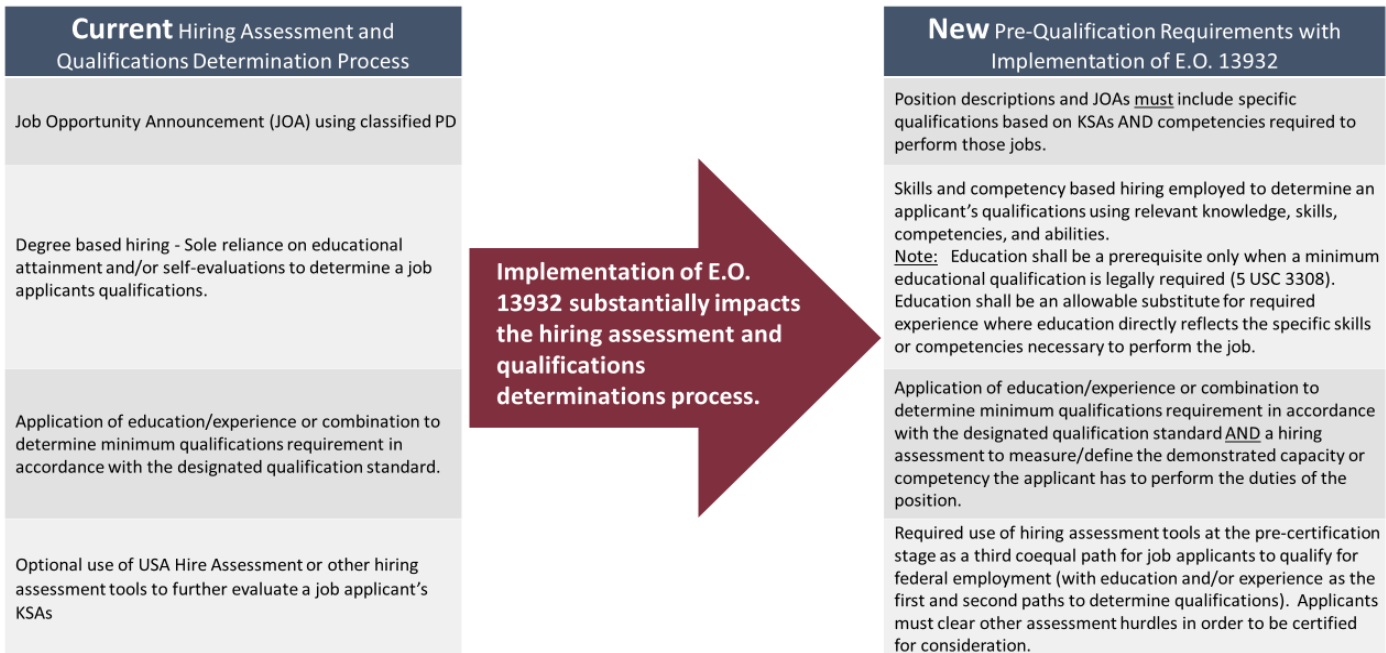
---

[1] OPM Memo, "Implementation of E.O. 13932; Determining Qualifications and the Use of Assessment Tools When Filing Positions," dated July 31, 2020.
[2] The coequal paths are defined as: (1) education (when it is legally required), (2) experience, or (3) a skills-based assessment.

DoD will continue using assessment tools in a purposeful manner and using tools that are appropriate for the targeted population. Most importantly, DoD will use the whole-person approach to make assessment and selection decisions. The table below identifies the major impacts of implementation of E.O. 13932. **Figure 1** provides a comparison of the hiring assessment process before and after implementation.

Figure 1. EO Impacts

Current Hiring Assessment and Qualifications Determination Process

Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) using classified PD

Degree based hiring - Sole reliance on educational attainment and/or self-evaluations to determine a job applicants qualifications.

Application of education/experience or combination to determine minimum qualifications requirement in accordance with the designated qualification standard.

Optional use of USA Hire Assessment or other hiring assessment tools to further evaluate a job applicant's KSAs

Implementation of E.O. 13932 substantially impacts the hiring assessment and qualifications determinations process.

New Pre-Qualification Requirements with Implementation of E.O. 13932

Position descriptions and JOAs must include specific qualifications based on KSAs AND competencies required to perform those jobs.

Skills and competency based hiring employed to determine an applicant's qualifications using relevant knowledge, skills, competencies, and abilities.
Note: Education shall be a prerequisite only when a minimum educational qualification is legally required (5 USC 3308). Education shall be an allowable substitute for required experience where education directly reflects the specific skills or competencies necessary to perform the job.

Application of education/experience or combination to determine minimum qualifications requirement in accordance with the designated qualification standard AND a hiring assessment to measure/define the demonstrated capacity or competency the applicant has to perform the duties of the position.

Required use of hiring assessment tools at the pre-certification stage as a third coequal path for job applicants to qualify for federal employment (with education and/or experience as the first and second paths to determine qualifications). Applicants must clear other assessment hurdles in order to be certified for consideration.

OPM will issue revised guidance to incorporate the newly implemented provisions of E.O. 13932. This will include the updated General Schedule Qualifications Operating Manual that provides the overarching policy for qualifying candidates for Federal jobs and expands the use of skills and competencies to qualify talent. In addition, the Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Administrative and Management Positions and the Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Professional and Scientific Positions will include guidance on qualifying talent using skills and competencies in addition to education or experience. The Delegated Examining Handbook is also included in the revisions that support the E.O.

5.0   ASSESSMENT STRATEGY AND TOOLS

An assessment strategy is an established plan for designing and implementing one or more assessment tools for an organization, occupation, or a specific situation. DoD Components must consider a number of factors in determining the most appropriate assessment strategy for a particular situation since not all assessment tools are appropriate for every job.

Here are steps to consider when establishing an assessment strategy prior to implementing one or more assessment tools, which measure an individual's employment or career-related qualifications and interests. The assessment strategy may include the following steps:

Step 1: HR Managers should share the vision with their team of Key Stakeholders (Manager/HR/Subject Matter Experts (SME)/ Industrial and Organizational (IO) Psychologist) after a review of the staff acquisition plans; budget; and required skill gaps within the organization to cultivate an atmosphere of change.

Step 2: Activate, engage, and enable a team of Key Stakeholders (Manager/HR/Subject Matter Experts (SME)/ Industrial and Organizational (IO) Psychologist) who will collaborate, identify the competencies, based on the position and create a supportive job analysis.

Step 3: Review and Execute the Team's Strategy once the team has communicated and obtain buy-in by confirming and documenting the job analysis and competencies.

Step 4: Identification of Validated and Reliable Assessment Tools.

Step 5: Monitor, evaluate, and sustain an assessment strategy.

This process can also be instrumental in making employment and career-related decisions about job candidates and current employees.

Quality assessments increase the likelihood of hiring employees who possesses the right competencies and will contribute to agency success. In addition, a quality assessment results in hiring, placing and promoting greater numbers of superior performers and decreases the likelihood of a bad hire and associated consequences (e.g., poor work quality, dissatisfied customers, lowered morale among fellow employees).

Any assessment tool used for selection of candidates must be both reliable and valid. Reliable where consistent scores can be obtained when the same applicants are reexamined with the same or equivalent form of an assessment, and valid to the extent where the assessment method has been shown to accurately measure a job-related competency and/or predict successful performance on the job. Further information on ensuring a reliable and valid assessment is in OPM's Assessment Decision Guide.

5.1   DoD Assessment Tool Usage

Across DoD, HR Professionals are utilizing a variety of assessment tools when recruiting for practically every DoD occupational series. At a minimum, the occupational questionnaire in USA Staffing is the staple. HR Professionals will continue collaborating with hiring managers to determine the best assessment tool to employ. Some of the assessment tools DoD Components are using are below.

- USA Staffing, the talent acquisition system adopted for use throughout DoD, to recruit, evaluate, assess, certify, select and onboard talent.

- Self-Report Tools include questionnaires used to screen candidates based on training and experience. Some DoD Components utilize Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) as a self-report tool, as described below.
- Ability and knowledge tests are comprised of questions that involve the candidate solving a potential process or determining how much the candidate knows about a particular job task.
- Simulation Tools include candidates providing writing samples, attending structured interviews or responding to multiple assessments that evaluate how a candidate performs on a variety of job-related competencies.

Many DoD Components are expanding the use of USA Hire to recruit for non-supervisory positions with GS and GS-equivalent pay plans. Section 6.2 provides additional information on USA Hire.

More tools for your assessment toolbox and sample templates are located in Appendices A-E. These tools will allow DoD Components to not solely rely on candidate self-evaluations (e.g., resumes and occupational questionnaires); and may serve as alternatives to educational qualifications. In addition, OPM guidance states candidates must clear other assessment hurdles in order to qualify and be eligible for preference and referral.

Some of DoD's assessment and evaluation best practices and highlights are located in Appendix F.

6.0   AUTOMATED PLATFORMS

DoD Components utilize the automated platforms USA Staffing and USA Hire for administering online hiring assessments. USA Staffing, developed by OPM, is now the enterprise's integrated talent acquisition system used to recruit, evaluate, assess, certify, select, and onboard candidates. USA Hire serves as an online assessment program designed by a team of psychologists at OPM to meet the hiring needs of DoD.

6.1   USA Staffing

USA Staffing is a platform that handles the full range of hiring flexibilities and requirements while offering expanded capabilities like onboarding and data analytics, and features a modern, user-friendly interface. Many of its interfaces and features, such as workload management and tracking, create time savings for HR Professionals.

USA Staffing features a competency-based foundation for assessments. It offers a range of assessment and scoring capabilities and is interconnected with USA Hire, which delivers online, objective assessments of general competencies to provide a 'whole person' assessment approach. It also contains functionality that allows HR professionals to develop occupational questionnaires used to screen and rate candidates. This assessment method typically consists of multiple choice, yes/no, or similar types of questions that cover a wide variety of competencies. This method also consist of self-ratings of a candidate's training and experience. Most DoD HR professionals are familiar with the following occupational questionnaire example:

> **Select the one statement that most accurately describes your training and experience carrying out each task using the scale provided.**

Default Scale

Write technical policies and standard operating procedures governing the management of data network systems.

A. I have not had education, training, or experience in performing this task.

B. I have had education or training on this task but have not yet performed it on the job.

C. I have performed this task on the job. My work on this task was monitored closely by a supervisor or senior employee to ensure compliance with proper procedures.

D. I have performed this task as a regular part of a job. I have performed it independently and normally without review by a supervisor or senior employee.

E. I am considered an expert in performing this task. I have supervised performance of this task or am normally the person who is consulted by other workers to assist them in doing this task because of my expertise.

Further examples of language in an occupational questionnaire could include the following:

Customized Scale

Indicate the extent of your training and experience conducting legal research.

A. I have not had education, training, or experience in conducting legal research.

B. I have used legal periodicals, dictionaries, manuals, form books, and court rules for the purpose of locating legal information or guidelines.

C. I have examined documents for legal sufficiency by verifying citations and statutory references.

D. I have researched a variety of legal issues covered mostly by precedent and/or assembled information on laws applying to specific cases.

E. I have provided direct assistance to attorneys preparing for Federal court by analyzing and summarizing case law and governing statutes to support specific cases.

Yes/No

Do you have one year of specialized experience (equivalent to at least the GS-11 level or pay band in the Federal service) that includes performing the following duties: interpreting and applying complex personnel laws, regulations, practices, and procedures relating to recruitment and placement activities; providing HR consultant/advisory services and products in the areas of staffing, recruitment, and placement to managers, supervisors, employees, and applicants; analyzing trends and forecasting changes in workforce requirements that may impact future recruitment needs of an organization; developing or modifying organization-wide policy relating to recruitment and placement procedures; analyzing and resolving uncommon recruitment and placement issues; and participating as a lead/senior consultant at meetings/conferences regarding workforce initiatives and strategies?

A. Yes. I have experience performing most of the above duties.

B. No. I do not have experience performing most of the above duties.

(**Multiple Choice-Multiple Select**)

Select all of the software systems you have used.

A. USA Staffing

B. Monster

C. People Soft

D. Ascendre

E. None of the above

The USA Staffing Resource Center for HR users is located here Resources - USA_Staffing_Resource_Center and will provide users multiple resources to aide in developing occupational (assessment) questionnaires in the USA Staffing platform.

6.2   USA HIRE

USA Hire serves as an online assessment program of off-the-shelf battery of assessments (i.e., a combination of separate assessments) designed for use with specific occupational series and grade combinations to measure general competencies (e.g., reading comprehension, decision making, interpersonal skills, etc.). USA Hire offers agencies the capability to deliver innovative and robust online assessment solutions in proctored and un-proctored environments. Moreover, a standard USA Hire assessment can be included in the USA Staffing assessment plan for a vacancy with no additional analysis, development, validation, or customization required; and can be combined with a rating assessment questionnaire (AQ) delivered in USA Staffing, allowing Agencies to assess the whole-person (i.e., general and technical competencies) during the assessment process.

Integrating online assessments offered through USA Hire into your existing hiring process can save time and agency resources and can help your DoD Component find the right candidate that will help accomplish mission goals.

Many DoD Components are expanding use of USA Hire to recruit for non-supervisory positions with GS and GS equivalent pay plans. A list of USA Hire covered job series/grades is located here.

USA Hire also, offers custom designed and premium assessments as requested by agencies as a fee for service option. For example, the Supervisory Situational Judgment Test (SSJT) is an online multiple-choice test that asks candidates to respond to realistic work problems or scenarios that are common to supervisory positions in the Federal Government. Another example of a custom designed assessment is the Project Management Assessment. HR Professionals use this assessment in filling occupations with core project management responsibilities.

For more information, visit the USA Hire Resource Center.

In addition to USA Staffing and USA Hire, DoD Components utilize a variety of other assessment tools to identify top talent to meet critical mission needs. See Appendices A-E.

7.0   ADMINISTRATIVE CAREERS WITH AMERICA (ACWA)

The Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) rating schedules are assessment tools that were developed as a result of the lawsuit resolution known as the "Luevano consent decree", and it required the use of alternative assessments for occupations at the GS-5 and GS-7 grade levels that were once subject to the Professional and Administrative Career Exam.

These assessment tools comply with the requirement to use validated (i.e., job-related) assessment tools when examining candidates for competitive service positions. The ACWA rating schedules validated for use with the professional and administrative positions as stated in the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook.

Agencies are free to use any valid alternative assessment. USA Hire is a valid OPM alternative to ACWA, and many of the ACWA series cover standard USA Hire assessments. Agencies are also able to develop their own ACWA alternative assessments. We encourage you to consult your Office of General Counsel before using an agency-developed ACWA alternative.

Under E.O. 13932, the assessment requirements for all vacancies are essentially the same as they previously were for "ACWA-covered" positions. All vacancies require the use of a valid assessment tool(s) that measure job-related competencies needed for successful performance in the position.

The current ACWA Rating Schedule still meets the criteria for assessment tools for the occupational series and grade levels for which they were developed.

For more information, please copy and paste the following link into internet browser:
https://help.usastaffing.gov/ResourceCenter/images/6/6d/ACWA_User_Guide_9.14.20.pdf

## 8.0   SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT

HR professionals alone do not have to determine minimum qualifications and rate and rank candidates. Recent OPM guidance states that it is appropriate and encouraged to use Subject Matter Experts (SME) outside of HR, who have diverse backgrounds and relevant experiences to work with HR in determining whether job candidates are qualified. As long as SMEs are not the selecting official, SMEs can conduct pre- referral structured interviews to determine the most highly qualified candidates to refer to the hiring manager for consideration.

During the job analysis process, SMEs may also help to identify and document the competencies and proficiency levels required to perform the essential job functions. In partnership with SMEs, HR professionals can screen out the candidates who do not possess the required competencies and proficiency levels and can help identify and refer only the candidates who possess the required competencies and proficiency levels.

DoD HR Professionals should collaborate with their hiring managers to determine the appropriate type of positions and determine which stages of the hiring process to include SME involvement.[3]

In March 2019, the United States Digital Services (USDS) and OPM collaborated to pilot a Technical SME Hurdled Assessment process prior to the category ranking of candidates and placement on the selection certificate. The primary objective of this pilot was to enhance the quality of hires through a partnership between the agency hiring manager, human resources specialist, and SMEs using a documented multiple hurdle assessment process. **Figure 2** outlines the steps that were included in determining which candidates met the minimum qualifications.

Figure 2. SME Assessment Process
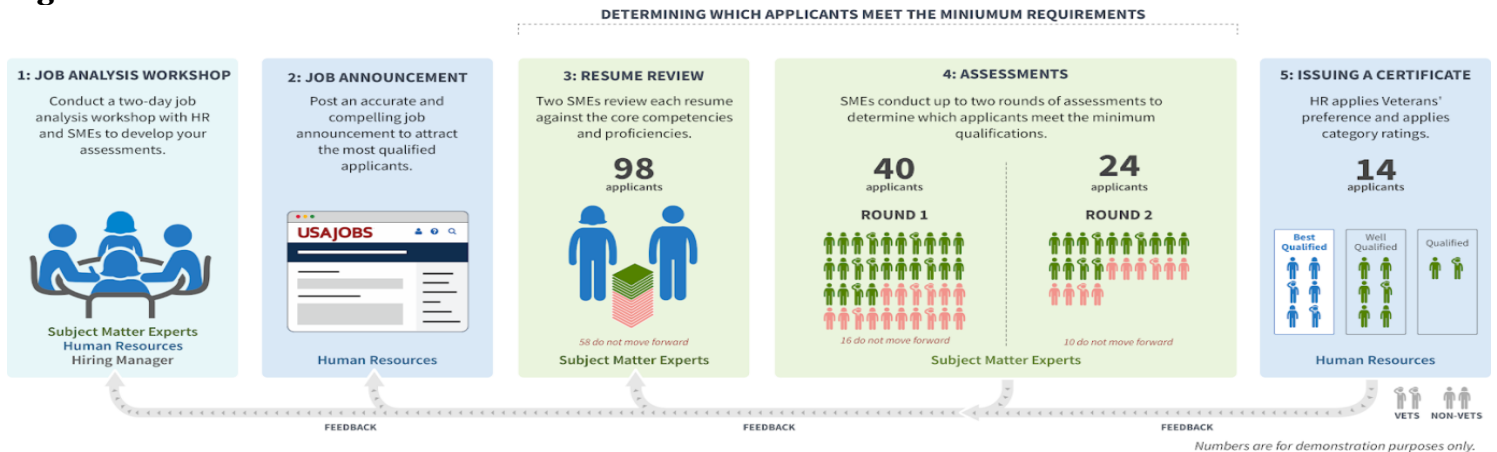
More information can be found https://www.usds.gov/projects/smeqa and on https://smeqa.usds.gov/

9.0   USING A MULTI-HURDLE APPROACH UNDER E.O. 13932

A multi-hurdle process uses multiple assessments successively to manage the candidate pool and narrow the pool to the most qualified candidates. Generally, the methods that can manage easily a large volume of candidates should be used at the beginning of the process; and the methods that are more resource-intensive should be leveraged for the candidates who best meet the knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies of the position. In **Figure 3,** the common first hurdles include the application and occupational questionnaire, while common second and or third hurdles include cognitive ability test, writing assessment, work sample/simulation, structured interview or reference checking.

---

[3] OPM Memo, "Improving Federal Hiring using Effective Assessment Strategies to Advance Mission Outcomes," dated September 13, 2019.

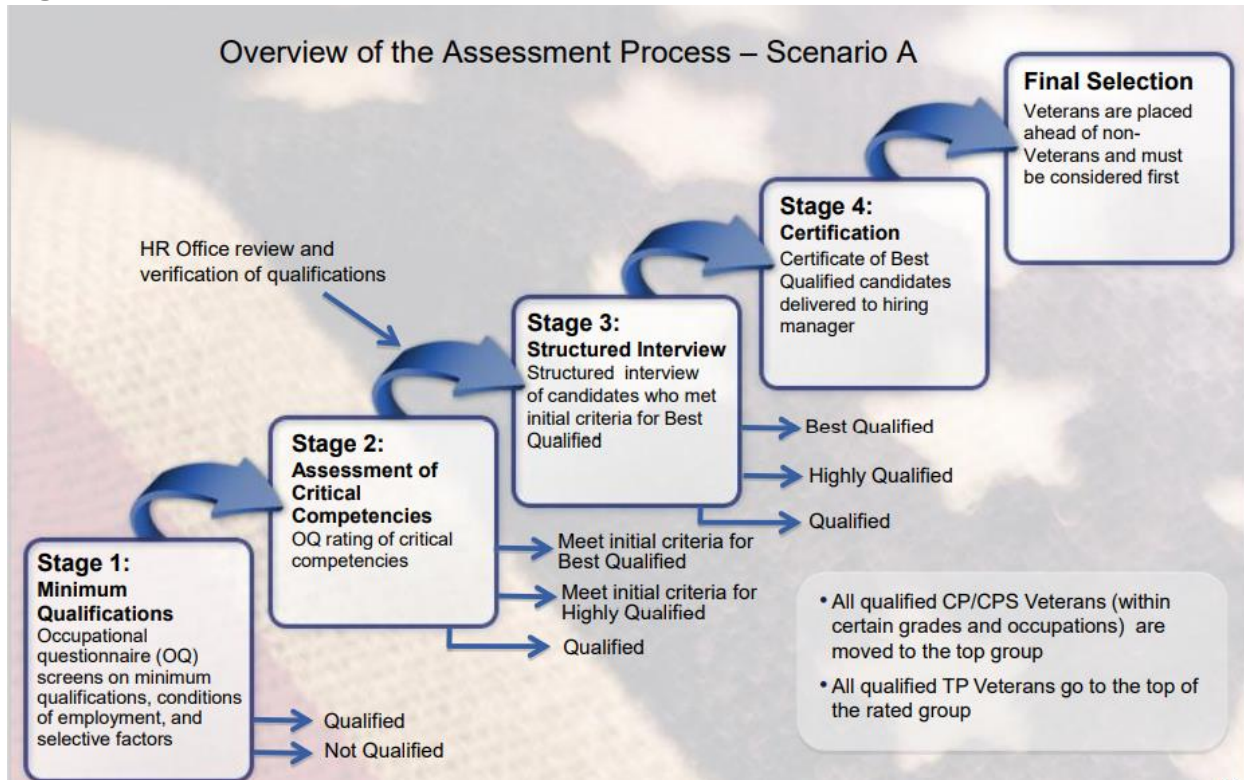**Figure 3. SME Assessment Process**

Assessment 1: Screen Minimum Qualifications

Types of Assessment:
Résumé
Occupational Questionnaire

Implementation:
Fast, accessible, low-cost screens
High degree of automation, low
level of precision

Assessment 2: Evaluate Relative Qualifications

Types of Assessment:
Online Occupational Assessments
Role Plays/Simulations

Implementation:
Increased time, cost, expertise to develop
Higher precision to differentiate candidate
quality

Assessment 3: Select Best Qualified

Types of Assessment:
Structured Interviews
Reference Checks

Implementation:
Hiring manager involvement
High precision to differentiate candidate quality

Assessment 4: Ensure Selection Meets the Needs of the Job

Types of
Assessment:
Performance
Probation

Implementation:
Observation on the job
Retain or terminate based on performance

MSPB Report on Improving Federal Hiring Through Better Assessment (July 2018)

10.0 APPLYING VETERANS PREFERENCE IN A MULTI-HURDLE APPROACH

As cited in the Delegated Examining Operations Handbook (DEOH), with the application of Category Rating, an agency may not select a non-preference eligible if there is a preference eligible in the same category. DoD Components must continue following appropriate procedures to pass over the preference eligible pursuant to 5 USC 3318. As noted in the image below, when the certification is issued all qualified CP/CPS veterans are moved to the top group, for certain grades and occupations. In the final selection, **Figure 4**, veterans are placed ahead of non-veterans. These same rules apply when using a multiple hurdle assessment process (preference is applied after completion of the multi-hurdle process, prior to issuance of the hiring certificate).

Figure 4. Overview of the Assessment Process

Designing an Assessment Strategy Briefing- OPM

11.0 JOB OPPORTUNITY ANNOUNCEMENT (JOA) UNDER E.O. 13932

The JOA will need to include an explanation of the assessment process within the "How You Will Be Evaluated" section.

Agencies must include their basis for rating candidates in accordance with 5 CFR 300.104. At a minimum, the description of the assessment process should include:

- A general overview of the assessment process – this does not need to be exhaustive but should provide candidates an idea of what the process will entail and what types of assessments they will complete (e.g., writing sample, online questionnaire, USA Hire, etc.).

A list of the competencies to assessed during the assessment process – this includes the competency titles and definitions identified during the job analysis and targeted in the assessment process.

Sample JOA language

Once the application process is complete, your resume, and supporting documentation, along with the results of any additional hiring assessments, will be evaluated to determine whether you meet the job qualifications listed on this announcement. If you rate yourself higher than is supported by your application package, your responses may be adjusted and/or you may be excluded from consideration for this position. If you are among the top qualified candidates, you will be referred to the selecting official for employment consideration.

Your qualifications may be evaluated on the following competencies (knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics):

Problem Solving
Communication
Compensation Management

12.0 EVALUATING ASSESSMENT EFFECTIVENESS CONTINUES UNDER E.O. 13932

The importance of quality assessments increases the likelihood of hiring employees who possess the right competencies and will contribute to the DoD Component's success. As outlined in the E.O. 13932 continuous monitoring and evaluating assessment development practices, including quality control, remains a key factor in the effectiveness of different assessment strategies. To ensure the quality and integrity of the hiring process, HR professionals can take the following actions:

- After a vacancy is filled, or if a certificate is returned without a selection, seek feedback from the hiring manager and candidates

  o Examine the managers' perceptions of the quality of candidates on certificates by reviewing Hiring Manager Satisfaction Survey data
  o Examine the candidates' perceptions of the fairness and job-relatedness of assessments used in the hiring process by reviewing Applicant Satisfaction Survey data
  o Identify barriers to recruiting a well-qualified and diverse candidate pool by reviewing Candidate Flow data

- Obtain feedback from SMEs involved in the assessment process by tracking and reviewing the performance of particular assessment tools in various hiring scenarios (e.g., how well are SME interview panels working for selecting scientist positions, or how effectively are evaluations of writing samples in identifying candidates with writing skills);
- Evaluate the impact of the assessment process on timely hiring practices by reviewing time to hire data;
- Ensure optimization of available assessment options by tracking utilization of shared services assessment tools such as USA Hire; and
- Ensure use of competency-based assessment tools for hiring by utilizing Merit Systems Accountability Reviews and Audits.

13.0 REFERENCES

A. Executive Order 13932, "Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates" dated July 1, 2020

B. OPM Memorandum, "Improving Federal Hiring using Effective Assessment Strategies to Advance Mission Outcomes" dated September 13, 2019

C. OPM Memorandum, "Implementation of E.O. 13932; Determining Qualifications and the Use of Assessment Tools When Filling Positions" dated July 31, 2020

D. OPM Memorandum, "Updated Interim Guidance – E.O. 13932; Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates" dated December 29, 2021

E. OPM Assessment Types

F. OPM Assessment Decision Guide

G. OPM Designing an Assessment Strategy

H. OPM Glossary of Terms

I. Delegated Examining Operations Handbook: A Guide for Federal Agency Examining Offices

J. Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures

K. USA Staffing ACWA User Guide

L. USA Staffing USA Hire User Guide

M. Department of Labor, Testing and Assessment: An Employer's Guide to Good Practices

14.0 POINT OF CONTACT

For more information, contact DCPAS, Employment and Compensation, Field Advisory and Support at 703-545-7487 or dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.list.ec-field-advisory--support@mail.mil.

APPROVALS

_____   _____
Name   Date Signed

_____   _____
Organization   Date Effective

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Examples of Assessment Tools		
Self-Reports	**Ability and Knowledge Tests**	**Simulations**
Occupational Questionnaires – Task and competency-based self-report questionnaires used to screen candidates based on their training and experience	**Cognitive Ability Test** – Candidates are asked to solve questions to estimate their potential to use mental processes to solve job-related problems or acquire job knowledge; can also measure aptitude for job-related skills.	**Writing Assessments** – Candidates receive a writing prompt and have a set amount of time to write about the topic. Scored by raters using professionally-developed benchmarks or by complex automated protocols.
Biodata – Items about past events and behaviors that predict overall performance for a given occupation. Items scored using a research-based scoring key.	**Job Knowledge Test** – Comprised of specific questions developed to determine how much the candidate knows about particular job tasks or responsibilities.	**Assessment Center** – Consists of multiple assessments to evaluate small groups of candidates on a variety of job-related competencies. Resemble actual challenges encountered on the job. Candidate performance is observed and evaluated by multiple trained assessors.
Accomplishment Record – Candidates provide a written description of a situation to illustrate their proficiency in critical job-related competencies. Evaluated by a panel of trained raters against competency-based benchmarks.	**Situational Judgment Tests** – Presents candidates with a description of a work problem or critical situation, and asks them to identify how they would deal with it (can be paper, computerized, or video-based format).	**Structured Interview** – Panel interview where all candidates are asked the same job-related questions (often competency-and behavioral-based). Interviewers use detailed rating scales, evaluating all candidates according to the same standards.
Sample Self Reports: Administrative Careers With America (ACWA) Customized Response Assessment Questionnaire Occupational Questionnaires (Technical Competency and Training/Experience)	**Sample Ability & Knowledge Tests:** Aptitude Test Proctored Apprentice Exam	**Sample Simulations:** Background Investigation Behavioral Based Interviewing Internal Job Libraries Reference Check Skill Assessment

Other Assessments

Assessment Center

Employs multiple assessment methods and exercises to evaluate a wide range of competencies used to make a variety of employment decisions (e.g., employee selection, career development, or promotion).

Integrity/Honesty Test

Evaluation of an applicant's past job performance based on information collected from key individuals (e.g., supervisors, peers, subordinates) who have known and worked with the applicant.

Personality Test

Designed to assess an applicant's tendency to be honest, trustworthy, dependable, and can be valid measures of overall job performance.

APPENDIX B: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTION AND RATING SCALE EXAMPLE

Sample Structured Interview Question and Rating Scale*

Competency: Interpersonal Skills - Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.

Lead Question: Describe a situation in which you dealt with individuals who were difficult, hostile, or distressed.

Probing Questions: Who was involved? What specific actions did you take? What was the outcome?

Proficiency Level	1- Low	2	3-Average	4	5- Outstanding
Benchmark Definition	Handles interpersonal situations involving little or no tension or discomfort ...		Handles interpersonal situations involving a moderate degree of tension or discomfort ...		Handles interpersonal situations involving a high degree of tension or discomfort ...
	Example 1	**Example 2**	**Example 3**	**Example 4**	**Example 5**
Behavioral Example	Refers employees to the appropriate staff member ...	Works With others on a cross functional team	Establishes Cooperative working relationships with managers	Facilitates an open forum to discuss employee concerns	Diffuses an Emotionally charged meeting with external stakeholders

*https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/examples/structured-interview-example.pdf

APPENDIX C: SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT

Subject Matter Expert Qualification Assessments

Promoting effective assessments to ensure high quality applicants

OVERVIEW

During a typical competitive delegated examining hiring process, human resource (HR) specialists review resumes and occupational questionnaires to determine whether applicants are minimally qualified for a role. Agencies often conduct outreach and recruitment for technical positions and are concerned when they receive certificates without qualified applicants to select from.

With this assessment alternative, SMEs partner with HR specialists to create and conduct interview assessments before considering an applicant qualified and applying veterans' preference. This process is recommended for GS 12+ technical positions (not limited to IT) with at least five vacancies for the same role and where applicant volume can be limited to approximately 100 applicants.

IMPROVING FAIR AND OPEN ACCESS FOR ALL APPLICANTS

This process is an alternative to using the traditional resume review and assessment process and through the use of SMEs, provides the hiring manager the ability to hire highly qualified talent. Key principles include:

- A clean, simple USAJOBS announcement template that is more narrowly tailored to the job requirements, similar to private sector standards.
- The ability to limit the number of resume pages that SMEs will review, removing the common practice of submitting long, overly comprehensive resumes that favor individuals intimately familiar with federal hiring practices.
- Structured SME assessment interviews replace the self-reported, and often over-inflated, applicant occupational questionnaire. These interview assessments allow experts in the role to mark unqualified any applicant who does not meet the required technical qualifications.
- Minimal burden on participating SMEs, such as allowing minimal but retraceable justifications and being comfortable with one SME participating in each structured phone interview.
- The assessment strategy enforces a passing score on SME interviews before determining qualification. At that point, veterans' preference and category rating rules apply.

PILOT HIRING ACTIONS

U.S. Digital Service and OPM have now conducted 2 rounds of pilots over the previous 18 months:
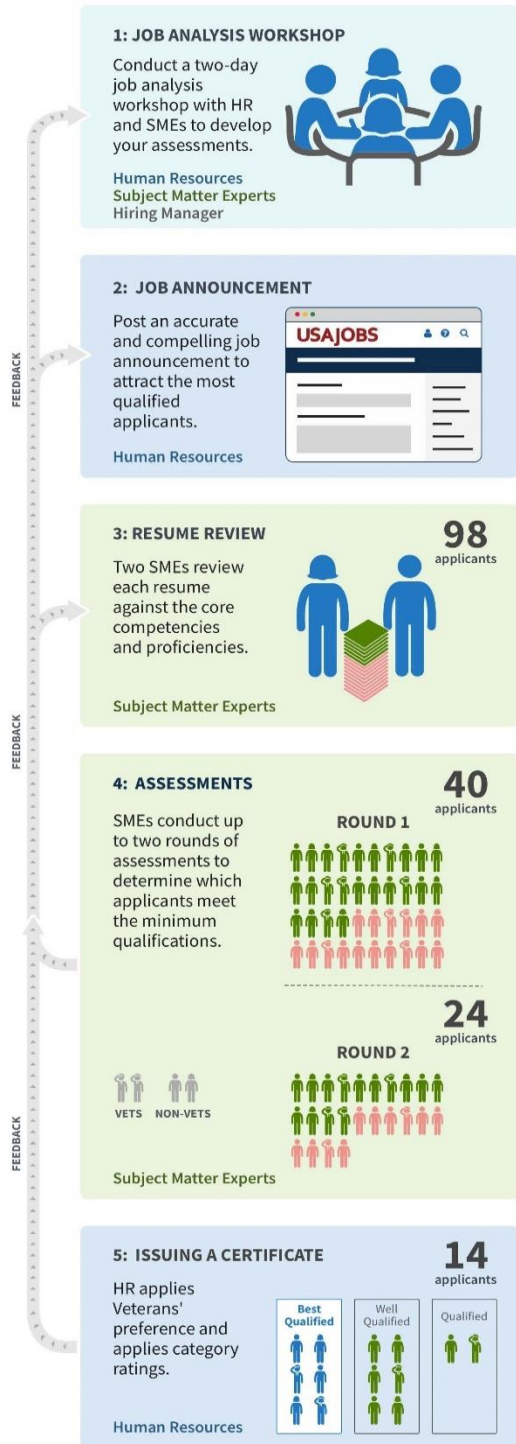
7
pilots

15
agencies

22
offices

1843
applicants

160
qualified

50
selections

FIVE PHASES

1/ **Job Analysis Workshop:** Conduct a two-day job analysis workshop to develop the job qualifications and assessments. HR, SMEs, and hiring manager identify and define the required competencies and proficiency levels for the position. The team writes two sets of structured interview questions to be used later in the assessment process.

2/ **Job Announcement:** Use the results of the job analysis workshop to bridge a standard position description into a job announcement that is an accurate and compelling representation of the position. In addition, to reach potential applicants who may not visit USAJOBS, consider posting on other applicable job boards.

3/ **Reviewing Resumes:** HR specialists remove applicants who did not include a resume or are ineligible due to citizenship requirements. After this limited step, two SMEs independently review each remaining resume to determine whether they adequately reflect the core competencies and proficiencies to warrant the first of two phone assessment interviews.

4/ **Assessments:** SMEs conduct up to two rounds of assessments (eg. live or recorded phone interviews, review of written exam or work simulation) to assess remaining applicants against the required competencies and proficiencies, with a single SME conducting each assessment. Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications move on to a second assessment with a different SME. Applicants who receive an overall passing score after two assessments are considered minimally qualified.

5/ **Issuing a Certificate:** When SMEs complete the minimum qualification assessments, HR specialists can adjudicate veterans' preference and assign categories based on whether the applicant met or exceeded the requirements during the assessments. After hiring managers receive a hiring certificate, they can either conduct additional interviews or make selections based on transcripts from phone assessment interviews or other assessment information.

1: JOB ANALYSIS WORKSHOP

Conduct a two-day job analysis workshop with HR and SMEs to develop your assessments.

Human Resources
Subject Matter Experts
Hiring Manager

2: JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Post an accurate and compelling job announcement to attract the most qualified applicants.

Human Resources

3: RESUME REVIEW

Two SMEs review each resume against the core competencies and proficiencies.

Subject Matter Experts

98 applicants

4: ASSESSMENTS

SMEs conduct up to two rounds of assessments to determine which applicants meet the minimum qualifications.

ROUND 1 — **40** applicants

ROUND 2 — **24** applicants

VETS   NON-VETS

Subject Matter Experts

5: ISSUING A CERTIFICATE

HR applies Veterans' preference and applies category ratings.

Best Qualified   Well Qualified   Qualified

Human Resources

14 applicants

Numbers are for demonstration purposes only.

FEEDBACK

DETERMINING WHICH APPLICANTS MEET THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

APPENDIX D: WORK SIMULATION

Work Simulation

Work simulation requires applicants to perform a task or activity associated with performing the job, and allows a hiring manager to assess a candidates skills.

For example, a hiring manager requires a presentation as part of the interview process to assess and evaluate an applicant's ability to present information in an engaging manner.

An applicant is informed that during the interview, he/she will be required to provide a short briefing. The briefing slides are provided ahead of the interview to allow the applicant to become familiar with brief. The interview panel considers the briefing as part of their final decision.

APPENDIX E: REFERENCE CHECK EXAMPLE

Sample for Reference Checking

Reference checking helps to get the full picture of the candidate's skills, work habits and personality. They serve as an important tool to evaluate a candidate's fit with your job and organization.

Note: From DoD Hiring Manager's Toolkit
https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/sites/default/files/2021-04/Hiring%20Manager's%20Toolkit%20Final.pdf -

APPENDIX F: HIGHLIGHT OF DOD COMPONENT BEST PRACTICES

This section highlights the various assessment best practices and evaluation methods across the enterprise.

Defense Logistics Agency's (DLA) improved hiring approach inserts more rigor into the evaluation/selection process, increases the validity of their existing assessment process, produces more reliable, precise referral lists, and elicits better quality candidates on the lists and in the job. Using tests like the DLA Supervisory Situational Judgment Test (SSJT) and the OPM USA Hire assessment, coupled with the customized response questionnaire, behavior-based interviewing and reference checks supports a higher validity rating (greater cumulative predictive power in determining successful performance).

Additionally, behavior-based interviewing is another best practice, also supported by research that reflects past performance is an indicator of future performance.

DLA's evaluation findings demonstrate the refreshed hiring approach is a more holistic, competency-based, rigorous and accurate candidate evaluation process. The improved process results in more normal distribution of ratings without the extremes, whereby hiring officials support candidates referred for the jobs have the right, critical skill sets.

Supervisory Situational Judgement Test (SSJT)	Customized Response Assessment Questionnaires	USA Hire and Administrative Careers with America (ACWA)
• Evaluates critical leadership skills for GS Supervisory positions • Developed in concert with OPM personnel psychologists • Available for other DoD Components use after validation • Used in private and public sector; provides more precise measurement of candidates	• Evaluates technical competencies, as well as general competencies for those series where a USA Hire assessment does not exist • Moves away from default scales to customized responses based on expertise/proficiency benchmark levels	• Evaluates general competencies for non-supervisory GS- positions (series and grade) for which a USA Hire assessment exist • ACWA assessments are used for ACWA covered positions at the GS-7 where a USA Hire assessment does not exist

Department of Navy (DON) uses a variety of candidate assessment methods with the primary being USA Staffing Occupational Questionnaires, and employs the use of resume reviews, USA Hire assessments, structured interviews and reference checks.

When announcing to fill a position, the hiring manager conducts and submits a job analysis, which links the requirements of the position to USA Staffing competencies. USA Staffing occupational questionnaires are completed using DON's Competency Library content and are used for all announced vacancies, except when utilizing a specified hiring authority (e.g., Direct Hiring Authority, Veterans' Recruitment Appointment) which uses a minimum qualifications assessment only. When developing occupational questionnaires, staffing specialists follow guidance provided by OPM and detail DON USA Staffing process guides. Frequently filled occupations utilize USA Staffing Assessment Templates built from the DON Competency Network content that streamline the assessment development process. DON occupational content is developed/approved by experienced and trained Competency Library developers with collaboration with DON functional community leads.

USA Hire used in combination with a USA Staffing Occupational Questionnaire to assess technical competencies. Does not use for hard to fill occupations/locations, positions with multiple specialties or supervisory responsibilities.

Apprentice assessments uses a proctored OPM custom exam or Accuplacer college exam, which provides information about a student's present academic skill levels in reading, writing, mathematics, and computer fields.

Hard to fill occupations, or for direct hire, utilizes the minimum qualifications/screen out element in the vacancy announcement. Additional formal candidate assessments outside of a resume review and/or interview are rarely used.

Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) in most instances uses USA Hire when the projected volume of candidates that may apply is high or when they have to create categories by law, e.g., Pathways, Delegated Examining hiring.

DFAS shares that the competencies identified with this type assessment allows for clear distinctions of top job candidates. DFAS has observed that because there is a higher commitment of effort and time in completing a USA Hire assessment, a smaller number of candidates complete the additional assessment.

Cyber Excepted Service (CES) in Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022, the DoD Chief Information Office is implementing an online assessment tool for CES designed to leverage multi-hurdle and multiple, different assessment processes which can vary by position and/or occupation. This platform uses artificial intelligence to integrate job design and classification with job analysis; and will assess candidates and complete multi-hurdle assessments. The personnel assessment menu will include:

- Structured phone screening
- Scored cognitive tests
- Online occupational questionnaires
    - Traditional KSA-Based (provides a draft version based on the documents and manager input)
    - Competency-Based Assessment or CBA Questionnaire (provides a draft version based on the documents and manager input)
    - Freestyle Questionnaire (provides the staff support for Freestyle assessment development which includes all the occupational analysis, job analysis, SME input via surveys and/or focus groups, and validation)
    - View eligibilities allows the user to see the eligibility requirements that are captured by Indigo as applicants apply – e.g., veterans preference, citizenship, and any program-unique eligibility requirements
- Behaviorally-based interviews (panel or individual hiring manager) using a crediting plan-style scoring methodology
- Panel candidate assessment using a crediting plan-style scoring methodology
- Online reference checking and candidate skill verification surveys
- Task and job simulations (e.g., case study, code screens and live programming exercises)
- Aptitude testing (sometimes called personality testing)
- Security question evaluation for initial background investigations screening and suitability determinations

Department of the Air Force uses a quality control process to assess the hiring processes operations. They have recently implemented a reporting process for ensuring hiring panel requirements are in compliance. They also use the OPM hiring manager surveys to evaluate the hiring processes.

Department of the Army, Civilian Personnel Evaluation Agency, conducts evaluations of the various HR Offices and Commands and reviews the quality and integrity of the hiring process. The review is conducted on specific actions/processes and if issues are found, they are elevated to leadership for awareness and to ensure any corrective actions are taken.

Defense Threat Reduction Agency established a number of reporting mechanisms, such as surveys, brown bag sessions, and other channels of communication, which hiring managers/supervisors can use to provide feedback. This helps to improve the hiring process, continuously. Use of these channels have allowed hiring staff to become an agile team, able to swiftly meet the ever-changing needs of the agency and overcome challenges.

APPENDIX G: OTHER HELPFUL RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

- Establishing relationships with a broad variety of colleges and universities to develop diverse talent pipelines and increase interest in careers with the Federal Government.
- Establishing collaborative relationships with organizations and offices that serve specific communities such as, individuals with disabilities, career services centers, workforce centers, and veterans' service organizations.
- Reaching out to qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society based solely on fair and open competition and merit that assures that all receive equal opportunity.
- Utilizing technology, including social media, to seek diverse pools of qualified candidates.
- Displaying job opportunity announcements at locations (e.g., America's Job Centers) accessible to various candidate pools and/or providing supplies of agency recruiting literature at selected locations.
- Working with faculty from universities and community colleges to conduct curriculum reviews and identify necessary coursework for mission-critical occupations. Designating an individual and/or committee to work with deans and career placement offices in planning and implementing recruitment strategies.
- Educating candidates on how to apply for Federal jobs.
- Developing strategies to encourage highly qualified candidates to relocate to regions where agencies have vacancies (e.g., using internship programs and career development programs to give employees an opportunity to try another location).
- Using special appointing authorities such as the Pathways Internship and Recent Graduates Programs, 30-Percent disabled veterans' authority, and Schedule A authority for individuals with certain disabilities, to recruit talented individuals and address future workforce needs.
- Sponsoring recruiters' and hiring managers' participation in professional associations and conferences where they are likely to meet qualified candidates or people who know qualified candidates who could be encouraged to apply.
- Using professional association websites, commercial websites, journals and other publications reaching a diverse audience to advertise agency opportunities.
- Marketing very competitive Federal employee benefits and programs to attract new people to Federal employment.
- Using recruitment flexibilities (e.g., Recruitment, Retention, and Relocation Incentives, Leave and Work Schedule Incentives, etc.) to attract high-quality candidates.

In order for a recruiting strategy to be successful, agencies must determine what resource needs will be required for implementation. Having the right staff and technology with the capabilities to implement the strategy is a critical step. For more information, please see Delegated Examining Operations Handbook.