



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Department of Defense Implementing Guidance for Assessment Requirements for the Hiring and Selection Process

Highly skilled and competent employees are critical to building and maintaining the Department's competitive advantage. Executive Order (EO) 13932, "Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates," June 26, 2020, directed significant merit-based reforms in Federal hiring. To comply with the EO and advance DoD's talent acquisition practices, the Department will implement competency-based assessment strategies to better evaluate the skills that job candidates possess. Improved assessment strategies and tools can reduce recruitment time, reduce employee turnover rates, and improve the quality of hires, thereby, enhancing organizational performance.

The attached implementing guidance uses leveraging assessment strategies and tools to meet the requirements of the EO 13932. The implementation of these reforms will affirm the Department's commitment to modernizing and reforming the assessment of job candidates.

My point of contact is Ms. Margaret Bankston, Employment and Compensation, Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, at (571) 372-1543 or margaret.h.bankston.civ@mail.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.

Attachment:
As stated

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE IMPLEMENTING GUIDANCE FOR ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HIRING AND SELECTION PROCESS

- References:
- (a) Part 2102 of Title 5, United States Code (U.S.C.)
 - (b) Part 2301 of Title 5, U.S.C.
 - (c) Part 300 of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations
 - (d) Executive Order (EO) 13932, "Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates," June 26, 2020
 - (e) U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Memorandum, "Guidance Release - E.O. 13932; Modernizing and Reforming the Assessment and Hiring of Federal Job Candidates," May 19, 2022
 - (f) Department of Defense Hiring Assessment and Selection Guide, March 2022

1. Policy

- a. Pursuant to reference (d), this memorandum establishes implementing guidance for DoD Components to develop assessment practice requirements for the hiring and selection process within the DoD. All candidate selection decisions will be based on assessments that do not rely solely on a candidate's self-assessment and do not rely exclusively on educational attainments to determine the extent to which candidates possess relevant knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies. Further, all assessment strategies will be continually evaluated to ensure the quality and integrity of the hiring process.
- b. Except for paragraphs 3.a. and 3.b., this guidance is not applicable when filling positions by excepted service hiring authority (e.g., Pathways Program, Schedule A); filling positions in the Federal Wage System, and Nonappropriated Fund Personnel System. Hiring actions that do not require competitive rating and ranking of candidates (e.g., direct hire authorities) are also exempt because these are excepted from the assessment requirements in reference (d). Also, non-competitive hiring actions are not included in the requirements of reference (d); therefore, DoD Components may choose to exclude those hiring actions from these requirements. For example, a DoD Component could require all candidates complete the same assessment process, including the non-competitive candidates; or, could require candidates with non-competitive eligibility be exempt from the assessment process.

2. Hiring Assessment, Selection, and Evaluation Process

- a. In moving forward with implementation of reference (d), DoD Components will maximize use of skills-based hiring practices for DoD jobs. Instead of relying on a job candidate's self-assessment (e.g., occupational questionnaires) and education, their demonstrated ability to perform the job will be the basis for qualification, unless education is statutorily required for the occupation. This guidance provides the framework for the Department's transition to a skills-based approach to broaden recruitment efforts.

- b. DoD Components will expand competency-based hiring by increasing the use of valid assessments that carefully measure a candidate's ability to perform the job duties. OPM guidance issued in reference (e) includes the following tools to assist the Department in this approach:
 - (1) An updated General Schedule Qualifications Operating Manual to help improve hiring by applying minimum qualification requirements, using passing grade assessments;
 - (2) Qualifications, Assessment, and Hiring Policy Frequently Asked Questions; and,
 - (3) Guide to Better Occupational Questionnaires, which will improve the rigor of occupational questionnaires used to meet professional standards.
- c. DoD Components will conduct multiple hurdle assessments pre-referral. Applicants are to clear other assessment hurdles in order to be considered qualified in examinations and thus, eligible for preference and referral.
- d. To be fully compliant with reference (e), DoD Components will establish and evaluate different assessment strategies to ensure the quality and integrity of the hiring process. This may include the consistent use of various assessment tools, as well as the involvement of subject matter experts in the development of assessment tools and strategies. At a minimum, an assessment strategy will include:
 - (1) Assessment tools that are used for selection purposes and are reliable, valid, and meet the criteria established in references (b) and (c).
 - (2) Job analysis and competency assessment.
 - (3) A determination of how assessments are scored.
 - (4) Identification of the order of assessments to be administered (i.e., multiple hurdle).
 - (5) A determination of available resources to develop and implement assessments (e.g., consider any operational issues such as resources needed, time, and costs for development and implementation).
- e. DoD Components will input data into USA Staffing to the greatest extent possible, as this will assist the Department in complying with the reporting requirements as outlined in section 5.

3. Reporting

- a. DoD Components will be responsible for including their assessment practices, and results from assessment tracking (in alignment with their assessment strategic plans) in the annual self-audit of delegated examining operations report. In addition, any regular

evaluations of merit staffing policy and procedures must also include assessment practices.

- b. To ensure compliance with reference (d), DoD Components will submit the following to the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service, Field Advisory and Support Office (dodhra.mc-alex.dcpas.list.ec-field-advisory--support@mail.mil) by October 31st of each year. DoD Component reports may include assessment requirements for Presidential appointments. The report will include the following elements that demonstrate the Department's embrace of the Federal Government's expansion to skills-based hiring practices for Federal jobs:
 - (1) A narrative on assessment tools usage, to include an analysis of hiring improvements;
 - (2) Positions (pay plan, occupational series, title, grade) for which assessments are utilized;
 - (3) Types of multiple hurdle assessments used during the recruitment process;
 - (4) Number of employees hired during the previous fiscal year utilizing an assessment tool;
 - (5) Supplemental Component guidance issued to implement this EO; and,
 - (6) A copy of the completed assessment strategy that evaluates the effectiveness of the DoD Component's assessment and selection processes.

4. Glossary

- a. Assessment refers to any valid and reliable method of collecting information on an individual for the purposes of making a decision about qualification, hiring, placement, promotion, referral, or entry into programs leading to advancement.
- b. Assessment strategy is an established plan for designing and implementing one or more assessment tools for an organization, occupation, or a specific situation. The strategy will vary depending on the attributes of the position being filled, which includes position competencies, number of applicants pool, area of consideration, type of position, (i.e., merit promotion vs. delegated examining) and the resources available (e.g., time, cost, and subject matter expertise). An effective assessment strategy will assist DoD Components to meet the unique missions and workforce needs in the Department.
- c. Assessment tool is any type or procedure (e.g., ability, structured interview, work sample) used to measure an individual's employment or career-related qualifications and interests.
- d. Competency is a measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions

successfully. Competencies specify the “how” of performing job tasks, or what the person needs to do the job successfully.

- e. The competitive service, as defined in reference (a), consists of all civil service positions in the Executive Branch, except positions which are specifically excepted from the competitive service by or under statute; positions to which Presidential appointments are made following confirmation by the Senate; and positions in the Senior Executive Service. The competitive service also consists of civil service positions not in the executive branch and positions in the government of the District of Columbia, which are specifically included by statute.
- f. A multiple hurdle approach involves the administration of assessments or selection procedures in sequential steps. After each selection procedure is administered, it is then scored. Candidates with scores below a specific cutoff are removed from consideration. Candidates who remain for further consideration proceed to the next step or assessment.
- g. Reliability is the extent to which applicants’ scores on an assessment are consistent given that the applicants re-examine with the same or equivalent form of an assessment (e.g., a test of keyboarding skills).
- h. Validity is the extent to which assessment scores are related to current or future job performance (or some other related outcome such as training success, productivity, absenteeism, or turnover).