

A Golden Opportunity

Recruiting Baby Boomers Into Government

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PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to revitalize the federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the next two years, our federal government will need to hire an estimated 193,000 individuals to fill “mission-critical” positions in areas such as public health, accounting and engineering. To fill these openings, government should look first to its existing employees and emphasize their professional development. But due to hiring freezes and downsizing during the 1990s, most federal agencies will not have the bench strength to fill their looming vacancies with internal talent. Considering the experience and expertise required for many of these mission-critical positions, older workers outside government seem to be an ideal source of additional talent. Unfortunately, most federal agencies have a poor track record when it comes to accessing this skilled talent pool. The good news is that the aging of the baby boomer generation — the very trend fueling many of government’s vacancies — creates an opportunity to rethink government’s approach to recruiting older Americans, and tap an abundant source of new talent at a time when agencies desperately need one.

The graying of America is in full swing. A solid majority of our nation’s 78 million baby boomers see their 50th birthdays in their rear-view mirrors, and the number of Americans age 55 and older is projected to increase by more than 9 million over the next five years. This generation is healthier and more educated than all preceding generations. Consequently, instead of retiring from the workplace altogether as they have typically done, older Americans are increasingly looking to take on new professional challenges.

In addition to experience, older Americans possess a number of skills government would find attractive. Research from AARP/Towers Perrin shows older workers are more motivated to exceed expectations than younger workers. And in another survey, of HR professionals, 68 percent of respondents considered older workers to be more reliable employees. Older workers also possess oth-

er positive attributes such as the ability and willingness to mentor other workers.

However, older, experienced workers differ significantly from our government’s more common recruiting targets, making “cookie-cutter” recruiting strategies less likely to succeed. Unlike with college students, older Americans have no career services network to facilitate outreach from federal agencies. In addition, different experience levels raise different sets of expectations. Whereas younger workers often don’t know what to expect when looking for a job, older workers, who have experience in the job market, have ideas about what constitutes acceptable workplace conditions and application procedures.

Older workers also view government more skeptically. A March 2007 survey from the Pew Research Center found more than 70 percent of people age 50 to 64 see government as inefficient, compared to only 42 percent of those under 30.

To examine ways our government can better tap into this more experienced talent pool, the Partnership for Public Service launched *FedExperience*,

an initiative to enhance government’s recruitment of experienced workers and enlist potential partners to fuel interest in federal service. The Atlantic Philanthropies awarded the Partnership a grant to fund the first phase of this project. With these resources, the Partnership tested the practicality of this idea by assessing the interest levels of older workers toward federal employment, analyzing current federal hiring practices, interviewing hiring managers and HR experts, and identifying ways to overcome many of the barriers to bringing older Americans into government.

This research suggests our government has a golden opportunity to attract talented, experienced workers to federal service, but that agencies must take action to more effectively appeal to this cohort.

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The key findings arguing for future action are as follows:

- **Older, experienced workers are planning to continue working ... and for quite a while.** A nationwide survey of 50- to 65-year-olds who are potential job applicants in the near future reveals that 29 percent of workers age 55 to 59 plan to continue working beyond their 65th birthday.
- **Older workers' skills align with government's talent needs.** By 2012, 36 percent of the Senior Executive Service (the corps of civil service leaders), and 27 percent of federal supervisors are projected to retire. Millions of older, nongovernment workers possess not only the technical but the managerial and supervisory skills government will need. Many occupational areas where government currently hires higher percentages of older workers — IT, engineering, legal and accounting — are the same areas in which federal agency officials have said they will have mission-critical openings, suggesting a natural skills alignment.
- **Older workers are interested in government service.** Interest in federal service is comparable to interest in working for nonprofit organizations, large private-sector firms, state government and local government. Interest can be further enhanced through effective communications. The main quality older workers seek in a job is challenging work, something government offers, despite perceptions among this cohort to the contrary.
- **Experienced workers who enter government service like it.** According to a Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) study, experienced workers who recently entered government prefer federal service to their previous jobs.
- **Increasing the flow of older talent into government will require effort. Many barriers persist.** An isolated culture within much of government has shut off many agencies from older, experienced talent. Only half of federal job openings are even made available to non-government candidates. Government processes and procedures also tend to discourage external applicants. Job announcements often are confusing, and the application review process takes too long and lacks transparency. Fifty-seven percent of older Americans believe the federal govern-

ment application process is more difficult compared with other jobs. On top of these factors, only 11 percent of older Americans say they are knowledgeable about federal government opportunities, and many view government negatively, which dampens interest in federal service.

- **Signs indicate these obstacles can be overcome.** Based on extensive interviews, federal hiring and HR managers say government's isolated culture is shifting, and they are open to new efforts to recruit external candidates, including older workers. Agencies also acknowledge their hiring practices are not user-friendly enough and they are exploring ways to hire faster and smarter. Survey data also shows that educating older Americans about federal government opportunities drives interest in service.
- **If an agency wants to pursue a strategy aimed specifically at increasing the influx of older talent, the model to follow does not yet exist.** Even those agencies that hire relatively large numbers of older, experienced workers are not doing so deliberately via a comprehensive, strategic recruiting effort.

NEXT STEPS

Based on this last key finding, the Partnership's primary recommendation is to launch a pilot program with federal agencies, corporate partners and advocacy groups to apply the insights of our *FedExperience* research, and to match older candidates with meaningful positions. This pilot project would test the feasibility of the *FedExperience* concept and hopefully create replicable models across government to access this talent pool.

In addition to the pilot project, this report contains a series of recommendations aimed directly at overcoming barriers identified by the Partnership's research.

If the pilot and, ultimately, *FedExperience* succeed, it will be a "win-win-win" situation. Older Americans, who want to continue working, will win by gaining new opportunities to put their experience to use. Federal agencies will win by having a new pipeline of talent available to help them fulfill their missions. And the American people will win by having a government that is better equipped to do its job.

The Partnership's primary recommendation is to launch a pilot program with federal agencies, corporate partners and advocacy groups to apply the insights of our *FedExperience* research, and to match older candidates with meaningful positions.

INTRODUCTION

A quick look at the federal landscape reveals many troubling signs about the state of our government. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates declared that “al-Qaeda does better at communicating its message on the Internet than America.” Toxic toys made their way onto store shelves and into people’s homes. The *New York Times* reported the average time to resolve a Social Security disability claim has increased to more than 500 days, placing more than 700,000 Americans in limbo.

At the heart of all of these problems is a failure to adequately invest in our civilian workforce — whether it is the fact that the Consumer Product Safety Commission has just one full-time toy tester, or the fact that SSA doesn’t have enough appellate judges. Unfortunately, at a time when our federal government needs to find new talent, agencies face an unprecedented loss of experience and expertise.

The looming retirement of the 78-million-strong baby boomer generation will impact all sectors of the American economy. As reported in a recent Conference Board study, current retirement trends could create a U.S. labor shortage of 4.8 million workers in 10 years.¹ But the federal government — the nation’s largest employer — will be hit especially hard. The federal civil service has more workers over age 45 (58 percent) than the overall U.S. workforce (41 percent).² An estimated 530,000 full-time permanent employees will leave the federal government in the next five years, the majority through retirement.³ This is more than one-third of the federal government’s full-time permanent workforce.

“Many Americans over 50 are very active, have quick minds, and a great deal of talent and skills that could serve as a role model for excellence to the entire workforce.”

There is no silver bullet to meet government’s upcoming talent crunch. But a “silver buckshot” approach might work.

The first step government should take is to focus on the professional development of its existing employees. A complementary piece of a comprehensive solution is for government to re-think the way it goes about recruiting talent to focus more on outreach to experienced workers.

During the same five-year period that the federal government will lose hundreds of thousands of employees, the number of Americans age 55 and older is projected to increase by more than 9 million,⁴ many of whom want to continue working. If government can become an employer of

choice for baby boomers, this experienced cohort can become a considerable source of talent.

Older workers are attractive for a variety of reasons beyond their increasing availability. An AARP/Towers Perrin study of private-sector employers concluded that older workers are more motivated to exceed expectations than younger workers.⁵ In another survey, of HR professionals by the Society for Human Resource Management, 72 percent of respondents said that older workers are more willing to work on different schedules and serve as mentors. Respondents also cited the strong work ethic and reliability of older workers.⁶

Many organizations both inside government — U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the government-wide Chief Human Capital Officers Council, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) — and outside — AARP, National Council on Aging, Civic Ventures, National Older Worker Career Center — have already advocated for increased federal hiring of mature workers.

1 The Conference Board, *Gray Skies, Silver Linings: How Companies are Forecasting, Managing and Recruiting a Mature Workforce*, Research Report R-1409-07-RR, December 2007 and the Employment Policy Foundation, *The American Workplace Report: Building America’s Workforce for the 21st Century*, 2001.

2 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Employment Situation: November 2007*, September 2006 and the Central Personnel Data File, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, September 2005.

3 Central Personnel Data File, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, October 2006.

4 Census Bureau, 2006.

5 AARP/Towers Perrin, *Business Case for Workers Age 50+: Planning for Tomorrow’s Talent Needs in Today’s Competitive Environment*, December 2005.

6 Collison, Jessica, *Older Workers Survey*, SHRM Research, June 2003.

Federal agencies are already taking steps to address the exodus of retirement-eligible workers. For starters, they are investing in the development of their existing workforces, which all healthy organizations must do. Many agencies are emphasizing succession planning, knowledge transfer and other career advancement and retention strategies that encourage current employees with institutional knowledge and critical skills to grow and stay on the job. While these are important steps, they will not be enough to ensure that our government has experienced talent to preserve our national interests.

For these reasons, the Partnership for Public Service launched *FedExperience*, an initiative to enhance government's recruitment of experienced workers and enlist potential partners to fuel interest in federal service. The Atlantic Philanthropies awarded the Partnership a grant to fund the first phase of this project. This research project was designed to assess the feasibility of attracting larger numbers of older, experienced workers into the federal government. In particular, the Partnership sought to answer several key questions:

- **To what extent is the federal government already hiring from outside government, and what proportion of new hires are older Americans?**
- **Which federal agencies have successfully attracted experienced, older talent and what approaches have been most effective?**
- **What are the perceptions about, and what is the interest in, encore federal careers among older Americans?**
- **What are the key barriers to entering federal service that experienced workers face, and how can these barriers be eliminated or minimized?**
- **What attitudes and concerns do federal hiring managers and HR officials have about seeking experienced outside talent, and what factors might discourage agencies from giving serious consideration to older workers?**
- **What can and should the federal government do to attract larger numbers of mature workers?**
- **How can pilot programs be designed to test how to match older workers with specific federal job opportunities, and enable these new hires to succeed?**

To answer these questions, the Partnership analyzed detailed hiring and vacancy announcement data provided by OPM for 2006; conducted a nationwide telephone survey of older Americans; interviewed federal hiring managers, HR officials and recent older hires from outside government; assessed the “user-friendliness” of federal job announcements; researched national workforce trends and demographics affecting older workers; and talked to public interest and advocacy organizations inside and outside government. Appendix A offers a more detailed description of our research methodology.

Older, experienced workers differ significantly from government's more common recruitment targets, making “cookie-cutter” recruiting strategies less likely to succeed. Unlike with college students, older Americans have no career services network to facilitate outreach from federal agencies. In addition, different experience levels raise different sets of expectations. Whereas younger workers often don't know what to expect when looking for a job, older workers, who have experience in the job market, have specific ideas about what constitutes acceptable workplace conditions and application procedures.

Older workers also view government more skeptically. A March 2007 survey from the Pew Research Center found only 42 percent of those under 30 see government as inefficient, compared to more than 70 percent of people age 50 to 64.⁷

The Partnership's research suggests *FedExperience* and the effort to reach out to mature workers will be worth it, resulting in a “win-win-win” situation. Older Americans, who want to continue working, will win by gaining new opportunities to put their experience to use. Federal agencies will win by having a new pipeline of talent available to help them fulfill their missions. And the American people will win by having a government that has the talent it needs to serve the public.

⁷ The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, *Trends in Political and Core Values: 1987-2007*, March 2007.

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT HIRING PRACTICES

To what extent is government already hiring older workers? Which federal agencies have successfully attracted experienced, older talent and what approaches have been most effective? To answer these questions, the Partnership analyzed data on new hires in the federal government in calendar year 2006.

GOVERNMENT-WIDE OVERVIEW

The federal government is the largest single employer in the United States, with almost 1.9 million civilian employees. More than 80 percent of these workers serve outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, in locations across the United States and abroad.⁸ More than half of all federal civil servants work in professional, management, and financial occupations, compared to only 29 percent of private-sector workers.⁹

The federal workforce is also older than the overall U.S. labor force. Almost 60 percent of federal employees are older than 45, compared to 41 percent of private-sector workers.¹⁰ In 2006, federal agencies hired more than 233,000 new employees from outside government into a variety of work arrangements and schedules. Only 45 percent (about 105,000) were hired into permanent jobs, meaning the majority of federal hires were into temporary positions that were time-limited, on-call or seasonal.

The Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security hired 58 percent of these new employees. Along with the Departments of Agriculture and Treasury, these five agencies accounted for three-quarters of government hiring. The occupational areas with the most new hires, in order, are: general administration; medicine and public health; natural resources management and biological sciences; investigation; and law.

Although the federal government has enjoyed some success attracting external talent, a good deal of this hiring is for entry-level positions and temporary jobs that support student employment. The rate of external hiring decreases appreciably when it comes to mid- and higher-

level positions where experience is such a vital factor in addressing the government's crucial talent needs.

A CLOSER LOOK: HIRING OLDER WORKERS

The federal government remains largely isolated from external talent pools for higher-level positions

One of the biggest findings of the Partnership's analysis of current hiring practices is that government's isolated nature causes it to miss out on available talent.

It's hard to find external talent when only internal candidates can apply, and only half of federal job vacancies are even open to the public. In fiscal 2006, 48 percent of more than 190,000 vacancy announcements posted on USAJOBS, the one-stop OPM Web site for federal job opportunities, were open to external candidates. Moreover, in 30 percent of these "open" jobs, candidates had only seven or fewer days to apply, reducing the number of nongovernment candidates who might apply. After reviewing a federal job vacancy announcement, an older American in a focus group noted, **"The job was posted for eight days. It would certainly require more than eight days to obtain (required) college transcripts."**

Considering government's talent needs are greater for jobs that require highly experienced workers, it is important to examine specifically how many mid- and higher-level positions are open to external candidates. This review shows that as jobs become more highly paid, agencies become less likely to seek external talent. For example, at the GS-12 to -15 pay levels, only 41 percent of vacancies were open to external applicants in 2006 — down from 43 percent in 2003, and 51 percent in 2001.

It's not only opening vacancy announcements to external candidates that is on the decline. When it comes to actually *hiring* workers from outside of government, the rate of mid- to high-level positions being filled by external candidates is also declining. In 2006, only 12 percent of GS-12 to -15 professional and administrative job openings, which require experienced workers, were filled with external candidates, down from 15 percent in 2003 (see Figure 1).

8 Central Personnel Data File, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, October 2006.

9 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Career Guide to Industries: Federal Government, Excluding Postal Service*, 2008-2009 edition.

10 Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Employment Situation: September 2007*, September 2006 and the Central Personnel Data File, U.S. Office of Personnel Management, September 2005.

FIGURE 1

TRENDS IN MIDCAREER HIRING GS-12 TO -15 VACANCIES

	Open to public (%)	External hires (%)
FY 2001	51	13
FY 2003	43	15
FY 2006	41	12

Government's isolation from the outside job market is driven largely by traditional attitudes toward outside hiring. For example, some federal managers said there is more comfort with internal candidates who have federal background and experience, and already "understand the system." As one manager put it, **"There is a lot of interest by outsiders, but not a lot of interest in outsiders by insiders."**

Hiring of older workers is sporadic and dispersed

Seeing as how government does a poor job of recruiting external candidates for higher-level positions that are ideally suited for older, experienced workers, it should come as no surprise that federal hiring of older workers is sporadic and dispersed. As Figure 2 shows, just fewer than 16 percent (36,705) of all new hires in 2006 were age 50 and over. Nine percent were 55 and older. The large majority (84 percent) of new hires were under the age of 50, and many of them were hired into student and entry-level positions. For example, 45,000 new hires came in through special student programs in 2006.

The Small Business Administration (SBA); National Science Foundation (NSF); Agency for International Development (AID); OPM; Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC); Government Printing Office (GPO); Departments of Energy and Commerce; Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG); and the Department of Veterans Affairs had the highest percentages of new hires 50 and older. However, some of these organizations (AID, GPO and BBG) did relatively little hiring overall.

As Figure 3 shows, the occupations with the highest percentage of new 50 or older hires were veterinary science; business and industry; information and arts; equipment, facilities and services; medical and public health; accounting and budget; and social science, psychology and welfare. In its *Where the Jobs Are* report, the Partnership for Public Service identified the job categories where federal agencies will have to fill the most mission-critical positions over the next two years. A comparison of the list of government's hiring needs and the areas where government currently attracts older workers reveals a great deal

of overlap. Government is going to need thousands of specialists in IT, engineering, legal occupations and accounting, and hiring patterns suggest the older, external talent pool is a good place to find them.

Of the 12 percent of mid-career (GS-12 to -15) positions that were filled with external candidates, 31 percent were 50 or older. Although external hiring for these positions remains low, the relatively high percentage of older hires further suggests that these higher-level jobs, where government has acute talent needs, are well-suited for older workers and would benefit from broader outreach to experienced candidates.

In addition, the federal government hired large numbers of blue-collar workers — more than 63,000 (27 percent of all hires) — in 2006. These blue-collar jobs include occupational trades (e.g., electrician, carpenter, plumber, and mechanic) at levels of responsibility ranging from supervisor to lead worker to front-line employee.

Federal government positions are filled under a wide variety of work arrangements ranging from full-time permanent jobs to those that are part-time, temporary or even seasonal in nature. In 2006, of the 36,705 new hires age 50 and older, 76 percent were hired into jobs with full-time work schedules. Of these full-time older workers, about half were hired into permanent positions and half into temporary jobs. In addition, 3,745 older workers were hired into part-time federal jobs in 2006, with about 60 percent assuming permanent positions. In comparison, 197,029 new hires in 2006 were under the age of 50. Of these younger workers, 83 percent were hired for positions with full-time work schedules — about half of whom were hired into permanent positions and half into temporary jobs. In addition, 19,700 younger workers were hired into part-time jobs, with about 29 percent assuming permanent positions.

Hiring of older workers is ad hoc, driven by demand for specific experience, not a strategy to access the older talent pool

To help understand these hiring trends, and what hiring flexibilities are used to attract older workers, the Partnership interviewed human resources officials in agencies with the highest percentages of new hires age 50 and older.

Although some agencies use specific recruiting techniques to find experienced workers, none of the officials who were interviewed said their agencies deliberately targeted

FIGURE 2

PERCENTAGE OF NEW HIRES AGE 50 OR OLDER

CALENDAR YEAR 2006 COMPETITIVE AND EXCEPTED SERVICE¹¹ NEW HIRES (COMBINED) BY AGENCY

	Total hires	Number age 50 or older	Percent age 50 or older
Small Business Administration	3,538	1,443	40.8%
National Science Foundation	246	78	31.7%
Agency for International Development	143	45	31.5%
Office of Personnel Management	810	219	27.0%
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	593	156	26.3%
Government Printing Office	76	19	25.0%
Department of Energy	1,120	272	24.3%
Department of Commerce	5,024	1,086	21.6%
Broadcasting Board of Governors	112	24	21.4%
Department of Veterans Affairs	33,263	7,044	21.2%
Department of Treasury	16,658	3,308	19.9%
Department of Education	423	80	18.9%
Department of Interior	15,165	2,764	18.2%
Department of Health and Human Services	6,100	1,083	17.8%
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	103	18	17.5%
Department of State	2,179	380	17.4%
Social Security Administration	4,203	732	17.4%
Department of Homeland Security	23,943	3,938	16.4%
Smithsonian Institution	518	84	16.2%
Department of Transportation	3,649	533	14.6%
Department of Labor	1,489	212	14.2%
General Services Administration	624	88	14.1%
All Other Agencies	2,039	281	13.8%
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency	185	25	13.5%
Department of the Army	29,898	3,995	13.4%
Environmental Protection Agency	1,042	139	13.3%
Department of the Navy	14,188	1,859	13.1%
Department of Agriculture	21,878	2,755	12.6%
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	767	88	11.5%
National Labor Relations Board	99	11	11.1%
National Archives and Records Administration	454	49	10.8%
Defense—Other	14,677	1,556	10.6%
Department of the Air Force	20,802	1,923	9.2%
Department of Housing and Urban Development	962	82	8.5%
Federal Communications Commission	110	8	7.3%
Department of Justice	6,121	303	5.0%
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	308	15	4.9%
Securities and Exchange Commission	225	10	4.4%
Total	233,734	36,705	15.7%

11 See methodology for definitions of the competitive and excepted services.

older Americans as a rich source of talent and developed a strategy to access this talent pool.

In fact, many were unaware that their agencies had hired higher-than-average percentages of older workers. They cited job specifications, experience requirements, or labor market conditions as reasons why older workers were hired.

The Small Business Administration tops the list of agencies with the highest percentage of older hires in 2006 — 41 percent overall. Almost three-quarters of the agency's 777 competitive service hires were age 50 or older.

According to agency officials, a large portion of SBA's hiring is in its Office of Disaster Assistance. The Administration uses hiring flexibilities to appoint temporary staff, term appointees and consultants/experts for its "active reserve," an intermittent, on-call workforce available for quick mobilization when disasters strike. These people, hired into a variety of disciplines, are often older workers who have deep experience in their fields and are available on short-term notice.

An HR official at the National Science Foundation (NSF), which hires a high percentage of experienced scientists and engineers, explained that NSF has unique hiring and recruiting tactics to attract experienced private-sector talent. For example, NSF invites respected scientists (who are often older) to serve on peer review panels. This group then becomes a primary recruitment pool to fill permanent vacancies.

Most people associate internships with college-age workers, but the Department of Labor is also using the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP) to bring in experienced talent. According to a Department of Labor official, the average age of its hires through the program is 46. The agency uses the program to recruit experienced investigators and inspectors from the private sector (especially the mining industry) who are seeking second careers. Labor also uses FCIP to hire into its "MBA fellows" program, which draws heavily from retired military personnel seeking encore careers. Many are age 50 or older.

The Census Bureau has many positions that are appealing to older workers. It conducts over 200 surveys each year, and hires workers to collect and process the survey data. These positions are usually temporary or intermittent, have flexible hours, and are based out of the home, making them attractive for older Americans seeking temporary or flexible job opportunities.

At the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), 26 percent of its 593 new excepted service hires were age 50 or older. According to NRC, the agency values experienced workers, and it uses them as a resource to mentor younger employees. Many of NRC's recruitment strategies appeal to older workers, such as advertising in professional journals and promoting job stability. NRC also emphasizes federal benefits, such as a retirement annuity and continued health insurance benefits after five years of service. NRC officials also say they provide an environment that is friendly to older workers, and allows telework and flexible schedules.

Although NRC values older hires, it also focuses on keeping its existing older talent. The Commission uses its special legislative authority to waive the restriction on dual compensation (i.e., NRC can allow federal retirees to simultaneously receive full salaries and full retirement annuities) to re-employ retired former federal employees. Ninety-six percent of NRC's intermittent staff are 50 or older, and many are re-employed annuitants.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS), in the Department of Treasury, employs many seasonal and temporary workers who provide technical assistance and support to IRS and the public during tax season. Many of these activities require seasoned employees who have done this work before or who have financial backgrounds. Because this work is seasonal, many of these employees are retirees and other older workers interested in short-term employment. IRS also hires seasoned investigators to work on complex financial cases. About 25 percent of these hires are age 50 and over — a byproduct of the extensive experience these jobs require. To help address a shortage of these experienced workers, OPM gave IRS a special authorization for streamlined hiring of seasoned financial investigators.

Agencies consider older workers to be good hires

The baby boomer generation offers not only a large source of talent, but also a good one.

The majority of hiring managers and HR personnel the Partnership interviewed said it is realistic to expect older hires from outside government to become a major source of talent for the federal government. One typical comment from a hiring manager, **"Many Americans over 50 are very active, have quick minds, and a great deal of talent and skills that could serve as a role model for excellence to the entire workforce."**

FIGURE 3

OCCUPATIONS FOR NEW HIRES AGE 50 OR OLDER

CALENDAR YEAR 2006 COMPETITIVE AND EXCEPTED SERVICE NEW HIRES (COMBINED) BY GENERAL SCHEDULE OCCUPATIONAL GROUP

	Total hires	Number age 50 or older	Percent age 50 or older
Veterinary Medical Science	200	52	26.0%
Business and Industry	5,692	1,398	24.6%
Information and Arts	1,586	360	22.7%
Equipment, Facilities and Services	677	130	19.2%
Medical, Hospital, Dental and Public Health	26,723	5,097	19.1%
Accounting and Budget	9,985	1,830	18.3%
Social Science, Psychology and Welfare	8,471	1,532	18.1%
Engineering and Architecture	8,590	1,473	17.1%
General Administration, Clerical and Office Services	50,665	8,625	17.0%
Legal and Kindred	10,543	1,783	16.9%
Quality Assurance, Inspection and Grading	1,297	208	16.0%
Mathematical Sciences	1,605	241	15.0%
Information Management	3,670	529	14.4%
Library and Archives	615	88	14.3%
Education	6,886	972	14.1%
Human Resources Management	4,221	586	13.9%
Miscellaneous Occupations	10,977	1,516	13.8%
Investigation	17,510	2,231	12.7%
Physical Sciences	2,342	276	11.8%
Supply	5,113	500	9.8%
Natural Resources Management and Biological Science	21,085	1,952	9.3%
Transportation	3,250	241	7.4%
Copyright, Patent and Trademark	1,255	66	5.3%

Federal agency managers cited several reasons why they consider older workers to be good hires. The most common were their strong commitment to the agency mission, a hunger to do good work, and talent developed through different work and life experiences. Many managers also acknowledged the value of older workers as mentors. According to one hiring manager, **“Experienced workers should be placed in positions that can best utilize their experience and talents, such as mentoring more junior employees and knowledge management transfer.”**

In addition, a MSPB study of recent outside hires in GS-12 to -15 jobs found that the managers of these new, experienced employees believe the quality of talent they possess is, in most cases, every bit as good, if not better, than the quality of their existing staffs.

The Partnership also asked hiring managers and HR personnel to identify the specific occupations that would benefit most from targeted outreach to older workers. Our interviewees cited jobs that typically require experience to master: scientists, engineers, IT staff, procurement professionals, lawyers and accountants. This list overlaps

in part with actual hiring of older workers (See Figure 3). Some agency managers also cited entry-level positions that involve direct contact with the general public. For example, a hiring manager at the Social Security Administration suggested call center work as a good fit.

Hiring managers also identified hiring flexibilities that could attract older workers. Many mentioned flexible work schedules; part-time and alternative work schedules; job sharing; short-term assignments; telecommuting; family and medical leave programs; increased vacation time for experienced new hires; and recruitment, retention, and relocation bonuses.

Attitudes toward hiring older workers are shifting

The isolated culture that has long limited the influx of experienced outside talent is changing. A solid majority of the HR professionals interviewed during this research embraced the idea of enhanced outreach to older, experienced job candidates. They just wanted to know how to do it in a way that would benefit their agencies.

OLDER AMERICANS’ OPINIONS ABOUT GOVERNMENT AND FEDERAL SERVICE

In order to determine the extent to which older Americans are interested in working for the federal government, the Partnership engaged Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. to conduct focus groups and a nationwide telephone survey (see Appendix A for methodology).

This research produced data on older Americans’ attitudes and interest levels in working for the federal government. The following key findings from the nationwide telephone survey revealed both hiring opportunities and challenges.

Older workers plan to continue working ... and for quite a while

Twenty-nine percent of workers age 55 to 59 plan to continue working beyond their 65th birthday. Sixteen percent of respondents 60 to 65 plan to work for at least 11 more years. This finding undercuts the argument that older job candidates are not worth pursuing, because they are unlikely to remain in a new job for a long time. More than one-third will seek a new job in the next few years.

Even among those who have already retired from one career, half reported that they plan to work for at least another six years before they are “completely retired.” About 53 percent of all respondents said they prefer a full-time job, with men having a much stronger preference for full-time work than women (66 to 42 percent, respectively). Among those age 50 to 54, two-thirds prefer full-time work. That percentage declines to a little more than half for those age 55-59, and to less than one-third in the 60-65 age group. Six in ten respondents with annual incomes above \$75,000 prefer full-time work, while half of those with lower incomes prefer working full-time.

Interest in federal service is relatively high, particularly among likely job seekers

A majority (58 percent) of older Americans believes “there are good jobs for people like me in the federal government,” and 49 percent believe there are good federal jobs available where they live. About 53 percent of older Americans are at least somewhat interested in working

for the federal government, with 26 percent extremely or very interested. This level of strong interest is comparable to older workers’ interest in large private firms, nonprofits and state government (see Figure 4). It lags behind only small, private firms. Among respondents who are “very likely” to seek a new job in the next few years, interest in federal employment rose to 40 percent, topping this list of potential employers.

FIGURE 4
PERCENT OF OLDER AMERICANS “EXTREMELY” OR “VERY” INTERESTED IN POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

	All Respondents (%)	Very Likely to Seek a New Job (%)
Small Private Sector	40	40
Nonprofit Organizations	29	37
Large Private Sector	29	40
State Government	26	34
Federal Government	26	40
Local Government	21	28

Interest in federal service is particularly high among older Americans who are lower on the socioeconomic scale

The older Americans who indicated they were extremely or very interested in working for the federal government (26 percent of all respondents) included 35 percent of blue collar workers, 34 percent of those earning less than \$40,000 per year, and 34 percent of women without college degrees (see Figure 5).

Among all respondents, women and people with lower incomes, people without a college degree, and those with non-professional job backgrounds are most interested in working for the federal government.

A deeper examination of respondents who are interested in federal service and are most likely to continue working provides a profile of prime recruitment targets. In general, women, those age 50 to 54, noncollege graduates, those earning less than \$40,000 per year and those who currently have friends working for the federal government are in this high interest/available group.

FIGURE 5

PROPORTION OF OLDER AMERICANS “EXTREMELY” OR “VERY” INTERESTED IN FEDERAL SERVICE

	Initial Response (%)	Final Response (%)	Differential: Final – Initial (%)
All respondents	26	32	+6
Men	24	31	+7
Women	28	34	+6
Age 50 to 54	29	34	+5
Age 55 to 59	26	34	+8
Age 60 to 65	22	28	+6
High school or less	29	35	+6
Some college	32	38	+6
College graduates	21	31	+10
Postgraduates	20	25	+5
Men/college graduates	21	24	+3
Men/non-college graduates	26	36	+10
Women/college graduates	21	31	+10
Women/non-college graduates	34	37	+3
Professionals	22	32	+10
White-collar workers	28	32	+4
Blue-collar workers	35	43	+8
Retirees	15	19	+4
\$40K or less	34	35	+1
\$40K to \$75K	26	37	+11
More than \$75K	19	28	+9
Extremely/very knowledgeable	41	48	+7
Somewhat knowledgeable	30	35	+5
Not knowledgeable	21	28	+7
Worked in state/local government	32	41	+9
Friends/family in federal government	29	37	+8
Applied for federal government job	39	48	+9
Targets: Likely job seekers/college	28	41	+13

Knowledge about federal opportunities is low

Older Americans surveyed said they have very limited knowledge about federal job opportunities. Overall, just 11 percent said they were extremely or very knowledgeable, while 57 percent said they are not too knowledgeable or not knowledgeable at all. This tracks closely to findings from a 2007 Partnership national survey of college students, where only 13 percent of juniors and seniors said they were extremely or very knowledgeable about federal job opportunities, and 54 percent were not too or not at all knowledgeable.

Further, among older Americans surveyed, only 17 percent of those who have friends or family members in the federal government reported being extremely or very knowledgeable about career opportunities.

These older workers also said they don’t know where to get information or assistance about federal jobs. Specifically, 44 percent said they are not too knowledgeable or not knowledgeable at all about where to get information and assistance about finding and applying for a federal job. Only 19 percent said they are extremely or very knowledgeable, including those who are highly interested in working for the federal government and plan to seek a job in the next few years.

The more they know about federal opportunities, the more they like them

Knowledge levels drive interest in federal employment. About 41 percent of those who said they were extremely or very knowledgeable about working in the federal government also said they were extremely or very interested

FIGURE 6

JOB QUALITIES OLDER WORKERS CITE AS EXTREMELY APPEALING

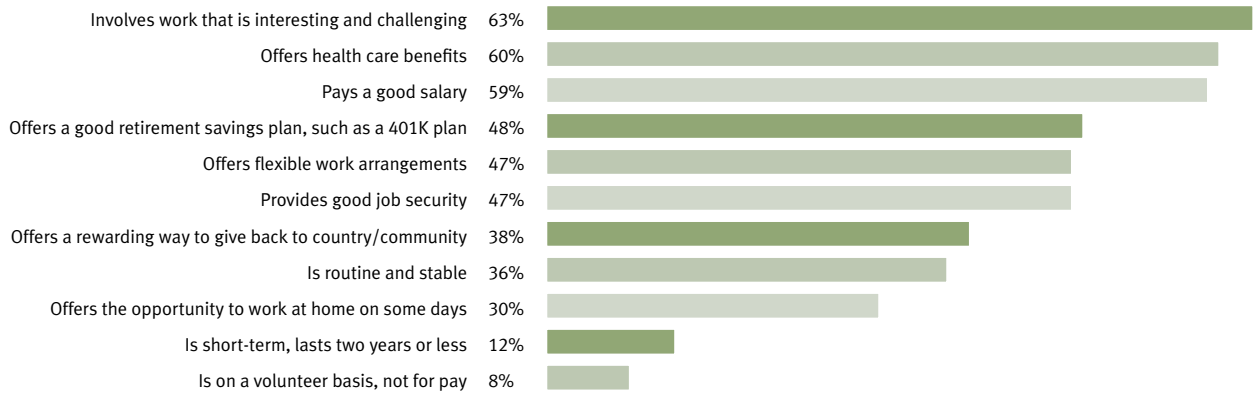


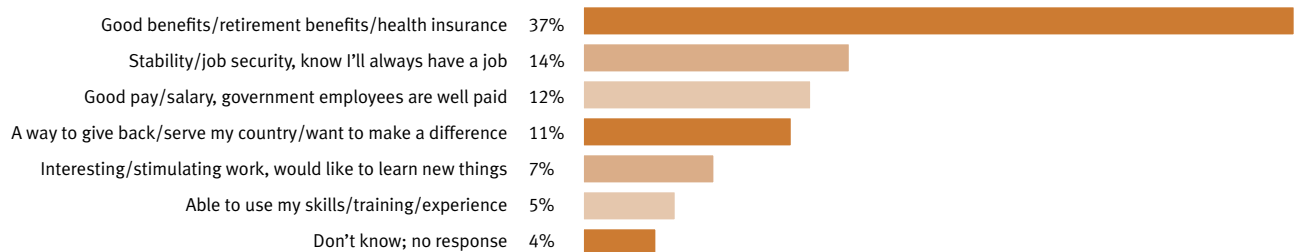
FIGURE 7

OLDER WORKER PREFERENCE FOR GOOD PAY/BENEFITS VERSUS MEANINGFUL WORK

	Good Pay/Benefits (%)	Meaningful Work (%)	Differential: Pay - Meaningful (%)
All adults	37	36	+1
Age 50 to 54	38	34	+4
Age 55 to 59	43	31	+12
Age 60 to 65	27	47	-20
High school or less	55	18	+37
Some college	42	36	+6
College graduates	35	37	-2
Postgraduates	17	51	-34
Receive a pension	27	49	-22
Professionals	29	42	-13
White-collar workers	44	26	+18
Blue-collar workers	52	26	+26
\$40K or less	39	34	+5
\$40K to \$75K	49	29	+20
More than \$75K	29	44	-15

FIGURE 8

VOLUNTARY REPLIES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTION ABOUT THE MOST ATTRACTIVE JOBS



in working in a federal job, compared to just 21 percent of those who were not knowledgeable.

However, even the knowledge obtained during the administration of the Partnership's survey was enough to boost interest. Near the end of the survey, respondents were asked again to rate their overall interest in working for the federal government. After responding to survey questions, interest rose to 67 percent saying they would be at least somewhat interested, compared to 53 percent at the start of the survey. Thirty-two percent reported they would be extremely or very interested, versus 26 percent earlier. Plus, the level of interest among all demographic categories rose, particularly among college graduates likely to seek jobs in the next few years, those with professional work backgrounds, those who earn more than \$40,000/year, and men without college degrees (see Figure 5). This is significant since college graduates likely to seek jobs in the next few years and those with professional work backgrounds are particular groups that agencies might recruit.

Interesting and challenging work and health care benefits are the most compelling reasons to work for government

When given specific choices of what job qualities they would find “extremely appealing” in considering a job, older Americans we surveyed said the most important qualities, in order, are interesting and challenging work, health benefits, and a good salary (see Figure 6). Respondents were less interested in jobs that offered a rewarding way to give back to the country or community, jobs that were stable, and jobs that offered the opportunity to work at home occasionally. Short-term jobs and volunteer, unpaid work drew virtually no interest.

To better focus these responses, the Partnership also asked these older Americans to choose between a job that offered good pay and benefits, or a job that provides meaningful work. The percentages choosing each are almost identical — 37 percent favored good pay and benefits versus 36 percent who preferred meaningful work. Twenty-five percent volunteered that they valued both about the same. However, the Partnership found major differences in responses by age, education level, occupational focus, and income levels.

As shown in Figure 7, those under the age of 60, with less education, lower income levels, and in non-professional jobs were more interested in pay and benefits; while those 60 and over, with higher levels of education, higher incomes, who receive a pension, and work in professional

occupations were more interested in meaningful work. These preferences can help federal agencies target recruiting and marketing strategies and activities.

Respondents who said they were at least somewhat interested in working for the federal government were asked why, in an open-ended question. By an overwhelming margin, they cited benefits, particularly health insurance and retirement annuities (see Figure 8). Although job stability, good pay, and a way to give back to their country or making a difference were also mentioned, benefits were clearly the chief reason.

Older workers doubt our federal government offers many of the qualities they value in a job

With multi-billion-dollar budgets and nationwide — or even global — reach, federal agencies offer unique and challenging work, which is exactly what 63 percent of older workers want. But only 21 percent of respondents strongly believe our federal government offers interesting and challenging work. Similarly, 30 percent of older workers think government “pays a good salary,” while 59 percent cite salary as critically important. In addition, only 10 percent of respondents believe government offers “flexible work schedules,” compared to 47 percent of mature workers who say flexibility is something they desire.

There are major gaps between the job qualities that older Americans value most and what they think the federal government offers

Another way to assess the attractiveness of government employment is to compare how well older Americans believe that particular job qualities describe the federal government to how important they feel these qualities are. As Figure 9 shows, the federal government came up short on job qualities that survey respondents said are important. The largest gaps are in “work that is interesting and challenging” (-42), “offers flexible work schedules” (-37), “pays a good salary” (-29), and “offers a rewarding way to give back to your country or community” (-15).

People with less confidence in government are less likely to be interested in federal jobs

Just 29 percent of survey respondents rated the federal government as being very or fairly effective in solving problems and helping people, while 66 percent said gov-

FIGURE 9

COMPARISON OF DESIRED WORKPLACE QUALITIES TO HOW THEY APPLY TO GOVERNMENT

GAP BETWEEN APPEAL AND DESCRIPTION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT JOBS

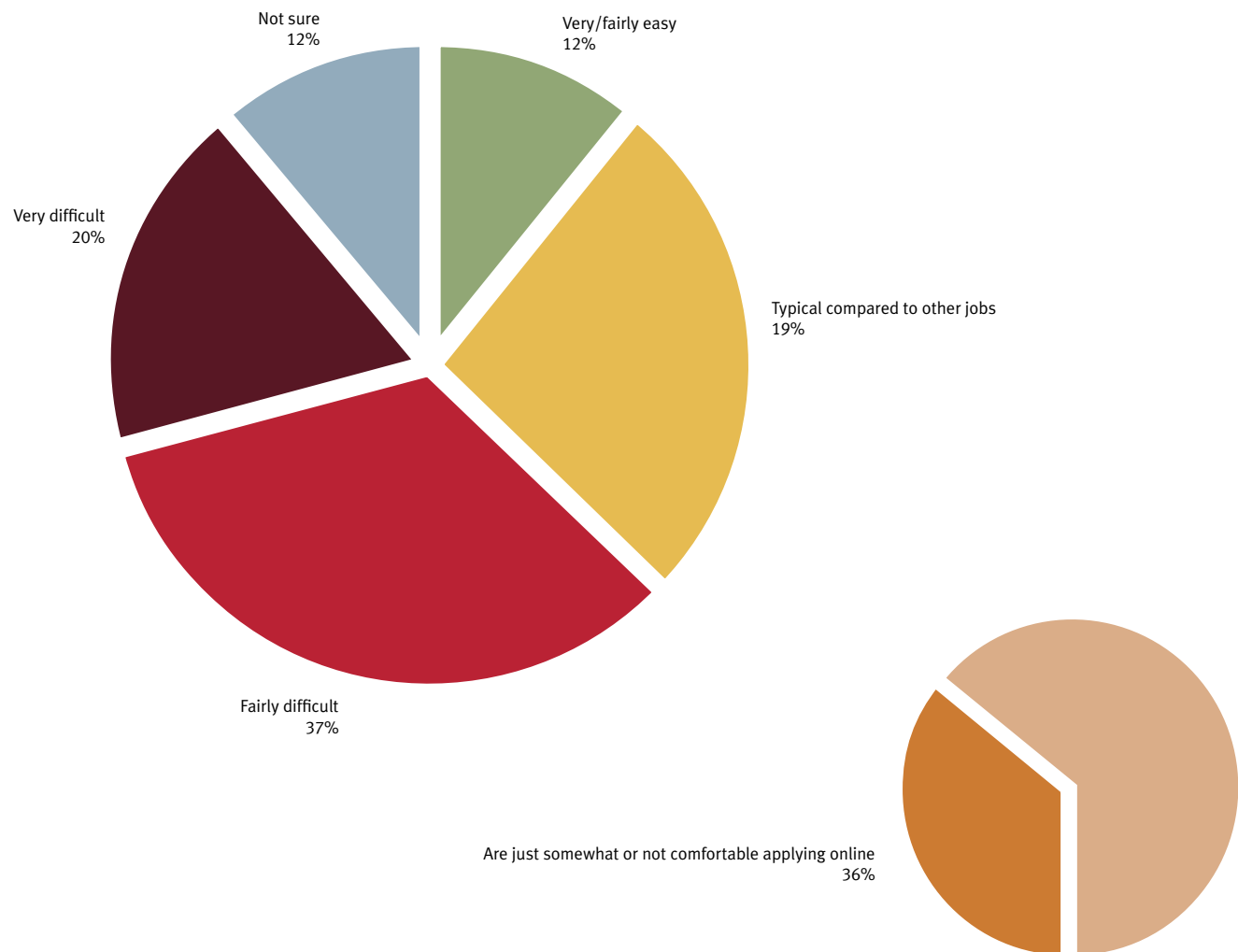
	Extremely Appealing (%)*	Describes Federal Government Very Well (%)*	Gap (%)
Involves work that is interesting and challenging to you	63	21	-42
Offers good health care benefits	60	51	-9
Pays a good salary	59	30	-29
Offers a good retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k) arrangement	48	45	-3
Offers flexible work schedules	47	10	-37
Provides good job security	47	40	-7
Offers a rewarding way to give back to your country or community	38	23	-15
Is routine and stable	36	31	-5

*Both the "extremely appealing" and "describes government very well" percentages are the sums of ratings of these criteria as 9 or 10 on the 1-10 scale, with 10 the highest rating.

FIGURE 10

PERCEPTIONS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT APPLICATION PROCESS

HOW EASY/DIFFICULT DO YOU THINK IT IS TO APPLY FOR JOBS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?



ernment is very or fairly ineffective. While not an exact comparison, in a 2001 Partnership survey, 51 percent of workforce participants age 50-64 said government was effective. Today’s more negative attitudes dampen the level of interest that older Americans have in working for government. Specifically, 31 percent of respondents who said they believe the federal government is effective are extremely or very interested in working for it, while only 20 percent who believe the federal government is very ineffective are interested.

Older Americans are also turned off by negative perceptions of government and the application process

When given a series of choices, 61 percent cited “too much bureaucracy” and “it is too hard to accomplish anything” as reasons not to work for the federal government, while 51 percent said that people who are not planning to work for many years have limited opportunities for promotions and pay increases.

Most respondents also believe that applying for a federal government job is difficult compared to other jobs. As Figure 10 illustrates, fifty-seven percent of all 50- to 65-year-olds surveyed said applying for a federal job is fairly or very difficult while only 12 percent said it is fairly or very easy compared to other jobs. These perceptions are reality among those respondents who have actually applied for a federal job in the past. The same proportion of this group, 57 percent, indicates the process is fairly or very difficult.

The federal government’s Web-based, online application process is another potential obstacle for older workers. For example, 11 percent of respondents said they do not have Internet access at all, and 36 percent said they are just somewhat or not that comfortable with the prospect of applying for a job online. This percentage increased for 60- to 65-year-olds (44 percent), those with a high school degree or less (50 percent), blue-collar workers (44 percent), those with annual incomes of \$40,000 or lower (47 percent), and retirees (48 percent).

To gain a better understanding of attitudes about the federal application process, the Partnership asked a sample of persons age 50 and older to evaluate actual job announcements and rate them using a five-point scale (0 being “poor,” 4 being “good”). They were asked to rate the announcements on overall “user-friendliness” and in four specific areas — “readability and tone,” “usefulness and clarity of information,” “organization of information,” and perceived “fairness and openness.” On overall

user-friendliness, the average score was 1.7 on the 0-4 scale, with a range of 0.8 to 2.6 for the individual vacancy announcements. By category:

	<i>Average</i>	<i>Range</i>
<i>Readability and tone</i>	1.8	0.9–2.5
<i>Usefulness and clarity</i>	2.0	1.4–2.5
<i>Organization of information</i>	2.3	1.8–2.7
<i>Perceived fairness and openness</i>	2.3	1.4–3.1
<i>Overall user-friendliness</i>	1.7	0.8–2.6

Typical comments from the group included “way too bureaucratic,” “totally confusing,” and “extremely too long.” As one reviewer put it, **“The overall feel of the job vacancy announcement is negative and heavy handed ... If this application is like this, what’s it like to work there and why would you want to?”**

Many older workers worry about subtle age discrimination

Even among those extremely or very interested in working for the federal government, 55 percent said their age might be a negative factor in finding a federal job.

Older workers who enter government service like it

When it comes to gauging the merits of bringing new, experienced talent into government, no opinions are more valuable than those older workers who have already made this transition.

The Partnership spoke to a sampling of older workers who are new federal hires. Most said they would recommend the federal government as an employer of older workers. Further, an MSPB study of recent outside hires in GS-12 to -15 jobs found that when asked how government compared to their immediately previous employers, respondents scored government higher in almost all categories, including job security, workplace flexibility, a chance to make a difference, opportunity for training and development, and retirement programs.

BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS

The analysis of current hiring practices and survey of older Americans reveal many of the key barriers that are preventing older Americans from entering federal service. Despite these challenges, our research also reveals great potential to enrich the federal workforce by hiring and engaging talented, older workers.

To show that it is feasible, **the Partnership's primary recommendation is for federal agencies to collaborate on a series of pilot programs to apply the insights of our FedExperience research.** The Partnership will work with federal agencies, OPM, corporate partners and organizations advocating the interests of older workers to attract talented, older workers into federal service and match them to meaningful careers. The pilots will demonstrate how agencies across government can tap into the growing talent pool of mature, experienced workers.

In addition to the pilots, we have identified a series of other actions that agencies, OPM and the Congress can take to improve the government's ability to hire older, experienced workers.

This section of the report catalogs the barriers that must be addressed and offers preliminary solutions for overcoming them.

1 OUR GOVERNMENT'S CLOSED CULTURE SHUTS OFF POTENTIAL CANDIDATES.

As long as half of federal jobs are not even open to external candidates, agencies will continue to miss opportunities to hire the best talent, including older workers. In addition, with many of the jobs that are open to nongovernment candidates, external recruiting consists of little more than posting vacancies on the Internet.

RECOMMENDATION: When filling positions, agencies should consider all possible talent pools, including older workers.

In particular, agencies should consider opening jobs that have traditionally been closed to the public if there is not a compelling reason to limit them to internal candidates. However, agencies should not simply open all vacancies to the public — this approach does not automatically yield results and can unnecessarily increase HR staff workload. For vacancies open to the public, agen-

cies should allow enough time for external candidates to apply. For jobs that need to be filled on a high-volume, continuing basis, agencies should maximize the use of open continuous vacancy announcements to provide a steady stream of qualified applicants, take advantage of processing efficiencies, and improve opportunities for outsiders to learn about, and apply for, jobs. OPM should continue to take a leadership role in encouraging agencies to change their mindset about recruiting experienced talent from outside government. OPM's *Career Patterns* initiative, which calls on agencies to develop new talent sources and alternative work arrangements to help recruit all age groups, is an important step in the right direction and a program OPM should continue and strengthen.

2 A LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT FEDERAL JOBS IS PREVENTING OLDER AMERICANS FROM CONSIDERING THESE OPPORTUNITIES.

After opening government's eyes about older, experienced workers and their potential to fill talent needs, we need to open these workers' eyes about government and close the knowledge gap. The Partnership's research on college students found that one of the biggest challenges facing federal recruiters is not a lack of interest in federal jobs, but a lack of knowledge. Older workers are no different, with only 11 percent claiming to be extremely or very knowledgeable about federal employment opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION: Agencies and OPM should enhance outreach and marketing of federal jobs to experienced workers.

In particular, agencies should:

- Use advertising/marketing campaigns, especially in targeted geographic areas, that are designed to attract experienced talent. Those campaigns should:
 - Personalize agency missions and jobs in these campaigns to help overcome the perception that government is a faceless bureaucracy with uninspiring work. Agencies can make this personal connection by profiling real people (especially older workers) in real jobs.
 - Prominently feature — in all outreach — the advantages and benefits of federal employment that resonate strongly with experienced workers such as

exciting missions, interesting and challenging work, health and life insurance, and retirement plans.

- Target outreach and recruitment (including job fairs) to professional networks, societies and associations; trade journals and publications; state employment agencies; military retiree and other organizations that can help reach experienced workers.
- Establish job marketing partnerships with organizations such as AARP that advocate for older workers.
- Contract, as needed, with commercial recruitment firms and employment services, especially for jobs that require hard-to-find competencies.
- Expand entry-level recruitment beyond college campuses or other outlets targeted at young job seekers. OPM should continue working with agencies to creatively market the broad range of job opportunities and the exciting, meaningful work federal employees perform.

3 THE FEDERAL HIRING PROCESS IS BROKEN.

Once knowledge about and interest in federal service is increased, it must be made easy for candidates to act on their interest. One of the biggest obstacles preventing older workers from entering federal service is our government's cumbersome and complicated hiring process. In addition to the survey finding that 57 percent of older Americans think the federal government's application process is difficult compared with other jobs, a Partnership for Public Service review of hiring at select federal agencies revealed that the process for hiring one employee can include more than 110 steps. Not surprisingly, some federal job applicants wait nearly a year before getting a job offer, and some wait even longer. Candidates who receive and accept offers can be forced to wait even longer as they undergo security clearances.

Some potential workers don't wait at all, because the job announcement discourages them from applying in the first place. Often running 10 to 20 or even more pages in print form, federal "vacancy announcements" are frequently filled with impenetrable acronyms and technical jargon, long lists of duties and responsibilities, complex descriptions of qualification requirements, and confusing instructions on how to actually apply. In addition, they often require a résumé that candidates must adapt to federal government requirements, and that can vary from agency to agency. While long vacancy announcements are designed to provide clarity, the overwhelming amount of information instead leads to confusion.

Most of the Federal managers we interviewed agree that the hiring process is broken. One manager provided insight from the standpoints of both an applicant and a hiring manager: **"The most awful thing I've ever gone through — as both an applicant and later as a hiring official."**

RECOMMENDATION: Agencies and OPM should work to make hiring more timely, efficient and user-friendly.

Although some agencies are addressing these problems, much remains to be done to demystify and make hiring more welcoming, understandable and efficient. Therefore, we urge agencies, among other actions, to:

- Improve vacancy announcements — make them shorter and less threatening, use less "gobbledygook" and more plain English, and provide easy-to-follow instructions on how to apply and where to get questions answered. Agencies should also ensure that job qualification requirements are not so vague or restrictive that they discourage qualified applicants from applying.
- Allow candidates to submit college transcripts, veterans documentation, and other secondary application materials within a reasonable time after the application deadline or after the best-qualified candidates have been selected, instead of requiring applicants to submit this documentation at the front end of the process. This particularly disadvantages external candidates.
- Keep applicants continually informed of their status, particularly through email and other automated notification methods.
- Use existing tools and guides such as the OPM's 45 Day Hiring Model, Hiring Toolkit, *Career Patterns* guidelines, and HR Resources Center; as well as the Partnership's *Extreme Hiring Makeover* results to help streamline and improve the hiring process.
- When appropriate, create data bases with profiles of federal retirees and other experienced experts and consultants who can be notified for short-term job needs that match their skill sets and work preferences.
- OPM should continue its efforts to reduce backlogs of security clearance cases and improve systems to reduce lost opportunities to acquire top talent.
- While agencies and OPM work to make the hiring process more effective, Congress should continue to exert its oversight authority and hold agencies accountable. We urge Congress to evaluate the federal

hiring process and, when necessary, enact legislation to help agencies streamline the process.

4 EVEN IF CANDIDATES CAN NAVIGATE THE HIRING PROCESS, TRANSITIONING INTO A NEW WORKPLACE CAN BE A BUMPY PROCESS.

Large segments of the federal workforce and new employees coming from outside government are skeptical of one another. Some federal workers doubt external hires will understand “how things are done” in the government world, and external hires don’t necessarily disagree, assuming government work is completely different from the private and nonprofit sectors. While newly hired boomers will bring good skills, strong experience, and fresh perspectives, these outside hires will need help transitioning into their new government workplaces.

RECOMMENDATION: Agencies should create employee orientation and onboarding processes that recognize the unique needs of new outside hires, including older workers.

In particular, agencies should establish mentoring, shadowing and other on-the-job learning processes that will help new employees transition into and understand agency missions and cultures. Given the increasing number and complexity of federal employee benefits/insurance programs, and our survey finding that older workers are keenly interested in benefits, agencies should ensure that employee benefits specialists are well-trained in counseling new federal employees on the full range of health insurance, life insurance, retirement and other benefits programs.

Agencies should also use flexible work arrangements to help experienced workers create work-life balance, promote a productive and high-quality work environment, and maximize retention. Programs and arrangements that have particular appeal to mature workers include part-time and alternative work schedules, job sharing, short-term assignments, telework, family and medical leave programs, training and career development, and time off for good job performance.

An important step agencies can take to ensure incoming older workers enjoy a smooth transition is to make sure efforts to recruit experienced, older workers from outside government complement the needs of existing employees and do not diminish opportunities for current workers. Agencies need to develop multiple internal and external recruiting channels. However, external hiring strategies should be sensitive to the needs and expectations

of current employees, as well as collective bargaining requirements. Current employees should not view efforts to bring in experienced outside talent as threatening to their career prospects. External hiring must be complemented by careful attention to the existing workforce through training and development, succession planning and career paths.

5 NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF GOVERNMENT ARE NEGATIVELY IMPACTING THE RECRUITING CLIMATE.

The Hart survey identified a link between perceptions about government’s effectiveness and interest in federal service among older workers. The same survey also reveals older Americans’ attitudes about government are overwhelmingly negative. Sixty-six percent believe the federal government is ineffective in solving problems today and helping people. Just 29 percent believe the federal government is effective. In addition, survey respondents said the biggest reason not to serve in government was that it was too bureaucratic.

RECOMMENDATION: Acknowledging there is no short-term solution to improve government’s overall image, agencies should pierce skepticism about government by telling success stories specific to the areas where they are trying to recruit.

For example, agencies and OPM can develop marketing materials for scientists that highlight federal scientists — including older Americans — who have won the Nobel Prize in physics. The Partnership’s *Service to America Medals* program has already identified dozens of outstanding federal employees whose stories illustrate the potential to make a major difference in government.

6 SOME STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BARRIERS, COUPLED WITH INADEQUATE USE OF EXISTING HR FLEXIBILITIES, KEEP EXPERIENCED WORKERS OUT OF GOVERNMENT.

Federal retirees who might be interested in re-entering federal service have their new salaries reduced by the amount of their retirement annuity, creating a major financial disincentive. As a result, many of these retirees return to work as private contractors at a much higher cost to taxpayers. In addition, several hiring managers said that their agencies need expanded and more flexible direct hiring authority. Direct hiring authority broadens agency hiring flexibility and expedites the selection process.

RECOMMENDATION: Congress should exercise oversight and pass legislation to remove obstacles, while agencies should take full advantage of existing personnel authority and flexibility.

In particular, Congress should enact legislation to allow phased retirement (i.e., transitioning from full-time to part-time work schedules) without reducing future retirement annuities. This will enable agencies to retain talent and efficiently transfer critical job knowledge to replacements. Congress should also allow agencies to hire retirees for temporary assignments without reducing their retirement annuities.

Also, H.R. 2533, the “FERS Redeposit Act,” would allow former non-retired federal employees returning to civil service (after separating and cashing out, or rolling over, their retirement savings) to redeposit funds in a Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) annuity without losing retirement credit for prior years of federal service. This benefit is currently available to former employees enrolled in the Civil Service Retirement System, but not those more recently covered by FERS. As with the legislation that would allow agencies to bring back current retirees without reducing their current annuities, this bill would give agencies access to a pool of experienced talent.

In most cases, however, legislative relief is not needed to make it easier to recruit older, experienced workers. Recent legislation and regulations have already increased personnel authorities and hiring flexibilities. However, flexibility only works if it is fully and creatively used. Agencies filling jobs that require experienced talent should use their personnel “tool boxes,” including recruitment and relocation bonuses, superior qualifications and special needs appointments above minimum salaries, retention pay, and direct hiring authority. Agencies can also use special appointing authorities to quickly hire veterans, disabled persons, prior federal employees with reinstatement eligibility, and experts and consultants. Some agencies can use temporary, term and seasonal appointments, SES limited appointments, and short-term emergency appointments under certain conditions.

To consider the broadest range of highly-qualified candidates, agencies should more frequently use category rating of job applicants. Agencies can also grant increased annual leave earning rates to outside hires with directly relevant and mission critical experience. Further, agencies with special hiring needs due to shortages of qualified candidates, remote locations, or other critical situ-

ations should ask OPM to approve flexibilities such as direct hiring authority and excepted service hiring.

The Partnership urges OPM, working with the CHCO Council, to continue to make changes in government-wide regulations, and HR programs and practices to give agencies more flexibility and authority to acquire, develop and retain the best talent, including older workers from outside government. These changes include revising OPM regulations and implementing guidance for direct hiring authority (authorized under the Homeland Security Act of 2002) to create more flexibility and expand agencies’ use of this authority for critical hiring needs or severe shortages of candidates.

OPM should also issue implementing guidelines for and begin recruiting Senior Presidential Management Fellows (PMF), authorized under Presidential Executive Order 13318 (2003). Although OPM issued final regulations to create the framework for the Senior PMF program in 2005, implementing guidance has not been issued and the program has not yet been launched.¹² This program was designed to create a pool of experienced talent from inside and outside government with potential to become senior executives.

To help ensure agencies are taking advantage of flexibilities and pursuing effective recruiting and hiring strategies, Congress should also exert its oversight authority and thoroughly examine federal hiring practices. To help with its oversight duties, Congress might also want to require agencies to report on their use of special personnel authorities and flexibilities. While Congress should avoid adding to the already burdensome amounts of paperwork agencies face, this accountability mechanism could be a powerful incentive for agencies to do more with the tools they have.

Older experienced workers can be a tremendous asset to our federal government. The Partnership believes that now is the time to launch a concerted and broad effort to take advantage of the interest, energy, and talents of baby boomers to help fill the nation’s mission-critical jobs and to make the federal government an employer of choice for this fastest growing segment of the American workforce. Changing the systems, attitudes, and cultures in the federal government, as well as how older workers perceive the government employment process and work environment, will not be easy. Matching boomer talents and interests with federal government needs can result in a win-win-win — for older Americans, for our government and for our nation.

¹² Federal Register: May 19, 2005 (Vol. 70, No. 96), 5 CRF Part 213.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

The goal of *FedExperience's* initial research was to explore the issues surrounding hiring older workers into government, from the perspectives of both federal agencies and job-seekers. The Partnership first conducted a literature review to assess existing work on this issue, including any legislative and policy barriers to hiring older workers. The Partnership also collected data in four distinct areas.

Specifically, the Partnership:

1. Analyzed federal hiring over a 12-month period.

First, the Partnership reviewed data provided by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) from its Central Personnel Data File, the most comprehensive database of all federal employees. The Partnership used this data set to evaluate hiring patterns in 2006. The dataset included all federal employees hired in calendar year 2006. The Partnership broke out the data by age and type of appointment, and cross-tabulated it with a variety of demographic attributes including occupational group, work status and pay plan.

The second dataset provided by OPM was from the USAJOBS (the official federal government job posting site) database. This data consisted of information on the numbers of federal vacancy announcements posted in fiscal 2006, such as length of time each vacancy was posted, the number open to the public, and vacancy announcements by grade level. At OPM's suggestion, the Partnership requested additional vacancy announcement information directly from the U.S. Air Force. In total, the Partnership compiled vacancy announcement data from agencies representing 98 percent of the federal workforce.

2. Interviewed hiring managers, HR officials and recent hires in selected agencies to identify attitudes and perceptions, hiring successes and hiring barriers.

The Partnership did two rounds of interviews. First, the Partnership interviewed hiring managers, recent hires and former employees from a variety of federal agencies. The Partnership did this to better understand *FedExperience*-related issues in the federal workforce, and to obtain insights on whether federal agencies are taking positive steps to attract mature workers. The Partnership also sought to evaluate what types of existing HR tools and programs can be used to recruit this experienced talent source. The Partner-

ship conducted 28 of these interviews (18 with hiring managers or HR professionals, eight with recent hires and two with former employees).

The Partnership did a second set of targeted interviews with agency HR officials. The Partnership used the OPM hiring data to determine which agencies hired the highest and lowest percentages of workers from the age 50 and over group, and went directly to those agencies for insight. The selection criteria were 20 percent above or 30 percent below the government-wide average for hiring new employees age 50 or older in either the competitive or excepted services. The Partnership interviewed HR officials at 13 agencies to obtain perspective on hiring patterns identified in the data.

3. Surveyed a national sample of older workers to assess their attitudes toward, and interest in, federal careers.

The Partnership engaged Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. to conduct focus groups and a nationwide telephone survey of older Americans, defined as people age 50 to 65. In addition, survey participants must not have worked for the federal government (excluding military service), must have held a regularly paying job within the past 15 years, and said that there is at least somewhat of a chance that they will seek a new job in the next few years. In addition, the Partnership imposed an education quota to ensure that no more than 25 percent of the adults surveyed had only a high school degree.

To gain a better understanding of this audience and to help design the nationwide telephone survey, Hart conducted a pair of focus groups in the Richmond, Virginia area on June 14, 2007. Both focus groups were comprised of participants age 50 to 65. One group consisted of non-college graduates while the other was comprised of college graduates. There were 10 participants in each focus group. Each group was diverse with respect to race, gender, and employment backgrounds.

Hart then conducted a nationwide telephone survey of 800 adults using a sample drawn from a list of more than 24,000,000 individuals in the 50 to 65 age group. The list vendor, InfoUSA, compiled the list by driver's license, voter registration information,

and more than 20 additional sources. Records from InfoUSA's full database were sorted by ZIP Code to ensure that a geographically proportionate distribution of the sampled group was drawn. Hart staff interviewed one adult per household, selected by a systematic procedure to provide a balance of adults by gender. The telephone survey was conducted from August 16-21, 2007. The margin of error is ± 3.5 percentage points for the overall sample and somewhat higher for specific subgroups.

4. Reviewed a sample of federal vacancy announcements. The Partnership also asked members of the Hart Research Associates focus groups to review federal vacancy announcements. The Partnership asked the 10 participants in each group to provide a written assessment of a vacancy announcement. One vacancy announcement was given to the first focus group and a different announcement was given to the second focus group. The Partnership asked the first focus group (those with no more than a high school education) to assess a vacancy announcement for a GS-6 "Voucher Examiner" (full-time term position not to exceed four years) at the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs (announcement # VZ142896GRP). This vacancy announcement was 12 pages in length and the position did not require advanced education. The second focus group (all college graduates) was asked to assess an announcement for a GS-5/7 "Customs and Border Protection Technician" (full-time permanent position) at the Customs and Border Protection agency in the Department of Homeland Security (announcement # MHCDE-142865). This vacancy announcement ran eight pages in length and also did not require advanced education.

The Partnership asked participants to rate each announcement on several criteria: usefulness and clarity of information; readability and tone; organization of information; fairness and openness; and overall user-friendliness. The rating scale was 0 to 4 – with four being the highest or most favorable rating and 0 being the lowest. Each volunteer was given a detailed set of instructions and scoring sheet explaining the assessment process and the criteria for rating the vacancy announcement elements.

To broaden the assessment and get feedback on a different set of vacancy announcements, the Partnership attended the AARP "Life@50+" National Event and Expo, held in early September 2007, in Boston. The Partnership asked attendees who visited its exhibit

table to review and provide a written assessment of a federal vacancy announcement. Fifty-one attendees, all age 50 and over, volunteered and were given one of four different vacancy announcements to assess:

- Security Assistant, GG-7, Army Installation Management Agency, Department of the Army, vacancy announcement # WTST07146324 (4 pages) — full-time temporary position not to exceed two years
- Conciliation Specialist, GS-9/11, Community Relations Service, Department of Justice, vacancy announcement # CRS-07-451(HR) DEU (7 pages) — full-time permanent position
- Passport Specialist, GS-5/7, Department of State, vacancy announcement # PHJL-07-143476SO (20 pages) — full-time permanent position
- Contact Representative, GS-5/6, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Interior, vacancy announcement # CA-DEU-2007-0190 (9 pages) — full-time permanent position

Copies of these vacancy announcements are available online in the Partnership's Publications Library (ourpublicservice.org).

None of these positions required applicants to have a college degree. As it did with the focus group participants, the Partnership asked the AARP Life@50+ Event volunteers (who varied widely in educational background and prior job experiences) to provide written assessments of the vacancy announcements they reviewed. Also, consistent with the approach used for the Hart focus groups, participants rated each announcement on the same five criteria. At least 10 different volunteers assessed each of the four vacancy announcements.

The Partnership has also established an older worker advisory group composed of key stakeholders. The Partnership created this group to provide perspectives and insights. On October 16, 2007, the Partnership convened the advisory group to review the preliminary findings of this report. The group's insights have helped provide context and additional data sources. Advisory group members include HR officials from key federal agencies, including OPM; and representatives from AARP; the National Older Worker Career Center; and the International Public Management Association for Human Resources.

DATA EXPLANATIONS

Competitive vs. Excepted Service Appointments

Our hiring data from OPM consists of appointments in the competitive service and in the excepted service – the two broad hiring authorities used to appoint persons in the federal government. According to OPM regulations (5 CFR Part 212), competitive service appointments cover “all civilian positions in the Federal Government that are not specifically excepted from civil service laws by or pursuant to statute, by the President, or by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and not in the Senior Executive Service.” Competitive service jobs involve public notification to potential applicants of opportunities to apply and compete for particular job vacancies. OPM regulations at 5 CFR Part 213 define the excepted service as including “all positions in the executive branch of the Federal Government which are specifically excepted from the competitive service by or pursuant to statute, by the President, or by the Office of Personnel Management, and which are not in the Senior Executive Service.”

Although both types of appointments must follow statutorily based merit system principles, excepted service positions do not require “public notice,” as do competitive service jobs. This means that agencies do not have to notify OPM of excepted service vacancies which are open to outside applicants, and agencies are not required to post these jobs on USAJOBS.

To combine the OPM competitive and excepted data into one overall government new hires total, the Partnership selected all excepted service new hires, and all competitive service external new hires. Due to limitations in OPM’s dataset, the Partnership is not able to determine exactly which excepted service hires are external. However, given the large percentage of excepted service hires that come in through programs that rely heavily on recruiting from external sources (e.g., the Federal Career Intern Program, the Student Career Experience Program, Student Temporary Experience Program, Schedule C appointments), the Partnership is confident that the great majority of the excepted service new hires are from external sources.

Mid-Career Hiring Comparisons

To provide perspective to the *FedExperience* report, we utilized prior hiring and vacancy announcement data. In 2004, the Partnership published *Mid-Career Hiring: Revisiting the Search for Seasoned Talent in the Federal Government*, which summarized mid-career hiring and vacancy announcement data for the years 2000 through 2003. In the 2004 report, mid-career hires were defined as those professional and administrative hires from outside government into the competitive service at the GS-12 to -15 levels. Wherever it used this previous data set in the *FedExperience* report, the Partnership compared it against an equivalent subset of our 2006 data set. One slight difference between the two data sets exists, however: the *Mid-Career* report hiring data was for the fiscal year, and the *FedExperience* hiring data is for the calendar year. The Partnership has also used the prior *Mid-Career* report to trend vacancy announcement data over time. For these comparisons, the Partnership consistently used only those vacancy announcements for positions in the GS-12 to -15 range.

APPENDIX B: TELEPHONE SURVEY

*Note: some interviewer instructions have been excluded from the survey.

Hi, I'm calling from Peter D. Hart Research, national public-opinion polling firm. We are conducting a national survey, and I'd really appreciate the chance to get your opinions on a few questions about life and career decisions affecting Americans such as yourself. This is a public opinion survey, and you will not be sold anything. Your number was selected at random, and in this household, I am supposed to speak with a (man/woman) who is at least fifty years old. May I speak to that person, please? (IF THE PERSON WHO QUALIFIES IS NOT HOME, FIND OUT WHEN HE OR SHE WILL RETURN, AND MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO CALL BACK.)

Gender (DO NOT ASK.) Record respondent's gender.

Male	1
Female	2

Q1a First, what is the last grade or degree you completed in school? (DO NOT READ CHOICES.)

Grade school	1
Some high school	2
High school graduate	3
Some college, no degree	4
Vocational training/2-year college	5
4-year college/bachelor's degree	6
Some postgraduate work, no degree	7
2 or 3 years' postgraduate work/master's degree	8
Doctoral/law degree	9
Not sure/refused	0

Q1b For statistical purposes only and to ensure that we have a representative sample, would you please tell me how old you are? (IF "REFUSED" RECORD AS "DK.")

Numeric Range	—
Don't Know	Y

Permitted Range

18 TO 49 (Go to Termin), 50 TO 65 (Go to Q2), 66 TO 105 (Go to Termin)

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO REFUSE IN Q1b.)

Q1c Well would you please tell me which category best describes your age? Just stop me when I reach the correct category. (READ LIST.)

18-39	1	TERMINATE
40-49	2	TERMINATE
50-54	3	
55-59	4	
60-65	5	
66 and over	6	TERMINATE
Refused	7	TERMINATE

(ASK EVERYONE.)

Q2 Are you currently or have you ever been employed by the federal, state, or local government? For the purposes of this survey, federal does not include the military or any military service.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Yes, federal | 1 | TERMINATE |
| Yes, state | 2 | |
| Yes, local | 3 | |
| No, never employed by any government | 4 | |
| Not sure | 5 | |

Q3 And are you a federal retiree — that is, do you receive a pension based on your service as a prior federal employee and that is not from military service?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Yes, I am a federal retiree | 1 | TERMINATE |
| No, I am not a federal retiree | 2 | |
| Not sure | 3 | |

Q4 How effective do you think the federal government is today at solving problems and helping people — very effective, fairly effective, fairly ineffective, or very ineffective?

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Very effective | 1 |
| Fairly effective | 2 |
| Fairly ineffective | 3 |
| Very ineffective | 4 |
| Not sure | 5 |

Q5a Are you currently employed full-time or part-time?

(IF “NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED,” ASK:) Are you retired, a student, a homemaker, a volunteer, unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and NOT looking for work, or disabled and unable to work?

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Yes, employed | 1 | |
| Retired | 2 | (Skip to Q5d) |
| Student | 3 | (Skip to Q5c) |
| Homemaker | 4 | (Skip to Q5c) |
| Volunteer | 5 | (Skip to Q5c) |
| Unemployed, looking for work | 6 | (Skip to Q5c) |
| Unemployed, not looking for work | 7 | (Skip to Q5c) |
| Disabled/unable to work | 8 | (Skip to Q5c) |
| Not sure | 9 | (Skip to Q5c) |

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THEY ARE EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q5a1 What type of work do you do? _____

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THEY ARE EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q5b And do you work full time or do you work part time?

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| Work full time | 1 |
| Work part time | 2 |
| Not sure/refused | 3 |

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT CURRENTLY RETIRED IN Q5a.)

Q5c And have you retired from a previous job or not?

- | | |
|--|---|
| Yes, have retired from a previous job | 1 |
| No, have not retired from a previous job | 2 |
| Not sure | 3 |

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q5d What type of work did you do for most of your working life? —

(IF HAD NOT BEEN PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED, ASK:) Were you a student, a homemaker, a volunteer, unemployed and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, or disabled and unable to work?

- Student 1
- Homemaker 2
- Volunteer 3
- Unemployed and looking for work 4
- Unemployed and not looking for work 5
- Disabled/unable to work 6
- Not sure/refused 7
- Other specify... 8

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q6 About how many years ago was your last regularly paying job?

- Numeric Range —
- Don't Know Y TERMINATE

Permitted Range
1 TO 15 , 16 TO 100 (Go to Termin)

(ASK EVERYONE.)

Q7 Please tell me how likely you are to seek a new job in the next few years. Are you very likely to seek a new job in the next few years, fairly likely, just somewhat likely, not that likely, or not likely at all to seek a new job in the next few years.

- Very likely 1
- Fairly likely 2
- Just somewhat likely 3
- Not that likely 4
- Not likely at all 5 TERMINATE
- Not sure 6 TERMINATE

Q8 For each of the following items, please tell me whether it applies to you or does not apply to you.

You receive a pension or retirement benefits
You have applied for a federal government job in the past

- Applies 1
- Does not apply 2
- Not sure 3

Q9 I'd like to mention several activities that are a part of some people's plans for retirement. For each item that I mention, please tell me whether this activity is or will be a very important, fairly important, only somewhat important, or not very important part of your own retirement.

- Working at a paid job.
- Volunteering or being involved in community service.
- Being free to do what you want when you want.
- Taking courses or continuing your education.
- Spending more time with your family and friends.

Very important part	1
Fairly important part	2
Only somewhat important part	3
Not very important part	4
Not sure	5

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO SAY THEY ARE EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q10a Now I'm going to list several reasons for why you may currently be working. Please rate each one of these using a scale from one to ten, on which a "1" means that the statement is not a consideration for you at all, a "10" means that it is a very important consideration for you, and a "5" is in the middle. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF "NOT SURE," ASK:) Well, would you please give me your best estimate? (IF STILL "NOT SURE," RECORD AS "DK.")

- I need to work to earn more income for retirement.
- I need to work to pay for rising costs such as property taxes and transportation.
- Working allows me to stay active and productive.
- Working allows me to stay involved with other people.
- Working allows me to continue using my skills.
- I need to work for benefits such as health care coverage.
- I enjoy the work that I am doing.

Numeric Range	—
Don't Know	Y

Permitted Range
1 TO 10

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q10b Now I'm going to list several reasons for why you might consider working again in the future. Please rate each one of these using a scale from one to ten, on which a "1" means that the statement is not a consideration for you at all, a "10" means that it is a very important consideration for you, and a "5" is in the middle. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF "NOT SURE," ASK:) Well, would you please give me your best estimate? (IF STILL "NOT SURE," RECORD AS "DK.")

- I need to earn more income for retirement.
- I need to pay for rising costs such as property taxes and transportation.
- Working would allow me to stay active and productive.
- Working would allow me to stay involved with other people.
- Working would allow me to continue using my skills.
- I need benefits such as health care coverage.
- I enjoy working.

Numeric Range	
Don't Know	Y

Permitted Range
1 TO 10

(ASK EVERYONE.)

Q11 Even if you are not working right now, realistically how many more years will it be until you consider yourself fully retired and would not consider working in any capacity? (DO NOT READ LIST.)

- Less than a year 1
- One or two years 2
- Three to five years 3
- Six to ten years 4
- Eleven years or more 5
- Already fully retired/do not plan on working (VOL) 6
- Not sure 7

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q12a If you were considering seeking a new job, which one of the following better describes the type of job you would look for — a job that is the same or very similar to work that you have done previously, or a completely different type of job than the work you have done previously?

- Job that is the same or very similar to work you have done previously 1
- Job that is completely different from type of work you have done previously 2
- Depends (VOL) 3
- Not sure 4

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO ARE NOT EMPLOYED IN Q5a.)

Q12b If you were considering returning to work, which one of the following better describes the type of job you would look for — a job that is the same or very similar to work that you have done previously, or a completely different type of job than the work you have done previously?

- Job that is the same or very similar to work you have done previously 1
- Job that is completely different from type of work you have done previously 2
- Depends (VOL) 3
- Not sure 4

Q13a If you were looking for a job today, do you think that a potential employer would view your prior work experience as a positive factor, a negative factor, or would it not make much difference either way? (IF “POSITIVE/NEGATIVE,” ASK:) And do you think that your prior work experience would be a very or somewhat (positive/negative) factor if you were looking for a job today?

- Very positive 1
- Somewhat positive 2
- Somewhat negative 3
- Very negative 4
- Would not make much difference either way 5
- Depends/mixed (VOL) 6
- Not sure 7

Q13b If you were looking for a job today, do you think that a potential employer would view your age as a positive factor, a negative factor, or would it not make much difference either way? (IF “POSITIVE/NEGATIVE,” ASK:) And do you think that your age would be a very or somewhat (positive/negative) factor if you were looking for a job today?

- Very positive 1
- Somewhat positive 2
- Somewhat negative 3
- Very negative 4
- Would not make much difference either way 5
- Depends/mixed (VOL) 6
- Not sure 7

Q14 I'm going to read you a list of qualities that some people might look for in a job. For each one, please tell me how appealing it is to you personally in considering a job, using a scale from one to ten, on which a "1" means it is not appealing at all, a "10" means it is extremely appealing, and a "5" is in the middle. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF "NOT SURE," ASK:) Well, would you please give me your best estimate? (IF STILL "NOT SURE," RECORD AS "DK.")

(BOTH FORMS)

- Offers good health care benefits.
- Involves work that is interesting and challenging to you.
- Offers a good retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k) ("four-oh-one-kay") arrangement.
- Pays a good salary.
- Offers a rewarding way to give back to your country or community.

(FORM A)

- Offers the opportunity to work from home on some days.
- Offers flexible work schedules.
- Is short-term, lasts two years or less.

(FORM B)

- Is on a volunteer basis, not for pay.
- Is routine and stable.
- Provides good job security.

Numeric Range

Don't Know

—
Y

Permitted Range

1 TO 10

Q15 Now I'm going to read you a number of job situations and work schedules. For each one, please tell me how appealing it is to you personally in considering a job, using the same one-to-ten scale, on which a "1" means it is not appealing at all, a "10" means it is extremely appealing, and a "5" is in the middle. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF "NOT SURE," ASK:) Well, would you please give me your best estimate? (IF STILL "NOT SURE," RECORD AS "DK.")

- Work on a short-term basis, project-to-project.
- Work full-time.
- Work part-time.
- Work seasonally or intermittently when the need arises.
- Work at home or telecommute on occasion.

Numeric Range

Don't Know

—
Y

Permitted Range

1 TO 10

Q16a When it comes to selecting a job, which is more appealing to you — (ROTATE) a full-time job or a part-time job?

Full-time job	1
Part-time job	2
Not sure	3

Q16b When it comes to selecting a job, which is more important to you — (ROTATE) a job that offers good pay and benefits or a job that offers meaningful work?

Good pay and benefits	1
Meaningful work	2
Both are about equal in importance (VOL)	3
Not sure	4

Q17 Now I'm going to mention different types of potential employers, please tell me how interested you are or would be in working in each of these types of places — extremely interested, very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested, or not at all interested.

- The federal government.
- Not-for-profit organizations.
- State government.
- Large private-sector companies.
- Local government.
- Small private-sector companies.

Extremely interested	1
Very interested	2
Somewhat interested	3
Not too interested	4
Not at all interested	5
Not sure	6

(ASK ONLY OF RESPONDENTS WHO DO NOT SAY “NOT SURE” TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN Q17.)

Q18 You said that you would be (RESPONSE TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN Q17) in working in the federal government. Why do you feel that way? —

(READ TO EVERYONE.) Now I have some questions about employment. For the rest of this survey, when I mention federal government jobs, I am referring to civilian jobs in federal agencies located throughout the country, excluding jobs in the military.

Q19a Overall, how knowledgeable do you feel about career opportunities for you personally in the federal government—extremely knowledgeable, very knowledgeable, somewhat knowledgeable, not too knowledgeable, or not at all knowledgeable?

Extremely knowledgeable	1
Very knowledgeable	2
Somewhat knowledgeable	3
Not too knowledgeable	4
Not at all knowledgeable	5
Not sure	6

Q19b How knowledgeable do you feel about where to get information or assistance about finding and applying for federal jobs?

Extremely knowledgeable	1
Very knowledgeable	2
Somewhat knowledgeable	3
Not too knowledgeable	4
Not at all knowledgeable	5
Not sure	6

(FORM A)

Q20 Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “There are good jobs for people like me in the federal government.” If you neither agree nor disagree please just say so. (IF “AGREE/DISAGREE,” ASK:) And do you strongly or somewhat (agree/disagree)?

Strongly agree	1
Somewhat agree	2
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	5
Not sure	6

(FORM B)

Q21 Do you believe there are good federal government jobs available near where you live?

- Yes 1
- No 2
- Not sure 3

Q22 When it comes to applying for jobs in the federal government, do you think it is very easy, fairly easy, typical compared with other jobs, fairly difficult, or very difficult?

- Very easy 1
- Fairly easy 2
- Typical compared with other jobs 3
- Fairly difficult 4
- Very difficult 5
- Not sure 6

Q23 Based on what you know, given someone with your background, please tell me how well each of the following qualities describes jobs in the federal government, using a scale from one to ten, on which a “1” means it does not describe most jobs in the federal government at all, a “10” means that it describes most jobs in the federal government extremely well, and a “5” is in the middle. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF “NOT SURE,” ASK:) Well, would you please give me your best estimate? (IF STILL “NOT SURE,” RECORD “DK.”)

- Offers good health care benefits.
- Involves work that would be interesting and challenging to you.
- Offers a good retirement savings plan, such as a 401(k) (“four-oh-one-kay”) arrangement.
- Pays a good salary.
- Offers flexible work arrangements, such as part-time schedules or the ability to work from home.
- Offers a rewarding way to give back to your country or community.
- Is routine and stable.
- Provides good job security.

Numeric Range _____
 Don't Know Y

Permitted Range
 1 TO 10

Q24 How much would you say that you have to offer to the federal government as a potential employee in terms of your skills and prior work experience — a great deal, quite a bit, some, very little, or nothing at all?

- A great deal to offer 1
- Quite a bit to offer 2
- Some to offer 3
- Very little to offer 4
- Nothing at all to offer 5
- Not sure 6

Q25 AND Q26 ARE ROTATED

Q25 I'm going to mention several reasons why someone such as yourself might NOT consider working for the federal government at this point in your life. Please rate each reason using a scale from one to ten, on which a "1" means that this reason is not persuasive at all and a "10" means that this reason is a very persuasive reason NOT to work for the federal government at this point in your life. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF "NOT SURE," RECORD AS "DK.")

- The application process is just too burdensome and time consuming.
- There is too much bureaucracy ("byoo-RAH-cruh-see") in the federal government and it is too hard to actually accomplish anything.
- People like me who are not planning to continue working for many years might have limited opportunities to earn promotions and pay increases.
- People like me would likely report to and receive orders from younger supervisors who may have less experience on the job.
- Federal government jobs are less likely to offer interesting work or provide the challenges and experiences that people like me are looking for at this stage in their life.
- People like me are likely to only work for a few years and therefore would not be eligible for some of the benefits that are an appealing part of working for the federal government.

Numeric Range

Don't Know

—
Y

Permitted Range
1 TO 10

Q26 Now I'm going to mention several reasons why someone such as yourself MIGHT consider working for the federal government at this point in your life. Please rate each reason using a scale from one to ten, on which a "1" means that this reason is not compelling at all for you, and a "10" means that this reason is a very compelling reason for you to work for the federal government at this point in your life. You may use any number from one to ten. (IF "NOT SURE," RECORD AS "DK.")

- The federal government offers benefits such as paid leave and government contributions to a 401(k) ("four-oh-one-kay") retirement savings plan that begins immediately after being hired.
- The federal government offers health insurance during employment and if an employee is at least sixty-two years old, works at least five straight years, and then retires, their health care coverage continues after they leave government service.
- There are laws in place to guard against age discrimination in the federal government.
- Working for the federal government gives you the chance to provide services that individuals and communities depend upon such as working as customs inspectors, health care professionals, border patrol agents, program and project managers, passport processors, food inspectors, scientists, engineers, claims processors, and criminal investigators.
- The federal government offers flexible work schedules as well as less than full-time employment and telecommuting so you can find the job and work schedule that works for you.
- The federal government offers many training, development, and educational opportunities to expand your skills.

Numeric Range

Don't Know

—
Y

Permitted Range
1 TO 10

Q27 Thinking back to what we have discussed, please tell me how interested you are or would be to work in the federal government — extremely interested, very interested, somewhat interested, not too interested, or not at all interested.

Extremely interested	1
Very interested	2
Somewhat interested	3
Not too interested	4
Not at all interested	5
Not sure	6

FACTUALS: Now I am going to ask you a few questions for statistical purposes only.

QF1 With which political party are you affiliated?

Republican	1
Democratic	2
Independent	3
Other (VOL)	4
Refused	5

QF2 Do you have any friends or family members who work for the federal government?

Yes	1
No	2
Not sure	3

QF3 Are you a current or retired member of the military?

Yes, current/retired member of the military	1
No, not a current/retired member of the military	2
Not sure	3

QF4 Do you personally have Internet access at home, work, or someplace else? (IF “YES,” ASK:) And is that at home, work, or someplace else? (ACCEPT ALL THAT APPLY.)

Yes, at home	1
Yes, at work	2
Yes, someplace else	3
No, do not have Internet access	4
Not sure	5

QF5 How comfortable would you be applying for a job on-line — that is searching for the job on-line, filling out an on-line job application, and submitting your application electronically — very comfortable, fairly comfortable, just somewhat comfortable, or not that comfortable?

Very comfortable	1
Fairly comfortable	2
Just somewhat comfortable	3
Not that comfortable	4
Not sure	5

QF6 For statistical purposes only, would you please tell me whether you are from a Hispanic or Spanish-speaking background? (IF “NO,” ASK:) What is your race — white, black, Asian, or something else?

- Hispanic 1
- White 2
- Black 3
- Asian 4
- Other 5
- Not sure/refused 6

QF7 Finally, If you added together the yearly income of all the members of your family who were living at home last year, would the total be less than ten thousand dollars, between ten thousand dollars and twenty thousand dollars, between twenty thousand dollars and thirty thousand dollars, between thirty thousand dollars and forty thousand dollars, between forty thousand dollars and fifty thousand dollars, between fifty thousand dollars and seventy-five thousand dollars, between seventy-five thousand dollars and one hundred thousand dollars, or would the total be more than one hundred thousand dollars?

- Less than \$10,000 1
- Between \$10,000 and \$20,000 2
- Between \$20,000 and \$30,000 3
- Between \$30,000 and \$40,000 4
- Between \$40,000 and \$50,000 5
- Between \$50,000 and \$75,000 6
- Between \$75,000 and \$100,000 7
- More than \$100,000 8
- Not sure/refused 9

That concludes my interview today. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

APPENDIX C: VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT EVALUATIONS

VOUCHER EXAMINER – HART FOCUS GROUP #1	Average Score
Usefulness and Clarity of Information	1.4
Readability and Tone	0.9
Organization of Information	1.9
Fairness and Openness	1.4
Overall User-Friendliness	0.8

CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION TECHNICIAN – HART FOCUS GROUP #2	Average Score
Usefulness and Clarity of Information	2.0
Readability and Tone	1.9
Organization of Information	2.7
Fairness and Openness	3.1
Overall User-Friendliness	2.1

SECURITY ASSISTANT – AARP EVENT	Average Score
Usefulness and Clarity of Information	2.5
Readability and Tone	2.5
Organization of Information	2.8
Fairness and Openness	3.0
Overall User-Friendliness	2.6

CONCILIATION SPECIALIST – AARP EVENT	Average Score
Usefulness and Clarity of Information	1.5
Readability and Tone	1.7
Organization of Information	1.8
Fairness and Openness	1.8
Overall User-Friendliness	1.4

PASSPORT SPECIALIST – AARP EVENT	Average Score
Usefulness and Clarity of Information	2.1
Readability and Tone	1.8
Organization of Information	2.1
Fairness and Openness	2.3
Overall User-Friendliness	1.8

CONTACT REPRESENTATIVE – AARP EVENT	Average Score
Usefulness and Clarity of Information	2.4
Readability and Tone	2.0
Organization of Information	2.5
Fairness and Openness	2.5
Overall User-Friendliness	1.6



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