RAPID REINFORCEMENTS

STRATEGIES FOR FEDERAL SURGE HIRING

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Executive Summary

Federal agencies encounter many challenges that require rapid growth of their workforce such as national emergencies, large-scale attrition, new mission requirements or the need for emergent skills. In such instances, standard federal hiring practices are often insufficient to meet the immediate demands for additional talent. As a result, agencies may seek strategies to undertake surge hiring, the process of quickly and significantly increasing the size of the workforce.

Ordinarily, federal hiring can last more than a year for a successful candidate and on average lasts more than three months, which is more than twice the time it takes in the private sector.[1]

A number of options exist, though, that can enable agencies to bring on large numbers of qualified staff more quickly than is typical through normal processes while remaining committed to the civil service goal of cultivating an apolitical and professional workforce. These options are not widely known and remain largely underused.

With support from the Democracy Fund, the Partnership for Public Service conducted in-depth research—including a literature review as well as interviews with current and former federal HR leaders and other agency officials—to identify the most effective and widely applicable strategies for surge hiring. Based on the examination of previous hiring surges, the Partnership identified best practices, challenges and lessons learned, distilling these findings into three basic strategies that agencies can use without additional authority from Congress.

- Determine which government-wide or agency-specific hiring authorities best meet the needs of the hiring surge.

- Develop recruiting infrastructure by leveraging data and technology and by hiring recruiters or training current staff on how to attract candidates and guide them through the hiring process.

- Apply a project management approach to streamline the hiring surge.

This report describes how these strategies can benefit agencies and highlights opportunities to apply them. Two case studies demonstrate the strategies in practice, and a surge hiring roadmap illustrates how they can be applied throughout the hiring process. The report concludes with a matrix of hiring authorities detailing the options most conducive to surge hiring.

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1   According to the most recently available Office of Personnel Management data, the government-wide average time-to-hire in fiscal 2018 was 98.3 days. In fiscal 2018, OPM defined "time-to-hire" as the length of time from "date the hiring need is validated to the entrance on duty (EOD) date." Office of Personnel Management, "OPM Issues Updated Time-to-Hire Guidance," February 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/34hirHC. Office of Personnel Management, "Time-to-Hire Reporting Requirements," February 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3lLTn2v.

Introduction

Just weeks after a novel coronavirus strain was identified in January 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global public health emergency. Within a month, the U.S. recorded its first COVID-19 fatality and the U.S. stock market began a precipitous, month-long decline. By the end of March, COVID-19 had become a global pandemic, U.S. cases of the virus had jumped to more than 100,000, the nationwide death toll had topped 2,000, and states were implementing quarantine measures that shuttered businesses,[2] leaving millions of Americans newly unemployed.[3]

In response, President Donald Trump signed the bipartisan Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, a $2.3 trillion economic stimulus package that included the Paycheck Protection Program for small businesses, greater federal unemployment benefits, stimulus checks for millions of Americans and funding for state and local governments.[4]

The federal government was facing the unprecedented challenge of simultaneously ending a public health crisis, staving off an economic collapse and rapidly allocating more than $2 trillion dollars in relief funds to businesses, communities and taxpayers. Some federal agencies launched a hiring surge to meet the new demands.

Between March and October 2020, the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs onboarded about 55,300 new staff, including more than 10,400 registered nurses and nurse practitioners, to care for more than 12,200 COVID-19 patients along with other patients admitted to VA facilities[5]

And the Small Business Administration, responsible for implementing four financial-relief programs established by the CARES Act—including the $350-billion Paycheck Protection Program—more than doubled the size of its workforce, hiring over 6,000 people between March and September of 2020.[6] With the additional staff, the SBA was able to quickly review and process loan applications and requests for debt relief, helping millions of Americans in financial distress.

Efficiency was critical to the hiring surges of these and other agencies leading the government's COVID-19 efforts. The public health and economic challenges of the pandemic couldn't wait for the duration of the normal federal hiring process, which takes on average about three months and frequently much longer.

The length of the federal hiring process, however, can be challenging regardless whether agencies are responding to a crisis.

Agencies that are unable to deliver on their mission because of long-term talent gaps cannot fully serve small businesses, local communities and individuals, shortchanging all taxpayers. Additionally, the typical federal hiring process makes agencies less competitive with the private sector. Many candidates for federal positions opt to more quickly land a private-sector job than wait at least three months to become a government employee. This can result in agencies having to restart—and prolong—hiring actions.

Federal agencies have a number of options, however, to accelerate hiring and sidestep the normally slow process for bringing new employees on board without sacrificing qualification standards. This report offers a set of strategies for harnessing these options in an effort to better prepare assistant secretaries for management, chief human capital officers, HR specialists, hiring managers and other stakeholders to overcome the challenges of trying to quickly fill large talent gaps so as to ensure uninterrupted delivery of public service.

2 Robin Muccari, Denise Chow and Joe Murphy, "Coronavirus timeline: Tracking the critical moments of COVID-19," NBC News, March 10, 2020. Retrieved from https://nbcnews.to/3jqH2Qz.

3 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Graphics for Economic News Releases: Civilian Unemployment." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2GACkB6.

4 JP Morgan, "A Breakdown of the CARES Act." April 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2SiqsXl.

5 Department of Veterans Affairs, "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Weekly Report: October 6-12, 2020," October 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/34hDpGh.

6 Elias Hernandez, chief human capital officer, Small Business Administration. Email correspondence, September 10, 2020

Circumstances of Surge Hiring

Federal agencies encounter many circumstances that call for surge hiring, which is an accelerated staffing process designed to significantly increase the size of an agency's workforce. The most urgent need for surge hiring comes during regional, national and global emergencies. Agencies also use surge hiring in response to the debilitating effects of staff attrition, the demand for emergent skills like cybersecurity expertise and the need to meet growing mission requirements related to a new policy, program or federal organization.

Emergency response

Various emergencies—such as natural disasters, recessions, armed conflicts and public health crises—motivate federal agencies to quickly hire new staff to reinforce their capacity. Multiple agencies, for example, launched hiring surges in response to the dire public health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Commerce hired 10,900 people in fiscal 2009, the year it received $7.9 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support business development, construction projects, broadband service expansion and other economic stimulus efforts. This was 4,000 more people than it hired on average the previous four years.[7] And national security agencies drastically increased the size of their civilian workforce following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

New federal organizations, programs or policy initiatives

All new federal organizations engage in surge hiring to deliver on mission as soon as possible. Agencies launching new programs or policy initiatives—especially those created in response to emergencies—also often undertake hiring surges. When it was created in 2001, the Transportation Security Administration had to rapidly build its workforce to meet new national security concerns, and within a year it hired 62,000 airport screeners for the nation's 429 commercial airports.[8] The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, created by Congress in 2010 in response to the 2007-2009 financial crisis, onboarded more than 600 people in its first year, about half the number of its current workforce.[9] The Treasury Department, meanwhile, hired 3,000 more people in fiscal 2008 than it had annually on average for the previous three years.[10] This included nearly 200 employees hired to stand up the Troubled Asset Relief Program to help stabilize the country's financial institutions hit hardest by the economic crisis.[11]

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7   Nearly 7,500 of the 10,900 new hires were for non-permanent positions. Office of Personnel Management, "FedScope 2005-2009 accessions data." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3kATbDi.

8   Department of Homeland Security, "Performance and Accountability Report: Fiscal Year 2003," February 2004, p. 38. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2I7P9Uz.

9   Office of Personnel Management, "FedScope 2011 accessions data." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3kATbDi.

10   Office of Personnel Management, "FedScope 2005-2008 accessions data." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3kATbDi.

11   Government Accountability Office, "Financial Audit: Office of Financial Stability (Troubled Asset Relief Program) Fiscal Year 2009 Financial Statements," GAO-1-301, December 2009, p. 88. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/34zhUBd.

Attrition

Large-scale attrition is disruptive to agencies no matter the cause of staff departures. Whether agencies lose people to retirement, office relocations, policy changes or other reasons, staff shortages typically cause workload backlogs and result in skill gaps that reduce productivity and increase operating costs. More significant is the loss of institutional knowledge, which is not replaced simply by filling vacant positions. A recent example of significant attrition is the experience of the Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture, which lost about 60% of their combined workforces when Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the agencies would relocate from Washington, D.C., to Kansas City, Missouri.[12]

Emergent skills

A byproduct of crises, new technology or evolving paradigms, the need for emergent skills often creates federal agency talent gaps. As the global economy becomes more digitized, for example, many federal agencies are trying to hire employees with cybersecurity expertise. Similarly, more agencies are seeking artificial intelligence professionals to support their mission-critical work as the technology becomes more refined and applicable to public-sector services.

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12 Merit Kennedy, "Scientists Desert USDA As Agency Relocates to Kansas City Area," National Public Radio, July 17, 2019. Retrieved from https://n.pr/34qudQe.

Overview of hiring authorities that facilitate surge hiring

There are a number of options available in certain circumstances that can help agencies hire faster than is typical through delegated examining or merit promotions, which are the most common ways agencies staff positions.

Most of the hiring authorities that can expedite hiring are limited to the **excepted service**. Examples include the many "Schedule A" hiring authorities—such as those for lawyers, academics and people with disabilities—which are available to agencies when "the competitive examining process is not practicable."[13] Some special hiring authorities within the excepted service, meanwhile, are occupation-specific, such as the various "Title 38" authorities for health-related positions.

Within the **competitive service**, there are variances—such as **noncompetitive hiring authorities**—that enable agencies to make appointments without using Title 5 competitive examining procedures, thereby streamlining the process. Examples include the Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority and the Reinstatement Authority for former federal employees.

Direct hire authorities, which are another flexibility within the competitive service, can accelerate hiring because they don't require application of veterans' preference or applicant rating and ranking. Both Congress and the Office of Personnel Management have the power to establish direct hire authorities. OPM may grant them to specific agencies or establish them government-wide for certain occupational series, pay grades or geographic locations in response to a critical hiring need or a severe shortage of qualified candidates. Examples of government-wide direct hire authorities include those for certain cybersecurity, STEM and medical positions. An example of agency-specific authorities is the Small Business Administration's direct hire authority for IT and acquisition positions.

For more details about hiring authorities that can facilitate surge hiring, see the report's matrix of relevant authorities.

Upholding merit system principles

Regardless of which hiring authorities are used, it is imperative that agencies undertaking surge hiring remain committed to the federal government's goal of cultivating an apolitical and professional career workforce that can effectively meet the needs of all Americans. To that end, agencies should ensure that all their hiring practices—including those beyond the standard federal processes—are transparent and conducive to appropriate oversight. More importantly, agencies must remain faithful to the federal merit system principles, which were enacted in 1978 "to provide the people of the United States with a competent, honest, and productive federal work force reflective of the nation's diversity, and to improve the quality of public service."[14]

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13 Government Accountability Office, "Federal Hiring: OPM Needs to Improve Management and Oversight of Hiring Authorities," GAO-16-521, August 2016. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3jkY4zA.

14 See Sec. 3 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, Public Law 95-454. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2HsFt6M.

Strategies for Surge Hiring

Leverage government-wide and agency-specific hiring authorities

Recommendation:
Determine which government-wide or agency-specific hiring authorities best meet the needs of the hiring surge.

There is no single best authority for surge hiring. Instead, the many hiring authorities available under certain circumstances to federal agencies are simply part of a larger toolkit. Agencies interested in surge hiring should not look for a magic bullet, but instead should develop the capability to strategically apply different hiring options to meet various staffing needs and priorities, according to Robert Goldenkoff, former director of strategic issues at the Government Accountability Office.

Becoming familiar with the many hiring authorities that are available government-wide is essential. According to a 2016 GAO report, only 20 of the 105 hiring authorities used by federal agencies in fiscal 2014 accounted for 91% of new hires that year.[15] This indicates that agencies tend to rely on common hiring authorities, that there is widespread unfamiliarity with the many options available and that some authorities lack broad utility.

The fact that many hiring authorities are underused also suggests that some agencies do not need or want more hiring authorities.

"There is no corporation in the world that has 102 different ways to hire somebody. So, it's no wonder that we obviously default to the few that are on the books. It's not because there are favorites. It's just because it's probably the go-to thing for us. And it just makes it easier," testified Angie Bailey, the Department of Homeland Security's chief human capital officer, before the Senate Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management Subcommittee. "Please don't give us any more hiring authorities," she continued. "We just don't need any more."[16]

When planning a hiring surge, agencies should compare the latitude and limitations of the various authorities—described below and detailed more fully in the report's matrix of hiring authorities—relative to their staffing needs and goals. But regardless of which authorities they use, agencies should continue to adhere to the merit system principles and maintain their commitment to an apolitical, equitable, transparent and accountable hiring process.

Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority

One government-wide authority good for surge hiring is the Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority, which is a "win-win" option, according to both Tracey Therit, the chief human capital officer of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and William Malyszka, the deputy chief human capital officer

at the National Science Foundation. By allowing agencies to noncompetitively hire spouses of an active-duty military service member or a 100%-disabled service member injured while on active duty, the authority enables agencies to quickly secure new staff for permanent, temporary and term positions. Furthermore, it can be a source of professional opportunity and stability for military spouses whose frequent relocations may otherwise limit their career options. Hiring military spouses is "the right thing to do for our military personnel," explained Malyszka. "If they have security at home, that's one thing that they're not worried about in whatever circumstances they're serving."

For the VA, this authority has yielded high-quality staff who have adapted well to the agency's culture. As Therit noted, this may be because military spouses tend to fundamentally understand the agency's mission as well as the challenges veterans face.

Recruiting military spouses, however, can be difficult in part because many agencies do not have talent pipelines that effectively reach this population. Recognizing this, the NSF intends to enhance its ability to recruit military spouses. Currently, the agency recruits military spouses by networking through the agency's veterans community. But it plans to improve its recruiting efforts by developing relationships with organizations that support military families.

"I think there's huge talent out there that's untapped," Malyszka said. "So, we definitely are a hundred percent behind [the military spouse authority]. It's just cracking the nut on how to best do it."

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15 Government Accountability Office, "Federal Hiring: OPM Needs to Improve Management and Oversight of Hiring Authorities," GAO-16-521, August 2016. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3jkY4zA.

16 "Statement of Angie Bailey, Chief Human Capital Officer, Department of Homeland Security." Hearing on "Solutions to Improve Federal Hiring," Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management, 2019. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2GtlTXp.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority

The Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority—which enables agencies to noncompetitively hire returned volunteers within one year of the end of their service—"is the best hiring flexibility in the entire federal government," according to Jeri Bucholz, former chief human capital officer of NASA. It not only expedites the hiring process, she said, but also is "the most generous and easy to use."

After the Peace Corps granted noncompetitive hiring status in March 2020 to all 7,000 volunteers whose service abruptly ended after being evacuated from countries around the world in response to COVID-19, the Department of Agriculture jumped on the opportunity to use this authority to quickly fill talent gaps left by attrition.[17]

The agency sought out returned volunteers for its hiring surge because, by the nature of their service, they have project management experience and demonstrated a commitment to public service. And many worked in USDA programming areas such as agriculture, forestry, nutrition and community development.

"We decided we were going to try to snap up as many of the Peace Corps volunteers as we could. And my goal was to do it quickly because I figured the best candidates would go fast," explained Abbey Fretz, associate deputy administrator of the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. Fretz led the agency's hiring surge as an SES-candidate detailed to USDA's Office of Human Resources Management.

Within one week, USDA's team—with the support from the secretary of agriculture's office—launched a surge hiring campaign. The effort paid off. As of the end of August 2020, USDA had posted 516 job opportunity announcements for 624 positions, tentatively selected 194 returned volunteers, offered jobs to 156 and hired 98 others.[18] (As a point of comparison, in 2019 USDA hired a total of 10 people using the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority.[19])

Reinstatement Authority

Agencies trying to quickly fill talent gaps large or small also should consider hiring authorities that enable reemployment of civil servants who have left the federal workforce. The prior experience of former federal employees, especially those returning to their old agency, is a valuable asset. Furthermore, hiring former civil servants can be quicker than hiring people new to the federal government.

Through the government-wide Reinstatement Authority, agencies can noncompetitively hire former federal employees who previously held a career or career-conditional appointment. Former federal employees who have veterans' preference or acquired career tenure by completing three years of continuous creditable service have lifetime eligibility for reinstatement. For those who do not meet these criteria, most can be hired under this authority for only three years following their separation from federal service.[20]

The drawback of the Reinstatement Authority is that former employees can be reemployed only at the same grade level they held when they left federal service. "If you left your agency as a GS-9 and now you've got 20 more years of experience," said Bucholz, "you still have to come back [into federal service] as a GS-9" if hired under this authority.

In effect, the authority is useful only for rehiring former employees who recently left government, those who are not earning more now than they did in federal service or those who are not motivated by salary.

Addressing this limitation, Congress enacted a law in 2017 to give "passport" authority to the VA, enabling it to noncompetitively appoint former career or career conditional employees (within two years of their voluntary departure) to any position within the competitive service and up to one grade higher than the level of their last position.[21]

Reemployed Annuitant Authority

The Reemployed Annuitant Authority, meanwhile, allows agencies to noncompetitively hire former employees who have retired and are receiving a federal annuity (annuitants) through the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System. Agencies may hire annuitants under any employment authority for which they are eligible; to any position for which they are qualified; and either to the competitive service (for permanent, term, or temporary positions) or the excepted service (for permanent, indefinite, or time-limited positions). Additionally, reemployed annuitants may work on a full-time, part-time or intermittent work schedule.[22]

Federal rules, however, require agencies to offset salaries of reemployed annuitants by the amount of their monthly annuity, creating a disincentive for rejoining government. Agencies can receive "dual-compensation" waivers from the Office of Personnel Management in certain circumstances, such as when there is an emergency hiring need

17 Peace Corps, "Peace Corps announces suspension of Volunteer activities, evacuations due to COVID-19," March 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3jrNW87.

18 Abbey L. Fretz, associate deputy administrator, legislative and public affairs, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Department of Agriculture. Email correspondence September 3, 2020

19 Ibid.

20 Office of Personnel Management, "Reinstatement." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/33B16KE.

21 See Sec. 204 of the VA Choice and Quality Improvement Act of 2017, Public Law 115–46. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2FrXd1g.

22 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, 5 C.F.R. 553. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/36D016V.

or severe recruiting difficulty.[23] They also can receive delegated authority to issue their own waivers. Both, however, are difficult to obtain from OPM.

Through the National Defense Authorization Act 2020, though, agencies can issue dual-compensation waivers to reemployed annuitants on temporary appointments (of up to one year) without permission from OPM under certain circumstances. NDAA waivers, though, apply for just 26 weeks a year, and the number of annuitants receiving them may not exceed 2.5% of the size of the agency's full-time workforce.[24] This authority expires at the end of 2024.

To facilitate federal efforts to recruit and reemploy annuitants who could support agencies in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, OPM issued guidance in late March 2020 inviting agencies to request delegated authority to issue dual-compensation waivers.[25] It also granted the authority to the VA.[26] Between March and July, the VHA hired 125 annuitants—including 67 nurses, 17 physicians and 7 HR professionals—using dual-compensation waivers for 89 of them.[27]

Reemployed annuitants are easy to onboard and quick to get up to speed on current agency priorities. "They already know this stuff. We don't have to train them on how to use the systems or what our processes are," said Therit. "So, to get some surge support to help with all of this and using dual-comp [waivers] for the HR community has been hugely helpful."

"Being able to bring on those folks who already understand the organization and the occupation made a great deal of impact," agreed Ann Vicks, the VA's executive HR policy advisor. "There are a lot of folks out there, a lot of retirees, who welcome the opportunity to come back and be a public servant and to help. Not only to do the work, but also to help mentor and train others to do what they've done for a career."

Direct Hire Authorities

When available to agencies, direct hire authorities—whether government-wide or agency-specific—can facilitate surge hiring because they do not require application of veterans' preference or applicant rating and ranking.

The Small Business Administration, which had to rapidly build its staff capacity to distribute $350 billion of CARES Act funding to small businesses and nonprofit organizations, relied on the government-wide Cybersecurity Direct Hire Authority. It also used its agency-specific direct hire authority for IT and acquisition positions.

In addition, direct hire authorities were useful for VHA's COVID-19 hiring surge. With the 39 direct hire authorities that OPM gave to the VA in response to the pandemic, the VHA was able to hire about 600 new staff between March and mid-June of 2020.[28]

But agencies should keep in mind that direct hire authorities do not guarantee accelerated hiring. Inexperience with the authorities, for example, can lead to inefficient assessments that slow down the hiring process. Furthermore, requesting an agency-specific direct hire authority from OPM is a difficult, time-consuming and uncertain process.

Schedule A Hiring Authorities

The hiring authorities within Schedule A are not applicable to all hiring actions, but when available they have proven to be effective means of surge hiring, especially for agencies staffing in response to COVID-19. For example, both the VHA and the National Park Service have used the temporary Schedule A COVID-19 Hiring Authority, which OPM created to enable agencies to make one-year appointments to build staff capacity in response to the pandemic. Through it, VHA brought on close to 200 people in about two months.[29] Meanwhile, the National Park Service launched an effort to hire up to 700 new staff through it to complete backlogged work and to provide short-term jobs in local communities with high pandemic-related unemployment.[30]

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29 Ibid.

30 Jennifer Ackerman, deputy chief human capital officer, Department of Interior. Interview transcript, June 16, 2020.

Intergovernmental Personnel Act Mobility Program

The Intergovernmental Personnel Act facilitates temporary talent exchanges between the federal government and the nonprofit and academic sectors to enable agencies to access top expertise and to provide developmental opportunities for civil servants.

While the IPA program can be an effective mechanism for temporarily filling specific talent gaps, particularly those in STEM fields or that otherwise require highly specialized skills, it was not designed for surge hiring. The IPA staffing process can be time-consuming, especially if agencies do not already have relationships with nongovernmental organizations that have staff primed for IPA assignments.

Additionally, using the IPA program for surge hiring risks the possibility of challenges from employee unions and concerns from general counsels about potential ethics issues, such as whether IPA agreements constitute supplemental funding.

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23 Office of Personnel Management, "Dual Compensation Waivers." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3ijmacM.

24 National Defense Authorization Act 2020, 5 U.S.C. 8344. Retrieved form https://bit.ly/2GFdOPF.

25 Office of Personnel Management, "Dual Compensation Waiver Requests for COVID-19 Emergency," March 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/30rEEBR.

26 Office of Personnel Management, "News: OPM Issues Flexibility to the VA to Combat COVID-19," March 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3cQNMVs.

27 Jessica Bonjorni, chief, human capital management, Veterans Health Administration. Email correspondence, September 29, 2020.

28 O. "Ann" Vicks, executive HR policy advisor, Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs. Email correspondence, June 22, 2020 and September 29, 2020.

Develop recruiting infrastructure

Recommendation:
Develop recruiting infrastructure by leveraging data and technology and by hiring recruiters or training current staff on how to attract candidates and guide them through the hiring process.

B ecause recruiting is one of the most critical and challenging aspects of hiring, agencies undertaking surge hiring should increase their investment in their recruiting infrastructure. This is possible to do in conjunction with a hiring surge, though it is easier and more effective when done prior to such efforts. Agencies that don't treat recruiting as a special skill set are not well-prepared for hiring surges.

By developing their recruiting infrastructure—whether by hiring professional recruiters, training existing staff to develop talent pipelines, or leveraging data and technology—agencies can make this part of the surge hiring process more efficient and effective. Plus, good recruitment increases the likelihood that each hiring action is successful, which is critical for surge hiring as unfilled job announcements can result in restarting the hiring process. The time and effort recruiters expend on filling reposted positions could be better allocated to recruiting for newly posted jobs.

Though budget limitations may prohibit the hiring of professional recruiters or the adoption of new technologies, underfunded agencies can still develop their infrastructure by training their HR and programming staff on how to sell their agency's work; how to demonstrate mission match; how to use project management software and other resources; how to cultivate relationships to reach broad and diverse groups of potential candidates; and how to guide candidates through the hiring process.

Leverage data and technology

The Veterans Health Administration has developed a recruiting infrastructure, and its team of recruiters was central to the agency's COVID-19 hiring surge. The "Find a Recruiter" button on its careers webpage put recruiters directly in touch with potential candidates. In addition, the agency added a prominent banner to the page advertising its hiring surge. The COVID-19 banner included a link enabling people to apply through the agency for VHA positions instead of using USAJOBS. Applicants uploaded their resume directly to VHA's application tracking system, and recruiters prioritized following up with physicians and other high-priority candidates who expressed interest in working for the agency.

"With our applicant tracking system, people could post their CV and express interest in a job, and our recruiters contacted them," explained Jessica Bonjorni, the VHA's human capital management chief. "Every physician got a call, a reach out from a recruiter." VHA's applicant tracking system, she continued, provides a "quicker way to get candidates."

VHA's recruiters also leveraged the Reemployed Annuitant Authority—and the dual-compensation waiver granted to the Department of Veterans Affairs by the Office of Personnel Management—to tap into a broad pool of high-quality candidates that can be onboarded quickly.

The recruiters proactively contacted potential candidates from VHA's database of retired nurses, doctors and other staff. They also worked with OPM and the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association to spread the word about its hiring surge. "We touched over one million retirees about coming back,

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Promising Practice: HR Exchange

Recognizing the need to update and automate the federal HR business model, the Department of Health and Human Services created HR Exchange, a customer-centric online platform for modernizing HR service delivery. HR Exchange includes a number of applications that can facilitate the staffing process. It helps HHS staff, for example, access and activate workforce-related data. The platform also features automated personnel actions requests, a priority placement program module, and a classification and recruitment module.

It is HR Exchange's HireNow application, however, that is the most promising for surge hiring. HireNow uses advanced technology to aggregate data from the Office of Personnel Management's HR systems—including USA Staffing and USA Hire—to share hiring certificates, putting the resumes of hire-ready candidates in the hands of HR specialists and hiring managers across HHS agencies. HireNow currently has nearly 100,000 resumes available to be considered for merit promotions and direct hire. The application has helped HHS reduce its hiring timeline by up to 75 days.

Because HR Exchange is adaptive to customer needs, it could support surge hiring in other ways, too. For example, HHS added a COVID-19 portal to the platform that provides timely information related to the coronavirus pandemic. Through the portal, HHS automated close to 600 resumes of returned Peace Corps volunteers with noncompetitive hiring eligibility who might be able to support the agency's response to the public health crisis. As of October 2020, HHS agencies hired 70 of these former volunteers through one job announcement posted to the COVID-19 portal. In addition, a forthcoming application, DetailNow, is being designed to facilitate the staffing of Emergency Response Force positions.

and we got quite a few nurses and doctors who were interested," noted Tracey Therit, the VA's chief human capital officer.

Perhaps the best way to recruit former staff, however, is to maintain relationships with them. Relationship maintenance takes time, though, and this approach should be implemented well before launching a hiring surge. It also requires focused effort. Jeri Buchholz, NASA's former chief human capital officer, said an email list is not enough. "You have to have ways to stay in touch with them," she said. "You have to be prepared to invite them in once a year to give them a mission update. You have to have a program...so they stay in touch and have the motivation to keep their skills up to date."

Hire recruiters or train current staff

The General Service Administration's Technology Transformation Services—a division of the agency that applies modern methodologies and technologies to help other federal agencies strengthen their services—has improved the efficiency of its hiring by creating a focused talent team that prioritizes the roles of recruiters. The team, which works in partnership with GSA's Office of Human Resources, is composed of nine people, including recruiters, a recruiting coordinator, a sourcing strategist and an onboarding lead.

"Good recruiting is central to an efficient hiring process," said Brian Whittaker, former deputy director of GSA's Centers of Excellence—a part of TTS that works to accelerate IT modernization in federal agencies—and current deputy chief innovation officer of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. "Finding quality candidates is not always easy, but the searches can go faster when trained recruiters are on the job."

The recruiting team ensures TTS's hiring managers only consider high-quality candidates, thereby further helping to streamline hiring efforts. "Without good candidates, the chances go up that a hiring certificate goes unfilled and that the hiring process has to begin all over again. Poor recruiting is not a good strategy," said Whittaker.

The recruiters also make staffing more efficient by shepherding candidates through the hiring process. Recruiters talk to potential applicants, engage candidates through phone screens and interviews, and stay in close contact with them until the start of the security clearance process when TTS's onboarding lead becomes the primary point of contact. Throughout, recruiters frequently communicate with candidates to set realistic expectations about the hiring timeline and to make sure they know what to expect at each juncture.

"The recruiters are engaged with candidates throughout the hiring process," said Whittaker. "They give candidates process updates and let them know what to expect. If there's a delay, the recruiters tell them, 'This is probably going to add a week to the timeline.' They're up front about all aspects of the process."

Such transparency and guidance can help candidates, especially those new to the complexities of federal staffing, remain engaged with TTS for the duration of the hiring process. These efforts can lower candidates' frustrations with federal protocols and reduce the possibility they withdraw their application and turn to the private sector for a faster path to employment.

"The TTS talent team was crucial in quickly growing the Centers of Excellence," said Whittaker. "Without them, we wouldn't have been able to scale up from two to 40 staff members over 20 months."

Guiding principles for surge hiring

Underlying each of the three strategies for surge hiring are three operating principles that guide their implementation. According to interviews with current and former agency leaders, these principles are common to successful efforts to quickly fill large talent gaps.

- Hiring short-term staff may be preferable to hiring permanent staff if the immediate goal is to address emergencies or prevent disruptive talent gaps. This holds true even if there is a longer-term goal to develop the permanent workforce. According to NASA's former Chief Human Capital Officer Jeri Buchholz, "Short-term hiring is not mutually exclusive with agencies taking time to revamp their human capital capabilities." Temporary staff can maintain mission-critical work while agencies recruit and hire permanent staff.

- Hiring quickly should not come at the expense of hiring well. Because surge hiring does not guarantee quality hiring, it is important that agencies remain committed to cultivating an apolitical and professional career workforce by applying the federal merit system principles to its assessment and selection practices. Federal hiring that disregards good-government guidelines may result in ineffective employees, stalled initiatives, decreased workforce morale and poor customer service, among other things. All of these factors could negatively impact service to the public.

- Surge hiring should not distract or displace agency efforts to improve their human capital practices and processes. Indeed, the catalysts of surge hiring—like the federal response to the coronavirus pandemic—may present opportunities for agencies to rethink workforce needs, staffing goals and the efficacy of existing HR infrastructure.

Streamline the hiring process

Recommendation:
Apply a project management approach to streamline the hiring surge.

The complexity of federal hiring slows the process down. This problem is compounded when agencies segment and isolate the many hiring steps. Treating recruitment, assessment, selection, security clearance and salary negotiations as separate HR functions disrupts the continuum of the hiring process, adding layers of bureaucracy and discouraging efficiency.

"We talk about a personnel system or a human capital system, but we don't operate as if it were a system. It's all disconnected," explained Robert Goldenkoff, the former director of strategic issues at the Government Accountability Office. "And nobody [responsible for different parts of the system] is talking to one another as they should."

To increase the efficiency of surge hiring, agencies should adopt a data-driven project management model through which a project manager coordinates the hiring process, collaborating at every point of it with HR specialists and hiring managers.

There are a number of examples of this strategy in practice that are described below. While some are not stories of surge hiring per se, they nonetheless illustrate the practices of project management that are critical to effective hiring surges.

Prioritize clear and frequent communication

In adopting a project management approach to surge hiring, HR teams should prioritize clear and frequent communication with candidates as well as with hiring managers, sub-ject matter experts, agency leaders, and other stakeholders.

Good communication with candidates encourages them to be responsive to paperwork requests and other administrative aspects of the hiring process, which can help speed it up. It also keeps candidates engaged, preventing them from taking a job in the private sector out of frustration with bureaucratic speed bumps.

Effective communication is central to HR specialists' efforts to educate hiring managers about various hiring authorities and how they facilitate surge hiring, according to Abbey Fretz, associate deputy administrator of the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. And it is key to ensuring hiring surges are built on the subject matter expertise and perspectives of hiring managers. Finally, since many hiring managers will supervise the positions they are filling, it is important that the HR team keep them up-to-date on the status of the hiring surge so they are prepared to onboard new staff and get them to work right away.

Clear communication and coordination with other subject matter experts supporting surge hiring is also critical. Subject matter experts can help strengthen the assessment process and the quality of candidate pools. As demonstrated in a pilot program developed by the Office of Personal Management and the U.S. Digital Service, applicant self-assessments may not be as accurate as assessments conducted by subject matter experts. Subject matter experts have the specialized knowledge to determine through resume reviews and phone screens which applicants best demonstrate the position's required competencies.

Agency leaders, meanwhile, can help identify potential barriers to surge hiring as well as ways to overcome them. It also can drive staff contributions to hiring surges,

which benefit from staff flexibility and motivation.

"We got buy-in from the secretary's office to support the [surge] initiative, which helped motivate our agencies to be on board with it," Fretz said. "Having support from the secretary's office gave it a sense of urgency" for HR specialists and hiring managers.

Collect, analyze and visualize data

Process-improvement efforts risk being ineffective or counter-effective when not driven by data analysis. Hiring surge project managers are disadvantaged when they don't have sufficient data or the ability to make data actionable. Such information gaps can skew hiring surge designs and limit the surge managers' ability to assess and improve their team and its work. To prevent derailed efforts, hiring surges should be based on and continually informed by workforce data such as vacancy rates and average time-to-hire.

For example, the Air Force uses a dashboard for all its civil service hiring to visualize and track the progress of every hiring action from end-to-end. The online tool is a model for surge hiring project management. Updated by hiring managers and HR specialists in real time, it pinpoints who is responsible for every step in the process and when every action is completed. This makes the process more transparent and encourages a culture of accountability, fostering collaboration among the various stakeholders of the hiring process and helping them avoid, recognize or overcome bottlenecks.[32]

The General Service Administration's Technology Transformation Services is another agency that uses project management software to visualize candidate progress in each of its hiring actions, exemplifying how agencies should approach surge hiring.

"The talent team updates the candidate tracker at every step of the process so that everyone always knows—and can see—where things stand," said Brian Whittaker, former deputy director of TTS's Centers of Excellence and current deputy chief

innovation officer of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Because the talent team tracks the duration of every step of every hiring action, it has developed a robust dataset enabling its team of recruiters, HR specialists and hiring managers to identify inefficiencies as well as opportunities to resolve them. These benchmark data also help the agency predict hiring timelines, another good tactic for surge hiring.

"The team has created a hiring timeline worksheet that makes clear how long each part of the process takes on average," said Whittaker. "The worksheet enables the team to estimate when candidates can begin work based on the date they were selected. The timeline for individual candidates varies, of course, but having this estimate is really helpful for keeping things on track."

This system enables recruiters to help set candidates' expectations—encouraging them to stay engaged throughout the process—and to educate potential candidates about federal hiring, which is useful for all staffing efforts including surge hiring. TTS's website, for example, features a Navigating the Hiring Process page that estimates the duration of the five broad steps of its hiring process and describes them in plain English. It also highlights unique aspects of federal hiring, such as the government-style resume and veterans' preference.

Prioritize involvement of hiring managers

Federal hiring is undertaken through a partnership between HR specialists and hiring managers who are not HR professionals, but who often supervise the position being filled or otherwise have specialized knowledge related to it. Too often, however, the collaboration is lopsided either because HR specialists see hiring as the purview of their team or because hiring managers are passive participants. These dynamics can impede

> ### Hiring Data Dashboards
>
> To inform their strategic application of hiring authorities, agencies should track and analyze data generated by their usage. "Agencies need to have good data on how different hiring authorities are being used to meet different needs," explained Robert Goldenkoff, the former director for strategic issues at the Government Accountability Office.
>
> One way that agencies can collect, visualize and leverage relevant workforce data is to develop a talent pipeline dashboard. Such dashboards can make data easier to read, track and analyze, better preparing agencies to undertake surge hiring. Talent pipeline dashboards can highlight an agency's vacancy rate, the percentage of unfilled job announcements and the overall average time-to-hire data. They also can feature the average time-to-hire for each hiring authority used and compare the efficacy of various hiring authorities relative to the specifics of job opportunity announcements, such as occupation and grade level. With these data, agencies could better understand the utility of various hiring authorities and better plan for hiring surges.
>
> The Partnership has created a template for talent pipeline dashboards. It is designed to be adapted by agencies for various needs, including surge hiring. The sample dashboard is available in the Partnership's 2020 report, "A Time for Talent: Improving Federal Recruiting and Hiring."

hiring efforts—and are particularly detrimental to hiring surges.

"Hiring is not just an HR function," said Rochelle Granat, former assistant general counsel of the Department of the Treasury. "Hiring managers need to be committed to the hiring process. They cannot just say to HR specialists, 'We need X number of people, go get them.'"

A project management approach to surge hiring prioritizes the role of hiring managers.

Hiring managers are often subject matter experts who can offer an informed perspective to facilitate efficient surge hiring. This knowledge

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32 Partnership for Public Service and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, "A Time for Talent: Improving Federal Recruiting and Hiring," 2020, p. 14. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/33yzvtv.

can make position descriptions more accurate and attractive. It also can inform the design of strategies for effective recruitment, assessment and applicant rating, which can help expedite hiring.

"Get your hiring managers involved early and often," advised John Palguta, former vice president for policy at the Partnership for Public Service and former director of policy and evaluation for the Merit Systems Protection Board. "Hiring managers can make sure position descriptions are attractive to people in specific fields. And they know best what qualities are needed for the job."

In addition, hiring managers should work with HR specialists to decide which hiring authorities to use for surge hiring. Strategically leveraging hiring authorities relative to the many factors of each hiring action can accelerate the staffing process. This is why HR specialists and hiring managers at the National Science Foundation work closely to select the best hiring option for every position vacancy.

"We try to use all the tools we can in our toolbox as we're advising hiring managers in how to structure and think about the recruiting and hiring strategies that they want to use," said William Malyszka, NSF's deputy chief human capital officer. "It starts with the fundamental conversation that [HR specialists] have with hiring managers."

The Technology Transformation Services has developed a hiring methods chart to facilitate strategic decisions about using hiring authorities, including those for surge hiring. The chart is designed not only to educate new hiring managers about the many hiring options available, but also to walk hiring managers through a set of decisions that will help identify the best staffing approach for each position vacancy.

The tool accounts for many factors, including the length of appointment, whether it is in the excepted or competitive service, and who can apply. It also indicates for each authority whether veterans' preference, reduction-in-force preference or other federal hiring preferences pertain.

A TTS hiring primer, which lays out the roles and responsibilities of the five phases of its staffing process, is another tool well-adapted to hiring surges. For each phase, the hiring primer notes the average process timeline as well as what might affect it, delineating between factors hiring managers and HR specialists can and cannot control.

Department of Veterans Affairs

The Veterans Health Administration—which is America's largest integrated healthcare system, with 170 medical centers and 1,074 outpatient sites around the country collectively serving 9.21 million enrolled veterans each year—is on the front lines of the federal government's medical response to the coronavirus pandemic as many veterans are particularly vulnerable to the health risks of COVID-19.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the chance of hospitalization or death from the coronavirus increases with age,[33] and more veterans than civilians are 65 years old or older.[34] Additionally, veterans experiencing homelessness generally have high rates of chronic health problems[35] and limited access to health care.[36] And the isolation and stress of maintaining social distance is particularly taxing for populations that have pre-existing mental health problems, including those associated with post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries.[37]

Between March and October 2020, VHA diagnosed more than 58,000 veterans with COVID-19 and admitted about 12,200 coronavirus patients to its facilities after testing more than 787,000 veterans and agency staff.[38] Additionally, VHA's telehealth visits have increased 1,476% between March and October, with more than 176,000 telehealth visits occurring in a single week alone.[39]

To meet the overwhelming demand for care, VHA onboarded about 55,300 new hires between March and October 2020, including more than 10,400 registered nurses and nurse practitioners.[40]

The foundation of this hiring surge was VHA's national recruitment effort, which leveraged social media and other resources to attract candidates for the many types of positions it needed to fill, including nurses, physicians, respiratory therapists, housekeepers and supply technicians. Applicants interested in temporary appointments were encouraged to apply directly through VHA's website.[41]

The VHA also strategically used various hiring authorities to hire so many people so quickly. "The combination of hiring flexibilities the VHA used was critical to the success of its hiring surge because each applies to different groups of hires," said Jessica Bonjorni, the VHA's human capital management chief.

"We needed many tools in our toolkit. One tool was not going to meet all of our needs," agreed Tracey Therit, the Department of Veterans Affairs chief human capital officer.

For example, the VHA leveraged Title 38, a set of hiring authorities for medical personnel that it commonly uses. It also employed the temporary Schedule A COVID-19 Hiring Authority. And it hired annuitants noncompetitively, leveraging its authority to issue dual-compensation waivers—granted by the Office of Personnel Management—to attract many of them back into federal service. The VHA also relied on the 39 agency-specific direct hire authorities the VA received from OPM.

The success of the VHA's hiring surge, however, was mostly due to the agency's project management approach and ability to streamline its staffing process. Improving hiring was a 2020 goal, and the agency already had identified hiring inefficiencies and ways to resolve them when COVID-19 hit. But as the public health crisis grew throughout the winter and spring, VHA intensified its efforts to hire more efficiently.

When the scale of the pandemic became clear, the VHA set a goal of onboarding within three days of making a tentative offer, an extraordinary target given that VHA's average time-to-hire before the coronavirus pandemic was more than 90 days.[42]

33 Centers for Disease Control, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Your Health: Older Adults." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3itI90C.

34 Veterans Affairs, "Profile of Veterans: 2017," March 2019, pp. 5-6. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3ip7mcK.

35 "Statement of Richard A. Stone, M.D., Executive in Charge, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs." Hearing on "Assessing VA's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: 90 Days Later," House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3nlzBwj.

36 Veterans Affairs, "Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-2019)." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2HMhHCF.

37 Bob Woodruff Foundation, "Veterans and COVID-19: Projecting the Economic, Social, and Mental Health Needs of America's Veterans," March 2020, p. 9. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3l66KKI.

38 Veterans Affairs, "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs COVID-19 Pandemic Response: Weekly Report: October 6-12, 2020," October 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/34hDpGh.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 "Statement of Steven Lieberman, M.D., Acting Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs." Hearing on "Recruitment, Retention and Building a Resilient Veterans Health Care Workforce," Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/34pvJSC.

42 Ibid.

To meet this urgent goal, the agency's leadership team decided that every aspect of the hiring process was on the table for improvement. And with "tremendous support" from OPM, according to Dr. Steven Lieberman, the VA's acting principal deputy undersecretary for health, the VA was able to restructure "pre-employment requirements, moving some of these to be completed after the initial onboarding occurs, allowing new hires to begin work very quickly."[43]

- **Credentialing Process:** The VHA reduced the credentialing process from 30 to three days by decreasing the contacts and verifications initially required.[44] Despite this shortened timeframe, the VHA was able to take appropriate steps to prevent bad hires, such as checking references, verifying appropriate licenses and searching databases for malpractice issues. The agency also removed the requirement to use a professional standards board in its appointment and pay-setting process for Hybrid Title 38 employees.[45]

- **Data Collection and Analysis:** During the initial months of its hiring surge, the VHA tracked time-to-hire on a weekly basis and collected other data on a daily basis that helped identify and resolve inefficiencies and system limitations. These datapoints included the number of selections made, number of projected hires with enter on duty dates and number of new hires onboarded. While the VHA

no longer collects these data on a daily basis, Bonjorni said that routine and frequent data collection and analysis remains an important part of efforts to streamline hiring. For example, the agency leveraged data to support its efforts to onboard every day during the surge, instead of just on the first day of a pay period, which is standard practice.

- **Staggering the Onboarding Process:** The VHA delayed some aspects of the onboarding process. For example, it deferred fingerprinting, drug testing and physical examinations. It also administered the oath of office virtually. And with Department of Homeland Security authorization, the VA allowed new hires to complete their I-9 form online, which is used to verify the identity and employment eligibility of candidates. These efforts required effective coordination between HR and other offices.

The VHA also developed a checklist of all the hiring shortcuts it identified for their HR teams. The checklist noted what requirements—such as background investigations, fingerprinting, drug testing and physical examinations—had been temporarily suspended, deferred or otherwise amended. The checklist also listed what could be done virtually.

"A simplified checklist for the expedited hiring process was critical in helping our HR professionals keep track of rapidly changing requirements while trying to onboard a record number of staff as quickly as possible," said Bonjorni. "We operate in a complex web of hiring authorities and pre-employment requirements under normal circumstances—the checklist was a great way to keep our busy HR teams on track with what temporary COVID flexibilities required."

Supporting these efforts was the VHA's staffing command cell,

a cross-functional team that determined the best allocation of personnel. Composed of HR, IT, emergency response, nursing and clinical leadership staff, the team helped prioritize critical talent gaps across the VHA system through redeployment of current staff or hiring permanent, temporary travel-ready, and contract staff. It also coordinated virtual support from clinical-resource hubs as well as reassignments of existing personnel.

"The SCC's close collaboration across functional areas resulted in getting the right people in the right places when they were needed, with surge staff being fully ready to function upon arrival at a COVID hot spot," Bonjorni said.

All of these process improvements, coupled with the use of various hiring authorities, reduced VHA's time-to-hire to an average of 10-12 days. In some cases, the agency was able to hire in a little as three days.[46]

The VHA most likely will not be able to continue to hire at the same pace as the hiring surge took around-the-clock commitment from its HR team. Nonetheless, the VA is assessing the efficacy of the surge campaign and considering how it can permanently implement many of the process improvements made.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 "Statement of Steven Lieberman, M.D., Acting Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs." Hearing on "Recruitment, Retention and Building a Resilient Veterans Health Care Workforce," Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, 2020. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/34pvJSC.

46 Ibid.

Small Business Administration

In late March 2020, Congress passed and the president signed the CARES Act, a $2.3 trillion economic stimulus package designed to mitigate the devastating impacts of COVID-19, tasking the Small Business Administration with managing its $350-billion Paycheck Protection Program.[47] To efficiently deliver this amount of financial support to small businesses and nonprofit organizations, the SBA—which is an independent federal agency that at the time had a staff of about 4,200—launched a hiring surge.[48]

By September, the SBA had onboarded more than 6,000 new employees in response to COVID-19, more than doubling the size of its workforce.

One of the SBA's approaches to quickly expanding its workforce was to strategically use multiple hiring authorities. In addition to hiring permanent, term and temporary staff through delegated examining and merit promotions, the SBA leveraged a number of other options, including:

- Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority.

- Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority.

- AmeriCorps VISTA Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority.

- Direct hire authorities (including the government-wide Cybersecurity Direct Hire Authority and the SBA's agency-specific direct hire authority for IT and acquisition positions).

- Various Schedule A hiring authorities.

- 30% Disabled Veterans Appointing Authority.

- Pathways Program.

"The special hiring authorities used gave the SBA greater flexibility to fill critical positions in a short period of time," said Elias Hernandez, the SBA's chief human capital officer.

The hiring authorities within Schedule A, however, accounted for most of the SBA's new hires between March and September 2020. As of September, the agency brought on about 260 individuals through the Schedule A COVID-19 Hiring Authority, and it hired close to 800 lawyers through the Schedule A authority for attorneys. It also hired more than 4,800 employees through its agency-specific Schedule A authority for national emergencies.

The SBA also used a project management approach for its hiring surge and its normal HR operations that had to continue throughout it. When faced with a challenge like this, Hernandez said, "You have to shift your mindset about how you do your work." For the SBA, the new mindset resulted in a number of tools and process efficiencies:

- A hiring toolkit and related training to educate hiring managers on how to best use hiring options.

- Improved communication within the agency, ensuring that staff critical to the hiring surge met regularly and strategically coordinated their activities.

- Stronger recruitment efforts that targeted veterans, military spouses, returned Peace Corps volunteers and students, including those attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities, among other specific populations of potential candidates.

- Promoting details and temporary rotations within the SBA to staff of other federal agencies via the COVID-19 Response page of the Office of Personnel Management's Open Opportunities website.

- Moving new employee orientation sessions online and offering them daily instead of biweekly.

- Leveraging a strong partnership between the SBA's HR team and Office of Personnel Security to ensure fingerprinting and security screening were accomplished efficiently and effectively.

A resource that complemented this approach was the SBA's updated library of position descriptions. Over the few years prior to the 2020 coronavirus outbreak, the SBA refreshed its collection of 2,000 position de-

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47 Small Business Administration, "Coronavirus Relief Options." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/30rF2jN.

48 According to the most recent data from the Office of Personnel Management, the SBA had 2,118 non-seasonal, full-time permanent employees and a total of 4,196 employees in December 2019. Office of Personnel Management, "FedScope employment data 2019." Retrieved from https://bit.ly/3kATbDi.

scriptions, some of which were 30-years old. This effort included culling position descriptions that were outdated or inaccurate as well as reclassifying 700 others. In addition, the SBA created a number of standard position descriptions that are applicable enterprise-wide. As a result, the SBA had a streamlined electronic library of 825 up-to-date and accurate position descriptions ready to use when it launched its COVID-19 hiring surge, giving hiring managers and HR specialists immediate access to documentation that in the past could take great effort to find. Furthermore, the SBA was prepared to quickly revise position descriptions as necessary.

"The reorganization of our PD library and enhancement of classification procedures has expedited classification requests. Over this period, the timeline of classification went from months, to weeks, to days," said Tony Martin, the SBA's classification program chief.

Communication was critical to the SBA's hiring surge. According to Hernandez, good communication enabled the agency to develop "strategic plans to address the volume of hires" and to ensure "new employees were able to immediately support the agency's mission." He continued, "Open communication allowed the agency to identify potential barriers or bottlenecks early in the process, pivot when new efficiencies were identified, and share resources to improve strategic operations."

For example, the SBA's Office of Human Resources Solutions and the Office of the Chief Information Officer worked collaboratively to send as soon as possible computers and other necessary equipment to new staff onboarded remotely.

The SBA also focused on leveraging technology, such as the USAStaffing website, to create efficiencies in existing hiring and onboarding processes and to adapt to new challenges presented by its hiring surge.

Technology enabled the agency to conduct virtual information sessions with agency partners as well as to shift its onboarding activities and employee-orientation sessions online.

From its success in quickly expanding its workforce, the SBA has identified a set of best practices for surge hiring:

- **Communication and collaboration are key.** Ensure key agency leaders and stakeholders—including the chief human capital officer, the chief information officer and the chief financial officer—are part of the development and implementation of the hiring strategy. Gaining their input and buy-in is critical for identifying needs, potential barriers and the available resources for overcoming them. Communication must continue throughout the hiring surge to recognize what is working, what isn't and what needs to change. To that end, use multiple means of communication, including email alerts, agency-wide "town hall" meetings, and smaller communities of practice like "HR cafes."

- **Be flexible and open to change.** Agency leaders and staff need to be flexible when undertaking a hiring surge. They should be willing to shift internal resources and to evolve processes if they recognize opportunities for increasing efficiency. Institutional norms and practices should not prevent efforts to improve the hiring process. Agencies need to provide training and guidance to supervisors that enable them to help staff not only adapt to but also implement changes necessary for surge hiring.

- **Training is necessary.** Provide training to agency leaders, supervisors, hiring managers and other stakeholders as it helps to

reduce misinformation about and to increase the effectiveness of surge hiring campaigns. Training should be provided in multiple formats.

- **Leverage technology.** Leverage and expand use of existing technology to facilitate surge hiring.

- **Seek staff feedback.** Create an environment of open ideas. The leaders of hiring surges should seek feedback from HR specialists, hiring managers and other stakeholders about potential bottlenecks and how to increase process efficiencies.

Conclusion

While standard federal hiring processes such as delegated examining and merit promotions were not designed to facilitate surge hiring, there are options available for agencies that need to bring large numbers of new employees on board in a short period of time. These options are little known and infrequently used but can provide agencies with the ability to meet their workforce needs in response to national emergencies, large-scale attrition, new mission requirements or the demand for emergent skills.

Based on a review of past hiring surges, this report highlights three basic strategies that can be implemented by federal agencies to facilitate rapid hiring without additional authority from Congress. The strategies are to identify government-wide or agency-specific hiring authorities that best meet the needs of the hiring surge; to develop infrastructure that expedites the recruitment of top-quality candidates; and to apply a project management approach to streamline surge hiring.

These strategies were used by agencies that had to rapidly grow their workforces in response to various challenges. The Small Business Administration, for example, hired more than 6,000 employees to bolster its capacity to manage the $350-billion Paycheck Protection Program, which benefited millions of Americans financially hurt by the coronavirus pandemic. The Veterans Health Administration responded to the public health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic by reducing its average time-to-hire to 10-12 days and by onboarding more than 55,300 new hires between March and October 2020.

These and other examples included in this report are designed to help HR specialists and hiring managers—as well as assistant secretaries for management, chief human capital officers and other stakeholders—look beyond the often slow and cumbersome hiring process when they must hire large numbers of employees quickly.

The surge hiring roadmap included in this report graphically demonstrates where the report's three basic strategies can be applied throughout the federal hiring process. And it is backed up by facts detailed in the matrix of hiring authorities, which describes the rules and limitations of the options most conducive to surge hiring.

While the stories in this report may be singular, their lessons are not. Federal leaders can use the approaches taken by these agencies to quickly overcome staff shortages when surge hiring is needed, and they can apply these lessons during normal times to improve their recruiting and hiring processes.

Appendix I: Surge Hiring Roadmap

Job Announcement Preparation and Posting	Recruiting	Application Review and Hiring Certificate	Candidate Assessment, Selection and Tentative Offer	Security Clearance, Final Offer and Onboarding

Strategies for Surge Hiring

APPLY A PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- Analyze hiring data.
- Include hiring manager in selecting hiring authorities.
- Coordinate efforts and facilitate effective team communication.

STRATEGICALLY APPLY HIRING AUTHORITIES

- Determine which agency-specific (when available) and government-wide hiring authorities best meet the needs of the hiring surge.

APPLY A PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- Analyze past hiring and recruiting data to inform and design effective recruitment tactics.
- Continue to coordinate efforts across teams and facilitate effective communication.

DEVELOP RECRUITING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Hire recruiters or train existing staff with relevant expertise to attract candidates and guide them through the hiring process.
- Leverage data and technology to enhance candidate searches.

APPLY A PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- Analyze past hiring data to predict process timelines.
- Include SMEs and hiring managers in resume reviews and phone screens.
- Track progression of each candidate as well as status of overall hiring process.
- Continue to coordinate efforts across teams and facilitate effective communication.

DEVELOP RECRUITING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Recruiters prioritize clear and frequent communication while guiding candidates through the hiring process.

APPLY A PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- Include SMEs and hiring managers in candidate interviews and assessments.
- Continue to track progression of each candidate, making process improvements where necessary.
- Continue to coordinate efforts across teams and facilitate effective communication.

DEVELOP RECRUITING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Recruiters continue to prioritize clear and frequent communication while guiding candidates through the hiring process.

APPLY A PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

- Continue to track progression of each candidate, making process improvements where necessary.
- Continue to coordinate efforts across teams and facilitate effective communication.

DEVELOP RECRUITING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Recruiters continue to prioritize clear and frequent communication while guiding candidates through the hiring process.

Appendix II: Hiring Authorities for Surge Hiring

Hiring Authorities		Type of Appointment	Competitive or Noncompetitive Authority?	Description	Considerations	More information via...	
						U.S. Code of Federal Regulations	Office of Personnel Management
Direct Hire Authorities	Direct Hire Authority for Cybersecurity	Competitive Service	Noncompetitive	Direct hire authorities enable agencies to hire qualified candidates to the competitive service without applying veterans' preference or applicant rating and ranking procedures. Both Congress and the Office of Personnel Management have the power to create direct hire authorities, which may be used for permanent, temporary or term positions. OPM may grant them—on its own or in response to an agency request—to specific agencies or establish them government-wide for certain occupational series, pay grades or geographic locations in response to a critical hiring need or a severe shortage of qualified candidates. The direct hire authorities for cybersecurity positions, IT management positions and STEM positions are the most applicable direct hire authorities government-wide.	The flexibility of direct hire authorities can be very useful for surge hiring, but there is no guarantee they will accelerate staffing. Inexperience with these authorities, for example, could result in inefficient assessments that slow down the hiring process. In addition, receiving an agency-specific direct hire authority from OPM is a difficult, time-consuming and uncertain process. Agencies must provide current documentary evidence that either a "severe shortage of candidates" or a "critical hiring need" exists for specific positions. To demonstrate candidate shortages, agencies may cite workforce analysis data, regional or national employment trends, and their recruitment and training efforts, among other things. To demonstrate critical hiring needs, they must submit evidence showing why other hiring authorities have been impractical or ineffective. Finally, it is important that agencies using a direct hire authority ensure their hiring practices uphold the federal government's merit system principles since the authority allows them to forgo applying veterans' preference and applicant rating and ranking procedures.	5 C.F.R. 337 Subpart B	OPM list of government-wide direct hire authorities / OPM Direct Hire Authority Fact Sheet
	Direct Hire Authority for IT Management (Information Security)						
	Direct Hire Authority for Scientific, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)						
Former Federal Employees Hiring Authorities	Reemployed Annuitants Authority	Competitive Service or Excepted Service	Noncompetitive	The Reemployed Annuitant Authority allows agencies to noncompetitively hire former federal employees who have retired and are receiving a federal annuity through the Civil Service Retirement System or the Federal Employees Retirement System. Agencies may hire annuitants under any employment authority for which they are eligible; to any position for which they are qualified; and either to the competitive service (for permanent, term or temporary positions) or the excepted service (for permanent, indefinite or time-limited positions). Reemployed annuitants may work on a full-time, part-time, or intermittent work schedule.	Without a waiver to the federal "dual-compensation" rule—which requires agencies to offset salaries of reemployed annuitants by the amount of their monthly annuity—it can be difficult to hire staff through this authority. But until 2024, agencies hiring annuitants on a temporary basis (for up to one year) can issue waivers to the rule without permission from OPM under certain circumstances, such as hiring retired civil servants to perform mission-critical work or to help recruit, retain, or train or mentor employees. Dual-compensation waivers for temporary staff do not apply, however, beyond 1,040 hours of service during any 12-month period. And the waiver has a lifetime cap of 3,120 hours per annuitant as well as a limitation of 520 hours for annuitants during the first six months of receiving their annuity. The number of annuitants receiving waivers from agency heads may not exceed 2.5% of the size of the agency's full-time workforce. If the number exceeds 1%, agencies must report why to Congress and develop a succession plan. OPM also can grant dual-compensation waivers directly to agencies when there is an emergency hiring need, severe recruiting difficulty and other reasons. And, in response to emergencies or "other unusual circumstances," it can delegate to agencies the authority to issue waivers. In these circumstances, OPM determines how long the waiver applies. Agency requests for an OPM waiver or the authority to issue waivers are time-consuming and not always granted.	5 C.F.R. 553	OPM's Dual Compensation Waiver Templates
	Reinstatement Authority	Competitive Service	Noncompetitive	Through the Reinstatement Authority agencies can noncompetitively hire former federal employees who previously held a career or career-conditional appointment. Former federal employees who have veterans' preference or acquired career tenure by completing three years of continuous creditable service have lifetime eligibility for reinstatement. Most other former civil servants, though, can be hired under this authority for only three years following their separation from federal service.	Staff hired through the Reinstatement Authority are employed at the same grade level they held when they left federal service no matter what experience they gained in the interim period. As a result, the authority is most useful for hiring former civil servants who are not earning more in their current position than they did in government or who are not motivated by salary. Staying in touch with former employees is an effective recruitment strategy when using this hiring authority.	5 C.F.R. 315.401	OPM's Reinstatement page
Military-Related Hiring Authorities	Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority	Competitive Service	Noncompetitive	The Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority allows agencies to noncompetitively hire spouses of an active-duty military service member or a 100%-disabled service member injured while on active duty. Agencies may also noncompetitively hire spouses of a service member killed on duty if they have not remarried. The authority can be used to hire for permanent, temporary and term positions.	Some agencies consider this authority to be a "win-win." It enables agencies to accelerate their hiring, and it provides professional opportunities and stability for military spouses whose frequent relocations may otherwise limit their career options. Recruiting military spouses, however, can be difficult because many agencies do not have talent pipelines that effectively reach this population. Agencies can better recruit military spouses by developing relationships with organizations that support military families.	5 C.F.R. 315.612	Feds Hire Vets webpage
	Veterans Recruitment Appointment Authority	Excepted Service (with conversion to Competitive Service)	Noncompetitive	The Veterans Recruitment Appointment Authority allows agencies to noncompetitively hire eligible veterans to excepted service positions. To be eligible, veterans must be disabled, must have served in a war, must have received an Armed Forces Service Medal for participation in a military operation, or must have received a badge for service in a campaign or expedition. Additionally, they must have received an honorable or general discharge. Agencies may use the authority to fill permanent, temporary or term positions. Veterans hired for permanent positions are converted to the competitive service after two years of satisfactory service.	Agencies planning to use any of these hiring authorities should consider how they post their job opportunity announcements. Veterans can apply for positions only open to veterans as well as those open to current civil servants or the general public. Agencies that are specifically recruiting veterans should post their job opportunity announcements so that only veterans can apply. Those seeking a broader candidate pool can open positions up to federal employees and people outside of government, too. The broader approach, however, may yield multiple applications from a single veteran who applied through each channel. And it may result in not using any of these hiring authorities if a non-veteran is hired.	5 C.F.R. 307	Feds Hire Vets webpage
	30% Disabled Veterans Appointing Authority	Competitive Service	Noncompetitive	This authority allows an agency to noncompetitively hire veterans with a 30% or more service-connected disability to temporary or term positions in the competitive service. Agencies may convert veterans hired through this authority to permanent positions, but there is no requirement to do so.		5 C.F.R. 316.402(b)(4)	Feds Hire Vets webpage
	Veterans Employment Opportunities Act	Competitive Service	Competitive	The VEOA allows veterans to apply for positions announced under an agency's merit-promotion procedures that are open to "status" candidates—i.e., current competitive service employees and certain former employees who earned competitive status. The authority only may be used to fill permanent positions in the competitive service. Veterans' preference does not apply. To be eligible, veterans must have received an honorable or general discharge and must either be "preference eligible" or have completed three or more years of active service.		5 C.F.R. 335.106	Feds Hire Vets webpage

Hiring Authorities		Type of Appointment	Competitive or Noncompetitive Authority?	Description	Considerations	More information via...		
						U.S. Code of Federal Regulations	Office of Personnel Management	
Pathways Program Hiring Authorities	Pathways Internship Program	Excepted Service (conversion to Competitive Service possible)	Noncompetitive	The Pathways Internship Program provides students with paid opportunities to work in federal agencies while still in school. To be eligible, students must be enrolled in an accredited educational institution, such as a high school, vocational or trade school, college or university, or a graduate or professional school. Internships are in the excepted service. Students who complete them may be converted to a permanent competitive service position.	Recent graduates and current students—especially those with graduate school experience and those with specialized training that could fill critical federal talent gaps—can be good candidates for hiring surges. They might not be the best candidates, however, for agencies seeking to hire people with previous federal experience or a track record of professional success.

Veterans' preference applies to hiring under the Pathways program. | 5 C.F.R. 362 Subpart B | Pathways Internship Program | |
| | Pathways Recent Graduates Program | | | The Pathways Recent Graduates Program is a one-year developmental program for recent graduates designed to promote careers in the civil service. To be eligible, applicants must have completed within the previous two years a qualifying associates, bachelors, masters, professional, doctorate, vocational or technical degree or certificate from a qualifying educational institution. Individuals in the Recent Graduates Program are placed in an excepted service position. Upon completion of the program, they may be converted to a permanent competitive service position. While the program is run by OPM, it is largely administered at the agency level by each participating agency. | | 5 C.F.R. 362 Subpart C | Pathways Recent Graduates Program | |
| | Pathways Presidential Management Fellows Program | | | The Pathways PMF program is a leadership development initiative managed by OPM that is focused on cultivating individuals with an advanced degree in any discipline. Each year, the competitive program assesses thousands of applications, winnowing the candidate pool to a select group of finalists who are pre-qualified for 12 months to be hired by a federal agency as a fellow. Fellows serve a two-year, paid position in the excepted service. Participating agencies pay the salaries and benefits of fellows in addition to a $7,000 reimbursement fee to OPM. Agencies may convert fellows who have successfully completed the program to permanent positions in the competitive service. | The PMF program is a good resource for highly qualified, talented candidates who already have been recruited. The program not only is very selective—with less than 10% of applicants becoming fellows on average—but also vets and pre-qualifies its finalists. Agencies can browse the resumes of PMF finalists without having to post a job announcement, and they can hire any who accept an offer.

Nonetheless, the PMF program is not the best tool for surge staffing because OPM sets a cap on the number of PMF finalists each year, limiting the candidate pool. (There have been 400 finalists per year on average over the past four years.) OPM's cap is primarily based upon the number of jobs that participating agencies predict filling with fellows. Agencies that are planning a hiring surge could encourage OPM to raise the cap by reporting by the July deadline their anticipated hiring needs.

Veterans' preference applies to hiring under the Pathways program. | 5 C.F.R. 362 Subpart D | Pathways Presidential Management Fellows Program | |
| Schedule A Hiring Authorities | Schedule A 30-Day Appointment Authority | Excepted Service | Noncompetitive | Through Schedule A hiring authorities, agencies may hire noncompetitively for excepted service positions when examination is not practical. While all Schedule A hiring authorities can be used for surge hiring, many are rarely applicable. Three of them, however, are generally useful.

The Schedule A 30-Day Appointment Authority enables agencies with critical talent gaps to hire individuals for up to 30 days and extend their employment for another 30 days "if continued employment is essential to the agency's operations." Agencies may not employ the same individual under this authority for more than 60 days in any 12-month period.

The Schedule A Severe Disabilities Authority allows agencies to hire—on a permanent, term, or temporary basis—a person with an intellectual disability, a severe physical disability or a psychiatric disability. This authority allows noncompetitive conversion to competitive service after two years of satisfactory service.

The Schedule A(r) Authority enables agencies to hire individuals through intern, fellowship, training, clinical-residency, and professional- or industry-exchange programs. Appointments under this authority may not exceed four years. | Schedule A is not a single hiring authority but rather a collection of hiring authorities, most of which are for specific occupations—such as authorities for attorneys, law clerks and doctors—and some of which are not broadly applicable, like the authorities for hiring chaplains. Schedule A also has a provision enabling OPM to authorize the noncompetitive hiring of temporary and part-time positions when necessary. (OPM used this provision to authorize the COVID-19 Hiring Authority in response to the coronavirus pandemic.) | 5 C.F.R 213.3102(i)(2) | | Excepted Service Hiring Authorities: Their Use and Effectiveness in the Executive Branch |
| | Schedule A Severe Disabilities Authority | Excepted Service (conversion to Competitive Service possible) | Noncompetitive | | | 5 C.F.R. 213.3102(u) | OPM's Schedule A for Disabilities page | |
| | Schedule A(r) Authority | Excepted Service | Noncompetitive | | | 5 CFR 213.3102(r) | | |

Hiring Authorities		Type of Appointment	Competitive or Noncompetitive Authority?	Description	Considerations	More information via...	
						U.S. Code of Federal Regulations	Office of Personnel Management
Other Hiring Authorities	Experts and Consultants Authority	Excepted Service	Noncompetitive	When authorized by an appropriation or a statute, agencies may noncompetitively hire qualified experts or consultants to perform temporary work (up to one year) or intermittent work without time limit.	Agencies may not use this authority to fill staff shortages, to hire for Senior Executive Service positions or to hire for positions with managerial or supervisory authority. Additionally, agencies can't use the authority to fill positions requiring a presidential appointment—though they may use it to hire an individual awaiting final action on a presidential appointment to an expert or consultant position.	5 C.F.R. 304	
	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority	Competitive Service	Noncompetitive	Agencies may noncompetitively hire returned Peace Corps volunteers who have satisfactorily completed their service. Returned volunteers' noncompetitive eligibility is only available, however, for one year following the completion of their service.	By the nature of their service, returned Peace Corps volunteers generally have project management experience and demonstrated a commitment to public service, making them good candidates for the federal civil service. Additionally, many agency leaders who have hired former volunteers tout their value as employees, citing their education, flexibility, creativity and commitment to mission.

Mission match is especially important to returned Peace Corps volunteers. To that end, agencies recruiting returned volunteers should consider how to demonstrate mission match relative to the programming areas as well as to the functions of positions they are filling. Some returned volunteers may be attracted to any position in forestry, for example, while others may seek any position involving project management or teaching. | 5 C.F.R. 315.605 | |
	Returned AmeriCorps Vista Volunteer Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority			Agencies may noncompetitively hire returned AmeriCorps Vista volunteers who have satisfactorily completed their service. Returned volunteers' noncompetitive eligibility is only available, however, for one year following the completion of their service.			
	Peace Corps Former Personnel Noncompetitive Eligibility Authority			Agencies may noncompetitively appoint former Peace Corps employees who have completed at least three years continuous satisfactory service. Former Peace Corps employees' noncompetitive eligibility is available for three years after separating from the Peace Corps.		5 C.F.R. 315.607	
	Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program	Excepted Service	Noncompetitive	The IPA program facilitates temporary talent exchanges between the federal government and the nonprofit and academic sectors to enable agencies to access top expertise and to provide developmental opportunities for civil servants. Agencies may arrange IPA assignments with institutions of higher education, federally funded research centers, state and local governments, tribal governments and other qualified organizations. They do not need OPM approval; they simply need to enter into a written agreement. IPA assignments may be for intermittent, part-time and full-time employment. They may last up to two years and be extended for two more. IPA assignments within federal agencies are in the excepted service. Cost-sharing arrangements for IPA assignments are determined by federal agencies and their nongovernmental partners. Federal agencies may pay all, some or none of the costs associated with an assignment.	While the IPA program is an effective mechanism for agencies to fill specific talent gaps—especially those in STEM fields—it is not a great tool for surge hiring. The IPA staffing process can be time-consuming, especially if agencies do not already have relationships with nongovernmental organizations with staff primed for IPA assignments. In effect, IPA assignments require two recruiting efforts: one for partner organizations and the other for candidates within them.	5 C.F.R. 334	
	Transfer Authority	Competitive Service	Competitive	Agencies may appoint staff by transferring current career or career-conditional employees of another agency. Employees with career status who transfer retain their status. Career-conditional employees also retain their status, except those who transfer to a position required by law to be filled on a permanent basis. Career employees who transfer from a position required by law to be filled on a permanent basis become a career-conditional employee unless they have completed the service requirement for career tenure.	While the transfer authority can facilitate hiring surges by enabling agencies to quickly build up their staff capacity, the mechanism does not strengthen the overall civil service workforce. In fact, it often depletes the capacity of agencies, which lose staff transferring to another agency. Some federal HR leaders describe the effect of the authority as "robbing Peter to pay Paul."	5 C.F.R. 315.501 – 315.503	

Appendix III: Acknowledgements

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