



## TALENT ACQUISITION QUICK TIPS

Amid the response to COVID-19, federal agencies are moving quickly to fill the jobs needed to address new and emerging challenges. As hiring managers and HR staff work together to find the best candidates for these roles, they should consider the recruiting and hiring tools and flexibilities available to them and customize an approach that is well aligned with the overall goals for the role. In Spring 2020, the Partnership hosted two recruiting and hiring sessions to support agencies as they sought to rapidly fill mission critical roles. This guide captures strategies and insights shared by experts at those sessions—many of which are relevant to hiring amid the pandemic and in normal operations.

### CONVERSATION GUIDE: INITIAL HIRING MEETING

Before the kick-off of the recruitment and hiring process, the hiring manager and HR professional should confirm they are clear on the qualifications and expectations for the role, including necessary skills or expertise, expected tenure and success criteria. Questions the hiring manager and HR professional should consider and discuss include:

1. What type of talent is needed (e.g. skills, knowledge, background) and how will we assess talent?
2. How long is this talent needed (e.g. immediate, short-term, permanent)?
3. Where might this type of talent typically be found or contacted (e.g. conferences, professional societies, academic institutions)?
4. What security clearance level is necessary? Is there a difference in the short-term and long-term clearance needs?
  - Amid COVID-19, what additional considerations should the agency factor into this decision?
5. Is there a hiring authority or flexibility that is well-matched with the defined role and would enable a quicker and more effective hire?

### RECRUITING TIPS

As recruiting begins, considerations to ensure the position is reaching the most well-qualified audiences include:

1. Be thoughtful and intentional about accessing the talent pools aligned with your needs and building a diverse applicant pool. All candidates will apply through the established process, however actively reaching out to groups and networks can help ensure that the position reaches well-qualified applicants.
2. Publicize and share the job through venues typically used by candidates who have the skills, knowledge and expertise needed for the role. Channels and platforms for sharing the job could include:
  - **Internal hires:** Current employees within the hiring agency or another federal agency.
  - **Handshake:** Primarily for entry-level talent.

Recruiting is work. Investing in building a brand and community engagement can pay dividends when trying to spread the word about critical jobs. If the audience is already engaged with content, they are more willing to like or share the agency's call.

- **LinkedIn:** In addition to posting the open position, reaching out to networks and individuals on LinkedIn to share the job posting can help expand your reach.
  - **University career services center and professors:** Reach recent graduates (from entry-level to post-doctoral) by sharing the PD and job posting.
  - **Entelo:** Primarily for digital and technology talent.
  - **Stack overflow:** Primarily for digital and technology talent.
  - **U.S. Digital Service and 18F:** Many candidates who apply to USDS and 18F are better suited for other jobs within government.
3. Leverage word of mouth and built-in communication networks to help exponentially grow the reach of your recruiting. Outreach networks could include:
- Professional associations.
  - Conference speakers or attendees.
  - Congressional offices in targeted regional areas.
  - Community partners.
  - Webinars and other virtual recruitment events.
  - University career services centers, faculty and advisors.

## **SMEs**

Utilize subject matter experts to improve the quality of technical hires<sup>1</sup>:

1. Involve SMEs upfront in the initial hiring meeting.
2. Involve SMEs in drafting the position description. ([Example](#))
3. Bring together HR staff, SMEs and hiring manager to agree on the criteria for assessing resumes. Take time to explain why those criteria are important to the project and role.
4. Co-develop interview process with HR staff, SMEs and hiring manager.
5. Involve SMEs in developing questions and defining what a good and bad answer looks like. Share these examples with evaluators.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Improving Federal Hiring through the Use of Effective Assessment Strategies to Advance Mission Outcomes](#)

## HIRING FLEXIBILITIES AND AUTHORITIES CHEAT SHEET

During the early hiring conversations, the hiring manager and HR professional may discuss the use of hiring flexibilities or authorities to acquire the desired talent. The chart below outlines key features of the authorities and flexibilities used for COVID-19 hiring. Additional resources and tools are available at OPM's [Hiring Excellence](#) portal.

Hiring Flexibility or Authority	Term	Restrictions	Considerations	Expiration	Resources/Contacts
<b>Open Opportunities</b>	1-2 hours to 20% time over several months	Open to current federal employees only	Short-term, surge support for specific projects or tasks	N/A	Open Opportunities Site: <a href="https://openopps.usajobs.gov/">https://openopps.usajobs.gov/</a> MOU: <a href="https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/covid-19/appendix-1-mou-covid-19-response-program.pdf">https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/covid-19/appendix-1-mou-covid-19-response-program.pdf</a>
<b>Schedule A (COVID-19)</b>	1 year, plus 1-year extension Can apply to OPM for extension after 2 years	Must be related to COVID response (could be a new project, backfill for others who need to work on response)	Best for temporary needs— talent the agency does not expect to need beyond the current response  Best for specialized skill sets	Authority expires March 31, 2021	OPM Fact Sheet: <a href="https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/covid-19/opm-fact-sheet-covid-19-exceptional-service-hiring-authority/">https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/covid-19-exceptional-service-hiring-authority/</a>
<b>IPA</b>	Up to two years, and may be intermittent, part-time, or full-time. May be extended for an additional two years.	Open to current employees from federal, state or local governments, colleges and universities, Indian tribal governments, federally funded research and development centers, and other eligible organizations	Does not require longer commitment  Opportunity for regular talent exchanges with key partners (e.g. colleges and universities)  Either the host or the lending organization can pay the salary of the individual	N/A	IPA overview: <a href="https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/intergovernment-personnel-act/#url=Overview">https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/hiring-information/intergovernment-personnel-act/#url=Overview</a>  <a href="#">Assignment Agreement</a>
<b>Schedule A (r)</b>	6 months - 2 years Opportunity to extend for 2 years	Must make the case for why this is the best/only way to access the desired talent source  CHCO memo will include the terms of hiring and how to advertise the role (e.g. quals done on the backend) Not eligible for conversion	Best for specialized skill sets	N/A	NIH policy: <a href="https://policymanual.nih.gov/2300-213-1">https://policymanual.nih.gov/2300-213-1</a>  <a href="#">GSA - Sample CHCO memo</a>
<b>Military Spouse Noncompetitive Appointing Authority</b>	Temporary (not to exceed 1 year). Term (more than 1 year but not more than 4 years), or Permanent	Open to military spouses	Many military spouses have education level of masters+  Resumes may have gaps in employment due to military moves	N/A	<a href="https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/special-hiring-authorities/family-members/">https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job-seekers/special-hiring-authorities/family-members/</a>  <a href="https://www.chcoc.gov/content/recent-changes-noncompetitive-hiring-authority-military-spouses">https://www.chcoc.gov/content/recent-changes-noncompetitive-hiring-authority-military-spouses</a>  <a href="https://www.fedshirevets.gov/hiring-officials/strategic-recruitment-and-hiring/military-spouses-family/">https://www.fedshirevets.gov/hiring-officials/strategic-recruitment-and-hiring/military-spouses-family/</a>
<b>Peace Corps NCE</b>	N/A	Peace Corps returning volunteers and staff members	7,000 volunteers who returned due to COVID-19 received NCE status Well-suited to management function roles	Volunteers have 12 months of NCE eligibility Staff members have 3 years of NCE eligibility	<a href="https://www.peacecorps.gov/returned-volunteers/careers/noncompetitive-eligibility/#">https://www.peacecorps.gov/returned-volunteers/careers/noncompetitive-eligibility/#</a>  <a href="#">NCE FAQs</a>