

Hiring Reform: What You Need to Know



In an effort to increase the quality and speed of federal hiring procedures, the Presidential Memorandum on Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process, signed by President Obama on May 11, 2010, mandates changes to streamline federal hiring processes. In the memorandum, President Obama “call[s] on executive departments and agencies to overhaul the way they recruit and hire our civilian workforce.” This memorandum is available on the [Resources](#) tab of the HR Academy website.

The HR Academy is committed to ensuring that you understand the requirements, benefits, and impacts of the hiring reform initiative and are prepared to perform the changes within your day-to-day job activities.

Read more about the requirements and benefits of the hiring reform initiative.

Requirement: Eliminate the requirement for job applicants to answer essay questions as part of the application process and instead:

- Submit resumes and cover letters to describe experience and expertise; or
- Complete simple, plain language applications.

Benefits: Eliminating knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and allowing job-seekers to complete simple, plain language applications or submit resumes and cover letters to describe experience and expertise may encourage a larger pool of qualified applicants to apply. Eliminating KSAs also saves time for HR professionals, who will no longer be required to process lengthy essay questions.

The Hiring Reform Initiative involves:

- Eliminating written essays (KSAs) in the initial application
- Allowing applicants to submit simple, plain-language résumés and cover letters
- Eliminating the “Rule of 3” approach, which required managers to select from the three highest ranking candidates
- Requiring managers to be more involved and accountable in the hiring process
- Training managers in efficient and effective hiring methods
- Notifying candidates about the status of their applications

Requirement: Increase the number of qualified applicants by using category ratings rather than the “Rule of 3” approach, which required that managers select from only the three highest ranking applicants.

Benefits: The “Rule of 3” approach previously narrowed the field of candidates, often preventing other strong applicants from being considered.

Category ratings instead allow hiring managers and recruiters to submit a broader field of qualified candidates. Category ratings also relieve HR professionals from having to devise “tie breakers” when two or more candidates have the same rating.

Additional information on category ratings can be found on the [Resources](#) and [Learning](#) tabs of the HR Academy website.



Requirement: Ensure hiring managers are involved in planning workforce requirements, identifying required skills, and interviewing candidates. Additionally, hiring managers should be held accountable for recruiting and hiring qualified employees and supporting their successful transition.

Benefits: Increasing the involvement of hiring managers is another way that the hiring reform initiative intends to streamline the federal recruitment and hiring process. Hiring managers are typically the most knowledgeable about the requirements of the positions being filled and are most aware of the types of skills that are necessary. HR professionals benefit by being able to focus on the recruiting of qualified candidates instead of having to determine position requirements and qualifying skills.

Requirement: Notify individuals applying through USAJobs.gov regarding their application status at key intervals.

Benefits: Ensuring that applicants have a good experience with the job application process will encourage them to stay in the system and recommend other qualified colleagues to apply.

Resources to Support You

Annie Spiczak, VA Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, Policy and Planning, has played a key role in working with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and other federal agencies to develop the framework for the hiring reform initiative, including participating in the official OPM HR-to-HR Hiring Reform [blog](#).

Additional information on hiring reform is available on the [Resources](#) tab of the HR Academy website. Additionally, you are encouraged to read and review the [Human Resources Management Letter](#), dated October 8, 2010, which provides further guidance on the implementation of initiatives designed to improve the recruitment and hiring process within VA.

Learn More at the HR Academy

The HR Academy offers a comprehensive array of courses and resources that are designed to help VA's HR professionals learn more about important issues in their field. Explore courses such as Consulting Skills, Customer Service, Hiring Reform, Position Classification, Communicating Effectively, and more. To find out more about these and other courses, including schedules and registration, visit the [Learning](#) tab of the HR Academy website.

The HR Academy is an important part of ADVANCE, the Office of Human Resources and Administration's long-term investment in the professional and personal growth of its workforce. Through enhanced opportunities for education, professional development, and skills training, the HR Academy ensures that VA's employees and customers - our nation's Veterans - are fully supported and served with excellence.

For questions or more information, contact the HR Academy National Implementation Team at vacoacademy@va.gov.